



COLUMBA RUPESTRIS, Pall.

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Mongolian Rock-Pigeon.

Columba aenas, var. *δ. rupestris*, Pallas, Zoogr. Rosso-As., i. p. 560.

——— *rupestris*, Bp. Consp. Gen. Av., ii. p. 48.—Gray, List of Columbæ, 1856, p. 29.—Swinh. P. Z. S., 1863, p. 306.—Jerdon, B. Ind., iii. p. 470.—Swinh. P. Z. S., 1870, p. 434, 1871, p. 397.—Gray, Hand-list B., ii. p. 232.—Taczan. J. f. O., 1873, p. 97.

——— *leucozonura*, Swinh. Ibis, 1861, p. 259.

——— *rupicola*, Hume, Lahore to Yarkand, p. 273.

THIS is the eastern representative of the Rock-Pigeon of Europe (*Columba livia*), which it replaces throughout Eastern Asia. Severtzoff has procured it in Turkestan, and, during the first Yarkand Expedition, Dr. Henderson met with it in Ladak. "One specimen," he writes, "of this species was procured at Lé on the 4th of July, where enormous flocks of Pigeons were observed; but it was not at the time discriminated, and it is not certain whether these colonies consisted entirely of this species, or whether other species were intermingled in the flock."

Regarding its distribution in India, Dr. Jerdon observes that it was procured by Major Boys in Kumaon, "where it is known as the Pale Blue Rock-Pigeon. It is also, perhaps, as suggested by Blyth, the Hill-Pigeon of Mussooree, which is said in summer to fly in small flocks to the Deyra Doon in the morning, returning to the hills in the evening; and it is certainly the pied variety of the Blue Pigeon observed by Adams in Ladak." Commenting on the above passage Mr. Hume remarks:—"This species never occurs near Massuri, nor in any other part of the Himalayas, to the best of my belief, below 12,000 feet."

Pallas originally discovered this Rock-Pigeon in Dauria, and there is a specimen in the British Museum from the same locality. Dr. Dybowski says that in Eastern Siberia it "lives in a semidomesticated condition, nesting in the roofs of houses and in clefts and fissures of the rocks. It breeds more than once in the year, and the males court the hen birds all the year round. The latter begin to nest in February, and finish in September. The 'coo' of the male is somewhat different from that of the European Rock-Dove, and the flight more rapid, so that the Sparrow-Hawk cannot overtake it. In the villages Cats, and among the rocks the large Eared Owl (*Bubo sibiricus*), create the greatest ravages among them."

Père David met with the species in Thibet; and Mr. Swinhoe gives its habitat as "North China" in his latest list. The latter gentleman, in his paper entitled "Zoological Notes of a Journey from Canton to Peking and Kalgan," writes as follows:—"On the 6th of July we visited a large cave about a mile from our temple. It is on the side of a low hill which stands alone. Its mouth is about 20 feet in diameter, opening into an abyss floored with broken rocks, among which water has collected. Its internal dimensions are large; but it offers no means of entrance. Along the walls of its interior the rock was broken into shelves; and here the Rock-Pigeon (*C. rupestris*, Bp.) resorted in hosts to rear its young, and find a cool retreat from the noonday sun. A shout and a few stones thrown in brought them out in swarms." Again, in his account of the "birds observed about Talien Bay," Mr. Swinhoe describes the present bird as *C. leucozonura*, and observes:—"This Rock-Pigeon, at once distinguishable from *C. livia* by its white tail-band, its purple breast, and the reversion of the resplendent tints that adorn the neck, is found in immense numbers in Talien Bay, where the precipitous rocks abounding in dark limestone caverns afford it a safe retreat and present it with cradles for the rearing of its young. The caverns these birds generally choose were dark and unwholesome-looking, with the damp trickling from the roof. In these places out of arm's reach the Pigeons chose rocky ledges to place their stick-built nests on; rude constructions they generally were. You never watched long before seeing some bird either going or returning with food. They mostly went on these excursions several together, and dashing by with rapid flight, made for the fields of newly-planted grain, into which they would drop and commence to search for food. On our first landing we found no difficulty in approaching to within a few yards; but they very soon learnt to dread the gun. The ships of war that visited this bay during early spring, report these birds as wandering about the country, associated in immense flocks. One officer, I was informed, brought down thirteen at one shot."

I may, in conclusion, remark that Professor Schlegel considers the present species to be only one of the many varieties of the ordinary *C. livia*; and, in his lately published list of the Columbæ in the Leiden Museum (p. 64), he mentions specimens from Lake Baikal, Amoy, and Japan; but he says nothing to indicate that they are *C. rupestris*, excepting in the case of the Baikal examples.

The figure in the Plate is life-sized.



Gould, John. 1874. "Mongolian Rock-Pigeon, Columba rupestris [Pl. 54]." *The Birds of Asia* 6(XXVI), -. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.323301>.

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