

## COMETES SPARGANURUS.

### The Sappho Comet.

*Trochilus sparganurus*, Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 291. pl. 39.—Ib. Steph. Cont., vol. xiv. p. 238.—Jard. Nat. Lib. Humming-Birds, vol. ii. p. 112. pl. 23.

*Fire-tailed Humming-Bird*, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 291.

*Trochilus chrysurus*, Cuv. Règn. Anim., tom. i. p. 236.

——— *radiosus*, Temm. in Mus. Leyden.

*Ornismya Sappho*, Less. Hist. Nat. des Ois. Mou., p. 105. pl. 27 male, 28 female.—Ib. Less. Troch., p. 131. pl. 49, adult male.—Ib. Man. d'Orn., tom. ii. p. 83.

*Cometes Sappho*, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., part xv. p. 31.

——— *sparganurus*, Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 81, *Cometes*, sp. 1.

*Mellisuga sparganura*, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 113, *Mellisuga*, sp. 46.

*Orthorhynchus chrysurus*, D'Orb. et Lafr. Syn., p. 26.

*Trochilus chrysochloris*, Vieill. Ois. dor., tom. iii. ined. p. 8.

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BOTH Wilson and Gosse have given to the world, fresh from nature, the most charming and poetic descriptions of the habits of the *Trochilus colubris* and *T. Polytmus*; and had either of these elegant writers had an opportunity of observing the present species in its native country, we should doubtless have been favoured with an account of its habits and economy in the same masterly language; in the absence of which, and of any opportunity of observing the bird in a state of nature, I cannot do more than furnish all the information I have been able to acquire respecting it. To be, however, the pioneer in directing the attention of those who may hereafter fill up the voids in the history of this lovely bird, will be something to revert to, at all times, with satisfaction. "No combination of gorgeous colouring," says Dr. Tschudi, "can exceed that which is presented in the plumage of the Golden-tailed Humming-Bird, which appears and disappears like a dazzling flash of coloured light, and which haunts the warm primæval forests, but is still more frequently found in the pure atmosphere of the ceja-girded Montañas."

We are continually receiving fresh evidence that the richest botanical and zoological districts of South America are those to the eastward of the Peruvian and Bolivian Andes; the great primæval forests of which are as yet a *terra incognita*, and their zoological products equally unknown. It is only the outskirts of this fine country that have yet been partially investigated.

I have ascertained from unquestionable evidence, that this fine species is very generally distributed over the great country of Bolivia, to the westward of the Cordillera, from La Paz to Chuquesaca, and that its range extends at some seasons as far to the southward as Mendoza. It is strictly migratory, and it is in the summer seasons alone that it is to be found in the countries above mentioned. The eastern parts of Peru are doubtless its head quarters in winter; and it is probable that at this season it may even range as far to the northward as the Caracas, as travellers who have visited that part of the country speak of a large Flame-tailed Humming-Bird as an occasional visitant, which must either be this bird, *Cometes Phaon*, or a new species. Mr. Bridges collected numerous examples of both sexes, during his visit to the valley of Cochabamba, where he found its favourite food was obtained from the flowers of the scarlet *Salvia*; "the males carrying on a continual war with each other, and each bird appearing to possess a separate territory."

One of the principal summer haunts, however, of this bird is Chuquesaca, in the interior of Bolivia, "where," says M. Bourcier, "it appears when the fruit trees of the country are in flower, and is met with in the greatest abundance among the flowers of the *Capuli*, a kind of cherry-tree: it also visits the orchards and the gardens of the city, during the blossoming of the apple-trees; it is by no means shy, and the males, which are constantly at war, chase each other with the utmost fury, uttering at the same time a sharp cry whenever one bird invades another's territory." I am indebted to Mr. Bonelli, who made a lengthened residence in that part of the country, for the following notes respecting it.

"It arrives in the environs of Chuquesaca in the months of September and October, and takes up its residence in the shrubberies of the city and in the gardens of the Indian cottages; the hill sides of the neighbouring country, clothed with indigenous trees and shrubs, also afford it a fit place of abode; whence it descends several times a day to the cultivated plains below, particularly to the fields of maize, pulse and