

CUCKOO- OR CATERPILLAR-SHRIKES AND MINIVETS

Family CAMPOPHAGIDÆ

Vol. I., p. 193; Vol. II., p. 149.

IN the members of this family the plumage on the rump is full and thick and the rump feathers are long, with thickened, sometimes almost spiny, shafts. In most of their other characters the cuckoo-shrikes are rather like the shrikes.

The bill is less powerful than in the shrikes, broad at the base and very slightly hooked. The feet are weak. The wing has ten primaries, of which the first is much shorter than the second. The tail is long and evenly graduated or rounded. In a few genera that do not occur in Malaya it is forked. More often than not the nostrils are covered with short feathers, and there are some not very well-developed rectal bristles at the gape.

The plumage is variable in colour, but often a combination of grey, or black, and white. The sexes differ in plumage, and sometimes the difference is very marked. In the Malay Peninsula the gorgeous little minivets are the most striking members of the family. In most of these the males are clad in a livery of black and scarlet, whereas the females of the same species are black and bright yellow. As the young males at first resemble the females in plumage, they present a very vivid appearance when assuming the scarlet adult dress.

The cup-shaped nests are placed in trees and contain eggs that are usually greenish with brown markings.

The birds are insectivorous and arboreal, and the smaller species are often gregarious.

The family is found in the warmer parts of the Old World. In the Malay Peninsula ten species, three of which occur in two distinct subspecies, are found. Two of the species are found only on the mountains, but the others can all be seen at some time in the lowlands, although not all are resident in the Peninsula.

KEY TO THE MALAYAN LOWLAND CUCKOO-SHRIKES

I	{	Rump, greenish yellow	<i>Pericrocotus speciosus</i> subsp.
			(females), p. 239
		Rump, bright red	2
		Rump, grey, or barred black and white	5

2	{	Crown and back, black	3	
		Crown and back, grey	4	
3	{	Smaller: wing about 2.9 in.; under wing coverts, yellow	} <i>Pericrocotus igneus</i> (male), p. 240	
		Larger: wing about 3.4 in.; under wing coverts, red		
4	{	Chin and throat, dark grey; breast, orange-red	} <i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus vividus</i> (male), p. 240	
		Under parts, creamy white		
		Under parts, bright yellow	<i>Pericrocotus igneus</i> (female), p. 240	
5	{	Throat and breast, dark grey	6	
		Throat and breast heavily barred black and white	} <i>Lalage fimbriata</i> subsp. (females), p. 236	
		Throat and breast, whitish		7
6	{	Large birds: wing about 6 in.	} <i>Coracina sumatrensis sumatrensis</i> , p. 234	
		Medium size: wing about 4.4 to 5 in. Smaller birds: wing less than 4 in.		<i>Lalage melanoptera</i> , p. 235 <i>Lalage fimbriata</i> subsp. (males), p. 236
7	{	Wings heavily lined with white	} <i>Lalage nigra nigra</i> , p. 239	
		Wing feathers without broad white edges		8
8	{	Rump, pure pale grey	} <i>Pericrocotus divaricatus</i> , p. 241	
		Rump, brownish or buffy grey		<i>Pericrocotus cantonensis</i> , p. 241
		Rump at least partly red, pink or olive-yellow		<i>Pericrocotus roseus</i> , p. 241

Coracina sumatrensis sumatrensis

The Large Barred Cuckoo-Shrike

Vol. I., p. 194.

The sexes differ in appearance. The male is almost uniformly pale grey. The feathers of the rump are tipped with whitish grey, and the under wing coverts are indistinctly barred with blackish. The under tail coverts also show signs of barring, but very indistinctly. The wing and tail quills are darker grey, almost black. The female has the rump, upper tail coverts and the under parts from the lower breast downwards, heavily and almost equally barred with white and black. The rest of the plumage is grey, as in the male.

Total length, about 12 in.; wing, about 6 in.

This large cuckoo-shrike is found in the lowlands especially near the coasts, on both sides of the Peninsula from Trang in Peninsular Siam, south to Singapore Island. It is a bird of the mangroves and extensive areas of secondary growth rather than of old forest, and is commoner on the east than on the west coast, and much more numerous in the south of the Peninsula

than in the north. In the south of Johore it is not uncommon, but north of Perak it is decidedly rare. The nest and eggs are unknown.

Lalage melanoptera

The Large Grey Cuckoo-Shrike

Ceblepyris melanoptera Rüppell, *Mus. Senckenb.*, iii., 1839, p. 25, pl. 2, fig. i. (New Holland, error = Burma).

Campophaga intermedia, Sharpe, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, iv., 1879, p. 66.

**Campophaga melanoptera*, Sharpe, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, iv., 1879, p. 67; Oates, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, i., 1889, p. 492.

Volvocivora melanoptera, Oates, *Cat. Birds' Eggs, Brit. Mus.*, iii., 1903, p. 296.

Lalage melaschista avensis, Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), ii., 1924, p. 338; Stuart Baker, *Nid. Birds Ind. Emp.*, ii., 1933, p. 304.

Lalage melaschistus intermedia, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1924, p. 252.

Malay Name.—Unascertained.

Description.—Dark grey, becoming whitish on the under tail coverts. Wings and tail, blackish, the outer tail feathers broadly tipped with white. Young birds are narrowly and regularly barred on the under parts from chin to under tail coverts.

Adult male.—General plumage, including axillaries and under wing coverts, dark grey, darkest on the lores and a ring round the eye, and becoming paler on the abdomen and changing to white or buffy white on vent and under tail coverts, although even the latter are sometimes tinged with grey. Wings and tail, shiny black, faintly green in certain lights, the centre pair of feathers greyish on the basal half. The outer tail feathers are broadly tipped with white, the amount of white decreasing inwards to the centre pair of feathers, which are either without white tips or with very narrow white fringes.

Adult female.—The fully adult female is said by some authors to be like the male but a trifle paler, but all those I have seen from the southern part of the range retain certain features in the plumage reminiscent of the immature dress. It may be, as some have contended, that these marks are remains of immaturity and that they would disappear with age, but it has yet to be proved that this is the case, and it may be that only a minority of females ever attain "full" plumage. A narrow circle of white feathers round the eye is common; the wing quills have, usually, very narrow pale fringes and white patches on the inner webs; the centre tail feathers are washed with grey at the base; the cheeks and ear coverts are narrowly streaked with white; and the under tail coverts, and perhaps even the abdomen and breast, are indistinctly barred with dusky.

Immature.—Immature birds have the general tone of the plumage grey as in adults, but differ in many other respects. The entire under parts from chin to under tail coverts are narrowly barred grey and white; the sides of the head and the ear coverts are streaked with white, and the top of the head

is indistinctly streaked with black; the wing feathers are very narrowly edged with pale grey, and the primaries have a large white patch on the inner webs. I have never seen a juvenile from the Malayan area. It will not improbably prove to be barred with dusky on the upper surface as well as below.

Soft Parts.—Iris, brown to crimson; bill, black; feet, black or grey-black.

Dimensions.—Total length, 9.25 to 9.5 in.; tail, 4.25 to 4.4 in.; wing, 4.4 to 4.95 in. (the smallest and the largest specimens are both females); tarsus, 0.8 in.; bill from gape, 0.9 to 1 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—This bird only just enters the extreme north of our area, where it has been collected near Langsuen. Müller recorded a bird from Junk Zeylon as *Volvocivora avensis* with a wing-length of 115 mm. It is possible that it refers to the present species. If so, it is the most southerly record.

Extralimital Range.—From Arakan and the north of Burma eastwards to Yunnan and most of China except the north. South through Burma to Tenasserim; the Shan States, Siam and French Indo-China (Tonkin to Cochin-China). The Indian *Lalage melaschista* is very similar, and the two birds can perhaps be regarded as subspecies, but for the moment they are best kept apart. Both forms are said to occur in Yunnan.

Nidification.—There is no record from the Malay Peninsula, but the bird breeds in Tenasserim where, according to Mr Stuart Baker, a shallow cup-like nest of interlaced twigs, with an outside decoration of lichen, is placed high in a forest tree and contains two or three eggs, which are pale green with longitudinal brown blotches and a few underlying blotches of grey. Size, about 0.94 by 0.7 in.

Habits.—I have never met with this bird in the field, and Davison, who collected numerous specimens in Tenasserim, could detect no specific characteristic. He writes: "The habits and voice (which, by the way, one seldom hears, as they are very silent birds) of all these *Volvocivoras*¹ are much the same. I have found them in the densest forests, in thin jungle, in gardens—in fact, wherever there were trees. They are usually met with singly, never in parties; rarely I have seen a pair together. They never descend to the ground to feed; but if you are sitting about midday near a stream, you are sure to see two or three of these birds come down to bathe and drink. As indeed do all the Bulbuls and Malacopterons, and scores of others. When feeding, they hunt about the leaves and branches, occasionally seizing insects on the wing."

Lalage fimbriata culminata

The Malayan Grey Cuckoo-Shrike

PLATE 13

Vol. II., p. 154.

Ceblepyris Culminatus A. Hay, *Madras Journ.*, xiii., 1845, pt. 2, p. 157 (Malacca).

Lalage culminata, Sharpe, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, iv., 1879, p. 104.

¹ An old name for this and allied species.

Lalage fimbriata culminata, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1924, p. 254.

Malay Name.—Unascertained.

Description.—General appearance as in the last-mentioned species (*Lalage melanoptera*), but very much smaller.

Adult male.—The whole of the body plumage, including the under wing coverts, dark grey, palest on the rump, abdomen, upper and under tail coverts, and darkest, sometimes almost blue-black, on the throat, sides of the head and crown. Wings and tail, shiny black, glossed with green in certain lights, the lesser and median wing coverts sometimes dark grey like the back. Outer tail feathers narrowly tipped with whitish grey, the tips becoming narrower inwards until they disappear, or are reduced to a very narrow grey fringe on the centre pair of feathers.

Adult female.—Quite different. Upper parts, pale blue-grey, indistinctly striped on the head with black, and the rump and upper tail coverts narrowly barred with white. Lores, mixed grey and white; sides of head, dark grey, streaked with white. Entire under parts, including the under wing coverts, narrowly and regularly barred with white and blackish grey, the white interspaces broadest on the under tail coverts, which are sometimes almost immaculate. Wings, dark grey, becoming almost black on the quills, the feathers very narrowly edged with paler grey and the centre few primaries with a white patch on the inner web. Tail feathers, blackish, the centre pair dark grey on the basal two-thirds. Outer feathers broadly tipped with white, the tips larger than in males; outer web of outermost feathers also narrowly white. The white tips decrease in size inwards, the centre pair of feathers being immaculate and the next pair almost so.

It has been said that the sexes of this bird are alike, but in the great majority of cases this is certainly not so. I have seen a few skins of both this race and *L. f. neglecta*, sexed as females by the collectors, and in a plumage like that of the adult male, but I cannot confirm that the birds were rightly sexed.

The amount of white on the inner webs of the primaries is a variable feature, and, rarely, the white patches may be absent. In birds in which the character is well marked, the primaries in question may be conspicuously beaded with white on the outer web also.

Immature.—Young birds of both sexes are, at first, like the adult female, but they are heavily barred on the upper parts, including the wing coverts, with white-edged black bars. The secondaries are also narrowly tipped with white, and the white tips to the tail feathers are marbled with black. In older birds the upper parts are without bars, and subadult females are like the adult, but have white tips to the secondaries. Males moult from the juvenile plumage into a plumage much like that of the adult male, but the grey is a trifle paler, and traces of barring are retained on the rump, abdomen and tail coverts.

Soft Parts.—Iris, usually brown, rarely red, in adults; bill and feet, black in both sexes at all ages.

Dimensions.—Total length, 7 to 7.3 in. ; tail, 2.9 to 3.1 in. ; wing, 3.55 to 3.9 in. ; tarsus, 0.75 in. ; bill from gape, 0.85 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—Typically, south of about lat. 3° N., including Singapore Island. Between lat. 6° and 3° N. birds approach the next form to be described (*neglecta*), but they are nearer to *culminata*, and a male from Patani must definitely be referred to *culminata*. An old record from Penang needs confirmation, although the bird probably occurs on the island.

Extralimital Range.—Sumatra, Siberut Island and Borneo. Another subspecies is known from Simalur Island, West Sumatra. The typical race is found in Java and Bali.

Nidification.—Unknown.

Habits.—A low-country bird apparently ascending the hills to at least 2000 ft. and no doubt a little higher. It is not very common in any Malayan locality known to me, and on the few occasions on which I have collected the species my birds have been alone, and shot from the tops of big trees in forest or clumps of trees left standing on the outskirts of cultivated areas. Robinson records it as not uncommon on the hills of Johore and Negri Sembilan.

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

Lalage fimbriata neglecta

The North Malayan Grey Cuckoo-Shrike

Volvocivora neglecta Hume, *Stray Feathers*, v., 1877, p. 203 (South Tenasserim).

Campophaga neglecta, Oates, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, ii., 1889, p. 493.

Lalage fimbriata neglecta, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1924, p. 254; Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.); ii., 1924, p. 339 (pt.).

Description.—So very like the foregoing subspecies that a separate detailed description is not required. Females of the two races are alike, but the males of *neglecta* have the plumage slightly paler grey, and they are not blackened on the head and mantle. Abdomen and under tail coverts, white or at least whitish.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—Peninsular Siam, excluding Patani, but including the west-coast islands of Junk Zeylon, Pulau Panjang and the adjacent Malay state of Perlis. The island of Koh Samui off the north-east coast.

Extralimital Range.—Extends to the south of Tenasserim where, and in South-West Siam, it meets another race, *L. f. polioptera*, described from Cochin-China, and also occurring as far south in Siam as Koh Lak.

Nidification and Habits.—I can find nothing recorded specifically.

Lalage nigra nigra

The Pied Cuckoo-Shrike

Vol. I., p. 195.

The sexes are rather different in appearance. The male is boldly patterned black and white. The rump is pale grey, and the remainder of the upper parts, including the wings and tail, are shiny black, the wing coverts and the secondaries edged with white, and the tail quills tipped with white. A broad stripe over the eye and the under parts are white, washed with pale grey on the breast. The female is pale brown where the male is black, and the under parts are washed with buff and narrowly and indistinctly barred with dusky.

Total length, about 6·8 in. ; wing, 3·5 in.

This species is most emphatically not a bird of the old forest, but it is common in secondary-growth areas and on the coastal plains where there are trees. In some parts of the Peninsula it is a common garden bird.

In Lower Perak Mr A. T. Edgar has found nests in mango and other fruit-trees and in the "perepat" forest on the coast from February to June. Mr V. W. Ryves adds July for Perak, and gives April to June for Negri Sembilan. Mr G. C. Madoc has eggs taken in August and February.

Pericrocotus speciosus flammifer

Davison's Minivet

Vol. II., p. 151.

The sexes are quite distinct. Males are black and scarlet ; females grey, black and bright yellow.

Male : head and neck all round and back, glossy black ; rump and remaining under parts, bright scarlet ; wings, black, patched with scarlet ; tail, scarlet, but the centre feathers largely black. *Female* : forehead, the front part of the crown and the under parts, bright yellow ; rump, greenish yellow ; hinder crown to back, pale grey ; wings, black, patched with yellow ; tail, yellow and black.

Total length, about 7 in. ; wing, 3·4 in.

Throughout the greater length of the Peninsula this brilliantly coloured *minivet* is found in the forest on the lower slopes of the mountains. It is found as far south as the Selangor Hills. In the extreme south of the Peninsula it is replaced by a very slightly differentiated form, *P. speciosus xanthogaster*, which is slightly smaller, and in the female duller grey on the back, slightly paler yellow on the under parts and with a stronger green wash on the yellow rump. This southern form has been found on the hills of Negri Sembilan, and in the lowlands and on the hills of Johore ; also in Singapore Island and in Penang. Broadly speaking, *xanthogaster* occurs mainly in the south ; it spreads northwards in the lowlands, and *flammifer* has extended its range from the north into the Malay States along the mountain ranges. There is no local record of the nest of this species.

*Pericrocotus igneus***The Fiery Minivet**

Vol. I. p. 198; Vol. II., p. 150.

This species is very like the preceding bird, but it is much smaller. Furthermore, the male has the coloured areas on the inside of the wing, yellow not red, and the female has the rump, red not yellow.

Total length, about 5·7 in. ; wing, 2·9 in.

A common bird in the more open forest of the lowlands and of the coast, especially where there are casuarina trees. The nest has been found in Perak.

*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus vividus***The Small Minivet**

Pericrocotus peregrinus vividus Stuart Baker, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, xl., 1920, p. 114 (Tenasserim).

Pericrocotus peregrinus (pt.), Sharpe, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, iv., 1879, p. 76; Oates, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, i., 1889, p. 487; Oates, in Hume's *Nests and Eggs Ind. Birds* (2nd ed.), i., 1889, p. 339; Oates, *Cat. Birds' Eggs, Brit. Mus.*, iii., 1903, p. 297.

Pericrocotus peregrinus vividus, Herbert, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, vi., 1923, p. 108; Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), ii., 1924, p. 331; Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, v., 1924, p. 250.

Pericrocotus cinnamomeus vividus, Stuart Baker, *Nid. Birds Ind. Emp.*, ii., 1933, p. 297.

Malay Name.—Unascertained.

Description.—Crown and mantle, grey; rump, flame-coloured; under parts, flame-colour in males, whitish in females.

Adult male.—Top of head, mantle, scapulars, and lesser wing coverts, grey; rump and upper tail coverts, scarlet. Centre two pairs of tail feathers, brownish black, the other feathers broadly tipped with orange tinged with red; remainder of wing, brownish black; the primaries, except the four outer pairs, with a median yellow or orange patch, continued as a deeper orange patch on the secondaries except the innermost. Inner greater wing coverts also tipped with orange. Edge of the wing, axillaries and under wing coverts, deep yellow. Chin, throat and sides of head, blackish grey; breast and flanks, deep orange, sometimes flecked with scarlet; remainder of under parts, yellow.

Adult female.—The upper parts are paler grey than in the male, and the rump is less brightly coloured and separated from the grey of the lower back by a narrow, ill-defined, olive band. The patches on the wing quills, pale yellow. Forehead, very narrowly, supercilium, sides of the head and entire under parts, creamy white, faintly brown on the sides of the breast and tinged with yellow on the flanks, abdomen and under tail coverts.

Immature.—Immature birds are like the female, but have the upper parts barred with whitish-tipped dusky bars. I have not seen the juvenile plumage.

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

Dimensions.—Total length, 5·9 to 6·2 in.; tail, 2·8 to 2·9 in.; wing, 2·6 to 2·85 in.; tarsus, 0·6 in.; bill from gape, 0·6 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—The Renong river and the shores of the Takuapa Inlet, west coast Peninsular Siam.

Extralimital Range.—From Eastern Bengal to Assam and Yunnan; southwards through Burma, Tenasserim and South-West Siam. French Indo-China from Laos southwards. The Andaman Islands. Allied races are found in the territory of British India, and another in Sumatra, Borneo, Java and Bali.

Nidification.—There is no record from our area. From Central Siam Mr E. G. Herbert records the small shallow nests of fibre, covered with lichen and cobwebs, as being placed from 30 to 40 ft. up in fruit-trees or betel-nut palms. He says that eggs, which usually number three and measure about 0·66 by 0·53 in., vary from white to very pale blue in ground-colour, with specks, sparingly and evenly distributed, and blotchy spots, more numerous at the larger end, of brownish red, with a few spots in pale purple.

Habits.—This minivet is not known from any part of British Malaya, and I have never seen it in the field. Robinson and Kloss describe it as very abundant, flying in small flocks on the shores of the Takuapa Inlet in Peninsular Siam, where they obtained specimens from the tiny coastal islets of Koh Rah and Koh Pra Tung. Davison noticed that in both Tenasserim and the Andamans the species is partial to mangrove swamps.

Pericrocotus divaricatus

The Ashy Minivet

Vol. I., p. 197.

There is no red in the plumage. The male has the hinder crown and nape, black, and the remaining upper parts, grey. Under parts, white, washed with pale grey on the sides of the breast. Outer tail feathers broadly white at the tips. The female lacks the black on the top of the head.

Total length, about 8 in.; wing, 3·7 in.

This minivet is a common winter visitor to the coasts of the Peninsula from its breeding-grounds in Siberia and Japan. When on passage it occurs commonly at the Malayan lighthouses.

A closely allied species, Swinhoe's minivet (*Pericrocotus cantonensis*), also occurs in Peninsular Siam, but not in the south of the Malay Peninsula, during the winter months. It breeds in China. In appearance it is much like the ashy minivet, but there is no black on the top of the head in any of the plumages, and the upper parts are of a more brownish and less pure grey, this being particularly noticeable on the rump.

A third member of the group, the rosy minivet (*Pericrocotus roseus*), has been taken once in Peninsular Siam, in December. It is a grey-backed form with the throat whitish in both sexes. Males have the rump and under parts at least washed with rosy-pink, and there is also red in the wings and tail.

In females the pink is replaced by pale yellow. It breeds in the Himalayas, Yunnan, Burma, etc., and can only be considered a casual winter visitor to the Peninsula.

Following Robinson, I have maintained a simple nomenclature for the three forms mentioned above, but my own view is that they can be regarded as subspecies of *roseus*.