TROCHALOPTERON VARIEGATUM.

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Variegated Trochalopteron.

Cinclosoma variegatum, Vigors, P. Z. S., 1831, p. 56.—Gould, Cent. Himal. B., tab. xvi.

Pterocyclus variegatus, Gray, Gen. B., i. p. 226.—Bp. Consp. i. p. 372.—Horsf. & Moore, Cat. B. Mus. E. I. Co., i. p. 207.—Gray, Hand-l. B., i. p. 283.

Crateropus variegatus, Blyth, J. A. S. B., xii. p. 950.

Garrulax variegatus, Blyth, J. A. S. B., xii. p. 950.—Id. Cat. B. Mus. A. S. B., p. 97.

Trochalopteron variegatum, Jerdon, B. Ind., i. p. 45.

I AM somewhat surprised that, of a species described and figured by me in my 'Century of Himalayan Birds' nearly forty years before, so very meagre an account should have been given as that by Dr. Jerdon in 1863; but it is only since the publication of his 'Birds of India' that we have obtained any definite information respecting the bird. The latter gentleman, in his supplementary notes to the above-mentioned book (Ibis, 1872, p. 305), writes:—"I first obtained this species in the valley of the Sutlej, and subsequently in various other parts of the N.W. Himalayas up to Kashmir, where it is common in summer in forests at from 8000 to 10,000 feet of elevation."

Respecting its nidification Capt. Cock and Capt. C. Marshall, in their joint paper on a collection of eggs made at Murree, observe:—"The nidification of this *Trochalopteron* was apparently unknown before. We found one nest, on the 15th of June, about 20 feet up a spruce fir, at the extremity of the bough. Nest deep cup-shaped, solidly built of grass-roots and twigs. The bird sits close. Eggs light greenish blue, sparingly spotted with pale purple, the same size as those of *M. castanea*."

In the lately published 'Lahore to Yarkand,' Mr. Hume figures his new *Trochalopteron simile*, a closely allied species; and he remarks, in his article on the last-named bird:—"Nothing seems to have been recorded as yet of the nidification of *T. variegatum*. They lay during the latter half of April, May, and June. The nest is a pretty compact, rather shallow cup, composed exteriorly of coarse grass in which a few dead leaves are intermingled; it has no lining, but the interior of the nest is composed of rather finer and softer grass than the exterior, and a good number of dry needle-like fir-leaves are used towards the interior. The nest is from 5 to 8 inches in diameter exteriorly, and the cavity from 3 to 3·5 in diameter, and about 2 deep. It is usually placed in some low, densely foliated branch of a tree, at, say, from 3 to 8 feet from the ground; but I recently obtained one placed in a thick tuft of grass growing at the roots of a young deodar, not above 6 inches from the ground. They lay four or five eggs. The first egg that I obtained of this species, sent me by Mr. G. C. Buck, C.S., and taken by himself, was a nearly perfect, rather long oval, and precisely the same type of egg as those of *T. erythrocephalum* and *T. cachinnans*, but considerably smaller than the former. In fact, had Mr. Buck not taken the egg himself, I could scarcely have believed that it belonged to this species. The ground-colour is pale, rather dingy greenish blue, and it is blotched, spotted, and speckled—almost exclusively at the larger end, and even there not very thickly—with reddish brown. The egg appeared to have but little gloss.

"Other eggs subsequently obtained by myself were very similar, but slightly larger and rather more thickly and boldly blotched, the majority of the markings being still at the large end.

"The eggs vary from 1·07 to 1·15 inch in length, and from 0·76 to 0·82 in breadth."

The following description is from a Nepalese bird. I have not at present a sufficiently large series to decide on the specific value of *T. simile* and *T. Humei*, which, though Dr. Jerdon fancies they may not be distinct species, seem to me to be probably well-marked representative species.

Above olivaceous brown, with a slight tinge of greenish; forehead washed with dull ochraceous; lores and feathers round the eye extending on to the ear-coverts blackish; sides of face ochraceous, shading into buffy white on the sides of the neck; throat black; chest grey, slightly washed with ochraceous; rest of under surface light ochraceous, deepening into tawny rufous on the thighs and under tail-coverts; flanks shaded with olivaceous grey; under wing-coverts dull rufous ochre; upper wing-coverts olivaceous brown, the greater series washed with rufous, the outer ones black, forming a conspicuous wing-patch; quills blackish, externally grey, the primaries washed with orange on the outer web, all tipped with white at the extremity of the latter; tail greyish, tipped with white, the outer feathers greenish yellow on the outer web, the two centre feathers black for about half their length, this colour disappearing gradually towards the base of the outermost and absent on the two external rectrices.

The sexes are of about the same dimensions, and are represented in the Plate of the size of life.

Gould, John. 1876. "Variegated Thrush, *Trochalopteron variegatum* [Pl. 38]." *The Birds of Asia* 3(XXVIII), -. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.323491>.

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