

Pittas, Broadbills and Asities by Frank Lambert, Second Edition, Helm Identification Guide, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2025

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Pittas and broadbills are bird species that are much sought after by birdwatchers and photographers. They are colourful and delightful birds. Pittas are often found on the ground and hard to see, being rather secretive. Broadbills are quite different, more sociable and not terrestrial. They build large, hanging nests and have broad beaks, some fascinatingly coloured. Of the 52 species of pittas in the world, 13 can be seen in Malaysia with 11 known to nest locally. There are 18 species of broadbills in the world of which 9 are present in Malaysia. The Asities are a unique family of birds that are endemic to Madagascar and not found in Malaysia.

With such a large range of pittas and broadbills in Malaysia, the second edition of Pittas, Broadbills and Asities by Frank Lambert (Plate 1) is of great interest to us.

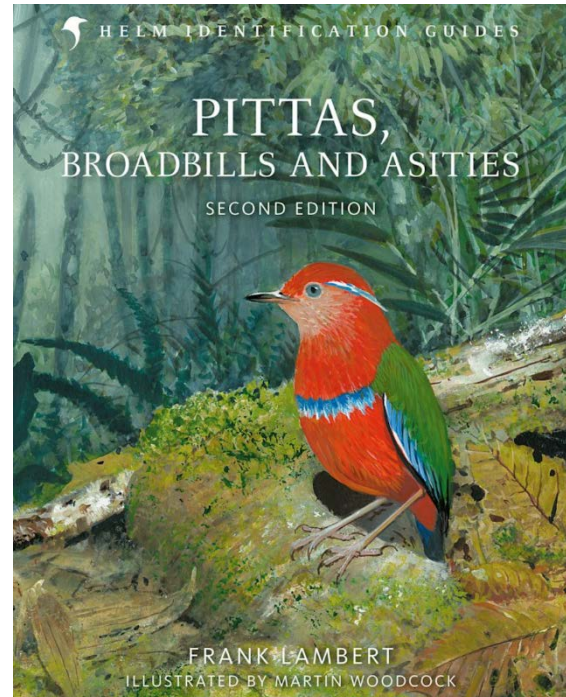


Plate 1: Front jacket cover of the book.

This is a completely revised and updated version of the 1996 first edition. The text covers everything from taxonomy and identification to the detailed habitat and ecology of each of the pitta, broadbill and asity species (Plate 2). Frank's wealth of knowledge on the species is supplemented with extensive literature from published and unpublished sources. It is beautifully illustrated with the artwork of Martin Woodcock from the first edition. Martin Woodcock sadly died in 2019 and was not involved in this second edition. Paintings from the first edition by Martin Woodcock have been digitally updated. This edition is also accompanied by superb photographs.

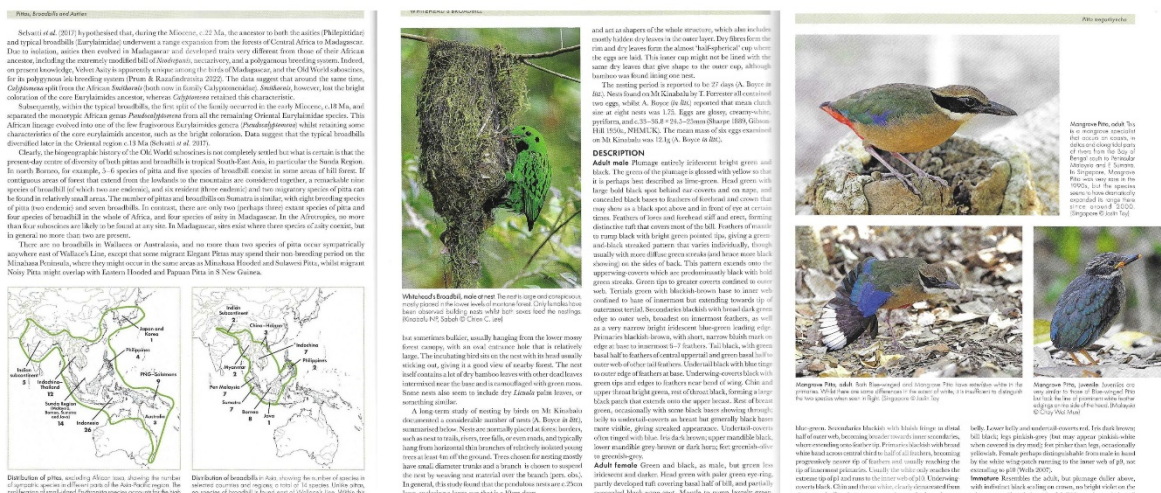


Plate 2: Sample pages from the book.

I found the level of detail in-depth and comprehensive. What impressed me was the inclusion of images of juveniles and nests, something not often seen in similar species account books.

Frank's immense experience with call and song recordings showed in the detailed descriptions of vocalisation and the inclusion of the occasional sonogram. Call and song recordings, with sonogram/spectrogram analysis, are often neglected by many birdwatchers.

For those of us who would like to learn and understand each of these species, this is an indispensable guide. For anyone who owns the first edition, the second is a necessary upgrade. For newcomers, it is simply the definitive starting point for these species.

There is still much to learn about these birds and this book identifies what is known to us and the gaps in knowledge that we need to search for.

In summary, Pittas, Broadbills and Asities by Lambert provides an unmatched level of detail, marrying authoritative text with exquisite artwork and photographs to create a comprehensive and indispensable in-depth guide.



Plate 3: Composite of a few sunbirds, flowerpeckers, spiderhunters. Clockwise from top left: Black-crowned Pitta *Erythropitta ussheri*, Bornean Banded-Pitta *Hydrornis schwaneri*, Western Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida*, Banded Broadbill *Eurylaimus javanicus*, Black-and-red Broadbill *Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchos* & Black-and-yellow Broadbill *Eurylaimus ochromalus*.