

GOATSUCKERS

Family CAPRIMULGIDÆ

Vol. I., p. 116; Vol. II., p. 59.

THE goatsuckers, nightjars or fern-owls are a sharply defined family of birds, well distributed over the tropical and subtropical zones of both hemispheres and visiting the more temperate regions in summer.

The family characters are very uniform; all the species have short depressed bills, very broad in the gape, and generally, but not always, furnished with bristles. The plumage is very soft, and the colours are blended tints of brown, black, grey, white and dull fuscous, so that the birds are protectively coloured. Tail feathers are often tipped with white and many forms have white bars on the wings. The Asiatic species have the claw of the middle toe with a peculiar comb-like margin, the use of which is not understood.

Many species are supplied with ornamental appendages, such as elongated ear tufts, lengthened tail feathers or specialized primaries. The sexes in the majority of species differ in plumage, but only very slightly.

The goatsuckers lay their eggs on the ground without a nest. The eggs are usually two in number and are generally protectively coloured; the young are hatched covered with down (*Robinson*, Vol. I., p. 116).

Four species (including one with two subspecies—northern and southern forms) are found in the Peninsula.

KEY TO THE MALAYAN NIGHTJARS

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| 1 | { With no bristles at the gape: a tuft
of lengthened feathers ("ear
tufts") above and behind the eye. | 2 |
| | | { With strong bristles at the gape: no
"ear tufts" |
| 2 | { Larger: wing about 12 in.
Smaller: wing about 8 in. | <i>Lyncornis c. cerviniceps</i> , p. 104 |
| | | <i>Lyncornis temmincki</i> , p. 104 |
| 3 | { Two outer pairs of tail feathers with
buff or white tips: bristles at gape,
white at the base | <i>Caprimulgus macrourus</i> subspp.,
p. 103 |
| | | { Either no pale tips to tail feathers
(female) or four outer pairs of
feathers white-tipped (male):
bristles at gape black throughout . |

*Caprimulgus macrourus bimaculatus***The Malay Long-tailed Nightjar**

Vol. I., p. 116, pl. 9.

Like that of the owls, the plumage of nightjars is very difficult to describe in detail because of the complicated pattern of mottled and vermiculated browns and greys. In the present species the upper parts are grey, finely vermiculated with blackish brown streaked with black, most boldly on the crown, mottled with rufous on the wings, and with large buff-edged black patches on the scapulars. Wings indistinctly barred with buff, and the tail barred with blackish on the centre feathers and rufous on the others.

Often there is a golden-buff collar across the hind neck. Breast, grey vermiculated with dusky; abdomen, buff, barred with brown; throat, white, the lower feathers tipped with black. Males have the outer tail feathers tipped with white and a large white patch on the primaries. In females these tail tips and wing-patches are buff. In both sexes the rictal bristles are black with white bases.

Total length, about 11.5 in.; wing, 7.9 in.

This nightjar, well known to Europeans as the "tock-tock" bird because of its characteristic and sometimes rather annoying note, is common almost everywhere in the lowlands, but perhaps most numerous in the cultivated, populated areas. In the town of Singapore it is a familiar bird. North of about the latitude of Penang it is replaced by a slightly larger and paler subspecies, *C. m. ambiguus*. The species is resident and lays its eggs on the ground, often in gardens and plantations. In Lower Perak Mr A. T. Edgar regards the nesting season as January–April. The eggs usually measure about 1.18 by 0.88 in. Mr Edgar has definite proof that in this species the nestlings are sometimes moved, or move, to a place of greater security a day or so after hatching (see *Bull. Raff. Mus.*, viii., 1933, p. 134). Season in Selangor and Negri Sembilan, January–April (*Ryves*).

*Caprimulgus indicus jotaka***The Migratory Nightjar**

Vol. I., p. 118; Vol. II., p. 59.

Superficially this species is so like the last-mentioned bird (*C. m. bimaculatus*) that a detailed description is unnecessary. The present species can be distinguished by the fact that males have the four outer pairs of tail feathers tipped with white, not merely the two outer pairs as in *C. macrourus*, and that the female has no pale tail tips at all. Furthermore, the rictal bristles in both sexes are entirely black and have no white bases.

Total length, about 12 in.; wing, 7.7 to 8.6 in.

A migrant from Siberia, Japan, etc. It is common in winter as far south as Malacca, near the coasts, or on the mountains. There is no record from the extreme south of the Peninsula.

*Lyncornis temmincki***The Malaysian Great-eared Nightjar**

Vol. I., p. 119, pl. 8; Vol. II., p. 60.

In general appearance again very similar to the two last-mentioned species, but without rictal bristles, with no white in the wings and tail in either sex and with elongated ear tufts. Furthermore, the general plumage is darker and more rufous, and the under parts are more coarsely barred, especially on the breast.

Total length, about 10.5 in.; wing, about 7.9 in.

Common from about the latitude of Penang and North Perak south to Singapore. It is usually seen high in the air in open country on the edge of forests and is, normally, not a bird of the towns, etc. The well-known note *tip-ti-bau* cannot be mistaken.

From Lower Perak Mr A. T. Edgar records, "a single egg, beginning to incubate, taken on 30th June. Laid on the ground, near the base of a large tree, on a dry strip of land covered with 'bertam' and saplings, and surrounded by swamp jungle. The egg measured 1.42 by 1.02 in. It is a long, regular oval, with a tough glossy shell. The colour is pale pinkish stone, with scanty, evenly distributed spots of light reddish brown, some of them with a faintly purple tinge, and with larger and more numerous undermarkings of pale lavender."

On 13th April, in Negri Sembilan, Messrs G. C. Madoc and V. W. Ryves flushed a bird from a single egg laid on dead leaves in the shelter of a "bertam" palm in old jungle.

Mr Ryves further reports a clutch of two eggs from Perak on 25th March.

*Lyncornis cerviniceps cerviniceps***The Giant Nightjar**

Lyncornis cerviniceps Gould, *Icon. Av.*, pt. 2, 1838, pl. 14 (China, error=Peninsular Siam, *Rob. and Kl.*, 1922); Oates, in Hume's *Nests and Eggs Ind. Birds* (2nd ed.), iii., 1890, p. 52; Hartert, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, xvi., 1892, p. 604; Blanford, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, iii., 1895, p. 192; Oates, *Cat. Birds' Eggs, Brit. Mus.*, iii., 1903, p. 60.

Lyncornis cerviniceps cerviniceps, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1922, p. 140; Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), iv., 1927, p. 374; Stuart Baker, *Nid. Birds Ind. Emp.*, iii., 1934, p. 489.

Malay Name.—Unrecorded.

Description.—By far the largest of the local nightjars. A tuft of lengthened, erectile feathers growing from above and behind the eye can be overlooked when the plumage is sleek. No bristles at the gape.

Adult.—Sexes alike. The whole plumage highly variegated in many tones from grey to chestnut and finely vermiculated with black. Top of head, greyish buff with a few black spots; remainder of head and fore neck, black, the feathers fringed with chestnut, the ear tufts tipped with grey-buff. A white band across the throat, a rufous-buff band across the nape, a buff band across the breast. Breast, abdomen, under wing coverts and axillaries,

buff closely barred with black. Under tail coverts, buff with thinner and more irregular black bars. Mantle and scapulars, chestnut and greyish buff, the whole finely vermiculated with black and with large black spots; back, rump and upper tail coverts, buff and grey with black bars. Wing coverts and long inner secondaries, buff to chestnut with black vermiculations or bolder irregular bars. Wing quills, black finely and irregularly marked with chestnut. Tail quills, black with broad, irregular buff and grey bars, the bars mottled with black.

Soft Parts.—Iris, brown; bill, horny pink; feet, dull blackish purple (*Kloss*).

Dimensions.—Total length, about 16 in.; wing, 11.75 to 12.5 in.; tail, 8.5 to 8.8 in.; tarsus, 0.8 in.; bill from gape, 1.4 to 1.7 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—Peninsular Siam, including Junk Zeylon. Penang.

Extralimital Range.—Common in Siam and Burma. Occurs in French Indo-China from Laos southwards. Ranges north through Manipur to Assam. Chittagong and Tippera. In Southern India an almost indistinguishable subspecies occurs. Certain Philippine forms are also very closely related, and an isolated race recently described from Simalur Island, off the west coast of Sumatra, also seems to stand in subspecific relationship to *cerviniceps*. The distribution is a curious one.

Nidification.—No details are available from the Malay Peninsula, but Mr Stuart Baker has an egg from the "Northern Malay States" which he considers to be of this bird. In Burma, a single egg is laid on the ground, in forest: there is no attempt at nest-making. The egg is elliptical, glossy and smooth in texture, cream to pinkish in ground-colour, marbled with lilac and sometimes with a few rich brown spots. Size about 1.65 by 1.2 in.

Habits.—Although very common in most parts of Peninsular Siam, except Patani, and especially so in the open country in Trang, this fine nightjar rapidly becomes rarer as it ranges to the south. The Penang record is a little dubious and is based on an old specimen, without detailed data, in the Selangor Museum, and I know of no records from Patani, or any other of the Malay States, although the species is almost certain to occur in Patani.

In Tenasserim, according to Davison, it shows a preference for the well-wooded parts of the country.

It has been known to roost in caves, but this is, perhaps, not its usual habit. Judging from various published accounts of the bird in Burma its habits seem essentially like those of other nightjars, the bird appearing in the sky at sundown and taking its insect food on the wing. Davison describes the note as a full clear whistle of three syllables. Referring to the species at Chong, in Peninsular Siam, Robinson and Kloss have recorded: "This magnificent Goatsucker, one of the finest of the family, only appeared on three or four nights for a few minutes before and after sunset, when the air was full of termites. Its flight was somewhat slow and very direct, rendering it a very much easier bird to shoot than its congener, *L. temmincki*, which is sometimes very rapid in flight. We did not hear it utter any note."