PERICROCOTUS CANTONENSIS, *Swinh.*

Canton Pericrocotus.

Pericrocotus cantonensis, Swinhoe, Ibis, 1861, p. 42.—Id. P. Z. S., 1863, p. 284.—Id. P. Z. S., 1871, p. 378.
——— *sordidus*, Swinhoe, P. Z. S., 1863, p. 284 (*juv.*).

Of the well-defined groups of *Pericrocoti* or Minivets there are two very distinct sections, some species being, as in the present instance, of sober hue, whilst the others are unequalled in the brilliancy of their flame-coloured plumage. The birds must play an important part in nature, in keeping down insects and their larvæ.

Of *Pericrocotus cantonensis* (of which the nearest ally is *P. cinereus*) Mr. Swinhoe gives the following account in his first list of the birds of China (P. Z. S. 1863):—"This species, forming so happy a link between the grey and some of the crocus-tinted forms of this group, I have as yet only seen from Canton, where it was pretty common. The tendency of the female to develop the yellow tints is in this much more strongly shown than in *P. cinereus*; so much so that Dr. Sclater declined to accept my identification of the sexes. But apart from any special examination of the sexual organs, the skins carry in their plumage their sexual stamp; for, analogous to what obtains in the foregoing species, the male of this has a white forehead and a dark head. I have no young specimen; but, judging from the last, I should say that the young would be as strongly tinged with yellow as the female." On the same occasion Mr. Swinhoe described a second species as *P. sordidus*, which he has more recently (P. Z. S. 1871, p. 378) determined to be the young of *P. cantonensis*. He remarks:—"All these species have very similar call-notes, and feed chiefly on tree-bugs (*Cimicidæ*) and their eggs, in search of which they creep and hang about among the leaves and branches of large trees, ranging the country in flocks."

I am indebted to Mr. Swinhoe for the following note on the species:—"On the 20th of May, 1869, during our expedition up the river Yangtze, I took a ramble behind the great temple Ta-foo-sze, where before the large gilt idol boatmen offer thanksgiving for safe voyages before finishing their cruise at the city of Chungkingfoo (Szechuen), which is within sight. I was walking about a country-gentleman's garden, followed by his whole family, to watch the curious monster, whose like they had never seen before, when I noticed a pair of this small grey Minivet flying backwards and forwards anxiously, and uttering twittering notes as if in great distress. I guessed the cause and peered about for the nest. A pear-tree had its top snapped away, and on the stump was a knot looking like an accumulation of moss and lichens; and this turned out to be the pretty Chaffinch-like nest of the pair. A lout of a lad climbed up and threw the nest down. It was not quite finished; but there was enough of it to make a nice picture, and I was therefore glad to place it in your hands. I was cruel enough to secure the pretty pair who owned the nest."

The following are the descriptions given by Mr. Swinhoe of the male and female.

Adult male.—Bill and legs black; irides deep brown; forehead, throat, sides of nape and vent white; the rest of the underparts dingy; head, back, and scapulars deep brown, with a wash of grey, blacker on the former; rump and upper tail-coverts light yellowish brown; wings and tail rich hair-brown, the former edged paler, the latter with the stems brownish white, and more or less white on all but the two central rectrices; white of under wing and wing-bone with a wash of pale saffron, the yellow being rather bright on some of the axillaries; wing-spot dingy yellow.

Adult female.—Rump more of a colour with the back than in the male; upper parts lighter and browner; wing-spot bright yellow; quills edged with yellow; the light part of the rectrices rather bright yellow; axillaries and wing-bar fine primrose yellow; forehead narrow, dingy white; in other respects like the male.

Length $7\frac{2}{8}$, wing $3\frac{1}{2}$, expanse $9\frac{2}{8}$, tail $3\frac{6}{8}$.

P. sordidus, which Mr. Swinhoe now identifies as the young bird, was described originally by him as follows:—

Upper parts greyish brown, paler on the forehead, and darker blue-grey on the head and hind neck; wings and tail hair-brown; greater wing-coverts tipped with white, but no wing-spot outwardly visible; two middle rectrices unicolorous, the rest more or less white; the throat and vent white, the former tinged with brown; a black spot in front of the eye; under plumage greyish brown; a dingy white bar runs across the under wing, with a faint tinge of primrose yellow.

Length $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches, wing $3\frac{1}{2}$, tail $3\frac{7}{10}$.

The Plate represents both sexes of the bird, with the nest, all of the natural size.