

GIGANTIPITTA CÆRULEA.

Large Blue Pitta.

Myiothera cærulea, Raffles, Trans. Linn. Soc. xii. p. 301 (1821).

Pitta gigas, Temm. Pl. Col. p. 217 (1823).—Less. Traité d'Orn. p. 394 (1831).—Müll. & Schleg. Verh. nat. Gesch., fol., Zool. *Pitta*, p. 14 (1839-44).

Pitta cærulea, Vigors, Mem. Raffles, App. p. 659 (1830).—Gray, Gen. B. i. p. 213 (1846).—Blyth, Cat. B. Mus. As. Soc. p. 156 (1849).—Moore, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1854, p. 273.—Horsf. & Moore, Cat. B. E.I. Co. Mus. i. p. 181 (1854).—Schleg. Vog. Nederl. Indië, *Pitta*, p. 2, pl. i. figs. 1-3 (1863).—Wall. Ibis, 1864, p. 108.—Gray, Hand-l. B. i. p. 296, no. 4368 (1869).—Gould, Birds of Asia, pt. xxx. (1877).—Hume & Davison, Str. F. 1878, pt. 1, p. 238.—Hume, Str. F. 1879, p. 59.

Brachyurus cæruleus, Blyth, J. A. S. Beng. xvi. p. 153 (1847).—Bp. Conspl. i. p. 253 (1850).—Elliot, Monogr. Pittidae, pl. 1 (1863).—Id. Ibis, 1870, p. 412.—Hume, Str. F. 1875, p. 321.

Gigantipitta cærulea, Bp. Conspl. Voluer. Anis. p. 7 (1854).

Brachyurus davisoni, Hume, Str. F. 1875, p. 321 (note).

SINCE this species was first discovered in Sumatra by the late Sir Stamford Raffles, our knowledge of its habitat has increased only by slow degrees—so much so that even as lately as the year 1874 Professor Schlegel stated that it was confined to the island of Sumatra; nor did Mr. Elliot acknowledge any other locality for the species. As early as 1854, however, Mr. Frederick Moore had included it in the list of Malayan birds collected by Dr. Cantor; and we have on several occasions seen specimens in consignments from Malacca and Singapore. Mr. Hume has duly included it in his list of the birds of the Malayan Peninsula; and we have no doubt that it ranges up the whole of the last-named country into Tenasserim. It is true that Mr. Hume has provisionally named the bird from the latter locality *Brachyurus davisoni*; but we cannot see from his descriptions that it is really distinct from the true *P. cærulea* of Sumatra and Malacca. It was procured by Mr. Davison at Bankasoon; and he records it as a rare visitant to the evergreen forests of the southern extremity of the province of Tenasserim. He also gives the following note:—“I first obtained this species on the 26th March in the evergreen forests of Bankasoon, two males on the same day: one I found caught in one of my traps in the morning; the second I shot as it was hopping along the forest path the same evening. For a couple of months previously I had daily been exploring these forests, but had never met with the bird; and it is my belief that they had then only just arrived. From this time up to my departure from Malewoon, in July, I on several occasions saw the bird; the most northern point at which I observed it was near the village of Laynah, on the 16th of May. The next year, in April, I shot a third male at Bankasoon, and in May we obtained our first female. They are extremely shy, and not at all like the other Pittas. Directly they catch sight of you they rise, flying low but rapidly, and not alighting under 200 or 300 yards, when, of course, in the dense forests, where alone they occur, all trace of them is lost. They doubtless must call; but I have never heard their note to distinguish it. My specimens had fed entirely on large black ants.”

Assuming, therefore, that the *Pitta davisoni* of Hume is identical with the true *P. cærulea*, we have the range of the latter bird extending from Southern Tenasserim, down the Malayan peninsula, to Sumatra, a habitat which is perfectly intelligible and is followed out by many other species of birds; nor is there any thing surprising in the fact that it should be met with in Borneo, which we now know to be the case; for we have recently seen examples of both sexes, collected by Mr. W. B. Pryer in Sandakan, in the north-eastern portion of that island. On comparing these Sandakan birds with others from Malacca, we found them to be perfectly identical; and there is therefore every probability that this large Pitta, like so many others of its congeners, is a migratory bird, whose breeding-place is probably in Sumatra.

Independently of its large size and peculiar coloration, the present species differs from most of its allies in having the sexes differing from one another; and although this is by no means the only case within the limits of the family, it is decidedly the exception rather than the rule.

A detailed description of the species is unnecessary, as the adult birds are easily recognizable. The young bird, however, is somewhat different; and I transcribe Salomon Müller's account of the capture of one in Sumatra, as translated from his great work on the Dutch East Indies by Mr. Elliot:—“In the month of June, 1834, in Sumatra, not far from the base of the mountain Singalang, in a dark retired valley which was entirely covered with a thick undergrowth, we saw a young male. He was sitting on the dead branch of a low tree, and was not in the least shy; the mellow reddish mouth and the peculiar softness of his feathers showed that he had not yet attained his first moult. The deep blue hue which adorns the older birds was in this specimen entirely wanting, with the exception of a slight indication on