
Description of Cratopus bicolor, a new species among the Merulidæ, from Southern Africa. By Sir WILLIAM JARDINE, F.R.S.E. F.L.S. M.W.S. F.Z.S. &c.

[From the Edinburgh Journal of Natural and Geographical Science.]

Fam. *Merulidæ*, VIC.—Sub-fam. *Crateropodina*, SWAINS.

Genus *Cratopus*, SWAINS.

Cratopus bicolor, JARD.—Black and White *Cratopus*.

C. corpore albo, remigibus, secundariis, caudaque nigris.

THE genus *Cratopus* has been formed, by Mr. Swainson, for the reception of some of the *Merulidæ* previously ranged in other genera, and is the typical form of one of the sub-families of that gentleman's arrangement of the group. In the second volume of the Northern Zoology, now nearly completed, will be

found a beautiful analysis of this family, particularly the North American forms, fully detailing the affinities; this species, with many others, was submitted to the inspection of Mr. Swainson, and it was at once set down as an aberrant form of the genus.

The general appearance of these birds is,—a strong, somewhat curved, bill; loose plumage, considerably elongated on the backs, like the puff-backed shrikes, (*melaconoti*;) or the American bush-shrikes, (*thamnophili*;) the wings rather short and rounded, the tail long and graduated, and the tarsi and feet strong. Mr. Swainson remarks—"It appears that most of the typical species principally live in the vicinity of water, among reeds: their notes are particularly loud, harsh, and grating; and, in these retreats, they keep up a perpetual monotonous babbling. Some, however, possess much more harmony, but nearly all appear to frequent only low trees and shrubs. Their geographic range is almost limited to the warm latitudes of the old world."* The colours are different shades of brown and black; the present species, however, is remarkably distinct in the pure black and white of the plumage. It exhibits the scaly form of the feathers which is found on the head and neck of many of them, and the secondaries and tail retain the curious waved form of the shafts, giving the appearance of bars upon the webs, in different lights. The feathers on the rump are also of considerable length. The following is a description of the only two specimens I have ever seen. They were both received, among a very large and valuable collection of skins, from Dr. Smith, the superintendent of the South African Museum. The one is now before me, the other is in the Collection of Mr. Selby. The only notice accompanying the skins was, "They are said to be gregarious," and I am ignorant of what particular district of South Africa they are natives. The length is ten inches and three-fourths. The bill black, somewhat more curved than usual, running into *pomatorhinus*. The quills, secondaries, bastard pinion, and tail, deep brownish black; the rest of the plumage very clear white. The wings are rather more pointed than in the true types, and the tail scarcely so long in proportion.

* *Northern Zool*, ii, 157.