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XXV.—*On Birds collected in the Colony of Natal, in South-Eastern Africa.* By JOHN HENRY GURNEY, M.P., F.Z.S.

HAVING received from Mr. Thomas Ayres, of D'Urban, Natal, some additional specimens of birds from that locality, together with some further notes, I beg leave to communicate, for insertion in 'The Ibis,' the following list of species, with notices by Mr. Ayres, and with a few comments of my own, the latter being distinguished by brackets and initials. I begin with some additional remarks on species included in my former list ('Ibis,' vol. i. p. 234).

SAGITTARIUS SECRETARIUS, Scop. Secretary Bird.

The stomach of the specimen sent contained lizards, locusts, small snakes, and a full-grown Red-breasted Lark. These birds well know how to use their long legs; they stalk along at a great pace. A terrier-dog which was with me at the time I shot this specimen gave chase to it; but the bird would run two or three hundred yards before it would trouble itself to rise, when it flew a short distance, and then ran on in front of the dog as before. Up-hill appears to make no difference in the speed of these birds.

CIRCAËTUS THORACICUS, Cuv. Black-breasted Harrier-Eagle.

The stomach of the specimen sent contained the remains of lizards, and of a poisonous snake, which could not have been less than 7 or 8 feet in length.

This snake is called by the Caffres "*Armarmbah*." A favourite

dog of ours, bitten last year by a snake of this species, died from the effects of the poison in less than an hour.

PERNIS APIVORUS, Linn. European Honey Pern.

The specimen sent is (like that in the previous collection) an adult male ; the stomach contained wasps and crickets.

BUTEO JACKAL, Daud. Jackal Buzzard.

The stomach of the specimen sent contained the remains of frogs.

ACCIPITER TACHIRO, Daud. Tachiro Hawk.

The stomach of the specimen sent contained brown crickets.

ACCIPITER EXILIS, Temm. Red-bellied Hawk.

The stomach of the specimen sent contained the remains of small birds.

CIRCUS RANIVORUS, Daud. South-African Harrier.

The stomachs of the two specimens sent were filled with field-mice.

The flight of these specimens was heavy, and they alighted often ; but at other times I have seen birds of this species on the wing for a great length of time, hunting backwards and forwards over a certain piece of ground, or a hill-side.

CAPRIMULGUS NATALENSIS, Smith. Natal Goatsucker.

The stomach of the specimen sent was full of large and hard beetles, swallowed whole. These birds roost on the ground amongst the grass ; if disturbed, they fly a short distance and alight again ; they feed only at night, and are fond of frequenting roads, or any other bare ground ; they rise from the ground, and catch any beetle or insect that passes, immediately alighting again.

The flight of this Goatsucker is noiseless ; its note is extremely liquid and mellow ; it builds its nest in the grass, and lays two white eggs.

HALCYON FUSCICAPILLA, Lafr. Brown-hooded Kingfisher.

Male. Eye dark brown ; bill crimson, black towards the tip ; legs dark red. In its crop beetles and grasshoppers.

These birds frequent the bush, generally perching on some dead or bare bough, not far from the ground ; they do not take their

prey on the wing, but take it from the ground; they have a loud chattering note, somewhat similar to the "Laughing Jackass" (*Dacelo gigas*) of South Australia, but do not laugh in the same ludicrous manner; they have a dipping flight, seldom flying far at once.

INDICATOR MINOR, Stephens. Least Honey-Guide.

The stomach of the specimens sent was full of caterpillars. These birds have a long dipping flight, somewhat similar to the Emerald and Golden Cuckoos. One of them occasionally comes and perches close to our beehives, and takes the bees as they fly out and return home.

ARDEA CINEREA, Linn. Common British Heron.

Stomach of specimen sent contained an eel. These birds are generally in pairs; they are exceedingly shy; they often feed with the White Herons, and alight on trees.

HERODIAS FLAVIROSTRIS, Temm. African Yellow-billed White Heron.

Male and female. Eye, bill, and skin round the eye light yellow; legs, feet, and extreme tip of the upper mandible black.

The stomachs of these birds were crammed full of shrimps and small fishes.

These Herons are gregarious, frequenting the bays along the coast; they feed at low tide amongst the mud and shallow water, stalking gently along. When they see their prey, they stop suddenly, and make a dead point at it, exactly like a pointer dog at a partridge; remaining motionless for a few seconds, then gradually drawing nearer, they dart their long necks suddenly into the water, and almost invariably catch the unlucky fish. At high water, or if disturbed, and at night, they always perch on the upper boughs of the Mangroves, and other trees that fringe the bay, never roosting on the ground. Their flight is heavy, as is the flight of all the Herons that I know.

ARDETTA MINUTA, Linn. European Little Bittern.

Male. Stomach contained caterpillars and a quantity of frog-bones.

PODICA PETERSII, Hartlaub. Peters's Finfoot. Male and female.

In the *male*, the eye light reddish-brown ; legs and feet bright red ; upper mandible black, with red margins ; under mandible red, with black margins. In the stomach frog-bones, and a quantity of bright transparent quartz-pebbles.

In the *female*, eye whitish-brown ; legs bright red. In the stomach fish-bones and a few insects.

Both these birds were caught in traps set for Otters. They have the power of making an extraordinary noise, like the growling of a wild beast, which they do by drawing the air into their bodies and forcing it gradually from their throats. Both of these birds made this strange noise when taken from the traps, fighting at the same time with all their might. I have never seen two of these birds together.

[The female bird in this species is nearly one-third smaller than the male. Judging from the specimens which Mr. Ayres has now sent, I am disposed to think that it is only the male bird which assumes the dark lead-colour on the throat when in breeding-plumage.—J. H. G.]

The following are additional species, which I have numbered continuously with the previous list. In this, as in the former catalogue, a few species from other Natal collections have been included, for the sake of completing, as far as possible, particular groups.

65. GYPS RÜPPELLI, Bp. Rüppell's Griffon-Vulture.

Male and *female*. Eye nearly black ; the colour of the skin of the neck of the male bird was greenish-white, that of the female black ; bill, feet, and tarsi, also the skin over the eye, and round the base of the bill, black.

The first of these birds that we shot, we took to be an immature bird of *Gyps fulvus* ; but a short time after, a flight of about thirty of them appeared and devoured an ox that had died close by. We managed to shoot three of them, two of which we now send ; we then, of course, saw they were a different species. *Gyps fulvus* nearly always settles on the ground at some little distance from the beast off which they intend to make a meal ;

but it appears to me that *Gyps rüppelli* prefers alighting on trees, if there are any near. In other respects these Vultures resemble *Gyps fulvus* in their habits, but I have not heard them make the unearthly noises over their food that *Gyps fulvus* does.

[With reference to the very dark colour of the eye in the specimens of *Gyps rüppelli* obtained by Mr. Ayres, it may be remarked that the colour of the irides in this species appears (according to the report of different observers) to be subject to considerable variation. Dr. Rüppell describes them as "white intermixed with serpentine fibre-like lines of brown;" Dr. Brehm as "silvery-grey," and Dr. Vierthaler as "yellowish-brown." Probably these variations may partly result from differences in age. The specimens sent by Mr. Ayres, I should suppose, from their plumage, to be birds of the second or third year.—J. H. G.]

66. *FALCO BIARMICUS*, Temm. Latakoo Falcon.

Male, adult. Eye lightish brown; legs and skin round the eye bright yellow; cere and base of the bill bright yellow; centre of the bill slate-colour; tip black.

This bird is very rare here. It is exceedingly quick on the wing when in chase. The specimen sent descended from a great height, with a succession of rapid twists, but happened to come within shot before it reached the small birds which it was at the time pursuing.

Some time back two of these birds attacked a cat, which was hunting for rats on a bare field not far from the house, and fairly drove her away from their domain; the cat was obliged to stop every now and then to defend herself.

67. *NECTARINIA NATALENSIS*, Jardine. Natal Sun-bird.

Feeds principally on the nectar of flowers; will also eat the softer kinds of insects; generally hangs its nest on the outermost twigs of trees, at no great height from the earth, and very frequently over water.

68. *NECTARINIA AFRA*, Linn. Greater Double-collared Sun-bird.

Habits and food much the same as those of *N. natalensis*.

69. *NECTARINIA AMETHYSTINA*, Shaw. Amethystine Sun-bird.

Habits and food the same as *N. natalensis*, but does not hang its nest over water.

70. *NECTARINIA COLLARIS*, Vieillot. Little Blue-banded Sun-bird.

These little birds are, I think, rather more insectivorous than the last three species, as I notice they climb about the creepers and thick foliage a good deal, hunting under the leaves and into buds for small insects ; but they take the nectar from flowers in an equal degree. They build a pendulous nest, generally in some thick bush, hanging it from the leaves and outermost twigs. They are very fond of building in orange-trees, and others of equally dense foliage.

71. *DRYMOICA MELANORHYNCHA*, Jardine. Black-billed Drymoica.

Builds among the stalks of high weeds.

72. *CERTHILAUDA AFRICANA*, Gmel. Serli Lark.

73. *MACRONYX CROCEUS*, Vieill. Yellow-bellied Lark.

74. *MACRONYX CAPENSIS*, Linn. Sentinel Lark.

75. *ANTHUS GOULDII*, Fras. Gould's Pipit.

This species, and the three preceding ones, all nest on the ground amongst the high grass, frequently under a tuft of the same, and, like the Larks in England, take but little trouble with their nests.

76. *MOTACILLA CAPENSIS*, Linn. Cape of Good Hope Wagtail.

This species is fond of building its nest in a bunch of Bananas, or in the thick stem of the plant, where the leaves separate from the stem.

77. *PRATINCOLA RUBICOLA*, Linn. British Stone-Chat.

These birds appear to feed entirely on insects ; they frequent principally marshy ground, always alighting on the tallest stem of rush or grass ; they appear to be solitary, and I do not often see two together ; they do not fly far without alighting ; they sometimes take insects on the wing, but generally descend to the ground for them.

[The specimen sent appears to me to be identical with those found in Great Britain.—J. H. G.]

78. *SAXICOLA PILEATA*, Gmel. Imitative Wheatear.

Male. Eye dark brown. Feeds, I believe, entirely on insects; frequents the open country, and is generally to be found perched on mounds of earth formed by the white ants, and on stones, though it occasionally alights on low bushes. Its song much resembles that of the Lark in England; and it rises fluttering from the ground in the same manner, singing at the same time, and descending suddenly as the Lark does. It is not a numerous species about here.

79. *PETROCINCLA RUPESTRIS*, Vieill. South-African Rock-Thrush.

Frequents the same localities as the previous species. The stomach of the specimen sent contained some of the Cape Gooseberries, and some small stones.

80. *ORIOLOUS LARVATUS*, Licht. Masked Oriole.

Male. Eye blood-red; bill and legs reddish-brown. Feeds principally on fruits and berries. Some of the notes of this bird are extremely liquid and mellow, others altogether as harsh. This species builds on the outermost boughs of trees, frequently over water, choosing a forked branch, and hanging the nest between them, in a very curious and ingenious way.

81. *PYCNONOTUS NIGRICANS*, Vieill. Le Vaillant's Bulbul.

These birds live entirely on fruits and berries, and are very destructive in our garden, devouring indiscriminately Bananas, Loquats, Peaches, Papaws, Cape Gooseberries, and all other soft fruits. They are very numerous; they build generally in a fork of a tree, towards the top, and lay from three to five eggs. These birds often get intoxicated by eating fruit that is over-ripe and has undergone fermentation, more especially the Cape Gooseberry; and when in this drunken state are easily caught, as they can fly but a few yards at a time, and then not straight, soon tumbling to the ground. The berries of the *Syringa* trees have the same effect on them, as also the fruit of the *Banyan* Fig. Other birds that live on these fruits become intoxicated

in the same way. If a hawk, or other bird of prey, makes its appearance, these Bulbuls immediately begin to chatter at a furious rate; and if he settle, a lot of them will frequently mob him; but the hawk, I have observed, takes no notice of them.

82. *JUIDA PHŒNICOPTERA*, Swainson. Flame-shouldered Juida.

Eye bright yellow; legs and bill black. These birds are generally to be found from three to a dozen together, sometimes more, excepting in the spring, when they pair off. They build in holes in the trunks of trees, generally at a good height from the ground. I have known a pair of these birds take possession of a Woodpecker's nest, destroying the eggs, and laying their own instead, which the Woodpeckers seemed rather tamely to submit to. They feed almost entirely on fruits and berries, and are destructive to our mulberries and other small fruits. They sometimes hop about and feed on the ground, somewhat like the Thrush and Blackbird in England.

83. *PLATYSTEIRA PRIRIT*, Vieill. Pririt Flycatcher.

[Mr. Ayres does not communicate any information respecting the habits of this Flycatcher.—J. H. G.]

84. *DICRURUS MUSICUS*, Vieill. Musical Drongo.

These birds generally build their nests on the outer branches of trees, about 20 or 30 feet from the ground, in a small fork, much exposed to wind and rain.

85. *LANIUS COLLARIS*, Linn. Fiscal Shrike.

This Shrike most frequently builds in a fork of a Mimosa or other low tree, but sometimes amongst shrubs and woody plants. It impales mice, small rats, lizards, chameleons, locusts, and other large insects, on the thorns of the bush on which it perches. It remains frequently for days on the same bush, making short excursions therefrom, hovering over its victim and darting down upon it, in a manner very similar to that of some of the birds of prey.

86. *LANIARIUS QUADRICOLOR*, Cassin. Four-coloured Shrike.

Male. Eye dark; legs slate-colour. Feeds entirely on insects. I do not think there is any difference in the plumage of the

female from that of the male. These birds inhabit the dense bush along the coast, never leaving it; they creep about the underwood in search of their food, and are easily obtained by those who can imitate their call, for they will immediately answer, and come to the sportsman if within hearing; on perceiving their mistake, they make a low chirring noise, as they do also if they see a cat, snake, panther, or other beast of prey.

87. *TELOPHONUS ERYTHROPTERUS*, Shaw. Tchagra Shrike.

This species frequently builds amongst a mass of tangled creeping plants, merely placing the nests on or amongst them, either not at all adhering to them, or very slightly indeed.

88. *CORVUS SCAPULATUS*, Licht. White-necked Crow.

Eye dark brown; legs and bill black. These birds are not to be found nearer the coast than fifty or sixty miles. They seem to feed on anything they can pick up, such as ticks (*Acari*), bits of bone, berries and insects, and are fond of frequenting roads, in fact, are scarcely to be found elsewhere.

89. *VIDUA AXILLARIS*, Smith. Epauletted Widow-bird.

Male. The females of these birds are brown. They build amongst the tall grass, and lay from three to five eggs. I rather think the males lose their black plumage at one time of the year, but at that time they are not to be found in this part of the country. I think they go more to the north during the winter, coming this way to breed; in the spring they come in large flights, and pair off afterwards. In these flights there seem to be generally a far greater number of females than males, and I strongly suspect polygamy is much practised amongst them. They do a great deal of damage here, in the fields of oats and other corn (as do also the Maize-birds and other Finches). The males assume a very peculiar clapping flight during the breeding season, somewhat similar to the flight of the Lapwing in England.

90. *VIDUA RUBRITORQUES*, Swains. Red-throated Widow-bird.

Male. The females are brown. Habits very much the same as the preceding species, and, like it, does much damage amongst

the corn-fields. The males have the long tail and black plumage only during the breeding-months. These birds build amongst the grass in the open country ; they lay from two to four eggs. The nest is curiously built : they select a convenient tuft of grass, and interlace the blades as they stand, without breaking them off ; so that the nest is green during the whole time of incubation, and is very beautiful when thus seen.

91. *VIDUA ERYTHORHYNCHA*, Swains. Red-billed Widow-bird.

Male. Bill red ; legs black. Feed entirely on grass seeds. These pretty birds have the long feathers in the tail during the summer months only, losing them in the winter. The female is brown, and never has the long feathers. I have never seen more than two or three of these birds together. The male of this species has a curious habit of hovering over his mate when she is feeding on the ground, bobbing up and down as you see the Mayflies and Midges do on a summer's evening in England. This exercise he generally continues for some minutes without resting.

[In the case of this and of the preceding species, I have used Mr. Swainson's specific names, as there seems to me to be some uncertainty with reference to the earlier synonyms.—J. H. G.]

92. *PLOCEUS SPILONOTUS*, Vig. Spotted-backed Weaver-bird.

These birds are gregarious ; numbers build their nests on the same tree, generally an Acacia. I have seen as many as fifty or sixty nests on one tree, generally high, and frequently over pools of water ; they hang their nests to the very outermost twigs, with their apertures downwards. The nests are made of strips of the leaf of the Palm-tree or Banana, which the birds tear off, and which resemble grass when woven in the nest ; occasionally a small quantity of grass is mixed with the Palm-fibre. The best way to take these nests is to chop the tree down, or a limb from it. The eggs vary very much in colour ; we scarcely find two nests with the same coloured eggs ; green, blue, white, and speckled white and brown are the general colours. Each nest is always suspended by a single twig, unless two or three twigs are very close together. The extent of the black colouring

on the heads and throats of the male birds varies very much, being often partially, and sometimes entirely wanting, and its place supplied with yellow. The females are always a dull olive-green.

93. *PLOCEUS OCULARIUS*, Smith. Black-lored Weaver-bird.

This species sometimes hangs its nest on the end of a leaf of a tall Palm, and sometimes from the boughs of the Acacias in the dense bush—in some cases only a few feet from the ground, in others far out of reach.

94. *PYRENESTES ALBIFRONS*, Vigors. White-fronted Grosbeak.

[Mr. Ayres does not mention the habits of this species.—J. H. G.]

95. *HYPOCHERA ULTRAMARINA*, Gmel. Blue-black Finch.

The specimen sent is the only one I have seen at Natal.

96. *FRINGILLARIA FLAVIVENTRIS*, Vieill. Yellow-bellied Bunting.

Rare in Natal. Has a dipping flight; alights on the ground, as well as on trees; stomach contained seeds and small stones.

97. *COLIUS STRIATUS*. Striated Coly.

This species builds in the thick fork of a Mimosa, or other low tree, well sheltered by creepers and foliage above.

98. *CUCULUS SOLITARIUS*, Vieill. Solitary Cuckoo.

[Received by me out of a collection from Natal, but not sent by Mr. Ayres.—J. H. G.]

99. *CAMPETHERA CHRYSURA*, Swains. Golden-tailed Woodpecker.

This Woodpecker makes a hole, for the purposes of incubation, in the trunk of a decayed tree, just large enough at the opening for the bird to enter, but becoming wider inside, and reaching downwards to a depth of a foot or 18 inches; it lays its eggs on the bare wood, without making any nest.

100. *COLUMBA ARQUATRIX*, Temm. Rameron Pigeon.

Male and female. Eye light yellow, as are also the bill and legs, and skin round the eye.

These fine birds are not to be found here all the year round, but come by thousands in the month of June, leaving again in August; they keep to the bush along the coast, only a few stragglers being found a few miles inland; they feed entirely on the berries which abound on the trees in the bush during the winter months, and are generally in good condition, and are the finest eating of all the Pigeons. The male specimen now sent weighed 17 oz. (the average weight of a number of these birds is 16 oz.). I have never seen them alight on the ground; they are shot here by hundreds, and afford our D'Urban sportsmen capital sport.

101. *COLUMBA TRIGONIGERA*, Wagl. Roussard Pigeon.

[Mr. Ayres does not mention the habits of this Pigeon.—J. H. G.]

102. *TURTUR SEMITORQUATUS*, Swains. Half-collared Turtle.
Female. Legs dark red.

These Doves are generally to be found in pairs, though I sometimes see half a dozen of them feeding together in the same field; they prefer cultivated ground, and are especially fond of buck-wheat; they are tame, and easily shot, as are most of the Doves and Pigeons here. These Doves build in the thick fork of a tree: the nest consists of a few twigs put so loosely together that it is a wonder that the young ones, of which they rear two, do not fall out.

[Mr. G. R. Gray, to whose kindness I am indebted for the identification of several species in this list, writes to me respecting the specimen of this Dove forwarded by Mr. Ayres as follows:—"It is very like *Turtur semitorquatus* of Swainson (Bonaparte's *Conspectus*, vol. ii. p. 64); and though it is smaller and rather richer in colour than any of the specimens of that species in the British Museum, yet I still consider it to belong to that species."—J. H. G.]

103. *PERISTERA TYMPANISTRIA*, Temm. Tambourin Pigeon.

Builds in the thick fork of a low tree; a few coarse twigs compose the nest.

104. *FRANCOLINUS NATALENSIS*, Smith. Natal Francolin.

Male and female. Eye dark brown; legs and feet red.

These birds live entirely in the dense underwood that abounds along the coast. Their food consists of insects and seeds; their call very much resembles that of the Guinea-fowl; they run exceedingly fast, and are shy and difficult to obtain; they roost in trees at night, and, when on the ground, will fly to them immediately, if chased by a dog, or in any other way suddenly disturbed—otherwise they run.

[The Natal Francolin is well described in Sir Andrew Smith's work on the Birds of South Africa; but the colouring of the plate is not equally accurate. The male bird is there mentioned as having only a single spur on each leg; in the male specimen sent by Mr. Ayres, there is a small rudimentary spur above the principal one on the right leg, but no corresponding second spur on the left leg; judging from the length of the ordinary spurs on both legs, it is probably an old bird, which may be the cause of this peculiarity.—J. H. G.]

105. *FRANCOLINUS SUBTORQUATUS*, Smith. Coqui Francolin.

Male and female. Eye dark; legs brownish-yellow; bill dark. In the crop of the female were insects and berries; that of the male was quite full of ants.

These birds live in the open country, and are generally dispersed all over the colony of Natal; they are to be found in coveys, like the Partridge in England; they roost on the ground in any convenient thick tuft of grass, and nestle all together.

These birds would be very numerous, were it not for the burning of the grass, together with the hawks, wild cats, and snakes which abound here, and are their mortal enemies.

[The female bird sent by Mr. Ayres agrees with the description and figure of this species given by Sir A. Smith, in his 'Birds of South Africa;' but the male which Mr. Ayres has sent differs in having the throat a pale rufous, instead of white, and in the total absence of the black crescent surrounding the throat and terminating above the base of the upper mandible, and also of the black line above the eye. Sir A. Smith says, "The female is without spurs to the tarsi; in other respects she exhibits a close resemblance to the male:" but, judging from the specimens sent by Mr. Ayres, I suspect that Sir A. Smith has figured and described as a male an old female bird, which, by

reason of age, had acquired spurs resembling those of the male; and I am the more disposed to think this possible, as the same distinguished naturalist, in describing an allied species (*Franco-linus levaillantii*), remarks, "In some specimens each sex has the tarsi armed with a spur; in others, that appendage is not found in either."—J. H. G.]

106. *COTURNIX DACTYLISONANS*, Temm. European Quail.

Male. Eye and bill dark brown; legs brownish-yellow.

A few of these birds are to be found here all the year round, nesting in the open country amongst the thick grass; but the greater part migrate here in large numbers during the autumn, in the months of April, May, and June, leaving again in the early spring. They live entirely on insects and small seeds, are extremely quick on the wing, and make a great noise when they rise with their wings, similar to the Partridge, also making a loud chirping noise as they fly away.

[The specimen sent, on comparison with English specimens, appears to be slightly smaller, but not otherwise to differ.—J. H. G.]

107. *TURNIX LEPURANA*, Smith. South African Hemipode.

Male. Bill dark; legs brownish-yellow. Feeds on insects and seeds, principally the latter.

These beautiful little birds appear with the preceding species, but by no means in such numbers; the sportsman will seldom flush more than two at once of these, whilst of the others frequently ten or twelve will rise together.

108. *EUPODOTIS CAFFRA*, Licht. Stanley Bustard.

Male. Eye light brown; legs whitish. In its stomach locusts and caterpillars.

I have found sometimes good-sized snakes and lizards in these birds. This specimen weighed 9 lbs. There are several kinds of Bustards here, but I have not yet been able to obtain them; they vary in weight from 3 or 4 up to 30 lbs.; and I believe there is one species in the Zulu country, frequenting the bush, which attains the weight of 40 lbs. The flesh of all the Bustards is excellent eating; they breed in the interior of the country, only coming towards the coast as the winter approaches;

they always prefer ground from which the grass has recently been burnt, to hunt for their food. They are exceedingly shy, and yet stupid; for although there is no cover, if the sportsman take a large circle round and round the bird, gradually nearing, the Bustard will frequently squat down with his head to the ground, thinking he will be passed unnoticed, when the sportsman may run up to within easy shooting distance.

109. *ÆDICNEMUS MACULOSUS*, Temm. Spotted Thick-knee.

Male and female. Eye bright yellow; legs yellow; dark along the front; bill yellow at the base, black towards the tip.

These birds feed, I believe, entirely on insects. They are very generally dispersed over the colony of Natal, appearing on the coast with the Bustards in the month of June. Like the Bustards, they will almost invariably try to hide themselves from the sportsman by crouching on the ground. When on the wing, the legs are extended straight out behind, similarly to the Herons.

110. *CURSORIUS BURCHELLI*, Swains. Burchell's Courser.

Male. Legs white; bill black. Contents of the stomach small beetles.

These birds are scarce here; they frequent the open country, and are to be found after the grass has been burnt off, when I have no doubt they more easily find their food. These birds run with extraordinary swiftness, much faster than any of the other kinds of Plovers here, notwithstanding their small size.

111. *VANELLUS MELANOPTERUS*, Rüpp. Black-winged Lapwing.

Male. Eye light yellow; legs and bill black.

Like the preceding species, this Plover feeds in the open country, and like it, is seldom to be found within ten or twelve miles from the coast. These birds have a loud harsh note, very similar to the Green Bee-eater here, and when on the wing they utter this note almost incessantly, more especially if they see a dog or other animal, when a lot of them will immediately fly towards the intruder, circling round and round within a few feet of it, seemingly with the intention of driving it away, which, with dogs, they generally succeed in effecting.

[In the 'Atlas' of Dr. Rüppell, the legs and feet of this species,

and also the irides, are figured and described as red ; in other respects the figure and description there given agree with the specimen and note forwarded by Mr. Ayres. Mr. Ayres's specimen appears to agree with '*Charadrius frontalis*' of Sundeval (Öfvers. 1850, p. 110), which is there described "*pedibus nigro-fuscis.*"

I think it probable, however, that this variation of colour in the legs and feet may be rather due to differences of age or sex, than to specific distinction, and the more so as the tibiæ in the specimen sent by Mr. Ayres appear to have been red when fresh, and as there is a specimen in the British Museum from the Cape of Good Hope in which the tarsi are red also, as represented in Dr. Rüppell's plate above referred to.—J. H. G.]

112. *ÆGIALITES MARGINATUS*, Vieill. Heywood's Ring-Dottrel.

Male. Eye dark brown. Stomach contained small pebbles and pieces of shell.

This species frequents the sea-shore, and runs with great swiftness.

113. *ÆGIALITES HIATICULA*, Linn. Common British Ring-Dottrel.

Eye dark brown ; legs yellow. Only sand in the stomach.

This bird also lives on the coast, and is equally swift-footed with the preceding species.

114. *TOTANUS GLOTTIS*, Linn. Green-shank.

Male. Eye dark brown ; legs and bill light slate-colour.

These birds are very shy, and are mostly gregarious, but sometimes solitary. They generally feed and intermix with the Curlews, frequently walking into the water till it reaches their bodies. The specimen sent seemed to have the remains of shrimps in the stomach.

115. *NUMENIUS ARQUATA*, Linn. Common European Curlew.

Female. Eye dark brown ; legs bluish. Stomach empty, except a piece of shell.

There are great numbers of these birds in the Bay of Natal ; and I think there are two or three species, as they vary much in size. They are exceedingly shy, and difficult to shoot ; they are

gregarious, and feed at low water on the mud-banks; they utter precisely the same note as the Curlew in England, and their habits appear to be the same.

116. GERONTICUS CALVUS, Bodd. South-African Bald Ibis.

Male and female. Top of the head bright red; bill and legs duller red; skin of the neck, and round the eye, greenish-white.

These birds feed entirely on insects, principally beetles. They frequent the open country, and are invariably to be found on land from which the grass has been burnt; they live principally inland, where they are very numerous, but gradually approach the coast during the winter months. I have not seen them nearer the sea than eight or ten miles; they are exceedingly wary, and it is a difficult matter to get within shot of them, as they generally prefer the bare open plains, without cover, to feed on; they walk about very fast, and are constantly on the move from morning till night. I imagine they must eat a great quantity of food, for they are always in search of it—not resting now and then, as all reasonable birds do; they seem to have no time at all for amusement.

[In Steedman's 'Wanderings in South Africa,' vol. i. pp. 144 & 174, this Ibis is said to nest in companies, in clefts in the rocky sides of precipitous mountains—a situation similar to that selected for nidification by its more northern congener, *Geronticus comatus*. Vide Rev. H. B. Tristram's paper in 'Ibis,' vol. ii. p. 78.—J. H. G.]

117. THRESKIORNIS ÆTHIOPICUS (Lath.). Sacred Ibis.

Male. Eye dark brown; legs, bill, and skin of the throat black. Stomach contained a quantity of small crabs and cowries.

These birds frequent the Bay of Natal and the mouths of the rivers along the coast. They are very shy. They feed with the Curlews at low water on the mud-banks; but where they roost I do not know, though I have seen them sometimes sunning themselves on the upper boughs of the Mangroves, together with Spoonbills, White Herons, &c. In their flight they usually form some figure, similarly to the Pelicans, Swans, Geese, &c.

[In my list of a collection of birds from Ibadan, inserted in the 'Ibis,' vol. i. p. 152, I included this species under Savigny's

specific name of "*religiosus*;" but as I believe that "*æthiopicus*" is a prior synonym, I have here adopted it for that reason.—J. H. G.]

118. *CICONIA ALBA*, Briss. White Stork.

[In a collection from Natal, but not sent by Mr. Ayres.—J. H. G.]

119. *ARDEA GOLIATH*, Temm. Goliath Heron.

Male. Eye bright yellow.

These birds frequent the mouths of the rivers and the bays along the coast. They feed entirely upon fish, easily swallowing those which weigh half a pound, or even more. They wade about up to their bodies, and dart on the fish as they swim past. The Bay of Natal affords fine fishing-ground for these birds, being three miles in diameter,—the greater part shallow, with a muddy bottom, and myriads of fish entering with the tide. These Herons when gorged retire amongst the Mangroves to digest their meal, not roosting on the trees, but on the ground. They appear to be very solitary birds; I have seldom seen two together. The specimen sent measured, when in the flesh, upwards of six feet from the bill to the toes.

120. *ARDEA ATRICOLLIS*, Wagl. Black-throated Heron.

Female. Eye light yellow; legs and feet black; upper mandible black; under mandible greenish-yellow, as also was the skin round the eye. The contents of the stomach were lizards, locusts, a snake about two feet long, and a large rat—all swallowed whole, and quite fresh.

This bird was shot in a marshy valley about a mile from the coast, and is the only one of the kind I have seen.

121. *ARDEA PURPUREA*, Linn. Purple Heron.

Female. Immature; eye light yellow.

In the stomach were some good-sized fish. This species frequents streams and marshes.

[A pair of Purple Herons, which I had in confinement some years since, were observed to catch rats when they had the opportunity, and to swallow them whole with great avidity. The specimen sent by Mr. Ayres appears to me to be identical with European examples.—J. H. G.]

122. *HERODIAS GARZETTA*, Linn. Little Egret.

Male. Eye light yellow; upper mandible black, under mandible lightish [but black on the sides towards the tip.—J. H. G.]; legs black, with a few green spots about them; feet pale green. Stomach contained a quantity of small fish. This species frequents the Bay of Natal.

123. *BUPHUS COMATUS*, Pall. Squacco Dwarf-Heron.

The only specimen I have seen. Eye and bill greenish-yellow; ridge of the upper mandible dark; legs pale green. Stomach contained grasshoppers and beetles.

124. *ARDETTA GUTTURALIS*, Smith. Guttural Dwarf-Bittern.

Male. Eye reddish-yellow; legs and bill greenish-yellow; ridge of the upper mandible dark brown. Stomach contained a few insects.

I believe that both this species, and also *Ardetta minuta*, feed entirely at night, generally hiding themselves in the reeds in the day, and coming out to feed at dusk.

[I am inclined to think that this species is identical with *Ardetta sturmii* of West Africa; but I have not seen sufficient specimens to express a positive opinion on the point.—J. H. G.]

125. *PARRA CAPENSIS*, Smith. Cape of Good Hope Jacana.

[Sent from Natal, but not by Mr. Ayres.—J. H. G.]

126. *LARUS PŒOCEPHALUS*, Swains. Grey-headed Gull.

Male and female. Eye greenish-white; legs, feet, bill, and eyelids blood-red; claws black. Contents of stomach, shrimps.

These Gulls frequent the Bay of Natal, frequently alighting on stakes or dead branches of trees that may be above the water. They do not appear to be gregarious.

127. *STERNA VELOX*, Rüpp. Rüppell's Tern.

Male. Eye dark; legs black.

These Terns frequent the Bay of Natal, generally in pairs, but sometimes as many as five or six together. When in search of food, they hover over the water and dart down on fish. Like the preceding species, they alight on any branch or piece of wood that may be above the water.