

HYLONYMPHA MACROCERCA, *Gould.*

Great Forked-tailed Humming-bird.

Hylonympha macrocerca, Gould, Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. 1873, vol. xii. p. 429.—Elliot, Synopsis of the Trochilidæ, p. 79.—Mulsant, Hist. Nat. Ois.-Mouches, tom. iii. p. 57.

In looking over the above references it will be seen that seven years have passed since I first became acquainted with this fine bird. Mr. Whitely, of Woolwich, called on me one day unexpectedly, and said "I have a fine new Humming-bird to show you; and if you wish it, it may be placed in your cabinet; and afterwards this unique specimen may be figured in your Supplement." For this offer I tendered my thanks, saying that the public would be as much gratified as I was. I then urged him to do all he could to obtain the female, as well as more males. He answered:—"No perseverance shall be wanting on my part; but I shall not easily succeed. Few of the public know that a considerable trade is carried on between Brazil and London almost solely in birds' skins and feathers; these are only for decoration. Humming-birds of any kind are preferred for the skirts of ladies' dresses, the hair, and bonnets. Few of the birds are shot; the rich landlords employ their slaves, who set finely meshed nets in the glades of the forest to catch them."

Thousands of the beautiful ruby and topaz Humming-birds are sent to this metropolis every year. As these seldom undergo a critical examination, it has frequently struck me that my new bird was imported in this way. But after waiting seven years for the female without success, and no other male appearing, I had determined to give a representation of the unique male. Suddenly all these plans were frustrated by the arrival of seventy males and two females, to the astonishment of every person fond of Humming-birds. Every Trochilidist wondered how so large a bird could have escaped the notice of travellers, and particularly traders in such countries as Brazil, and with myself have eagerly desired to ascertain the particular district of that huge empire it inhabits. This is now, I think, positively known. Mr. Henry Whitely states, this bird lives in the "Matura district, Manawas, on the river Bia, North Brazil."

The great number of males which arrived the other day showed me that some variety exists in that sex; in some the longest tail-feathers are pointed, in others rounded, the latter being two inches shorter than the former.

Its nearest ally is *Heliodoxa leadbeateri*, and not *Thalurania* (as first suggested in the 'Annals').

Bill stout, somewhat curved, a little longer than the head; wings rather long and falciform; feet and toes small; tarsi clothed; tail ample, deeply forked, and larger in comparison with the size of the body than that of any other member of the family. Crown of the head glittering blue, with a reflection of green towards the edges; throat very fine green, passing into dull green on the flanks; abdomen black, glossed with green; feathers clothing the tarsi dark brown on the outer side, and white on the inner; under tail-coverts black; all the ten feathers of the tail, the outer ones of which are very broad, a uniform steel-black.

Total length $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches, bill 1, wing $2\frac{3}{4}$, tail 6, tarse $\frac{1}{4}$.

The female differs from the male in that it has a much shorter tail and is very much varied in colour. The bill is like that of the male; and of the form of the wing the same may be said. The colouring of the tail of the female is very variable; the outer feather is tipped with greyish white as in my illustration, while the long swinging tail of the male is black from end to end. The admeasurements of the female are—total length about $5\frac{7}{8}$ inches, wing $2\frac{1}{2}$, tarse $\frac{1}{4}$.

The Plate represents male and female, natural size.