



J. Wolf, del, et lith.

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COSMETORNIS VEXILLARIUS.

nation of the details of structure in these and the allied genera from all parts of the world, we must consider the Pittas to form a group apart, closely allied to *Myiophonus*, *Brachypteryx*, and *Pnoëpyga*, and, through them, to the South American *Formicariidæ*. *Cinclus*, *Henicurus*, *Eupetes*, and *Zoothera* seem also to come in the same group; and it is a question whether the whole of the *Timaliidæ* must not follow them. These would form a large and very natural family of short-winged terrestrial or semi-terrestrial insectivorous birds, of which the *Pittinæ*, *Myiophoninæ*, *Cinclinæ*, and *Timaliinæ* would be the Old-World section, while the *Thamnophilinæ*, *Formicivorinæ*, and *Formicariinæ* would characterize the New World.

This arrangement is put forward with much diffidence as a mere suggestion which has arisen from the comparisons of these various groups while endeavouring to make out the affinities of the genus *Pitta*.

VIII.—Note on the *Caprimulgine* Genus *Cosmetornis*.

By P. L. SCLATER, M.A., Ph.D., F.R.S.

(Plate II.)

IN the second Number of his 'Icones Avium' Mr. Gould has figured a singular form of Goatsucker, with the inner primaries very much elongated, for which he has proposed the name *Semeiophorus vexillarius*. The term *Semiophorus*, having been previously employed in science, was subsequently altered by Mr. G. R. Gray into *Cosmetornis*. In the *Macrodipteryx longipennis* of Western Africa (a bird known since the days of Afzelius) the same remarkable peculiarity is exhibited by the male bird. But in *Macrodipteryx* the shaft of the elongated primary is denuded, and only terminated by a webbed extremity, whereas in *Cosmetornis* the elongated primary is webbed throughout its length. As, however, the general structure of these two forms closely agrees, they can only be considered as subgenerically different.

While *Macrodipteryx longipennis* is not an uncommon bird in cabinets of natural history, *Cosmetornis vexillarius* has hitherto but rarely made its appearance in European collections. There

is one example of it in the British Museum, and another in Sir William Jardine's collection. The latter specimen was taken on board a vessel in the Mozambique channel; and, curiously enough, an example of this same species, presented to me by Mr. Edmund Gabriel, which I exhibited before the Zoological Society* in 1861, had been obtained in the same way in a ship off the west coast of Africa. Among the birds from the South African Museum, examined and reported upon by Dr. Hartlaub in the fourth volume of this Journal†, was likewise a young male example of this species, said to have been collected in Damara-land by Mr. Andersson.

My friend Captain J. H. Speke, during his recent successful expedition through Eastern Africa, met with this curious Goatsucker in Uganda, and brought home one not very perfect specimen, which forms the subject of the accompanying Plate by Mr. Wolf. I was at first inclined to consider Captain Speke's bird referable to a different local variety from the true *Cosmetornis vexillarius* of Mr. Gould, as, instead of the long "standard feather" being white all along the inner web, it is of a nearly uniform darkish brown throughout. But it would seem that Captain Speke's specimen is not quite adult, and that this feather (which is an ornament of the adult male) may probably change colour. Moreover, as Mr. Gould's type was obtained on the eastern coast of Africa, it is very improbable that two representative species should be found within the same area.

Captain Speke tells me that he shot this bird flying, after nightfall, at Urondogami, north of Lake Nyanza, in Uganda. He saw others flying backwards and forwards, and often alighting on the bare ground in the cleared patches near the villages, whence they flew off again when disturbed.

In the 'Annals of Natural History' for 1862 (vol. x. p. 445) Mr. G. R. Gray has described a second species of *Cosmetornis* from Western Africa, under the name *C. burtoni*. The single typical specimen of this species is in an imperfect state. It appears to differ from *Cosmetornis vexillarius* chiefly in the amount of white upon the primaries.

* See P. Z. S. 1861, p. 44.

† See Ibis, 1862, p. 143.