

DRONGOS OR KING-CROWS

Family DICRURIDÆ

Vol. I., p. 267.

THE grey, and unspangled black species of king-crows, which are common in the northern parts of the Peninsula, and one of which is a migrant with us, are not jungle birds, and do not occur in the mountains of the Peninsula, where only two species are common, another being a rare visitor to the lower slopes. Species that may *possibly* occur are, however, included in the key.

KEY TO THE MONTANE SPECIES OF KING-CROWS

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|---|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | { | More or less crested, or with the nape feathers much lengthened, highly spangled | 2 | |
| | { | Not crested, very slightly spangled. | | <i>Dicrurus annectens annectens</i> , p. 261 |
| 2 | { | Outer tail feathers not greatly elongated, without bare shafts | | <i>Chaptia ænea malayensis</i> , p. 262 |
| | { | Outer tail feathers very greatly elongated, in part with bare shafts | | |
| | | | 3 | |
| 3 | { | Larger; terminal racquets of outer tail feathers short and recurved } | | <i>Dissemurus paradiseus malayensis</i> , p. 263 |
| | { | Smaller; terminal racquets of outer tail feathers long and tapered, not recurved | | <i>Bhringa remifer peracensis</i> , p. 263 |

Dicrurus annectens annectens

The Crow-billed Drongo

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This migratory species, distinguished by its black, slightly lustrous but not spangled plumage, crestless head and slightly forked tail, without elongated outer feathers, will occasionally be met with on the hills during both migrations, and a look-out should be kept for it from October to December, and in March and April. Mr Seimund obtained one male on Gunong Kledang, 2600 ft., near Ipoh, in December 1927.

*Chaptia ænea malayensis***The Southern Bronzed Drongo**

Chaptia malayensis, Hay, Blyth, *Journ. Asiat. Soc. Bengal*, xv., 1846, p. 294 (Malacca); Sharpe, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, iii., 1878, p. 44; Ogilvie-Grant, *Fascic. Malay., Zool.*, iii., 1906, p. 67; id. *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, iii., 1908, p. 17.

Chaptia ænea malayensis, Stuart Baker, *Nov. Zool.*, xxv., 1918, p. 304, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), ii., 1924, p. 369.

Chaptia ænea (part), Oates, in Hume's *Nests and Eggs Ind. Birds* (2nd ed.), i., 1889, p. 210; Ogilvie-Grant, *Cat. Birds' Eggs, Brit. Mus.*, v., 1912, p. 439, pl. 20., fig. 1.

Malay Name.—Burong paha kĕlati (*Hamilton*).

Description.—The smallest of the local drongos. Bill, very flattened; rictal bristles, very strong; nasal bristles, long, projecting forwards.

Adult.—Sexes alike. Whole plumage, black, strongly glossed with green; violet or purplish on the head and mantle in certain lights; forehead and ear coverts, velvety black, without gloss. Spangling on the breast more spread, less discrete than in *B. v. peracensis*; belly, very dark grey, darker than in that species; white spots on axillaries and under wing coverts, small, often nearly absent.

Immature.—Duller than the adult; the belly and rump lighter grey; the spots on the wing coverts and axillaries larger.

Soft Parts.—Iris, hazel, rich chestnut or carmine; bill, black; gape, yellowish in young birds; feet, black, often powdery grey.

Dimensions.—Total length, 8 to 8.5 in.; wing, 4.5 to 5 in.; tail outer feathers, 4.7 in., centre pair about an inch less; tarsus, 0.5 to 0.55 in.; bill from gape, 0.9 in.; culmen, 0.75 to 0.8 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—Throughout its whole length to South Johore, doubtfully recorded from Singapore and Penang.

Extralimital Range.—The greater part of the Indo-Chinese countries and Southern India. Birds from the Indo-Malayan islands can possibly be separated, as *Ch. ænea picinus* (Bp.).

Nidification.—In Tenasserim this species breeds in March and April, and builds a nest like that of *Bh. remifer tectirostris*, and usually very high above the ground. The eggs are similar, but smaller, and average about 0.84 by 0.63 in.

Habits.—This, the smallest of the Malay drongos, is the most widely distributed, though in few places can it be said to be exceedingly common, as is, for instance, *Dissemurus paradiseus*, in the islands of the Tioman Archipelago. It has also a wide range in altitude, being found from sea-level to over 4000 ft. It is a jungle and open-forest species, delighting in open glades, where, for instance, timber has been felled and replaced by bamboo, on the topmost shoots of which the drongos perch, and fly out after insect food. What has been said of *Bhringa* in regard to food, note and general habits, equally applies to this species.

*Dissemurus paradiseus malayensis***The Northern Malayan Large Racquet-tailed Drongo**

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This drongo, and the extremely closely related forms to north and south of it, do not normally ascend the hills, and I have never, myself, met with the species at a higher level than 2000 ft. Waterstradt records it, however, from as high as 5000 ft., though I doubt the accuracy of the label. Chasen has also recently obtained two specimens from near the summit of Penang Hill, 2600 ft. Its much larger size, heavier crest and the shorter tail racquets twisted on themselves distinguish this drongo from all the other local species.

*Bhringa remifer peracensis***The Malayan Lesser Racquet-tailed Drongo**

PLATE 21 (*left-hand figure*)

Bhringa remifer peracensis, Stuart Baker, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, xxxix., Nov. 1918, p. 18 (Telôm, Cameron's Highlands, Malay Peninsula, 3500 ft.); id. *Nov. Zool.*, xxvi., 1919, p. 43.

Bhringa remifer (*nec* Temm.), Sharpe, *P.Z.S.*, 1887, p. 434; Hartert, *Nov. Zool.*, ix., 1902, p. 580; Ogilvie-Grant, *Fascic. Malay., Zool.*, iii., 1906, p. 68.

Bhringa remifer attenuata, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, viii., pt. 2, December 1918, p. 235.

Malay Name.—Chěchawi, chawi-chawi (but not distinguished from the larger racquet-tailed species).

Description.—Outer tail feathers with the racquets gradually, not abruptly, broadening towards the tips.

Adult.—Sexes alike. Forehead, lores and cheeks, velvety black, without much lustre; rest of the plumage, black, with a strong, oily green lustre; purplish on the throat and breast, where the arrow-shaped, metallic spangles are most in evidence; belly and flanks, grey, without lustre. Under wing coverts and axillaries with small white spots, almost disappearing in very old birds.

Immature.—Duller, with shorter outer tail feathers; the spots on the under wing coverts and axillaries larger and more rounded. Unlike other black drongos, the young seem never to be spotted with white on the body.

Soft Parts.—Iris, carmine; bill and feet, black.

Dimensions.—Total length (excluding outer tail feathers), 9 to 9.5 in.; wing, 5.1 to 5.4 in.; tail with the outer feathers up to 15 or 16 in.; tarsus, 0.8 to 0.85 in.; bill from gape, 1 in.; culmen, 0.8 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—From Northern Perak to Southern Selangor, and in Pahang.

Extralimital Range.—Limits to the north and east not definitely

ascertained. Birds from Sumatra and Java belong to the typical form, are probably not separable from each other, but are smaller than the Malay race. Himalayan birds, again, are larger, and with differently shaped tail racquets.

Nidification.—Of the Malayan race unknown. The Himalayan bird, *Bhringa remifer tectirostris*, builds the ordinary cradle-shaped nest of the family, woven of rootlets, and laced into the outer fork of tree branches at some height from the ground. Three eggs are the usual clutch, regular ovals and rather glossy. The ground-colour is a pale pink, spotted and blotched, mostly near the larger end, with reddish brown and pale purplish. Baker gives the average dimensions as 1 by 0.76 in., but Malayan eggs will be rather smaller.

Habits.—Widely distributed on all the mountains of the Malay Peninsula to Southern Selangor, in the Larut Hills, and on Gunong Benom and Gunong Tahan in Pahang, but not found south of Selangor or at heights of less than 3000 ft. The bird is commonest always where there is much bamboo, and flies high, though not very fast, being apparently somewhat handicapped by its long lateral tail feathers, which are carried straight behind it at less of an angle than is the case with the larger species. The food is insects, moths, butterflies and, as always, termites, and the bird is largely crepuscular, being most in evidence very shortly before dusk. The note, like that of other drongos, is a very pleasant and mellow fluty whistle.

The question of the development of the outer racquet-ended feathers is one that still awaits detailed study. It is possible that the shafts of the feathers of young birds, and of freshly moulted birds, are less denuded than they ultimately become, and just possibly they are in part trimmed by the birds themselves. Field notes and illustrative specimens would be most acceptable at any museum.

The bird figured is a male from Telôm, Cameron's Highlands, the type locality of the race, shot in November 1909.

Figs. 2 and 3 show the tails of the two other races of the species, *B. r. tectirostris* and *B. r. remifer*, from Sikkim and Tjibodas, West Java, respectively.