

Common Birds of the Penang Botanic Gardens



**Jabatan Taman Botani
Pulau Pinang**



**Malaysian Nature Society
Penang Branch**

This booklet is not intended to be the checklist of the birds found at the Penang Botanic Gardens. The birds listed in the booklet are the species that visitors to the Gardens will more likely to observe while walking along the public access areas of the Gardens. Although the more adventurous may try the numerous well marked trails inside the Gardens including the forest areas.

For more information about the birds at the Penang Botanic Gardens please contact the Malaysian Nature Society, Penang Branch.

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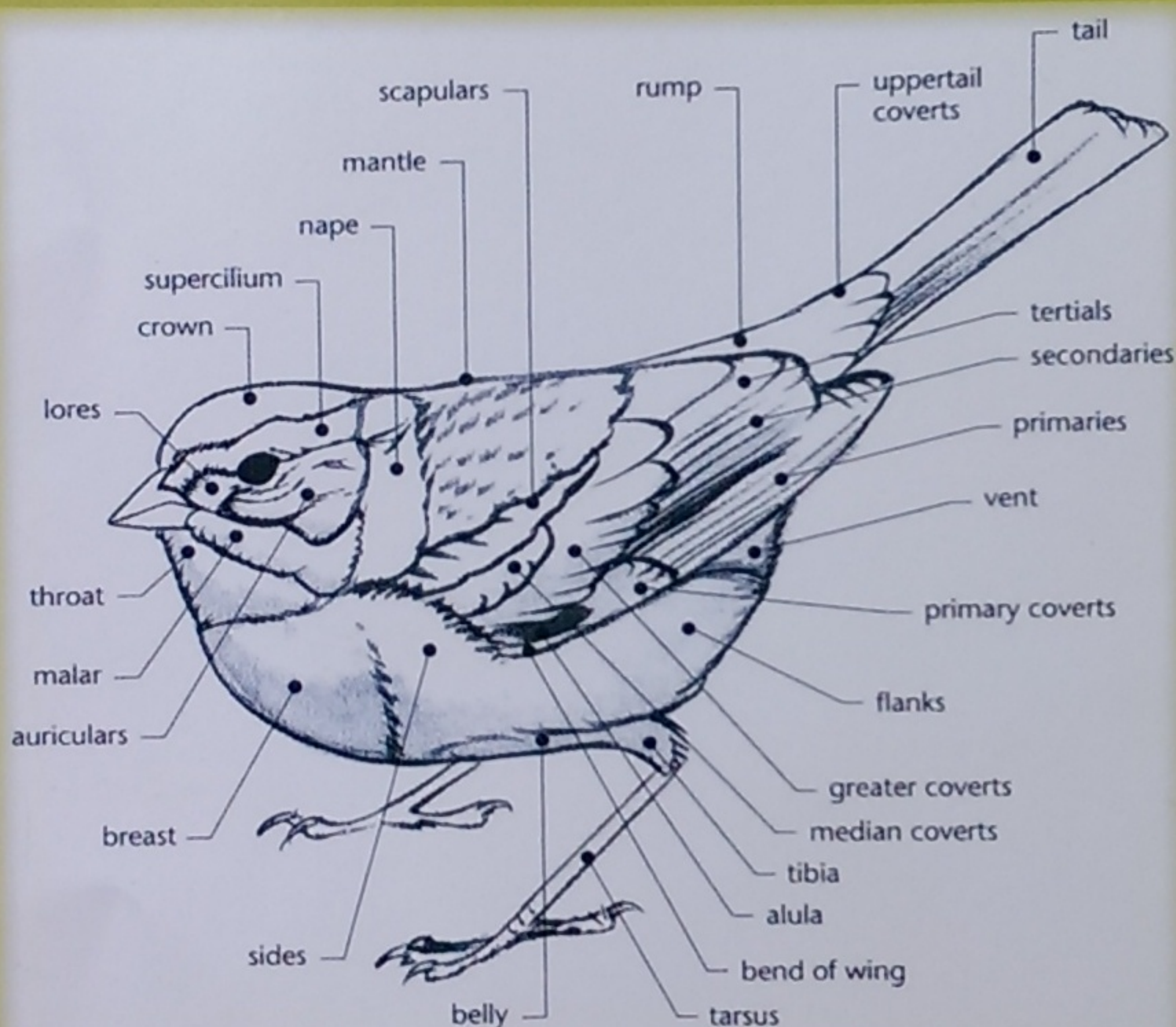


Code of Conduct for Birdwatchers and Photographers

1. When carrying out birdwatching or bird photographing activities, it is paramount that the welfare and safety of the bird is of the highest priority.
2. The birds should not ever be stressed or frightened by your inappropriate actions.
3. Stay well away from nesting birds or birds that are feeding their chicks or fledglings.
4. Do not make loud noises or throw objects at birds to make them move in order to give you a better view.
5. Minimise the use of photographic flash and playback of bird songs and calls.



Bird Topography



Rufous Woodpecker

Celeus brachyurus

(Belatok Biji Nangka)

25cm long. Resident.

Reddish-brown with black bars on wings and upperparts and red cheek patches. The belly is also barred. As with all woodpeckers they excavate nest holes. Even in an ant's nest as shown by this photo.



Dollarbird

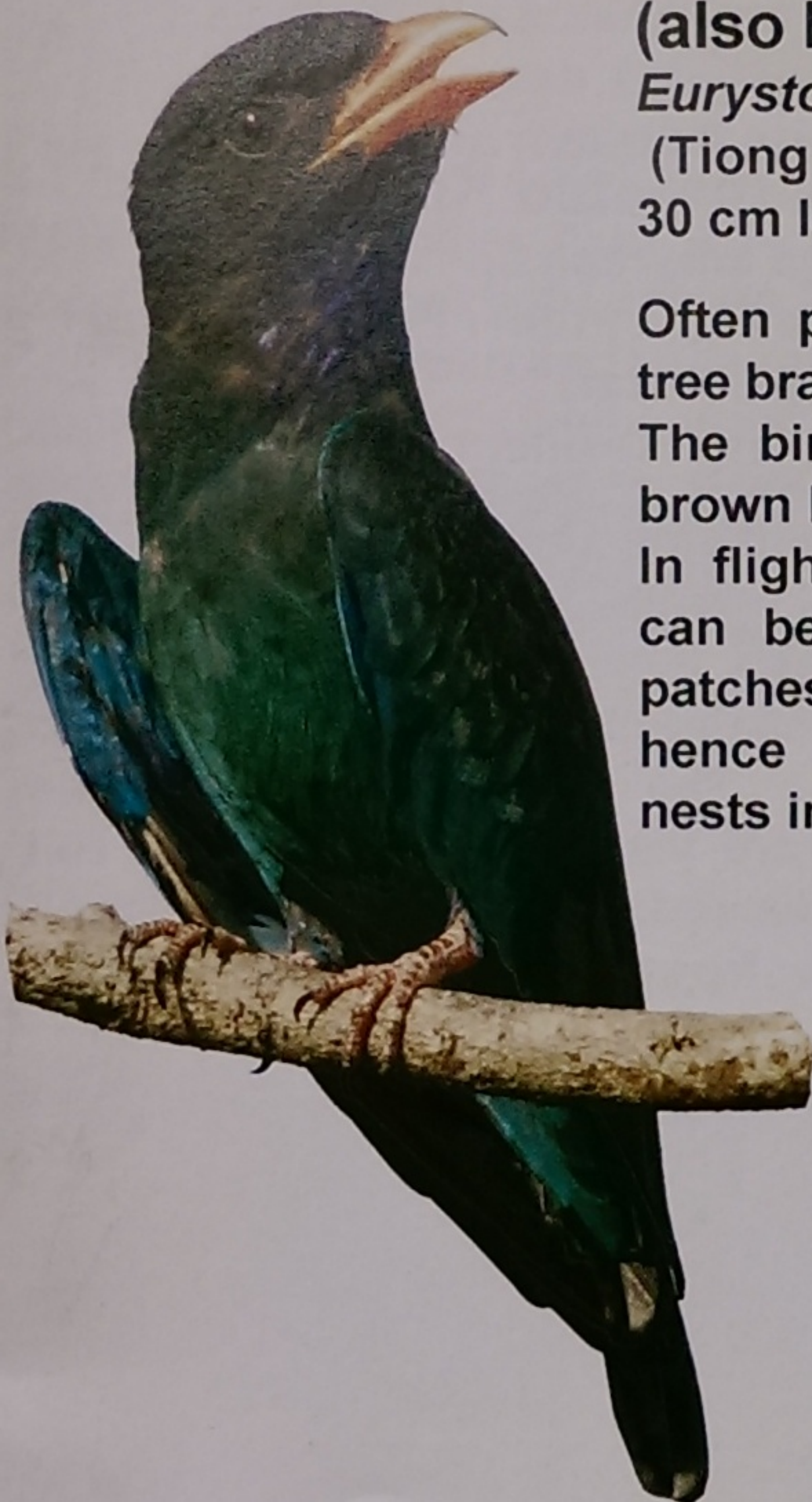
(also known as Broadbilled Roller)

Eurystomus orientalis

(Tiong Batu / Belacan)

30 cm long. Resident and Migrant

Often perches high on exposed or dead tree branches. At a distance it looks black. The bird is actually bluish-green with a brown head. It has a large orange-red bill. In flight, two large round white patches can be seen on the wings. The white patches resemble the silver dollar coin and hence its name. Feeds on insects and nests in natural holes in trees.



Common Kingfisher

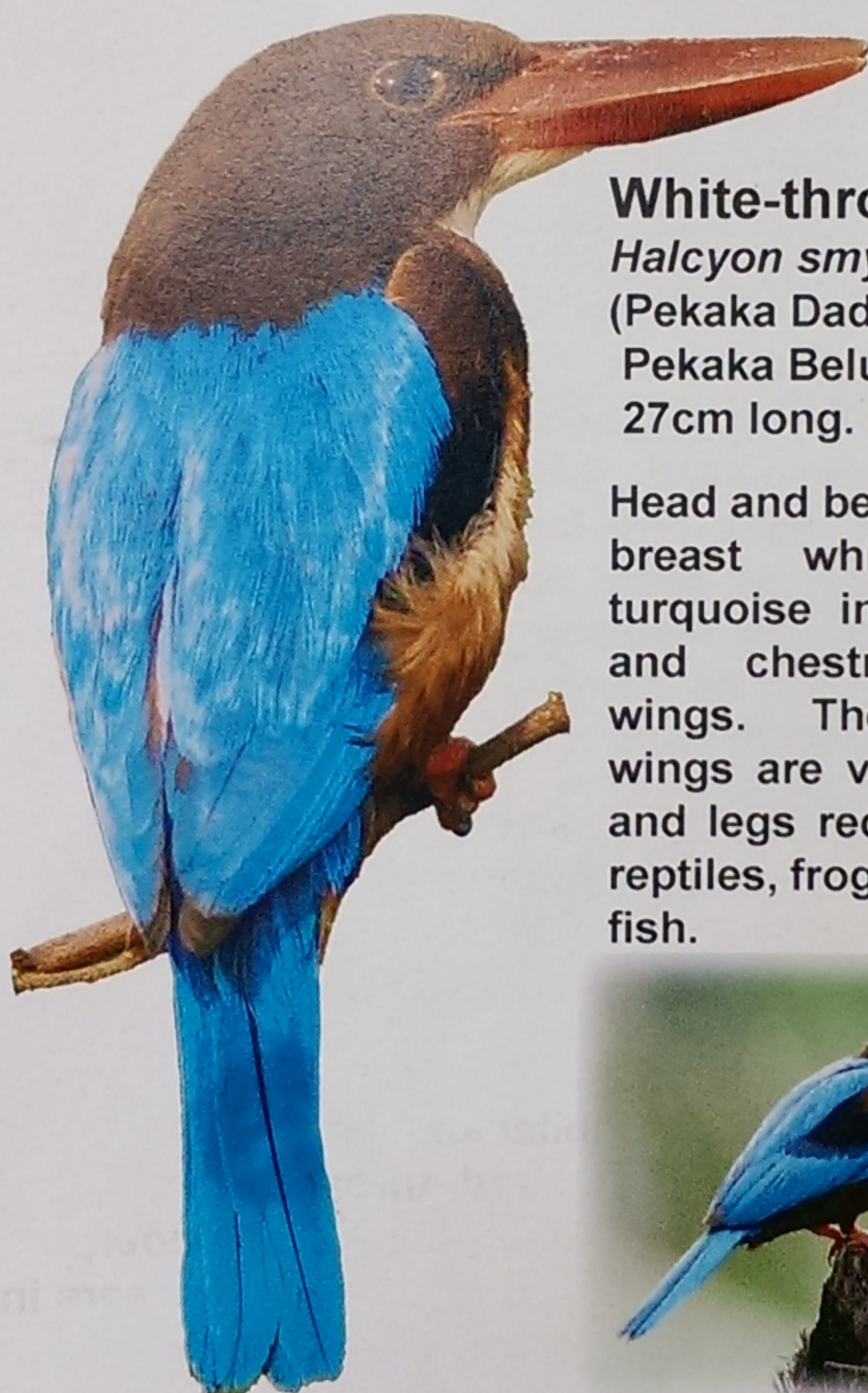
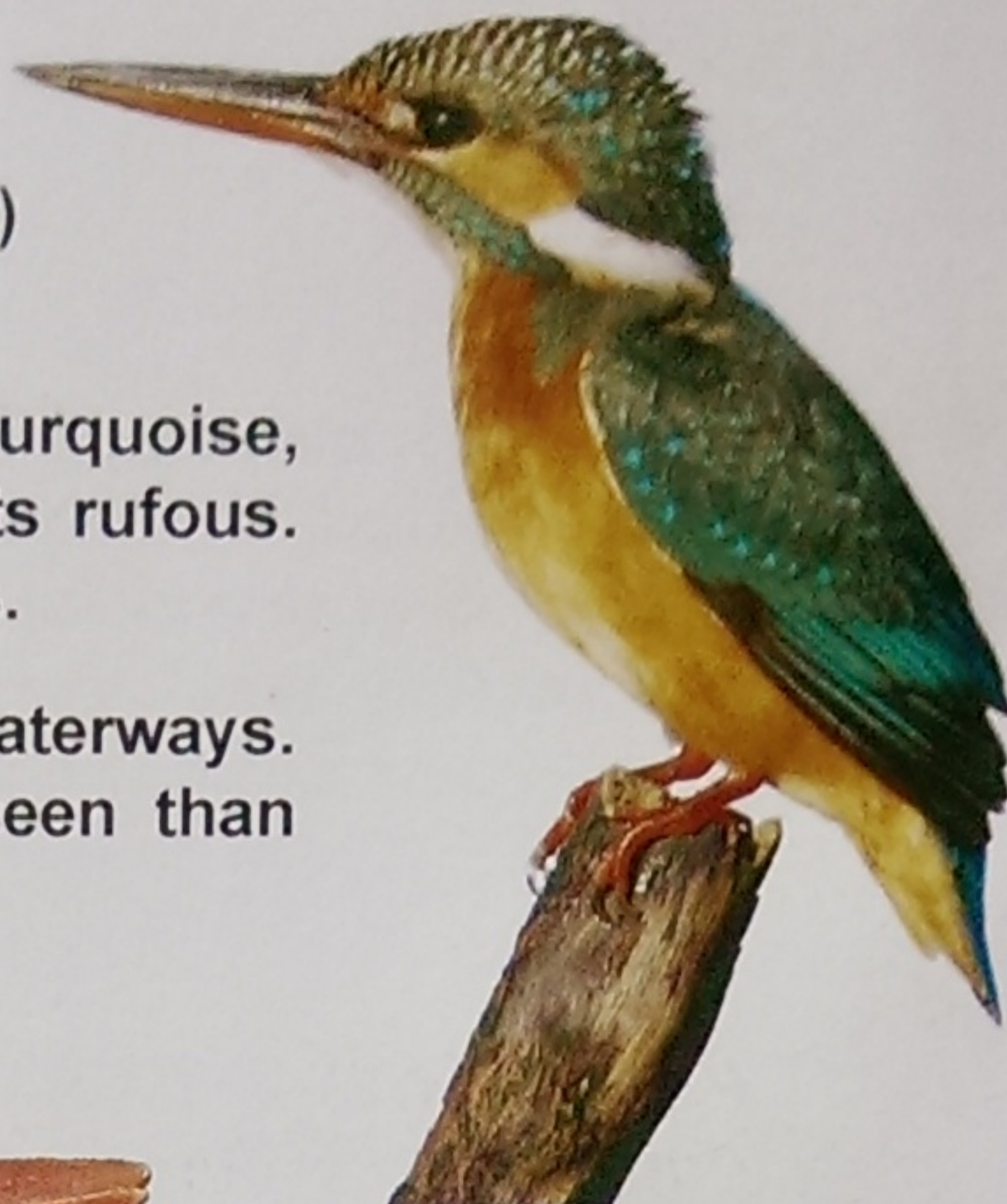
Alcedo atthis

(Pekaka Cit-cit / Pekaka Cit-cit Kecil)

16cm long. Resident and Migrant.

Upperparts blue with a tinge of turquoise, back turquoise blue and underparts rufous. Throat white and rufous ear-coverts.

Usually seen along streams and waterways. The migrant is more commonly seen than that of the resident in Penang.



White-throated Kingfisher

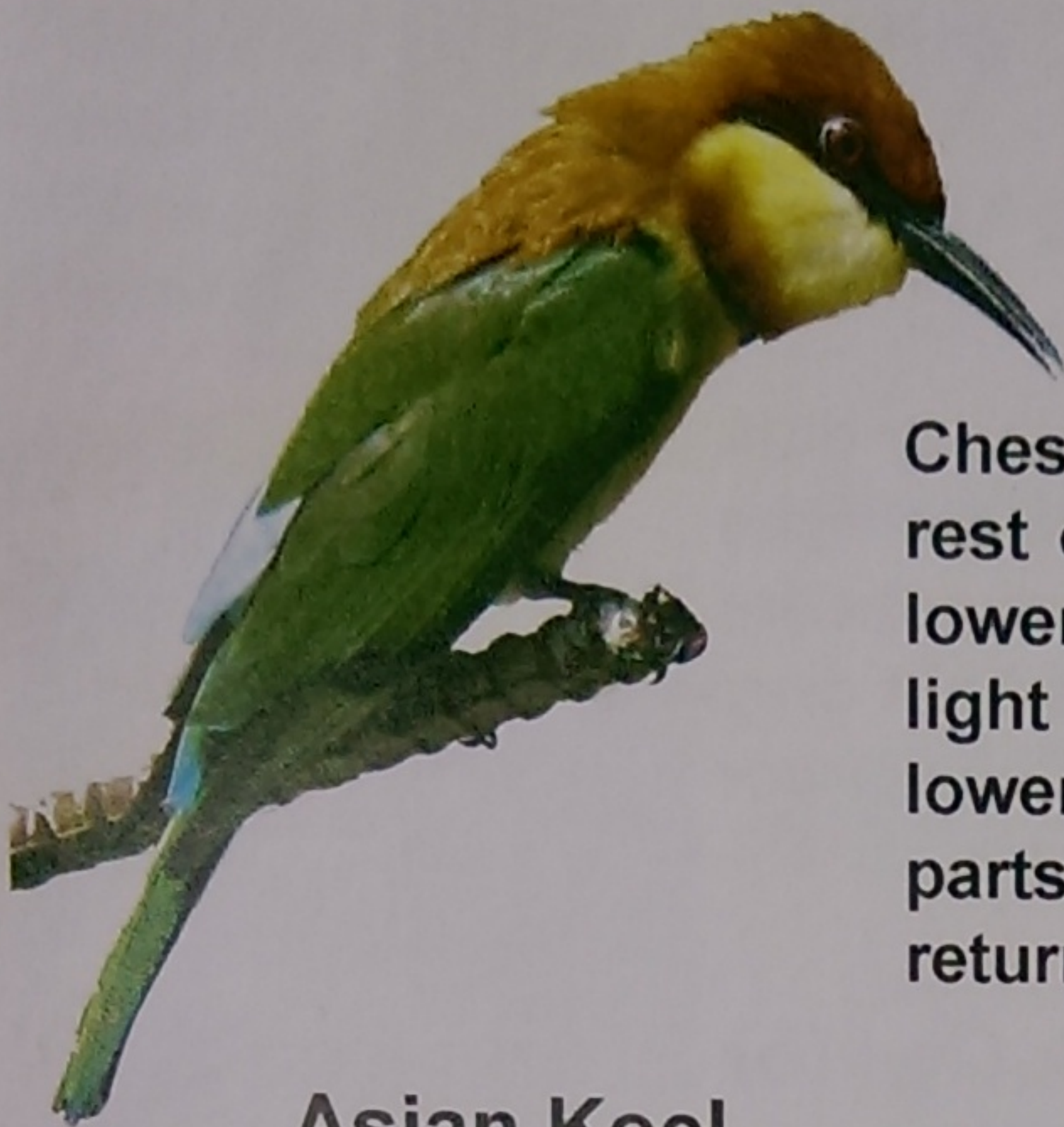
Halcyon smyrnensis

(Pekaka Dada Putih / Pekaka Dusun / Pekaka Belukar)

27cm long. Resident.

Head and belly dark brown, throat and breast white; wings and back turquoise including tail. Has black and chestnut-brown marking on wings. The white patches on the wings are visible only in flight. Bill and legs red. It takes insects, small reptiles, frogs, rodents and sometimes fish.





Chestnut-headed Bee-eater

Merops leschenaulti

(Berek-berek Senja)

21 cm long. Resident.

Chestnut head and upper back, and the rest of the upperparts green with bluish lower back but tail more greenish. Throat light yellow with a patch of chestnut on lower throat and greenish blue underparts. It catches insects in the air and returns to its perch to feed on.

Asian Koel

Eudynamys scolopacea

(Burung Sewah Tahu)

21 cm long. Resident and Migrant.

Male (below) glossy blue with blackish ting in good light. In poor light it looks black like a crow. Bill light apple green and eyes red. Female (right) blackish brown with white spots and streaks.



Plaintive Cuckoo

Cacomantis merulinus

(Burung Sewah Mati Anak)

22 cm long. Resident and Migrant



More often heard than seen, this cuckoo prefers open habitat and scrubland. The male (left) has a grey head, throat and breast and greyish brown upperparts. The underpart is rufous-buff. The female appears in a hepatic morph. It has a mournful call.

Grey-rumped Treeswift

Hemiprocne longipennis

(Layang-layang Berjambul Tongkeng Kelabu)

19cm long. Resident.

Male, crest, crown and upper back glossy dark green, with chestnut cheeks. In the female the cheeks are blackish. In flight, the bird appears blackish grey with a darker back and light grey rump and the tail is forked. The lower underparts is whitish.



Brown Hawk Owl (or Brown Boobook)

Ninox scutulata.

(Burung Hantu Betemak)

30 cm long. Resident.

A distinctive medium sized, round headed owl without ear-tufts or facial discs. Upperparts - dark brown. It has broad brown streaks on whitish underparts. A fairly common owl in Penang although more likely to be heard rather than seen. It also occurs in sub-urban gardens.

Emerald Dove

Chalcophaps indica

(Punai Tanah)

24cm long. Resident.



Male (left) upperparts metallic green back and wings with a white patch on wing shoulders; silvery grey head and two greyish-white bands on the back. Underparts reddish-brown, bill and legs red. Female like male but lacks the grey on the head. Often seen on the forest floor.

Peaceful Dove (or Zebra Dove)

Geopelia striata

(Merbok / Merbok Balam)

21cm long. Resident.



Greyish-brown with dark bars all over. Forehead and face whitish-grey with a bluish tinge. Breast pinkish and unmarked. Feeds on the ground and fairly tame.

Pink-necked Pigeon

Treron vernans

(Punai Gading / Punai Kericaui)

26cm long. Resident.

Male (right); head grey, pink nape and breast with a small orange band and the rest of the underparts green. Has a chestnut vent. Upperparts mostly greyish-green with black primary feathers. Female (bottom-right), like male but lacks pink and orange and has more yellow in the lower underparts.



This species is common and can even be spotted in urban parks and green areas of George Town

White-breasted Waterhen

Amaurornis phoenicurus

(Ruak-ruak / Wak-wak)

28cm long. Resident and Migrant.

Upperparts dark brown with an olive tinge. Face, throat, breast and belly white, lower belly and vent rich chestnut. Bill and legs yellow and eyes red.



Brahminy Kite

Haliastur indus

(Helang Merah)

More than 45 cm long.

Resident.



It is reddish-brown with a white head, neck and throat. The fine, black streaks on the white underparts can only be seen at close range. Shown-flying is the Juvenile.

This bird is a scavenger and feeds on carrion. It also catches live fish and is known to prey on domestic chicken. It builds a large nest, made up small branches and twigs in tall trees. This species is wide spread through the Island.

White-bellied Sea Eagle

Haliaeetus leucogaster

(Lang Laut / Lang Sicut) Ranges between 70 to 85 cm long. Resident.



It is a large eagle found along the coastal waters as well as inland. It is a grey and white bird with grey wings. Back, neck, head and underparts white. The tail is short and wedge shaped. The one shown flying is an immature bird. Feeds on fish and sea snakes. It also scavenges for food that is floating on the water.

Sea-Eagles are known to mate for life. They make large platform nests in tall trees and usually reuse the nest for each breeding cycle.

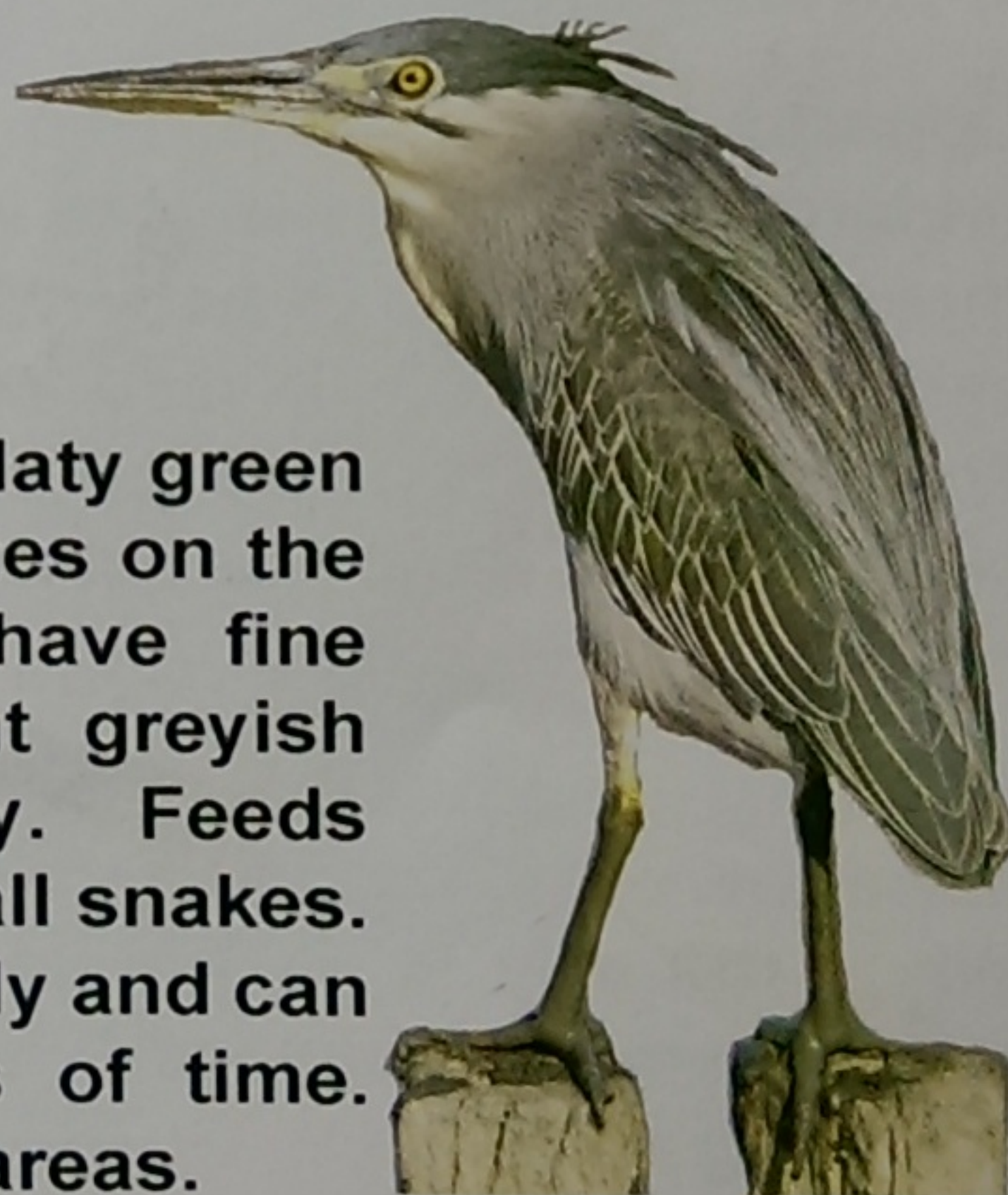
Little Heron

Butorides striatus

(Pucung Keladi)

40 cm long. Both resident and migrant.

The upperparts of the bird is light slaty green with a black crown and black plumes on the back of the neck. The wings have fine markings. The underparts is light greyish with a white throat and centre belly. Feeds on fish, frogs, lizards and even small snakes. Stalks its prey by moving very slowly and can stay motionless for long periods of time. Found in saltwater and freshwater areas.





Asian Fairy Bluebird

Irena puella

(Murai Gajah)

25 to 26 cm long. Resident.

Male – bright blue (turquoise) back and uppers wings and the rest of the body dark blue. Eyes are red. Female – dull blue with blackish wings and tail, eyes are also red. Feeds on fruits and also hawks for insects.

Quite vocal and usually seen high up in the trees.

Brown Shrike

Lanius cristatus

(Tirjup Tanah/ Tirjup Padang)

19cm long. Migrant.

Upperparts medium brown and underparts light brown with white throat and centre of belly. White eye-brow and black face mask. The forehead is white on some birds. Often wags its tail when perched.

This migrant arrives fairly early to winter here and departs as late as May. Usually it is already in full breeding plumage before departing north.



House Crow

Corvus splendens

(Gagak / Gagak Rumah)

40cm long.

Introduced species, now resident, considered as pest species.



General appearance, black with greyish nape and upper breast. Has a black forehead and throat. In good light most of the upperparts has a metallic sheen. A rather bold and aggressive bird; it mostly scavenges for food.

Black-naped Oriole

Oriolus chinensis

(Burung Kunyit Besar)

26cm long. Resident.

Brilliant yellow with black wing markings and tail black with yellow outer feathers. Black bandit mask that extends to the nape. Bill orangey red and eyes red. Female duller with upperparts olive tinged.

Very common throughout the Island with its presence betrayed by its distinctive loud and harsh call and also a loud melodious whistle.





Greater Racket-tailed Drongo

Dicrurus paradiseus

(Cecawi / Cecawi Anting-anting /
Cecawi Hamba Kera)

31 cm long excluding the tail streamers.

Resident

The tail streamers can be up to 30 cm long. The whole bird looks black. The upperparts are glossy blackish blue and the underparts do not have the glossy except for the throat and breast. Bill black with short rough crest. Eyes are red. The tails is slightly forked with two bare streamers and there is a twisted feather at each end of the streamers. The tail streamers can sometimes be missing or broken off.

It is a noisy bird and mimics other bird calls.

A common forest bird. It can also be found at the forest edge, plantations and orchard. It sometimes visits gardens.



Common lora

Aegithina tiphia

(Kelicap Kunyit Kecil / Kunyit Kacat)

15cm long. Resident.

Male (left): olive green upperparts with black wings and tail and underparts yellow. There are two white wing bars. Female (bottom-left) is duller with more olive tinge to the upperparts.

This species' call is varied and also has a long melodious whistle. Feeds on insects.

Asian Brown Flycatcher

Muscicapa dauurica

(Sambar Asia / Sambar Dusun)

13 cm long. Migrant.

Upperparts brownish grey and underparts whitish. There are traces of light brown on the breast and side of the body. It has a whitish eye ring which is usually half a ring or incomplete ring. Half of the lower bill is pale and with a black tip.

Flies out from its perch to catch insects and returns to its perch and waits for the next insect. This is a common feeding pattern of most flycatchers. This species arrives here during October and November from Siberia, China and Japan and departs by April and May.



Oriental Magpie Robin

Copsychus saularis

(Murai Kampung)

22 cm long. Resident.



A distinctive black and white bird. Male (right): glossy black head, nape and back. Throat and upper breast black. Wings black with long white bars. Tail black with white outer tail feathers. The rest of the underparts white. Female (left): like the male but the black parts are replaced with grey. Feeds on insects and nest in holes.

A popular cage bird, it is fast disappearing from urban areas.

White-rumped Shama

Copsychus malabaricus

(Murai Batu / Murai Hutan)

Male 27 cm and female 20 cm.

Resident.

Male (right): Glossy blue-black head, upperparts and upper breast. It has a white rump and a long black tail (7cm). Lower breast and belly orangy-red. Female: Like the male but the black parts are replaced by slaty-grey. Orangy-red parts duller. And the tail is much shorter.

Usually in low bushes and on the ground and often in pairs. Feeds on insects and builds nest in natural holes in trees. This species is popular cage bird prized for its song. Partly protected by law to reduce over trapping.



Asian Glossy Starling

Aplonis panayensis

(Perling / Perling Mata Merah)

19cm long. Resident.

Dark velvety green with red eyes in bright direct light but looks black in dull light. Juvenile (bottom), upperparts brown and underparts off white with dark streaks.

Feeds on fruits and berries and has adapted to urban environment, even nesting under eaves of houses.





Common Myna

Acridotheres tristis

(Tiong Gembala Kerbau /
Tiong Rumah)

25cm long. Resident.

Brownish with black head, throat and upper breast. Yellow bill and orbital skin. The two white patches on the wings are only visible in flight. Vent white. Tail black with white terminal band.



Crested Myna

Acridotheres cristatellus

(Tiong Gembala Jambul /
Tiong China)

26cm long. Introduced. Currently
resident on Penang Island.

Blackish plumage with a floppy
crest. Wing has a white patch. Bill
ivory white. Underparts duller black
with faint scales and vent has white
scaling.

This species has extended its range
to all parts of the Island.





Hill Myna (or Grackle)

Gracula religiosa

(Tiong Mas)

30 cm long. Resident.

Plumage is glossy black, with yellow-orange to reddish bill with yellow at the tip and yellow legs. Yellow skin patch (wattle) below the eyes and from the back of the eyes to the back of the head. There is a large white patch on each wings. Usually seen in pairs or small flocks. Feeds on fruits and insects. Nests in natural holes in trees. This species is often kept as a pet and can be taught to imitate simple words.

Pacific Swallow

Hirundo tahitica

(Layang-layang Pasifik / Sualo Batu)

14 cm long. Resident.

Rusty coloured forehead, throat and upper breast, rest of upperparts glossy blue-black. Wings and tail brownish. The tail is forked with white spots near the tip of the tail. Catches small insects and eats them while still in flight. Perches on bare branches, wires and poles. The nest is a half-cup structure, made up of mud and some plant material, in urban areas their nests can be found attached to the sides and under eaves of buildings.



Yellow-vented bulbul

Pycnonotus goiavier

(Merbah Kapur)

20cm long. Resident.

Blackish crown and brown upperparts and a slight crest. Broad white eye-brow with white face and throat, rest of underparts whitish with dull streaks and yellow vent. It is the most common of all the bulbul species



Olive-winged Bulbul

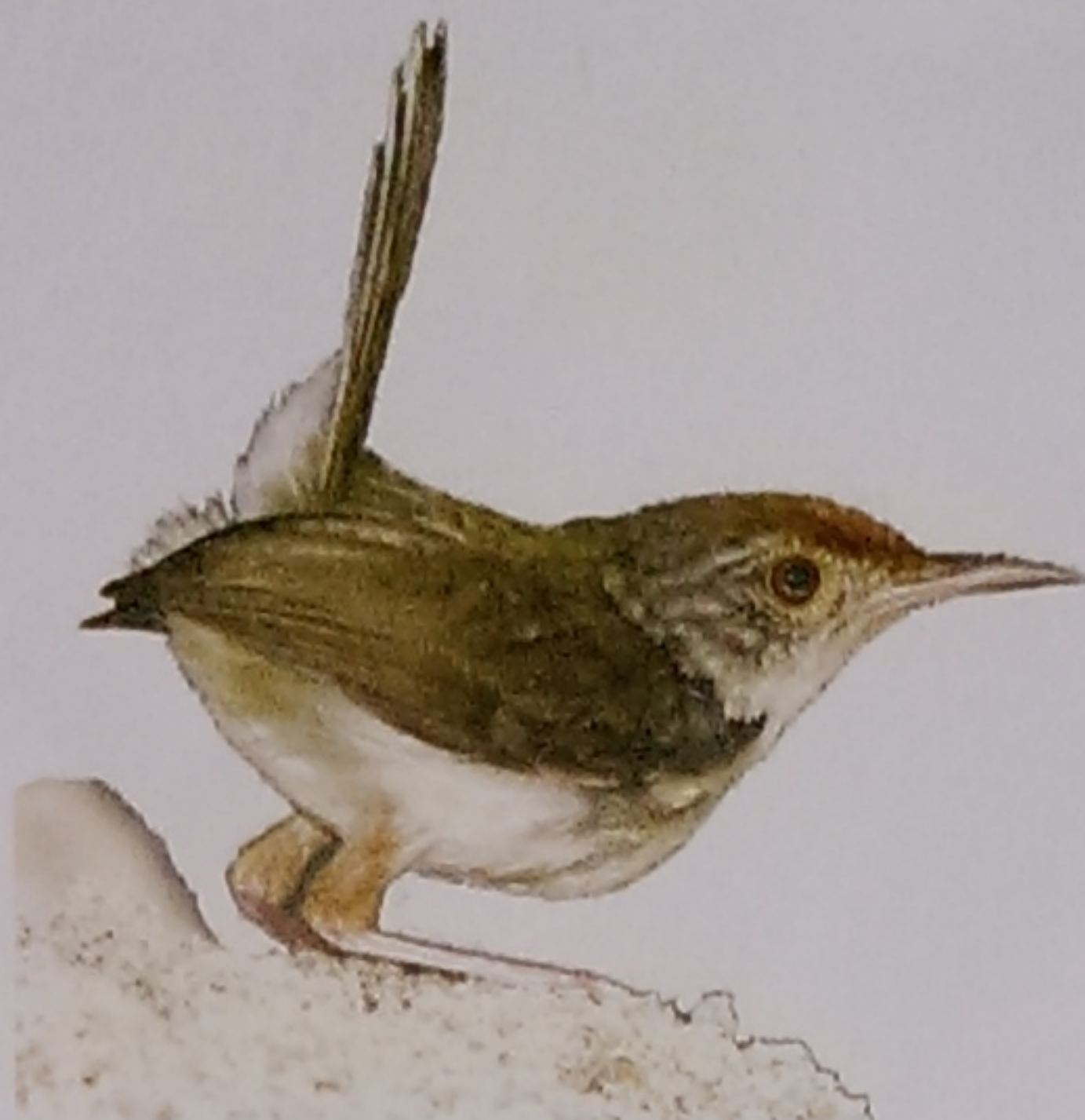
Pycnonotus plumosus

(Merbah Belukar)

20cm long. Resident.



Brown with light olive on the wings. Eyes red and had faint streaks over the whitish ears. Underparts light brown. Habitat; secondary forest. It feeds mainly on berries and sometimes it takes insects.



Common Tailorbird

Orthotomus sutorius

(Perenjak Pisang)

12cm long. Resident.

Olive-green with a brown tinge. Rufous crown with thin white eye-brow. Underparts; white with a light brownish tinge. Throat has black marking visible when it puffs its feathers. Male has a long tail (3.5cm long) and grows even longer in the breeding season.

Dark-necked Tailorbird

Orthotomus atrogularis

(Perenjak Belukar /

Perenjak Leher Hitam)

12 cm long. Resident



Male - rufous crown, olive-green with yellow tinge on the upperparts, black streaking on the sides of the head and blackish throat and uppermost breast. Underparts dull whitish with yellow rump. Female – like male but slightly duller, has less rufous on the crown and less black on the face and breast.

A noisy bird that moves quickly and may be difficult to see in thick undergrowth or bushes. Eats insects and caterpillars.

Arctic Warbler

Phylloscopus borealis

(Cekup Daun Artik)

13 cm long. Migrant

A very common migrant foraging either singly or in small flocks, gleaning insects from leaves. Olive-green above and whitish below.



Orange-bellied Flowerpecker

Dicaeum trigonostigma

(Sepah Puteri Bukit /

Sepah Puteri Dada Oren)

9cm long. Resident.



Male: (top-left) Slaty blue upperparts with an orange back. It has a grey throat. The breast and upper belly, orange; rest of underparts yellowish. Female: (top-right) Olive-green with a grey throat and yellow belly. It feeds on small fruits and insects.

Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker

Dicaeum cruentatum

(Sepah Puteri Merah)

9 cm long. Resident.

A very active bird. Male (right) has bright red on head, neck and back, wings are glossy bluish black and underparts mostly smokey white. Female (bottom-right) has olive green upperparts with red rump and dirty white underparts.

It feeds mainly on fruits and figs but does take insects occasionally. Very often seen feeding on the parasitic mistletoe plants. Builds a rounded woven nest which is suspended from a twig or a small branch.



Brown-throated Sunbird

Anthreptes malacensis

(Kelicap Mayang Kelapa)

14 cm long. Resident.



Male (top-right) – head and upper back metallic green, face brown, wings olive brown with metallic purple and maroon patches. Brown throat and yellow underparts. Female (top-left) – olive brown upperparts with broad light yellow eye ring and yellow underparts. Feet orange-yellow. Feeds on insects and nectar from flowers. Builds a woven pear shaped nest that is suspended from small branches or twigs.



Olive-backed Sunbird

Nectarinia jugularis

(Kelicap Bukit)

11.5cm long. Resident.

Male (left) olive-green upperparts with iridescent blue-black forehead, throat and breast dark iridescent blue-black, appears as black in poor lighting conditions, rest of underparts yellow. Female (bottom-left) olive-brown upperparts and yellow underparts and white in the tail.



Feeds on insects and nectar. Like all other sunbirds, builds a small woven rounded nest hanging from branches and even verandas of houses.

Crimson Sunbird

Aethopyga siparaja
(Kelicap Sepah Raja)
11cm long. Resident.

Male (right); head, back, throat and upper breast crimson, iridescent dark green on crown and tail. The rest of underparts grey. Has yellow rump. Female; dull olive with brownish tinge and dirty light yellow underparts.

Feeds on insects and nectar. Found in forests, forest edges, orchards and even gardens.



Forest Wagtail

Dendronanthus indicus
(Kedidi Hutan)
18cm long. Migrant.

Upperparts olive with a brown tinge, black and white bars on wings. Underparts; white with black breast bands. Feeds on the ground and sways its body sideways. It is one of the early winter migrants.

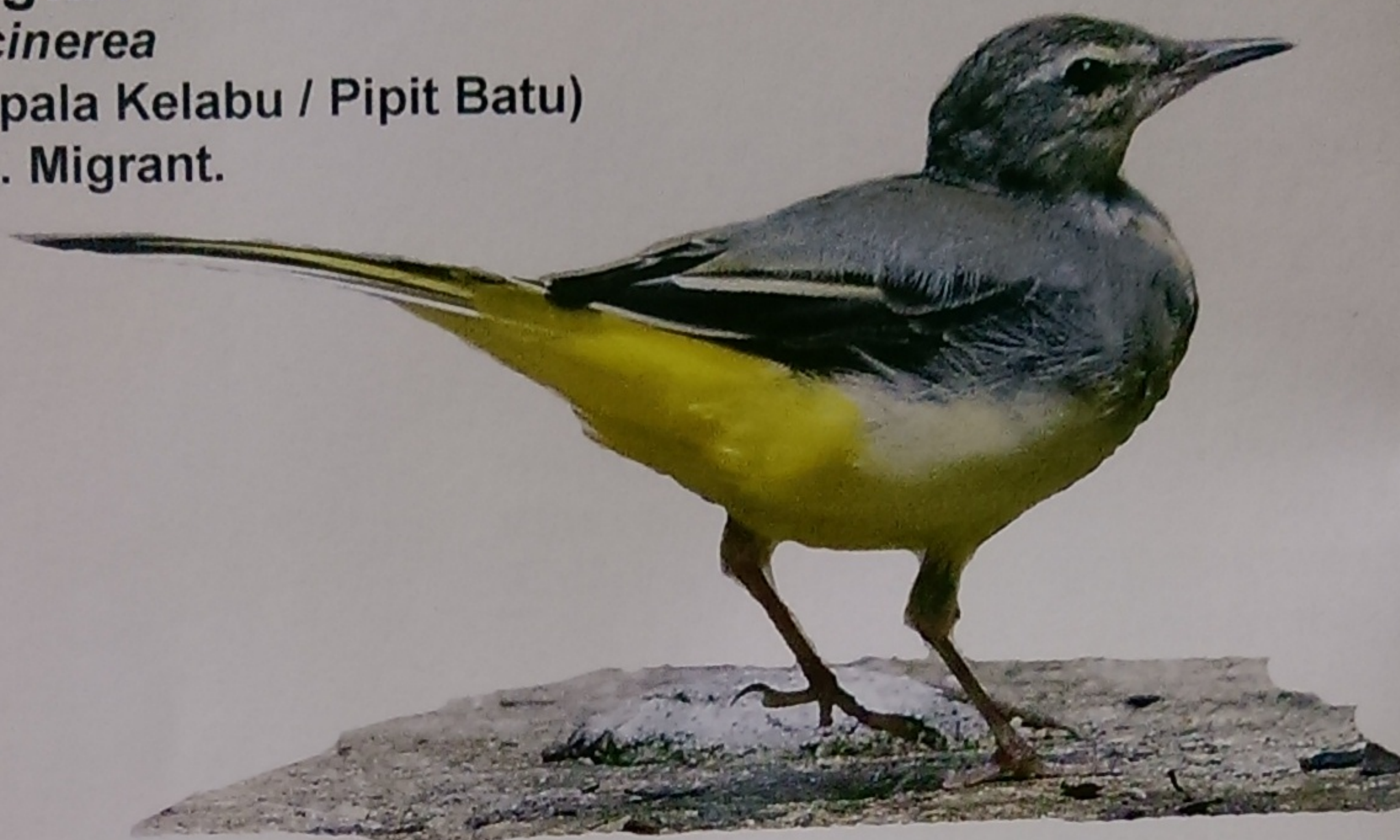


Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

(Kedidi Kepala Kelabu / Pipit Batu)

19cm long. Migrant.



Grey head and back with white eyebrow, rump yellow with white outer tail feathers. Underparts white with yellow vent and may have traces of light yellow on sides of belly. Attracted to water, it is usually found along fast flowing streams, constantly wagging its tail.

Scaly-breasted Munia

Lonchura punctulata

(Pipit Pinang)

12cm long. Resident.



Head and upperparts brown. Underparts white with brown scaling; and vent light brown. As with some bird species the juveniles or immature may not look exactly like its parents. The photo on the left is an immature. It is found in paddyfields and grasslands (lallang) where it feeds on seed.

Glossary: Common Terms Used in Birdwatching

Arboreal – birds living in the tree tops.

Endemic – species restricted to one specific area or locality.

Fledgling – a chick that have just left its nest and attended to by adult birds.

Head – the part of the bird from the fore-crown to the nape including the part above the eyes. Does not include the chin and throat.

Hepatic - Usually used for the brown colour morph found in some cuckoo.

Immature/Juvenile – a young bird that has not attained adulthood

Lower Mandible – the lower half of the bill.

Migrant – a birds species that flies south to spend the winter months in Malaysia.

Near Threatened – a category by which birds are classified for those species that are still surviving but may be moved to the Threatened Category (see *below*).

Nocturnal – active at night.

Primary Forest – undisturbed forest, also referred to as virgin forest

Raptor – a bird of prey like the eagle, hawk, falcon, etc.

Resident – a species that is present in a location throughout the year. Breeding may or may not occur.

Secondary Forest – forest that have been logged and new growth has started.

Secondary Growth – new growth when the original growth has been removed.

Sub-adult – a stage of which a bird is about to attain adulthood

Terrestrial – ground level, usually referring to birds living at ground level.

Threatened – a category by which birds are classified for those species that would become extinct soon, if there are no conservation measures taken to protect them and their habitat.

Undergrowth – parts of the growth in the lower story, usually bushes, ferns and young plants.

Underparts – parts of the bird's underside from the chin to the tail.

Upperparts - parts of the bird's upper side from the forehead to the top of the tail.