PITTA BAUDII, Müll. & Schl.

Red-backed Pitta.

Pitta baudii, Müller & Schl. Verh. Natuurl. Gesch. Zool. Aves, Pitta, pp. 10-20, pl. 2 (1839-44).—Gray, Gen. B. i. p. 243 (1846).—Low, Sarawak, p. 410 (1848).—Schl. Handl. Dierk. i. p. 253 (1857). —Id. Vog. Nederl. Ind. Pittæ, pl. 5. figs. 1 and 2 (1863).—Id. Mus. P. B. Pitta, p. 5 (1863).—Wall. Ibis, 1864, p. 107.—Gray, Handl. B. i. p. 296. no. 4374.—Salvad. Ucc. Born. p. 234. no. 254.
Brachyurus baudi, Bp. Consp. i. p. 255 (1850).—Elliot, Monogr. Pitt. pl. xxii. (1863).—Id. Ibis, 1870, p. 419.
Iridipitta baudii, Bp. Consp. Volucr. Anisod. p. 7 (1854).

So rare is this fine Pitta in the Museums of Europe, that the individual specimens at present known to naturalists cannot exceed a dozen in number. Besides those in the Leyden Museum, I have myself only seen two adult males—one in the collection of the British Museum, and another in my own cabinet; and it is only within the last few months that we have received authentic information respecting the exact part of Borneo where this bird is to be looked for, although it is highly probable that it is to be found sparingly distributed all over that large island. To Mr. Hugh Low, however, we owe the discovery of the adult female of this beautiful bird, as hitherto only the young plumage of this sex was known, as figured by Schlegel (1. c.). I have to thank Mr. Low for the loan of his female specimen for the purposes of the present work; and a faithful likeness of it will be found on the accompanying Plate. He informs me that the only specimens which he has seen his collectors obtained on the Mengalong river, opposite to the island of Labuan. It is, as far as he knows, never found on the last-named island, but is strictly confined to the mainland. I must mention that the female figured by me is rather larger in all its dimensions than the males mentioned above; and it is probable that the examples from N.W. Borneo will be found to exceed in size those from other localities.

I add a full description of both sexes of this Pitta:—

Adult male. Crown of head and nape brilliant cobalt blue; lores, feathers round the eye, sides of head, ear-coverts, and sides of neck black, bordering the blue crown for the entire extent, the lower feathers at the side of the neck purple, tipped with red where they adjoin the mantle; back and scapulars red, somewhat washed with sandy brown on the scapulars, rump, and upper tail-coverts; the lower upper tail-coverts bright cobalt, with a mesial streak of black; tail deep blue, black below; wing-coverts black, the median series tipped with white, forming a diagonal bar across the wing; quills blackish brown, the innermost secondaries externally sandy brown, the outermost of the latter tipped with white, forming a second bar across the wing; cheeks, throat, and sides of neck white; fore neck and breast black, the rest of the under surface purplish blue, shaded with richer purple on the sides of the body; thighs ashy white; under wing-coverts black, the axillaries tipped with white; lower surface of quills blackish brown; bill black; feet pale yellowish.

Total length 6.5 inches; culmen 0.85, wings 3.4, tail 1.75, tarsus 1.4.

Adult female. Above red, the head dull ochraceous brown; sides of face and under surface of body ochraceous brown, paler and inclining to buff on the abdomen, the sides of the neck washed with the same red as the back; under tail-coverts blue, slightly washed with ochre on the margins; wing-coverts as in the male, but browner and having the white bar across the wing slightly tinged with ochre; quills blackish, the inner secondaries dull sandy brown, the outer secondaries ochraceous towards the tips; upper tail-coverts bright cobalt; tail deep blue.

Total length 6 inches; culmen 0.9, wing 3.55, tail 1.6, tarsus 1.5.

The figures in the Plate represent two adult males and a female, of the natural size. One of them, a fine male, is in my own possession, and was received in exchange direct from M. Temminck. The female, collected by Mr. Hugh Low, is now in the collection of the British Museum.

I cannot conclude this article without making a remark on my friend Mr. Elliot's plate in his 'Monograph of the Pittidæ.' The specimens there figured are represented with a conspicuous white band across the lower rump, of which there is no trace in the bird itself; the white band on the wing is also represented as quite different from what it really is in the specimens examined by me. The specimen from which Mr. Elliot's figures are drawn is said to be in the Philadelphia-Academy collection; and an examination appears to be desirable.

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