SITTA NAGAENSIS, Godwin-Austen.

Nágá Nuthatch.

Sitta nagaensis, Godwin-Austen, P. Z. S., 1874, p. 44.

In my description of the Cinereous Bullfinch I have gone a little out of my way to say a few words on the range of the genus Pyrrhula; and I might have added the genus Sitta to the general remarks there incorporated, since it is a form equally familiar to most persons, even to those who have no great pretensions to ornithological science. Like the genus above alluded to, the Nuthatches are essentially a northern form, and they may be said to inhabit countries surrounding the temperate and northern portions of the whole world. In India and in China they are entirely confined to the north, while in Africa the genus is absent altogether; in the New World this form does not range south of Mexico.

The members of the genus Sitta are all birds of moderate size, very few of them exceeding in this respect our common Great Titmouse (Parus major). The number of species now known to science approaches twenty, and they are all characterized by a great similarity in habits and economy. Their chief food consists of insects gathered from the bark of trees, the boles of which they are able to traverse in all directions—that is to say, they run down the trunk as easily as they do up it; this is not the case with the Woodpeckers, which are also bark feeders.

Although during the course of the last few years several new species of *Sitta* have been characterized, the present is one of the most interesting recently brought to light, nor is it the least pretty of the new birds discovered by Major Godwin-Austen during his researches in the Nágá Hills.

The following is the original description of the bird from the pen of the last-named gentleman:—

"Above slaty blue, palest on the neck and head; two centre tail-feathers, shoulder of wing, and secondaries same colour, rather brighter; quills brown-black; outer tail-feathers black, with a white patch on the inner web of the four outer, increasing outwards and in the outermost extending diagonally to the other web, all tipped with grey and terminating in black; a black streak from lores through eye to ear-coverts and down side of neck. Beneath dull sordid white, purer on chin and throat, with a few white feathers bounding the ear-coverts; flanks, thighs, and under tail-coverts rusty chestnut, all the latter with a terminal white spot. Bill black above, grey below; legs greenish black; irides dark brown. Length 4.9 inches, wing 3, tail 1.75, tarsus 0.68, bill at front 0.58, extent of foot 1.2.

"Inhabits the Nágá Hill-ranges, and was not uncommon."

I have to thank Major Godwin-Austen for the loan of the typical specimen, from which the figures in the Plate have been drawn. They are life-size.