

## CORACIAS INDICA, Linn.

### Indian Roller.

- Coracias Indica* et *C. Bengalensis*, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 159, et auctorum.  
*Blue Jay from the East Indies*, Edw. Glean. of Nat. Hist., pl. 326.  
*Indian Roller*, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. i. p. 412.  
*Bengal Roller*, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. i. p. 410.  
*Garrulus (Galgulus) navius*, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxix. p. 431.  
*Galgulus navius*, Vieill. Ency. Méth. Orn., part ii. p. 868.  
*Coracias navius*, Wagl. Syst. Av., sp. 3.  
*Subzak* (i. e. greenish-bird) and *Nylkhant* (blue-throat) of the Hindoos.  
*Tas* of the Mahrattas.  
*Pálu pittá* (i. e. milk-bird) of the Telugus.  
*Katta-kade*, in Tamul.  
*Towee*, by the Mahris.  
*Jay*, Europeans in India.

To quote all the synonyms of the present species, and all that has been published respecting it is quite out of the question, inasmuch as the references to the various authors would occupy space which may be devoted to a more useful purpose, while much that has been written regarding its nidification, the colour of its eggs, and the extent of its range is erroneous; besides which there is much repetition in the accounts of those who have made it their theme. Why and wherefore so many persons have wielded the pen respecting it, is attributable to three causes:—First, its universal distribution over the whole of the Indian peninsula, from the base of the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, Afghanistan, and, according to Dr. Leith Adams, Ladakh and Thibet; that it is also a very common species in the Scinde valley I can testify, as I possess several specimens collected by my son, the late Dr. J. H. Gould, during his residence therein; and Mr. Layard tells us that it is widely distributed over Ceylon. Secondly, its extreme familiarity, and its habit of perching in some prominent position—such as the top of a pole, the bare branch of a tree, or on some low bush in groves and gardens in the immediate vicinity of villages; and, lastly, to the great beauty of its plumage, and the loveliness of the hues it displays during flight. If my readers will call to mind the habits and actions of the Common Flycatcher, *Butalis grisola*, and of some of the smaller *Haleyonidæ*, they will be able to form a just notion of those of the present bird, since they resemble both, particularly in the upright manner in which it sits on its elevated perch, and sallies forth thence when any living object for which it has a preference attracts its eye, whether it be a grasshopper on the ground, or an insect in the air; after capturing which it generally returns to eat its prey on the site it has just left. Like all other Rollers, a portion of its food consists of insects, caterpillars of various kinds, and occasionally mice, small lizards, and other creeping reptiles.

In confirmation of what I have said as to the abundance of this bird, I may mention that between three and four hundred flat skins were shown to me on the 10th of March, 1869, by a plumassier of Oxford Street, which, he said, had just arrived from India, adding that these were only a continuation of former sendings, and that hundreds more would probably follow. Now it must be a source of regret to all right-minded persons, as it is to myself, to learn that, under such a course of destruction, the annihilation of this beautiful bird is almost certain, unless a law be promulgated in India similar to that which we may hope is about to be passed for the protection of some of our own birds.

I have averred that some of the statements respecting the nidification and colouring of the eggs of the Indian Roller are erroneous; in proof of which I may mention that by one writer it is said to make a nest of twigs and grasses, and to have Antwerp-blue eggs; while by another they are described as green, profusely speckled with dark brown spots. But, as every ornithologist would naturally expect, they are, really, pinky white before being blown, and enamelled white, like the glazed paper upon which I am writing, after the yolk has been removed, and are deposited in the hollows of trees.

As with all other Rollers, there is but little, if any, difference in the colouring of the sexes. During the breeding-season the bird is very noisy and garrulous, a circumstance which renders its whereabouts easily detectable.

“The Indian Roller,” says Mr. Jerdon, “is of universal distribution throughout the country. It frequents, alike, open jungles, groves, avenues, gardens, clumps of trees in the open country, and, except in thick forest, is to be found everywhere, and is sure to be met with about every village. It generally perches on