

## HALCYON TRISTRAMI, *Layard*.

### Tristram's Kingfisher.

*Halycon tristrami*, Layard, Ibis, 1880, pp. 299, 460, pl. xvi.—Ramsay, Proc. Linn. Soc. N. S. W. vi. p. 834 (1882).—Tristr. Ibis, 1882, p. 609.  
*Sauropatis tristrami*, Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. xviii. p. 420 (1882).—Id. Orn. Papuasia e delle Molucche, iii. App. p. 524 (1882).

CONSIDERING that scarcely five years have elapsed since this species was discovered, its history has already been sufficiently complicated. The first mention of the bird is in 'The Ibis' for 1880; and Mr. E. L. Layard there states that he has a specimen of a Kingfisher from the Solomon Islands, which he proposes to name *H. tristrami*, but he does not describe it. Later on, however, in the same year he refers to this bird as being probably from Makira Harbour, and compares it with *H. vagans* of New Zealand. In his list of the birds of the Solomon Islands, published in 'The Ibis' for 1882 (pp. 141-146), Canon Tristram omits all mention of the species as an inhabitant of the group; but in the meantime Mr. Ramsay makes some remarks upon the species, and calls attention to the absence of the nape-patch in the plate and description given by Mr. Layard (*l. c.*). Canon Tristram, noticing this paper in 'The Ibis' for 1882 (p. 609), gives the dimensions of *H. tristrami* for the first time, and states that he considers it to be "further removed from *H. vagans* than from any other of the group." He likewise states that it has no occipital patch whatever, and that he "possesses the type specimens." No wonder, then, that Count Salvadori finds that he has been a little puzzled with regard to the history of the species.

First of all, there cannot be more than one type specimen of *H. tristrami*, which must be the supposed Solomon-Island specimen first mentioned by Mr. Layard; and with regard to the want of the occipital patch, it is clearly visible on a close examination in the specimen described by us below, and therefore its absence in Canon Tristram's specimen must be purely accidental. The British Museum possesses a nestling which has it plainly developed.

Lastly, we cannot quite understand why Canon Tristram should object to the close resemblance of *H. tristrami* to *H. vagans*, as in our opinion it is only distinguished from the latter species by its larger size, more vivid coloration, and by the deep cinnamon-buff colour of the underparts.

It is possible that there is some error respecting the occurrence of this bird in the Solomon Islands, for Mr. Layard does not appear to have been very certain about the origin of his type specimen. Three examples which have fallen under our notice have been from New Britain; but in all probability it is likewise found in Duke of York Island, as Mr. L. C. Layard does not mention particularly that it is confined to the former of the two (see 'Ibis,' 1880, p. 294). He states that it was "only got in the thick parts about the mountain-slopes; we never observed it mixing among its smaller brethren (*H. sanctus*) on the open shore. Their habitats being so different, their food was different also. The large one ate beetles, locusts, and small lizards, and the lesser one contented himself with fish and sea-worms. Native name for both 'Akiki.'"

*Adult male*. General colour above dark green, with more or less of a bluish tinge; the whole of the back, rump, and upper tail-coverts brighter cobalt, leaving the mantle and scapulars dull green; wing-coverts greenish cobalt, brighter blue on the greater series, and deepening into ultramarine on the outer aspect of the quills, which are otherwise black; the innermost secondaries above greenish; tail-feathers deep blue, the shafts below, as well as the edge of the inner web, blackish; crown of head green, slightly washed with blue; a loreal spot of ochreous buff; feathers in front of and round the eye black, with a half-concealed white spot below the latter; on the sides of the crown above the eye a few small whitish streaks; sides of the crown brighter blue, meeting on the nape; a concealed occipital patch of ochreous buff; a streak from below the gape joining the feathers below the eye and the ear-coverts bluish green, the hindermost of the latter black, joining a collar which surrounds the nape and separates the head from a very broad band of ochreous buff, which runs round the hind neck and joins the breast; this ochreous-buff band is separated from the mantle by a narrow shade of blackish; cheeks ochreous buff; throat whiter; fore neck and breast ochreous buff, deepening into cinnamon-buff on the lower breast, sides of body, and under tail-coverts; under wing-coverts and axillaries also deep cinnamon-buff; quills blackish below, yellowish buff along the edge of the inner web: "bill black; legs ash-coloured; iris brown" (*L. C. Layard*). Total length 9.3 inches, culmen 2.05, wing 4.3, tail 2.8, tarsus 0.55.

The specimen described and figured is a male, obtained in Blanche Bay, New Britain, by Captain Richards on the 2nd of July, 1879.

[R. B. S.]