

ORIOLOUS DECIPIENS.

Deceptive Oriole.

Mimeta decipiens, Selater, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1883, p. 199.

THE present species illustrates an example of mimicry in the class of Birds which it would be difficult to surpass for interest. Although amongst insects cases of mimicry are not unfrequent, they are comparatively rare amongst birds, and the Moluccan Orioles are known as perhaps the best illustration of this peculiar phenomenon in ornithology. In the island of Bourou there is a well-known Honey-eater (*Philemon moluccensis*) the plumage of which is almost exactly reproduced by the Oriole of the island (*Oriolus bourouensis*); and now in the Tenimber Islands we find the same thing taking place, the Honey-eater (*Philemon plumigenis*) being mimicked by the Oriole (*Oriolus decipiens*). By many ornithologists these Orioles are separated under the generic heading of *Mimeta*; but structurally they cannot be separated from the genus *Oriolus*, from which they differ only in their dull-coloured plumage.

The Deceptive Oriole is very closely allied to the species from Bourou, *O. bourouensis*; but the latter has the throat pale brown without any dusky spots; the rufous edgings to the wing-coverts are also more pronounced.

The following description is taken from the type specimen:—

Adult female. General colour above brown, lighter on the head and mantle, darker and more ashy brown on the lower back, rump, and upper tail-coverts; the head distinctly streaked with dark brown; the sides of the neck and hinder neck mottled with ashy grey, the feathers having narrow ashy grey edges; wing-coverts and quills deep brown, more ashy on the primaries, many of the coverts and quills slightly washed with pale rufous externally; tail-feathers light brown, with paler tips; an indistinct eyebrow of white, spotted with dark brown; ear-coverts uniform dark brown; cheeks whitish, spotted with dark brown, rather more marked on the malar line; centre of throat white, with a few dusky spots; remainder of under surface from the fore neck downwards ruddy ashy brown, a little darker and more ashy on the thighs and under tail-coverts; the chest slightly mottled with dark brown shaft-streaks; under wing-coverts, axillaries, and quill-lining rufous; “bill, legs, and feet black; iris dark brown” (*W. O. Forbes*). Total length 12 inches, culmen 1·45, wing 6·1, tail 5·0, tarsus 1·25.

The Plate represents this species of the full size, the figures being drawn from the typical examples collected by Mr. Forbes.

[R. B. S.]