

WRENS

Family TROGLODYTIDÆ

Vol. I., p. 231.

As noted above, only one species which can be referred to the family of Wrens, and that somewhat doubtfully, is known from the Malay Peninsula and is there strictly confined to the higher mountains.

The group which, by Sharpe and other writers, has been considered as merely a sub-family of the *Timaliidæ*, and which has been frequently associated with the Dippers, *Cinclidæ*, contains a considerable number of genera and species. The majority of the forms are inhabitants of South, Central and North America. Those found in the Old World are mainly inhabitants of the temperate zone or of high mountain ranges. They are completely absent from the equatorial tropics of the Asiatic region except, as above noted, at high elevations, and are unknown in Australasia and Oceania.

Pnoepyga pusilla harterti

The Malay Scaly-breasted Wren

Pnoepyga pusilla harterti, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, viii. (2), 1918, p. 205 (Gunong Ijau, Perak).

Pnoepyga pusilla, Sharpe, *P.Z.S.*, 1888, p. 273.

Pnoepyga lepida (*nec* Salvad.), Hartert, *Nov. Zool.*, ix., 1902, p. 570; Ogilvie-Grant, *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, iii., 1908, p. 24; Robinson, *op. cit.*, ii., 1909, p. 205.

Malay Name.—Burong resam.

Description.—Tail of six feathers only, extremely short, concealed by the feathers of the rump.

Adult male.—Above, dark brown, darker on head, with regular black edges to the feathers; the wing coverts and scapulars with subterminal reddish buff spots; primaries, dark amber-brown; beneath, dusky; under wing coverts and axillaries, dull golden buff, the former mottled with black; lores, sides of the face and a stripe over the eye and the ear coverts, dull rufous brown, mottled with black; sides of the neck with crescentic markings of brown and black. Beneath, white; the feathers of the throat narrowly fringed with black; those of the breast and belly with large black centres and narrow

black fringes, almost entirely black on the flanks, the white becoming buffy or golden buff.

Adult female.—The buffy spots on the scapulars extending to the mantle; the general ground-colour of the under surface pale yellowish buff.

Immature.—Above, uniform dark brown, blacker on the head, more reddish on the wings; beneath, with the throat greyish, finely edged with black; the rest of the under surface dark sooty brown, more rufous on the flanks.

Note.—The sexual differences are uncertain; specimens sexed male have been obtained in the plumage which, following the analogy of the Himalayan form, I have described as that of the female, and vice versa. It is possible that both sexes have similar plumages, as appears to be the case with the Javan and Sumatran birds, and that those birds with the yellowish ground-colour of the lower surface are atavistic reversioners of either sex. Series of carefully sexed specimens and examples preserved in spirit are much desired.

Soft Parts.—Iris, dark brown; bill, dark horn-colour or black in adults, yellowish at the gape and beneath in young; feet, amber-brown.

Dimensions.—Total length, 3.5 to 4 in.; wing, 1.9 to 2.1 in.; tail, 0.5 in.; tarsus, 0.75 in.; bill from gape, 0.7 in.; culmen, 0.5 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—From North and Central Perak to Southern Selangor, and in Pahang, always at high elevations.

Extralimital Range.—The form described is peculiar to the Malay Peninsula. Closely related subspecies are found from the Western Himalayas through Assam to China and Annam, and south through Burma to Tenasserim, also in Sumatra and Java, east to Flores, but not in Borneo, as stated by a *lapsus calami* in Volume I. of this work.

Nidification.—Unknown. The nests of the Himalayan birds are ball-shaped structures of green moss, lined with fine black roots, built in amongst the moss covering the trees in the rain-forest zone, and are very difficult to find. The clutch consists of four or five very fragile glossless white eggs, regular ovals, sometimes a little pointed at the smaller end. Average dimensions, 0.73 by 0.54 in. The Malayan bird will be found breeding in similar situations near the crests of the hills and in damp gullies wherever the stunted trees are heavily draped in moss. The clutches will probably be smaller.

Habits.—Found on the higher hills along the main range from Gunong Kerbau to Southern Selangor, and also in the Larut Hills near their summits, and on Gunong Tahan in Pahang, but not below about 4000 ft. An inveterate skulker, this little wren much resembles in habits the British species, and is almost entirely terrestrial in its habits, using its wings only when absolutely compelled and flying for a few feet only, with a weak fluttering action. It frequents rocky moss-covered slopes and gullies, trees of the rain-forest zone—which are covered feet-thick in moss—the beds of streams in damp dark gullies, and also drier situations under cover of dense brakes of bracken-like ferns, into and underneath which it dives when alarmed, uttering a very occasional chirping whistle. The food is ants and other insects, land planarians, which

are not uncommon in the situations it affects, and especially spiders and the long-legged phalangids which are abundant in the rain-forest zone.

Note.—A form of this short-tail wren occurs at 4000 ft. on the summit of Kao Nawng, in Bandon, Peninsular Siam. They are whiter, less squamated below, and duller above, with the sides of the head less rufous than the above-described Malayan bird, and probably represent a form intermediate between it and *Pn. p. pusilla*. Only a pair have been obtained.