

# THE BIRDS OF THE MALAY PENINSULA

A GENERAL ACCOUNT OF THE BIRDS  
INHABITING THE REGION FROM THE  
ISTHMUS OF KRA TO SINGAPORE WITH  
THE ADJACENT ISLANDS

*By*

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VOLUME I: THE COMMONER BIRDS

WITH  
TWENTY-FIVE FULL-PAGE PLATES  
IN COLOUR

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## PREFACE

SOME explanation of the plan of this work is perhaps necessary. The total number of species or subspecies known to occur within the limits of the Malay Peninsula, as here defined, is somewhat over seven hundred, and without very severe compression it would be impossible to give an account of all within the limits of one, or even two volumes, and at the same time to supply a certain number of coloured plates.

I have, therefore, attempted to deal with the subject by dividing the work into five volumes, which will be as follows:

- I. The Commoner Birds.
- II. The Birds of the Hill Stations.
- III. Sporting Birds ; Birds of the Shore and Estuaries.
- IV. The Birds of the Low-Country Jungle and Scrub.
- V. Open-Country and Ricefield Birds, Migratory Birds and Species not included in the above volumes. "Keys" to all the Forms from the Peninsula, and a General Index to all the volumes.

The divisions are necessarily somewhat artificial, and many species will, of course, be found in one or more areas, while as regards the first volume the term "Commoner" may perhaps be open to criticism in certain cases.

I have, however, endeavoured to include in the present section as many as possible of the species that are likely to be met with by the ordinary visitor to, or resident in, the Malay Peninsula, whose work or interests keep him to the towns and villages, large and small, and who does not visit the denser jungle or the higher hills. Where a family or group does not possess a member that falls within this definition, I have given some brief general description—as, for instance, in the case of the honey guide (p. 149), which cannot be said to be a common bird.

The "Keys" that appear in the present volume are most strictly artificial—that is to say, they will only serve to distinguish species that are here described. I have not attempted to construct any "Key" that would differentiate the various orders, as to do so with any effect it is necessary to employ osteological and anatomical characters, which in a work of this kind it is desirable to avoid.

One more explanation is needed. The reader will often come across the words "Malayan" and "Malaysian." The former word connotes the Malay

Peninsula only, the latter has a more extensive range, and includes the whole of the zoological region, which comprises, for practical purposes, the great land masses of Borneo, Sumatra and Java, with their adjacent islets, and that portion of Tenasserim about as far north as Tavoy, whose fauna is far more Malayan than it is Indian.

The classification adopted in this book is that employed by the late Dr R. B. Sharpe in his *Handlist of the Genera and Species of Birds*, 1899-1912.

Volume II. will be concerned with the very different birds which are found on the hills and mountains of the Peninsula, and for this purpose all species that are known to occur above a limit of 2500 ft. will be included.

The inception of this book, in its present shape, as distinct from a more formal Fauna of the Malay Peninsula, which is also in active preparation in conjunction with Mr C. B. Kloss, is largely due to Sir W. George Maxwell, K.B.E., C.M.G., late Chief Secretary to Government, Federated Malay States; both to him, my immediate chief, and to Sir Lawrence Guillemard, G.B.E., K.C.B., K.C.M.G., late Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States, I am greatly indebted for much material encouragement and help, and for the financial backing of the Federated Malay States Government, which alone has rendered possible the production of this book.

My grateful acknowledgments are due to the authorities of the Natural History Museum for facilities afforded in the study of the Malayan and Indian collections in that institution. More especially I must tender my most cordial thanks to Dr P. R. Lowe and Mr N. B. Kinnear, the officers in charge of the ornithological section, who, in matters too numerous to mention, have rendered me most material assistance.

The unrivalled knowledge of Indian Birds possessed by Mr E. C. Stuart Baker has most kindly been placed at my disposal, and I am also indebted to that gentleman for permission to utilize, for this work, details on nidification derived from the collections of Malayan eggs, obtained by Mr A. S. Kellow in Perak, now in his possession. I have also to thank Mr T. Wells, of the Natural History Museum, for the careful compilation of the Index.

H. C. ROBINSON.

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