

## ORTYX NIGROGULARIS, Gould.

### Black-throated Partridge.

#### SPECIFIC CHARACTER.

*Ort. gulâ nigrâ*; pectore et abdomine albis, singulis plumis ad apicem lunulam nigram exhibentibus.

Crown and all the upper surface rich brown; margins of the tertiaries and wing-coverts fawn-colour; these feathers are also crossed with indistinct zigzag lines, freckles and blotches of black and blackish brown; primaries greyish brown; tail deep bluish grey, the centre feathers and the external margins of the remainder freckled with reddish brown and buff; a black stripe commencing at the base of the bill passes over the eye to the occiput; above this a stripe of white; below the eye a white line from the base of the bill to the ear-coverts, down the sides of the neck, and encircling the throat, which is jet-black; feathers of the chest and abdomen white, margined with a zone of black which is narrow on the chest, and broad and distinct on the abdomen, giving the under surface a scaly appearance; flanks, thighs and under tail-coverts sandy chestnut, the centre of each of the flank-feathers white; bill black; feet flesh-white.

Total length, 8 inches; bill,  $\frac{9}{16}$ ; wing,  $4\frac{1}{4}$ ; tail,  $2\frac{1}{4}$ ; tarsi,  $1\frac{1}{4}$ ; middle toe and nail,  $1\frac{1}{4}$ .

*Ortyx nigrogularis*, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part X. p. 181.—List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., Part III. p. 44.

NUMEROUS living examples of this pretty and strongly marked species have lately been imported into this country, some of which having passed into the possession of the Earl of Derby, have upon more than one occasion bred in his Lordship's aviary at Knowsley. As its habits in confinement very much resemble those of the *Ortyx Virginianus*, and I doubt not that in a state of nature they are also very similar. It is very common in Honduras and Yucatan, where Mr. Dyson informs me it frequents the pine ridges, moves about in coveys, and lays from eight to ten white eggs in the months of July and August. Its note, like that of its northern ally, resembles the words "Bob-White." In the "Boston Journal of Natural History," vol. iv. p. 460, I find the following remarks on this species by Dr. Samuel Cabot, Jun.:—"This bird is the same as the *Ortyx* discovered by me in Yucatan, when on a visit to that country in company with Mr. Stephens, and mentioned by me in a memorandum of the birds of Yucatan which he published in the Appendix to his second volume of 'Incidents of Travel in Yucatan,' p. 474. The mention I there made of it is very slight, and hardly sufficient to constitute any right of priority; besides which, I could not wish the name altered, as it is very well chosen, indicating the most marked feature in the appearance of the bird. But as Mr. Gould has only met with one specimen and that the dried skin of a full-plumaged male, I have thought it worth while to give as full a description of the history and habits of this bird, as a residence of seven months in their native country would enable me to do, together with descriptions of the plumage of the female and young.

"In reading works relating to the discovery and conquest of Yucatan by the Spaniards, we see mention made of the sacrifices of quails offered by the natives to their idols; sometimes the blood only was offered, and sometimes the whole body. The bird there alluded to is undoubtedly the *Ortyx nigrogularis*, as this is the only bird called *Codorniz* or Quail by the Spanish residents of the country. The *Ortyx nigrogularis* in its note and habits is precisely similar to the *O. Virginianus*. They whistle the Bob-White in the spring: their covey-call in the autumn and winter is so precisely the same, that they readily answered when I whistled the call of our quail; and if I had previously scattered the covey, I could always find them in this way. They feed on similar food, and roost in the same way; they also sometimes alight on trees, as our quail. These birds are taken by the Indian boys, in traps similar to those used in taking our quail, and brought alive in great numbers to the markets of the large towns of Yucatan. The throat of the young male is light-coloured, nearly white, and it resembles very closely the young *O. Virginianus*. It does not get its full plumage till late in winter. I have the skin of a young male among my specimens which has light-coloured feathers among the black of the throat; this specimen was killed in the latter part of the month of