PERDIX BARBATA. *J. Verr. et O. Des. Mus.*

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PERDIX BARBATA, J. Verr. & O. Des Murs.

Bearded Partridge.

Perdix barbata, J. Verr. & O. Des Murs, in Proc. of Zool. Soc., 1863, pp. 62 and 371, pl. ix.—Swinh. *ibid.*

p. 307.—G. R. Gray, Hand-list of Birds, part ii. p. 267.

Tetrao perdix, var. *daurica*, Pall. Zoog. Rosso-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 78.

Perdix sibirica, Pall. Itin., p. 80.

—— (*Starna*) *cinerea*, Middendorff, Reise, Vög., p. 209.

—— *daurica*, David, Nouv. Archiv. du Mus. d'Hist. Nat. de Paris, tom. iii. p. 38.

ALL ornithologists and every sportsman will at once perceive that the bird represented in the accompanying plate typifies, in Dauria and China, the well-known Grey or Common Partridge of Europe; but it is not known to sportsmen generally, or those unversed in the science of ornithology, that the two birds above mentioned and the Thibet Partridge, named *Perdix Hodgsoniæ*, are the only known species of the genus *Perdix* as now restricted. Such, however, is the case; and I may state in a few words that the three species are each restricted to a somewhat limited area:—the Common Partridge (*Perdix cinerea*) being confined, with a trifling exception, to Central Europe; the Thibet Partridge (*Perdix Hodgsoniæ*) to the tableland at the back of the great Himalayan range of mountains; and the Bearded Partridge, here figured (*Perdix barbata*), is found in most, if not all, of the mountainous parts of the Altai, and thence eastward to the neighbourhood of Peking and Tientsin, the markets of which cities are supplied with it as our own are with the common European bird. There mark that not more than three species are known of the genus *Perdix*, is intended for the information of those who do not attend to the minute division of the forms of birds which has of late been instituted by ornithologists; for such persons would naturally say, “there are many other Partridges besides these.” True, but not of the same form—the Red-legs constituting a distinct group by themselves under the generic title of *Caccabis*, the little *Ammoperdix* of Persia and India another; and there are still many more forms, which it is not necessary to enumerate here. Each of these presents some one or more characters not common to the others. For instance, the *Caccabes* or Red-legs are all spurred, and the two sexes are alike in colour; while the true Partridges (genus *Perdix*) are unspurred, and the sexes are distinguished by several particulars, the most prominent of which is the presence of a well-defined horse-shoe like mark on the breast of the males.

Unfortunately I have nothing original to communicate respecting the habits and economy of the Bearded Partridge; for the little that is known respecting it I must therefore be indebted to the pens of others.

In the ‘Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London’ for 1863, MM. Jules Verreaux and O. Des Murs characterized this species under the name of *Perdix barbata*, with a description which they say “was taken from a fully adult male example obtained in Central Dauria,” and state that “the bird is met with in the environs of the city of Nertschinsk, and in all the mining districts of Nertschinski-zawod. It evinces a preference for cultivated fields and brushwood; during winter it descends to meadows near rivulets, and sometimes approaches the houses. Its voice and flight are similar to those of *Perdix cinerea*.”

In some notes kindly furnished to me by Mr. Swinhoe, that gentleman says:—“This bird was minutely described by Pallas in 1811 as *Tetrao perdix*, var. *daurica*; in his ‘Zoographia Rosso-Asiatica,’ tome ii. p. 78, where he states that it is found in the Altai mountains, at Jenisea, and in Dauria; and that it abounds in autumn in places among the rocks which are exposed to the sun, and where it passes the winter in coveys, often hiding under the snow. At p. 80 of the same work, Pallas refers to this bird under the name of *Perdix sibirica*. Von Schrenck does not mention its occurrence in Amoorland. Middendorff, in his ‘Reise in den äussersten Norden und Osten Sibiriens,’ 1851 (Vögel, p. 209), under *Perdix* (*Starna*) *cinerea*, says, “It was only in the Baraba steppe that I stumbled upon a considerable covey of this species.” Radde, in his ‘Reisen in den Süden von Ost-Sibirien,’ 1863, describes this Partridge as *Perdix* (*Starna*) *cinerea*, var. *rupestris daurica*, Pall.

“In Père Armand David’s Catalogue of Peking Birds in the ‘Nouvelles Archives du Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle de Paris,’ tome iii. p. 38, this bird is stated to be ‘very common in Mongolia, rarer in our bare mountains, never on the plains.’

“The only Partridge I have met with on the hills near Peking,” continues Mr. Swinhoe, “is *Caccabis chukar*; but sportsmen who have roamed about the Mongolian country beyond the Great Wall have informed me that they frequently came across coveys of a Partridge which they took to be the ordinary Home Horseshoe. The Bearded Partridge is brought in numbers in a frozen state to the Peking markets in winter by the

Mongolians, who trap them. It would appear from various accounts to be a rock-loving bird, and to differ in the choice of its haunts from the home species, as *Caccabis chukar* of the Himalayas and North China does from the French Partridge, *Caccabis rubra*."

In general appearance the present bird assimilates to the Common Partridge of Europe more nearly than to its other ally the *Perdix Hodgsoniæ*—but is readily distinguished from the former by its somewhat smaller size, by the lengthened plumes on the cheeks, by the light sandy-buff colouring of its breast, by the jet-black horseshoe-shaped mark on the abdomen, and by a very narrow line of black on the forehead close to the base of the upper mandible, which does not exist in the European bird.

The male has the hinder part of the crown and the occiput brownish black, striated and mottled with greyish white; fore part of the head, a broad stripe over each eye, the cheeks, throat, and centre of the breast sandy buff; back and sides of the neck and upper surface of the body light grey, crossed with numerous fine wavy lines of black; besides which the feathers of the mantle are crossed near the tip with a crescent of lively chestnut, bordered above and below by a light or whitish grey line; the back and upper tail-coverts are similarly coloured and marked, but the grey tint is paler than that of the neck and mantle; wing-coverts, scapularies, and innermost secondaries greyish brown, blotched with chestnut and having a conspicuous stripe of dull white down the shaft; primaries brown, crossed by numerous bands of very pale buff; flanks grey, freckled with narrow bands of black, crossed near the tip with a broad conspicuous band of lively chestnut, and having a line of white down the shaft; on the centre of the abdomen a horseshoe-shaped mark of jet-black; lower part of the abdomen and under tail-coverts buffy grey; lateral tail-feathers chestnut, becoming darker at the tip; bill bluish horn-colour; legs and feet olive-brown.

The female is very similar, but has only indications of the buff colouring of the breast and of the black mark on the abdomen.

The Plate represents a male and a female, of the size of life.

Gould, John. 1871. "Partridge, *Perdix barbata*, J. Verr & O.Des Murs. [Pl. 73]." *The Birds of Asia* 6(XXIII), -. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.323143>.

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