The Discovery of Green-Faced Parrot Finch.

By

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It is a well known fact that the Philippines supplies one of the oldest material of exotic birds and its fauna is known to us before the time of Linneaus. Manila and its surrounding countries have been the best collected grounds in the Orient. Therefore the discovery of this parrot-finch which I am describing has an especial interest to the reader—to know that such a distinct species of birds to be discovered from Manila in this day and also that large numbers have been exported to the United States.

The first record of this bird was made by Mr. L. H. Taft, of the Bureau of Forestry, who is stationed at Los Banos, Laguna Province, Luzon. He sent four specimens of this parrot-finch to Mr. B. H. Taylor, dated July 7th, 1920, and wrote the following to Mr. McGregor of Bureau of Science:

"The four birds you received last week were in a very bad condition when I found them. A week ago Saturday we started to string a wire for the back-stop of our tennis court at the school. We failed to finish, but left the wire standing up. The next Saturday (June 26) we started to finish the job and found that ten of these same birds had evidently flown against the wire and suffered an untimely death during the week. Six of them were far too gone to send at all (the ants had eaten out their throat), but the four I sent seemed to be in better condition. It does not seem probable that we caught a flock of migrating birds, for eight were on one side of the wire and two were on the other side. Only one of the men seemed to know the bird, he said he had seen many of them in San Carlos, Panaginan."

On the 20th of August 1920 the specimen was sent to the United States of National Museum, to Dr. W. Richmond, for identification; his comments are as follows:
The specimen is in a poor condition for determination and is probably a female or immature bird, which makes satisfactory identification more difficult. The bird belongs to a genus Erythrura, but has a smaller bill than E. trichroa, though the colour agrees fairly well with the description of the young of the latter, except for the colour of the bill. As the bill is wholly black in the Philippine bird, the specimen is more likely to be an adult than an immature one. In dimensions and size of the bill, the specimen is close to the adult of E. trichroa from Wetter Island, but it differs greatly in colour and is manifestly out of place there. The specimen probably represents a new form, but adult males will be necessary before the matter can be settled.

We hear no more of this mysterious bird for fifteen years until early 1935 in Los Angeles, there came to my notice in a local bird dealer, an unidentified parrot-finch from Luzon and I at once acquired several of them to be made into skins. It is called by them as Luzon Finch and well known to them. They have exported from Manila to San Francisco by the hundreds and distributed all over the private aviaries and public zoos throughout the United States.

At the time of this writing, May, 1937, there is still one in the Bronx Zoo, New York. As the bird is not vividly coloured like the Gouldin finch, and being offered to the public for the first time, there has not been many demands and popularity; and there are only one or two private aviaries in the State of California who have the birds.

Mr. W. J. Sheffler has several pairs in his aviary and during the last summer, some have started nesting, after being in his captivity for over a year.

During the meantime in Manila, McGregor and Manuel published in the "Philippine Journal of Science", March, 1935, further account of this bird. It says that Dr. Manuel has noticed, between the month of April to July, 1935, peddlers commonly selling these birds in Manila. They are kept in small bamboo cages and caught in large numbers in many districts in Manila. It is obvious that those birds which were sold in the spring and early summer in 1935 have been im-
ported into the United States. However, McGregor and Manuel were mislead by the belief that the birds have a migrating habit and also the wrong conception of the birds being introduced by human agency into Luzon which is entirely theoretical and not based on facts; furthermore, I have sent to Manila three skins of my cage birds, and according to Dr. Manuel they belong to the same species as those kept in the Bureau of Science; only my skins are more greener on the under-part of the body owing to maturity. Mr. Delacour shares with me the idea that this parrot-finch belong to hitherto undescribed species and may be distinguished chiefly in the male from all forms by having green face instead of blue or red, so we have described it as *Erythrura viridifacies* in the January Bull. B. O. C. 1937. The readers may be interested to know this strange occurrence, so common at one time which disappeared for several years, is also found in other parts of the tropics.

In Indo-China the Amandavat Finches are yearly exported from Paigon in large numbers, but its wild habitat has never been located by scientific collectors. It is also true that *Rhodonessa caryophyllacea*, Pink-headed Ducks of India. Mr. Alfred Ezra received several live specimens from an old Hindu who lives not very far from Calcutta. No one knows the life history of this peculiar duck, while many began to suspect that the species has become extinct. It is only explained by the fact that these birds have extremely local distribution, their life history is still little known to us.