

Food Items for Silver-breasted Broadbill *Serilophus lunatus* Nestlings

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On 10 June 2023, I observed a pair of nesting Silver-breasted Broadbills *Serilophus lunatus* delivering food to nestlings at the nest.

The nest was hanging from a small branch of a well-shaded tree at approximately 2 meters above the ground. The nest was shaped like a pendant with an untidy ball of dried leaves woven with pieces of plant fibres at the top; and a loose hanging tail at the bottom made up mainly of long 'root-like' fibres. The size was about 10 cm in width and 30 cm in length with an entrance hole near the top of the nest (see Plate 1).

There were two nestlings present in the nest.



Plate 1: Adult Silver-breasted Broadbill at the nest removing a faecal sac

On foraging and food items for the region, Wells (2007) states "*No direct information from the review area, but occurrence of individuals in mixed foraging parties of Montane forest (Lim Kim Chye; Lambert and Woodcock 1996) implies arthropods must be important.*"

Kirwan *et al.* (2021) present data on food taken by adults but not food items brought to nestlings. They state that "*Neither the diet nor foraging activity of this species has been subject to specific study. Most available data is based on anecdotal observations.*" The main food items are "*insects and other small invertebrates*" including "*grasshoppers, mantises, other insects and their larvae, and land snails ...*".

This field report is to document the feeding behaviour and food items brought to nestlings relevant to the region.

Feeding Behaviour

The parental care behaviour of the broadbills was observed and recorded. The adults would alight on a branch, their 'staging area', approximately one meter from the nest with food in the beak. They allocated 1-3 minutes to inspect the surroundings before going to the nest to feed the young. This, I believe, is to ensure that the area was devoid of predators; by inspecting and scanning the area, the birds could confirm that no predators were nearby that could jeopardize their young or steal the food. Another reason might be to hide the nest location; by inspecting and checking the area, the bird could determine that it was not being monitored by potential predators before flying directly to the nest. However, the birds I observed on that

day were aware of us and did not appear threatened; there were 3 birdwatchers acquiring images at the location.

The male and female alternated in delivering food items to the nestlings. The adults usually approached the nest site separately, but in one instance, both arrived simultaneously with prey items (see Plate 2).

The mean interval between feeding visits during the observation period of 90 minutes was 5-7 minutes. This interval may vary depending on the developmental stage of the nestlings and their nutritional requirements. For this nesting observation, I was informed that the juvenile broadbills fledged within a week of my observations.

There was no observation on the foraging behaviour of adults.



Plate 2: A pair of adult Silver-breasted Broadbills perched at the 'staging' branch. They would observe the safety of the surroundings before taking turns to feed the nestlings.

Food Items

During the observation period, I was able to observe many prey items the adult birds delivered to the nestlings. The prey items were insects that included lepidopterans (moths), orthopterans (grasshoppers), mantids (praying mantis), and arachnids (spiders) (see Plates 2 and 3). No fruit were observed as food items.

Discussion

As mentioned in the introduction, the primary diet of adults is insects and other small invertebrates. This appears similar to the prey brought to nestlings.



Plate 3: A variety of food items brought by the adult broadbills to feed their nestlings

A review of the Macaulay Library (2023) image database for birds observed in Malaysia, showed 134 images. Of these, eight images showed adults with food in the beak or in the process of feeding nestlings. Most appeared to be insect prey, of which three were winged insects; one a large Phasmatodea (stick insect). One prey, fed to a fledged fledgling, appeared to be part of a frog.

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References

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