PICA BACTRIANA, *Bonap.*

Affghan Magpie.

Pica caudata, Blyth, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., vol. xv. p. 26.—Id. Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 91.—Hutton, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., vol. xvi. p. 778.

—— *bactriana*, Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., tom. i. p. 383.—Horsf. and Moore, Cat. of Birds in Mus. East Ind. Comp., vol. ii. p. 550.

Akha, Cabul, Hutton.

It has often struck me that the more stupendous the mountain-ranges, the larger and more powerful are the animals frequenting them, whether mammals, birds, or insects; and I could, were it necessary, adduce many instances in confirmation of this being the case; but I will here merely mention that, of the numerous species of true Magpies forming the well-defined genus *Pica*, those inhabiting the high lands of the Old World, known as the Himalayan and Thibetan ranges, are much larger and finer than those of other countries. Of these larger and finer species the present bird is an example. It bears a general resemblance to the common *Pica caudata* of Europe and the *P. leucoptera* of Siberia; but on a careful comparison with those birds, it is found to present several points of difference: it is larger and more powerful than either of them; its correspondingly large tail is even more highly coloured; its rump is crossed by a very distinct band of white; and the white on the primaries is of greater extent than in its European ally, but not so extensive as in *P. leucoptera*; in all other respects the three birds are very similar.

Of the *P. bactriana* I have numerous specimens now before me from Affghanistan and Thibet, which countries appear to be the head-quarters of the species, and where it performs the same offices, and exhibits the same habits, manners, and disposition, that our own bird does in Europe, the *Pica media* in China, the *P. leucoptera* in Siberia, and the *P. Hudsonica* and *P. flavirostris* in America.

"The Afghan Magpie," says Captain Hutton, "is found all the year round, from Quettah to Giriskh, and is very common. They breed in March, and the young are fledged by the end of April. The nest is like that of the European bird, and all its manners are precisely the same."

A very fine series of these birds is contained in the collection at the India Museum, Scotland Yard; and my thanks are due to the Secretary of State for India and to Mr. Moore for the use of them in furtherance of the present work.

Crown black, slightly glossed with green; remainder of the head, neck, back, and breast black; the throat-feathers open in texture, and terminating in a bristle; scapularies, abdomen, flanks, and a band across the lower part of the back pure white; upper and under tail-coverts, vent, and thighs black; lesser wing-coverts black; greater coverts, spurious wing, secondaries, and tertiaries glossed with green and blue, and a few of the secondaries with a stripe of yellowish green along the centre of their outer webs; outer webs of the primaries, their tips, and the margin of the apical portion of the inner webs dark bronzy green; the inner webs, with the exception of the apical portion of their margins, pure white; two centre tail-feathers rich bronzy green nearly to the end, when that colour passes into rich purple, then blue, and lastly bluish green; the lateral feathers are similarly coloured on their outer webs and at the tip of their inner webs, the basal portion of the latter being black, glossed with blue; irides blackish brown; bill, feet, and legs black.

Total length 21 inches; bill 2; wing of specimens from Ladakh from $7\frac{3}{4}$ to $8\frac{3}{4}$; tail 13; tarsi 2.

The front figure represents the bird of the size of life.