

# HOOPOES

## Family UPUPIDÆ

THIS family, together with the wood hoopoes, *Irrisoridæ*, which are confined to Africa, and are quite differently coloured birds of glossy plumage, constitute a sub-order which is closely allied to the hornbills, though widely different in external appearance.

The birds are of small size, about that of a thrush, with a long and slender curved bill, with a rounded nostril near the base. Tarsi short, with large plates behind. Wing rounded, with ten primaries. Tail of ten feathers, rather short. Head strongly crested.

The family consists of a single genus of five or six species, widely spread over Europe, Asia and Africa, and differing but slightly among themselves.

Two races, one migratory and one resident, occur in the Malay Peninsula, in the northern third only.

### *Upupa epops longirostris*

#### The Burmese Hoopoe

*Upupa longirostris*, Jerdon, *Birds Ind.*, i., 1862, p. 393; Oates, in Hume's *Nests and Eggs Indian Birds*, ii., 1890, p. 338.

*Upupa indica*, Reichenb. Salvin, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, xvi., 1892, p. 10; Oates and Reid, *Cat. Birds' Eggs, Brit. Mus.*, iii., 1903, p. 47.

*Upupa epops longirostris*, Williamson, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, ii., 1917, p. 338; Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), iv., 1927, p. 312.

**Malay Name.**—Belatok gajah (very dubious): nok karang kua khwan (*Siamese*).

**Description.**—*Adult.*—Crest with the anterior feathers shortest, salmon-rufous, the tips black, with no intervening white edging; head all round, nape, chin, throat and breast, sandy vinous fawn, often strongly tinged with rufous; mantle, sandy brown; a band across the upper back, black; lower back, black, with white tips to the feathers; rump, white; upper tail coverts, black, with white bases and tips. Angle of the wing and inner margin, sandy buff; lesser wing coverts, black, with very narrow pale edgings; greater and median series, black, with broad white tips. Primaries, glossy black, with a white spot on

the inner web of the outermost, and an oblique white bar across both webs of the remainder; secondaries, black, with the bases white, and four broad white bars across the feathers; tertials, brownish black narrowly edged with white and with an oblique buffy white bar on the inner web; axillaries and inner wing coverts, salmon; the outermost of the greater series, black, a white spot on the edge of the wing; tail feathers, glossy black, a broad white bar across the middle. Abdomen, whitish, with dark brown stripes, and on the flanks; under tail coverts, white; thighs, salmon-pink.

*Immature*.—Are practically identical in plumage with the adults, except that the white is sullied with pale sand-buff. Bill very much shorter and quite straight.

**Soft Parts**.—Iris, dark or dark-red brown, hazel or chestnut; bill, black, corneous at base, with a pinkish tinge; feet, grey, brownish black, "purplish brown to plumbeous; soles, greyish white; claws, dark horn-colour" (Williamson).

**Dimensions**.—Total length, 11·5 to 12·6 in.; wing, *male*, 5·5 to 5·8 in.; *female*, 5·1 to 5·3 in.; tail, *male*, 4·1 to 4·5 in.; *female*, 3·9 to 4·2 in.; tarsus, *male*, 0·9 in.; *female*, 0·8 in.; bill from gape, *male*, 2·6 to 2·8 in.; *female*, 2·1 to 2·3 in.

**Range in the Malay Peninsula**.—From the northern border south to Patani on the east and Perlis on the west coast. Stray birds have occurred as far south as Klang in Selangor. Islands of Bandon Bight, Junk Zeylon (Salanga).

**Extralimital Range**.—The Indo-Chinese countries, east to Annam; Hainan. Accidental in Sumatra, but from no other part of the Malay Archipelago.

**Nidification**.—Hoopoes nest in holes in walls or in trees; the holes and the young are notorious for their offensive smell and the number of parasites, ticks, and bird-flies that they harbour. Mr J. Darling found this species nesting in Junk Zeylon (Salanga) at the end of February, in the hole of a large tree. The hole was a natural one, five feet from the ground, the entrance 3 in. in diameter, and the eggs 2 ft. inside. "There was no nest of any kind, the four fresh eggs being on the wood. These nests are very common here, and in queer situations, sometimes in a large fork, sometimes on a thick bough, and frequently in a clump of thick ferns or orchids."

A clutch of five eggs collected by Mr Darling is in the British Museum collection. They are very pointed ovals, of a very pale greenish white, the shell very smooth and faintly glossy, with scattered pits. They average 0·97 by 0·68 in.

**Habits**.—Hoopoes are very common in the northern parts of the Peninsula, always in comparatively open country or among Casuarina trees on or near the shore, hardly ever in heavy or evergreen jungles.<sup>1</sup> They feed generally on the ground, on insects, chiefly grasshoppers and caterpillars, and I have seen them probing damp mud on the edge of a recently dried-up pool. They run in a curiously jerky manner and fly with a very undulating action. The crest is frequently erected, often vertically or even bent forward over the

<sup>1</sup> Williamson (*loc. cit.*) records it from such situations from near Sriracha in South-Eastern Siam.

bill. The call, expressed by the name, is a clear musical note of from three to five syllables, and is constantly uttered.

This hoopoe is probably a resident bird, but on migration a larger form also occurs in the Malay Peninsula, with the black tip of the crest preceded by a narrow white band; the general colouring is also duller. This race (*U. c. saturata*, Lönnerberg) breeds in Siberia and Northern Asia, and in Nepal and Sikkim, and winters over nearly the whole of the Indian and Indo-Chinese countries.