## PERICROCOTUS SPECIOSUS.

## Great Pericrocotus.

Turdus speciosus, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 363.

Pericrocotus speciosus, Strickl., Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 282, Pericrocotus, sp. 3.

Muscipeta princeps, Vig. in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., part i. p. 22.—Gould, Cent. of Birds, pl. vii.

Phænicornis princeps, Gould, Cent. of Birds, text to pl. vii.—M'Clell. in Proc. of Zool. Soc., part vii. p. 156.—Jerd. Madr. Journ. Lit. and Sci., vol. x. p. 243.

Black and Scarlet Thrush, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., p. 146.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. v. p. 96.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. x. p. 273.

Shah Soki-kapir, Hindoos, Dr. F. B. Hamilton.

Sahelee, in the Himalayas, Dr. Royle.

The physical characters of the great country of India are favourable to the existence of the most varied forms of animal life; between its lofty alpine regions and the hot plains below, every kind of country supervenes; consequently in no part of the world can ornithology be more effectively studied, or is the Class Aves more completely represented. The snow-capped mountains, the sunny sides of the great mountain ranges, the forests clothing the lower hills, and the plains are all tenanted by peculiar forms: in the bleak and lofty regions birds of sombre hue occur; those of the hotter and temperate districts, on the other hand, are distinguished by their gayer colouring; and it is there that the bird here represented and numerous other nearly allied species are found, the whole forming one of the best-defined groups in ornithology; when seen in their native woods, the contrasted hues of their fiery-red plumage and the green foliage with which they are surrounded must be marvellously striking.

If not the most richly coloured, the present bird is the largest and finest member of the genus, as well as one of the most beautiful of Indian birds. The male was figured in my "Century" under the name of Muscipeta princeps, but most modern authors considering it to be identical with the bird to which Latham gave the name of speciosus, I have deferred to their opinion, and adopted that appellation. The parts of the country it inhabits and the extent of its range have not yet been very clearly defined. Independently of the southern slopes of the Himalayas, Mr. Blyth states that it sometimes occurs in the vicinity of Calcutta, and also gives Sylhet, Arakan, Tenasserim, and the Malayan Peninsula as other countries inhabited by it; but I am inclined to believe that it is not this, but a nearly allied species which is found in those countries. I know it is extremely probable that its range extends southwards from the Himalayas throughout the peninsula of India, but I believe that it becomes more rare as we recede from the mountain ranges.

Mr. Jerdon says,—"I shot one specimen of this splendid bird in a dense and lofty jungle in Goomsoor, hopping about the upper branches of high trees, and only once again observed it. At this time, which was just before the commencement of the hot season, and when insects were least abundant, it descended to the ground to pick up an insect, and returned immediately. This habit I, on several occasions about the same time, saw resorted to by other birds, from whose usual manners it was equally foreign, viz. true Flycatchers (M. Banyumas and M. melanops): on the same tree was a grey and yellow bird of the same size, which, judging from analogy, was the female. In the stomach of the one I killed were the remains of several insects, chiefly Coleopterous."

Lieut. Tickell states that it is "sometimes found solitary, at others flying in small parties;" and Dr. F. B. Hamilton informs us that it "cannot be tamed, and when taken always languishes and dies."

The late Captain Boys obtained specimens at Bumourie, Feb. 12, 1843, and noticed that the eye is dark brown; the bill and legs black; and the food, birds and insects.

The late Hon. F. J. Shore mentions that he "found it in warm places all over the hills in the Doon;" and that on the 7th of July, 1828, he "saw a large flock and killed several individuals of each sex at Păoree;" he further states, that "during the first year of their existence their colours are not so bright, especially the yellow of the female, which is then a light dirty greyish-yellow; the greenish-yellow of the lower part of her back also does not extend so high up."

The male has the entire head and neck, back, wings, two central tail-feathers, and the basal portion of the lateral ones deep glossy-black; all the under surface of the body, under surface of the shoulders, a large patch in the centre of the wing, an oblong mark near the tip of the external web of four of the secondaries, the lower part of the back, rump, upper tail-coverts, and the apical three-fourths of the lateral tail-feathers, of the very finest scarlet; bill and feet black; irides blackish-brown.

The female has the forehead, face, wing-marks, under surface of the body and shoulders, and the extremities of the lateral tail-feathers, fine rich yellow; occiput, back of the neck and scapularies grey; wings black, the greater coverts margined with olive; tail black; rump and upper tail-coverts wax-yellow; bill and feet black; irides blackish-brown.

The Plate represents both sexes of the size of life.