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EDITED BY

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

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No. 2.

Game Birds of Sikkim including the Darjeeling District
and of the Jalpaiguri District, Bengal.

BY

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

(Continued from page 3)

6. The Wedge-tailed or Kokla Green-Pigeon, (*Sphenocercus sphenurus.*) (Vigors)

This bird which is a near relation of the last one has also a graduated tail, but the middle feathers are not acuminate as in the Pin-tailed Green-Pigeon, in fact they scarcely project at all beyond the next pair.

The cock differs from that of the last species in having maroon on the back and at the bend of the wing, also the under-tail coverts, which are very long in both these species, are deep buff or pale cinnamon.

The hen resembles that of the last species very closely and the easiest way to tell her is by her tail which wants the long pointed central feathers.

This is the common Green-Pigeon of the hills and is also fairly common in the plains and resident. With regard to the hills Stevens writes:—"Recorded from the Himalayas between 4000 and 7000 at which limits it is generally distributed in well wooded tracts of the Outer Ranges during the summer.....a few birds

remaining around 5030'-6000' throughout the 'cold weather' though the majority migrate, in what direction can only be conjectured." Masson also writing about the hills say,--"This Green-Pigeon is found throughout the District, from 2000 up to 9000 feet. I have shot it at all seasons.....from September to May it keeps to the thick forest and is seldom seen." In Simla it ascends as high as 8000 feet during the summer and it may be seen and heard in Darjeeling on Birch Hill during that period. Stuart Baker remarks:--"This Green-Pigeon is, more exclusively than most, a bird of evergreen-forests, and will seldom, if ever, be found at any distance therefrom. It is also essentially a hill and mountain bird, though found throughout the plains of Eastern Assam, more especially close to the mountain-ranges.. .."Hume, Jerdon, Blanford and others consider the bird to be locally migratory, and this appears to be correct in so far as its western habitat is concerned, but to the east, that is to say from and including Nepal to its extreme south-eastern limit in Burma, the bird is resident throughout the year, perhaps in parts moving vertically with the change in seasons." In these hills, so far as I can ascertain, the majority certainly do appear to migrate, probably, towards the foot hills and plains.

The Kokla Green-Pigeon goes about, usually, in flocks of no great size, seldom numbering more than a dozen individuals, often only in pairs or single birds. During the breeding season they are generally seen in pairs or singles. They are often found in the company of the Pintailed species and I have found them consorting together both in the foot-hills at Sukna and in the plains in the Duars.

The notes are very musical, and are, as Stuart Baker writes "fuller, richer and more sweet than those of any other Green-Pigeon." According to Masson "It calls at all times of the day, from June till September and delights in dull rainy weather, for then it is on the move the whole day." Stevens says that he has "on several occasions seen these birds called up to within measurable distance by an almost perfect imitation of their familiar notes."

They are entirely frugivorous and as the late Mr. Dodsworth wrote:--"are very partial to the ripe berries of the *Kaiphul* (*Myrica sapuīda*). When hunting for fruit, they are continually gliding about the branches,

like squirrels; and, from their strong feet, they can hang over to seize a fruit and recover their position at once by the strong muscles of their legs..... They are heavy feeders, and generally seek their meals early in the mornings and late in the afternoons. To avoid the heat they retire during the middle of the day to some shady trees, where, hidden amongst the foliage they sit motionless, and spend the time dozing; occasionally one wakes up and utters its soft plaintive whistle, and it is by these alone that the birds betray their presence."

On account of their musical notes they are favourite cage birds but like all Green Pigeons are very lethargic and therefore rather uninteresting. The late Mr. Dodsworth gave a most interesting account, in the Avicultural Magazine, of a pair of birds which he reared at Simla. They were brought to him on the 1st July when about a fortnight or three weeks old and "by about the end of September appeared to be full-grown.

"Towards the latter end of the following November, the cock began uttering his notes, but these were incomplete.....

"During the winter the birds thrived excellently. Their diet still consisted of pieces of plantains, which they would accept *sitting on their perches*, and only from the hand of their mistress. If the fruit was placed in the cage it was never touched. They were fed about four or five times a day. They always drank water from a cup, which, like their food, had to be held up to their mouths. When hungry, the birds always became very active, hopping about from perch to perch and peering anxiously at their mistress if she happened to be standing near their cage. If no notice was taken of them, or she walked away from their cage without feeding them, they would settle down into their usual lethargic condition, but immediately renewed their activities on catching sight of her; the presence of strangers or of others in the house was entirely ignored by the birds."

A very peculiar fact is noted by the late Mr. Sanyal, Superintendent of the Zoo, Alipur, in his book. "On the management of animals in captivity in Lower Bengal." He wrote. "Though denizens of a cold climate, they bear captivity in the plains of Bengal much better than the Bengal green pigeons which live in a wild state in the neighbourhood of the garden."

The flight is practically the same as that of the Pin-tailed Green-Pigeon.

I have no information as to when this bird breeds in the Duars. Masson says they breed in the hills in June and July and Stevens writes, "Evidently double-brooded, as young birds have been found in the nest as late as 14-9-15 when I saw two nestlings at Okayti." According to Stuart Baker they breed "only in evergreen forests, or in forest which is in full leaf during their breeding season. This commences in early May and into June, but the great majority of young birds are well on the wing by the beginning of August or end of July."

The nests are like those of the Pin-tailed Green-Pigeon and may be situated as low as six or as high as fifty feet from the ground." The late Mr. Dodsworth drew attention to the fact that the nests are often placed in close proximity to those of Drogos as a protection from crows and other birds. Timid birds very often place their nests on the same trees as the more pugnacious species even sometimes in the proximity of those of hawks and eagles.

Two is the usual complement of eggs but often only one is laid. Masson certainly writes that he has "always found four white eggs." This is pure nonsense but the statements of the latter are not always accurate. The eggs are of course white and they resemble those of the Pin-tailed species in both shape, size and texture.

(To be continued).

A Fastidious Panther.

I was not aware that a Panther was averse to accepting anything in the meat line, and on one occasion when I was very fortunate in bagging a couple of bears, I conceived the idea of feeding "Puss", my pet panther, on bear for a few days, and thus hoping to reduce my colossal meat bill!

Puss was a full grown panther and quite tame. He always received a meal of cooked meat twice daily, and a little raw meat during the middle of the day. When his first meal of bear was put before him, much to my surprise, he refused it. I thought that this was absolute

swank on his part, so kept him hungry until evening, when he again turned up his nose and was distinctly annoyed. After that, I gave him his usual meal but tried him again with bear on the following morning, when it met with the same treatment.

Another surprise was to await me, as at the same time I had a pet bear, also full grown. One evening I had been playing with "Bhalloo" who lived at the other end of the compound and out of sight of Puss. After a game with Bhalloo I got a bone for Puss which I always gave to him before bed-time. To my surprise he refused it and growled at me and became quite obnoxious but I soon realised that the cause of this display was due to him having sniffed Bhalloo off the bone.

These experiences would make it appear quite obvious that Puss had inherited some sort of dislike for anything pertaining to *Ursus tibetanus*!!

T. A. BALDRY.

Tumsong T. E.

28th May 1927.

(The above interesting note reminds me of the following incident.

In the April or May of 1918 Capt. Bentham shot a Himalayan Black Bear which he saw sitting in a tree near Sukna. It proved to be a fair sized female in good condition so, as I had already experimented in both Himalayan and Sloth Bear and found them good eating, we decided on an exclusively bear menu for dinner.

The soup left something to be desired, but my cook was notoriously unlucky with his soups, so we finished it and hoped for better things from the entrée. We each ate one bear chop without comment but my second went to the miscellaneous pack of pi-dogs, which in those days, surrounded my table. Among this alert company competition was keen and food seldom reached the floor but, after one contemptuous sniff from each of the dogs, they let the despised chop lie where it fell. Bentham's eyes following mine he pushed his plate away and we decided to forego the next course, leg of bear, and "kill" a tin of sardines.

Some may be surprised to hear of Himalayan Bear so low as Sukna but I have occasionally found them in the Terai, always in the hot dry weather that precedes the first rains. I saw one at Bengdubi in May, six miles in a straight line from the foot of the hills-- E. O. Shebbeare.)

Cannibalism among Wild Dogs.

My friend Col. H. S. Wood, I. M. S. a shikari of well-known repute, sent me this interesting note on this subject from the North Cachar Hills:—"My friend in camp saw three wild dogs swim the river and we came on a place in the rocks where, apparently, they had a great fight as there was lots of blood and brains about. My wife picked up part of an ear from which blood was still oozing. One had been killed as we saw the drag marks in the sand leading to the jungle. I have always suspected that cannibalism exists amongst wild dogs and this incident confirms that theory." This theory sounds very probable in animals of the nature of wild dogs. Dunbar Brander says:—"There is singularly little affection in the composition of a wild dog. His is a hard nature, and the callous indifference they show when death or a wound overtakes a companion is remarkable. It is true that he seems to expect no sympathy." This callous indifference to suffering or death is possibly not a far cry to cannibalism.—Editor.

NEPALESE PLANT NAMES

by

J. M. COWAN, D. Sc., I. F. S.

*Offg. Superintendent, Royal Botanic Gardens, Calcutta.***PART I.****Nepalese plant names and their significance.**

The inhabitants of the Darjeeling District are principally Nepalese. There are also Bhutias, a few Thibetans and Lepchas. The Nepalese are often referred to as Paharias or merely Hillmen. The Lepchas were the original inhabitants of the district, but they are steadily disappearing, yielding place to the Paharias who are now very much in the majority. The Nepalese, who have invaded the territory from Nepal, have not the same detailed knowledge of jungle lore as the Lepchas who notice minute distinctions in individual plants. The Nepalese names are, however, now commonly used for the indigenous plants of the district. There are certain disadvantages in their use as they are sometimes vague,

for whereas the Lepchas have usually separate names for different species, the Nepalese often group several species under one name. Sometimes too the Nepalese have no name for a plant which does have a definite Lepcha name. There are no English names for most species in the Darjeeling District and the Nepalese names which are in general use are likely to remain so in preference to the Lepchas' name which are usually longer and more complicated. It is only the Nepalese names which will be dealt with here.

"The Trees, Shrubs and Climbers of the Darjeeling District" by the late Mr. J. S. Gamble, which was first published in 1877, with a second edition in 1895, has been for many years the only record of the Plants of the District with their Nepalese names and it has been continuously used by forest officers and others.

In 1924, my wife and I were asked by the Government of Bengal to undertake its revision. In this revision, the scientific names have been brought up to date and we have collated them with the Nepalese names of which we have kept records, during a number of years residence in the district.

My interest in the significance of these names was aroused and I was able to obtain much interesting information about them by asking questions whenever the opportunity occurred. Forest Rangers Biroo Singh and Jagat Singh Lama were specially helpful.

In order to standardise the spelling, which so far has been very varied, I arranged a meeting of a number of Nepalese and other authorities and it is hoped that the spelling which we decided to adopt will form a much needed standard. There are in the Darjeeling Forests, as far as our present knowledge goes, some 1300 woody plants including trees, shrubs and climbers. The Nepalese names for these plants number about 540 referring to some 400 species. Some plants have two or more Nepalese names and when this is the case the variation is often according to locality. More frequently one vernacular name will apply to several plants which may or may not be closely allied botanically. A general superficial resemblance or a resemblance in a particular character is accountable for this fact. Some plants have no Nepalese names at all.

An outstanding characteristic of the Paharia is that they are frequently descriptive. They have often the

happy knack of drawing attention to a prominent feature by which a plant can be readily recognised and remembered. This tendency, although it is extremely useful as an aid to remembering a plant once seen, may be misleading unless the use of the names is made with discretion. The reader must be warned that it is in no way safe to regard the Nepalese name as equivalent to the scientific name of a particular species. The vernacular name of a plant is often useful as an indication of the genus and may be specific and quite as reliable as a scientific name; frequently it is not. No rule can be given by which the reliability of the vernacular names may be determined or tested but the following information will help in this direction. Generally speaking it is true that very well known plants have definite specific names; their number is comparatively small. The less well known plants frequently have vague names, unless they have some outstanding individual character.

It must also be remembered that the ordinary villager or coolie may not very often have occasion to go into the forest and frequently has little knowledge of the local plants; taken as a whole, however, the population is very much better educated in this respect than are the inhabitants of a European country where there is also a much smaller number of plant names to be learnt. The natural politeness of the hillman is another factor which must be reckoned with. He is loath to cause inconvenience by failure to state a name, if a name is required, and will therefore resort to his imagination to compensate for the deficiency of his knowledge. *Kowla* is a common enough answer to the enquirer who must be fairly well versed in tree lore if he is to contradict, and most will have heard of the *nichinta* or "I don't know" tree and the *suka gach* or "the dry tree."

The descriptive value of the local names will often be missed, unless the enquirer has not only a knowledge of the language but a fairly intimate knowledge too, of the customs and the characteristics of the people. It is because such information is not available in dictionaries and can only be acquired by living amongst the people themselves and studying with them the local flora and its nomenclature, that these notes have been written.

Conversely it is also true that a close study of the plant names will afford a considerable amount of

information about the people, their mode of life and their characteristics.

The Nepalese nomenclature of the local plants may be classified as follows:--

1. Specific names ... non-descriptive
2. Specific names ... descriptive
3. Generic or Group names ... non-descriptive
4. Generic or Group names ... descriptive

An analysis of the names under these various heads shows that out of a total of 538 names, 367 are descriptive in character, 171 being non-descriptive. The great majority, therefore, 68 per cent. of vernacular names are definitely descriptive.

Specific names, both descriptive and non-descriptive, total 191 under heads 1 and 2 to which figure must be added 197 names from heads 3 and 4 which are of specific rank consisting of a group name with the addition of a limiting adjective. This makes a total of 388 specific names out of a grand total of 538 names or 72 per cent.

Generic or group names total 146, relating to 466 species. Of these 466 species 195 are distinguished by adjectives added to their group names, the remaining 251 species are not so distinguished. They are included under 92 of the generic or group names, so that an average of nearly 3 species is included under one name.

(1) SPECIFIC NAMES—NON-DESCRIPTIVE.

Under this head there are 81 names relating to the same number of species. As would be expected, a number of the best known species come under this head, but by no means all, for frequently a well-known species gives its name to a group of plants or it may give a name to a less well-known plant which has some one similar character although not closely related in a phylogenetic classification. Little known plants are not included in this group, having usually vaguely descriptive names. As examples of this group the following names may be quoted:--

*Aru, Bains, Bar, Dar, Kadam, Khamari, Lankuri,
Roringo, Sissau, Tantori, and Utis.*

(2) SPECIFIC NAMES--DESCRIPTIVE.

Plants included under this group are usually named after some outstanding individual characteristics and total 110. The following are examples :

*Amaro, Bajrant, Bhainsi Kanra, Damai Phal, Ghatephul,
Hathipale, Lampate, Mandhane, Panchpate,
Phirphire, Sangle.*

(3) GENERIC OR GROUP NAMES.—NON-DESCRIPTIVE.

The commonest method of naming plants among the Nepalese is by a generic or group name with an adjective added to distinguish the species.

There are 90 names under this head relating to 282 species ; of these, 155 species are distinguished by qualifying adjectives. The remaining 127 species are included under 49 group names, the number of species under one name varying from 6 to 2. Where species are distinguished by the addition of adjectives, the number of species under one group name varies from 10 to 2. Under the group name *Siris* (Albizzias and Dalbergias) 10 species are included, under *Bans* (Bamboo) 9, under *Champ* (Magnolias and Michelias) 7, and under *Chimal* (certain Rhododendrons) and *Katus* (Oaks and Chestnuts) 6. It should be noted that these group names do not always include all the species in the group.

(To be continued.)

THE KING COBRA.

Among all the snakes of India the one most feared, the star among poisonous snakes is undoubtedly the King Cobra. The ordinary cobra may be more often mentioned in our literature owing to its greater numbers, and of course far more human beings die every year from its bite. But the King Cobra owing to its greater size and to the reputation it has made as a valiant fighter excite the imagination of men all the world over. The fact that it feeds principally on other snakes too makes it more strange and interesting and seems to intensify its character for viciousness. Many tales are told of this formidable snake. It has been recorded that some of the jungle dwellers of Southern India dare not go

through certain districts where they know this snake to be common without taking great closely woven baskets with them under which they will squat and hide themselves at the least suspicion of a snake's movement; and they will remain shut underneath these till they are certain that the coast is clear. Most people have heard of some instance where the King Cobra has pursued an unwary intruder on its privacy. In this district only a few years ago Mr. Irwin was forced to run his hardest and finally take refuge on a large boulder in the Balasan Valley, and has to defend his life with no other weapon than his jacket to bear down the snake as time after time it attempted to climb up the stone. An account of this episode was printed in the *Darjeeling Visitor*. But the snake is not always aggressive. The few I have come across have always tried to get away and I can give one very striking instance of its timidity. A party of chokras carrying home their sickles after work came across a ten foot specimen which tried to hide in a hole in a rough terrace wall. The hole, however, was not quite large enough and eighteen inches of its hinder end were left outside. The chokras not realising their danger hauled at this and when they could not get it to budge chopped off the eighteen inches and brought it to me. I recognised the snake and sent next morning to have it dug out. It was nearly dead from loss of blood but was undeniably a large King Cobra in otherwise good condition. I have met with them when they emerge from their winter sleep about this time of the year and I have seen them much later during the rains but never when breeding. That must be just before the beginning of the rains and I am inclined to believe that it is only then and probably only the female with eggs that will attack human beings. I have not much reason for this belief except that as I said all those I have met with tried to escape and many of the tales of the snake's viciousness mention that the creature was near a small mound on which the eggs were discovered and it is well known that any animal guarding its eggs as this one snake seems to do is then especially daring.

Unfortunately the dates of encounters with King Cobras are never given, nor is the sex of the creature even if it has been killed. Perhaps our members will take any opportunity they may have to remedy this

lack of information by sending particulars of the behaviour of any King Cobra together with the date whether it is aggressive or not.

A difficulty I know is how to recognise the snake. The ordinary rat snake can also be pretty ferocious but is harmless except for the bruise it can give when it butts its head into one. I have known it to be taken for a King Cobra because of its pugnacity. Of course, the expanded hood is the readiest means of identification, that and its size. If a snake over six feet long raises the front part of its body, (it can raise a third of its length), and expands its neck into a hood it is a King Cobra. Ordinary cobras stop at six feet or very rarely six feet six inches. The King Cobra is darker than an ordinary cobra and, if one gets near enough, traces of the many rings round the body can be seen and when it is killed the scales on the top of the head are unmistakable. It has two more large plates before the small scales begin than any other snake has. Young King Cobras are quite different from the adult because those rings round the body and head are brilliant yellow. They look like the large banded krait but as they grow the rings fade away almost completely.

Mangpi,
14th April 1927.

G. E. SHAW.

[With regard to timidity in King Cobras Col. Evans gives an occasion when one was seen in some bushes and struck at with bamboos but only moved to another spot and which leaving the bushes was chased by dogs and incontinently fled. Col. Wall says it is the third longest snake found within the Indian Empire and measures up to 15 feet 5 inches in length. He also narrates about one which attacked Lt. Col. and Mrs. Fraser while in a car raising itself to about the height of the door or 3 feet 9½ inches. Another interesting point is the tenacity with which Hamadryads hold on to anything they attack. One has been known to hang on to the leg of a coolie woman for quite eight minutes during which time she was so paralysed with fear, that she did nothing to free herself; she died about 20 minutes after being bitten. Editor].

The Industries of Animals.

It is very well known that at a very early stage in the history of the human race different men began to seek different occupations. Certain types became fishers or hunters, other became shepherds and farmers or artisans, and some became adepts at various more or less complicated sports and dances, according to their natural inclination. It is not perhaps so well known that animals too have their various industries which correspond to a certain extent with those of men. The following account of some of these industries is adapted from Sir A. Thomson's description of Animal Life.

(1) **Hunters.** Hunting is a primary activity of animals as well as of men and it takes many forms. Some animals are hunters by open profession, as lions, tigers, and other mammals, and carnivorous birds. These catch their prey by strength or wiles or both, and sometimes only succeed after a bloody struggle with their victim. The wiles are numerous. For instance, there is a certain kind of fish (the Indian *Toxotes*)* which squirts drops of water on insects and so brings them down effectively. Some hunters go out to seek their prey (as do tigers) others lie in wait, as crocodiles by a stream. Certain snakes hang from a tree to catch their prey; some, as Pythons, † mesmerise their victims. Octopuses hide among the rocks and pounce. Some animals prowl about in search of easy prey, such as eggs &c; others are burglars, such as the Death's Head Moth which robs beehives, and the fox, jackal, and crow, all of whom adopt many most cunning methods of securing their daily food.

(2) **Shepherds.** There is a certain kind of ant (*Lasius Niger* and *Lasius Brunneus*) which domesticates other insects called Aphides and uses them as men use cows. This may sound extraordinary, but the process has been observed and described by many famous naturalists. The ants induce these creatures to go down the tunnels of the ant hill and live in the cellars of the nest, where they are sheltered and able to feed on roots, and the ants in exchange lick them to obtain the sweetness which exudes from them. In autumn the aphides lay eggs which the ants guard carefully with their own eggs.

(3) **Storing.** This activity can be traced from a long way down the animal scale. Earthworms take leaves,

down into their burrows and store them there for future use. Insects show this activity to perfection, especially among ants, wasps, and bees, all of whom store food for their young, although in most cases the mother does not survive to see the eggs hatched. Bees store in a marvellous fashion, with their permanent societies and perfect honey combs. Ants also carry storing to a fine art, and use great ingenuity in using the food so stored. Some kinds of ant are reported to collect certain seeds which are kept dry for a time and then put in the rain to ferment when wanted. When no longer required, the ants kill the embryo plant thus forming by biting off the radicle, and dry the seeds in the sun again till needed!

Though the lower vertebrates do not seem to store, birds and mammals lay up supplies either for future use, for their young, or for the winter. Many birds store food in their crop; certain owls gather food for their mates and offspring; wood peckers collect acorns[‡], sticking them into holes which they specially bore in the tree stem. Squirrels store nuts, marmots, dormice and voles collect food for the winter, and moles are reported to collect a store of earthworms for future use!

(4) **Animal Artisans.** Animals often make themselves elaborate dwelling places; some are (a) hollowed out in the earth or in wood; some are (b) made of light material woven together, and some (c) built of clay. On reflection we can see that these three different kinds of homes approximate to the different types of human habitations, viz, caves, wigwams, and buildings.

(a) This type though simple in structure often is complicated in detail:--sand martins, prairie dogs, and rabbits build more or less complicated burrows.

(b) These dwellings are used by sticklebacks, harvest mice, squirrels and, as is well known, by many kinds of birds.

(c) The third kind of structure is made by martins, by wasps, by mason bees, by termites, and beavers[§]. Some times such dwelling places are intended only for the young; but sometimes nests for the young are expanded into homes for the adults.

(5) **Movements.** In considering animal activities movements must not be left out. Such are seen in the flight of birds and insects, in swimming and diving, crawling and creeping (as of snakes), leaping and gamboll-

ing, galloping, dancing, and other activities. Especially noteworthy moreover is the problem as to how pigeons, hive bees, and other creatures can find their way home, sometimes from amazingly vast distances.

As with men, so with animals, at the root of all their activities is the struggle for existence. Centuries of experience have shown the various living creatures, including man, which method of livelihood will best ensure their continued existence. Those who can find no such methods are simply wiped out. This is one of the inflexible laws of Nature.

Darjeeling

J. Majumdar

21st May 1927.

* Day says (Fauna British India, Fishes Vol. II p. 22) that the action of shooting insects with a drop of water "is one which the mouths of these fishes appear incapable of effecting." It is told of another fish (*Chelmon rostratus*) that "when it saw a fly sitting on the plants that grew in shallow water it swam on to within 4, 5, or 6 feet, and with surprising dexterity ejected out of its tubular mouth a single drop of water which never failed to strike the fly into the sea where it was seized by the fish (*id. ibid.* p. 12.)

† Pythons don't appear to mesmerise their prey. Wall (Journal, Bombay Nat. History Society, Vol. XXI p. 462) writes:—"The snake roused to activity by the sight of food, advances towards its prey often with quivering tail and makes a sudden dash to it with open jaws, which are no sooner closed upon its victim than it throws a coil or two--according to the size of the quarry--round it as in a vice until its struggles have completely ceased when it relaxes its embrace and proceeds to swallow it almost always beginning at the head."

‡ All our Indian Woodpeckers are insectivorous but a species, the White fronted Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) found in Central America, Mexico to Panama (The Royal Natural History, Vol. III p. 558) is said to have this peculiar habit.

§ Mr. Martin writing about beaver-lodges says:--
"The beaver-lodge is generally included in the list of marvels reserved for the investigation of those who visit beaver districts, and yet no greater disappointment awaits the inquirer than the first-inspection of one. Somehow the minds of all lovers of Natural History become affected by the fabulous accounts concerning this structure, and it is a shock to stand for the first time before a pile of twigs, branches and logs, heaped in disorder upon a small dome of mud and to learn that this constitutes the famous lodge." Ed.]

OBITUARY

Meville Allan Marchant.

We have to record with deep regret the death at the age of 39, of Mr. M. A. Marchant on the 27th June last at the Presidency General Hospital, Calcutta.

He joined the Forest Service as a ranger in 1910, most of the early part of his service was spent in the Sunderbunds and Kalimpong divisions and the latter part in Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar.

Marchant was a keen shikari and shot in all 10 rogue elephants--mostly in the Chittagong district. He also took part in Khedda operations for some years.

His life was spent in the jungle and he was never so happy as when roughing it and living with the hill tribes of Chittagong with whom he was always popular. Marchant was a good linguist and spoke several dialects.

EDITORIAL

We here give an account of the various sections since publishing No. 2 of Vol. I of our Journal.

Mammals:--Only 3 new mammals have been added to our collection since last October and the collection now represents 119 species. Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay very kindly gave us their valuable assistance on several occasions in identifying rats and mice, but the one mentioned in Journal No. 2 of Vol. I, as having been

obtained from the Bhutia Busti has defeated all of us and been sent home to the British Museum for determination. Mrs. Lindsay has also proceeded home to take up her work again at that Institution and with access to the material in the national collection will doubtless be able to let us know what it is. Before she left Darjeeling we gave her a rather lengthy list of our desiderata and have no doubt she will do her best for us when she has time to go through the material in the small Mammal Section.

The skins of the larger species are terribly cramped in our present exhibition case and we would like to spread them out more so that they could be of more use to people. We could do this if we only exhibited one specimen of each and stored the remainder but unfortunately we have no cabinets or air tight boxes in which to do this, so things will have to remain as they are for the present.

Birds:--This collection still progresses though necessarily not so fast as before the plains area had been worked, however we are not at a standstill, 32 species having been added during the period under review. The collection now represents 454 species. Nearly 90 birds have been mounted and returned during the year and 32 more are at present in the taxidermist's hands.

The Game bird collection hasn't increased much, only 2 Pigeons being new to it. It now represents--Pigeons and Doves 16 species, Pheasants, Partridges etc 14 species: Floricorn 1 species: Woodcock and snipe 3 species: and Geese and Ducks 7 species.

We are also gradually getting together a cabinet collection and have at present about 800 specimens but no cabinets to put them and the problem of their storage, so as to be accessible when necessary, is very acute. Besides these there is a huge number of skins of my own private collection stored at present in ordinary boxes which of course is most unsatisfactory. A good working collection readily accessible to workers is a necessity of all museums and it is imperative that cabinets should be forthcoming.

We will now make a few remarks on some of the more interesting specimens collected during the year.

We sent home to Mr. Whistler all the Warblers we had collected for him to examine and compare with the material in his own collection or if necessary at the

British Museum and several of these he has determined as the Sind Willow-Warbler (*Phylloscopus collybitis sindianus*). The distribution of this subspecies, as given by Stuart Baker is:—"Breeding in Ladakh and Tibet possibly also in North Kashmir, in South-Eastern Turkistan as far North as Aksu. In winter south to Sind, Punjab, the United Provinces and Rajputana." He also says about the habits:—"Similar to (*P. C tristis*) but keeping much more to semi-desert and poorly wooded tracts." Our specimens were collected last February at Hasimara in the Duars, so if Mr Whistler is correct in his identification it is rather remarkable that this bird should be found so far away from its usual cold weather haunts and the country where they were got does not at all agree with that given by Stuart Baker. Another interesting bird got at Hasimara during the same trip was Hodgson's Short-Wing (*Hodgsonius phœnicuroides*) which has a status ranging from 2000 to 12000 feet. Our specimen, a female, was got at 500 feet. This is not the first record of this species here as O'Donel got a pair in February 1923, but it was never seen since then and must be rare at this elevation.

Writing about the Eastern Ruby-Throat (*Colliope pectoralis confusa*) Stevens conjectured that it might extend to the plains but had no information to prove this. We can now do this as we got it at Hasimara last February at an elevation of 500 feet: Another bird seldom seen so low down is the Grey-winged Blackbird (*Turdus bouboul*). Stuart Baker writes:—"It probably seldom wanders much above 9000 feet and, on the other hand, even in winter is equally seldom found below 3000 feet." Stevens mentions a few stragglers as descending to the Terai. We got a female at Hasimara on the 13th March this year and as others were seen in 1926 it probably comes down in small numbers pretty regularly.

O'Donel drew my attention some time ago to a peculiar omission by Oates and perpetuated by Stuart-Baker in the description of the Blue-naped Pitta (*Pitta nepalensis*). We have mentioned it in a Review on Stuart Baker's 3rd Volume on Birds, and sent a copy of our remarks to him, but also think it advisable to mention it here. It is the presence of white spots, at the base of the inner webs, on the undersurface of the first five primaries. We have examined over a dozen specimens and they all have them. With regard to the

beautiful pink tint on portions of the lower plumage Stuart Baker writes:—"A few individuals have a beautiful fulvous-pink flush on the throat and foreneck". We got a fine female on the 6th March this year which also had the abdomen this beautiful colour. Another point remarked upon by us in the aforesaid Review and which, perhaps, it would not be out of place to quote is the colour of the adult female Maroon Oriole (*Oriolus trailii*). "In the first Edition (Fauna British India. Birds) Oates gave it as the same as the adult male but in the present work (Fauna British India. Birds 2nd Edition) it is given as streaked below. The late Mr. A. M. Primrose as long ago as 1911, pointed out in the Bombay Journal that out of numbers of carefully sexed adult specimens he did not find a single female in the plumage of the adult male. He was always most careful in any statements he made and personally sexed the specimens which he examined: thus Stuart Baker corroborates this statement and we thought the matter was satisfactorily finished. Now those well known ornithologists, Messieurs Jean Delacour and Pierre Jabouille, while describing the results of their second Mission to Indo-China in a volume published this year in "Archives d'Histoire Naturelle publiées par la Société Nationale d'Acclimatation de France," state on page 173 "Il nous semble que le plumage rayé des parties inférieures soit non pas un signe du sexe, mais de l'âge, car nous avons obtenu une femelle complètement pourpre endessus sans trace de rayure. Nos avons aussi des exemplaires ♂ et ♀ présentant toutes les gradations entre le plumage rayé et le plumage uniforme." It is well known that some females, at times, assume the male plumage and as, apparently, they only got *one* female in that state we are inclined to think that it was an aberrant one and that the female plumage is as described by Stuart Baker. Any females we have got have always been striated below.

During our last trip to Hasimara we got one more specimen, in very abraded plumage, of the Ruddy Barbet (*Cyanops asiatica rubescens*), apparently it occurs there every year in small numbers, at any rate during the cold weather. A particularly fine coloured plate drawn from one of our Duars specimens, by the well-known bird artist Mr. H. Gronvold appears on page 119 of Fauna of British India, Birds, Vol. IV, 2nd Edition by Stuart Baker, just published. A bird which O'Donel had neve

seen during his many years residence in the Duars and one we certainly didn't expect to come across was the Yellow-wattled Lapwing (*Sarcisphorus malabaricus*). It was shot on some waste land near Dalsingpara station and may now be seen mounted.

Mr. Boden Kloss, Director of Museums, Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States asked us to send him, for examination, series of the Blue-throated Flycatcher (*Cyornis r. rubeculoides*) and the Large-billed Blue Flycatcher (*Cyornis magnirostris*). Unfortunately we were not in a position to do so and could only send him a skin of the former and none of the latter, since then we have got one or two more skins of the Blue-throated species, all males, but have failed to get the latter and Stevens also does not seem to have come across it although it is recorded as a resident in Sikkim. In a subsequent letter Mr. Kloss wrote:—"It is curious nobody seems to get *C. magnirostris*; Calcutta alone has sent me a male—a dilapidated skin about 60 years old."

We are compiling a list of those birds whose type locality is within our area, the object being to endeavour to get together a series of skins of these from the type localities, which, if successful in doing so, will be of great use to working ornithologists. We may here mention that Col. R. Meinertzhagen has started a most interesting account, in the Ibis, of the results of a visit to Sikkim in the winter 1925-26 and as he visited the Tibetan Plateau Region of Northern Sikkim in mid winter and most of his collecting was done from 8000 to 17000 feet, he obtained many birds not recorded by Stevens. It seems marvellous that "Dry and parched in summer, ice-bound in winter, this cruel merciless region nevertheless supports abundance of resident life",

Reptiles and Fish :—There is nothing of interest to report under this Section, except that Lt Col. Fraser has kindly promised to make us a plaster of paris cast of a Russell's Viper (*Vipera russelli*) and also one of a head of the same species to show the fangs etc.

Insects:--Butterflies:—We have finished compiling the list from Lt. Col. Evans papers on the "Identification of Indian Butterflies" and have sent it to Mr. G. E. Shaw to be "vetted". When he has finished this somewhat arduous task we hope to finish the rearrangement of this collection.

Moths:—We have at last found time to tackle these and named them as far as we were able to do so and now they are all arranged in the drawers of the cabinet. The collection consists of some 443 named species. Most of our specimens are very old and faded but thanks to the generosity of Lt. Col. Hutchinson we have got a good number of fresh and beautifully set specimens collected in Darjeeling. These and many given to us by Mr. O'Donel and collected by him in the Duars and others collected by ourselves form the nucleus of a fresh collection.

Beetles:—We started a cabinet for beetles a year ago but had then only arranged the *Cicindelidae* (Tiger beetles). We have now arranged the remaining families so far as we could do so. Mr. J. C. M. Gardner, Systematic Entomologist to the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun has kindly volunteered to name any material of this group we send him. We hope to despatch some on our return from tour next month.

Bugs:—There are no remarks to make under this section.

Dragonflies:—This collection is still expanding but new additions are difficult to obtain. We had, a year ago, 116 species and now our collection represents 131 species an increase of 15 species, 12 of which we owe to the generosity of Mr. O'Donel. One species, new to Science, is *Allogaster hermionce*, which we got on Senchal on the 3rd June last year. It is a nice little insect, the smallest of the *Cordulegasters* and was named by Lt. Col. Fraser, at my suggestion, after Lord Lytton's eldest daughter who, like the rest of that noble family, has always taken a very deep interest in this Museum. We had the pleasure of meeting Lt. Col. and Mrs. Fraser while they were up here on a short visit and he most kindly went over our set collection of dragonflies and corrected any mistakes in identification. We are afraid he was bitterly disappointed with his trip as he came up with great expectations and left, we are sure, with a very poor opinion of Darjeeling and its neighbourhood from, at any rate, a dragonfly point of view. We visited Mangpu and while there he thought we had got a new species of *Aciagrion* which I suggested might be called *Aciagrion freda* after Mr. Shaw's eldest daughter but on his return to Waltair and examination of the specimens

he found that they were only females of *olympicum*. However, he was fortunate enough to secure two new species and is naming one *Chlorogomphus freda* instead and the other *Orogomphus selysi*, after the late Baron Longchamps de Selys of dragonfly fame.

Other Groups:--There is nothing of interest to be recorded except that a cabinet has been started for *Orthoptera* (Grasshoppers) but nothing much done to it as yet.

Mimicry:--Two cases of "Protective Mimicry" have been completed, one showing 10 Leaf butterflies (*Kallima inachus*) amongst leaves and one of them in flight. This was made with the assistance of Lt. Col. Fraser and his interesting article (published in Vol. I No. 3) has been framed and set alongside it. The other represents Stick-Insects (*Phasmidae*) and consists of 6 specimens set amongst twigs. Both cases have been of considerable interest to our visitors.

Desiderata:--From time to time we intend to publish a short list of *desiderata* in the hope that some of our members may be able to help us. We are in much need of the following.

Mammals:--Good or average heads of all our big game with masks complete. Specimens of the *Felidae* (cats) except the ordinary Jungle and Civet cats.

Birds:--Specimens of Pigeons and Doves from the Darjeeling District, Sikkim and Tibet; also Woodcock, Solitary and Wood Snipe. It would perhaps be best if those were sent in in the flesh when possible.

Insects:--Leaf insects, Bees and Wasps.

Journal:--I must end this with my usual bleat for support in the way of articles for the Journal. I regret to say that my appeal still continues to meet with poor support and one looks forward to receiving more articles of interest from many of our members. The absence of fishing articles are particularly noticeable which serves to show that the average story from the fisherman is a myth.