

MYZOMELA NIGRITA, Gray.

Black Honey-eater.

- Myzomela nigrata*, Gray, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1868, pp. 173, 190.—Id. Cat. Mamm. & Birds of New Guinea, pp. 23, 55 (1859).—Id. Proc. Zool. Soc. 1859, p. 155, 1861, p. 434.—Rosenb. Journ. für Orn. 1864, p. 122.—Gray, Hand-list of Birds, i. p. 154, no. 1988 (1869).—Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. viii. p. 400 (1875), xii. p. 334 (1878).—Id. Proc. Zool. Soc. 1878, p. 97.—W. A. Forbes, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1879, p. 265.—D'Albert. & Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. xiv. p. 75 (1879).—Ramsay, Proc. Linn. Soc. New South Wales, iv. p. 469 (1879).—Rosenb. Malay. Arch. p. 553 (1879).—Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. xvi. p. 71 (1880).—Id. Orn. Papuasie e delle Molucche, ii. p. 291 (1881).—Id. Rep. Voy. 'Challenger,' vol. ii. Birds, p. 81 (1881).—Sharpe, Journ. Linn. Soc., Zool. xvi. p. 437 (1883).—Gadow, Cat. Birds in Brit. Mus. ix. p. 139 (1884).
- Nectarinia nigrata*, Finsch, Neu-Guinea, p. 163 (1865).
- Myzomela erythrocephala* (nec Gould), Meyer, Sitz. k. Akad. Wien, lxx. p. 204 (1874).
- Myzomela meyeri*, Salvad. Ann. Mus. Civic. Genov. vii. p. 947 (1875).
- Myzomela pluto*, Salvad. MSS., Forbes, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1879, p. 266.

This peculiar little Honey-eater was discovered by Mr. A. R. Wallace in the Aru Islands, and was described by the late Mr. G. R. Gray, who omitted to mention in his description anything about the white under wing-coverts, an error corrected by Count Salvadori. It is replaced in the Solomon Islands by a closely allied form, *M. tristrani*, in the Admiralty group by *M. pammelæna*, and in New Ireland by *M. ramsayi*. The latter differs in its smoky black colour, and the first-named by its yellowish bill.

Considerable difference in size is exhibited in a series of this species, and the late Mr. W. A. Forbes, who wrote a most useful memoir on the genus *Myzomela*, has given a table of measurements to show that the birds from New Guinea and the islands in the Bay of Geelvink (Jobi and Miosnoum) are the same as the typical examples from the Aru Islands. Count Salvadori also adopts this view, but Dr. Gadow tries to prove that *M. nigrata* occurs in Western and Southern New Guinea and the Aru Islands, being replaced by *M. pammelæna* on the north coast of New Guinea with its islands, the Admiralty Islands, and the Solomon group also.

Besides the islands of Jobi and Miosnoum, the species has been found at Dorei by Mr. Wallace, and at Rubi in North-western New Guinea by Dr. Meyer. In South-eastern New Guinea Signor D'Albertis met with it on the Fly River, and it has been procured at East Cape by Mr. Huustein. More recently Mr. Forbes obtained specimens on the Astrolabe Mountains.

The following is the description of a pair of birds sent to us by the last-named gentleman :—

Adult male. General colour black, both above and below; quills and tail-feathers black; axillaries and under wing-coverts white, the edge of the wing black: "bill black; legs and feet lavender-blue; iris black" (*H. O. Forbes*). Total length 4 inches, culmen 0·55, wing 2·25, tail 1·55, tarsus 0·55.

Adult female. Different from the male. General colour above dusky brown washed with olive; wing-coverts and quills dusky blackish, edged with olive; upper tail-coverts like the back; tail-feathers blackish; crown of head like the back, the forehead dull crimson; lores and sides of face dull crimson, lighter on the cheeks and throat; ear-coverts dusky like the crown; under surface of body dusky, washed with olive, the centre of the abdomen olive whitish; sides of body and flanks dusky; thighs and under tail-coverts dusky; under wing-coverts and axillaries white; quills below dusky, white along the inner edge: "bill black; legs and feet dark yellow; iris blue-grey" (*H. O. Forbes*). Total length 3·7 inches, culmen 0·55, wing 2·0, tail 1·3, tarsus 0·55.

The Plate represents a male and female of the natural size, drawn from the pair of specimens collected by Mr. H. O. Forbes in the Astrolabe Mountains.

[R. B. S.]