

A HONEY-EATING FIJI RED-HEADED PARROT FINCH

The Red-headed Parrot-finch (*Erythrura cyanovirens*) has been recorded as feeding largely on grass seed and small grain (Mercer 1965: 24) and on flowers and buds (Mayr 1945: 123), while I have often seen it picking small insects off vines and dead leaves in the rainforest understory, in company with mixed groups of flycatchers and the rarer Pink-billed Parrot-finch (*Erythrura kleinschmidti*).

At 6 p.m. on 24 April 1972, in Gordon Street, Suva, I saw a Red-headed Parrot-finch apparently honey-eating from the introduced White Ixora (*Ixora alba*). It would pluck a flower, nipping the stem off at the base, then hold the base of the stem in its bill, the flower protruding like a cigarette, and evidently lick at the nectar — something I often did myself as a child. It would then drop the flower, pluck another, and repeat the process. I watched it for ten minutes or so, during which time it proceeded with this in a very practised and business-like manner, before flying off into the dusk.

MAYR, E. 1945. Birds of the Southwest Pacific. A field guide to the birds of the area between Samoa, New Caledonia, and Micronesia. Pp. xx + 1-316, text-figs 1-16, pls I-III. New York: Macmillan.

MERCER, R. 1967. A field guide to Fiji birds. Fiji Museum Special Publication Series. No. 1. Pp. vi + 1-40, pls 1-14. Suva: Government Press.

FERGUS CLUNIE

*Fiji Museum,
Suva,
Fiji*