

## MELLISUGA MINIMA.

### Little Humming-Bird.

- Trochilus minimus*, Linn. Syst. tom. i. p. 193.—Ib. Gmel. tom. i. p. 500.—Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 320.—Edw. Glean., tom. ii. p. 105. pl. 105.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 347.
- Mellicora Avis minima*, Sloane, Jam., p. 307. No. xxxviii. tab. 264. fig. 1.
- Polytmus minimus variegatus*, Brown, Nat. Hist. of Jam., p. 475 female.
- Le plus petit Oiseau mouche*, Buff. Hist. des Ois., tom. vi. p. 11. pl. 1.—Pl. Enl. 276. fig. 1.
- L'Oiseau mouche à ventre gris*, Vieill. Ois. dor., tom. i. pl. 53. p. 99.
- Le très petit Oiseau mouche*, Vieill. Ois. dor., tom. i. pl. 64. p. 113.
- Trochilus minutulus*, Vieill. Ois. de l'Am. Sept., tom. ii. p. 73.
- Mellisuga*, Briss. Orn., tom. iii. p. 695. pl. xxxvi. fig. 1.—Ib. 8vo. tom. ii. p. 29.
- *Dominicensis*, Briss. Orn., tom. iii. p. 702. pl. xxxvi. fig. 8.
- Trochilus Vieilloti*, Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 347.
- Mellisuga Vieilloti*, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiv. p. 249.
- Ornismya minima*, Less. Ois. Mou., pl. 79, fem.—Ib. Ind. Gen. et Syn. des Ois. du Gen. *Trochilus*, p. xxvii.
- Least Humming-Bird*, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. ii. p. 788.—Shaw, Nat. Misc. vol. xii. pl. 489.—Ib. Zool. Lect., vol. i. pl. 62.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 359.
- Mellisuga humilis*, Gosse, Birds of Jam., text, p. 127.
- Trochilus Catharinæ*, Sallé, Rev. Zool. 1849, p. 498.
- Hylocharis nigra*, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 114, *Hylocharis*, sp. 16.
- Mellisuga minima*, Bonap. Cons. Gen. Av., p. 81.
- Trochilus niger*, Gmel., Lath., &c. ?

IN referring the above long list of synonyms to one and the same species of Humming-Bird, I know that I am deviating from the opinion of some writers on the subject; but after devoting the utmost attention to the matter, I have been unable to arrive at any other conclusion; at the same time I am open to conviction: if any proofs that I am in error can be adduced before the completion of the present work, I shall be happy to rectify any mistakes into which I may have fallen. I may state, however, that my own view is entirely coincided in by M. Bourcier, a gentleman, whose long attention to, and ample opportunities for acquiring a knowledge of the subject, render his opinion of the highest value; he has, moreover, given me permission to state that he believes the celebrated little Humming-Bird of the Loddigesian collection, formerly in that of Mr. Leadbeater, and earlier still in that of Mr. Bullock, to be an immature bird of the species here figured; it is but fair, however, to state that this was not the opinion of the late Mr. George Loddiges, who considered it to be a distinct species, and the minute egg accompanying it to be genuine: for myself, I must say, that, so far as I am able to judge from an examination of the specimen through the glass-case in which it is deposited, it appears to me to be an immature bird of this or some other species.

The *Mellisuga minima* is very generally dispersed over nearly the whole of Jamaica and the greater portion of St. Domingo, but has not as yet been found elsewhere; those islands may therefore be regarded as its true habitat. Its small size having attracted very general observation, more has been written respecting this little Humming-Bird than any other known species; the most lucid and valuable account of its habits and economy is that given by Mr. Gosse in his very interesting work on the "Birds of Jamaica," which I am sure his well-known desire for the promotion of science will induce him to excuse my transcribing from somewhat largely. After giving his reasons for believing this bird to be distinct from the *Trochilus minimus* of the older authors, Mr. Gosse says,—

"I have ventured to give to the present species the specific appellation of *humilis*, from its habit of buzzing over the low herbaceous plants of pastures, which our other species do not. The West Indian Vervain (*Stachytarpheta*) is one of the most common weeds in neglected pastures, shooting up everywhere its slender columns, set round with blue flowers, to the height of a foot. About these, our little Humming-Bird is abundant during the summer months, probing the azure blossoms a few inches from the ground. It visits the spikes in succession, flitting from one to another, exactly in the manner of the honey-bee, and with