

# THE TRUE FINCHES

## Family FRINGILLIDÆ

Vol. I., p. 284; Vol. II., p. 268.

THE finches and buntings form a very large family of small birds, all much alike in structure. Their headquarters are in the temperate and subtropical parts of the world where the species are widely distributed. Although there is usually only one moult in the year, the summer and winter plumages often differ owing to abrasion of the differently coloured edges of the feathers. In many forms the plumage of the male is much brighter than that of the female. Many of the finches are migratory.

The bill is short, more or less conical and often very stout, and the short feet are also strong. The tail of twelve feathers is usually square or nearly so. The wing has nine visible primaries. The finches are grain-eaters, but the young are fed largely on insects.

Only four members of the family are found in the Malay Peninsula. One of these, the Malayan bullfinch, is confined to the mountains; the others are only briefly noticed below, as detailed descriptions are more suitably included in other volumes of this series.

### KEY TO THE MALAYAN LOWLAND FINCHES

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| 1 | { | Upper parts heavily streaked . . . . .     | 2   |
|   |   | Upper parts not heavily streaked . . . . . | <i>Passer flaveolus</i> , p. 368            |
| 2 | { | Under parts, grey, washed with             |   |
|   |   | brown . . . . .                            | <i>Passer montanus malaccensis</i> , p. 367 |
|   | { | Under parts, yellow or yellowish . . . . . | <i>Emberiza a. aureola</i> , p. 368         |

### *Passer montanus malaccensis*

#### The Malay Tree-Sparrow

Vol. I., p. 284.

Very like the European tree-sparrow. Sexes alike. Top of the head, pinky chestnut; upper parts, bright brown boldly streaked with blackish. Under parts, grey, washed with brown. Throat and cheeks, black.

Total length, about 5·2 in.; wing, 2·7 in.

Common throughout the whole Peninsula in the larger towns and villages, but never in the jungle or away from the habitations of men. The nest is placed in a wide variety of situations.

*Passer flaveolus*

**The Pegu House-Sparrow**

The male has the back and a large patch behind the eye very pale chestnut ; chin and throat, black ; remainder of the plumage mostly dull yellow ; top of the head tinged with green. Females lack the black throat and the chestnut in the plumage. They are pale greenish clay-colour on the upper parts and dull yellow below. There is a broad, dull yellow eye-stripe.

Total length, about 5·9 in. ; wing, about 2·85 in.

In the Peninsula the southernmost known locality for this sparrow, which is found in Lower Burma, the Shan States, Siam and French Indo-China, is Mamoh on the Pakchan estuary, and according to the present state of our knowledge the species is, therefore, only nominally entitled to a place in the Malayan avifauna. In other parts of its range the habits are said to be very similar to those of the European house-sparrow, although the bird is not quite so dependent on human habitations.

*Emberiza aureola aureola*

**The Yellow-breasted Bunting**

Males have the upper parts chestnut, the feathers fringed with pale brown, and the under parts yellow, with a narrow chestnut band across the lower throat. In spring the chin and upper throat are black. Females have the upper parts brown, boldly streaked with blackish brown, and the under parts yellowish, streaked with brown on the flanks.

Total length, about 5·8 in. ; wing, about 3 in.

A winter visitor from its breeding-grounds in Manchuria, Siberia, etc. Although not uncommon in parts of Siam, it can only be regarded as an extremely rare straggler to the Malay States. In Tenasserim, Davison records it as occurring in large flocks in the more open country such as grass-land and ricefields.