

EUCICHLA BOSCHII.

Van der Bosch's Pitta.

Pitta boschii, Müll. et Schleg. Verh. Nat. Gesch. Ned. Ind., pp. 5, 16, pl. 1.—Moore, Proc. of Zool. Soc., 1854, p. 273.—Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 213.—Elliot, Mon. Pittidæ, pl. xxxi.—Gould, Birds of Asia, part 25 (1873).

Pitta elegans, Less. Voy. de la Bonite, pl. 3.—Temm. Pl. Col. text.

Pitta (Eucichla) elegans, Gray, Hand-l. of Birds, part i. p. 296.

BEAUTIFUL in coloration as is the lovely group of birds termed Pittas, the present species is certainly one of the most charming of them. Mr. Elliot, in his Monograph of the family, restricts the generic term *Pitta* to this bird and its two elegant allies, *Pitta cyanura* and *P. schwaneri*; while Reichenbach, as long back as the year 1850, applied to the three species the subgeneric term *Eucichla*. In my 'Birds of Asia' I retained all these Old-World Ground-Thrushes under the genus *Pitta*; but I think it more convenient in the present work to subdivide them according to my own views or those of the various ornithologists who have paid attention to the subject with a view to their classification. That the species above mentioned form a natural section, I have for many years clearly seen. Specimens of both sexes of *Pitta boschii* were brought from Sumatra by the late Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles; and I remember I shortly after formed the intention of naming the species *Pitta rafflesi*, an intention never carried out—which I now much regret, as it would have been very pleasing to me if the bird had borne the name of our celebrated countryman. The specimens referred to ornamented for many years the interesting Museum of the Zoological Society of London, the contents of which have since been scattered to the winds. Sumatra is unquestionably the native country of this fine bird; Mr. Elliot has added that of Malacca also—I believe, on the authority of Dr. Cantor; and he is probably correct in so doing, although, as yet, I have no positive evidence that any examples have been sent from there. The present bird not only differs from its two immediate congeners in being more redundantly coloured, but also in the female being more finely decorated than those of the other species; but, as will be seen on reference to the opposite Plate, she wants the blue and rich cross bars of the under surface.

Most (if not all) of the Pittidæ are solitary in their habits, and frequent the innermost and sterile parts of the forests almost too rugged for man to traverse, and which he would not venture to traverse did not his knowledge of birds tell him that the monotonous call he hears proceeds from one of Nature's living jewels.

Messrs. Müller and Schlegel, when writing on this species, say "the mission to Sumatra with which we were intrusted in the first half of the year 1833, by the then Governor-General Baron Von der Bosch, enabled us to increase our collection by a considerable harvest, both as regards the department of animals and that of plants. Under obligations of gratitude towards his Excellency for the execution of our coveted enterprise, we chose to introduce into the realm of science one of the handsomest birds discovered in the island of Sumatra under his venerated name."

The male has the centre of the crown deep black, bounded on each side by a broad band, which commences with rich yellow at the nostrils, gradually passes into rich orange, and finally on the nape into fiery or reddish orange; below this another band of black encircling the eyes, embracing the cheeks, and passing round the back of the neck; throat white, narrowly edged with yellow, which colour becomes rich orange on the sides of the neck; upper surface and wings cinnamon-brown, the tips of the coverts and outer edges of the secondaries margined with white slightly tinged with blue; upper tail-coverts and tail deep bright blue; under surface rich deep indigo-blue, crossed on each side of the breast with narrow crescentic lines of fiery orange-red, which nearly meet in the centre; on each side near the vent a patch of yellowish buff; bill black, apparently flesh-colour on the base of the under mandible; legs and feet fleshy brown.

The female is coloured like the male on the upper surface; but the under surface, in lieu of the indigo-blue and red lines, is crossed from the throat by narrow concentric lines of dark brown and dull yellow.

The figures represent the two sexes, of the natural size.