IRENA CYANEA.

Malayan Fairy Bluebird.

Muscicapa cyanea, Begbie, Malayan Peninsula, p. 517 (1834).

Irena puella, Blyth, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng. xv. p. 308 (nec Lath.).—Id. Cat. Birds Mus. As. Soc. Beng. p. 214 (partim).—Bonap. Consp. i. p. 274.—Walden, Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. 4, vol. v. p. 417.—Id. Ibis, 1871, p. 170.

Irena malayensis, Moore in Horsf. & Moore, Cat. B. Mus. E.I. Co. i. p. 274.—Jerdon, Birds of India, ii. p. 106.—Gray, Hand-list of Birds, i. p. 288.

Irena cyanea, Walden, Ibis, 1871, p. 170.—Sharpe, Cat. Birds, iii. p. 269.—Hume, Stray Feathers, 1879, p. 63.

The specific distinctness of the members of the genus *Irena* has been for many years a subject of discussion amongst naturalists; and it is now more than thirty years ago since the late Mr. Blyth drew attention to the subject. In a note upon the genus *Irena* he remarks:—"A curious distinction between the Indian and Malayan *I. puella* has been pointed out by Lord Arthur Hay, to whom we are indebted for numerous other closely allied forms. In the Malayan bird the under tail-coverts reach quite to the end of the tail, while in *I. indica* they are never less than an inch and a quarter short of the tail-tip in the males, and generally an inch and a half short in the females. I have verified this observation in so many examples from both regions that there can be no doubt of the fact."

Ever since the date of the above passage naturalists have been agreed, with greater or less unanimity, that the Malaccan *Irena* was a distinct species; and in 1854 Mr. Frederic Moore gave to it the name of *I. malayensis*. Even as the title of *I. indica*, bestowed on the Indian bird by Lord Arthur Hay, was found to be forestalled by the older name of *I. puella* (Latham), so a more ancient name for the Malaccan bird was found in an old work on the Malayan peninsula by Captain Begbie, who called it *Muscicapa cyanea*. It is common enough in collections from the Malayan peninsula; and Mr. Hume records it from Malacca, Johore, and Singapore, while, according to the late Dr. Stoliczka, it goes as high as Province Wellesley.

Nothing has been recorded of its habits, that I am aware of; and I end this article, therefore, by quoting the description given by Mr. Sharpe in his 'Catalogue of Birds.'

"*Adult male*. Similar to *I. criniger* in the distribution of its colour and in the shade of blue, but having the under tail-coverts falling short of the tail by half an inch. Total length 9·3 inches, culmen 1·0, wing 4·6, tail 3·5, tarsus 0·7.

"*Adult female*. Similar to the female of *Irena criniger*. Total length 8·5 inches, wing 4·6, tail 3·7, tarsus 0·7."

The figures in the Plate represent a pair of birds in my own collection; they are of about the natural size.