

BIRDS FROM SIAM AND THE MALAY PENINSULA
IN THE U.S. NATIONAL MUSEUM

Collected by Drs. Hugh M. Smith and William L. Abbott,

BY J. H. RILEY.

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The late Dr. W. L. Abbott collected specimens of natural history for the United States National Museum in the Malay Peninsula and many of its islands between the years 1896 and 1904. In the course of his expeditions he collected several thousand bird skins. Preliminary papers by the late Dr. Charles W. Richmond and Dr. H. C. Oberholser, treating of forms believed to be new to science, appeared many years ago. Until the recent publication of Mr. Riley, however, no complete account of Dr. Abbott's ornithological work within Thai (Siamese) territory had been issued.

Dr. Hugh M. Smith, (late of the Royal *Siamese* Bureau of Fisheries and well known to members of our Society), during field investigations of Thai ichthyology, which took him to all sections of the Kingdom devoted his leisure to collecting for the Museum. He sent to Washington, between the years 1923 and 1934, a total of 6,459 bird skins.

Mr. Riley's paper deals with the combined collections of these two men, and represents the most comprehensive review of Thai ornithology which has yet appeared.

An introduction describes 1. the itineraries of the collectors and includes 2. a gazetteer of localities at which work was done, 3. a summary of the zoogeographical divisions of the Kingdom (after Boden Kloss), and 4. a brief history of previously published accounts of Thai birds. In the body of the bulletin each form represented in either or both collections is discussed giving dates and localities, collectors' notes, a résumé of other published records of the same bird in Thailand, a summary of extra-limital range, and, in some cases, taxonomic comments. The value of the paper is much increased by the inclusion of a satisfactory index. However, only technical names are given and there are no descriptions which would enable the amateur

to identify unfamiliar birds. It does not constitute a complete roster of the birds of Thailand, as now known, dealing only with such birds as were actually taken by these collectors. But to the more advanced student this work will be of great value in putting on record the *data* for a large body of specimens, many of which have been, metaphorically speaking, buried in the great collection in Washington.

A number of birds are mentioned here for the first time as members of the wonderfully rich avifauna of Thailand; among them one notes the rare owl, *Otus sagittatus*; the hornbill, *Cranobrontes corrugatus*; the pitta, *Pitta sordida mulleri* (new for the Asiatic mainland); the flycatcher, *Cyornis concreta concreta*; the rose-finch, *Carpodacus murati*; the Tibetan ruby-throat, *Calliope tschebaiewi*; and numerous others. Inasmuch as many of these novelties come from the Peninsula, a region supposedly well known through the activities of Messrs. Robinson and Boden Kloss, we may fancy how many birds must remain to be discovered in less thoroughly explored portions of the Kingdom.

Reading this paper, the reviewer is impelled to make a plea for a uniform system of transliteration of Thai place-names, preferably that suggested a few years ago in the Journal of our Society, so far as the exigencies of type-setting abroad will permit its use. One notes that, in the case of northern towns and villages, some are spelled according to northern dialectic pronunciation, others according to the official pronunciation of the capital, and yet others according to their Sanskrit etymology. Again, one finds two words with the same Thai vowel spelled *Pae Pan Nam* and *Koh Si Chang*; two words with a common initial consonant spelled *Hua Vieng* and *Wang Hin*. It is, of course, scarcely to be expected that people abroad, unfamiliar with the *Siamese* language, should be aware of such contradictions, but it should not be difficult for residents of Thailand, who collect specimens, to label them in accordance with the semi-official system of transliteration referred to above, to the end that these confusions and errors be not repeated indefinitely. This stricture is made in all humility, by one who has similarly offended.

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