TETRAOPHASIS OBSCURUS.

Mou-Pin Snow-Partridge.

Lophophorus obscurus, J. Verreaux, N. Arch. Mus. v. Bull. p. 33, pl. vi. (1869).

Tetraophasis obscurus, Elliot, Monogr. Phasian., i. pl. xxi. (1871).—Swinhoe, P. Z. S., 1871, p. 399.—David, N. Arch. Mus. vii. Bull. p. 95 (1871).

Père Armand David and Mr. Swinhoe really seem to have been rivalling each other for the last few years in the discovery of new and undescribed species of birds from the Chinese Empire. The subject of our plate, however, would have probably remained in obscurity for years to come, had it not been for the adventurous French missionary, who has visited not only the parts of China usually accessible to Europeans, but also the most outlying portions on the frontiers of Thibet, and the distant provinces of the interior. The present species was procured by him in Mou-Pin, and must be regarded as one of the most interesting of his discoveries. Although placed by its original describer in the genus Lophophorus, of which it exhibits certain peculiarities, it cannot be denied that it is closely allied to the Snow-Partridges (Tetraogallus), to which Mr. Elliot likewise recognizes its affinity.

All that has hitherto been recorded of the habits of the species is embodied in a short note of Père David's, published in the 'Nouvelles Archives' of the Paris Museum, as above quoted.

Writing on the game-birds of Mou-Pin, he observes:—"The splendid Lophophorus Lhuysii frequents the elevated prairies which surmount the region of forests, as at Kokonoor, at an altitude of 4000 metres; but the species is not at all numerous. The Tetraophasis obscurus and Ithaginis Geoffroyi stop lower down, in the middle of the woods, which they never leave, any more than Pucrasia xanthospila, which is also found in these mountains. As regards the magnificent Thaumalea Amherstiæ, it is found in the woods where the wild bamboos grow in abundance, between an altitude of 2000 and 3000 metres. The Thaumalea picta lives a little lower still, towards Setchuan, and avoids the localities affected by its congener of the white-and blue-banded hood. Ceriornis Temminckii and Phasianus decollatus (which for me is only a variety of P. torquatus) are the most abundant Pheasants of the whole west of the Chinese Empire; the inhabitants snare them in the thickets and woods of the smaller mountains."

The accompanying account of the species is extracted from Mr. Elliot's 'Monograph of the Phasianidæ.' "This curious bird is one of the late discoveries of the French missionary Père David, and was described by M. Jules Verreaux in the Archives of the Museum of Paris as Lophophorus obscurus. It cannot be considered to belong to that genus, although in some characters it resembles its members, but represents an entirely new genus, and apparently connects a portion of the Phasianidæ with the Snow-Partridges or Tetraogalli."

"M. Verreaux says, 'This species, which at first sight calls to mind the appearance of *Tetraogallus*, was sent to the Paris Museum in the last collection of R. P. David, who discovered it in his journey to Thibet. The five individuals, representing different ages and sexes, prove not only that the species is new to science, but also that it belongs to the genus *Lophophorus*, in which we have not hesitated to place it. It only remains for us to know the habits of the bird, which we shall, without doubt, find in the notes which are on their way, our indefatigable traveller having been ill when he sent the last collection.'

"The sexes resemble each other in plumage, the only difference being that the female is destitute of spurs.

"The species may be described as follows:—Top of head and cheeks greyish brown; hind part of neck and back rufous brown; wings dark brown, feathers tipped with yellowish white; primaries dark brown; rump grey; upper tail-coverts very pale brown; throat chestnut, surrounded by a margin of yellowish white; upper part of breast dark grey, each feather with a central line of black, ending in a black spot at the tip; flanks rufous brown, tipped with yellowish white; middle of abdomen yellowish white, some feathers having their outer webs chestnut; under tail-coverts dark chestnut, with a central streak of black, and white tips; the chestnut divided from the white by a narrow black line; tail-feathers greyish brown at base, then a broad band of black, and tipped with white; bare skin of face red; feet and tarsi horn-colour."

The figures are about the size of life.

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