

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Type specimens of Sri Lankan birds in the collection of the Zoological Survey of India

Kaushik Deuti*

* Zoological Survey of India, 27 Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Calcutta 700 016, India.

Introduction

Edward Blyth (1810–1873) was the Curator of the Museum of the Asiatic Society of Bengal from 1841–1863. He described several new taxa based on cabinets of vertebrates collected from Ceylon and sent to him by contacts in that island, including Robert Templeton (1802–1892), Edgar Leopold Layard (1824–1900), Edward Fredric Kelaart (1818–1860).

In 1866, with the passing of the Museum Act, the Asiatic Society's collections were handed over to the Indian Museum in Calcutta, since 1916 part of the Zoological Survey of India, which now houses the National Zoological Collection of India. The ZSI, with its headquarters in Calcutta, is still the single largest repository of zoological material in the country. A significant part of the collections of birds from Ceylon made by Templeton, Layard and Kelaart during the 1800s, are still lodged in the collection of the Bird Section of the ZSI in Calcutta. A brief account of the history of the bird collection in the Indian Museum with a list of type specimens of taxa then considered valid was given by Sclater (1892), who also listed missing types of taxa described by Blyth. In this article, I list the type specimens of birds from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) still present in this valuable collection.

For historical information on Blyth, Templeton, Layard and Kelaart in relation to the ornithology of Sri Lanka see Legge (1878–1880: Introduction), Whistler & Kinnear (1930), Kinnear (1952), Wijesinghe (1997), etc. A biographical account of Blyth is given by Grote (1875); another is under preparation (see Brandon-Jones, 1995).

N.B. The figures in parentheses after the common names of the birds indicate the species numbers as given in Ali & Ripley (1987).

List of type specimens

1. Layard's Parakeet (565)
Palaeornis calthropae Blyth, 1849. Type: ZSI 35068 (syntype) from Ceylon, collected by E. L. Layard, 1848. Current status: *Psittacula calthropae* (Blyth, 1849).
2. Ceylon Green-billed Coucal (604)
Centropus chlororhynchos Blyth, 1849. Type: ZSI 35611 (holotype) from Ceylon, collected by E. L. Layard, 1848. Current status: *Centropus chlororhynchos* (Blyth, 1849).
3. Cheshnut-backed Barred Owlet (638)
Anthene castanota Blyth, 1852. Type: ZSI 30007, 30008 (syntypes) from Ceylon, collected by R. Templeton, 1846. Current status: *Glaucidium radiatum castanonotum* (Blyth, 1852).
4. Ceylon brown-crowned Pygmy Woodpecker (854)
Picas gymnophthalmus Blyth, 1849. Type: ZSI 35351 (Holotype), from Ceylon, collected by E. L. Layard, 1848. Current Status: *Picoides nanus gymnophthalmus* (Blyth, 1849).
5. Ceylon Striated or Red-rumped Swallow (928)
Hirundo hyperythra Blyth, 1849. Type: ZSI 18854, 35363 (syntypes) from Ceylon, collected by E. L. Layard, 1848. Current Status: *Hirundo daurica hyperythra* Blyth, 1849.
6. Ceylon white-vented Drongo (969)
Dicrurus leucopygialis Blyth 1849. Type: ZSI 18811 (syntype) from Colombo, Ceylon, collected by E. L. Layard, 1846. Current status: *Dicrurus caerulescens leucopygialis* Blyth, 1846.

7. Ceylon Hill Mynah (1019)
Gracula ptilogenya Blyth, 1846. Type: ZSI 35374 (Holotype) from Ceylon, collected by E. L. Layard, 1844. Current status: *Gracula ptilogenys* Blyth, 1846.
8. Ceylon Wood Shrike (1071)
Tephrodornis Affinis Blyth, 1847. Type: ZSI 35388 (syntype) from Ceylon, collected by E. L. Layard, 1846. Current status: *Tephrodornis pondicerianus affinis* Blyth, 1847.
9. Yellow-eared Bulbul (1136)
Pycnonotus penicillatus Blyth, 1852 ['1851']. Type: ZSI 35402 (Holotype) from Ceylon, collected by E. F. Kelaart, 1850. Current status: *Pycnonotus penicillatus* Blyth, 1851.
10. Ceylon brown-capped Babbler (1161)
Dryocathopus fuscicapillus Blyth, 1849. Type: ZSI 18808, 35415 (syntypes) from Colombo, Ceylon. Collected, according to the label, 'by E. L. Layard in 1835' but Layard was not known to be in Ceylon prior to 1845. Current status: *Pellorneum fuscicapillum fuscicapillum* Blyth, 1849.
11. Southern Ceylon Scimitar Babbler (1177)
Pomatorhinus melanurus Blyth, 1847. Type: ZSI 18786, 30019, 35421 (syntypes) from Urugaha, Ceylon, collected by R. Templeton, 1846. Current status: *Pomatorhinus schisticeps melanurus* Blyth, 1847.
12. Ceylon wet zone black-headed Babbler (1227)
Alcippe nigrifrons Blyth, 1849. Type: ZSI 18795 (holotype) from Urugaha, Ceylon. Collected by E. L. Layard in 1849. Current Status: *Rhopocichala atriceps nigrifrons* Blyth 1849.
13. Ceylon Rufous Babbler (1266)
Malacocercus rufescens Blyth, 1847. Type: ZSI 30015, 30016, 35445, 35446 (syntypes) from Ceylon, collected by R. Templeton, 1846. Current status: *Turdoides rufescens* Blyth, 1847.
14. Ceylon Streaked Fantail Warbler (1500)
Cisticola omalura Blyth, 1852 ['1851']. Type: ZSI 30034 (holotype) from Ceylon, collected by E. L. Layard, 1848. Current status: *Cisticola juncidis omalura* (Blyth, 1851).
15. Ceylon Jungle Wren-warbler (1523)
Drymoica valida Blyth, 1852 ['1851']. Type: ZSI 35500 (holotype) from Ceylon, collected by E. L. Layard in 1849. Current status: *Prinia sylvatica valida* Blyth, 1851.
16. Spotted-winged Ground Thrush (1737)
Oreocincla spiloptera Blyth, 1847. Type: ZSI 35553 (syntype) from Ceylon, collected by E. L. Layard in 1846. Current status: *Zoothera spiloptera* Blyth, 1847
17. Ceylon Black Bird (1757)
Merula Kinnisii Kelaart, 1852 ['1851']. Type: ZSI 18837 (holotype) from Nuwara Eliya, Ceylon, collected by E. F. Kelaart, 1849. Current status: *Turdus merula kinnisii* (Kelaart, 1851).
18. Ceylon Hill Munia (1973)
Munia kellarti Jerdon, 1863. Type: ZSI 18845 (holotype) from Ceylon, collected by E. F. Kelaart, 1847. Current status: *Lonchura kelaarti kelaarti* (Jerdon, 1863).

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to D. P. Wijesinghe, City University of New York, USA, for contributing information to this article.

Literature cited

- Ali, S. & S.D. Ripley. 1987. A handbook of the birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Second edition. Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi. xlii+737 pp., 104 pl.
- Baker, E. C. S. 1930. The Fauna of British India, including Ceylon and Burma. Birds (Second edition). Taylor and Francis, London. Vols. 7 and 8. Vol. 7: viii, 484 pp.; vol. 8: iv, 485–801 pp.
- Brandon-Jones, C. 1995. Long gone and forgotten: reassessing the life and career of Edward Blyth, zoologist. Arch. Nat. Hist., 22(1): 91–95.
- Grote, A. 1875. Introduction. In Blyth, E., Catalogue of mammals and birds of Burma. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 43(2) [Extra Number]: iii–xxiv, portrait.
- Kinnear, N. B. 1952. The history of Indian mammalogy and ornithology. J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc., [1951], 50(4): 766–778, 3 plts.; [1952], 51(1): 104–110.
- Legge, W. V. 1878–1880. A History of the birds of Ceylon. Published by the author, printed by Taylor & Francis, London. xlvi, 1237 pp., 34 col. plts., 1 col. map, 1 diag., 11 woodcuts.
- Slater, W. L. 1892. On the Indian Museum and its collection of birds. The Ibis, (ser. 6), 4(13): 65–87.
- Whistler, H. & Kinnear, N. B. 1930. The Vernay Scientific Survey of the Eastern Ghats. Ornithological section. [part]. J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc., 34(2): 386–403.
- Wijesinghe, D. P. 1997. Bird study in Sri Lanka; an historical perspective. Oriental Bird Club Bulletin 26: 26–31.