

# FORK-TAILED SUNBIRD

## *Aethopyga christinae*

*Aethopyga*, meaning “burning heat” in Latin, is a genus of Asian tropical birds belonging to the sunbird family Nectariniidae, which was named because most of these birds feed on nectar.

### Bird Under the Sun

Sunbirds love to spend time under the sun to conserve energy which would otherwise be spent on generating body heat.

### Lovers of Flowers

Their diet is mostly made up of nectar and sometimes, small insects. Usually perch on the branches when they are foraging for nectar, sometimes may hover in front of flowers. Often occur in pairs or small family groups.

## COUNT THE COLOURS!

Fork-tailed sunbird is amongst the most colourful birds found in Hong Kong. How many different colours can you find on the male and female birds respectively?

### Distribution and Habitat

Distributed in Southeast China, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Laos with 3 subspecies recorded. Usually found in low-hill forests, forest edge, urban parks and gardens. Resides in Hong Kong, commonly seen throughout the year.

### Conservation Status

Least Concern in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Yet the global population is suspected to be in decline owing to ongoing habitat destruction.

### Male fork-tailed sunbird

Male has central tail feathers elongated into a forked shape, hence the name of the bird. Male is brilliantly coloured while female is duller, paler and slightly smaller in size.

## SEXUAL DIMORPHISM

In many bird species, males are more colorful than female because they need to attract mates and intimidate their competitors, while females need to camouflage while guarding their nests. However, a handful of species are known to have reversed sex roles in which females have brighter colors.

### Specialised Nectar Eater

Its small body size, decurved bill and brush-tipped, tubular tongue are adapted for foraging nectar. It is an important pollinator of certain tubular flowers, in which bees and butterflies cannot reach.

### Tongue of sunbirds



### Ivory Coral Tree (*Erythrina speciose*)

A deciduous tree originating from Brazil. Usually flowers in March before foliage. Its red, tube-like flowers attract many birds and insects and seem adapted to pollination by long-billed birds.

### Female fork-tailed sunbird

Female birds use mosses, grasses and plant fibres to build pear-shaped nests, and suspend them from branches.



## WHERE TO SEE

### Sightings in KFBG

Commonly recorded

### KFBG Distribution

Lower and Upper Areas



Easily found on the flowering plants around KFBG, especially the ones with brightly-coloured flowers such as the Sleeping Wax Mallow (as shown above) and Ivory Coral Tree. This is because the bird mainly uses its keen sense of sight to forage for flowers.