

Trip report: A week in Gunung Gede & Halimun National Park

By Ingo Waschki

Inspired by Albert Low's trip report from last year, I went birding in Gunung Halimun & Gunung Gede NP last week.

Itinerary

23 June, full day in Gunung Gede, birding mainly the area between the junction (2.3 km) and hot spring (another 2.8 km further up), the aim being to tick off the higher altitude species only

24 June, morning in Gunung Gede, unsuccessful try for Sunda Thrush in the lower parts, then birding the Cibodas Botanical Gardens and some raptor watching on the golf course, transfer to Halimun in early afternoon, took us much longer than expected and we arrived well after sunset, stayed at the research station in the forest (cost is 250 000 Rp for a 2-bed room, have to bring your own food, but can use the kitchen)

25 June, Gunung Halimun, morning spent on Loop Trail (a well managed trail, only a bit more than 2 km long, connecting the research station to the nearby village), afternoon on Loop Trail and then along the road

26 June, Gunung Halimun, morning spent along road till maybe 9 am, then Kendeng trail (this trail is less maintained and partially steep and slippery, I wouldn't recommend it in wet conditions although it is nowhere dangerous) till about noon, Loop Trail in the afternoon

27 June, Gunung Halimun, morning spent on Loop Trail, return to Jakarta at 11 30

I actually went back to Gunung Gede for a more relaxed hiking experience on the week-end 28th/29th, but it isn't really worth it for birding as the place is completely overrun ... starting from 6 am, in particular my last hopes to get the Sunda Thrush were smashed well before sunrise by the first visitors coming along the path with loud music from their handphones.

I had splendid weather the whole time with no rain at all.

The trip was organized locally by Indra Ferdinand (transport & accommodation) , who acted also as my bird guide during the time, simply for the fact that I felt a bit scared and unexperienced to bird in Indonesia all alone (which in retrospect was nonsense, it is pretty easy do everything on your own, and almost all species are straightforward to get, although you will need some local help to organize Halimun as nobody there seemed to speak much English). Indra was good company though, and he is a really good birder - in particular he's a living bird sound archive and can whistle a lot of birds in. He had not visited Halimun for 10 years and never birded the place, so it was some kind of scouting trip for him, too.

Remarks on typical target species

Javan Hawk-eagle – One seen mobbed by **Spotted Kestrels** at the waterfall in Gede, 3 seen circling from the tea plantation in Halimun, and another distant sighting at the same place

Chestnut-bellied Partridge – Heard only briefly and distantly in Gede, but loads of times along Loop Trail in Gunung Halimun, one flushed from the track offered not more than the sound of its wingbeats, another one we could see scuttling away through the vegetation, but just a shadowy something, showing no details whatsoever, others were calling from very close but would not let them be called in, quite frustrating

PIGEONS – Pink-headed Fruit-Dove showed well three times in Gede, **Dark-backed Imperial Pigeons** seemed to be very common in Halimun from the number of calls heard, but we struggled till we found one giving reasonable views, a flock of 20+ **Sumatran Green Pigeons** was found in a fruiting tree in Halimun



Pink-headed Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus porphyreus*

Yellow-throated Hanging-Parrot – This species seems to become difficult, just a single bird seen on two occasions in the gardens in the usual flowering tree where old trip reports mention dozen(s)

Javan Trogon – Visibly quite difficult in June, as most pairs breed it seems, not a trace of it in Gede (although a Dutch birder had a nice encounter at the same time) and nothing in the lower areas of Halimun. After an unsuccessful first day we asked the rangers who said yes there's one just behind the research station – there was a trogon indeed, but it was Orange-breasted - we finally managed to connect with it on Kendeng Trail, pretty far up (close to the end actually).

Javan Kingfisher – seen on the golf course in Gede early in the morning and later also in the botanical gardens

Sunda Minivet – this species seems scarce in Gede, with only one distant sighting, but it is very common in Halimun

Pygmy Tit – botanical gardens in Cibodas are still very reliable and produced dozens of birds



Pygmy Tit *Psaltria exilis*

Crested Jay – a nice surprise, seen in two bird waves in Halimun, more birds heard, dunno if that's regular

BABLERS – all the usual suspects were seen with relative ease in both places, the sought-after lowland species **White-breasted Babbler** was seen twice in bird waves in Gunung Halimun, along the road, and along the lower part of Kendeng trail

Spotted Crocias – very common in Halimun, there isn't a bird wave without a small group of them, which means dozens of birds seen each day in Halimun, as is now standard, I didn't see it in Gede

Rufous-fronted Laughingthrush – recent reports indicate that birder struggle with this species, however, it was seen with relative ease both times I was in the area between junction and hotspots with another two groups heard only in the same area

Javan Cochoa – Indra knows the territories of a few pairs, but his whistles all remained unanswered for some reason, luck was with us however and we encountered a pair that was just feeding in the trees along the trail, maybe 500m from hot springs in Gunung Gede, on my second hike in that area, the birds remained heard only



Javan Cochoa *Cochoa azurea*

FANTAILS – Rufous-tailed Fantail was common at Gede between junction and hot springs while **White-bellied Fantail** was present in almost all bird waves in Gunung Halimun (usually just one or two birds per bird wave) resulting in a dozen or so sightings over 2.5 days

Tawny-breasted Parrotfinch – Indra saw it in Halimun on Loop Trail, sadly I didn't – we did however also encounter **Pin-tailed Parrotfinch** on Loop Trail, so watch out when you only get bad views ...

Both parks offer really good birding with especially Halimun being absolutely loaded with birds.

Feel free to contact me for more details.

Abbreviations

GGBG – Cibodas Botanical Gardens at the border of Gunung Gede
GGLF – Gunung Gede, lower forest from the entry to the junction at 2.3km
GGUF – Gunung Gede, upper forest, between the junction and the Hot Springs
GGW – Gunung Gede, waterfall
GGGC – Gunung Gede, golf course
GHR – Gunung Halimun, along the road
GHLT – Gunung Halimun, Loop Trail
GHKT – Gunung Halimun, Kendeng Trail
GHT – Gunung Halimun, tea plantation
J – central Jakarta
(h) means heard only

Species List

Besra (GHLT)
Crested Serpent-Eagle (GGBG, GGGC, GHKT)
Black Eagle (GGW, GGGC)
Changeable Hawk-Eagle (GGUF)
Javan Hawk-Eagle (GGUF, GHT)
Spotted Kestrel (GGW, GGGC)
Chestnut-bellied Partridge (GGUF (h), GHLT (h))
Dusky Woodcock (GGLF (h))
Sumatran Green Pigeon (GHLT)
Pink-headed Fruit-Dove (GGUF)
Dark-backed Imperial Pigeon (GHR, GHLT)
Spotted Dove (J, GGBG, GHT)
Yellow-throated Hanging-Parrot (GGBG)
Indian Cuckoo (GGLF (h), GGUF (h))
Plaintive Cuckoo (GGBG (h), GGLF (h))
Chestnut-breasted Malkoha (GHLT)
Salvadori's Nightjar (GGLF)
Javan Frogmouth (GGBG (h), GGLF (h), GHR (h))
Cave Swiftlet (everywhere)
Grey-rumped Treeswift (GHLT)
Javan Trogon (GHKT)
Orange-breasted Trogon (GHKT)
Javan Kingfisher (GGGC)
Collared Kingfisher (GGGC)
Fire-tufted Barbet (GGUF)
Brown-throated Barbet (GGUF, GHLT, GHR)
Orange-fronted Barbet (GGUF, GGLF, GHLT, GHR)
Crimson-winged Woodpecker (GGUF, GHLT, GHKT)
Checker-throated Woodpecker (GGUF, GHKT)
Banded Broadbill (GGBG)
Striated Swallow (GHT)
Lesser Cuckooshrike (GHLT)
Sunda Minivet (GGW, GHLT, GHR)
Common Iora (GHLT)
Blue-winged Leafbird (GHLT, GHR)
Sooty-headed Bulbul (GHT)
Orange-spotted Bulbul (GGBG, GGLF)
Grey-cheeked Bulbul (GHLT)
Sunda Bulbul (GGLF, GGUF, GHLT)
Ashy Drongo (almost everywhere)
Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo (almost everywhere)
Black-and-crimson Oriole (GHLT, GHR)
Crested Jay (GHR, GHKT)
Pygmy Tit (GGBG)
Great Tit (GGBG)
Blue Nuthatch (GHLT, GHKT, GHR, GGUF, GGLF)
Lesser Shortwing (GGLF, GHLT)
White-browed Shortwing (GGUF)
Horsfield's Babbler (GGLF, GHLT)
Chestnut-backed Scimitar Babbler (GGUF)
Large Wren-Babbler (GHLT)
Eye-browed Wren-Babbler (GGLF, GHLT)
Pygmy Wren-Babbler (GGLF, GGUF, GHLT)
White-breasted Babbler (GHR, GHKT)
White-bibbed Babbler (GGLF, GHLT)
Crescent-chested Babbler (GGLF, GHLT)
Javan Fulvetta (everywhere)
Spotted Crocias (GHLT, GHKT, GHR)

Rufous-fronted Laughingthrush (GGUF)
White-browed Shrike-babbler (GGUF, GHLT, GHKT)
Chestnut-fronted Shrike-babbler (GGLF, GGUF, GHLT)
Sunda Blue Robin (GGBG, GGLF)
Lesser Forktail (GHLT, GGLF)
Javan Cochoa (GGUF)
Javan Whistling Thrush (GGBG, GGUF)
Blue Whistling-thrush (GHR)
Sunda Warbler (GGUF, GGLF, GGBG, GHKT)
Mountain Leaf-warbler (GGLF, GGUF, GGBG, GHKT)
Striated Grassbird (GHT)
Javan Tesia (GGUF)
Olive-backed Tailorbird (GGBG)
Mountain Tailorbird (GGBG, GHLT)
Bar-winged Prinia (GGBG, GGGC)
Indigo Flycatcher (GGUF, GGLF)
Snowy-browed Flycatcher (GGW, GGUF)
Little Pied Flycatcher (GGBG, GHLT)
Grey-headed Flycatcher (GHLT)
Pale Blue Flycatcher (GHR, GHLT)
Rufous-tailed Fantail (GGUF)
White-bellied Fantail (GHLT, GHKT)
Maroon-breasted Philentoma (GHLT)
White-breasted Wood-swallow (GHT)
Long-tailed Shrike (GHT)
Ruby-cheeked Sunbird (GHLT)
White-flanked Sunbird (GGBG)
Javan Sunbird (GHLT, GHKT)
Little Spiderhunter (GHLT)
Long-billed Spiderhunter (GHKT)
Grey-breasted Spiderhunter (GHLT, GGBG)
Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker (GHR)
Orange-bellied Flowerpecker (GHR)
Blood-breasted Flowerpecker (GGBG, GGLF)
Scarlet-headed Flowerpecker (J)
Oriental White-eye (GGBG, GHR)
Javan Grey-throated White-eye (GGBG, GGUF)
Pin-tailed Parrotfinch (GHLT)
Javan Munia (GHT)
Tree Sparrow

Most important dips

Mountain Serin
Sunda Thrush
Tawny-breasted Parrotfinch
all owls

Photo Gallery

All photographs by Ingo Waschkies.



Spotted Kestrel *Falco moluccensis*



Fire-tufted Barbet *Psilopogon pyrolophus*



Orange-spotted Bulbul *Pycnonotus bimaculatus*



Pygmy Tit *Psaltria exilis*



Lesser Forktail *Enicurus velatus*



Sunda Warbler *Seicercus grammiceps*



Indigo Flycatcher *Eumyias indigo*



White-flanked Sunbird *Aethopyga eximia*



Blood-breasted Flowerpecker *Dicaeum monticolum*



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