

## LEPTOPÆCILE SOPHIÆ, *Severtz.*

### Yarkand Tit.

*Leptopæcile sophiæ*, Severtz., Turkest. Jevotn. pp. 66-135, pl. viii. figs. 8, 9 (1873).—Dresser, Ibis, 1876, p. 171.

*Stoliczkana stoliczkæ*, Hume, S. F. ii. p. 513 (1874).

THIS very curious little bird appears to be the representative of a genus peculiar to Central Asia, as it is at present known to occur only in Turkestan and Yarkand. In the former country it was discovered by Dr. Severtzoff, whose original essay having been for the most part translated into English by Mr. Dresser, to the great advantage of students, I do not think I can do better than reproduce the remarks of the celebrated Russian traveller, especially as full details of the species are given therein. For a more elaborate description I must refer my readers to Mr. Hume's paper (*l.c.*). In naming it after Dr. Stoliczka, who lost his life during the last expedition to Yarkand, Mr. Hume endeavoured to perpetuate the name of this indefatigable worker in the field of science; but, as will be seen, he had been anticipated by Severtzoff. He writes:—"The form, the coloration, and the loose fluffy plumage, together with the comparatively elongated and much-rounded or graduated tail, recall *Orites*; but the bill is slenderer than in any known Tit; it is, however, entire at the tip, and very hard and very sharp-pointed. I think that we must accept this as a sort of link between the Warblers and the Long-tailed Tits."

Dr. Severtzoff's notes are as follows:—"In form this bird approaches the Tits, but in habits and in the form of the bill, as well as in the sexes being different, it differs from these; and I have therefore deemed it best to separate it generically. The characteristics are as follows: bill slender, broader than high, compressed towards the end; nostrils narrow; bill half covered with a membrane; at the base of the upper mandible are a few feathers, which are downy at the base and hairy towards the point; legs stout; tarsus long, coarsely scutellated; hind toe large, with a long arched claw, other toes also long, but the claws are short; wings short and broad; tail long and much graduated, composed of twelve feathers; tarsus with three long and then four short broad scales; fourth and fifth rectrices longest, the two central ones 1" shorter, and the outer ones 3" to 3½" shorter; first primary short, twice as long as the coverts; second quill shorter than the tenth, 3=9, 4=10, 5=6, the last two the longest. *Male*. Crown bright brownish chestnut, glossed with violet; a broad yellowish white stripe passes over the eyes; back greyish brown, washed with bluish; rump rich violet-blue; cheeks, sides of the neck and of the body, and throat bright blue, with a violet or greenish gloss; centre of the abdomen brownish yellow; under tail-coverts short and downy, brownish, tipped with violet; wings blackish brown, with light brown margins to the feathers; rectrices nearly black, with bluish green edges, outer web of outer rectrix white; iris dark brown; beak and legs black. *Female*. Greyish, the lower flanks and rump violet-blue; nape light brown, the superciliary stripe narrower than in the male; cheeks and shoulders greyish brown; throat, breast, and belly light brownish yellow; sides light brown, the feathers near the vent tipped with blue; crissum brownish; wings blackish brown, with greyish brown margins to the feathers; tail black, tipped with brown, the outer feathers externally margined with white. Male—total length 4" 9", wing 2" 1½", outer tail-feathers 1" 8½", culmen 3½". Female—total length 4" 8", extent 6" 1", wing 2", tail 2" 1", outer tail-feathers 1" 8½". This bird was met with in the pine-woods near Issik-kul, where it was seen amongst the branches of the trees."

I have only to add my acknowledgments to Captain Biddulph for lending me the male specimen from which the figures in the Plate are drawn, these being of the size of life.