

BARBETS

Family CAPITONIDÆ

Vol. I., p. 144; Vol. II., p. 87.

THE barbets (*Capitonidæ*) are a small family of fruit-eating birds occurring in the tropics of Africa, Asia and South America, and well represented in Malaya. They are strictly sedentary, confined as a rule to old jungle, though a few are orchard and garden birds. The wing is rounded, and the powers of flight feeble. Tail short, always shorter than the wing, composed of ten feathers. Bill thick and robust, broadened at the base, straight or gently curved downwards, generally provided with bristles (which may equal or exceed the bill in length) in the neighbourhood of the nostrils. Feet coarse and strong, two toes directed forwards and two backwards, the soles somewhat broadened.

Plumage usually gaudy in the Asiatic species, the dominant colour green, with bright tints about the head and sometimes with ornamental plumes (*Psilopogon*). One genus, *Calorhamphus*, very dull in plumage. Sexes in the Malayan forms approximately the same in colour. The nests are in holes in trees, and as usual in such situations the eggs are white, variable in texture and shape, usually rather round and glossy.

The note in certain of the species is an anvil-like clank, from which the birds derive their vernacular Malay name of "coppersmith." Many of the deeper jungle forms are, however, very silent birds.

In Malaya only about three out of the fourteen species on the list are found away from deep jungle (*Robinson*, Vol. I., p. 144).

KEY TO THE MALAYAN LOWLAND BARBETS

1	{	Upper parts, brown	<i>Calorhamphus fuliginosus hayi</i> ,
			p. 160
	{	Upper parts, green	2
2	{	Forehead, bright yellow	3
	{	Forehead, not bright yellow.	4
3	{	Crown, pale blue	<i>Cyanops henrici</i> , p. 163
	{	Crown, bright red	<i>Chotorhea m. mystacophanes</i> (male), p. 161
4	{	Head, creamy buff streaked with	} <i>Thereiceryx lineatus intermedius</i> ,
	{	brown	
	{	Head with bright colours	5

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|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | { | Small birds: wing less than 3·5 in. | 6 |
| | | Large birds: wing more than 3·5 in. | 7 |
| | | Forehead, red; throat, yellow | <i>Xantholema hamacephala indica</i> ,
p. 165 |
| 6 | { | Forehead, blackish; throat, blue and
black | <i>Mezobucco ducanelli ducanelli</i> ,
p. 164 |
| | | With large yellow patches on the
sides of the head | 8 |
| 7 | { | Without yellow patches on the sides
of the head | <i>Chotorhea m. mystacophanes</i>
(female), p. 161 |
| 8 | { | With large red patches on the throat | <i>Chotorhea rafflesii malayensis</i> , p. 162 |
| | | Without red on the throat | <i>Chotorhea chrysopogon latus</i> , p. 160 |

Calorhamphus fuliginosus hayi

The Brown Barbet

Vol. II., p. 88.

Sexes alike. Upper parts, dark brown; sides of the head, chin and throat, pale reddish brown; remaining under parts, very pale dull yellow.

Total length, 7 in.; wing, 3·4 in.

This dull-coloured species is probably the commonest of the Malayan barbets. It is numerous in the swamp jungles of the lowlands and the old forest of the submontane districts. I have never seen it in gardens and, normally, I do not think it frequents secondary jungle.

In Lower Perak Mr A. T. Edgar found two nests in May, each with three nestlings. Both nests were about thirty feet from the ground and at the end of a passage burrowed into termites' nests placed in trees.

Chotorhea chrysopogon latus

The Malayan Gold-whiskered Barbet

Vol. II., p. 93.

Sexes alike. Upper parts from neck to tail and under parts from the breast downwards, green. Forehead, red; a broad band across the fore crown, dirty white, almost pale brown; hinder crown, red mixed with blue; ear coverts, chin and throat, dirty white tinged with brown; throat margined with blue on the hinder edge; a large yellow malar patch.

Total length, about 10·75 in.; wing, 5·2 in.

A common species in the submontane forests, but rather less numerous in the swamp jungles of the lowlands. Like other species of barbets it is usually seen among the dense foliage at the tops of trees.

In Perak, in February, Mr A. T. Edgar has found the eggs in a hole in a jungle tree, twenty feet from the ground. He describes the eggs as "pure white, rounded ovals, very slightly glossy, and small for the size of the bird, measuring 1·03 by 0·80 and 0·82 in."

*Chotorhea mystacophanes mystacophanes***The Gaudy Barbet**

PLATE 4

Vol. II., p. 93.

Bucco mystacophanos Temminck, *Pl. Col.*, 315, 1824 (Sumatra).*Cyanops mystacophanes*, Shelley, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, xix., 1891, p. 72.*Chotorhea mystacophanes*, Blanford, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, iii., 1895, p. 91; Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1922, p. 161; Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), iv., 1927, p. 115.**Malay Name.**—Takor; burong takor (generic).**Description.**—Green; forehead, yellow; crown and upper throat, red; lower throat, blue. Females have the forehead and throat green.*Adult male.*—Forehead and crown to level of eyes, golden yellow or orange; hinder crown and a loreal spot next the bill, scarlet; remainder of lores and a superciliary stripe, very narrow over the eye but widening into a patch behind the eye, black, mixed with a few greenish-blue feathers above the eye. Below the eye, a patch of bright blue. At the base of the lower mandible a large lemon-yellow spot, followed by an emerald-green patch. Chin and upper throat, scarlet; lower throat, bright blue, sometimes mixed with black, with a large scarlet spot on either side. Remainder of plumage, grass-green, darkest on the upper surface and very slightly brighter on the breast; the hidden part of the wing quills blackish; outer webs of the primaries buffy olive on the terminal portion. Tail, bluish beneath. Axillaries and under wing coverts, whitish, or buffy white, tinged with green.*Adult female.*—Quite different. Forehead, green; the red on the crown duller and smaller in extent; upper chin and throat green, or yellowish green; lower throat tinged with blue, the red spots smaller and duller than in the male. Spot at the base of the mandible, blue. Superciliary streak not so well marked as in the male and blue or green, sometimes mixed with black. Some females, perhaps very old birds, show an approach to the male in plumage in that the forehead is tinged with yellow and the throat with red.*Immature.*—A late juvenile female is almost entirely green, but the red loreal spot is present and there are one or two red feathers on the crown. A half-grown juvenile male already shows the characteristic head pattern and colours of the adult male. The limited material examined indicates that the juvenile plumage is not yet stabilized in this species and there is more than a normal amount of individual variation in both sexes of young birds.**Soft Parts.**—Iris, brown to chestnut; bill, black; feet, greenish to green-grey. In females and young birds the bill is whitish at the base of the lower mandible.**Dimensions.**—Total length, 8.2 to 9.1 in.; tail, 1.8 to 2.15 in.; wing, 3.7 to 3.9 in.; tarsus, 1.05 in.; bill from gape, 1.6 to 1.8 in.**Range in the Malay Peninsula.**—Both sides of the Peninsula from Peninsular Siam, including Junk Zeylon, south to Singapore. The statement in Vol. II., p. 93, that the species does not occur south of Malacca is an error,

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as Davison, or his collectors, actually obtained it on Singapore Island. There is no formal record from Johore, but it has been collected in Negri Sembilan and Malacca territory. An old record from Penang cannot be trusted, and I do not think the species still exists in Singapore.

Extralimital Range.—The southern half of Tenasserim, but only common in the extreme south; on the Siamese side of the Peninsula the northern limit is more to the south and the species does not seem to have been obtained north of the Pakchan estuary. Sumatra. An almost indistinguishable subspecies inhabits Borneo.

Nidification.—In Lower Perak, in March, Mr A. T. Edgar has found four eggs in a hole about twenty feet from the ground in a small dead tree standing in low scrub jungle. Mr Edgar describes the eggs as “white, rather glossy, rounded ovals, thin shelled and not dirty or stained.” Measurements of two, 1.08 by 0.83 and 0.80 in.

Habits.—A lowland species ascending the hills to a height not exceeding 2500 feet, and much commoner in the north than in the south. In the southern parts of Peninsular Siam it is often very numerous in forest country, and Robinson found it exceedingly abundant on Bukit Besar in the Patani States at a height of about 2500 feet. Davison has summarized the habits in the following passage:

“This bird has a peculiar note which might very well be syllabized by tok-toktok—tok-toktok uttered incessantly. In the forests where it does occur, its note may be heard nearly all day, and nearly all night on a bright moonlight night, but it is most noisy during the evening soon after dusk.

“Though very often heard, it is but comparatively seldom seen, for it keeps either to the tops of the highest trees or to the very bushy ones. It is very fond of clinging to the trunks of trees and tapping away like a woodpecker, and many of those I obtained I shot while so engaged. As a rule it keeps to the dense evergreen forests, but I have seen and shot it in comparatively thin tree jungle.”

The birds figured in the plate are a male and female from Selangor and Perak.

Chotorhea rafflesii malayensis

The Many-coloured Barbet

PLATE 3 (*lower figure*)

Vol. II., p. 94 (as *Chotorhea rafflesii rafflesii*).

Chotorhea rafflesii malayensis Chasen, *Ornith. Monatsber.*, 1935, p. 147 (Pulau Ubin, near Singapore).

Chotorhea versicolor, Shelley, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, xix., 1891, p. 59.

Chotorhea rafflesii rafflesii, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1922, p. 160.

Malay Name.—Takor; burong takor (generic).

Description.—Green: entire top of head, red; chin and throat, blue; a red spot below the eye; a yellow patch behind angle of bill.

Adult.—Sexes alike. Forehead, crown, a small spot under the eye and

a large spot on either side of the lower throat, crimson. A broad supercilium, chin, throat and a patch behind the gape, bright pale blue, the shaft stripes glistening and silvery, the black bases of the throat feathers sometimes showing through; a deep chrome-yellow patch on the sides of the head, behind the blue gape patch. Lores and ear coverts, deep black. Remainder of plumage, grass-green, darkest on the upper parts; concealed portions of wing quills, blackish, becoming pale smoky on the edge of the inner web. Axillaries and under wing coverts, whitish, spotted with dull green; edge of wing, bluish green. Tail quills, blue beneath.

Immature.—The colours everywhere much duller than in the adult; the red spots beneath the eye and on the sides of the lower throat scarcely noticeable.

Soft Parts.—Iris, brown; bill, black; feet, grey to olive; bare skin of head and neck where visible, blackish. In young birds the bill is dark slate in colour and almost whitish at the base of the lower mandible; feet, pale bluish slate tinged with green.

Dimensions.—Total length, 9.5 to 10.5 in.; tail, 2.5 to 2.7 in.; wing, 4.6 to 5 in.; tarsus, 1.1 to 1.2 in.; bill from gape, 1.9 to 2.1 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—The lowlands of the mainland on both sides of the Peninsula from South Peninsular Siam (north to about the level of Junk Zeylon) south to, and including, Singapore Island. There is an old record of doubtful value from Penang.

Extralimital Range.—On a purely technical point the Malayan race is regarded as restricted to the Peninsula, but birds from Sumatra and Banka, Billiton, and Borneo are almost indistinguishable, although subspecies from these three areas have been described.

Nidification.—Unknown.

Habits.—This large and gaudy barbet is common in the interior of Trang in Peninsular Siam, and then seems to be fairly evenly scattered over the lowlands of the Malay States, although nowhere very common, down to the extreme south, where it is abundant in South Johore. It clings to its haunts with remarkable pertinacity, and although, normally, a bird of the old forest it is still to be found on Singapore Island and the neighbouring islet of Pulau Ubin in the Johore Strait, in some places where there are a few tall trees, survivors of the original forest standing among the network of metalled roads, military cantonments, playing-fields and built-up areas.

The bird figured in the plate is a male from Gurun, Kedah.

Cyanops henrici

The Yellow-crowned Barbet

PLATE 3 (*upper figure*)

Vol. II., p. 92.

Bucco henricii Temminck, *Pl. Col.*, 524, 1831 (Sumatra).

Cyanops henrici, Shelley, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, xix., 1891, p. 67; Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1922, p. 163.

Malay Name.—Takor (generic). I am not certain of the exact application

of other Malay names which certain authors have applied to the barbets and therefore do not quote them here.

Description.—Green: forehead, orange; crown and throat, blue. A nuchal collar and two spots on the lower throat, red.

Adult male.—Forehead, broadly, and a stripe running back on each side of the crown, golden yellow; crown, chin and throat, bright pale blue. A narrow band across the hind neck, scarlet; a large spot on each side of the lower throat, scarlet-orange. Lores, black; green feathers behind the eye washed dusky. Remainder of plumage, grass-green, darkest on upper parts, palest on posterior lower parts and faintly yellowish on the breast; concealed parts of wing quills, blackish.

Female.—Usually slightly duller than the male, but the difference between the sexes is very small.

Immature.—Young birds at first lack the blue crown and scarlet nuchal band, being green with a greenish-yellow forehead and blue throat; the two spots on the lower throat are deep orange and much smaller than in adults.

Soft Parts.—Iris, brown; skin of orbital area, black; bill, black; feet, grey-green.

Dimensions.—Total length, 8.5 in.; tail, 2 to 2.2 in.; wing, 3.75 to 3.95 in.; bill from gape, 1.35 to 1.4 in.; tarsus, 0.9 to 1 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—The lowlands on both sides of the Peninsula from Nakon Sritammarat south to Johore. There is an old record of doubtful value from Penang. The species was once found in Singapore, but I doubt its occurrence on the island at the present time.

Extralimital Range.—Sumatra. An almost indistinguishable race is found in Borneo.

Nidification.—Unknown.

Habits.—A bird of the old forests and one of the least common of the Malayan barbets without being rare. It is rather locally distributed throughout the lowlands and foothills up to about 2300 feet. Like other members of the genus, it is difficult to locate in the field on account of its very sluggish habits, the bird remaining motionless on a branch, usually near the trunk, for a long time although repeatedly calling. In 1921 from a camp at Kuala Tahan, Pahang, I worked the surrounding forest with three collectors for several weeks without getting a barbet, until one of the men found a fruiting tree and then obtained a small series of three species in one morning. The next morning the present species also turned up. The food consists of fruits and berries.

The bird figured in the plate is a male from Kuala Tahan, Pahang.

Mezobucco duvauceli duvauceli

The Little Malay Barbet

Vol. I., p. 146, pl. 11; Vol. II., p. 94.

Sexes alike. Top of the head, blackish before the level of the eyes, blue behind the eyes; remainder of upper parts, breast and abdomen, green. Chin

and upper throat, blue; lower throat, black. Sides of the head with three bright red patches.

Total length, about 7.75 in.; wing, 3 in.

A common bird in cultivated land where there are tall trees and in forest. It is usually seen at the tops of the trees. North of about the latitude of Perlis the present form is replaced by a closely allied but slightly larger race, *M. duvauceli stuarti*, in which, among other minor differences, the ear coverts are slightly bluer and the black spot on the middle of the breast is less extensive. The nesting habits of the Malayan race have not been recorded.

Thereiceryx lineatus intermedius

The Lineated Dull Barbet

Vol. I., p. 148.

A large species, with the upper parts and abdomen green, and the head, neck and breast creamy white with broad brown streaks. There are no bright colours on the head as in most other barbets. Round the eye is a naked, dull yellow patch.

Total length, about 10.5 in.; wing, 5 in.

Found in open country, often among casuarinas, in the north of the Peninsula as far south as Kedah and Trengganu. There is no local record of the nest and eggs.

Xantholæma hæmacephala indica

The Coppersmith Barbet

Vol. I., p. 145, pl. 11.

Sexes alike. Top of the head, bright red; hinder crown, black; remaining upper parts, green; sides of the head, black, with yellow patches above and below the eye. Throat, yellow; upper part of the breast patched red and yellow; remaining under parts, whitish, heavily streaked with dark green.

Total length, about 6.25 in.; wing, 3.25 in.

This small and gaudy barbet is common in the north of the Peninsula in gardens and other cultivated areas, where it is seen, usually, in large trees. I have never seen it in old forest. In the extreme south of the Peninsula it is unknown, but Robinson (*loc. cit.*) certainly fixed the southern limit too far to the north, because Mr A. T. Edgar has found the species breeding at Sitiawan in Lower Perak and Captain T. P. Coe, M.C., is certain that he has seen the bird actually in Kuala Lumpur. The English name is, of course, derived from the note, which recalls that of the Malayan nightjar.

In Perak the species breeds in April and May in holes in trees, in one case a rubber-tree (*Edgar and Ryves*).