PODOCES HENDERSONI, Hume.

Henderson's Podoces.

Podoces Hendersoni, Hume, Ibis, 1871, p. 408.—Hume & Henderson, 'Lahore to Yarkand,' p. 244, pl. 22 (1873).

The rarity of *Podoces* in collections has always invested this form with peculiar interest; for the typical species, *P. Panderi*, remained for many years almost unknown to naturalists, and is at present very scantily represented in the museums of Europe. The discovery of a new and finer species was therefore of very great interest, and the first expedition to Yarkand will always be remembered by ornithologists on this account.

I must refer for full descriptions of the species to the above-quoted work of Messrs. Henderson and Hume, contenting myself with an extract therefrom relating to the habits of the bird, from the pen of the first-named author. Dr. Henderson observes:—

"This species was found in the desert ground after leaving Sānju, en route to Koshtak, and also near Oi-Togrāk. They always kept in pairs, and moved from one sand hill to another, seemingly searching for insects in the sand. The stomachs, however, were filled with grain, picked out of the horse-dung found in the road.

"They habitually fluttered and flapped about in the sand, laving their feathers in it after the manner of fowls, or like some of our Babblers (*Malacocerci*), commonly called in India 'Dust-birds.' The Turki name 'Kum-tuché' is said to mean 'sand-bird.' There was hardly a trace of vegetation in the localities in which they occurred, and they were always seen on bare hillocks of drift-sand. They were met with on several occasions, and always in similar localities. Mr. Shaw, who had seen them on his previous journey to Yarkand, said that they were good eating."

The original description of Mr. Hume is so good that I reproduce it here, and will merely add that my figure is taken from the typical example now preserved in the British Museum, to the authorities of which institution I am indebted for ready access to this valuable specimen.

"Male.—Tail, quills (except a broad white bar), the greater coverts, and the whole top of the head and nape black, with a metallic purplish-blue lustre; most of the feathers of the head with a minute rufescent white speck at the tip; all the primaries with a very broad white bar extending from near the bases to near the tips, and, except on the first primary, occupying the outer as well as the inner webs; the rest of the plumage somewhat pale Jay-colour, a mixture of pale rufous and fulvous fawn, with, especially on the back and rump, a vinaceous tinge, becoming paler beneath and albescent on the chin, cheeks, and lower tail-coverts. Total length 11:5 inches; bill at front 1:5; wing 5:4; tail 4:2; tarsus 1:6."

0. W. O. W.

The principal figure in the Plate represents the species of the size of life.