

FROGMOUTHS

Family PODARGIDÆ

THOUGH I do not propose to give a description of any of the species in this volume some brief account of the family is perhaps advisable here, though none of its members are at all commonly met with.

From the nightjars, to which they are closely related, the frogmouths are distinguished by their much less flattened and more horny bill, slightly hooked at the tip and very broad in the gape; the nostrils are narrow slits near the base of the bill, concealed by long bristly plumes, highly developed in some of the species. There are no stiff bristles at the gape.

The tarsi and toes are short and the claw of the middle toe is not serrated as in the nightjars. The wings are more rounded, and the tail relatively longer and more graduated than in that family. Plumage, soft and moth-like, usually much mottled and vermiculated, like the owls, in brown, rufous, grey and white tints. Sexes rather different.

The breeding habits are highly peculiar; the nests of the local species are small pads of white vegetable down, extraordinarily small for the size of the bird, often less than 1.5 in. in diameter. They are placed on the upper surface of a bough, along which the bird sits longitudinally. The eggs are one or two in number, white, without much gloss.

Like the goatsuckers all the members of the family are strictly nocturnal, nor in Malaya do they ever leave the shelter of thick jungle, and comparatively little is therefore known about them. The family comprises about thirty species, ranging from India through the Malay Archipelago to New Guinea, Australia and New Caledonia.

Three species are Malayan; one is a large bird with a wing of over 10 in., deep chestnut-brown in colour, with a cream-white collar on the hind neck and cream-white spots on the wing coverts (*Batrachostomus auritus*); the others are much smaller.