

# BIRDS OF KASHMIR

Samsar Chand Koul,  
*World Watcher*



# BIRDS OF KASHMIR

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**Srinagar.**

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SRINAGAR  
THE NORMAL PRESS  
1939

*Printed by*  
**NIRENجان NATH DHAR**  
*and Published by*  
**LACHMAN DHAR**  
**AT THE NORMAL PRESS, SRINAGAR, KASHMIR.**

## PREFACE.

Kashmir the home of Kashyap Reshi is the largest valley in the lap of the Himalayas. The highest peak on the east is Mahadiv (13,003 ft.), on the north Haramoukh (16,447 ft.) and along the south and south-west runs the flat-topped Pansal Range.

Nestling among the surrounding mountains are glorious side-valleys, like Purmandal and Gosai which are a paradise for the botanist. The high altitude lakes like Gangabal and Konsar Nag (Vishna Pad) encircled by awe-inspiring glaciers and snow-fields present an entrancing spectacle to the on-looker. The geologist will find rich material for investigation in the fossils. At the dawn of a summer day the music from the feathered world is full of rapture.

The valley occupies a central position in Asia. Hence we find there a good many birds during their migration in spring and autumn. The healthy hobby of bird observation should form the natural pastime of everyone in the valley.

Lt. Col. G. B. Sanford in his introduction to my unpublished 'Notes on some birds of Kashmir' writes:-

“The real value and purpose of introducing this particular line of Natural History to the boys is a deeper one than that of its own attractiveness. Birds are a delightful hobby for their own sake and well worth a place among the recognized pursuits of school boys alone for the charm and interest with which

nature has endowed them..... ..

The by-products of field ornithology are invaluable in the education of boys and are more than ample justification for its inclusion in their curriculum. It lacks nothing in the matter of contributing to the physical health, strength and development: for to pursue it keenly and thoroughly in a country like Kashmir entails upon its devotee all the activities of stalking in plains and hills, of cross country work on foot, and of the minor exertions of mountaineering.

To some extent also it gives them that invaluable ability known as 'an eye for the country'."

This little book aims at introducing the beginner in birdcraft to his feathered friends. It will help him to derive pleasure from noticing their charming plumage, attractive movements, and not the least their song. I have inserted in the book some of the native folklore and a few observations made during the boys' excursions to the haunts of the birds.

The Revd. Canon C. E. Tyndale-Biscoe, the pioneer of education in Kashmir, used in the days of his active service to lead parties of boys over the mountains and through the valleys and thus inculcated a love of nature in them. These outings have been continued up to the present by worthy educationists, The Revd. F. E. Lucy, The Revd. & Mrs. Dugdale, The Revd. R. D. Thompson, Mr. & Mrs. E. D. Tyndale-Biscoe, and Mr. F. Jacob. We have thus been able to find out the summer haunts of migratory birds in the various parts of the valleys visited by us from time to time.

These side valleys, especially where the deciduous

belt meets the coniferous, provide a suitable habitat for bird life, and here one can learn much by patient and persevering observation.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. B. B. Osmaston and Lt. Col. G. B. Sanford, who took me out with them into the country and taught me how and what to observe.

I must also express my deep sense of gratitude to the following gentlemen who have helped me in various ways in producing this little book.

To Mr. K. J. Hopman for the illustrations of the golden oriole, the Paradise flycatcher, the bulbul and the shrike (some material was supplied to him from the School Museum).

To the School Drawing Master for copying three illustrations (the king-fisher, the bee-eater, and the hoopoe) from the sketches of Mr. E. D. Tyndale-Biscoe and those of another friend of mine.

To Mr. F. Jacob M.A. (Cantab) M.R.S.T. (London) for very kindly correcting the manuscript and proof sheets at great personal inconvenience.

To Mr. Govind Koul for patiently and laboriously typing the manuscript sheets.

To the Headmaster Mr. Shanker Koul, B. A., M. R. S. T. (London) and my friend Mr. Shrider Koul, B. A., B. T., Headmaster, Government High School, Sopore, for valuable suggestions.

The information given in this book about the colours of the iris, beak, and legs of some of the birds

has been obtained from "Whistler's Popular Handbook on Indian Birds" and the measurement of eggs from "Osmaston's Notes on Kashmir Birds".

To these famous ornithologists I am most grateful.

SAMSAR CHAND KOUL,

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SRINAGAR,

KASHMIR.

*Dec. 1938.*



## FOREWORD

It gives me pleasure to write a foreword to Mr. Samsar Chand Koul's little book on Kashmir Birds not because he is an old pupil of mine or because he is one of our School Staff who is interested in bird life, but because he is unselfish, and always wishes others to share his love for knowledge of birds. So it has been his delight for many years to take boys with him on his excursions on lake and mountain to teach them to love birds and look upon them as their friends, and this love interest has induced them to show their sorrow for caged birds and set them free, and ever be bird friends and deliverers.

CECIL E. TYNDALE-BISCOE,

*Dec. 27, 1938.*

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## CHAPTER I

### ORDER ————— PASSERES THE CROW FAMILY (CORVIDAE)

#### THE RAVEN

(*Corvus corax tibetanus*)

*Local names* (Boṭiñ Kāv) *in Kashmir proper*  
(Khata) *in Leh*

#### A RARE MIGRANT

The raven is a rare migrant rather larger than the jungle crow. It has a black coat, a massive head, and a beak with bristles round the nostrils. It is a rare visitor to the valley. It is fairly common in the dry, rocky country of Ladakh at a height of 10,000 to 16,000ft. They are usually seen near villages, but are also found far from human habitation. Near Leh they can be seen busily feeding in the corn fields. They eat grain as well as flesh.

They commence nest building about the middle of February. These are usually placed on high cliffs well out of reach. B. B. Osmaston, Esq: found a nest near the Tsokar Lake (15,000 ft.) which was composed of sticks, thickly lined with yak's hair.

The eggs are of bluish colour marked with sepia and grey. They are a rather broad oval.

In Ladakh the 'caw' on the roof of a house is supposed to forebode evil. "In Denmark its

appearance in a village is held to portend the death of the priest, in Andalusia its croaking over a house foretells an unlucky day and if three times repeated a fatality". SWAINSON.

## THE JUNGLE CROW

(*Corvus macrorhynchos intermedius*)

*Kashmiri names* (Diva Kāv, Pantsōl Kāv)

A LOCAL MIGRANT

The jungle crow is rather larger than the house crow. It has an entirely black uniform and its caw is hoarse. The bill and legs are black. It is found along the whole length of the Himalayas from Afghanistan to Bhutan. It begins to migrate to the valley proper during the last week of October when finding difficulty in getting food on the "Margs", and it leaves the valley in the beginning of May as soon as the meadows become clear of snow.

In winter we see them in driving snow, sitting on trees near houses, solemnly on the watch in the hope of getting something from the inmates of the house. They eat everything that comes in their way.

In summer they can be seen above the tree-limits, at an elevation of about 12,000ft. We have seen several pairs at Kolahoi (11,000ft.) and Lidwas (12,000ft.). At Gosai (10,000ft.) we found a crow right inside a dense thicket, probably searching for the eggs of a bunting.

It is said that when Alexander the Great obtained the immortal water from the Realm of Darkness, he placed the water-bottle on a pine tree. To his great consternation a crow dislodged it and quenched its thirst. Hence it is said, that after death its beak does not rot and the pine never loses its greenness.

They build large nests of sticks in trees from 20ft. to 40ft. up. These are lined with a thick layer of wool and hair. The clutch consists of either 4 or 5 eggs.

They measure  $42.5 \times 29.7$  mm.

## THE HOUSE CROW

(*Corvus splendens zugmayeri*)

*Kashmiri name* (Kāv)

A RESIDENT BIRD

This crow is confined to the town. In colour it is glossy black, with a grey head and upper breast. This species is found in Sind, North - Western Punjab, the Mekran coast and South-eastern Persia.

It is a strong and intelligent bird. Its cleverness and intelligence outweigh its thievish propensities. The power of mutual co-operation is highly developed among them. I was sitting once in the school library when from outside there came the strident noise of cawing. I came out and saw a crow entangled in a piece of thread, high up in a

mulberry tree. A boy climbed up and released it and immediately the noise stopped. For bad behaviour they have been known to peck the offender to death.

I have seen several of their tricks which merit admiration. On one occasion I was watching the nest of a crow with a friend of mine. It was on a kikar (acacia) tree. I saw the bird fly down from its nest and peck the head of a woman who was walking below. I was surprised and asked my friend if he could explain it. He told me that she had partly dismantled the nest and every time she went out of her house, the crow had pounced upon her. It could recognize her out of a dozen women. It became such a nuisance that she was on the point of leaving her home and living somewhere else. I learnt subsequently that the tree had been cut down and the poor woman saved from her worry.

The day of the full moon in February is dedicated to the crow and boys make a contrivance of a long and a short stick, and place cooked rice on it and throw it to the crows, reciting the following verse:

“Kāv Bata Kawo! Khetsare Kawo!

Kāv tah Kávin sueti-hyet

Gangábálá shrānā karit, gurchay

Metsay tiokā karit, wollabā

kāwo! sánáy nāwáy láráy kánádārāy

Ware bata kheh.”

(Oh crow! Together with your consort, having bathed in Gangabal lakes and marked yourself with yellow earth, come, sit on the eaves of our new building and eat cooked rice.)

This bird is entirely omnivorous, it will eat any thing that a man will, and many other things that he refuses to touch.

The breeding season lasts from June to the middle of July.

The nest is a large, untidy mass of sticks, lined with smaller ones, or any soft material, placed in the fork of a willow, mulberry or poplar tree.

The clutch consists of either 4 or 5 eggs which vary considerably in size and colour. The ground colour is various shades of blue and green speckled with dull reddish brown. They measure 39.0 × 26.6 mm. Cawing at the window is supposed to bring bad luck. The house crow's hearing is very acute, which has given rise to the idiom, Kāva kan (crow's ears), Kava gatul (crow wise).

## THE JACKDAW

(*Corvus monedula monedula*)

*Kashmiri name (Kāviñ)*

A RESIDENT BIRD

There is a common belief that the jackdaw is the female crow. Grammatically speaking, Kavin is the feminine of Kav (Crow), and Kavin is also

used for jackdaw, hence the mistake. Dr. William Turner in 1544 wrote that it was named *Monedula* by the Latins, as though from *Monetula*, the *Moneta* or money, which according to Pliny is stolen by no other bird.

The jackdaw is slightly smaller than the house-crow, and the whole of its back, wings and tail are glossy black; it has a grey collar; its chin, throat and upper part of the neck are black; the eye is white.

This species breeds from Eastern Russia and Macedonia to the Yenisei River and South to Persia and Afghanistan. In winter many migrate to the provinces west of the Indus and to the Punjab districts along the base of the N. W. Himalayas. It is a very common bird in Kashmir and is found in the side valleys to a height of about 7,000 ft. but is not common outside the main valley. In winter thousands can be seen in enormous flocks on mulberry and chenar trees. When on the wing they resemble a huge black cloud. Their manoeuvring feats, changing direction, swooping down, or soaring high, present one of the most interesting sights of bird-life. After sunset they go to swamps where they make a deafening noise.

They select as nesting sites holes in chenars and willows or walls, mosque turrets and crevices of houses. They build nests in April and eggs are laid the first week of May. The nests are made of sticks lined with wool and hair. The eggs are 4 to 6 in number; the ground colour is pale greenish blue speckled and spotted with deep blackish brown. They measure 30.1 × 24.8mm.

## THE RED-BILLED CHOUGH

(Pyrrhocox Pyrrhocox)

*Kashmiri name* (Wan Kaviñ)

A LOCAL MIGRANT

The Red-billed chough is as large as a jackdaw, and has a red curved beak, red legs and a black body.

They are gregarious and in summer are found at all elevations between 10,000ft. and 17,000ft. We found them at Sekivas (11,000ft.), Suru 10,000ft, Apharwat (13,000ft.), Gangabal (12,000ft.), Tosa Maidan (11,000ft.) and Konsar Nag (12,120ft.).

Mr. Bullock Workman found a chough on the ice plateau (19,000ft.) of Nun Khun (24,600ft.).

In winter when snow is deep on the ground several pairs can often be seen feeding with jackdaws and crows along the Gupkar slope of the Shankarachar in Srinagar.

“When tame it shows a very inquisitive disposition examining every novelty with the greatest attention.” WOOD.

The nests are placed on high cliffs away from human habitations. They are made of wool and hair, sometimes with and sometimes without sticks. The eggs are laid in May and a clutch consists of either 3 or 4 eggs. They are whitish in ground colour, marked all over with yellowish brown and grey. They measure 39·2 × 27·6 mm. Some peasants believe that the flesh of this bird cures rheumatism.

## THE YELLOW - BILLED MAGPIE

(Urocissa flavirostris cucullata)

*Kashmiri name* (Lōt Raza in Lolab)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird has a tail of about 18 inches in length. The head, neck and breast are black, the under parts white and the upper plumage purplish blue, while during flight the tail appears like a beautiful fan, broadly tipped with white. The eyes are bright yellow, the bill waxen yellow, and the legs a bright orange yellow. It is found in the western Himalayas breeding at a height of 5,000 - 10,000ft.

The Yellow-billed Magpie is a common bird in the Lolab Valley, where it is found in the deodar and blue pine forests. They fly in pairs or in small parties and make a great deal of noise, though they sometimes utter a sweet note. They come to the ground to feed, and raise their tails as they hop.

Their food consists of insects, fruit and the eggs and young of other birds.

The breeding season is in May. The nest is rather small, cup shaped, lined with roots, and made of short, thin sticks lined with roots. The clutch consists of either 3 or 4 eggs of a pale yellow colour, with streaks of various shades of brown

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**CHAPTER II**  
**THE TIT FAMILY (PARIDAE)**  
**THE GREY TIT**

(*Parus major kashmiriensis*)

*Kashmiri name* (Ranga Tsar)

A RESIDENT BIRD

The Grey Tit is a common bird, as large as a sparrow. It has a bluish-grey back, white cheeks, whitish under-parts, with a black head, and a black bar running down the middle of its abdomen. When flying two white bars are seen in its tail. This species is found in the Western Himalayas as far as Garwal.

They are active little birds and hunt for insects along the branches of trees. They go downwards head first when seeking insects, and strike the bark with their beaks like a wood-pecker.

“Tits are excessively bold and even ferocious, the larger ones occasionally destroying young and sickly birds, both in the wild state and in confinement”. JERDON.

In spring the note resembles the creaking of a spinning wheel. The breeding season commences early in May. A common site for the nest is a deserted nest hole of the small blue kingfisher. They also build in holes in trees. The nest is the usual pad of hair and 6 to 9 eggs are laid. They measure 17·5 × 13·4mm.

## THE CRESTED BLACK TIT

(Lophophanes Melanolophus)

*Kashmiri name* (Pintsakon)

## A LOCAL MIGRANT

The Crested Black Tit is a little smaller than a sparrow. It has an erect chest and white patches on the nape and sides of the face. The lower plumage from the breast downwards is iron-grey, the iris is brown, the bill black, the legs dark bluish grey. It is found from Kohat and Chitral along the Himalayas to Garwal and Naini Tal.

In summer they are very common in the pine and fir forests on the hills from about 6,500ft. to 11,000ft. and their call may be heard amongst these trees. They hunt for insects in company with other small birds. In November we often see them in the gardens around Srinagar and Hari Parbat on quince, pomegranate and almond trees, busily hunting insects and uttering their call "Tseek, tseek tseek".

"The Crested Black Tit is seldom seen at rest but when the first stirrings of the spring turn his thoughts towards a mate, he occasionally ceases from the hunt for food and betaking himself to some lofty twig he perches there and proclaims his ardour to the world with a loud clear call, "want you, need you, want you, need you", sentiment that frequently finds an echo in the human heart below". WHISTLER.

They breed in holes in trees in May and June, generally in fir forests, the nest being the usual pad of wool and hair on a layer of moss. The clutch consists of either 5 or 6 eggs which are white, richly marked with chestnut. They measure  $15.8 \times 11.5$ mm.

## CHAPTER III

## THE BABBLER FAMILY (TIMALIIDAE)

## THE STREAKED LAUGHING-THRUSH

(Trochalopteron lineatum lineatum)

*Kashmiri name* (Sheena-pi-piñ) *The Snow Whistle*

## A LOCAL MIGRANT

The Streaked Laughing Thrush is nearly as large as a myna. It is a garden bird, generally found moving jerkily among the low bushes. It appears dark brown at a distance but there are some rufous streaks on the wings and throat.

This well known bird extends through the Punjab Himalayas to Garwal and Kumaon. It is often seen in winter, hopping from bush to bush, one following another from tree to tree. Sometimes the tail is raised and sometimes lowered.

In winter when the snow is falling fast and the cold is intense its sweet call "sheen-a-pae-pae" (oh, snow, fall, fall) is most enchanting. Its other call "vieew, vieew", "such a vieew", is no less musical.

They migrate in the first week of November, and retire late in May to the side-valleys to breed. We saw several pairs at Zaiwan (11,000ft.), Ferozepor nala, Ramban.

It is said that once upon a time the bird lost its brother in the falling snow, and now it comes every year and especially delights in falling snow, in order to search for the missing one. It is the forerunner of snow.

Breeding commences in June. The nests are placed in low bushes or in the grass on steep banks. 3 eggs of a greenish blue colour are generally laid. They measure 25·8 × 18·8mm.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BULBUL FAMILY (PYCNONOTIDAE)

#### THE WHITE-CHEEKED BULBUL

(*Molpastes leucogenys leucogenys*)

*Kashmiri name* (Bill-bi-chur)

#### A RESIDENT BIRD

This bird has a conspicuous bent forward crest. The chin, throat and portions of the side of the neck are black, and there is a large white patch on the face. The rump is yellow, the iris brown, the bill and legs black.

It extends throughout the Himalayas to the hills of Assam, north of the Bramaputra river and throughout Central India. Outside India it is found as far west as Mesopotamia. Poets have often sung its praises and frequent references have been made to it by the Persians. It is supposed to be a bringer of good fortune. Its movements, gestures and sweet twitter are much appreciated by everyone. Quite unmindful of the severity of the winter, a pair will sit on a window sill within a hand's breadth of each other, and then move closer and closer to show an example of pure love.

They enter fearlessly into the room and eat the grains or nut-kernels offered. They would even take raisins from the hand of one of my friends.



THE WHITE-CHEEKED BULBUL  
(Bill-bi-chur)

*To facing page 14.*





They feed chiefly on insects and fruit, and are often seen on the ground collecting ants, grubs, beetles and the like, and in the evening they run after insects like a flycatcher.

They are reputed to have given to Solomon the power to differentiate between an artificial and a natural nosegay, and to be ready to offer advice if one has the ear willing to listen. Their warbling at the window signifies the advent of a guest.

The breeding season is April and May and the nest is placed in low branches of fruit trees. On one occasion there were three nests in one of our school rooms. The nest is a well-constructed cup of dry stems of plants, mixed with dry grass stalks and shreds of vegetable fibre. It has a lining of some finer grass material. I have seen a nest, the outer part of which was entirely made of hair. 3 eggs are laid of a pinkish colour with blotches of red of various shades. They measure 22·8 × 16·7mm.

## THE HIMALAYAN BLACK BULBUL

(*Microscelis psaroides psaroides*)

*Kashmiri name* (Wan Bulbul)

### A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Himalayan Black Bulbul is a dark-looking ashy-grey bird with coral-red beak and legs. It has an untidy crest.

The iris is dark brown, the tail bluntly forked with the outer feathers slightly curved outwards.

It extends from Chitral and Hazara to Bhutan. It has been observed at Kohat in winter. The birds generally visit Srinagar about the first week of May, where they can be seen and heard making a strident noise on the trees. Amidst the din they produce a whistle-like note, which is not unmusical. It is interesting to watch the birds eating the berries of the Persian lilacs while still on the wing. They stay around the town for about a fortnight and then retire to the side-valleys to breed. They have been observed at Chitternar, above Gunishpor (Lidder valley) and above Dwara in the lower mixed forest at a height of 7,000ft.

They are gregarious. Once I counted as many as 127 on one Persian lilac tree in the C. M. S. Hospital at Rainawari, Srinagar. Their food consists chiefly of the berries of various shrubs and trees, but insects are also eaten.

The breeding season lasts from April to the end of June. The nest consists of a neat cup of coarse-bladed grass, dry leaves, and moss, lined with fine grass stems or pine needles and moss roots, and bound on the outside with spiders' webs. It is placed in the fork of a tree at a considerable height from the ground, and 3 or 4 eggs are laid of a pinkish white colour with spots of red.

## CHAPTER V

THE CREEPER FAMILY (CERTHIIDAE)  
THE HIMALAYAN TREE-CREEPER

(Certhia Himalayana)

*Kashmiri name* (Koel dider)

## A LOCAL MIGRANT

The Himalayan Tree Creeper is a small bird rather larger than a sparrow, striped and barred with black, the chin and upper throat white, the upper-parts pale smoky brown. The iris is dark brown, the bill black, long, slender and curved; the toes and claws are very long, the tail is composed of stiff pointed feathers.

The plumage very closely resembles the bark over which it creeps, and in consequence it is rather difficult to detect.

It is found in Simla, Garwal, Kumaon, Sikkim and Bhutan.

In summer it is found throughout the mountain forests from 7,000ft. to 9,000ft. We observed several at Pahalgam, Lidderwat, Gulmarg, and Ramban. Its day's work is to crawl from the trunk to the top-most leafy bough 'From dawn to dusk'

in search of insects in or under the bark. It flies from the top to resume its task at the bottom. In November we see it busily occupied on the mulberry, poplar and willow trees in the town.

The breeding season is from March to early May. The nest is composed of fine grasses, dry leaves, moss and chips, with a lining of feathers and fur. It is placed in a hole or crevice in a tree trunk and very frequently behind a loose bulging section of bark. The clutch consists of 4 to 6 eggs, which are white profusely spotted with various shades of red and brown.

## THE WALL-CREEPER

(*Tichodroma muraria*)

*Kashmiri name* (Lamba dider)

### A WINTER MIGRANT

The Wall-Creeper is as large as a sparrow. Its upper plumage is ashy-grey. The chin and throat are black. When flying its wings seem bright red. In winter the chin and throat are white and the top of the head is brownish.

The bill is very long and slender, the wings rounded and the hind claws very large. The iris is dark brown, the bill and legs black.

It is found in the mountain ranges of Central and Southern Europe and eastward to Mongolia, Turkestan and the Himalayas.

This beautiful bird lives with us from October to March. It may be seen eating insects on the rocks of Rustum Gaddi, Shankarachar, (Takhti-i-Sulaiman) and Hari Parbat. I have often watched them near Pampur creeping over the mounds of yellow soil and the steep banks, and some crawling on the stones of the ruined temple of Awantipur.

“On the face of the rock which the bird frequents it climbs in a zigzag fashion, sometimes head downwards, with a crab-like sidling motion, according to Canon Tristram, rapidly expanding and closing its wings in a succession of jerks and showing the brilliant, crimson shoulders at each movement”.

The breeding season is in May and June. The nest is a pad of moss and wool, more or less mixed and lined with wool, fur, hair and feathers, placed in a crack in the face of some precipice often near streams. The clutch consists of 4 to 6 eggs. The colour is dull white with reddish spots.

**CHAPTER VI**  
**THE THRUSH FAMILY (TURDIDATE)**

The Bush chat  
(*Saxicola torquata*)

*Kashmiri name* (Dofa Tiriv)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Bush Chat is rather smaller than a bulbul. The upper parts are brownish black, there is a white patch on the wings and at the base of the tail; the sides of the head, chin and throat are black, with a large patch of white bordering the sides of the neck, the breast orange rufous. The female is dark brown with a rusty patch at the tail.

It is found in Western Siberia, Russian Turkestan to the South Urals, in the Himalayas, and the N. W. Frontier to Baluchistan.

This is one of the commonest birds in the lower more open rocky and bush covered slopes of the surrounding hills. It is seen at Hari Parbat and Zeethair. It perches at the top of some stone or bush and utters a short song.

It arrives in April and leaves for the plains late in October. Breeding commences in May. The nests are well-hidden in holes under stones or at

the foot of small bushes on steep, rocky hill-sides. 4 or 5 eggs are laid which are pale blue marked with faint chestnut spots. They measure  $17.3 \times 13.5$  mm.

## THE WHITE-CAPPED REDSTART

(*Chaimarrhornis leucocephals*)

*Kashmiri names* (Chets tāl, Kumidi in Kolahoi)

### A SUMMER MIGRANT

Red-start is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word (steorat-tail) and means "red tail".

This bird is rather larger than the bulbul. It has a velvet black plumage, snowy white cap, and the tail, rump and abdomen are bright chestnut red.

It is found from the hills of Baluchistan and the Afghan Frontier, right along the Himalayas up to Western China. It breeds at elevations of 6,000 and 16,000ft, but the majority of nests are found between 8,000 and 13,000ft.

This is a torrent bird. It rises perpendicularly over the silvery foam after an insect, and when the sun shines, its tail glitters like a tongue of fire. At Kolahoi I did my best to find its nest but failed. I saw it coming with a worm in its beak, and as long as I looked at it, its mate scolded me, but as soon as I turned my head it disappeared at once.

It erects its tail and opens it like a fan when resting on a rock watching the current of a moun-

tain stream. In the Gurais valley we found a nest on the top of a sandy precipice, but it was beyond our reach.

We saw the bird at Harwan, Dwara, Lidwas (11,000ft.) Achabal, Ferozepur nala, the Lidder, the Sind, Gangabal, Konsar Nag and the Kishen Ganga valleys. They breed from May to July. The clutch consists of 4 eggs which are very pale blue, marked with shades of rufous brown. They measure  $23.1 \times 16.3$  mm.

## THE PLUMBEOUS REDSTART

(*Rhyacornis fuliginosa fuliginosa*)

*Kashmiri name* (Kola Tiriv)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is rather larger than a sparrow. The body is dusky indigo-blue, the tail and abdomen bright chestnut.

The female has the whole upper plumage dull bluish brown, and a white mark shaped like a butterfly on her tail.

Probably the year-old birds are like their mothers. We saw a number of these (none with a red tail) on the rocky bank of the Kargil river in early August.

It is a torrent bird. There is no mountain stream where a pair is not seen flitting from stone



to stone in the foamy spray of the rushing water which they love. We saw a pair at Harwan. Like all redstarts, they flirt their tails. They breed in May and June. The nest is generally well concealed in a hole in a rock, or tree stump overhanging the water, less frequently in a tree at some distance from the stream. 4 is the normal clutch of eggs. Their colour is pale greenish white, spotted with chestnut-brown. They measure 19·8 × 14·6 mm.

## THE BLACK THROATED THRUSH

(*Turdus atrogularis*)

*Kashmiri name* (Wanda kostur)

A WINTER MIGRANT

The Black Throated Thrush is rather smaller than a myna. It has a black throat. They are found round Shankarachar and the Id-Gah in willow orchards where they may be seen feeding. They stay from October to March.

## TICKELL'S THRUSH

(*Turdus unicolor*)

*Kashmiri name* (Kostur)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Tickell's Thrush is rather larger than a bulbul. The upper plumage is ashy grey, the under parts slaty grey. The iris is brown, the eye-

rim greenish yellow, the bill and legs yellow. It is generally seen feeding on lawns.

It is found in the Himalayas from Chitral to Eastern Nepal, Sikkim, Eastern Assam and Manipur. In winter it moves down into the plains of India as far as Orissa. It arrives in March. The air is filled with their notes from every willow and poplar avenue. It is pleasant to sit under a shady chenar and listen to the untiring song of this bird. When in search of worms we hear it repeating "Tuck, Tuck, Tuck" without stretched neck. The song is somewhat like "pee u, pee u, t s e r r r. It is the first bird to greet the dawn with its song. It breeds in May and June. The nest is made of fine willow roots, mud and grass. On one occasion I found a nest which was entirely made of threads in the verandah of a garden where embroiderers were working. The number of eggs varies from 3 to 5. The ground colour is reddish white, speckled with dull-reddish brown. The eggs measure 27.1 × 19.3 mm.

## THE HIMALAYAN WHISTLING THRUSH

*Myiophoneus temminckii temminckii*

*Kashmiri name* { Házár Dāstān.  
                          { Kava kuñur.

### A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Himalayan Whistling Thrush is as large as a myna. Its entire plumage is deep blue black, its bill yellow, blackish along the top, and the legs

black. It extends throughout the Himalayas from the hills of Baluchistan and the Afghan frontier to the east of Assam.

It is a torrent bird. It is found all along the mountain streams of Dwara, the Lidder, the Sind, the Kishanganga, the Erin, the Vishaw and Wardwon. When on a boulder near a stream, it is seen with tail erect. Its charming note is like a long whistle and banishes the weariness of the traveller on mountain paths. It has also a reproachful note. I once saw a young bird in a cage at Pahalgam. The parent bird showed its indignation by scolding harshly and flew down several times to kiss the young one. In November we hear it round Hari Parbat and the Dal Lake. On August 27th at Kazalwan in the Kishanganga Valley, on the right bank of the river Ganga below the bridge, we found the nest of a bird in the niche of an overhanging rock. One of us threw a stone at the rock and a bird flew out. It was a whistling thrush. The nest looked like a cup. After some moments the male bird also appeared. Probably one sat on the nest to incubate the eggs, and the other stood on the rock like a sentinel to guard it.

The nest is made of moss lined with roots. The eggs are generally 3 in number. They are a pale green or cream-coloured, faintly mottled with pinkish markings. They measure  $36.9 \times 25.6$  mm. .

## CHAPTER VII

## THE FLYCATCHER FAMILY (MUSCICAPIDAE)

“The Flycatchers form a group of birds feeding mainly on insects which are caught on the wing. The species of this group have very feeble feet which incapacitates them from walking on the ground, their usual habit being to wait on some convenient branch and swoop down on their insect prey, which is taken in the air”.

FLETCHER AND INGLIS

## THE PARADISE FLYCATCHER

*Terpsiphone paradisi leucogaster.*

*Kashmiri name* { Young and female, Rángā bulbul  
 { Adult, Fhambaseer (cotton flake)

## A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Paradise Flycatcher is slightly smaller than a bulbul with a tail about 8 inches long. The cock and hen when young have orange upper plumage and bluish-black head with a crest, in the third year the male grows a long tail but retains the orange colour. In the fourth year the male assumes a white colour retaining the bluish-black of the head. The bill is fringed with coarse hairs.

It is found from the Himalayas to Ceylon. It



Female

Male

**PARADISE FLYCATCHER**

(Ranga Bulbul)

(Fhambaseer)

*To facing page 26.*



also inhabits Afghanistan and Turkestan. In Ceylon it is called the "Cotton thief".

Of all the feathered visitors to the valley, I think the Paradise Flycatcher is the most conspicuous. Its pure white uniform against the deep green foliage of the Chenar trees appears most striking. It is a great pleasure to see the bird moving like a white flame as it flies after its prey. When it regains its perch it sits with hanging tail and devours the unfortunate fly. It visits the valley about the middle of April and leaves in late September.

"They must be to every one a source of wonderful admiration as they leap lightly about from twig to twig and fly hither and thither among the branches".

CUNNINGHAM

It prefers to build its nest in a shady Chenar (plane) tree. This tree, owing to its cool, refreshing and invigorating shade is called the tree of Paradise and indeed it is fitting that such a bird should build in such a tree. The breeding season is May and June. The nest is like a cone with apex downwards. The materials used in building are the catkins of poplars and willows, vine bark, and fine grass cemented with cobwebs.

The clutch consists of 3 eggs. Their colour is pinkish-white with spots of bright reddish-brown. They measure 20.8 × 15.4 mm.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE SHRIKE FAMILY (LANIDAE)

## THE RUFIOUS BACKED SHRIKE

*Lanius schach erythronotus*

*Kashmiri name* (Hara wátaj)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

The Rufous-backed Shrike is rather smaller than the myna. It has a large head, a long tail, a broad black bar through the eye and forehead, a rufous back, dark wings and tail and pale buff underparts.

This species is found from Baluchistan to the North Western Frontier and from the outer Himalayas to Eastern Bengal.

Wátaj means "executioner". As it kills other birds it rightly deserves the name. It prefers to sit on a tree where it can have a clear view all round. It is a bold and ferocious bird, killing birds and mice with its strong beak. We once saw the head of a mouse stuck on some barbed wire near the nest of a shrike. On another occasion (on a Thursday after noon) during a Masters' meeting in the Principal's garden, I watched a bird coming with a dead sparrow. It hung the sparrow in the fork of a bush and began to take off its feathers. The body of the slain bird gave way and the head remained in the fork. Then the shrike took hold of the dead body and after several efforts impaled it





THE RUFOUS BACKED SHRIKE  
(Hára Wátij)

*To facing page 28.*



on a thorn of the bush. I am sorry to say I paid more attention to its movements than to the news which our Principal was passing on to us. It is a great mimic. I have heard it successfully imitating Tickell's thrush.

The eggs are laid in May. The clutch consists of 4 to 6 eggs in a nest made of rags, wool and fine grass. The colour of the eggs is creamy white with brown spots. They measure 23·0 × 17·9 mm.

## CHAPTER IX

THE CAMPEPHAGIDAE FAMILY  
THE SHORT BILLED MINIVET

*Pericrocotus brevirostris brevirostris.*

*Kashmiri name* (Wozul mini)

## A SUMMER MIGRANT

This minivet is rather smaller than a bulbul. These birds stay here only for a short time and then go to the pine forests to breed. The male has a long tail, red body and black head, while the female is bright yellow. On April 6th. I saw a pair near Munshi Bagh. On another occasion a pair was seen near Naseem. Late in April several have been observed in the Rampor, Rajpor forest towards Lake Wular and the forest near Konsar Nag.

## CHAPTER X

## THE DRONGO FAMILY (DICRURIDAE)

## The Indian Grey Drongo (The King Crow)

*Dicrurus leucophaeus longicaudatus.*

*Kashmiri names* { Gankōts  
Télákōts

## A SUMMER MIGRANT

The King Crow is considerably larger than a bulbul. The upper parts are glossy indigo, the lower parts dark grey. The iris is red, the bill and legs black, the tail long and widely forked at the end. It is found in the Western Himalayas from Hazara to Nepal.

It sits on a convenient branch of a tree so as to catch insects. It drives away crows and other birds which come to steal the eggs of the birds which have built on the same tree. For several years a bird built its nest in a chenar tree. The top boughs died and the bird was seen no more.

“The king crow is the Black Prince of the bird world, the embodiment of pluck. The thing in feathers of which he is afraid has yet to be evolved. Like the mediaeval knight he goes out seeking those on whom he can perform some small feat of arms. In certain parts of India he is known as kotawal

the official who stands forth to the poor as the impersonation of the might and majesty of the British Raj".

DEWAR

Donald records that he has heard one imitate a Shikra (a small bird of prey) so as to frighten away a pair of mynas and thus secure the worm which they had caught.

The breeding season is in May and June. The nest is built of fine grass stems, slender twigs and roots, plastered with cobwebs and lichens and lined with fine grass and hair.

The eggs are 3 or 4 in number, pinkish white marked with dark reddish brown. They measure  $23.2 \times 17.9$  mm.

CHAPTER XI  
THE WARBLER FAMILY (SYLVIIDAE)

THE GREAT REED WARBLER

*Acrocephalus stentoreus brunnescens*

*Kashmiri name* (Kurkoch)

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a bulbul. It has greyish brown upper parts, light grey under-parts, a white chin, and a slender beak.

It is found in the Dal Lake and other swamps among bulrushes.

It arrives in the last week of April, and is heard among the bulrushes making a strident noise. It climbs to the top of a reed and then flies down again to continue its cry. This is somewhat like "Babuch, Babuch, Chuch Chuch Babuje".

The breeding commences in June. The nest is of a deep cup shape made exclusively of split rushes round three or more bulrushes. The eggs are white in colour marked with brown. They measure 22·6 × 15·8 mm.

## THE PALE BUSH WARBLER

*Horornis pallidus pallidus.*

*Kashmiri name* (Dofa Pich)

## A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is heard from the bush covered slopes of mountains. One hears it on the Zeethair, Kulan, and Dwara slopes. "The call of the bird is remarkably loud and very peculiar. It is expressed in words.

You ..... mixed-it-so-quick  
He 'll..... beat you"

OSMASTON

According to one peasant its note runs "Checho .... pechanho moyiy (oh uncle ..... we lost aunt)."

The nest is rather untidy, domed, with a large side entrance composed of dry grass and lined with feathers. We found a number of nests at Bren village on almond trees and at Ajus on wild pomegranate trees. The eggs are about 4 in number, deep chocolate or purple crown in colour







Male

**GOLDEN ORIOLE**  
(Poshi-nul)

Female

To facing page 35.

## CHAPTER XII

## THE ORIOLE FAMILY (ORIOLIDAE)

## THE GOLDEN ORIOLE

*Oriolus oriolus kundo*

*Kashmiri name* Posh Nul (flower mongoose)

## A SUMMER MIGRANT

This beautiful bird is slightly smaller than a myna. The cock is bright yellow with a pink bill; its cheeks, wing feathers and tail are black. The hen is of a greenish yellow colour. The iris is dark crimson, the legs dark slate, the tail slightly rounded.

The bird breeds in Turkestan, Gilgit, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, the Central and Western Himalayas, and in the plains from Rajputana to Cape Comorin. On August 9th. we saw a pair in Kargil.

It arrives here in April and sets to work on its nest in a willow or quince tree on the banks of the Dal Lake. It sometimes builds in chenars in company with the king crow.

Its sweet liquid note mingled with that of the thrush is very charming at dawn. Its note is somewhat like "peeho-peeho".

"The call note during the pairing season sounds like the words. 'Who are you' in a full

rapid whistle, and its song is 'wheet, li, vee, o,' whence its vernacular name in Holland of 'Kiel, i, vee-vi.'

SEEBOHM

It has been sung by Kashmir poets owing to its beautiful plumage and fascinating song. The song is interpreted as, Shri Krishna gopio, (Hindu deities) hence a sort of sacredness is attached to the bird. The food consists of insects, caterpillars, berries and fruits. It cannot live in captivity. Golden Orioles breed in June and July, the nest being woven like a cradle (Guga manzul) in branches of chenars, willows, quince or almond trees.

The clutch consists of 3 eggs which are white with dark reddish brown spots. They measure 29·3 × 20·3 mm.

## CHAPTER XIII

## THE STARLING FAMILY (STURNADAE)

## THE STARLING

*Sturnus vulgaris humii**Kashmiri name* (Tsini-hañgur)

## A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a bulbul. It is black in colour with reflections of green, purple and violet, the bill yellow and the feet reddish brown. In Autumn we see spots on its body. It arrives in the last week of February and is seen and heard on chenars, mulberry and poplar trees, shaking its wings uneasily at intervals as it sings with its head pointed upward.

They are gregarious and are seen feeding on lawns and digging busily for the harmful grubs and insects on which they feed. Fruit, berries and grain are also eaten. On one occasion a starling plucked a green leaf from an almond tree and carried it away in its beak. It reminded me of Noah's dove.

In the evening they sit on a chenar tree and in company with mynas make a deafening noise.

Kirke Swann records a provincial belief that if starlings congregate in large numbers rain may be expected, but quotes Swainson as saying that in

Brittany the belief is that it is a sign of cold weather. Here there is the same belief with respect to kites.

The eggs are laid in May. Nests are made of grass and lined with feathers. They are placed in holes in trees or sometimes in walls, banks and houses.

Five eggs are laid of a very pale blue colour. They measure  $28.8 \times 20.7$  mm.

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE STARLING FAMILY

## THE MYNA

*Acridotheres tristis tristis*

(The sad grasshopper eater)

*Kashmiri name* (Hör)

RESIDENT BIRD.

The myna is one of the most familiar birds of the valley. It finds itself at home when it enters any house. It searches every corner and turns every thing which it finds useful for its purpose.

The colour of the head, neck and the upper part of the breast is black. The back is brown.

“Iris reddish-brown, flecked with white, bill and a fleshy wattle below and behind the eye bright yellow; legs yellow, claws horny.” WHISTLER

It is distributed throughout the whole of the British Empire, Northern Kashmir, Baluchistan and Tenasserim and south of Mergui. It was introduced in Australia, Andamans, Hawaii and New Zealand and there it drove away other species.

The myna is a noisy bird. At any time and in every garden we can hear its guttural and soft note of keeky, keeky, keeky, churr, churr, churr, kok, kok, kok, sometimes with the bobbing of its head.

Even during the night at regular intervals we hear him. At sundown on a summer day along with starlings and jackdaws the noise which they make on a mulberry or a chenar tree is quite deafening.

Dewar calls it a bird of character. It is very bold and few birds dare to attack it. It is self-reliant and stands no nonsense. I remember how it once drove away a jackdaw and usurped its nest.

There was a nest of a jackdaw on the rafters supporting a balcony. The myna always took away the twigs from the nest in the absence of the jackdaw and the latter always repaired it. One day it so happened that the jackdaw and the myna met face to face and fought. I watched it from the window. They both alighted in the compound, both stood on their tails and caught hold of each other with claws and beaks. It was exactly like two wrestlers. Sometimes one threw the other on the ground and vice versa. They were ringed by jackdaws and mynas. No one interfered but there was a very great noise, probably cheering on both sides. It lasted for 5 minutes when to my great disappointment a cat appeared on the scene and cleared the arena. The jackdaw never came to that nest again.

The myna's haughty nature has given rise to a proverb, *Hôr chhe gōs khewán, kôr thōz thawit* (The myna eats rubbish, but keeps its head high) Its clean habits and compact body is used some times as simile, *Harihen hish* (like a little myna).



It is a true friend to the peasant. When ploughing, watering or weeding his fields, the bird eats the injurious insects which harm the plants. The poor hoopoe, after his hard work of digging the worm from the ground, finds the myna and shrike ready to steal the tit-bit. It keeps on plodding and the myna keeps on robbing.

It feeds on both animal and vegetable food. When offered cooked vegetables with meat or cheese, it would prefer meat or cheese and leave the vegetables. Sometimes it would eat cooked vegetables and chilies. It is very fond of pears.

The nest is built in holes in houses, walls, or chimneys. The material used is straw, fine twigs, feathers, felt hair, paper etc. A lady once dropped a ten rupee note out of her pocket. A myna at once took it away to its nest behind the hillock. I once placed a broken pot of earthenware on the wall of my compound. It was quickly utilised as a nest and on June 3rd I found three eggs of a deep blue colour. They measure  $32.3 \times 21.9$  mm.

## CHAPTER XV

## CINCLIDAE (DIPPER FAMILY).

## THE WHITE BREASTED DIPPER

## (WATER OUSEL)

*Cinclus cinclus kashmiriensis**Kashmiri name, Dungal.*

A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a myna. It has a white breast, a brown body and a short tail. It is a torrent bird and is generally found along mountain streams flowing from ranges above 10,000 ft. near glaciers and snow beds. On August 4, we saw a bird at the mouth of the Lidder, where it flows from the Kolahoi Glacier. It was in the act of raising and lowering its body probably taking exercise to keep itself warm.

It dives in search of food. It eats water-beetles, aquatic insects and their larvae. They breed from May to July. The nest is a large oven-shaped mass of moss, placed in the crevice of a rock in a hole or bank, over-hanging swift-flowing water. 3 or 4 eggs are laid of a pure white colour.

The brown dipper is also a torrent bird found at lower elevations and commoner than the white breasted variety.

## CHAPTER XVI

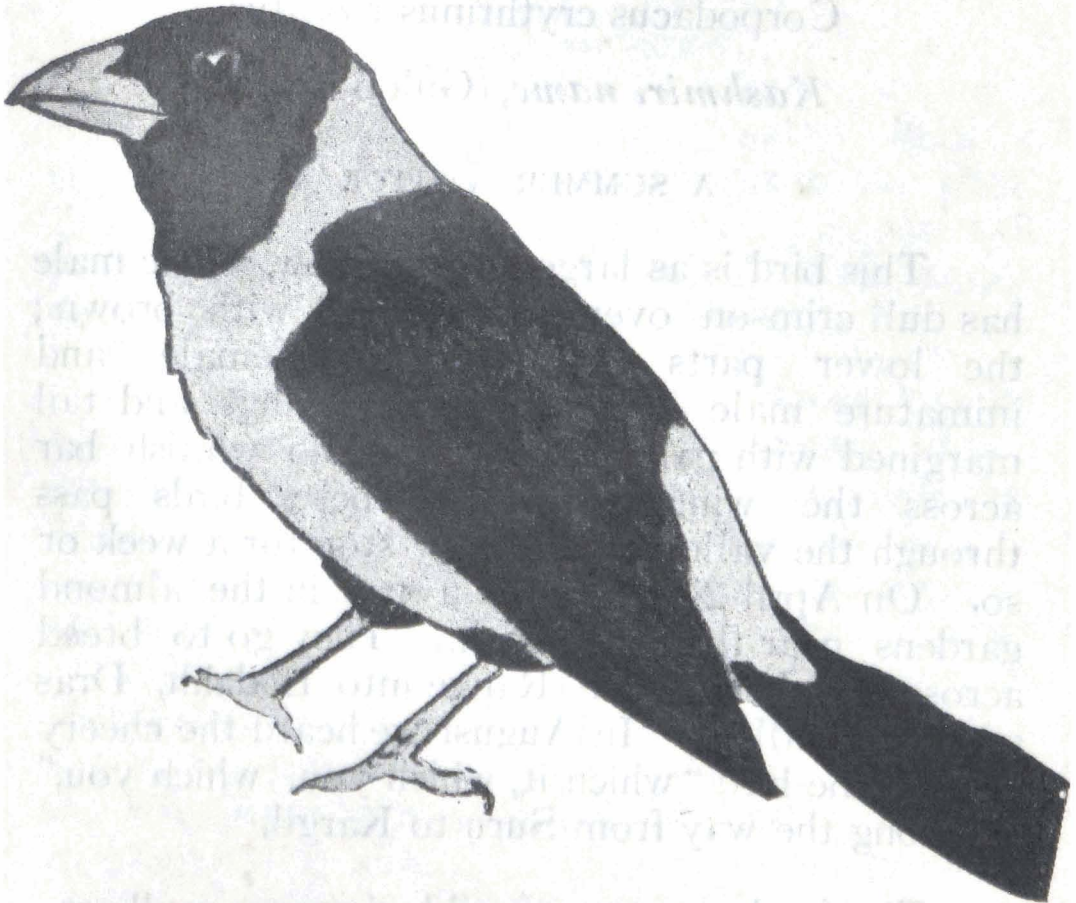
## FAMILY FRINGILLIDAE.

## THE BLACK AND YELLOW GROSBEAK.

*Perrisospiza icteroides icteroides.*

*Kashmiri name, Wyet Tont.*

A SUMMER MIGRANT.



This bird is rather larger than a bulbul. It has a yellow body, black head and ashy conical beak.

These birds are common in silver fir and mixed forests between 8,000 and 10,000 ft. They feed largely on the fruits of shrubs and undergrowth in these forests. They construct nests high up in fir trees. We found some birds near Aru (Lidder Valley) in July. It is common in the fir forest in and around Gulmarg up to about 10,000 ft.

### THE ROSEFINCH.

*Corpodacus crythrinus roseatus.*

*Kashmiri name, (Gulob Tsar.)*

#### A SUMMER VISITOR

This bird is as large as a sparrow. The male has dull crimson overcoverts mixed with brown; the lower parts palish white. Female and immature male greenish brown wings and tail margined with pale yellow, a double whitish bar across the wing coverts. These birds pass through the valley where they stop for a week or so. On April 24th we saw a pair in the almond gardens near the central jail. They go to breed across the Himalayan Range into Ladakh, Dras and Suru valleys. In August we heard the cheery note of the bird "which it, which you, which you," all along the way from Suru to Kargil.

The food consists of wild cherries, mulberry seeds and fruit.

The nest is a cup shaped structure of grass

lined with fine roots and stems. It is placed in a low bush.

4 eggs are laid, which are of a blue colour with black or red streaks or spots. They measure 20'8 × 14'9 mm.

## THE GOLDFINCH.

*Carduelis caniceps caniceps.*

*Kashmiri name, Sehara.*

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

The goldfinch is rather smaller than a sparrow. There are two yellow bars in the wing. The base of the bill is crimson and black, the bill is sharp, conical and pinkish white. The young have no crimson at the base of their bills.

In winter we see these birds in flocks on the tops of chenar trees feeding on the seeds. They are also seen in late autumn feeding on seeds and flower plants in Shalamar garden. It has a pleasing sprightly song. They are also seen at the foot of Shankarachar and in the almond gardens round the Fort. They sing in unison. At the end of May they retire to their breeding haunts. According to Mr. Osmaston they rear the first brood between 5000 and 7000 ft. in blue pines and large shrubs. They leave in July for higher altitudes and build second nests between 9500 and 11000 ft. At Kacheon in the Suru valley we heard the celestial music of these birds and other finches in August.

A good number of these birds are caught in winter and caged for sale. They seem to thrive in captivity. They are fed on 'malida' (a preparation of pulse and ghee).

The nest is a neat structure of vegetable cotton with a little hair. It is placed in a tree or bush. The clutch consists of 4 or 5 eggs of pale bluish white, spotted with purple and brown.

### THE HOUSE SPARROW.

*Passer domesticus parkini.*

*Kashmiri name*, (male: Kantur / female: Tsar)

A RESIDENT BIRD.

The house sparrow is one of the most common birds of the valley. The male bird has a rich chestnut colour with black lines on its upper parts, white cheeks, black chest and a black bar on the throat, conical beak, and under parts grey, ashy crown. The female has a pale grey back with black lines without any black on the chest. Iris brown; bill brown, black in the male in summer, legs brown.

This sparrow is widely spread throughout Europe, Northern Africa and the greater part of Asia, and has been introduced into America and Australia.

In winter when the food outside is exhausted, flocks of these birds are seen entering houses from open windows. It is interesting to see them

separating chaff from the grain. They eat seeds and vegetables but they rear young ones on insects. The peasants keep rags and dead birds on sticks in their fields to scare the birds. At several research institutions the stomach contents have been examined and it has been found that the bird eats more vegetable than insect food.

The male bird begins his nuptial dance from the last week of February. He lowers his wings, raises his tail and hops on his feet. He does this when he sees a female whom he tries to approach. When on the upper branch of a tree, he assumes this form and descends to a lower branch to meet his lover. When he reaches the female she always dislikes and pecks him. Not a single case has come under my observation where a female welcomes such gestures. I know an instance when a he-sparrow in this posture was attacked and pecked by seven she-sparrows. On the contrary I remember an occasion when a she-sparrow was made a prisoner by nine he-sparrows.

They are very noisy. In the morning and evening they make a great chattering with the mynas when roosting on a chenar or a mulberry tree. Sometimes their noise during the day signifies the presence of a snake. But when in company of cinnamon-headed sparrows, goldfinches, and red fronted finches, their twittering is a pleasant addition to the chorus.

Almost every Himalayan house contains the nest of one or more sparrows. It has several broods. The nest is a bundle of turf grass, straw,

felt hair and feathers, with a depression for 5 or 6 eggs which are of various colours with spots. They measure  $21.7 \times 15.4$  mm.

### THE GOLD FRONTED FINCH.

*Metaponia pusilla.*

*Kashmiri name, Adult, Tyok. / Young, Taer.*

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This is a tiny bird with a golden red cap on its head. There is a mixture of yellow and black in its plumage. It is found here in autumn and during the spring migration. The bird catchers trap it with a net in autumn and cage it. They do not live long in captivity. They seem unable to bear summer heat. I have met only two which lived throughout the summer. These birds are found round Shankarachar and Hari Parbat. They breed in dry rainless country beyond the Himalayan Range. We saw several in the Suru valley.

The nests are like those of the gold finch and are placed in the low bushes of the wild rose. 4 eggs are laid. They are very pale blue or white, with some dark spots.

### THE GREEN FINCH.

*Hypacanthis spinoides spinoides.*

*Kashmiri name :—Saboz Tsar.*

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is as large as a sparrow. It is heavily built about the head and neck and yellowish green



all over, mixed with black. The abdomen is of a brighter yellow. The bill is sharp, conical and pointed. They are often found in open portions of mixed forests between 6,500 and 8,000 ft. They can be seen in flocks round the temple at Gulmarg. In winter they visit the Peshawar valley, Afghan Hills and Manipur. The male has a pretty little song.

## THE MEADOW BUNTING.

*Emheriza cia stracheyi.**Kashmiri name*,—Won Tsar.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.



This bird is rather larger than a sparrow. The overcoverts are chestnut brown, the head pale brown with black lines and two vertical bars are seen in the tail when flying. They are found in bush-covered slopes of mountains and breed up to 10,000 ft., from Hazara country and Gilgit to Kumaon. It is found at Zeethair, Dara

and Kangan. Breeding commences early in June. The nest is placed on a steepish slope on the ground generally at the base of a low bush.

The full clutch of eggs is usually 3, marked with brown lines on a white ground. They measure  $21.5 \times 15.7$  mm.

## CHAPTER XIX

## HIRUNDINIDAE (SWALLOW FAMILY)

## THE SWALLOW.

*Hirundo rustica.*

*Kashmiri name, Katij*

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is as large as a sparrow. The upper plumage is glossy blue black. The chin and brow are chestnut, the upper breast black, the under parts white. The outer feathers of the tail are long and forked. The legs are short.

They arrive early in March and are seen flying along roads and rivers with open mouths to catch insects. Sometimes they are seen taking mud in their beaks to build their nests. These they build in houses. Their saliva is mixed with the mud. The props are first raised and then layer after layer, till a semi cup-shaped nest against the wall is constructed and inlaid with soft material and feathers. The bird appears to return regularly year by year to its old nest. 4 to 6 eggs are laid, which are white with dark red brown spots. They measure 19·6 × 13·7 mm. There is a belief among some physicians that if you sprinkle termeric on the young of the swallow, it will think that they have got jaundice. It will fly off at once and get a substance resembling

crystallised sugar and will keep it in the nest. This should be carefully removed and used as a specific medicine for jaundice. When swallows build a nest in houses it is supposed to be auspicious. Russian peasants believe that the swallow flies to us from Paradise on March 25th.

“ The Arabs call it the “ Bird of Jesus ” and the “ Bird of Paradise ” because to it alone are the gates of Eden open ”.

“ In Germany their presence is believed to preserve the house from storms, fire and evil ”.

DYER.

It is believed that the nest when made into a paste and placed on the bare head stops bleeding from the nose.

## CHAPTER XX

## MOTACILLIDAE (WAGTAIL FAMILY).

These birds get their popular name from the curious dipping motion of the tail, which accompanies every movement of the body. They are water-loving birds who seek there their insect food.

## THE WHITE WAGTAIL.

*Motacilla alba hogsoni.*

*Kashmiri name, Dobbai.*

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is as large as a sparrow. It has a graceful shape with a long tail. Black above, white forehead, sides of the face and neck, throat and wing feathers black, under parts white.

On March 4th a flock of pied wagtails was seen at Chandmari. A few days later, grey and yellow wagtails were seen feeding together on the same maidan. On 25th of the same month there was not a single bird to be seen there. On July 31st we saw all the above mentioned kinds of wagtails feeding on a shallow stream coming down from an ice bed in Rewal Ravine of the Liddar Valley. During the winter months a few pied and grey wagtails are often seen feeding on insects near the water.

Once when on an excursion with some school boys, I met a tonga driver who gave me a quaint explanation of why a wagtail wags its tail. He said, "It is a wise bird. It thinks its tail very heavy; so much so that if it were to rest on the ground the earth would give way. Hence it keeps it wagging".

They breed in May and June, the nest being placed generally under a stone or a thick low bush on a stony island or in part of the dry river or stream bed.

It lays 4 white eggs, with numerous tiny grey spots and dots and sometimes a black line.

They measure 21·9 × 15·6 mm.

## THE GREY WAGTAIL.

*Motacilla cinerea melanope.*

*Kashmiri name, Khak Dubbai*

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is as large as a sparrow. It is slender in shape with a long tail. Head and back grey, chin, throat and foreneck white. The lower plumage is yellow, growing brighter towards the tail.

It is a bird of streams and rivers. It does not hop, but runs quickly when it finds an insect. In winter it migrates to the plains, and reaches an

altitude of 8,000 to 13,000 ft. The nests are built in May. They are composed of dry grass and weeds lined with hair, and are placed under a stone, generally near a stream.

Five eggs are laid with spots of pale yellow or greyish brown. They measure  $18\cdot2 \times 14\cdot10$  mm.

## THE YELLOW-HEADED WAGTAIL

*Motacilla citreola citreoloides.*

*Kashmiri name, Ledōr Dub-bai.*

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is as large as a sparrow. The cock bird is very handsome. It has a bright yellow head and the breast and back are black. There is a yellow streak above the eye. The hen birds are found in two distinct phases of plumage (1) Young birds presumably one year old, where the yellow of the male bird is replaced by very pale yellow almost white, (2) Birds of two years and over much yellower than (1) but paler yellow than the males. It is a common bird in swamps and lakes. They walk freely over the weedy surface of the water and eat insects. We found several in the Dal Lake, Padshahi Bagh swamps and at Kanital (14,400 ft.) at the foot of the Bhat Khol glacier. They are also found in Ladakh.

The nests are placed on the ground in tufts of grass. Four is the usual number of eggs. They are of mottled pale khaki or yellow brown with often a black streak at the broad end. They measure  $20\cdot1 \times 14\cdot5$  mm.



## CHAPTER XXI

## ALAUDIDAE (LARK FAMILY)

## THE LITTLE SKYLARK.

*Alauda gulgula guttata.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Dider.

## A WINTER MIGRANT.

This bird is streaky brown, buff-white below and with pale buff edges to the tail which become conspicuous in flight. We saw a number of birds in Dras and Suru valleys. They frequent barley fields and grass meadows. The song is uttered while soaring. They breed in May. The nests are placed on the ground in a slight depression among grass on young barley. 4 eggs are laid. They are of a greenish brown colour, thickly speckled and mottled with a darker brown.

We found a nest on the shore of the Gangabal Lake on July 18th containing 4 hard-set eggs.

They measure  $21.5 \times 16.5$  mm.

There is another kind of lark which is plumper and has a short tail. It is called Jal. Both these species come in winter in large numbers and are caught in their nests and sold to the shopkeepers. I remember one who had ten of them in cages. They feed them on malida (pulses plus ghee). They live long in captivity.

## CHAPTER XXII

ORDER———PICI PICIDAE  
(WOODPECKER FAMILY)

“ All the woodpeckers find their chief supply of food in the crevices of the bark of trees. Their feet have sharp strong claws and two of the toes are placed forward and two backward enabling the birds to cling with ease perpendicularly on the trunks and limbs of trees, they are also helped by the structure of the tail, the feathers of which are very strong and pointed, this acts as a prop to the bird.”

HODGES.

The tongue is long, worm like, pointed and barbed at the tip. It can be stretched out and withdrawn. A kind of fluid covers the tongue to which the grubs stick.

## THE GREEN WOODPECKER.

*Picus squamatus squamatus.*

*Kashmiri name*,—Koel Makots.

A WINTER MIGRANT.

This bird is rather larger than a crow. It is green with pale underparts covered with black patches. In winter it is found on poplar trees, striking the bark for insect food. In summer it ascends to wooded areas where it breeds.

## THE PIED WOODPECKER.

*Dryobates himalayensis.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Hör koel maköts

Koel-Ku-Kör (tree hen) Koel Tatak in the Lolab.

This bird is as large as a myna. Its upper parts are barred with black and white and underneath it is whitish with dark streaks. There is a reddish patch under the tail. The male has a crimson crest.

In winter it is seen moving jerkily on willows. On March 2nd in a willow orchard near Sonawar, I was attracted by the behaviour of a pied woodpecker. It made a noise and turned its head right and left and then stopped for a few seconds. It repeated the exercise of turning its head. I watched the bird for 10 minutes. During this time it repeated the exercise 5 times and then flew away.

Breeding commences in April when they are in well-wooded areas and hills. We found a pair on the tall poplars of the Gurais valley. 4 white, glossy eggs are laid. They measure  $26.5 \times 19.1$  mm.

## THE WRYNECK.

*Lynx torquilla japonica.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Viri Mot.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is as large as a bulbul. “The wry-neck or snake bird owes its name to its peculiar

habit of writhing the head and neck and of hissing when disturbed on the nest."

The upper parts are brown and grey with black markings. A black bar extends from the top of the head to the middle of the back. Under parts creamy white, narrow black bars on chest; throat, neck and tail barred with brown and grey.

It is generally found on willow trees holding on to the bark. It emits a noise like "Pee,pee, pee." They arrive in early April.

Breeding commences in the middle of May. The eggs are laid in holes, chiefly in the rotten portions of willow trees excavated by the parent birds. The eggs are laid on bare wood on a layer of fine chips. 6 eggs are usually laid of a pure white glossy colour. They measure 21.1 × 15.5 mm.

## CHAPTER XXIII

## ORDER ——— ANISODACTYLI

## (CORACIADAE FAMILY)

## THE ROLLER.

*Coracias garulla semenowi.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Nila Krash.

## A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This is a blue bird as large as a myna. When flying it reveals dark blue wings and tail, banded with light blue. The lower parts are pale blue throughout. It extends from the Altai Mountains to Siberia and winters in Cape Colony passing through eastern Africa and Egypt. It is a common bird in the Kashmir Valley and in the Sind, Lidder and Lolab up to 6,500 ft. They arrive in spring and leave in October. They are often seen perched on telegraph wires or the dead bough of a tree from whence they can have a commanding view of their surroundings and are ready to pounce upon a grasshopper or a mouse or any insect they see. Canon Tristram relates how he saw flocks of rollers migrating near Mount Tabor in Palestine on April 12th. One of these flocks settled on some trees near a fountain and made a strident noise. "After a volley of discordant screams one or two birds were alarmed and started from their perch to commence a series of gambols and

somersaults in the air, then in a moment or two the whole flock followed their example, this strange performance being repeated many times in succession.

They breed in June. The nesting site is a hole in a steep river bank or in a hollow tree.

Five or six pure white eggs are laid. They are frequently speckled all over with small dark brown spots which can be easily removed by washing. They measure  $36.3 \times 29.0$  mm.

## CHAPTER XXIV

## MEROPIOAE FAMILY

## THE BEE-EATER,

*Merops apiaster.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Tulri khāv.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.



This bird has a beautiful plumage, a curved beak and long wings and tail. The middle tail

feathers are elongated. The upper parts are brick coloured, the others are a mixture of blue and green, the throat is bright yellow.

They arrive in late April and leave early in September. They are generally seen hovering near the slopes of Shankarachar and Hari Parbat uttering a note like "tearrp". On April 28th I saw one in the act of digging a hole for its nest on the southern slope of Hari Parbat in the soft yellow soil. On July 22nd we saw a flock on the telegraph wire at Safapore. They are very fond of eating bees. Dr. E. F. Neve killed one once and placed it over the beehives to save the bees from being eaten. The plan was very successful. They winter in Sind and even in Cape Colony, where it is said they breed a second time.

"During my stay at Gibraltar" writes Colonel Irby, "bee-eaters decreased very much in the neighbourhood, being continually shot to put into ladies' hats on account of their bright plumage. Owing to this vile fashion we saw no less than seven hundred skins, all shot in Tangier in the spring, which were consigned to some dealer in London."

Breeding commences early in June and the birds usually nest in small scattered parties. The nest is a hole about 2 inches in diameter, excavated in soft yellow soil. The hole slopes gently upwards for a distance of about 3 feet at the end of which there is a wide, bare egg-chamber 9 inches or so in diameter.

The eggs are laid from 5 to 6 in number, pure white, glossy and nearly round. They measure  $25.8 \times 21.9$  mm.



CHAPTER XXV

ALCEDINIDAE (KING-FISHER FAMILY)

THE BLUE KING-FISHER.

*Alcedo atthis pallasii.*

*Kashmiri name:—Kola tonch.*

A RESIDENT BIRD.



This bird is a little larger than a sparrow. It

has an attractive plumage. The wings are dark blue, the back light blue, under parts orange, bill long and black, chin white, two white spots on either side of face, legs red, claws dusky. The bird is generally seen on a willow branch with concentrated look on the water. It darts like an arrow and catches its prey and then perches on the branch again. It batters the head of the fish against the branch of the tree till it is dead and then swallows it head foremost. It sometimes hovers like a pied kingfisher. I once saw the bird, while waking for a fish, raise and lower its body several times, and also lift its short tail.

“Its note is a shrill “chee” uttered most often on the wing. The flight is low and swift, generally close to the surface of the water”.

KERSHAW

I remember seeing a parent bird with 3 young ones perched on a willow branch. The parent bird dived several times into the water, not after fish, but probably to show its young ones how to dive, and the young ones did likewise. Breeding begins in April and fresh eggs may be found till the end of May. Nest holes are dug in clay banks, sides of wells, or hollows of willow trees. A nest has been found in the Zeethair Slope above and away from the Dal Lake.

From 5 to 7 eggs are laid, which are pure white. They measure  $21.2 \times 17.6$  mm.

## THE PIED KING-FISHER

*Ceryle rudis leucomelanura.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Hor Kola Tonch

## A RESIDENT BIRD.

The Pied King-fisher is fairly common on the Wular, Dal and Anchar lakes and is also found along the Vitasta (Jhelum). The plumage is entirely black and white, and the beak long and black. It is rather smaller than a myna.

It is interesting to watch the bird when flying over an expanse of water. It rises high, vibrates its wings and hovers like a kestrel, pointing its beak downward. As soon as its keen eyes detect a fish, it drops like an iron ball on its prey. I once saw a bird with a fish about 5 inches long in its beak on the bank of the Jhelum (Vitasta). It was beating the head of its prey against a clod of earth.

There is another larger species (*Ceryle Lugubries Guttulata*) found along the larger rivers and side streams. It does not hover in the air, but dives after fish from a fixed perch.

The breeding season is in March. Holes in which to lay eggs are dug in steep banks, often but not always near streams. There is a layer of fine fish bones thrown up in 'castings' by the parent bird.

Five or six white eggs are laid. They measure  $3.03 \times 23.6$  mm.

## CHAPTER XXVI

## THE UPUPIDAC (HOOPOE FAMILY)

## THE HOOPOE.

*Upupa epops epops.*

*Kashmiri name* — Satut.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.



The Hoopoe is about the size of a myna. It is one of the early visitors to the valley. The wings

and tail are marked with bars of black and white. The bill is long, slender and curved, the remainder of the plumage is fawn colour. The feathers of the crest are broadly tipped with white and black. The crest generally remains closed, but when the bird is startled, and at the moment when the hoopoe alights on the ground, it opens to form a beautiful 'corona'.

This bird is met with in open and cultivated country. It feeds almost entirely on the ground and is very partial to grassy lawns, digging the soil with its beak for insects, caterpillars and grubs. The shrike and myna watch him working and when an insect is taken out they at once come and take away the prey. Forgetting the trick he goes on working industriously till he gets something for himself. According to the legend he is said to be the son of Solomon, hence he has a golden crown. So the people in greed for gold used to kill him. One day he referred the matter to his father, so he changed the golden crown into flesh and the persecution then ceased.

Bechstein gives a curious account of the attitude assumed by the hoopoe on perceiving a large bird in the air. "As soon as they perceived a raven, or even a pigeon they were on their bellies in the twinkling of an eye, their wings stretched out by the side of the head, so that the large quill feathers touched the head, leaning on the back with the bill pointed upwards. In this curious posture they might be taken for a rag".

In China, according to Mr. Swinhoe, it is known by the name of "Coffin-bird," as it breeds in the holes of exposed Chinese coffins, and Pallas relates his finding a nest in the chest of a decayed corpse. We saw a pair at the top meadow of Dudgai Hill (11,000 ft.).

The majority arrive in March and leave in September, but a few birds may be seen occasionally even in winter. Breeding commences in April, 6 or 7 eggs being laid on the ground with no nest, sometimes in a hole in a mud wall, in a house or in a hollow tree. Canon Stokoe found a nest in his wood go-down with seven young ones. The eggs are whitish blue, but they soon discolour into a pale dirty greenish grey.

They measure  $26.2 \times 17.6$  mm.







THE PIED CRESTED CUCKOO  
(Hor Kuk)

*To face page 71.*



## CHAPTER XXVII

ORDER——COCCYGES

CUCULIDA (CUCKOO FAMILY)

THE PIED CRESTED CUCKOO.

Clamator jacobinus.

*Kashmiri name.*—Hor Kuk.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

The upper plumage is black, underparts white, a white band through the wing, white tips to the long tail feathers. Its call of two notes attracts attention. They are heard in the bush-covered slopes of Zeethair in Zaberwan Hill. They do not build their own nests, but deposit their eggs in the nest of the streaked Laughing Thrush. The young cuckoo throws the rightful offspring out of the nest.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

## ORDER ——— PSITTACI

## PSITTACIDAE (THE PARROT FAMILY)

## THE SLATY-HEADED PARAKEET.

*Kashmiri name:*—Tota, / Shoga in Lolab Valley.

## A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This noisy bird has a green plumage, red beak, and a slate coloured head. It is seen on walnut trees busily engaged in eating the nuts. They arrive in April and leave when the pears are ripe. We saw them at Olus on the bank of the Wular and at Sogam in the Lolab Valley.

## CHAPTER XXIX

## ORDER———STRIGES

## THE STRIGIDAE (OWL FAMILY)

## THE INDIAN BARN OWL.

*Tyto alba Javanica.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Rata Mogul.

## A RESIDENT BIRD.

The owl is a common bird round Srinagar. It comes out during the night and hides during the day. When it comes out during the day time, it is surrounded by the crows which annoy it very much. It is a brown bird with narrow white and black bars.

The face is almost round.

This bird which has a sagacious look, is considered inauspicious.

When an owl whoops during the night the people say that a male child is going to be born in that locality, but a sound like, “krake, krake” is believed to portend the birth of a female child.

Sometimes the claws of some unfortunate owl are decorated with gold to adorn the cap of a child, or are hung round its neck, as it is believed

to avert the danger of an evil spirit.

Its flight is quite noiseless when searching for mice and other small prey.

It nests in hollow trees or in ruins and lays 2 white eggs.

In the neighbourhood of Bordeaux the peasants throw a pinch of salt into the fire on hearing the birds call, to avert evil. SWAINSON.

“ In the South of France there is an idea that if an owl shrieks on the chimney of a house in which a woman lies with child, daughter will be born to her ; its cry near a village betokens a birth shortly in one of the houses, and in Berne it is believed to foretell either the birth of a child or the death of a man.” SWAINSON.

## CHAPTER XXX

### ORDER—ACCIPITRES (THE BIRDS OF PREY)

The bill is hooked, the talons are powerful and there is bare skin at the base of the bill.

### THE PANDIONIDAE FAMILY

#### OSPREY

*Pandion haliaetus haliaetus.*

The osprey is as large as a kite. It has a white head and neck, and a broad dark band from the eye down the side of the neck.

It generally feeds on fish. When in search of food this large bird rises up, vibrates its wings like a pied kingfisher, then closes its wings and drops like a stone and disappears into the water with a large splash, and comes out with a fish in its talons.

It is frequently seen on the Wular Lake and along the Jhelum river in cold weather.

to avert the danger of an evil spirit.

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## CHAPTER XXXI GYPIDAE (THE VULTURE FAMILY)

“Vultures are huge birds of prey which feed exclusively on carrion. They are distinguished by the fact that their head and neck are destitute of feathers. A large bird of prey with a bare head and neck is undoubtedly a vulture.” DEWAR.

### THE HIMALAYAN GRIFFON.

*Gyps Himalayensis.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Grad.

A RESIDENT BIRD.

This is a very large bird. It stays for hours floating on out-stretched wings in the air looking for dead animals. It takes advantage of aerial currents and it is marvellous to see how it can ascend several thousand feet in a minute or so.

A number of these birds were seen at Lidderwat, Zōjpal and Dras sailing on their wings in the air near the sky-kissing peaks.

On August 16th. at Zoji La (11,000ft.) we counted 4 dozen vultures eating a carcass and it was interesting to see them hopping with out-stretched wings.

At Dán Zab (11,950ft.) a vulture visited a dead pony in the morning. In half an hour 89 vultures



gathered round the carcass and finished half the body of the animal by sunset. It was interesting to see them alighting with their necks lowered and basking in the sun with out-stretched wings.

They breed on rocky precipices from 6,000 to 8,000 ft., nests being usually inaccessible without ropes. Two nests were obtained by Mr. Osmaston on February 11th. and 15th. at 6,500 ft., while the snow was still on the ground. They each contained one fresh egg. I saw one egg and it was like a white cricket ball.

## THE EGYPTIAN VULTURE.

*Neophron percnopterus percnopterus.*

*Kashmiri name, Patyál.*

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is a little larger than a kite. The whole plumage is white except the wings, which are black and brown. The bill is yellow and hooked at the end. The head and upper neck are bare, with the skin deep yellow.

This bird is generally seen either flying near Shankarachar or in Malla Khah where it feasts on the carrion. When in flight it appears a graceful white bird with a round tail.

In April two boys found a nest above the Gagribal Spur. The nest was lined with paper, sticks and felt rags. They found two eggs of a dirty white colour, marked with deep reddish brown.

## CHAPTER XXXII

## FALCONIDAE (BIRDS OF PREY)

## PALLAS FISHING EAGLE.

*Cuncuma leucorypha.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Gáda Grad.

This bird is nearly half as big again as the kite. It is a large brown bird with whitish forehead, chin, and throat, and a broad white band across the tail, about three inches from the tip.

It is fairly common in the neighbourhood of lakes and rivers.

Mr. Osmaston found a pair at 10,600ft., in the Sind Valley and another pair near the Tsomoriri Lake at 15,000 ft., in Rupshu in June.

“ All fish-eagles have loud resonant calls, anything but melodious, and each and all seem to love hearing their own voices. In the plains of the Punjab it may often be heard long before it is seen, particularly when soaring, and though it may only appear a wee speck in the heavens, its call will be distinctly heard.” C. H. DONALD.

## THE BLACK-EARED KITE.

*Milvus migrans lineatus.*

*Kashmiri name,* Gōnt.

A RESIDENT BIRD.

This is one of the most common resident birds of Srinagar. The bill is hooked and tail forked.

It spends the whole of its time in flying and sailing in the air. The tail works as a rudder when turning left or right. While on the wing it looks down in search of food. When it holds its booty in its talons it passes it on to its beak when flying. It seems to love sailing through the air as long as the light lasts. When seen flying high in a flock it is believed to be the precursor of clouds. Its perching on the house is supposed to be ominous. From February we begin to hear its mating screams. It nests on chenars, poplars and mulberry trees. The nest is a large mass of sticks, lined with wool, hair, rags and paper. It lays 2 or 3 white eggs spotted with brown.

On April 18th. a boy found two eggs on a chenar tree at Padstaki Bagh. With the eggs was a knife. I enquired the reason for the knife. I was told that the young ones cannot see until their eyes are rubbed with a jewel or a piece of metal.

## THE KESTREL.

*Falco tinnunculus.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Bohar.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is rather larger than a myna. The head, neck and tail are grey, back and wings brick red. Lower plumage rufous-fawn with the breast and flanks streaked and spotted with brown.

The bill is short and hooked. The wings are long, pointed and thin, tail long, the legs orange yellow.

It is a bird of the open country and prefers mountain slopes above tree belts, where it finds lizards, grasshoppers and mice.

It is pleasing to watch the bird making circles in the air and suddenly stopping and hovering to detect its prey and dropping on it like a stone, not unlike the piedking-fisher. On account of its hovering motion it is sometimes called wind-hover in England.

It breeds on rocky cliffs. We have seen several on Kolahoi and Apharwat, Erin Valley and Konsar Nág slopes and Chets Kōin.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

## ORDER——COLUMBIDAE

## FAMILY COLUMBIDAE

## THE TURTLE DOVE.

*Streptopelia orientalis meena.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Wan Kukil

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

It is about the size of a ring-dove. In colour it is a vinous-brown bird with conspicuous rufous scale markings on the wings, and a patch of black and blue grey scale markings on the sides of the neck. The dark tail edged with white is conspicuous in flight. The iris is orange, the legs vinous red, the claws black.

It is a bird of well-wooded areas on the slopes of mountains. We saw large numbers among the forest of the Tragbal Pass. They are also found in the Suru and Dras Valleys.

The breeding season is from May to August, and nests are built in small trees or thick bushes. The clutch consists of two eggs.

## THE RING-DOVE.

*Streptopelia decaocto decaocto.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Kukil.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This bird is a little larger than a myna. The overcoverts are pale grey with a plain black collar round the base of the neck.

Its call Gu -Gu -Gu- either from leafy chenars or willow groves at once warns of its arrival in late March. The bird is seen in large numbers eating seeds in the open country fields.

Kukila Hyot (dove's throat) or Kukil Hish (dove like) are proverbial phrases used of sweet singing or graceful appearance.

“ The dove is much revered in Roman Catholic countries, and in Italy, Germany, and Russia it is considered a sin to eat it, while in Bohemia it is looked upon as the special favourite of God and never killed.”  
SWAINSON.

They breed in May and June. The nest is generally placed in willows and chenars not far from the ground.

The clutch consists of 2 eggs. They are broad and perfect ovals, hard in texture and somewhat glossy. The colour is white.

Eggs measure 30·2 × 23·4 mm.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

ORDER——GALLINAE

(FAMILY PHASIANIDAE)

## THE CHIKOR

*Alectoris graeca chukar**Kashmiri name.*—Kakov

A RESIDENT BIRD.

This bird is a little larger than a crow. It is well-known to sportsmen. The upper parts of the bird are ashy brown. It has a black band across the forehead through each eye which is continued behind the eye and round the throat as a gorget; the sides are heavily barred with black and chestnut.

Iris orange, bill and legs red, the claws brown.

It is fairly common on the lower slopes of the hills bordering on the main valley, and found up to at least 11,000 ft. In autumn we hear their call from Zeethair and Shankarachar slopes. The call is "Kak, Kak, Kakak, Kakak". It is sometimes kept in cages as a pet. When pursued, they fly fast and have alternate flight and glide, hence the proverb 'Kakau ring'. (A short flight)

Mr. Jesse mentions that a gentleman who was watching his ploughman saw a partridge running from her nest, almost crushed by the horses' hoofs.

Being certain that the next furrow must bury the eggs and nest, he watched for the return of the plough, when to his great astonishment the nest previously containing 21 eggs was vacant. After a search he found the bird sitting upon the eggs under a hedge, nearly 40 yards from the nest, to which place she and her mate had removed the whole number in less than 20 minutes.

It is a game bird and affords excellent shooting from October till March.

Breeding commences early in April. The clutch consists of 12 or 13 eggs, usually laid under a rock or a bush. The ground colour is pale yellowish or greyish stone, with spots.

Eggs measure 42·1 × 30·7 mm.



## CHAPTER XXXV

## ORDER——GRALLAE

## (FAMILY RALLIDAE)

## THE MOORHEN

Gallinula chloropus parvifrons

*Kashmiri name.*—Tech

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

The moorhen is a common bird found in the Dal and Anchar Lakes, upper plumage is dark-brown and the under parts dark-grey.

Iris red, frontal shield and base of bill red, tip greenish yellow, legs green with an orange ring above the joint. The toes are fringed with a membrane and are exceedingly long.

It is found throughout India, in the plains and in the Himalayas and Nilgiris up to about 6000 ft.

It is a water-bird, and spends all its time swimming. It feeds on vegetable matter and water insects and their eggs. It is a strong diver; to escape it dives and comes up a good distance from the intruder. The submarine vegetation does not hinder its speed. When swimming it puts its head forward, and erects its tail. It takes long strides when it walks on land.

The nest is composed of a heap of vegetable matter with a depression for the eggs, either in bulrushes or among aquatic plants.

Breeding commences in May to July, 8 or 9 eggs are commonly laid, but 14 have been recorded. The ground colour of the egg is a pale stone-colour tinged with pink.

It has deep red spots.

They measure 41·4 × 29·6 mm.

### THE PURPLE COOT

*Porphyrio pollocephalus pollocephalus*

*Kashmiri name.*—Wan Tech

A WINTER MIGRANT

It is a beautiful bird. The upper parts are purple blue, with very long red legs. The bill is conical and red, as is a square shield which the bird carries on its forehead. During winter a large number of these birds visited the valley in 1929, 30 and 31.

It is a pity that these beautiful birds are shot for the table in the valley. It would have been a gracious act to forbid such slaughter.

### THE COMMON COOT

*Fulica atra atra*

*Kashmiri name.*—Kolar, Káv-put

This bird is slightly larger than a crow. It has

a shining black plumage with bluish white bill and frontal shield. Iris red, legs greenish.

The coot is found throughout the greater part of Europe, Northern Africa and Asia. It is unknown in Ceylon.

In winter coot collect in large flocks in HOKAR Sar and in other lakes but not in the Dal Lake. "On the Munchur Lake, the water is covered with separate flocks of coot, each of which keeps more or less to a territory of its own separated by a gap of several hundred yards from the territory of the next. The noise of wings and paddling feet when one of these gatherings takes to flight is like the noise of great waves breaking on a shingle beach. For the coot rises with difficulty, pattering at first along the surface of the waters, though once on the wing it flies strongly with neck and legs outstretched and rises well up into the air."

WHISTLER.

Their food consists of vegetable matter, small fish, water insects and eggs and chicks of other water birds. The nest consists of a mass of water-plants among the rushes. The clutch varies from 6 to 10. The ground colour is a pale buffy-stone with black and dark brown spots. They measure  $52.4 \times 35.0$  mm.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

## (FAMILY JACANIDAE)

## THE PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA

*Hydrophasianus chirurgus**Kashmiri names.*—Goind Kāv, Gair Kov.

## A SUMMER MIGRANT

This bird is seen walking on lotus and other aquatic leaves. It has a long central tail feather. When flying the whiteness of its wings gives a beautiful effect. It has long claws and very long toes, which enables it to walk over the water leaves.

The bird has a wide distribution. It is found in India, Ceylon, Burma and eastward as far as China, the Philippines and Java.

In Kashmir we see the Jacana or Water-Pheasant in the Dal Lake towards the Nasim and Nishat Bagh side, Anchar Lake, Hokar Sar, and Pádsháhi Bágħ swamps.

Its long tail feather as well as those of Herons is plucked and sold to make a crest for bride-grooms to wear on their heads. Its call is loud and somewhat like "gooruk". It feeds on fresh water molluscs and vegetable matter. The breeding season is June. 4 eggs peg-top shaped are laid in a heap of accumulated floating water plants. The eggs are of dark olive brown colour. They measure 37·2 × 27·8 mm.

CHAPTER XXXVII  
FAMILY CHARADRIIDAE  
THE COMMON SAND PIPER.

*Tringa Hypoleuca.*

*Kashmiri names.*—Tont Kôn, Kula Kavin.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This sandpiper is rather smaller than a myna. The upper plumage is dark brown and the under parts white. The bill is long, straight and slender, the front toes are slightly webbed.

It breeds from the Arctic circle to the Mediterranean basin in Europe and in Asia north of the Himalayas eastward to Japan. In winter it migrates southward, to Africa, Southern India, Australia and Tasmania. Several pairs are to be seen in the Dal Lake and the Jhelum.

It is a graceful little bird with slender legs, often seen running along the sandy banks of mountain streams in summer. We have observed it in Suru, Gurais, Lidderwat and Madhamati valleys. When disturbed it flies away skimming the surface of the water and emitting a shrill note. It wags its short white tail up and down.

The food consists of water insects and their eggs. Eggs are laid in May and June in a nest composed of dry leaves and grass in a depression under a bush. The clutch consists of 4 eggs of creamy white colour spotted chiefly at the broad end with reddish brown and sepia markings. They measure 35·5 × 26·0 mm.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

## ORDER———GAVIAE

## FAMILY LARDIAE

## THE WHISKERED TERN.

*Chlidonias leucopareia indica.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Kreu.

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

The whiskered tern is a whitish bird with the top and the sides of the head black and under parts sooty black. Bill and legs red. In winter it may be found in Ceylon and Burma.

These birds are seen flying across lakes, swamps and rice fields from one side to another. At times they dip to catch their prey. It feeds on dragon flies, water beetles and insects.

On July 8 we got inside the swamp to the south of Padshahi Bagh. We found no less than 25 nests. We did not see more than 3 eggs in any nest. The pity is that grass cutters steal their eggs to sell to the people in the city. As we approached the nest, the bird made a hideous noise and even tried to swoop down and peck us. They made several gestures and the noise was great. The nest is like a floating islet composed of water plants with a depression at the top. The ground colour of the eggs is yellowish brown or pale green, marked chiefly in a zone at the large end with deep brown chocolate spots. They measure 37·0 × 27·4 mm.

CHAPTER XXXIX  
ORDER——HERODIONES  
FAMILY ARDEIDAE  
THE COMMON HERON.

*Ardea cinerea cinerea.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Brag.

The upper plumage of this bird is ashy grey, the flight feathers bluish black, the long breast plumes white, the lower plumage white. The iris is golden yellow, the bill a dirty yellow. It is long, compressed and pointed; the tail short.

It is found in the greater part of Europe, Asia and Africa and extends through West and Central Asia into India, Ceylon and Burma.

“The flight of the heron is very majestic and characteristic, and when travelling the bird mounts high in the air and is recognisable a long way off. The head is drawn back within the shoulders and the long legs trail behind while the large rounded wings beat with a slow methodical rhythm. The call is a loud harsh “frank” usually uttered in flight. The bird is partly nocturnal in its habits.”

WHISTLER.

It stands motionless at the edge of the water to watch for a fish or frog. This position has given rise to an idiom, “Braga Smád (Heron’s trance)”.

There are regular colonies of these birds at Bandapor, Vetsar Nag and Kulgam. On a July night in Bandapor we had no sleep owing to the deafening noise of these birds. On the top of the huge chenars their long necks appear like so many serpents swaying to and fro. They nest on these trees.

### THE NIGHT HERON.

*Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Bōr.

A RESIDENT BIRD.

This bird is slightly smaller than a kite. The overcoverts are black glossed with green, and long white feathers hang from the crest; the under parts are white.

The iris is red, the skin is bare from the eyes to the beak and is yellowish green, the bill is black and yellowish at the base, the feet greenish yellow. The neck is short and thick.

It is found in South and Central Europe, nearly the whole of Africa and in the greater part of Asia.

They spend their time sitting on the top of chenars, and as soon as the sun sets they are seen flying in lines, flapping their wings regularly, emitting "wak wak" and flying past Shankarachar to feed on fish or water insects in some pond or lake. There is a regular colony of these birds at Hazarat Bal. They lay 4 eggs of light green colour. These measure 49·5 × 34·8 mm.



## THE LITTLE BITTERN.

*Ixobrychus minutus minutus.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Goi

A SUMMER MIGRANT.

This is a very common bird seen among the bulrushes on the Dal Lake. One sees it watching its prey—a frog or fish, standing motionless with long beak and legs. Sometimes it climbs willow trees and sits on the branches. It has a yellowish brown body with black and white wings and a black back.

It is seen in the last week of April. Breeding commences in May and from 5 to 7 dull white eggs are laid in a nest of leaves in a bulrush bed. The eggs are slightly elliptical in shape. They measure 34·5 × 25·5 mm.

## CHAPTER XL

## ORDER——ANSERES-DUCKS

## FAMILY ANATIDAE

The bill is rather long and broad and the claws webbed. "The changes of plumage through which most of the ducks pass are very curious and there are at least six of these. After the young have acquired their first plumage, both sexes resemble the old female. In the first year they are like the adults, but differ somewhat from both, then the male has a separate plumage from the female in the fully adult stage, and lastly there is the post nuptial dress of the male, when he retires into a sober-coloured plumage like that of his wife."

R. B. SHARPE.

The wild ducks (Pachin) begin to migrate in November. All through the winter in snow storms and rain they are heard and sometimes seen, flying at dusk in lines and curves headed by a pilot, towards the east to feed in lakes and swamps, and at dawn about 6·30 a.m. they come back from their feeding grounds to Hokar Sar or some other swamps. By the flapping of their wings and a kind of creaking noise we can detect their flight. They are always punctual.

G. Stagdzing of Hemis Monastery (Ladakh) told me of a (wild duck) swan which has such a peculiar construction of the beak that if you offer

it milk mixed with water, it will drink only the milk and leave the water.

One wonders why Dr. Sven Heidin does not mention these mystic birds, for he launched his boat in Mansurowar Lake at the foot of Kialas Koh, where the head Lama told me these water fowls are found.

## THE MALLARD

*Anas platyrhyncha platyrhyncha.*

*Kashmiri name.*—Male, Neluj. / Female, Thuj.

### A WINTER MIGRANT

This bird is as large as a domestic duck. The male has a deep green head and neck with white collar, back brown, the shoulders grey, the breast deep chestnut, the under parts freckled greyish white, the tail black, the wings have a patch of bright greenish blue edged with black and white.

The female is brown with black markings. The iris is brown, the bill greenish yellow, the legs orange red. It breeds throughout the Northern Hemisphere and in winter is found southward to Northern Africa, Madeira, the Canaries and Northern India. Several pairs breed here. In winter they are seen in flocks in Hokar and other Sars. The breeding season is between April and May. The nest is built in reeds and about 12 eggs are laid of a very pale greenish colour.

They measure 56·3 × 41·3 mm.

**CHAPTER IXL**  
**ORDER ———PYGOPODES**  
**FAMILY PODICIPIDAE**  
**THE DABCHICK.**

*Podiceps ruficollis albipennis*

*Kashmiri name.*—Pind

A RESIDENT BIRD.

This is the smallest of the water birds seen swimming in the Dal and Anchar Lakes. The upper parts are dark brown, with sides of the head, neck, and throat chestnut, the under parts white.

“It rises from the water with some difficulty owing to the comparatively small size of its wings, but once in the air travels well and fast. On settling it strikes the water with the breast which is well cushioned with fat, down and feathers instead of thrusting forward its feet as a brake after the fashion of ducks and geese.” WHISTLER.

It is a strong swimmer and diver. If alarmed it dives quickly, coming up again some yards away when if it thinks there is still danger it again disappears under water. Eggs are laid from May to July in a nest of decayed floating vegetable matter in a reedy bed. The clutch consists of 4 to 6 eggs. The eggs are of creamy white colour pointed at both ends. When parents leave the nest they conceal the eggs with a part of the nest material.

The eggs measure 36·6 × 25·1 mm.

### Morning and evening song of birds.

The following observations of the serial succession of bird song at dawn and at dusk were taken on May 16 in accordance with the World Watcher Movement organised by Mr. Noble Rollin of Glanton.

These were recorded in Mr. E. D. Tyndale-Biscoe's garden which is a natural bird sanctuary. Here we find large and small trees, open spaces and lawn side by side. Sometimes we meet with rare specimens during spring and autumn migrations.

It was a blissful hour when my friend and I were surrounded by this heavenly music. The soul gets filled and thoughts are turned towards the Creator of the universe.

- 4.10 A.M. Soft calls of Tickell's thrush (*Turdus unicolor*).
- 4.15 A.M. Tickells thrush began its song.
- 4.16 A.M. The golden oriole (*Oriolus oriolus kundoo*) followed.
- 4.17 A.M. The second Tickell's thrush joined in.
- 4.19 A.M. The second golden oriole took part.
- 4.23 A.M. ( A lull )
- 4.24 A.M. Tickell's thrush and golden oriole began again.
- 4.30 A.M. Another thrush from a different quarter joined the concert.

Then we heard the paradise flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradise leucogaster*). This bird does not continue its song, but repeats twice or thrice and then stops. The

note goes somewhat as follows:— 'Were you you here? or it may be, 'Chich chichu chich'.

- 4.31 A.M. The third Tickell's thrush.
- 4.33 A.M. The ringdove (*Streptopelia decaocto decaocto*) from the eastern side.
- 4.44 A.M. Another ringdove from the south.
- 4.45 A.M. Another ringdove from the north.
- 4.46 A.M. All ringdoves together. Chorus in full swing. The Paradise flycatcher.
- 4.47 A.M. The house crow (*Corvus splendens zigma-yeri*).
- 4.48 A.M. The ringdove.
- 4.58 A.M. Ringdoves, orioles, thrushes at high pitch.
- 5.00 A.M. The crow, the house sparrow, (*Passer domesticus parkni*), the starling (*Sturnus vulgaris humii*), the myna (*Aridotheres tristis tristis*).
- 5.7 A.M. The bulbul (*Molpastes leucogenys leucogenys*).
- 5.10 A.M. Ringdoves in chorus.
- 5.12 A.M. A thrush was seen feeding on the ground.
- 5.13 A.M. The tit (*Parus major kaschmiriensis*). The note resembles the creaking sound of a spinning wheel.
- 5.20 A.M. Ringdoves, tits, bulbuls continue.
- 5.21 A.M. The hoopoe (*Upupa epops epops*).
- 5.22 A.M. The rufous-backed shrike (*Lanius schach erythronotus*). This bird is a great mimic, but apparently it does not sing in the morning. It lies in wait to kill others.

- 5.24 A.M. The jackdaw (*Corvus monedula monedula*).
- 5.30 A.M. Orioles and thrushes stopped. Ringdoves and tits continuing.
- 5.33 A.M. The kite (*Milvus migrans lineatus*) gave two screams only.
- 5.45 A.M. Doves, bulbuls, the hoopoe, the myna continuing. Morning cloudy.  
Sunrise about 6-10 A.M.  
In day time doves, orioles, thrushes continue their songs in a cool place occasionally.  
Sunset about 7-10 P.M.
- 7.14 P.M. Myna, the bulbul and the golden oriole.
- 7.15 P.M. The thrush.
- 7.20 P.M. 'Tuck, tuck' calls of several thrushes.
- 7.25 P.M. Thrush, ringdove, golden oriole and the scream of a kite.
- 7.35 P.M. Ringdove and thrush again.
- 7.45 P.M. Various calls of thrushes.
- 7.50 P.M. Silence prevails after the hard day's struggle for food for their dependents, they merit perfect sleep.

**S. C. K.**

**Natural History Department,**

*May 19th, 1937.*

C. M. S. High School,

SRINAGAR,

KASHMIR.

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Podiceps ruficollis 96.  
Porphyrio pollocephalus 86.  
Poshi nul 35.  
Pyrrhocax 7.

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                  plumbeous 22.  
Roller 61.  
Rosefinch 44.  
Rhyacornis fuliginosa 22.

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Satut 68.  
Saxicola torquata 20.  
Sehara 45.  
Schara 45.  
Sheena-pi-pin 12.

## S

- Shrike 28.  
 Skylark 57.  
 Sparrow 46.  
 Starling 39.  
 Streptopelia orientalis. 81.  
     decaocto 81.  
 Sturnus vulgaris 37.  
 Swallow 52.

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- Tech 85.  
 Telaköts 31.  
 Tern 90.  
 Terpsiphone paradisi 26.  
 Tichodrama muraria 18.  
 Thuj 95.  
 Thrush, Laughing 12.  
     Black throated 23.  
     Tickell's 23.  
     the himalayan  
        whistling 24.  
 Tiriv, dofa 20.  
     kola 22.  
 Tit, the grey 9.  
     the crested black 10.  
 Trochalopterm 12.  
 Tringa 89.  
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     wan 50.

## T

- Tsini-haňgur 37.  
 Tulri kháv 63.  
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     the pied 59.  
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