

RHODOPHILA MELANOLEUCA, *Jerd.*

Black and White Bush-Chat.

Rhodophila melanoleuca, Jerd. Birds of India, vol. ii. part i. p. 128, and vol. ii. part ii. p. 872.

It affords me great pleasure to give the first figures of an adult male and female of this recently described bird, to which Mr. Jerdon has given the name of *Rhodophila melanoleuca*. No ornithologist will, I feel assured, question the propriety of instituting a genus for this form; for, at least in my opinion, it is sufficiently distinct from every other to warrant such a step; I aver this because Mr. Jerdon states that "It is possible that some of the Oceanic *Saxicolæ* of Prince Bonaparte, which he named *Oreicola*, may belong to the same type. One of these is *Sax. melanoleuca*, Müll., black above and white beneath, but has a white wing-spot and ear-spot. Another is *S. luctuosa*, Müll., black above and white beneath, but the wings varied with white; and *S. pyrrhonota*, Müll., has the back rufous. All three are from Timor." I believe, however, that the Indian bird differs in form from these, and that the genus *Rhodophila* will not be consigned to the list of rejected genera. In his characters Mr. Jerdon says, "Much as in *Pratincola*, but the bill longer, deeper, barely depressed at the base; nostrils longitudinal, slightly impended by some nareal tufts; rictus strongly bristled; wing moderate, or rather short, rounded; first quill short, second, third, and fourth graduated, fourth longest, fifth and sixth nearly equal to it; tail moderate, distinctly rounded; tarsus moderate; feet moderately long, toes slender, hind toe and claw lengthened.

"This form approaches that of *Prat. ferrea*, but the bill is still less depressed, and the tail more distinctly rounded. The coloration, too, is peculiar, as are its thicket-loving habits.

"I first procured this bird," continues Mr. Jerdon, "when beating for game in the dense swampy rose-thickets near the banks of the Ganges in Purneah, and subsequently observed it along the reedy edges of some of the rivers in Eastern Bengal and Cachar. Mr. W. Blandford obtained it in Burmah, in long elephant grass, and I doubt not it will be found in similar situations throughout Lower Bengal and the countries to the eastward. It is with difficulty dislodged from the thick coverts it frequents, and quickly returns to its shelter. Judging from the structure of its feet, it is probably a ground feeder like the rest of its family."

The male has the head, all the upper surface, wings, and tail deep glossy bluish black; the entire under surface pure white; irides dark brown; bill and feet black.

The female has the head, all the upper surface, wings, and tail reddish brown; the under surface dull white, washed with buff on the flanks; irides dark brown; bill and feet black.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size. The plant is the *Berberis concinna*, Hook. fil., in fruit.