BIRDS OF INDIA

A selection of twelve lithographs from 'The Birds of Asia,' Volumes I-VI by
John Gould, F.R.S., published in 1850-1883, by the author through public subscription, and printed by Taylor and Frances.

JOHN QOULD, F.R.S. (1804-1831), John Gould, an Englishman, was born on September 14. 1804 at Lyme Regis in Dorset. England: His passion for arrithology developed early, whilst assisting his father in Tooking after the Royal Gardens of Windsor, where as a hobby he began stuffing birds. His statem for taxidenmy resulted in his appointment in 1927 with the newlyformed Zoological Society in London, where amongst other lasks, he was entituated with the responsibility of stuffing the first grafts to arrive in England. Shortly afterwards, Gould met and married Elizabeth Cosen, askinted draughthowman. No one, the Goulds included, were to realise the ormitted complete the stuffing of the st

All through his life Gould sketched continuously, travelled extensively and maintained valuable contacts with leading crinthologists of the day. When The Birds of Australia had to be abandoned, in 1837, owing to lack of material he decided to proceed to Australia, a hazardous voyage at best, to do his own field work. This decision, however, left the famous Charles Darwin somewhat in the furch, as Gould was unable to complete his work on Darwin's Zoology of the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle (1832-1836). In Neutralia, Gould listed 300 new species white Elizabeth, apart from her work on birds, set about documenting the region's botancial life. The Goulds returned to England in 1840 where a year later tragedy struck in the torm of the death of Elizabeth. Though much of his works were published after her demise, with the help of artists such as Edward Lear, Henry Ritcher and Million Herberg and the properties of the deather and the such as Edward Lear, Henry Ritcher and Million Herberg and the such as Edward Lear, Henry Ritcher and Million Herberg and the such as Edward Lear, Henry Ritcher and Million Herberg and the such as Edward Lear, Henry Ritcher and Million Herberg and the such as Edward Lear, Henry Ritcher and Million Herberg and Herberg

The publication of 'The Birds of Australia' (1840-1848) constituted eight volumes, containing 681 plates, and one might have considered this achievement enough for a single lifetime. But Goold was made of entirely different metal—he worked on with renewed vigour right up to the day he clied. In his industrious lite Goold produced 41 large folior volumes with 2999 hand-coloured plates. This sheer volume is impressive enough and when judged on the basis of quality as well, his accomplishment approximates the impossible.

How did Gould manage to be so prolific and yet maintain the high standards posterity has some to associate with his name? The secret lay in the fact that he was able to recruit good help, whom he rewarded handsomely. As a result, Gould, an astute businessana, invariably had a studie of talented artists to work under his close supervision. Moreover, leading printers were also eager for his custom. So leyal and committed were his co-workers and associates that some of the works he commissioned, including "The Birds of Asia", were in fact faithfully completed by them after his death.

THE BIRDS OF ASIA: In 1850 Gould began work on the historic "The Birds of Asia". This latter work was to absorb the artisal for over thirty years till hidded in 1881. More than 530 species were featured, many of which, no being illustrated elsewhere, remain valuable ornthological records. While still working on "The Birds of Asia", the amazing John Gould found time to reorduce still more volumes including The Birds of Asia".

Selecting for this calendar a mere dozen lithographs out of the hundreds of spectacular visuals in 'The Birds of Asia' was no mean task. By a lengthly and paintstaking process of elimination, which involved choosing only those birds which were resident or migratory to India, we arrived at the control of the control

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*LESSER FLORICAN (SYPHEOTIDES INDICA)
**LESSER FLORIKIN (SYPHEOTIDES AURITUS)

This proud and handsome bird graces the Indian grasslands with its regal presence. In the mating season, the male, head plumes lying, springs up vertically in an awe-inspiring ritualistic display. This evolutionary mating instinct has, however, singled the florican out for punishment at the hands of unscruptious hunters over the years, as it can easily be spotted from a distance. Fortunately, lesser florican habitats now receive protection and the birds which were once severely threatened are now increasing their numbers.



*NORTH INDIAN SCARLET MINIVET (PERICROCOTUS FLAMMEUS SPECIOSUS) **GREAT PERICROCOTUS (PERICROCOTUS SPECIOSUS)

Also referred to as caterpillar birds, these brightly-coloured avalators prefer to eat soft-bodied creatures such as flies, grubs, spiders and of course, caterpillars, they will, however, readily consume small pulpy fruit. In season. Flocks often hunt together, filting from tree to tree, flushing insects from hiding so as to snap them on the wing. Females, invariably yellow, and scarlet males share in nest-building, incubation and feeding the young. The nest itself is saucer-shaped and well-camouflaged so as to be virtually invisible from the ground.



*LONGTAILED BROADBILL (PSARISOMUS DALHQUSIAE DALHQUSIAE)

Lethargic, fame and decile, broadbills are possibly the mast primitive group of living song birds. Ivid blue pais trafting behind them, broadbills have been observed climbing dyarfelf, fat up are in forested areas in search of cleadas, mantises, flying, insight or in the first page. Their shrill whistling calls add to the careginary of sound in their jungle haunts, as flocks move easily from place



YELLOWBREASTED LAUGHING THRUSH (GARRULAX DELESSERTI GULARIS) YYELLOWTHROATED GARRULAX (GARRULAX GULARIS)

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*HIMALAYAN REDBILLED BLUE MAGPIE (CISSA ERYTHRORHYNCHA OCCIPITALIS) NEPALESE BLUE PIE (UROCISSA OCCIPITALIS)

Related to the crow, this large, long-tailed bird inhabits the Himalayan forests, from Kashmir eastwards to Assam and Baran, Its flagpy flight involves slow wingbasts foreward by a glas one bird follows another in search of catery in a heact's small animals. Known neel-robbers, blue magples, and one tunistic feeders and can often be seen saliversing the kins of larger carrivores.



WESTERN GREYHEADED THRUSH TURBUS RUBROCANUS

Definetives, hereof, these series and, black and white brids are a fair, common, soft it is along the Himalayas from Kashmir housing to Reput to Reput Basis in primarily on keen vision they are quick to possess, upon privately as insects, groups, or even basis y anakes and lisands apportunity fleeders, they also seem to thrive on the second private and principle from the first private and the second private and principle from the second private and private a



"INDIAN WHITEBREASTED KINGFISHER (HALCYON SMYRNENSIS FUSCA) "INDIAN KINGFISHER (HALCYON FUSCA)

A flash of furquoise and white in flight, accompanied by a ravoous ackling call, draws ones' attention to this all-familiar, large, Indian kingfisher. Pair bonds are said to last for life and ter-ficires are vigorously defended, as the birds stake out strategic vantage points on which they perch, hunched patiently, while keeping an eye for food — possibly a florg, a lizard or an insect. The stout beak is often used to batter their hapless prey against a branch or a nock before it is awaitiowed.



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*HOOPOE (UPUPA EPOPS) *
**INDIAN HOOPOE (UPUPA NIGRIPENNIS

This crested, rust-coloured, zebra-striped bird is one of the handsomest feathered creatures to be seen in the Indian Subcontinent. Its long bill is used as a probe to dig for larivae and other invertebrates in the loose mud of fields, gardens and manure heaps. Hoopoes derive their name from their soft, musical, "hoop-hoop-hoop" calls which carry great distances and which are most often heard during the breeding season. Hoopoes construct no nests, preferring to lay their eggs in a convenient hole in a tree, wall or rock crevice.



"INDIAN PITTA (PITTA BRACHYURA BRACHYURA "BENGAL PITTA (PITTA BENGALENSIS)

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All through his life Gould sketched continuously, travelled extensively and maintained valuable contacts with leading ornithologists of the day. When 'The Birds of Australia' had to be abandoned, in 1837, owing to lack of material he decided to proceed to Australia, a hazardous voyage at best, to do his own field work. This decision, however, left the famous Charles Darwin somewhat in the lurch, as Gould was unable to complete his work on Darwin's 'Zoology of the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle' (1832-1836). In Australia, Gould listed 300 new species while Elizabeth, apart from her work on birds, set about documenting the region's botanical life. The Goulds returned to England in 1840 where a year later tragedy struck in the form of the death of Elizabeth. Though much of his works were published after her demise, with the help of artists such as Edward Lear, Henry Ritcher and William Hart, Gould never quite recovered from the shock of losing Elizabeth. volumes, containing 681 plates, and one might have considered this different metal - he worked on with renewed vigour right up to the day he died. In his industrious life Gould produced 41 large folio volumes with 2,999 hand-coloured plates. This sheer volume is impressive enough and when judged on the basis of quality as well, his accomplishment approximates the impossible.

How did Gould manage to be so prolific and yet maintain the high standards posterity has come to associate with his name? The secret lay in the fact that he was able to recruit good help, whom he rewarded handsomely. As a result, Gould, an astute businessman, invariably had a studio of talented artists to work under his close supervision. Moreover, leading printers were also eager for his custom. So loyal and committed were his co-workers and associates that some of the works he commissioned, including 'The Birds of Asia', were in fact faithfully completed by them after

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> As can be seen from these twelve prints, Gould's magic lay in the fact that he never sacrificed aesthetics for scientific accuracy. Conversely, he took great pains to ensure that his art works were vetted by the most well respected scientists. His subjects in fact, seem 'alive'. The minivet with the caterpillar in its beak, the rubythroat in its nest, or the Himalayan magpie in flight, are all depicted just as one might observe them in real life. Regretfully, very few original sets of 'The Birds of Asia' survive to this day. But, as can be confirmed by those who have had the pleasure of actually examining the volumes, the colours are ever vibrant, ever rich, and unparalleled in terms of aesthetics. In fact, the originals still retain their sheen, and the gloss of freshly applied paint.

> This calendar, then, is a tribute to John Gould, a man whose genius and dedication lives on even a century after his death. His life and works are an example we would do well to emulate. Living as we do, in a world increasingly dominated by high technology, John Gould reminds us of the value of that one asset that sets man apart and above the rest of his fellow creatures - the human spirit.

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*LEEKH OR LESSER FLORICAN (SYPHEOTIDES INDICA) **LESSER FLORIKIN (SYPHEOTIDES AURITUS)

This proud and handsome bird graces the Indian grasslands with its regal presence. In the mating season, the male, head plumes flying, springs up vertically in an awe inspiring ritualistic display.



*HIMALAYAN REDBILLED BLUE MAGPIE (CISSA ERYTHRORHYNCHA OCCIPITALIS) **NEPALESE BLUE PIE (UROCISSA OCCIPITALIS)

Related to the crow, this large, long-tailed bird inhabits the Himalayan forests, from Kashmir eastwards to Assam and Burma. Its flappy flight involves slow wingbeats followed by a glide,



*HOOPOE (UPUPA EPOPS) **INDIAN HOOPOE (UPUPA NIGRIPENNIS)

This crested, rust-coloured, zebra-striped bird is one of the handsomest feathered creatures to be seen in the Indian subcontinent. Its long bill is used as a probe to dig for larvae and other invertebrates in the loose mud of fields, gardens and manure heaps. Hoppoes derive their name from their soft,



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Also referred to as caterpillar birds, these brightly-coloured aviators prefer to eat soft-bodied creatures such as flies, grubs, spiders and of course, caterpillars; they will, however, readily consume small pulpy fruit, in season. Flocks often hunt together, flitting from tree to tree, flushing insects from hiding so as to snap them on the wing. Females, invariably yellow, and scarlet males share in nest-building, incubation and feeding the young. The nest itself is saucer-shaped and well-camouflaged so as to be virtually invisible from the ground.



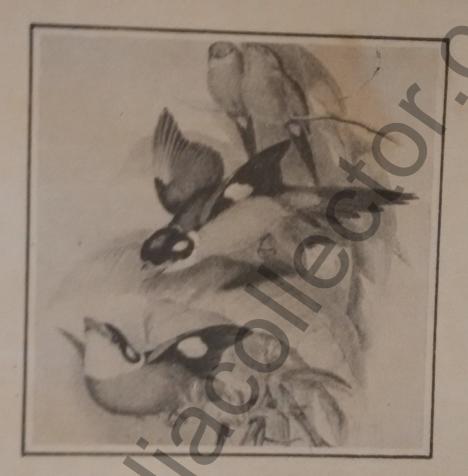
*WESTERN GREYHEADED THRUSH (TURDUS RUBROCANUS) RUBROCANUA) **CHESTNUT COLOURED MERULA (MERULA CASTANEA)

Distinctively marked, these chestnut, black and white birds are a fairly common sight all along the Himalayas from Kashmir through to Nepal. Relying primarily on keen vision they are quick to pounce upon prey such as insects, grubs, or even baby snakes and lizards. Opportunistic feeders, they also seem to thrive on berries, seasonal fruit and nectar from blossoms.



*INDIAN PITTA (PITTA BRACHYURA BRACHYURA)
**BENGAL PITTA (PITTA BENGALENSIS)

Among the most colourful of birds, pittas are often referred to as 'jewel thrushes'. Seen singly or in pairs, these strong fliers seem to prefer grubbing along the leaf litter of moist, dense, evergreen or deciduous forests in search of beetles, spiders, termites or even crabs and snails. Their characteristic double-note whistling calls can be heard echoing through the jungle gloom at daybreak and at dusk.



*LONGTAILED BROADBILL (PSARISOMUS DALHOUSIAE DALHOUSIAE)
**DALHOUSIE'S EURYLAIME (PSARISOMUS DALHOUSIAE)

Lethargic, tame and docile, broadbills are possibly the most primitive group of living song birds. Vivid blue tails trailing behind them, broadbills have been observed climbing parrot-like up vines in forested areas in search of cicadas, mantises, flying insects or even tree frogs. Their shrill whistling calls add to the cacophony of sound in their jungle haunts, as flocks move easily from place to place.



*INDIAN WHITEBREASTED KINGFISHER (HALCYON SMYRNENSIS FUSCA) **INDIAN KINGFISHER (HALCYON FUSCA)

A flash of turquoise and white in flight, accompanied by a raucous cackling call, draws ones' attention to this all-familiar, large, Indian kingtisher. Pair bonds are said to last for life and territories are vigorously defended, as the birds stake out strategic vantage points on which they perch, hunched patiently, while keeping an eye for food — possibly a frog, a lizard or an insect. The stout beak is often used to batter their hapless prey against a branch or a rock before it is swallowed.



*GOLDENTHROATED BARBET (MEGALAIMA FRANKLINII) **FRANKLIN'S BARBET (MEGALAEMA FRANKLINII)

Intermediate between woodpeckers and rollers, barbets are essentially denizens of tropical forests. The name 'barbet' arises from the typical 'beard' of feathers and bristles that sprouts from the base of their bills. Thickset, strongly-built and flamboyantly-coloured, both sexes look alike and work together to excavate their nest, usually in a rotten tree, dry embankment, or discarded termite mound. Fledglings will stay in the nest till they are well developed, but will continue to be fed on a diet of berries, fruits, buds and insects for some time after they leave their home. The barbet's incessant call is a familiar sound to those who frequent the forested Himalayan hillslopes east of Central Nepal.



*YELLOWBREASTED LAUGHING THRUSH (GARRULAX VELESSERTI GULARIS) **YELLOWTHROATED GARRULAX (GARRULAX GULARIS)

Striking looking birds, laughing thrushes seem to prefer keeping together in flooks as they comb grasses and low bushes to flush insects out of wher cover. Their frequent chirping calls keep individuals in contact with the rest of the flook. At the first sign of danger they take to the trees from where they flit from branch to branch to very their territory.



*NICOBAR REDCHEEKED PARAKEET (PSITTACULA LONGICAUDA NICOBARICA) **BLUE-WINGED PARRAKEET (PALAEORNIS NICOBARICUS)

This forest-dwelling sub-species is found only in the Nicobar islands, though parrots are, of course, distributed widely all over the tropics. A stout, strong bill and muscular tongue helps the birds to eat their favourite food — seeds and fruit. Not much is known of their breeding biology but the nest is little more than an enlarged hole in a tree into which the female will lay its dull white eggs. In all likelihood both parents share the responsibility of feeding the young till they are able to fend for themselves.



*RUBYTHROAT (ERITHACUS CALLIOPE)

**SIBERIAN RUBYTHROAT (CALLIOPE CAMTSCHATKENSIS)

With its scarlet throat patch, prominently on display, the male promenades outside while his mate incubates her precious clutch of eggs in the 'hideaway' nest. Rubythroats will boldly defend their territory with a combination of posturing and 'aggressive' song while hunting for insects and their larvae to feed their young. Choosing to breed in northern climates these tiny sparrow-sized birds journey each year over the lofty Himalayas to spend their winters in India.

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