PODOCES BIDDULPHI, *Hume.*

Biddulph's Podoces.

Podoces Biddulphi, Hume, Stray Feathers, ii. pp. 503, 529.

In adjoining Plates I have figured two remarkable species of *Podoces*, which were discovered during the first British expedition to Yarkand; and I have now the pleasure of bringing before the notice of ornithologists a beautiful member of the genus which forms part of the natural-history collections made during the second mission of Sir Douglas Forsyth to Kashgar. This grand novelty was discovered by Captain John Biddulph, 19th Hussars, who was attached to the expedition; and it most appropriately bears his name. We have therefore four species of this interesting genus now known to science, all of which are illustrated in the present work; and one cannot but regard these birds with interest when we consider their extreme rarity in collections, and their restricted range. They are eminently typical of the great desert region of Central Asia, lying to the north of our own possessions in India, and stretching from Persia as far as Mongolia and Amoor-land.

Mr. Hume, whose account of the bird I herewith transcribe, has noted the characters of the species so well that I cannot do better than quote his words. He writes:—"This, the finest of the four Chough Thrushes as yet known to me, was procured during the second Yarkand expedition by Captain Biddulph, after whom I have named it. He was the only one of the party who saw it in a wild state. He obtained it in January at 'Maralbashi;' later Dr. Stoliczka purchased a caged specimen in Yarkand.

"In size, general tone of colouring, and appearance this species resembles both *P. Hendersoni* and *P. Panderi*; but it is distinguished from both at once by its conspicuous white tail, as well as by many other minor differences which will become apparent from the following description. I should add that, although both Captain Biddulph's specimens are females (and the females in this genus appear to be smaller and to have smaller bills than the males), the bills are considerably larger than those of the male *P. Hendersoni*.

"The following are the measurements taken from the skin:—length 11·5 inches; wing 5·9; bill at front 2·0, covered for 0·4 inch by frontal plumes; tail from vent ·4, the exterior tail-feathers on either side 0·3 shorter than the rest; fourth and fifth primaries equal and longest, sixth primary 0·1, third 0·18, second 0·65, and, first 0·85 shorter than the longest; tarsus 1·93; hind toe and claw 0·87, claw only 0·4; mid toe and claw 1·2. The bill, legs, and feet are black, the narial tufts vinaceous fawn-colour.

"The lores, a band under the eye not quite extending to the posterior angle, a broad streak over the eye extending to the ear-coverts, ear-coverts, and sides of the neck pale vinaceous fawn-colour; chin and throat of the same colour, but mottled with dull black from the bases of the feathers showing through, just as in some of the black-throated *Saxicolæ* in winter plumage, leading one to suspect that in summer these parts may be black; base of the lower mandible and a broad moustachial patch, as well as an ill-defined stripe running upwards from this behind the eye and then backwards over the ear-coverts and dividing these from the long supercilium, dull black; forehead, crown, and occiput black, strongly glossed with steel-blue, the feathers of the occiput narrow, pointed, and prolonged to form a short full demi-crest; entire mantle, including lesser and median wing-coverts and rump, a rich vinaceous fawn-colour, much the same as in *Garrulax bispecularis*; winglet pure white; greater-primary and secondary-coverts black, strongly glossed with blue; primaries, ninth and tenth entirely pure white, except at the extreme bases on the inner webs, where they are brownish black; eighth primary similar, but with the terminal half-inch brown and the basal portion of the shaft brownish. The rest of the primaries white, with the whole of the tips and the shafts blackish brown; secondaries white-tipped for about a quarter of an inch, and the inner webs brownish black; the first secondary with the entire outer web white, the rest with the outer webs black strongly glossed with steel-blue; the tertiaries with the inner webs white, and in each feather a decreasing breadth of black, glossed with blue, on the outer webs.

"Upper tail-coverts white, tinged with vinaceous fawn; tail-feathers white, the central pair strongly tinged towards the margins with vinaceous fawn, and with a conspicuous blackish brown shaft-stripe; the lateral tail-feathers faintly tinged with vinaceous on the exterior margin, less and less so as they recede from the centre; the pair next the central ones with conspicuous black shafts, which black shafting becomes less and less marked as the feathers approach the exterior of the tail; the entire lower surface of the body pale vinaceous fawn, paling still further towards the vent and lower tail-covents, which latter may be said to be