

I have seen this bird from various localities in the lower ranges of the Himalayahs from Kussowlee to Darjeeling, and concur in Capt. Hutton's remarks to me (*in Epist.*) that, "it is less common in its own haunts" than *E. Gymnopus*, "it frequents valleys at about 3500 to 4000 feet, and generally near a stream of water."

It has a low soft call, very different from the bell-like notes of *E. Gymnopus* and *Glaucidium Brodiei*, which, as Capt. Hutton has proved, are very similar, both being low, sweet, whistled ejaculations, if I may use the phrase.

This bird doubtless occurs in the Hilly ranges of Southern India, but all the specimens as yet sent me thence were either *E. Griseus*, or *E. Malabaricus*, which latter, it should be noted, Mr. Blyth identifies, and possibly correctly, with *E. Lempigi*.

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NO. 74. BIS. **Ephialtes Gymnopus.\* GRAY?**  
**(E. Spilocephalus. BLYTH?)**

THE BARE-FOOT SCOPS OWL.

I first received specimens of this species from Capt. Hutton, who had named it *E. Pennatus*, and my reason for believing it

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\* DIMENSIONS. Length, 7 to 7.75; expanse, 14.5 to 15; wing, 5.4 to 5.6; fourth and fifth primaries the longest, the first 1.75, the second 0.9; and the third 0.35 shorter than the longest; tail 2.75; exterior tail feathers 0.4 shorter than the interior; tarsus, 1.2; mid. toe to root of claw, 0.7; its claw straight, 0.32; hind toe, 0.33; its claw, 0.27; inner toe, 0.6; its claw 0.38 bill straight from edge of cere, 0.4; bill from gape, 0.68, width at gape, 0.68; height at margin of cere, 0.26; length of cere only, 0.3; closed wings fall short of end of tail by 0.75; lower tail coverts fall short of end of tail by 1.1.

DESCRIPTION. The forehead and a broad stripe over the eye, pale rufous white or fawn colour, some of the feathers with a few minute brown spots towards the tip; loreal bristles, pale fawn colour, more rufous towards the tips, and black at the tips. Feathers under the eye and ear coverts pale fawn colour, more or less tinged rufous, and freckled and mottled or imperfectly barred with brown; the top of the head, back of the neck, back, scapulars, rump and upper tail coverts and lesser wing coverts, with a more or less dark, rufous, fawn ground, very finely and closely freckled with dark, in some almost blackish, brown, the frecklings becoming confluent towards the tips of all the feathers of the head, and most of the feathers of the lesser wing coverts, and some of those at the back of the neck producing, especially on the first named parts, a regularly spotted appearance. An irregular, ill-defined, broad, white or yellowish white half collar at the base of the neck; most of the exterior row of scapulars, with the outer webs white or yellowish white, and tipped dark brown. The tail, rufous fawn, with about seven, broad,

to be identical with Mr. Blyth's *Spilocephalus*, is, that Capt. Hutton has a specimen, on the wrapper of which, Mr. Blyth himself wrote the name of *Spilocephalus*. Moreover, laid amongst specimens of all the other five Indian species of *Ephialtes*, it is the only one of which the head is truly and conspicuously spotted, recalling by the way, to a certain extent, the markings on the head of *Scotopelia Peli*, as figured by Mr. Wolf in Vol. I. of the Ibis.

Capt. Hutton gives the following account of the nidification of this species. He calls it *Pennatus*, it is true; but he has sent me beautiful specimens of the birds, which leave no doubt that the species referred to is the present one.

“This Owl occurs on the Himalayas, in the neighbourhood of Mussoorie, at an elevation of five thousand feet, and nidifies in hollow trees, laying three pure white eggs, of a rounded form, on the rotten wood, without any preparation of a nest. Diameter of egg,  $1.19 \times 1$  inch. The nest was found on the 19th of March.”

In some respects this species approximates to *Athene*, the fourth and fifth quills are equal and longest (and not the third and fourth as according to Jerdon they should be in *Ephialtes*) while the note is almost identical with, or at any rate is of precisely the same character as that of *G. Brodiei*. Capt. Hutton, who quite independently noticed the peculiar rounded shape of the wing, but from want of works of reference, identified this species

somewhat freckled, transverse, brown bars, most strongly marked towards the bases of the feathers, and becoming more or less obsolete towards the tips. The quills, rufous fawn, broadly barred and clouded with dusky brown, which, above the tips, suffuses the greater portion of the inner webs. The rufous fawn being replaced in three or four of the interspaces, of the outer webs, of the third to the sixth or seventh primaries, by slightly rufous or buffy white. The carpal joint of the wing whitish; the outer webs of the outer feather of the winglet and the tips of some of the secondary greater and median coverts, white, or faintly buffy white, with broad, irregular, brown bars. The chin and throat, rufous white, or pale fawn color, some of the feathers of the throat with narrow, somewhat irregular, transverse, brown bars, and all the feathers of the ruff tipped with the same colour. The breast, abdomen, and flank, pale rufous white or fawn colour very thickly freckled and vermicillated with dark brown, most thickly on the breast, somewhat more sparingly so on the abdomen and flanks, the markings becoming confluent in spots, towards the tips of some of the feathers. Tarsal plumes, more or less ferruginous, tibial ditto, rufous white; the whole more or less spotted or obscurely barred with dusky. The wing lining and axillaries silky yellowish white, except towards the edge of the wing, near the carpal joint, where the feathers are mingled rufous and dusky brown.

The general tone of colouring in some specimen, is darker and more rufous, in others paler and more buffy.

with *Pennatus*, proposed (in *Epist.*) to separate it under a new genus as *Athenoptera*, and should such separation be deemed expedient, the name is an appropriate one. The plumage, ear tufts and bare bristle-less feet, are, however, those of *Ephialtes*, while as far as my experience goes in *Lettia*, *Plumipes*, and *Griseus*, the fourth and fifth primaries are most commonly longest, and *not* the third and fourth. For the present, I prefer to retain it under *Ephialtes*.

Capt. Hutton remarks of this species:—

“This bird, if it be truly *Ephialtes Spilocephalus* of Blyth, and he wrote that name on the paper wrapper with his own hand, cannot stand under that genus if Jerdon’s generic characters are correct, for while he gives third and fourth quills longest, this Mussooree bird has the fourth and fifth longest, as in *Athene*. I have lately examined six good specimens, and this character is apparent in all. It is a curious fact, moreover, that I have fully ascertained the double whistle so often heard in the hills, to belong, not to *Glaucidium Brodici*, as has always been supposed, but to the present species; four have been shot while uttering the whistle “*who-who*” close to my house in fine moonlight nights, and three or four specimens of *G. Brodici*, uttering a somewhat similar note of four syllables, have also been shot while uttering it; there is in fact no shadow of a mistake about it, and yet I, for one, have for many years attributed both notes to *G. Brodici*, and could have sworn that the latter bird uttered the double note of “*who-who*,” and that I had shot it while doing so. The fact is, however, that the two species being common, are often either found in the same tree or very near each other, and the collector following the sound, shoots whichever bird he sees first, and so confounds the notes.

“I do not believe in any red phase of plumage in this species, as we have taken the young from the nest, and found them and the parents alike,—while as regards *Ephialtes Lempiji*” (*this is really E. Pennatus*) “or what I take to be such from Jerdon’s description, with which it agrees tolerably well, the nestling is red like the parent. The wing of *E. Lempiji*” (*should be E. Pennatus*) “however differs toto caelo from that of the present species,” (*viz.*, *E. Gymnopus*). “In the former bird, the third and fourth quills are longest, and the wing reaches to the end of the tail, if not beyond it, whereas in the present species, the fourth and fifth quills are longest, and the wing is short, not far over-reaching two-thirds of the tail; in the former, the quills are pointed, in the latter, broad and obtusely rounded. At all events, whatever the true specific names, and I am by no means certain of these, they

cannot stand under the same generic characters. Our present bird occurs abundantly at 5,500 feet, and probably higher; and the other species is not, by any means, so common, nor does it come up so high as this, and seems to be far more shy."

Again in another letter he says: "The note of *Glaucidium* is also a low whistle, but runs thus slowly like the other, 'hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo,' the middle note pronounced quicker, and joined while there is a pause between it and the others, as—'o-o, o-o;' this I always knew belonged to *G. Brodiei*, but thought the other belonged to it also, until we shot the other birds uttering it."

He also remarks of the present species, that "it extends far into the hills, as I have procured it north of the Tyne range corresponding to Simla; Blyth was surely wrong in giving '*Noctua, auribarbis*, Hodg.' as a synonym of this bird, for Gray says that this was *A. Cuculoides*. The wing, however, is rounded, with the fourth and fifth quill longest, and the plumage and ear tufts those of *Ephialtes*. I took the eggs in April at Mussooree, at 5,500 feet."

The only specimens that I have seen of this species, some nine or ten in number, had all been procured in the Himalayahs, near Mussooree, in Gurhwal, and below Simla.

The entirely naked feet, feathered, if I might so express it, (though anatomically it is a misapplication of terms) only to the ankle, the conspicuously spotted plumage of the head, the short wings with the fourth and fifth primaries longest, alone suffice to distinguish this species, which, if *not*, as I believe it, *Gymnopus* of Gray, must stand as *E. Huttoni*, in honour of the noble old naturalist, whose accurate observations I so often have to refer to, and whose life-long devotion to the study of God's glorious works, has scarcely yet been appreciated as it deserves. Fortunately he is one of those who look for something higher and better than "the praise of men."

## No. 75. *Ephialtes Lettia*,\* HODGSON.

### THE NEPAL SCOPS OWL.

Two comparatively large species of Scops Owls are found in the Himalayas, the first *E. Lettia*, altogether paler and some-

#### \* *E. LETTIA*.

DIMENSIONS. Length, 10 to 10.5. Expanse, 19 to 20. Wing, 6.6 to 7.2; fourth and fifth primaries the longest;—first, 1.6 to 1.9 shorter; second, 0.7 to 0.9 shorter; third, 0.25 to 0.4 shorter; length of tail, 3.2; longest tail