## GALLINULA PHŒNICURA.

## White-breasted Waterhen.

Rallus phænicurus, Penn. Ind. Zool., p. 19, pl. 9.—Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 715.

Gallinula phænicura, Lath. Ind. Orn., tom. ii. p. 770.—Jerd. Birds of India, vol. ii. part ii. p. 720.—Swinh. Ibis, 1863, p. 427; 1870, p. 364.—Id. Proc. Zool. Soc., 1863, p. 321; 1871, p. 414.—Gray & Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. iii. p. 599, Gallinula, sp. 5.

Red-tailed Waterhen, Penn. Ind. Zool., p. 10, pl. 9; ibid. 4to, p. 49, pl. 12.

Red-tailed Gallinule, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 770.—Id. Gen. Syn., vol. v. p. 259.—Id. Gen. Hist., vol. ix.

Gallinula javanica, Horsf. Linn. Trans. vol. xiii. p. 196.—Id. Zool. Res. in Java, p. , pl. .—Sykes, in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., part ii. 1832, p. 164. erythrina, Bechst.

Fulica chinensis, Bodd.

La Poule Sultane brune, Buff. Hist. des Ois., tom. viii. p. 204.—Pl. Enl. 896.

Porzana phænicura, Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta. p. 284.—Swinh. Ibis, 1860, p. 67; 1861, p. 57.—Irby, Ibis, 1861, p. 246.—Schomb. Ibis, 1864, p. 261.—Blyth, Ibis, 1867, p. 171.

Gallinula (Erythra) phænicura, Gray, Hand-list of Birds, part iii. p. 67.

Erythra phænicura, Bonap. Compt. Rend. de l'Acad. Sci., tom. xliii. 1856, p.

Dawak, Dahak, or Dauk, Hind.; Boli-kodi, Telugu; Kureyn, of Gonds; Kurayi, in Scinde. (Jerdon.)

Karawaka, Cinghalese; Khaloo-gwet, Aracan; Roa-Roa, Malay; Tri-bombo, Javan. (Blyth.)

Specimens of this Gallinule having lived for some time in the Zoological Society's Menagerie in the Regent's Park, I was not neglectful of the opportunity thus afforded me of noting the colouring of the soft parts during life, nor of making the drawing on the opposite Plate from a very clean and well-feathered example immediately after death. Of such opportunities advantage should always be taken, as they may lead to many interesting results; in the present instance a slight discrepancy has thus been detected between the colouring of the soft parts as represented by me from life and their description by Dr. Jerdon, who states that the irides are blood-red and the legs green, while in the living birds at the Gardens the former were brownish red and the latter wax-yellow: confinement, it is true, may have affected the colouring of the irides and legs, or it may be that those parts are heightened or of a different tint at different seasons.

That this bird is not a true Gallinule I freely admit; and any one writing a Monograph of the Gallinulinæ would classify the White-breasted Waterhen, with the species I have figured in the 'Supplement' to the 'Birds of Australia' under the name of Gallinula ruficrissa, another from Timor, and perhaps some others, as a distinct form—which, indeed, has been done by the late Dr. Reichenbach, with the generic appellation of Erythra, the propriety of such a separation being confirmed when we regard the difference in the habits of these long-tarsed and short-toed birds, which are far less aquatic than those of the typical Gallinulæ, of which our Common Moorhen (Gallinula chloropus) is a prominent example.

Dr. Jerdon, speaking of the bird as observed by him in India, says:—

"The White-breasted Waterhen prefers thickets, hedgerows, and patches of thick jungle, often at some distance from water; and it is often seen in gardens and close to villages. It comes out into fields, gardens, &c. to feed, and, when approached, runs to its covert with great rapidity and erect tail; it climbs with facility through the thick shrubs and reeds, and is dislodged with difficulty. Near villages it is often very tame. It feeds both on grain and insects, and emits a loud call. Theobald found the nest in a jheel, made of weeds, containing seven eggs of a brownish cream-colour, spotted and blotched with brownish red. It is found throughout India and Ceylon, extending through Burmah into the Malayan isles."

Mr. Blyth states that "the blood of this species is accounted a valuable remedy by the natives of Bengal;

hence, in the bazaar, the dealers want a higher price for it than for other birds of its size." Captain Irby remarks that, in Oudh and Kumaon, the Gallinula phænicura is "very common throughout the

year, frequenting small ponds and swamps near villages." In the MS. notes on Indian birds by the late Captain Boys, it is stated that he shot examples of this species at Khoonda Pool, on the 5th of December, 1840, where he found it "running over weeds and skulking under brushwood near the water; it is shy and difficult of access, flies slowly, but runs swiftly, and is very good eating."

The late Sir Robert Schomburgk, in his 'Notes on the Birds of Siam,' says that in that country "this Waterhen is not very common; it is very shy; and it was but seldom we could procure it as an addition to our commissariat."