

TROCHILUS ALEXANDRI.

Purple-throated Humming-bird.

Trochilus Alexandri, Bourc. et Muls. Ann. de la Soc. Sci. de Lyon, tom. ix. 1846, p. 330.—

Cassin, Ill. Birds of California, p. 141. pl. 22.

Mellisuga Alexandri, Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 113, *Mellisuga*, sp. 80.

Archilochus Alexandri, Reich. Aufz. der Col., p. 13.

Trochilus alexandri, Bonap. Rev. et Mag. de Zool. 1854, p. 256.

THE native countries of this modestly-coloured, but pretty species of *Trochilus* are Mexico, California and Texas, and it will be seen from the following note by Mr. Cassin, that the United States also lays claim to it as part of its fauna. It was through the exertions of the late Signor Flores, that most, if not all the specimens which now adorn the collections of Europe have been procured, all of which were obtained in the table-lands in the vicinity of the celebrated Real del Monte Mines; but that it extends its range over a vast area northward of the city of Mexico, in all such localities as are favourable to its existence, is more than probable. In its structure and in the disposition of its markings it is precisely similar to the *T. Colubris*, from which, however, it is specifically distinct, as will be immediately seen on an examination and comparison of the Plates of the two species.

Since the publication of Mr. Cassin's figure in his "Birds of California," a doubt has been expressed by Prince Charles L. Bonaparte as to whether the bird there represented be not distinct from that found in Mexico, and, believing this to be the case, he has proposed the name of *Cassini* for it,—a term, however, which I have not yet seen in print. The propriety of this step was one of the points in connexion with this group of birds which it became incumbent upon me to investigate during my recent visit to the United States, and I can state that, upon comparing Dr. Heermann's birds, from which Mr. Cassin's description and figure were taken, with others from Mexico, no difference whatever was observable; I regret to have to add, that my friend Cassin's Plate gives a very indifferent representation of the bird, and as the Prince had this Plate only, from which to form an opinion respecting the Californian specimens, he may be readily excused for considering them to be distinct from those from Mexico.

"Within the limits of the United States," says Mr. Cassin, "the Humming-bird now before the reader has been noticed only by Dr. Heermann, whose fine collection, made in California, contained numerous specimens. He detected it in one locality only,—the burying-ground at Sacramento City. There several pairs remained during the season of incubation, and reared their young, finding suitable food and protection among the flowering plants with which, with great feeling and propriety, that last resting-place of the emigrant and stranger has been adorned.

"Dr. Heermann represents the nest as composed of fine mosses, lined with the feathery down of various seeds, and containing two white eggs. He saw this bird also at Guaymas in Mexico."

The female of this species, like the female of *T. Colubris*, differs very considerably from the male in the total absence of the black and rich purple colouring of the throat.

This species was named *Alexandri* by MM. Bourcier and Mulsant, in honour of Dr. Alexandre of Mexico, by whom it was first discovered.

The male has the head dark brown; all the upper surface dark bronzy-green; wings purplish-brown; central tail-feathers bronzy-green; the lateral ones black, slightly glossed with green; throat deep velvety-black, bounded below by a band of rich metallic purple; across the breast a band of greyish-white; under surface dull bronzy-grey; bill and feet black.

The female has the head brown; upper surface bronzy-green; wings purplish-brown; central tail-feathers bronzy-green; the lateral ones grey at the base, then black, and lastly tipped with white; under surface greyish-white; the throat speckled with brown.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size. The plant is the *Eriogonum compositum*.