CURSORIUS COROMANDELICUS.

Indian Courser.

Charadrius Coromandelicus, Gmel. Edit. Linn. Syst. Nat. tom. i. pars ii. p. 692.—Vieill. Ency. Méth. Orn. part i.

Cursorius asiaticus, Lath. Ind. Orn. vol. ii. p. 751.—Temm. Man. d'Orn. 2nde édit. tom. ii. p. 514.—Sykes in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc. part ii. p. 165.—Less. Traité d'Orn. p. 530.

Courvite de la côte de Coromandel, Buff. Pl. Enl. 892.—Ib. Hist. Nat. des Ois. tom. viii. p. 129. Tachydromus Coromandelicus, Ill. Prod. p. 250.

Coromandel Courser, Lath. Gen. Syn. vol. v. p. 217.—Ib. Gen. Hist. vol. ix. p. 353.

Cursor frænatus, Wagl. Syst. Av. Cursor, sp. 2.

Tachydromus Asiaticus, Vieill. Gal. des Ois. tom. ii. p. 90.

Coromandelicus, Vieill. Ib. pl. 232.

- Orientalis, Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 365.—Ib. Anim. in Menag. &c. p. 339.

Cursorius Tarayensis, Hodgs. in Gray's Misc. 1844, p. 86.

—— coromandelicus, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. iii. p. 537, Cursorius, sp. 3, and App. p. 25. App. to p. 537.—Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 259.—Gray, List of Birds in Coll. Brit. Mus. part iii. p. 60.—Gray, List of Spec. and Draw. of Mamm. and Birds presented to Brit. Mus. by B. H. Hodgson, Esq., p. 131.—Jerd. Madras Journ. Lit. and Sci. vol. xii. p. 216.—Layard, Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist. 2nd ser. vol. xiv. p. 108.

The members of the genus Cursorius are but few in number, and all are natives of the Old World. India is the natural habitat of two, if not of three species; of these, the one here figured has been noticed by nearly every writer on Indian ornithology, and would therefore seem to be almost universally dispersed over the country.

My son, the late Dr. J. H. Gould, says, in one of the last letters I received from him, "I procured my specimens of the Cursorius Coromandelicus in the neighbourhood of Kurrachee, where it is tolerably plentiful on the arid plains that subtend the fiery rocks so characteristic of Scinde. I have observed it there from May till September, that is, throughout the whole of the hot season, but am unable to say whether it is migratory or not. Towards the end of October it seems to collect and feed in small companies, six or seven being often seen within a short distance of each other. Although its structure is eminently adapted for running, it does not depend upon this power alone for safety, but readily takes flight when closely pursued; and, moreover, being wary in the extreme, you can rarely obtain other than a long shot at it. Its habits are very like those of the Houbara, and it frequents the same ground, being probably attracted by the same kind of food. The stomachs of those I examined contained the remains of grasshoppers and dragonflies, which at the time were very plentiful. The flesh of this bird forms no bad addition to the table."

The following notice of this species occurs among the MS. notes on Indian Birds by Captain Boys:—

"This beautiful bird is found at Sultanpore and Nusserabad, and is often seen on the way from Ferozepore to Sukhur; it has therefore a very wide range. Its flight is remarkably easy, and when disturbed it generally alights again at from fifty to one hundred yards. It is a very nimble runner, and does not stoop or crouch while running as most of the Plovers do. It is a very good bird for the spit."

Mr. Jerdon states that "The Courier is very numerous towards the more northern part of the table-land, much less so towards the south. It frequents the open bare plains only, in numerous flocks, running along with great celerity, and picking up various insects, beetles, and small grasshoppers, with their larvæ. It breeds in the more retired spots during the hot weather, laying three eggs of a pale greenish-yellow colour, much blotched and spotted with black, and also with a few olive spots. They are deposited in a slight hollow. In length the bird varies from $8\frac{1}{2}$ to nearly 10 inches. As I have frequently killed birds of different lengths