PHASIANUS MONGOLICUS, *Brandt.*

Mongolian Pheasant.

Phasianus Colchicus, var. *Mongolicæ*, Pall. Zoogr., tom. ii. p. 84.
——— *Mongolicus*, Brandt, Bull. des Sci. de St. Pétersb., tom. iii. p. 51.

As any additional information relative to the history of the typical Pheasants cannot fail to be of interest to various classes of the community, I have considerable pleasure in giving a figure of a very fine bird of this genus, at present scarcely known even to the scientific world. The obscurity in which it is involved is due to the small amount of European intercourse with the distant country of which it is a native, and the little we do know respecting it is derived from Pallas and other Russian travellers and naturalists.

I am indebted to Professor Brandt, of the Imperial Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg, a gentleman distinguished for his profound acquirements in many branches of natural history, not only for a very beautiful skin of this species, but for the following note, which I give in his own words. I am also indebted to the intrepid Siberian traveller, Mr. Atkinson, for some notes respecting the Pheasants seen by him during his journey, and which doubtless have reference to the present bird and the *Phasianus Colchicus*.

"The *Phasianus Mongolicus*," says Professor Brandt, "is the variety *Mongolicæ* of the *Phasiani Colchici* of Pallas (Zoographia, vol. ii. p. 84), of which that naturalist has himself said, at p. 85,—'Dubius hæreo an hanc avem pro varietate *Ph. Colchici* vel pro distincta specie tradam;' but I am satisfied that it is quite distinct, both from that bird and from the *P. torquatus*; I have therefore assigned to it the specific designation of *Mongolicus*. Independently of the localities mentioned by Pallas, the *P. Mongolicus* is also found in Tarbagatai and in the Altai, and is doubtless spread over the country lying to the westward."

"In answer to your inquiries about the Pheasants of Asia," says Mr. Atkinson, "I beg to say that I first observed them on the wooded banks of the Lepsou, a river which falls into the Balkash; these had the white ring round their necks; they were also seen in vast numbers on the borders of all the small rivers and in the wooded ravines in the great horde of Kirghis, which stretch along the foot of the Alatou Mountains. Further to the west, on the Kezzil-a-gatch, I found the Common Pheasant in considerable numbers; I have also seen several that were brought from the country to the west of the river Ilia. After extending my journey to the Gobi Desert, south of the Tangnou Mountains, I again found them on the small rivers of Mongolia, and these also had the white ring."

We have now therefore a knowledge of the existence of four very distinct, but nearly allied species of true Pheasants, which, contrary to the usual course of nature, will probably cross with each other in a state of semi-confinement, the produce of which, if not prolific with each other, will be so with their parents on either side; the four species are, *Phasianus Mongolicus*, *P. torquatus*, *P. versicolor*, and *P. Colchicus*. Of these the most powerful is the *P. Mongolicus*, the native country of which is Mongolia and Chinese Tartary, while that of *P. torquatus* is Eastern China, *P. versicolor* Japan, and *P. Colchicus* Asia Minor and Western Asia.

The *P. Mongolicus* differs from all the other species above enumerated in its larger size, in the glaucous colouring of its shoulders, and particularly in the narrow and well-defined barrings of its tail-feathers; it has the lunate mark of white on the neck much broader than in *P. torquatus*; and it also differs from that bird in the absence of any buff colouring on the sides, or of any black colour on the abdomen.

The male may be thus described:—Crown of the head and nape greenish bronze, in some lights very strongly tinged with purple; sides of the head and neck green; round the back of the neck a broad lunate mark of pure white; feathers of the base of the neck and upper part of the back bronzy red, with a small, nearly triangular mark of black at the tip of each; remainder of the back-feathers chestnut-red, broadly margined with greenish bronze; shoulders or lesser wing-coverts glaucous white; greater coverts grey, with white shafts, on either side of which are two irregular marks of chestnut, which advance towards each other and meet near the apex of the feather; primaries brown, margined externally with buff, and toothed internally with greyish white; secondaries greyish brown, mottled with darker brown, and broadly margined with chestnut, some of the feathers having a broad whitish stripe down the centre; breast and under surface fiery chestnut-red, each feather broadly margined with bronzy green; those of the flanks crossed at the tip by a line which in some lights is black and in others brilliant green, the extent of this mark increasing as the feathers proceed towards the vent; these flank feathers are moreover of a more fiery chestnut hue than the other parts of the body; centre of the abdomen and the thighs, which are densely clothed, reddish brown, glossed on the tips of the feathers with green; tail-feathers bronzy red, crossed by numerous narrow bars of black, bordered on each side by a lighter line of bronzy red than the body of the feather; all the tail-feathers fringed with bronzy green; the hue of the longer tail-feathers becomes paler towards the tip and the bands greatly increased in breadth; under tail-coverts deep red.

Total length, 3 feet 3 inches; bill, $1\frac{5}{8}$ inch; wing, $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches; tail, 2 feet 1 inch; tarsi, $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches.

The female I have never seen; but there are specimens in the Museum at St. Petersburg; one collected by M. Kareline, at Semipalatinsk in Siberia, near the Chinese frontier, in the collection of M. Hauptman Kinchhoff; and another in the Museum at Bremen, which latter, Dr. Hartlaub informs me, is somewhat darker in colour than the female of *P. Colchicus*.

The figure is about two-thirds of the natural size.