

Dollarbird Protecting Nesting Site from a Raptor

Pungut Luntar

The Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* is a common resident, non-breeding visitor and passage migrant in Malaysia. They are known to fiercely defend their nesting sites and nests against threats which includes physically attacking and attempting to drive away the intruders. Wells (1999) states that "*Combined confrontation of an intruder by a territorial pair involved aerial-chasing and mates perching close together with their throat-hackles fluffed out, much head-bobbing and loud calling*".

Two prior reports describe Dollarbirds physically evicting a Long-tailed Parakeet *Psittacula longicauda* from a nesting hole (Yoke-Meng Chan 2006) and fighting for an abandoned woodpecker's hole with Jungle Mynas *Acridotheres fuscus* (Amar-Singh HSS 2019).

In April 2024, at Kota Damansara, Selangor, Malaysia, I observed Dollarbirds protecting their nesting site from a Grey-headed Fish-Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus* (Plate 1 & 2). The Dollarbirds were nesting nearby in a dead tree trunk in a lake. I did not observe any juveniles in the nest.



Plate 1: Dollarbird confronting a Grey-headed Fish-Eagle that came near the nesting site Kota Damansara, Selangor, Malaysia, April 2024.

Both the Dollarbirds harassed the Grey-headed Fish-Eagle by flying close to it, on the tree top, and making loud calls. After a short time of this activity, the Grey-headed Fish-Eagle flew away to the other side of the lake. The Dollarbirds did not give chase. Later the Grey-headed Fish-Eagle was observed making a dive for fish in that lake and then flew off.

I wonder what threat they perceived from the Fish-Eagle towards their nest? Did they think the eagle might eat juveniles?



Plate 2: Dollarbirds confronting a Grey-headed Fish-Eagle that came near the nesting site Kota Damansara, Selangor, Malaysia, April 2024.

While there are reports of Dollarbirds confronting and chasing birds of a similar size, addressing a Fish-Eagle is quite an accomplishment.

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References

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