

EXTINCT BIRDS OF THE WORLD

#22 BONIN GROSBEAK

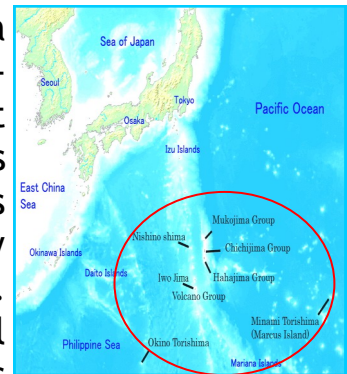


Illustration:
John Gerrard Keulemans
(1842-1912)

The Bonin Grosbeak or Bonin Islands Grosbeak, *Chaunoproctus ferreorostris*, is an extinct finch, the only species in the genus *Chaunoproctus*. It is one of the many bird taxa that are commonly called "Grosbeaks", but it is not closely related to the Grosbeaks in the strictest sense. It was a retiring, although not shy bird, and was usually found singly or in pairs. It fed on fruits and buds which were usually taken from the ground or low shrubs; it was rarely observed perching in trees, as it was apparently somewhat reluctant to fly. Only one kind of vocalization has been described: a soft, pure and high note,

sometimes short, sometimes drawn out; sometimes given singly, sometimes in a short series.

It was found only on Chichi-jima in the Ogasawara Islands. While reports that it was also found on Haha-jima are most probably erroneous. However, it might have occurred on Anijima and Otōtojima. Chichi-jima is the only location, however, where the bird was observed. Contemporary illustrations show considerable differences, particularly in the males. Whether these differences are due to seasonal variation or whether several subspecies or even species existed could only be determined by a thorough review of the available material, limited though that is.



The Ogasawara Islands,
south of Japan



WILLIAM STIMPSON
1832-1872

The Bonin Grosbeak was discovered by the Beechey Pacific expedition, which collected two specimens on Chichi-jima in 1827. The following year, Friedrich von Kittlitz, the only naturalist to have seen the species alive, took several more specimens, but only gave the locality "Boninsima" (*ie.* Bonin-shima). When the Rodgers-Ringgold North Pacific Exploring and Surveying Expedition called at Chichi-jima in 1854, the American naturalist William Stimpson could not find the species. However, he did find rats, goats, cats, sheep and dogs, as well as pigs that were probably left there by Beechey

to provision castaways. The Bonin Grosbeak probably succumbed soon after

1830, when settlement occurred, to habitat destruction and predation by introduced animals.

The collector A. P. Holst was told by settlers on Chichi-jima in 1889 that the species had persisted on Haha-jima until the early 1880s. However, as the birds were not reported from there during the 1853 visit of the first Perry mission to Japan nor in 1854, these reports seem to be either erroneous or referred to some other island in the Chichi-jima group. The sedentary habits of the Bonin Grosbeak make it unlikely that it was present anywhere outside the *Chichijima Rettō*.

Only ten skins of the Bonin Grosbeak are preserved in museums. The Leiden Museum possesses a male and a female, both collected by von Kittlitz, with the other specimens being in Berlin, Frankfurt, St. Petersburg, Tring and New York.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia