

## ESTRELDA PHAETON.

### Crimson Finch.

*Bengali Phaéton (Fringilla phaeton)*, Hombr. et Jacq. Ann. des Sci. Nat., tom. vi. p. 314.

*Ing-a-dám-oon*, Aborigines of Port Essington.

*Red Finch*, Residents of Port Essington.

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IN a paper addressed by MM. Hombron and Jacquinot to the Académie des Sciences on the 9th of August, 1841, entitled, "*Description de plusieurs Oiseaux nouveaux ou peu connus, provenant de l'expédition autour du monde faite sur les corvettes l'Astrolabe et la Zélée*," I find the characters of a Finch, which, although the colouring does not quite agree with that of the bird here figured, I have little doubt is identical with it. I am the more inclined to consider them to be identical from the circumstance of MM. Hombron and Jacquinot's bird having been collected at Raffles' Bay, a locality closely bordering that in which Mr. Gilbert procured the specimens in my own collection, and who states that "this bird is an inhabitant of moist grassy meadows, particularly where the *Pandanus* (Screw Pine) is abundant. It is generally found feeding among the grass, and when disturbed invariably takes to those trees. From July to November it is to be observed in large flocks, sometimes of several hundreds; but although great numbers were shot during this period, not more than three or four were obtained in the rich plumage. About the latter part of November they were either in pairs or in small companies, not exceeding six in number; the males decorated with their rich red and spotted dress."

In its form it is in every respect closely allied to the *Estrellda temporalis* of the southern coast, and it doubtless as closely assimilates in its actions, economy and nidification, of which at present nothing is known.

The stomach is somewhat muscular, and the food consists of grass and other small seeds.

Crown of the head deep bluish black; lores, line over the eye, sides of the face and ear-coverts rich crimson red; under surface crimson red, spotted on the flanks with white; centre of the abdomen and under tail-coverts black; back of the neck and rump dark brownish grey; back and wings brownish grey, each feather crossed near the extremity with a band of deep crimson red; upper tail-coverts and two centre tail-feathers deep red; the remainder deep red at the base, passing into brown at the tip; bill rich carmine, bounded at the base by a band of greyish white about one-tenth of an inch in breadth; hinder part of the tarsi and inside of the feet ochre yellow; front of tarsi and upper surface of the feet ochre yellow, strongly tinged with hyacinth-red.

The female, who is rather smaller than her mate, is brown above, a few of the feathers on the back and the wing-coverts crossed with red as in the male; lores, line over the eye, sides of the face, chin, upper tail-coverts and tail as in the male, but not quite so brilliant; breast and flanks greyish brown, the latter ornamented with a few small spots of white; centre of the abdomen buff.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size.