

THE BIRDS OF THE MALAY PENINSULA

GAME BIRDS

Order GALLIFORMES

Vol. I., p. i.

THE game birds of the Malay Peninsula, using the expression in a somewhat loose and popular fashion, number some eighteen species, jungle fowl, pheasants of various kinds, wood- and tree-partridges, button and bustard quail, and of these I have been able to deal with only two species as "Common Birds."

Though this is not a work in which details of classification based on deep-seated anatomical characters can suitably be discussed, it should be pointed out that even in a popular book of this character I was perhaps incorrect in including the bustard quails under one heading with the rest of the *Galliformes*. Recent osteological investigations, by Dr P. R. Lowe, based largely on certain bones of the skull, has shown beyond any reasonable doubt that these birds have undoubted claims to be regarded as a quite distinct group, *Turniciformes*, of equal standing with the true *Galliformes*, but perhaps somewhat more closely allied to the *Columbiformes*, or pigeons and doves. Of the remaining sixteen species eight have good claim to be regarded as inhabitants of the Malayan mountains, and, of these, three are, so far as is known, strictly confined to the higher hills, and are therefore fully described here. The remaining five are more regular inhabitants of lower levels, and therefore will be dealt with later. They are, however, included in the key, and a brief description, sufficient, it is hoped, to identify the species, is also added in the text.

In most cases, unless the visitor to the Hill Stations of the Peninsula is sufficiently enthusiastic to devote much time and trouble to their pursuit, and to undergo not a little discomfort in the process, his acquaintance with any of the local game birds is likely to be limited to hearing the never-to-be-mistaken call of the Argus pheasant at early morning or, more frequently, at late evening or far into the night. In most localities the Argus pheasant is possibly not uncommon, though extremely shy and very wary, but all the other species are probably, as compared with related forms in the mountains of Sumatra, Java or Tenasserim, actually rare. This may be due in part to the operations of the Sakai, who, where they are at all numerous, lead the local game a very hard life, but is more likely to be caused by unsuitability of the very steep hillsides

to the needs of the birds, admitting of the maintenance of a very limited stock.

KEY TO THE SPECIES HERE DESCRIBED

1	{	Tail exceeding the wing in length ; large or moderate - sized birds — Argus or peacock-pheasants	2	
		Tail much less than the wing in length ; small or moderate-sized birds—partridges or wood-quail	4	
2	{	Secondaries much longer than primaries, broadened and furnished with large ocelli	} <i>Argusianus argus argus</i> , p. 2	
		Secondaries not longer than primaries, not broadened, spotted, but without large ocelli		3
3	{	Central pair of tail feathers very greatly exceeding the others ; without metallic ocelli in plumage	} <i>Rheinardius ocellatus nigrescens</i> , p. 3	
		Central pair of tail feathers not very greatly exceeding the others ; with metallic ocelli in plumage		<i>Polyplectron inopinatus</i> , p. 5
4	{	Conspicuously crested	<i>Rollulus roulroul</i> , p. 7	
		Not crested	5	
5	{	Bill much lengthened	} <i>Rhizothera longirostris longirostris</i> , p. 6	
		Bill short		6
6	{	Head and under surface mainly rusty red	} <i>Caloperdix oculo oculo</i> , p. 7	
		Head, black ; under-surface, grey		<i>Arborophila campbelli</i> , p. 7
		Head, earthy brown ; a patch of chestnut-maroon on breast		<i>Tropicoperdix charltoni charltoni</i> , p. 9

Argusianus argus argus

The Malayan Argus Pheasant

Malay Names.—Kauu (or) kuang, kauu raya, kauu rimba.

The Argus pheasant can be recognized at once by the fact that in the male the secondaries, or inner quill feathers, are much lengthened and broadened, being longer than the primaries. The outer webs are ornamented with a series of large eye spots or "ocelli," increasing in size towards the tips, the inner webs are whitish towards the margin, with several rows of black spots. The general colour of the body beneath is chestnut, mottled and vermiculated with blackish. The head is black, with a short blackish crest ; the sides of the head and the neck are thinly feathered. The total length of the male is about 66 to 78 in., the tail may be anything up to 60 in. ; the tarsus is about 4.5 in. without spurs, pinkish red in colour.

The female is much smaller than the male, and without the enormously developed secondaries or the very elongated central tail feathers. The total length is about 30 to 35 in., with a tail of from 12 to 15 in.

The Argus pheasant is widely spread through the whole of the Malay Peninsula in hilly country and on Pangkor Besar in the Dindings. It is perhaps commonest in the foothills where these are covered with heavy but not too dense jungle, but ascends the hills to well over 3000 ft., and, it is said, to nearly 5000 ft. in Upper Perak; it certainly occurs, though rarely, on the lower parts of Cameron's Highlands. Formerly common on the Larut Hills it is now scarce there, except on the reverse slopes of the hills draining into the Kuraw Valley.

The bird will be described in detail and figured in Volume III. of this work.

Rheinardius ocellatus nigrescens

The Malayan Ocellated Pheasant

Rheinardius ocellatus nigrescens, Rothschild, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, xii., 1902, p. 55 (Ulu Pahang); Hartert, *Nov. Zool.*, ix., 1902, p. 538; Ogilvie-Grant, *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, iii., 1908, p. 56; Robinson, *op. cit.*, ii., 1909, p. 168; Beebe, *Mon. Pheas.*, iv., 1922, pp. 106-110, pl. lxxxii., photo pls. 68, 69.

Malay Name.—Kuang (or) kuau raya gunong, kuang or kuau kepala puteh.

Description.—*Adult male.*—Upper surface, including the wings, deep black, each feather with treble or quadruple rows of rounded white spots quite defined from each other on each web; on close examination each spot is seen to be surrounded by a black area darker than the rest of the background, which is also covered by a reddish brown vermiculation, hardly perceptible on the mantle, more conspicuous on the secondaries, rump and upper tail coverts, where the white spots are larger. Inner aspect of the wings a duller, more slaty black, with the spots smaller; white spots more elongate transversely, on the axillaries and wing coverts. Tail extremely long, much graduated, the feathers with numerous rows of white spots all surrounded by black or greyish black on a ground of reddish chestnut, the edges of the feathers much darker. Near the shaft the spots almost completely cover the base, leaving a single or double row of clear reddish areas on either side, generally with blackish centres on the outer webs, these areas having themselves the appearance of larger spots. Crown with short, black velvety feathers; a broad buff stripe from the nostrils over the eye; sides of the head and ear coverts, greyish brown; a heavy lengthened occipital crest of hair-like disintegrated feathers, the uppermost shortest and black, the undermost longest, and silky white, with a very faint buff tinge at the extreme base. Beneath, throat buffy; rest of the under surface more or less as the upper parts, but the spots more oblong, more regularly disposed in rows, and the ground-colour dark chestnut-red, not so black; middle of the belly greyish brown, the feathers faintly tipped with buff. Tarsus without spurs (rarely present in the allied *R. ocellatus* from Annam).

Adult female.—Very different from the male, with no white spots. Above,

an earthy brown, very finely vermiculated with blackish. Wings and tail more or less the same, but with numerous black bars bordered with coarse mottlings of ochreous buff. Inner aspect of quills greyish, with hardly any markings. Head as the male, but the crest shorter, mainly black, the inferior feathers rufescent; beneath, chin whitish buff, rest of under surface, including under tail coverts, brownish, finely and regularly vermiculated with black. Lower throat and breast more rufescent, the former almost devoid of vermiculations.

Soft Parts.—Iris, brown; skin round eyes, bluish grey; bill, horn, tinged with pink near the gape; feet and legs, brownish grey.

Dimensions.—*Male*: wing, 14·5 to 15 in.; tail, outer feathers, 15·5 to 17 in.; longest pair up to 42 in.; tarsus, 3·8 in.; bill from gape, 0·9 in. *Female*: 13·2 to 14 in.; outer tail feathers, 9·5 to 10 in.; longest pair, 15 in.; tarsus, 3·4 in.; bill from gape, 0·85 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—As yet known with certainty only from the lower levels of Gunong Benom and Gunong Tahan in Pahang, not improbably from similar altitudes in the mountains of Trengganu and Southern Kelantan, and possibly, but more doubtfully, from the main range in the vicinity of the Batang Padang Valley, South Perak. Within my knowledge not more than ten specimens are extant in museums.

Extralimital Range.—Peculiar to the Malay Peninsula. The original form is comparatively common in the mountains of the Annamitic chain, French Indo-China, extending over a wide range in latitude.

Nidification.—Unknown. The typical race is said to lay two white eggs, but little is known of its breeding habits.

Habits.—In Pahang, in certain localities, this wonderful pheasant is by no means rare, though even shyer and more retiring in its habits than the more familiar Argus pheasant. It is found in hilly country up to a level of about 3000 ft., possibly rather higher, but also occasionally descending to the level of the larger rivers, though only in dense jungle. On the lower slopes of Gunong Tahan it must have been about equally numerous with the common Argus, but certainly ranged higher up the hill. When the mountain was first ascended, from the Tahan river, and the original track was being cut, playing-grounds were quite numerous along the ridges and for a short distance below them, and occurred every quarter of a mile or so, but constant traffic caused the birds to desert them. We were unable to distinguish the playing-grounds of the two species, and feathers of both were found upon them. The playing-grounds were usually made where the grade of the ridge flattened down, generally near or under some large tree; they were sometimes very extensive, up to ten or fifteen feet in diameter, and were most meticulously cleared, every dead leaf, twig and growing seedling being removed. The call, “*kuau*,” several times repeated at varying intervals, closely resembles that of the common Argus pheasant, but is, nevertheless, rather different, perhaps more resonant and less harsh. It is rarely heard in the heat of the day, sometimes in the early morning, but regularly at dusk and far into the night.

Polyplectron inopinatus

Rothschild's Peacock-Pheasant

Chalcurus inopinatus, Rothschild, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, xiii., 1903, p. 41 (Ulu Pahang); id. *Nov. Zool.*, x., 1903, pl. ii.; Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, viii., pt. 2, 1918, p. 103; Beebe, *Mon. Pheasants*, iv., 1922, pp. 43-49, pl. lxxiv., photo pl. 63.

Polyplectron inopinatus, Ogilvie-Grant, *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, iii., 1908, p. 55; Robinson, *op. cit.*, ii., 1909, p. 168.

Malay Names.—Kua (or) kuang chermin gunong.

Description.—Head, very slightly crested; sides of the face, feathered. Male, with twenty tail feathers; female, with eighteen.

Adult Male.—Head, neck, sides of the face and throat, greyish black, mottled with paler grey and having the tips of the feathers, and occasionally a fine shaft stripe, white, conspicuously so in the case of the throat and the sides of the head. Mantle, scapulars and secondary coverts, chestnut, with wavy lines of black, the bases of the feathers greyer, each feather with an ocellus of metallic green, surrounded by an irregular black ring, and with a whitish buff spot on the shaft towards the base. Back and rump similar, but the ocelli gradually disappear, until on the lower rump they are represented only by a whitish buff spot. Upper tail coverts, coarsely mottled black and rufous buff, the outermost with greenish metallic spots with a violet sheen, on each web. Primaries and under wing coverts, greyish black; secondaries, blackish, vermiculated with paler grey and suffused with chestnut on the outer webs and at the tips. Tail feathers strongly graduated, black, thickly mottled with small, clearly defined spots of rufous buff, becoming whitish at the tips, the mottling sparser on the basal portion of the inner web; the central pair without metallic spots, the next pair with the spot on the inner web much reduced, and all the others with metallic violet-green spots, one on each web, the inner the smallest. Aspect of the tail beneath, blackish, mottled at the tip with whitish spots. Under surface, greyish black, with obscure paler wavings, and speckled here and there with minute spots of greyish white. Abdomen almost uniform greyish, tinged with brown. Under tail coverts black, mottled and waved with rufous chestnut, and occasionally with a buffy white shaft stripe. Tarsi with two pairs of spurs, the lower usually the largest.

Adult female.—Somewhat similar to the male above, but lacking the metallic ocelli on the mantle and secondaries, which are replaced by black spots having only a very faint lustre. Tail shorter, less graduated, the mottling finer, less regular and more rufous; wings and under surface similar to the male. Tarsi without spurs.

Soft Parts.—Iris, hazel; bill, bluish horn-colour, paler at the tip; feet, French grey with a bluish tinge; soles, yellowish green.

Dimensions.—*Male*: total length, 26 in.; wing, 7·8 to 8·1 in.; tail, up to 16 in.; tarsus, 2·8 in.; bill from gape, 1·15 in.; culmen, 0·85 in. *Female*: total length, 18·5 in.; wing, 6·8 to 7 in.; tail, 9·5 to 11 in.; tarsus, 2·5 in.; bill from gape, 1·05 in.; culmen, 0·75 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—From Bukit Fraser and the mountains above the Semangko Pass, along the main range to Gunong Ulu Kali and Gunong Mengkuang Lebar; Gunong Tahan and Gunong Benom in Pahang, Waterstradt's hunters having probably obtained the original specimens at Ulu Dong on this mountain.

Extralimital Range.—A very distinct species, confined to the Malay Peninsula, forming a connecting link between *Polyplectron* and the Sumatran genus *Chalcurus*.

Nidification.—Unknown in detail, but, from the dates on which chicks have been obtained, eggs may be looked for from December onwards. Beebe (*loc. cit.*) discovered the remains of a nest under a tree on the Pahang side of the Semangko Pass, and deduces that two white eggs are laid, though the full clutch is probably, in my opinion at least, more numerous.

Habits.—There is not very much to be said about the habits of this peacock-pheasant, except that it is strictly an inhabitant of very rugged and mountainous country. On the high mountains forming the border between Selangor and Pahang it is not at all rare, and occurs in small parties of four or five. Thick cover and shady gullies are frequented, and except at night the birds are almost always on the ground, and when on the wing fly heavily. The food is largely grubs, beetles and ants, but, like most Malayan game birds, these pheasants are very fond of the fruits of small climbing palms (*Calamus*), which on some mountains are inconveniently abundant. I have not heard any call, nor did my Dyak collectors know it, but Beebe—who came across the bird in the Ulu Liang district of Ulu Pahang, near Bukit Fraser, where it is very common—records it as a kind of chuckle.

Rhizothera longirostris longirostris

The Long-billed Partridge

Malay Name.—Burong sĕlanting.

A moderate-sized bird, about sixteen inches long; the legs armed with blunt spurs in both sexes and with, for a game bird, an unusually long decurved bill. Plumage, a vermiculated motley of buff, rust, black and reddish brown blotches and irregular bars; the sides of the head rusty chestnut, and the neck and breast clear grey, in the male, rufous buff on the lower breast and belly. In the female, the neck and breast are rufous chestnut, not grey.

The long-billed partridge, or sĕlanting, is a well-known game bird in the Malay Peninsula, though not very common anywhere, and emphatically not a good sporting bird. It is spread through the whole length of the Peninsula, and affects rather dry jungle, especially where there is a good deal of bamboo at moderate elevations, not exceeding about 3500 ft. In the Ulu Selangor district and in Upper Perak it used to be fairly numerous, and was much trapped by Malays, who used a bamboo call to imitate its rather harsh whistle, which is often heard at night-time, especially when there is a full moon.

*Rollulus roulroul***The Crested Green Wood-Quail**

Malay Names.—Burong siul ; burong chichit (a cheeper).

A plump, thick-set bird, a good deal smaller than a partridge, recognizable by its long hairy crest developed in both sexes. Amongst other differences, males have the whole under surface glossy bluish black, and a white band across the crown, between the eyes ; females have the whole head blackish grey, and the under parts dark grass-green. Total length in both sexes about 10 in.

This wood-quail, which is numerous in heavy jungle everywhere, especially where it is fairly open underfoot, ranges from sea-level to over 5000 ft., but is commonest at moderate elevations from 1500 to 2500 ft. It is met with singly or in pairs, but not infrequently in coveys up to seven or eight birds.

It will be described in detail in a later volume.

*Caloperdix oculatea oculatea***The Malayan Ferruginous Wood-Partridge**

Malay Name.—Sang serok rimba.

This very distinctive bird is identified at a glance by its deep rusty red head and under surface, the sides of the breast and the flanks barred with glossy black and buff ; the mantle and back are also black, each feather with a narrow concentric edging of white, producing a scale-like pattern ; the wing coverts and secondaries are an olive-clay colour, with large black spots towards the tips. The male has the tarsi furnished with blunt spurs. Total length, about 10 in., but a smaller, lighter bird than Campbell's tree-partridge.

This very handsome little game bird is very common in low-country jungle throughout Peninsular Siam, being found in bebies of four or five. There are skins ascribed to Malacca in the British Museum collection, but the only authenticated specimen is one obtained by Dr Maingay, about 1867. Of late years the only specimen recorded from British Malaya is one obtained by the Dyak collectors of the F.M.S. Museums on Menang Gasing, a mountain in Ulu Langat, Selangor, at an altitude of about 3000 ft., in February 1912. The species may possibly be found on Cameron's Highlands and other localities in the main range.

This bird will be described in detail in Volume III.

*Arborophila campbelli***Campbell's Tree-Partridge**

Arboricola campbelli, Robinson, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, xv., 1904, p. 28 (Telôm, 3500 ft., Perak-Pahang boundary) ; Robinson and Grant, *Ibis*, 1905, p. 165, pl. iv. ; id. *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, i., 1905-1906, pp. 105, 126 ; Robinson, *op. cit.*, ii., 1909, p. 167.

Malay Name.—Sang serok gunung.

Description.—*Adult male.*—Top of the head, nape, lores and periocular region, jet-black, a broad, white, supra-loral stripe, ending immediately above the eye, the feathers with black shaft stripes; a white stripe from the base of the lower mandible broadening posteriorly until it reaches the ear coverts, which are greyish black. Mantle, back and upper tail coverts, golden olive-brown, each feather with three narrow bars of black. Primaries, brownish black, outer primary coverts and secondaries, black, their outer webs broadly margined with chestnut, remaining wing coverts, greyish olive, their concealed portions black. Tertiaries and scapulars greyish olive, with a broad, oblique subterminal bar of black and a terminal one of chestnut. Inner aspect of wing greyish, the inner wing coverts whitish, grey at the base, the outer series, sooty black, axillaries, greyish white. Tail feathers above, blackish, vermiculated with olive-brown, beneath, greyish olive. Sides of the neck, black; a somewhat ill-defined black-and-white stripe from each side of the occiput to the nape, the bases and margins of the feathers being white. Below, chin and upper throat, black; feathers of the lower throat with their bases white, forming an ill-defined collar. Chest and upper abdomen, dark grey, lower abdomen, paler, whitish in the middle, with a brownish tinge; flank feathers greyish, shading into olive-brown near the extremity, with a subterminal rufous buff shaft spot and a terminal black band; concealed patch of downy feathers under the wing, grey. Thighs, greyish olive, obscurely barred with orange-buff and tipped with black; under tail coverts with their bases black, their tips greyish olive.

Adult female.—Does not seem to differ very greatly from the male, but has the black of the head not so deep, somewhat tinged with olive.

Immature.—A half-grown female closely resembles the adult, but is less olive, more rufous above, with the breast more clouded with rufous rust and with pale shaft stripes to the tips of the feathers; the sides of the breast have irregular blackish bars.

Note.—There is a good deal of variation in the amount of white on the head and face; in some specimens, possibly in very old birds, it is greatly reduced, so that the head is almost completely black. An erythristic variety occasionally occurs in which all black is lacking from the wings and the mantle is much less olive.

Soft Parts.—Iris, brown; bill, black; gular and orbital skin, brick-red; tarsi and claws, bright sealing-wax red. Young birds have the bill reddish pink at the tip.

Dimensions.—Total length, 10 to 11 in.; wing, 5·5 to 5·8 in.; tail, 1·9 to 2·1 in.; tarsus, 1·55 to 1·7 in.; bill from gape, 0·8 to 0·9 in.; culmen, 0·65 to 0·7 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—Along the main range of the Peninsula, from Gunong Kerbau in Perak to Gunong Menang Gasing in Southern Selangor.

Extralimital Range.—The species is a very distinct one, peculiar to the Malay Peninsula. Its nearest ally is *A. atrogularis*, found in Assam, south to Aracan and the Chin Hills.

Nidification.—This tree-partridge breeds at between 4000 and 5000 ft. in the higher mountains of Selangor, in March. The nest is made on the ground, below small stemless palms, and consists of a very loose, flat pad of sticks and dead leaves, about six inches in diameter. The eggs are two in number, very pointed at one end, pure white and somewhat glossy, with numerous scattered pores; they measure 1.62 by 1.25 in.

Habits.—This bird is a rare and little-known species, confined to the main range, and not as yet met with either on the Larut Hills or on the Pahang Mountains. It does not seem to descend below about 3500 ft., and is commonest between 4000 and 5000 ft. On Cameron's Highlands, where it was first discovered, it is extremely rare and shy, keeping to the gullies and river valleys, and to areas overgrown with slender rotans, on whose fruits it largely feeds. In Selangor it frequented damp and swampy flats, where a small red berry of a creeping plant, *Pratia begoniaefolia*, was its favourite food. Insects, notably termites, and small snails, are also eaten.

Living in fairly dense jungle, the birds do not use their wings much, but run with great rapidity, though when forced to flight it is rapid and powerful. They are generally seen alone or in pairs, but our Dyaks have met coveys of four or five on several occasions. I know nothing of its note, but a low whistle, softer and more melodious than that of the long-billed partridge, which is sometimes heard at dusk in the localities it affects, is probably correctly attributed to this species.

Tropicoperdix charltoni charltoni

The Malayan Chestnut-breasted Tree-Partridge

Malay Name.—Sang serok.

Above, a fine vermiculation of earthy brown and buff; forehead and a stripe over the eye, mingled black and white. Throat, white, with black spots, with a more or less complete collar of black round the neck. Ear coverts, rusty. A large plastron of chestnut on the breast, followed by a narrow band of black-and-buff barred feathers; lower breast and flanks, rusty buff, the middle of the abdomen whitish. A large patch of silky white feathers on the sides, under the wings. Total length, about 10 in.; a very thick-set, stocky bird.

Originally described from the territory of Malacca, little is known about this tree-partridge, and in the southern parts of the Malay Peninsula it is seldom seen. At one time it was not uncommon on the lower slopes of the Larut Hills towards the sources of the Kurau river, and a considerable number trapped in this locality lived for a period in the Zoological Gardens, London. In parts of Upper Perak and in Ulu Pahang it is also fairly numerous, as also in the state of Perlis and farther north, in Peninsular Siam. Its habits are those of the other jungle partridges, but the nest and eggs are unknown. It will be fully described and figured in Volume III. of this work.