LERWA NIVICOLA, Hodgs.

Lerwa Partridge.

Perdix Lerwa, Hodgs. in Proc. of Zool. Soc., part i. p. 107.—Gray, Ill. Ind. Zool., vol. ii. pl. 44. fig. 1.

Lerwa nivicola, Hodgs. Madras Journ. of Lit. and Sci. 1837, p. 301.—Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. iii.

p. 508.—Ib. Cat. of Birds in Coll. Brit. Mus., part iii. p. 36.—Cat. of Spec. and Draw. of Mamm. and Birds presented to Brit. Mus. by B. H. Hodgson, Esq., p. 127.—Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 248.

Quoir monaul.

Snow Partridge of sportsmen.

Perhaps no naturalist living has done more towards enlightening us as to the natural productions of northern India than Mr. Hodgson, who, with an industry rarely equalled, has devoted every leisure moment to the study of the mammals, birds, &c. of that interesting region, and by this means made us acquainted with numerous species in both those branches of natural history, which would otherwise have been unknown to us. Among the birds few are more interesting, or possess greater claims to our notice, than the subject of the present Plate, which he first described in the "Proceedings of the Zoological Society" for 1833, under the name of Perdix Lerwa, and subsequently erected into the genus Lerwa in the "Madras Journal of Literature and Science" for 1837. To the sportsman it is of interest from the rich colouring of its plumage, from its excellence as a viand for the table, and, dwelling as it does among the higher ranges of the Himalayas, from the facility with which it might be introduced to the Scottish Hills, and thus contribute to the sport and recreation of the owners of the properties there, which now afford a congenial habitat to the Ptarmigan and the Grouse. The scientific ornithologist, on the other hand, will regard it with interest from the circumstance of its structure being different from that of all other known forms, and from its assimilating in a nearly equal degree to that of the Grouse, the Francolins and the Partridges. These affinities having, however, been noticed by Mr. Hodgson, I cannot, in justice to that gentleman, do otherwise than give his remarks on the species in his own words:-

"These birds have the habits and manners of *Tetrao* rather than *Perdix*. They are gregarious in coveys, nestle and breed under jutting rocks, feed on the aromatics, seeds and insects found in the proper Himalayan region, which they never quit, and amid the glaciers of which they take impenetrable refuge when disturbed. Trees they wholly avoid; and are usually found on the flatter and quasi-heathery ledges, which form steps from the snow-bound summits of the Himalayas. The Lerwas moult, I think, twice a year, in spring and autumn; but certainly in autumn, their plumage being most imperfect in August. They are splendid game, with a vigorous flight, shy, and in size and strength equal to a Grouse. Their flesh is white, succulent, and possessed of a very high flavour. The sexes resemble each other, and are of nearly equal size; nor do the young differ materially, except in being of a duller hue, especially on the breast and flanks, which in the old birds shine with an intense chestnut-brown or ochreous-red colour. The young have the bill and legs dusky red."

The following brief notice of this species occurs in Dr. Hooker's "Himalayan Journals," vol. ii. p. 113, and is quoted in confirmation of Mr. Hodgson's remarks as to its partaking of the characters of both the Grouse and the Partridge:—

"I waited till the last streak of snow was shut out from my view, when I descended to breakfast on Himalayan Grouse (*Tetrao Perdix nivicola*), a small gregarious bird, which inhabits the loftiest stony mountains, and utters a short cry of 'Quiok, quiok'; in character and appearance it is intermediate between Grouse and Partridge, and is good eating though tough."

Mr. Hodgson states the weight to be eighteen ounces.

Head, neck, throat, upper surface, wings and tail alternately barred with narrow wavy bars of greyish or buffy-white and brownish-black, stained as it were, here and there, on the sides of the neck, back and wings with chestnut; primaries dark brown, narrowly freckled with buffy-white on their margins; secondaries largely tipped with white; on the tail-feathers the grey bands are interrupted by the dark shaft, and the bands themselves are double, or with a mark of brown along their centres; breast, upper part of the abdomen and flanks very dark chestnut, with a mark of buff on the edge of some of the feathers, this mark becoming very conspicuous on the flanks; lower part of the abdomen, thighs and vent barred like the upper surface, but suffused with a rufous hue; under tail-coverts chestnut-red, with a black line within their buff tips; irides pale brown; bill and feet intense coral-red.

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The figures represent the two sexes of the size of life.