

THE TRUE FINCHES

Family FRINGILLIDÆ

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Pyrrhula nipalensis waterstradti

The Malay Bullfinch

PLATE 23 (*upper figure, male; lower, female*)

Pyrrhula waterstradti, Hartert, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, xii., 1902, p. 69 (Gunong Tahan); id. *Nov. Zool.*, ix., 1902, p. 577; Ogilvie-Grant, *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, iii., 1908, p. 18; Robinson, *op. cit.*, ii., 1909, p. 212.

Pyrrhula nipalensis waterstradti. Hartert, *Vög. Palaarkt.*, i., 1903, p. 93; id. *Nov. Zool.*, xxvi., 1919, p. 161.

Malay Name.—Pipit gunong.

Description.—*Adult male.*—Upper surface, earthy brown, paler on the head where the feathers have darker centres; lower back, black; rump, white; upper tail coverts, metallic purplish, with dark edges; tail feathers the same, greenish black towards the tips; inner wing coverts as the back, paler at the tips; primary coverts, blackish. Primaries, blackish, outer secondaries, greenish violet on the outer webs, the inner secondaries on both webs, the innermost with a streak of dark red on the outer web. Axillaries, whitish; under wing coverts, ashy grey; inner webs of inner primaries and secondaries with white margins. Lores and base of bill, blackish brown, a large whitish patch on the sides of the face below the eye, and above and behind the ear coverts, which are pale brown. Beneath, chin, blackish brown; middle of belly and under tail coverts, white; remainder, greyish brown.

Adult female.—Like the male, but the inner secondary with a yellow streak on the outer web.

Immature.—Like the adults, but duller, the streaks on the inner secondaries reduced or absent.

Soft Parts.—Iris, yellowish; bill, black, shading into lead at the base of the culmen; feet, pinkish flesh-colour.

Dimensions.—Total length, about 6 in.; wing, 3'1 to 3'3 in.; tail, 2'8 to 2'9 in.; tarsus, 0'6 in.; bill from gape, 0'5 in.; breadth at base, 0'4 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—The mountains of Perak, Selangor and Pahang, never below an elevation of 4500 ft.

Nidification.—Nothing is known. The Himalayan form builds cup-

shaped nests, lined with fine roots and decorated with moss, and lays up to three eggs, which are pale blue, with blotches of reddish brown, lavender-pink and pale grey.

Habits.—This bullfinch, which is peculiar to the mountains of the Malay Peninsula, is common on Gunong Tahan and Gunong Benom in Pahang, and also on the Selangor dividing range, on Gunong Mengkuang Lebar and Gunong Ulu Kali, north to the Semangko Pass. It will probably occur on Fraser's Hill. It has also been found on Cameron's Highlands, but must be very rare there, as only one specimen, shot there by a Dyak collector of the Raffles' Museum, Singapore, has ever been obtained.

The species is found only in the zerophytic zone of vegetation, which is characteristic of the summits of the mountains on which it occurs, and is met with on small coniferous trees, such as *Agathis* and *Dacrydium*, and especially on shrubs, *Bæckia* and *Leptospermum*, on the berries of which it largely feeds, though small insects are also eaten. On the bare, heathy plateau and slopes of Gunong Tahan, from 5000 to over 7000 ft., it was at times very common, though at others entirely absent. It was generally met with in pairs, and was very restless, never remaining long in one place. Flight is powerful and long sustained, and, unlike most high-mountain species, the bird is very shy. The note is a pleasant little pipe, very much feebler than that of the British species.

Note.—Like that of many of the species living among the mountain vegetation that is characterized by stiff and leathery leaves, the plumage of this bullfinch becomes very worn and faded. In this stage the upper surface, especially the head, becomes a pale, dirty whitish brown, and the dark centres to the feathers much more conspicuous.

The birds figured, about natural size, are from Gunong Benom, Pahang, 6000 ft., shot in August 1925.