

MOTACILLA MADERASPATENSIS, Gmel.

Great Pied Wagtail.

- Motacilla Maderaspatensis*, Gmel. Edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 961.—Lath. Ind. Orn., tom. ii. p. 502.—Jerd. in Madras Journ. of Lit. and Sci., vol. xi. p. 10.—Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 203, *Motacilla*, sp. 5.
- *Maderas*, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. x. p. 548.
- *variegata*, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiii. p. 234.—Sykes, in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., part ii. p. 91.
- *picata*, Frankl. in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., part i. p. 119.
- *Maderaspatana*, Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 137.—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 251, *Motacilla*, sp. 6.—Blyth, Mem. on Fam. Motacillidæ, p. 2.
- Pied Wagtail*, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. vi. p. 320. pl. civ.
- Mhamoola*, of the Hindoos.

THE elegant contour and graceful actions of the Pied Wagtail, so commonly distributed over every part of the British Islands, cannot but be familiar to every one who has paid the slightest attention to our native birds; all, however, are not aware that this semi-domesticated favourite is only one of the many species of the genus *Motacilla* which are dispersed over the whole of the northern portion of the Old World, or that there exist in India several species very similar in general appearance, and whose habits and economy precisely resemble those of our own pretty favourite. The subject of the present memoir and of the accompanying Plate, which is the largest species of the entire genus, is a native of India, to which country it appears to be strictly confined. With the exception of Lower Bengal, where Mr. Blyth states it is not found, it is distributed over the whole of the Indian peninsula, from the base of the Himalaya Mountains to Travancore; and Mr. Layard also includes it in his "List of the Birds of Ceylon." Colonel Sykes comprises it in the "List of the Birds of the Dukhun." Major Franklin obtained specimens on the banks of the Ganges and in the mountain chain of Upper Hindostan; and Mr. Blyth has seen examples from Darjeling and from the district of Rajmahl.

With respect to its habits, Captain Boys states that it "is very nimble on its legs, and runs with great facility, constantly jerking its tail, and, like the other members of the genus, making occasional jumps after flies and other insects. It is not so common as the other Indian species, and differs much in weight, according to the season, but generally averages between nine and ten drachms." Mr. Jerdon mentions that it is found throughout the peninsula, but only in the neighbourhood of rivers. I find a figure and description of this species among the Drawings and MS. notes of the late Hon. F. J. Shore, who states that he shot both sexes together at Hutwas near Aurungabad, on the 23rd of January 1836, while they were engaged in picking up insects by the side of a stream; that he also found the bird in the Sagur and Dumoh districts; that it is only seen during the cold weather, and removes, like the other Wagtails, on the approach of the hot season.

The plumage of the sexes varies only in the colour of the upper surface of the female being brown instead of black; and we learn from Mr. Blyth's memoir on the *Motacillidæ* that the winter dress merely differs from that of summer in the feathers immediately below the eye, and those of the chin and throat being white instead of black. The conspicuous white superciliary stripe at once distinguishes this bird from all the other members of the genus.

Head, neck, cheeks, chin, throat, back wings and eight middle tail-feathers black; a conspicuous stripe, commencing at the nostrils and passing over each eye, the margins of the secondaries, greater wing-coverts and lateral tail-coverts, breast, abdomen and under tail-coverts white; two outer tail-feathers on each side white, margined internally, for nearly their whole length, with black; irides dark brown; bill and legs black.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size.