

# 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 IV : THE BIRDS OF THE LOW-COUNTRY  
JUNGLE AND SCRUB

*(With a notice of all species occurring in the lowlands)*

WITH TWENTY-FIVE FULL-PAGE PLATES  
IN COLOUR

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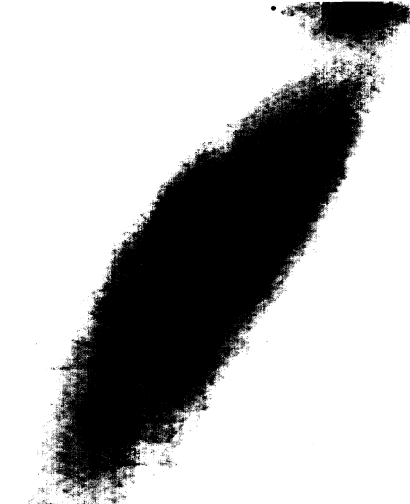
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## PREFACE

CERTAIN ornithologists in Europe have complained to me that the peculiar arrangement of this work, in which the Malayan avifauna is artificially divided, makes reference difficult. I freely admit the weakness in the plan. At first I also disliked the novel idea of dividing the species into "common birds," "birds of the hill stations," etc., but I am now convinced that the original choice, for which I was not responsible, was a wise one.

These books are meant rather more for the use of residents in Malaya than for my fellow-professionals in museums abroad. Any attempt to condense this first detailed account of Malayan birds into one volume would be futile, and a series of volumes dealing with the birds in a natural sequence would remove the work, on grounds of expense alone, from the reach of most amateur naturalists in the country.

As it is, there is one volume available at a reasonable price for the sportsman, and one of the others for the resident wherever he lives. The first volume is for use in the towns and city gardens, for the "verandah bird-watcher" in fact. The next and final volume will, I hope, satisfy the serious ornithologist, for it will contain, in addition to other features, a summary of Malayan birds in a systematic arrangement. Furthermore, I hope that in the not too distant future it will be possible to produce a work on Malayan birds planned on the lines of *The Fauna of British India*. The manuscript of this is in an advanced state.

Nevertheless, I admit that our novel arrangement showed signs of breaking down during the preparation of the present fasciculus, and at times I was hard put to it to decide whether a given species was of the "low-country jungle and scrub," or the "open-country and ricefields." I submit that an arbitrary decision would have robbed this book of any value it was likely to possess; I therefore modified the plan and now include a brief notice of *all species hitherto met with in the lowlands of the Malay Peninsula—i.e. below 3000 ft.*; but birds dealt with in the published volumes, or more appropriately included in the next volume, have not received the usual detailed notice.

The large extent and rapid growth of my official correspondence in the Raffles Museum with residents scattered over the Malay States is, I think, a fair sign of the success of the books' plan, and there is no doubt that the late H. C. Robinson's first volume stimulated an interest in birds throughout the country that has added more to our knowledge of life-histories in one

decade **than in all the previous** fifty years. First and foremost of my correspondents is **Mr A. T. Edgar**, who plants rubber at Sitiawan, in Lower Perak. His **work is especially** valuable in that he has discovered and recorded in detail **the nidification** of many common Malayan birds of which not only the details **but, in a number** of cases, the actual nests and eggs were hitherto **unknown from the** Peninsula. Many such records appear in the present volume. **Mr G. C. Madoc** of the Malayan Police has also been very helpful. **Captain T. P. Coe**, M.C., Mr E. Seimund, M.B.E., and Mr V. W. Ryves have **also sent very welcome** notes. In spite of the ready assistance that I have **been given**, and the beautiful collections available to me, the latter largely **through** sustained effort for many years by Messrs H. C. Robinson and C. **Boden Kloss**, there remain many gaps in our knowledge, and it was not **until I** came to write about the hosts of common babblers and bulbuls of the **low-country** forests that I realized how little I knew of them. It is my **belief** that W. Davison, Hume's collaborator and a predecessor of mine at the Raffles Museum, knew more about the habits of Malayan birds than any of us. Davison died in 1893, but his published field-notes remain a model of what such things should be.

Few people can have had such opportunities for observing Malayan birds as myself. I must by now, at some time or other, have seen or collected the great majority of the species in the field; but I joined the Museum Department when we were, quite rightly I think, mainly engaged in building up the present unrivalled collections with a view to establishing the composition of the Malaysian fauna as a preliminary to its study in detail. This meant that the main purpose of our expeditions was the acquisition of specimens. Unfortunately, I have never been able to combine serious observation with collecting, and so it was that for the first ten years of my life in the East most of my bird-watching was done down a gun-barrel.

In this place I must repeat that *in matters of classification and nomenclature I have been bound by the system and names* used by Robinson in the first volume. This was published ten years ago and for technical reasons a number of the names should be changed. Such a change at this point, however, would certainly lead to confusion in the minds of the people for whom the book is primarily intended, and I have therefore retained Robinson's names, in a few cases, when it seemed absolutely necessary, calling attention to a recent change in a footnote; but even this action has been taken very rarely. I will attempt to correlate all the names with a synonymy in my next and last volume. In the meantime my own views are expressed in *A Handlist of Malaysian Birds*, published in 1935.

When the paragraph on habits is very short it often means that I cannot add anything of interest to the generalized notes given under "Family." In a few groups of birds it is difficult to pick out specific differences and sometimes the birds of a genus are much alike in their habits.

Following the general plan of including notice of all birds likely to be found in the lowlands I have had to mention all the game and sporting birds to which a whole volume has already been given, although I fear that the bare

essential notes and the repetition of the keys have made the last part of the book especially tedious. Two new features are introduced in this volume. As a preliminary to the detailed **specific** descriptions brief diagnoses have been added. In these the colour notes are designed for field identification. Here and there, under a special heading, an occasional excursus appears. These invite attention to such **special subjects** as the seasonal change of plumage in sunbirds.

I am again grateful to Mr **H. Grönvold** for the care he took in the preparation of the plates, to Mr **N. B. Kinnear**, of the Natural History Museum, who, as usual, helped in many ways, and to my wife, who helped me in the preparation of the manuscript. Mr **H. Bench Usher** kindly prepared the indices in both the present and the last volume.

F. N. CHASEN.

SINGAPORE,  
1st October 1938.