

MELANOPITTA CUCULLATA.

Hooded Pitta.

- Pitta cucullata*, Hartl. Rev. et Mag. de Zool. 1833, p. 65.—Gray, Gen. B. i. p. 213 (1846).—Blyth, Cat. B. Mus. As. Soc. p. 157 (1849).—Moore, Proc. Zool. Soc. 1854, p. 274.—Horsf. & Moore, Cat. B. E.I. Co. Mus. ii. p. 399 (1856).—Cass. U.S. Expl. Exp. Birds, p. 437 (1858).—Jerd. B. Ind. i. p. 504 (1862).—Gray, Hand-l. B. i. p. 295 (1869).—Gould, B. Asia, part xxx. (1877).—Hume & Davison, Str. F. 1878, p. 245.—Hume, Str. F. 1879, pp. 59, 94.
- Pitta nigricollis*, Blyth, J. A. S. Beng. xii. p. 960 (1843).
- Pitta rhodogaster*, Hodgs. J. A. S. Beng. xii. p. 961 (1843).
- Pitta malaccensis*, Müll. & Schleg. Verh. natuurl. Gesch., fol., Zool. *Pitta*, p. 19 (1844).
- Pitta coronata*, Peale, U.S. Expl. Exped. Birds, p. 891 (1848).
- Brachyurus cucullatus*, Bp. Consp. i. p. 255 (1850).—Elliot, Monogr. Pittidæ, pl. xxvii. (1863).—Hume, Str. Feathers, 1875, p. 109.—Blyth & Walden, Birds of Burma, p. 98 (1875).
- Melanopitta cucullata*, Bp. Consp. Volucr. Anis. p. 7 (1854).—Hume, Str. Feathers, 1874, p. 475.—Id. Nests and Eggs Ind. B. p. 225 (1875).

THIS species is rather an aberrant member of the subgenus *Melanopitta*, inasmuch as it has the head chestnut instead of black as is usual with the members of this section; but the rest of its coloration shows that it is a close ally of the typical members of the black-headed group. Like the other members of the family, it is evidently a migratory bird, and breeds in Nepal and the Eastern Himalayas. Mr. Hume, who has translated many of the original notes from Mr. Hodgson's MS., states that the latter gentleman found a Hooded Pitta breeding in the central regions of Nepal and about Darjeeling in April and May. They build large globular nests, one of which measured nearly 6·75 inches externally and had a circular opening fully 3 inches in diameter on one side. They place their nests very generally on the ground, in clumps of bamboos; and they construct them of dry bamboo leaves and twigs, and stems of plants, firmly and compactly interwoven. The exterior is rough and strong; the interior lined with soft vegetable fibres. They lay four eggs, very broad oval, glossy, with a pinky white ground, pretty thickly spotted all over with reddish and brownish purple; an egg figured measures 0·96 by 0·79 inch. Dr. Jerdon observes that he "procured one specimen, which was killed by a Lepcha when seated on her nest on the banks of the Great Rungit river, about 1200 feet above the sea. The nest was composed chiefly of roots and other fibrous matter, with a few hairs, and contained three eggs of a faint greenish white with a few reddish and some fawn-coloured spots." Mr. Hume also states that it is very common in Sikhim. Blyth, in his 'Birds of Burmah,' mentions its occurrence in the Khasia Hills and in Arakan; and Captain Wardlaw Ramsay obtained it at Rangoon, as did also Captain Feilden at Thayetmyo. Writing of its occurrence in Upper Pegu, Mr. Oates remarks:—"I met with this bird in one ravine only, in the evergreen forests, where I procured several specimens. I searched many precisely similar localities, but never again met with it." It was doubtless on migration that the species was procured by Mr. Oates on the above-mentioned occasion; for it is stated by Mr. Hume to be only a seasonal visitant to the southern and central portions of Tenasserim; and it is doubtless only as a migrant that it is met with in the Malayan peninsula. Mr. Davison's note on the bird in Tenasserim is as follows:—"This species is much rarer and more of a forest bird than *P. moluccensis*. Its call is similar, but not nearly so often heard—firstly because the bird is only about one tenth as numerous, and secondly because those that are there call *much* less frequently. These also sit about in trees a great deal, and, like *P. moluccensis*, are, I believe, merely migrants, as I have only shot them from April to July."

Body green above; head light chestnut-brown, the lores, eyebrows, sides of face, sides of neck, as well as the hind part of the latter and throat, black; upper tail-coverts rich cobalt; least wing-coverts rich cobalt; primaries with a broad band of white; under surface of body green; on the upper abdomen a black patch; the lower abdomen and under tail-coverts scarlet, thighs brown. The soft parts are described by Mr. Oates as follows:—"The bill was black, the inside of the mouth dusky fleshy, irides dark coffee-brown, eyelids pale plumbeous fleshy pink, claws pinkish horny."

All writers agree that specimens from the Eastern Himalayas are perfectly identical with those from the Burmese provinces and Malacca; some of the birds, however, have the back striped with dusky; and these I take to be immature.

The figures in the Plate, which are drawn from specimens in my collection, are of the natural size.
[R. B. S.]