

ACCENTOR ERYTHROPYGIUS, *Swinh.*

Red-backed Accentor.

Accentor erythropygius, Swinh. Proc. of Zool. Soc., 1870, pp. 124, 447, pl. ix.

——— *alpinus*, Schrenck, Vög. des Amur-L. p. 355 ?

It will be seen that in this work neither the subgeneric term *Spermolegus*, proposed for the *Accentor montanellus*, nor *Tharrhaleus*, for our common Hedge-Sparrow, has been employed, but that all the birds of this group have been retained in the genus *Accentor*, of which the *A. alpinus* is the type ; it is more immediately to this latter section that the very fine bird here represented belongs.

Of the history of the Red-backed *Accentor* I know nothing more than has been placed on record by Mr. Swinhoe in the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London,' and in some MS. notes with which he has favoured me since the former account was published :—

"On a journey from Mongolia to Peking, in the Prefecture of Seu-en-hwafoo, a tract of country enclosed by two portions of the Great Wall, we halted on the 26th of September, 1868, at a place called Kemeih, and climbed up the sides of a high mountain, on the top of which stood a monastery. We were in pursuit of the Rock-Partridge (*Caccabis chukar*), when a party of red-tailed birds whisked past us and, perching near, kept flying from rock to rock, uttering loud cries. We secured one, and then continued our chase after the Partridges. A few days later I saw another small flock of the same species among the rocks of the fine mountain-pass that leads through the Nankow Gate to the Peking plain. The bird proved to be an *Accentor* of the *A. alpinus* form, most nearly allied to the *Accentor nipalensis* of Hodgson ; but from this the handsome *A. erythropygius* may be at once distinguished by the chestnut colouring of its rump, upper tail-coverts, and tail, by its greyer head and neck, and by the markings of the flanks and belly. *Accentor altaicus* and *A. alpinus* are also members of the same group of mottled-throated *Accentors*."

"Père David," says Mr. Swinhoe, in the MS. notes above acknowledged, "does not include this species in his 'Catalogue of the Birds of Peking ;' and Gustav Radde did not meet with it in his travels in the southern parts of Eastern Siberia ; but Middendorff found a bird which, from his description, is evidently this species (though identified by him with *A. alpinus*), in Amoorland, and saw the young in July, flying about in parties on the steepest cliffs of the south shore of the sea of Okhotsk. Von Schrenck also met with it in Amoorland, but failed to distinguish it from *A. alpinus*. It must also breed in the neighbourhood of Lake Baikal ; for I have seen young specimens which M. Jules Verreaux had received thence.

"The general plumage before the first moult is of a mottled yellowish grey ; but the bright cinnamon colouring of the rump and the margins of the tail-feathers mark at once the species, even at this early age."

The following is Mr. Swinhoe's description of this fine bird :—

"Head, neck, and breast smoke-grey ; lores, and beneath the eye mottled with white ; throat, for nearly an inch downwards white, crossed with narrow bars of black ; lesser and greater wing-coverts and winglet black, with a large spot of white at the tip of each feather ; secondary quills black, margined for the greater part of their length with yellowish brown, and broadly tipped with light chestnut, terminating with white ; on the tertiaries the chestnut brightens and increases in extent, and the terminal white spots are conspicuous ; primaries blackish brown, edged with light yellowish brown, browner near their bases, and slightly tipped with white ; back light yellowish brown with broad brown centres to the feathers ; scapularies brownish chestnut, with a median streak of blackish brown and a small white tip to each feather ; the yellowish brown of the back soon brightens into brownish chestnut, which is rich and conspicuous on the upper tail-coverts, the longest of which have black centres ; tail brownish black, the external rectrix with the greater part of its outer web brownish chestnut, and a broad white tip to the inner web ; the rest of the rectrices, except the two centrals, have their outer webs tipped with chestnut, their inner webs with white, and they are narrowly edged with light yellowish brown ; the two centrals are more broadly edged, and have broad chestnut marks on both their outer and inner webs towards the tips ; axillaries dusky, the carpal edge barred with black and white like the throat ; under surface light yellowish brown ; many of the flank-feathers deep chestnut-brown, with white margins ; and the abdominal feathers have blackish V-shaped bars and white margins ; under tail-coverts blackish chestnut, with broad white margins and tips ; bill blackish brown, ochreous yellow on the sides of the basal half of the lower mandible ; irides chestnut ; legs and toes ochreous ; claws light brown."

The figures are of the natural size.