

Birds Feeding on Common Fruit: Papaya

Amar-Singh HSS, Zhi-Gang Wong, Wei-Qing Lim, Wee-Yee Lee, Matthew Albanus, Sein-Chiong Chiu, Daisy O'Neill, John Yap & Belinda Wong ML.

Introduction

A ripe Papaya *Carica papaya* is a magnet for a wide range of bird species to feed on. This article documents the birds that have been observed to feed on the papaya fruit and nectar of the flowers. Some of these are not as yet documented in literature. For this article we focused on birds feeding on papaya 'in the wild', i.e. not captive feeding and not those seen at feeding stations like bird hides.

Observations

Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*

Amar-Singh HSS and Belinda Wong ML have often observed the Asian Koel feeding on papaya (Plate 1). In January 2018, at his home at Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, he saw a pair feeding on a ripe papaya in the rain (Amar-Singh HS 2018). Papaya is a recognised item in the diet of the Asian Koel (Wells 2007; Limparungpatthanakij 2024).

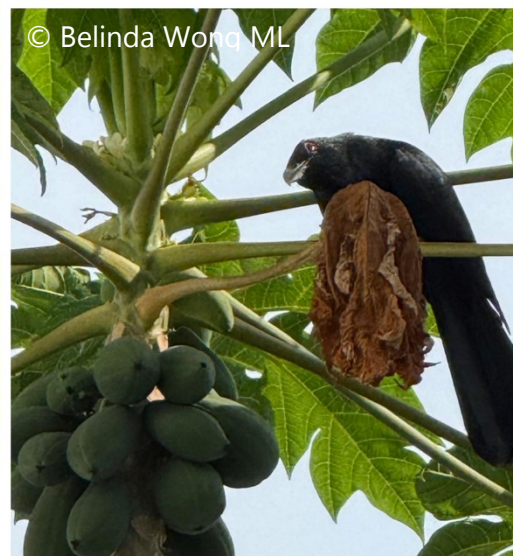


Plate 1: Male Asian Koel feeding on papaya fruit, Ipoh, Perak, (left) & Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia.

Oriental Pied-Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*

In September 2025 at Tanjong Karang, Selangor, Malaysia, Zhi-Gang Wong and Wei-Qing Lim observed a pair of Oriental Pied-Hornbills sharing a papaya meal together (Plate 2). The female appeared to prefer feeding by the male, as she was seen constantly begging for the male to feed her, even though she had her own fruit to feed on. They both appeared to be adults so this is not feeding of a juvenile. Breeding is known to occur from September to May in Malaysia (Kemp & Boesman 2020), hence this is most likely courtship feeding which strengthens the bond between a mating pair. A video recording of the feeding by Wei-Qing Lim can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/GspEFcdc_HA.



© Zhi-Gang Wong



Plate 2: Adult Oriental Pied-Hornbill male feeding an adult female papaya fruit, Tanjong Karang, Selangor, Malaysia, Sept 2025.

Sein-Chiong Chiu also observed two Oriental Pied-Hornbills feeding on papaya in his neighbour's garden in Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia in July 2020. A video recording of the feeding can be seen here: <https://youtu.be/7EKHYcMXv0Y>. The Oriental Pied-Hornbill is not documented in literature to feed on papaya fruit (Wells 1999).

Gold-whiskered Barbet *Psilopogon chrysopogon*

In June 2023, at Kamunting, Taiping, Malaysia, Wee-Yee Lee saw an adult Gold-whiskered Barbet feeding on papaya fruit (Plate 3). The papaya tree was located in a durian farm. The Gold-whiskered Barbet had an active nest near the papaya tree. In a two hour observation of the nest in the morning, the birds fed nestlings with papaya once (Plate 4). On other occasions the food items brought to nestlings were *Ficus* fruit.

Daisy O'Neill (2008) has also observed the Gold-whiskered Barbet feeding on papaya fruit (Plate 5). The Gold-whiskered Barbet is not documented in literature to feed on papaya fruit or to feed nestlings papaya fruit (Wells 1999).



Plate 3: Adult Gold-whiskered Barbet feeding on papaya fruit, Kamunting, Taiping, Malaysia, June 2023.



Plate 4: Adult Gold-whiskered Barbet feeding papaya fruit to nestling, Taiping, Malaysia, June 2023.

Red-throated Barbet *Psilopogon mystacophanos*

Daisy O'Neill (2008) has observed the Red-throated Barbet feeding on papaya fruit in June-July 2008; sharing it with a Gold-whiskered Barbet (Plate 5). The Red-throated Barbet is not documented in literature to feed on papaya fruit (Wells 1999).

© Daisy O'Neill



Plate 5: Red-throated Barbet (left) and Gold-whiskered Barbet feeding on papaya fruit, June-July 2008.

Lineated Barbet *Psilopogon lineatus*

Papaya is a common food source for Lineated Barbets. Amar-Singh HSS has often seen them feeding on the fruit in his neighbourhood. At the outskirts of Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia in November 2019, he saw Lineated Barbets feeding on a ripe papaya (Plate 6) that was also feasted on by Black-naped Orioles, Yellow-vented Bulbuls and Javan Mynas (Plate 7). Although a common food item, papaya fruit is not documented in literature for the Lineated Barbet (Krishnan 2023).



© Amar-Singh HSS



Plate 6: Lineated Barbet feeding on papaya fruit, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, Nov 2019.

Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*, Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier*, Javan Myna *Acridotheres javanicus*

Papaya is a common food source for the Black-naped Orioles and Yellow-vented Bulbuls and Amar-Singh HSS has often seen them feed on the fruit in his neighbourhood. At the outskirts of Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia in November 2019, he saw Black-naped Orioles, Yellow-vented Bulbuls and Javan Mynas feeding on a ripe papaya with Lineated Barbets (Plate 7) (Amar-Singh HSS 2021). Papaya fruit is well documented in the diet of the Black-naped Oriole, Yellow-vented Bulbul (Wells 2007) and Javan Myna (Craig & Feare 2020). Yellow-vented Bulbuls and Javan Mynas may also feed on papaya seeds (Wee 2013). A video of a Black-naped Oriole feeding on papaya fruit, June 2017 at Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, can be seen here: <https://youtu.be/8EkpgnIVIg0>. Note how the bird, like many other bird species observed, will eat the fruit with great relish and try to get every last morsel.



Plate 7: Black-naped Oriole, Yellow-vented Bulbul and Javan Myna feeding on papaya fruit, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, Nov 2019.

The Yellow-vented Bulbul will also take papaya fruit to feed nestlings (Plate 8) (Amar-Singh HSS (2023) and this is not documented in literature (Wells 2007).



Plate 8: Adult Yellow-vented Bulbuls with papaya fruit for nestlings, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, May 2023.

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*

Although there is no image documentation, John Yap has observed Red-whiskered Bulbuls (possibly escapees), more than 40 years ago (possibly 1979), feeding on papaya at his parents' home in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This is a recognised item in their diet (Islam & Williams 2020).

Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus*

Mynas will often take the opportunity to feed on a ripe papaya once it is opened by another bird. Plate 9 shows Jungle Mynas feeding on papaya fruit at Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia in July 2017 (Amar-Singh HSS 2017), an item not documented in their diet (Wells 2007).



Plate 9: Jungle Myna feeding on papaya fruit, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, July 2017. Note the individual shown in the images is a rare pale mutation seen in some Peninsular Malaysia birds.

Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis*

Asian Glossy Starlings are common papaya fruit feeders (Plate 10 & 11) and often seen at ripe, open fruit. There is often competitive feeding at these sites and these smaller birds have to wait for large birds to finish. Asian Glossy Starlings will strip a papaya fruit down to the last morsel. Surprisingly, papaya fruit in their diet is not documented in literature (Wells 2007).



Plate 10: Asian Glossy Starlings feeding on papaya fruit, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia. Left Oct 2008, middle July 2017 & right May 2017.



Plate 11: Asian Glossy Starlings adults and juveniles feeding on papaya fruit, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, April 2020.

Siamese Pied Starling *Gracupica floweri*

Amar-Singh HSS was up in Perlis, Malaysia, in October 2025 and observed a flock of Siamese Pied Starlings and Javan Mynas feeding on a ripe papaya (Plate 12).



Plate 12: Flock of Siamese Pied Starlings & Javan Mynas feeding on papaya fruit, Perlis, Malaysia, Oct 2025.



Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma*

Matthew Albanus observed a male Orange-bellied Flowerpecker feeding on papaya fruit at Penampang, Sabah, Malaysia in January 2020 (Plate 12). The papaya had already fallen off the tree on the ground so Matthew placed the papaya on the bench nearby in the hopes that the flowerpecker would return to feed, which it did!



© Matthew Albanus

Plate 12: Orange-bellied Flowerpecker feeding on papaya fruit, Penampang, Sabah, Malaysia, Jan 2020.

Little Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostra*

Some birds feed on the nectar of the papaya flowers. In September 2014 at the fringe of the Ulu Kinta Forest Reserve, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, Amar-Singh HSS observed the Little Spiderhunter feeding on the flower nectar of a papaya tree (Plate 13) (Amar-Singh HSS 2014).



Plate 13: Little Spiderhunter feeding on nectar of papaya flowers, Ulu Kinta Forest Reserve, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, Sept 2014.

Other Sunbirds and Spiderhunters known to feed on the **nectar** of the flowers include (Wells 2007; Cheke & Mann 2025):

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Streaked Spiderhunter <i>Arachnothera magna</i> | 7. Scarlet-chested Sunbird <i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i> |
| 2. Mouse-brown Sunbird <i>Anthreptes gabonicus</i> | 8. Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris ornatus</i> |
| 3. Nile Valley Sunbird <i>Hedydipna metallica</i> | 9. Pemba Sunbird <i>Cinnyris pembae</i> |
| 4. Green-headed Sunbird <i>Cyanomitra verticalis</i> | 10. Splendid Sunbird <i>Cinnyris coccinigastrus</i> |
| 5. Olive Sunbird <i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i> | 11. Superb Sunbird <i>Cinnyris superbus</i> |
| 6. Buff-throated Sunbird <i>Chalcomitra adelberti</i> | 12. Olive-backed Sunbird <i>Cinnyris jugularis</i> |
| | 13. Mayotte Sunbird <i>Cinnyris coquerellii</i> |
| | 14. Seychelles Sunbird <i>Cinnyris cussumieri</i> |

Other Birds Observed to feed on Papaya Fruit (Wells 2007; Wee 2013; Chowdhury 2020; Amar-Singh HSS 2020; Wikimedia Commons 2025; Google Image Online Ssearch).

It is not possible to be exhaustive in any search for birds that feed on such a common fruit as the papaya. From data and images posted online, some birds noted to feed on papaya fruit include:

1. Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis* (feed on seeds)
2. Tanimbar Corella *Cacatua goffiniana* (feed on unripe fruit)
3. Yellow-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua sulphurea*
4. Ouvea Parakeet *Eunymphicus uvaeensis* (feed on unripe fruit)
5. White-cheeked Barbet *Psilopogon viridis*
6. Brown-headed Barbet *Psilopogon zeylanicus*
7. Blue-throated Barbet *Psilopogon asiaticus*
8. Toco Toucan *Ramphastos toco*
9. Collared Aracari *Pteroglossus torquatus*
10. Saffron Toucanet *Pteroglossus bailloni*
11. Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*
12. Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*
13. Yucatan Jay *Cyanocorax yucatanicus*
14. Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*
15. Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*
16. Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*
17. Streaked Spiderhunter *Arachnothera magna*
18. Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus* (possibly nectar)
19. Yellow-rumped Cacique *Cacicus cela*
20. Russet-backed Oropendola *Psarocolius angustifrons*
21. Violaceous Euphonia *Euphonia violacea*
22. Palm Tanager *Thraupis palmarum*
23. White-lined Tanager *Tachyphonus rufus*
24. Silver-beaked Tanager *Ramphocelus carbo*
25. Seven-colored Tanager *Tangara fastuosa*
26. Opal-rumped Tanager *Tangara velia*
27. Green-headed Tanager *Tangara seledon*
28. Red-legged Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes cyaneus*

It is not unexpected that many birds in South America feed on the papaya fruit as the *Carica papaya* is native to southern Mexico and Central America, from where it spread to other tropical regions.

Discussion

There are many other bird species imaged feeding on papaya. They are not listed here as the majority are observed feeding on the fruit at staged events or at bird feeding stations. Many birds will feed on papaya fruit when cut and offered but not all will feed on papaya fruit while on a tree. The list provided in this article is not exhaustive and we encourage colleagues to continue documenting birds that feed on the papaya, fruit or seeds.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Kim-Chye Lim for reviewing the manuscript.

References

1. Amar-Singh HSS. (2014). Little Spiderhunter – nectar feeding and sexing. *Bird Ecology Study Group*. [online] <https://besgroup.org/2014/11/13/little-spiderhunter-nectar-feeding-and-sexing/> Accessed on 30 October 2025.
2. Amar-Singh HSS. (2017). Variant Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus torquatus*. *Bird Ecology Study Group*. [online] <https://besgroup.org/2017/08/18/variant-jungle-myna-acridotheres-fuscus-torquatus/> Accessed on 29 October 2025.



3. Amar-Singh HSS. (2018). Asian Koel feeding on papaya. *Bird Ecology Study Group*. [online] <https://besgroup.org/2018/02/16/asian-koel-feeding-on-papaya/> Accessed on 29 October 2025.
4. Amar-Singh HSS. (2020). Diet and Foraging Behaviour of the Streaked Spiderhunter *Arachnothera magna*. *BirdingASIA* 34: 114–120.
5. Amar-Singh HSS. (2021). The Papaya Feeders. *Bird Ecology Study Group*. [online] <https://besgroup.org/2021/09/27/the-papaya-feeders/> Accessed on 29 October 2025.
6. Amar-Singh HSS. (2023). Food Items for Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier* Nestlings. *Bird Ecology Study Group*. [online] <https://besgroup.org/2023/05/15/food-items-for-yellow-vented-bulbul-pycnonotus-goiavier-nestlings/> Accessed on 29 October 2025.
7. Cheke, R.A., Mann, C.F. & Allen, R. (2025). *Sunbirds of the World: Sunbirds, Flowerpeckers, Spiderhunters and Sugarbirds*, Second Edition. Helm Identification Guide. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.
8. Chowdhury, S.U. (2020). PlantBird Citizen Science Project Bangladesh. Facebook Post. [online] <https://www.facebook.com/511304177/posts/10163022332279178/?mibextid=rS40aB7S9Ucbxw6v> Accessed on 01 October 2025.
9. Craig, A.J.F. & Feare, C.J. (2020). Javan Myna *Acridotheres javanicus*, version 1.0. In Birds of the World (J. del Hoyo, A. Elliott, J. Sargatal, D. A. Christie, and E. de Juana, Editors). *Cornell Lab of Ornithology*, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.whvmyn.01>.
10. Daisy O'Neill (2008). Barbets and papaya. *Bird Ecology Study Group*. [online] <https://besgroup.org/2008/11/04/barbets-and-papaya/> Accessed on 01 October 2025.
11. Islam, K. & Williams, R.N. (2020). Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*, version 1.0. In Birds of the World (S. M. Billerman, Editor). *Cornell Lab of Ornithology*, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.rewbul.01>.
12. Kemp, A.C. & Boesman P.F.D. (2020). Oriental Pied-Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*, version 1.0. In Birds of the World (J. del Hoyo, A. Elliott, J. Sargatal, D. A. Christie, and E. de Juana, Editors). *Cornell Lab of Ornithology*, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.orphor1.01>.
13. Krishnan, A. (2023). Lineated Barbet *Psilopogon lineatus*, version 2.0. In Birds of the World (N. D. Sly, Editor). *Cornell Lab of Ornithology*, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.linbar1.02>
14. Limparungpatthanakij, W.L. (2024). Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*, version 1.1. In Birds of the World (S. M. Billerman, B. K. Keeney, P. G. Rodewald, T. S. Schulenberg, and M. G. Smith, Editors). *Cornell Lab of Ornithology*, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.asikoe2.01.1>.
15. Wells, D. R. (1999). *The birds of the Thai-Malay Peninsula: Vol. 1. Non-passerines*. London: Academic Press.
16. Wee, Y.C. (2013). The Complete Plant-Bird Relationship – version 1.0. *Bird Ecology Study Group*. [online] <https://besgroup.org/2013/01/04/the-complete-plant-bird-relationship-version-1-0/>
17. Wells, D.R. (2007). *The Birds of the Thai-Malay Peninsula: Vol. 2. Passerines*. London: Christopher Helm.
18. Wikimedia Commons. (2025). Category: Birds eating papayas. [online] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Birds_eating_papayas Accessed on 01 October 2025.

Citation: Amar-Singh HSS, Zhi-Gang Wong, Wei-Qing Lim, Wee-Yee Lee, Matthew Albanus, Sein-Chiong Chiu, Daisy O'Neill, John Yap & Belinda Wong ML. (2025). Birds Feeding on Common Fruit: Papaya. *Malaysian Bird Report*. Volume 4/2025, Dec 2025: pg. 57-67.