

FLOWER-PECKERS

Family DICÆIDÆ

Vol. I., p. 308.

IN the mountains the flower-peckers do not attract the attention that the exceptionally brilliant sunbirds do, nor are they probably nearly as numerous in individuals as is that family. Moreover, most of them keep high up in the trees and are very difficult to make out at all, still less to identify. Most of the species, a dozen or so, recorded from our area have a fairly wide range in altitude, but one is absolutely, and another probably, confined to the higher mountains. These are described in full in the present volume, while of the other five which are recorded from the hills, only sufficient particulars are given to facilitate their identification, pending detailed accounts in a later volume.

KEY TO THE SPECIES HERE DESCRIBED

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|---|---|--|---|
| 1 | { | With some bright colours in the plumage | 2 |
| | { | Plumage uniformly dull | 7 |
| 2 | { | Uniform metallic greenish above | <i>Dicæum sanguinolentum ignipectus</i>
(male), p. 277 |
| | { | Not uniform metallic greenish above | 3 |
| 3 | { | With no bright coronal patch | <i>Dicæum t. trigonostigma</i> , p. 278 |
| | { | With a bright coronal patch | 4 |
| | { | Heavily streaked below; no red on breast | <i>Charitociris m. maculatus</i> , p. 281 |
| 4 | { | Not heavily streaked below; with red or orange on breast | 5 |
| | { | Not streaked below; no red or orange on breast | 6 |
| | { | Head mainly black; rump bright yellow | <i>Prionochilus thoracicus</i> , p. 280 |
| 5 | { | Head and rump bluish grey (male); head and rump dull greenish olive (female) | <i>Charitociris percussus ignicapillus</i> ,
p. 281 |
| | { | Whole upper surface, from crown, scarlet | <i>Dicæum cruentatum ignitum</i> (male),
p. 279 |
| 6 | { | Head and back greyish brown, only rump scarlet | <i>Dicæum cruentatum ignitum</i>
(female), p. 279 |
| | { | Under surface brighter buff | <i>Dicæum s. ignipectus</i> (female), p. 277 |
| 7 | { | Under surface duller, more greyish. | <i>Dicæum m. olivaceum</i> , p. 278 |

*Dicæum sanguinolentum ignipectus***The Fire-breasted Flower-pecker**PLATE 24 (*upper figures*)

Myzanthæ ignipectus, Hodgs., Blyth, *Journ. Asiat. Soc. Bengal*, xii., 1843, p. 983 (Nepal).

Dicæum ignipectus, Sharpe, *P.Z.S.*, 1887, p. 441; Butler, *Journ. Straits Branch, Roy. Asiat. Soc.*, No. 32, 1899, p. 22; Bonhote, *P.Z.S.*, 1901 (1), p. 65 (Patelung); Hartert, *Nov. Zool.*, ix., 1902, p. 575; Ogilvie-Grant, *Fascic. Malay., Zool.*, iii., 1906, p. 75; id. *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, iii., 1909, p. 20.

Dicæum sanguinolentum ignipectus, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1924, p. 391.

Dicæum ignipectum ignipectum, Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), iii., 1926, p. 427.

Malay Name.—Burong supā putri gunong or sēpah putēri gunong.

Description.—*Adult male.*—General colour above, an oily, metallic bluish green; primaries and secondaries, black, edged with bluish on the outer webs, inner aspect of the wing, dusky, the quills narrowly edged with whitish on their inner webs; under wing coverts and axillaries, white. Tail feathers, black, washed with metallic greenish blue. Under surface, buff, the flanks sordid green, and the middle of the belly and the under tail coverts paler; thighs, whitish. A broad scarlet patch on the breast, and below it a longitudinal black stripe.

Adult female.—Above, a dull yellowish olive, the crown with darker centres to the feathers; primaries and secondaries, blackish brown, with paler yellowish edges to the outer webs, broader on the secondaries; under wing coverts and axillaries, white. Tail feathers, black, with a greenish gloss. Lores, mixed with buff; sides of the face and ear coverts, greenish grey. Beneath, buff, richer than in the male; sides of the breast and flanks, greenish olive; thighs, buffy.

Soft Parts.—Iris, dark brown; bill, black; feet, blackish brown in the male, lead-colour in the female.

Dimensions.—Total length, rather under 3 in.; wing, 1·9 to 2·1 in.; tail, 1·1 to 1·3 in.; tarsus, 0·5 in.; bill from gape, 0·35 in.; culmen, 0·3 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—From Perak to Southern Selangor, and also in Pahang.

Extralimital Range.—Very widely distributed from the Western Himalayas to Assam; Yunnan and South China; south to Manipur, Tenasserim; French Indo-China to South Annam. Related forms are found in Java and Sumatra, but not in Borneo.

Nidification.—Unknown in the Malay Peninsula. In the Himalayas the nests are egg-shaped cups of fibre and cotton down, ornamented with green moss outside, placed in trees ten to twenty feet from the ground. The clutch consists of two or three white eggs, and Baker gives the average dimensions as 0·59 by 0·41 in.

Habits.—In the Malay Peninsula, so far as my experience goes, this flower-pecker is strictly confined to the zone above 3500 ft., and, though generally distributed, is nowhere at all common. I cannot help thinking that there is some mistake either in identification or labelling of the specimens recorded by Bonhote (*loc. cit.*), as obtained at Patelung and Kuala Aring, Kelantan, both low-level localities, by the "Skeat Expedition." There is little to record about habits. The bird is usually seen on epiphytic plants—sometimes on bushes where these are growing—on the ridges, but often in high trees. They are generally seen singly or in pairs, rarely in small parties. The note is not recorded.

The male bird figured is from Fraser's Hill, above the Semangko Pass, Selangor-Pahang boundary, shot in October; the female, from Gunong Mengkuang Lebar, Selangor, 5200 ft., shot in April.

Dicaeum trigonostigma trigonostigma

The Malayan Orange-bellied Flower-pecker

A small flower-pecker with a somewhat slender bill.

Male.—With head and wings dark grey; tail, black; back and rump, orange; beneath, with the chin and throat very pale grey; rest of the under surface, orange; under wing coverts and axillaries, white.

Female.—Upper parts, greenish olive; wings, black, edged with olive; those parts which are orange in the male, a rather dull yellow. Total length, about 3.5 to 4 in.

This species is an ordinary low-country jungle form, usually living in fairly high trees, and there is nothing much in its habits to differentiate it from other members of its genus. It ascends the hills to a height of rather over 3000 ft., and was common up to this height on Gunong Tahan, the hills of Negri Sembilan, and also on Kedah Peak, where, in December 1915, we found it numerous on flowering trees, at about 3000 ft., on the site of the present bungalow.

The bird will be described in full in Volume IV.

Dicaeum minullum olivaceum

The Plain-coloured Flower-pecker

Dicaeum olivaceum, Walden, *Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist.* (4), xv., 1875, p. 401 (Toung-hoo); Oates, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, ii., 1890, p. 380.

Dicaeum inornatum, Sharpe, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, x., 1885, p. 45.

Dicaeum minullum olivaceum, Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), iii., 1926, p. 430.

Malay Name.—Burong supa putri or sěpah putěri kecil.

Description.—*Adult.*—Sexes alike. Above, dark greenish olive, a little brighter on the rump and upper tail coverts, the feathers of the crown with darker centres. Primaries and secondaries, blackish, the latter with broad

brownish fringes on both webs; inner aspect of wing, dusky, the quills with narrow white edges to their inner webs, under wing coverts, white, axillaries, white, pectoral tufts white and silky. Tail, black, the feathers with olive edges. Beneath, dark greenish grey, middle of the abdomen and the thighs, buffy.

Immature birds.—Appear to have the upper wing coverts and secondaries browner, with broader and paler margins than in the adults.

Soft Parts.—Iris, brown; bill, black, the base of the lower mandible bluish grey; feet, slaty black. Immature with the bill largely yellow (*Kloss*).

Dimensions.—Total length, 3 to 3.25 in.; wing, 1.7 to 1.9 in.; tail, 1 to 1.2 in.; tarsus, 0.5 in.; bill from gape, 0.45 in.; culmen, 0.35 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—Not well known. Perak, Selangor, Malacca. Common on Penang Hill.

Extralimital Range.—The Himalayas to Assam, south to Manipur, Pegu, and the Shan States, Yunnan, Southern China and French Indo-China to South Annam; Sumatra. Various other races have been described, including one from Hainan and another from Borneo, which I find difficulty in separating from the Penang birds.

Nidification.—Not known from the Malay Peninsula. Baker states that the nests are exactly like those of other species of the genus, placed sometimes near the ground, sometimes forty feet up in high trees. The eggs are two or three in number, greyish white in coloration, and average 0.57 by 0.42 in.

Habits.—There are few known specimens from the Malay Peninsula, as, from its small size and dingy coloration, the bird escapes observation altogether or is mistaken for the immature of one of the more brightly coloured species. I have obtained it at moderate elevations in the Batang Padang valley, South Perak. Seimund secured several specimens on Gunong Kledang, and Wilson found it abundant in the grounds of Government House, Penang Hill, at 2500 ft. The habits are those of the family in general, and the note is described by Baker as a constant “*chip, chip, chip.*”

Dicæum cruentatum ignitum

The Malayan Scarlet-backed Flower-pecker

Vol. I., p. 308, pl. 23 (*upper figures*).

Malay Name.—Burong supa putri or sěpah putěri.

Male.—Upper surface, scarlet; wings and tail, black, with a purplish or greenish wash; sides of the head and neck and a patch on each side of the chest, dull black; rest of the under surface, white, slightly tinged with buff.

Female.—Greyish brown above, only the rump scarlet; wings and tail, duller blackish brown; under surface, buffy white, the patches on the sides of the breast greyish. Total length in both sexes slightly under 4 in.

Does not normally ascend the mountains to any great height. Mr F. N. Chasen, however, obtained a male near the summit of Penang Hill, at 2700 ft., in December.

*Prionochilus*¹ *thoracicus***The Scarlet-breasted Flower-pecker**PLATE 24 (*lower figures*)*Pardalotus thoracicus*, Temm., *Pl. Col.*, 1836, pl. 600, figs. 1, 2 (Borneo).*Prionochilus thoracicus*, Sharpe, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, x., 1885, p. 67; Ogilvie-Grant, *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, iii., 1908, p. 19; Robinson and Kloss, *op. cit.*, vi., 1916, p. 234.**Description.**—Bill coarse and deep, swollen at the base.*Adult male.*—Head and neck, all round, black, a scarlet patch on the middle of the crown. Mantle and upper back, olive-yellow, becoming clear yellow on the rump and upper tail coverts. Lesser upper wing coverts, along the inner edge of wing, bright yellow; median and greater series, primaries and secondaries, black. Inner aspect of wing, blackish, the quills margined with white on their inner webs, axillaries and under wing coverts, white, the latter mottled with black towards the edge of the wing; tail, black. Beneath, chin and throat, black; a large shield of scarlet disintegrated feathers on the breast surrounded by black; remainder of lower surface, yellow, greenish on the flanks, brighter on the under tail coverts; thighs, greyish.*Adult female.*—Dull coloured. Above, greyish olive, becoming more yellow on the rump; upper wings, brownish; the outer webs of the secondaries greenish olive; inner aspect, as in the male. Tail, blackish, the feathers edged with olive. Sides of the head, dull grey; middle of the throat, pale grey. On the middle of the breast a patch of greenish yellow, the edges of the feathers brighter yellow; rest of the under surface, greyish, paler on the flanks, more yellow on the middle of the abdomen and under tail coverts. Some birds have an olive-yellow patch on the middle of the crown, indicative of the scarlet patch of the male.*Juvenile.*—Young birds are dull greenish olive above, and a uniform greyish olive, tinged with green, below, without any brighter colouring. The male passes through a phase in which it resembles the adult female. Afterwards the bright yellow wing and tail coverts are the first to be acquired; and the scarlet crown patch last of all.**Soft Parts.**—*Male*: iris, dark or yellowish brown; bill, black; feet, dark slate, with a tinge of green. *Female*: "iris, deep wood-brown; lower mandible, dark plumbeous, almost black; young birds with the tip of bill, gape and basal part of upper mandible, orange-yellow" (*Davison*).**Dimensions.**—Total length, about 4 in.; wing, 2'1 to 2'3 in.; tail, 1'1 to 1'4 in.; tarsus, 0'55 in.; bill from gape, 0'45 in.**Range in the Malay Peninsula.**—From somewhat north of the latitude of Penang to Johore. Not on any of the islands.**Extralimital Range.**—Billiton and Borneo. No difference is to be seen between birds from these islands and Malaya.

¹ It seems probable that the correct generic name for this bird is *Anaimos*, Reichenb., but I have retained *Prionochilus* for the present.

Nidification.—Unknown.

Habits.—This flower-pecker is a rare bird in the Malay Peninsula, and little is known about it. There are a few trade skins from "Malacca" in the British Museum, and some young birds from Johore, obtained in August and September 1875 by W. Davison. It was obtained by L. Wray and myself on Gunong Tahan at moderate elevations, at Temengoh, Upper Perak, and on Kedah Peak, in December, by Kloss and myself.

Like others of the genus, all the birds I have myself seen were feeding on flowering trees or on parasitic shrubs. The species probably lives in heavy jungle on lofty trees, where it is quite inaccessible, but is probably not at all rare. On Kedah Peak and on Tahan the birds were in parties of six or seven, and were not at all shy. I have no special record of its note.

The male figured, natural size, is from Kedah Peak, 2800 to 3500 ft., shot on 2nd December 1915; the female, from Temengoh, Upper Perak, shot on 2nd August 1909.

Charitociris percussus ignicapillus

The Crimson-breasted Flower-pecker

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Male.—Blue-grey above, with a flame-coloured patch on the middle of the crown. Below, extreme point of chin, white; rest of under surface, bright yellow, whitish on the middle of the belly and under tail coverts, and with a longitudinal flame-coloured patch on the middle of the breast.

Female.—Duller, greyish olive-green above, the crown patch dull orange. Beneath, chin and throat, grey; middle of breast and abdomen, pale orange; rest of under surface, greyish olive. Total length, about 4 in.

Widely distributed in heavy jungle, usually on high trees, but rare on the mountains, though Butler states that it is fairly common on the Larut Hills as high as 4000 ft., and I myself have obtained it near the summit of Kedah Peak.

Charitociris maculatus maculatus

The Yellow-throated Flower-pecker

Male.—Above, dark olive-green, a patch on the crown, fiery orange; below, throat yellow, the rest of the under surface heavily streaked with dark green.

Female.—Like the male, but the patch on the crown a paler yellow. Total length, about 4 in.

Distribution in the Peninsula much as that of the preceding species, but, on the whole, a rarer bird. Fairly common on Ginting Bidei, Selangor, and also recorded from the Larut Hills, Kedah Peak and Gunong Tahan. In the north of the Peninsula the bird becomes slightly brighter beneath, and has been named *Ch. maculatus septentrionalis*.

Both these forms will be fully described in Volume IV.