

PATAGONA GIGAS.

Giant Humming Bird.

Trochilus gigas, Vieill. Gal. des Ois., tom. i. p. 296. pl. 180.—Ib. Ois. dor., tom. iii. inedit. pl. 25.—Jard. Nat. Lib. Humming Birds, vol. ii. p. 50. pl. 3.

Ornismya tristis, Less. Hist. Nat. des Ois. mou., pp. xi. & 43. pl. 3.—Ib. Ind. Gen. et Syn. des Ois. du Genre *Trochilus*, p. iv.

Cynanthus tristis, Ib. Traité d'Orn., p. 272.

Ornismya giganteus, D'Orb. et LaFres.

Patagona gigas, G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd edit., p. 18.—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 75.—Ib. Rev. et Mag. de Zool. 1854, p. 251.—Reichenb. Aufz. der Colibris, p. 14.

Hylocharis gigas, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 114, *Hylocharis*, sp. 1.

THE figures on the accompanying Plate give a faithful representation, the size of life, of this the largest of the Humming Birds, which has been truly designated as the giant of its family, for by no other species is it approached in size. It is said to be a bold and vigorous flier, to be quick in all its actions, and to pass from flower to flower with the greatest rapidity, notwithstanding the length and volume of its wings, which would seem to be far better adapted for lengthened and continuous progress than for poising in the air, which the bird is in constant habit of doing while visiting, with little choice of species, the numerous flowers of the forest, and among others the Cacti. It is stated, that, unlike the other species of the family, it may be frequently seen perched on some small tree or shrub. It enjoys an extensive range of habitat over the southernmost portions of South America, being found in most parts of Bolivia, Southern Peru and Chili.

M. Lesson states, that it inhabits the forests in the interior of Chili, and that it advances into the country of the Araucanos, the wild Pampas of the Puelches, to the south of Old Chili, and to the foot of the Andes. M. Warszewicz collected specimens in Bolivia, at an elevation of from 12,000 to 14,000 feet. Mr. Bonelli informs me, that "it annually visits in abundance the villa grounds of General Santa Cruz near La Paz, and that it goes as far to the eastward as Chuquesaca; procures its insect food from maize, barley, and various leguminous plants; flies about all the shrubs with such rapid motions and quick turns that it is extremely difficult to procure examples; and dwells in all the temperate and colder regions of La Paz." Mr. Cuming tells me that in Chili it is strictly migratory, arriving from the north in August; and, after spending three months in that country, during which it breeds, returns to whence it came.

Of this form I consider but one species has yet been discovered, for, although some slight difference in colouring has occurred in the many specimens which have come under my notice, I regard them all as identical; the principal difference being in the colouring of the abdomen, which in some is sandy red, in others olive and brown.

There appears to be little difference in the colouring of the sexes; less, in fact, than in size, for the female is very much smaller than her mate.

The nest is a somewhat large cup-shaped structure, composed of mosses, lichens and similar materials put together with cobwebs, and placed in the fork of a branch of some tree or shrub, generally on one overhanging a turbulent stream of water. The eggs are white, two in number, of the usual lengthened form, and about three-quarters of an inch from end to end.

The *Patagona gigas* has now become very common, and examples may be seen in nearly every Collection.

Head and all the upper surface pale brown, glossed with green; wings and tail similar but somewhat darker, and the green gloss more conspicuous, especially on the tail-feathers; basal portion of the shafts of the lateral feathers white; an irregular patch of white on the rump; upper tail-coverts narrowly fringed with white; breast mottled brown and buff; throat and abdomen rusty red; under tail-coverts white, with a wash of brown in the centre of each; bill blackish brown; feet brown.

The figures are the size of life. The plant is the *Puya Chilensis*.