



SINGAPORE AVIFAUNA

A monthly bulletin of the Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group

**Volume 22
Number 4**

Published by Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group, 510 Geylang Road, #02-05, The Sunflower, Singapore 389466.

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MICA(P) 239/11/2005

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Note from the Editors:

The month of April was one of the most exciting one in recent time. The month began with the incredible sighting of Singapore's first confirmed record of a White-throated Needletail at the summit of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. Another "mega" reported in this issue of SINAV is the first record of the Amur Falcon for Singapore. This species was seen and photographed in November. Unfortunately both birds were "one-day wonder". If these sightings are not enough to whet your appetite, read on to find out more about the enigmatic Malaysian Rail-babbler, a species that have ornithologist baffled for more than a century.

This issue of SINAV marks the last Raptor Report by Alan Owyong and Kenneth Kee. We thank both of them for diligently putting this informative and interesting report together and we look forward to seeing their report next autumn.

Finally the editorial committee would like to thank all contributors to SINAV and to the Bird Group website. We are very heartened to note that we are seeing more contribution. Please continue to keep them flying in. It is your contributions that will make this publication and the website interesting and informative.



Nature Society (Singapore) is the national partner of



Bird Report

April 2008

By Albert Low

Highlights

Singapore

In the spirit of Spring Migration, the month of April began right where the preceding one had left off, with a slew of notable migrants recorded heading north, mostly “one-day wonders”.

The month started off once again on a high note with the sighting of a **White-throated Needletail** on the summit of Bukit Timah Hill. This is the first confirmed sighting for Singapore. The bird was noted to be associating with up to 5 **Brown-backed Needletails**, another uncommon visitor to Singapore, for the better part of the morning. However, as with all Needletails, the birds could not be located on follow-up visits over the next few days.

Over at the Chek Jawa coastline on the eastern end of Pulau Ubin, an area which was largely neglected by observers for some years now, rewarded visitors with an eye for our feathered friends with some noteworthy highlights. Foremost among them was the sighting of a single **Asian Dowitcher** in the middle of the month, evidence of some stragglers returning north after spending the winter in their wintering strongholds in northern Sumatra. In addition, a handsome male **Chinese Egret** was consistently recorded for the better part of the month foraging along the same area of mudflats. These sightings may thus serve to underlie even more the importance of this coastline as a stopover & even a wintering area for globally threatened shorebirds in the winter. The rare **Great-billed Heron** was also recorded frequently in this area during the same period.

Elsewhere around the island, noteworthy visitors of note including a single **Gull-billed Tern** in the sea near Pulau Ubin, a handsome male **Blue-and-White Flycatcher** in the Botanical Gardens for just a day and a **Black Bittern** at Hindhede Nature Park.

April was an interesting month for residents as well, with the cream of the crop coming in the form of a female **Mangrove Blue Flycatcher** at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, just one of a handful of mainland records of a species traditionally associated with the inaccessible mangroves of Pulau Tekong, where it is still locally common. The vocal **Mangrove Pittas** on Pulau Ubin were also the source of many birders and photographers' attention, as everyone strived to make the most of this narrow window of opportunity where they were comparatively easy to track down. Other notable residents included a male **Greater Painted-snipe** at Tuas



Mangrove Pitta at Pulau Ubin on 25 April 2008

Photo © Lee Tiah Khee

Grasslands, an encouraging sign that this enigmatic species is still hanging on, up to 5 **Red-wattled Lapwings** at Bukit Batok West & a **Grey-headed Fish-eagle** at Lower Pierce Reservoir.

Johor

There were several notable sightings from Panti this month, as observers were treated to a good mix of returning passerines & residents in the midst of raising families of their own.

Chief Highlight among them must be the sighting of the “resident” male **Giant Pitta** at Bunker Trail, a mythical bird which has eluded just about all of its most ardent pursuers for years. In addition, there was the added bonus of a pair of **Crested Wood-Partridges** in the same trail, always a welcome sight in this increasingly disturbed neck of the woods.

Not to be out-done by these legends, the passerines performed well too. The cream of the crop coming from a pair of **Great loras** in the 270 trail. This rarity in the Malay Peninsula was even photographed for good measure. In Bunker Trail, **Scarlet-breasted Flowerpeckers** continued to show well, while a vocal **Black-throated Babbler** in 270 wrapped things up nicely. Notable passerines on spring passage included a male **Yellow-rumped Flycatcher** & a female **Mugimaki Flycatcher** on the same date.

Other notable residents include a photographed **Black Magpie**, a **Rufous-collared Kingfisher** at 270 & a **Cinnamon-headed Green-Pigeon** at Bunker Trail.



*Great lora at Panti Forest Reserve Trail 270 on 12 April 2008
Photo © Danny Lau*

Summary

This report covers noteworthy bird sightings in April 2008 for Singapore and the surrounding region. In general, the report will include but are not limited to the following categories: rarities, breeding or nesting records, arrival and departure dates for migratory species, new locality records, escapees and unusual behaviour.

In addition, contributors are also advised to be as precise as possible concerning records. Please remember to include details such as how many birds were seen, the plumage, sex and age of the birds, the type of habitat in which they were observed, the food they were eating (if possible, identify the plant or animal), the weather encountered (what was the wind direction, tide conditions, etc.). Although it is not necessary to have such details for all record submissions, it is a good habit to cultivate and is normally required for very rare or unusual species.

Please send all your records of interest to Lim Kim Seng @ denislim@starhub.net.sg or Lim Kim Chuah @ pittalover@yahoo.com.sg or Yong Ding Li at zoothera@yahoo.com. Alternatively you can also post your sightings at the NSS Bird Group website at <http://wildbirdsingapore.nss.org.sg>. Please send your records no later than one week after the end of every month. Your contributions will be greatly appreciated and acknowledged.

Unless stated otherwise, nomenclature and systematic follow K.S. Lim's (2007) "Pocket Checklist of the birds of the Republic of Singapore (Second Edition)", K.S. Lim & K.C. Lim's (1999) "Pocket checklist of the birds of Johor, Peninsular Malaysia" for Johor, and B.L. Monroe Jr. & C.G. Sibley's (1993) "A World Checklist of Birds" for the rest of the region.

We would like to thank the following contributors:

Doreen Ang (DA), Alfred Chia (AC), Chong Boon Leong (CBL), Andrew Chow (CCP), Vincent Fong (VF), Lau Weng Thor (LWT), Lau Jia Sheng (LJS), Ben Lee (BL), Lee Tiah Khee (LTK), David Li (DL), Lim Kim Chuah (LKC), Lim Kim Seng (LKS), Alan Owyong (AOY), Tan Gim Cheong (TGC), KC Tsang (TKC), Wu Eu Heng (WEH), Margaret Yeo (MY), Yong Ding Li (YDL), Simon Cockayne (SC), Richard Carden (RC), Andrea Bloem (AB), Mike Hooper (MH), Martin Kennewell (MK), Con Foley (CF), Wing Chong (WC) and all those who contributed by posting their sightings in the wildbirdsingapore E-group.

In addition, we would like to thank Chong Boon Leong, Con Foley, Lau Weng Thor Danny, Lee Tiah Khee and Lim Kim Chuah for allowing us to use their photos in this report.

Abbreviations Used:

BTNR: Bukit Timah Nature Reserve
PFR: Pantii Forest Reserve

SINGAPORE

BARRED BUTTONQUAIL (*Turnix suscitator*)

2 flushed at Tuas Grasslands 20/4 (YDL).

COPPERSMITH BARBET (*Megalaima haemacephala*)

1 vocal individual observed at Geylang Lorong 28 18/4 (AOY)

ORIENTAL PIED HORNBILL (*Anthracoceros albirostris*)

2 seen on Pulau Ubin 12/4 (SC/RC). A male seen foraging in a mangrove tree at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 20/4 (DA/LKS). One young bird seen on Pulau Ubin 25/4. It was observed moving about clumsily among the trees. (LKC/LTK)



Oriental Pied Hornbill (young) at Pulau Ubin on 25 April 2008
Photo © Lim Kim Chuah

STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER

(*Pelargopsis capensis*)

2 observed at Jurong Lake 26/4 (LWT).

BLACK-CAPPED KINGFISHER

(*Halcyon pileata*)

1 observed in Japanese Garden 5/4 (WEH).

BANDED BAY CUCKOO

(*Cacomantis sonnerati*)

2 birds observed vocalising to each other at Bukit Batok West 6/4 (WC).

YELLOW-CRESTED COCKATOO

(*Cacatua sulphurea*)

1 photographed on Mount Faber 6/4 (LWT) is continued evidence that the feral population of this critically endangered species is still eking out an existence locally.



Yellow-crested Cockatoo at Mount Faber on 6 April 2008
Photo © Danny Lau

TANIMBAR CORELLA (*Cacatua goffini*)

2 at Changi Village on 20/4 (LKS).

WHITE-THROATED NEEDLETAIL (*Hirundapus caudacutus*)

1 over the summit of Bukit Timah Hill on 5/4 (SC/RC/CBL) is the first confirmed record for Singapore. Simon wrote: "I was at the summit of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve this morning with Richard Carden when at 8:30 am, we pretty much instantaneously found a White-throated Needletail zooming and looping around the summit at just above the height of the red and white masts. We were also in the company of Chong Boon Leong who got some good record shots of the bird. The lighting was superb and the bird very obliging – we watched it looping the summit



White-throated Needletail at BTNR on 5 April 2008
Photo © Chong Boon Leong

for at least 1 hour. It would disappear for a few minutes but always returned for several circuits before disappearing again. After approximately 20 minutes the bird was joined by 3 Brown-backed Needletail whose numbers peaked at 5 birds by 9 am. They all put on a very spectacular performance blasting through the air. By 9:30 am, the temperature increased and the birds rose ever higher and became dots. It was at this point that we left the summit."

BROWN-BACKED NEEDLETAIL (*Hirundapus giganteus*)

5 of these birds were seen associating with the aforementioned species over the summit of Bukit Timah Hill 5/4 (SC/RC).

SAVANNA NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus affinis*)

Up to 7 flushed at Tuas Grasslands 20/4 (YDL).

BAR-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa lapponica*)

1 observed at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 14/4 (MH). 2 seen at the same site on 20/4 (DA/LKS).

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*)

8 counted at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 20/4 (DA/LKS). All birds seen were nominate *phaeopus*.

ASIAN DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus semipalmatus*)

1 observed at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 14/4 (MH) is indicative of spring passage from its wintering strongholds in Sumatra.

GREATER PAINTED SNIPE (*Rostratula benghalensis*)

1 male flushed at Tuas Grasslands 20/4 (YDL).

GREY PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

15 counted at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 20/4 (DA/LKS).

RED-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus indicus*)

5 seen at Bukit Batok West 6/4 (WC). 5 also observed at Tuas Grasslands 20/4 (YDL).

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Sterna nilotica*)

1 non-breeding adult was observed out at sea near Changi Point on 12/4 (SC/RC).

BLACK-NAPED TERN (*Sterna sumatrana*)

About 10 seen at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 20/4 (DA/LKS).

LITTLE TERN (*Sterna albifrons*)

50 seen at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 20/4 (DA/LKS).

CRESTED HONEY-BUZZARD (*Pernis ptilorhyncus*)

A noteworthy record of an individual snatching an egg from a Greater Racket-tailed Drongo's nest at Mount Faber 6/4 (LWT).

CRESTED SERPENT EAGLE (*Spilornis cheela*)

1 observed at Labrador Park 13/4 (LWT/LJS) represents a new locality for this rare raptor whose movements are poorly understood.

GREY-HEADED FISH EAGLE (*Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*)

1 photographed at Lower Pierce Reservoir 8/4 (TKC).

CHINESE SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter soloensis*)

1 observed at Labrador Park 13/4 (LWT/LJS)

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*)

1 observed on the telecom tower on Pulau Ubin 13/4 (BL).

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

2 adults and 1 chick seen at Lorong Halus on 20/4 (LKS). The chick was riding on the back of one of the adults.

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*)

1 seen at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 20/4 (DA/LKS).

GREY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*)

1 at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 20/4 (DA/LKS).

GREAT-BILLED HERON (*Ardea sumatrana*)

2 adults seen at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 20/4 (DA/LKS). These birds were observed at the same site earlier in the month on 13/4 (DL/AB) & 14/4 (MH).

CHINESE EGRET (*Egretta eulophotes*)

A summer bird was seen feeding at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 20/4 (DA/LKS). This bird was observed at the same site earlier in the month on 13/4 (DL/AB) & 14/4 (MH).

BLACK BITTERN (*Ixobrychus flavicollis*)

1 flushed from below the Lookout Point at Hindhede Quarry 5/4 (SC/RC).

BLUE-WINGED PITTA (*Pitta moluccensis*)

1 heard giving alarm calls on the BTNR Cycling Trail 5/4 (SC/RC)

MANGROVE PITTA (*Pitta megarhyncha*)

1 vocal individual observed on Pulau Ubin 12/4 (SC/RC). 1 very vocal individual was observed on Pulau Ubin on 25/4 singing at the top of an Avicennia (LKC/LTK). This bird was subsequently seen and photographed by numerous observers over the course of the month.

BROWN SHRIKE (*Lanius cristatus*)

2 seen at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 12/4 (SA/LKS). 1 was observed on Jurong Island 23/4 (LKC).

YELLOW-RUMPED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula zanthopygia*)

1 male in summer plumage observed at Jurong Lake on 26/4 (LWT).

BLUE-AND-WHITE FLYCATCHER (*Cyanoptila cyanomelana*)

1 male in summer plumage of race cumatilis sighted at Botanic Gardens 17/4 (AC).

MANGROVE BLUE-FLYCATCHER (*Cyornis rufigastra*)

1 female observed on 20/4 at SBWR Mangrove Boardwalk between Stations 1 & 2. Observer noted the following plumage details: The flycatcher's upper body was dark blue (like a deep indigo) throughout with the primaries and lower tail feathers an even darker shade of blue (like black but not quite); had distinctive white lores; slight white spots on the cheeks below the eyes; was whitish on the chin; rufous or duller shade of orangey on the breast; whitish from mid belly to the vent. (MY)

WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA (*Copsychus malabaricus*)

A singing male seen in secondary scrub at Tg Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin on 20/4 (DA/LKS). 2 males were seen on Pulau Ubin on 25/4 (LKC/LTK) singing fervently.



White-rumped Shama at Pulau Ubin on 25 April 2008
Photo © Lee Tiah Khee

STRAW-HEADED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*)

2 observed on Pulau Ubin 12/4 (SC/RC) and 4 heard on 25/4 (LKC).

RED-WHISKERED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus jocosus*)

2 observed at Jurong Lake 26/4 (LWT).

ASIAN RED-EYED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus brunneus*)

2 observed on low perch at Bukit Batok Nature Park 14/4 (CCP).

ARCTIC warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*)

1 seen and another heard on Pulau Ubin, 25/4 (LKC/LTK)

COPPER-THROATED SUNBIRD (*Nectarina calcostetha*)

2 observed on Pulau Ubin 12/4 (SC/RC).

BAYA WEAVER (*Ploceus philippinus*)

1 male & 2 females seen in the vicinity of nests on Pulau Ubin 12/4 (SC/RC).

Nesting Reports for Singapore

ORIENTAL PIED HORNBILL (*Anthracoceros albirostris*)

2 adults coaxing 1 young to fly on Pulau Ubin, 25/4 (LKC/LTK). The young bird was seen moving in a clump of dense foliage clumsily and flying in short burst. According to a NPark ranger, the young fledged about a day ago.

ORIENTAL DOLLARBIRD (*Eurystomus orientalis*)

1 pair seen feeding young at Changi Boardwalk, 25/4 (LKC/LTK). The nest is built in the hollow at one end of a *nibong* pole protruding out from the sea. The chick fledged and left the nest on 29/4 (TGC)

BLACK-NAPED TERN (*Sterna sumatrana*)

About 20 birds on Squance Rock with 4 chicks and 4 eggs (VF), 24/4 and 10 on 25/4 (LKC).

CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE (*Spizaetus cirrhatus*)

A fully-fledged young bird seen at the nest at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 12/4 (LKS). It was seen hopping about in the branches next to the nest rather energetically.

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

A chick seen riding on the back of an adult at Lorong Halus on 20/4 (LKS) was evidence of continued breeding at this site.

COMMON IORA (*Aegithina tiphia*)

A pair were feeding two chicks in a nest at Japanese Garden, 5/4. Subsequent visits found the nest destroyed and the chicks gone. (WEH). The pair was first observed on 1/4 (TGC). TGC reported: "Nest with 2 naked chicks, eyes not yet open. Both male and female seen feeding and brooding chicks."

ASIAN GLOSSY STARLING (*Aplonis panayensis*)

An adult seen flying with twigs at Woodlands Avenue 1 on 12/4 (LKS). At least 5 pairs nesting in holes in *nibong* poles at Changi Boardwalk, 25/4 (LKC/LTK).

COMMON TAILORBIRD (*Orthotomus sutorius*)

1 female seen carrying nesting materials into a dense undergrowth low to the ground on Pulau Ubin, 25/4 (LKC/LTK)

BROWN-THROATED SUNBIRD (*Anthreptes malacensis*)

Seen in the initial stages of nest building at Japanese Gardens, 1/4 (TGC)

LATE SUBMISSION FOR MARCH

BLUE-THROATED BEE-EATER (*Merops viridis*)

1 at Hindhede Nature Park, 15/3 (LKC)

BLUE-TAILED BEE-EATER (*Merops superciliosus*)

1 at Hindhede Nature Park, 15/3 (LKC)

GREY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*)

1 in winter plumage was seen in a monsoon drain in front of Blk 265, Bukit Batok East Ave 4, 4/3 (CCP). This species was previously seen in the same location in 2005.

JOHOR

CRESTED PARTRIDGE (*Rollulus rouloul*)

A pair seen along Bunker Trail, PFR on 27/4 (YDL/MK)

ORANGE-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Reinwardtipicus validus*)

1 pair observed within the PFR 22/4 (TGC/CF).

GREY-AND-BUFF WOODPECKER (*Hemicircus concretus*)

2 males observed within the PFR 12/4 (LWT/LJS)

YELLOW-CROWNED BARBET (*Megalaima henricii*)

1 photographed within the PFR 19/4 (LWT/CF)

RUFOUS-COLLARED KINGFISHER (*Actenoides concretus*)

1 seen and another heard at the 270 Trail, PFR on 22/4 (TGC/CF)

CINNAMON-HEADED GREEN PIGEON (*Treron fulvicollis*)

1 observed at Bunker Trail 5/4 (LWT/LJS)

GIANT PITTA (*Pitta caerulea*)

1 vocal male observed at Bunker Trail 27/4 (YDL/MK)

BLACK MAGPIE (*Platysmurus leucopterus*)

1 photographed within the PFR 19/4 (LWT/CF)



Black Magpie at Pantii Forest Reserve on 19 April 2008
Photo © Con Foley

LESSER CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina fimbriata*)

1 female observed at Bunker Trail 22/4 (TGC/CF)

GREAT IORA (*Aegithina lafresnayeii*)

2 observed, of which 1 was photographed at 270 Trail, PFR on 12/4 (LWT/LJS)

YELLOW-RUMPED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula zanthopygia*)

1 male photographed within the PFR 19/4 (LWT/CF)

MUGIMAKI FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula mugimaki*)

1 female observed within the PFR on 19/4 (LWT/CF)

BLACK-THROATED BABBLER (*Stachyris nigricollis*)

1 vocal individual observed at 270 Trail, PFR on 27/4 (YDL/MK)

SCARLET-BREASTED FLOWERPECKER (*Prionochilus thoracicus*)

1 male photographed on 5/4 at Bunker Trail (LWT/LJS). 1 also seen on 22/4 at the same trail (TGC/CF).



Scarlet-breasted Flowerpecker at Bunker Trail on 22 April 2008
Photo © Danny Lau

RAPTOR REPORT

Report on the Raptor Migration in Singapore from Autumn 2007 to Spring 2008

Compiled by Alan Owyong and edited Kenneth Kee

Summary:

The Asian Raptor Migration Survey (ARMS) Project was launched in 1999 by the Asian Raptor Research & Conservation Network (ARRCN) to support and coordinate data from the raptor counts in the field from different member countries. The project is coordinated by Yasunori Nitani-san and reports can be accessed at <http://www5b.biglobe.ne.jp/~raptor/index.htm>

Even though we do not have thousands of raptors migrating through Singapore, the Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group decided to submit records of migrating raptors to ARMS from October 2007. This was based on reported sightings in the wildbirdSingapore e-forum from members and birding community in Singapore during the autumn and spring seasons.

Analysis:

As I started compiling only in the later part of October, the records for that month were not representative. We had only 4 species totaling 29 raptors. But in November with a full month of records, we hit the jackpot with the highest count of **241** raptors from **10** species. This pointed to a peak for migrating raptors flying south in the autumn migration in November. The next four months from December to March averaged 102 raptors monthly, with the highest at 128 in January and the lowest at 82 in February. It would appear that many of these raptors could be wintering here as their numbers looked pretty much the same over these months. However more studies have to be done to confirm this. So far the records indicated that **Black Bazas**, **Crested Honey-buzzards** and **Japanese Sparrowhawks** bypassed our island and took a different route flying back north, when you compared their numbers for November and March. See Table 1.

We recorded a total of **15** migrating raptors over the last two seasons, more than half of the 28 species of raptors wintering, passing through or accidental arrivals as listed in the Pocket Checklist of the Birds of Singapore (Lim KS, 2007).

In Thailand and Malaysia, **Black Baza** was the top recorded species counted during their Spring migration season and not surprising, it was also our top migrant during this period. It hit a high count of 122 birds in November, going down to 82 and 93 birds in December and January before dropping further to about 60 birds in February and March.

The **Crested Honey-buzzard** came in a distance second but still with creditable counts of 58 in November and slow to around 10 for the following months. The **Japanese Sparrowhawk** sightings showed very clearly the migration pattern for the two seasons. They came through in good numbers in autumn – 12 in October and 20 in November but showed a drastic drop to a few birds in the next few months including 3 in March.

Both the **Ospreys** and **Peregrine Falcons** seemed to be wintering here as their numbers were pretty the same, averaging 5 throughout the six months. They like to stay at their favorite feeding grounds in Pulau Ubin, Kranji and Jurong.

The surprising statistics was only a single record of the **Chinese Sparrowhawk** in November, when good numbers were reported in Perak and Selangor, Malaysia in September.

Not so surprising were the 10 **Black Kites** recorded in November with 4 reported by Horst Flotow in Sungei Buloh, 3 by Kok Hui in Seletar and another 3 by Mike Tan in Lim Chu Kang. There were no records after this. This uncommon winter visitor doesn't seem to like wintering here for some reasons.

Highlights:

The top and most important raptor sighting for the season was the **Amur Falcon** at Changi Cove on 21st November. Con Foley and Tan Gim Cheong made the observation during early morning. Con submitted a photograph of a female perched on the tip of a casuarina tree. This is our first record of this out-of-range *falco* on our shore. Note that this record was not included in Table 1 due to the late notification.



Amur Falcon by Con Foley

The Amur Falcon is a rare passage migrant for Thailand (*Chaiyan Kasomdorkbua, pers. comm.*). It is also a vagrant for Malaysia, with a female reported wintering in Kuala Terengganu last year by Anuar McAfee (*Suara Enggang Vol.15. No 6*). Like the one in Singapore, it was also sighted in November, perching on a casuarina tree. What a coincidence!

Amur Falcon breeds in Siberia, China and Mongolia, wintering mainly in Southern Africa.

On 6th November, Albert Low and Ding Li recorded the largest one day raptors migration over Bukit Timah Hill. They counted a total of 65 to 70 raptors comprising of 5 species in one afternoon. Lee Tiah Khee photographed three **Himalayan Griffon Vultures** at Bukit Timah Hill on 23rd January adding to the single vulture seen at Seletar on the 3rd January and another at Simpang reported by James Heng on 26th January. Like Thailand and Malaysia, we are seeing these Vultures more regularly at the end and beginning of the year.

A globally threatened **Greater Spotted Eagle** was photographed by Mike Tan at Jalan Murai in November, this being our only record for this period. We had three records of the rare **Rufous-bellied Eagle**; Ding Li and Albert Low at Bukit Timah Hill on 6th November, Ah Huay & Doreen record from Venus Drive on 2nd December and Sutari and the ramblers group at Bukit Brown Cemetery on 31st December.

Danny Lau, Kok Hui, Jia Sheng and gang again proved to be the top raptors team with excellent records of the much sought-after **Jerdon's Baza** hunting at the CCK cemeteries on 26th January adding to Con Foley's record and photo of one flying at the Chinese Gardens on 30th November. They then topped this with the only record of a dark morph **Booted Eagle** on the 8th March at Seletar Airport. Jia Sheng had earlier reported a pale morph **Booted Eagle** at the same location on 1st March. This rare accidental raptor used to turn up regularly at the dump site at Lorong Halus before it was closed. They also contributed to our only record of a female **Pied Harrier** at Tuas on 17th February, which is a new location for this raptor followed by another one at Changi Cove on 14th March. Well done guys!

KC Tsang photographed a **Chinese Sparrowhawk** at Sungei Buloh on 15th November. We had expected more to come down to Singapore from Malaysia as they have recorded around 1000 in September and 4000 in October at Taiping. The second record for this bird came from a late photo submitted by Leslie Fung taken at Sungei Buloh on 21st February.

The **Common Buzzard**, a regular visitor, was first seen by Alfred Chia along Changi Coastal Road in January and later seen again at the same place in March by Kenneth Kee and Alan OwYong. There seemed to be a pair of **Eastern Marsh Harrier** at Changi Cove hovering over the vast expanse of reclaimed land. It was first reported by Ding Li in early March. A second location was at Marina East where an individual was reported by Mike Hooper in March as well.

Single high species count for the **Black Bazas** came in from Mike Hooper with 30 at Marina East in November, Kim Seng's record of 60 at Gambas Avenue in December and a roosting flock of 25 at Admiralty Park by Tsen Thauming in February.

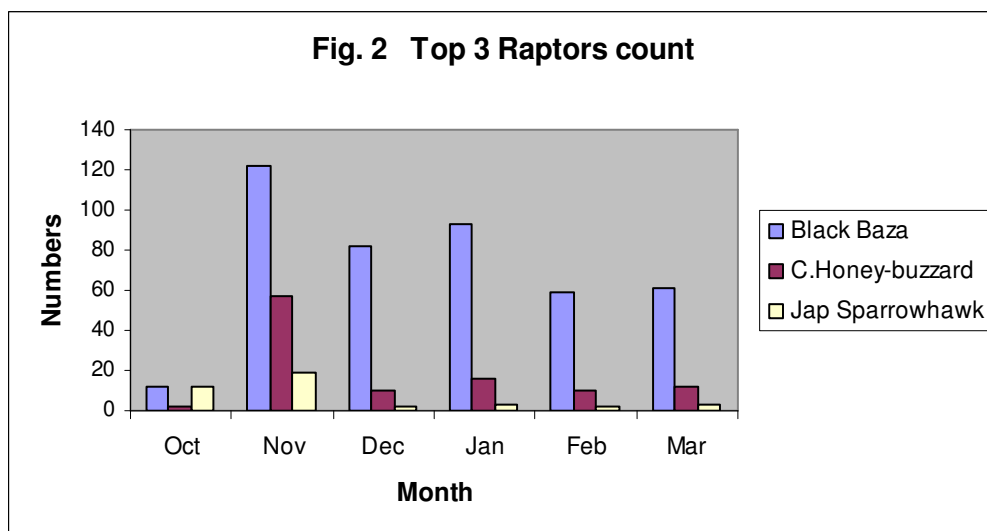
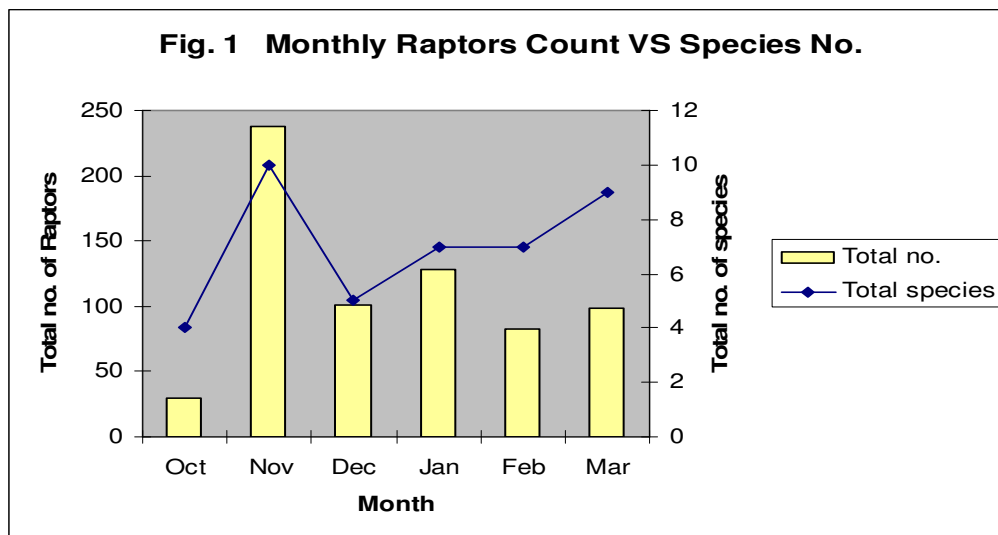
True to their nature, **Peregrine Falcons** were reported in our urban area; Capital Square and downtown CBD and HDB heartlands at Sengkang. We can assume that they were after our city pigeons for an easy meal.

Table 1. Summary of Records

No	Species	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
1	Black Baza	12	122	82	93	59	61
2	Crested Honey-buzzard	2	58	10	16	10	12
3	Japanese Sparrowhawk	12	20	2	3	2	3
4	Black Kite		10				
5	Osprey	3	6		5	4	6
6	Peregrine Falcon		4	2	2	3	7
7	Chinese Sparrowhawk		1			1	
8	Rufous-bellied Eagle		1	2			
9	Greater Spotted Eagle		1				

10	Jerdon's Baza		1		3		
11	Common Buzzard				1		1
12	Eastern Marsh Harrier						3
13	Pied Harrier					1	1
14	Booted Eagle						2
15	Himalayan Griffon Vulture				5		
	Unidentified <i>Accipiter</i>		17	3		2	3
	Total	29	241	101	128	82	99
	Number of Species	4	10	5	7	7	9

Note : Amur Falcon is not reflected in the above table due to late notification.



This report is condensed from the monthly compilation of records send in to the WildbirdSingapore e-group from October 2007 to March 2008. The compiler wished to thank all who sent in the records, Kenneth Kee for editing & graph work and Con Foley for the use of his photo.

First Sighting of the Amur Falcon

(*Falco amurensis*)

in Singapore

By Tan Gim Cheong

Observers: **Tan Gim Cheong** and **Con Foley**

Date: **21 Nov 2007**

Time: **0720-0830**

Location: **Changi Cove**

Weather: **Overcast**



Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*, female. Singapore 21 Nov 07. © Tan Gim Cheong

Time: 0720

Entering the site just after dawn, a medium-sized raptor was seen afar, flying about. It surprised me that a bird of prey should be out and about this early under overcast conditions. We went farther into the site and it was just 0720 hr when the bird was seen perched on top of one of the casuarina trees lining the coast. It was a small raptor, roughly the size of a Kestrel, and it appeared to have greyish upperparts.

Time: 0732-0740

It was subsequently seen swooping down, onto the ground or close to the ground. Then it took flight and appeared to be holding something in its claws. Whilst in flight, it reached for the prey item with its beak, holding its wings outstretched. It was either feeding on the wing or crushing the prey to ensure that it was dead. It did this 2-3 times. It flew to the top of one of the casuarina trees lining the coast and perched there to feed on the prey. The prey was consumed within 1 minute. The bird continued to perch there for several more minutes, swaying with the wind. What came across as striking was its bright orange-coloured feet and beak. It was photographed here. The closest match based on the Pocket Checklist of the Birds of the Republic of Singapore (2007) would be an Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, which is a rare accidental visitor to Singapore, however its bright orange-coloured bill and feet remained strikingly problematic. A photograph of the bird was e-mailed to Dr. Chaiyan Kasorndorkbua of Thai Raptor Group who identified the bird as an adult female Amur Falcon.

The prey item could not be ascertained though it appeared not to have a tail, so it was probably not a mouse or rat. It might have been a large insect.

Time: 0820

Leaving the site, it was seen again, perched on top of some low bushes. After about 10 seconds it flew off, towards a small tree.

Possibly related Sighting in Malaysia

A sub-adult female Amur Falcon was seen by various Malaysian observers on 13 November 2007 on the east coast of Terengganu, also on a casuarina tree. The time and space between the Malaysian sighting and this sighting at Changi Cove begs the question – “Is it the same individual which moved down the east coast of Peninsula Malaysia and was subsequently seen by us at Changi, on the eastern end of Singapore – a distance of 450 kilometres over 8 days?”

Comments from Alan Owyong

Alan Owyong made a comparison between the Singapore bird and the one taken by Anuar McAfee in Terengganu to see if they were the same bird. The following observations were made:

The white face patch on the Terengganu Bird is more extensive and well defined and so is the black mask, while the Changi Bird is less so.

The Changi Bird showed a bit of orange patch at the side of the chin which is absent in the Terengganu Bird.

The under belly streaks are bolder, more extensive and clearer for the Terengganu Bird when compared to the Changi Bird.

From these observations, Alan believed that the birds are two different individuals and the Terengganu Bird been like to be an older bird.

Bird in Focus

MALAYSIAN RAIL-BABBLER

By Yong Ding Li

A dull hum of a dozen cicadas filled the damp humid air of the secondary forest in its late morning dead. This deafening monotone of the forest was occasionally broken by excited hooting from a distant troupe of White-handed or Lar Gibbon and a party of **Chestnut-rumped Babbler** that was nowhere to be found despite its seeming proximity. James, Felix and I were creeping through a small claustrophobic forest path that is mostly overgrown with young tree saplings and shrubs, and at the constant mercy of marauding mosquitoes and leeches. A flurry of movement on a few low trees caught our eyes, but turned out to be no more than a **Yellow-bellied Bulbul**, a colourful bird that is quite common in closed forest. We observed two birds merrily singing away on a low concealed branch until they flew off, returning us to the rather loud cicada cacophony. A little disappointed for the lack of unusual birds, we were about to leave when a familiar sound caught our ears. Not too far away, perhaps within fifty metres, was a low-pitched prolonged whistle. This was certainly not a cicada. We got excited and stood in blank silence, anticipating another exciting episode of forest birding that was slowly unfolding before our eyes. Hearts pounding, we were now on the trail of the beautiful yet enigmatic **Malaysian Rail-Babbler** *Eupetes macrocerus*, one of the star birds of the Panti Forest Reserve.



Malaysian Rail Babbler at Bunker Trail, Panti Forest Reserve on 27 May 2008 (Lim Kim Chuah)

Introduction

A bright rufous-chestnut brown bird about the size of a **White-breasted Waterhen**, the aptly named Malaysian Rail-Babbler is among the most memorable birds in South-east Asia's rainforests. Especially for birdwatchers visiting Malaysia, this uncommon ground-dwelling bird is often high in priority among the 'must-see' birds and most make special effort to visit lowland forest sites to 'twitch' for this avian oddball. Unfortunately, it is also an expert skulker, always keeping to the forest floor and fallen logs. With its brownish overall and against the shades of brown and green of the leaf litter, trying to spot a Malaysian Rail-Babbler is no mean feat. Many birders bash through leech-infested forests and sweat for as long as an hour to glimpse this elusive bird, only to lament that 'only the head was seen' or 'better views could be had'. Others draw envy with tales of Rail-Babblers seen at point-blank and glowing on the forest floor like an animated gem.



(Above) Malaysian Rail-Babbler in secondary scrub, Panti Forest Reserve (Lim Kim Chuah)



(Above) Malaysian Rail-Babbler in closed Primary Forest, Panti Forest Reserve (Ong Kiem Sian)

Interestingly, the Malaysian Rail-Babbler was for a long time a taxonomically poorly-understood bird with unusual affinities. Ornithologists probably jumped to the conclusion that it was a babbler by virtue of its 'babbler-like looks', strongly terrestrial habits and were quick to chug it into the 'taxonomic dumping ground' of the babbler family, Timaliidae. However, recent research has shown that many members of the original Timaliidae are totally unrelated and were merely conveniently grouped together as a result of their superficial morphological resemblances, and also in the absence of understanding. With the recent advent of DNA studies, the splendid Malaysian Rail-Babbler is now known to be most closely related to the Rockfowls and Rockjumpers of Africa (see Jonsson *et al.* 2007).

Taxonomy and Nomenclature

For many years, and in fact since its official description by noted Dutch zoologist, Coenraad J. Temminck in 1831, the Malaysian Rail-Babbler was classified under the vast babbler family, Timaliidae. Very strangely amongst many of these 'babbler' relatives shared little or no physical resemblance to although a number of them are strongly terrestrial-living. So, for the nearly 150 years that were to follow, it was listed in most literature and regional field guides as a babbler, together with all the other typical tree and ground babblers (e.g. King *et al.* 1975, Mackinnon & Philipps 1997), until recent advances in avian classification. Through the pioneering DNA-DNA hybridization work of Charles G. Sibley and Burt L. Monroe in the 1980s, the Malaysian Rail-Babbler was eventually re-invoked under the newly enlarged Corvidae family which includes all

the true crows and their allies. (Examples of crow allies include the drongos, woodshrikes, whistlers, cuckooshrikes and many others). Its nearest close relatives include the rather similar-looking Jewel-Babblers, Quail-thrushes and Whipbirds from subtropical Australasia (New Guinea and Australia) and with these the Malaysian Rail-Babbler were grouped together under the subfamily Cinclosomatinae. Amidst the taxonomic anarchy created therein, more was to follow and some taxonomists even designated a new family 'Eupetidae' for the Malaysian Rail-Babbler and its closest kin, resulting in its temporary yet unglamorous expulsion from the Corvidae.

Most excitingly, recent studies using DNA markers to examine the phylogeny of the Malaysian Rail-Babbler has yet shed even newer light on its affinities. As scientists plough even deeper into the evolutionary relationships between *Eupetes*, *Ptilorrhoa* (Jewel-Babblers) and two other less well-known but supposedly related genera, their studies have demonstrated that the Malaysian Rail-Babbler have even closer relatives than Jewel-Babblers. Based on this recent study, the sister clades and thus the nearest living kin of the Rail-Babbler are the Rockjumpers, genus *Chaetops* of Southern Africa and the bizarre yet similar-looking Rockfowls, genus *Picathartes* from West Africa (Jonsson *et al.* 2007). With this new knowledge, scientists would also be able to draw radically new understanding of the evolution and spread of their common ancestors. Thus, hypothetically speaking the common ancestor of the Rail-Babbler could have dispersed from Asia-Australasia into Africa and then spread east once more into Southeast Asia, resulting in such an anomalous distribution of the Malaysian Rail-Babbler and its closest kin.

Distribution, Status and Habitat

The Malaysian Rail-Babbler, like its close relatives the Rockfowls and the Jewel-Babblers, is a strictly forest bird of the biological diverse Sunda subregion which encompasses a large part of South-east Asia. Its relatively extensive range extends from the Southern Thailand (from Krabi southwards to Narathiwat) to much of lowland Peninsular Malaysia. Its range then stretches onwards to the sprawling islands of Sumatra and Borneo in Indonesia. Two subspecies are officially recognized, the nominate *Eupetes macrocercus macrocercus* that is shared between Sumatra the Thai-Malay Peninsula and intervening islands and the *E. m borneensis* of Borneo. It inhabits wet tropical evergreen forest and is most at home in lowland Dipterocarp forest, a vegetation type that formerly cloaked large swaths of the Sunda subregion. With the clearance of much of these easily accessible forests for oil palm, rubber plantations and urban development, what remains now are mostly small isolated fragments of forest and not surprisingly, populations of the Malaysian Rail-Babbler must also be highly fragmented.

While the core habitat of the Rail-Babbler is the lowland dipterocarp forest, it is also able to persist in forests on hilly areas like Gunung Panti, Johore and Ulu Langat, Selangor, extending occasionally into lower montane forests at elevations as high as 1000 metres above sea level. Whether the occurrence of Rail-Babblers at such unusually high elevations is a result of seasonal dispersal of populations lower down, or of permanent resident populations is still not well understood. For example, in Fraser's Hill of Peninsular Malaysia's main Titiwangsa Range, the Rail-babbler has never been recorded above the lower Gap area at an elevation of 760 metres. Very interestingly, during the drought-hit period of 2003-2004, up to two Malaysian Rail-Babblers were intermittently seen by a number of observers in forest at over 800 metres elevation, which is significantly higher than normal. In the same period were also unusual altitudinal range extensions for some other lowland forest birds, like the Orange-backed Woodpecker *Reinwardtipicus validus*. Such records suggest that Malaysian Rail-Babblers may actually move into forests at higher elevations for foraging during dry periods.


In the Panti Forest Reserve of South-east Johore, Peninsular Malaysia, the Rail-babbler also forages in partially inundated freshwater swamp forest, and is known to be able to persist in remnant secondary forest that have been degraded by logging. Single birds have been seen foraging in patches of low stature, logged forest that has lost most of its towering canopy and emergent trees. Also notable is that a number of sightings of these birds were in depressions and

ditches that were created when the big trees were removed, showing some adaptation to a human disturbed environment.

These examples suggest that Malaysian Rail-Babblers currently are still able to tolerate some levels of disturbance and degradation in their habitat. However, it is prudent to note that in either case, birds most probably originated from nearby primary forest reservoir populations and at any rate lowland evergreen forest still constitute the most important habitat. Conversely, these degraded forests act merely as sink habitats and are unlikely to sustain viable populations in the long term. It is possible that Malaysian Rail-Babblers existed on Singapore Island historically as the island was once covered with primary lowland forests, a favoured habitat. Even so, it is certainly long extinct here with the near-complete lost primary lowland forests on the island.

Within its habitat, the Malaysian Rail-Babbler occurs at naturally low densities. However, spatial distribution of Rail-Babblers is uneven, though the exact factors that cause this are not well studied. Factors that very likely affect local abundance would include prey availability, presence of ground cover for nesting, predators, disturbance levels and so on. In some sites where prime habitat in the form of pristine lowland forest is widely available for instance, Danum Valley, the species is interestingly, seldom met with. In others like disturbed Panty Forest Reserve, Malaysian Rail-Babblers are moderately common and frequently encountered throughout the year.

There are numerous recent records for the species in well-visited parks and reserves in the region, with the most number of records from Panty Forest Reserve thanks to heavy observer coverage. About 10 – 20 sightings originate from the reserve annually though many go unreported, the most recent one being 1 bird heard from the Bunker Trail area on the 27th April 2008. Aside from **Panty Forest Reserve**, Johor, Malaysian Rail-Babblers have also been recently recorded in Malaysia in **Taman Negara National Park** (Merapoh and Kuala Tahan), Pahang, **Kerau Game Reserve**, Pahang, **Fraser's Hill**, Pahang, **Endau Rompin National Park**, Johor, **Hutan Lipur Sungai Tekala**, Selangor, **Lambir Hills National Park**, Sabah, **Danum Valley Conservation Area (rare)**, Sabah, in Indonesia in **Kerinci Seblat National Park**, West Sumatra, **Renai Sungai Ipuh**, Jambi, **Way Kambas National Park**, Lampung and in Thailand in **Hala-Bala Wildlife Sanctuary**, Narathiwat and **Khao Nor Chuchi Reserve**, Krabi.

	<p>Malaysian Rail-Babbler <i>Eupetes macrocercus</i> (Temminck, 1831)</p> <p>Other names: Rimba Sintang (Malay), Bái-méi cháng-jǐng dōng (Chinese), Kuina chime-dori (Japanese), Rallen-Flöter (German), Eupète à longue queue (French), Garrulo ralloide della Malesia (Italian), Hablantín Malayo (Spanish), Maleise Raltimalia (Dutch)</p>				
<table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="251 1753 552 1785">1. <i>E. m. borneensis</i></td> <td data-bbox="592 1753 690 1785">Borneo</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="251 1785 552 1816">2. <i>E. m. macrocercus</i></td> <td data-bbox="592 1785 1372 1816">South Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra and Natunas Islands</td> </tr> </table>		1. <i>E. m. borneensis</i>	Borneo	2. <i>E. m. macrocercus</i>	South Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra and Natunas Islands
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Vocalizations

It is not too difficult to recognize the call of the Malaysian Rail-Babbler. In most literature, it is described fairly accurately as a long thin whistle. The monotonous whistle is drawn out; lasting for about 1.5 to 2 seconds in duration and has a ventriloquial quality. Amazingly, a bird that is actually already very near the observer may seem far and I have numerous encounters whereby a seemingly distant call actually came from a bird not more than 10 metres away on the forest floor, stealthily walking amongst the leaf litter. The pitch of the whistle can vary, with some birds calling higher-pitched notes than others and this perhaps can be use in the identification of individuals. Alarmed or agitated birds utter a very slight chuckle, described as a soft 'chok' which is often hardly audible. Many times, when the observer is too close to the Rail-Babbler for comfort, it stops its long whistling note and instead gives the soft 'chok' notes (pers obs), giving the false impression that it has left the scene when it is in fact very near!

Many birdwatchers marvel about their past experiences of seeing these gorgeous birds walking about and calling persistently, especially after whistling an imitation note or doing a tape playback. The calling birds, as described by many and also seen by myself engage in a rather interesting posture when it vocalizes. An actively walking bird pauses itself, lowering and stretching its head forwards as it calls. While calling, the bird's beak is hardly opened and whilst so, the brilliant blue skin of the neck which is just over the vocal air sacs inflate. These bare skin regions of the vocal sacs are not conspicuous and are hidden beneath the black and orange feathers of the neck when not calling. In short, an actively calling bird would appear to have a periodically expanding and contracting blue patch on the neck as it walks around, repeatedly bowing its head down and forwards. It is possible that this posture and behavior might also be demonstrated during courtship display to capture the attention of females.

In the Malaysian lowland forest, another bird which has a call similar to the Malaysian Rail-Babbler is the colourful **Garnet Pitta** *Pitta granatina*, also a ground-dwelling bird. Care must be taken to distinguish the vocalizations of the two birds apart. Generally, the Garnet Pitta's call is a more or less similar monotonous whistle, except that it is subtly shorter and has a slight upward inflection towards the end, in contrast to the latter's long single tone note. In Borneo, the Black-headed Pitta *Pitta ussheri* and Blue-banded Pitta *Pitta arquata* also have similar calls.



A Malaysian Rail-Babbler calling from the undergrowth and showing its expanded blue-coloured vocal sacs. Picture from Renah Sungai Ipuh in Jambi province, Sumatra. (James Eaton)

Morphology and other Aspects of Behaviour

Study carefully the accompanying pictures and you would understand why this strange bird is called the Malaysian Rail-Babbler. With its ground-dwelling habits and its superficial rail-like resemblance, it does indeed evoke impressions of a somewhat oversized rail when it is not even anywhere closely related. The nearly 1-foot long adults are stunning forest gems in their rich brown plumages. Much of their bodies is warm brown, while the neck and head regions are a rich chestnut red. A thick black band extends from the base of the long bill through the ear coverts and the neck-side. Above this band is a long white supercilium that follows down the neck. Adult birds do not exhibit sexual dimorphism. Young birds meanwhile are easily separated from the adults in having a duller plumage overall, a dirty grayish belly and a pale whitish throat region.

Due to its general scarceness throughout the region, very little is known about the behavioral ecology of the shy Malaysian Rail-Babbler. In fact, the recent discovery of a nest in Hala-Bala, Southern Thailand proved to be one of the very few recent nest records found for this species thus far. Most observations made of this largely sedentary bird are either of single individuals or a pair foraging on the ground, responding to imitated calls and playback. At least in the Panti Forest Reserve, birds have been seen foraging on the grounds for arthropod prey items like crickets and worms. As the foraging individual moves amongst the leaf litter in a 'meandering' manner, it actively flips pieces of leaves away to unveil potential arthropod prey items hiding beneath, reminding of the foraging habits of thrushes or pittas. Occasionally, birds were also observed walking or running in its 'chicken-like' gait up and down decaying fallen logs. These individuals were presumed to be searching for food items though they were not seen picking up any organisms. For their size, it would also be a reasonable that birds not only feed on invertebrates, but also some small-sized vertebrates like skinks and frogs.

A recent Thai birding article documented a bird that has built its rather untidy nest on the forest floor near the base of some shrubs (per Lim, K.C. *in litt* 2007). The nest contained two white coloured eggs which were carefully concealed beneath an untidy heap of dried leaves, twigs and assorted leaf litter material. Generally, the nest appears no different from the surrounding leaf litter and blends exceptionally well with it, hence adding a protective element of camouflage from terrestrial predators. Nesting near the ground, at any rate is still a risky business since it exposes the nest to all sorts of ground-dwelling predators like lizards, civets, mongoose and snakes. An earlier nest was described in Smythies, 1999 as being constructed using the leaves of the forest shrub, *Hanguana*.

Scanty information is available in terms of social interactions and courtship behaviour. However, based on field observations, we do know that birds call all year round and apparently more so in the middle of the year. Field observations also suggest that breeding takes place between the periods from January to July, but that is about all that is known. A record from the Panti Forest Reserve in July 1999 noted a male bird feeding a female with insect food, suggesting some sort of courtship behaviour and perhaps egg-laying (Edwards, 1999).

Malaysian Rail-Babblers when agitated or threatened, tend to stop calling its typical whistle and instead utters soft chuckles probably are alarm notes. Disturbed birds (by birdwatchers) are also seen to constantly flick their tails in alarm. Even when approached very closely, birds are reluctant to fly off, and instead choose the alternative of quietly but quickly walking away.

Conservation

In the latest major revision of threat status by Birdlife International, the Malaysian Rail-Babbler was evaluated as lower risk/near-threatened. About some ten years ago, the number of listed near-threatened species in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand was dramatically lower than what it is today (See: Birds to Watch 2). One decade later, environmental change in the region has occurred at such a frightening pace that there is now considerable cause for alarm. Large scale

deforestation for monoculture, particularly oil palm by large firms has wreaked environmental havoc and destroyed most of the extent lowland primary forests except those protected in national parks, thus affecting many stenotopic forest bird species. The situation is worst in Sumatra and Indonesian Borneo where even national parks (places which receive official protection) are not spared from the chain saws of illegal loggers and their backers. For instance, large areas of former lowland forest have been destroyed in Indonesian parks like Way Kambas, Kerinci-Seblat, Gunung Palung and Bukit Barisan Selatan National Parks (Jepson *et al.* 2001). Presently, another major threat in the region comes from human-induced forest fire (And augmented by stronger El Nino cycles), a phenomenon that is increasing in frequency and intensity due to its effectiveness in clearing land for agriculture.

The predictions that come with such environmental destruction are grim. In peninsular Thailand, virtually all lowland forest except for small fragmented patches has been lost to agriculture. In Malaysia the situation is slightly less severe, but most lowland forest outside of the national parks and reserves have already been clear-felled, selectively logged or disturbed to some extent. Forest loss in the region as a whole is most severe in Western Indonesia where forests have been lost not only because of monoculture development and commercial logging, but also to forest fires, illegal logging and accompanying weak enforcement of environmental laws. Undoubtedly, the Malaysian Rail-Babbler must have been affected by the large-scale environmental changes that are going on at the moment, which is causing it to lose much of its habitat. As such changes continue unabated, populations of this remarkable bird will become increasingly fragmented. In a matter of decades, local extinctions will take its toll and the species will eventually only persist in the large undisturbed reserves.

Where to see Malaysian Rail-Babblers?

Indonesia Way Kambas National Park, Kerinci-Seblat National Park, Ketambe area Gunung Leuser National Park. (**Sumatra**). Gunung Palung National Park, Kutai National Park, Sungai Wain Protection Forest. (**Kalimantan, Borneo**).

Malaysia Taman Negara National Park, Endau Rompin National Park, Panti Forest Reserve, Gunung Blumut, Kerau Game Reserve, Pasoh Forest Reserve, Sungai Tekala Recreational Forest (**Peninsular Malaysia**). Danum Valley Conservation Area, Gunung Mulu National Park, Lambir Hills National Park. (**Borneo**)

Thailand Hala-Bala National Park, Khao Nor Chuchi Protection Forest.

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Specimen of Malaysian Rail-Babbler in Zoological Museum of Amsterdam. Taken on the 20th June 1916 in Langkat, North-east Sumatra by Z L.P. le Cosquino de Bussy, (ZMA)

Acknowledgements

This article is not possible without the contribution of a number of individuals. My sincere thanks go to Martin Irestedt and his colleagues for sharing their latest findings on *Eupetes* phylogeny, as well as Magnus Gelang who put me in contact with the research team. I would also like to thank Magnus Gelang, le Cosquino de Bussy, Chris Goodie, David Bishop, Ong Kiem Sian, James Eaton, Lim Kim Chuah, Felix Wong, Frank Rheindt and Robert Teo for their records, various inputs and pictures.