

SALPORNIS SPILONOTA.

Spotted Creeper.

Certhia spilonota, Frankl. in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., pt. i. p. 121.

Salpornis spilonotus, Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 338.

——— *spilonota*, Gray, Gen. of Birds, vol. i. pl. xlv, upp. fig.—Jerd. Birds of Ind., vol. i. p. 382.—Blanf. in Ibis, 1867, p. 461.

THE singular bird figured on the accompanying Plate has many characters in common with the *Climacteres* of Australia, and is not very far removed from the single member of the genus *Tichodroma*. Hitherto it has been ranked among the rarities of Indian ornithology, and its true locality was almost unknown. Franklin's solitary specimen was all the material at the disposal of the late D. W. Mitchell for his figure of the species in Mr. G. R. Gray's 'Genera of Birds;' but I have been more fortunate, having had several fine examples lent to me by Mr. W. T. Blanford (from the Rev. S. Fairbank) and by my friends Captains Stackhous, Pinwill, and Julian. One belonging to the last-named gentleman was collected in Oude; and Captain Pinwill writes me the following note:—"I shot a specimen in a grove of mangoe trees. It had the manners of an ordinary creeper; it was in a large migrating party of *Sitta castaneiventris* and *Yungipicus Hardwickii*, no doubt at the time moving from the more central jungle into the Oude terai, or low hills." Fortunately other interesting notes relating to the habits and economy of this species have appeared in 'The Ibis' and elsewhere; and these I take the liberty of transcribing.

Mr. Jerdon states that "this bird inhabits the hilly parts of Behar and probably similar regions in Central India, Bundelkund, &c. It does not appear to have been again discovered since Franklin procured it, now more than thirty years ago, except by Hodgson, who received it from Behar; but the exact locality in which it was obtained is still unknown. It was probably the hilly and jungly tract which extends from Mount Parisnath, where it is very likely to be found, through Chota Nagporee, towards the source of the Nerbudda."

In a letter to the Editor of 'The Ibis,' dated "Geological Survey Office, Calcutta, July 17, 1867," Mr. W. T. Blanford says:—

"I think all who have paid attention to the ornithology of India will be interested in hearing of the rediscovery of Franklin's long-lost *Certhia spilonota* (*Salpornis spilonota*, Gray). I have collected birds during the past year around Nagpoor, and in the country to the south, about Chanda and Siroucha; and amongst other rarities I had the good fortune to obtain eight or nine specimens of *Salpornis*, most of them in good condition. They agree perfectly with the somewhat meagre original description given by Major Franklin in the 'Proceedings' of the Committee of Science and Correspondence of the Zoological Society for 1831, p. 121, and with Mr. Blyth's fuller account in 'The Ibis' for 1865, p. 48. My first specimen was killed about twenty miles south of Chanda; but the birds there appeared to be very rare. It was much less so, though still very far indeed from common, in the great forests upon the Pranhita and Godavery rivers, about Siroucha. This is five hundred miles south of Franklin's supposed original locality, and still further from Behar, whence Mr. Hodgson is said to have obtained specimens. It is very probable that the neighbourhood of the Godavery is the principal locality of this bird, and that the specimens obtained to the northward were stragglers. It is curious that Mr. Jerdon did not meet with it in Bustar, which is not very far from Siroucha, and is a portion of the same great forest-tract, which, indeed, stretches from the Godavery to Midnapoor, and is the largest extent of 'jungle' in India.

"*Salpornis* is not very wary. It has much the appearance of a *Sitta*, clinging to the largest trees, running round and round their trunks in all directions, and searching for insects. I found Coleoptera in their stomachs. In April the sexes were paired, and evidently breeding; but I had not the good fortune to obtain any of their eggs."

Stripe over the eye greyish white; upper surface dull black, streaked on the head and spotted all over the body with greyish white; wings dark grey, crossed by broad bars of dull black and greyish white; two centre tail-feathers grey, with spots of black along their edges; the remainder greyish brown, crossed with well-defined bars of white; chin and throat whitish; chest, flanks, abdomen, and under tail-coverts brownish grey, barred with dull black and grey; bill horny brown, lightest on the base of the under mandible, where it appears to have been flesh-coloured; feet apparently light brown.

The figures represent the bird in two positions, of the size of life.