

feathers were little more than stumps. It is true this was an exceptionally late season in starting, and may have had something to do with the particular stage of moult in which the birds arrived, but that rather adds to the interest of the subject than otherwise.

The moult of the primaries appeared to start from about the centre of the wing, usually about the 7th and 8th, followed by the next outer pair and then an inner pair, so by the time the outer pair of primaries were dropped the new centre feathers had put on a fair amount of growth. This was about the weakest stage of the moult, when only the outer pair of old primaries remain.

Another noticeable feature of the moult was the dropping of the "pin" feathers from the tail, which occurred about a month later.

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November, 1913.

No. VIII.—DISTRIBUTION OF THE INDIAN PIED KINGFISHER  
(*CERYLE VARIA*) AND SPOTTED OWLET  
(*ATHENE BRAMA*) IN SIAM.

I have been endeavouring to trace recently the southern limit of the Indian Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle varia*. F. 1033) and should be glad if your readers would help me. This bird abounds on the Me Ping and Me Yome, and rivers further North, and is very plentiful on the Menam above and below Bangkok, but is unknown in the Malay States. It is common in India, Ceylon, and Burma in the plains, except south of Amherst, and it extends east into China, but apparently does not go much south of Bangkok. It should not be difficult to trace, as it is a noisy bird and can be readily recognised by its peculiar fishing habits. Unlike other Kingfishers it never plunges from a fixed perch, but flies over the water and hovers with its beak pointed downwards, at a height of frequently 15 or 20 feet above the surface, when it suspects the presence of a fish. It dives for its prey after hovering, hence the Siamese name "Nok kra ten *pak lak*," which likens the long straight plunge to the driving of a stake.

Another species which occurs in Siam, though as far as I am aware it has not previously been recorded, is the Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*. F. 1180). It is quite common some 40 miles north of Bangkok, but I believe it does not occur in Bangkok or further south in Siam—the exact distribution of it is therefore of interest.

Blanford gives it as occurring throughout India, but not in Ceylon, and as common in the Irrawaddy valley from Prome upwards, the latitude of Prome being about 18°. The latitude at which it is found in Siam is known to be as far south as 14°.

The Spotted Owlet is a noisy little bird (8" long) which comes out before sunset and pours forth a volley of chuckles and squeaks. Usually two of these individuals sit shouting together, as if trying which can finish its chatter first. The entire upper plumage is an ashy brown copiously spotted with white, and the tail is barred with

four to six bars. The lower plumage is whitish with broken brown cross bars or spots. The legs are feathered down to the feet, and the toes covered with long bristles on the upper side. This owlet has no so called "ears", and must not be confused with the Scops Owl, which is a quiet little owl and only utters a monotonous "toop" at regular intervals of about ten seconds.

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January, 1914.

No. IX. DISTRIBUTION OF *ANCISTRODON RHODOSTROMA*,  
THE MALAYAN VIPER, IN SIAM.

The only record of this snake in Siam up to the present has been from the island of Puket. North of this latitude it had not been known at all. Recent collections have shown, however, that it has a much wider distribution. It is not uncommon at Bangtaphan, near the sea coast, and Mr. P. A. R. Barron has found it at Nong Kai Ploi, just E. of Srimaharicha, elevation 150 metres, where it appears to be equally plentiful. One was recently caught at Lopburi, and Dr. Sprater procured last year a very young specimen at Kumpawapi, 250 km. N. of Korat, Lat.  $17^{\circ} 10' N.$ , Long.  $102^{\circ} 50' E.$  It will thus be seen to have a wide distribution in this country, and its northern range of habitat greatly increased.

Speaking of its poison, Boulenger says, "This snake was long known from Java only, where it is regarded as one of the most dangerous poisonous snakes, cases being known of men dying five minutes after being bitten. In the neighbourhood of Biserat and Kuala Jalar (Malay States) where it was discovered by Messrs Ammandale and Robinson, the natives do not believe its bite to be fatal." The people of Bangtaphan and Nong Kai Ploi, who appear to know this snake quite well, also agree that its bite is not particularly dangerous, and as natives on the subject of snake-bite are apt to exaggerate rather than otherwise, one is inclined to accept these statements as correct.

I have recently acquired 4 living specimens. They are extremely sluggish creatures, remaining motionless throughout the entire day, usually coiled up in a circle with the head projecting from the middle, and the body comfortably bedded down into the sand of their cage. Even a stick will hardly rouse them, and when taken up they move off in a leisurely fashion. At night they become more active and wander about. I have never yet heard them hiss, but when thoroughly excited will "rattle" the tip of the tail at great speed. They feed freely upon mice, frogs and toads.