

## OREOTROCHILUS CHIMBORAZO.

### Chimborazian Hill-Star.

*Trochilus Chimborazo*, Bourc. Rev. Zool. 1846, p. 305.

*Oreotrochilus Chimborazo*, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., part xv. p. 10.—Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 104, Genus *Oreotrochilus*, sp. 3.—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., p. 76.

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THIS beautiful species of Hill-Star is an inhabitant of the celebrated volcanic mountain Chimborazo, where it is to be found at an elevation of from 12 to 16,000 feet, or to the verge of perpetual snow; in these desolate regions it finds a home so congenial to its habits, that it is never known to descend to the warmer valleys below; the various alpine plants, particularly the *Chuquiraga insignis*, afford it a constant supply of insect food; there, in the land of storms and earthquakes, it has dwelt for ages entirely unknown, and there it might have remained for ages yet to come, since few would imagine that so delicate a creature as a Humming-bird could live in such an inhospitable clime, had not the energy of modern travellers induced them to explore regions neglected by their predecessors, and thereby bring to light the numerous interesting objects which have enriched our collections of late years, among which few are more conspicuous for their beauty than the *Oreotrochilus Chimborazo*. The merit of discovering this fine bird is due to M. De Lattre, who obtained a single specimen of the male while passing over one of the ridges of Chimborazo; this specimen is now in the possession of E. Wilson, Esq. of Lydstip House, Pembrokeshire. For the first specimens that came into my own possession I am indebted to my friend Professor Jameson of the University of Quito, who sent me fine examples of both sexes. Since that period the researches of M. Jules Bourcier, late French Consul at Quito, have been rewarded by the acquisition of numerous others, and it is to this gentleman that I am indebted for the following brief notes—all that are known—of its habits and manners.

“This species is exclusively confined to the volcanic mountain Chimborazo; here, at an altitude where vegetation ceases and near to the eternal snows, it loves to dwell, the altitude of its range appearing to be governed by that of the *Chuquiraga*, its favourite shrub, the flowers of which afford it an abundance of nectar and insect food. It is solitary in its habits, and so pugnacious, that it immediately offers battle to intruders upon its haunts: the male always perches on the extremity of the most elevated branch, and is rarely found near the female, which, unlike the male, invariably perches near to the ground; a circumstance, which, combined with her sombre colouring, renders her very difficult of detection.

“The nest is formed of lichens, and is either suspended to or sheltered beneath a ledge of rock; the eggs as usual are white, and two in number.

“The young retain their greyish green colouring during the first year, and do not attain their perfect plumage until the second year of their existence;” the young males may, however, be at all times distinguished by a tolerably well-defined collar of olive-green and brown.

The male has the head and throat bright violet-blue, bounded below by a narrow line of deep velvety black, and having in the centre of the violet-blue of the throat an oblong triangular gorget of rich light shining green; upper surface shining olive-green, becoming of a purer green on the upper tail-coverts; wings purplish brown; two centre tail-feathers dark green; outer feather on each side greenish black for three-fourths of its length, and white at the base; the remainder of the tail-feathers white; the two next the outer feathers broadly, and the inner one narrowly margined with greenish black; chest and centre of the abdomen white, with a line of greenish black down the centre of its lower portion; flanks olive-brown; under tail-coverts shining olive-green; thighs and feet clothing the tarsi brown; bill and feet black.

The female has all the upper surface olive-green; two centre tail-feathers dark glossy green; the remainder light greenish brown with white bases, and a large irregular spot of white at the extremity of the inner web; under surface olive-brown, each feather edged with white; throat white, with a spot of olive near the tip of each feather; bill and feet as in the male.

The Plate represents two adult males and a female on the *Chuquiraga insignis*, of the natural size; and in the distance two immature males.