SITTA CASTANEOVENTRIS, Frankl.

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch.

Ferruginous-bellied Nuthatch, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 74.

Sitta castaneoventris, Frankl. Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., Part I. p. 121.—Jard. and Selby, Ill. Orn., vol. iii. pl. 145.—Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 148, Sitta, sp. 8.—Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 190.

Sitta castanea, Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 316.

——ferrugineoventris, Gould, proposed at Meeting of Zool. Soc., Nov. 13, 1849, and reported in Athenæum, 1849, p. 1183.

The bird here represented agrees with Major Franklin's description of Sitta castaneoventris in every respect, except in being of a somewhat smaller size; which difference induced me in the first instance to believe it to be a distinct species; but upon further consideration of the subject, after having carefully compared it with examples in the Museum of the East India Company which agree more nearly in size with Major Franklin's description, I am inclined to consider them to be merely local varieties of each other: should, however, future research prove them to be distinct, the term of ferrugineoventris, proposed by me at a late Meeting of the Zoological Society, may be applied to the smaller bird; at present it must be regarded merely as a synonym of castaneoventris. The specimens at the East India House were obtained in Bhotan; the smaller bird here represented was procured by Captain Boys, at Gorruckpoor: they all have the compressed and attenuated bill, pointed out by Mr. Blyth as a character by which they may be distinguished from the S. cinnamoventris, in which the bill is much stronger and of a broader form.

Mr. Blyth states that the S. castaneoventris inhabits the Himalayas and hilly regions of India generally; that Mr. Jerdon has shot it at Goomsoor, in high forest jungle, and has seen specimens shot at the top of the Gazalhatti Pass in Mysore; that Captain Tickell obtained it at Chyebassa, and that he has himself seen it in collections from Rajmahl in Bengal, and from Darjeeling. It will certainly be necessary to institute a careful comparison of specimens from localities so widely apart, before we can affirm that they are all referable to one and the same species.

All the upper surface blue-grey, conspicuously lighter on the head and back of the neck; lores and a line from the eye down the sides of the neck black; primaries and secondaries black, margined with grey; two centre tail-feathers grey; lateral tail-feathers black, margined with grey; the two outer ones on each side with a spot of white on their inner web near the tip; chin and cheeks white; under surface of the shoulder black; at the base of the under side of the primaries a mark of white; all the under surface very deep chestnut; under tail-coverts grey, margined with rufous; irides brown; legs and base of the bill blue-grey.

The female differs from the male in having the chin and cheeks grey, instead of white, and the under surface pale rusty brown, instead of dark chestnut.

The above descriptions are taken from specimens collected by Captain Boys, the admeasurements of which are as follows:—

Total length, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches; bill, $\frac{13}{16}$; wing, $2\frac{7}{8}$; tail, $1\frac{1}{2}$; tarsi, $\frac{1}{2}$.

The figures represent two males and a female of the size of life.