



1  
2 .

J. Wolf. del. et. lith.

M. & N. Hanhart, imp.

TURDUS ALBICEPS .



# THE IBIS.

---

## NEW SERIES.

---

No. VI. APRIL 1866.

---

### XI.—*A Voice on Ornithology from Formosa.*

By ROBERT SWINHOE, Her Majesty's Consul, F.Z.S., &c.

(Plate V.)

I HAVE been very unfortunate with regard to my scientific books. The two closing numbers of 'The Ibis' for 1864 went down with the mail-steamer in a typhoon; and some other works have since been carried off by pirates on the capture of a schooner bound from Amoy to this port with the mails. Thanks, however, to the deity that presides over science, the two first numbers of the New Series are at hand. Mr. Blyth, I am pleased to see, is still hard at work. I have read his "Identifications and Rectifications of Synonymy" (Ibis, 1865, pp. 27-50), and can corroborate most of what concerns my sphere of experience. I should like, however, to say a few words.

*Eurystomus orientalis*, L. (p. 30), I take to be the summer visitant of South China, and not *E. australis*, Sw. My specimens are with Mr. Tristram, and this question can very easily be settled by any one who cares to take the trouble. *Merops philippinus* I have also received from Swatow, in the Province of Canton (see Ibis, 1865, p. 230). *Lanius hardwickii*, Vig., and *Nectarinia flammazillaris*, Blyth, may occur in China, but I have never had the good fortune to meet with them. "China," however, is a broad term, comprising no small part of Asia.



Surely a collector could give a more restricted habitat for his captures ! I cannot, however, myself accept Mr. Fortune's *Chinese* species. His sole object appears to have been to procure showy things, and he could have had no interest at heart in noting down their special localities. Furthermore I have before explained that Canton is a great emporium for all kinds of showy birds, many of which are brought from all parts of the Indian archipelago. I have in some of the shops there seen side by side *Ampelis garrulus*, *Loxia curvirostra*, and other North-China species with Lories, Parrots, Parrakeets, Love-birds, &c. I was informed by Mr. G. R. Gray that *Loriculus galgulus* was brought by Mr. Fortune from China. I did not specially wonder at it, as I myself had procured skins of *Paradisea apoda* at Canton, and had seen the Malayan birds above noted. Nevertheless I did not, on the strength of such evidence, introduce *L. galgulus* into my Chinese list. I do not, by any means, wish to disparage Mr. Fortune's labours in the cause of science, but simply insist upon satisfactory evidence before I can take upon myself to admit a species, when I consider the determination of the geographical distribution of birds of such importance. A live bird purchased in a shop, or a dried skin procured in the same way, by no means proves that the creature was found wild in the neighbourhood of the shop. It may matter little in horticulture whence a fine form comes, but its *exact* habitat is positively required in our science.

I wish somebody would give us a list of the Philippine Birds\*. It would be of great service to me. I have just heard of a Dr. Otto Semper who has been some years collecting specimens in Manilla. I am trying to get up an exchange and a correspondence with him. Some fruits will, I hope, result from this.

The Cuckoos are very bothersome. According to Mr. Blyth my newly-described *Cuculus monosyllabicus* (Ibis, 1865, p. 545) will be *C. canoroides*, S. Müller. I will make an effort to work the genus by-and-by.

\* [Such a list has just appeared in the 'Journal für Ornithologie' for January 1866. It has been compiled with much pains by Dr. Eduard von Martens.—Ed.]



Mr. Fortune's *Eudynamis australis*, Sw., from China (p. 32), must surely be a joke. I shall have again to appeal to my collection at home. *E. orientalis* I have received from Siam, and I know it to be the Philippine species. The Australian species would have therefore, if really found in China, to traverse the ground of its Asiatic ally twice a year in its migrations. This can scarcely be likely. 1869 331

The note on *Turnix* (p. 33) is highly interesting. *T. maculosa*, Temm., is the commoner species in South China. The other is allied to *T. ocellata*, Scop., but I am not yet prepared to affirm that it is identical with it. I mentioned, in a letter, that my new Formosan species, *T. rostrata* (allied to *T. maculosa*), was shot while attending to its young [Ibis, 1865, p. 543], and that on dissection it proved to be a *male*, and that its mate was not forthcoming. I am inclined to think that even in its nidificatory instincts the *Struthious* affinities are prominent, and that it will be eventually found that the entire duties of incubation are attended to solely by the male. It would be as well to call the attention of observers in other parts of the world to this important idea. The four chickens of *T. rostrata* that I procured under the circumstances before detailed I have bottled, and shall be sending home shortly for Mr. Parker's investigation. 297

*Sturnus dauricus*, Pall. (p. 41, note), has occurred at Tientsin (North China) in summer. I should like much to know whether it is found in the Malayan peninsula all the year. *Fregilus graculus* from Java (*loc. cit.*): I can confidently affirm that I saw a mounted specimen of this species in the "India Museum" marked "Java."

*Cypselus subfurcatus*, Blyth (*loc. cit.*), as its name implies, has a more furcate tail than its ally *C. affinis*, J. E. Gray. The mistake is not mine, but the printer's. While on misprints I may just mention one that ought specially to be corrected. It occurs in my 'Formosan Ornithology,' <sup>9668 1863 p 232</sup> ~~p. 58~~, 5th line. For "birds'-eggs" read "birds' legs."

*Butalis hypogrammica*, Wallace (p. 43). While in England I saw a specimen of this bird in the British Museum, and was struck with its resemblance to my *B. griseisticta*. I allowed myself,



however, to be laughed out of the idea of their identity, and so did not compare the two together. I suspect this will prove to be another of our summer visitants that find winter-quarters in the Indian archipelago.

✓ Allusion is made (p. 47) to the *Microscelis amaurotis* "of China." It occurs in Japan, whence it was originally described in the 'Fauna Japonica.' Has it ever been brought from China?

X I will conclude these remarks with a prayer that in future all my past notes on Chinese Ornithology, in the 'Ibis,' be read in conjunction with my "Catalogue of the Birds of China," published in the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society' for 1863. This last embraces all the latest comparisons made, and identifications worked out, by myself before leaving England.

With regard to Flamingos, though not included in our humble fauna, I should like to record one little fact, which I had the pleasure of communicating some time since to Mr. Darwin. An uncle of mine, who has been in his day a great Indian sportsman, informed me that he once shot a Flamingo, the legs of which were covered with barnacles (*Balani*). Now the Flamingo is known to sit on her nest with her legs dangling over the sides, and, I presume, continues to sit, like some other birds, until the young are hatched, the male feeding her during the period. Flamingoes are stated to pile up their nests in shallow water. We may infer, then, that the bird in question had built her nest in a shallow into which the salt-water flowed, and that she continued to keep her legs submerged in the briny liquid until the barnacles formed. I know no other way of accounting for the phenomenon. The truth of this solution might be tested by ascertaining how long it usually takes for an object submerged in the sea to contract barnacles, and to compare this when ascertained with the term of the Flamingo's incubation.

✓ In Mr. Tristram's "Ornithology of Palestine" (Ibis, 1865, p. 77) is the remark that species "which resort to the highest latitudes for nidification also pass further than others to the southward in winter." This my experience in Eastern Asia quite enables me to confirm, and, to some extent, the axiom



reversed. But I want more data before I can bring forward much that is of value on the important subject of migration of birds. *Cypselus galilæensis* (shown subsequently by Dr. Sclater to be no other than our Indian friend *C. affinis*) in habits corresponds very nearly to our own *C. subfurcatus*. The Bulbul of Palestine is a fine songster (p. 81); so is our affine *Ixus chrysorrhoides*, and I suspect all of this plain-coloured group, which are, in most of the species, adorned on the *crissum* with carnation or saffron. The green-tinted Bulbuls, on the other hand, are simply noisy chatterers. *Drymæca gracilis* (p. 82), I before pointed out, is not a typical *Drymæca*, but a *Suya*. I see Mr. Blyth (p. 44) identifies it with his *S. (Burnesia) lepida* of India. The colour of its eggs alone would appear to separate it. The typical *Drymæca* have bluish eggs, with brown and claret-coloured blotches and streaks.

I am told that some consider my *Oreoperdix crudigularis* (Ibis, 1864, p. 426) an *Arboricola*. That this Formosan bird is allied to *Arboricola* I am prepared to allow, but I cannot admit it into that genus, at least not into the genus which includes *A. torqueola* of India, the only species of the group that I have by me. The specimen of *A. torqueola* that I have here was kindly sent to me by Dr. Squire (of Pheasant fame); and *O. crudigularis* certainly differs from that a good deal in the form of the head and the bill. Ours has a much more rounded or concave wing, with the quills obtusely ended instead of pointed, and its tail is shorter, not surpassing the wings. The legs of the two species are somewhat similarly formed, but those of ours are *red*. I am sending home skeletons of this bird, and I think there will be found a good deal of difference between the osteology of the two. The two species differ from each other far more than many other types of distinct genera. I hate the "furor genericus" so called, but still my conscience at present tells me that I am right in separating these two birds.

On the 23rd of July my northern collector sent me a box of skins from Tamsuy. Among these was a cock *Euplocamus swinhoii*, which had its second long central tail-feather *white* in its inner or upper web instead of *black*; the *rectrices* were, as usual, sixteen in number. There were also a pair—but a pair



only—of the Redlegs (*Oreoperdix crudigularis*). These had more black feathers on their throats than ordinary; and I suspect from this that the bareness of the red throat-skin marks the nuptial livery of the bird.

On the 30th of July I was wandering about the alluvial flats between the sea and the city of Taiwan-foo. They were partly under water from the late heavy rains, and were frequented by several mud-birds. I observed *Charadrius longipes*, many of *Hiaticula geoffroyi*, *Numenius uropygialis*, and *Hydrochelidon leucopareia*. These I believe to be all residents in the island, as I have before observed.

To preserve dried skins in a country like this, one is obliged to be ever on the watch against vermin. To say nothing of several species of ants and the little pest moths *Tineæ*, also of many species, a large beetle, which (as Mr. Wallace writes to me) glories in the name of *Dermestes vulpinus*, and a small yellowish-brown beetle of, I think, the same genus, destroy not only the feathers but the skin also. Ye naturalists of England, that sit at home at ease, pity the difficulties with which a brother-in-arms has to contend in the tropics.

338 August 11th was a fine day, but very hot. I took a ten-mile ride into the country to the banks of a river near the foot of the first range of low hills. In the steep clay banks occurred round holes bored by the Sand-Martin (*Cotyle sinensis*), but the little fellows had finished with them for the year. In a small mango-grove heard the well-known "pic" of a Woodpecker, and soon saw with much pleasure a pair of the small *Picus kaleensis* amusing themselves on the boughs of a mango-tree. On the opposite bank, in a wood, put up a Bamboo-Partridge (*Bambusicola sonorivox*) and a large flight of Night-Herons. The latter appear to have closed incubating-transactions for the season. On returning, in a paddy-field, I put up a white-rumped Green Sandpiper, which I took to be *Totanus affinis*; but more of this species anon.

On August 16th this place was visited by a severe typhoon or cyclone, which lasted for three days. A small party of Terns (*Sterna velox*) were driven into the harbour. On the 17th I saw the first *Gallinago solitaria* of the season.



August 23rd.—Another typhoon. Many birds were flying about distressed by the gale. A smallish Tern (*Sterna hirundo*?) and a Gull-like bird, which I took to be a *Stercorarius*, driven in. All the country saturated with rain. Hermit-crabs (*Pagurus*) in shells of *Buccinum*, sp., climbing up bushes and rocks some way up the hills, and hanging three or four feet from the ground, apparently to avoid the damp. Saw the first Willow-Wren, *Phylloscopus sylvicultrix*, Swinh., the first *Lanius lucionensis*, Strickl., and the first *Reguloides superciliosus* (Gmel.).

September 2nd.—While wandering about the plain in the early morning, I watched several of *Phylloscopus sylvicultrix* and *Lanius lucionensis*. I also observed a Thrush-like bird sitting quietly on the branch of a tree, which at first sight I took for an *Artamus*. I shot it, and to my delight found it to be the young of *Turdus albiceps*, Swinh. (*Ibis*, 1864, p. 363), the old birds of which new species I had before procured from the Tamsuy mountains\*. It appeared to be quite alone. Here is a description of it:—

*Turdus albiceps*, nobis (typ. spec. of adult procured at Tamsuy March 15, 1864): bird of the year. Length 8 inches, wing 4·36, tail 3. Iris brown. Bill yellowish, washed with olive-brown; at rictus and inside of mouth orange-yellow. Head and neck olive-brown, mottled with ochre. A broad white streak runs over each eye, nearly meeting at the occiput. Upper parts blackish-olive, the coverts streaked with reversed arrow-heads of ochre; the dorsals and upper tail-coverts but lightly streaked. Primaries and winglet black, with paler edges. Secondaries also black, washed on their outer webs with blackish-olive. Tail of twelve mucronate rectrices, black, washed with olive. Under parts orange-buff, speckled and mottled with olive, washed on the sides with olive and grey. Throat and vent dull white. Sides of breast deep olive, with broad ochreous centres, often shaped like arrow-heads. Under wings and tail blackish-grey. Legs and claws bright brownish-yellow.

\* [Through the kindness of M. Jules Verreaux we are enabled to give a figure (Plate V.) of the adult male of this fine species, discovered by Mr. Swinhoe in March 1864, and described by him, as referred to above, in the former series of 'The Ibis.'—ED.]



The immature plumage of this species shows a resemblance to that of *T. cardis* and *T. sibiricus*—to that of the latter in having spots on the wing-coverts. Our species in this stage is more *melanistic*, and is a more typical *Merula* than any I know. It has not the Turdine under-spots of either the *T. cardis* or the *T. sibiricus*, which both of them partly retain till the completion of their second year. It even makes more advance towards the *melanistic* form of *Turdus* (or *Merula*) than even *T. mandarinus* or *T. merula*; I mean it is more alienated from the Turdine or primary Thrush-characters of the group.

295- On September 4th I nearly lost my life, being sucked under a cutter, moored athwart the tide, while out for a morning swim in the harbour. I mention this to account for my late dilatoriness. My system received such a shock that I was next to useless for more than a fortnight after it. I received the same day a box of specimens from Tamsuy. I could not attend to them, and they were consequently put away. In overhauling them lately, I find some interesting things among them which deserve special notice; but in the midst of Reports and Returns which overwhelm me at the end of each quarter of the year, I have not yet had time to draw up careful notes. The box in which these specimens were stored was neglected, and the outturn was in a sad state. O, *Dermestes vulpinus*, that thy bump of destructiveness were a little smaller!

September 7th.—Another typhoon, finished off to-day with a south-easterly gale, brought to our harbour a large flock of Dunlins (*Tringa alpina*) and some more small Terns.

✓ The live Buzzard (*Poliornis poliogenys*) that I before mentioned [Ibis, 1865, p. 545] as being in the possession of a friend of mine at Taiwan-foo, he subsequently gave to me. Its legs and a basal belt on the culmen of its bill were of a fine orange-ochre; its irides a fine clear yellow. It always held its head inclined to its right shoulder. I much desired to get it safe to England as a present to the Gardens; but it unfortunately died soon after reaching Hongkong, though it had lived in captivity in Formosa for many months.

September 19th, I saw the Rock-Thrushes, *Petrocincla manillensis*, about the houses of the town. They are now regular in



their attendance, chasing flies on the roof-tops and about the verandahs, and occasionally delighting us with their song.

September 23rd, I came across a small party of Curlews, *Numenius uropygialis*, feeding on the mudflats on the banks of the river, and knocked over three, but only succeeded in bagging two. They were much tamer than *N. arcuatus*; their note has a much deeper trill; and the sound birds did not gather and wheel round and show concern for the wounded as do the winter-species: my exposing a wounded bird for a decoy only resulted in the loss of the specimen itself. Of the two I secured, one exceeds the other a good bit in the length of bill, wings, legs, and toes. This I took at first to be a sexual difference; but on dissection they both proved to be females; and on subsequent examination of the *sterna*, I find that that of the smaller specimen is less developed, and I conclude therefore that the lesser bird was simply the younger. In a grove along the avenue at the inner foot of Apes' Hill I heard the unmistakable "pic" of the small Woodpecker (*Picus kaleensis*), and soon had the satisfaction of procuring the pair. The gizzards of the small Curlews above-mentioned contained remains of small crabs, were muscular, and like inverted saucers, as in the Rails and *Rhynchæa*. The cæca were long and vermiform, and the unique cæcal appendage (shaped like, and the size of, a full-grown blowfly-maggot) occurred on the intestine about a foot from the anus. With respect to this appendage, and to the shape of the stomach, *Rhynchæa* approaches *Numenius*; but in the relation of their *sterna* they stand widely apart. That of *Rhynchæa* is Scolopacine, while that of *Numenius* is Totanine, having double open *foramina*\*. In its Ralline affinities and plumage *Rhynchæa* is analogous to *Eurypyga helias*, and may be

\* [The number of foramina or emarginations at the posterior end of the sternum in Snipes, Sandpipers, and kindred groups is by no means constant in the different generally recognized genera, as our contributor seems to suppose. *Scolopax gallinago* and *Totanus ochropus* have each a single emargination on each side of the keel, while *Scolopax gallinula* and *Totanus glareola* have double emarginations. It would be easy to enumerate many more instances; we only mention these to show that the terms *Scolopacine* and *Totanine* as indicating different types of structure in the sternum are insufficiently precise.—ED.]



considered an outstanding genus among the *Scolopaces*, much as the latter is among the *Ardeæ*.

September 28th, I met with small parties of *Heterornis sinensis*. They wend their way southwards from Amoy at this season; but what they do in Formosa during their migrations I cannot make out. They were here, as I before remarked, in spring. I have not found them resident during summer in Formosa; and they are not quoted from Japan, or known in North China. They occur here scantily when they are met with, and I fancy they are blown off their course to our shores. *Motacilla boarula* and *Budytes taivana*\* have returned from the hills. The latter is now abundant enough in the flats and fields. Swallows and Sand-Martins are wandering about without a settled habitation. Walking along the avenue this morning my attention was attracted by a Halcyon's scream, and two birds, one chasing the other, dashed through the thicket. The first bird I was not quick enough to catch sight of. The pursuing bird was an Oriole (*Oriolus chinensis*). The Oriole discontinued the chase, and, perching on a tree not far from me, began to whistle its absurd attempt at a song, as if glorying in the defeat of its enemy. It was a mature bird, and looked very showy in the sunlight. The colour of the iris was not red, but just as I have described before. On returning I came close on the *Halcyon*: it was *H. coromanda*, a rare bird in the low country. I was so fascinated in watching the lovely pink-plumaged fellow, that I let slip the opportunity of securing him. He was very impatient of being watched, and flew as I followed from one tree to another. Once he dashed against some leaves, and flew back to his perch, as Flycatchers are wont to do. He appeared to have caught something; but what it was I could not see.

Takow, S.W. Formosa,  
1 October, 1865.

\* [This word is not quite plain in the manuscript. If it has been rightly read, we may mention that we are not aware that the Yellow Wagtail of Formosa, probably indicated by it, has been yet described as a distinct species ( *Cf.* Ibis, 1863, pp. 309, 310).—ED.]