

With the authors compliments
Chas: M. Inglis,

BIRDS OF THE DUARS

BY

C. M. INGLIS, F. Z. S., B. E. M. B. O. U.

INTRODUCTION.

The object of this treatise is to help those who take an interest in the birds they come across during their day's work in the forest or on the banks of the many rivers and streams in the district. At present any one wishing to identify a bird has to search through many volumes, as the few popular works which have been published only give a small percentage of the species found in any district. The ideal course would have been to illustrate every bird in colour but as that is not feasible, use is being made of the coloured plates which we have in stock, most of them already published in the journals of the Bengal Natural History Society, supplemented by the beautiful photographs taken by Messrs. W. A. S. Lewis, H. E. Tyndale and F. W. Champion, to whom we are very greatly indebted. The coloured plates are the work of the author.

This work is, mostly, based on the large collections of birds made in the district by the author, over a period of thirty years, supplemented by a very interesting collection made by Mr. E. G. L. Webb and his two sons. The observations made by that excellent field naturalist, the late Mr. H. V. O'Donel, who resided for many years in the district, have been fully made use of as well as various notes received from other kind friends. Many ornithological books and journals have been consulted, and a list of the principal ones is given in an appendix.

There is one great blank in this account due to the paucity of local information about the nesting of even the commonest of our resident birds. No one has gone in, systematically, for the oological branch of the science; a nest or two have, sometimes, been taken but nothing published except one interesting note by H. Storrs. He was a promising enthusiast but was unfortunately in the district for too short a time to be able to do much in that line. Another man, of whom I had great expectations, was

transferred to the Calcutta office before he was even able to start collecting eggs.

With regard to previous collecting in the district, there is not much information available. During the years 1873 and 1874, the late Mr. Mandelli had collections in "the Bhutan and Buxa Duars" but there is nothing to show where they were collected. The specimens were sent to that fine ornithologist, the late Allan Octavian Hume (who, incidentally, was the founder of the Indian National Congress after he gave up ornithology,) were, ultimately, presented to the British Museum. Mr. J. R. Cripps was at Bamandanga in 1876 and did some collecting for Hume. In a settlement report of the Western Duars, by Mr. Sunder, written in 1895, mention is made of some mammals and birds said to occur there but the occurrence of these birds is very doubtful so I have relegated them to an appendix. The late Mr. H. V. O'Donel made a collection of some of the birds of the district, the Darjeeling Natural History Museum purchased some from him and the rest found a home in the collection of the late Mr. Hugh Whistler. Mr. Herbert Stevens made a short collecting trip to the Eastern Duars in January, 1922, and I have made use of the notes he published.

In 1919 and 1920 "A Tentative List of the Vertebrates of the Jalpaiguri District, Bengal" was published in the journal of the Bombay Natural History Society, under the authorship of the late Sir Lancelot Travers, H. V. O'Donel, E. O. Shebbeare and myself. Since then much more has been learnt about the avifauna of that area and a good many additions, as well as omissions, have now been made to bring the list up to date. That early paper was a mere list, with no descriptions and little information.

In the present series of articles I am giving descriptions, generally only of the adults, the distribution within the Duars where known and notes on the habits of the various species. There is very little original matter, but as this publication is primarily meant for those who do not possess bird books and to whom such information is not available, I thought the inclusion of published notes would prove both useful and interesting, so I make no apology, except to the authors for using them.



Subject :—WET MIXED FOREST, VIEW DOWN RAMJHORA FROM ROAD CROSSING, JALPAIGURI DIVISION.
Locality :—NORTH MORAGHAT, R. F., JALPAIGURI DIVISION, BENGAL.

WET MIXED FOREST SHOWING STREAM WHICH RISES IN THE PLAINS.



BAKSA DUAR WITH SURROUNDING FOREST AND BALA RIVER. *Copyright H. E. Tyndale.*

With regard to nomenclature I have followed that of Stuart Baker in the 2nd Edition of the Fauna of British India (Birds), with alterations to bring it as much up to date as I can. In this I have had much assistance, both in scientific and popular English names from H. G. Deignan's important account of (*"The Birds of Northern Thailand"* published as *Bulletin 186 of the Smithsonian Institution in 1945.*) While on the matter of nomenclature, it will be noticed that some of the plates differ from those in the text, this is due to a change in nomenclature since the plates were first reproduced. A serial number and the reference number in the Fauna of British India (Birds) are given. Those species whose occurrence is doubtful are placed in brackets.

Acknowledgements.—The facilities I had to study, and collect, the birds of the district during my earliest visits to the Duars were largely due to the great kindness and hospitality of E. O. Shebbeare with whom I spent a month of each winter touring the district during the years I was living in Bihar. As our whole time was spent in forest bungalows I had unique opportunities for doing this. Later I spent many whole winters with my very dear friends, the O' Donels, both at Hasimara and Haldibari, and my greatest successes in the collecting line were achieved while with them. Being an enthusiastic naturalist himself, and his wife being interested in all my activities, life with them was most congenial and fruitful. Haldibari is excellently situated from a naturalist's point of view as the Moraghat forest is one of its boundaries and many water birds and grass-loving birds are found on the Estate. Mr. and Mrs. E.G.L. Webb also put me up for lengthy periods during a number of years, both at Nangdala and Binaguri and made their home my home where I could come and go and do just as I liked. He also presented a collection of bird skins to the Darjeeling Museum which included the only known specimens of the Lapwing from the Duars. I am also indebted to Mr. and Mrs. N. G. Webb and the late W. Stowell for their kindness in having me to stay with them, for weeks at a time, at Hasimara on many occasions and thus helping me to do some collecting on the Torsa river. I must also thank the late Mr. D.A.G. Davidson and Mr. A. V. Pullan for their generous hospitality at all times. My stays with the former, in various forest bungalows, and with the latter, both at Kartick and

in his 'palace' at Rydak, have enabled me to study and collect the birds of both the Eastern and Western Duars. Thanks are also due to kind friends who have, alas! crossed the "Great Divide", F.M. Graham of Hantapara, Lancelot Travers of Baradighi, Ian Ballantyne of Manabari, and J. R. Philips of the Indian Police, who was stationed for some time at Baksa Duar, all of whom generously gave me hospitality on many occasions. I owe much to the encouragement of the Museum Committee for the interest they have taken in my work. Last but not least, I must add the names of my friends, the late Stuart Baker and Hugh Whistler, the former as far back as 1890 made me keen on birds, gave me books, and all through his life helped me in many ways. The latter was always willing to help by comparing and identifying doubtful species and with valuable advice.

The area included in this book is that portion of the Jalpaiguri district known as the Duars (or Dooars) and excludes the area South of the line Jalpaiguri—Alipur—Duar.

The following account of the District was written by Shebbeare and published in the Bombay Natural History Society's journal. It is "an area taken over by the British Government after the Bhutan War of 1865 and prior to that time divided by the Bhutan Government, for the purpose of rent collecting, into a number of small districts known as Bala-Duar, Luckee-Duar, etc. whence the name. The term "Duars" and especially such contributions as Sikkim and Bhutan Duars etc., used by writers in describing the habitat of species, led to a good deal of confusion. Originally, at any rate, the whole of the foothill tract east of the Tista and stretching into Assam was called the Duars (just as the corresponding tract west of the Tista is called the Darjeeling Terai) but, latterly, the meaning of the word has been narrowed down, by common usage, to refer to the Duars tea district which only extends eastwards to the Sankos and is therefore, co-terminus with the Jalpaiguri District. We presume that "Sikkim Duars" refers to that part west of the Jaldhaka and "Bhutan Duars" to that east of this river. Buxa Duar was one of the original divisions made by the Bhutan Government, a comparatively small area, but we believe that the expression "the Buxa Duars" is meant to refer to the whole of that between the Torsa and the Sankos. Similarly, Eas-

tern and Western Duars, though originally used relatively to the Sankos is sometimes, we believe, wrongly used relatively to the Torsa. British Bhutan is another rather confusing term which we believe is intended to be synonymous with the Duars.

"The north boundary of the district is in some places the foot of the hills and in others the top of the first ridge which at one point (above Buxa, now called Buxa-Duar) reaches an elevation of nearly 6000 feet. From the foot of the hills, which is usually well defined, a stony plateau, intersected by the steep-sided beds of streams and rivers, slopes gently southwards for a distance of two to six miles to join the true plains, at some places passing into them imperceptibly and at others descending to their level by one or more steep or even precipitous declines. The plains, like the plateau, slope towards the south, but with a very gentle gradient.

"As might be supposed all water courses flow from north to south; those which rise in the Himalayas are torrents in the rains and have rocky, gravelly or sandy beds according to their distance from the hills. For the first few miles after leaving their gorges, these hill streams are confined to some extent by the necessity of cutting their way through the plateau, but once in the plains they spread out to an enormous width. Except a few of the larger ones, these hill rivers disappear underground for some part of their length in the dry season causing a waterless tract some miles wide from north to south. The streams which rise in the plains are in almost every respect the opposite of those which rise in the hills; they have narrow beds and high banks with overhanging evergreen vegetation, and vary very little at different seasons.

"The northern part of the district is nearly all either tea-grant or Government forest, and the southern part nearly all cultivation; The tea-grants are not all entirely under tea. Parts of them are grazing land, savannah, and, in a few cases, tree-forest. The Government forests are mostly tree-forest though there are still a few fair-sized savannahs and some forest villages.

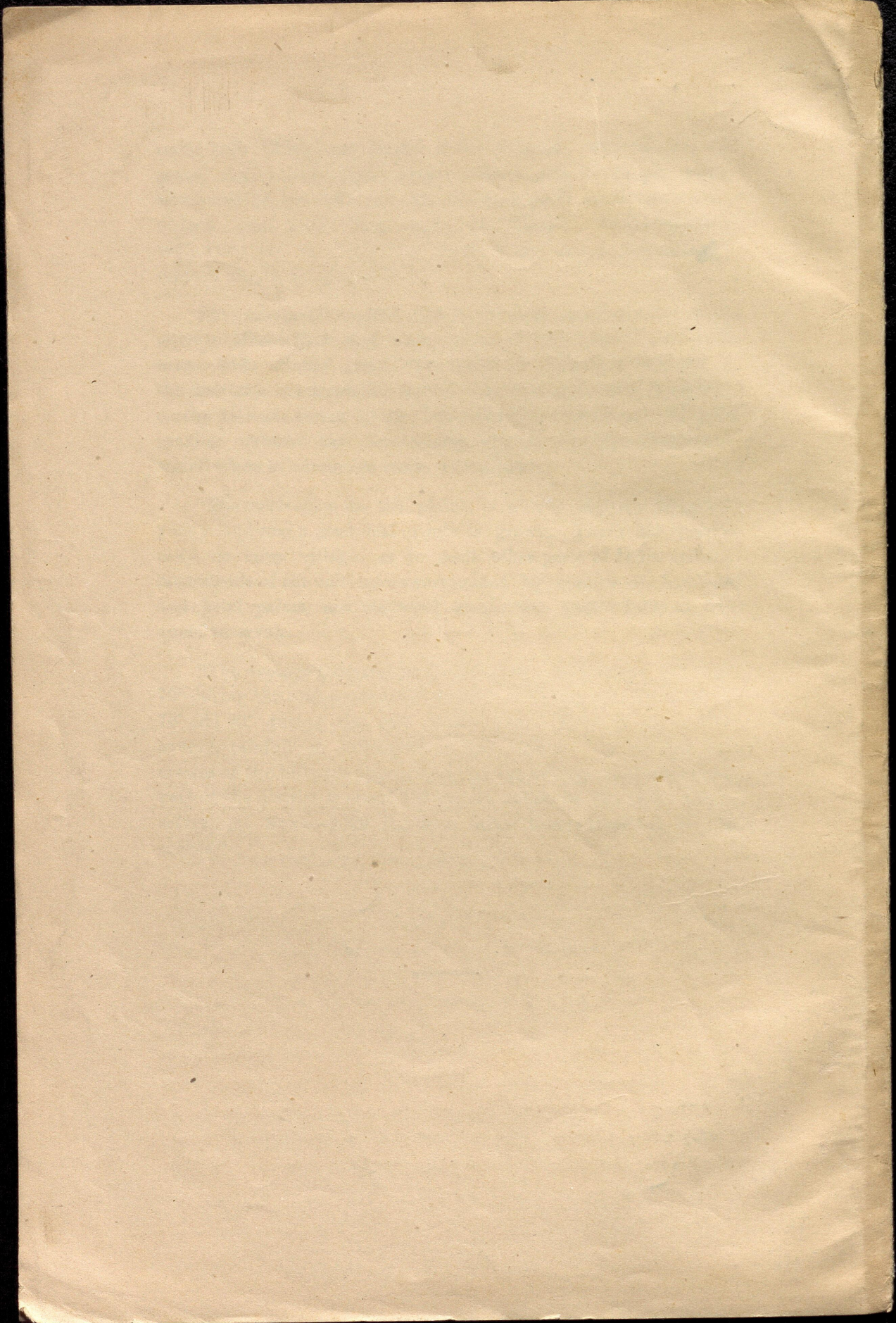
"The forests of the plains consist of a great variety of trees of which the commonest is *Sal* and there is, generally, a heavy undergrowth of shrubs and creepers, mostly evergreen. In the

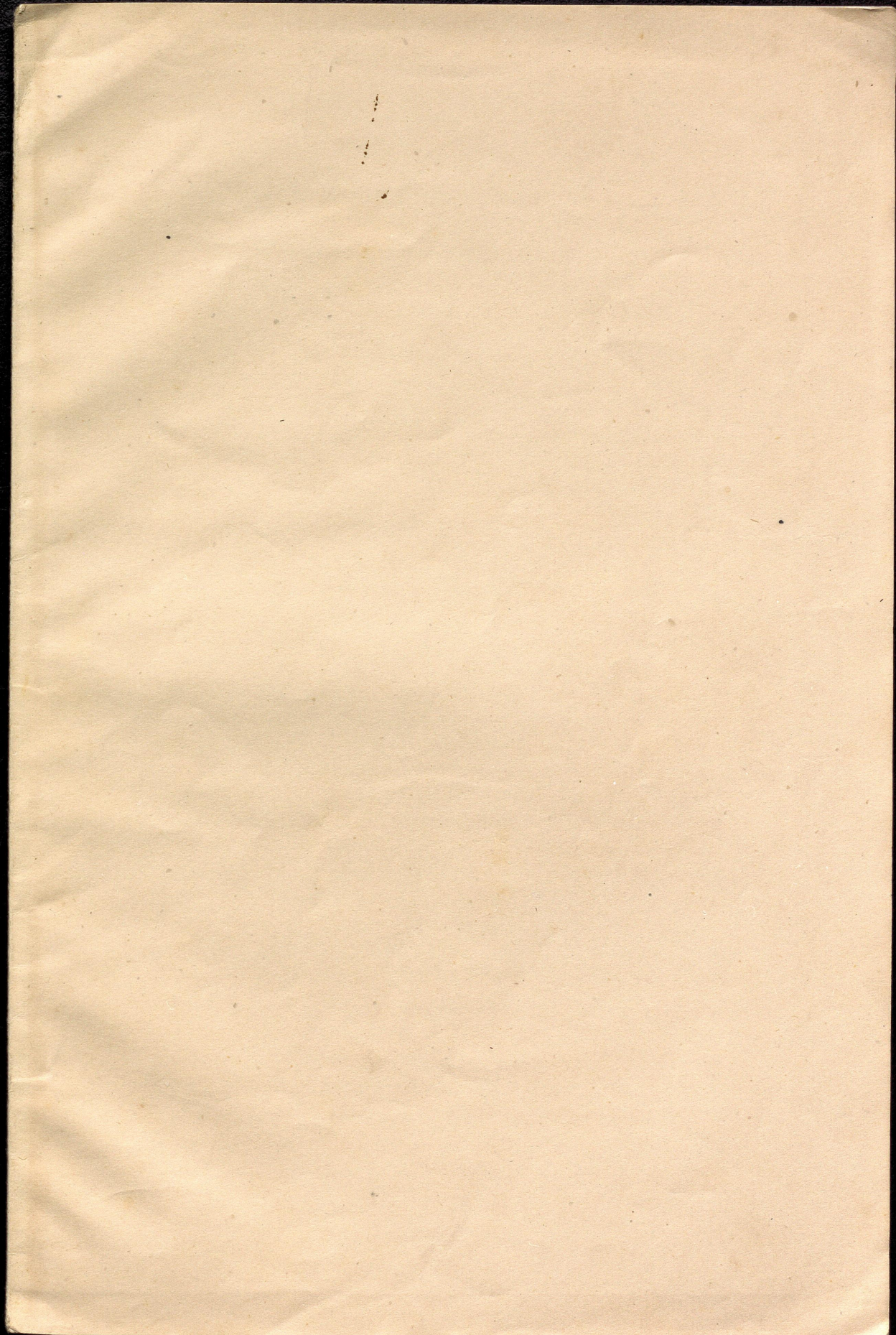
river beds *Khair* and *Sissoo* forest is found, This is not evergreen and, usually, has a lighter undergrowth or simply grass. The forest of the hills consists of trees with moderate undergrowth and some bamboos in the villages. Where shifting cultivation has been practised there is an almost impenetrable mass of shrubs and creepers.

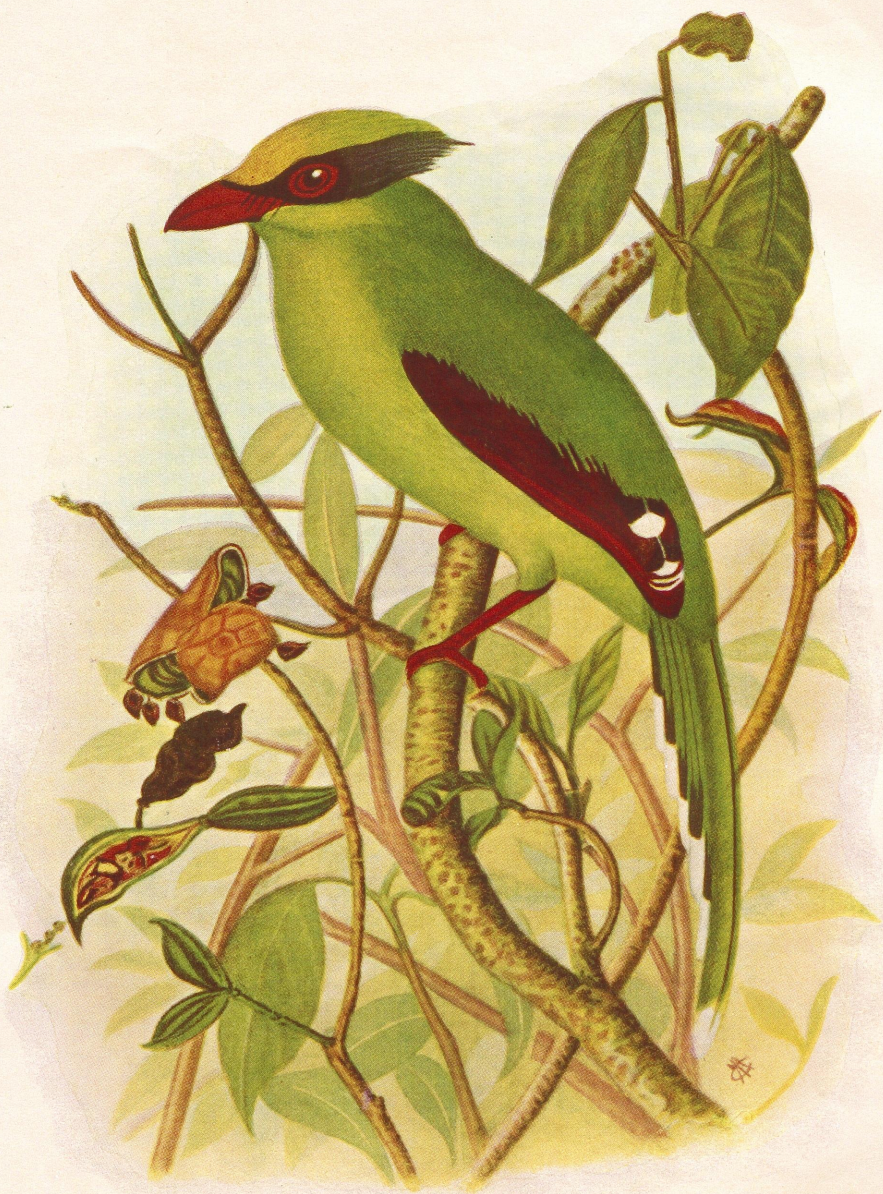
"The savannahs consist mostly of tall grass usually from eight to fifteen feet high with scattered trees; there are some areas with shorter grass. The area of savannah throughout the district is much smaller than it was formerly and constantly on the decrease owing to the extension of cultivation, tea and grazing outside the Government forests and fire protection, which tends to encourage trees, within them.

"The cultivation in the plains is almost entirely irrigated paddy land and a good deal of jute is grown. There are practically no large villages as in some other parts of India and the homesteads of the cultivators surrounded by clumps of bamboos and betel palms, are scattered among the paddy fields at frequent intervals.

"The average temperature in the plains is between 60° and 70° during the cold weather (November to February) and between 75° and 80° during the rest of the year. Frost is rare. The average rainfall at Jalpaiguri is 127 inches. The rainfall increases as the hills are approached and the average in the northern part of the district is about 160 inches, while in the hills themselves (at Buxa—2000 ft., now called Buxa-Duar) it is 194 inches."







The Indian Green Magpie
Cissa chinensis chinensis (Boddaert)
(2/5 Nat. size)

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C. M. INGLIS, F.Z.S., C.M.B.O.U.

(Continued from page 127, Vol. XXV, No. 2)

Order *Passeres*

Suborder *Dicromyodi*

Family *Corvidae*

1. The Northern Indian Jungle Crow.

Corvus macrorhynchos levaillanti Lesson

(Fauna Br. Ind. 2nd Ed., No. 5).

Description.—Length 17 or 18 inches. Sexes alike. Whole plumage black, glossed with purple above and steel-blue below; bill and legs black; iris brown.

The common black Crow of the plains.

Distribution and habits.—Found all over the plains portion of the district both in the forest and the open. Although called a Jungle Crow it is fast becoming accustomed to human beings and their habitations, even to the extent of visiting their compounds and gardens and nesting in them. It is also a forest bird. I have not yet seen one enter a verandah but it will settle on one's roof and drink from a bird bath a few yards from one's bungalow as I have seen it do at Haldibari and in Bihar. It is omnivorous, feeding on carrion, the young and eggs of birds, grasshoppers, caterpillars, centipedes, worms, lizards, frogs and a lot of vegetable matter such as maize, paddy and fruit. In fact, from the examination of the stomach contents, these have been found to compose the greatest proportion of its food. It is not as bold a bird as its cousin, the House Crow, and is much less gregarious being generally seen in pairs and very often each pair has its own particular area.

The breeding season is very variable and may be as early as December but most nests will be found from March to May. The nest is composed of sticks and leaves and lined with grass

or hair. The eggs number 4 or 5, very occasionally 6; they are bluish-green, or pale blue in colour, blotched and streaked with blackish-brown and have, sometimes, a few underlying lavender-grey markings. They measure about 1·6 by 1·1 inches.

2. The Himalayan Jungle Crow.

Corvus macrorhynchos intermedius (Adams)

(Fauna Br. Ind. 2nd Ed., No. 7).

Description.—Length 20 or 21 inches; sexes alike; similar in colour to the last race but the bases of feathers, in adults, are pale or sometimes white; bill and legs black; iris brown.

Its larger size and different habitat should help to recognise this species.

Distribution and habits.—I have come across this Crow at Buksa Duar but nowhere else in the district, and that was during winter. Its habits are very similar to those of the last bird but it often inhabits country remote from human habitations—many of them, however, are very common in hill stations. Its voice is louder and deeper than that of our plains bird. It may breed in the hilly portions of the district, if so, April and May are likely to be the breeding months. It nests in trees and bamboo clumps, making the usual stick nest and lays from 4 to 6, rather more richly coloured eggs than does the last race. They average about 1·75 by 1·3 inches.

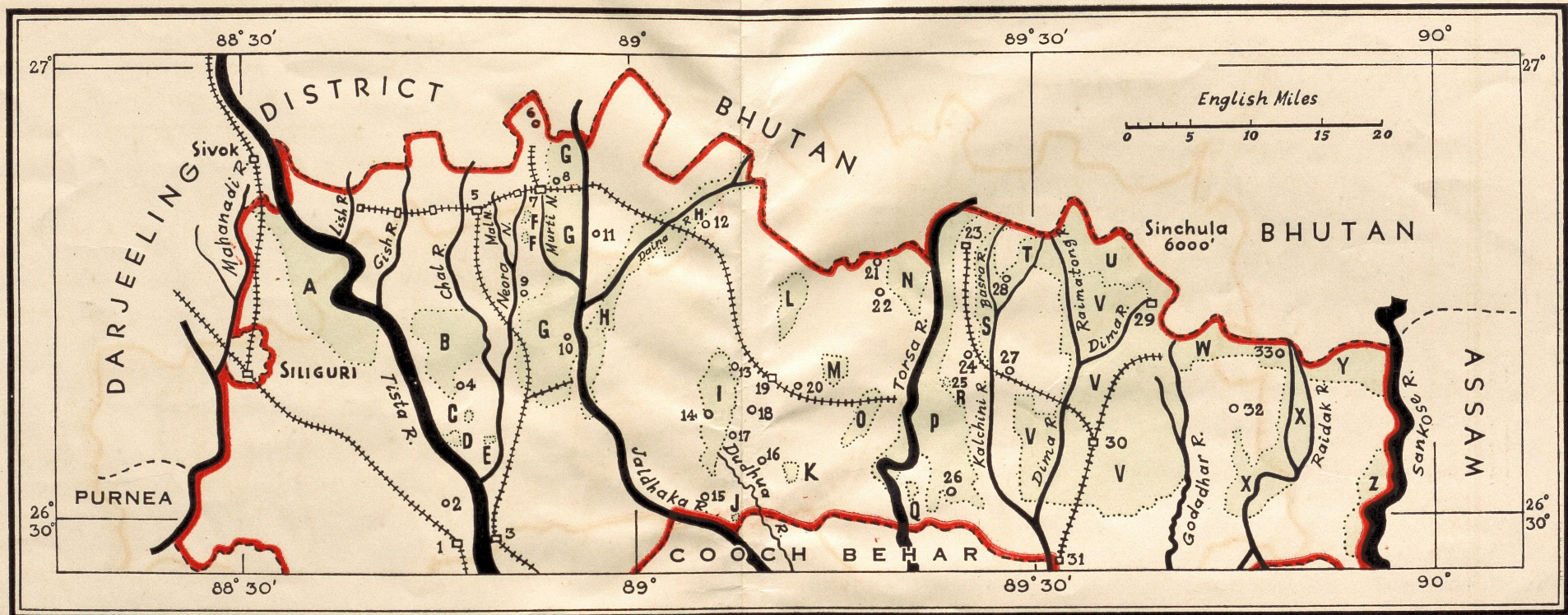
3. The Common Indian House Crow.

Corvus splendens splendens Vieillot

(Fauna Br. Ind. 2nd Ed., No. 11).

Description.—Length 18 inches; sexes alike; nape, ear-coverts, a broad collar round the neck, also the upper back and breast, light ashy-brown; lower plumage, below the breast, dull brownish-black; rest of the plumage black, glossed with purple-blue and green; bill and legs black; iris dark brown.

Distribution and habits.—One of our most familiar plains birds, commonly seen near habitations. It is, as EHA wrote, a



F.J.A. Hart

KEY TO MAP
OF
JALPAIGURI DISTRICT
(DUARS)

PLACES

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. Jalpaiguri | 12. Red Bank | 23. Dalsingpara |
| 2. Danguajhar | 13. Haldibari | 24. Hasimara |
| 3. Barnes Ghat | 14. Kuntimari | 25. Nilpara |
| 4. Katambari | 15. Dhupguri | 26. Chilapata |
| 5. Mal | 16. Sarugaon | 27. Kalchini |
| 6. Yongtong | 17. Gairkata | 28. Bhutri |
| 7. Chalsa | 18. Telipara | 29. Baksa Duar |
| 8. Chapramari | 19. Binaguri | 30. Rajabhatkhawa |
| 9. Baradighi | 20. Nangdala | 31. Alipur Duar |
| 10. Gorumara | 21. Lankapara | 32. Kartik |
| 11. Sulka para | 22. Hantapara | 33. Bhutanghat |

FORESTS

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| A. Baikantapur | N. Titi |
| B. Apalchand | O. Khairbari |
| C. Malhati | P. Borajhar & Torsa |
| D. Changmari | Q. Salkumar |
| E. Khairanti | R. Nilpara |
| F. Khariabandar | S. Gabur Basra |
| G. Tonda | T. Bhutri |
| H. Daina | U. Buxa Hill |
| I. Moraghat | V. Buxa |
| J. Salbari | W. Sachaphu |
| K. Dalgaon | X. Raidak |
| L. Rehti | Y. Dhumpara |
| M. Dumchi | Z. Bholka |

parasite of man, and is a bold, impudent bird, capable of stealing food from anywhere. It loves mischief for mischief's sake, as can be seen when it worries a lizard or bird, often with no wish to eat them if killed and its bad habit of pulling up plants. This Crow, however, is a very good parent, taking the greatest care of its repulsive offspring; it also shows no lack of intelligence and is well aware of the danger of a gun. It is so familiar that it readily enters our verandahs and will pick up, and take away, anything it fancies. It is highly gregarious, thousands sometimes roosting together in some favourite clump of trees. Nothing comes amiss to it in the way of food, scraps thrown to it or, preferably, stolen grain, whether in the field or exposed for sale in shops; fruit, insects, carrion, etc. It is curious that so wide-awake a bird is so easily cuckolded by the Koël, although it seems to have an instinctive dislike of that Cuckoo. As many as 13 Koël eggs have been found in one of these Crow's nests. Its caw is softer than that of the jungle crows.

The breeding season is, principally, during April and May. It nests in trees near villages, or in compounds, and all sorts of materials are used in making the nests. They are, usually, made of sticks and lined with grass and other soft materials. One pair, in Bombay, built their nest of gold and silver spectacle frames, the value of which was estimated at about Rs. 400/- in pre-war days. The number of eggs varies from 4 to 7, and they are various shades of green, blotched and speckled with dull reddish-brown, and underlying markings of grey and neutral tint. They measure about 1.45 by 1.05 inches.

4. The Indian Green Magpie.

Cissa chinensis chinensis (Boddaert)

(Fauna Br. Ind. 2nd Ed., No. 24).

Description.—Length 15 inches: sexes alike; forehead bright greenish-yellow, rest of top of head and crest, yellow-green, with a broad black band through each eye, from the base of the bill and meeting at the nape; upper plumage and tail, glaucous-green, the latter with white tips to the feathers and all, except the central ones, with sub-terminal black bars; cheeks and lower plumage, pale yellowish-green; wings bright chestnut-red

the inner quills tipped with bluish-white, and with black sub-terminal bars. Bill and feet, deep coral-red; iris, blood-red; eyelids, yellowish-brown, edged with deep coral-red.

a/ The yellow pigment in the plumage of this bird is very evanescent and birds, in a live state, are come across with patches of coerulean-blue; skins become wholly this colour; the chestnut-red of the wings also changes to a grey-brown. According to Deignan, "the change is more pronounced in birds taken just before the moult and in those collected in hot, dry forests with little shade". I have not noticed this. Its eyelids are wattled and very noticeable.

This handsome Magpie frequents both dense and deciduous forests and also bamboo jungle. It does, sometimes, stray some distance from these and may be seen in gardens in which there are a fair number of trees either growing in a clump or in a thick avenue. I have seen one, in such places, at Haldibari and Binaguri. In the forest it is often seen in the company of Laughing-Thrushes and other birds, in hunting parties, usually one Magpie in the party. O'Donel said that in former years he saw them in quite large flocks, but I have only noticed them singly or in pairs. It has a very harsh note and this often gives the bird away when, otherwise, it would not be seen in the forest. It feeds both on trees and on the ground, its food consisting of insects, especially grasshoppers, mantides, beetles, etc., but it also eats lizards, young birds, etc.

It probably breeds in the hills and foothills. April and May are the principal breeding months. It builds a cup-shaped nest of twigs, grass, leaves, roots and bamboo leaves lined with roots, in a clump of bamboos, small tree or high bush.

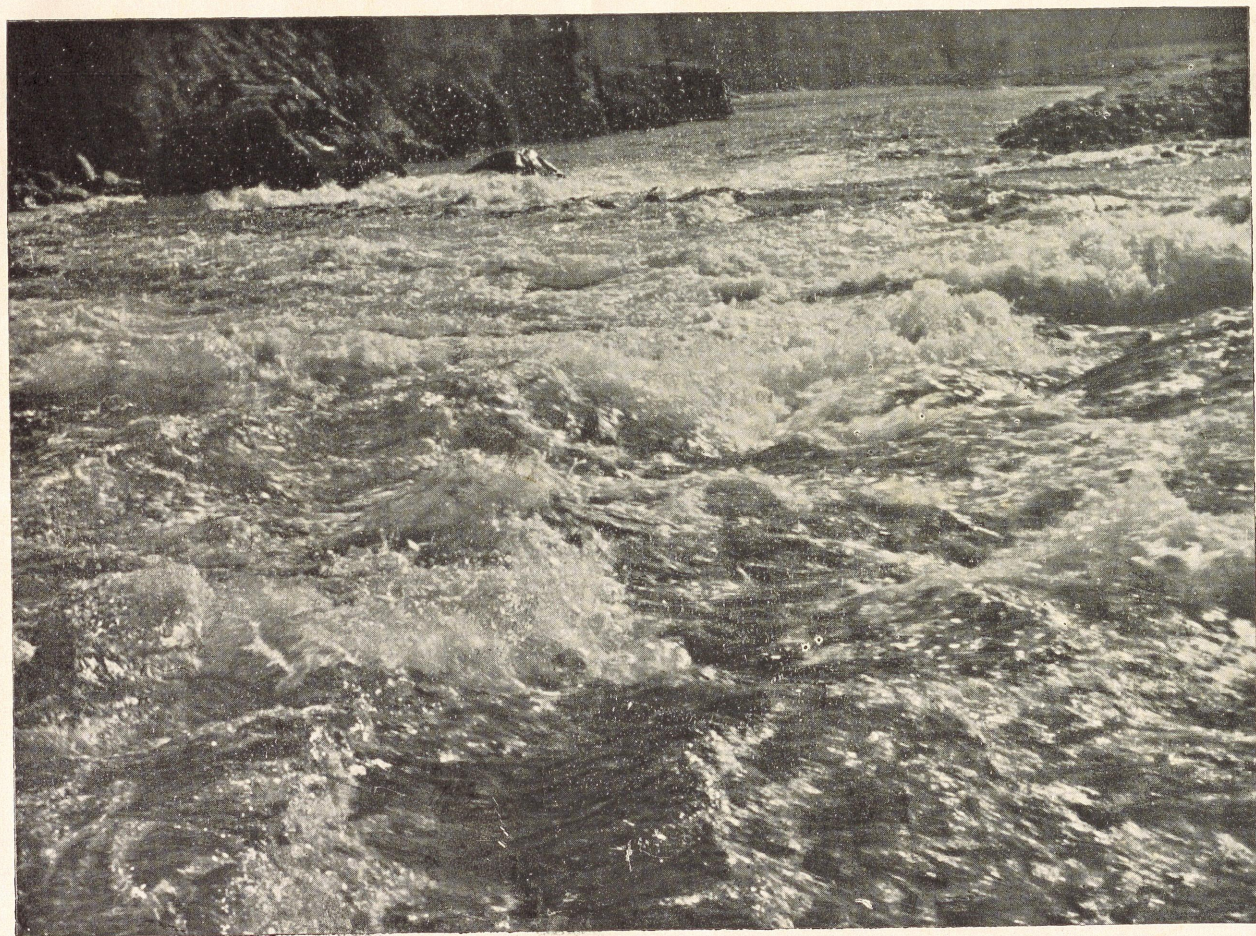
The eggs number 4 to 6 and are dull grey-white in colour, sometimes reddish, freckled with yellowish and brown, and measuring about 1.21 by 0.92 inches.

5. The Bengal Tree-Pie.

Dendrocitta vagabunda vagabunda (Latham)

(Fauna Br. Ind. 2nd. Ed., No. 27).

Description.—Length 18 inches; sexes alike. Head, neck and breast, dark sooty-brown, rest of plumage rufous-fulvous, richer



RAIDAK RAPIDS.

Copyright—H. E. Tyndale.



RAIDAK RIVER, OR CHIN CHU, ABOVE BHUTAN GHAT, *Copyright—H. E. Tyndale.*

on the back ; a large patch of silvery grey on the closed wing : tail grey, broadly tipped with black. Bill slaty horn, albescent at base ; iris reddish-brown ; legs dark brown.

Distribution and habits.—A very common bird in the plains, especially near villages and in the Tea Gardens. It goes about in pairs, or parties, hunting the trees for insects, fruit, birds' eggs, etc. It also captures lizards, mice, snakes, etc., on the ground. It is a very bold and tame bird and freely enters verandahs in search of Carpenter bees (*Xylocopa spp*), clinging on to the beams and exploring holes in them for these insects. Doves have an innate dislike for it, knowing it to be an arrant robber of their eggs. I have seen a Ring-dove chase a Tree-pie in and out of a tree and then right across the garden for a long distance. It is, however, on the whole, a beneficent bird. It has quite a repertoire of notes, some pleasant and others far from melodious, the most usual one heard is *Kokli Kokli*.

In the Duars it breeds in May and June. The nest is made of twigs, roots and miscellaneous material, interwoven and lined with roots, etc., and built in a shade tree in the tea or on some other tree near a village. It is also known to build in a thorny hedge or in a clump of cacti. It lays from 3 to 5 eggs of two different types : one is palish green in colour, blotched and spotted with grey-brown, and the other pale reddish-white or salmon, with reddish and dark brown blotches and some underlying ones of lilac and a neutral tint. They measure about 1.17 by 0.87 inches.

6. The Eastern Himalayan Tree-Pie.

(*Dendrocitta formosae himalayensis* (Blyth).

(Funna Br. Ind. 2nd Ed. No. 32).

Description :—Length 16 inches. Sexes alike. Forehead, in front of the eye and as far as its posterior corner, black ; crown of head and upper back, ashy ; rest of the back, brownish-buff, with the rump and above the tail, light ashy ; sides of the head, chin and throat, sooty brown fading into ashy on the rest of the lower plumage ; a patch below the tail, chestnut ; wings black, with a small white patch formed by the bases of most of the

pinions; central tail feathers ashy for two thirds of their length, the remainder black, the others black with ashy bases. Bill black; iris reddish-brown; legs brownish-black.

Distribution and habits.—A common bird in the hilly portion of the district; also occurs in fewer numbers in the plains but it wanders far into them. I have obtained it in the Moraghat forest and O'Donel found it at Chilapata, some 20 miles from the hills. It is a forest loving bird, being found in both heavy and thin forest and will occasionally even stray into the garden of a Tea estate bungalow, where I saw one at Haldibari. It goes about in pairs, or small parties, and has the same undulating flight as others of the genus. Its food consists of fruit, insects, birds' eggs and probably young birds, mostly obtained on trees, but it does, sometimes, descend to the ground.

It breeds from April to June. O'Donel took a nest nine miles from the hills, during May. It was on a tree on the outskirts of the forest. The nest is similar to that of the last species and placed in trees and bushes, sometimes, quite low down. The eggs number 3 or 4, very occasionally 5, and have a pale stone, pale cream or pale reddish ground colour with reddish and deep brown, pale sienna and grey-brown blotches. They are more richly coloured than those of the Bengal Tree-Pie, and measure about 1.14 by 0.85 inches.

(To be continued)

