PYRRHULA ERITHACUS, Blyth.

Beavan's Bullfinch.

Pyrrhula erythaca, Blyth, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng. xxxii. p. 459.—Jerdon, Birds of India, ii. p. 389.—Gray, Hand-list of Birds, ii. p. 99, no. 7483.—Hume, Stray Feathers, 1874, p. 455.—Dresser, Birds of Europe, pt. 51, note to P. major.—Hume, Stray Feathers, 1879, p. 108.

Pyrrhula erithacus, Blyth, Ibis, 1862, p. 389.—Id. Ibis, 1863, p. 441, pl. x.—Id. Ibis, 1867, p. 43.—Beavan, Ibis, 1868, p. 177.—Tristram, Ibis, 1871, p. 232.

This lovely Bullfinch is one of the rarest of the genus Pyrrhula, and very few specimens exist in collections. It was discovered by that excellent observer the late Captain Beavan, and was described by Mr. Blyth. Dr. Jerdon, in the 'Birds of India,' calls it the "Red-breasted Bullfinch," an English name which I have not adopted, as there are other Bullfinches which have red breasts, and for which the term would be more appropriate; and I follow Mr. Hume in calling the species by the name of its discoverer, who thus described his meeting with it:—"I came across a flock of this new species on my way up Mount Tongloo in April 1862. There were two males and several females picking about the bushes near the path. The females all escaped; but I secured both the males, though one was too much damaged to preserve; the other I sent to Mr. Blyth, who described it in 'The Ibis' for 1862 (p. 389), and in the following year furnished its portrait ('Ibis,' 1863, pl. x.). This was the only occasion on which I observed the species. The elevation was about 9000 feet." Neither Captain Elwes nor Mr. Blanford met with the bird during their journey through Sikhim; and the only other notice of the species occurs in the volume of 'Stray 'Feathers' for 1874, where Mr. Hume writes:—"A specimen of that rare Bullfinch Pyrrhula erythaca has recently been obtained for me by Mr. Gammie (to whom I have repeatedly owed rare birds and eggs) at Jor Bungala, close to Darjeeling, at an elevation of between five and six thousand feet. As far as I know, this is the first specimen obtained since the late Captain Beavan shot the type on Mount Tongloo. Perhaps others have been met with; and if so I should be glad to learn the localities from and dates on which they were procured.

"Since this was in type Mr. Mandelli has also kindly sent me a specimen of Beavan's Bullfinch, procured in April, also at Sikhim. It would appear that it is only an occasional migrant to Sikhim (just as Syrrhaptes paradoxus in England); for we have for years maintained the keenest watch for this species, and heretofore without success. Where can the home of this species be? Swinhoe has not met with it in China, nor any of the Russians in Siberia, nor our people in Yarkand. However, there is a vast country outside all these explorations, to which P. erythaca must belong."

I have nothing to add to the above interesting note of Mr. Hume's, as in the sentences I have quoted I believe to be comprised all that we know respecting the species; and I can only re-echo Mr. Hume's hope that more information respecting its habits may soon be forthcoming.

Mr. Blyth's description of the type is as follows:—

"Upper parts pure ashy, like the back of *Pyrrhula vulgaris*, also the front of the neck, becoming whitish on the throat; pectoral region bright red, the abdominal pale ashy, and the lower tail-coverts white; a broad white band on the rump, as in *P. vulgaris*, above which is a slight black band; and the upper tail-coverts and tail are rich purple-black, the middle tail-feathers being $\frac{3}{4}$ inch shorter than the outermost; a black ring encircles the bill, and spreads over the loral region, this ring being bordered and set off with white; wings black, except the smallest coverts, which are grey, and a brownish grey band ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch broad) tipping the greater coverts; no red mark on the tertiaries. Bill black and feet pale. Length of wing $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches, and of tail 3 inches."

The Plate represents two adult males and an old female, all of the natural size.