

# PARROTS

## Order PSITTACIFORMES

THE parrots are an order of birds found in the tropics of both old and new worlds, of which six or seven hundred forms have been recorded.

They are easily recognized by their short, stout and strongly hooked beak, which is separated from the feathers of the forehead by a fleshy membrane (the cere). The upper mandible is only loosely articulated to the skull, which gives additional grasping power to the bill. The feet are adapted for climbing, two toes being directed forward and two backwards (zygodactylous).

The nest is a hole in a tree-trunk or large bough, usually at some height above the ground, and the eggs are white, usually rounded and rather glossy, laid on the bare wood.

The parrots are not well represented in the Malay Peninsula and only six species are recorded from our area, of which two do not occur within British limits; of the remainder two are well known and favourite cage-birds.

All the Malayan species have more or less green in the plumages.

### KEY TO THE SPECIES OF PARROTS HERE DESCRIBED

- |   |   |                                      |   |   |                                      |       |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | { | Central tail feathers much elongated | . | . | <i>Psittacula longicauda</i> .       | p. 85 |
|   |   | Tail square                          | . | . | .                                    | 2     |
| 2 | { | Wing coverts uniform green           | . | . | .                                    | 3     |
|   |   | Wing coverts not uniform green       | . | . | <i>Psittinus cyanurus cyanurus</i> , | p. 89 |
| 3 | { | Both mandibles black                 | . | . | <i>Coryllis galgulus</i> ,           | p. 87 |
|   |   | Both mandibles orange                | . | . | <i>Coryllis vernalis</i> ,           | p. 88 |

### *Psittacula longicauda*

#### The Long-tailed Paroquet

##### PLATE 5

*Psittacus longicauda*, Bodd., *Tabl. Pl. enl.*, 1783, p. 53 (Malacca).

*Palæornis longicauda*, Salvad, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, xx., 1891, p. 475 ;

Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1923, p. 116.

**Malay Name.**—Bayan.

**Description.**—*Adult male.*—Top of the head, grass-green, an almost blackish spot in front of the eye ; sides of the head and a broad collar round the neck, vinous-pink, deeper near the bill ; a broad black stripe from the base of each mandible ; mantle, a pale milky green, with a bluish flush ; middle of the back, pale verditer-blue ; lower back, rump and upper tail coverts, green. Central tail feathers, blue, edged with green at the base, others green, all much pointed ; inferior aspect of tail, dull oily yellow. Scapulars and lesser wing coverts, yellowish green ; greater wing coverts, blue, edged with green. First primary entirely black, others black, their outer webs blue, edged with green ; secondaries almost entirely blue ; inner aspect of wing, lead-grey, the lesser under wing coverts and axillaries, pale yellow, the greater ones lead-grey. Whole under surface, yellowish green, with a mealy wash on the breast, flanks more yellowish ; under tail coverts more verditer-green.

*Adult female.*—Differs from the male in being almost uniform green above, the cheeks only vinous pink, the ear coverts washed with blue, and the broad mandibular stripes dark green ; under wing coverts less pure yellow and mixed with blackish towards the edge of the wing ; tail much shorter, upper and lower mandibles the same colour.

*Immature.*—Very young birds have no colour on their cheeks, which are greenish ; young males at first resemble the female and gradually acquire the male characters and change in the colour of the upper mandible ; it is probably two years or more before the full adult male plumage is acquired.

**Soft Parts.**—Iris, yellow or whitish yellow ; upper mandible, blood-red, paler at the tip and edges, lower horny ; feet, powdery black. In the female both mandibles are horny.

**Dimensions.**—Total length, about 16 in. ; wing, 5·8 to 6·2 in. ; tail: male, about 10 in. ; female, about 4 in. ; tarsus, 0·55 in. ; bill from gape, 0·85 in.

**Range in the Malay Peninsula.**—From Selama in North Perak to the southern extremity. Somewhat doubtfully in Penang. Common in Singapore but not on the islands of the peninsular east coast.

**Extralimital Range.**—Sumatra, Borneo and other smaller islands adjacent ; unchanged or almost unchanged.

**Nidification.**—I have no details of the nidification ; like others of the genus it will be found to nest in holes in lofty trees and lay white rounded eggs.

**Habits.**—This paroquet flies in large flocks and feeds on the blossoms of lofty trees ; it is very erratic in its occurrence and may suddenly visit a district and as suddenly disappear and be absent for years. It is a very restless bird and never stays in one tree for long. In Kuala Lumpur it is especially fond of the flowers of a species of *Acacia*, originally planted as a shade tree for coffee, and in the jungle in Ulu Selangor I have seen it feeding on the scarlet flowers of a very lofty species of *Bombax* (silk cotton). The note is a shrill squawk, constantly repeated. Chasen (*Singapore Naturalist*, No. 4, 1924, p. 29) says that this species is migratory in Singapore, "common enough in the autumn," but I think it is only a question of changing feeding-grounds. I have obtained it in Singapore in May and June.

*Note.*—The birds in the plate are figured half natural size, the male from Johore and the female from Singapore, both collected by W. Davison and now in the Hume collection, British Museum.

*Coryllis galgulus galgulus*

**The Malay Loriouet**

*Psittacus galgulus*, Linn., *Amœn.*, iv., 1754, p. 236 (Malacca).

*Loriculus galgulus*, Salvad., *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, xx., 1891, p. 531; Oates and Reid, *Cat. Birds' Eggs, Brit. Mus.*, iii., 1902, p. 17; Kloss and Robinson, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1923, p. 115.

**Malay Name.**—Sērindit.

**Description.**—*Adult male.*—General colour emerald-green, the bases of the feathers of the lower flanks, yellow. A deep blue patch on the crown, a large triangular golden yellow patch on the mantle; a narrow bright yellow band on the middle back; lower back, rump and upper tail coverts, scarlet. Primaries, black on their outer aspect, the outer webs green; inner aspect, black, the inner webs, except at the tips, broadly edged with verditer-blue; lesser wing coverts and axillaries, emerald-green; greater wing coverts, verditer-blue; a large scarlet patch on the throat and foreneck extending nearly to the chin; tail feathers above, rather darker green than the rest of the plumage; beneath, verditer-blue, with an ill-defined tip of yellowish green.

*Adult female.*—More yellowish green than the male, blue patch on the crown very faintly indicated; patch on the mantle reduced to a narrow band, and band on the middle back almost absent; rump and upper tail coverts, darker red; no scarlet patch on the throat.

*Immature.*—Like the female but with *no* trace of the blue patch on the crown; red of the rump and upper tail coverts, paler; the tail coverts shorter and reaching only half-way down the tail and not to the tip as in the adults.

**Soft Parts.**—*Adult*: iris, dark brown; bill, blackish; feet, plumbeous green. *Immature*: bill, cere, legs and feet, dull yellow; bill, shaded dusky (Davison).

**Dimensions.**—Total length, 5 to 5.5 in.; wing, 3.15 to 3.4 in.; tail, 1.3 in.; tarsus, 0.35 in.; bill from gape, 0.45 in.

**Range in the Malay Peninsula.**—From Patani to the southern extremity. The Dindings and Singapore Island. Its occurrence in Penang Island has not been authenticated.

**Extralimital Range.**—Sumatra, Borneo and other smaller islands, but not Java.

**Nidification.**—No details are available as to peninsular birds. Eggs obtained by Sir Hugh Low in Labuan are described as white, measuring 0.7 by 0.57 in. The nesting habits are almost certainly exactly similar to those of *L. vernalis*.

**Habits.**—This loriouet is widely spread throughout the Malay Peninsula, but is not as a rule found in heavy jungle or on the high mountains, though, curiously enough, I once observed—but did not obtain—a single individual on the top of Gunong Tahan, the loftiest summit of the Peninsula.

It is rather sporadic in its appearances and one only occasionally comes across it. Commonest in gardens and orchard-land and on the edge of forest, it keeps in small flocks and is fairly active in flight, feeding on fruit, nectar and, I believe, small insects, and climbing about the boughs of fruit-trees, very much in the manner of a tit. It is said also to frequent coconut-palms, but I have not myself seen it in such a situation.

It is a very favourite cage-bird among Malays and Straits-born Chinese and can always be seen in the bird shops. Localities of specimens must therefore be regarded with some caution.

*Coryllis vernalis vernalis*

**The Indian Loriquet**

*Psittacus vernalis*, Sparrm., *Mus. Carls.*, tom. 29, 1787.

*Loriculus vernalis*, Salvad., *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, xx., 1891, p. 517; Blanford, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, iii., 1895, p. 261; Oates, in Hume's *Nests and Eggs Ind. Birds* (2nd ed.), 1890, iii., p. 92; Oates and Reid, *Cat. Birds' Eggs, Brit. Mus.*, iii., 1902, p. 16; Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1923, p. 115.

*Coryllis vernalis vernalis*, Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), iv., 1927, p. 217.

**Malay Name.**—Sērindit.

**Description.**—*Adult male.*—Green above, head brighter, a slight tinge of yellow on the mantle; rump and upper tail coverts, deep red. Throat with a bluish tinge, breast, yellowish green. Inner webs of the primaries on their inner aspect, verditer-blue, brighter than in *C. galgulus*. Lower aspect of tail, bright verditer-blue.

*Adult female.*—Duller and more yellowish green than the male, no yellow on the mantle, no blue tinge on the throat; red in the rump darker and the upper tail coverts shorter.

*Immature.*—As the adult female, but still duller grey-green on the crown and forehead.

**Soft Parts.**—Iris, white or yellowish white; bill, orange; feet, yellow.

**Dimensions.**—Total length, 5 to 6 in.; wing, 3·5 to 3·7 in.; tail, 1·6 to 1·9 in.; bill from gape, 0·48 to 0·52 in.; tarsus, 0·4 in.

**Range in the Malay Peninsula.**—Common from the Isthmus of Kra as far south as Trang. Of doubtful occurrence only within British limits, specimens being recorded from Larut, Perak (without exact prominence).

**Extralimital Range.**—The greater part of India east to Cochin-China and the Andaman Islands.

**Nidification.**—Major Bingham found this bird nesting in the Thoungyeen Valley, Tenasserim, at the end of February. The nest was in the branch of a silk cotton-tree (*Bombax*), 40 ft. above the ground. The hole was about 1½ in. in diameter and about 6 or 7 in. deep, going obliquely inwards towards the base of the branch. It was unlined except for a few fragments of chipped

wood. The eggs (three) were dull dead-white, without gloss and rather roundish; they averaged 0.68 by 0.60 in. Baker gives an average of 0.73 by 0.61 in.

**Habits.**—Precisely as in *C. galgulus* but going about in smaller parties. We found it numerous at Takuatung on the west coast of Peninsular Siam, in February 1919, among flowering shrubs on the beach.

*Psittinus cyanurus cyanurus*

**The Little Malay Parrot**

*Psittacus cyanurus*, Forst., *Faun. Ind.*, 1795, p. 6 (Malacca).

*Psittinus incertus*, Salvad., *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, xx., 1891, p. 501.

*Psittinus cyanurus cyanurus*, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1923, p. 114.

*Psittinus incertus macropterus*, Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), iv., 1927, p. 215.

**Malay Names.**—Burong nuri (but this is more usually applied to exotic lories); pialin; sērindit gajah.

**Description.**—*Adult male.*—Head, neck, cheeks and ear coverts, grey, washed with blue, most strongly on the forehead; mantle and scapulars, sooty black, the feathers with obscurely lighter edges, tending to a scaly appearance; lower back, rump and upper tail coverts, violet-blue. Lesser and median wing coverts and tertials, green, edged with yellow, strongest on the tertials, a dull lake-red patch along the lesser upper wing coverts, terminating before the angle of the wing. Primary coverts, bluish. Primaries and secondaries, dull black except the first; dark green on the outer webs, and very narrowly edged with pale yellow except at the tips. Patch on angle of wing, pale yellow. Inner aspect of primaries and greater under wing coverts, lead-black; lesser under wing coverts and axillaries, scarlet. Beneath, greyish, greenish on the middle of the abdomen and bluish on the lower flanks; under tail coverts, greenish, tinged with blue. Centre tail feathers, green; others pale green; pure pale chrome on inner webs; lower aspect of tail almost pure yellow, darker towards the tips.

*Adult female.*—Differs from the male in being generally green, with only a small patch of blue on the lower back. Head and nape, brownish, more yellowish on the sides of the head; upper throat, oily yellow; breast, bright green, with a slightly scaly appearance; wings and tail feathers as in the male.

*Immature.*—Like the female but head green. The yellow edgings to the wing coverts and tertials are more pronounced and the maroon-red patch on the smaller upper wing coverts is much reduced. The outermost rows of lesser under wing coverts are blackish, broadly edged with green, and the green of the under surface is purer.

**Soft Parts.**—*Male*: iris, red; upper mandible, red; lower, greenish; feet, greenish. *Female*: iris, pale green, with an outer ring of white; bill,

yellowish horn, darker on the upper mandible; feet, pale sage-green. *Immature male*: iris, yellowish white; upper mandible, vermilion, dark at tip; lower mandible, wax-yellow.

**Dimensions.**—Total length, 7 to 8 in.; wing, 4·6 to 4·8 in.; tail, 1·85 to 2·1 in.; bill from gape, 0·8 to 0·9 in.; tarsus, 0·5 in.

**Range in the Malay Peninsula.**—Throughout its length and in Singapore Island. Of doubtful occurrence on Penang.

**Extralimital Range.**—From Central Tenasserim southwards. Very dubiously from Siam and Cochin-China; Sumatra, Borneo. Allied races are met with in the chain of islands westward of Sumatra.

**Nidification.**—Baker (*loc. cit.*) describes several clutches taken by Mr W. A. T. Kellow in heavy jungle near Simpang, Taiping, Perak, in May: "They were deposited in quite small natural hollows very high up in tall forest trees. The clutches, all incubated, numbered one to three, and nine eggs averaged 0·97 by 0·79 in."

**Habits.**—This is one of the mystery birds of the Peninsula, and though it is widely spread over the country, except in the hills, we have little detailed information about it. I met with it at Biserat, in the Patani States, in small parties in orchards and secondary jungle, where it behaved much as the loriquets, except that its movements were slow and clumsy and its flight less swift. In Tenasserim it is said to be a seasonal visitor, arriving in April, and it is probable that this is true and that it performs limited migrations, as Mr Seimund fell in with it among the mangroves at Tangong Karang, on the Selangor coast, in immense numbers in January 1908. It has not, however, been obtained at any of the lighthouses or small islands. At Toentengan, near Deli, North-East Sumatra, Mr A. van Heyst observed it in flocks of ten to twelve, feeding on the fruit of *Macaranga rhizinoides*, a coast swamp tree. The note is said to be a sharp whistle.

Further information on this bird is much desired. It will probably be found in coastal gardens and orchards during the winter months.