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Notes on some Ceylonese Birds.

I HOPE during the course of next year, in accordance with the general scheme of this periodical, to publish a complete list of the Birds of Ceylon, together with full descriptions and measurements of all species not included in Dr. Jerdon's "Birds of India."

In the mean time, I think, it may be useful to put on record a few notes written in the course of an examination I have just made of a large number of Ceylon specimens, some presented to my museum by Vincent Legge, Esq., R. A., and G. Nevil, Esq., C. S., and some purchased for me by the latter gentleman, and other friends.

62.—Phodilus badius, *Horsf.*

This species must now be added to the Avifauna of Ceylon, Mr. Nevil, C. S., having sent me a specimen killed in the island, the only one I believe as yet obtained there. The Ceylon bird differs from the Nepal race, (which Mr. Gray has separated as "*nipalensis*,") in its somewhat smaller size; in the much closer and darker banding of the lower surface of the quills; in the dark brown patch on the wing lining, at the base of the first two or three primaries (this patch being bright chestnut in the Nepal bird); in the dark brownish tint of the lesser wing coverts along the ulna and of the whole crown; in the conspicuous black banding, (almost obsolete in *nipalensis*) of the outer webs of the quills; in the much closer banding of the tail, and in the darker tint of the back and especially of the lower part of it.

In fact the bird seems referable rather to the Malayan than the Himalayan race.

63.—Syrnium indranee, *Sykes.*

I very much doubt whether the Ceylonese bird is *Syrnium indranee*; but if it be so there can be no question as to the distinctness of this species and *newarense*. I have never yet succeeded in obtaining either a Malabar or Nilghiri specimen of this

bird, and therefore I confine my remarks to that from Ceylon. Of the Himalayan species I have very numerous specimens from all parts of the Himalayas, from Darjeeling to Murree. All are one and the same species, identical in every respect, though individuals differ considerably in size, and in the tone of coloring above and below. In every one of these the disc of the eye is precisely similarly colored; I have thirteen specimens before me now, and have carefully examined at least double that number, and I therefore speak with great confidence on this point.

The whole of the central portion of the eye disc is black or nearly so, as are also the shafts and central portions of the long, bristle-like, anti-ocular feathers; the lateral portions of these, especially towards their bases, being greyish. From near the base of the bill a broad, pure white, band extends over the eye as far as the posterior angle; beyond this, outside the blackish central ring, the eye disc, behind and under the eye, to the gape, is a pale, fulvous brown, narrowly and obsoletely barred with darker brown. I am very particular about this, because anything more absolutely and utterly unlike the natural bird than Fig. XIV., G. & M. Gen. of Birds, of *Syrnium newarense*, Hodg., so far as the eye discs are concerned, it is absolutely impossible to conceive. What the artist was thinking of I cannot guess, the picture fails to convey the faintest idea of what the eye disc is really like.

When we turn to the Ceylon bird, it is not merely that the bird is much smaller, (a fine male before me having the wing barely 12 inches); that the ground color of the under-surface, and specially of the tibial and tarsal plumes, is more rufous; that the whole upper surface, but specially the head and nape are paler and of a more rufescent olive brown, and that the scapulars, tertiaries, and coverts are much more banded; but the eye disc differs *toto cælo*. The anti-ocular bristles are not half the length, the dark ring immediately round the eye is not half so broad, the white eye-brow does not extend so far back, and is tinged with fulvous, while the whole of the rest of the outside of the eye disc from the termination of the white eye-brow, a little behind the centre of the upper margin of the eye, right round to where, near the gape, it meets the anti-ocular bristles, is a *rich ochreous buff*, utterly unspotted and unbarred.

No one who has ever seen the two birds could possibly mistake them for one moment.

The question arises can this bird be Sykes' *indranee?* Could he possibly have overlooked this most conspicuous, rich, ochraceous crescent? It is the very first feature in the bird's plumage that would strike the most careless observer, and yet there is no allusion

to it in Jerdon's description which, if I understood him correctly, he transcribed nearly verbatim from Sykes.

I have therefore great doubts whether the Ceylon bird is really *indranee*, and if it proves distinct, it should stand as *ochrogenys*, nobis.

71.—Huhua nipalensis, *Hodg.*

Mr. Holdsworth, in his Catalogue of the Birds of Ceylon, P. Z. S., 1872, p. 416, separates the Ceylon bird as *Huhua pectoralis*, Jerdon. Whether *pectoralis*, Jerd., be, or be not, a good species, I cannot yet positively affirm, because I have hitherto failed to procure a Nilghiri or Malabar specimen; but the Ceylon bird of which I have a very fine specimen now before me is no more distinct from *Huhua nipalensis* than *Ketupa ceylonensis* of Ceylon is distinct from that of Northern India.

Huhua nipalensis is a rare bird, I believe, in European collections; but I have carefully examined some ten specimens, five of which are now in my collection, and I find that even as regards size there is no such marked difference between the Ceylonese and Nepalese birds. In two males before me from Nepal, the wings vary from 16 to 16·5 inches, in the females, from 17·5 to 18·5 inches; in a supposed male from Ceylon, the wing is 16·75 inches.

As regards plumage, the bird is one that varies very greatly; if there is a difference, the Nepalese birds are rather darker; as for the so-called pectoral band, which merely depends upon the breadth of the subterminal bars on the breast feathers, this apparently depends upon age, and I have a Nepalese bird in which the so-called pectoral band is a great deal more marked than in the very fine Ceylon specimen before me, while I have another Nepalese bird, a young male I believe, in which there is scarcely a trace of this band. The Ceylon bird may, I think, be with perfect safety referred to *nipalensis*, and this being the fact I think it extremely doubtful whether the Malabar and Nilghiri birds will prove distinct.

72.—Ketupa ceylonensis, *Gmel.*

There is a great deal more difference, there seems to me, between Ceylonese and Himalayan examples of this species than between those of the last species from the same localities. As far as I can judge, the Ceylon birds do certainly average somewhat smaller and darker, and have far less white on the throat than Northern Indian birds; birds from the extreme south of the Peninsula as from Anjango are very close to the Ceylon bird; all however clearly, according to my view, belong to the same species.