ERYTHROSPIZA OBSOLETA.

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Rosy-winged Finch.

Fringilla obsoleta, Lichtenstein in Eversmann's Reise, Anhang, p. 132 (1823).—Bonap. & Schleg. Monographie des Loxiens, p. 28 (1850).

Erythrospiza obsoleta, Licht., Scully in 'Stray Feathers,' vol. iv. p. 168.

This is one of the most charming of the insessorial birds inhabiting the great plains of Central Asia, and forms a part of a group of Finches characterized by many harmonious tints. To state the range of the present bird over the highlands of Asia is beyond my power; it appears to be as familiar to the Kirghiz and other inhabitants of those desert countries as the Greenfinch and Chaffinch are to the people of England; and so stationary does it appear to be, that it never crosses the Himalayas towards the south and but seldom descends to the lower countries of Russia and Siberia on the north.

When that celebrated work 'La Monographie des Loxiens' of Bonaparte and Schlegel was published, the individual from which the figure was taken was probably the only specimen known; and this being in a bad state of plumage would account for the meagreness of the figure. As considerable information has in recent years been added to the history of the bird as then published, I shall be able to add something which I trust will be of interest to ornithologists of the present time. I am also able to give a drawing from very perfect specimens of both sexes, killed in the height of summer, when the bills are black and the markings of the plumage delicate and beautifully contrasted. I have made a point of speaking of the colouring of the bill, because, as in the Sparrow and many other fringilline birds, this organ is totally different at opposite periods of the year. Dr. Scully, in his valuable paper entitled "A Contribution to the Ornithology of Eastern Turkestan," in 'Stray Feathers,' says, "it is numerous in the plains of Kashgharia, where it is a permanent resident, frequenting hedges, often in company with the Sparrow (Passer montanus). Near Yarkand, in summer, it was found in orchards, and in clumps of poplars. It has a very sweet song, and feeds entirely on seeds. The Turki name for the species is Tumochuk.

"It lays in May, the nest being usually placed in high trees, often in the poplar (*Populus balsamifera*). A nest, obtained on the 13th June, contained five eggs, in which the embryo was found to be formed. The nest is of a broad oval shape, 5 in. 75 lin. in length by 4 in. in breadth, thickness of side walls about 5 lines. It is made up of twigs and fibres. The egg-cavity is oval (3 in. 5 lin. by 2 in. 5 lin.), lined with fine vegetable fibres and some horsehair; depth of cavity 1 in. 25 lin. The eggs are moderate ovals, smaller at one end, and are fairly glossy. The ground-colour is pale bluish grey, with fine purplish brown spots and streaks sparingly scattered at the small end, but accumulating to form nearly a cap or zone at the large end. In size they vary from 76 to 78 lines in length, and from 57 to 58 lines in breadth; the average of four eggs is 77 lines by 57.5 lines."

I cannot close this account without thanking Capt. Biddulph for the loan of skins of this as well as other interesting birds from Kashgar and the bordering countries.

The male, in summer plumage, has a very narrow reddish brown band across the forehead, while in the female the face is uniform; crown of the head and upper surface of the body, chest, and flanks greyish brown; centre of the abdomen and under tail-coverts white; centre of the wings rosy red; primaries and tail-coverts black, largely margined with white feathers. In the winter plumage the bills are yellowish horn-colour, with small black feathers at the base of the mandibles.

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Total length 5 inches; wing 3, tail $2\frac{1}{2}$, bill $\frac{1}{2}$, tarsi $3\frac{1}{2}$.

The Plate represents a male and female, in the plumage of summer, of the size of life.