

NOTES ON BIRDS OF THE PHILIPPINES

BY KENTON C. LINT AND KEN STOTT, JR.

THE following notes were obtained during military assignment in the Philippines in 1945 and 1946, while the observers were on leave of absence from the San Diego Zoological Society. The Field Artillery Battalion to which Lint was attached was stationed for the longest periods on the islands of Leyte and Samar, and the majority of his observations were made in those areas.

The itinerary followed by the naval epidemiology unit of which Stott was a member included most of the larger islands of the archipelago. However, since the greater part of his Philippine sojourn was divided between the area around Guiuan, Samar, and the Zamboanga Peninsula on Mindanao, the majority of his notes were recorded in those two regions.

Reproduced here are only those notes which either supplement in some way or do not concur with material published previously.

The nomenclature followed is that of Delacour and Mayr (*Birds of the Philippines*, Macmillan, 1946).

ARDEIDAE. Herons

REEF HERON (*Demigretta sacra*).—Of the scores of Reef Herons observed along the coasts of southern Samar during the months of June, July and August, 1945, all belonged to the white phase with the exception of a pair of gray birds. Only one example of this species was encountered during three months on the Zamboanga Peninsula, Mindanao. It belonged to the gray phase and was seen feeding along the shore of the Sulu Sea near San Ramón on October 26, 1945.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis coromandus*).—This attractive little heron was found to be abundant throughout the lowlands of the Zamboanga Peninsula where it frequented marshy areas and followed free-ranging herds of domesticated Indian buffaloes (*Bubalus bubalis*). A large nesting colony was discovered in a marsh forest near San Roque, Mindanao, on August 23, 1945. The nests were constructed in low spreading trees and were situated very close to one another.

RUFous NIGHT HERON (*Nycticorax caledonicus manillensis*).—These birds shared the San Roque (Mindanao) rookery with the preceding species. Nests of both species were situated in the same trees, and so near to each other that brooding birds could easily reach into adjoining nests to steal their neighbors' eggs and nestlings.

BLACK BITTERN (*Dupetor f. flavicollis*).—Although Delacour and Mayr ascribe nocturnal and secretive habits to this species, we encountered it regularly in the marshes and rice paddies east of Zamboanga, Mindanao. It was always to be observed singly but it did not appear to be particularly shy nor was it restricted to nocturnal activity. We often saw it and at all times of day as it stood on the exposed ridges between flooded rice paddy squares.

ANATIDAE. Ducks

SPOTTED WHISTLING DUCK (*Dendrocygna guttata*).—An individual of this species was observed in the brackish marsh east of the Zamboanga (Mindanao) airstrip on October 29, 1945. Although this species was not seen again, we found the Lesser Fulvous Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna arcuata*) to be fairly common in the marshes about Zamboanga throughout the fall months.

ACCIPITRIDAE. Hawks

CRESTED LIZARD HAWK (*Aviceda jerdoni magnirostris*).—Although Delacour and Mayr describe this bird as "rare and shy," we saw three individuals in different areas on Mindanao during the month of October, 1945. The first of these was encountered in a second-growth forest near Pulig, another at the demarcation line between the Santa Maria marsh and the edge of the second-growth forest, and a third example in a bare tree within half a mile of the center of the city of Zamboanga.

MONKEY-EATING EAGLE (*Pitheophaga jefferyi*).—An individual of this magnificent raptor was observed on September 9, 1945. It flew directly over us as we were crossing the jungle-bordered Tumaga River about twelve miles inland from Zamboanga. We recognized the bird at once, having become previously well acquainted with the species through a living bird exhibited by the San Diego Zoological Society in 1938. Our guide, Pablo Santos, who had an excellent knowledge of the fauna of the area, reported that he had seen the species on numerous occasions as it flew over his home in the forest near the Pasonanca Waterworks which lie approximately a mile inside the opening of the Tumaga Canyon.

PIED HARRIER (*Circus melanoleucus*).—An individual of this strikingly marked hawk was seen near Burauen, Leyte, in August, 1945, and another in a rice paddy near Mahnican, Mindanao, in September, 1945.

MARSH HARRIER (*Circus aeruginosus spilonotus*).—We watched a very bold individual of this harrier kill a Philippine Cockatoo (*Cacatua*

haematurophygia). The cockatoo was too terrified to fly and did not make a sound when struck. The occurrence was observed at the San Pablo Airstrip on Leyte, March 2, 1946.

RALLIDAE. Rails, Gallinules, etc.

RUDDY CRAKE (*Porzana fusca*).—Single individuals of this rail were observed just before sunset on two occasions in the undergrowth close to a vine-covered outcropping of lava near Guiuan, Samar, June 7 (?) and August 2, 1945. On both occasions the bird eventually retreated to the crevices in the lava in which it may have lived.

CHARADRIIDAE. Plovers and Lapwings

PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER (*Pluvialis dominica fulva*).—This migratory species was first observed on October 28, 1945, near Mercedes, Mindanao.

SCOLOPACIDAE. Curlews, Sandpipers, etc.

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus variegatus*).—This migratory curlew was first observed on Jolo (Sulu Archipelago) on October 21, 1945, at which time it was seen in large numbers along the beaches and on sand spits in coastal marshes.

COLUMBIDAE. Doves and Pigeons

AMETHYST BROWN FRUIT DOVE (*Phapitreron a. amethystina*).—This little dove was found to be moderately abundant in the dense second-growth forests east and north of Guiuan, Samar. It was seen only singly or in pairs. During the day it frequented dense thickets from which it emerged only in the early morning hours and late in the afternoon. Unlike the White-eared Brown Fruit Dove (*P. leucotis*), which we later observed on Mindanao, it was never seen to perch in large trees but seemed to prefer low-growing vegetation. Like most of the forest doves, it is a very rapid flier and impresses the observer with its remarkable agility and maneuverability as it flies through the tangled undergrowth.

BLACK-CHINNED FRUIT DOVE (*Ptilinopus leclancheri*).—Delacour and Mayr report this bird to be absent from Leyte. Two individuals were observed along the Binalayan River south of Tanauan in a lowland forest area, on a trip to Lake Davao, January 3, 1946. Water surrounded the trees in which they were resting, so we were unable to approach closely enough to flush them.

CUCULIDAE. Cuckoos

VIOLET CUCKOO (*Chalcites xanthorhynchus amethystinus*).—A single example of this rare cuckoo was encountered in the forest on the crest of the lava plateau on southeastern Samar, August 2, 1945.

MEROPIDAE. Bee-eaters

CHESTNUT-HEADED BEE-EATER (*Merops viridis americanus*).—A flock of several hundred individuals was encountered in an upland marsh on Samar on August 1, 1945. The flock had departed by the following morning. We later saw several large flocks in freshwater marsh forests near Labuan and San Ramón, Mindanao, on October 25, 1945. In each case the marshes they frequented supported a growth of large trees about which the bee-eaters swarmed. This species was never encountered in open areas nor close to human habitation.

GREEN-HEADED BEE-EATER (*Merops superciliosus philippinus*).—This larger and less colorful bee-eater was observed almost daily from August 15 until November 3, 1945, in the outskirts of the city of Zamboanga, Mindanao. It was always seen in the immediate vicinity of open, brackish marshes. Unlike the former species, which was not seen to utilize man-provided perches, the Green-headed Bee-eater often perched on fence wires and posts. During the day, they were usually encountered as single individuals, in pairs, or in small, dispersed flocks occupied with the task of capturing insects in a manner similar to that of New World flycatchers. In the later afternoon they would congregate in large flocks to fly over the marshes in what appeared to be recreational flights rather than foraging expeditions. They would fly rapidly, following a straight course for several hundred feet, then wheel in an about-face and return over the same course. This activity might be repeated several times before the participants would pause to rest on the power lines or fence wires. On November 1, 1945, a flock of several hundred birds was observed dusting in a well-travelled road, unmindful of the passing traffic. This species seemed to be totally indifferent to the proximity of human activity.

CORACIIDAE. Rollers

DOLLAR BIRD (*Eurystomus o. orientalis*).—We encountered this roller in upland areas, as did Amadon and Jewett (Notes on Philippine Birds, *The Auk*, 63 (4): 545, 1946). It was common on the cleared hillsides at an elevation of approximately 2000 feet above the city of Zamboanga, Mindanao. It was also encountered in lowland areas under cultivation near San Ramón, Mindanao, in the dense lowland forests of the island of Manicani (off southern Samar), as well as in lowland second-growth forests of Samar, itself.

BUCEROTIDAE. Hornbills

WRITHED-BILLED HORNBILL (*Aceros l. leucocephalus*).—Contrary to the Delacour-Mayr statements that it is “solitary or lives in pairs,” this species was encountered in large flocks in the foothill and mountain forests of the Zamboanga Peninsula on several occasions during the fall months. It was never observed except in flocks and it proved to be by far the most abundant hornbill in the area, with the Rufous Hornbill (*Buceros hydrocorax mindanensis*) in second place, and the Tarric (sic) (*Penelopides panini affinis*) running a poor third.

TARRIC (sic) HORNBILL (*Penelopides panini samarensis*).—The meat of this species is considered a special delicacy in the central Philippines. At a festival in Baybay, Leyte, on September 21, 1945, we saw the carcasses of four Tarric (sic) Hornbills which were being prepared for the holiday feast. The birds had been collected in the mountains between Baybay and Abuyog.

RUFIOUS HORNBILL or CALAO (*Buceros hydrocorax semigaleatus*).—Delacour ascribes this subspecies to Bohol, Leyte, Samar, and Panaon. Two birds were observed in the mountains between Ormoc and Burauen, Leyte, on October 2, 1945.

AEGITHINIDAE. Fairy Bluebirds

PHILIPPINE FAIRY BLUEBIRD (*Irena cyanogaster melanochlamys*).—Delacour and Mayr describe this species as being “rather uncommon and shy.” In the lofty forests which border the Tumaga River above Zamboanga, Mindanao, we found it to be quite common and not particularly shy. It and the Philippine Trogon (*Harporhynchus ardens*) were the most frequently encountered and most easily observed of the birds inhabiting the lower levels of the forest.

PYCNOTIDAE. Bulbuls

PHILIPPINE BULBUL (*Microscelis g. gularis*).—Delacour and Mayr express the belief that this bird prefers high trees. The species was common in the second-growth vegetation about Guiuan, Samar. High trees in the area were limited to coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*) in which this bird was never seen perching. However, it seemed perfectly content to share the lower vegetation with the Yellow-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus goiavier*).

WATTLED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus urostictus*).—A pair of these friendly little birds nested in March, 1946, in a *Casuarina* tree in front of our barracks at San Roque, Leyte. The nest contained three speckled white eggs. The species seems to seek the protection of man's habitation.

STURNIDAE. Starlings

LESSER GLOSSY STARLING (*Aplonis minor*).—A specimen of what was probably this species was collected by Dr. W. P. Stewart on September 23, 1945. It was one of several starlings in the crown of a coconut palm in a lowland area near Mercedes, Mindanao. Unfortunately, because the specimen was badly mutilated it was not saved. However, because of its small size, the strong violet iridescence of its plumage, and the lack of greenish iridescence, it very probably belonged to this species. It is regrettable that the specimen, regardless of its condition, was not saved, since specimens previously collected in the Philippines have come only from Mindanao's midmountain zone (Delacour and Mayr).

COLETO (*Sarops calvus*).—On August 11, 1945, a nest was discovered in a coconut palm at the San Pablo Airstrip, Leyte. The nesting hole was fifty feet from the ground, and was seven inches high, five inches wide, and circular in shape. The nesting material consisted only of coconut fibre. Two young birds were in the nest. Both were covered with dark pin feathers at about four weeks. The wattles were flesh colored. The young birds grew nicely, and, accompanied by their parents, left the nest on October 5, 1945.

NECTARINIIDAE. Sunbirds

YELLOW-BACKED SUNBIRD (*Aethopyga siparaja magnifica*).—Delacour limits this species to Cebu, Negros, Panay, Sibuyan and Tablas. For a period of three months (October–December, 1945) we observed this beautiful sunbird in most of the second-growth areas surrounding Tacloban, Leyte.

Zoological Society of San Diego
San Diego, California

NESTING BEHAVIOR OF THE POOR-WILL

BY ROBERT T. ORR

A GREAT deal of information remains to be gathered concerning the behavior of our North American caprimulgids, and few species, if any, have been the subject of intensive study. The Poor-will (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*) of western North America is one of those less known, although valuable contributions relating to its natural history have been published from time to time, in recent years notably by Elmer C. Aldrich (Condor, 37: 49–55, 1935). These have been admirably summed up by A. C. Bent (U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. no. 176: 187–198,