

Anting Behaviour by the Blue Whistling-Thrush

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Introduction

Anting behaviour is not uncommon among birds, and a wide range of species employ this technique (Amar-Singh HSS *et al*, 2024). The function of anting remains the subject of controversy and debate with many reasons and hypotheses proposed for the activity (Morozov 2015; Hendricks 2016).

There are no reports in literature (Wells 2007; Collar 2020) or from an online search for the Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus* having anting behaviour. I report here what may well be the first observation of this behaviour in the species.

Observations

The Blue Whistling-Thrush can be observed at many of the limestone outcropping around Ipoh city, Perak, Malaysia. Often they are very confiding at cave temples situated at these limestone hills, being habituated to humans.

On 20 October 2025 I observed a pair of Blue Whistling-Thrush searching in the dark sections, under one of the temple foundations. They found some millipedes and proceeded to rub them on the body and under their wings (anting) (Plate1). The entire activity lasted about 2 minutes. The millipedes were not eaten.

Millipedes secrete hydrogen cyanide from glands in body segments as a defence and may be useful for anting purposes.



Plate 1: Anting by a Blue Whistling-Thrush using a millipede, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 20 October 2025.

Discussion

There are no reports prior to this of any species of Whistling-Thrush involved in anting behaviour. There are reports of other thrush species observed having anting behaviour, including:

1. Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina* – anting with ants and a snail (Evans *et al*, 2020).
2. Japanese Thrush *Turdus cardis* – anting with ants (Ohkawara *et al*, 2022).
3. Austral Thrush *Turdus falcklandii* – anting with ants (Bird Buddy Inc. 2025).
4. White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus* – anting with Weaver Ants *Oecophylla smaragdina* (Tzi-Ming Leong 2015).

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