STRIX INDICA, *Blyth.*

Indian Screech-Owl.

Strix flammea, Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 41.—Gould, in Proc. of Zool. Soc., 1859, p. 151.

—— *javanica*, Jerd. Madras Journ. of Lit. and Sci., vol. x. p. 85.—Sykes, in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., part ii. p. 81.—Jerd. Birds of Ind., vol. i. p. 117.

—— *indica*, Blyth, in Ibis, 1866, p. 250.—Gray, Hand-list of Birds, part i. p. 52.—Holdsw. Proc. of Zool. Soc., 1872, p. .

Karaya and *Karail*, Hind.; also *Buri-churi*, *i. e.* the bad bird.—Jerdon.

Chaao pitta, Telugu, and *Chaao-Kuravi*, Tamul, both meaning death-bird.—Jerdon.

However far to the eastward from Europe the Common Owl (*Strix flammea*) may range, it does not appear to extend to India, as was formerly supposed, its place in that country being occupied by the present species, which may be easily distinguished by its larger size, longer tarsi, much larger feet, by the more buffy hue of its plumage, and the smaller size of the spots with which it is ornamented. To what extent this bird ranges over the islands of the Eastern archipelago, or if it is found there at all, is not known with certainty. Mr. Swinhoe does not notice it as a species found in China; neither is it, I believe, identical with the *Strix javanica* of Dr. Horsfield—that is, if the figure given of the latter by Gray and Mitchell, in their 'Genera of Birds,' be a correct representation of the Java bird. Mr. Jerdon is the principal writer on this species; and he, I regret to say, has furnished but little respecting it; what he has said, together with a brief note by Col. Sykes, will be found below—as also a short paragraph kindly furnished to me by Mr. E. W. H. Holdsworth, who has recently returned from Ceylon, respecting its range and habits as observed by him in that island, and which forms a part of his "Catalogue of the Birds of Ceylon," to be published in the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London' for 1872.

"The Indian Screech-Owl," says Dr. Jerdon, "is found throughout India and Ceylon, ascending through Burmah to Malayana. Sometimes it takes up its quarters in a grove of old trees, in the holes of which it roosts during the day; at others it lives in deserted buildings, tombs, pagodas, mosques, &c.; and I have often found them in the solitary cells and powder-magazines which are generally situate at a little distance from the lower part of a cantonment. It hunts entirely by night, not coming forth until it is quite dark, and lives on rats, mice, shrews, &c. More than once, one has flown into a room in which I was sitting with open doors and windows, after a rat that had entered. It breeds both in holes in trees and buildings."

Col. Sykes remarks:—"One of my specimens was captured alive while lying on its back on the ground, defending itself against the attacks of a body of Crows."

"*Strix indica*," says Mr. Holdsworth, "is very local in Ceylon, and is entirely confined to the north of the island. Layard gave the Fort of Jaffna as the only locality for it; but I have since obtained it at Aripo, where a pair of these Owls were resident. They frequented a Government storehouse in my compound, each bird regularly perching in a dark corner under the roof at opposite ends of the long building, and apparently living in harmony with the hundreds of Bats which hung from the roof and walls around. I have never observed these birds out of doors until some time after sunset."

Upper surface buff, minutely freckled with grey and with one or two small spots of brown and white near the tip of each feather; quills and tail darker or richer buff, freckled with grey on the outer margins, passing into white on the inner, and crossed with distinct bands of brown; facial disk white, with a rufous patch at the inner corner of the eye; ruff mingled yellow and rufous; undersurface, including the under wing-coverts white in some, and pale yellowish buff in others; the feathers of the breast and abdomen ornamented with a small brown spot at the tip of each; bill horny yellow; irides black; legs and feet yellowish brown.

I remark that in specimens of the European *Strix flammea* the presence of bands on the primaries is only indicated on their undersurfaces by small spots near the shaft, while in *Strix indica* these marks are much larger, and extend across somewhat more than half the breadth of the web.

The principal figure represents the bird, of the size of life.