

## CYNANTHUS CYANURUS.

### Blue-tailed Sylph.

*Trochilus cyanurus*, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiv. p. 239.

*Ornismya Kingii*, Less. Les Troch., p. 107. pl. 38.

THE accompanying Plate offers but a feeble representation of a Humming-Bird, the beauty and elegance of which are in just accordance with the luxuriance of the glorious country it inhabits, namely, the temperate regions of the Andes, from the Equator northwards to the Isthmus of Panama, or, more correctly speaking, the countries of Ecuador, New Grenada and Venezuela. The vast primæval forests, both of the Eastern and Western sides of the Great Cordillera in these countries, appear to be alike visited by it; and it is also spread over the less elevated hills which jut out from the main range and extend eastward to the Caraccas; it lives at an elevation ranging between five and ten thousand feet, among regions the botany of which is of the richest and most varied character, and where insect life is ever abundant. The single specimen which graced the Bullock's Museum, and which is now in Mr. Leadbeater's collection, was for many years the only one known, and it was not until within the last fifteen years, or from about 1836, that other examples were sent to Europe; since then, however, it has become common, and no general collection is destitute of specimens.

It is much to be regretted that considerable confusion exists with respect to the synonymy of this beautiful bird. I have carefully examined the figure and description of the Long Green-tailed Humming-Bird of the accurate George Edwards, to which the specific name of *forficatus* has been applied by many writers, and which is usually considered as identical with the present bird, but I can come to no other conclusion than that they are quite distinct. Edwards, in his description, states that "the crown of the head is blue, or else the bird is mostly green, . . . and the lower belly and coverts under the tail are white:" no admeasurements are given, but the figure is said to be of the "natural bigness," and is coloured in strict accordance with the description. He adds, that the bird was brought from Jamaica by Captain Chandler, of Stepney, who permitted him to make a drawing of it. In my opinion Edwards's figure has no reference to the present species in either of its states of plumage, but would appear to represent a species of which no other example has yet been seen, and which we may hope to see rediscovered whenever its proper locality may be again visited. There are districts of sufficient extent in the island of Jamaica yet unexplored by the scientific naturalist, whereof it may be an unknown denizen, although we should rather infer that, like its allies, it is a continental and not an island species. Entertaining the opinion here expressed, I feel obliged to reject the synonyms usually applied to the present bird, and to adopt that of *cyanurus* given to it by Mr. Stephens, and which so correctly expresses the trivial name of Blue-tail by which it is generally known, and which has a priority of two years over that of *Kingii* of Lesson. Some ornithologists may consider that the term *cyanurus* ought also to have been rejected, because it had been applied to two other members of this family; to which I reply, that one of the birds referred to does not, I believe, belong to the *Trochilidæ* at all, and the other is a species which I cannot satisfactorily identify, but which, at all events, is generically distinct from the present form. Some persons are of opinion that the Blue-tailed Humming-Birds, sent so plentifully from Bogota, are referable to more than one species; I have not, however, been able to determine this point satisfactorily; almost the only difference consisting in the colouring of the tail, some having the apical half of all the feathers of a uniform blue, but more generally the eight central feathers are broadly margined with bright metallic green; in this latter state of plumage I have figured the bird: another variety occurs in Venezuela, in which the outer feathers are blue, except at the tip, where they are green like the intermediate ones: these Venezuelan specimens, when fully adult, also have the basal half of their outer feathers more dilated, and their apical half more pointed than in those from other districts, and, moreover, are nearly destitute of the black line which bounds the brilliant green of the crown. In some examples the blue gorget is wanting; this I believe to be due to immaturity rather than to any other cause; it is possible that they may be very old females, which having passed the period of breeding, have assumed the plumage of the male, except in this point; but I have no positive evidence that such is the case: the breeding females, or the specimens sent to us as the female of this bird, differ so considerably, as to induce the belief that they belong to some other species, had we not evidence which proves the contrary: the young males of the year, or of one or two years old, are also very different from either; the tail in these youthful birds being much shorter and far less luminous than in the adult; the green of the crown, though much brighter than the green of the body, is far less brilliant than it is in the mature state, and the gorget of blue is always wanting; a white mark also occurs down the centre of the back in some individuals.