

racter to the ecclesiologist and the architect, beautiful scenery to the artist, and novel customs amidst an obliging and hospitable people to the general tourist; while to the naturalist in every branch, the geologist, the botanist, the entomologist, the zoologist generally, there is a rich harvest of facts to be reaped in a field which, though so near our shores, and now so easy of access, is perhaps less known to the travelling public than any other region of Europe.

XXXV.—*A Ninth additional List of Birds from Natal*.*

By J. H. GURNEY, F.Z.S.

(Plate X.)

THE birds comprised in this list have, with the exception of the first, been transmitted to me by my valued correspondent Mr. Thomas Ayres, together with the following notes upon them and upon some other species included in my previous lists of the Birds of Natal. Many of the latter notes have been made by Mr. Ayres in the Transvaal, and refer to species which are found in the territory of that republic as well as in the colony of Natal. As on previous occasions, my remarks are distinguished from those of Mr. Ayres by brackets and initials.

An error having occurred in the enumeration of the species in my former lists by the double insertion under different names of one species, as before explained (*anteà*, pp. 157, 158), I commence the enumeration of the present list with

307 A. BRACHYOTUS PALUSTRIS, Bp. Short-eared Owl.

[Having previously mentioned (*anteà*, p. 150) that the Zoological Society of London possesses a Natal specimen of this Owl, I only insert it here for the sake of including it in my enumeration of the species which I have seen from that Colony.—J. H. G.]

308. CYPSELUS GUTTURALIS, Vieill. South-African Alpine Swift.

Female. Iris dark hazel; eye full; bill black; tarsi feathered, toes dusky.

* *Vide supra*, p. 40.



J. Wolf del.

M. & N. Hanhart imp.

HYPHANTORNIS MARIQUENSIS

These Swifts are met with in flights, and fly with extreme rapidity; the specimen sent was shot in December from amongst a flight on the feed.

309. *CORACIAS PILOSA*, Lath. White-naped Roller.

This Roller is not uncommon in Natal during summer, and it also occurs on the river Limpopo*; it is generally found either solitary or in pairs. The young birds may be readily reared, as they feed well on raw meat or insects; but they are troublesome from the loud discordant notes which they almost constantly utter. They give their food a toss before swallowing it, and in fact toss it down their throats.

[Mr. Layard (B. S. Afr. p. 60, No. 93) includes this species under Swainson's name of *C. nuchalis*; but I follow Dr. Hartlaub (Orn. Westafr. p. 30) in using for it Latham's prior appellation. It is figured by Levaillant (Rolliers, pl. 29); but his preceding plate (pl. 28), cited by Dr. Hartlaub as representing this species, appears to have been taken from a specimen of *C. indica*.—J. H. G.]

310. *CORACIAS CAUDATA*, Linn. Long-tailed Angola Roller.

This species, like the preceding one, is found in Natal and also on the river Limpopo, in which latter locality the specimens sent of this and also of the White-naped Roller were obtained.

[This species is well figured by M. Desmurs (Icon. Orn. pl. 28)—a fact not mentioned by Mr. Layard.—J. H. G.]

311. *CRATEROPUS JARDINII*, A. Smith. Jardine's Crateropus†.

Iris bright reddish-yellow; bill black; tarsi and feet dusky. I found these birds inhabiting the bush near the Tugela‡; there was a family of eight or nine together, but I only succeeded in getting the specimen sent. They have a loud chattering note and a rather heavy flight; the stomach of the bird sent contained caterpillars. I have never met with them

*The district of the river Limpopo is claimed by the Government of the Transvaal as belonging to the territory of that republic.—J. H. G.

† *Vide antea*, p. 266, note.

‡ Accidentally misspelt "Jugela," *antea*, p. 44.

on the coast, and believe they are entirely confined to the upper districts; they are, however, also found on the river Limpopo.

312. *HYPHANTORNIS OLIVACEUS* (Hahn). Cape Weaver-bird.

Male. Iris light tawny-yellow; bill dusky; wing yellowish underneath; tarsi and feet pale dusky.

These Weavers are exceedingly fond of sucking the nectar from the flowers of the Cape-Broom, a thorny tree which bears a bright scarlet blossom before the leaves appear, and is common all along the coast, where it blooms in the very early spring. They also feed on insects; their flight is heavy and undulating. They are sometimes solitary, and at other times to be seen in companies. These birds are more numerous in the Transvaal than in Natal, and breed there side by side with *Euplectes sundevalli*, and apparently in equal numbers. Their nest is also composed of the same material as is used in the nest of that species; it is woven to two or more reeds, and consists of the leaves of the reeds torn into strips. The nest is in the shape of a retort with the neck cut off, the opening being downwards; and there is a sort of bar across the entrance, which prevents the eggs from rolling out: it is lined with the soft flowering heads of grass, which form a very warm bed for the young birds.

313. *FRINGILLARIA TAHAPISI* (A. Smith, Rep. Exp. C. Afr. p. 48); *Emberiza septemstriata*, Rüpp., N. Wirbelth. Taf. 30, fig. 2.

The specimen sent was shot by me in November, at the upper drift of the Tugela, amongst the thorn-bushes. There were three of them together, feeding amongst the short grass.

314. *GEOLAPTES OLIVACEUS* (Gmel.). South - African Ground-Woodpecker.

Male. Iris light ash brown; bill black; tarsi and feet light ash-colour. I first met with these Woodpeckers at the Movi River, creeping with much agility amongst the crevices and holes in some loose stone walls erected by the Caffres as enclosures for their cattle. One of the birds sent I captured alive, after having pulled down a large piece of wall; the unfor-

tunate fellow at last got into a hole that was blocked up at the end. I also saw some of the same species climbing the face of a large perpendicular rock and searching for insects exactly in the same manner as other Woodpeckers examine a tree.

Their stomachs contained beetles, evidently taken from amongst the stones.

315. *NUMIDA CORONATA*, G. R. Gray. Crowned Guinea-fowl*.

Male. Iris dusky; bill blood-red, except the tip and under mandible, which are pale ash-coloured; tarsi and feet black.

These birds are abundant in some of the upper districts of Natal; they are gregarious, and are generally found amongst scrubby bush on the borders of streams and rivers. They run with exceeding swiftness, and in open ground a person on foot would stand but a poor chance of running them up. When in cover they lie very close indeed, and require a good dog to find them; when found they will frequently fly up into the lower boughs of any convenient bush or tree. They are naturally very tame, and easily domesticated, and may be found thus at many farmsteads. In some instances I am informed that they come regularly to feed with the poultry. In their wild state they feed much upon berries, the roots of various grasses, and so forth. They are excellent eating; and a good cock will weigh from three pounds and a quarter to three pounds and a half.

The following remarks refer to species which have been already enumerated in my previous lists of the Birds of Natal.

GYPIS FULVUS (Gmel.). Fulvous Griffon Vulture. (No. 5, Ibis, 1859, p. 236.)

The only nest of this Vulture which I have met with in the Transvaal was placed on a thorn-tree; and, though but a short distance from the ground, it was, from the denseness of the boughs and the innumerable thorns, not easy to get at.

FALCO BIARMICUS, Temm. Latakoo Falcon. (No. 66, Ibis, 1860, p. 207; 1862, p. 154.)

* *Vide antea*, p. 253, note.

This species seems to be equally distributed through Natal and the Transvaal.

CIRCUS RANIVORUS (Daud.). *Le Vaillant's Harrier*. (No. 24, *Ibis*, 1859, p. 242; 1860, p. 204.)

These Harriers are exceedingly plentiful about the reedy swamps of the Transvaal; and, during the summer months, they appear to congregate towards evening over one particular portion of a swamp, flying and wheeling round and round till darkness puts an end to their meeting, when they retire singly or in pairs to their beds amongst the high rushes. I have counted as many as thirty in these assemblies; they are easily shot in the dusk of the evening, their sight being apparently anything but good at that time.

COTYLE PALUSTRIS (Steph.); *Hirundo paludicola*, Vieill. South-African Sand-Martin. (No. 219, *Ibis*, 1864, p. 347.)

This Martin is as common in the Transvaal in June and July as it is in the upper districts of Natal. They are fond of following the course of a river, skimming along with rather eccentric flight within a few feet of the surface of the water.

Specimens with the under parts dark and entirely whole-coloured, are to be seen in company with the white-bellied birds, but are not nearly so common.

[The whole-coloured variety of this Martin is mentioned by Mr. Layard (*B. S. Afr.* p. 58, No. 91).—J. H. G.]

PRATINCOLA RUBICOLA (Linn.); *P. pastor*, Strickland. Stonechat. (No. 77, *Ibis*, 1860, p. 208; 1868, p. 157.)

This species is common throughout the Transvaal, breeding in walls and banks.

SAXICOLA MONTICOLA, Vieill. Mountain-Wheatear. (No. 290, *Ibis*, 1868, p. 44.)

These Chats are to be found in many localities in the open country of the Transvaal, frequenting rocky situations. Their nests are generally placed in crevices within a few feet of the ground; but at some of the farmhouses they may be seen having taken possession of an unfinished Swallow's nest under the eaves, where, if not interfered with, they become exceedingly tame. Though sombre in colour, they immediately attract the

sight by frequently spreading the tail and showing its snow-white feathers. They are also frequently to be found amongst the ant-hills which are so abundant in the Transvaal.

JUIDA BICOLOR (Gmel.). White-rumped Grakle. (No. 294, Ibis, 1868, p. 46.)

These birds excavate holes for their nests in the perpendicular banks of the Vaal River, two or three feet from the surface of the ground, and from two to four feet deep, horizontally. The same holes appear to be used for successive seasons, being merely pierced further each year. The nest is composed of coarse grass, lined with wool, hair, and feathers; the eggs are from two to six in number.

CHERA PROGNE (Bodd.). Great Widow-bird. (No. 137, Ibis, 1861, p. 133.)

The nest of this species is placed close to the ground, in a tuft of long grass, to the blades and stalks of which it is roughly woven or joined; it is rather a rough structure, composed of fine grass and lined with the seed-ends; the opening is at the side. The eggs are almost invariably four in number.

EUPLECTES SUNDEVALLI, Bp. Sundevall's Bishop-bird. (No. 267, Ibis, 1865, p. 269.)

I have found these Finches breeding in companies in many reedy vleys and pools, and also in great abundance in the swamps of the Transvaal; their nests are very compact purse-like structures, hung between two upright reeds, and composed of the leaves of reeds torn into fine strips (easily mistaken for grass), and woven together with great neatness and care. The entrance is placed on the upperside of the nest, and always facing the water, and is covered with a porch formed of the flowering ends of grass, with which downy material the nest is also lined. The eggs are generally from two to four in number.

This species assembles in immense flocks, both in winter and in summer. In the latter the flocks appear to consist almost entirely of males in their gaudy red and black dress; and twenty or thirty of these splendid birds may then be killed at a single

shot. They generally feed on the ground, where they find a plentiful supply of fallen grass-seeds, but they are also very destructive to the crops of wheat.

[The preponderance of males in full nuptial dress may probably be due to the females being then occupied in incubation.—J. H. G.]

HYPHANTORNIS MARIQUENSIS (A. Smith, Zool. S. Afr. pl. 103); *H. nigrifrons*, Cab., Mus. Hein. i. 182. Capricorn Weaver-bird. (No. 209, Ibis, 1863, p. 329.) (Plate X.)

In summer plumage the male has the iris bright crimson, the bill black, tarsi and feet pale dusky. In winter the iris is light brown, the bill, tarsi, and feet pale dusky. The iris, tarsi, and feet of the female, both in winter and summer, resemble those of the male in his winter garb.

These birds are common in the Transvaal, congregating in small flocks during the winter. In summer the male, in his handsome clothing, may frequently be found alone, or occasionally in company with other Finches, such as *Euplectes sundevalli*. They build among the high reeds.

[The winter dress of the male bird, and the plumage of the female throughout the year, are well portrayed in Sir A. Smith's plate above cited; but the male in breeding-plumage has, I believe, not as yet been figured; and I am therefore glad to be able to refer my readers to the annexed representation, by Mr. Wolf, of a male specimen in that dress, which was sent from the Transvaal by Mr. Ayres. It appears to me to be identical with that described by Mr. Layard (B. S. Afr. p. 180, No. 357) under the name of *H. nigrifrons*, Cab., except that the latter seems to have been taken from a slightly larger specimen.

I may remark that the male of an allied North-African species, *H. sublarvatus*, J. W. Müller, appears to undergo a very similar change of plumage in the breeding-season, and is figured in both spring and winter dress by that naturalist (Ois. d'Afr. pl. 12).

An accidental error seems to have occurred in a statement as to *H. mariquensis* made by Mr. Layard (B. S. Afr. p. 182). Its whole length, as given by Sir A. Smith (*loc. cit.*), is 5 inches 11 lines, which agrees with the specimens sent to me from the Transvaal.—J. H. G.]

CHRYSOCOCCYX AURATUS (Gmel.). Didric Cuckoo. (No. 41, Ibis, 1859, p. 247; 1868, p. 163.)

I found these Cuckoos plentiful in December among the low mimosa thorns and wood bordering the rivers and streams in the upper districts of the colony of Natal, and also among the fruit-trees in the scattered town of Potchefstroom. They are most fond of apple-trees, where, I think, they find the caterpillars suited to their taste and upon which they appear entirely to feed. Their note, which is loud and monotonous, is frequently uttered whilst they are flying high over head. Early in the morning they are particularly fond of chasing each other, frequently so high as to be almost out of sight. They are often chased by the Sparrow* and other birds, which appear at once to know a stranger. Like most of our Cuckoos, they appear in summer and are away during the winter months.

FRANCOLINUS NATALENSIS, A. Smith. Natal Francolin. (No. 104, Ibis, 1860, p. 214.)

[Mr. Ayres has sent me this species from the Transvaal, but without any accompanying remarks.—J. H. G.]

FRANCOLINUS SUBTORQUATUS, A. Smith. Coqui Francolin. (No. 105, Ibis, 1860, p. 215.)

The pair sent were obtained near the river Limpopo.

COTURNIX COMMUNIS, Bonn. European Quail. (No. 106, Ibis, 1860, p. 216.)

Found, but not plentifully, in the vicinity of Potchefstroom.

EUPODOTIS CAFFRA (Licht.). Stanley Bustard. (No. 108, Ibis, 1860, p. 216; 1864, p. 360.)

These birds frequently breed amongst the rocks and stones on the top of some hill; the nest is merely a slight excavation scratched in the ground, with perhaps a handful of grass. The eggs are two in number; and the old bird sits so close that she will almost let one tread on her before she rises.

GRUS CARUNCULATA (Gmel.). Caffre Crane. (No. 244, Ibis, 1864, p. 355.)

My friend Mr. G. A. Phillips found a nest of this Crane

* [Perhaps *Passer arcuatus* (Gmel.).—J. H. G.]

containing two eggs, which were on the point of hatching, in a very large lagoon near the Vaal River. The nest was about five feet in diameter, and of a conical form; it was composed of rushes pulled up by the birds, and was placed in water about five feet deep, the eggs being well out of the water.

HOPLOPTERUS ARMATUS, Jard. White-headed Spur-wing Plover. (No. 275, *Ibis*, 1865, p. 271.)

These Plovers are plentiful about Potchefstroom; they frequent the borders of the swamps and Snipe-grounds, and are sometimes found in companies of a dozen together, though generally not more than two or three are met with.

They fly about the intruder on their haunts with loud screams of disapprobation, and keep up a constant clatter, to the annoyance of any one intent upon Snipes or other feathered game, among which they thus produce a state of unwished-for watchfulness.

ARDEA PURPUREA, Linn. Purple Heron. (No. 121, *Ibis*, 1860, p. 220.)

These Herons are very common in the Transvaal, where I have frequently seen as many as ten or twelve together; they appear to vary very much both in size and plumage.

[The Purple Heron appears to be even more numerous in India than it is in South Africa; thus Mr. F. Day (*Land of the Permauls*, p. 472) mentions that in the Malabar state of Cochin these Herons, "at the commencement of the year, may be seen towards evening flying in flocks of some hundreds in an irregular line towards their feeding-grounds."—J. H. G.]

ARDEA BUBULCUS, Savig. Buff-backed Heron. (No. 215, *Ibis*, 1863, p. 330.)

This species is exceedingly numerous in the Transvaal; in winter it loses the buff-coloured plumes on the back and neck, and appears in a pure white dress.

HERODIAS GARZETTA (Linn.). Little Egret. (No. 122, *Ibis*, 1860, p. 221.)

These Egrets are much more numerous about the swamps of the Transvaal than they are in Natal.

ARDETTA MINUTA (Linn.). Little Bittern. (No. 52, Ibis, 1859, p. 249; 1860, p. 205.)

The Little Bittern is common amongst the reedy swamps and banks of rivers in the Transvaal, where it lies close amongst the reeds and hedges, and is not always easily flushed; its flight is never lengthened.

TRINGOIDES HYPOLEUCUS (Linn.). Common Sandpiper. (No. 139, Ibis, 1861, p. 134.)

This species occurs in the Transvaal, but is scarce.

TRINGA MINUTA, Leisl. Little Stint. (No. 281, Ibis, 1865, p. 272.)

These Sandpipers are occasionally found in considerable flights on the mud-flats and borders of pools in the Transvaal. They are very shy and difficult of access, and their flight is very rapid.

PORPHYRIO SMARAGDONOTUS, Temm. Green-backed Porphyrio. (No. 56, Ibis, 1859, p. 249.)

Iris red; bill and frontal shield blood-red; thighs, tarsi, and feet dark pink. This beautiful species is found, though not abundantly, in the more extensive swamps and lagoons in the colony of Natal, and seems to be pretty generally distributed, though, in consequence of its close and shy habits, it is not easily obtained. These birds generally remain amongst the high rushes and reeds; but during the winter, in the mornings and evenings, they often leave their cover to catch the first and last rays of the sun, and they are then frequently to be found perched on a clump of rushes or reeds; they make many extraordinary noises, most unmusical and quaint. Their food consists of the inner and soft parts of the shoots of reeds and of other water-plants; these may be found in their stomachs chopped up like chaff by their powerful bills, which no doubt are expressly provided for peeling off the outer bark and hard parts of the plants they feed upon.

There appears to be but little difference between the sexes; but the female bird is, if anything, the smaller of the two.

[Mr. Layard (B. S. Afr. p. 341) includes this species under the name of *P. erythropus* proposed for it by Shaw in 1824;

but Temminck's name of *P. smaragdonotus*, having been assigned to it in 1820, has priority. I have to thank Mr. G. R. Gray for supplying me with the respective dates of these two designations.

Some naturalists have supposed this species to be identical with *P. madagascariensis* (Lath.) ; but having compared four specimens of the Madagascar form, obtained by Mr. E. Newton, with examples of the South-African from Natal, I have no hesitation in considering them specifically distinct, the first having a longer and more powerful bill than the last, and also a longer tarsus and larger foot, as will appear from the following measurements taken from adult males of each species :—

	Length of maxilla along tomia.	Height of maxilla at nostril.	Length of tarsus.	Length of middle toe with claw.
<i>P. madagascariensis</i> ..	1·625 in.	·625 in.	3·625 in.	4·75 in.
<i>P. smaragdonotus</i>	1·375 „	·5 „	3·125 „	4·25 „

I should, however, add that the length of the wing from the carpal joint to the tip of the primaries, and also the colour of the plumage, appear to be the same in both species.—J. H. G.]

LIMNOCORAX NIGER (Lath.) ; *Gallinula flavirostris*, Swains. Black Gallinule. (No. 176, Ibis, 1862, p. 35.)

These Gallinules are common along the Movi River, and are exceedingly fond, on sunny days, of issuing from the reeds and hunting for insects on dead reeds fallen across the stream ; they then look exceedingly pretty with their bright red legs, green bill, and chaste plumage.

[An immature specimen, obtained by Mr. Ayres, closely resembles, in the colour of its plumage, the young of *G. chloropus*.—J. H. G.]

FULICA CRISTATA, Gmel. Crested Coot. (No. 184, Ibis, 1862, p. 153.)

These birds are much more abundant in the Transvaal than in Natal, and also not nearly so shy. In Natal they are very shy, and maintain a flight for a length of time, examining their ground well before realighting ; but in the Transvaal they seem to trust more to hiding and diving for their safety, and, when flushed, fly but a short distance. Frequently have I stood up to my middle in water listening to some cunning old bird

within a few yards of me, and vainly trying to catch a glimpse of him, where there was not enough cover, apparently, to hide a rat. Either these birds must possess the power of ventriloquism, or they must remain under water with perhaps just their bills out; one thing is certain, that they are expert divers.

QUERQUEDULA HOTTENTOTA, A. Smith. Hottentot Teal. (No. 186, Ibis, 1862, p. 154.)

Tolerably common about the lagoons near Potchefstroom, and found in pairs and small flocks.

PŒCILONETTA ERYTHORHYNCHA (Gmel.). Crimson-billed Duck. (No. 62, Ibis, 1859, p. 251; 1862, p. 158.)

Far outnumbers all other species of Ducks in the Transvaal.

[I avail myself of the present opportunity to correct an error which unfortunately occurred in my remarks on Mr. Layard's 'Birds of South Africa.' I there stated (*antea*, p. 261), under the head of *Rallus aquaticus*, that I had seen this species from Damara Land. The example to which I referred is in the collection of Mr. Tristram, who has since informed me that it is not a specimen of *R. aquaticus*, but of *R. cærulescens*, Gmel. (No. 629 of Mr. Layard's Catalogue).

I regret that I have not by me the Rail from Natal, which I formerly described in this journal (Ibis, 1859, p. 249, No. 53) as *R. aquaticus*; but I cannot help suspecting that a similar error may have occurred as regards that specimen also, and that it may have been in reality an example of *R. cærulescens*. I am the more disposed to think that such an error may have occurred, as Mr. Ayres informs me that this last is "common in most of the swamps of the Transvaal, where they swim with great ease and quickness, and may often be seen in the evening passing from one clump of reeds or rushes to another in search of their supper."

Mr. Layard gives the length of *R. cærulescens* as 8 inches. This is less than that of a female sent to me by Mr. Ayres from the Transvaal, which measures 10·25 inches from the tip of the bill to the end of the tail; and I may also mention that the specimen from Damara Land, in the collection of Mr. Tristram, is nearly 10 inches in length.—J. H. G.]