## PITTA BENGALENSIS.

## Bengal Pitta.

Coturnix bengalensis, Albin, Birds, vol. i. pl. 31.

Corvus brachyurus, Linn. Syst. Nat., 1766, vol. i. p. 158.

Turdus triostegus, Sparrm. Mus. Carls., pl. 84.

— malaccensis, Scop. Faun. et Flor. Insub.

Myiothera brachyura, Cuv. Règn. Anim., 1817, tom. i. p. 356.

Pitta bengalensis, Vieill. Ency. Méth. Orn., 2nde partie, p. 685.—Jerd. Birds of India, vol. i. p. 503.

— brachyura, Less. Traité d'Orn. p. 394.—Gould, Cent. of Himal. Birds, pl. 23.

— coronata, G. R. Gray, Hand-list of Birds, part i. p. 294.

— triostegus, Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 157.

Brachyurus bengalensis, Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., vol. i. p. 254, Brachyura, sp. 9.—Elliot, Mon. Pitt. pl. vi.

Turdus coronatus, Miill. Natursyst., Anhang, p. 144?

Short-tailed Pye, Edw. Glean. of Nat. Hist., pl. 324.

Shum shah of the Bengalese. Nou rung of the Hindoos, i. e. nine-coloured bird. Pona-inka of the Telugus.

This appears to be the earliest described species of a beautiful family of Old-World birds—the *Pittidæ*, or Ant-Thrushes,—all the members of which, with the exception of a solitary species confined to a limited area in Africa, inhabit India, China, and the numerous islands to the southward as far as Australia, but not Polynesia or New Zealand.

The distribution of the present species over India is so very general that Mr. Blyth says it is found throughout the whole of the country, from the Himalayan region to Ceylon inclusive, but never on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal.

Although the Bengal Pitta is so common all over India, very little has been recorded respecting its habits and economy, and, as far as I can learn, nothing whatever as to its nidification, the number and colour of its eggs, &c.; but I trust these desiderata will soon be supplied by some of the many gentlemen who have of late years turned their attention to the ornithology of the East.

In Mr. Jerdon's 'Birds of India' it is stated that "this prettily plumaged Ground-Thrush is common in the Indian forests, but is also occasionally met with in every part of the country that is tolerably wooded. In the Carnatic it chiefly occurs in the beginning of the hot weather, when the land-winds first begin to blow with violence from the west: and the birds in many instances appear to have been blown by the strong wind from the Eastern Ghats; for, being birds of feeble flight, they are unable to contend against the strength of the wind. At this time they take refuge in huts and houses, or any building that will afford them shelter. The first bird of this kind that I saw had taken refuge in the General Hospital at Madras; and subsequently, at Nellore, I obtained many alive under the same circumstances. Layard states that in Ceylon it is migratory, coming in with the Snipe, in the beginning of the cold weather. He further remarks that it is shy and wary, resorting to tangled brakes and ill-kept native gardens. It seldom alights on trees, and is generally found single; but I have seen three or four together; and it feeds chiefly on the ground, on various coleopterous insects. Like others of its family, it progresses by hopping, and is in general a most silent bird, but is said to emit at times a fine loud whistling note. Its Singalese name is said to be derived from its call,—Aoitch-i-a, pronounced slowly and distinctly. Blyth was informed that it

There is no apparent difference in the colouring of the sexes; but specimens frequently occur among the skins sent to England with dark elongated marks down the stem of the feathers of the back and rump, while in others these parts are uniform in colour; whether these marks are characteristic of any particular season, or whether they are indicative of immaturity, I have been unable to determine, and it is a cular season, or whether they are indicative of immaturity, I have been unable to determine, and it is a point to which I would direct the attention of those favourably situated for observation. Other differences point to which I would direct the attention of those favourably stripe being in some instances brownish buff, also occasionally present themselves—the superciliary stripe being in some instances brownish buff,

while in others it is of a lighter hue and, moreover, marked with green.

Although Mr. Blyth states that he has not seen this bird from any locality to the eastward of the Bay of Bengal, I possess a bird from Assam which is so closely similar to Indian examples that I question the propriety of giving it a name; it is, however, a smaller bird, and more delicately formed in every respect.

A line down the centre of the head from the bill to the nape black, narrow from the forehead to the