PITTA GURNEYI, Hume.

Gurney's Pitta.

Pitta gurneyi, Hume, Stray Feathers, vol. iii. no. 4, p. 296. Brachyurus gurneyi, Id. tom. cit. no. 6, pl. 3.

We are indebted to the pages of 'Stray Feathers' for a knowledge of this new and magnificent Pitta; and I can readily conceive with what real pleasure Mr. Allan Hume took up his pen to write a description of so interesting a bird.

To myself, who have from the beginning of my career as an ornithologist been much attached to this family, the discovery was especially welcome; but how much was this feeling enhanced by Mr. Hume presenting me with a fine pair (male and female adult) for my already, I may say, unique collection of this beautiful family!

Not only is this bird entirely new, but it is an additional and fourth species of a small section of the Pittidæ whose coloration is most attractive and interesting. Mr. Hume having given a most careful description of both sexes of the *Pitta gwrneyi*, and his reason for dedicating this new bird to his friend Mr. J. H. Gurney, I shall take the liberty to copy nearly verbatim what he has so well said:—"I dedicate this really lovely species, an inhabitant of the most southern portions of the Tenasserim Provinces, to my kind friend Mr. J. H. Gurney, well known to all ornithologists as the first living authority where Raptorial birds are concerned.

"No more beautiful or interesting addition to our Indian avifauna has been made for many a long day; and its discovery is one of the results of the systematic ornithological survey of the Tenasserim Provinces which for the past two years has been vigorously prosecuted by my curator Mr. William Davison and my whole staff.

"Though conspicuously different from any one of them, this new species is most nearly allied to P. cyanura, Gmel. (guaiana, P. L. S. Müll.), P. schwaneri, Temm., and P. boschi, S. Müll. (? elegans, Lesson).

"There is the same cuneiform blue tail, the same comparatively small bill, the same more or less rufous olivaceous upper surface, the same difference in the sexes, an orange-brown replacing on the head of the female the more marked colours of that portion of the male.

"While dealing with a species of this genus I take the opportunity of noting that in a recent livraison of the Museum des Pays-Bas (dated April 1874) Professor Schlegel remarks of this genus, 'Ces oiseaux aux habitudes parfaitement sédentaires et ne sachant guère voler, n'ont pas la faculté de se transporter dans d'autres localités du lieu qui les a vu naître.'

"Now, as regards those species which I have had most opportunities of observing, viz. moluccensis and coronata, these remarks are wholly erroneous. Both species are eminently migratory; neither, at any rate within our limits, are ever found at other seasons of the year anywhere in or near the localities in which they breed. Both yearly travel hundreds of miles to their breeding-haunts, streaming up in tens of thousands of pairs, all moving at about the same time, though not in flocks. As to coronata, Layard and Jerdon and others have recorded this years ago. As to cyanoptera, we have found this the case during the past two years in Burmah: they come up from the Malay peninsula, and flood not only the Tenasserim Provinces, but the valley of the Irrawady, some at any rate getting as high as Thayetmyo; and in this migration they are accompanied by the nearly allied but much larger-billed megarhynchus. Doria, too, I see, as quoted by Salvadori ('Uccelli di Borneo,' p. 236), notices that in Borneo also they are migratory, no specimen having been obtained at Sarawak before October (though not rare there in that month), November, and December."

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The Plate represents two males and a female, of the size of life.