



Nectar Feeding by the Himalayan Cutia

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The Himalayan Cutia *Cutia nipalensis* is resident in Peninsular Malaysia, occupying the upper montane regions from 1200 to 1950 m (Wells 2007). The diet is reported as predominantly animal prey (Wells 2007; Collar & Robson 2020) comprising caterpillars, larvae, winged insects, beetles, gastropods, pupae and insect eggs. It is often seen foraging by creeping along a branch and probing or stripping lichen cover to look for prey. There are a few reports of feeding on fruit, seeds and pine cones (Wells 2007; Collar & Robson 2020).

We could not find any prior records of nectar feeding by this species in the literature. Here we report two different nectar feeding observations.

In August 2025 Amar-Singh HSS observed a flock of five or six Himalayan Cutias feeding on the nectar of *Rhodoleia championii* (Hong Kong Rose; local name: Kerlik) (Plate 1). This occurred at the Mossy Forest, Gunung Brinchang, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia at 1980 m. There was no doubt that the birds were taking nectar as a group of us watched all five birds feeding from 0754 hrs to 0816 hrs. They fed on the nectar of *Rhodoleia championii* from four different trees, moving from tree to tree as a social group. At least one of the group was an adult female and another appeared to be an immature bird. This feeding activity had also been observed by other birdwatchers for the past two weeks. A video recording of the feeding activity by Sein-Chiong Chiu is available here (shared with permission):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0DFjm1rxUk>



Plate 1: Female Himalayan Cutia feeding on the nectar of flowers of *Rhodoleia championii*, Mossy Forest, Gunung Brinchang, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia, August 2025.

Rhodoleia championii is a small to medium-sized, evergreen tree found in Malaysia and South-east Asia (Gardner *et al.*, 2016; MyBIS 2025). It has hanging scarlet flowers that are noted to be pollinated by birds. In August 2025 Amar-Singh HSS also observed the Streaked Spiderhunter *Arachnothera magna* and the Black-throated Sunbird *Aethopyga saturata* feeding on the nectar of flowers this plant.

In July 2019 Michelle MK observed Himalayan Cutias feeding on the nectar of a different plant, *Eurya acuminata* (local name: Medang Melukut Jantan). This occurred at the Mossy Forest, Gunung Brinchang, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia at 1980 m. There was a flock of five to six birds but only two or three were sighted feeding on the flowers. Michelle MK photographed a male bird that was feeding vigorously on the nectar of small, white flowers (Plate 2). There were a few other photographers who witnessed this nectar feeding action that morning.



Plate 2: Male Himalayan Cutia feeding on nectar of flowers of *Eurya acuminata*, Mossy Forest, Gunung Brinchang, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia, July 2024.

Eurya acuminata is an evergreen small tree known for its lanceolate leaves with small axillary flowers and berry-like fruits (Tropical Plants Database 2025). It is a montane species widely distributed in Asia including South-east Asia and Malaysia.

Review of Images in Macaulay Library

We reviewed the images in Macaulay Library of the Himalayan Cutia. As of 19 August 2025, there were 1085 images uploaded. We applied the filter "foraging or eating" and it limited images to 110. A review of these 110 images showed three observations that supported nectar feeding.

Warren Regelman observed Himalayan Cutia feeding on nectar at Doi Pha Hom Pok NP-Doi Lang (W), Chiang Mai, Thailand on 16 March 2024 (ML621449882). The plant is an *Erythrina* species, possibly *Erythrina variegata* in view of the thorny stems.

Ramesh Shenai observed Himalayan Cutia feeding on nectar at Mahal Diram Tea Garden, Darjeeling, West Bengal, India on 23 January 2025 (ML629846861). The plant was identified as *Leucosceptrum canum*.

Thomas Churchyard observed Himalayan Cutia feeding on nectar at Dochula-Royal Botanical Park, Thimphu, Bhutan 20 March 2013 (ML536063651). The plant was not clearly identified but appeared similar to *Rhodoleia championii*.

There were also two observations on possible fruit feeding - Akekachoke Buranaanun, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 5 December 2019 (ML608325408) and Badri Narayan, Arunachal Pradesh, India, 19 April 2023 (ML564324031).

The observations we report here, and the supporting ones from the Macaulay Library, clearly indicate the presence of nectar in the diet of the Himalayan Cutia.

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