

RUBY-CHEEKS

Family CHALCOPARIIDÆ

Vol. I., p. 312; Vol. II., p. 282.

THIS family consists of a single species superficially very like the sunbirds, but with several important distinctions. The bill, which is less curved and slightly stronger, lacks the minute serrations on the edges of the mandibles. The tongue is not like the elaborate organ of the sunbirds, but is short and not tubular, although split and frayed at the tip. The feet are relatively strong. The tail is almost square.

The systematic position of this curious little bird has given rise to much discussion, which is not yet ended. Regarded as a sunbird it is, admittedly, aberrant, but it so closely resembles the sunbirds, with which it has usually been grouped, in its nidification and plumage, that I submit it could with advantage be left in the *Nectariniidæ* until its anatomy has been exhaustively examined by a competent anatomist. Its removal on superficial grounds to a separate family has added nothing to our knowledge, and has disturbed a well-understood, existing order, but I have here accepted the change (change rather than progress, I am afraid), to maintain uniformity throughout the present series of volumes, as explained in the preface to this fasciculus.

The field habits are certainly unlike those of any sunbird with which I am acquainted. Small groups of birds move through the scrub and low trees, usually not far from the ground, in the manner of the smaller babblers, and Oates suggested that the proper position of the species was among the *Timaliidæ*.

Chalcoparia singalensis singalensis

The Malay Ruby-Cheek

Vol. I., p. 302.

The male has the upper parts metallic green, and the under parts from chin to breast bright ferruginous. The abdomen is yellow. On the sides of the head is a patch of deep reddish copper-colour, which turns to bluish purple on its lower edge. The female has the upper parts olive-green, and the sides of the head greyish. The under parts are as in the male, but paler.

Total length, about 4·4 in. ; wing, 2·2 in.

The species is fairly common, though very locally distributed, in the lowlands of the Peninsula. It is not a garden bird, but inhabits the forests and secondary growth. I know of no Malayan record of the nest.