

# Birding Snippets

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No. 8 • July 2008

## Birding Gunung Kerinci & Tapan Road, Sumatra - Part 2



Sumatran Leafbird *Chloropsis media* (endemic)

### Birding the Tapan Road

**Day 4**  
**Weather: Good initially,**  
**Rain in late afternoon**

An early breakfast and we started the drive to the Tapan Road in the dark. The first part of the journey was on the good sealed road towards Sungai Penuh, the next major town and I managed to catch some sleep along the way. From Sungai Penuh, the road climbed to the Tapan Pass and deteriorated rapidly. The potholes were unavoidable as there were just too many of them and we were literally 'bumping' up the road, making sleep impossible!

When we reached the top of the Tapan Road, the sun was already up. There was a tall flowering tree and its red flowers were attracting lots of birds. Thankfully, the flowers were eye-level to us as the



**Blue-masked Leafbird**  
*Chloropsis venusta*  
(endemic)  
at a flowering tree

tree grew from the slopes below us. Among the first birds seen through my binoculars was the **endemic Blue-masked Leafbird** (lifer), quickly followed by the **endemic Sumatran Leafbird** (lifer), a recent split from the Orange-fronted Leafbird.

Many **Ashy Drongoes** were seen. A few birds skulked in the undergrowth, and these proved to be **Hill Prinias** (lifer). Two Malkohas with very long tails put up an appearance and I soon realised that I was looking at **Green-billed Malkohas** (lifer). Then, the endemic **Sumatran Treepie** (lifer), split from Sunda Treepie, put up an appearance. **Fire-tufted Barbets** were also recorded, as were **Barred Cuckoo-Dove** (lifer) and **Little Cuckoo-Dove**. The calls of the Mountain Imperial Pigeon reverberated in the air.

We made our way down the Tapan Road, in the direction of Muara Sako, walking part of the way and driving down to the next promising stretch of road and walking again. A flock of 3 **Wreathed Hornbills** flew above us, followed by another individual. A darkish raptor soared overhead. It wasn't very big and we surmised that it was likely a Blyth's Hawk-Eagle. A small flock of birds was encountered and these proved to be the **endemic Cream-striped Bulbul** (lifer). Later, we also encountered the **endemic Spot-necked Bulbul** (lifer).



**Ashy Drongo**  
*Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Other common birds of the Sunda region such as **Black-browed Barbet**, **Chestnut-capped Laughingthrush**, **Grey-throated Babbler**, **Blue Nuthatch**, **Black-and-Crimson Oriole**, **Grey-cheeked Bulbul**, **White-headed Munia**, **Grey wagtail** and a female **Plain Sunbird** were also observed.

In a gully, between the 24 and 25 km mark, we heard a monotone whistle and the source of the calls seemed to be changing positions, causing us to walk up and down the gully as we searched for the maker of the calls. The calls had stopped for a while when Subandi gestured for me to go over to him quickly. Arriving at his spot, he grabbed my

arm and pointed towards the ground. I saw some leaves being flicked about. Looking through my binoculars, I saw a drab brown bird standing quietly on the ground. Simon quickly came over and we stood silently as we scrutinised the bird through our binoculars, wondering what it might be. Then I noticed some red colouring on its belly and just then, the bird gave the characteristic monotone whistle and we knew we were looking at a juvenile **Graceful Pitta**! Endemic to Sumatra, it was another lifer on the records for me!

**A juvenile Graceful Pitta**  
*Pitta venusta*  
(endemic) in the  
understorey



**Cream-striped Bulbul**  
*Pycnonotus leucogrammicus*  
(endemic)

Rather unexpectedly, Subandi brought us into the opposite gully and after quite a bit of effort, we saw not 1 but 2 adult Graceful Pittas! With 3 Graceful Pittas seen, we proceeded for lunch near a big bridge with a clear stream running underneath. Right next to this bridge, we could see what remained of the old bridge. A **Whiskered Treeswift** accompanied us while we had lunch.

The forest along the stream's edge proved rather birdy, as with most edge habitats. We saw the **endemic Sumatran Drongo** (lifer), male & female **Sunda Cuckoo-Shrike** (lifer), **Scarlet Minivet** (lifer), **Green Magpie**, **Great Tit**, **Verditer Flycatcher**, **Greater** and **Lesser Yellownapes**, **Maroon Woodpecker** and **Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike**.



**Greater Yellowname**  
*Picus flavinucha*

A male **Rufous-chested Flycatcher** (lifer) perched quietly in a gully. We also encountered **Lesser Forktail** (lifer) along a small stream in a gully. We searched two gullies for the Marbled Wren-Babbler to no avail. **Temminck's Sunbird, Emerald Dove, Mountain White-eye, Thick-billed Spiderhunter** and **Pacific Swallow** were also recorded along the Tapan Road.

At 4pm, we had not even reached Muara Sako when it started to rain heavily and decided to call it a day. When we arrived at the homestay it was already dark. After a warm shower and dinner. We both decided that we were done with the Tapan Road. One experience of being 'bumped around' in the car during the journey to and from the Tapan Road was enough for me!