PYRRHULA CINERACEA.

Cinereous Bullfinch.

I believe that of all the novelties which from time to time attract the notice of ornithologists, those which please us most are the new species of well-known genera, and that a new Bullfinch or Chaffinch, or some such form connected with our first impressions of ornithology, possesses the most interest for the students of this delightful branch of science. I was glad, then, when my friend Mr. Dresser brought me the specimens of the present species, which may fairly be considered one of the most striking of the Bullfinches,—striking, I would say, because of its dissimilarity to the other members of the genus *Pyrrhula*. In most of the Bullfinches the prevailing colours are bright red and grey, with variations towards orange in some of the Himalayan forms; and the grey section of the genus contains but four species—*P. murina* of the Azores, *P. griseiventris* of Japan, *P. Cassinii* of Alaska, and this recently described *P. cineracea* from North-eastern Siberia.

All the Bullfinches are inhabitants of the northern portions of the Old World and are distributed over the whole of the Palearctic Region, but the maximum development of the genus takes place in the Himalaya Mountains. The subject of the present memoir was discovered by Dr. Dybowski in the country round Lake Baikal, and is one of the most interesting of the novelties brought to light by that indefatigable naturalist. He gives the following note on the species in his recently published notes on the birds of North-eastern Siberia, and these observations are all that we have recorded concerning the habits and economy of the species. In the same country occurs the Russian Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula coccinea*); but, says Dr. Dybowski, "The two species differ considerably in habits and live quite apart from each other, even in localities where both are common. *P. coccinea* keeps always close to the villages, seeking its food near the store-houses, or on the islands of the Onon, or in small groves thinly sprinkled with birch trees. In the neighbourhood of Irkutsk it is found on the road to the Telminsk manufactory. *P. cineracea*, on the contrary, keeps near the dark groves consisting of rhododendron bushes, or in open spaces in the woods covered with high grass; as an exception, and this only in the present winter, a great number of them being driven from the mountain-plains on account of the heavy snow, we found them with *P. coccinea*. In the larch-woods on the hills we never met with the latter, but only with *P. cineracea*.

"P. coccinea feeds on different cereal seeds and especially on heath-berries, therefore large flocks may be seen congregating round the store-houses and on the threshed straw. We very seldom found any hawberries in their stomachs, or seeds of any other plants growing near the villages. P. cineracea, on the contrary, feeds principally on rhododendron-berries, living here on the berries of the Daurian rhododendron. The voice of P. coccinea is a little harsher and the tone lower, the voice of P. cineracea thinner and higher; my unmusical ear could not recognize the exact differences, but my colleague, Mr. Michael Janskowski, can recognize both species by their note and can call them excellently.

"About the breeding of the two species we have as yet only imperfect information. *P. cineracea* breeds in the high mountains about 5000 to 6000 feet above the sea. During our trip which we made to the Baikal Mountains we saw *P. cineracea* flying about in pairs; as, for instance, in the Chamardaban-fields (Naseberg) a pair followed us for a long while, performing the usual manœuvres of lame flight to draw us away from the nest; but neither here nor in other places where we saw them in summer could we find the nest."

Adult male.—Above ashy grey, the rump conspicuously white; crown of head, lores, feathers round the eye, and chin black; rest of under surface ashy grey, clearer than the upper surface, and very light on the cheeks and sides of the face and neck; under wing- and tail-coverts white; upper wing-coverts ashy grey like the back, the greater series purplish black at base shading into ashy grey at tip, the outermost whitish at their extremity; quills black, the secondaries shaded with purple, the outer primaries with a very narrow marginal line of whitish; upper tail-coverts and tail purplish black, the latter duller below; bill black; legs brownish; iris dusky brown. Total length 6.5 inches, wing 3.5, tail 2.8, tarsus 0.65.

Female.—Similar to the male, but much more dingy grey above, shaded with brown; the under surface much browner. Total length 6.5 inches, wing 3.4, tail 2.9, tarsus 0.7.

The Plate represents the two sexes of this Bullfinch of the size of life.