IXUS SINENSIS.

J. Gould & H. C. Richter del et lith.

Walter, Imp.

IXUS SINENSIS.

Chinese Bulbul.

- Le Gobe-mouche verdâtre de la Chine*, Sonn. Voy. Ind. Orient., ii. p. 197.
Wreathed Flycatcher, Lath. Gen. Syn., ii. pt. 1, p. 336.
Muscicapa sinensis, Gm. S. N., i. p. 942.
Turdus occipitalis, Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 410.—Eydoux et Souleyet, Mag. de Zool. (1836), Oiseaux, pl. 66.
Pycnonotus sinensis, Blyth, J. A. S. B., xiv. p. 569.—Id. Cat. B. Mus. A. S. B., p. 210.—Horsf. & Moore, Cat. B. Mus. E. I. Co., i. p. 246.
——— *occipitalis*, Gray, Gen. B., i. p. 237.—Swinh. Ibis, 1861, p. 39.
Ixus sinensis, Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., i. p. 266.—Swinh. P. Z. S., 1871, p. 369.
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If I had wished to select one of the commonest Chinese birds I probably could not have chosen a fitter subject for my Plate than the present species; but, notwithstanding that it is one which has been more than once figured, I cannot resist the opportunity of giving an illustration of the nest and young birds, with which Mr. Swinhoe has kindly furnished me; for although the species has been known for a long time (ever since the time of Sonnerat) we have only lately become thoroughly acquainted with its manners and economy.

In his last list of Chinese birds Mr. Swinhoe gives the habitat as follows:—"Luichow to Shanghai, and westward to Szechuen, also in Formosa. Shanghai samples are larger, with the black of the crown somewhat obscuring the white of the occiput; Szechuen specimens have the occiput very white, with a pale halter mark round the neck; but both these varieties occasionally occur at Amoy."

The best account of the species is that given by the Consul in 'The Ibis' for 1863, p. 289:—

"This is the commonest of the *Pycnonotidae* in Southern China; it is said to be also very common in the Philippines, and in Formosa is our only species, being found in great abundance throughout all the low country. My specimens vary chiefly in the proportions of white and black on the head. I have one peculiar variety from Amoy. The Formosan form is essentially identical with the Chinese bird, having no special peculiarities of its own. It is, however, a bird abundant on the coasts of both the island and the main, and possesses no mean powers of flight; and, though usually resident in localities where found, there could be no difficulty in supposing it occasionally to transport itself across the channel.

"These birds subsist partly on insects, and partly on berries and small wild figs. In habits they connect the *Fringillæ* and the *Muscicapæ*, assembling, like the former, in large flocks, and flying from tree to tree in noisy concert in search of berries, and, like the latter, pursuing insects in the air. They have no habits in common with the skulking *Garrulæ*, preferring rather to show themselves tame and conspicuous; no creeping from bush to bush, and chattering in low and coaxing whisper, in their case; but, perching on the tops or exposed parts of bushes and trees, they assemble and utter loud notes,—often, when so engaged, ruffling their crests, rounding the back and tail, and making the tips of their wings meet over their heads. Their notes are very varied, but strikingly peculiar, and I would try to syllable them if there was any chance of conveying to the reader an idea of their natural sounds. In April they commence nesting, but still keeping together in parties, which meet after the business of the day is over and amuse themselves till nightfall. They mostly build three nests in the course of the season, occasionally four, laying in the first nest usually five eggs, in the others that succeed three. In the interior the nest is large and deep for the size of the bird; it is usually made of grasses, lined with finer samples; but in the materials these birds are by no means particular, almost any thing they can gather, such as scraps of paper, cotton, cloth, leaves, and feathers, being added. In the site, too, they are not regular; any bush or tree, of almost any height from the ground, will serve their purpose; and in the usual choice of their position they show as little discernment as the Hedge-Sparrow (*Accentor modularis*) at home, frequently placing their nests in most exposed situations. They generally nestle in gardens close to the habitations of Chinese, and, being familiar birds, are protected. When their nest is approached they make a great chattering; but they have far less to fear from man than from Magpies and *Garrulæ*es.

"Their eggs are of a purplish-white ground-colour, spotted closely and often confusedly with dark shades of brownish purple-grey. They measure .9 by .65 inch."

An amusing story is also related by the same gentleman (Ibis, 1870, p. 254) concerning the present species or its Hainan relative:—"The Chinese writers of some centuries back call the Hainan *Ixus* by the

same name as the Chinese race; and one author gives a joke, which annoyed a celebrated old gentleman with a bald head. The latter was sitting with some friends in an arbour, when a Bulbul flew over. One of the friends asked what bird it was, and another replied, 'The White-poll'd Grandsire,' as *I. sinensis* is named by the Chinese literati. The friends laughed, but the old gentleman did not like it.

"The whole story is thus given in the 'Kiung-shan-Heen Gazetteer':—'Choo Kokih was in the reception-hall of Lord Woo, when this bird flew past. Lord Woo asked what bird it was. Choo replied, "The White-poll'd Grandsire." Chang Chao, an old gentleman also present, suspecting that Choo was joking at his expense, said, "I have never heard of a bird called White-poll'd Grandsire. Perhaps you know another called White-poll'd Grandmother?" Choo at once rejoined, "No! but you must know the Parrot's Mamma (Cockatoo). Would you like to have also a Parrot's Papa?" Poor Chang was perplexed, and the rest of the company amused."

I copy the annexed description from the published papers of Mr. Swinhoe:—

"*Adult*.—Bill and legs black. Iris rich brown. Crown, moustache, and nuchal band black. Auriculars brown, ending in a large white spot. Upper parts brownish grey, each feather being margined laterally with yellowish olive-green. Quills and tail hair-brown, margined on outer webs with greenish yellow. Throat white; a broad pectoral band of light greyish brown. Underparts pure white in most specimens, with only a few yellow streaks; in others dingy yellowish white, most of the feathers margined exteriorly with sulphur-yellow. Under wing whitish, the fourth and fifth quills equal and longest. Tail-feathers twelve, somewhat graduated, with white under-shafts.

"The young of this species have the head a uniform colour with the back, which is light brown instead of grey; the rest of the colours are much paler. Among my series from Amoy I have one very curious variety, in which the white of the occiput and throat is of a fine clear smoke-grey. My specimens differ from one another chiefly in the development of the white occipital patch; some have it very large, and occupying a good portion of the head, while in others it gets encroached upon by the black, until in some specimens it almost entirely disappears. There is also a great variation in size and length of wing and tail; but in the form and length of bill the difference is not so appreciable as I have found it in many species of birds."

The Plate represents the birds with their nest and young, all of the natural size.

Gould, John. 1874. "Chinese Bulbul, *Ixus sinensis* [Pl. 11]." *The Birds of Asia* 3(XXVIII), -. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.323370>.

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