TROCHALOPTERON MELANOSTIGMA, *Blyth*.

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Tickell's Laughing Thrush.

Trochalopteron melanostigma, Blyth, Journ. As. Soc. Beng. xxiv. p. 268 (1855).—Blyth & Walden, Birds of Burmah, p. 108, no. 316 (1875).—Wardlaw Ramsay, Ibis, 1877, p. 464.—Hume & Davison, Stray Feathers, 1878, vol. i. p. 291.—Hume, Stray Feathers, 1879, p. 97.
Pterocyclus melanostigmus, Gray, Hand-list of Birds, i. p. 283. no. 4192 (1869).

This beautiful species of Laughing Thrush was discovered by the late Colonel Tickell in the mountains of Tenasserim, where he found it up to the vast wall-like crags of Mouleyit at a height of 7500 feet. It has also been obtained by Mr. Davison in the same country; and Captain Wardlaw Ramsay met with it in Karen-nee at a height of 5000 feet, where he found it very abundant. He writes:—"A native bird-catcher snared more than a dozen for me one day in a few hours, besides specimens of *Turdus sibiricus*, *T. pallidus*, *Oreocincla mollissima*, and *Sibia picoides*, using as his bait the larvæ of some insect. In some specimens the ferruginous-chestnut colour of the throat and breast is continued over the whole of the lower surface."

Mr. Davison's note on the species in Tenasserim is as follows:—

"This species, except perhaps in the nesting-season, is always found in small parties of six or eight. They feed chiefly on the ground, keeping much in the brushwood, rarely flying into trees unless pressed by dogs; neither a very noisy nor very silent bird, uttering from time to time its fine whistling call, which greatly resembles that of the species (*T. erythrocephalum*) that we get about Simla. By no means a shy bird, and rather common on the hills from 3000 feet and upwards (not seen in the plains), and especially so about Mooleyit. It keeps to the forest or its outskirts as a rule; but it sometimes at Mooleyit ventures into the detached clumps of briars and scrub that stud the grassy slopes near the summit. All the specimens I examined had fed exclusively on insects."

The present species is very closely allied to *T. ruficapillum*, like which species it has the cap chestnut as well as the throat; but it differs from that bird in the following characters—the black primary-coverts (which form a wing-patch), the black chin, the uniform hind neck and mantle—as well as in having the ear-coverts ashy, streaked with black and slightly washed with rufous.

The following excellent description has been given in 'Stray Feathers' by Mr. Hume:—

"*Males*. Length 10·4 to 10·62; expanse 12·0 to 13·0; tail from vent 4·4 to 4·5; wing 4·0 to 4·2; tarsus 1·5 to 1·6; bill from gape 1·2; weight 2·75 to 3·25 oz.

"*Females*. Length 9·85 to 10·7; expanse 11·62; tail from vent 4·0 to 4·5; wing 3·8 to 4·5; tarsus 1·45 to 1·65; bill from gape 1·2; weight 2·75 oz.

"Legs, feet, and claws very pale brown to reddish brown; bill black; irides brown or hazel-nut brown.

"The lores and point of the forehead black; the rest of the forehead, crown, occiput, and a sort of tail to the occiput descending onto the nape, bright ferruginous chestnut to deep ferruginous, almost maroon chestnut; cheeks, ear-coverts, sides of the occiput, and upper part of sides of the nape delicate silvery grey, regularly striated longitudinally with dusky; feathers at the base of the lower mandible and chin black, the former sometimes slightly streaked silvery; the black of the chin and of the feathers on the base of the lower mandible shading into an intense ferruginous or ferruginous-red on the throat, whence this colour extends, somewhat diluted, over the rest of the front of the neck. Most generally only a trace of this extends onto the breast, but the birds are very variable in this respect, and in some specimens this ferruginous, though less ruddy and less intense in character, spreads over the whole of the upper breast, the middle part of the lower breast, and upper abdomen, and in one specimen before me right down to the vent. Normally, however, the breast, abdomen, sides, flanks, vent, lower tail-coverts, tibial plumes are all a clear olive-brown or olive, the sides a little shaded with grey, and the middle of the breast and its sides a little diffused with a paler, duller, and less ferruginous tinge of the colour of the lower neck. Of course, where the ruddy or ferruginous tinge is more extended, the amount of the olive is proportionately contracted. The sides of the neck below the silvery striated face-patch, the back of the neck, and upper back are olive, sometimes greener, sometimes yellower, and sometimes again browner or greyer; the rest of the back, scapulars, rump, and upper tail-coverts are usually the same colour, but darker in shade and less pure in tint. The primary greater coverts are velvet-black, forming a conspicuous patch on the wing; the earlier secondary greater coverts are red, varying from bright ferruginous chestnut to an almost orange ferruginous; the rest of the coverts are olive; the quills are hair-brown; their outer webs and the greater part of the visible portion of both webs of the tertiaries bright golden olive, in some,

however, with a decided greenish tinge, and the colour usually brightest and most intense towards the bases of the primaries; the tips of the tertiaries and later secondaries more or less untouched with this colour, giving the effect of rather irregular ill-defined black or blackish tipplings. The tail is dark brown, margined everywhere, and both webs of the central and the outer webs of the lateral feathers suffused with a somewhat duller shade of the wing-colour, varying as this does from bright golden olive to dull greenish olive-yellow. The wing-lining varies: when the red descends far on the breast, it is chiefly ruddy olive-brown; but in others, which show less red on the breast and abdomen, it is a pure olive or olive-brown, some few of the longest feathers being like the lower surface of the quills, a dark glossy, somewhat blackish hair-brown; the edges of the wing are white, yellowish, or ruddy in patches, varying a good deal in different specimens."

The figures in the Plate represent a male and female of about the size of life; they have been drawn from a pair of birds kindly lent me by Captain Wardlaw Ramsay.

[R. B. S.]

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