

# Oriental Bird Club

FOCUS ON  
MALAYSIA



Bulletin 20 • December 1994



## The Oriental Bird Club aims to:

- encourage an interest in the birds of the Oriental region and their conservation.
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies.
- collate and publish material on Oriental birds.

Two bulletins and a journal, *Forktail*, are published annually

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### Membership of OBC

Membership of the Club is open to all and costs £12 per annum (£8 reduced rate for nationals living in Oriental countries), £16 Family, £36 Corporate Members, £20 Sponsoring Member (supporting the Honorary Membership Scheme), and £20 for organisations, libraries and universities. Special arrangements for payment exist in USA, Thailand and India. To join or for further details please contact the Membership Secretary, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, U.K.

### Cover illustration:

#### Papaya Breakfast

A painting of Common Myna  
*Acridotheres tristis*, Black-naped Oriole  
*Oriolus chinensis* and Asian Glossy  
Starlings *Aplonis panayensis* feeding at a  
papaya tree by Dr Neoh Chin Boon.



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# Guest Editorial



We are most pleased that David Wells agreed to write the guest editorial for this Special Malaysia Issue of the bulletin. David has been carrying out long-term studies on the country's avifauna for nearly 30 years and soon his great knowledge will be published in a handbook for the region's birds. David was OBC's first representative for Malaysia and we would like to thank him warmly for all the support he has given the Club in its first decade.

Malaysia is a country that is split in two parts with 600 km of sea separating the two halves. However, the break between Borneo and the Malay Peninsula is geologically modern though formerly a continuous continental plain. Its parallel-running mountain systems have been the only really durable habitat islands, now old and weathered except for the giant, still rising plug of Kinabalu. The latter's summit, once cold enough to have supported a glacier, is a refuge for trapped, cool-climate life forms and the only spot in Malaysia above the tree-line.

Below that line, the almost universal climax cover is evergreen tropical forest, contributing over 60% of the Malaysia/Singapore bird species list. The two mountain archipelagos offer birdwatchers separate field challenges. In bird terms, Malayan forest above about 900 m is an arm of Indochina, its specialists 80% northern versus only 20% Sunda endemic. A not-much-smaller Bornean mountain fauna inverts these figures, with enough local endemics to qualify as Malaysia's only Endemic Bird Area (EBA) community in BirdLife International's global analysis of restricted-range bird distributions. Instead of high numbers of restricted-range species the lowland forest bird communities are more speciose, but note that 80% of the community's birds are endemic to the Sunda region. Malaysia's list, at 717 species, is near half that of the many times bigger, biogeographically much more complex Indonesia.

These are basic statistics, but how good are the facts? In forest, post-gun era fieldwork has added only a few species to over fifty years of effort by museum collectors, mostly through the coming of mist-nets and portable sound recorders. Introduced in the fifties and sixties, the largest early effect of these tools was to revolutionise the

status of many forest birds, and in this, Malaysia is ahead of Indonesia in that virtually every species of the collecting era has been re-found in the field by birdwatchers. It would be incorrect, however, to assume from this that the ground has been thoroughly covered. Sampling has always been spotty and while some recent expeditions (on most of which OBC members have been active) have plugged gaps there still are large terrain features in both parts of Malaysia that have never been visited by an ornithologist, though accessibility so often means loggers have got there first.

Events in open country have been quite different, in that only a few of the last 30 years has passed without one to several species being added to the Malaysian list. Most have been extra migrants, but include some breeding range expansions, unassisted, and also by introduction via the wildlife trade. This is a fluid situation in which exciting changes have occurred fast, but it is clear that rate of reporting has also varied with observer effort, which accounts for the undue number of 'firsts' from Singapore!

Development over this period has been two-pronged, through universities and local research institutions and via the large expansion of amateur activity, heavily expatriate through the 1960s, but increasingly resident since. This has been organised mainly via branches of the Malaysian Nature Society, which started a consolidated *Malayan Bird Report* in 1962 and the journals *Singapore Avifauna* and *Enggang* in the 1980s.

A first summary of Malaysian ornithology appeared in the mid-seventies and another is being written up now, highlighting gaps and trends, and suggesting ways forward that apply area-wide. Briefly, interest in forest bird communities continues (with serious findings for

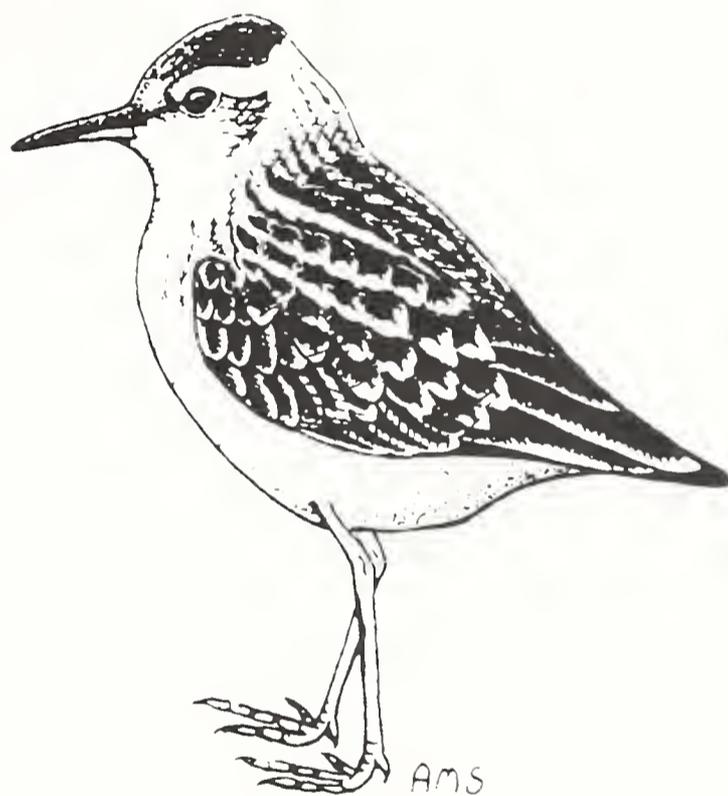
conservation policy) and, in all habitats, more species and groups have received special treatment. Pheasants, bee-eaters, swifts (and their ecto-parasites), owls, frugivorous pigeons, hawks and starlings are among those featured, and through Interwader and now the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB) our knowledge of shorebird movements has advanced greatly.

These projects have all been organised by institutionally supported students and full-time professionals. The dominant contribution of amateurs and touring visitors has been inventory work, which still remains a major need. Inevitably, it has double value if it can be channelled to sites of special scientific and/or conservation need, which more could undoubtedly be done locally to identify and publicise. Still the biggest deficiency however, offering greatest scope for those able to work only opportunistically, is in natural history observations. Much more has been learned about vocalisations, and nest records have accrued slowly, but regular collection of other classes of information (e.g. on foraging behaviour, food, social interactions, etc.) would be transforming. For locals, it could well begin in gardens where, happily, there are still plenty of birds, most as poorly known biologically as those of wild habitats.

How safe are Malaysian birds? This year, West Indonesian forests burned again on a grand scale. Along the west coast plain of the Peninsula we have not had a sunny day now for three months, blanketed by smoke from Sumatra. In past El Niño years fires have entered Sabah forests, but with a still manageably small rural population this has not become a widespread Malaysian problem. Rather, the problem in Malaysia/Singapore is management of wealth, the single-minded pursuit of which is hitting forest resources unacceptably hard and frighteningly fast. In recent years, Sarawak has designated a good system of reserves, but few real claims can yet be made for the rest of the country, with opportunities of connecting decision-making to scientifically-based conservation needs disappearing especially fast in the Peninsula. Nationwide, it would be realistic to warn now that undisturbed forest below the hills, source (versus sink) habitat of the core Sunda avifauna, is an endangered environment, and a first important test of the value of the newly drafted Malaysian National Biodiversity Action Plan.

Nor are there problems only with forest birds. Overuse of chemical insecticides in paddy agriculture is hardly news anywhere, but one recent event above all others – post-harvest application of broad-spectrum herbicides (outrageously touted by international chemical companies) – has overnight almost turned a rich and rewarding man-made habitat into a biological desert. There have to be more acceptable, sustainable ways of boosting rice production, and unless they are found soon the outcome especially for dependent migrants, such as Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, must be serious.

In sponsoring this bulletin issue, the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board lends its name to a call for action on these fronts. Instilling the principles



*Long-toed Stint Calidris subminuta* by Andy Stoddart

of sustainable ecotourism among the many resort entrepreneurs, whose world view stops at golf courses, is an uphill task in its own right; but here is public support from the national policy body for more balanced use of resources. That must include more protected areas where conservationists advise they are most needed, and which OBC members can continue to help promote.

**David Wells, Kuala Lumpur, October 1994.**

# Club News



## 1994 Tenth Anniversary AGM

The Club's 10th Anniversary AGM and Winter Meeting will be held at the Meetings Rooms, the Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London, U.K., on the 10 December 1994. The talks will be: a review of 10 years of the Club's Conservation Fund by Melanie Heath, the Club's Conservation Officer; the 'crowned' group of *Phylloscopus* warblers by Per Alström (who gave a talk alongside Urban Olsson at the Club's first Winter Meeting and AGM); Hong Kong and central China by Alan Greensmith; and, the wild bird trade in Asia by Stephen Nash of TRAFFIC. The meeting will also include the formal business of the AGM, the announcement of the Forktail-Leica award winner and the draw for the Club's Mega prize Draw raffle.

As usual, there will be many sales stands offering a variety of goods and a plentiful supply of delicious refreshments. The day's events will conclude with an open invitation to a local hostelry, the Prince Albert. Buffet food will be available there at a cost of £5 per person. Booking should be made in advance by contacting the Club's Meeting Officer, Graeme Green, on +44 (0)296 6310879.

## Joint OBC/Yorkshire Birding Meeting

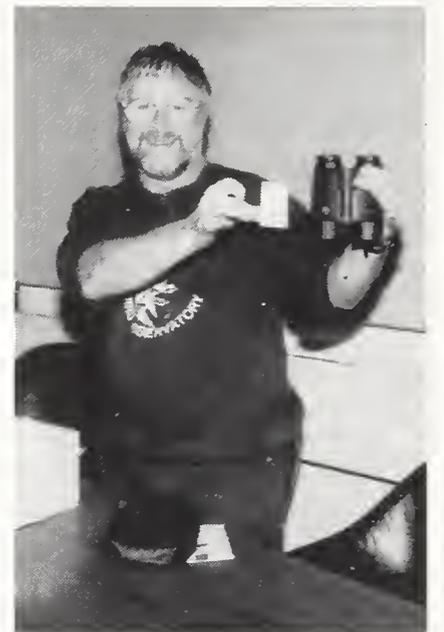
A joint meeting will be held in Leeds on the 25th February 1995. Full details about the meeting will be circulated with *Forktail* 10 in January.

## Mega prize Draw 1994

### 48 prizes worth over £2,500 in total

Once again a fabulous selection of prizes is on offer in our annual Mega prize Draw. In addition to a pair of the incomparable Leica 10x42 binoculars, there is also a £500 voucher for optical equipment from In Focus, and a one week self-catering holiday for two in Portugal (kindly donated by an OBC member with flights donated by WildWings). Other prizes include books such as ten copies of *A Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo, Sumatra, Java and Bali* (MacKinnon and Phillipps), five copies of *Crows and Jays* (Madge and Burn)

and one copy of volumes I and II of *Birds of Pakistan* (Roberts), subscriptions and WildSounds vouchers (full details are given on the reverse of the Draw tickets). All this means that the Mega Grand prize raffle is even more attractive with a greater chance of winning a prize. OBC is most grateful to all our



sponsors and supporters who have so kindly donated the prizes for this year's event.

The Mega prize Draw is utterly essential for the Club's Conservation Fund and provides a substantial amount of the funding required to support the Small Grants scheme. Some 70 projects have been supported since the inception of the Conservation Fund and further funding is vital if we are to continue this valuable work. Please support the Mega prize Draw and get your friends to purchase or sell the raffle tickets. More tickets are available from Richard Bosanquet on +44 (0)81-660-8076. SUPPORT CONSERVATION - BUY OR SELL AS MANY TICKETS AS YOU CAN!

## OBC Information Service

Peter Morris has recently been co-opted onto OBC Council as Information Officer. The provision of information has been one of the Club's primary aims since its formation ten years ago. With the current increase in birders visiting the region, and the expanding wealth of information being produced (especially in the form of private trip reports), Council have agreed that there is scope to expand and improve the information service for Club members.

The Information Officer will be responsible for answering members' enquiries and will advise and, where possible, supply available information to them. In particular OBC aims to build up its collection of trip reports and other birdwatching

information to a comprehensive level. This information will then be available to all members for a nominal fee (to cover copying costs, postage and a small donation to the Conservation Fund).

We request that any members who have visited the Oriental Region and who have produced any written information that may be of use to fellow members contact the Club. Clearly, the quality of OBC's information service is dependent on the reports that we receive from you. New reports of interest to members will be publicised in the *Free Press* or *Stray Feathers* (see page 84) sections of the bulletin. Those who are prepared to make their reports available to the Club may benefit in one of two ways. Firstly, OBC will be happy to swap reports with members who are prepared to donate their reports to us and, secondly, those who wish to supply copies of reports for sale (on a sale or return basis) will be able to sell them through the OBC Information Service, with a small profit going to the Conservation Fund.

The Information Officer keenly awaits to hear from any members with information and those with queries regarding birding in the Oriental Region.

### A new T-shirt for Autumn 1994

To continue the special celebration of our 10th Anniversary year another OBC T-shirt design is now available to members. The design features a stunning male Pied Harrier and an Ibisbill by Martin Woodcock and is printed on a light grey T-shirt. We are most grateful to Leica whose sponsorship helped cover the set-up costs of this T-shirt.

As well as being available in the usual medium, large and extra large sizes, the new design is also available in small. This is the first time a T-shirt has been produced in this smaller size but, if it proves popular, we will have other designs in this size in future. Many U.K. members saw and bought the new design at the British Bird Fair and OBC Blakeney meetings in August.

The design is now available to everyone.

T-shirts are priced at **£11 each Surface mail** and **£13 each Airmail**. A special **multiple** purchase rate of **£10 each Surface Mail** and **£12**



**each Airmail** is offered for purchases of five or more of the new design. Please note that these rates are exclusive to the new design and cannot be mixed with the special multiple purchase offer for existing designs, which can be purchased using the general order form enclosed with this bulletin.

### OBC Member Donates £1,000 to Conservation Fund

The Club is extremely grateful to Per Undeland, who has donated £1,000 to the Conservation Fund. As Per is presently resident in India, it was felt appropriate to allocate the donation to two projects in this country. Accordingly £500 was given to Shankar Raman's study of the impact of shifting cultivation on bird communities in Mizoram (page 9) and £500 to Asad Rahmani and Phil McGowan for their project on the endangered Swamp Francolin *Francolinus gularis* in Uttar Pradesh (see page 8).

Donations from members are most appreciated, especially as funding from traditional sources (Mega prize raffle; T-shirt sales, Corporate Sponsors, etc.) is not keeping pace with the significant rise in grant applications. Therefore if you would like to make a donation to the Conservation Fund we would be delighted to hear from you. **All money entering the Conservation Fund goes to conservation projects in the Orient with no administration costs being taken out.**

### OBC welcomes Natural History Book Service

From 1  
January  
1995 the



Natural History Book Service (NHBS) will be managing the OBC Book Service and providing members with a highly reliable and easy-to-use mail-order service. NHBS was established in 1985 and in a relatively short space of time has become one of the leading suppliers of books to birders around the world. As part of their commitment to offering an international mail-order service of the highest quality, NHBS offer flexible payment methods including most credit cards, and transfer to four bank accounts, while payments in £ sterling, US\$ or DM are all acceptable. In addition to managing the OBC Book Service, NHBS will be participating at all our main U.K. meetings and many members will have an opportunity to meet their friendly professional staff.

In order for the Club to benefit from this new mail order book service, members will need to identify themselves when ordering books from NHBS. Whilst the new service will not be offering free postage for U.K. members or reduced rates for members outside the U.K., we believe that it offers much more in terms of reliability, wider coverage of all natural history publications, exclusive special offers on forthcoming titles and a special search and location facility.

### Special Malaysia Issue Bulletin

The Club is delighted that the production costs of this bulletin issue have been substantially reduced by sponsorship and advertising. We are particularly grateful to the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, which has contributed £1,500 in sponsorship and will be distributing the pull-out section *Malaysia Birding* in their London office.

Much of the success with advertising is directly attributable to members telling bird tour companies, optical equipment manufacturers, etc. that they saw their advertisement in the OBC Bulletin. **Remember this simple action costs you nothing, but the extra revenue from advertising means further improvements to the bulletin and extra resources for the Conservation Fund.**

### Two More Corporate Sponsors

In recognition of the support of Nikon U.K. Ltd in financing colour insertions in the last issue of the bulletin, Corporate Sponsorship status has been conferred on this company. Similarly the Club is indebted to the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board for their sponsorship of this Special Malaysia issue, and we are pleased to welcome this organisation as a Corporate Sponsor. The addition of Nikon UK Ltd and Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board means that the Club now has thirteen Corporate Sponsors.

### More Business Supporters

The number of Business Supporters has continued to grow, helping us to fund even more honorary members in Asia. Since May, Wildlife Computing, Flying Colours and AandC Black (Publishers) Ltd have become Business Supporters. Flying Colours are renowned for their high quality photographs of Asian birds, some of which feature in this issue of the bulletin. Likewise AandC Black have established themselves as publishers of quality identification guides such as *New World warblers* and *Crows and jays*.

## INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

### Beidaihe Meeting



*Birders, speakers and China TV at the Beidaihe 1994 seminar (Photo: D. Tipling).*



Beidaihe, on China's north-east coast, has rapidly become a mecca for birders eager to see the spectacular passage of Oriental and Palearctic migrants each spring and fall. In this 10th Anniversary Year, it was therefore befitting for OBC to participate in an event hosted by Beidaihe Birdwatching Society. An evening meeting held at the Jin Shan Hotel on 10 May was well attended, drawing its audience from at least 10 countries, including our Chinese hosts and, among them, prominent local leaders. Even television cameras were there to record the event, which was later screened in the region.

The meeting was introduced by Professor Hsu Weishu, who also translated for the Chinese delegates. Among the speakers, Martin Williams gave an illustrated presentation on the highlights of the region's birds and the economic and social problems which threaten them. Andy Gibson of Budget Bird Tours took the spotlight at very short notice to give an introduction to the work of OBC and our commitment to conservation in the Orient.

OBC is very grateful to the Beidaihe Birdwatching Society as hosts, and both Martin and Andy for their contributions and involvement in organising this event, which hopefully will be the forerunner to future joint meetings at Beidaihe.

### AOU/OBC Symposium in August 1995

The American Ornithologists' Union has invited OBC to participate in a symposium session on tropical ornithology at its next annual meeting, which will be held during 16-19 August 1995. The meeting will be hosted by the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History, Ohio. The session, scheduled

for 18 August, will have particular emphasis on the Oriental Region. The programme has not yet been finalised, and speakers are still being invited to submit abstracts of papers for presentation. If you would like to present a paper at this meeting or want further information please contact Dr Robert Kennedy (USA OBC Representative) at Cincinnati Museum of Natural History, 1720 Gilbert Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202-1201 U.S.A. or Dave Weaver, International Meetings Officer at the Club's address. Further details about the meeting will be included in the next bulletin.

### OBC Manchester meeting

The Club's sixth summer meeting in Manchester was held on 18 June, and, thanks to good publicity in the north-west in particular, attendance was well up on previous years.

Nigel Lindsey opened the programme with an account of some of the lesser known birds and sites in Pakistan and India, including his visit to see the enigmatic Jerdon's Courser *Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*. Peter Morris then entertained us with a comprehensive tour of Northern India and Nepal, encompassing all the better known sites and illustrated by Pete's incomparable slides - he always seems to manage to photograph a remarkably high number of the birds he sees! Finally, Mark Beaman enthralled us with an account of a recent visit traversing the Tibetan plateau. Not only is Tibet one of the most remote and inaccessible regions in Asia, it is also highly sought-after both as a birding and a travel experience. Rather few birders have been lucky enough to get to Tibet and it was a pleasure to be given a comprehensive account of its delights and hardships.

Thanks are due to all who helped make this meeting a success, in particular Graeme Green, and Nona and Graham Finch.

### New OBC Display stand

OBC's new display board was unveiled in August at the British Birdwatching Fair and our own Blakeney meeting. The eye-catching display summarises the work of the Club and especially our commitment to supporting conservation work in the region. OBC is most grateful to Engli Green, Bob Hibbert and Colin Poole for designing and preparing the display material.



### Another successful Blakeney Meeting...

Once again Blakeney Village Hall, Norfolk, resounded to the applause of a capacity audience (and indeed the sounds of the rainforest) during the annual August Bank Holiday meeting. Over 300 people contributed to another memorable occasion for the Club on its 10th anniversary. Importantly this year we were very pleased to welcome our representatives and members from Thailand, Viet Nam, Philippines and Indonesia.

Tim Loseby, one of our most popular speakers, started the meeting with a superb photographic tour of the sights, birds and other wildlife found in Sri Lanka. Following on, Michael Poulsen from BirdLife International gave a thorough account of survey work carried out in the extremely endemic-rich remaining hill forests of Luzon, Philippines. Rudyanto, also from BirdLife, gave a brief but enthusiastic presentation on the work of the BirdLife Indonesia Programme. Finally, Peter Morris took us light-heartedly through the rigours of birding in the Philippines, but amply illustrated with some stunning endemics of which Great Philippine Eagle *Pithecophaga jefferyi* was a major highlight.

Although no longer our Meetings Officer, special thanks are due to Dick Filby for standing



in and once again so energetically organising and chairing the event. An astounding £1,450 was raised during the day, with over £700 in sales alone! The culinary delights prepared by Nona Finch and her team were, as ever, greatly appreciated by all and also raised over £300. OBC is most grateful for their hard work and support.

### India Special Bulletin for 1995

The November 1995 issue of this bulletin will be dedicated to the Indian Subcontinent. If you are interested in writing an article or supplying photographs or artwork for this special issue please contact the OBC Bulletin Editor at the Club's U.K. address.

### Join OBC Editorial Committee!

The OBC Editorial Committee is looking to bolster its current committee in 1995. This is to cope with the demands of producing two bulletins and *Forktail* annually and bring in new skills and experiences. For instance, it is envisaged that the 1995 edition of *Forktail* will be in a new format and that the current Bulletin Editor will step down at the end of 1995. If you feel that you can contribute and help with the Club's publishing please contact Adrian Long at the Club's U.K. address.

*Photographs in Club News by Tim Loseby*



### Major awards for 1994

The winners of the Sixth *Forktail* Leica Award and First OBC In Focus Conservation Awareness Award will be announced at the Club's AGM on 10 December.

### Knobbed Hornbill in Sulawesi

A grant of £500 has been given to a project led by the Biological Science Club in Indonesia to study the **Knobbed Hornbill** *Aceros cassidix*, a species endemic to Sulawesi and surrounding islets. The hornbill population, which is found in both lowland and montane habitats, is decreasing due to hunting and habitat destruction. This project will gather comparative data on the species' status and ecology in lowland and montane habitats in northern Sulawesi, together with information on hunting and forest destruction rates.

OBC would like to thank the New South Wales Field Ornithologists' Club for their kind donation of £200 which has been awarded to this project.

### Burt Monroe

It was with great sadness that we learned of Burt Monroe's death, which is a great loss to ornithology. Burt will probably be best known to members as the co-author of *Distribution and taxonomy of birds of the world* - related to this he was leading an international committee of experts undertaking an authoritative review of the English names of the world's birds. His tremendous energies and leadership during this ambitious project will be difficult to replace. We offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

### Helping OBC

OBC Editorial Committee would like to thank profusely Bob and Scott Hibbert, and Michelle Hines for their sterling work in the production of this bulletin. Without their continued support and efforts we would not be able to produce such a large and colourful issue. The committee would also like to thank Rob Still of Rubythroat Publications for his patience and help in getting this issue completed on time.

**Correction:** On page 3 of Bulletin 19, the final sentence of the paragraph on OBC T-shirts should have read, '...OBC T-shirts are now an important source of income for the Club's funds...'

## Conservation Fund

Compiled by OBC Conservation Officer, Melanie Heath

## Conservation research in Java hill forests

A grant of £500 was awarded to three Indonesian students, working together with two Dutch students, to conduct surveys of the **Javan Hawk-Eagle** *Spizaetus bartelsi* in central Java. The group have already collected valuable information on breeding and distribution of the eagle and are currently giving a series of presentations of their results at universities in Java.

## Gunung Halimun

A grant of £500 was awarded to the Gunung Halimun 1994 Java Expedition, comprising six members of the Biological Science Club in Jakarta and five students from the University of East Anglia, U.K. The team will conduct research to assess the effect of human usage and population pressures on birds and forest vegetation around the periphery of Gunung Halimun National Park, south-west of Bogor. The team have recently received full funding for the project and have therefore kindly requested that this grant be allocated to another needy project, for which OBC is very grateful.

## Shifting cultivation on bird communities

A grant of £500 has been awarded to Shankar Raman to study the effects of shifting cultivation on the bird communities in Mizoram, India. This part of north-east India harbours a very diverse avifauna of over 500 species. Shifting cultivation is one of the major causes of habitat change in this hilly region, with more areas being cultivated as population increases. This project aims to answer some important questions regarding the impact of such practices on bird populations and what conservation measures are needed. Per Undeland generously donated £500 to fund this project.

## Habitat of the Swamp Francolin

Asad Rahmani and Phil McGowan received a grant of £500, donated by Per Undeland, to fund their study of the globally threatened **Swamp Francolin** *Francolinus gularis* in the tall wet grasslands of the Indo-Nepalese *terai* belt. The project aims to describe the habitat of the Swamp Francolin and to assess the species' use of available vegetation types for activities such as calling, nesting and feeding young. The OBC grant will be used specifically to fund the assessment of breeding success in agricultural areas outside the Dudwa National Park and compare it with that inside.

## Bang Khram Reserve Forest



Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* by  
Craig Robson

A grant of £500 has been awarded to Khlong Thom Environment Club (KEPC) and the Khao Nor Chuchi Lowland Forest Project (LFP) in Thailand to survey land-holdings in the Bang Khram Reserve Forest. This area is of critical importance for the conservation of **Gurney's Pitta** *Pitta gurneyi*, supporting no fewer than 13 of 21 known pairs. The Thai government has plans to issue land-use certificates for land inside the reserve forest but, unless properly monitored, the imposition of this scheme could lead to further unregulated land clearance. OBC funds will be used to enable village representatives to survey forest cover and land-holdings in critical areas of the reserve, and the results will be used as the basis for a comprehensive forest zoning plan.

## CONSERVATION FUND IN ACTION

### Birds recorded in the The Desert National Park

The Desert National Park, created in 1984 in Rajasthan, covers over 3,000 km<sup>2</sup> and is thus the only sizeable protected area representative of the desert region of India. Records of birds occurring in the park were collected for 1992-1994. We also collected additional information from naturalists who have visited the park in the last decade.

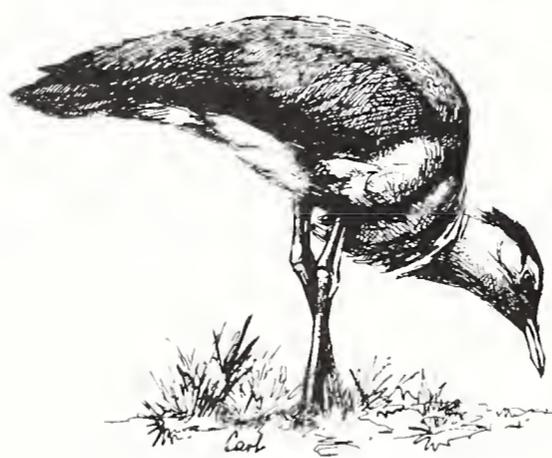
We recorded a total of 106 species in the park. The **Indian Bustard** *Ardeotis nigriceps*, one of the most endangered birds of the subcontinent, is regularly seen in the park, but it appears to be declining in numbers. Compared to an earlier estimate in 1986 of 200-400 birds, this study revealed that there are probably now only 50-100 individuals in the park.

**Houbara Bustard** *Chlamydotis undulata* is a regular winter visitor and **White-browed Bushchat** *Saxicola macrorhyncha*, the only endemic in the region, was frequently recorded in the park and is possibly more numerous than previously thought. More than 20 species of raptor were recorded, together with three species of sandgrouse and ten species of lark.

During the monsoon period in July there was an influx of species not present in the dry months such as **Rain Quail** *Coturnix coromandelica*, **Indian Courser** *Cursorius coromandelicus*, **Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix grisea* and **Rufous-tailed Lark** *Ammomanes phoenicurus*. As early as mid-July, autumn migration of birds was observed: **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* passed through the area and two **Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robins** *Cercotrichas galactotes* were recorded. Migration was at its peak during September-October with large numbers of **European Rollers**, **Rosy Starlings** *Sturnus roseus*, **Pallid Harriers** *Circus macrourus*, **Montagu's Harriers** *Circus pygargus* and **Common Kestrels** *Falco tinnunculus*. During spring migration in February four **White-browed Bushchats** were recorded, which suggests that the bird is quite common but overlooked.

The Indian Desert is one of the most densely populated deserts in the world and even inside the park there are 37 villages and many scattered homesteads. Most people are dependent on livestock rearing, and recent increases in human and livestock populations have resulted in the overgrazing of much of the park outside the core areas. There is thus a need to increase the area of the park fully protected within core zones, which may require some management to maintain suitable conditions for the birds.

**Harkirat Sangha**



Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps*  
by Carl D'Silva

### Ecology of the Sumba Hornbill *Aceros everetti*

The **Sumba Hornbill** *Aceros everetti* is endemic to the island of Sumba in Indonesia and is one of the most endangered Asian hornbills. An initial study of the species was made in 1992, funded by an OBC small grant (£300), and a summary of knowledge of the species given in the *Little-known bird* section of *OBC Bulletin* 18:19-20. With funding provided by the fourth Forktail Leica Award, I did further work on the hornbill during its breeding season in 1993.



Forest in Gunung Langgaliru Nature Reserve, habitat of the Sumba Hornbill.

Male Sumba Hornbill *Aceros everetti*, endemic to the island of Sumba, Indonesia.



A Sumba Hornbill nest hole in *Planchonella duclitan* (Katanga).

### Ecology and conservation of the Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis* in the Western Ghats of southern India

This study was carried out in the only nature reserve on Sumba, Gunung Langgaliru, which was designated in 1992. It contains hills (300-600 m) and deep valleys covered in primary tropical rainforest as well as secondary forest (see photograph).

Usually the Sumba Hornbill starts breeding in October and November when most trees are fruiting, and is then difficult to find. We found that four tree species were used as nest sites. A nest was observed in an evergreen *Planchonella duclitan* (local name Katanga) in secondary forest at 300 m (see photograph). Situated at a height of 23 m in a 30 m tree and at the intersection of the first branch, the nest hole would be difficult to reach by many predators. As is usual with hornbill nests the entrance had been plastered up, only allowing access for the male's beak to feed the female. The male fed the female with six species of fruits and seeds including figs *Ficus* spp. He did not approach the nest directly, but would first perch nearby and call to the female.

The Sumba Hornbill is the largest frugivore on the island, but it does face competition from some species which feed on the same fruits. Crab-eating Macaques *Macaca fascicularis* were regularly observed attacking hornbills feeding in the same fruiting tree and aggressive behaviour by Yellow-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua sulphurea* to the hornbill was also observed. We rarely witnessed human predation of the hornbill because the meat is not popular; nor is it valued for the pet trade. The Yellow-crested Cockatoo is hunted far more. Sometimes the hornbill nests are mistaken for those of the cockatoo and the female and young caught unintentionally. The major threat to the species is undoubtedly the destruction of its forest habitat - only 10% of the island remained forested in 1992.

**Dedy Juhaeni**

During the past few decades large areas of evergreen forest in the Western Ghats have been destroyed for the construction of hydroelectric projects, plantations and settlements. Fig trees *Ficus*, which are especially important for the Great Hornbill, have been heavily lopped or removed to feed domesticated elephants. Poaching of adults and young from nests is also a major threat. The local tribal people relish hornbill meat and often poach hornbill nests they come across while collecting honey. Honey is a major source of income to the native forest people of southern India. The honey bee of these forests breeds in large combs placed in the branches of lofty ancient trees, exactly coinciding with the breeding season of the hornbill. These threats have resulted in the decline in numbers and range of the Great Hornbill and it is officially declared an endangered species in India.

Between 1991 and 1993 we conducted a study of the Great Hornbill to identify the ecological requirements for its survival. The study was based in the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary in the Anaimalai hills of Tamil Nadu and was partly funded by an OBC Small Grant (£500) provided by ORNITHOLIDAYS.

Fruiting phenology of principal fruits consumed by the



Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis* by  
Kamol Komolphalin

hornbill were monitored over the two year period. Lipid-rich fruits, produced by deep forest trees were highly seasonal in their availability, and their production in the hot season coincided with the breeding season of the hornbill. These fruits showed a staggered pattern of availability. Sugary fruits, represented mainly by several species of figs, were available year round. Figs fruited during times of low availability of other resources and were heavily preferred by hornbills and other fruit-eating birds. Figs therefore played a keystone role in the maintenance of the frugivorous community. Nesting and foraging habitat of the hornbill were quantified, and the results indicate the overwhelming importance of the mature forests with large trees for the nesting and foraging of the hornbill. A Great Hornbill nest was observed for 183 hours during the study. A total of 3,104 food items was delivered to the nest by the parent hornbills, of which 72.9% were fig fruits. The adults delivered 19 species of fruits and at least seven species of vertebrate food to the nest. Animal food was delivered more after the chick hatched than during incubation. Males visited the nest most frequently just after the chicks hatched and then declined. The entire nesting cycle lasted 102 days. The nesting habitat study also showed the hornbill's dependence on pristine undisturbed and mature stands of wet forests with large trees.

An assessment of various issues relevant to the conservation of the endangered Great Hornbill and of the mountain forests of southern India was made and management steps recommended. It is very important to protect remaining mature stands of wet evergreen forest, and to actively manage and protect fig tree populations. The identification, monitoring and increased protection of traditional nest sites is needed. Other important measures include enforcing anti-poaching laws and controlling honey collection when it is in conflict with hornbill nesting. The local tribal people can be encouraged to help to conserve the Great Hornbill by increasing their awareness through education, promoting ecotourism, and involving them in future research projects on the hornbill. For example, tribal people from each major village could be appointed as paid guards to protect the hornbill against poaching and illegal honey collection. The feasibility of introducing bee hives into the major honey collection villages and thus taking the pressure off the forest could be investigated.

**Ragupathy Kannan**

### Winter ecology and conservation of migrant birds in south India

Migrant landbird populations are declining in North America and Europe, but little is known about the status of Asian migrants.

This study of migrant warblers wintering in south India is the first detailed investigation of forest migrant birds in the country. The work is being conducted on a 20 ha forest plot at Mundanthurai in the Kalakad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, Tamil Nadu. We documented the habitat associations and territorial behaviour of three common warbler species at Mundanthurai, namely **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, **Large-billed Leaf-Warbler** *P. magnirostris* and

**Blyth's Reed-Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum*. The most interesting discovery was that of apparent habitat-based subdivision within the *P. trochiloides* population: several interesting behavioural differences between individuals in two habitats (riverine semi-evergreen forest and dry deciduous forest) were documented, including different arrival, departure and moult schedules, but no clear differences in morphology. Further work will continue during winter 1994-1995.

**Madhusudan Katti**

A study of the **Sarus Crane** *Grus antigone* was carried out during 1992 and 1993, assisted by a donation from Sunbird Tours, at Lumbini in Nepal. The area, lying 200 km south-west of Kathmandu, was once cultivated but a project, launched in the 1970s, has transformed the landscape to grassland, secondary forest and wetland. The site has become an important nesting area for herons, egrets and the Sarus Crane, which villagers regard as a symbol of love and happiness and thus afford special protection.

We studied the home range, habitat utilisation, nesting location and habitat preference of Sarus Cranes. Results reveal that annual home ranges differed considerably and their seasonal home range also varied greatly, due to dry climate (food availability), social interaction (communal roost) and nesting activity.

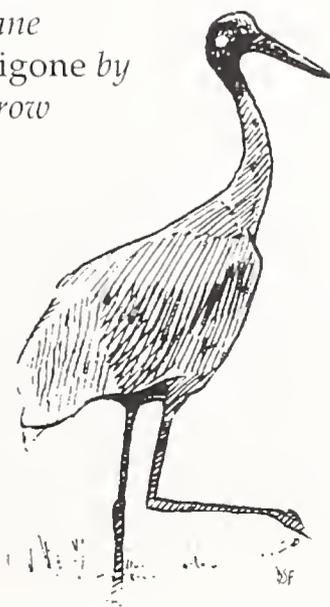
The time spent by cranes in each habitat type was examined. The mean annual habitat utilisation by these birds was 43% in wetland habitats (including paddyfields and ponds), 24% in fallow land and 8% in wheat fields, with a variety of other habitats (none of which exceeded 8%) accounting for the remaining percentage. Habitat use varied throughout the year according to crop rotation and the seasons. Wetlands, such as paddyfields, streams and mud pools, were important habitat during the monsoon and the dry season. During the monsoon season most of the cultivated land is under paddy plantation. The rivers and streams are swollen and the paddyfield provides feeding and nest sites. After the harvest of the paddy crop most of the fields are left barren, and the cranes then spent much time in this habitat.

The recorded crane density was 0.6 birds per km<sup>2</sup>. The turnover rate was found to be alarmingly low: in the pre-nesting communal flock there were only 3 juveniles among the 66 cranes i.e. only 4.5%, indicating nesting failure or loss of unfledged chicks. Nest site location and dimensions were also studied. Combined results from 1992 and 1993 from 24 nests showed that the cranes preferred to nest chiefly in the paddyfields, followed by ponds and flooded grassland and rarely in the flooded forest. Generally the cranes preferred to build their nests far away from human settlement, with water around the nest and small shrubs for camouflage. The mean clutch size was just over 1 egg per nest but the egg loss was high at 52%.

Lumbini is a communal roost for many other species and a total of 238 bird species was recorded, including harriers, storks, egrets, herons, parakeets, mynas, and other passerines.

## Crane ecology and bird conservation

Sarus Crane  
*Grus antigone* by  
Dave Farrow



Approximately half the bird species using the area are migratory, most being winter visitors (e.g. ducks and harriers) whilst a few summer visitors come to breed, such as **Asian Paradise-Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone paradisi* and **Cinnamon Bittern** *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*. It is hoped that further wetland habitat may be created in the area to ensure safe breeding of Sarus Cranes and encourage further species to utilise the area.

**Rajendra N. Suwal**

### Survey of endemic birds in Cebu

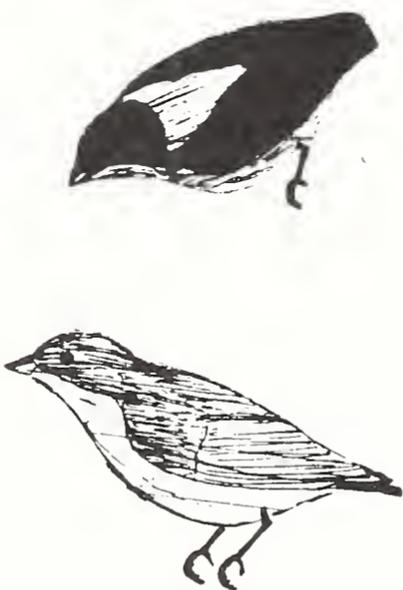
An OBC grant of £500 part funded a survey of endemic birds on Cebu Island, Philippines. Cebu is considered the most denuded island in the central Philippines, and with the loss of the natural forests the wildlife has disappeared at an alarming rate. The primary objective of this survey was to examine the endemic Cebu species and subspecies extant in the remaining forest patches on the island. Twelve areas were covered, two of which were natural forest, three a mix of natural and man-made forest, two areas purely man-made forest and the remaining areas scrub forest.

The surveys showed that two endemic species and five subspecies are extant in these areas but that only one site, Tabunan Forest, hosts all seven endemics and was the only place where **Cebu Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum quadricolor*, **Colasisi** *Loriculus philippensis* and **White-vented Whistler** *Pachycephala homeyeri* was observed. One endemic species, the **Black Shama** *Copsychus cebuensis*, which seems to thrive in secondary vegetation and bamboo thickets, can be considered more tolerant of degraded habitats. However, none of the endemic species or subspecies was observed at three of the surveyed sites, which were man-made forest planted with introduced species of mahogany, *Gmelina*, Ipil-ipil and Kakawati, which produce toxic substances that suppress the growth of surrounding plants.

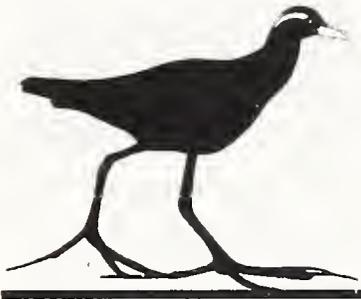
Tabunan Forest, despite its protected status as part of Central Cebu National Park, is threatened by habitat destruction through conversion to agriculture and clearance for human settlements. This has undoubtedly harmed the bird community and resulted in population declines and even the local extinction of some birds. Other specific threats to Cebu endemics include trapping and hunting, both for meat and the cage-bird trade. While specific hunting for threatened species is unlikely, since birds now occur at such low densities, some are killed incidentally during hunting of more common species.

Almost all of the survey sites are surrounded by farmlands and there is rapid encroachment into the forest. Laws for the protection of wildlife and its habitat have been formulated, yet forest destruction is unchecked and continues to occur. It is therefore imperative that the authorities responsible for the protection of the national parks strictly implement the existing wildlife laws and monitor their effectiveness. If the current rate of deforestation continues, and the already small patches of forest are further damaged and reduced, it is unlikely that these endemic birds will survive.

**Perla Magsalay**



*Cebu Flowerpecker* *Dicaeum quadricolor* field sketch by Guy Dutson



# Around the Orient

Compiled by Colin Poole

## Survey Results from Nakai-Nam Theun

A five-month survey of the Nakai-Nam Theun National Biodiversity Conservation Area in central Laos has recently been completed with the support of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). At 3,500 km<sup>2</sup>, Nakai-Nam Theun is the largest of the 17 newly designated reserves in the country and is dominated by pristine dry evergreen slope forest. Also included in the reserve is 350 km<sup>2</sup> of the Nakai Plateau, a 1,200 km<sup>2</sup> area of gently rolling pine/broadleaved forest, including over 200 km of some of the best riverine forest in South-East Asia. Outside of the current reserve, in the mountains to the north lies a much wetter forest type which may be similar to the ever-wet forests of the Vu Quang Reserve in Viet Nam, which directly adjoins Nakai-Nam Theun.

A remarkable diversity of wildlife was found during the survey, including about 400 bird species (though this list is still far from complete, and little time has so far been spent in the higher montane areas). At least eight Red Data Book species were present. Good numbers of Beautiful Nuthatch *Sitta formosa* and Rufous-necked Hornbills *Aceros nipalensis* occurred above 1,000 m. Along the forested lowland rivers and streams, Blyth's Kingfisher *Alcedo hercules* and several White-winged Ducks *Cairina scutulata* were found. In the wetter forests, Crested Argus *Rheinardia ocellata* were numerous and the first Short-tailed Scimitar-Babblers *Jabouillea danjoui* outside Viet Nam were seen. Small numbers of Siamese Fireback *Lophura diardi* and Red-collared Woodpecker *Picus rabieri* were also present on the Nakai Plateau. Many hunters also reported an all blue-black pheasant with a straight tail which might well prove to be Imperial Pheasant *Lophura imperialis*, though sadly no specimens were found. There was an excellent supporting cast of ten near-threatened species, including Purple Cochoa *Cochoa purpurea*, Coral-billed Ground-Cuckoo *Carpococcyx*

*renauldi*, Ratchet-tailed Treepie *Temnurus temnurus*, Pied Falconet *Microhierax melanoleucos* and White-winged Magpie *Urocissa whiteheadi*. Although the area had been visited by two pre-war collecting expeditions, the survey revealed perhaps ten new species for the country and another 30 or more new to the 'Central' region of Laos.

Despite the impressive ornithological discoveries, these were eclipsed by the mammals. Saola *Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*, the bizarre ox first found at Vu Quang in 1992, proved to be quite widespread in Laos, mainly in the wetter forest. Many hunters knew of it and produced about 20 sets of horns.

Remarkably, the Saola was not the only unknown large mammal in the area, as an undescribed species of Muntjac deer was also found. It is markedly larger than the sympatric Indian Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak* and has disproportionately large antlers and different coloration. It occurs in drier forest in the reserve, but probably also over much of central Laos and Viet Nam. In January and February, numerous sets of antlers were found in villages (more than doubly outnumbering those of Indian Muntjac, suggesting the new species is locally rather common). In March an adult male was found captive in a town near the reserve, allowing the collection of tissue samples and the first ever live photos; in April we saw two females in the wild.

It was something of a disappointment to return to find that a Vietnamese team had discovered the same species in Vu Quang in March-April and already released the news! They rapidly published, in Vietnamese, a brief type description of the male, without the benefit of an intact specimen, and gave it the name *Megamuntiacus vuquangensis*. It seems unlikely that this new genus will prove valid, but there is little doubt that it is a very distinctive species.

Though legally a reserve since December 1993, Nakai-Nam Theun is far from secure. The most pressing threat is from logging of the massive conifers which occur on the higher

slopes. In early 1994, a helicopter was being used by a Japanese contractor, in cooperation with the Lao military, to extract timber, and a 30 km road is being built into the heart of the reserve to allow logging by truck. This will increase access by settlers and hunters to the core of the reserve, quite apart from the direct damage to the habitat.

The other severe threat is from the Nam Theun II Dam Project. Although technically outside the reserve, as boundaries were drawn to exclude it, it will flood about 500 km<sup>2</sup> of the Nakai Plateau. Most destructively, it will inundate more than 95% of the forested rivers, backing them up far outside the plateau, destroying wetlands and gallery forest, preventing the movement of migratory fish, and speeding access by boat to the remoter valleys. It will also displace 4,000 or more people, many of whom will seek land deeper into the reserve.

All habitat for White-winged Duck in the reserve will be inundated, as well as much of that for Lesser *Ichthyophaga humilis* and Grey-headed Fish-Eagles *I. ichthyaetus* and Blyth's and Crested Kingfishers *Megaceryle lugubris*. Otters will also suffer and the loss of gallery forests may severely affect populations of carnivores, gibbons and many ungulates which, although they range into other habitats, are dependent on riverine forest. The new muntjac species also occurs in the inundation zone. Happily, despite the fears voiced in the last *Around the Orient* (OBC Bull. 18) the Saola Ox does not occur in or near the inundation area.

Sadly it seems the project is too far advanced, and too important a source of foreign exchange, to be halted. Already the dam inundation area is being clear-felled by a huge fleet of logging trucks. It will, at least perhaps, provide an incentive for protecting the forests of the reserve, which cover 95% of the reservoir catchment. However, two other major dams are also planned for lower down the Nam Theun catchment.

Other pressures on the reserve include a major immigration of shifting cultivators from largely deforested north Laos, and the growth and expansion of the reserve's several thousand local population. Hunting pressure is also a very serious problem, with several large mammals, along with vultures, storks and Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus*, already all but extinct.

The Nakai-Nam Theun Reserve, linked as it is with other high quality reserve areas in both Laos and Viet Nam, has the capacity to be one of the best in the region. Far more remains to be discovered in the area, and in central Laos in general, as evidenced by rumours of yet more new large mammals, but if the growing threats are not soon stemmed the area may be irreparably damaged.

Contributed by Tom Evans and Rob Timmins.



Left: *Megamuntiacus vuquangensis* (Photo: Tom Evans, Rob Timmins/Wildlife Conservation Society)  
Right: Captive Saola *Pseudoryx nghetinhensis* (Photo: Frank Lambert).

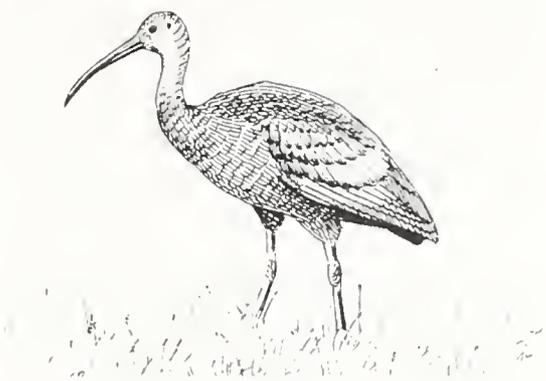
## XXI BirdLife International World Conference – new Asian Partners announced

The XXI BirdLife International World Conference was held from 12-18 August 1994 in Rosenheim, Germany, the first under the new BirdLife identity. Among organisations signing an agreement to become BirdLife Partners (or Partners Designate) at the conference, were three from the Oriental Region; Bird Conservation Society of Thailand, Wild Bird Society R.O.C. (Taiwan) and Nature Society (Singapore), bringing the total number of Asian Partners to six. In addition, Bird Conservation Nepal has been appointed BirdLife Representative for Nepal. The Asia Partner organisations decided to establish a BirdLife Asia Council. This met briefly and resolved to produce a BirdLife Asia newsletter and to formally request that the first BirdLife Asia Conference be held in Indonesia in 1996. The Council will primarily concern itself with implementation of an Asian Red Data Book and an Important Bird Areas inventory, to be carried out over the next five years.

## CAMBODIA

### Major Wetland Survey

Surveys carried out this spring by the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB) and the Cambodian Government identified three sites suitable for listing under the Ramsar Convention and made many exciting new discoveries of populations of large waterbirds (see this issue's *From the Field*). In order to assist the Government in



*Giant Ibis Pseudibis gigantea* by  
Craig Robson

acceding to the Ramsar Convention, AWB identified Boeng Tonle Sap, coastal areas in Koh Kong Province and flooded forest along the Mekong River from Stung Treng to the Laotian border as suitable for immediate designation. Of these three areas, the chief immediate threat is to the mangrove and *Melaleuca* forest of Koh Kong, which is being commercially felled and cleared for prawn ponds with the backing of Thai businessmen.

Further surveys this summer by the government and the International Crane Foundation have made more discoveries. These include three pairs of nesting Eastern Sarus Cranes *Grus antigone sharpii*, one in Stung Treng Province and two south-west of Lamphat in Natanakene Province, one Giant Ibis *Pseudibis gigantea* along Sae Pok, and further sightings of Woolly-necked *Ciconia episcopus* and Black-necked Storks *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*, Greater *Leptoptilos dubius* and Lesser Adjutants *L. javanicus* and Red-headed Vultures *Sarcogyps calvus*.

## CHINA

### Crested Ibis Flown to Japan

A pair of Crested Ibises

*Nipponia nippon* has been flown from China to Japan in the hope that they will breed with the two surviving Japanese birds in the conservation centre on Sado Island. The Japanese birds are both elderly, the female aged 27 and the male at least 20, while the Chinese birds are both young, aged three-and-a-half and two-and-a-half. Two previous attempts, in 1985 and 1990, to mate the Japanese birds with Chinese birds both failed. However, Beijing Zoo has had some success in breeding birds taken from their home in the Qinling mountains, Shaanxi Province.

*Contributed by Michael Rank.*

### Three Gorges Dam - Construction Commences

August 21 1994 was the official start date for the construction of the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River, but even before this date bulldozers were earth-moving. It is proposed that the construction will take place in three phases and is projected for completion in 2009. But there still exists considerable doubt over how the project will be funded. The World Bank is not involved and the Chinese government is reportedly seeking advice on domestic and international financing options from foreign investment banks. Several western companies are already involved in the initial earth moving contracts and the USA, after previously rejecting involvement in the project for environmental and political reasons, is now considering allowing the US Export-Import Bank to provide financing to assist US companies in winning construction contracts.

### **Qilhai Wetland in New Reserve**

The wetland of Qilhai (Seven Mile Sea) has been included in a newly established State-class marine-type Nature Reserve of over 200 km<sup>2</sup> along the coast of Tianjin. According to Chinese scientists the 100 km<sup>2</sup> Qilhai wetland is a 'typical lagoon wetland characterised by fresh air, a vast expanse of water, thick reeds and a great variety of species'.

### **Tibetan Irrigation Plan**

The Chinese Government are planning to divert significant amounts of water for agricultural projects in Tibet. The Changsuo Basin Irrigation Project is a 9,000 ha irrigation scheme located between Dingri and Dingrie Counties in Shigatse Prefecture, and the area is reported to include the Qomolangma Nature Preserve. However, perhaps as important is that the scheme plans to divert water from the Pungun (Arun) River via a 25 m high dam. The lower reaches of the Arun River in Nepal are currently the subject of a controversial proposed hydro-power project, Arun III (see Nepal).

### **Bustards Under Threat**

Bustards are reported to be under severe threat in China, from hunting, egg-collecting and habitat destruction, with many local people reported to be completely unaware of the fact that they are a Grade 1 protected species. The total population of Great Bustards *Otis tarda* in northern Xinjiang, their main breeding area, is estimated to be 2,000-3,000 birds, while Little Bustards *Tetrax tetrax* total about 1,000

and Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* 200-300. The bustards breed in three overlapping regions of northern Xinjiang, with Great Bustard mainly in the Tacheng region and the Altai Mountains, Little in the southern Junggar, and Houbara in the southern Altai foothills and the central and eastern Junggar basin.

However, the report by scientists from Urumqi, Xinjiang, lists remarkably few sightings during the 1980s, recording only nine of Great Bustard, eight of Little and four of Houbara.

### **Nine-headed Bird in Hunan!**

*Wen Wei Po*, a Chinese-backed Hong Kong newspaper, reported that residents in a mountainous area of Hunan Province claim to have spotted a bird with nine heads! The bird is originally mentioned in records from the Song Dynasty, and legend has it that its appearances are a bad omen. Because of this nobody has attempted to catch it, but it has reportedly been seen on several occasions by some 30 people and is said to resemble a Turtle Dove.

## **HONG KONG**

### **Further Protection for Mai Po?**

The Hong Kong government is currently considering designating Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. A working group has been established and is expected to report by the end of 1994 and Hong Kong NGOs have also submitted their recommendations on the scope of the proposed site. The government has also granted HK\$16 million over the next

three years to purchase four remaining *gei wais* for Mai Po. However, the future of the Deep Bay area is far from secure, as there are still five or six proposed developments pending including residential schemes and a golf course.

## **INDIA**

### **Waterfowl Replace Terrorists at Harike Lake**

Harike Lake, at the confluence of Sutlej and Beas Rivers, in Punjab was formerly one of the most important sites for wintering waterfowl in India. In the early eighties it held up to 200,000 waterfowl and was one of India's only sites for White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*. But after 1985 the Mand area around Harike Lake in Punjab became a terrorist hideout, its inaccessible water courses and swamps making a perfect hideout for the Khalistan Liberation Force and Commando Force. This had a disastrous effect on the lake's waterfowl, as not only did poaching and illegal felling increase, but when government forces moved in to rid the area of the terrorists large tracts of elephant grass were burnt and high-speed motor-boats were used for intensive patrolling. But by last year the terrorists had been flushed out and peace and birds had returned to the lake.

However, there are still several threats at work there. The flow of effluent and fertiliser into the lake has resulted in the continued unchecked growth of Water Hyacinth *Eichhornia crassipes*. Many waterfowl have also

been killed by local people using grain laced with poison. Resolution of these problems is difficult as the sanctuary area consists of 86 km<sup>2</sup> in a total area of 400 km<sup>2</sup> and there are only two guards employed to enforce the regulations. But, with the return of peace and the birds the Punjab State Government is working on declaring part of the wetland as a tourism zone.

### Quarrying in Sariska National Park

Over the past decade about 15% of the forest in the 800 km<sup>2</sup> Sariska National Park in Rajasthan, famous for its Tiger *Panthera tigris* population, has been lost. By 1991 more than 400 illegal quarries had been opened up, blasting for marble, dolomite and limestone. This has resulted in not only forest loss, but also disruption of the park's water table and severe disturbance from blasting and lorry traffic. The park's Tiger population is now officially estimated at 22, but may be much lower. In 1991 local people won a campaign in the courts to declare the quarrying illegal; but, in spite of continued protests, many quarries are still in operation. It appears that many local and national politicians are involved in the operation and the campaigners have now almost given up hope of getting the government to act.

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## INDONESIA

### Important Wetlands discovered in Sumatra

A visit to the open swamps of the Tulang Bawang in

northern Lampung Province in 1993 discovered one of the largest egret colonies currently known in Indonesia. This included possibly as many as 30,000 pairs of Javan Pond-Heron *Ardeola speciosa* and over 500 Black-crowned Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax*, the first breeding record of the latter in Sumatra. It also revealed the continued presence of Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidius indicus*, first noted there in 1976; the species was deemed to be resident and although there was no positive proof of breeding, many immatures were present. In view of the scarcity of this species in apparently suitable habitats elsewhere in Sumatra and Java, this is thought to be the most important site for it in Indonesia. Also discovered were 48 nests of Oriental Darters *Anhinga melanogaster*, the first proof of breeding in Sumatra.

No positive evidence however could be found for the White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata*, known to be present in 1976-1977. Although interviews indicated that it is probably still there, the impression was gained that there could have been a 'population crash' as a result of the mounting pressures against this species. The ominous inference from this could be that the species' apparent adaptability to severely degraded habitats in Sumatra may have been an illusion.

Recommendations have been made for game reserve status to cover some 12,000 ha of the deep zone of flooding swamps, and Strict Nature Reserve status for the two

identified breeding sites. The Governor of Lampung has expressed keen interest in the early establishment of conservation status for the area.

*Contributed by Derek Holmes, Indonesian Ornithological Society.*

### Forest Fires

Large-scale forest fires have again hit Sumatra and Kalimantan, and the resultant pollution has put large areas of South-East Asia, as far away as Peninsular Malaysia, under smog for two months. It is reported that over 136,000 ha of forest have been hit by an estimated 200 fires, and as many as five million trees destroyed. In Sumatra the fires are primarily affecting two areas, southern Lampung Province and the Tapanuli region near Medan. In Kalimantan, flights to the island have been suspended, so it is more difficult to gauge the effect of the fires. But, broadly speaking, two large areas of the south-eastern part of the island are affected, one between Samarinda and Balikpapan, where 47 coal seam fires were counted, and the other near Palangkaraya.

The fire comes following a six-month dry season, prolonged by a continued El Niño event in the Pacific, the reversal of cross-ocean currents and trade winds, which result in drought in much of Australia and South-East Asia. The fires appear to have been started through the use of burning to clear land for oil-palm plantations, and the problems have been enhanced by poor forestry methods, particularly in Kalimantan, where, without replanting, dry tinder is left lying on open peat and coal

deposits. The Indonesian government admits that it apparently hasn't learnt from a previous massive forest fire in 1982, which burnt an area the size of the Netherlands. It is currently refusing any international assistance, and has little answer but to wait for the annual rains, expected in November.

### Bali Myna Census

This year's census of Bali Myna *Leucopsar rothschildi* carried out by staff of the Bali Barat National Park and BirdLife International has found only seven active breeding pairs (one pair of which was poached in March) rearing a total of 24 young. The post-breeding survey indicated a total population of between 36-40 individuals. These numbers indicate a decline on 1993 when there were nine active pairs.

### Gold in Dumoga-Bone

The Dumoga-Bone National Park in North Sulawesi is coming under increasing threat from gold-mining operations. Groups of up to 300 gold-diggers live in semi-permanent camps deep inside the park, primarily in the Toraut area in the east. The forest has been completely destroyed or severely damaged in a wide area around the camps, not only from the gold-digging itself, but also from the negative impact of transporting the gold, the use of timber for fuel and building, and the trapping of animals for food. Both the park director and the head of the provincial nature conservation department have expressed concern, but have so far been unsuccessful in

attempts to stop the mining.

### Forest Policy

The Indonesian Forestry Ministry has announced a forest preservation plan that will reduce the country's timber harvests by nearly a third over the next five years, from the current 31.4 million m<sup>3</sup> a year, to 22.5 million m<sup>3</sup> by 1999. Further parts of the plan are a halt to investment in forest-based industries and the introduction of an eco-labelling scheme on timber products starting in 2000. However, all is not rosy, as controversy currently exists over a Government decree that has allowed the diversion of US\$185 million from the Government's Reforestation Fund to subsidise the state-owned aircraft industry. In September, the Indonesian NGO Wahli (Indonesian Forum for the Environment) was given the go-ahead by the Indonesian Courts to sue President Suharto for directing this decree.

## NORTH KOREA

### Birds Mourn The Great Leader!

The North Korean Official Central News Agency (KCNA) has reported some unusual behaviour of the country's birds following the death of the Great Leader Kim Il Sung! KCNA reported that in September swallows flocked to one of his statues 'twittering sadly . . . the swallows seem to be expressing condolences on the death of the fatherly leader before flying south'. Furthermore, hundreds of cranes reportedly flew to another statue at Kim Il Sung Military University and apparently 'were reluctant to

leave'. Finally on 8 September, the two-month anniversary of Kim's death, 'three Little Bitterns, a rare bird well known to the world' according to KCNA, 'stayed at the statue of the Great Leader standing at Kim Il Sung University in Pyongyang for nearly five and a half hours'.

## SOUTH KOREA

### Black-faced Spoonbill Colony Discovered

A colony of 10-20 pairs of Black-faced Spoonbills *Platalea minor* has been discovered breeding in an egretty in the Demilitarised Zone, of the Han River Estuary north of Kanghwa Island, Kyonggi Province. This is the first breeding record in recent years anywhere outside of North Korea. Due to the military sensitivity of the area, detailed counts were impossible this year, but are hopefully planned for next year. The south coast of South Kanghwa has been known for five years to be an important site for post-breeding gatherings, with regular counts of up to 80 adults and immatures between August and October.

## LAOS

### More Dams

The Laotian Ministry of Industry has listed 58 proposed hydro-electric power generating projects, involving dams on most of Laos's major rivers. So far few of these projects have gone beyond the feasibility stage, and with the vast amounts of foreign money required and the lack of interest from foreign donors, few appear likely ever to reach fruition. However, it is alleged that

many of these projects may be little more than pretexts for the expanding timber industry. Laos severely restricts logging throughout the country, but there are reports that proposed dam sites are already being clear-felled, particularly in the south, for reservoirs that may never be built.

### Mekong Resort Plans

A Thai businessman has announced plans for a major resort development at the Kon Phapheng Waterfalls on the Mekong River, in remote Champasak Province adjacent to the Cambodian border. The 500 ha resort would include, amongst others, two casinos, two de-luxe hotels, a golf course and a town of 10,000 people, and it would be served by its own international airport. The aim is an international gambling resort to rival Macau or Genting Highlands. The Kon Phapheng Falls, although ecologically important, are not included under Laos's National Protected Area Plan and there are no laws necessitating an EIA.

## MALAYSIA

### Ramsar Convention Signed

On 1 June the Malaysian government decided to ratify the Ramsar Convention. The freshwater lake of Tasek Bera in Pahang has been designated the country's first Ramsar site. Tasek Bera, an alluvial peat-swamp system, is one of only two natural major bodies of fresh water in Peninsular Malaysia. Over 200 bird species have been recorded, but the site is most important for its diversity of fish and flora, including several endemic species.

### World's Largest Wildlife Sanctuary

Malaysia and Indonesia will next year set up the world's largest wildlife sanctuary across the border of Sarawak and Kalimantan in Borneo. The park will cover 173,000 ha of the Lanjak Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary in the Sri Aman and Kapit Divisions in Sarawak and another 800,000 ha in PT Karimun, Kalimantan. The project is being run in conjunction with the International Tropical Timber Organisation. A Sarawak minister reported that 'after being gazetted the area will be fully protected and no one will be allowed to cut down trees or harm any wildlife'.

### New Guidelines for Golf Course Development

The Malaysian Government approved new guidelines for golf course development in August, banning in future all golf course projects in Permanent Forest Reserves. They will from now on only be allowed on agricultural land and zones separating industrial areas from housing.

## NEPAL

### Arun III Project Still Undecided

After eight years of debate, the World Bank is reported to have postponed the vote on the proposed go-ahead on the funding of the US\$770 million Arun III hydro project on the Arun River in northern Nepal. Critics say the run-off-river scheme will be too big and too expensive and that the access road will cause major damage to the surrounding habitat; they are instead recommending several smaller

schemes. Of further concern to the project is the news that the Chinese are planning to divert large quantities of water from the upper Arun (Pengun) River in Tibet for irrigation projects (see China). This could severely hamper the future generating potential of any Arun scheme in Nepal.

## PAKISTAN

### Western Tragopan Survey

During May-June 1994 BirdLife International surveys of the Palas Valley, Kohistan District, NWFP, recorded a total of 22 calling Western Tragopans *Tragopan melanocephalus*. When added to the results of previous surveys from 1988, 1989 and 1991 this gives a minimum total of 222 pairs for the valley, confirming the status of the area as the most important known site in the world for this globally threatened species. In addition seven other restricted range species were recorded in the valley: Kashmir Nuthatch *Sitta cashmirensis*, Tytler's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus tytleri*, Brooks's Leaf-Warbler *P. subviridis*, White-throated Tit *Aegithalos niveogularis*, White-cheeked Tit *A. leucogenys*, Orange Bullfinch *Pyrrhula aurantiaca* and Spectacled Finch *Callacanthus burtoni*. Survey work was conducted under the auspices of the Himalayan Jungle Project, which is working together with the people of Palas to safeguard the future of the valley's west Himalayan forest.

Contributed by Nigel Bean, Phil Beustead, Dave Showler and Phil Whittington.

## SINGAPORE

### Senoko Under Threat

More birds have been recorded at Senoko than at any other site in Singapore, including Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes*, Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* and at least 20 locally endangered species. The 168 ha proposed nature reserve is made up largely of mangrove, mudflats and open ponds with a large wooded area. In recognition of its national importance the Nature Society (Singapore) (NSS) proposed Senoko as one of ten nature areas deemed as 'five star conservation sites' in its 'Masterplan for the conservation of nature in Singapore'. In 1991, the Urban Redevelopment Authority accepted on principle the NSS proposals, and later the same year conservation history was made when a planned railway line was diverted south of the site.

However, in March 1993 the Ministry of the Environment published a Singapore Green Plan which included 18 sites for nature conservation, but left out Senoko and another important wetland site, Khatib Bongsu. Although Khatib Bongsu was later given status as the ninetennth site, following appeals from NSS, Senoko has been left out due to plans to build a major new town site and housing estate on the area. NSS is currently mounting an appeal to save at least 50 ha of the area and is carrying out its own EIA.

*Contributed by Lim Kim Seng.*

## TAIWAN

### Black-faced Spoonbills Secure?

The world's largest wintering flock of Black-faced Spoonbills *Platalea minor* at Tseng-wen-chi, Tainan County, has been under threat for the past two years. Previously a military area, the site was opened up two years ago and local villages decided that the mudflats could be reclaimed as a development area. However, the presence of a protected species prevented them from doing this, so in the winter of 1992/93 some local people began shooting at the spoonbills, several of which were killed and others injured. Following this, the Government has frozen the potential development plans for the area, and during the winter of 1993/94 local bird clubs mounted a round-the-clock watch to ensure the birds were not shot at. This was apparently successful, with no birds known to have been injured, and it is hoped that this can be repeated during the coming winter.

### Colour-ringed Chinese Egret Sighted

One of the colour-ringed Chinese Egrets *Egretta eulophotes* marked at the world's largest colony, Shin Island, South Korea, was reported from Szu-tsao, Tainan County, on 19 May 1994; it had been marked in the colony in 1990. The only other sighting of a colour-ringed bird from Shin was at Pulau Ubin, Singapore, on 17 October 1992, and involved a bird also ringed in 1990. Although the major wintering area for

Chinese Egrets is now thought to be the Philippines, conclusive proof, from sightings of marked birds, of the wintering areas of the Shin population is still awaited. Please report *any* sightings of colour-ringed Chinese Egrets to Taej Mundkur, AWB, Universiti Malaya, 59100 KL, Malaysia.

## THAILAND

### Pak Moon Dam Completed

On 11 June the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand closed, for the first time, four of the eight gates of the Pak Moon Dam, completed after two years of construction and many more of controversy, on the Moon River, a tributary of the Mekong in the north-east. However, the construction may have finished, but the controversy hasn't. Protesters are still campaigning for more compensation for the local villagers and for some 2,000 fishermen who are no longer able to fish in the river.

### Khao Nor Chuchi

At present only five of the approximately 21 pairs of Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* lie inside the Khao Nor Chuchi wildlife sanctuary boundary. The remaining 16 pairs are outside, in the Bang Khram Reserve Forest. The Khao Nor Chuchi Lowland Forest Project is therefore seeking ways to extend effective protection to this forest through the cooperation of the local communities. Currently the proposal is to extend the wildlife sanctuary to two zones including the remaining pairs of Gurney's Pitta, but without displacing any villagers and

White-crowned Hornbill *Aceros comatus* by Seb Buckton



allowing sustainable use of the community forest in the outer zone. Further to this the project has been instrumental in the planting of over 12,000 trees with many more planned from its own nursery, and it is running programmes of rural development and education involving the local villages and schools.

Unfortunately, during the course of the last year four new clearings have been made in Bang Khram Reserve Forest, totalling 4 ha, and one of these has deprived a pair of Gurney's Pittas of their nesting habitat. Hunting is also still a problem, primarily for Lesser Mouse-Deer *Tragulus*

*javanicus*, but this year one young Spotted Wood-Owl *Strix seloputo* was found shot, and the young from two hornbill nests, one White-crowned *Aceros comatus* and one thought to be Wreathed *A. undulatus*, were stolen.

## VIET NAM

### New Discoveries in Annamese Lowlands

A joint survey between BirdLife International and IUCN has made exciting discoveries in the Annamese Lowlands. These include the first ever sightings in the wild of Vietnamese Pheasant *Lophura hatinhensis*. At least nine different birds were seen – including a pair on several occasions and four immatures together – in an extensive area of primary forest in the Net River watershed in north Quang Binh Province. Unfortunately, the area is scheduled for logging,

pending the completion of a logging road; this road-building operation could be heard during the course of the survey. However, BirdLife staff are presently discussing the possibility of a logging moratorium with the Forestry Department. Also discovered in the same province was Sooty Babbler *Stachyris herberti*, the first record of the species since its original discovery in Laos 70 years ago (See this issue's *From the Field*).

### Main sources (unless otherwise stated)

*Asian Wetland News, Bangkok Post, BBC Wildlife, Bernama, BirdLife International, China Flyway, Chinese Journal of Zoology, The Economist, Far Eastern Economic Review, Hong Kong Birdwatching Society Bulletin, Ross Hughes, Indian Express, India Today, International Rivers Network, Khao Nor Chuchi News, New Scientist, Straits Times, Oryx, Taej Mundkur, Michael Rank, Reuters, The Star (Kuala Lumpur), Straits Times, Brian Sykes, Tibetan Environmental and Development News, Per Undeland.*



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# Little-known Oriental bird

Kinabalu Friendly Warbler\* *Bradypterus accentor*



Many birders visiting Kinabalu National Park leave disappointed at not seeing the enigmatic Kinabalu Friendly Warbler. Future visitors should have little excuse as in this article Simon Harrap dispels several myths concerning the species's habits.

'... I saw creeping about - almost at my feet - a small creature which I at first thought was a mouse, but I soon discovered that in reality the new comer was a small Timeliine bird. This little brown bird was if anything tamer than the species just shot [White-browed Shortwing *Brachypteryx montana*], and was only secured after ten minutes in trying to get away from it; and when shot it was too much hit. This bird...was not only a new species but a new genus: it has been named *Androphilus accentor* [i.e. the man-loving Accentor]. What mistaken confidence, poor bird! The few specimens of these two species obtained by me invariably sought us out in the forest, appearing within a few yards or often under our very toes. I have been closely followed by an *Androphilus* for fifteen yards or so, as I walked slowly purposely to see how far the little friendly bird would follow. The Kadyans used to laugh at and call these little innocents 'bodo', i.e. fools...'<sup>9</sup>

The Kinabalu Friendly Warbler, or Friendly Bush-Warbler, *Bradypterus accentor* has one of the most restricted ranges of any Oriental bird. It is confined to Sabah, Malaysia, where it is found on just three massifs, Mount Kinabalu and the adjacent peaks of Mount Trus Madi to the north and Tam Boyukan to the south<sup>2</sup>.

The species was discovered by John Whitehead, who commented: 'I only met this species at from 7,000-9,000 feet where it frequented the dark and damp patches of forest, amongst the wet moss-covered fallen trunks of large trees, where this peculiar bird was found singly.... If this bird ever frequented the lower altitudes of Kina Balu it has long since been exterminated by the Dusun rat-traps, which no doubt account for its scarcity at the altitudes it now frequents'<sup>9</sup>. Despite Whitehead's statement that the species was found at 7,000-9,000 feet (2,135-2,745 m), the most frequently used subsequent literature has emphasised that it is found at higher altitudes.

Smythies<sup>8</sup> reported that Harrison found it to be quite common at 10,000-12,000 feet (3,050-3,660 m) and, as a result, most modern observers have looked for the species above 3,050 m, rushing through the altitudinal band where the Friendly Warbler is, if not most abundant, certainly easily found. Perhaps as a consequence, visitors to Kinabalu often find the Friendly Warbler far from friendly, and in fact easy to miss. Most recently Davison<sup>2</sup> noted that the species has apparently become considerably less common, but notes that it may not be as rare as reports suggest, for all *Bradypterus* warblers are inveterate skulkers. He gives the altitudinal range as 2,100-3,650 m, being most abundant perhaps in the upper montane forest. On Mount Trus Madi, a single specimen was collected at 7,600 feet (2,315 m)<sup>7</sup>, and one was seen at 5,800 feet on 8 December by T. Harrison<sup>5</sup>.

Emphasising the species's rarity, it is listed as 'near-threatened' in Collar and Andrew<sup>1</sup>, but what of the reports that the species has declined? In August 1994, admittedly whilst making a special effort to find the species, I saw at least nine Friendly Warblers and heard several others along the main trail, despite a more or less constant procession of climbers, porters, etc. They respond well to pishing, and will often approach to within a couple of metres. I can only conclude that they are common for, once above 7,500 feet (2,285 m), a prolonged period of 'pishing' will almost inevitably produce a Friendly Warbler wherever one stops. Perhaps, then, the major reason for the so-called decline of the species is the fact that, instead of struggling slowly through the thick moss forest like the early explorers, with the resulting opportunities to observe small birds in their habitat, modern birdwatchers make use of a broad, well-made trail, and effectively confine their activities to the edge of the forest.

Perhaps the greatest misconception concerns the species's vocalisations. Smythies<sup>8</sup> notes that it is normally silent, although uttering a single *chuck*



1



2



3



4



5

**Bush-Warblers**  
1, 2, and 3: Friendly Bush-Warbler *Bradypterus accentor* on Mount Kinabalu, Sabah (Photos: Simon Harrap). 4, and 5: Long-tailed Bush-Warbler *B. caudatus*, Luzon, the Philippines (Photos: David MacLeman).

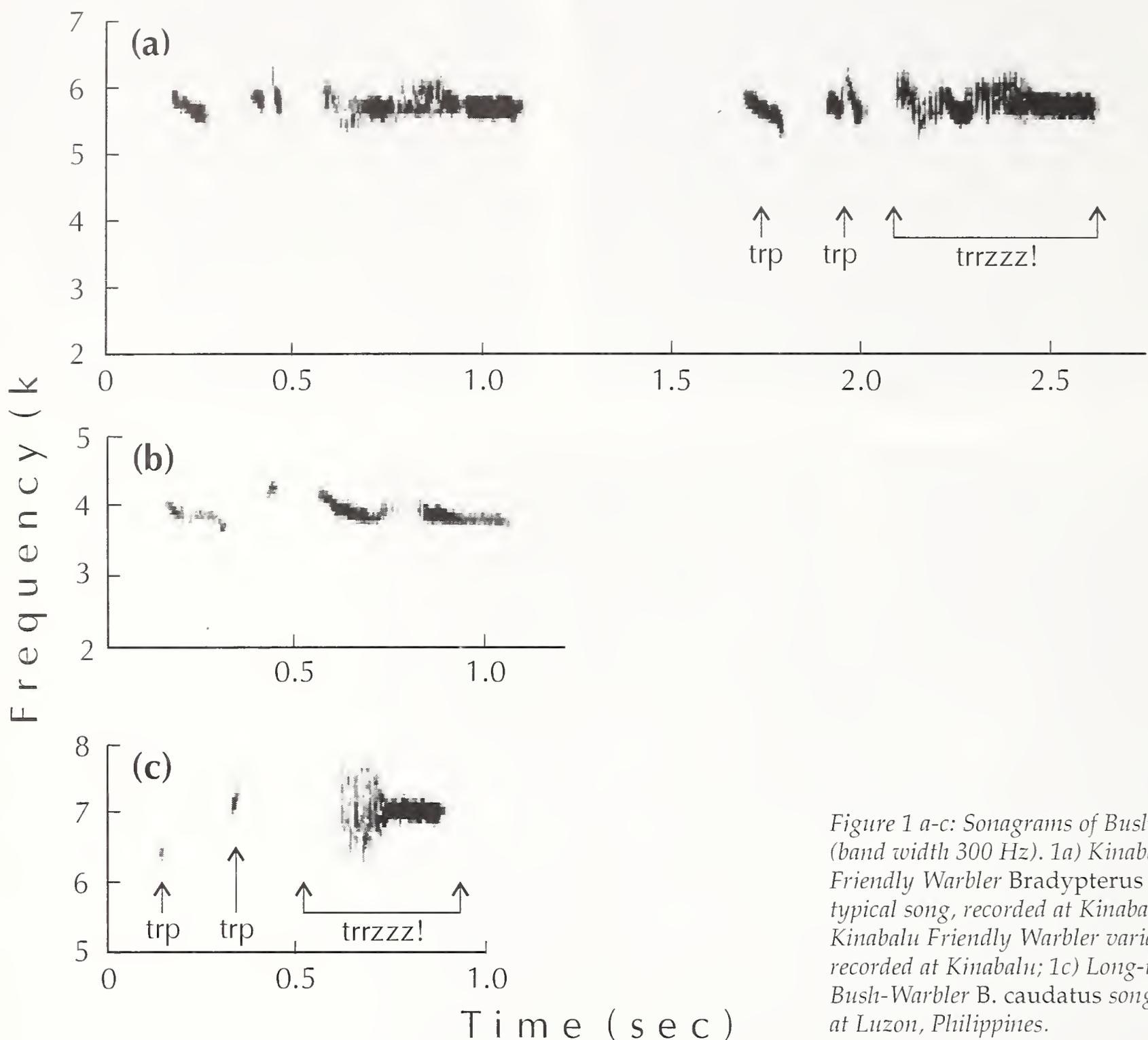


Figure 1

Figure 1 a-c: Sonograms of Bush-Warblers (band width 300 Hz). 1a) Kinabalu Friendly Warbler *Bradypterus accentor* typical song, recorded at Kinabalu; 1b) Kinabalu Friendly Warbler variant song, recorded at Kinabalu; 1c) Long-tailed Bush-Warbler *B. caudatus* song, recorded at Luzon, Philippines.

note if disturbed, and also (following Harrison) records a hissing note and single weak whistle. This is repeated by MacKinnon and Phillipps<sup>6</sup>, whilst Davison<sup>2</sup> similarly repeats Smythies's notes, but also specifically states that 'They are normally silent birds without any loud song...'

In fact, in common with other *Bradypterus* warblers, the Kinabalu Friendly Warbler has a rather loud, far-carrying song. I have visited Mount Kinabalu five times in the period June-August, and have heard the species singing on every occasion that I have been within its altitudinal range. Although it is not abundant, I have usually heard 4-5 individuals singing during a morning's walk.

The song is a high-pitched phrase, reeling or buzzing, and on one pitch, comprised of two short units and a longer and harsher, buzzing terminal unit (or units, as this is stuttered and almost

disyllabic; see Figure 1a): *dzhee-dzhee- zeeeeee'ah*, *dzhee-dzhee-zeeee ee'ah...*, or *trp trp trrzzz*, *trp trp trrzzz....* It is sometimes repeated for prolonged periods (at a rate of c. 40 phrases per minute). This is the normal song, but in August 1994 I recorded another variant (Figure 1b). It is made up of four distinct units, *tu di dzu-yu*, *tu di dzu-yu....* Recognisable as that of a Friendly Warbler, it is weaker and mellower in tone than the normal song, and at a lower pitch. Although each phrase is of the same duration as the normal song, it is delivered in a more hesitant fashion, with only c.21 phrases per minute.

Identification of Kinabalu Friendly Warbler is usually straightforward. The only vaguely similar species found on Mount Kinabalu is Sunda Bush-Warbler *Cettia vulcania* (although it would be possible to confuse the young of one of the resident flycatchers, which show spots on the

underparts, in a poor view). Note also that the immature plumage of the Friendly Warbler apparently lacks the white throat<sup>10</sup>.

Sunda Bush-Warbler is rather commoner, and is often (but not always) abundant around the park headquarters at c.1,525 m. It has a slurred, whistled song (which recalls Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*), very different from the Friendly Warbler's reel. It is also smaller, a paler, more ochraceous brown above, and uniformly pale greyish on the underparts. MacKinnon and Phillipps<sup>6</sup> have caused some recent confusion by highlighting the Kinabalu race of Sunda Bush-Warbler *C. v. oreophila*, which they state is darker than other races, with black blotching on the throat and breast. Their plate depicts it as rather similar to the Friendly Warbler. But such spotting has never been apparent to me, either in the field or photographs, and examination of specimens indicates that their spotted appearance is due to the method of preparation, with the breast feathers greyish-drab with fine white shaft streaks and no dark spotting. Note also that MacKinnon and Phillipps's<sup>6</sup> description of the song of Bornean Stubtail *Urosphena whiteheadi*, *tzi-tzi-tzee*, is equally applicable to the Friendly Warbler; the stubtail's song is, however, exceedingly thin and high-pitched.

Little is known of the Friendly Warbler's biology. Its diet includes insects and spiders, but the nest and eggs are apparently undescribed<sup>8</sup>.

The taxonomic relationships of the Kinabalu Friendly Warbler were discussed by Delacour<sup>3</sup>, who considered it to be very closely allied to Long-tailed Bush-Warbler *B. caudatus* of the Philippines, differing in its shorter and less frayed tail, made up of ten rather than 12 feathers, and weaker legs and feet. Field observations have confirmed their similarity and, significantly, the songs of the two species are very similar. On Luzon the song of *B. caudatus* is comprised of two short units followed by a longer, harsher and more buzzing unit, *trp, trp trrzz, trp, trp trrzz...* (see Figure 1c). The speed of delivery is very similar to the 'normal' song on Kinabalu, but the phrase is higher-pitched, slightly shorter, and the last unit more definitely monosyllabic.

In spite of the similarity between the songs of Kinabalu Friendly Warbler and Long-tailed Bush-Warbler, the slight differences may be disproportionately important. In this respect, it is notable that Long-tailed Bush-Warbler of the race *unicolor* on Mount Katanglad in Mindanao reacted

poorly, if at all, to playback of the song of birds of the nominate race tape-recorded on Mount Polis on Luzon, but then responded well to tapes of their own songs (pers. obs., February 1994). It is also worth placing on record that tape-recordings of birds from Mount Polis by J. Scharringa, which he identified as Russet Bush-Warbler *B. seebohmi* (a species known from just three specimens in the Philippines), in fact refer to Long-tailed Bush-Warblers, *contra* Dickinson *et al.*<sup>4</sup>.

### Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Richard Ranft of the British Library National Sound Archive for preparing the sonagrams at short notice, and for comments on bush warbler songs, and to Tim Inskipp for drawing to my attention the note relating to the Friendly Warbler's immature plumage.

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**Simon Harrap**, 13 Hempstead Road, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6DL, U.K.

\* Kinabalu Friendly Warbler, rather than Friendly Bush-Warbler, is used at the author's request.



1

*Masked Finfoot*

1: Adult male Masked Finfoot *Heliopais personata* at Taman Negara, May 1992 (Photo: Mike Chong).

2 and 3: Masked Finfoot, Krabi mangroves, Thailand (Photos: Simon Harrap).



2



3

# Masked Finfoot *Heliopais personata* in Peninsular Malaysia

Finfoots are enigmatic and poorly known birds, thought by some to be closely related to rails and coots, but occupying their own family, Heliornithidae. Represented by only three species in the world they are each confined to one of the major continents of Asia, South America and Africa. In this article Mike Chong pieces together the information on Masked Finfoot in Malaysia and gives an illuminating account of their breeding status, habitat preferences, habits and conservation there.

## Introduction

Masked Finfoot is a globally threatened species found over a wide area from Assam through most of South-East Asia to Sumatra and Java (but not yet known from Borneo). It is apparently a vagrant to Java, the only record being a bird in coastal mangroves at Pulau Rambut, West Java, in 1984<sup>6</sup>. King<sup>3</sup> treats the species in South-East Asia as a lowland resident in Burma, Peninsular Malaysia, Peninsular, central and south-east Thailand, Cambodia, and South Annam; and of uncertain status in north-west Thailand.

Lekagul and Round<sup>5</sup> prefer to regard its status in Thailand as a passage migrant and winter visitor in north, north-east west and Peninsular Thailand, but mention that it may breed there. Indeed there is now a sighting<sup>10</sup> of a pair and three young in the mangroves of Krabi, Peninsular Thailand, on 29 May 1992 which, if accepted, would be the first breeding record for Thailand and the Greater Sundas. Additionally, a team from the Bangkok Bird Club (now Bird Conservation Society of Thailand)<sup>4</sup>, with the help of an OBC survey grant, made several surveys of Tarutao Island, off the extreme south-west coast of Peninsular Thailand in April and December 1992, and January 1993. They recorded the species on each visit and thought it to be resident in the mangroves there.

## Status in Malaysia

Contrary to King, Medway and Wells<sup>7</sup> consider Masked Finfoot to be a non-breeding visitor to the Malay Peninsula as there are no breeding records. Although observations of the species have increased in the last decade this lack of evidence of breeding unfortunately continues. Its earliest recorded appearance in Peninsular Malaysia is 8 December<sup>13</sup> with a record from Taman Negara National Park. This is consistent with sightings by

the author, on 1 January, at Thaleban National Park, Thailand and at Ulu Yam, Selangor.

The birds apparently leave their 'wintering' areas in the Peninsula by late June each year, but where they go to is not known. Either they perform a long-distance migration or simply disperse locally to a remote and secretive habitat. The species' status as a migrant is well documented<sup>12</sup> through a bird mist-netted on 27 December during night-migration ringing studies at Fraser's Hill, Pahang, by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (PERHILITAN). Prior to this record, apparent migrants were also recorded<sup>7</sup> at sea near Pulau Langkawi and flying into a building in Melaka town.

However, in recent years I have made sightings of Masked Finfoot at Taman Negara, which possibly suggest that it does breed in Malaysia. On 28 March 1992, I observed a juvenile Masked Finfoot near an adult on the Tahan River. The juvenile flew off about 20 m downstream when approached by boat. It landed and sat on a sandbank opposite with its neck stretched straight upwards, but the head held in a horizontal position, and remained there motionless for about 30 seconds. It was smaller than the adult, the body and head was light brown with a darker shade on the wings, the neck was buffy with black mottling on the side of the face and chin; and the smaller bill was creamy-yellow with a black ridge on the upper culmen. As the boat drew almost level it flew off low over the water, disappearing from view under overhanging branches lining the river.

Further evidence of possible breeding comes from the record of a male with a small knob at the base of its upper mandible at Taman Negara National Park on 19 May 1991 (Plate 1). Lekagul and Round<sup>5</sup> suggest that the breeding male acquires this feature. Nevertheless, this cannot be

construed as a definite breeding record: the bird may have been a non-breeding adult remaining on its wintering grounds; a bird about to depart to breeding grounds; or, conceivably, a bird which had migrated there immediately after completing breeding elsewhere. These observations indicate that a longer and more extensive search is needed at Taman Negara to determine the bird's true status there.

### Habitat preferences

Masked Finfoots have been observed in a variety of habitats in Peninsular Malaysia in recent years. Most sightings have been in freshwater areas, especially unpolluted pools and pristine forest rivers.

In Taman Negara, finfoots have been seen in the upper reaches of the Tembeling River and along the lower reaches of the Tahan River. The Tembeling is a large, slow-flowing and turbid river, while the Tahan is clear and fast-flowing, with occasional slow-moving stretches. The birds are usually observed along the sides of the slow-moving stretches of river where there are overhanging riparian trees, mostly 'Kelat Jambu Air' *Eugenia grandiflora*. A male finfoot observed on 10 and 11 May 1989<sup>9</sup> on the Kinchin River at Endau-Rompin, Pahang, further demonstrates its partiality to riverine habitats, as does a number of records from the River Lompat in the Krau Game Reserve, Pahang<sup>12</sup>.

Of late, more reports of the species have come from mangroves, especially on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The first sightings from mangroves involved several individuals off the north-west Perak coast in January, February and March 1986. Recent observations come from Pulau Tengah, a group of built-up mangrove islands off Port Kelang, Selangor, in 1992. There have been occasional sightings of the species at two comparatively well-watched mangrove areas, namely Kuala Selangor, Selangor and Kuala Gula, Perak. Mangrove areas on the east coast are small compared to those on the west and there are just a couple of records from the Cherating River, Pahang, including one on 25 April 1989<sup>15</sup>.

There have been a number of recent observations of Masked Finfoot from standing waters such as inland lakes and vegetated pools in Peninsular Malaysia. It has been regularly seen over the last few years on former tin-mining pools overgrown with lotus, underwater weed and water hyacinth, and fringed by scrub. Although

such sightings have been restricted so far to Selangor state, further discoveries may be made elsewhere on the Peninsula given the abundance of former mining pools. Surprisingly, there are no records from the large natural lakes of Tasek Bera and Tasek Chini, both in Pahang.

It is interesting that there have been recent observations of the species from ornamental lakes. A bird was observed on an ornamental lake in Ayer Keroh, Melaka in late February 1987<sup>14</sup>. An individual spent two weeks on a lake at the National Zoo, Selangor, in late February 1993 (T. Nazim and T. Yacob pers comm. 1994). Utilisation of habitat in exceptionally busy and open areas is contrary to its description as a very shy bird.

Large man-made lakes created through dams on the Peninsula tend to be very poor for waterbirds such as ducks, grebes and moorhens, possibly owing to deep water and lack of aquatic vegetation, especially close to the water's edge. Recently, in March 1994, a Masked Finfoot was sighted on the Temenggor Dam, Perak, probably the first record of the species utilising a large man-made lake or dam. Notably, however, the lake fringe still had overhanging trees and vegetation in sheltered bays. A specimen<sup>11</sup> in the National Parks and Wildlife Department's collection labelled 'Kuala Piah, Grik', 25 May 1966, provides a further link, as this area is situated on the same Perak River system south of Temenggor Dam, which is now flooded for hydroelectric generation.

Another potential habitat that Masked Finfoot may inhabit is the peat-swamp forests found along the eastern and western coastal plains of Peninsular Malaysia. These are poorly known and clearly merit further investigation. Seasonally flooded forests may also be another potential alternative habitat.

### Diet and feeding

The diet and foraging habits of Masked Finfoot are little known. Food probably consists of many different types of insects, fish, amphibians, molluscs, small reptiles and other aquatic invertebrates. Delacour<sup>2</sup> describes its food as being small fish, shrimps and snails. Feeding behaviour has been observed by the author on a few occasions at Taman Negara. Birds swim slowly along the shady banks and pick small insects from the surface of the water and from overhanging leaves. A bird was also seen catching a small fish in shallow water. The individual

observed on a shallow water lake at Ayer Keroh foraged by stirring the bottom detritus with its feet. Among 17 food items taken in 45 minutes was a small frog<sup>14</sup>. More observations have to be made to ascertain its feeding behaviour and diet.

### Conservation and protected status

Masked Finfoot is a protected species in Peninsular Malaysia, but it is the conservation of its preferred habitats which will best protect it. Most sightings of the species in riverine habitats are from protected and semi-protected areas, such as Taman Negara National Park, Krau Game Reserve, and Endau-Rompin State Park. To a certain extent, the numerous extractive forest reserves may provide limited protection to Masked Finfoot habitat, although they are subject to disturbance and logging exploitation. With much of the Peninsula's riverine forest being unprotected the bird may be restricted in the future to the country's protected areas.

It is encouraging that there are still extensive areas of mangrove on Peninsular Malaysia providing potential habitat for the species. However, in the last two decades Peninsular Malaysia has lost about 20% of mangrove forest through land reclamation. Mangroves are also vulnerable to ongoing degradation and exploitation, such as for aquaculture ponds. They are poorly protected: the only semi-protected mangrove areas on the Peninsula are Kuala Selangor Nature Park; and the mangroves at the Kuala Gula Bird Sanctuary in the Matang Mangrove Forest Reserve, which is perhaps the best managed forest in the world<sup>8</sup>. Both these important sites have yet to be gazetted as totally protected areas.

The Masked Finfoot in Peninsular Malaysia still has to be considered as a non-breeding and winter resident due to the lack of concrete evidence of breeding or nesting. The influx of sightings from different habitats is encouraging and, hopefully, increased vigilance will unravel the breeding status of this enigmatic and special bird in Peninsular Malaysia.

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**Mike H. N. Chong**, 219 Jalan H7, Taman Melawati, 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



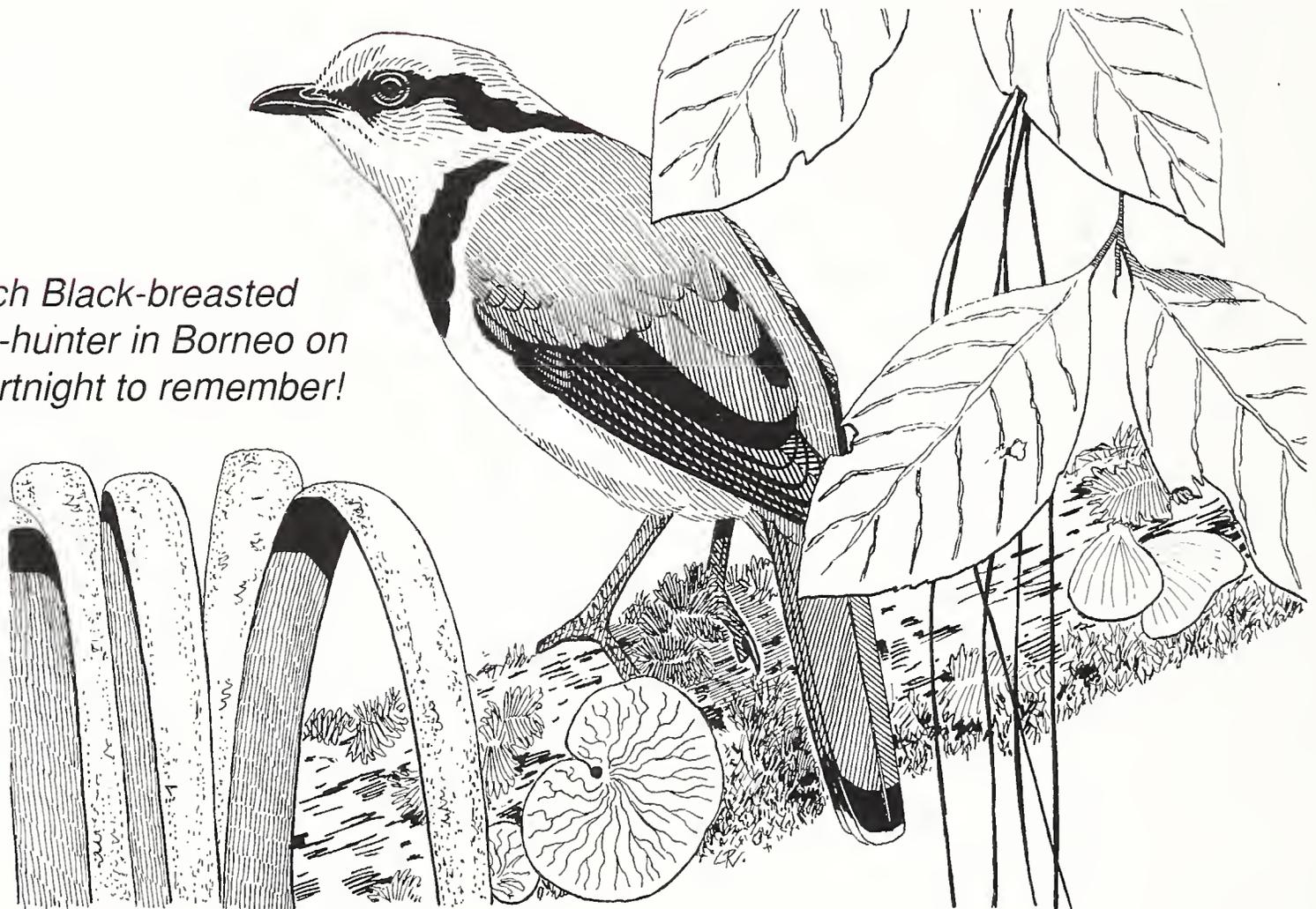
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# Kuala Selangor Nature Park

## – rich and accessible

Kuala Selangor Nature Park, which is the first coastal nature reserve in Asia to be run by a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), has been an astounding success. Located within an hours drive of the nation's capital it has become one of the most popular destinations for the increasing number of Malaysians eager to learn more about their natural heritage. Here, Tony Sebastian gives an insight to the attractions of the nature park.

Nestling at the mouth of the Selangor river, on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula, is the Kuala Selangor Nature Park. This 350 ha nature park has received international acclaim as a birding site and, more importantly, an education centre catering for environmental awareness in Malaysia. Opened in 1987, the Kuala Selangor Nature Park (locally referred to as KSNP) is managed by the Malaysian Nature Society with strong support and cooperation from the state government.

KSNP receives almost 3,000 visitors every month and has 12 chalets in three designs, accommodating up to 40 people at a time. An eco-education centre with a permanent static exhibition, as well as an audio-visual room, caters for student groups, tourists and researchers. All this aside, what makes KSNP one of the premier nature tourism sites in the region?

The town of Kuala Selangor, just outside the park, is the historical site of Fort Altingsburg, located on Bukit Melawati, a hill overlooking the estuary of the Selangor river. Its bastions, which used to protect the Sultanate from invaders and pirates in the past, still remain today. The scenic Bukit Melawati is also home to a habituated population of **Silvered Leaf Monkeys** *Trachypithecus cristatus*. The telecommunications tower is home to a nesting pair of **White-bellied Fish-Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucogaster*, while six species of owl have been recorded in the giant trees which cover the hill. The lighthouse on the hill is of somewhat ambiguous ornithological renown. Its beacons, as they sweep the Malacca Straits, have attracted hundreds of passerines on migration, many of which collide and die there. Specimens from this locality have contributed to collections in museums throughout the world.

The park itself, at the foot of the hill, extends to the coastline where the mangroves are rich and diverse (Figure 1). The extensive mudflats

support one of the largest wintering populations of shorebirds in Peninsular Malaysia. Some 45 species of waders, seabirds and waterbirds have been recorded in the area, with the park boasting of a bird list of 150 species. Among these are threatened species like **Lesser Adjutant** *Leptoptilos javanicus*, **Masked Finfoot** *Heliopais personata*, **Nordmann's Greenshank** *Tringa guttifer* and **Asian Dowicher** *Limnodromus semipalmatus*.

A 55 ha shallow lake has been created with four observation hides around it, and two of these are watchtowers providing a panoramic view of the park. The water level within the bund-surrounded lake is controlled via a sluice-gate which joins a long canal leading to the Selangor river. The result is a brackish lagoon, used extensively by herons, egrets, kingfishers and birds of prey.

Other interesting bird which can be seen in the park are mangrove specialities such as **Mangrove Pitta** *Pitta megarhyncha*, **Mangrove Blue-Flycatcher** *Cyornis rufigastra*, and **Greater Flameback** *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*.

Testament to the honey-pot effect of the park is the number of records of species which are not normally found in these parts. These are often vagrants or rare migrants on passage. Some of the species include **Little Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax niger*, which breeds in Thailand but is seldom recorded further south; **Black-headed Ibis** *Threskiornis melanocephalus*, an uncommon but annual visitor to Thailand but otherwise not recorded in Peninsular Malaysia in recent times; **Pheasant-tailed Jacana** *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*, a rare visitor to the Peninsula; and **White-shouldered Starling** *Sturnus sinensis*, a regular wintering migrant in Singapore but very seldom recorded in Malaysia (this species is believed to use coastal mangroves on migration, hence the dearth of records on passage). There are a host of

other species, making this site a welcome source of constant surprise and excitement to the birdwatcher.

For this reason, the Selangor International Bird Race is held at KSNP in October each year and attracts teams from all over the world. Benefiting from much local amateur participation, this race is fiercely competitive as well as great fun for all!

In addition to its rich and diverse avifauna, the park is destined for greater acclaim. In collaboration with the National Zoo, a project is being initiated for the re-introduction of the **Milky Stork** *Mycteria cinerea* at Kuala Selangor. A captive breeding programme at the National Zoo has been breeding both Milky and **Storm's Storks** *Ciconia stormi* for many years. KSNP will hopefully be an ideal site for a programme to gradually establish a wild breeding population of Milky Storks. The only known breeding population of this species in Malaysia is in the Matang Forest Reserve and this population has been steadily declining in numbers. An aviary is being built to house the captive-raised storks, which would be released gradually into the park under close monitoring. Plans are being drawn up for the erection of artificial nesting platforms within the mangroves to encourage the storks to start breeding. If successful, this venture would become a star attraction for the park.

KSNP caters for more than birdwatching. With a total distance of 5,114 m, six well-maintained and sign-posted trails meander through the park. These allow visitors to explore different habitats, cross rope bridges and traverse a boardwalk. The boardwalk extends 500 m through the mangroves to an observation hide overlooking the tidal mudflats which, at low tide, extend for 2 km out to the Straits of Malacca. This boardwalk gives one the unique opportunity to observe a mangrove forest in its natural state. Nature guides are on hand to explain the zonation found within the mangroves and visitors are able to watch the tide creep into the mangroves while the mudskippers and fiddler

crabs go about their daily lives and a host of shorebirds feed on the extensive mudflats.

Added to all this is the presence of an animal which is guaranteed to charm visitors. The nature park supports two species of otters: the **Smooth-coated Otter** *Lutrogale perspicillata* and the **Oriental Small-clawed Otter** *Amblonyx cinerea*. The Smooth Otter is the largest of the oriental otters and is commonly seen in the park. They live in families of up to nine and are a hit with the kids. The smaller Oriental Small-clawed Otter is also common within the park but is less often seen, keeping to the dense mangrove forests. They too travel in families of up to 12 animals.

Mammals that can be seen within the park at night include the **Leopard Cat** *Felis bengalensis*, **Malay Pangolin** *Manis javanica*, **Common Palm Civet** *Paradoxurus hermaphrodilus* and **Small-toothed Palm Civet** *Arctogalidia trivirgata*. During the day, the most prominent of the park's denizens are the **Silvered Leaf Monkeys** and **Crab-eating Macaques** *Macaca fascicularis*.

In years to come, more nature parks like KSNP are expected to be set up, a reflection of the increasing awareness among Malaysians of the sheer richness and diversity of their country's wildlife and, more importantly, the urgent need to ensure its continued existence.

**Tony Sebastian**, 43 USJ9/3C, Subang Jaya 47620 Petaling, Selangor, Malaysia

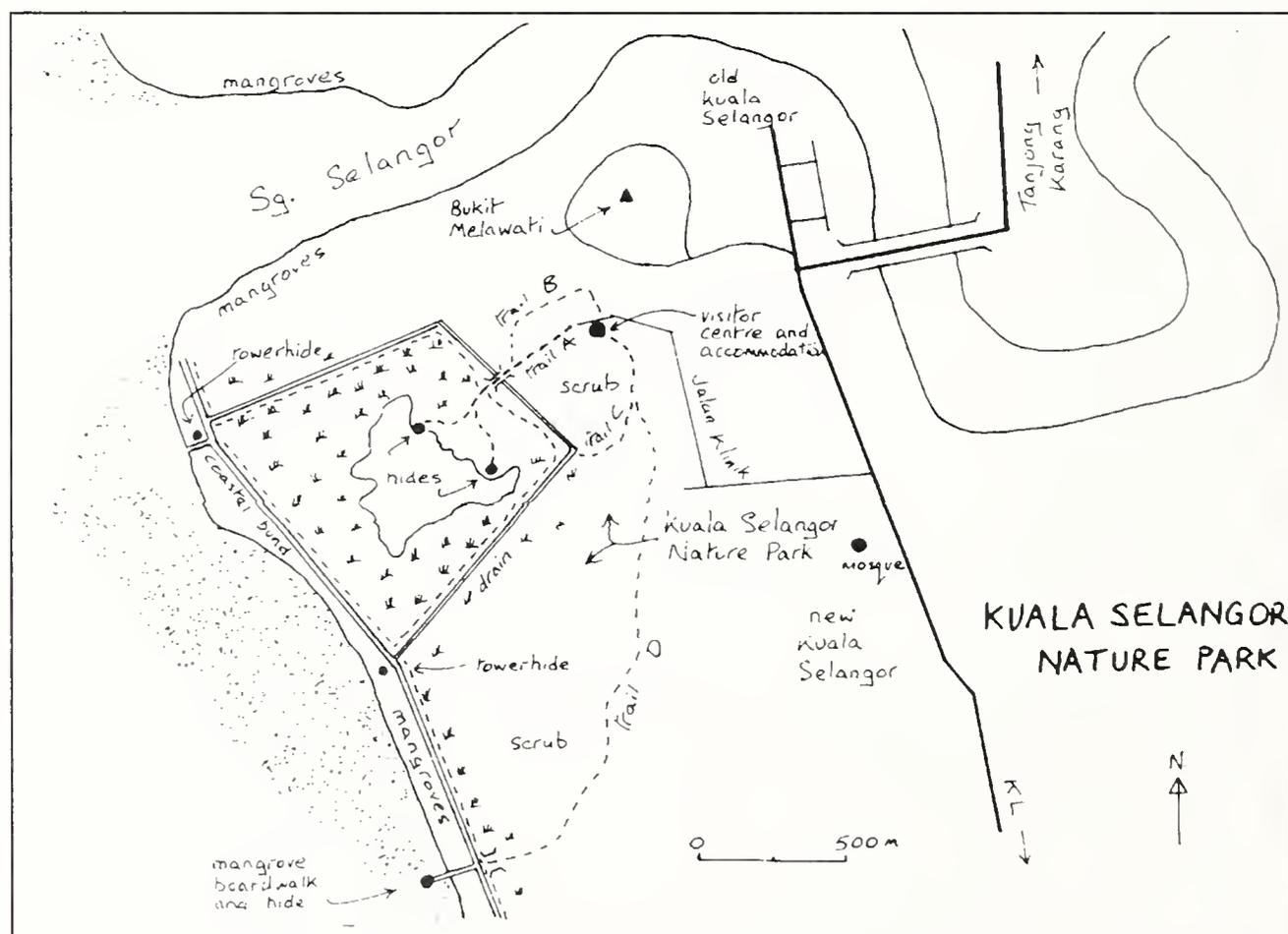


Figure 1: Kuala Selangor National Park (John Bransbury).

# Birdwatching areas

## Panti Forest Reserve, Johor, Malaysia



The forests of southern Johor are not on the itinerary of most visitors to Malaysia. In this article Lim Kim Seng shares with us the delights of Panti Forest, which is a popular site for Singaporean birders as it offers excellent birding at the southern tip of the Peninsula.

Panti Forest Reserve covers some 275 km<sup>2</sup> and is located at the headwaters of the Johor, Linggiu and Ulu Sedili rivers, 20 km north of the town of Kota Tinggi in southern Johor (Figure 1). It is mainly lowland dipterocarp forest with hill forest located on two peaks of over 600 m, Gunung Muntahak (634 m) and Gunung Sumalayang (615 m). Montane ericaceous forest is found on the western summit of a third mountain, the curious flat-topped Gunung Panti (654 m). Peat-swamps are also to be found in the low-lying areas, and the rivers frequently overflow during the monsoon months (November to February).

Unfortunately, Panti Forest Reserve is a reserve only in name, and large parts of it have been logged since the early seventies so that the only primary habitats now left are the more inaccessible forests in the foothills of the three mountains. Commercial logging has since ceased, but sand quarrying and clearance of the reserve land for oil palms and cultivation is threatening to swallow up Panti unless the state government reviews its management plans for the reserve and enforces protection for the area.

As may be expected from its current status, there are no visitor facilities in the reserve and visitors have to camp if they want to stay more than a day. Alternatively, there is inexpensive (M\$50 per room) chalet accommodation at the nearby Kota Tinggi (Muntahak) Waterfalls, a popular picnic area, and cheap (M\$40 per room) hotels in Kota Tinggi town itself.

Access to Panti is via Kota Tinggi, which is 41 km north of the Johor causeway, making it a very accessible and popular birding location for Singapore birdwatchers. After Kota Tinggi, you may take the north-western road to the (Lombong) Waterfall, 20 km distant, to the western parts of the reserve or the main northern trunk road leading to Mersing in the reserve's eastern half. There are buses departing daily for the waterfall road and Mersing from the bus

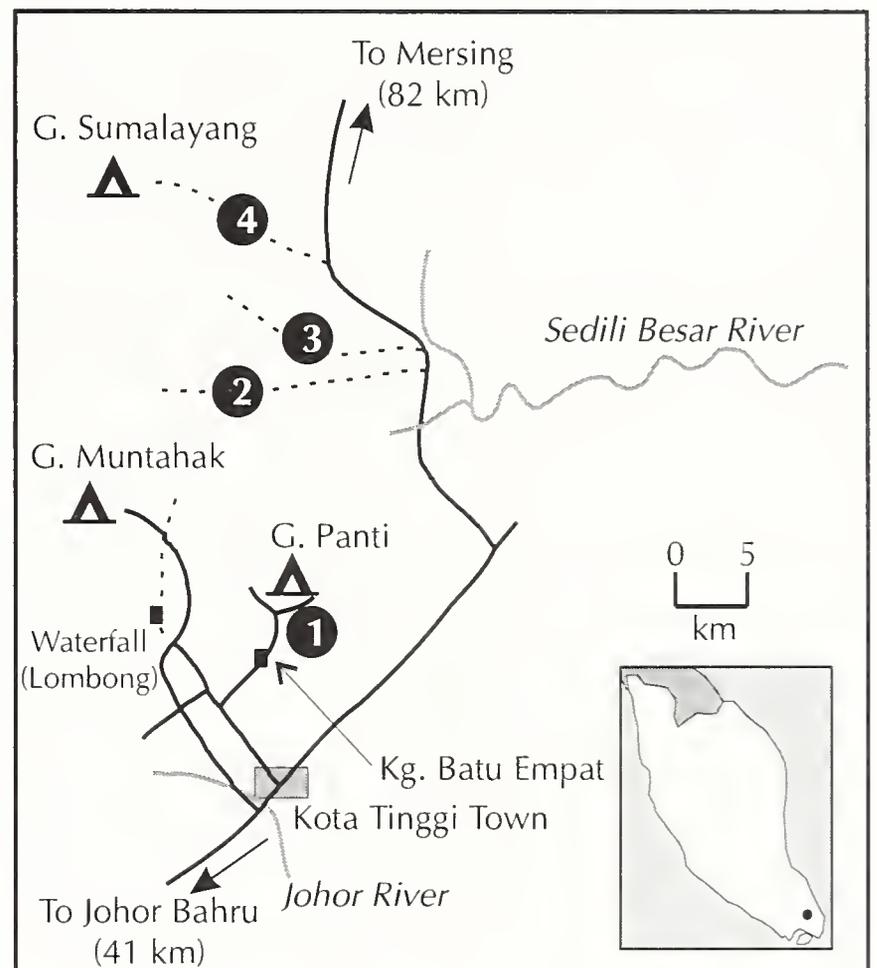


Figure 1. Map of Panti area, Johor

station at Kota Tinggi, but you need to have your own vehicle if you have only a day or so to spare.

Over 250 bird species have been recorded at Panti, including many Sunda endemics and five globally threatened species - **Wallace's Hawk-Eagle** *Spisaetus nanus*, **Chestnut-necklaced Partridge** *Arborophila charltonii*, **Short-toed Coucal** *Centropus rectunguis*, and **Wrinkled Aceros** *Aceros corrugatus* and **Helmeted Hornbills** *Buceros vigil*.

Panti's mammals are also impressive, in spite of its disturbed state. About a dozen **Asian Elephants** *Elephas maximus* still roam the reserve and the **Tiger** *Panthera tigris* is regularly reported by the villagers and forest workers. The endangered **Sumatran Rhinoceros** *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* has not been recorded since fresh pugmarks were seen in 1981 and is presumably extinct. Other mammals to look out for include the **Flying Lemur** *Cyanocephalus variegatus*, tree

shrews, **Slow Loris** *Nycticebus coucang*, five other primate species, **Sunda Pangolin** *Manis javanica*, squirrels, **Sun Bear** *Helarctos malayanus*, civets, deer, **Wild Boar** *Sus scrofa*, the extremely shy **Malayan Tapir** *Tapirus indicus* and **Leopard** *Panthera pardus* as well as numerous (and as yet unstudied) bats and rats.

Some of the more interesting accessible trails, all easily reached from Kota Tinggi, are described below.

### 1. Around the foothills

Take the road to the waterfall and look out for a police station on your right-hand side after about 6 km. Turn into the road beside the station and drive on till the end, 4 km in. You can park your vehicle at the village at Batu Empat (get permission first). Take the trail turning left of the metalled road, which will take you through cultivation, old rubber plantations and scrub for 2 km. Look out for rural species like the **Rufous Celeus** *Celeus brachyurus* and **Laced Woodpeckers** *Picus vittatus*, **Common Flameback** *Dinopium javanense*, **Straw-headed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*, **Oriental Magpie-Robin** *Copsychus saularis* and **Mangrove Whistler** *Pachycephala grisola*. Towards the end of the rubber plantations you will see the flat-topped ridge of Gunung Pantii to the north. This is where the foothill trail and logged forest begins.

The transition from plantation to forest is indistinct and some forest species are also seen in unkempt rubber trees. **Black-and-Red Broadbills** *Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchos* and **Black Magpies** *Platysmurus leucopterus* are frequently seen in these situations, as is the unfamiliar sight of **Common Flamebacks** sharing the same tree as **Rufous Piculets** *Sasia abnormis*, **Buff-rumped Woodpeckers** *Meiglyptes tristis* and the beautiful arboreal **Cream-coloured Giant Squirrel** *Ratufa affinis*.

The foothills of Gunung Pantii were cleared in 1991 and this has altered the bird population there. Most affected are the understory species, especially trogons which are now rarely seen. A pair of **Banded Pittas** *Pitta guajana* which used to be easily found has disappeared because of the disturbance. However, the rather open trails permit easy viewing of raptors, of which there are 13 species on record. Most frequently encountered are **Lesser Fish-Eagle** *Ichthyophaga humilis*, **Crested Serpent-Eagle** *Spilornis cheela*, **Changeable Hawk-Eagle** *Spisaetus cirrhatu*s and

**Black-thighed Falconet** *Microhierax fringillarius*. Also regularly seen are up to four species of hornbills, the commonest being **Rhinoceros Hornbill** *Buceros rhinoceros*, which can be seen flying noisily over or high up on a fruiting fig. Flocks of up to eight **Black Hornbills** *Anthracoceros malayanus* can sometimes be found in the canopy of the surviving tall trees.

The recent logging has created plenty of new trails and obscured an old one leading to the western summit (Panti Timor), so bring along a compass and do not stray from the main (biggest) track. The new trails are invaded by many sun-loving shrubs and two species (both natives of South America!), *Melastoma malabathricum* and *Clidemia hirta*, produce berries which attract frugivorous birds to come down to feed at close proximity to birdwatchers. **Yellow-breasted Prionochilus** *maculatus*, **Crimson-breasted P. percussus**, **Yellow-vented Dicaeum** *chrysorrheum* and **Orange-bellied Flowerpeckers** *D. trigonostigma* are frequent visitors. Also attracted by fruiting shrubs are **Little Green-Pigeon** *Treron olax*, **Green Broadbill** *Calyptomena viridis* and **Dark-throated Oriole** *Oriolus xanthonotus*.

The dense undergrowth is particularly rich in babblers. Of the 23 species recorded in the reserve, **Ferruginous Trichastoma** *bicolor*, **Chestnut-rumped Stachyris** *maculata*, **Grey-headed S. poliocephala** and **Chestnut-winged Babblers** *S. erythroptera* are the most common. The drab, frugivorous **Brown Fulvetta** *Alcippe brunneicauda* is rare but can be found during the fruiting season. All babblers are inveterate skulkers and a good knowledge of their calls is an essential identification tool.

The trails also attract many mammals. **Wild Boar**, **Barking Deer** *Muntiacus muntjak* and **Lesser Mousedeer** *Tragulus javanicus* are common. Herds of feral **Water Buffalo** *Bubalus bubalis* also roam the wider trails and can be intimidating if bumped into. Villagers living at the plantations report tiger sightings from time to time and tracks indicate that it is not uncommon.

Climbing to the summit takes about three hours and goes through some exciting ridge and peat swamp forest before entering montane forest near the summit at 600 m. This montane forest is the lowest in Peninsular Malaysia and, though it has no truly montane birds, it does harbour some endemic plants. As the original trail has been obliterated by recent logging, take along a guide from the village at Batu Empat. The climb can be done in one day.

## 2. The Ridge Trail

This and the next two trails are easily reached by heading up the road towards Kuantan. The Ridge Trail is situated at the 270 km mark on your left hand side. There is space to park three cars about 20 m inside the trail.

The first km of this trail is extremely rich in birds and birding there often brings the unexpected. Bird waves are commoner than elsewhere in the reserve and typically comprise 20-25 species.

Both the **Crestless Fireback** *Lophura erythrophthalma* and **Crested Partridge** *Rollulus rouloul* have been seen near the 'car park'. The spectacular but shy **Great Argus** *Argusiannus argus* used to be common on this trail, but has become scarce, probably because of illegal trapping. Other birds which are frequently seen in the 'car park' area include **Banded Kingfisher** *Lacedo pulchella*, **Red-naped** *Harpactes kasumba*, **Diard's** *H. diardii*, **Cinnamon-rumped** *H. orrhophaeus* and **Scarlet-rumped Trogons** *H. duvaucelii*, **Chestnut-breasted Malkoha** *Phaenicophaeus curvirostris*, **Great Slaty Woodpecker** *Mulleripicus pulverulentus*, **Banded Eurylainus** *javanicus* and **Black-and-yellow Broadbills** *E. ochromalus*, and the ubiquitous **Hairy-backed** *Tricholestes criniger* and **Buff-vented Bulbuls** *Iole olivacea*. Also frequent there is a flock of up to twelve **Bushy-crested Hornbills** *Anorrhinus galeritus*, more often heard than seen, as they forage high up in the trees.

The trail goes downhill after about 1 km and situated there is a massive strangling fig which attracts a host of birds, particularly frugivorous, when fruiting. Regulars include **Wreathed**



*Diard's Trogon* *Harpactes diardii* by Richard Grimmett

**Hornbill** *Aceros undulatus*, **Cinnamon-headed Green-Pigeon** *Treron fulvicollis*, **White-bellied Woodpecker** *Dryocopus javensis*, **Red-crowned Megalaima** *rafflesi*, **Yellow-crowned** *M. henricii*, and **Blue-eared Barbets** *M. australis*, **Blue-rumped Parrot** *Psittinus cyanurus*, **Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot** *Loriculus galgulus*, **Red-bearded Bee-eater** *Nyctornis anictus*, and several bulbuls. After another 500 m, an old wooden bridge over a stream marks the beginning of the swamp forest. This stretch is perennially wet and full of leeches but noteworthy as the former nest site of a pair of **Blyth's Hawk-Eagles** *Spisaetus alboniger* and the best place to see the reclusive **Wrinkled Hornbill** *Aceros corrugatus*, as well as the uncommon **Puff-backed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus eutilotus*, which can usually be detected by its whimsical trill. Mammals recorded here include **Sun Bear**, **White-headed Gibbon** *Hylobates lar* and families of **Oriental Small-clawed Otters** *Amblonyx cinerea*.

The swamp ends after 450 m and from there on the trail goes up a ridge for about 700 m before hitting a rocky hill-top. Birds commonly seen around there include **Banded Kingfisher**, **Red-billed Malkoha** *Phaenicophaeus javanicus*, **White-bellied Yuhina** *Yuhina zantholeuca* and **Purple-naped Sunbird** *Hypogramma hypogrammicum*. Most birdwatchers stop there for a breather before turning back, as the trail becomes very overgrown and obscure after this point.

## 3. The Quarry Trail

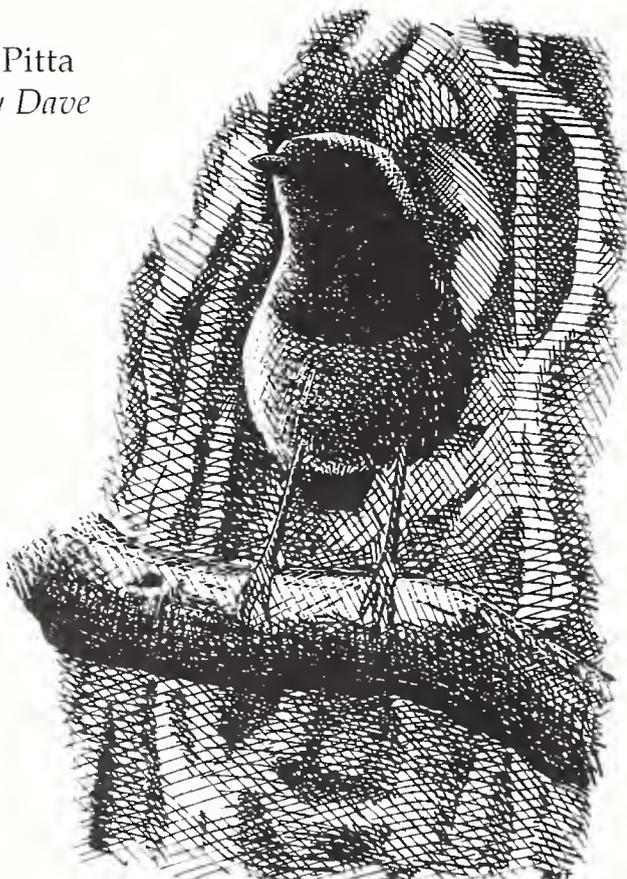
The Quarry Trail is situated just after the 269 km mark, on your left-hand side and just another kilometre after the Ridge Trail, as you head towards Mersing. A metalled track takes you west for a kilometre before swinging north. The forest is fairly open, enabling good views of both canopy and understorey species.

This track is famous as the only site in South Johor for **Wallace's Hawk-Eagle** *Spisaetus nanus*. The much sought-after **Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* has also been seen there once. Canopy species commonly seen there include both **Scarlet Pericrocotus** *flammeus* and **Fiery Minivets** *P. igneus*, **Lesser Cuckooshrike** *Coracina fimbriata*, **Black-winged Hemipus** *hirundinaceus* and **Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrikes** *H. picatus*, **Green Iora** *Aegithina viridissima* and **Scarlet or Temminck's Sunbird** *Aethopyga temminckii*. The enigmatic **Black-and-White Bulbul** *Pycnonotus melanoleucos* has also been recorded with regularity there.

**Scarlet-rumped Trogon** is the most common mid-storey species, while forest floors are good for **Garnet Pitta** *Pitta granatina*, **Black-capped Babbler** *Pellorneum capistratum*, which has a trademark rising whistle, and the long-necked **Malaysian Rail-babbler** *Eupetes macrocerus*. In winter months, **Eyebrowed** *Turdus obscurus* and **Siberian Thrushes** *Zoothera sibirica*, and **Siberian Blue Robin** *Luscinia cyane* can be found feeding on the trail, while exposed perches are good places to look for migrant passerines, including **Dark-sided** *Muscicapa sibirica*, **Asian Brown M.** *daurica*, the striking black-and-yellow **Yellow-rumped** *Ficedula zanthopygia* and, occasionally, **Blue-and-white Flycatchers** *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*.

You should not venture onto this trail alone as **Elephant, Malayan Tapir, Tiger and Leopard** are not uncommon.

*Garnet Pitta Pitta granatina* by Dave Bakerwell



#### 4. The Bunker Trail

This trail is located just after the 266 km mark and is distinguished by two World War II bunkers on either side of the road before you turn left onto it. This is an active and wide mud track used by lorries transporting sand from quarries deep inside the reserve. Traffic can be heavy on weekdays, so plan your visits for the weekend and public holidays.

The wide track extends several kilometres into the foothills of Gunung Muntahak and is bordered by secondary and swamp forest. Birds flying over or in the high canopy are easiest to see, among them all the eight hornbill species

recorded at Panti including the **Helmeted** *Buceros vigil* and **White-crowned Hornbills** *Aceros comatus*, the latter a recent addition to the Panti list and the southernmost Peninsular Malaysian record. The high canopy is frequented by leafbirds, ioras, sunbirds and spiderhunters. Mid-storey levels should be checked and occasionally yield interesting finds like the scarce **Olive-backed Woodpecker** *Dinopium rafflesii*, the atypical **Brown Barbet** *Calorhamphus fuliginosus*, **Velvet-fronted Nuthatch** *Sitta frontalis* and flocks of the sociable and noisy **Dusky Broadbill** *Corydon sumatranus*.

The logging track crosses several swamps and these should be checked for migrants in winter which might include **Black** *Ixobrychus flavicollis* and **Schrenck's Bitterns** *I. eurhythmus* and the odd wintering **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*. **Chestnut-naped** *Euicurus ruficapillus* and **White-crowned Forktails** *E. leschenaultii* are sympatric and should be looked for on the bigger streams.

A dusk or night visit there is also worthwhile. Near twilight, both **Savanna** *Caprimulgus affinis* and **Malaysian Eared-Nightjar** *Eurostopodus temminckii* can be seen sharing the same airspace. At night, a number of nocturnal species can be found. **Oriental Bay-Owl** *Phodilus badius* and **Reddish Scops-Owl** *Otus rufescens* are both common, as are **Gould's** *Batrachostomus stellatus* and **Javan Frogmouths** *B. javensis*. The awesome looking **Large Frogmouth** *B. auritus* is rare. Mammals most frequently met with are the civet cats, most notably **Malay Civet** *Viverra zibetha* and **Masked Civet** *Paguma larvata*, **Leopard Cat** *Felis bengalensis* and **Sunda Pangolin**.

Panti is south Johor's most important bird site and is definitely worth a visit of at least three days. Much remains to be discovered, especially deep in the valleys of the interior where no birdwatchers have ventured. There is also an urgent need for the authorities to undertake immediate measures to control illegal logging and quarrying activities before Panti is degraded beyond repair. The potential for the development of ecotourism in this wildlife-rich and botanically important reserve (Panti has several endemic plant species) is immense as over a million Singaporean and Singapore-based tourists visit Johor each year and some may be lured to Panti with active promotion.

**Lim Kim Seng**, 644 Yishum Street 61, 12-300, Singapore 2776.

# Club Watch



## Malaysian Nature Society

**Founded**  
**1940**

**Area of concern**  
**Malaysia**

**Membership**  
**4,000**

**Address:**  
**P.O. Box 10750,**  
**50724**  
**Kuala Lumpur,**  
**Malaysia**

The establishment of the Kuala Selangor Nature Park and the success of the Endau-Rompin Expedition are two of the greatest conservation achievements in Malaysia in recent years. Both are due almost solely to the efforts of the Malaysian (formerly Malayan) Nature Society, perhaps better known as the MNS, the oldest non-governmental nature conservation organisation in South-East Asia.

The MNS's aims are to promote amongst Malaysians an appreciation of the country's natural heritage, and to this end its philosophy is to encourage Malaysians to become involved in nature by means of its extensive programme of activities. These are initiated both nationally and locally, through branches in almost every Malaysian state, specialist groups (e.g. reptiles, birds, photography and caving) and school nature clubs.

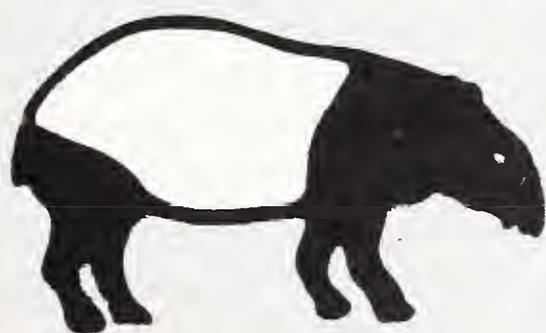
Using this network, the MNS organises field trips, courses, outdoor experiences, exhibitions, talks and seminars, to cater for a complete range of interests and expertise. It also publishes a wide range of materials on Malaysian natural history, from magazines and books for children to the Malayan Nature Journal, an internationally recognised scientific periodical.

Politically, the MNS has played a key role in several successful national environmental campaigns, including those against the Gunung Tahan Road Project and the Penang Hill Development. It is now regularly consulted on issues of conservation importance by government and media alike, a recognition of its standing in Malaysia.

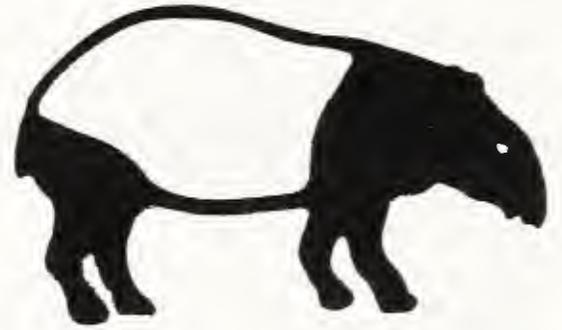
The development of Kuala Selangor Nature Park (see p. 33), the first NGO-run coastal nature reserve in Asia, has been an overwhelming achievement. A visit to this protected mangrove reserve, within an hour's drive of Kuala Lumpur, has become one of the most popular excursions for the increasing number of Malaysians eager to learn more about their natural heritage.

However, it is perhaps the MNS's scientific expeditions that have been its most successful endeavour to date. From 1985-1989 members explored Endau-Rompin, a little known area of lowland primary forest on the Pahang-Johor state border, and currently a similar expedition is being carried out in the Ulu Belum forest area of northern Perak on the Thai border (see *OBC Bulletin* 19:14).

The Endau-Rompin expedition enormously increased the awareness of the area's importance and created a strong lobby for its protection. Endau-Rompin has already been designated a State Park by the Johor State Government and is in the process of being designated one by Pahang, a real testimony to the effectiveness and success of the MNS. The hope now is that the same can be achieved for Belum.



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## Recently published

**A Birdwatcher's Guide to Malaysia** by John Bransbury, 1993. Waymark Publishing. World distribution by Natural History Book Service Ltd (details on back cover). 282 pp., £14(sb) ISBN 0-646-14559-2.

Malaysia is made up of 13 states in two landmasses, 11 in the Malay Peninsula and two (Sabah and Sarawak) in northern Borneo, comprising a land area of some 330,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Situated in the midst of South-East Asia, its avifauna is mainly Sundaic, but is supplemented in winter by Palearctic migrants. Over 700 species have been recorded, including 31 Bornean and three peninsular endemics.

This book is the first published site guide for the country and describes 42 sites (26 peninsular) in detail. For each site, there is a concise summary of the ornithological and scenic attractions followed by an annotated checklist which is divided into habitat types and zones, e.g. wetlands, forest, mangrove, open areas, canopy, etc. Rarities have been separated under a different sub-heading (a useful pointer for first-time birders in the tropics) and information is listed on good birdwatching areas at each site, access, accommodation, when to visit and other attractions apart from birds. A site map accompanies each site description. A short introduction incorporates useful hints on birding in Malaysia and contact addresses/numbers for visiting birders, as well as a short list of references, but very little general information on the avifauna of the country. At the end of the book are two very useful checklists of birds and mammals of Malaysia, probably the first published lists for the country.

The author has done a marvellous job of providing a compact book introducing the uninitiated to birding in the varied habitats of Malaysia. Site information is well researched, up-to-date and generally useful. Errors are few, one notable exception being the mis-statement that Kenyir Lake is 'two-and-a-half times bigger than Singapore', which it isn't (Singapore is actually bigger). The eight pages of colour photographs

feature mainly scenic shots of sites and a whole range of subjects ranging from Bearded Pig to pitcher plants. There is only one bird photograph (of a Great Hornbill) which appears to be a captive. One feels that the inclusion of a colour photograph is an unneeded luxury, the costs incurred could perhaps have been better utilised to include additional sites. Line drawings of birds or black and white pictures of sites would have been more appropriate.

On the whole, the selection of sites in the book gives a good representation of Malaysian bird habitats, although one feels that the 13 states are not equally covered. For example, Selangor has 14 sites covered (wholly or in part) while the largest state of Sarawak only has four and Perlis none. The bird-rich state of Johor is hardly covered except for Endau-Rompin State Park which it shares with Pahang. A few deserving sites have been left out, e.g. Pantai Acheh Forest Reserve (Penang), Krau Game Reserve (Pahang), Cape Rachado (Negri Sembilan) and Panti Forest Reserve (Johor). Hopefully, this oversight can be rectified in the next edition.

All said, a first-time visitor to the country equipped with a good field guide and this book should have no problems getting the most out of his or her visit.

**Lim Kim Seng**

**Manual to the conservation of Asian Hornbills** edited by P. Poonswad and A. C. Kemp, 1993. Hornbill Project, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand. 511pp., 95 colour photographs and numerous line drawings and maps. US\$100 (surface mail included) from Hornbill Project, Dept. of Microbiology, Faculty of Science, Mahidol Univ. Rama 6 Road, Bangkok 10400, Thailand. ISBN 974-587-693-3

This work is a comprehensive compilation of the biology, ecology and conservation of Asia's 31 species of hornbills. The book is packed with detailed and up-to-date information. It is lavishly illustrated with nearly 100 excellent colour photographs, mainly of hornbills, as well as

pictures of the birds' habitats and other wildlife, and numerous useful line drawings and maps. The book is excellently produced and partially sponsored by the Asia Foundation.

As the editors point out, hornbills have important roles to play in forest ecology and conservation. First they are dispersers of seeds and predators of small animals, and second they are indicators of forest health. Third, hornbills are, among birds, obvious 'flagship' species, since they are among the most spectacular, colourful and noisy inhabitants of an area. Almost all Asian hornbills are birds of tropical rainforest, a habitat which has been severely reduced in Asia, with an accompanying reduction in hornbill numbers.

The first section of the book consists of general information on evolution, identification, biology and ecology of Asian hornbills. Alan Kemp begins by introducing the birds' conservation and their habitats. In the following chapter Pilai Poonswad gives detailed descriptions of how to identify each of Asia's hornbills, including measurements of wing, tail, tarsus, bill and weight, and gives useful line drawings illustrating field characteristics. The distributions of each species are described and mapped. Synonyms are also given. Pilai Poonswad then describes in detail the biology and ecology of some Asian hornbills, including breeding and a useful table for all species giving their breeding seasons. There is an interesting chapter on the life history of the Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*. The plant community of Khao Yai National Park, one of the most valuable natural reserve areas in Thailand, and a preliminary study on the forest vegetation of Thailand, are detailed.

Perhaps the most useful section of the book comprehensively covers field techniques for the study of hornbills. Studies of habitats, nests, breeding behaviour, radio-tagging of hornbills, food, feeding behaviour, field evaluation of insect prey and descriptions of plant communities are all detailed. Some of these methods could be applied to the study of other wildlife.

The third section of the book gives the Proceedings of the First International Workshop on the Conservation of Asian Hornbills and their Habitats, which was held on April 6-10 1992. There are national reports on hornbills from 12 countries in South and South-East Asia. This section, which is well illustrated with maps, consists of an excellent account of the distribution, status and threats to Asian hornbills today. The

workshop gave birth to the Asian Hornbill Network which is formed mainly of Asian nationals, dedicated to the conservation of the hornbills and their habitats. They have compiled a list of priorities and set a programme of action in motion which comprises the final chapter of the book.

This manual is an invaluable reference source for anyone with an interest in Asia's hornbills and their conservation. Pilai Poonswad, Alan Kemp and the other contributors have done a remarkable job in compiling such a comprehensive and up-to-date work.

Carol Inskipp

**Wild Malaysia. The wildlife and scenery of Peninsular Malaysia, Sarawak and Sabah** *photographs by Gerald Cubitt, text by Junaidi Payne, 1992. New Holland Ltd in association with the World Wide Fund for Nature Malaysia. London. 208pp., 403 colour photos, £24.99 (hb). ISBN 1-85368-093-1.*

This colourful coffee-table book is packed full of excellent photos of some of the huge variety of wildlife that Malaysia has to offer. The introductory chapter takes the reader through various aspects of Malaysia including its climate and geography, variety of habitats, interesting plant species and an overview of the animal life. An interesting section entitled 'a walk through the rainforest' provided a stimulating account of how it feels to walk in the forest and an interpretation of some of the many interesting sights, sounds and smells. Also covered by the introduction are accounts of the peoples of Malaysia and finally an outline of some of the wildlife conservation issues. The book then follows with sections focusing on Peninsular Malaysia and the two Bornean states of Sarawak and Sabah, outlining the important conservation areas within each accompanied by a wide variety of photographs. The photographs are the focus of the book: they provide the reader with an insight into what may be seen in the different habitats and sites outlined. For me the most exciting aspect of the book was to turn a page and be reminded of so many plants and insects that I had seen in the forest but whose name or function had previously been a mystery. This book is excellent stimulus for anyone thinking of visiting Malaysia and equally stimulating to those who have been and want to know more.

John Howes

**An audio guide to the birds of South India, Part 1** by P. S. Sivaprasad. Privately produced. One cassette and accompanying notes, 12 pp., £8.50 (supply details given in *Stray Feathers* section).

This evocative collection of sound recordings from southern India, mostly in and around the Western Ghats, is an important contribution to the 'literature' of the Indian Subcontinent.

From his base in Coimbatore, Sivaprasad has for many years devoted his spare time to recording the local birds. Starting 20 years ago with largely home-made equipment, with which many tapes in this first collection were made, he has achieved an admirable result. More than that, he has shown the way to many better equipped and more widely travelled sound recordists by making his work available to the birdwatching community at large.

With a potential total count for the subcontinent that is rapidly approaching 1,300 species, the 66 represented here on about 90 minutes of tape may seem hardly enough. However, no one who has birdwatched in the region will doubt the usefulness of this cassette. Each species is announced with English and scientific names, and the notes give further information including background species, locality and date. All the recordings are his own and the whole project has been undertaken almost single-handed.

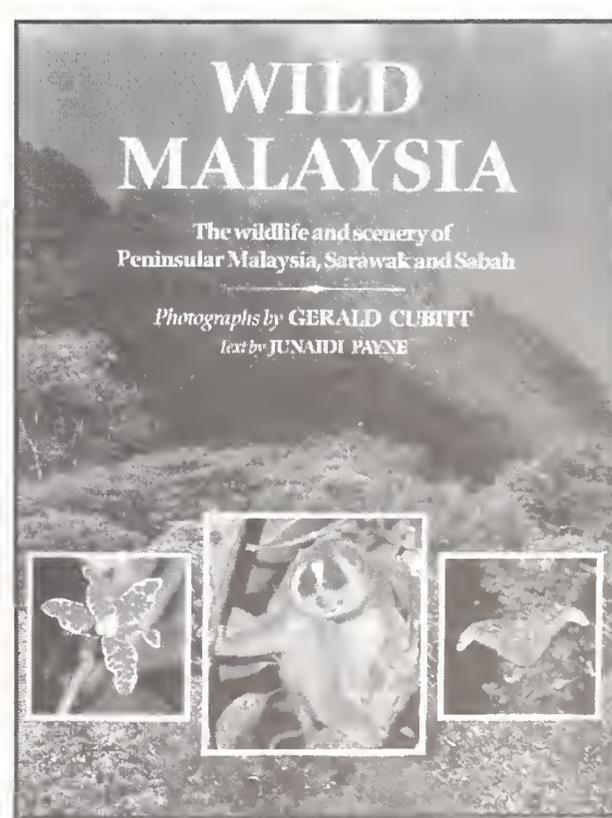
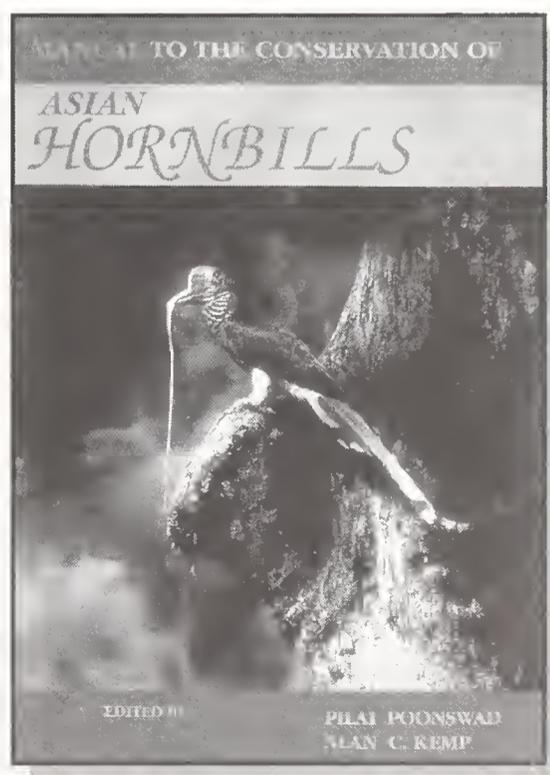
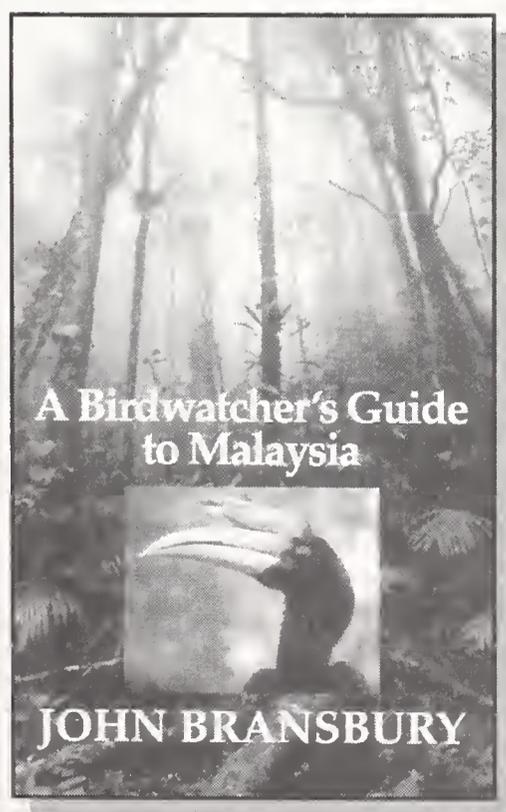
The mix of species included is eclectic, being a personal collection, part of the charm of which is in the mixture of the common calls of the

commonest species – Coppersmith Barbet, Grey Partridge, Red-wattled Lapwing – with the less usual, such as a duet of Heart-spotted Woodpeckers, or the 'burps and murmurs' of Hill Myna, and a handful of regional endemics including Nilgiri Laughing-Thrush, Black-and-Orange Flycatcher, Grey-headed Bulbul and Rufous Babbler. For my money it is worth it for the hysterical beauty of the Mottled Wood Owl's call alone.

This is a technically accomplished tape and will be of great value to field identification. No longer will I have any excuse for not correctly differentiating Crimson-breasted from Crimson-throated Barbets heard in the forests of the Western Ghats. Tourists may quibble with some of the extraneous background noises, and a more qualified critic than myself has pointed out that the recording of Greenish Leaf Warbler is of the race *P. t. nitidus*, which may be lumped or split according to taste. But this cassette is undoubtedly the result of dedicated work by someone whose concern for his local birds is truly apparent. Perhaps those who may be inclined to draw attention to any shortcomings will instead publish their own recordings of calls and songs so that we can all learn more in this essential and difficult field.

P. S. Sivaprasad must be congratulated and I hope further parts will soon follow. All OBC members should buy a copy, whether or not they ever intend to visit south India, because enterprise such as this deserves the Club's wholehearted support and encouragement.

Andrew Robertson



# Layang-Layang – Malaysia's largest seabird colony

This article presents information from one of Malaysia's most distant territories, where the nation's largest seabird colony is also sited. In spite of its isolated location there are regular MAS flights, because of its growing popularity as a destination for divers to its pristine reefs. For those wanting sun, sea, sand, diving, and a few seabirds, this might be your ideal desert island. . . Colin Poole tells more.

The Spratly Islands are a collection of over 600 reefs and at least 26 isolated islands scattered across an area of the South China Sea north-west of Sabah and Palawan (Figure 1). This area is judged to be one of the most politically and militarily sensitive in the world, as the whole or differing parts of the group are claimed by Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Viet Nam.

Layang-Layang (formerly Swallow Reef), claimed by Malaysia, is a reef atoll in the south. An island has been created on the reef as a base for the Malaysian Navy and this has provided a home not only for the Navy but also a large colony of seabirds. Until now the colony had never been counted, but from photographs of visitors it was known to contain **Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus*, **Great Crested-Tern** *Sterna bergii*, **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* and **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster*<sup>1,2,3</sup>.



Figure 1. Map showing the location of Layang Layang in the Spratly Islands.

In the last couple of years the size of this tiny (1 km x 400 m) man-made island has been increased by an airstrip, and a small resort has opened up, primarily to cater for diving tourists, as Layang-Layang offers some of the most pristine reefs and best scuba-diving in South-East Asia. From August 21-23 1994, I was fortunate enough to visit the island, and I was able to do a full census of the colony for the first time. The following seabirds were present in the colony: **Brown Noddy** 2,000, **Great Crested-Tern** 2,000, **Sooty Tern** 800, **Brown Booby** 50, **Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra* 1 and **Black-naped Tern** *Sterna sumatrana* 8. The Masked Booby was paired to a Brown Booby. Three **White-tailed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon lepturus* were also present around the island, but with no evidence of breeding.

The colony is restricted to a small area in the west of the island, so direct disturbance from the resort and Navy is limited. But the resort is currently being vastly expanded, and by next year will have increased in size from 17 to 75 rooms, aimed primarily at Japanese diving tourists. Hopefully if simple measures are taken to keep tourists out of the colony, this shouldn't affect the birds too much. Unfortunately, however, rats have been introduced onto the island and this has to be the biggest threat facing the colony.

The island's location means that it attracts wayward migrants, and other birds present during my two days were **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* 2, **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* 1, **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* 3, **Common Sandpiper** *Tringa hypoleucos* 2, **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* 4, **Rufous-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* 1, **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* 12, and **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* 1. The island has very little vegetation but there is a collection of small trees and other low vegetation around the Navy base which will presumably attract passerines in the right seasons.



*Seabirds of Layang-Layang*  
 1: Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* (Photo: Colin Poole). 2: Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* (Photo: Colin Poole). 3: Nesting Brown Noddies *Anous stolidus* (Photo: Colin Poole). 4: Nesting Brown Noddy (Photo: Colin Poole). 5: Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* (Photo: Morten Strange/Flying Colours Photography).

The seabirds of the rest of the Spratlys are little studied, but colonies are at least known to exist on islands claimed by China, the Philippines and Viet Nam, and in addition to the above species, are known to also support breeding **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula*. Currently, however, Layang-Layang is the only island anywhere in the group open to tourists, although it is reported that the Philippines are planning a similar operation on one of 'their' islands. Conservation proposals concerning the Layang-Layang colony are being forwarded to the relevant authorities, and it is hoped the future of Malaysia's largest seabird colony can be secured.

Access to Layang-Layang is by an hour-and-a-quarter Malaysian Airlines charter flight from Kota Kinabalu (KK), Sabah. Flights are currently four times a week and are planned to be increased to daily by next season, but must probably be booked in conjunction with a stay at the resort, which provides full board. This can be booked via

travel agents in Kuala Lumpur or KK, but unfortunately is not cheap, as it is aimed primarily at scuba-divers. The resort is open only from March to September, outside the monsoon season, but then the birds are also present only during these months.

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**Colin Poole**, 10 Russet Close, Hersham, Surrey, KT12 4QJ, U.K.



### FLYING COLOURS PHOTOGRAPHY

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Main contributor to *A photographic guide to the birds of Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore*, Sun Tree Publishing, 1993.

Described in *OBC Bulletin* 18 "... simply the best introduction and background to birds and birding in the region yet produced".

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# Wedge-tailed Pigeon *Treron sphenura* in Malaysia

There is a distinctive endemic race of Wedge-tailed Pigeon in Peninsular Malaysia, but even there it is apparently locally distributed and probably the least known of the Peninsula's seven *Treron*. In this article Allen Jeyarajasingam describes and shows with stunning photographs his observations of a nesting pair of the species.

The Wedge-tailed Pigeon *Treron sphenura* ranges from the western Himalayas to South-East Asia and the Sundas. Several races occur at high altitudes throughout this range. Despite having a wide distribution it is common in some parts of its range but apparently scarce in other parts. In India it has been recorded as a common summer visitor to the Himalayan hill stations<sup>1</sup>. In Thailand, it is the most common *Treron* pigeon at higher altitudes<sup>2</sup>. In Sumatra and Java<sup>3</sup>, it has been reported as locally common between 1,400 and 3,000 m.

The race occurring in Peninsular Malaysia is *T. s. robinsoni*, and among the seven species of *Treron* found there it is perhaps the least observed and studied. The peninsular race is resident, inhabiting hill dipterocarp and montane forests from 769 to 1,692 m<sup>4</sup>. Its local distribution is restricted to the Larut Hills, the Main Range and Gunung Tahan<sup>4</sup>. It is a moderate-sized bird measuring 33 cm. The male is yellowish green on the head and underparts, while the upperparts are darker olive green with a greyish tinge on the mantle. It has a small maroon patch restricted to the scapulars only (more extensive in other races of Wedge-tailed Pigeon). It lacks the orange wash on the breast which is characteristic in most races. The bill, which is purplish mauve with a horn-coloured tip, is weaker than those of its larger congeners. The female can be distinguished by the lack of both the maroon scapular patch and the greyish tinge on the mantle.

Very little is known about the habits and breeding behaviour of this pigeon in Peninsular Malaysia. Like all *Treron* it is gregarious. It frequents the canopy and may be seen sitting motionlessly on high branches for long periods, often obscured by the foliage. It is probable that the rather unobtrusive nature of this bird is partly the reason why it may have been overlooked. Early observers had reported it feeding in lofty

trees growing on hill slopes and therefore being seen rarely<sup>5</sup>. Like most forest *Treron*, the Wedge-tailed Pigeon is frugivorous, feeding almost exclusively on figs *Ficus* sp., which are widespread in hill and montane forests.

The range of the Wedge-tailed Pigeon in Peninsular Malaysia overlaps with those of two other *Treron*, Thick-billed Pigeon *T. curvirostra* and Yellow-vented Pigeon *T. seimundi*. Two *Ficus* trees (species unidentified) which I observed in fruit at The Gap (Selangor) just below Fraser's Hill at an altitude of 830 m, over a total of seven days, contained mainly Thick-billed and Yellow-vented Pigeons. No Wedge-tailed Pigeons were observed feeding in these two trees although individuals were seen sporadically in the area. Both trees bore medium-sized fruit that were at least 16 mm in diameter. Since both Thick-billed and Yellow-vented Pigeons have relatively heavier bills than Wedge-tailed Pigeon, they are better equipped to tackle larger figs. It is reasonable to suppose that the Wedge-tailed Pigeon specialises in feeding on smaller figs and therefore congregates only in those *Ficus* species bearing smaller fruit. Such trees may be sparsely distributed throughout the range of this pigeon and hence the bird is seldom located.

I observed a pair nest-building at Fraser's Hill (Pahang) on 24 and 25 May 1992 at an altitude of 1,320 m. The nest site was 12 m above the ground on the bough of an exotic conifer *Pinus* sp. The nest, when observed from below, was a flimsy pile of thin twigs. Gathering of the nest material was done exclusively by the male, while the female remained in the nest site. This appears to be a characteristic feature of *Treron* pigeons (D. R. Wells, pers. comm. 1992). The male would descend to lower trees in the vicinity and, using its bill, snap off small twigs from thin branches, the whole process sometimes taking a minute or more. It would then fly up to the bough with the



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1: Male Wedge-tailed Pigeon at Fraser's Hill, Malaysia with characteristic tail shape visible (Photo: A. Jeyarajasingam)

2: First record of Wedge-tailed Pigeon breeding in Malaysia at Fraser's Hill. Male carrying twig to nest. (Photo: A. Jeyarajasingam)

3: Male Wedge-tailed Pigeon at Fraser's Hill, Malaysia. The maroon colour is restricted to the scapulars and is characteristic of this race. (Photo: A. Jeyarajasingam).

2



3



nest on, walk along it to the nest site, and deliver the twig to the female who would then position it. During the course of a two-hour observation from 08h00 to 10h00 on 25 May, the male collected six twigs of different sizes. Often both birds would leave the incomplete nest for an hour or more to feed in the forest nearby. Prior to this there has been no published record of the nesting of this species in Peninsular Malaysia. Further observations in this area will undoubtedly shed more light on the breeding biology and other behaviours of this elusive bird.

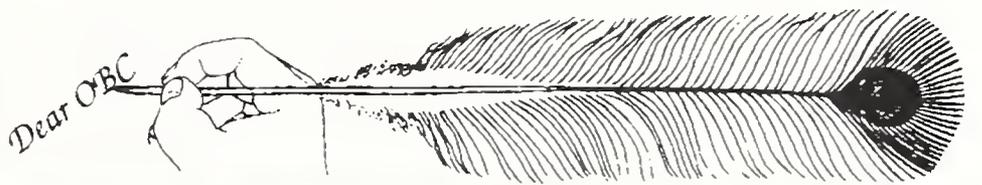
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Allen Jeyarajasingam, Boys' Division, The Royal Military College, Sungai Besi, 57000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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## To the editor




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### Some comments on the 'revival' of Sultanpur Lake

Under the title 'Sultanpur Lake revived' (*Bull. OBC 19: 15*) described how a heavy monsoon in 1993, added to the provision of tube wells, has improved conditions for birds at Sultanpur Lake. This reserve is a popular birdwatching site about an hour's drive south of Delhi. As an antidote to excess enthusiasm for the present state of affairs at Sultanpur, I would like to give some historical perspective on the present conditions of the lake and on potential lessons to be drawn for conservation.

I first visited Sultanpur 'lake' in 1970, and have visited it many times since, most recently in January 1994. In 1970, there was not one, but several shallow 'jheels' in the vicinity of Sultanpur. Such jheels were once a common feature of the countryside around Delhi. They were shallow depressions in sandy terrain which filled to a varying extent after the monsoon and then persisted for varying lengths of time before largely or completely drying out in the summer. Being without external drainage, they were saline, the degree of salinity varying with rainfall and local conditions.

With increasing pressure on land for agriculture and the use of tube-well water to desalinate previously uncultivable land, the jheels became attractive for drainage. The creation of the bird sanctuary at Sultanpur was a classic conservation compromise, with only one of several jheels being set aside for protection. The last of those remaining outside the reserve was drained within the last few years.

Once the reserve was created, the land came under the control of the Haryana State Forest Department which proceeded to manage the area according to their ideas of what would attract the most birds. Trees were planted, dykes and sluices were erected and latterly tube wells have been sunk. The result of this activity has been to convert a seasonal saline wetland into a perennial fresh one. There has been a corresponding alteration in the avifauna, with a reduction in use by flamingos *Phoenicopterus* and an increase in pelicans *Pelecanus*. Use of the area by ducks has switched from mainly roosting, towards use for feeding. Cormorants *Phalacrocorax* and egrets use the trees for breeding (egrets used to breed in one of the other jheels, but that colony was abandoned after drainage). On the other hand, the long grass

that extends right to the water precludes the use of the water for drinking by sandgrouse *Pterocles* and the large flights seen formerly no longer appear. Shorebirds of open shorelines (e.g. Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*) have been replaced by those of wet meadows (e.g. Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*).

The change in the nature of Sultanpur *jheel* may, as Colin Poole suggests, be regarded as a success. I suspect that the average birder can obtain a longer list today than was possible in 1970. However, we should also recognise that what has been created is an entirely artificial ecosystem; a sort of ornamental bird garden which is well on the way to duplicating Bharatpur (another artificial ecosystem) on a smaller scale. What has been lost is any trace of the original ecosystem. Birds have been gained, history has been lost. Whether the preservation of the original *jheel* ecosystem was ever a possibility, given the changes in agricultural practices on surrounding land, is impossible to know. At any event, we need to recognise the potential contradiction between managing bird sanctuaries for birds and managing protected areas to maintain indigenous ecosystems. Losses of interesting animals and plants adapted to the pre-existing seasonal conditions will probably never be known. I think we should temper our celebrations somewhat over what has been achieved.

**Anthony J. Gaston**, Canadian Wildlife Service, 100 Gamelin Blvd., Hull, Quebec, Canada K1A 0H3.

### **More notes on Rabor's Wren-Babbler** *Napothera rabori*

Rabor's Wren-Babbler (also known as Luzon Wren-Babbler) *Napothera rabori* is endemic to the island of Luzon in the Philippines, and is noted as being rare and very local by Dickinson *et al.*<sup>1</sup>. Described as recently as 1960, there appear to have been no sightings in the field until January 1990, when two birds were found by Frank Lambert at the Angat watershed in the southern Sierra Madre. Subsequently, de Roever<sup>3</sup> published the first field notes on the species, based on observations of a single individual at Quezon National Park in March 1990. Field observations remained very rare, however, and the vocalisations of the species were unknown.

On 23 December 1993 KM and Nigel Redman were birdwatching at Angat when they noted a high-pitched, insect-like noise. It was tape-recorded, but playback of the 'song' resulted only in fleeting glimpses of a terrestrial brown passerine. Given the nature of the song it was thought possible that a *Bradypterus* warbler was involved, and NR noted the similarity of the song to one of the stubtails *Urosphena* sp., but no species of stubtail occurs in the Philippines.

On 8 February 1994 KM returned to Angat, together with SH and a Birdquest tour group. KM drew attention to the insect-like song, but again playback resulted merely in fleeting glimpses of the bird. Bjorn Anderson, a member of the group, identified the bird as Rabor's Wren-Babbler, due to its size, general appearance and the presence of white spots on the wings, but this last feature had not been noted by other group members and identification as a *Bradypterus* was again mooted.

On 24 February, together with Tim Fisher, the Birdquest group visited Quezon National Park and, again, the insect-like song was heard. Playback was attempted once more, and this time our luck changed. Moving quickly between areas of cover, the bird responsible for the mystery vocalisation circled the party for some time and eventually everyone had good views. It was unquestionably Rabor's Wren-Babbler. In fleeting views the most conspicuous field feature was the extensive white throat, which contrasted with otherwise rather dark plumage, although the whitish wingspots were also surprisingly obvious. For a short while after the group had left the area, SH attempted to obtain better tape-recordings of the bird and, in the presence of just one observer, it proved quite obliging, allowing some prolonged views, including several of it actually singing, in a rather upright pose with the bill pointing upwards, often perched on a low horizontal bough or fallen log.

On 25 February, in another part of the park, SH rounded a large boulder and flushed a dark brown passerine at close range from the forest floor. His first thought was 'Rabor's' and shortly afterwards a second bird was seen, which proved to be a recently fledged juvenile Rabor's Wren-Babbler. Subsequently, over a period of about 90 minutes, we were able to watch two adults feeding this begging juvenile. In terms of habitat, all our observations were in closed-canopy forest: those at Quezon were all on level ground in the vicinity of limestone rocks and outcrops, whilst

those at Angat were on more sloping ground amongst bamboo and many moss-covered rocks and boulders.

Based on these experiences, we would like to offer the following observations. The illustration of Rabor's Wren-Babbler in duPont<sup>2</sup> is fairly accurate, in both coloration and, rather surprisingly, shape. The upperparts are a rich dark brown with a slight rufous tone (perhaps most pronounced on the tail), the dark fringes to the feathers being visible as indistinct 'scaling' only with the best of views. The white spots at the tips of the wing-coverts are rather conspicuous. A rather narrow, off-white supercilium extends backwards from the eye, with pale areas above the lores and in the centre of the ear-coverts (the latter formed by fine paler streaks). The large dark eye is surrounded by a greyish eyering. The throat and centre of the upper breast are white, with a thin dark grey malar stripe (ending in a broader triangle) separating this area from the thin, somewhat lozenge-shaped, off-white sub-moustachial. The sides of the upper breast and lower breast are dark smoky-grey, the flanks dull buffy-brown, and the centre of the lower breast and belly and vent off-white. The bill is black, the legs and feet dark brownish-grey. The juvenile had a very short-grown tail, but possessed the conspicuous wing spots and white throat of the adult. Overall, it was however a slightly warmer and buffer brown than the adult.

In terms of the shape and 'jizz' of the bird, our observations were somewhat at variance with de Roever<sup>3</sup>. The usual stance was more or less horizontal, with the rather full and rounded (even spatulate) tail appearing almost 'stuck-on' at the rear. The line of the back and tail was disjointed, with the tail often held at about 30 degrees above the horizontal. Exceptionally, the tail was cocked to about 60 degrees (indeed, the whole body appeared to 'cock'), but despite extensive observations in a variety of circumstances, it was never seen to be cocked at 90 degrees in the manner depicted by de Roever. When seen well, the tip of the tail of one bird was very heavily abraded. Notably, the crown was rather low and the bill long and slender, giving the face a rather 'pinched' expression.

The song was a very thin, high-pitched *tee-zee teeeee-zeeee*, with the third and fourth notes higher-pitched, and the fourth rising towards the end. The whole phrase lasts about two seconds, and in pitch and quality closely resembles that of

Bornean Stubtail *Urosphena whiteheadi*. Copies of the recordings have been deposited in the National Sound Archive of the British Library. In terms of its vocalisations, and its overall shape and 'jizz', Rabor's Wren-Babbler does not resemble the other members of the genus *Napothera* with which I am familiar, and it may be more appropriate to place it in a different monospecific genus. In the period December 1993-February 1994 at least three birds were heard (two of which were seen briefly) at Angat and four birds were seen and another three heard at Quezon National Park. Clearly, Rabor's Wren-Babbler is much commoner than previously realised, and now that its vocalisations are known, it is likely to be discovered in new areas. It is interesting however, that neither Tim Fisher nor Craig Robson could find any Rabor's Wren-Babblers at Quezon in March 1994, despite knowledge of the vocalisations; and the song may be used only in the immediate period of the breeding season.

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- 2 duPont, J. E. (1971) *Philippine birds*. Delaware: Delaware Mus. Nat. Hist.
- 3 de Roever, J. (1990) Notes on the Luzon Wren-Babbler. *Bull. Oriental Bird Club* 12: 33-34.

**Simon Harrap**, 13 Hempstead Road, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6DL, U.K.

**Ken Mitchell**, 16 Lingfield Drive, Worth, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 4XQ, U.K.

# Stray feathers



## Birdwatching in the Philippines

A new trip report by Jon Hornbuckle, covering a six-week visit to the Philippines, has recently been produced. At 73 pages, this is the most comprehensive report so far for this country with such remarkable endemism. But this is much more than a simple trip report. In addition to the obligatory systematic species list, a daily log and some useful general information, there is a 'definitive' guide to key sites (including some not visited by Jon Hornbuckle), a list of all but the commonest endemics with the best sites for them (drawn from several recent trips by various observers) and a section of site maps (from other birders' reports). If you are planning to visit the Philippines, and you want to see as many of the endemics as possible, this report is virtually essential. Copies are available from the OBC Information Officer (see page 4) price £6.00.

## Audio Guide to the Birds of South India

This new tape by P. S. Sivaprasad, containing the voices of 66 species including a number of southern Indian endemics, is a valuable and welcome publication. A full review of it appears on page 75.

By special arrangement with the recordist, the tape is

available directly from the OBC at £8.50 including postage, and it will also be on sale at OBC meetings. This initiative by Sivaprasad is most welcome and in order to assist him produce further tapes, all proceeds will go directly to him. If you are at all interested in Indian birds you should buy a copy of this tape. Furthermore, please respect Sivaprasad's copyright and do not allow your copy to be copied. He is relying on sales to fund his future productions. If you wish to give a copy away, buy two!

## Asian Waterfowl Census - Five-Year Results Published and 1995 Dates Announced

The Asian Waterfowl Census is an annual event carried out by volunteer birdwatchers during the second and third week of January. The census was initiated in 1987 in the Indian Subcontinent and has now grown to cover 32 countries. The objectives are to obtain information on and monitor non-breeding populations of waterbirds, to evaluate and monitor the status and condition of wetlands, and to promote the conservation of the region's wetlands and waterbirds.

The results of the first five years have recently been analysed and published as '*Asian Waterfowl Census 1987-91: Distribution and Status*

*of Asian Waterfowl*'. This details the status and distribution of all waterbird species recorded during the census, and identifies potential internationally important wetlands. Copies of the report are available from AWB (address below), or IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BX, U.K.

Participants are invited for the 1995 census. The dates are from Saturday 7 January to Sunday 22 January inclusive. For more information, count and site forms and a list of national/regional co-ordinators, please contact Dr Taej Mundkur, AWB, IPT, Universiti Malaya, 59100 KL, Malaysia. Tel. 60-3-7572176, Fax. 60-3-7571225.

## AOU/OBC Symposium in August 1995

The American Ornithologists' Union has invited OBC to participate in a symposium session on tropical ornithology at its next annual meeting which will be held during 16-19 August 1995. The meeting will be hosted by the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History, Ohio. The session, scheduled for 18 August, will have particular emphasis on the Oriental Region. The programme has not yet been finalised, and speakers are still invited to submit abstracts of papers for presentation. If you would like to present a paper at this meeting or want further

information please contact Dr. Robert Kennedy (USA OBC Representative) at Cincinnati Museum of Natural History, 1720 Gilbert Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202-1201 USA or, Dave Weaver, International Meetings Officer at the Club's address. Further details about the meeting will be included in the next bulletin.

### **Philippine Birds and South Pacific Birds on Special Offer**

Members may wish to take advantage of a special offer on *Philippine Birds* and *South Pacific Birds* (both by John E. duPont). The two publications can be purchased directly from the Delaware Museum of Natural History at US\$20 each (includes US\$5 for postage and packing outside the USA) while payment by credit card is accepted. For more details please contact: Susan Tongue, Administrative Assistant, Delaware Museum of Natural History, Box 3937, Wilmington, DE 19807, U.S.A., Tel: 1-302-658-9111, Fax: 1-302-658-2610.

### **Welcome return for DBTRS**

Many members will have been disappointed when Dutch Birding Travel Reports Services (DBTRS) suspended their operations at the beginning of this year. However, the good news is that since May DBTRS has been under new ownership with Natureschool, who are a non-profit-making organisation offering an environmental education service to primary and secondary schools. Among

DBTRS's ambitious plans for 1995 will be the publication of a newsletter three times a year providing information on new reports, requests for birding companions on foreign trips, offers of local bird-guides, etc. In December a new catalogue will be available, while it should be noted that reports can be purchased using most major currencies including US\$ and UK£.

We wish the new DBTRS much success, especially as they have continued being an OBC Business Supporter.

### **Request for shrike photographs**

I am about to start the illustrations for a guide to the world's shrikes (subfamily Laniinae) for Helm Information Ltd/Pica Press. I need photographs (not necessarily of the highest quality) of all non-European species of *Lanius*, the eastern Asian species in particular.

All photos received will be returned, if requested. Please send to: Tim Worfolk, 6 Johnsons Road, Bristol, BS5 9AT, U.K. Tel: +44 (0)272 552357.

### **Hill Myna information needed**

I am writing a book on the Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*, so I am very interested in any articles or notes on the species. I am also interested in any photographs especially of the nest (in nature), eggs, and aberrant plumages. In my book all collaborators will be fully acknowledged. Please send information to: Ivano Mortaruolo, Presidente, Associazione Ornitologica

Ternana, Centro Studi Ornitologici, Casella Postal 198, 05100 Terni, Italia.

### **India Special Bulletin 1995**

The November 1995 issue of this bulletin will be dedicated to the Indian Subcontinent. If you are interested in writing an article or in supplying photographs or artwork for this special issue please contact the OBC Bulletin Editor at the Club's U.K. address.

### **Photographs of Indonesian birds**

The Indonesia office of BirdLife International are trying to find slides of Indonesian birds. If you would like to help please contact Paul Jepson: PO Box 310/Boo, Bogor 16003, Indonesia (Tel/fax 0251 314361).



*Asian Paradise-Flycatcher*  
*Terpsiphone paradisi* by David Swithenbank

# Free Press

Compiled by Guy Dutton



This feature aims to publicise papers and reports of interest to members. If anyone has written or knows of recent publications worthy of inclusion in this feature, please send details to the OBC for future bulletins.

## REGIONAL

**The reproductive strategies of edible-nest swiftlets (*Aerodramus* spp.)** by P. G. Lee and N. Kang (Dept. Zoology, National University of Singapore, Lower Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 0511). *Bull. B. O. C.* 114: 106-113.

**Plumage variation and geographical distribution in the Kalij and Silver Pheasants** by P. J. K. McGowan (Dept Biology, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, U.K.) and A. L. Panchen. *Bull. B. O. C.* 114: 113-123. Taxonomic reappraisal of *Lophura leucomelanos* and *L. nycthemera* subspecies based on museum studies.

## INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

**Birds of ICRISAT campus - part I** by M. E. Peacock *Mayura* 9: 1-10. This, and many other articles of interest, are published in *Mayura*, the biannual newsletter of the Birdwatcher's Society of Andhra Pradesh. Details from The Hon Secretary, 6-3-912/1, Kapadia Lane, Somajiguda, Hyderabad - 500 482, India.

**Nest site selection by cavity-nesting birds on *Melia azedarach* L. and management of multiple use forests** by D. N. Pandey (Indian Forest Service, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Udaipur [South] Forest Division, Udaipur 313001, India) and D. Mohan. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 90: 58-61. Maintenance of old *Melia* trees would aid ten species of hole-nesting birds.

**The Oriental Plover (*Charadrius veredus*): a new record for Sri Lanka** by D. Warakagoda (no address). *Ceylon Bird Club Notes* January 1994: 7-8.

**A survey of the White-winged (Wood) Duck, *Carina scutulata*, in India** by H. S. A. Yahya (Centre of Wildlife and Ornithology, A.M.U., Aligarh, India). *IWRB Threatened Waterfowl Research Group Newsletter* 5: 7-8 with errata in TWRG

*Newsletter* 6: 15. The Indian population is estimated at 100 birds.

## CHINA

**Distribution of the Elliot's Pheasant in Jiangxi Province, China** by S. Ziang-jin (Jiangxi Provincial Nature Reserve Management Office, West Beijing Road, Nanchang 330046, China). *World Pheasant Association News* 45: 15. Forty-one localities are mapped in Jiangxi.

## INDOCHINA

**Observations ornithologiques au Viet Nam en avril 1992** by J.-F. Voisin (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Laboratoire de Zoologie (Mammifères et Oiseaux), 55 rue de Buffon, 75005 Paris, France). *L'Oiseau et la Revue Française d'Ornithologie* 63: 226-230. Incidental observations from a ten-day stay.

**Breeding and moult in the Edible-nest Swiftlet *Collocalia fuciphaga germani* in Viet Nam** by Nguyen Quang Phach (Oceanographic Institute, Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa, Viet Nam). *Alauda* 62: 107-115.

## THAILAND

**Falcated Teal *Anas falcata*, a new bird for Thailand** by Iain Robertson. *Natural History Bulletin of the Siam Society* 40: 191-192. Several records of up to 70 birds are documented.

**A record of Great Black-headed Gull (*Larus ichthyæetus*) in Thailand** by Peter Morris. *Nat. Hist. Bull. Siam Soc.* 40: 193-195.

**The status of Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* 1987-1989** by A. Gretton et al. (Cosford Hall, Hadleigh, Suffolk IP7 6DR, U.K.). *Bird Conservation International* 3: 351-367. Less than 30 pairs survive at one site with negligible numbers found elsewhere.

## BORNEO AND PHILIPPINES

**Weights of Bornean understorey birds** by J. C. Gaither (Section of Plant Biology, University of California, Davis, California 95616, U.S.A.). *Bull. B. O. C.* 114: 89-90. Masses of 41 species.

**Some key sites and significant records of birds in the Philippines and Sabah** by F. R. Lambert (IUCN SSC, 219 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, U.K.). *Bird Conserv. Internatn.* 3: 281-297. Incidental records and conservation comments from eight islands.

**Cooperative breeding by Rufous Hornbills on Mindanao Island, Philippines** by M. C. Witmer (Section of Ecology and Systematics, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14853, USA). *Auk* 110: 933-936.

**First record of the Dunlin from the Philippines** by J. Erritzoe (Taps Old Rectory, DK-6070 Christiansfield, Denmark). *Bull. B. O. C.* 114: 128-129. A 1988 specimen from Luzon.

**Birdwatching in the Philippines. Trip report for Jan-Feb 1994 and definitive guide to key sites** by J. Hornbuckle (30 Hartington Road, Sheffield S7 2LF, U.K.). The most thorough Philippine trip report yet (73 photocopied pages); available from the author.



## INDONESIA

**Preliminary observation on the breeding biology of the endemic Sulawesi Red-knobbed Hornbill (*Rhyticeros cassidix*)** by M. F. Kinnaird and T. G. O'Brien (NYZS/The Wildlife Conservation Society, 185th and Southern Blvd, Bldg A, Bronx, NY 10460, U.S.A.). *Tropical Biodiversity* 1: 107-112. Observations from 16 nests.

**Status and conservation of Sula Scrubfowl (*Megapodius bernsteinii* Schlegel 1866) in Banggai Islands, Sulawesi** by M. Indrawan et al. (Indonesian Foundation for the Advancement of Biological Sciences, P.O. Box 103, Depok 16401, Indonesia). *Tropical Biodiversity* 1: 113-130. Although more common than previously supposed, this species is still threatened.

**The status, ecology and conservation of the forest birds and butterflies of Sumba** by M. Jones et al. (Dept. Biological Sciences, Manchester Metropolitan University, Chester Street, Manchester M1 5GD, U.K.). Expedition report (111 pages), available from the authors.

**Report on an ornithological survey of Taliabu, Indonesia** by P. J. Davidson et al. (Report available from Tony Stones, 9 Albany Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR3 1EE, U.K.). Expedition report (90 pages), available from the authors.

## From the field

Compiled by Craig Robson

These are largely unconfirmed records covering the period from January to mid September 1994. We urge that if they have not already done so, contributors provide full details to the relevant regional organisations in due course.

## BHUTAN

Two new species for the country were recorded during February-April: a single male **Baer's Pochard** *Aythya baeri* on the Mo Chu (KB/Vent) and ten **Greater Spotted Eagles** *Aquila clanga* flying north near Tongsa on 28 February along with another four over Phuntsholing on 21 March (KB, AP, KB/Vent). Two different male **Ward's Trogons** *Harpactes wardi* were seen and heard

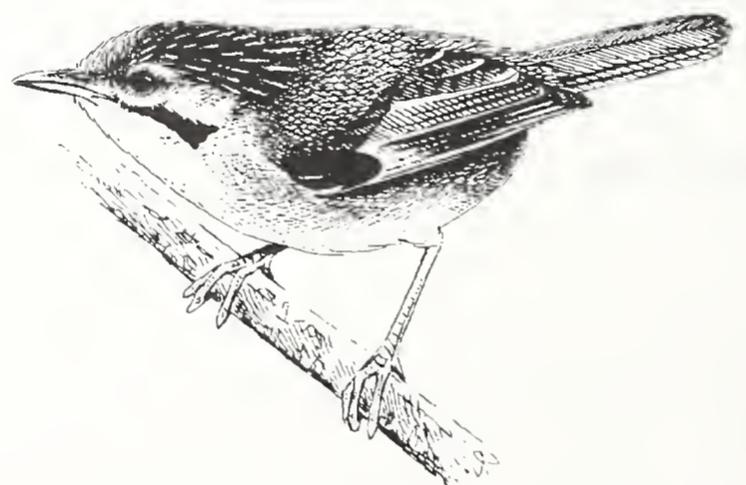
along the Limithang Road at 2,075-2,105 m and a single **Bar-winged Wren-Babbler** *Spelaornis troglodytoides* was found in the same area at 2,865 m (KB/Vent). Other noteworthy records during the period under review included a single male **Blue-fronted Robin** *Cinclidium frontale* at 2,255 m along the Limithang Road (KB, AP) and a flock of c. 100 **Fire-capped Tits** *Cephalopyrus flammiceps* at Pele La (KB/Vent).

## CAMBODIA

A survey, primarily for large waterbirds, was carried out during late March and early April by AWB and the Wildlife Protection Office of the Cambodian Forestry Department, providing some much-needed recent information from this ornithologically little-known country. A large flock of up to 2,000 **Spot-billed Pelicans** *Pelecanus philippensis*, including some juveniles, was located at Chunuk Tru near Tonle Sap, perhaps the largest concentration left in the world. Breeding was confirmed at a nearby locality. Also of great importance were records of **Milky Stork** *Mycteria cinerea*, with a single at the Stung Kampong Smach estuary and a flock of 15 near Boeng Tonle Sap. Large numbers of **Painted Storks** *M. leucocephala* were found breeding at two colonies west of Boeng Tonle Sap and **Woolly-necked Storks** *Ciconia episcopus* were seen at scattered localities in drier parts of the country, with a maximum flock size of 23 in Mondul Kiri province. Small numbers of **Greater Adjutants** *Leptoptilos dubius* were observed at several localities; **Lesser Adjutant** *L. javanicus* was predictably more widespread but also found in small numbers. **White-rumped Vulture** *Gyps bengalensis* was reported to be present still in Mondul Kiri province (MD). Amongst the many other species recorded, the following were apparently new for the country: several **Rain Quails** *Coturnix coromandelica* heard calling at the base of Phnom Basset, north of Phnom Penh, on 23 March and near Ph Svay Tani, Takeo province, on 24 March; two **Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla* found on sale in Oressey market, Phnom Penh, on 11 April (caught locally); single **White-browed Crakes** *P. cinerea* near Prasat marsh on 16 April and north of Phnom Penh on 17 April, with others on sale for food in Phnom Penh (also the first records for Indochina); a flock of 34 **Asian Dowitchers** *Limnodromus semipalmatus* at Prey Nup, Stung Kampong Smach estuary on 3 April; adult and juvenile **Common Terns** *Sterna hirundo* offshore at Kampong Smach; a single **Short-toed Snake-Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* along the Phnom Penh to Kampong Chhanang road on 6 April and **Asian Pied Starling** *Sturnus contra*, which was a common breeding species in Sihanoukville province and also found at Kampong Speu and Peam Bang.

## CHINA

The most unusual recent report comes from Ba Bao Shan, Guangdong, where up to seven **Varied Tits** *Parus varius* were seen during 20-22 May (RM, NB, SC, GK). It had previously been seen at this locality in October 1993 (RLe *et al.*). These appear to be the only Chinese records away from the north-east. There is no documentation of long-distance migration for this species but it is a common cagebird. Up to four **White-necklaced Partridges** *Arborophila gingica* were observed at Ba Bao Shan, Guangdong, during 21-24 May (RM, NB, SC, GK), apparently the first records from this locality. At Wolong Panda Reserve, Sichuan, a male **White-backed Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucotos* on 6 July and a single **Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* on 11 June (RM, NB, SC, GK) were both noteworthy. A single **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo** *Clamator coromandus* was taped out near Bagueo temple, Omei Shan, Sichuan on 12 May (NG). Further north, a pair of **Rufous-headed Robins** *Luscinia ruficeps* were observed carrying food to unseen young at Jiuzhaigou, north Sichuan on 6 August (SC, NB), perhaps the first evidence of breeding for this rare species. Five **Sooty Tits** *Aegithalos fuliginosus* were found at Dafengding Panda Reserve, south Sichuan, on 10 July (RM, NB, SC, GK). Nearby, a pair of **Gold-fronted Fulvettas** *Alcippe variegaticeps*, one of the world's poorest-known babblers, were seen well and a nest containing four eggs found at Huang Nian Shan (c. 1,590 m), south Sichuan, during 6 to 8 July (RM, NB, SC, GK). Two **Streaked Barwings** *Actinodura souliei*, another poorly known species,



Gold-fronted Fulveta *Alcippe variegaticeps*  
by Craig Robson

were observed at Dafengding Panda Reserve (2,000-2,200 m), south Sichuan, on 9 and 11 July (RM, NB, SC, GK). A single male **Fire-tailed Sunbird** *Aethopyga ignicauda* was found feeding on rhododendron flowers with **Gould's Sunbirds** *A. gouldiae* near Jieyin Hall, Omei Shan, Sichuan, on 2 May (NG), well north of its documented range. A pair of **Brown-chested Flycatchers** *Rhinomyias brunneata* accompanying four fledged young were found at Ba Bao Shan, Guangdong, on 25 May and a juvenile **Slaty Bunting** *Latoucheornis siemsseni* was seen on Omei Shan, Sichuan, on 15 July (RM, NB, SC, GK), providing some welcome breeding data for these little-known species.

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## HONG KONG

A single **Long-billed Plover** *Charadrius placidus* at Kam Tin from 20 February (PA *et al.*) will be the first for Hong Kong if accepted, and a single **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicaria* at Mai Po on 26-27 April (RL *et al.*) was the third record. One of several first winter **Mew Gulls** *Larus canus* at Mai Po in late February showed characters of the subspecies *brachyrhynchus* from North America and could be the first Eurasian record if accepted. A single calling **Hodgson's Hawk-Cuckoo** *Cuculus fugax* at Tai Po Kau on 15 April (PR *et al.*) was the second for Hong Kong, and an immature **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* at Mai Po on 1-3 May (PH) was the first for 16 years.

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## INDIA

At Harike Bird Sanctuary, Punjab, at least ten **Rufous-vented Prinias** *Prinia burnesii* were reported between 9 January and 10 September (PU). Other interesting sightings at this locality, made by PU, were as follows: three **Bar-tailed Godwits** *Limosa lapponica* on 3 September; four **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* on 3 September, with another bird on 10 September; single **Common Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius hiaticula* on 24 April and 1 May; a maximum of 43 **Indian Skimmers** *Rynchops albicollis* up to 20 February; a first winter **Mew Gull** *Larus canus* until 15 January; four **Lesser Spotted Eagles** *Aquila pomarina* between 7 August and 4 September; a single **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* on 20 February; single **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* on 20 February and 27 March; and a single **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberisa aureola*

on 1 April. A pair of **Tibetan Ground-Jays** *Pseudopodoces humilis*, seen carrying food at Pangmar (4,500 m), Rupshu, Ladakh, on 25 July (DWh, KW) appear to constitute the first Indian record away from north Sikkim. A pair of **Laggar Falcons** *Falco jugger* was found near Pang, Rupshu, Ladakh, during July/August (DWh, KW). In Kaziranga National Park, Assam, a single **Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* was seen on 13 April (SM-Birdquest), a single **Chinese Bush-Warbler** *Bradypterus tacsanowskii* seen well on 16 February (R) and ten **Yellow Weavers** *Ploceus megarhynchus* observed on 12 April (SM-Birdquest). Rarities at Bharatpur so far this year have included two **Red-necked Grebes** *Podiceps grisegena* and a **Hair-crested Drongo** *Dicrurus hottentottus* on 26-29 January (PU) and a male **Black-naped Monarch** *Hypothymis azurea* on 27-30 January (PU). A single **Brooks's Leaf-Warbler** *Phylloscopus subviridis* at Bandhavgarh National Park, Madhya Pradesh, in February (R) was, perhaps, outside its documented range.

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## INDONESIA

### Ambon

Small groups of munias, believed to be **Black-headed Munia** *Lonchura malacca*, were observed in the vicinity of Ambon airport on 12 and 20 July (SB); there are no previous records from the island.

### Banda Islands

Two **Rainbow Bee-eaters** *Merops ornatus* over Hatta (Rosengain) Island on 21 April, a single **Spotted Dove** *Streptopelia chinensis* in Bandanera harbour on 20 April, and two **Little Pied Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* on 21 April, were all new species for the islands (SB).

### Halmahera

A recent University of Bristol expedition to the island produced four previously unrecorded species (RF *et al.*): a single **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx basalis* on 7 August; a single **Little Curlew** *Numenius minutus* near Sidangoli on 14 September; four **Masked Boobies** *Sula dactylatra* in Wasile Bay, north-east Halmahera on 1 September and a single **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina novaehollandiae* on 27 August. The expedition also recorded some interesting new altitudinal range data. **Chattering Lory** *Lorius garrulus* was seen from sea level up to 1,040 m but

was commoner above 700 m; **Blue-capped Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus monacha* was recorded up to 750 m; **Cinnamon-bellied Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula basilica* was found occurring down to sea level; **Standard-wing** *Semioptera wallacii* was common in lowlands and mountains, where many display sites were located, and **Halmahera Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina parvula* was observed at 150-900 m but was commoner above 700 m. Also of note were records of **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* and **Tree Martin** *Hirundo nigricans*, two species recently recorded for the first time on the island.

### Java

A **Spotted Wood-Owl** *Strix seloputo* in Bogor Botanical Gardens on 7 August appears to be a noteworthy record. Records that may represent easterly range extensions, all seen in central Java during April or May (ML), were: two or three **Brown-throated Barbets** *Megalaima corvina* at Guci and Pancoran Tujuh, Gunung Slamet area, and two at Gonoharjo, Gunung Unguran; two pairs of **Pygmy Tits** *Psaltria exilis* above Pancoran tujuh on 5 and 7 April and nine at Gonoharjo (down to 830 m) on 28 April; and three **Chestnut-fronted Shrike-Babblers** *Pteruthius aenobarbus* near Gonoharjo in April.

### Kai Islands

Observations were made here during 24 April to 1 May (SB), resulting in two new records: **Rainbow Bee-eater** *Merops ornatus*, seen in small flocks, near Taman Anggrek forest, Kai Kecil, and a single **Terek Sandpiper** *Tringa cinerea* in north-west Little Kai on 25 April. **White-tufted Honeyeater** *Lichmera squamata* was common on the small island of Er, while **Lemon-bellied White-eyes** *Zosterops chloris* were found on Er and Dranan (near Rumadan). The endemic **Pearl-bellied White-eye** *Z. grayi* and **Golden-bellied White-eye** *Z. uropygialis* were, respectively, common on Kai Besar and scarce on Tual (Dullah). An adult **Abbott's Booby** *Papasula abbotti*, seen north of the Kai Islands on 2 May, was the second Wallacean record.

### Kalimantan

Small groups of up to 12 **Oriental White-eyes** *Zosterops palpebrosus*, seen in a suburb of Pontianak on 28 March (SB), were the first to be recorded from mainland Kalimantan. Several **Scaly-breasted Munias** *Lonchura punctulata* in the same area, on 28 March (SB), constitute the third record for Kalimantan and Borneo.

### Lease Islands

A juvenile **Nicobar Pigeon** *Caloenas nicobarica* and five **Mongolian Plovers** *Charadrius mongolus*, both on Molana on 5 May (SB), were new records.

### Manuk

A short visit made by SB on 22 April produced two new species for the island: several **Elegant Imperial Pigeons** *Ducula concinna* and numerous **Lemon-bellied White-eyes** *Zosterops chloris*.

### Seram Laut Islands

A single **Great-billed Heron** *Ardea sumatrana* and two or three **Pacific Swallows** *Hirundo tahitica* seen on Manawoka, near Amarsekaru on 3 May, were the first to be recorded from the islands (SB).

### Sumba

A visit by ML in June resulted in sightings of the following species which appear to be new records for the island: a colony of at least 50 **House Swifts** *Apus nipalensis* south of Mondu, a single **Australian Hobby** *Falco longipennis* near Mondu, a single **Royal Spoonbill** *Platalea regia* at Kedumbul wetland and ten **Tree Martins** *Hirundo nigricans* along with four **Fairy Martins** *H. ariel* at Malinjak wetland, near Anakalang.

### Tayandu Islands

New records for the islands, visited on 23 April (SB), were: five **Bar-tailed Godwits** *Limosa lapponica* near Yamruh, a single **Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* near Yamruh, a single **Common Sandpiper** *T. hypoleucos* on Ree, small numbers of **Mongolian Plovers** *Charadrius mongolus* with several **Greater Sand Plovers** *C. leschenaultii* near Yamruh and a single **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* off Walir. A single **Pied Oystercatcher** *Haematopus longirostris* seen near Ree was the first post-war record for the islands. **White-tufted Honeyeater** *Lichmera squamata* was abundant on Ree and Tayandu.

## LAOS

A lengthy survey of the Nakai-Nam Theun National Biodiversity Conservation Area, central Laos, sponsored by the Wildlife Conservation Society (see p. 15), was undertaken from January to June and resulted in many interesting observations (TE, RT *et al.*). A pair of **Short-tailed Scimitar-Babblers** *Jabouilleia danjoui*, a species previously recorded only from Viet Nam, were

found east of Nape. Another new babbler for the country, still to be confirmed, was **Spotted Wren-Babbler** *Spelaornis formosus*. Other firsts for the country included a single **Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* on 1 February, a single **Purple Cochoa** *Cochoa purpurea* in February and **Fork-tailed Sunbird** *Aethopyga christinae*. New records for Central Laos included many **Rufous-necked Hornbills** *Aceros nipalensis* above 1,000 m; eight different **Blyth's Kingfishers** *Alcedo hercules*; **Yellow-vented Green-Pigeon** *Treron seimundi*; **White-bellied Green-Pigeon** *T. sieboldii*; three **Rufous-bellied Eagles** *Hieraaetus kienerii*; **Pied Falconet** *Microhierax melanoleucus*; **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* in February; **Blue-naped Pitta** *Pitta nipalensis* (found in a market); several **Pygmy Blue-Flycatchers** *Muscicapella hodgsoni*; four **Beautiful Nuthatches** *Sitta formosa* (950-1,700 m); many **Yellow-vented Warblers** *Phylloscopus cantator*; **Coral-billed Scimitar-Babbler** *Pomatorhinus ferruginosus*; and **Spectacled Fulvetta** *Alcippe ruficapilla*, probably of the subspecies *danisi*, above 1,500 m. A single and two **White-winged Ducks** *Cairina scutulata* were observed, footprints found and reports received in other areas. Elsewhere, a population of **Green Peafowl** *Pavo muticus* was located on the southern edge of Phou Khao Khouay National Biodiversity Conservation Area, North Laos, in March (NONC).

## NEPAL

Flocks of **Mongolian Finches** *Rhodopechys mongolica* were recorded at Kagbeni (RD), with 20 on 8 March, 25 on 9 March and 50 two weeks later; there are three previous Nepalese records. Two interesting species were found in the eastern part of the country by DWh: three **Purple Cochoas** *Cochoa purpurea*, including two males singing at Milkedanda (2,100 m) above Dungesangu on 16-17 May, and a singing **Rufous-tailed Flycatcher** *Muscicapa ruficauda* at Ghunza (3,600 m) on 10 May, the most easterly record to date. A single **Indian Skimmer** *Rynchops albicollis* was seen in Royal Chitwan National Park on 13 March (KW et al.); the species is very rare in Nepal these days and has not previously been recorded from the park. Interesting new altitudinal records, all from Sagarmartha National Park (TI, CI), were: **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* near Phortse (5,000 m) on 21 April, **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* over Namche Bazar

(4,000 m) on 13 April, **White-winged Grosbeaks** *Mycerobas carnipes* at 4,600 m on 19 and 24 April, and **Little Bunting** *Emberisa pusilla* at Kyangjuma (3,560 m) on 28 April. These all appear to be the highest records for the Indian Subcontinent.

## PHILIPPINES

A visit to Panay during late August and early September by FL resulted in some interesting discoveries. A population of **Writhed-billed Hornbills** *Aceros waldeni*, perhaps the world's most threatened Hornbill, was found near Dalagsaan in the Aklan River watershed (c. 600-950 m). Small flocks of up to four birds were observed daily during 3-6 September and local people reported a flock of 50-60 birds. Parties of up to eight **Tarctic Hornbills** *Penelopides panini*, another seriously threatened species, were observed in the same area (500-950 m elevation). The recently discovered and still little-known **Panay Striped-Babbler** *Stachyris panayensis* was seen only once: two birds in the upper catchment of the Aklan River, central Panay (c. 950-1,000 m). Two new species for Panay were also seen during the period under review: four **Purple Needletails** *Hirundapus celebensis* on Mount Madja-as (c. 600 m) on 2 August (TB, GD) and a single **Ruddy-breasted Crake** *Porzana fusca* in Sampunong Bolo Natural Sanctuary on 31 July (TB, GD). A **Negros Bleeding-heart** *Gallicolumba keayi* was seen well at 1,005 m on Mount Canlaon, above Mambucal, Negros, on 31 March (CR), confirming the continued existence of this chronically threatened species. Elsewhere on Negros three new species were noted for the island (PD, CR): 20-30 **Common Black-headed Gulls** *Larus ridibundus* at Bacolod Port on 30 March, a single **Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa dauurica* on Mount Canlaon on 31 March, and two or three **Lanceolated Warblers** *Locustella lanceolata* at Balinsasayao on 6 April. On Mindoro, a male **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* (TF, JH) and a single **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* (JH) at Lake Lubao, Sablayan Penal Colony, on 15 January, along with a least one **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* at San Jose in February (JH), were all the first records for the island. Several **Roseate Terns** *Sterna dougallii* and two **Little Terns** *S. albifrons* seen off Tagbilaran Port, Bohol, on 15 April (PD, CR) were the first recorded from the island. Three **Black-naped Terns** *S. sumatrana* off Cebu on 27 July (TB, GD) were also a new island record. At least 28 Far

**Eastern Curlews** *Numenius madagascariensis* were observed at Puerto Princessa, Palawan, on 28 March (PD, CR) and were apparently the first recorded from the island. A single **Dark-sided Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sibirica* at Sitio Siete, South Cotabato, on 24 March (PD, CR) and **Scaly-breasted Munia** *Lonchura punctulata*, found in flocks at Pasonanca, Zamboanga, on 11 and 13 August (TB, GD), were both new species for Mindanao. Fieldwork in the Sulu Islands (TB, GD) turned up some very interesting new records. Perhaps most important of all, was the discovery of **Celestial Monarch** *Hypothymis coelestis* on Tawi-Tawi, with singles observed at Barangay Buan on 10 and 11 August, the first record for the Sulu Islands. Other new records for Tawi-Tawi were: a probable **Wandering Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna arcuata* at Barangay Magsagaw on 8 August; **Grey-rumped Swiftlet** *Collocalia marginata*; three to five **Grey-rumped Treeswifts** *Hemiprocne longipennis*, the second Philippine record, at Barangay Buan on 10-11 August; two **Common Terns** *Sterna hirundo* on 12 August and **Eurasian Tree-Sparrow** *Passer montanus*, which was common at Batu Batu. Firsts for Sanga-Sanga were: three **Asian Koels** *Eudynamis scolopacea* on 12 August; **Grey-rumped Swiftlet**; a single **Philippine Needletail** *Mearnsia picina*, a single **House Swift** *Apus nipalensis* and a single **Zebra Dove** *Geopelia striata*, all on 12 August; three **Common Sandpipers** *Tringa hypoleucos* on 5 August; a single **Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur indus* on 6 August; 12 **Little Grebes** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* on 10 August; two **Yellow-vented Bulbuls** *Pycnonotus goiavier* on 10 August and **Eurasian Tree-Sparrow**, which was common. New species for Bongao were: four **Zebra Doves** on 5 August; a single **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* on 13 August; a single **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*, of the resident subspecies *ernesti*, on 6 August; two **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* on 5 August; a single **Yellow-vented Bulbul** on 5 August and **Eurasian Tree-Sparrow**, which was common. According to park staff, a **Philippine Cockatoo** *Cacatua haematuropygia* was incubating eggs during early February in Saint Paul Subterranean National Park, Palawan, considerably earlier than its previously documented breeding season. A pair of **Luzon Water-Redstarts** *Rhyacornis bicolor*, particularly the female, was observed feeding young in a nest near Bay-yo, Mountain province, Luzon, on 25 February (JH), a much earlier date than previous evidence of breeding suggests. The

nest was situated on a rocky bank 1.5 m above a river and was previously in use in March 1993 (IG). Records of a single **Rufous-lored Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus winchelli* (PD) and two **Citrine Canary-Flycatchers** *Culicicapa helianthea* at Tabunan, Cebu, on 9 April and 28 August respectively, confirm the continued existence of these two species on the island. A male **Blue-breasted Flycatcher** *Cyornis herioti* was seen at three locations, within the same general area, in Quezon National Park, Quezon, Luzon, on 19 February (RH), 20 February (JH) and 3 March (KT).

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## SINGAPORE

15 **Wandering Whistling-Ducks** *Dendrocygna arcuata*, a species not yet admitted to the Singapore list but now breeding freely, were observed at Serangoon (Lorong Halus) on 2 May. A single **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, found at the same locality on 2 May, was the second record for the country. Also of note were: up to seven **Cotton Pygmy-geese** *Nettapus coromandelianus* at Senoko from 29 May to 12 June; ten **Blue-rumped Parrots** *Psittinus cyanurus*, half the surviving Singapore population, at Chestnut Avenue on 17 July, and single **White-bellied Woodpeckers** *Dryocopus javensis* at Bukit Timah on 27 May and at Sime Road from 15 May to 30 July. (All records LKS).

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## SRI LANKA

A juvenile **Oriental Plover** *Charadrius veredus* was present at Kirinda Kalapuwa, near Yala National Park, on 24 January (DW), the first for the country and apparently only the second for the Indian Subcontinent.

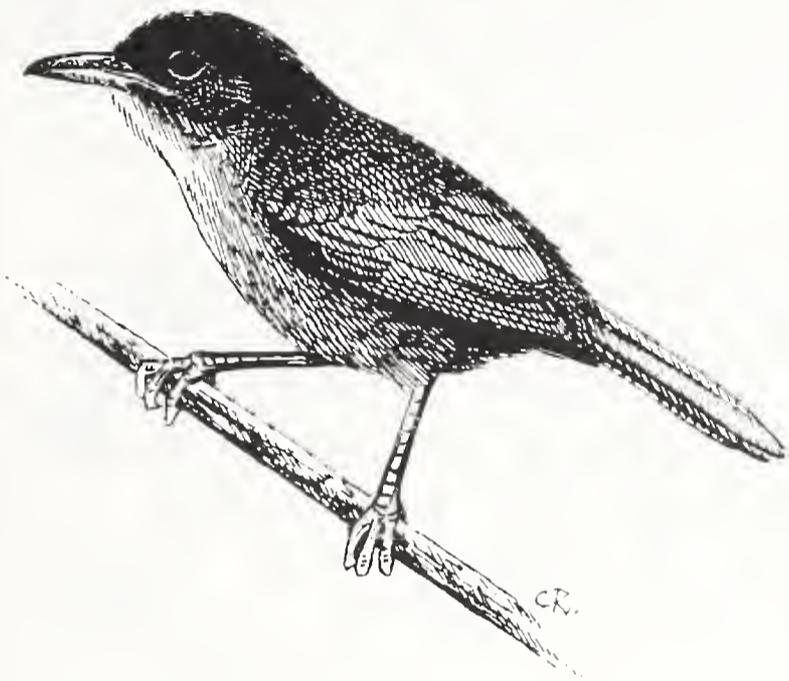
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## THAILAND

A single **White-gorgeted Flycatcher** *Ficedula monileger* was seen well at Kaeng Krachan National Park on 11 April (NP, PnS, PS *et al.*), a considerable southward range extension for the species.

## VIET NAM

The most exciting news received was of the discovery of **Sooty Babbler** *Stachyris herberti* in an area of forest on limestone in Phong Nha Cultural and Historical Site, Quang Binh province, central Annam, with many birds observed during 7-10 July (FL, JE, N). This is the first record of this species since its discovery in Central Laos over 70 years ago and the first from Viet Nam.



*Sooty Babbler Stachyris herberti* by Craig Robson

A population of the rare and local **Vietnamese Pheasant** *Lophura hatinhensis* was discovered in the Net River watershed, north Quang Binh province, North Annam (FL, JE, N); at least eight birds were observed, and a recently fledged male caught, during 25 June to 3 July. Two nests of **Blue-rumped Pitta** *Pitta soror* were found in Vu Quang Nature Reserve, Nghe Tinh province, on 4 and 6 June (FL, JE, N) and **Blue Pittas** *P. cyanea*, seen at Tam Dao, Vinh Phu province, on 22 May (JE, FL), were the first for east Tonkin. Two **Blue-winged Pitta** *P. moluccensis* nestlings were obtained from villagers at Phong Nha Cultural and Historical Site, Quang Binh province, Central Annam, on 9 July (JE, FL), a northward range extension for the species and proof that it breeds in this region. Small numbers of **Sulphur-breasted Warblers** *Phylloscopus ricketti* were also observed at Phong Nha during 7-10 July (JE, FL), indicating that the species is a resident in central Annam.

Observations and contributions are from the following: Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB), Birdquest, K. Bishop (KB), N. Bostock (NB), S. van Balen (SB), T. Brooks (TB), S. Cook (SC), P. Davidson (PD), M. Dioli (MD), R. Drijvers (RD), G. Dutson (GD), J. Eames (JE), T. Evans (TE), T. Fisher (TF), R. Fuller (RF), I. Gardner (IG), N. Gardner (NG), N. Higgins (NH), Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (PA, PH, RL), R. Hopf (RH), J. Hornbuckle (JH), C. Inskipp (CI), T. Inskipp (TI), G. Kirwan (GK), F. Lambert (FL), R. Leuthwaite (RLe), Lim Kim Seng (LKS), M. Linsley (ML), S. Madge (SM), R. Martins (RM), P. Morris (PM), Nguyen Cu (N), National Office for Nature Conservation, Laos (NONC), A. Pain (AP), N. Pomankul (NP), Regulus Tours (R), C. Robson (CR), P. Round (PR), Pinit Saengkaew (PnS), Piyanipa Saengkaew (PS), R. Timmins (RT), K. Turner (KT), P. Undeland (PU), Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (Vent), D. Warakagoda (DW), D. White (DWh), K. White (KW).



*Vietnamese Pheasant Lophura hatinhensis*  
(Photo: Frank Lambert)

**Addenda:** In *Bull. OBC*. 19: 41 the figure legend for localities marked 17 and 18 were transposed: 17 is Simao (or Ssu-mao) and 18 is Wuyan. We thank Geoff Carey for drawing our attention to this error.

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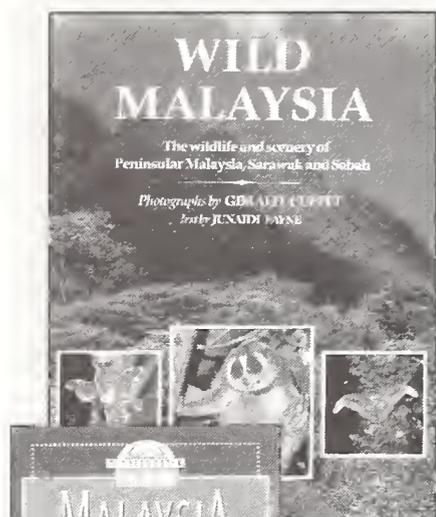
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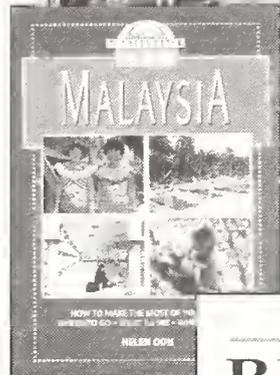
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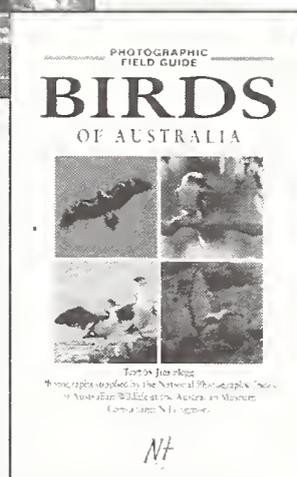
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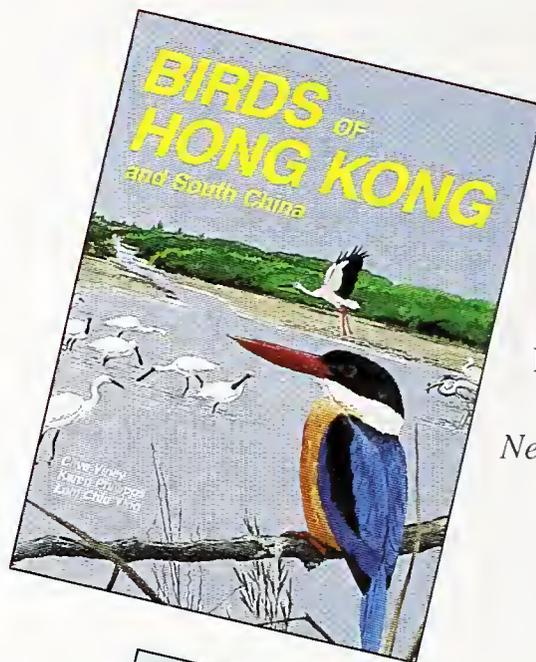
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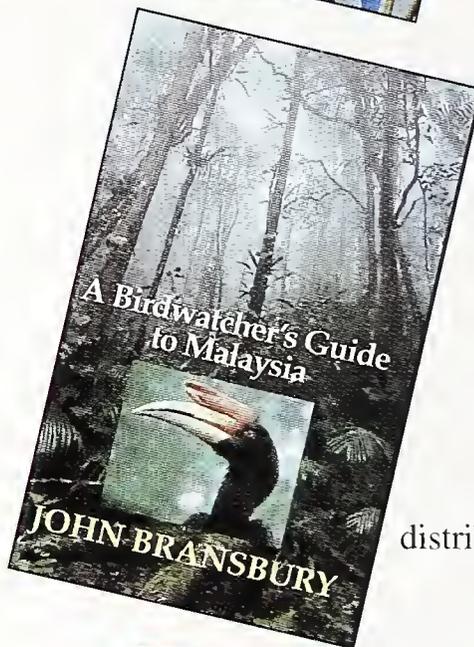
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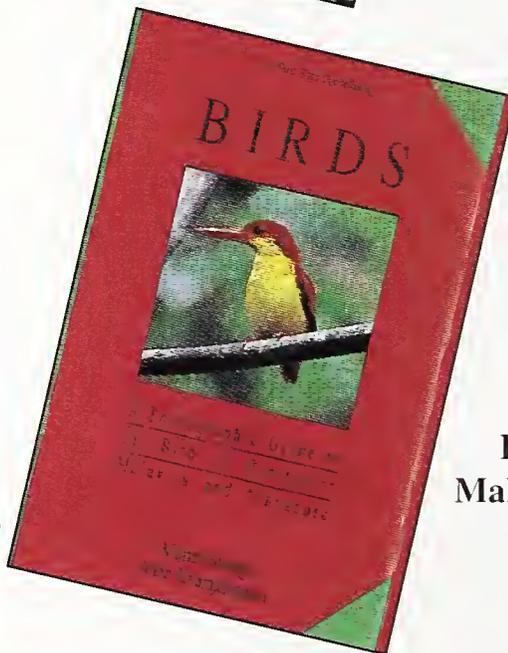
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