SYRNIUM OCELLATUM, *Less.*

Speckled Wood-Owl.

Syrnium ocellatum, Less. Rev. Zool., 1839, p. 289.—Gray & Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 39, *Syrnium*, sp. 5.—Jerd. Birds of India, vol. ii. part 2. p. 870.—Gray, Hand-list of Birds, vol. i. p. 49.
——— *sinense*, Jerd. Birds of Ind., vol. i. p. 123.
Strix sinensis, Hard. & Gray, Ill. Ind. Zool. pl. 21.
Bulaca ocellata, Blyth, Ibis, 1865, p. 29; 1866, p. 253.

"What's in a name?" is a frequent exclamation to indicate that the matter referred to is of no moment; but if any of my non-scientific readers had to work out synonymies, they would find that in many instances it would be precisely the reverse. Thus it would appear that the beautiful and well-known Owl, figured some forty years ago, in Hardwicke and Gray's 'Illustrations of Indian Zoology,' under the name of *Strix sinensis* has borne an appellation which does not and cannot belong to it, since it was applied by Latham to a bird which he places among the Eared Owls both in his 'Index Ornithologicus' and his 'General History of Birds.' Under these circumstances, we must agree with Mr. Blyth that Lesson's specific appellation of *ocellatum* should be retained for it. Moreover the term *sinensis* would be very inappropriate, inasmuch as the bird is never found in China; while *ocellatum*, as descriptive of its markings, is an excellent one: under this appellation I have therefore figured it on the accompanying Plate, my drawing being taken from a specimen obtained in India proper. The *Syrnium ocellatum* belongs to a small division of the Owls to which the subgeneric name of *Bulaca* has been applied; it will be seen, however, that I have preferred to retain it under that of *Syrnium*.

I have stated that this bird is not found in China, and I may mention that Mr. Swinhoe did not meet with it in any of his extensive wanderings in the Celestial Empire. Of its habits and economy little is known. As far as we are aware, there is no external difference in the sexes. Its soft and moth-like plumage renders it one of the most attractive members of its great family.

"This very beautifully plumaged Owl," says Mr. Jerdon, "is found throughout the greater part of India. It is only met with in well-wooded districts, at no great elevation. I have found it most numerous in the Carnatic and in parts of Mysore, frequenting groves of trees and avenues; it is rare in Central India and the forests of Malabar, but does not occur in Lower Bengal. It emits a loud, harsh, dissonant hoot."

"I never obtained a Bengal specimen," remarks Mr. Blyth; "but I once picked up an unmistakable feather of this bird in a mango-tope, some thirty miles above Calcutta. I have never seen it from the eastward. A specimen is noted by Mr. F. Moore from the Himalaya; but I doubt this alleged habitat, and believe that it was from one of the Subhimalayan valleys. Capt. J. Hutton has well remarked that an ordinary collector at one of the Himalayan Sanitary Stations (say Másuri) employs three or four native *shikáris*, and sends one or two of them far into the interior of the hills, and others down into the Subhimalayan valley of the Deyra-doon; and their gatherings of birds, insects, and so forth (from quite different faunæ or assemblages of species) are alike brought to England as a collection from the Himalaya! Thus untravelled students are apt to be misled."

Upper surface rich tawny buff; each feather of the head and nape tipped with black, within which are two or more irregularly shaped spots of white, which increase in size (and in some instances are mottled with black in the centre) towards the mantle; feathers of the back, scapularies, wing-coverts, and upper tail-coverts with a series of large patches of white, freckled with dusky on each web, the central line and the lines dividing the patches being of a blackish brown; primaries tawny at the base, and blackish brown for the remainder of their length; the tawny portion crossed by dark brown bands, the exterior webs by irregular mottled bands, and the dark portion of the inner webs by faint irregular bands of a lighter tint; tail tawny at the base, gradually deepening into dark brown near the tip, the whole crossed by broad, irregular, mottled bands, dark on the basal portion and becoming nearly white towards the tip, which terminates in white; facial disks white, brown, and fulvous, the white occupying the shafts of the feathers; the edges of the disks white, surrounded by a dark brown ruff; chin white; undersurface of the body beautifully banded with tawny white and brownish black, each feather being tawny at the base, and white crossed with three bands of brownish black for the remainder of their length; tarsal feathers similar, but the tawny tint prevailing on the upper portion, and the grey or white on the lower part of the limbs; bill black; eyelids orange, irides dark brown; soles of the feet yellowish; claws dusky.

The figure is somewhat smaller than the natural size.