

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 II : THE BIRDS OF THE HILL STATIONS

WITH
TWENTY-FIVE FULL-PAGE PLATES

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PREFACE

THE present volume contains an account of all the species of birds that are with certainty known to inhabit or visit the mountains and the neighbourhood of the various hill stations in the Malay Peninsula.

For this purpose it has been necessary to fix a definite altitudinal limit, which has been taken at 2500 ft. above sea-level. This limit is necessarily somewhat arbitrary, but it will, I think, be found that few species that can be called strictly montane descend below this datum line, which also excludes, from elevations above it, very many forms that are typical lowland birds.

The range of country dealt with in this volume is the almost exclusive habitat of nearly all the races of birds that are peculiar to the Malay Peninsula; these are, as has been explained in the section on Zoogeography in Volume I., closely allied to birds inhabiting similar altitudes in Borneo, Sumatra and Tenasserim, while there is, in addition, a small but characteristic group, whose range extends to the Himalayas on one side and, in one or two cases, to the Philippines on the other.

It is interesting to note that certain detached mountains attaining a sufficient altitude—viz. 4000 ft.—to harbour a true montane fauna have no representatives of the peculiar forms found on the peninsular main range, the Larut Hills, and the lofty detached mountains in Pahang, Gunong Tahan and Gunong Benom.

These mountains include Gunong Jerai or Kedah Peak, Gunong Ledang or Mount Ophir, and most of the hills in Negri Sembilan and Johore, though these latter are in a somewhat different category, as their submontane fauna is comparatively rich. That of the two first-mentioned mountains is, however, extremely impoverished, and it would appear that some special cause has prevented the access, or caused the destruction, of the avian fauna so characteristic of the other Malayan mountains north of the Selangor border. The causes, whatever they have been, have not applied to plant life, as the flora both of Kedah Peak and Mount Ophir includes very many species allied to Himalayan and Sondaic forms, such as are also found in the high mountains of the Malay Peninsula in general, but not in the lowlands.

On Penang Hill, reaching an elevation of nearly 3000 ft., the degree of impoverishment is even more extreme.

I have given "keys" to all the species that I recognize as occurring, even casually, in the mountains, but have not considered it necessary to repeat

full descriptions of those few species that have been included in Volume I. These keys include species whose range in altitude just brings them within the montane zone as defined above, but whose normal habitat is below this level. Such birds are not described in detail in the present volume, but will be included in later volumes as may be appropriate.

It will doubtless be noted that certain orders and families, even among the passerine birds, receive no mention whatever in this volume; this is not due to any accidental omission, but to the fact that these groups have no representatives whatever in the area now treated. Such families, for instance, are the Frogmouths, the Hoopoes and the Starlings and Grackles.

It will be noted that no vernacular name is given for very many of the species, in most cases forms strictly confined to the higher hills, and for these it may be assumed that no reliable Malay names exist, except, possibly, in dictionaries. In this connexion it should perhaps be added that *burong*=bird in Malay, and *nok*=bird in Siamese. Names in the latter language are mostly descriptive ones.

The English trivial names are not always strictly consistent, but I have tried to correlate them as far as possible with those used for identical or very closely allied species in the second edition of the *Fauna of British India, Birds* (vols. i.-v.). Distinctive names for the subspecies are often unduly lengthy, but this cannot be avoided.

As in Volume I., "Malay" or "Malayan" means that the bird in question, so far as relates to its Malay habitat, is confined to the Peninsula—"Malaysian" connotes that the range extends to one or more of the great Indo-Malayan Islands, Sumatra, Borneo or Java.

As before, my thanks are due to the authorities of the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, and to Dr P. R. Lowe and Mr N. B. Kinnear, the officers in charge. Mr E. C. Stuart Baker has also assisted me in many ways, and almost every page of this volume shows how greatly I am indebted to him for details of the oology of Malayan and Indian birds.

More especially must I thank my former colleague, Mr C. B. Kloss, and Mr F. N. Chasen of the Raffles Museum, Singapore, for their unwearied kindness in answering queries connected with the collections in their charge.

H. C. ROBINSON.

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