

PARADOXORNIS HEUDEI, A. David.

Père Heude's Paradoxornis.

Paradoxornis Heudei, David, Comptes Rendus, lxxiv. p. 1449.—Id. Rev. Zool. 1872, p. 359; J. Verr. N. Arch. Mus. ix. Bull. pl. 4. fig. 2.

FROM a very early period of my ornithological career I have always been led to expect to see a true *Calamophilus* from Eastern Asia; but up to the present time this has never turned up. On the other hand, a new and highly interesting sedge-loving bird has lately been described by Père David, and skins forwarded to this country for Mr. Swinhoe's collection. I herewith offer my best thanks to the last-named gentleman for the loan of these specimens, and am sure that the birds now figured will be full of interest to the ornithological public. In colour, general markings, and softness of plumage the present bird is almost similar to our own Reedling; and it is principally in its larger size and *Paradoxornis*-like bill that the greatest differences are observable.

The following is an extract from the original account of the species by Père David:—"Père Heude, a missionary at Shanghai, actively busies himself with studying and collecting the natural productions of the province in which he resides. Among the birds shown to me by him during a recent visit to that town, are several not yet included in the ornithological catalogues of Chinese birds. I now refer specially to a very interesting form belonging to that curious group of insectivorous birds which is represented in Eastern Asia by the genera *Conostoma*, *Cholornis*, *Paradoxornis*, and *Suthora*. The bird I allude to appears to me to be intermediate between these last two genera, and might perhaps constitute the type of a new one. I range it provisionally with the genus *Paradoxornis*, of which it exhibits the most important characters. Père Heude having permitted me to take a description of the bird, which is unique in his collection, I hasten to transmit it, feeling that it is at the same time my duty to dedicate this new species to him by the name of *Paradoxornis Heudei*."

My kind friend Consul Swinhoe has also communicated the following extract from a letter received from Père Heude, and dated "Sikaiwei, Sept. 29th, 1873." He writes:—"The Kiang-Sou *Paradoxornis* frequents the large reeds. When they are cut down it takes refuge in those which are kept in a reserve-store in the enclosures of gardens &c.; I have not seen it on bushes. It extends, to my knowledge, the length of the Yang-tsze river from Kin-Kiang to Nanking and Kew-Kiang, on the edge of the great lake Hang-tse. It flies in company, like its near ally *Suthora*, making a great noise when climbing up the dry reed-stalks, which it attacks vigorously from the bottom, examining each stalk to its top, and then passing on to another. Its song is a warbling 'rè-ri-ri,' sonorous and melancholy. When one is fully accustomed to the note it can be distinguished from afar, the birds calling to one another without ceasing. They are very easily approached, and are not wild. Length of male 0.19 mill., of female 0.16 mill. Iris rosy red. These dimensions are extreme; and there are slight differences between these limits."

The accompanying descriptions are from Mr. Swinhoe's specimens.

Adult male.—Head and hind neck grey, gradually assuming a lilac shade on the interscapular region as it passes off into the chestnut back, the upper part of which is slightly streaked with dark brown; on each side of the crown a narrow line of black extending down the sides of the neck; lores and sides of face light greyish white; throat white; fore neck whitish, tinged with lilac; upper breast chestnut-maroon, the rest of the under surface fulvous fawn-colour, lighter down the middle of the abdomen and under tail-coverts; under wing-coverts whitish, as also the edge of the wing; upper wing-coverts deep chestnut-maroon; quills sepia-brown, externally washed with rufous, extending round the tips and some way up the margin of the inner web, the secondaries margined with whitish buff, the innermost broadly black in the centre, the half of the inner web white for its whole length, forming a distinct longitudinal streak down the sides of the back; rump straw-coloured, the upper tail-coverts paler; tail black, with conspicuous white tips to the feathers, more or less shaded with fawn-colour, the two centre feathers fulvous fawn-colour, deeper on the margins.

Adult female.—More dull-coloured than the male, and with a much smaller bill; all the colours less intensified, the maroon of the back absent, and the head nearly uniform with the back, having only a very slight tinge of grey.

Both sexes are represented in the Plate, and are life-size.