

Crested Goshawk Attacking a Juvenile Spotted Wood-Owl

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A family of Spotted Wood-Owls *Strix seloputo* live in the Taiping Lake Gardens, Taiping, Perak, Malaysia. They are often observed by local and visiting birdwatchers. I was doing a video of a juvenile Spotted Wood-Owl in April 2025 when, to my surprise, a Crested Goshawk *Lophospiza trivirgata* attacked it. The Crested Goshawk flew just over the head of the juvenile Spotted Wood-Owl, which was thrown off balance and almost fell (Plate 1). A link to the video is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIHgxbBB1xE>.

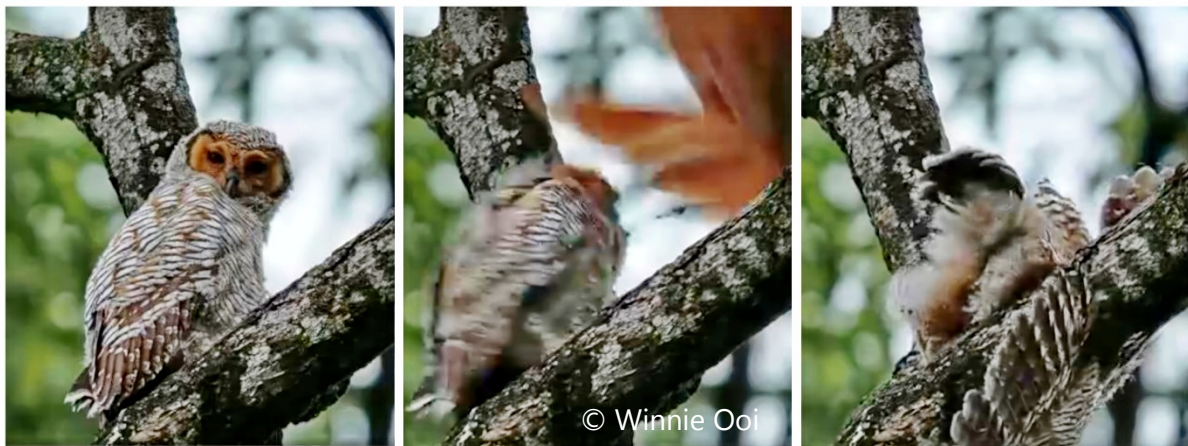


Plate 1: Screen grab composite of a juvenile Spotted Wood-Owl attacked by a Crested Goshawk.

The two adult parent Spotted Wood-Owls came to its rescue and chased away the Crested Goshawk. After the attack, the juvenile Spotted Wood-Owl appeared distressed with some loss of feathers from the head. Post attack video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWDBZiA5T1g>.

Only one Crested Goshawk was involved in the attack. It had been seen perched on a tree near where the juvenile Spotted Wood-Owl was located. The adult Spotted Wood-Owls were located in a tree close by. Crested Goshawks have been known to nest in that area in the past.

This observation was unexpected as an adult Crested Goshawk is smaller (30–46 cm, 224–450 g; Clark & Marks 2024) than an adult Spotted Wood-Owl (44–48 cm, 1011 g; Holt *et al.*, 2020).

I was uncertain as to the reason for the behaviour. Was the Crested Goshawk hunting for prey or did it perceive the Spotted Wood-Owl as a threat?

Birds form a large part of the diet of Crested Goshawks but they are usually much smaller in size than this raptor (Clark & Marks 2024). Pigeons, doves, barbets, sparrows, babblers and thrushes have been documented as prey (Huang *et al.* 2006; Clark & Marks 2024). Of note is the study by Huang and colleagues (2006) that showed Crested Goshawks taking larger prey and owls. That study documented Chinese Bamboo-Partridge *Bambusicola thoracicus* as prey on six occasions (30–32 cm, 200–342 g; McGowan *et al.* 2020) and the Collared Scops-Owl *Otus lettia* on 13 occasions (23–25 cm, 94.1–170 g; Holt *et al.*, 2024).

I suspect the Crested Goshawk considered the Spotted Wood-Owl as a possible prey item as it was a juvenile.

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