

PRATINCOLA INDICA, *Blyth.*

Indian Furze-Chat.

Savicola saturator, Hodgs., in Gray's Zool. Miscell., 1844, p. 83.

——— *rubicola* of India, Auct.

Pratincola indica, Blyth, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., vol. xvi. p. 129.—Id. Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc., Calcutta, p. 170.—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 305.

——— *saturator*, Horsf. and Moore, Cat. of Birds in Mus. East Ind. Comp., vol. i. p. 285.

Savicola indica, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. iii. app. p. 8 (app. to p. 179).

THE present species is an interesting illustration of the law of representation, inasmuch as it takes the place in the fauna of India which is occupied by the common Furze-Chat (*Pratincola rubicola*) in that of Europe; but it will be observed that the Indian bird, besides being of a somewhat smaller size than its Western ally, differs from it also in the uniform black colouring of the head, back, and tail, and in the scapulary patch being of less extent and of a purer white. The female presents the same variation from the colouring of her mate that is seen in our own bird the *P. rubicola*. It is distributed over the whole of the peninsula, wherever sterile waste lands and scrubby districts congenial to its habits are found. Its clacking note, like that of the European bird, is uttered while it is sitting on the topmost sprig of a low bush, which it leaves on the approach of an intruder, flits off to a neighbouring shrub, and jerks up its little tail on alighting.

The brief notes given below, from the pens of Colonel Sykes, Mr. Jerdon, and the late Captain Boys, are, I regret to say, all that has been recorded respecting this pretty species.

Mr. Jerdon states that "it is found in all parts of India during the cold weather, making its first appearance in the beginning of October. It frequents bushes on the plains, hedges, and grain-fields, and feeds on the ground, on ants and various other insects."

Colonel Sykes says that, in the Dukhun, "these birds were met with only in low scattered bushes. Caterpillars, flies, and ants found in the stomach."

Captain Boys states that it "flies in sudden jerks, and sometimes hovers up and down in a fluttering manner previous to alighting. It is generally seen sitting on the topmost sprig of a low bush in a corn-field. One, shot on the 7th of March 1842, was sitting on an ear of ripe corn; its crop was filled with insects. Its note is melodious, but of no great variety."

The male has the head, throat, back, wing-coverts, interior half of the scapularies, thighs, and tail deep black; sides of the neck and chest, exterior half of the scapularies, upper and under tail-coverts pure white; primaries brown, with paler edges; secondaries blackish brown; chest rich deep rusty red, becoming gradually paler and passing into buffy white on the abdomen and vent; irides dark brown; bill, legs, and feet black.

The feathers of the upper surface of the female are brownish black, largely fringed with tawny; those of the wings are similarly coloured, but are more narrowly margined; the white scapulary patch is not so pure; the chin is light greyish brown, bounded below by a patch of brownish black feathers, fringed with greyish brown; all the under surface pale rufous; tail-feathers blackish brown, margined with tawny; eyes, bill, and feet as in the male.

The Plate represents the two sexes, of the natural size, on a branch of Juniper.