MUSCIPETA PARADISI.

Paradise Flycatcher.

Muscicapa paradisi, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 324.—Ib. Gmel. Edit., tom. i. p. 929.—Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 480.

Avis Paradisiaca Orientalis, Seba, i. t. 52. fig. 3.

Pied Bird of Paradise, Edw. Glean., pls. 113, 325.

Paradise Flycatcher, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. iii. p. 345.—Id. Supp., p. 172.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. x. p. 416.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. vi. p. 192.

Muscicapa mutata, Lath., from India.

Muscipeta leucogastra, Swains. Nat. Lib. Flycatchers, p. 205. pl. 24, young.

Muscipeta paradisi, Cuv.—Frankl. in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., Part i. p. 116.—Sykes in Ib., Part ii. p. 84.—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 325, Muscipeta, sp. 1.

Muscipeta Indica, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiii. p. 111.—Sykes in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., Part ii. p. 84.

Avis Paradisiaca cristata, Seba, i. t. 30. fig. 5.

Upupa paradisea, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 184.

Muscicapa castanea, Temm.

Muscipeta paradisea, Jerd. Ill. Ind. Orn., pl. vii.

Tchitrea paradisi, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 259, Tchitrea, sp. 1.—Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 203.

Shah Bulbul, and Hosseini Bulbul, Hindoos. The White Bird.

Kaddehoora, Cingalese.

Sultana Bulbul, Hindoos. The Chestnut Bird. Ginihoora, Cingalese.

Tonka Peegeelee-pitta, i. e. Long-tailed Bulbul, Telugu.

Walkordalatee, Tamul.

In Malyalum it is called by a name signifying the King of Heaven.

Without particularizing the numerous localities whence specimens of this very elegant and ornamental species of Flycatcher have been brought to Europe, it may be stated to be generally distributed over India, from the warmer regions of the Himalaya to the farthermost part of the Peninsula, wherever wooded districts suitable to its habits and mode of life occur. It is said to give preference to dense jungles of bamboo, but to be very frequently found in gardens, shrubberies, and other cultivated situations. Mr. Jerdon of Madras, who has given by far the best account of the species, states that "in its habits it is restless and wandering, flitting continually from branch to branch and from tree to tree. It feeds on various insects, which it takes in the air, and occasionally from the branches of the trees. I have generally seen it singly or in pairs. It is said to breed among the bamboos. It has a loud, harsh, grating cry of alarm, but I never heard it utter any other note. When it seizes an insect it makes a loud snap with its mandibles." And Captain Boys states that it flies in long undulating sweeps; and that the length of the tail has procured it the name of the Raquet Bird.

A complete list of the synonyms that have been applied to this species would occupy at least an entire page, as both the generic and specific appellations have been multiplied almost without end. Nor is there less confusion with regard to the sexual differences of plumage to which the species is subject, and which are so great, as to have led to the belief that the bird constituted two, if not three species; the white birds with long flowing tail-feathers being regarded as distinct from those having the upper surface and tailfeathers brown, and the young birds which are always destitute of the lengthened tail-feathers as different from both. After carefully examining the numerous examples I possess in every stage of plumage, studying the changes the allied species apparently undergo, and reading with attention the opinions of every writer on the subject, I believe that the conclusion I have come to is the right one; namely, that fully adult males have the body and tail wholly white, with the exception of the primaries, which are invariably black, margined with white; that the adult female has the middle tail-feathers of the same length as in the male, and the whole of the upper surface, wings and tail rufous, the primaries being merely a shade darker than the other part of the plumage, and the breast-feathers clouded with grey. I have specimens apparently adult with very long tail-feathers, ascertained to be males by actual dissection, which have the upper surface, wings and tail brown like the female, but of a lighter tint and with black primaries. I have also seen other males directly intermediate, some of them having white feathers interspersed among brown ones, and the like occurring with regard to the tail-feathers, some being white, while others were brown in the same specimen. I believe that when the long feathers have been once acquired by either sex they are not again thrown off, and that they are not a seasonal or breeding characteristic, as some authors have supposed: the short-tailed birds which are always chestnut are very young birds. To be more concise, I may state, that the white birds are invariably males, that the chestnut birds with black primaries are also males, that the chestnut birds with brown primaries are females, and that the short-tailed birds are the young of the year of both sexes.

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