

RECENT LITERATURE.

Elliot's Monograph of the Pittidæ.—The fifth and concluding part of this beautiful monograph¹ is dated January, 1895, its publication thus covering a period of nearly two years. The present part contains nearly forty pages of introductory matter, and eleven plates, with their appropriate text. The species here figured are the following: *Pitta strepitans*, *P. mackloti*, *P. vigorsi*, *P. palliceps*, *P. nympha*, *P. cyanonota*, *P. oreas*, *P. forsteni*, *P. propinqua*, *P. soror*, and *P. inspeculata*. Several of these have not been previously figured.

The species recognized in the present monograph number 48—an increase of 18, or more than 50 per cent., over the number known in 1863, and included in the author's first monograph of the group. These 48 species are distributed in 3 genera (*Anthocinclæ*, *Pitta*, and *Eucichla*) and 17 subgenera, of which 42 species and 15 of the subgenera are placed under *Pitta*. Mr. Elliot differs from most previous writers in adopting for some of the species names not generally current, their adoption being rendered necessary by due observance of the law of priority. No new species are described, nor are any new specific names given, but we note the introduction of the following new subgenera: (1) *Monilipitta*, type and only species, *Pitta arcuata*; (2) *Galeripitta*, type and only species, *P. cucullata*; (3) *Pulchripitta*, type and only species, *P. iris*; (4) *Ornatipitta*, including *Eucichla guaiana*, *E. boschi*, and *E. schwaneri*; (5) *Insiginipitta*, including *E. ellioti* and *E. gurneyi*.

The Introduction gives (1) an elaborate 'Review of the Literature' of the subject (pp. v-xiii); (2) a history of the Genera (pp. xiii-xv); (3) 'Key to the Genera and Species' (pp. xv-xviii); (4) 'Classification' (pp. xviii-xx); (5) 'Geographical Distribution' (pp. xxi-xxvii). Mr. Elliot considers that the species of Pittas known to us to-day "are probably but the survivors of what was once a great and brilliantly plumaged group, inhabiting a vast extent of territory. The majority of the species," he believes, "have long since become extinct, and those remaining represent the few which have, through what may be termed fortuitous occurrences, been able to keep themselves above water, when the greater portion of their habitats disappeared beneath the waves." On no other supposition does he deem it possible to account for the isolated distribution of certain members of the group, as *Pitta angolensis* on the west coast of Africa, and

¹ A | Monograph of the Pittidæ, | or | Family of Ant-Thrushes. | By | Daniel Giraud Elliot, | . . . [12 lines of titles, etc.] | — | London: | Bernard Quarich, 15 Piccadilly, W. | 1893-1895. Folio, pp. i-xxvii + (letter-press, unpagged), col. pll. i-li.

For notices of previous parts, see Auk, XI, pp. 62, 173, 243, and XII, p. 65.

P. nympha on the Japanese island Tsu-sima, in the Straits of Corea, as well as in Borneo; the species being for the most part natives of the Eastern Archipelago, but extending into India, Ceylon and China, the Philippine and Papuan Islands, to New Guinea and northern Australia.

As the author states in his Preface, the present is an entirely new Monograph of the Pittidæ, the text of the earlier Monograph having been discarded and that of the present written "as if the subject had only now for the first time engaged my [his] attention." A few of the plates of the first edition have been retained, but the majority are from new drawings by Mr. W. Hart of London, who has most skilfully executed his task. The Pittas constitute one of the most beautiful families of birds, their striking and yet pleasing display of colors rendering them a most attractive subject for the monographer. "It is not often," says our author, "that one returns to his first love and finds her, after many years, more beautiful than ever," as has been his experience in the present instance.—J. A. A.

The Fossil Birds of Patagonia.¹—It may be a little late to notice Dr. Ameghino's memoir, but as the work has not been reviewed in 'The Auk,' and as some of the birds described therein are truly extraordinary, it is perhaps a case of better late than never; moreover, there are one or two points concerning these birds and Dr. Lydekker's notice of them² that deserve at least a passing notice. In this memoir Dr. Ameghino describes the remains of thirty-two species of birds from the Eocene of Patagonia, fifteen of which, as well as nine genera and one family, are new. The main interest of the paper, however, centers about the gigantic forms for whose reception the order Stereornithes was established by Moreno and Mercerat in 1891. These authors have distributed in four families the various genera placed by Dr. Ameghino in the family Phororhacidae, although this grouping must be largely a matter of opinion, since the parts most necessary for a family diagnosis are lacking. Not all the species of the family are large, but the leading members of the group, *Phororhacos* and *Brontornis*, were birds of great size, rivalling in bulk the *Æpyornis* of Madagascar and the Moas of New Zealand, while they were, like them, flightless. The reduction of the wing had not, however, proceeded so far as in the last named birds. A remarkable feature of the genus *Phororhacos* is the great size of the skull, which in *P. inflatus* is 13 inches long and 5¼ inches across the articular portion, while the mandible of *P. longissimus* is 21 inches in length and 8 inches across the condyles. Small wonder that the symphysis of such a jaw,

¹ Florentino Ameghino | Sur les | Oiseaux Fossiles | de Patagonie | Extrait du Boletín del Instituto Geográfico Argentino | tome XV, cahiers 11 et 12 | Buenos Ayres | 1895.

² Knowledge, London, June, 1895.



Elliot, Daniel Giraud. 1896. "Elliot's Monograph of the Pittidæ." *The Auk* 13, 60–61. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4068745>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/54125>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/4068745>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/89532>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Sponsored by

Smithsonian

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.