

MERULA POLIOCEPHALA.

Grey-headed Blackbird.

- Turdus poliocephalus*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., xlv. 25.—Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 219, *Turdus*, sp. 72.
——— *fuliginosus*, Lath. in Lamb. Icon. ined., vol. ii. pl. 42.
Merula Nestor, Gould.—Jard. and Selb. Ill. Orn., new series, pl. 37.
Ash-headed Thrush, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. App. p. 373.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. x. p. 226.
Turdus fuliginosus, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., xlii. ?
Sooty Thrush, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 185 ?.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. x. p. 195 ?.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. v. p. 125 ?.
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THE present species of *Merula* appears to have been known for a much longer period than I had supposed ; indeed I was not aware that Latham had given a good description of the bird under the name of *Turdus poliocephalus*, otherwise I should not have proposed the additional name of *Nestor*. When Norfolk Island was first made a penal settlement, this bird was doubtless very common there ; but I have reason to believe it has now become scarce, having been partially extirpated by the Government officers and convicts who tenanted this beautiful island for so many years. Some short time since, I described a second species of this form from Lord Howe's Island, under the name of *Merula vinitincta* ; and I have seen a third species in the British Museum (*Merula vanthopus* ?, *Turdus aurantius*, var. β Gmel.), which I believe is from New Caledonia. All these have a general resemblance both as to form and style of colouring ; and it would be as well perhaps if they were formed into a new genus among the *Merulinæ*, for I have always considered them somewhat removed from the true Blackbirds of Northern Asia and Europe. I have long wished to know something of the habits and economy of these birds, but at present nothing has been ascertained : there appears to be less difference in the colouring of the sexes than occurs among the true *Merulæ* ; for the birds I consider to be females are very similarly coloured, and are only a trifle less in size.

Head, neck, and front of the throat light ashy brown, the remainder of the plumage dark sooty black ; in some specimens the under tail-coverts have a stripe of dull white down the centre of each ; bill, eyelash and feet yellow.

The figures are of the natural size.