

AGLÆACTIS CAUMATONOTA, Gould.

Black-throated Sunbeam.

- Aglæactis caumatonotus*, Gould, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1848, p. 12.—Bon. Consp. Gen. Av. vol. i. p. 73 (1850).
Helianthea caumatonota, Reich. Troch. Enum. p. 5 (1855).
Aglæactis caumatonota, Reich. & Heine, Mus. Hein. vol. iii. p. 70, note 4 (1860).
Aglæactis caumatonota, Gould, Int. Troch. p. 106 (1861).—Elliot, Syn. p. 186.—Whitely, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1873, p. 190.
Aglæactis olivaceocauda, Lawr. Ann. N.Y. Lyc. Nat. Hist. 1867, p. 470.—Mulsant, Hist. Nat. Oiseaux-Mouches, tom. iii. p. 26 (1875).

THE specimen from which my description was taken is still in my cabinet, with the word "type" written on its label.

The country of this bird is Peru, and the name of the district Eeachipata, which is over 11,000 feet above the sea. As regards its habits, Mr. H. Whitely says that its flight is slow and peculiar, and should be watched by every one who has an opportunity of visiting that part of the country.

The *Aglæactis caumatonota* is the smallest species of the genus, and more nearly allied to *A. cupreipennis* than any other; but any novice would distinguish the differences between the two at a glance. In the present bird a triangular patch of brown covers the throat, which is superseded by a band of yellowish brown; below this springs the usual tuft of lengthened feathers which hangs from the centre of the chest. The luminous colouring of the middle of the back is a deep rosy red with a band of puce colour above.

The tuft of lengthened lance-shaped feathers which hangs so gracefully from the chest is found in both sexes, although it is much smaller in the female than in the male; the same difference also occurs on the back, where the colours are reversed. If you look up the feathers, the bird is seen in all its glory, particularly when it is dipping the bill in the flower on the level of the eye; but give the bird a fright, he turns upon you in the twinkling of an eye, frequently darting off in a straight line like a flash of lightning.

Of this peculiar form there are four species: three of them are figured in my 'Monograph'; the other is the present bird, which would have accompanied them if the unique specimen had been better in colour.

In the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society' for 1873, p. 187, is a paper on the Humming-birds of High Peru, received from Mr. H. Whitely December 17th, 1872, in which he says concerning the present species, "They are among the most fearless of the Humming-birds, as I have sat down near one which was perched on a dry twig, and watched it for a long time, without its taking the least notice of me."

Mr. O. Salvin tells me that the Humming-birds with short bills frequently get their food from the funnel-shaped flowers, as represented in the opposite drawing. These little birds do not ascend the interior of the flower, but hang on the upper part of the funnel, putting their small bills through the sides, when their lengthened tongues act as feelers. After all the insects are gathered, they dart away to other parts, each returning again at a given time to the same flower and performing the same actions.

The following is from my description in the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society,' 1848, page 12:—

In an immature state, "Crown of the head brown; lores, chest, and under surface cinnamon-brown; throat crossed by a bar of blackish brown; flanks clouded with the same; from the lower part of the chest springs a tuft of lengthened feathers, which are dark brown at the base and buff at the tip; wings bronzy olive; tail cinnamon-brown, except in the upper or exposed portion, which is rich bronzy olive; back and upper tail-coverts shining purplish lilac, which colour is only seen when the feathers are looked at in the reverse direction.

"Total length $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches, bill $\frac{2}{3}$, wing $3\frac{1}{4}$, tail $1\frac{3}{4}$, tarsi $\frac{3}{8}$.

"Habitat. Peru."

The Plate represents a male and a female, of the natural size.