OTUS BENGALENSIS.

Ordo RAPTORES.

Fam. STRIGIDÆ.

Genus OTUS, Cuv.

TAB. III.

OTUS BENGALENSIS.

Ot. pallidè rufescens, fusco alboque undulatis variegatus; nuchæ pectorisque plumis in medio strigâ latâ brunneo-nigrâ notatis; abdomine fusco graciliter fasciato; remigibus rectricibusque lateralibus prope apicem brunneo fasciatis, his mediis per totam longitudinem similiter notatis.

Longitudo corporis, 1 ped. 8 unc.; alæ, 1 ped.; caudæ, 6½ unc.; tarsi, 4.

THE first notice of this remarkable bird is in the "General History of Birds" of Dr. Latham, who seems inclined to consider it a variety of the great *Eagle Owl* rather than as a distinct species. The fine collection of Birds brought from India by Major Franklin of the Hon. E. I. C. S., contained a specimen of this species which he considered as possessing characters sufficient to warrant its being separated as a new species, an opinion with which a repeated and minute examination of several specimens leads us to coincide. The range of this fine *Owl* appears to be very extensive, being generally and rather abundantly found over the whole of the low lands of India, as well as in the elevated range of the Himalayan Mountains, whence the present specimen was received. The very valuable MS., abounding in accurate and judicious remarks from personal observation, which has been placed at our disposal by the kindness of its author, the Hon. F. J. Shore, gives the following particulars. "Killed in the Doon; builds in trees, the nest being composed of large and small sticks; the female laying two large eggs mottled with black reddish-brown and white. Its native name in the Doon, is *Hokra** *Cheel*; the natives considering it among the *Cheel* or *Kite* genus, and affirming that it is strong enough, and does in fact attack and kill wild cats."

The *irides* of this bird are represented in Mr. Shore's Drawings of a yellow colour, and they are described by Col. Sykes† as having the "external margin dark orange, gradually changing to yellow at the internal margin." It may be observed that the species of *Owls* which have a bright *iris*, such as our *short-eared* and *Scops Owls*, are diurnal in their habits; and the observation may be extended to the present species. Col. Sykes states that he has at all times seen the species in full activity by day; so much so that he has on several occasions chased them unsuccessfully at that time; a circumstance which rarely happens among the nocturnal species. The name *Cheel* or *Kite*, originally applied to a bird which preys by day, when applied to the present species may probably refer to its diurnal habits.

Col. Sykes states in addition, that the favourite haunts of these birds are extensive plains, where they may be generally seen seated on large stones. At other times however, but rarely, he has observed them in glens and more secluded places. Their favourite food, he adds, is rats; but he has met, at times, with *crustacea* and birds in their stomachs. Their Mahrattée name is *Goobur*.

* *Hokra* is the name of a district in the Himalayan range.

† Proceed. of Zool. Soc. Part II. p. 81.

Gould, John. 1831. "Otus bengalensis [Tab. III]." *A century of birds from the Himalaya Mountains* –. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.323555>.

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