

# PARROTS

## Order PSITTACIFORMES

Vol. I., p. 84.

THE most characteristic feature of the parrots is the beak, which, typically, is stout and short, with the upper mandible much hooked and curved over the truncated, strongly arched under mandible. The upper mandible is hinged to the skull and is movable, apparently an arrangement to increase the grasping power of the beak. At the base of the upper mandible is the smooth fleshy area known as the cere. The feet have two toes pointed to the front and two directed backwards. This *zygodactylous* arrangement is also found in cuckoos, woodpeckers and barbets, and is an adaptation to climbing habits.

White eggs are laid in holes in trees, and the nestling is quite naked when first hatched.

Parrots are usually met with in flocks, and their food consists largely of fruits and seeds. Many species are brilliantly coloured, and on this account, as well as the marked ability of a few to imitate the human voice, they are favourite cage birds, and large numbers are yearly imported into Singapore from the Celebes, Moluccas and Australia.

The family is a very large one, consisting of hundreds of species, distributed in tropics throughout the world, but in the Malay Peninsula it is poorly represented by five species (two paroquets, one small parrot, and two loriquets), two of which are found only in the north.

### KEY TO THE MALAYAN PARROTS

I	{	Centre tail feathers much lengthened	2
	{	Tail square . . . . .	3
2	{	Crown green in adults; malar stripe green in young birds	} <i>Psittacula longicauda longicauda</i> , p. 69
	{	Crown blue in adults; malar stripe blackish in young birds . . . . .	
3	{	Rump and upper tail coverts, blue to green . . . . .	} <i>Psittinus cyanurus cyanurus</i> , p. 70
	{	Rump and upper tail coverts, dark red	
4	{	Bill, black . . . . .	} <i>Coryllis galgulus galgulus</i> , p. 70
	{	Bill, orange . . . . .	

*Psittacula alexandri fasciata***The Red-breasted Paroquet**

*Psittacula fasciata* P. L. S. Müller, *Natursyst. Suppl.*, 1776, p. 74 (Pondicherry).

*Palaeornis fasciata*, Salvadori, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, xx., 1891, p. 464; Oates, in Hume's *Nests and Eggs Ind. Birds* (2nd ed.), iii., 1890, p. 90; Blanford, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, iii., 1895, p. 256; Oates, *Cat. Birds' Eggs, Brit. Mus.*, iii., 1903, p. 14.

*Palaeornis alexandri fasciata*, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1922, p. 116.

*Psittacula alexandri fasciatus*, Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), iv., 1927, p. 210; Stuart Baker, *Nid. Birds Ind. Emp.*, iii., 1934, p. 382.

**Malay Name.**—Unrecorded: ? bayan (a paroquet).

**Description.**—A long-tailed paroquet, mostly green in plumage but with a pinkish breast in adults. Cheeks, pinkish grey to blue.

*Adult male.*—Forehead narrowly black, the black extending as a narrow band to the front of the eye. A broad, black moustachial patch. Chin, whitish; remainder of head, pale grey washed with blue and sharply defined against the bright green nape and sides of the neck. Mantle, back, scapulars, upper tail coverts and wings, rather duller green, which becomes deep greenish yellow, forming a patch, on the inner median and greater upper wing coverts. Outermost primary black; other primaries and secondaries green on the outer web, the inner secondaries entirely green. All secondaries with a very narrow yellowish beading on the outer edge. Breast and upper abdomen, vinaceous pink with a blue bloom and definitely tinged with blue on a narrow zone near the throat. Lower abdomen, bluish green. Thighs, under tail coverts, flanks, axillaries, under wing coverts and outer tail feathers, green. Lengthened, centre tail feathers blue, but green at the base on the sides.

*Adult female.*—Very much like the male but with no blue bloom or tinge on the reddish under parts.

*Immature.*—Like the adult, but the under parts entirely green and the blue of the head replaced by green on the crown and pinkish or bluish grey elsewhere.

**Soft Parts.**—*Male*: iris, lemon; bill, upper mandible bright red, tip yellowish, lower mandible black; feet, olive. *Female*: iris, yellowish white; bill, black, with perhaps some scarlet at the base of the upper mandible; feet, olive-grey. *Immature*: iris, yellowish; bill, black; feet, olive-grey. *Nestlings* are said to have the bill orange-red.

**Dimensions.**—Total length, about 14 in.; tail, 6.75 to 7.25 in.; the long tail feathers project beyond the others about 3 in.; wing, 6 to 6.4 in.; culmen, 1 in.; bill from gape, 0.8 in.; tarsus, 0.65 in. In *females* and *young birds* the tail is shorter (specimens measured are from Siam).

**Range in the Malay Peninsula.**—The only record of this bird from our

area is that of an immature female collected on 17th February 1919 at Koh Pra Tang, Takuapah Inlet, West Peninsular Siam. The species is not otherwise known from south of the Isthmus of Kra.

**Extralimital Range.**—From Kamaun across the Lower Himalayas to Assam, Yunnan, West and South China and Hainan. South to Eastern Bengal, the Andaman Islands, Manipur, Burma, Siam and French Indo-China. The typical race is found in Java, Bali and South Borneo, and local races have developed on islands in the Java Sea and off the west coast of Sumatra. The species is not found elsewhere in Malaysia.

**Nidification.**—No record from the Peninsula. According to writers on Indian birds, the three or four white eggs, which measure about 1.5 by 1 in., are laid in holes in trees either in forest or in cultivated land near villages. Sometimes one tree will harbour a small colony of these paroquets.

**Habits.**—This paroquet only enters the Malayan area in the extreme north where it appears to be rare. It is common in Siam, but more so in the north than in the south. It is usually numerous wherever it occurs, sometimes congregating into very large flocks. It frequents wooded country, but also occurs commonly in the open, raiding the ricefields, in which it causes much damage to the crops. The food is fruit, grain, etc., and like all its relatives it is a very noisy bird.

*Psittacula longicauda longicauda*

**The Long-tailed Paroquet**

Vol. I., p. 84, pl. 5.

General plumage, green, in the male washed with yellow on the breast and becoming blue on the middle of the back. Centre tail feathers blue. Crown, bright green, but remainder of head pink. A broad black moustachial stripe. The female is more uniformly green, and the pink on the head is duller and restricted in extent to the sides. Moustachial stripe green, not black. Males have the upper mandible red.

Total length, about 16 in. (of which in males the full-grown tail measures about 10 in.); wing, about 6 in.

Common in flocks, more especially in the open country, in the lowlands from North Perak south to Singapore. It shifts its feeding-ground so regularly that in some districts the bird appears migratory.

Mr A. T. Edgar has found the nests, in Lower Perak, in holes in dead trees, from forty to sixty feet from the ground. One tree stood in jungle; another in a clearing. The entrance hole was large enough to admit a hand, but ran vertically downwards about two feet. The two white, round, highly glossy, comparatively thin-shelled eggs measure 1.16 by 1.04 in. They were laid on a pad of strips of bark, torn up till they were of the consistency of coconut fibre. Eggs in February, nestlings in July.

*Psittinus cyanurus cyanurus***The Little Malay Parrot**

Vol. I., p. 89.

**Male** : top of the head, lower back to upper tail coverts and the primary coverts, blue ; mantle, grey-black ; wings and tail, green, the coverts margined with yellowish green ; under parts, greenish grey, the abdomen tinged with blue ; a large patch on the under wing coverts and the axillaries, scarlet.

**Female** : general plumage, green ; top of the head, brownish ; lower back, blue ; scarlet under the wings as in the male. Upper mandible, red in males, brown in females.

Total length, about 7.5 in. ; wing, 4.7 in.

Although widely spread in the lowlands of the Peninsula from north to south, very little is known about this parrot, which has been collected in secondary forest, orchards and mangroves. In some parts of its range it is certainly only a seasonal visitor, and it has been seen in large flocks on the coast of Selangor in winter. The eggs have been found in small natural hollows, high up in tall forest trees in Perak.

*Coryllis vernalis vernalis***The Indian Loriquet**

Vol. I., p. 88.

Plumage, green, faintly bluish on the throat and yellowish green on the breast. Wing lining and under side of the tail, blue. Rump and upper tail coverts, dark red. Bill, orange or red. Females rather duller than males and without the blue tinge on the throat.

Total length, about 5.5 in. ; wing, 3.6 in.

Occurs only in the north of the Peninsula where it is common from the Isthmus of Kra south to Trang. It has been recorded from as far south as Larut in Perak, but the record is open to doubt. It is usually seen in small flocks. Robinson met with it on flowering shrubs on the beach in Peninsular Siam. There is no Malayan record of the nest.

*Coryllis galgulus galgulus***The Malay Loriquet**

Vol. I., p. 87.

General plumage, green ; a large blue spot on the crown and a golden-yellow patch on the mantle. Rump, upper tail coverts and a large patch on the throat, bright red. Lining of wings and under side of the tail, blue. A yellow band across the lower back. Females have no red on the throat, and the blue and yellow patches on the upper surface are only faintly indicated. Bill, blackish in both sexes.

Total length, about 5.25 in. ; wing, 3.25 in.

This loriquet is widely spread in the lowlands from Patani south to

Singapore. It usually avoids the high forest, preferring gardens and orchards, especially where these are in the vicinity of forests. There are very few localities in the Peninsula where it is really common, and the species is inclined to be local in distribution.

In Lower Perak, according to Mr A. T. Edgar, this bird nests in holes high up in dead nibong palms, or in living trees standing in open jungle (February, March and May). He describes one nest, forty feet from the ground, in a tall living tree as follows: "The entrance of the nest was about three inches in diameter, but inside the tree the hole was about eighteen inches deep and twelve inches across. The bird had filled up this large cavity, to about six inches below the entrance hole, with a pile of fronds of bracken and green leaves, torn up into pieces roughly an inch square. The leaves at the bottom of the filling were partly dry, but those on top were still green. The three white eggs were much stained and had a tough shell. They were not glossy. Two eggs were round and one was oval. Two measured 0.67 and 0.66 by 0.59 and 0.58 in. ; the largest egg measured 0.72 by 0.60 in. The clutch may also be four, as one of the nibong nests had four nestlings. In this nibong nest the hole was much smaller and the lining was wood-shavings only."