## CONOSTOMA ÆMODIUM, Hodgs.

## Himalayan Conostoma.

Conostoma amodius, Hodgs. Journ. Asiat. Soc. Bengal, vol. x. p. 856.—Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 101.—Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 312.

Conostoma amodium, Cat. of Sp. and Draw. of Mamm. and Birds presented to Brit. Mus. by B. H. Hodgson, Esq., p. 102—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 368.

For our first knowledge of this curious bird we are indebted to the researches of Mr. Hodgson, who has transmitted specimens from Nepaul to the Collections at the British Museum and the East India House. It must be regarded as one of the rarest of the Indian birds, and also as one of the most interesting of the numerous species it has been Mr. Hodgson's good fortune to make known to us. Much diversity of opinion exists among Ornithologists as to the place this bird should occupy in the natural system: Mr. G. R. Gray places it among the Callwatinæ, a subfamily of the Corvidæ or Crows, Mr. Blyth among the Parinæ or Tits, while Mr. Hodgson inclines to the opinion that it has an affinity to the Glaucopinæ: for my own part, I should have little hesitation in placing it in the subfamily of which Crateropus forms a part, although it does differ considerably from that form, both in the structure of the bill and the shape of the nostrils. With such a diversity of opinion existing on the subject, it is only an act of justice to the original describer to give his view in his own words:—

"Amongst the very numerous forms of birds," says Mr. Hodgson, "known to me as inhabitants of Nepaul, there is one which I believe to be still new to science, and to belong to a group, of the occurrence of which, either in these mountains or in the plains at their base, I know no other instance save that of the ubiquitous tree Magpies. The group alluded to is the *Glaucopinæ* or Finch-billed Crows of Swainson; and the single species I am acquainted with tenants exclusively the immediate neighbourhood of the perpetual snows. In the lower and central regions it appears to be represented by the *Timaliæ* and *Crateropi*, to both of which, and especially to the former, it bears in much of its structure the same close resemblance that it does in its manners.

"In manners the present species is a shy forester, adhering to the wilds and tenanting the skirts of forests where brushwood as well as trees abound. Five or six birds are usually found together chattering, hopping and scraping the ground, and resorting to the trees and shrubs chiefly for shelter. Their food is principally insects of the soft and imperfect kind in summer, but in winter they doubtless take some vegetable food.

"Habitat, the northern region of Nepaul, close to the perpetual snows."

The sexes are alike in colour, and may be thus described:—

The entire plumage dull olive-brown, paler beneath, becoming almost white on the forehead and nearly black on the lores; irides brown; bill dull orange; legs slaty-grey.

(1) 11 (

The figures are of the natural size.