

to select terms sufficiently expressive to convey an idea of the loveliness of the birds comprised in this latter genus. The two birds generally known under the names of *Sappho* and *Phaon* are *par excellence* the most gorgeous birds in existence so far as regards the colouring of their tails; and well do these living meteors deserve the more general name of *Comets*.

Genus COMETES, *Gould*.

(Κομήτης, cometa.)

Generic characters.

Male.—Bill longer than the head, straight or slightly arched; wings moderate; tail long and deeply forked, the feathers broad and luminous; tarsi naked; feet small; hind toe and nail nearly as long as the middle toe and nail; throat luminous.

Female.—Smaller in size, and nearly destitute of fine colouring.

195. COMETES SPARGANURUS Vol. III. Pl. 174.

Cynanthus sparganurus, Jard. Nat. Lib. Humming-Birds, vol. ii. p. 146.

Trochilus (Cynanthus) chrysurus, Tsch. Consp. p. 36, sp. 200; Id. Faun. Per. p. 244.

Orthorhynchus chrysurus, D'Orb. et Lafres. Syn. p. 26.

Sappho sparganura, Reich. Aufz. der Col. p. 9; Id. Troch. Enum. p. 5, pl. 724. figs. 4651-52.

Lesbia sparganura, Bonap. Rev. et Mag. de Zool. 1854, p. 252.

Sparganura Sappho, Cab. et Hein. Mus. Hein. Theil iii. p. 52.

Habitat. Bolivia.

196. COMETES PHAON, *Gould* Vol. III. Pl. 175.

Sappho Phaon, Reich. Aufz. der Col. p. 9; Id. Troch. Enum. p. 5, pl. 725. figs. 4653-54.

Lesbia phaon, Bonap. Rev. et Mag. de Zool. 1854, p. 252.

Sparganurus Phaon, Cab. et Hein. Mus. Hein. Theil iii. p. 52, note

Habitat. Peru.

197. COMETES? GLYCERIA Vol. III. Pl. 176.

Sparganura Mossai, Cab. et Hein. Mus. Hein. Theil iii. p. 52, note.

Habitat. Popayan in New Granada.

This is perhaps the most extraordinary bird I have had the good fortune to describe. I have placed it in the genus *Cometes* with a reservation; for it comprises characters which are found both in *Lesbia* and *Cometes*: in form it most nearly approaches the latter, while in its markings and in the colouring of its throat it resembles the former. At present only a single example has been obtained, and this, I am inclined to think, is not quite adult; it may possibly be only a young male of a splendidly coloured but unknown species; and if so, a fine bird remains in store to reward the researches of some future explorer.

198. COMETES? CAROLI Vol. III. Pl. 177.

Habitat. Peru.

Of this remarkable bird about four specimens have been in our collections for many years; but whether they are males or females is unknown; for in fact nothing has been recorded respecting these puzzling birds. If the description accompanying my plate of the species be referred to, it will be seen that it has been bandied about from one genus to another, different authors having assigned it to *Trochilus*, *Hylocharis*, *Calliphlox*, and *Avocettinus*! Some day, when the little-known country of Peru has been more fully investigated, we shall doubtless acquire a better knowledge of it, and be able to decide to which genus it really pertains; for the present let it remain in the one in which I have placed it.

Genus PTEROPHANES, *Gould*.

(Πτερόν, ala, et φαίνω, ostendo.)

Generic characters.

Male.—Bill cylindrical, longer than the head, and slightly upcurved; wings very large and sickle-shaped; tail broad and large; tarsi clothed; feet small; hind toe shorter than the middle one; claws long, slightly curved, and sharp at the point.

Female.—Unadorned.