LOXIA HIMALAYANA, Hodgs.

Himalayan Crossbill.

Loxia himalayana, Hodgs. in Gray's Zool. Misc. 1844, p. 85.—Id. Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., vol. xiii. p. 952.—Id. Proc. of Zool. Soc., part xxxv. p. 35.—Id. Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist., vol. xvi. p. 206.—Cat. of Spec. and Draw. of Mamm. and Birds pres. to Brit. Mus. by B. H. Hodgson, Esq., p. 111.—Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 123.—Id. Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., vol. xxiii. p. 213.—Bonap. et Schleg. Monog. des Loxiens, p. 6, pl. 7.—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 527, Loxia, sp. 5.—Horsf. and Moore, Cat. of Birds in Mus. East Ind. Comp., vol. ii. p. 453.—Gray and Mitch., Gen. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 388, Loxia, sp. 5, and vol. iii. App. p. 18, app. to p. 388.

The Crossbills constitute a well-defined and isolated group among the Fringillidæ, all the members of which are distinguished by having a greater or less amount of red in their plumage, and by the crossing of the tips of their mandibles. In Europe there occur at least three species, and there are two or three others in America. In all probability the whole of the European species enter the confines of Asia; certain it is that the well-known Loxia curvirostris, our Common Crossbill, frequents China and Japan; at least, examples from the latter country offer no perceptible difference from others killed in England. Independently of the species above enumerated, there exists in the great Himalayan range of mountains a species which differs from them, and all others known, in its diminutive size. The discovery of this bird is due to Mr. Hodgson, who has transmitted specimens to this country, and thus furnished both the collection at the British Museum and that at the East India House with examples of both sexes. Mr. Hodgson merely states that the bird "inhabits the Cachar only, near the snows, and is rare there."

In point of affinity, both as regards structure and colour, the L. himalayana is more nearly allied to the L. curvirostris than to any other member of the genus.

The male has the crown of the head, back, scapularies, face, throat, breast, and abdomen fine red, speckled on the back and more faintly on the breast with dark brown; wings and tail dark brown, the latter paler beneath; vent grey; under tail-coverts dark brown, margined with greyish-white; irides hazel; bill and feet pale flesh-colour.

The female differs in having those parts of the upper surface which are red in the male of an olive-green; the throat white, with a crescent of brown in the centre of each feather, and the breast and abdomen yellow with similar crescentic marks of brown.

The figures represent the two sexes, of the full size, or perhaps a trifle larger than the birds really are.