

MELANOCORYPHA MAXIMA, Gould.

Long-billed Calandre.

Melanocorypha maxima, Gould.—Blyth in Ibis, 1867, p. 46, note.

IN a small collection of birds submitted to my inspection by Mr. Ward, of Vere Street, London, I found a single specimen of this large and strange species of Lark. The collection was said to have been formed in Afghanistan, but the precise locality was not ascertained. At first sight it appeared to me to differ so much from all the Larks previously described as to warrant its being regarded as the type of a new genus; but on carefully comparing it with the Common Calandre and the three or four allied species, I came to the conclusion that, notwithstanding the more prolonged form of its bill, it really belongs to the same genus, every part of its structure, with the exception of the bill, as well as the colouring and markings of its plumage, being precisely similar. Mr. Blyth, to whom I submitted it, coincided in this view, and, writing on the *Melanocoryphæ*, in his "Commentary on Dr. Jerdon's Birds of India," published in the 'Ibis' for 1867, states that the Asiatic species of the genus "are four in number:—1. *M. tatarica* (Pallas). 2. *M. mongolicus* (Pallas); Radde, Reisen, &c., taf. iii. fig. 1; *Alauda sinensis*, Waterhouse, P. Z. S. 1839, p. 60. 3. *M. calandra* (L.); *Alauda torquata*, Gmelin. 4. *M. torquata*, nobis." To these Mr. Blyth adds in a note:—"A large species with a remarkably slender bill Mr. Gould designates *M. maxima*."

Head, neck, all the upper surface and wings dark brown, each feather conspicuously bordered with lighter brown; primaries dark brown, the outer one margined externally to near the tip with white, the remainder with brownish white; the outer tail-feather on each side white, except on the basal portion of the inner web, where it is light brown; the remaining tail-feathers dark brown (except the two central which are light brown), margined externally and tipped with white, the extent of which decreases as the feathers approach the centre; stripe over the eye dull white, continued in a browner tint behind the ear-coverts to the sides of the neck, where it unites with the dull fawn-colour of the flanks; line from the nostrils to the eye and the ear-coverts brown, the feathers of the latter with darker centres; from the angle of the mouth within the brown a small moustache-like streak of greyish white; on each side of the neck, in front of the shoulder, a few dark-brown feathers, bordered with sandy buff, show somewhat conspicuously, but not so much so as in *Melanocorypha calandra*; throat and under surface very pale brown or creamy white; bill bluish flesh-colour, passing into pale buff on the basal portion of the lower mandible; legs and feet light brown, very stout and strong; nails black, that of the hinder toe unusually stout and straight.

The figures are of the natural size.