

Volume 2/2026, June 2026

Malaysian
Bird Report



Malaysian Bird Report Volume 2/2026, June 2026

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Cover Page

White-throated Rock-Thrush (Tarum Rengkung Putih) *Monticola gularis*, Kangar, Perlis, Malaysia, Mar 2026 © Huzairi Abd Halim

Malaysian Bird Report Editorial team

Dato' Dr Amar-Singh HSS (Editor), Kim-Chye Lim, Swee-Yian Lim, Wai-Mun Choy, Jia-En Ho

Advisors

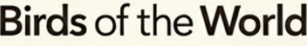
Dave Bakewell, Allen Jeyarajasingam

Please address all correspondence to: malaysianbirdreport@gmail.com

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Website

Malaysian Bird Report website with access to publications: <https://malaysianbird.report/reports/>



MALAYSIAN BIRD REPORT PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

BIRDS OF THE WORLD IS NOW OPEN ACCESS IN MALAYSIA!

The Malaysian Bird Report is delighted to report that in our partnership with Birds of the World | The Cornell Lab the Birds of the World is now OPEN ACCESS IN MALAYSIA (usually USD 50/person/year). <https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/home>

The Malaysian Bird Report is the Malaysian content partner for Birds of the World. Birds of the World is a reference tool that includes species accounts for every bird in the world. We hope this access encourages birdwatchers in Malaysia to deepen their knowledge and understanding of birds.

Please work with us so we can incorporate our collective expertise on Malaysian birds into this important online resource. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the MBR committee at malaysianbirdreport@gmail.com.

Note: You will need an eBird (Cornell) account (free) to sign in.



Partnerships <https://malaysianbird.report/partnerships/>

Cornell Lab  | **Birds of the World**

Malaysian Bird Report is the Malaysian content partner for Birds of the World | The Cornell Lab <https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/home>

Birds of the World is a participatory avian life history platform that empowers a global community of ornithologists to unlock transformative insights for research and conservation. BOW species accounts are under a constant state of revision and special efforts are being made to address data gaps and surface regional science. Please work with us so we can incorporate our mutual expertise on Malaysian birds into this important online resource. If you are interested in being involved, supporting or contributing to the work please contact the MBR committee.

Wild Bird Club Malaysia



<http://www.wildbirdclub.my/>

The Wild Bird Club Malaysia is a registered non-profit and membership-based organization that strives to conserve Malaysia's unique birds and their habitats through promoting best practices for birdwatching and encouraging people to enjoy birds and value nature. They plan birdwatching outings and have a very active Facebook page. WBCM supports eBird Malaysia as a collaborative project.

Sabah Bird Watchers Association (Persatuan Pemerhati Burung



Sabah)

<https://www.sabahbirdwatchers.com/>

The Sabah Bird Watchers Association (SBWA) was established with the primary objective to promote birdwatching in Sabah and Malaysia. SBWA aims to improve birding ethics, provide young individuals exposure to birdwatching and a platform to pursue their interest. They have over 30 experienced bird guides and 200 birdwatcher & photographer enthusiasts.

Editorial

Best Practices on eBird

Jared Tan

Editorial Note: This article was first published on the Bird Society of Singapore's website on 10 February 2026. We have asked the author and the Bird Society of Singapore to kindly allow it to be reproduced here. The article has been edited to make it more appropriate for Malaysian birders.

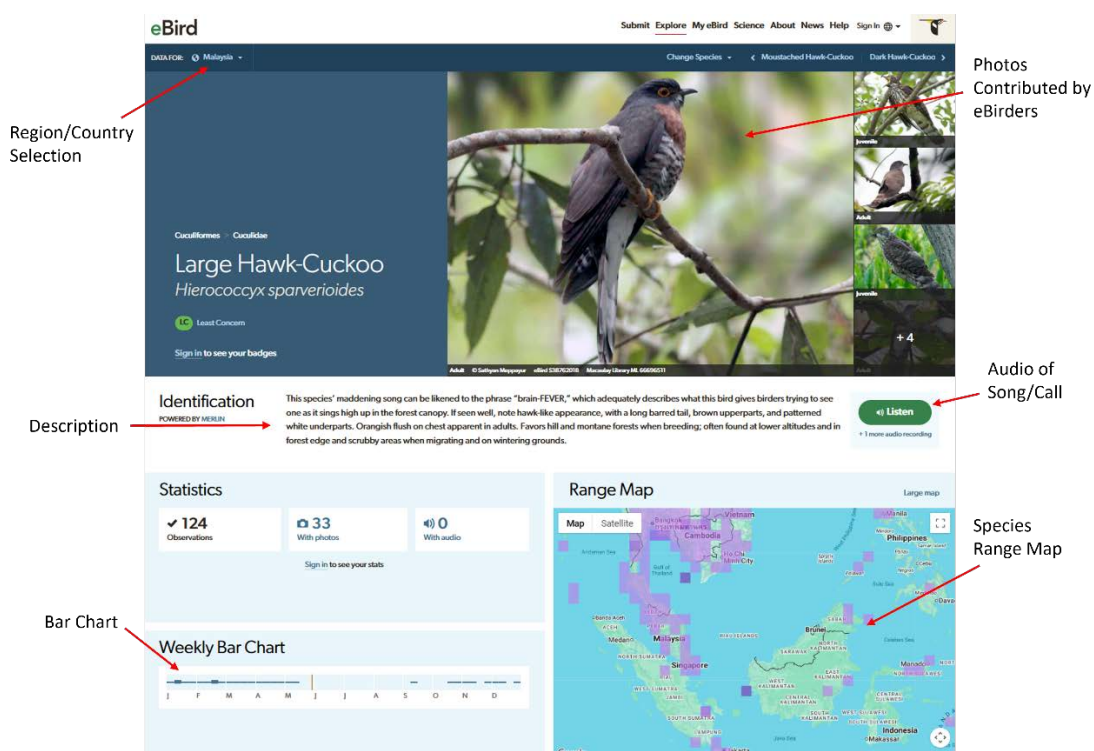
Introduction: Why should I use eBird?

eBird is a free-to-use citizen-science database, which by now I am sure many of us are familiar with. This article hopes to share with you more about eBird and some good habits you can put into practice when using it. eBird contributes to research and monitoring of bird movements and abundance. By using eBird, all of us can contribute data to aid research and conservation of birds around the world, and we ourselves can benefit in several ways by using eBird too!

Useful Information About Birds

Species pages give us tips on how to identify birds, and provide reference photos of birds of various sexes, morphs and ages (all of which are contributed by fellow eBird users!)

Bar charts provide data showing the abundance of various species throughout the year. This gives you an idea of when to start looking out for a certain species. If you go to the eBird site <https://ebird.org/home> and choose 'Explore' at the top, you will be given two options – to search by Species or Region. As an example, if you choose Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparveroides* and at the top enter 'Malaysia' you will get a page with useful data (Plate 1).



Region/Country Selection

Photos Contributed by eBirders

Audio of Song/Call

Description

Bar Chart

Species Range Map

Plate 1: eBird page for the Large Hawk-Cuckoo with Malaysia selected as the region.

A quick look at the eBird bar chart would tell you that January to February is the best time of the year to look out for Large Hawk-Cuckoo in Malaysia.

The species range maps show us the global distribution of birds, which can give us an indication of whether we might expect to see a certain species in different parts of the world. Zooming in to the range maps will even show you all the various spots in Malaysia where other eBird users have reported a particular species before, and recent sightings within the past month would show up in red. You may also filter the data to see the sightings for a specific range of months or years (Plate 2). This is a highly useful tool if you are wondering where to go to see a specific target species.

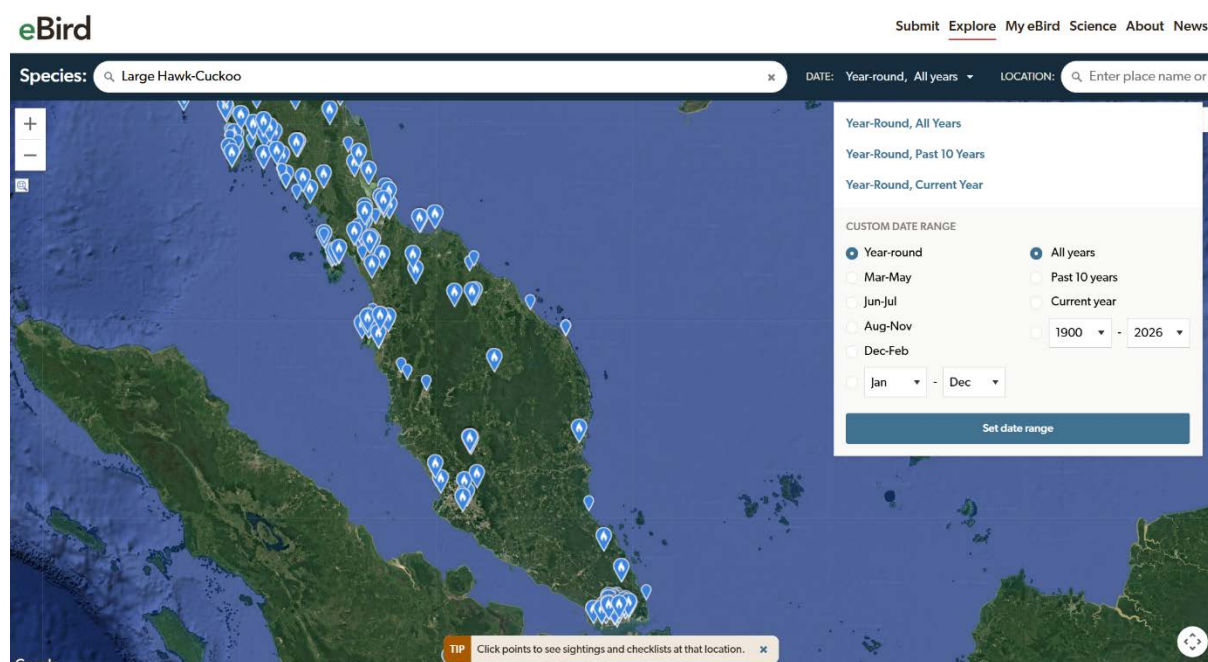


Plate 2: eBird species range map for Large Hawk-Cuckoo with filter to set time period.

The links to the respective Malaysia or state-level eBird region pages are shown here:

Malaysia: <https://ebird.org/region/MY>
 Johor: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-01>
 Kedah: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-02>
 Kelantan: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-03>
 Melaka: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-04>
 Negeri Sembilan: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-05>

Pahang: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-06>
 Pulau Pinang: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-07>
 Perak: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-08>
 Perlis: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-09>
 Selangor: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-10>
 Terengganu: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-11>
 Sabah: <https://ebird.org/region/MY-12>

From each region page, you may navigate easily to other resources, such as the Rare Bird Alert (RBA), or Needs Alerts.



eBird Alerts

eBird's 'Rare Bird Alert' (RBA) is an especially crucial tool for serious twitchers or for anyone hoping to see a rare bird species. This page gives a summary of all sightings of species deemed as rare in Malaysia as a whole, or in specific states (be it throughout the year, or during a certain time of the year). The link provided will send you to the Malaysia RBA page, but you may check out the individual states' RBA via the region pages shown above.

<https://ebird.org/alert/rba/MY>

The 'Needs Alert' is also a great tool for listers as it will show you whenever a species you have not yet seen in Malaysia or a specific state has been sighted. The 'Year Needs Alert' is similar, except that it shows you when a species you have not yet seen for the year has been sighted. For those doing a Big Year, this would be a great source of timely information.

<https://ebird.org/alerts>

For these tools, you may subscribe to email notifications (either daily or hourly), or alternatively (as I prefer to do so), go directly to the websites for direct access. These tools may be used anywhere around the world, and can help you as you go birding on your travels as well.

The screenshot displays the 'Malaysia Rare Bird Alert' page. It features a header with the title and a sub-header indicating that the report shows observations of rare birds in Malaysia, including both unreviewed and reviewed/approved observations. A 'You are subscribed' notification is visible, stating 'Sending alerts DAILY. Change' and 'Unsubscribe'. Below this, a section titled 'Observations for last 7 days' lists several sightings. Each entry includes the species name, scientific name, status (CONFIRMED or UNCONFIRMED), date, time, location, and the observer's name.

Count	Species	Scientific Name	Status	Date	Time	Location	Observer
2	Black-naped Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus melanospilus</i>	CONFIRMED	May 26, 2026	16:09	Pulau Selingaan (Turtle Islands National Park), Sabah, Malaysia	Muhammad Kazee
1	Black-naped Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus melanospilus</i>	CONFIRMED	May 24, 2026	05:58	Pulau Selingaan (Turtle Islands National Park), Sabah, Malaysia	Jumaidig jay Borneo Eco Tours
2	Gray Imperial-Pigeon	<i>Ducula pickeringii</i>	CONFIRMED	May 26, 2026	06:48	Pulau Mantanani Besar, Sabah, Malaysia	Yuhao Sun
1	Short-toed Coucal	<i>Centropus rectunguis</i>	UNCONFIRMED	May 28, 2026	11:14	Kinabatangan Wetlands Resort, Sabah, Malaysia	Angela Lund
2	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypselurus balisensis</i>	UNCONFIRMED	May 26, 2026	08:31	The Dusun, Pantat, Negeri Sembilan, MY (2.801, 102.015), Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia	Niel Bruce
2	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	UNCONFIRMED	May 24, 2026	11:17	Fishing Farm, Sabah, Malaysia	Stanley T Shao
2	Black-backed Swanphen	<i>Porphyrio indicus</i>	UNCONFIRMED	May 24, 2026	07:20	Sungai Rambai Paddyfields, Melaka, Malaysia	Chan Chee Keong

Plate 3: eBird Rare Bird Alert for Malaysia.

Keeping of personal lists

Apart from being an excellent source of information, eBird can also serve as a place where you can store information about your birding trips and adventures, including the date, time, location and list of birds seen during each trip. eBird can also help you to keep track of how many birds you have seen in a certain country, or even around the world! Personally, I treasure



each and every moment I spend birding, and each experience I have had seeing a bird holds a special meaning to me. As time goes on, it may be easy to forget where and when you saw a specific bird, however making use of eBird to faithfully log your checklists (Plate 4) helps you to store information and photographs of your birding experiences in one place.

My eBird

My Checklists

1124 Checklists [Show all details](#)

	DATE/TIME	LOCATION	COUNTY	STATE/PROVINCE	REGION	
1124.	04 Jun 2026 11:15 AM	名古屋市-鶴舞公園 (Nagoya-Tsuruma Park)	Nagoya	Aichi	Japan	
1123.	01 Jun 2026 11:00 AM	名古屋市-水分橋緑地 (Nagoya-Mizuwakebashi Greenspace)	Nagoya	Aichi	Japan	
1122.	31 May 2026 9:47 AM	高山市-豊平 (Takayama-Tatamidaira Flat)	Takayama	Gifu	Japan	
1121.	30 May 2026 4:34 PM	高山市-宮川-松本橋と宮川大橋の間 (Takayama-Miya River-Matsumoto Bridge to Miyagawa-Chashi Bridge)	Takayama	Gifu	Japan	
1120.	30 May 2026 2:06 PM	高山市-宮川-柳橋と家事橋の間 (Takayama-Miyagawa River-Yanagi Bridge to Kaji Bridge)	Takayama	Gifu	Japan	
1119.	30 May 2026 12:50 PM	高山市-宮川-筏橋と柳橋の間 (Takayama-Miya River-Ikada Bridge to Yanagi Bridge)	Takayama	Gifu	Japan	
1118.	29 May 2026 10:22 AM	春日井市-みろくの森 (Kasugai-Miroku Forest)	Kasugai	Aichi	Japan	
1117.	21 May 2026 10:45 AM	Sungei Seletar		Singapore	Singapore	
1116.	20 May 2026 7:35 AM	Central Catchment Nature Reserve (CCNR)		Singapore	Singapore	
1115.	16 May 2026 12:00 PM	Singapore Straits (including SG/Indo/M'sian waters)		Singapore	Singapore	

Plate 4: 'My Checklists' page on eBird

Mobile app or desktop site?

After you have registered for eBird and downloaded the mobile app (available on both Google Play Store and Apple Store), you may be wondering if there are any differences between the app and the desktop site. Here is a quick summary.

Mobile app	Desktop site
More user-friendly experience of submitting checklists.	Submission of checklists may be slightly more challenging.
You have the option of keeping your checklist running while birding to keep track of the time and distance travelled using GPS.	Does not allow for live running of checklists. Use of the desktop site is more for submission of checklists after you have completed birding. You would have to estimate the distance travelled and duration spent birding.
Does not support attachment of media (photos and audio) to checklists.	Allows you to attach media to your checklists.
Does not allow mass uploading of checklists via Microsoft Excel.	Allows mass uploading of checklists via Microsoft Excel

Personally, I prefer to submit my checklists using the eBird mobile app first, then upload my photos and audio to my checklists via the desktop site afterwards.

eBird Best Practices

As previously mentioned, eBird data is used by scientists for research purposes and helps in conservation of birds around the world. As such, we should aim to keep the data that we key into eBird as accurate as possible.

1. Only key in species you are confident of identifying

Keying in species you are not confident in identifying, or are not sure if you really saw them will affect the reliability of eBird data. For example, if you see terns which are too far out and you are unable to get photographs or good looks at them to identify them confidently, you should key them into your checklists as 'tern sp.' instead of assuming that all of them are Little Terns. In reality, they could be White-winged Tern, Whiskered Tern, or some other kind of tern. If you are not sure of the identification of any sightings, don't feel shy to ask an experienced birder directly, or on a Malaysian Nature Society or Wild Bird Club Malaysia Facebook group.

In the same vein, there are some species which are not identifiable to species during certain times of the year, or unless certain criteria are met. One example is Black-nest Swiftlet and White-nest Swiftlet which cannot be identified to species in the field unless they are seen on their nests. Instead of assuming the swiftlets we see flying about to be one species or the other, we should key in our observations as "dark-swiftlet sp." instead. The table below shows some examples of some birds we should not identify to species.

Species	What to key into your eBird checklist
Black-nest Swiftlet White-nest Swiftlet (also known as Edible-nest Swiftlet) While these are some of the most common birds in Malaysia, they cannot be identified to species without a view of a bird on its nest, or an exceptional view of the extent of feathering on the tarsi with a bird in hand.	dark swiftlet sp. (for birds seen flying around and not on their nests)
Mossy-nest Swiftlet Despite being known from Sumatra, Java and Borneo based on specimens and nesting records, in the field, the species is not identifiable away from the nest from Black or White-nest Swiftlets. There are no confirmed Mossy-nest colonies in Sabah away from Gomantong Caves and only a few known nesting sites in Sarawak.	dark swiftlet sp. (for birds seen flying around and not on their nests) Note: Comment from eBird reviewer James Eaton
Bornean Swiftlet Not possible to identify in the field unless extreme attention & numerous photos from all angles and lights. On current knowledge, it is only known with certainty from the upper elevation of Mount Kinabalu.	Bornean/Plume-toed Swiftlet Note: Comment from eBird reviewer James Eaton
Chinese Pond-Heron Indian Pond-Heron	pond-heron sp. (for birds in non-breeding plumage)



Species	What to key into your eBird checklist
Javan Pond-Heron These three species cannot be differentiated while in their non-breeding plumage. They typically start to develop their breeding plumage from March to May, before they return back to their breeding grounds. They are usually only identified to species during these months.	
Pin-tailed Snipe Swinhoe's Snipe	Pin-tailed/Swinhoe's Snipe (for birds seen without a view of the spread tail)
Blue-and-White Flycatcher (default species in East Malaysia) Zapppy's Flycatcher	Blue-and-White/Zapppy's Flycatcher (for female or immature male birds)
Himalayan Cuckoo Oriental Cuckoo Himalayan Cuckoo: no acceptable field reports of this species were found since 1980 in Peninsular Malaysia and since 1960 in Bornean Malaysia. Oriental Cuckoo: No acceptable records were found for Peninsular Malaysia.	Himalayan/Oriental Cuckoo (Field reports of Himalayan/Oriental Cuckoo should be referred to as such unless diagnostic measurements and/or a record of vocalizations can be obtained.) Reference: MNS Bird Conservation Council. 2021. <i>A Checklist of the Birds of Malaysia</i> . 2020 Edition. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Nature Society. (MNS Conservation Publication No. 22)

While rare species will still be subject to review from eBird reviewers, common species will easily slip under the radar and automatically be accepted into eBird. Just because you have more species on your checklist, or have seen more individuals of a particular species, it doesn't mean you are a superior birder! Let's do our part to be responsible in reporting our sightings and try to keep eBird data as accurate as possible. In addition to the species you see, also do remember to include the species you **hear** as well - but again, only if you are confident of your identification.

2. Try to provide an accurate estimate of the number of birds seen instead of using 'X'

While there is the option of putting an 'X' to show that a bird is seen (without providing an exact count), it is always best to provide a count of the number of birds seen. Even if you are unable to count the exact number, it is still good to give an estimate. As a general, stay conservative with your counts. For example, if 20 white-shouldered starlings fly by, and 10 minutes later, another flock of 20 flies by again in the opposite direction, they are likely to be the same flock. In some cases, it might feel daunting to count the many birds you are observing, for example, if a flock of 237 Asian Glossy Starlings fly by you, a ballpark figure of 200 to 250 will be alright.

3. Include photos, audio and/or comprehensive descriptions for rare species

When submitting your checklists, you may realise that some species are labelled with an 'R'. This would denote a rare species for the location (either year-round or for that specific time of the year). You would then be prompted to insert comments for your observation, as well as to add photos, videos or audio to substantiate your sighting. This is particularly important, as this helps to show eBird reviewers that your sighting is accurate and genuine, particularly when you are the first (and perhaps only) person to spot it. This is crucial as the eBird reviewers have

to exercise due-diligence when confirming sightings, and cannot confirm a sighting of a rarity which does not have sufficient evidence to back it up. For sightings of continuing easily identifiable birds seen by multiple observers and consistently showing each day, it is acceptable to state 'continuing' under the checklist comments. However, perhaps if the bird's appearance is highly irregular and you are also the sole observer for that specific day, or if the bird is one which is difficult to identify (e.g. Oriental vs Collared Pratincole) it would still be important for you to provide good documentation to back the sighting up. Please do an additional check if an 'R' appears to ensure that you have not mistaken a more expected species for a rarer one, as the filters have been put in place by the eBird reviewers who are knowledgeable of the region's expected species.

While photographs are the best evidence, we do know that not all birders carry a camera or we may not have our cameras with us all the time, and also that sometimes the birds are just too quick for us to get a picture. If no photographs are available, your descriptions become all the more important to prove the presence of a rarity.

When inserting comments for rare species, it is important to describe the following:

- Appearance of the bird such as:
 - o Size (Usually by comparing to other common species, for example, "slightly bigger than Javan Myna")
 - o Proportion (Was the tail long? How were the wings shaped?)
 - o Colour (Describing species colours for different body parts can be very helpful!)
- Behaviour of the bird
 - o For example: Did you notice any specific flight pattern, was the bird wagging its tail, was it hunting using a specific technique?
- How similar-looking species were eliminated
- Duration of sighting
- Distance to the bird
- Whether binoculars were used
- Whether photographs were obtained (and if so, remember to upload them!)

Merely stating "perched on a tree", "flying about", "confirmed by guide" or "feeding" does not help to prove a rarity! Do try to make sure you describe birds to the best of your abilities. It is perfectly fine if you did not get to see or take note of every single feature of the bird, but just be honest about what you saw, and why you reached your conclusion about its identification. This will help the eBird reviewers to make a well-informed verdict on your sighting.

4. Input location accurately and make use of eBird hotspots whenever possible

[Make use of eBird hotspots instead of creating a new custom location.](#)

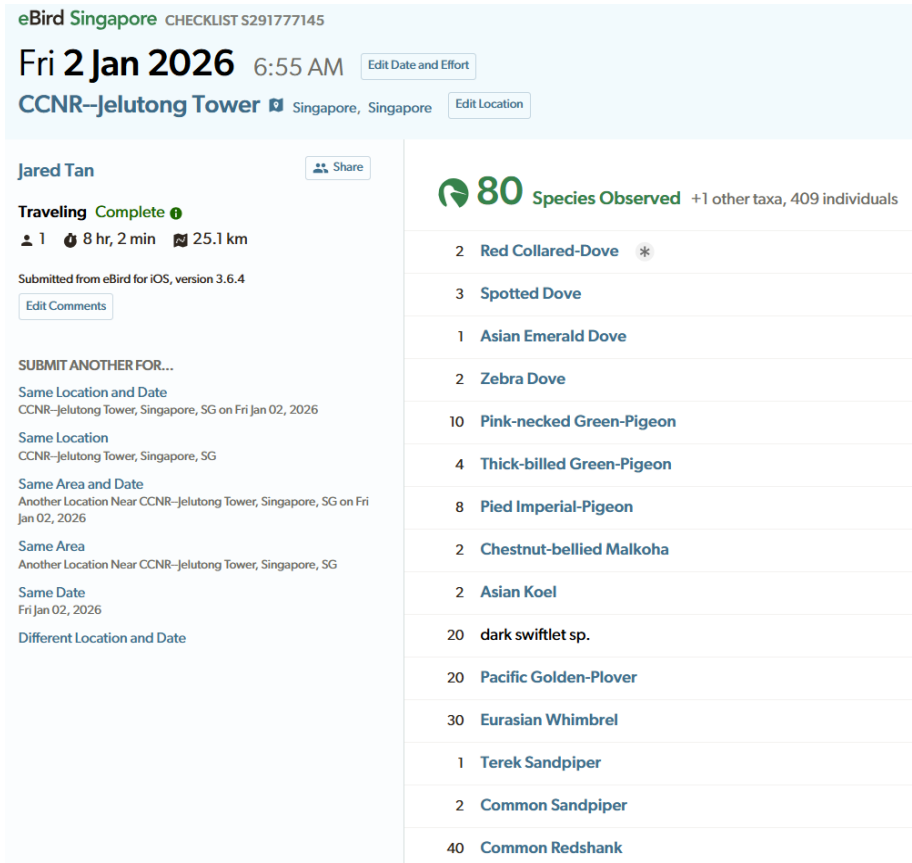
Generally, try to key in the location based on an existing location available in eBird (i.e. selecting "Gunung Pantu Recreational Forest--Pantu Bird Sanctuary and North Area" rather than creating a new custom pinned location). This will be beneficial as your checklist and sightings will be classified under the existing data for that location. If no existing hotspot is available for selection, it is ok to create a new pinned location as well. You can even suggest new hotspots for the eBird reviewers to consider! Alternatively, if you would like to use your checklist to

show people a specific pinned location to look for a specific bird, it is also ok to create a custom location.

Input locations accurately

Do also ensure that you input locations accurately. For example, you saw a bird in Gunung Pantı Recreational Forest, make sure that your checklist location is as such. It is actually quite common to see people mistakenly setting the location of their checklist as their home address!

It is also quite common to see some eBird users creating long, continuous checklists spanning multiple locations, which is misleading for other users and affects the accuracy of eBird data. For example, if you start your day in Singapore with a trip to Jelutong Tower in the Central Catchment Nature Reserve followed by Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, and record all your sightings in one checklist, this would lead to a 'jumbo' checklist of 80 species, spanning 8 hours and 25 km being created (Plate 5). While the location says 'Jelutong Tower', several species in the checklist are not found in the Central Catchment forest, and instead found along coastal mudflats such as Pacific Golden Plover, Eurasian Whimbrel, Terek Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper and Common Redshank. In fact, the high number of species, long duration and distance should set alarm bells ringing when seeing checklists like this.



eBird Singapore CHECKLIST S291777145

Fri 2 Jan 2026 6:55 AM [Edit Date and Effort](#)

CCNR-Jelutong Tower [Singapore, Singapore](#) [Edit Location](#)

Jared Tan [Share](#)

Traveling Complete [i](#)

[1](#) [8 hr, 2 min](#) [25.1 km](#)

Submitted from eBird for iOS, version 3.6.4

[Edit Comments](#)

SUBMIT ANOTHER FOR...

Same Location and Date
CCNR-Jelutong Tower, Singapore, SG on Fri Jan 02, 2026

Same Location
CCNR-Jelutong Tower, Singapore, SG

Same Area and Date
Another Location Near CCNR-Jelutong Tower, Singapore, SG on Fri Jan 02, 2026

Same Area
Another Location Near CCNR-Jelutong Tower, Singapore, SG

Same Date
Fri Jan 02, 2026

Different Location and Date

80 Species Observed +1 other taxa, 409 individuals

2	Red Collared-Dove	*
3	Spotted Dove	
1	Asian Emerald Dove	
2	Zebra Dove	
10	Pink-necked Green-Pigeon	
4	Thick-billed Green-Pigeon	
8	Pied Imperial-Pigeon	
2	Chestnut-bellied Malkoha	
2	Asian Koel	
20	dark swiftlet sp.	
20	Pacific Golden-Plover	
30	Eurasian Whimbrel	
1	Terek Sandpiper	
2	Common Sandpiper	
40	Common Redshank	

Plate 5: Screenshot of a 'jumbo' eBird checklist.

Someone experienced enough would be able to tell that something is off about this checklist, however those new to birding may not know this, and may end up going to Jelutong Tower

to look for the Eurasian Whimbrels and Common Redshanks and be sorely disappointed when none are seen at the location!

On the same note, even locations in somewhat close proximity to each other should be split to separate checklists. For example, if I visit Kranji Marsh, Neo Tiew Harvest Lane, then head to Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, I should submit three different checklists instead of submitting one large checklist under 'Kranji Marsh'.

While we benefit from the sightings of other eBird users, let us try to be responsible eBird users and keep our data as clean and accurate as possible so that our data can be used for research and also in turn benefit other eBird users as well. When eBird reviewers come across such checklists, they would have to **flag the entire checklist** and remove the checklist from public view to preserve the eBird data quality.

5. Make use of List-building Checklists to record your pre-eBird life lists

While it is preferred for eBird users to key in all checklists accurately based on exact dates and locations, eBird also recognises that historically, a lot of birding activity was recorded at a coarser scale of day lists, trip lists, or life lists, and submission of such detailed checklists may not be possible. As such, eBird has provided special guidelines on how you may input your historical life lists, with the use of 'List-building Checklists'. A List-building Checklist allows you to add in all the species you have seen in a certain region and can span multiple locations within that region. You do not need to put in the exact count of birds seen, as you can simply use an 'X' to show that you have seen each species before.

These checklists will be flagged and will not show up on the eBird public output, but will show up under your personal eBird bird count for each region. This way, you can still record your total number of birds seen without affecting the accuracy of eBird data being used by researchers. If the eBird reviewers come across checklists used for list-building which are not correctly flagged as such, they would have to manually flag them and remove them from public view.

You may refer to this link for more information:

<https://support.ebird.org/en/support/solutions/articles/48000804866-enter-your-pre-ebird-life-list>

6. Work together with eBird reviewers

The eBird reviewers are constantly reviewing submissions of rarities throughout the year. They may contact you regarding rarities after you submit your checklist. When that happens, it doesn't mean that they are looking down on you or do not trust you! Rather, they need to exercise due diligence to ensure that high and consistent standards are kept in the eBird database. Rather than just leaving reports of rarities with insufficient documentation unconfirmed, as far as possible, they would hope to contact observers to find out more information about each sighting, so that they do not miss out legitimate records.

To make things as smooth as possible, do your best to provide media/thorough descriptions on your checklists and reply to the eBird reviewers via email accordingly. Unfortunately,

sightings of rarities without sufficient documentation will not be able to be confirmed on eBird. Nevertheless, unconfirmed sightings will still be added to your personal eBird counts.

It is worth remembering that the eBird reviewers are merely volunteers and use a substantial amount of their free time to help the birding community. If you happen to disagree with their comments about a sighting that they have contacted you about, please do so in a respectful and constructive manner. Although this happens rarely, there have been cases of people being abusive towards eBird reviewers.

On a final note, I would like to remind everyone again to be responsible eBird users, being conservative about sightings and keeping checklists as accurate as possible! Let us continue to take the time to enjoy the birds around us and learn more about them together. eBird is a community effort, and I am sure it will continue to grow both in Malaysia, Singapore and around the world in the years to come.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Amar-Singh HSS for helping to edit the article, James Eaton for suggestions on birds which should not be identified to species, and to Dave Bakewell and James Eaton for reviewing the manuscript.

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Field Notes

Nesting of the Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher

Amar-Singh HSS, Kai-Soon Chan, Nick Baker, Suit-Kuen Cheong (Susan) & Pankaj Gupta

Introduction

The Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis* has a wide range in tropical Asia (Clement 2020). It is common in both Peninsular and Bornean Malaysia; the subspecies in Peninsular Malaysia is *C. c. antioxantha* (Clement 2020; Puan et al. 2020). While there is some local and regional data on nesting, it is generally limited. We report four nests, one parasitised by a cuckoo species, to add to the available information on the breeding ecology.

Disclosure on Nest Observations

The first and third nests were observed by a number of individuals over time. Generally, observers stayed at a distance of approximately six to seven meters from the nest and used long lens and videography equipment. The second and fourth nest were observed by two of us. One had terrain limitations and we stayed about five to six meters from the nest site but were shielded from the nest by a row of trees and foliage. At all nesting sites the adults appeared to be comfortable with being observed and did not show any alarm.

Observations

Nest One

The first nest was located at the Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia. It was identified on 24 March 2024 by Susan and monitored until 13 April 2024. The nest was attached to the upright trunk of a tree growing in mixed primary and secondary forest at the height of five meters. It was built of a variety of bryophytes, plant fibre, small ferns and other material (possibly lichen) and held together by spider webs (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Front & side views of the first nest. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 01 Apr 2024.

There was a distinctive trailing extension, attached to and hanging below the main nest; reminiscent of structures seen in some other flycatcher nests. Overarching the nest was a circular structure made of plant fibres and bryophytes, continuous with the main nest; shaped like a wreath. The bryophytes used for the nest matched the colour of the bryophytes growing on the tree trunk

When adults were keeping the nestling warm, they were hard to see as the cavity allowed all but the tail to be hidden. At times the head and eye of the adult could be seen, possibly when they were checking for any danger (Plate 2).



Plate 2: View of adult Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher when in the nest. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 01 Apr 2024.

When the nest was first discovered, the adults appeared to be feeding chick(s) inside nest but the head of the chick(s) could not be seen. Feeding continued on subsequent days as we monitored the nest to determine the duration of fledging. Around 08 April 2024 we were able to confirm the nestling was a cuckoo chick and recognised that the nest had been parasitised.

Both adults brought food to the single cuckoo nestling. Adults often used a branch, 4-5 m from the nest as a staging area before alighting on the lip of the nest to reach in and feed the nestling (Plates 3 & 4). There were 30 feeding episodes over a two hour continual observation period from 0815 to 1015 hrs on 01 April 2024. Feeding frequency occurred at a mean of 3.8 minutes (SD 3.0, median 3.0, mode 3.0). Given that this was a cuckoo nestling, the feeding frequency cannot be taken as that of Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher nestlings.

A link to an edited video of feeding episodes is here: <https://youtu.be/6evtZ0BZnlo>.



Plate 3: Left - Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher at staging area with small berries in beak, 28 Mar 2024. Right – Adult at nest to feed, 01 Apr 2024. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia.

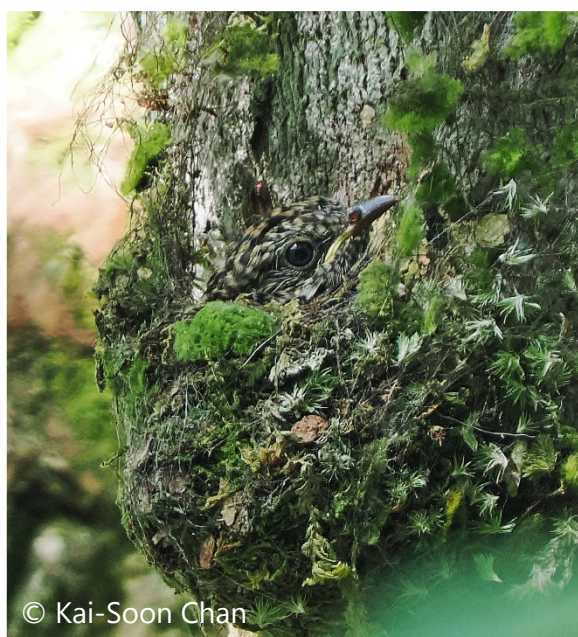


Plate 4: Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher feeding cuckoo chick (left) and chick in nest. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 09 Apr 2024.

Food items were small and were hard to determine. The majority appeared to be small insects. Items that were identified included small fruits on two occasions, small moths three times and small worm-like invertebrates brought in a batch of three items.

Adults usually spent between three to eight seconds at the nest. At times adults appeared to wait expectantly for a faecal sac, even though none was produced. We observed two faecal

sacs being removed (Plate 5) over a two hour continual observation from 0815 to 1015 hrs on 01 April 2024. The faecal sac was presented by the cuckoo nestling and was removed far from the nest. It was not consumed by the adults.



Plate 5: Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher removing cuckoo nestling faecal sac. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 08 Apr 2024.

Adult sexes are alike in plumage making determination of parental responsibilities difficult. Wells (2007) states that females are "*as male except smaller; size dimorphism greater than in other muscicapid flycatcher genera*". However, this was not easy to appreciate in the field. Plate 6 shows a composite image of the adult pair when they arrived to feed eight seconds apart. Although the postures are not identical, it can be seen that the presumed adult male was slightly larger with a longer tail than the adult female.

The park was closed on 11-12 April 2024 for the Hari Raya holidays. The nest was checked again on 13 April 2024 and found to be empty although the nest structure was largely intact. On 27 May 2024, we found a pair of Grey-headed Canary-Flycatchers feeding a cuckoo fledgling near the back gate area. This site is less than 500 m from the recent flycatcher nest which was located at the entrance to the birding trail. We suspect this cuckoo fledgling was likely from that nest. It was a Sunda Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis sepulcralis* (Plate 7). An adult Sunda Brush Cuckoo was also seen in the same area a few days apart from the chick sighting. Repeat observation on 29 and 31 May 2024 found that the cuckoo fledgling was still being fed by the Grey-headed Canary-Flycatchers (Plate 8). However, on subsequent days these birds could not be found anymore.



Plate 6: Adult Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher at nest. Presumed female left and male right. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 01 Apr 2024. Captured still images from a video.



Plate 7: Sunda Brush Cuckoo juvenile. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 26 May 2024.



Plate 8: Fledged Sunda Brush Cuckoo being fed by Grey-headed Canary-Flycatchers. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 31 May 2024.

Nest Two

On the morning of 29 January 2026, a pair of Grey-headed Canary-Flycatchers were observed by Nick at the Kledang Saiong Forest Reserve at Ulu Chepor, Perak, Malaysia, 2km away from the first nest. One of the pair was photographed with nesting material in its beak (Plate 9). In order not to disturb the birds any further the area was soon vacated, and no attempt was made to locate a possible nest that day. During a subsequent visit on 05 February 2026 a completed nest was located at the exact same location. The nest was fixed to the upright trunk of a tree growing in primary forest in a steep ravine adjacent to a rushing stream. The nest was approximately 8-10 metres up the tree trunk and was constructed predominantly of bryophytes and spider web with some possible plant fibres.



Plate 9: Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher with nesting material. Ulu Chepor, Kledang Saiong Forest Reserve, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 29 Jan 2026.

Unlike the first nest it did not have much of a trailing extension or an overarching circular structure although there were suggestions of small upward extensions at the upper sides of the nest. The adult was hidden, except for the tail, when incubating in the nest (Plate 10).

We were only able to watch the nest until 16 February 2026, after which the site was closed due to the Muslim fasting month. Limited observations showed that the pair were incubating but, due to limited sexual dichromatism, we cannot be certain if both adults shared the responsibility. One continual nesting observation was done on 16 February 2026 from 0840 to 0940 hrs using long lens videography with the observer standing some distance away. The nest was empty on arrival. Both adults came at 0909 hrs and one entered the nest to incubate. The other stayed outside, nearby. The bird outside sang/called intermittently; possibly contact calls. The bird in the nest left at 0934 hrs with no change over observed. An edited video of the activity and adult incubating is available here: [https://youtu.be/ TYd7qRIPUw](https://youtu.be/TYd7qRIPUw).



Plate 10: Front & side views of second nest with adult Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher incubating. Ulu Chepor, Kledang Saiong Forest Reserve, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 09 (right) & 16 (left) Feb 2026.

Nest Three

The third nest was located at the Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia. It was identified on 09 March 2026 by Susan and monitored until 20 April 2026. At the time of first observation the birds were in the final stages of nest building (Plate 11) with adults using bryophytes to build the nest.

The nest was attached to the upright trunk of a tree growing in mixed secondary and primary forest at the height of seven to eight meters. It was located below a bend in the tree trunk which may have offered some shelter from the rain (Plate 12). It was about five to six meters from a stream and about 150 m from the first nest. The nest material was similar to previous nests but there was more plant material – leaves and plant fibre. It had a well-developed overarching circular structure making the nest look like a 'cavity' from the front. The side view showed that the primary bulk of the nest was the lower portion. There was a small amount of nesting material attached at the base of the nest but no trailing extension.



Plate 11: Grey-headed Canary-Flycatchers nest building. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 09 Mar 2026.



Plate 12: A view of the third nest. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 16 Apr 2026.

Observations on 19, 24 and 29 March 2026 showed no nest building activity or birds in the nest, although the nest appeared complete and adults were seen feeding near the nest. On 04 April 2026 it was noted that one adult was incubating (Plate 13) but it was not known when incubation had started. By 10 April 2026 feeding of chicks had started, although chicks were too small to be seen. Prey was predominantly small insects including flies. Once a small moth was brought back but had to be discarded, presumably because the nestlings could not swallow it (Plate 14).



Plate 13: Grey-headed Canary-Flycatchers incubating (left) 04 April 2026 and feeding nestlings (right) 15 April 2026. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia.



Plate 14: Grey-headed Canary-Flycatchers bringing food to nestlings. Right a moth prey that was too large for chicks to feed on. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia. 11 April 2026.

Both adults brought food to the nestlings. Adults often used a branch of an adjacent tree, 2-3 m from the nest as a staging area before alighting on the lip of the nest to reach in and feed the nestling. A 45 min continual video recording from 1404 to 1449 hrs on 16 April 2026 showed 19 feeding episodes. Feeding frequency occurred at a mean of 1.7 minutes (SD 1.1, median 1.5, mode 1.0). Nestlings appeared to anticipate the arrival of the adults. A link to an edited video of feeding episodes is here: <https://youtu.be/-4SaHdPYL-A>. Food items were small. Two items brought to nestlings were moths. On one occasion, a cricket/grasshopper was offered to the nestlings and had to be re-offered before it could be taken. Adults usually spent between two to five seconds at the nest. We observed two faecal sacs being removed

during the 45 min continual observation period. The faecal sac was not consumed by the adults and was removed far from the nest.

The last observation of feeding in the nest was 18 April 2026. When the nest was visited on 20 April 2026 it was empty and the chicks had possibly fledged. Note that this pair of adult Grey-headed Canary-Flycatchers appeared very tolerant of human presence and had built the nest above an area where picnickers often swim in the river and prepare barbecues. Feeding was observed even as smoke from the barbecue was blown towards the nest. Feeding of nestlings carried on even as park staff were clearing leaves in the area using loud leaf blowers.

Nest Four

The fourth nest was located by Nick at the Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia on 25 May 2026. Adults were seen actively feeding what appeared to be young nestlings, as they had to reach deep into the nest to do so. It was located along a trail in primary forest and attached to the trunk of a tree at the height of seven meters. The nest was located on the leaning side of the tree, which may have offered some shelter from the rain (Plate 15). The nest material appeared to be similar to previous nests but there was more spider web used. It lacked the overarching circular structure and had no trailing extension. We were not able to follow up on this nest.

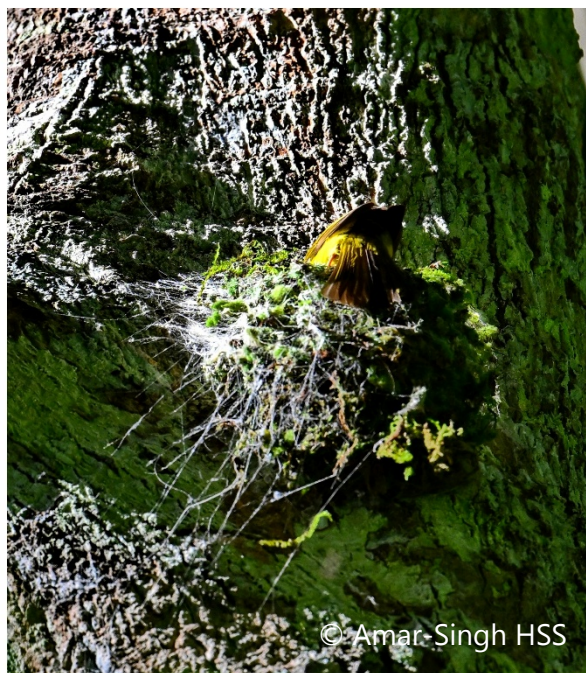


Plate 15: Overview of fourth nest. Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 25 May 2026.

This nest was noted to be re-used (pers. obs. Sein-Chiong Chiu).

Discussion

There are only two previous local nesting records (Wells 2007), one on the flat face of a large boulder and the other on the upright trunk of a tree growing in a forest stream; one was 1.5 m from the ground. Wells (2007) notes that nest "*sides produced into lateral wings that curve*

with and attach across its surface". In the three nests we observed locally two had a similar structure but of different degrees.

Of interest is how the birds attach the nest to the flat surface of a tree trunk. Plate 16 shows a Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher nest in early construction. The bird appears to first lay down a foundation of spider web in the shape planned and then adds bryophytes to it. This will then be anchored with more spider web and plant material.



Plate 16: Early stages of Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher nest construction. Bagar Talla, Nainital, Uttarakhand, India. 11 Apr 2024.

There is no information on the duration of incubation and fledging periods (Clement 2020). The observations at nest three suggest that the incubation period is in the range 7-12 days and the fledging period in the range 9-12 days. It is possible that chicks fledge early. A previous observation in June 2012 at 1,800 m ASL on Gunung Brinchang, Pahang, Malaysia showed adults feeding three, recently fledged, young juveniles (Plate 17).

In the literature (Sharpe & Whitehead 1890) there is a report of a *Hierococcyx fugax* cuckoo, Malaysian Hawk-Cuckoo in today's terminology, parasitising a Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher nest in the Kinabalu area, Sabah, Malaysia. We observed parasitisation by a Sunda Brush Cuckoo which adds a new local record of brood parasitism.



Plate 17: Recently fledged Grey-headed Canary-Flycatchers. Gunung Brinchang, Pahang, Malaysia. Jun 2012.

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We would like to thank David Wells and Swee-Yian Lim for reviewing the manuscript.

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Prey choice of the Crested Serpent-Eagle in an Urban Environment

Chee-Yong Teoh & Peck-Choo Lim

Introduction

In Malaysia, the Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela* is a familiar raptor in both forested and urban environments, where its distinctive one-to-three note scream is frequently heard (Wells 1999; Clark et al. 2020). Despite significant environmental changes, the species has demonstrated remarkable adaptability. At Taman Tasik Cova (also known as Lake Cova), Crested Serpent-Eagles appear to have become habituated to human presence. In 2025, we observed a Crested Serpent-Eagle perched less than six meters above a paved pathway, unperturbed by the pedestrians and dogs passing below. Similar behaviour has been noted in other nearby urban parks. Taman Tasik Cova is located in Kota Damansara, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, and spans approximately 10.5 hectares. Lake Cova's primary function is flood mitigation, serving as a stormwater retention basin for the surrounding township while also providing a recreational space for the community (Chen 2021). Unlike many other retention basins, it does not feature a permanent lake or pond, despite being fed by two small rivers. Siltation over the years has resulted in shallow water flows and the formation of numerous "sandbanks" due to the accumulation of mud and silt. These deposits have transformed the area into a mini-wetland habitat. Plates 1 and 2 show the general location where prey captures by the Crested Serpent-Eagle occurred at Taman Tasik Cova. The trees at the top left near the apartment building were where all the prey captures by Crested Serpent-Eagle were observed by us. This area was also the main entrance to the Cova park.



Plate 1: A view of Taman Tasik Cova showing where Sungai Rumpit flows into Tasik Cova. Kota Damansara, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, Apr 2026.

One species thriving in this environment is the Asian Water Monitor *Varanus salvator*. On the morning of 20 April 2026, at least ten Asian Water Monitors - ranging from juveniles to large adults - were observed hunting or sunbathing. The park also supports large populations of

House Crows *Corvus splendens* and Javan Mynas *Acridotheres javanicus*. This environment served as the setting for the Crested Serpent-Eagle prey captures documented in this report.

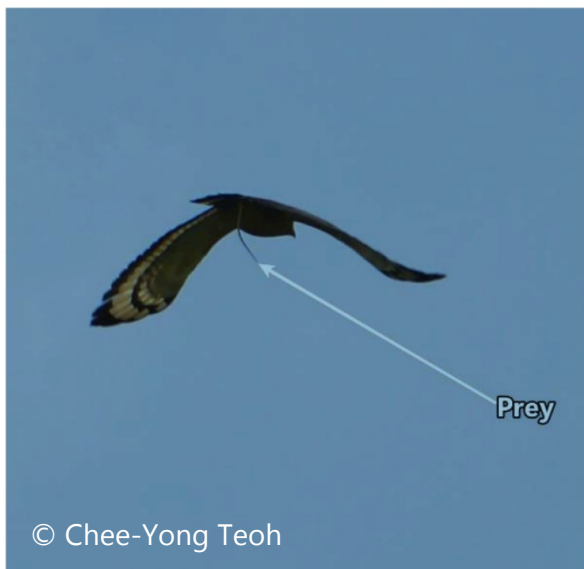


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Plate 2: A view of Taman Tasik Cova showing where Sungai Tambul flows in. Kota Damansara, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, Apr 2026.

Observations

At Taman Tasik Cova, the preferred prey of the Crested Serpent-Eagle appeared to be juvenile lizards, specifically young Asian Water Monitors. On 10 April 2021 a Crested Serpent-Eagle was observed swooping down to capture a juvenile monitor on the ground before carrying it away into the distance (Plate 3). On 16 February 2025 a Crested Serpent-Eagle was seen perched on a branch with a captured juvenile Asian Water Monitor, feeding briefly before relocating to a nearby tree across the water (Plate 3).



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Plate 3: Asian Water Monitor prey: Left - flying away with lizard prey, Apr 2021. Right - perched with young lizard prey, Feb 2025. Taman Tasik Cova, Kota Damansara, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.

On 10 May 2025, at approximately 1035 hrs, a flock of approximately ten House Crows were observed mobbing a Crested Serpent-Eagle. The eagle had captured a young Asian Water Monitor and raised its crest in a defensive posture against the crows while ensuring the prey was incapacitated (Plate 4).



Plate 4: Crested Serpent-Eagle with Asian Water Monitor prey. Left - crest raised in defensive posture; Right – incapacitating prey. Taman Tasik Cova, Kota Damansara, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, May 2025.

On the morning of 20 April 2026 at about 0915 hrs, we observed a Crested Serpent-Eagle swooping to the ground with a mob of House Crows trailing behind. When on the ground, it could be seen that the Crested Serpent-Eagle had a dead Javan Myna under its talons. The Crested Serpent-Eagle was on a pedestrian path, next to the car park entrance of the apartment (Plate 5). A car drove past the Crested Serpent-Eagle into the car park but the Crested Serpent-Eagle was unfazed by it. After about 5 minutes, the Crested Serpent-Eagle took its prey and flew to the other side of the water to eat it (Plate 5). This is the first instance we have observed a Crested Serpent-Eagle with a bird prey at Taman Tasik Cova.



Plate 5: Crested Serpent-Eagle with Javan Myna prey. Left - warning off the House crows; Right at a quieter location across the water. Taman Tasik Cova, Kota Damansara, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, Apr 2026.

A video recording of the Crested Serpent-Eagle with the Javan Myna prey can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dq9HIKqa6gw>.

Discussion

While the name Crested 'Serpent-Eagle' suggests a specialized focus on snakes, its diet has been documented to be broad and opportunistic. Sharma and Bhopale (2015) noted that the Crested Serpent-Eagle consumes a variety of prey, including turtles, frogs, fish, lizards, and birds. In 2013 at the Kuala Selangor Nature Park, Peninsular Malaysia, a Crested Serpent-Eagle was observed foraging on the ground for earthworms following a rain event (Shepherd 2018). The eagle was seen extracting large worms from moist, bare soil over a fifteen-minute period. Ang (2021) cited an observation where a Crested Serpent-Eagle was feeding on a crab.

Wells (1999) notes that prey in Peninsular Malaysia includes snakes, lizards, frogs, toads and occasionally small, grassland birds like weavers, munias and pipits. There is one [Facebook post](#) by Jayesh Nagda from India in 2017 of a Crested Serpent-Eagle taking a myna chick. Our observation of an adult Javan Myna as a prey appeared to be unusual for the region.

However, a study conducted in India, that documented 173 prey items, showed that 74% were reptiles, 18% birds, 7% amphibians and 0.5% each fish and mammals (Gokula 2012). The bird prey identified in that study included Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*, Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*, Indian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*, Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*, Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus* and an oriole.

The egg-laying season of the Asian Water Monitor typically extends from April to October (Shine et al. 1996). With the female Asian Water Monitor producing multiple clutches each season, presumably there should be enough prey for the Crested Serpent-Eagle. So was this Javan Myna prey just an opportunistic meal for this Crested Serpent-Eagle or was it part of its regular diet?

The study from India suggests that birds are more common in the diet of the Crested Serpent-Eagle than we have observed and may include larger birds than expected. Ongoing observations and studies at nesting sites would help quantify its diet better.

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Prey in the Diet of the Greater Painted-Snipe

Amar-Singh HSS & Stanley T Shao

Introduction

The Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* uses its long bill to probe soft mud and also uses a scything action in shallow water to find food (Kirwan 2020) but no information on their diet is known locally (Wells 1999). Kirwan (2020) mentions invertebrates, including insects, snails, earthworms, crustaceans, and seeds as part of their diet. Overall data on their diet is limited; their crepuscular and shy behaviour makes observations difficult. We share some observations to add to the understanding of the dietary preferences of the Greater Painted-Snipe.

Observations

Feeding on Small Water Snails

On 07 May 2020 at a large overgrown drain/ditch in an urban setting at Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, Amar had an opportunity to watch feeding behaviour from 0730 to 0900 hrs, using the car as a hide (Amar-Singh HSS 2022). A pair of Greater Painted-Snipe were feeding together. Foraging behaviour included probing into soft mud, probing with beak closed on the 'stream' bed and sweeping a partly open bill through the shallow water (scything action of bill). Prey was obtained in both shallow waters, where the eyes were kept open, and deeper waters where the eyes were closed. At times the head could be partially or completely submerged under water (Plate 1). Feeding was accompanied, in the female, by frequent tail and body bobbing.

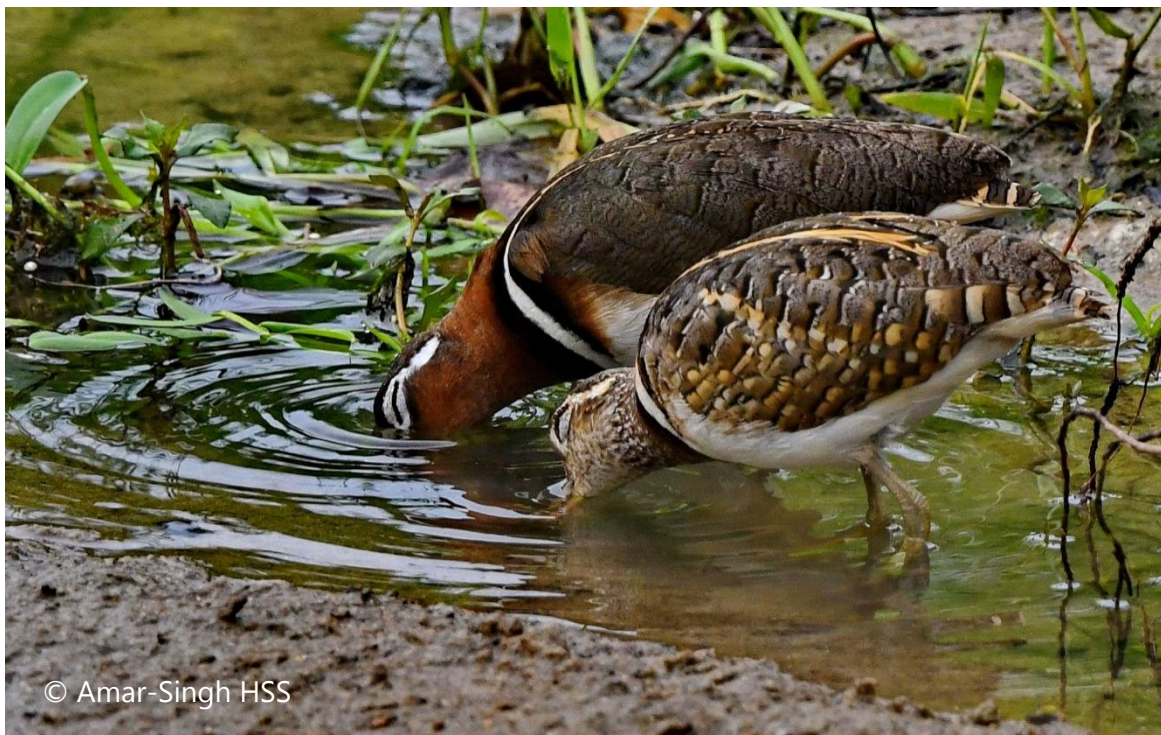


Plate 1: Male (right) and female Greater Painted-Snipe deeper water feeding technique. Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 07 May 2020.

The primary prey taken, that could be identified, were small water snails (Plate 2 & 3). The bill was run through shallow water, a snail identified and drawn up the beak. A large volume of

these snails were consumed rapidly, almost one every 10-20 seconds. A video recording of the feeding activity can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLVEnn5ncHY>.



Plate 2: Female Greater Painted-Snipe feeding on a snail. Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 07 May 2020.



Plate 3: Still images from a video of a single, snail feeding episode by a female Greater Painted-Snipe showing surface tension transport mechanism. Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, 07 May 2020.

An evaluation of this and other videos by Fraser (2022) established that the birds' use "*a surface tension transport mechanism to move captured prey from the distal tip of the bill to the oral cavity*". The surface tension transport activity is fast and takes approximately 0.6 seconds. Fraser (2022) also notes that the dominant foraging mode was tactile and receptors in the lower mandible aid in prey detection.

Feeding on Tadpoles

On 19 April 2026 at Tawau, Sabah, Malaysia, Stanley observed a female Greater Painted-Snipe taking a tadpole as prey (Plate 4). The female Greater Painted-Snipe was feeding in shallow water using a probing method. It submerged its bill just past the midpoint, always with its eyes closed (Plate 5). While there were many small pools in the area, the one Stanley photographed for two days seemed to contain only tadpoles. The bird would feed for about five minutes before slowly walking away to rest behind a bush.

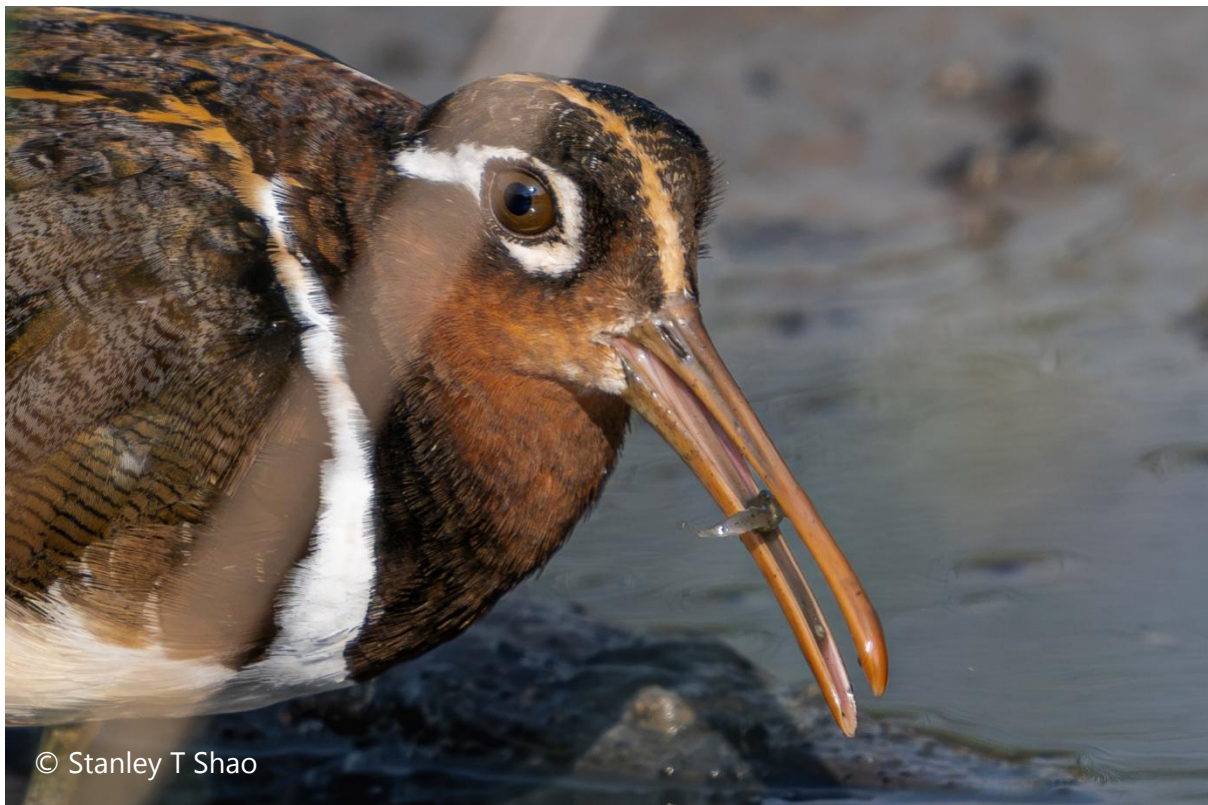


Plate 4: Female Greater Painted-Snipe feeding on a tadpole. Tawau, Sabah, Malaysia, 19 April 2026.

Observations showed that the Greater Painted-Snipe made fewer than ten catches before hiding for about ten minutes and then would peek out from the corner of the bush it was hiding behind. It would then slowly walk out into the open to feed once again.

Images were taken from the car at a distance of four to five meters. It is likely that the bird would have stayed longer during each feed if the observer had not been this close. A Slaty-breasted Rail *Lewinia striata* was also feeding on tadpoles in the same pool but was very shy and hurried away; it was there just once.



Plate 5: Female Greater Painted-Snipe feeding technique (tadpoles). Tawau, Sabah, Malaysia, 19 April 2026.

To our knowledge, there is no prior documentation of tadpole prey for this species, although Peacock (2016) mentions that the diet probably includes tadpoles.

Review of Online Images and Databases

A review of images posted in the Macaulay Library on 06 May 2026 with behaviour filters 'foraging or eating' (n=541), 'feeding young' (n=9) or 'carrying food' (n=4) showed five observations where some food item could be seen in the bill (apart from ours reported here). George Parker (Yilan County, Taiwan, May 2023 ML593567051), Arijit Banerjee (Rajasthan, India, Jul 2022, ML464397681), JingZu Tu (Yilan County, Taiwan, May 2021, ML369652541) and Sunil Singhal (Rajasthan, India, Jul 2017, ML378451681) observed adults with a small snail in the beak. Najmuddin Fakhrudin (Maharashtra, India, Jul 2025, ML639404818) observed an adult male with three juveniles, two of which had a small prey in the beak that could be a small fish or a dragonfly larva. A general Boolean web search for "Greater Painted-Snipe" and "diet" and "Greater Painted-Snipe" and "prey" did not add any additional information for images. One recent video showed an adult feeding two juveniles with a possible dragonfly larva (link: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/aLJy6lAgyGI>).

Fraser's (2022) analysis of many online videos noted that, although "*birds were observed capturing prey*"... "*in many instances the prey item could not be seen*". He noted small snail prey in 16 recordings and worms in two recordings.

In summary, apart from Fraser's (2022) analysis, most diet records are incidental observations rather than any systematic analyses. We encourage colleagues to do video recordings of feeding episodes and report prey taken to help fill this data gap. Notably, the observation of tadpole predation reported here appears to be the first documented instance for this species.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Dave Bakewell for reviewing the manuscript.

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Some New and Overlooked Food Plants of Dicaeidae and Nectariniidae

Robert A. Cheke

During the preparation of 'Sunbirds of the World' (Cheke & Mann 2025) an important publication on the biology of mistletoes was, regrettably, overlooked. Docters van Leeuwen (1954) published a comprehensive account of the biology of the Loranthaceae including information on avian visitors to flowers and fruits of this family of mistletoes, and to other plant varieties, mostly noted in Java. Many of these included plant-bird interactions additional to those provided by Cheke & Mann (2025), which are listed below together with a few other additional records (Table 1). Docters van Leeuwen's paper includes, *inter alia*, descriptions of how some mistletoe flowers 'explode' when probed by birds' bills, line drawings of the development of mistletoe plants from their deposition on branches by flowerpeckers and photographs. Amongst the drawings are illustrations of a longitudinal section of the stomach of a Grey-sided Flowerpecker *Dicaeum celebicum* showing the gizzard, which consists of a sack emerging from the lower end of the upper stomach just below the oesophagus, and a picture of a string of excreted seeds of two species of mistletoe suspended together by a slimy strand. The photographs include pictures of a nest of a Scarlet-headed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum t. trochileum* amongst leaves of *Enterolobium saman* and of the approximately 45 seeds of *Dendrophthoe pentandra* deposited by a young *D. trochileum* during a single day, whilst it was still being fed by its parents.

Other additional food-plants of flowerpeckers and sunbirds have been published more recently. A summary list of mistletoes visited by 13 species of flowerpeckers in Malaysia has been published by Amar-Singh et al. (2026); their list also includes some records additional to those listed by Cheke & Mann (2025). Similarly, Navarro et al. (2025) have published eight new food plants of the Tboli Sunbird *Aethopyga tibolii*: *Amyema serata*, *A. incarnatiflora*, *Agalmyla chorisepala*, *Aeschynanthus mindanaensis*, *A. asclepioides*, *Cyrtandra apoensis*, *Heptapleurum ovoideum* and *Saurauia copelandii*.

Table 1: Some records of plant foods of Flowerpeckers, Spiderhunters and Sunbirds additional to those listed in Cheke & Mann (2025) from Docters van Leeuwen (1954), references therein, Amar-Singh et al. (2025), Huang et al. (2025) and Jacobs (1961).

Bird species	Plant species	Notes	Reference(s)
Yellow-vented Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum chrysorrheum</i>	<i>Scurrula ferruginea</i>	Nectar & fruit	Amar-Singh HSS et al. (2026)
Thick-billed Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum agile</i> (= <i>Pachyglossa agilis</i>)	<i>Dendrophthoe falcata</i>	Berries taken	Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Pale-billed Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>	<i>Ficus racemosa</i> (= <i>F. glomerata</i>)	Fruits taken	Ryan (1899) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Nilgiri Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum concolor sollicitans</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe pentandra</i>	Pollination reported	Cammerloher (1928) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Plain Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum minullum</i>	<i>Viscum ovalifolium</i>	Fruit	Amar-Singh HSS et al. (2026)



Bird species	Plant species	Notes	Reference(s)
Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum cruentatum</i>	<i>Viscum ovalifolium</i>	Fruit	Amar-Singh HSS <i>et al.</i> (2026)
Scarlet-headed Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum t. trochileum</i>	<i>Scurrula atropurpurea</i>	Feed at flowers. Pollination reported	Cammerloher (1928) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Black-sided Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum monticolum</i>	<i>Taxillus chinensis</i> <i>Scurrula ferruginea</i> <i>Amyema beccarii</i>	? Fruit Nectar	Amar-Singh HSS <i>et al.</i> (2026)
Fire-breasted Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum ignipectus</i>	<i>Scurrula ferruginea</i>	Fruit	Amar-Singh HSS <i>et al.</i> (2026)
Red-striped Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum australe</i>	<i>Flueggea virosa</i>	Fruit	Barredo (2024)
Whitehead's Spiderhunter <i>Arachnothera juliae</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe longituba</i>		Jacobs (1961)
Brown-throated Sunbird <i>Anthreptes m. malacensis</i>	<i>Macrosolen cochinchinensis</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Brown-throated Sunbird <i>Anthreptes malacensis</i>	<i>Scurrula atropurpurea</i>	Nectar	Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Olive Sunbird <i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>	<i>Agelanthus</i> (= <i>Tapinanthus</i>) <i>kraussianus</i>		Evans (1895) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Mouse-coloured Sunbird <i>Cyanomitra verreauxii</i>	<i>Agelanthus</i> (= <i>Tapinanthus</i>) <i>kraussianus</i>		Evans (1895) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Purple-rumped Sunbird <i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe falcata</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954),
Crimson-backed Sunbird <i>Leptocoma minima</i>	<i>Scurrula</i> spp.		Ali (1932) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Purple Sunbird <i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe falcata</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Purple Sunbird <i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>	<i>Scurrula</i> spp.		Ali (1932) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris o. ornatus</i> (includes <i>pectoralis</i> ; Listed as <i>Nectarinia jugularis pectoralis</i>)	<i>Dendrophthoe pentandra</i>	Nectar and fruits. Pollination reported	Docters van Leeuwen (1954), Cammerloher (1928)
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris o. ornatus</i>	<i>Macrosolen cochinchinensis</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris ornatus</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe pentandra</i>	Pollination reported	Cammerloher (1928) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954).
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris ornatus</i>	<i>Scurrula atropurpurea</i>	Nectar	Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris ornatus</i>	<i>Erythrina variegata</i> (= <i>E. indica</i>)		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris ornatus</i>	<i>Helixanthera cylindrica</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Loten's Sunbird <i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe falcata</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)



Bird species	Plant species	Notes	Reference(s)
White-flanked Sunbird <i>Aethopyga eximia</i> (listed as <i>Aethopyga eximea</i>)	<i>Rhododendron retusum</i>	The sunbird chased a <i>Bombus rufipes</i> bee away from the flowers	Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Black-throated Sunbird <i>Aethopyga saturata</i>	<i>Colquhounia elegans</i>	Pollination reported	Huang <i>et al.</i> (2025)
Javan Sunbird <i>Aethopyga mystacalis</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe pentandra</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Vigors's Sunbird <i>Aethopyga vigorsii</i>	<i>Scurrula</i> spp.		Docters van Leeuwen, (1954), Ali (1932)

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Citation: Cheke RA. (2026). Some New and Overlooked Food Plants of Dicaeidae and Nectariniidae. *Malaysian Bird Report*. Volume 2/2026, Jun 2026: pg. 37-39.

Intraspecific Conflict in the White-breasted Waterhen

Mohamed Ali, Sein-Chiong Chiu, Dixon Lau & Amar-Singh HSS

Introduction

The White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* is a common resident and migrant railid in Malaysia (Wells 1999). It can be found in a wide range of habitats, including urban parks and gardens, wetlands and the forest edge (Wells 1999). Little is known about its intraspecific (within the same species) or interspecific (between different species) interactions (Taylor & van Perlo 1998; Wells 1999; Taylor et al. 2023). In one extended survey, the authors concluded that the White-breasted Waterhen "*avoided interspecific conflicts with other wetland birds in the same feeding and breeding grounds*" "*by hiding themselves*" (Akhtar et al., 2013). No mention was made about intraspecific conflicts. In general, rails are characterised by intensive antagonistic behaviour directed not only towards conspecifics, but also towards other species (Taylor & van Perlo 1998).

This brief report describes some observations on intraspecific conflicts.

Observations

Conflict 1

In August 2022 at Bishan-AMK Park, Singapore, Mohamed Ali witnessed a White-breasted Waterhen multi-individual territorial dispute. The fight appeared to have begun when an 'outsider' White-breasted Waterhen intruded on another group's territory. The intruder was then attacked by a 'resident' White-breasted Waterhen (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Two White-breasted Waterhens involved in a fight, Bishan-AMK Park, Singapore, Aug 2022.

Eventually, two other 'residents' joined the fight, bringing the total to three birds attacking the 'intruder' simultaneously (Plate 2). Agonistic behaviours included aerial kicks, bill-jabbing, pecking, and grappling with feet/claws. At times the birds had claws locked while seated (Plate 3). Mohamed Ali was unfortunately unable to witness the resolution of the conflict.



Plate 2: Two White-breasted Waterhens attacking a third, Bishan-AMK Park, Singapore, Aug 2022.



Plate 3: Two White-breasted Waterhens with claws locked, Bishan-AMK Park, Singapore, Aug 2022.

Mohamed Ali has previously observed the White-breasted Waterhen being very territorial with other species (interspecific conflicts). This was the first time he witnessed them fighting so violently.

Conflict 2

In December 2024, at Sibul, Sarawak, Malaysia, Dixon Lau came across two White-breasted Waterhens moments before the fight broke out. One bird slowly approached another bird, while continually making soft but 'strong-toned' calls. The other bird was faced away but was also vocalising in the same manner. There was no immediate 'charging' of the other bird. A short while later the two birds engaged in a fight (Plate 4). It was a very brief conflict and stopped with one individual slowly backing off and walking away. No third individual seen. A link to a video of the activity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4A4kWHo4ZA>.



Plate 4: Two White-breasted Waterhens involved in a fight, Sibul, Sarawak, Malaysia, Dec 2024.

Conflict 3

On 08 January 2026, in Perak, Malaysia, Sein-Chiong Chiu was driving a village road, bordered by a pond on one side and wetlands on the other side, when he came across two pairs of White-breasted Waterhens in the midst of a fight. Two birds had their claws tightly locked in a clamp and were sitting in the middle of the road while another two birds stood facing off on the side of the road (Plate 5). The two birds locked claws for around 17 seconds before disengaging and running to the right side of the road and then continued to jump at each other with claws extended. The other two birds jumped once at each other and then continued to just face off. After about 32 seconds the fighting birds split up and one pair ran towards the wetlands while the other pair ran towards the pond. As there were two pairs it was unlikely that they were fighting over a mate and also no food was seen. This was very likely a territorial fight. A link to a video of the activity: <https://youtu.be/c42B7hVvex8>.



Plate 5: Video screen grab of two pairs of White-breasted Waterhens involved in a fight, Perak, Malaysia, 08 Jan 2026.

Discussion

Taylor & van Perlo (1998), quoting other sources, state that while "*remarkably little information is available on its social organisation and behaviour... territorial birds are intolerant of conspecifics, and individuals have been seen driving off approaching birds...*"

These observations suggest that intraspecific conflicts do occur and can be quite forceful. Whether these are purely territorial or if there is a breeding element is uncertain. Two of the three documented episodes occurred during the migratory season and it is uncertain if any migratory birds were involved. Breeding in Peninsular Malaysia is documented to occur year round (Wells 1999) and this aggression may well have a breeding/nesting defence component.

Acknowledgement

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

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Possible Red-whiskered Bulbul x Yellow-vented Bulbul Interspecific Hybridisation

Yoke-Mooi Liew

Hybridisation among bulbuls is rarely documented in the wild in Peninsular Malaysia. I report a possible hybridisation between a Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* and a Yellow-vented Bulbul *P. goiavier*.

On 26 April 2026 at approximately 1358 hrs, I observed an odd-looking bulbul in Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia. I visited a nearby field to monitor a pair of Red-wattled Lapwings *Vanellus indicus*, as one bird appeared to be brooding when I last saw them at the end of March. The lapwings were still present but nothing of interest was noted with one lapwing sitting on the ground, seemingly still brooding.

After a while, I noticed a flock of perhaps at least ten Yellow-vented Bulbuls *P. goiavier* feeding at a *Macaranga tanarius* tree. The Yellow-vented Bulbul is one of the most common urban garden birds in Peninsular Malaysia. The Yellow-vented Bulbuls were very active during that hot midday afternoon, with their signature bubbly song.

Shortly thereafter, I noticed an unusual bulbul associating with the Yellow-vented Bulbuls and feeding with them. The first impression I had of the strange bird was a Red-whiskered Bulbul *P. jocosus*, but it had a shorter crest, a yellow vent and was missing the distinct red ear coverts (Plate 1). While the Red-whiskered Bulbul is naturally distributed in northern Peninsular Malaysia (Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan), it is a common species in the Asian cagebird trade (Wells 2007). Hence, where the Red-whiskered Bulbul is observed south of northern Peninsular Malaysia, these are likely escapees, with small feral populations established in Perak. The odd bulbul also reminded me of the Sooty-headed Bulbul *P. aurigaster* and the White-eared Bulbul *P. leucotis*, both non-native to Malaysia, but again this bird was not of those species.



Plate 1: Red-whiskered Bulbul x Yellow-vented Bulbul Hybrid. Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia 26 April 2026

This odd bulbul was of similar size to the Yellow-vented Bulbul. It exhibited a mix of traits - it had a crest of intermediate height, a thick black line between the bill and the eye (blackish

loral stripe like Yellow-vented Bulbul), white cheeks demarcated with a black malar stripe (like Red-whiskered Bulbul), white throat, black bill and legs, a bright yellow vent (like Yellow-vented Bulbul), brown upperparts and whitish underparts. No vocalisation was heard.

I did not know what to make of it. I decided to consult some friends, one of whom suggested it could be a hybrid and shared an interesting article with me (Techachoochert & Round 2013). In the article Techachoochert & Round (2013) describe the apparent widespread practice of cross-breeding Red-whiskered Bulbuls with Yellow-vented Bulbuls in Thailand. After comparing the bulbul to pictures of hybrids in the article, it seemed likely that this unusual bird was a cross between the common Yellow-vented Bulbul and the Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* x *P. goiavier*. I tried looking for it again on three other occasions but could not find it. Plate 2 shows a comparison of this hybrid bulbul with a Red-whiskered Bulbul and a Yellow-vented Bulbul.

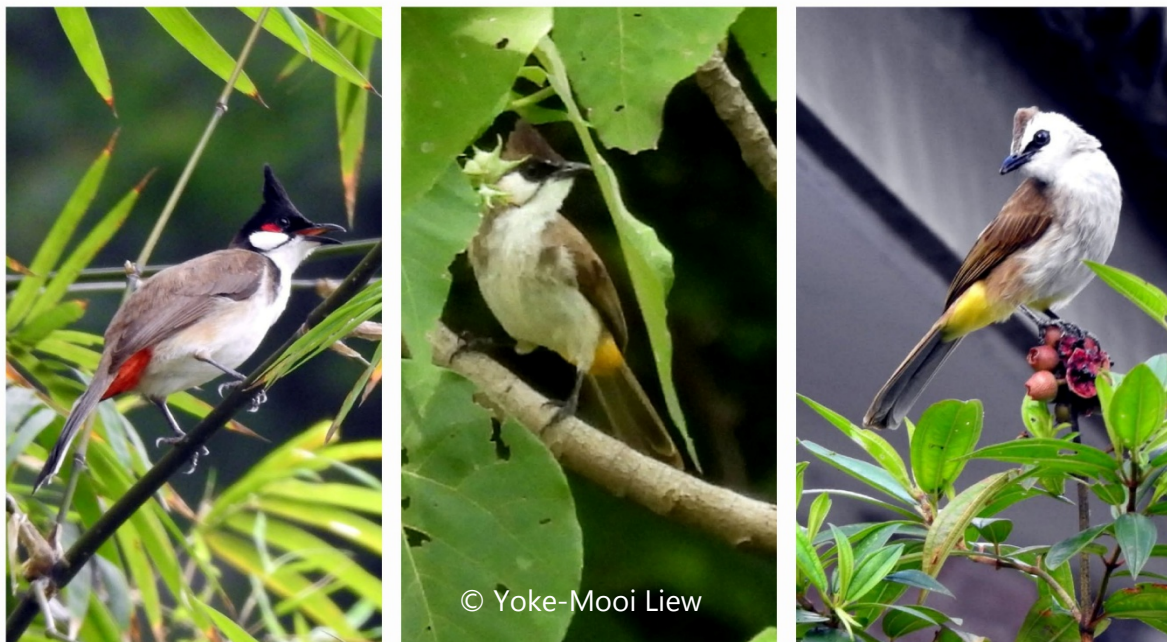


Plate 2: Comparison of the hybrid bulbul (centre) with a Red-whiskered Bulbul (left) and a Yellow-vented Bulbul (right).

One concern in identifying hybrids is that juvenile Red-whiskered Bulbuls may also exhibit a yellow-orange vent. Islam and Williams (2020) state that "*Juveniles are like adults, but with a shorter and browner crest, they lack crimson ear-patch, much weaker breast band, and their undertail coverts are pink to orange rufous*". Observations of juvenile Red-whiskered Bulbuls in Perak have often shown yellow-orange vents (Amar-Singh HSS, pers. comm.). David Wells (pers. comm.) suggests that rather than emphasising lower tail-covert colour, it might be wiser to concentrate on other characters like: the shape and relative size of the white cheek patch, and shape and size of the crest. Plate 3 shows a comparison of the possibly hybrid bulbul with a juvenile Red-whiskered Bulbul. Note that the hybrid bulbul has a shorter crest and the white cheek patch goes up to the rear contour of the eye, giving it a different shape and larger size. Note also that the interrupted breast band is less well developed in the hybrid.

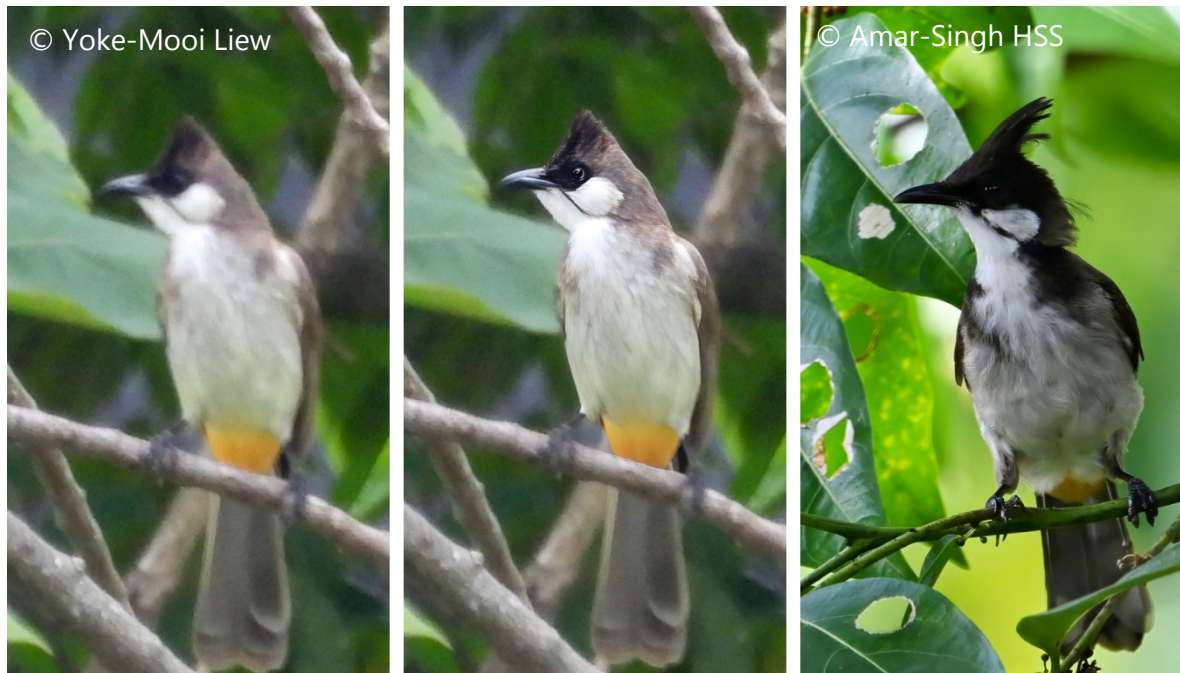


Plate 3: Comparison of the hybrid bulbul (left & centre) with a juvenile Red-whiskered Bulbul (right). The image in the middle is a digitally enhanced image to bring the bird into focus.

While hybridisation between these two species does happen (possibly due to their shared genus), it is probably largely driven by unregulated aviculture and escapees from the local songbird trade (Amar-Singh HSS et al. 2024). Hybrids have been reported between the Red-whiskered Bulbul and the Himalayan Bulbul *P. leucogenys*, White-eared Bulbul *P. leucotis*, Black-crested Bulbul *R. flaviventris*, White-spectacled Bulbul *P. xanthopygos*, Red-vented Bulbul *P. cafer*, and Brown-breasted Bulbul *P. xanthorrhous* (McCarthy 2006; Islam & Williams 2020).

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I would like to thank David Wells and Amar-Singh HSS for their kind support in reviewing the images and providing valuable information and opinions.

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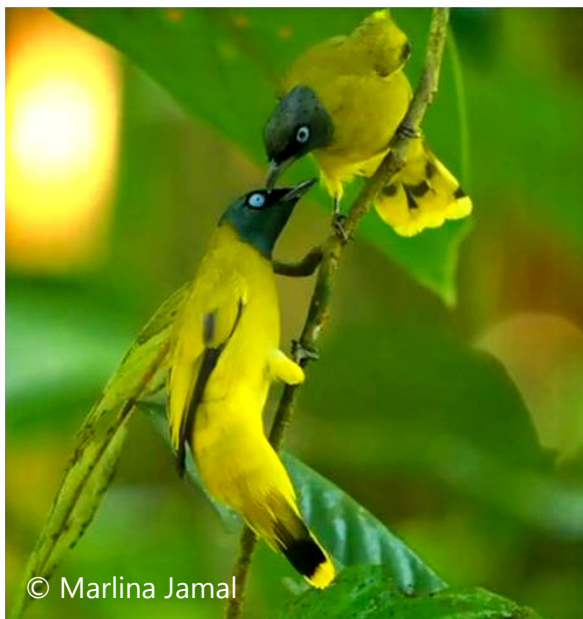
Photo-Shorts

Intraspecific Agonistic Behaviour in the Black-headed Bulbul

Marlina Jamal

The Black-headed Bulbul *Microtarsus melanocephalos* is a sociable species, often seen in small social groups of six to eight individuals. I am unaware of any published accounts of social interaction for the species (Wells 2007; Fishpool & Tobias 2023; Amar-Singh HSS & Sein-Chiong Chiu 2023).

On 03 May 2026, I was watching birds at Sungai Congkak, Selangor, Malaysia. It was a clear morning and I was seated near a small stream in the jungle around 1100 hrs. There were around six to seven Black-headed Bulbuls flying around the area. One Black-headed Bulbul landed on a branch near where I was sitting and appeared to observe me briefly (upper bird in the images and video). It stayed there for longer than I expected, when a second Black-headed Bulbul landed on the same branch a step below (bird at the bottom in the images and video). The second bird appeared to 'challenge' the position of the first bird and an altercation began. The first bird started furiously flapping its wings and both birds were intensely looking at each other (Plate 1). Note how their pupils are constricted, especially that of the second bird which may be consistent with a threat response. There was no vocalisation and no physical contact although they were very close to each other. It seemed like the first bird was trying to stand its ground by flapping its wings, but without success. The second bird continued to persist and the first bird decided to fly away after a few seconds. Very soon after the second bird flew away and seemed to chase the first bird. They both flew out of my view. The total interaction lasted approximately 15 seconds. A short video clip of the social interaction can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQr2W4UfPHU>.



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Plate 1: Screen grab from video recording of agonistic behaviour in Black-headed Bulbuls. Sungai Congkak, Selangor, Malaysia, 03 May 2026.

I considered the possibility that this might be begging behaviour, as seen in juveniles. But the behaviour was too intense and the bird flapping the wings was an adult. The sex of both individuals could not be determined as the species is sexually monomorphic. The specific display described – wing-flapping, intense mutual gaze, no vocalisation, no contact, ending in displacement – all fits well within intraspecific agonistic display or threat/dominance display.

Kenyon and Martin (2022), who reviewed photographic and video evidence of aggressive interactions across 164 bird species, found that many birds open their wings and tails to increase apparent body size in aggressive displays. Aggressive postures included orientating their bodies and heads forward with their bills pointing towards their opponent.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Jia-En Ho and Amar-Singh HSS for support in preparing the manuscript and for reviewing it.

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Night-time Roost of the Black-eared Barbet

Mohd Azree, Amar-Singh HSS & Ron Pudín

Introduction

The Black-eared Barbet *Psilopogon duvaucelii* is common in Peninsular Malaysia and Bornean Malaysia (Wells 1999; Smythies 1999) but little is known about the social behaviour of this barbet (Krishnan 2023a). We report a night-time roost of the Black-eared Barbet.

Observations

While on a field trip to Maliau Basin, Sabah, Malaysia, Amar and Ron were informed by Azree that he had observed an adult Black-eared Barbet using a hole almost every night for two weeks before our arrival. We decided to investigate and document this behaviour.

At 1500hrs on 28 March 2026 we visited the site but there was no bird in the roosting hole. Plate 1 shows an overview of the roosting site. It was in an old barbet or woodpecker nesting hole on the underside of a rotting, horizontal branch. The branch was approximately 3.5 meters above the ground. The tree was located fairly near to the Maliau Basin Field Station and our accommodation building.



Plate 1: Overview of Black-eared Barbet roosting site. Maliau Basin, Sabah, Malaysia, 28 March 2026.

We returned to the hole at 2110hrs the same day. The Black-eared Barbet was observed roosting in the hole (Plate 2). It was faced forward in the hole, suggesting that after entering the hole there was sufficient space in the cavity for it to turn around. Azree noted that the bird continued to use the roost site until the time of writing this article (04 April 2026).



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Plate 2: Black-eared Barbet in roost hole. Maliau Basin, Sabah, Malaysia, 28 March 2026. Image taken using a long lens and brief torch light; no flash was used.

Discussion

We were not able to find any published literature on night-time roosts by Black-eared Barbet using tree holes and this is probably the first such observation. The hole location suggest that this was an old Black-eared Barbet nesting hole. Nesting holes made by the Black-eared Barbet are often excavated on the underside of a dead branch (Smythies 1999; Shorts & Horne 2002). Personal observation by Amar of a nest excavation in Perak, Malaysia was also on the underside of a dead branch (Plate 3).

Some barbet species are known to use cavities for roosting, particularly the Coppersmith Barbet *Psilopogon haemacephalus*, which may spend 50% of the day in the roost (Shorts & Horne 2002; Krishnan 2023b). The Coppersmith Barbet has also been described using a hole in a concrete electricity pillar as a roost (Karunaratna. & Amarasinghe 2008); a behaviour that Amar has also observed once in Perak. The Brown-headed Barbet *Psilopogon zeylanicus* is also known to roost alone in tree hollows (Krishnan 2021). Amar previously reported four Sooty Barbets *Caloramphus hayii* using a nesting hole as a night-time cooperative roost (Amar-Singh HSS 2025).

Acknowledgement

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



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Plate 3: Black-eared Barbet excavating a nesting hole. Perak, Malaysia, 12th January 2026.

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Sighting of a Melanistic Zebra Dove

Tuck-Hong Tang

On the morning of 19 April 2026, ten members of the Malaysian Nature Society visited Kapar Power Station, Selangor, Malaysia, to conduct a shorebird count. Towards the end of the count, we noticed a dark bird perched on a bare tree beside an ash pond. We trained our binoculars on the bird and could identify it as a Zebra Dove *Geopelia striata* but with unusual dark feathers (Plate 1). Notably, the bluish-grey feathers of the head and the pink of the breast and underparts were replaced by dark melanistic feathers, while the bare parts remained unaffected.



Plate 1: Melanistic Zebra Dove. Kapar Power Station, Selangor, Malaysia, 19 April 2026.

Melanism is an "*aberrant production and distribution into the feather cells of normal melanin (not necessarily an increase of pigment)*" with feet, bill and eyes normal (van Grouw 2021). To my knowledge, melanistic Zebra Doves have not previously been documented in Malaysia (Amar-Singh HSS et al. 2024). However, the Macaulay Library images show a few observations of melanistic Zebra Doves seen in the United States and Thailand (Kirwan et al. 2026).

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A Large Flock of Glossy Ibis in Peninsular Malaysia

Teck-Hin Ang

The Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* is the "most widespread ibis species, with populations in Central and South America, the Greater Antilles, southern Europe, Africa, Asia, India, and Australia" (Davis & Kricher 2020). The Glossy Ibis is not a regular seasonal migrant along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway: instead, individuals occur as occasional nomadic vagrants wandering in mainland Southeast Asia. For Peninsular Malaysia, Wells (1999) reports the Glossy Ibis as a vagrant, often a single bird seen infrequently, while Jeyarajasingam and Pearson (2012) describe it as a "very rare non-breeding dispersant". There are intermittent records in eBird for Peninsular Malaysia, usually of a single bird. There are however reports of some expansion in Southeast Asia (Davis & Kricher 2020).

At 0800 hrs on 17 May 2026, I observed an unexpectedly large number of nine Glossy Ibis foraging in an open, ploughed paddy field at Sungai Rambai, Melaka, Malaysia (Plate 1). The birds were encountered feeding on the ploughed muddy fields alongside a mixed flock of egrets, Javan Mynas *Acridotheres javanicus* and Lesser Adjutants *Leptoptilos javanicus*. The birds were seen utilising the long-curved bill to probe deep into the soft mud with rhythmic like motion to extract aquatic insects. All the birds seen appeared to be adults in breeding plumage.



Plate 1: Glossy Ibis feeding with Medium Egret *Ardea intermedia*. Sungai Rambai, Melaka, Malaysia, 17 May 2026.

The Glossy Ibis were observed at the same location on a regular basis from 17-27 May 2026, always in a flock (Plate 2).



Plate 2: Nine Glossy Ibis in flight. Sungai Rambai, Melaka, Malaysia, 17 May 2026.

There have been two previous records of large flocks of Glossy Ibis in the region. In [June 1984, 11 birds were seen](#) at Lorong Halus Wetland, Singapore, and in [October 2022, 8 birds were observed](#) at Sungai Balang, Johor, Malaysia.

This sighting is a significant record for Peninsular Malaysia and may signal larger numbers arriving in the peninsula on migration as we have seen with the Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans* and Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger*.

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Rarity Finders in the Field

A 'Lesser' Addition to a Greater List: Meet Malaysia's Newest Noddy

Choong-Liung Chin, David Awcock, Swee-Seng Khoo, Caroline Ho, Chris Gibbins, Kang-Woei Ong

Pelagic Birding in Malaysia

Pelagic birding -- the practice of observing seabirds from a boat in the open sea, is still in its infancy in Malaysia. Birders typically start in more accessible habitats like parks and forests before progressing to shorebirds and seabirds, both of which require specialized gear like telescopes or fast, super-telephoto lens cameras and involve exposure to harsh elements. Consequently, some birders are hesitant to step out of their comfort zones, leaving seabirds sightings and familiarity relatively low compared to land birds. Today, however, advancements in digital camera technology are encouraging more birders to venture offshore, leading to a steady increase in seabird records.

Noddies of the World

The noddies are tropical seabirds in the family Laridae, which also includes gulls, terns and skimmers. Currently, there are five recognized species of noddies in the world, all in the genus *Anous*: the Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*, Black Noddy *A. minutus*, Lesser Noddy *A. tenuirostris*, Blue-grey Noddy *A. ceruleus* and Grey Noddy *A. albivitta*.

The Lesser Noddy was long treated as a subspecies of the Black Noddy, although field differences between them have been known for decades. Some authors recognized them informally as distinct species based on morphological separation. A study on the molecular phylogeny of noddies by Cibois, Thibault, Rocamora and Pasquet (2016) provided the genetic evidence confirming their species-level separation. Major checklists, Clements, IOC, and HBW/BirdLife, adopted the split post-2016.

Noddies of Malaysia

For Malaysia, the most commonly found species is the Brown Noddy. Historically, there are records of another species, the Black Noddy, both in Peninsular Malaysia and Bornean Malaysia. However, the only Black Noddy record in Peninsular Malaysia has never been officially accepted. Wells (1999) listed its distribution as 'Melaka?', as it was based on a bird skin in the collection of the British Museum of Natural History labelled '*Malacca August 1865*', which is "*likely to have come off a ship and may not have been captured actually within the Straits*".

As for Bornean Malaysia, the Black Noddy is listed as a '*vagrant, but possibly breeds*' by Mann (2008). It listed four undated old records for both Sarawak and Sabah, the Black Noddy of the race *worcesteri* (distributed in the Cavilli Island and Tubbataha Reef of the Sulu Sea, Philippines). However, there are no recent reports in eBird, unlike from nearby regions such as Philippines (e.g., Sulu Sea) or eastern Indonesia, which have good photographic evidence.

Pelagic sites in Peninsular Malaysia

The sea off Tanjung Dawai, Kuala Muda, Kedah, is the best pelagic site in Peninsular Malaysia in terms of species diversity. Seabirds congregate here mainly due to the big fleet of purse

seiner anchovy fishing boats operating in the waters, benefiting from the bycatch or discards from the boats.

The Brown Noddy is the 'default' noddy species seen off Tanjung Dawai. However, it is not an easy bird to see there. Pulau Perak, a small rocky island under the Yan district of Kedah, and the westernmost point of Malaysia, is the best noddy site. Located far out in the middle of the Strait of Malacca, it is a renowned breeding site for its keystone seabird species, the Brown Noddy and Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*. On our only trip there so far, from 6 to 7 September 2025, we, my regular pelagic gang -- David Awcock, Swee Seng, Caroline Ho, Chris Gibbins, Woei Ong, and I -- saw about 250 individuals of each species. However, a long sea journey at a significant cost is needed to reach this site.

Seabirds dispersed far from their breeding sites after the breeding season. Perhaps those Brown Noddy seen at Tanjung Dawai originated from Pulau Perak. Only tagging or tracking can confirm this.

The Mega-Finds Trip

Due to easier logistics, we have been making regular trips to Tanjung Dawai during the migration season (from September to May), to look for rare migrant or vagrant seabirds. On one such trip on 29 October 2022, we had a brief encounter with a brown-coloured noddy. It was late afternoon toward the end of the trip, and after the euphoria of finding Malaysia's first Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* earlier in the day, a bird expertly spotted by Chris (a story for another day, perhaps).

The noddy flew toward our boat from the right, just above eye level, before turning sharply toward the bow. It flew away and briefly joined a flock of foraging terns before flying out of sight. All this happened in less than a minute. Fortunately, the 'sharpshooters' in the group managed to secure some clear flight shots (Plate 1). We were all thrilled because, at the time, it was our first-ever noddy, a 'lifer' for everyone on board. 'Brown Noddy' it must be, the 'default' noddy of Tanjung Dawai.



Plate 1: The noddy seen on the pelagic trip. Tanjung Dawai, Kedah, Malaysia, 29 Oct 2022.

However, as you can see, the bird (Plate 2, bird on the right) has a straighter and much thinner bill while the Brown Noddy (Plate 2, bird on the left) has a thicker bill that is slightly decurved at the tip). The bird we saw was also much whiter-headed, more lightly built, and has narrower wings. The bird is clearly not a Brown Noddy.

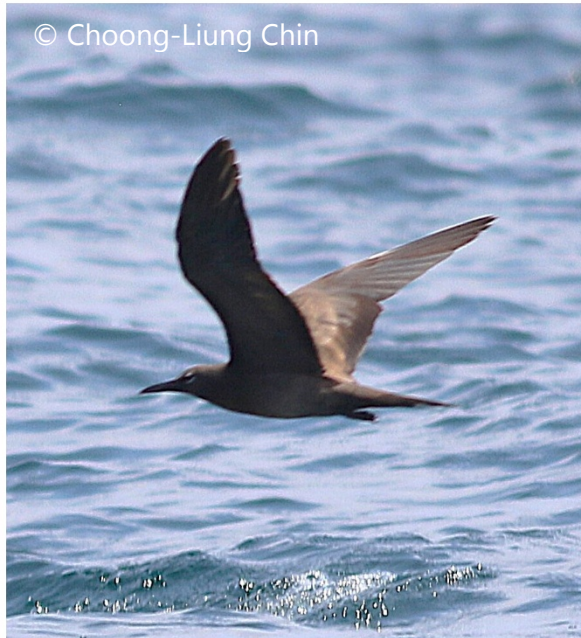


Plate 2: Brown Noddy (left), 18 May 2024; The noddy in question (right), 29 Oct 2022. Tanjung Dawai, Kedah, Malaysia.

Could it be a Black Noddy, the other noddy species on Malaysian list?

The field differences between the Black and Lesser Noddies are much subtler. The Black Noddy is slightly larger and has a thicker bill, a darker plumage tone, and less extensive pale areas on the crown and nape (Plate 3). These differences are difficult to discern without having them side-by-side, never mind seeing one in flight in a rocking boat.

However, there is a key facial identification feature between the two species: the Black Noddy has dark lores (the small area between the eye and the base of the upper bill) that are sharply demarcated from the whitish forehead. In contrast, the Lesser Noddy has white lores that merge into whitish forehead without a sharp demarcation (Plate 3).

Luckily, this critical feature was captured in our photos. Our bird in Plate 1 and 2 exhibits the latter feature and is therefore clearly a Lesser Noddy. This is the first photographic proof of this species for Malaysia. What a momentous trip, with two national-first 'mega-finds' for us!

Conclusion:

Our sighting adds a new noddy species to Malaysian list: the Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris*. More images in Plate 4 and 5. Based on distribution, the Black Noddy is far more likely to occur in both Peninsular Malaysia and Bornean Malaysia waters. The Black Noddy is widespread across tropical / subtropical Atlantic and Pacific Oceans whereas the Lesser Noddy is primarily

an Indian Ocean species. This is especially true for Bornean Malaysia, as Sabah's offshore waters is right next to Philippines' breeding populations of Black Noddy in the Sulu Sea.

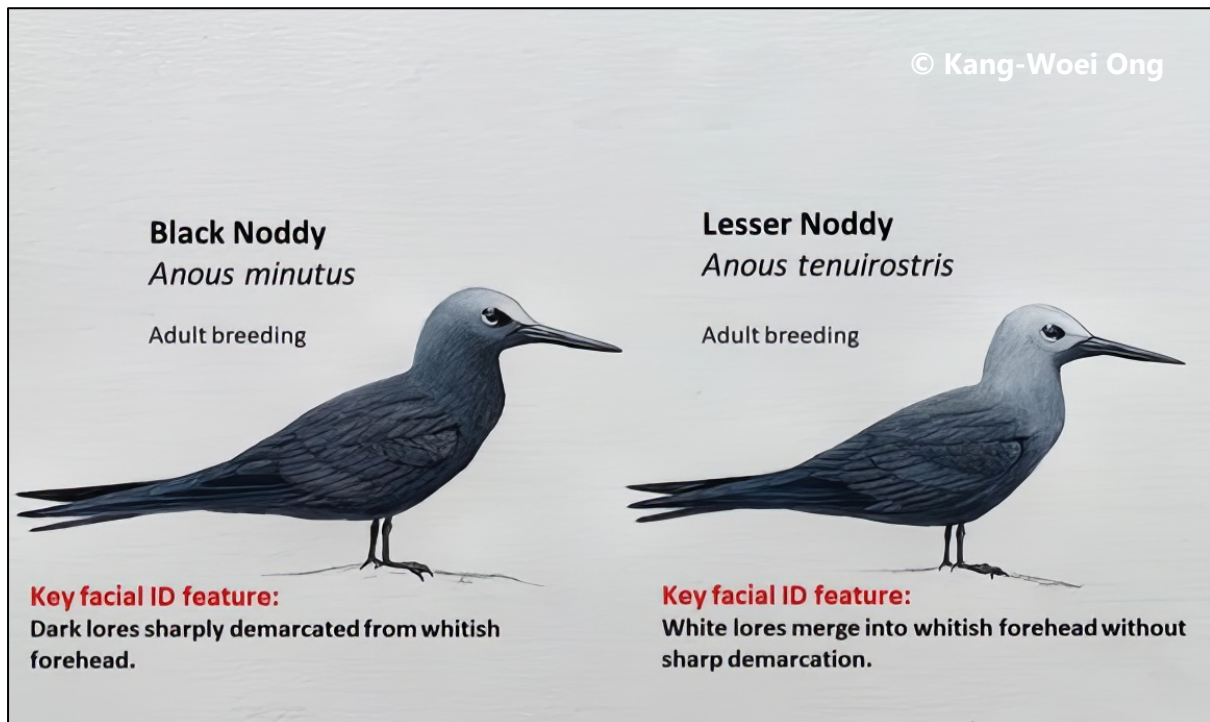


Plate 3: Illustration comparing the difference between the Black and Lesser Noddies.



Plate 4: Lesser Noddy with a Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* for size comparison. Tanjung Dawai, Kedah, Malaysia, 29 Oct 2022.

However, to date, there are only four historical records for Bornean Malaysia and none for Peninsular Malaysia. Both species are, at best, rare vagrants to Malaysian waters, making the lack of recent records unsurprising. However, this may also be a result of under-recording due to the scarcity of pelagic trips and regular seabird surveys.

Could the Lesser Noddy be more likely in Peninsular Malaysia waters than the Black Noddy? This is perhaps not a valid question after just one find, and one find certainly cannot answer it.

These gaps in knowledge and many rare vagrants yet to be discovered provide strong incentives to go pelagic birding. You could get the first Black Noddy for Peninsular Malaysia or the first photo-backed record of a Black Noddy in Bornean Malaysia. And as the saying goes, 'birds fly' -- so perhaps you could find Bornean Malaysia's first Lesser Noddy!

Let's go pelagic. Mega finds are the incentives, and at the same time, we can help improve our understanding of the seabirds of Malaysia.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my pelagic gang -- David Awcock, Swee-Seng Khoo, Caroline Ho, Chris Gibbins, and Kang-Woei Ong -- for their good company, without which this discovery would not have been possible. A big thank you goes to Thai birder Sarawin Kreangpichitchai, who alerted us to the correct identification of this bird, which we had assumed was just another Brown Noddy and to Dave Bakewell for reviewing the manuscript.

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Plate 5: Lesser Noddy foraging with White-winged Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus*. Tanjung Dawai, Kedah, Malaysia, 29 Oct 2022.

First record of Common Gull (Kamchatka) *Larus canus kamtschatschensis* in Malaysia

Andy Dinesh, Jacky SM Soh, Vincent Chow, Lai-Peng Chiang, Yong-Kwong Han, Kim-Chuah Lim & Vincent Yip

A group of us, about 12 in total, were conducting a survey along the Johor-Endau Coastline during the annual Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) on Saturday 24 January 2026. This was organised by the Johor Branch of the Malaysian Nature Society. Some in the group came from further south and they had to either cross-over the night before or very early that morning to escape getting delayed in the weekly Saturday morning exodus from Singapore into Malaysia. We could not have known that we would meet a rare fellow traveller later on that morning.

We had spent the morning further south at Mersing surveying the two main sites in town and it had been a rather hot morning with bright easterly sun warming up the coast. We reached the Endau coastline at about 1230 hrs and by then the heat was at its peak. The Endau coastline is peppered with lorongs (small lanes) leading from the coastal kampung roads towards the coast through oil palm and coconut small holdings. This involved driving in and out of the narrow lorongs and reversing out of some tight spots to head back to the fringing kampung road, avoiding fallen coconuts, palm fronds and cow pats on the well-weathered gravel and semi-tarred single lane paths. After surveying several coastal spots, we finally reached the penultimate lorong and made our way to the beach. By this time, everyone was hot and hungry. At this point we were located at Kampung Teriang Kecil coast, Jalan Penyabung-Endau, Johor, Malaysia.

We parked the vehicles as close as we could to the beach and walked out with binos and cameras. A quick look left and right showed various shorebird species at varying distances either way. There were Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*, Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*, Tibetan Sand-Plovers *Anarhynchus atrifrons*, Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola*, Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus*, Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris*, the odd Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* and Malaysian Plover *Anarhynchus peronii* amongst other somewhat usual species for the coast. Given that we had already seen so many of the same species of birds that morning, we kept looking for the unexpected or special birds. Just maybe there had been two Red Knot *Calidris canutus* but we did not get a good enough look at them before they flew off. We were a little dulled by the usual birds at each site but each site presented different photo opportunities and this was always a welcomed treat.

We had encountered large numbers of terns at earlier coastal sites and also at Mersing earlier that morning. There were quite a number of Great Crested Terns *Thalasseus bergii*, Little Terns *Sternula albifrons*, a handful of Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica* and Lesser Crested Terns *Thalasseus bengalensis*.

The heat reflected from the bright sand was already cooking us even though we had only been on the sand a few minutes. One in the group found a sea snake in a shallow pool and that provided the group with some good moments until a more-herp-savvy birder carefully helped it into deeper water. There were also two Portuguese Man-of-War Jellyfish seen earlier along the same coastline. That was a first time seeing the little globule of air lined with purple with

rather short fringing tentacles. We later read that there had been more sightings in adjacent waters and the authorities had put out a warning to beach goers on local media.

Further north, there was a large unmistakable group of large terns about 300m away and it was easy to make a guess looking through binoculars that these were all more of the Great Crested Terns and Little Terns. A look through the scope however showed one larger bird beyond all the terns. It was a head taller than the Great Crested Terns and stood out prominently despite being the furthest away (Plate 1). There had been previous e-Bird reports a few weeks earlier of a Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* at Mersing Town. Perhaps this was the same bird?



Plate 1: Common Gull (Kamchatka). Kampung Teriang Kecil, Jalan Penyabung-Endau, Johor, Malaysia, 24 January 2026.

Andy decided to walk closer carrying the scope with Jacky accompanying while the others busied themselves imaging the other shorebirds closer to them. Lai Peng and a few others soon followed. We stopped every 50m to get record shots of the gull and the other birds closest to us. The terns would occasionally take off and we fearfully thought we had spooked them for good but they quickly settled down at more or less the same spot. It was likely that the mixed group of terns and shorebirds were just adjusting their position on the sand due to the movement of the tide which had begun to recede slightly (and since there was a group of people walking awkwardly towards them).

As we got closer to within about 100m, the gull was visibly more anxious and it flew off further north beyond a small river mouth which was not passable. We thought that we had missed the opportunity for better photos and turned our attention to the flock of terns. The gull however, quietly returned to shallows just beyond the outer edge of the terns and stood in shallow water. We were delighted to see it return and quickly resumed taking more images as it walked or did short flights to reposition itself along the outer edge of the tern flock. This offered good opportunities to take a series of pictures from various angles (Plate 1, 2 & 3).



Plate 2: Common Gull (Kamchatka) in flight with Great Crested Terns in the background. Kampung Teriang Kecil, Jalan Penyabung-Endau, Johor, Malaysia, 24 January 2026.



Plate 3: Common Gull (Kamchatka) in flight showing belly and underwing plumage. Kampung Teriang Kecil, Jalan Penyabung-Endau, Johor, Malaysia, 24 January 2026.

The rest of the AWC volunteers soon arrived as word spread of the gull's presence. Everyone had ample opportunity to observe and image the gull, terns and other shorebirds. Strangely, the receding tide exposing more sand somehow placated the birds' anxieties and they tolerated the group of birdwatchers rather well. Everyone was careful about getting too close and practised common sense to maximise the observations.

The bird was observed for about 45 minutes in total before the group left the site to continue with the ongoing AWC survey at the next site.

Confirmation on the identity of the gull as a Common Gull (Kamchatka) *Larus canus kamtschatschensis* was subsequently obtained with several members of the group enquiring with Dave Bakewell, Chris Gibbins and also friends in Thailand, all of whom verified that it was indeed a juvenile Kamchatka Gull.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Amar-Singh HSS for reviewing the manuscript.

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Commentary on the Observation:

Identification of the Endau Kamchatka Gull

Chris Gibbins

Gulls seem to elicit either fear or fascination. Fear comes from the fact that gull identification is genuinely challenging. Differences between species are rather subtle, so identification requires great attention to detail. The challenge is compounded by plumage variability related to age and season, structural differences stemming from sexual dimorphism, and what often seems like random individual variation in both plumage and moult. There is the added problem that many gulls have several subspecies, and in a number of instances there is ongoing debate about whether these might be better regarded as full species. Finally, hybridisation is quite common in gulls.

For one subset of birders this is all too much, and many simply don't even bother trying to learn gull identification. However, for another subset the challenge elicits fascination, to the extent that a whole specialist genre of birding has evolved - 'gulling'. Malaysian birders have



few opportunities to test their gull identification skills. The only species encountered regularly here are the smaller hooded ones - Brown-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus* and Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* - which, thankfully, are more straightforward to identify. The more challenging larger gulls such as Heuglin's Gull *Larus (fuscus) heuglini* are rare in Malaysia (just a handful of records), and the equally challenging medium-sized ones belonging to the 'Common/Mew Gull' *Larus canus* complex are even rarer. So, unless they have studied gulls abroad, Malaysian birders have little field experience of this difficult group of birds. It is therefore understandable that the finders of the Endau bird were not sure what they were looking at.

I was initially sent images of the bird with a message '*Is this a first winter Brown-headed Gull? Got this at Mersing yesterday.*' I replied immediately: '*Wow!!! This is a Kamchatka Gull*'. To explain this conclusion, it is first worth articulating how the more familiar Malaysian species can be ruled out, and then how the choice between the medium sized and larger gulls can be made. After this we can deal with species-level identification.

It is a largely brown bird, and this makes it an immature. Even in immature plumage, the familiar smaller gulls are very white bodied and have contrasting wingtip patterns, with much more white in their primaries than the Endau bird. They also often have dark patches on their rear ear coverts, which the bird lacks, and often have reddish bill bases and legs. So, it belongs either to the larger or medium sized gulls. Both are brown in their immature plumages but its rather slender bill (not too different to Brown- or Black-headed in shape) makes it one of the medium sized taxa - the larger gulls have a much deeper bill with a marked gonys angle. It was a little larger than the Great Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* often seen alongside; the larger gulls would dwarf these terns, and in fact look larger even than Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*.

So, here in South-East Asia, a brown medium sized gull (in between Great Crested and Caspian Terns) is an immature belonging to the Common/Mew Gull complex. To identify the bird correctly we need to apply criteria that are specific to each age class, so we need to go beyond simply saying it is 'immature'. Gulls take several years to attain adult plumage, and they develop progressively more grey, black and pure white in their plumage as they mature. Essentially, each moult involves replacement of brown feathers with white, grey and black ones. The medium sized gulls take three years to attain adult plumage - this means that they have two immature plumages (corresponding broadly to year classes), and a third plumage which is the adult one.

We commonly use the term 'cycles' when ageing gulls. Cycles relate to the complete moult. Gulls typically have two moults each year - a partial moult typically beginning around March or April that involves only the head and body feathers. They then have a complete moult (all feathers) in the June to October period. The complete moult is the key one in terms of cycles. With gulls we don't consider the replacement of down with juvenile feathers to be a complete moult, so by convention the first complete moult is taken as the one that occurs at approximately one year of age. Until this moult commences, a gull is said to be in its 'first cycle'. Once the first complete moult begins - typically defined as the point when the first primary is dropped - a gull is considered to be in its second cycle. First cycle gulls have a

slightly different moult pattern to older ones. After fledging in June or July they have their first real plumage – ‘juvenile plumage’, in which all feathers are first generation. In medium and larger gulls these first generation feathers are mostly brown, with some white around their edges. However, rather than keeping all of these feathers until the moult that does happen until the following year, many species have a partial moult in the July to October period. This is referred to either as the ‘post-juvenile moult’ or the ‘pre-formative moult’ (depending on which moult/plumage system you prefer). Most commonly the post-juvenile moult involves replacement of some or all the mantle and scapulars. This is relevant for the Endau bird.

The bird’s wholly brown outer primaries (rather than black and grey), and the absence of any white mirrors (small white spots) or white tips in these feathers indicate that it is a first cycle bird. Second cycle birds have primaries that are a mixture of black and grey, and the outer one or two primaries have a small white mirror set back a little way from the tip. Overall, second cycle birds have a lot of grey in the upper wing, mantle and scapulars. The bird has a grey mantle and upper scapulars but the lowermost row and rear scapulars are brown. These grey feathers are second generation ones grown in during its partial post-juvenile moult; the remaining brown ones are juvenile/first generation feathers.

So we have a first cycle ‘Common/Mew Gull’ and can now apply the identification criteria for this age class.

For a long time, the taxonomy and identification of the Common/Mew Gull complex was unclear. The complex consists four taxa, which broadly speaking are found in Western Europe (*canus*), a broad band from western to eastern Russia (*heinei*), far-eastern Russia (*kamtschatschensis*) and North America (*brachyrhynchus*) (Figure 1).

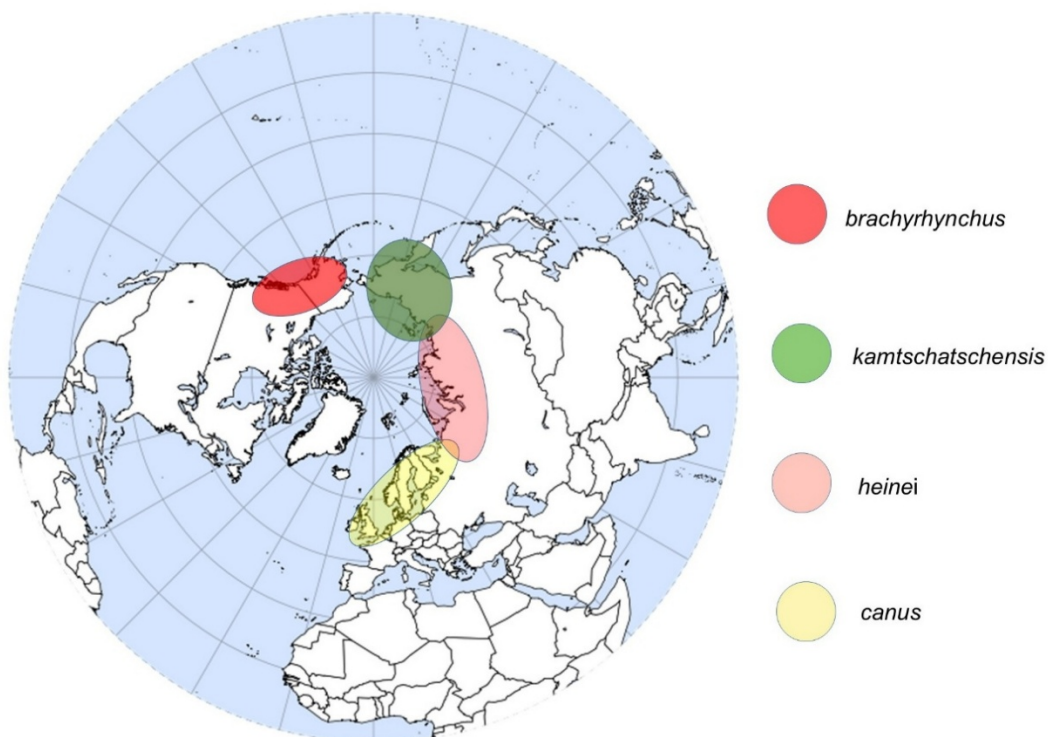


Figure 1: Approximate breeding ranges of taxa belonging to the Common/Mew Gull complex.

A decade ago, we published the first comprehensive analysis of the plumages and vocalisations of this complex (Adriaens & Gibbins 2016). The two main findings of this paper were that (i) *heinei* is a distinctive pale taxon (previously it was thought identifiable only on biometrics) and (ii) *brachyrhynchus* is best regarded as a full species. The American Ornithologists Union (AOU) were first to adopt this taxonomic position, and the major gull monographs published since then followed suit. Thus, the complex is currently considered to consist of two species - Common Gull *Larus canus*, which has three subspecies (n nominate *canus*, *heinei* and *kamtschatschensis*) and Short-billed Gull *Larus brachyrhynchus* (which is monotypic).

Based on range, the likely taxa in Malaysia are *heinei* and *kamtschatschensis*, and it clearly fits the latter. Key features to separate these two taxa are evident on the great set of images in the article by Andy Dinesh et al. and in Plate 1 below. First cycle *heinei* are very white, with a clean white head, body and underwing, and a very narrow blackish tail band which contrasts with unmarked white upper and undertail tail coverts and white tail base. In contrast, the Endau bird is extensively brown - note for example the streaky head, brown body and underwing, and that it has a distinctly spotted rump and brown marks on the basal parts of its tail. All these feature match *kamchatchensis* and are very unlike *heinei*. Given its breeding (eastern Russia) and wintering (East Asia) ranges, *kamtschatschensis* is the most likely one to occur in Malaysia. My experience of looking at Common Gulls in East Asia in winter is that *kamtschatschensis* is by far the most numerous - I have only ever seen a couple of *heinei* here. After breeding, *heinei* seem therefore to go in a more southerly direction and are found wintering in areas around the Caspian Sea and as far east as India. Thus, the position of their breeding and core wintering areas makes *heinei* less likely here in Malaysia. Not only does it look like a textbook *kamtschatschensis* but this seems the more likely taxon to occur here.

Actually, due to its extreme pallor, *heinei* is very easy to rule out; the more challenging possibility is Short-billed Gull which is also brown at this age. However, Short-billed can be ruled out for several reasons. This species has a more strongly barred rump (often with dark dominating over light), and a more extensively dark tail (often the whole tail is dark). Short-billed tends to have a softer more smudgy plumage, whereas this bird shows clear streaks within the brown areas (e.g. on its belly). Also, as the name suggests, Short-billed has a shorter and more delicate bill than the Endau bird. In life it was also clearly a large bird, with the bulky rugby-ball shaped body typical of *kamtschatschensis*. Due to its worn plumage, some of the other features that separate these two taxa (inner primaries, wing covert fringes and tertial fringes) are rather hard to assess.

So, while unfamiliar to most birders here, Malaysia's first Common Gull can be identified quite easily. There is the possibility that *kamtschatschensis* may deserve full species status (thus, separating the complex into three rather than two species). It is separable from *heinei* and *canus* at all ages and we have tantalising evidence from sound recordings that its long call may differ from the other taxa. This, however, requires more thorough acoustic work, and would certainly benefit from full genetic analysis. The possibility of elevation to species rank is why this taxon is often referred to as Kamchatka Gull - it is perhaps a 'species in waiting'.



Plate 1: Members of the Common/Mew Gull complex in first cycle plumage: A and B *heinei*, C and D *kamtschatschensis*, and E *brachyrhynchus*. (A Turkey, B Georgia, C and D South Korea, E USA).

The bird remained in the Endau area for quite some time. I saw it on 12 April 2026 (perhaps the last sighting), by which time it had become extremely abraded and bleached – its wing coverts and tertials were almost white, with most worn to the shaft (Plate 2). I feared for its health, as it seemed to be scavenging on bycatch along the strandline and was reluctant to fly. But who knows... hopefully it returned North to Russia.



Plate 2: Kamchatka Gull. Endau, Johor, Malaysia, 12 April 2026.

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Reporting Rare Birds

MNS-Bird Conservation Council Records Committee

All birdwatchers are encouraged to report new birds seen. See details at the Records Committee Website: <https://sites.google.com/site/mnsbccrecordscommittee/>

The species that are assessed by the Records Committee (species that you should submit) include:

1. All claims of potentially new species for Malaysia.
2. All claims of potentially new species for Bornean Malaysia.
3. All claims of potentially new species for Peninsular Malaysia.
4. All claims of wild species which are currently only in Category B, C or D (for either Bornean or Peninsular Malaysia)

B: Species recorded at least once in a wild state, but not since before 1963.

C: Species believed to occur only as a result of human introduction. The population is considered self-sustaining.

D: Species believed to occur (or to have occurred) only as a result of human introduction. Continued existence in the wild is considered dependent upon repeat introductions.

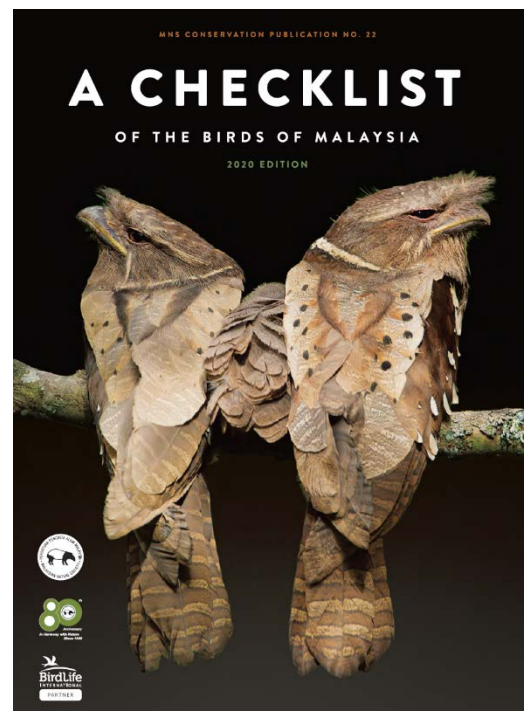
You can download the latest (2020) Malaysia Checklist of birds in pdf format at this link:

https://malaysianbird.report/wp-content/uploads/Checklist_Birds-of-Msia-2020.pdf

1. Rare & New Records submission form
2. Rare & New Records submission form (shortened version for submissions with photos attached)

<https://sites.google.com/site/mnsbccrecordscommittee/home/rare-and-new-record-submission-form?authuser=0>

The Records Committee encourages observers to submit all observations of wild birds in Malaysia to eBird. Claims of rare and scarce species will be assessed by a team of eBird reviewers on that site.



Special Reports

Bird-Building Collisions: Identifying and Reducing the Threat of Urban Infrastructure on Migratory and Urban Bird Populations

Yen-Yi Loo & Noorul Ezyan Nor Hashim

Sunway Centre for Planetary Health, Sunway University, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.

Background

In a rapidly urbanizing world, cities have become concentrated with denser and taller buildings that are encroaching into green spaces as well as flight paths in the sky. The proliferation of glass-dominated infrastructure is creating an invisible risk for bird populations around the world as birds collide into these surfaces (Klem 2021). Bird-building collisions or bird strikes happen when birds are not able to see reflective or see-through surfaces (like windows or glass) and attempt to fly through them. Light and noise pollution can further increase the likelihood of bird-building collisions (Hirschhofer et al. 2026; Lao et al. 2020). When birds fly into these surfaces, the impact can cause injuries to the skull, wings, digestive system, and other parts of the body (see below section on how to identify bird-building collisions). These injuries can range from mild to severe, depending on the speed of flight and angle of impact. When the injury is on the skull, which is more often the case, birds rarely survive and die almost immediately after the collision. When it is mild, birds may be able to fly away shortly after. However, birds may endure injuries that significantly affect their ability to feed or fly, leading to a delayed mortality (Nemes et al. 2023). This is detrimental to bird populations, especially migratory birds, but also resident urban birds. So, it is important that we understand how, when, where, and why this happens to improve our city's infrastructure to promote bird-friendly cities and urban biodiversity.

Bird-building collision incidents are on the rise (Gómez-Martínez & MacGregor-Fors 2025). A recent critical review on bird-building collision provides the cause, species affected, and environmental conditions (Klem 2025). The proportion of glass on building exterior, the number of buildings, building height, shape, and size, artificial light pollution at night, and how dense the vegetation is near the building, among other factors, can cause birds to collide with glass surfaces (Riding et al. 2020; Tan et al. 2024) (Plate 1).

The frequency of cases can also vary seasonally, such as during migration or breeding seasons (Zulian et al. 2025). In the US, up to 1 billion migratory birds die from building collisions annually during migration (Loss et al. 2014). In South Korea, the transparent noise barrier on roads caused the mortality of 3,686 birds from 2020 to 2023 (Lee et al. 2025). However, migratory and non-migratory birds may face different risks. In Singapore, one of the fastest growing cities in the Global South, data from citizen science efforts and remote sensing in monitoring bird strikes have shown that migratory birds which fly at high altitude collide more into taller buildings during migration while resident birds have relatively higher risk in colliding into lower buildings adjacent to the forest edge (Tan et al. 2024). Moreover, different species may also collide into surfaces for different reasons, such as blue light pollution at night (e.g. Pittas) and reflections of vegetations (e.g. Pigeons) (Tan & Hsieh, in press).



Plate 1: The danger of reflective and see-through surfaces to birds as seen in the estimated percentage of bird-building collisions by floor levels. Source: Loss et al. 2014. Illustration credits: Nadia Radzif, Sunway Centre for Planetary Health.

Currently, there is limited research in Malaysia apart from scattered reports of collisions such as with university buildings (Afandi et al. 2026) and aircrafts at airports during take-off or landing (Abdul Samad & Mohd Tahir 2019; CAAM 2022; Nizam 2025). These bird strike incidents are increasingly concerning because Malaysia is situated in one of the major flyways of migratory birds, the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF), where there is high overlap between sensitive species and the growing human population (Crosby et al. 2025; Dai et al. 2026). Infrastructure that is harmful to birds may be counterproductive to greening initiatives in cities.

This article aims to serve as a starting point to document bird-building collision incidents in Malaysia through a citizen science data collection approach. As bird-building collisions may happen spontaneously or seemingly by chance, citizen science data is able to leverage the collective effort of the masses to report sightings near them. Here, we hope to provide:

- (1) simple ways to identify bird-building collision incidents,
- (2) a step-by-step guide of what to do when encountering one, and
- (3) a few recommended actions for individuals, communities, and organizations to reduce bird-building collisions in the city and other built areas.

These findings can be synthesized regularly to inform policy actions to reduce bird-building collisions for the conservation of resident and migratory bird populations in Malaysia.

How to identify bird-building collisions

The challenge in collecting data on bird-building collisions rests in the difficulty in diagnosing the cause of death, disposal of carcasses without reporting, and the variable detection rates by citizen scientists or community members. In this section, we hope to fill this gap by providing some pointers in identifying incidents of bird-building collisions. There are several

methods to identify bird-building collisions as highlighted by several active organisations in collating bird collisions data such as Bird Collision Prevention Alliance (<https://www.stopbirdcollisions.org/>) and Flap Canada (<https://flap.org/>).

When a bird strikes windows or glass, it often produces a loud 'thud' sound as the first warning sign. If a collision is suspected but is not witnessed directly, examining the window or surface for indirect physical evidence can help to confirm whether the strike took place. A striking bird may leave visible marks on the surface, including oil smudges from their feathers, dust prints, or feather imprints possibly outlining the bird's silhouette. Although the evidence may not provide complete taxonomic identification and confirm deadly collisions, it can help in detecting strike events (Montaño-Casas et al. 2025). Birds may also accidentally deposit droppings or leave blood marks on the surface following the strike (Plate 2).

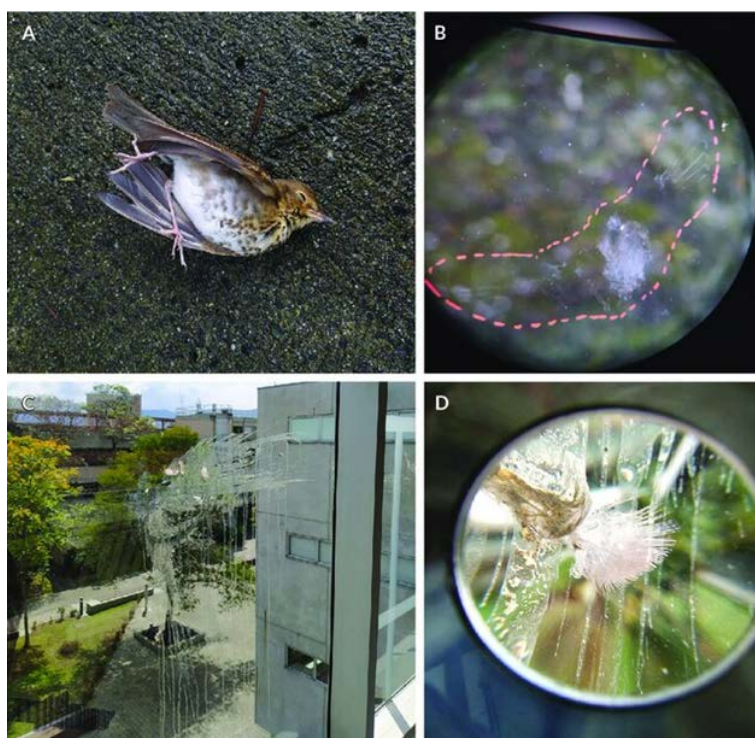


Plate 2: Examples of direct and indirect evidence of bird-window collision: A) carcass of a Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*; B) silhouette; C) bodily fluids, apparently including reproductive tract contents; and D) feathers. Source: Montaño-Casas et al. (2025). Image is licenced under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0.

Once a collision has been confirmed, search for the injured or dead birds on the ground and surrounding vegetation near the window. There may be signs of scattered downy feathers on the ground where the bird landed. The area should be inspected carefully as small birds with well-camouflaged feathers can easily blend with surrounding vegetation and are difficult to spot. The injured bird may also hide beneath bushes or low vegetation to seek shelter. Note that lack of physical evidence of a victim can also mean that it had been removed by a predator, such as a cat, a bird of prey, or other carnivores. In addition, the carcass may have also been discarded by cleaners or maintenance workers. Thus, it is important to report any bird strike incidents immediately when observed and speak to staff or colleagues to ask whether they have observed any such cases.



Upon finding a grounded bird, refrain from approaching immediately or attempting to move it, unless a predator is detected nearby. Observing the bird from a safe distance first will allow for a better assessment of its condition. The bird may be stunned, dazed, and physically weakened following a strike. In severe cases, the birds may experience visible head trauma and physical injuries. Plate 3 shows a quick guide on identifying the signs of a victim of suspected bird-building collisions. It is also important to note that birds which survive the collision impact may still suffer internal injuries and experience delayed mortality. If you are uncertain about the next steps after witnessing a strike, seeking advice from qualified wildlife rehabilitators such as the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (PERHILITAN), nearby veterinarians, or organisations such as the Malaysian Nature Society, is highly recommended*.

**For more details on caring for injured birds, you may refer to Jalila Abu (2024) in the references section below. If you are in the Klang Valley and require assistance on bird injuries, please reach out to the Avian Veterinarian Unit at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor at Tel: 03-97693889 or WhatsApp 013-8067724.*



Plate 3: A quick guide to identify bird-building collisions.

What to do when encountering bird strikes and how to report them

When encountering bird strike incidents, there are several ways to help the collision victim and support conservation efforts.

1. Report your observations:

Sunway Centre for Planetary Health is launching a **Bird Strike Report** to collect data for bird strike incidents. The aim is to quantify the trends of bird collisions and find ways to mitigate the problem in Malaysia. This information is crucial in improving the infrastructure of built

areas to promote bird-friendly cities and urban biodiversity. Here are the steps to be part of the 'stop bird collisions' movement:

- Observations can be reported through this form (<https://forms.gle/YhWeZ7Mcv5Yh5Mei9>) by providing information such as date, location, species, and type of buildings or structures involved. Please read the instructions and follow the steps to key in your observations. You can also scan the QR code provided in Plate 4.
- This form is open to the public in Malaysia, and submitting observations contributes to citizen science efforts on bird strikes.
- Species identification is optional for reporting. Photographs of victims taken from multiple angles can be uploaded through the form, thus assisting researchers in identifying species and gathering real-time data on bird strike incidents. In some cases, some birds may be only temporarily stunned and fly away shortly after the strike.
- Apart from direct strikes or collisions, sometimes birds may hover because of the reflection of vegetation or of the bird itself, or they might manage to change direction at the last minute and fly away without hitting the glass, which can be considered a near miss. **A near miss can also be reported** as it also provides information about the danger of reflective or transparent surfaces.
- In some cases, some birds may be only temporarily stunned and fly away shortly after the strike. If you suspect a collision has happened with no visible victim, you can still report the incident through the form. This information helps the researchers to map the incident locations and document the likely causes.



Plate 4: Report your observation through this Bird Strike Report.

2. Handling a grounded bird:

- Upon finding a grounded bird that appears stunned and at risk, observe its condition first to determine whether it is still alive or shows any visible injuries.
- Avoid handling the bird with bare hands to protect both yourself and the bird from potential health risk.
- Wear hand protection such as latex or vinyl gloves before handling the bird. If gloves are not accessible, cloth, towels or large leaves can be used as alternatives. Wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling any wildlife.
- Find a clean, small cardboard box or an unwaxed paper bag as a temporary container to place the bird. Line the containers with clean cloth, towels or unscented tissues to provide a soft surface for the birds to grasp.
- Approach the bird slowly from behind and gently hold the bird with both hands. Remain calm during this process, as the bird may vocalize or flutter when handled. Hold the bird firmly but gently, taking care not to compress their fragile body.
- Place the bird upright inside the container and secure closely the opening as you withdraw your hands to prevent escape.
- Avoid feeding the bird with food and water directly; however, you may place a shallow container of water near the temporary container.
- Position the container in a dark and quiet space away from people or pets to minimise stress to the bird.
- If the bird shows signs of recovery by the following day, release it in a wooded area near where it was found, away from buildings or infrastructure that pose a strike risk. If the bird is unable to fly well, recapture the bird carefully and contact nearby rehabilitators or veterinarians for further guidance.
- Precautions: For raptors such as hawks and owls, do not attempt to handle them with bare hands. Instead, turn the container sideways and use a stick, broom, or similar tool to guide the bird gently into the box. Once secured, place the box in a dark and quiet place and contact rehabilitators immediately for further instructions.
- As responsible citizens, we can take part in protecting wildlife from the growing adverse impact of habitat changes. For a quick guide on how to respond to bird strikes, please refer to the infographic in Plate 5.



Plate 5: A quick guide on the recommended steps to take upon encountering bird strikes.

Call to action: How to identify risk and reduce the frequency of bird strikes

There are existing guidelines that have been developed and tested to make buildings more visible to birds and thus reduce collisions (Brown et al., 2021; De Groot et al., 2022; US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2016). These guidelines can be referred to when developing bird-friendly building standards. Indeed, solutions do not need to be perfect in order to begin reducing bird-building collisions. What creates reinforcing change are the efforts of local communities and authorities actively engaging and experimenting with different solutions, coupled with continued improvements tailored to local contexts. Efforts can be made on any scale by anyone to reduce the chances of collisions. Here are some examples of what you can do to improve the chances of bird survival in cities.

1. Individuals and corporations can
 - make windows visible to birds by retrofitting collision-preventive decal stickers (dotted or lined) on surfaces at home or at the workplace, especially surfaces that are reflective or see through, near greenery, for both low-rise and high-rise buildings,
 - switch off lights at night when not in use to lower artificial light pollution in cities,
 - avoid placing plants near windows or reflective surfaces,
 - encourage bird-friendly practices among friends, families, neighbours, and peers.
2. Urban planners and city councils can
 - design cities, townships, and landscapes to provide bird-friendly habitats that are safe from direct exposure to buildings with reflective or see-through surfaces,

- identify when a building or township poses risks to birds,
 - enforce bird-friendly window standards in all buildings,
 - work with engineers and architects and to design bird-friendly buildings.
3. Engineers and architects can
 - use principles of architecture design and infrastructure engineering following bird-friendly building standards,
 - increase the visibility of surfaces to birds and reduce the frequency of collisions, such as using more visible glass materials or more reflection-disruptive designs,
 - use shapes of buildings that reduce collision,
 - avoid window configurations that are on parallel or perpendicular sides where vegetation can be seen through them.
 4. Citizen scientists and urban ecologists can
 - form small teams to survey, monitor, and report incidents of bird strikes in the form provided in this article,
 - observe and document bird populations and behaviours near buildings and urban parks,
 - initiate community knowledge sharing programs to raise awareness.

Conclusion

Glass is a silent killer of at least a billion birds worldwide. These mortality rates may go unnoticed if not documented, especially in Southeast Asia. With improved understanding through reporting of bird-building collision or bird strike incidents in Malaysia, we will be better equipped to reduce the number of fatalities caused by our buildings. To be truly nature-positive, cities can no longer ignore the invisible threat to our urban birdlife if we are to co-exist for the benefit of both the people and planet.

Acknowledgements

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Articles

Bird Identification Series:

Identification Features of *Hierococcyx* Hawk-Cuckoos in Peninsular Malaysia

Mohd Rafi Kudus

Introduction

Nine *Hierococcyx* hawk-cuckoo species inhabit Asia, with recent taxonomy (King 2002) splitting two formerly polytypic groups. The first group separated into Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparverioides* and Dark (Bock's) Hawk-Cuckoo *H. bocki*. The second, the former Hodgson's Hawk-Cuckoo complex, split into Northern Hawk-Cuckoo *H. hyperythrus*, Hodgson's (Whistling) Hawk-Cuckoo *H. nisicolor*, Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo *H. pectoralis*, and Malaysian (Malay) Hawk-Cuckoo *H. fugax*. Common Hawk-Cuckoo *H. varius* and Moustached Hawk-Cuckoo *H. vagans* make up the remaining species. A further split to the former group has recently been described from Borneo - Penan Hawk-Cuckoo *Hierococcyx tiganada*.

Six species inhabit Malaysia, of which five can be found in Peninsular Malaysia, including two migrant species. The five include the Large Hawk-Cuckoo (migrant), Dark (Bock's) Hawk-Cuckoo, Hodgson's (Whistling) Hawk-Cuckoo (migrant), Malaysian (Malay) Hawk-Cuckoo and Moustached Hawk-Cuckoo.

Identifying members of the *Hierococcyx* genus is challenging due to their subtle plumage variations and cryptic behaviour. While they are mostly silent in winter quarters, making identification of these five species a complex puzzle, they are more straightforward to distinguish on breeding grounds, where they are highly vocal.

The tables and images below offer a detailed comparison. They are based on personal observation and field notes taken during field trips with the references quoted.

Description of *Hierococcyx* Hawk-Cuckoos



Plate 1: Adult Large Hawk-Cuckoo. Pasir Ris Park, Singapore, March 2015



Plate 2: Adult Dark Hawk-Cuckoo. Fraser's Hill, Pahang, Malaysia, May 2016.



Features	Large Hawk-cuckoo <i>H. sparveroides</i> (Plate1)	Dark (Bock's) Hawk-Cuckoo <i>H. bocki</i> (Plate2)
Chin	Small dark grey/black smudge	Tiny black smudge
Underparts (see Note 1)	Rufous throat extends to upper breast; barred belly appears less dense than <i>H. bocki</i>	As Large, but rufous brighter and extends to the breast area; belly dark and heavily barred (see Plate 4)
Head	Slaty-grey	Slaty-grey
Upperparts	Rich bronze-brown contrasting sharply with head (see Plate 3)	Brownish-grey, slight contrast with head
Bill	Black; yellow base to lower mandible (see plate 5)	Bill mostly all black; limited yellow on lower mandible
Size & Structure	Very large (40cm) and bulkier than all the other hawk-cuckoos; characterised by its notably slender, elongated profile separates it well from the other hawk-cuckoos	Small and densely built (30 cm)
Habitat (see Note 5)	A migrant found at various altitudes in wintering quarters	Primarily a montane species found at elevations 900+meters



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Plate 3: Large Hawk-Cuckoo – note head plumage contrasting sharply with the upperparts which is diagnostic. Although Malaysian (Malay) Hawk-Cuckoo does show some contrast.

Note 1: The barred belly of these two species separates them from Hodgson's (Whistling), Malaysian (Malay), and Moustached Hawk-Cuckoos, which have streaked underparts.

Note 2: Dark Hawk-Cuckoo subadult shows darker lores than an adult. Slightly denser barring are showing on its body as it develops into adulthood. See Plate 4. Large would show more streaking marks and appears more elongated and larger on its underparts.

Note 3: First winter Large Hawk-Cuckoo specifically distinguished from other hawk-cuckoos by its diagnostic facial markings. The black smudge with two diagonal lines (or dark streaking) on the chin/throat, combined with a greyish-brown head, sets this species apart. See Plate 5.

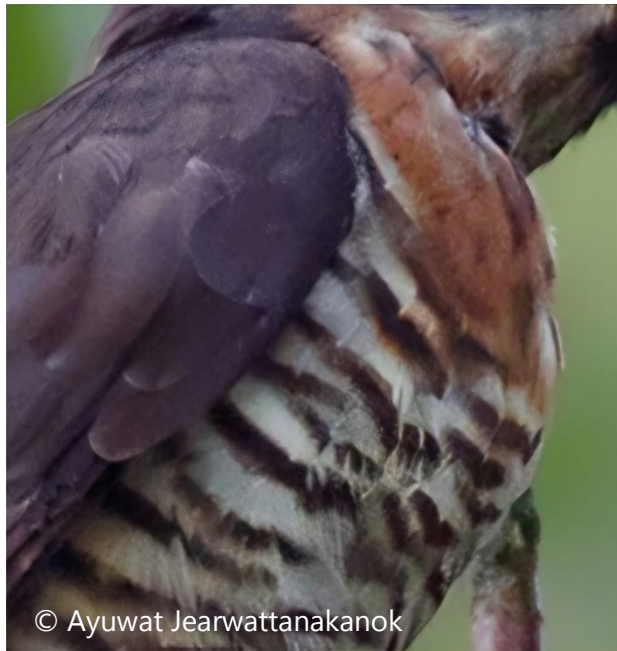


Plate 4: Dark Hawk-Cuckoo. Left: Note the extent of rufous on breast and strong barring on belly. Right: Subadult. Fraser's Hill, Pahang, Malaysia, Nov 2018.

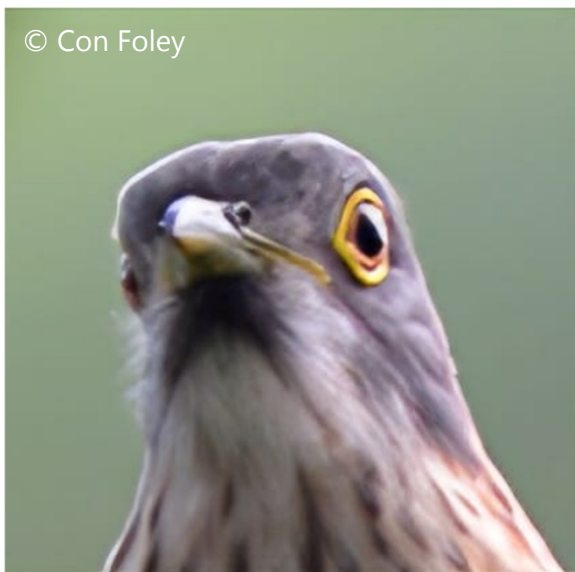


Plate 5: First winter Large Hawk-Cuckoo - see the diagonal lines or streaks on the chin/throat and the black bill, with yellow base to lower mandible. Bidadari Cemetery, Singapore. Jan 2015.

Note 4: Belly barring for first winter Dark (Bock's) Hawk-Cuckoo more conspicuous than the other hawk-cuckoos. Large Hawk-Cuckoo mostly streaked with less barring on the belly whilst the other juveniles lack barring on its underparts. The Large Hawk-Cuckoo shows dark brown tear drop or arrow shape marks which are distinct from the finer, sparser markings of the other juvenile hawk-cuckoos. See Plate 6.



Plate 6: Large hawk-cuckoo - both these juveniles show dark brown tear drop or arrow streak marks on the underparts. Left: Bidadari Cemetery, Singapore. Jan 2015. Right: Kranji Marsh Singapore March 2018.

Note 5: As a montane species, Dark (Bock's) Hawk-Cuckoo is separated by habitat from our other two resident hawk-cuckoos which are found primarily in lower altitudes/lowland regions.



Plate 7: Adult Hodgson's (Whistling) Hawk-Cuckoo. Jurong Lake, Singapore, Dec 2008



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Plate 8: Adult Malaysian (Malay) Hawk-Cuckoo. Left: Perak, Malaysia, Jan 2025. Right: Panti Forest, Johor, Malaysia, June 2012.

Features	Hodgson's (Whistling) Hawk-Cuckoo <i>H. nasicolor</i> (Plate 7)	Malaysian (Malay) Hawk-Cuckoo <i>H. fugax</i> (Plate 8)
Chin (see Note 6)	Grey smudge	Tiny black smudge
Underparts	Heavier somewhat diffuse markings than Malaysian; shows rosy-buff or peach-washed breast & cleaner white belly. The markings on the chest shows more rufous-brown in colour.	Generally has whiter, cleaner underparts with narrow dark-brownish, streaks. The belly is usually clean white, contrasting with the dark streaks.
Head	Slaty-grey	Brownish-grey
Upperparts	Steel slaty- grey, no contrast with head	Rich brown, contrast with head
Nape Patch (see Note 7)	Small and sometimes hardly visible	Clearly visible
Tertial Patch (see Note 8)	Shows a more conspicuous or paler tertial patch	Possesses less conspicuous or darker brownish-grey tertials
Tail (see Note 9)	Narrow penultimate bar; unequal width (see Plate 9)	Broad, roughly equal width; broad rufous tail tip (see Plate 10)
Bill	Yellow base, black tip	Yellow base, black tip

Note 6: Grey smudge on chin somewhat separates from the other hawk-cuckoos described here.

Note 7: The visible medium-sized nape patch on Malaysian (Malay) Hawk-Cuckoo separates it from the other hawk-cuckoos described here.

Note 8: The distinct pale tertial patch on Hodgson's (Whistling) Hawk-Cuckoo separates it from the other hawk-cuckoos described here.

Note 9: The broad rufous tail tip on Malaysian (Malay) Hawk-Cuckoo separates it from all the other hawk-cuckoos. See Plate 10.



Plate 9: Hodgson's (Whistling) Hawk-Cuckoo



Plate 10: Malaysian (Malay) Hawk-Cuckoo

First winter birds (Juveniles)		
Features	Hodgson's (Whistling) Hawk-Cuckoo <i>H. nasicolor</i> (Plate 11)	Malaysian (Malay) Hawk-Cuckoo <i>H. fugax</i> (Plate 12)
Chin	Small black smudge	White, with some spotting
Underparts	Long, rufous edged, dark brown streaks	Small, narrow dark streaks somewhat elongated with white background; interestingly the fledging shows spots. Refer to Plate 13.
Head	Slaty-grey	Slaty-grey
Upperparts	Brownish-grey with rufous barring	Dark grey, little contrast with head, indistinct rufous barring
Nape patch	Absent or indistinct	Visibly distinct
Tertial patch	Less conspicuous	Less conspicuous
Tail	Narrow penultimate bar	Fairly even tail bars



Plate 11: Immature Hodgson's (Whistling) Hawk-Cuckoo. Bidadari, Singapore, Nov 2011.



Plate 12: Immature Malaysian (Malay) Hawk-Cuckoo. Bidadari, Singapore, Oct 2013.



Plate 13: Fledgling juvenile Malaysian (Malay) Hawk-Cuckoo – note spotted marks on the underparts. Panti Forest, Johor, Malaysia, July 2010.

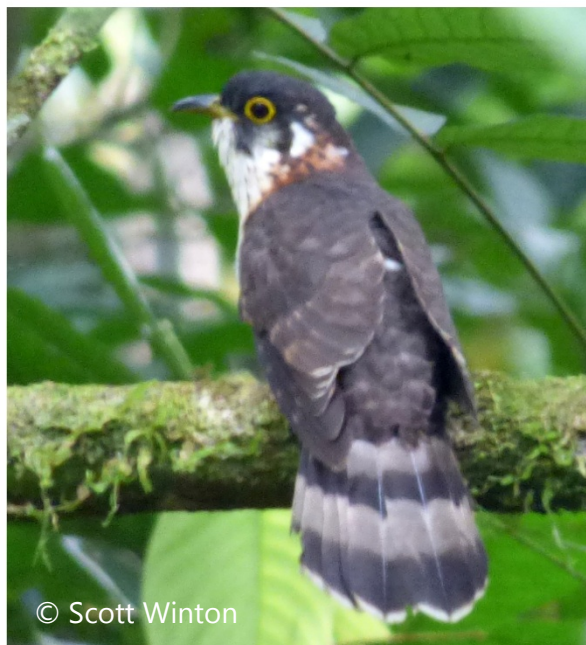


Plate 14: Adult Moustached Hawk-Cuckoo. Left: Sabah Malaysia, Oct 2008. Below right: Kalimantan Indonesia, Sep 2016.

Key features for the **Moustached Hawk-Cuckoo** *H. vagans* (Plate 14) include:

- Distinct black moustache that separates the white ear coverts from the white throat giving it a falcon-like facial pattern that the other hawk-cuckoos lack.
- The white ear-coverts and white throat contrast sharply with the dark grey crown, a feature not found in the same manner on the others.
- The white or cream coloured underparts are marked with narrow blackish or dark brown streaks.
- Proportionately shorter-tailed than the other hawk-cuckoos described here.

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Bird Trees Series:

***Flueggea virosa* – a Wayside Bush for Birds**

Amar-Singh HSS

Flueggea virosa has a widespread distribution through parts of Africa, Arabian Peninsula, Indian subcontinent, China, Southeast Asia, Borneo to northern Australia (Tropical Plants Database 2026; Plants of the World Online 2026). The plant is widely used, in many parts of the world, for traditional medicine. Various parts of the plant, including the leaves, bark, fruit, and roots, are used; the root being used most often (Tropical Plants Database 2026). It may have anti-malarial properties. *Flueggea virosa* has many common names including Common Bushweed, Chinese Waterberry, Sigar Jalak, Trembilutan, Bai Fan Shu, Jin Gan Teng, Vellapoolam, Snowball Bush, etc. Locally it is known as:

- Bertih (most of Peninsular Malaysia).
- Bertih Mertajam (north Peninsular Malaysia).
- Sigar Jalak (Javanese Malaysian and some Indonesian roots in Peninsular Malaysia).

It is a common wayside, multi-stemmed, bush, often growing to about three to four meters in height; occasionally higher. Branches tend to lean outward and down when laden with fruit (Plate 1). The plant produces small, white, fleshy berries 4-5 mm in diameter that are said to be edible, though they may have a sweet to bitter taste (Tropical Plants Database 2026).



Plate 1: A *Flueggea virosa* bush laden with fruit. Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, Nov 2025.

Flueggea virosa is said to be dioecious, with male and female flowers borne on separate plants and fruit is produced only on the female plants. It can be propagated by stem cuttings.

There are a number of *Flueggea* species which can be differentiated by their leaf and inflorescences structure (Barker & van Welzen 2010) but *Flueggea virosa* is the commonest and most widespread in Malaysia.

The fruit is favourite of many birds and seeds are dispersed by both birds and animals. Over the years, a number of bird species have been observed feeding on the fruit of *Flueggea virosa*.

Bird species observed feeding on *Flueggea virosa* (Amar-Singh HSS pers. obs.) (Plate 2):

1. Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier* – a common food item and observed often.
2. Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis* – a common food item and observed often.
3. Javan Myna *Acridotheres javanicus* – a common food item. These birds have a wide diet range.
4. Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus* – an unexpected observation as fruit is not described in its diet. In August 2015 at Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia, observed a flock of 18-20 Baya Weavers feeding on the fruit together with Yellow-vented Bulbuls and Asian Glossy Starlings.
5. Java Sparrow *Padda oryzivora* – a single immature bird observed feeding with the Baya Weaver flock described above.
6. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* – another unexpected observation but this bird has wide diet range (Amar-Singh HSS 2025).



Plate 2: A composite of some birds seen feeding on *Flueggea virosa* fruit. Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia.

An online search for other birds feeding on *Flueggea virosa* identified the following articles and species:

1. In a study on the role of frugivorous birds in seed dispersal in mixed dry deciduous forests of parts of India, Aruna and colleagues (2009) identified 158 individual bird visits by 11 different species that fed on the fruit of *Flueggea virosa* (the bird species list for the individual plants was not published).

2. Red-keeled (Red-striped) Flowerpecker *Dicaeum australe* – Source: Allan Barredo, Birdwatch Philippines Community [Facebook post Sept 2024](#).
3. Brown-headed Parrot *Poicephalus cryptoxanthus* – Source: Aland Manson, Kruger National Park, South Africa [on iNaturalist](#).
4. Southern Masked-Weaver *Ploceus velatus* – Source: [Know Your Weeds website](#) (a global weed database).
5. Cape Starling *Lamprotornis nitens* – Source: [Know Your Weeds website](#) (a global weed database).
6. Red-winged Parrot *Aprosmictus erythropterus* – Source: Ronda Crerar, Kimberley Bush Medicine and Bush Food [Facebook post Sept 2023](#), Northern Australia.
7. Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* – Source: Derek Keats, Kruger National Park, Africa, a [Facebook video posted Feb 2026](#).

Note that some of the *Flueggea virosa* plants above may be of a different subspecies.

It is interesting to note that *Flueggea virosa* is not listed as a food item in any of the birds observe or identified in this article. The work by Aruna and colleagues (2009) suggest that many bird species feed on this bush This common wayside plant is probably overlooked as a food source in Malaysia for bulbuls, flowerpeckers, barbets, parrots, babblers and more. We hope colleagues will keep an eye out to document birds feeding on the fruit.

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Citation: Amar-Singh HSS. (2026). *Flueggea virosa* – a Wayside Bush for Birds. *Malaysian Bird Report*. Volume 2/2026, Jun 2026: pg. 93-95.

Common Garden Bird 13: Brown-throated Sunbird (Kelicap Mayang Kelapa) *Anthreptes malacensis*

Amar-Singh HSS & Swee-Im Lim

Sunbirds are the glittering gems of our birdlife. Most of them have bright metallic plumage and are similar to the hummingbirds of the Americas, but do not hover as well. As their family name suggests (Nectariniinae) they like to feed on the nectar found in flowers. Two species are common in the lowland, urban gardens.

The Brown-throated Sunbird male is brightly coloured with a brown throat, metallic green-purple head, chestnut on the shoulders and yellow underparts. The female is olive-yellow with yellowish underparts and an incomplete yellowish eye-ring. This is one of the larger of the sunbirds and has a long, thickish beak.

The male has a habit of long periods of calling out ("*kelicap*") in early mornings, to demarcate its territory. They are very acrobatic in their search for insects in the garden. They love to feed on the Bottle Brush, Powderpuff, Coral tree and other flowering bushes. They will pierce the base of a long flower (exotics, not native to Malaysia) to get to the nectar.



They build a pendular, pear-shaped nest, hung from a branch at some height; often in a tree infested with Kerengga (Weaver) ants.

If you have these birds in your garden it is possible to cultivate a relationship by planting nectar plants that they love as well offering them wet leaves for 'leaf-bathing'. If you water the leaves of your bushes in the hot afternoon/evening they will turn up to rub or slide their bodies against the wet leaves. Some in our wild garden will even call out when they see us to ask for a shower.

Common Garden Bird 14: Ornate Sunbird (Kelicap Biasa) *Cinnyris ornatus*

Amar-Singh HSS & Swee-Im Lim

Sunbirds are the glittering gems of our birdlife. Most of them have bright metallic plumage and are similar to the hummingbirds of the Americas, but do not hover as well. As their family name suggests (Nectariniinae) they like to feed on the nectar found in flowers. Two species are common in the lowland, urban gardens.

This is another common sunbird of lowland urban garden, and perhaps even more common than the Brown-throated Sunbird. It is smaller with a longer, thinner, curved beak. We often call this the 'dainty' sunbird. The upperparts are olive-green with yellow underparts and a white-tipped tail. The male has iridescent blue-black plumage on the throat and upper breast. Females have a pale yellow eyebrow. Males in northern Peninsular Malaysia have the upper breast bordered below by a maroon band.



They love the nectar of flowers and will pierce the base of a long flower to get to the nectar. But can also be seen searching a spider web for spiders. It is even more tolerant of humans and may build its pendular, pear-shaped nest around the house, attaching it to a branch in a potted plant, a wire just outside a window or a lightbulb.



They are fascinating to watch when courting – the male will extend its yellow-orange pectoral tufts to woo the female, often accompanied with loud song and some chasing/pursuit.

Recent Publications & Research

Research/Review Articles Relevant to Malaysia

Kim-Chye Lim

Birds of the Southern Islands of Singapore. Dillen Ng, Geoffrey W. H. Davison, R.Y. Nicholas Seng, Y.H. Jonathan Tan. National Parks Board, Singapore.

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Upcoming & Recent Bird Activities

The 'Inside Scope' to Shorebird ID Workshop 2026, Penaga, Penang, Malaysia

Michelle PH Ho & Eng-Keong Chng

The Motivation

When we first heard about the Shorebirds Identification Workshop 2026 in Penaga (held from May 30–31), we didn't hesitate. Organized by the Shorebird Peninsular Malaysia Project (SPMP) and led by the legendary 'Grand Master' Dave Bakewell, we immediately seized the opportunity—even though it meant enduring a 700+ km overland migration of our own all the way from Singapore.

A UK-born lecturer based in Sabah, Dave Bakewell is a lifelong birder who channels his deep passion for shorebirds into workshops that elevate local identification and monitoring skills. As a close friend and technical advisor, Dave supports the Shorebird Peninsular Malaysia Project (SPMP) - an inspiring conservation initiative launched in 2017 by a dedicated team of researchers and volunteers led by Mohd Nasir and his wife, Nur Munira Azman.

This 2-day workshop brought together 20 passionate participants from across Malaysia, Singapore, and Japan. Fortuitously, it also aligned with the celebrations for World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) 2026. It served as a powerful reminder that migratory birds transcend borders, connecting countries, cultures, and ecosystems across the globe. Ultimately, their survival hinges on healthy coastal wetlands and the united, trans-boundary efforts of researchers, communities, and conservation organizations alike.



Plate 1: Participants of Shorebirds ID Workshop 2026. Dewan Nelayan Sungai Tembus, Penang, Malaysia, May 2026.

Why Shorebirds?

For many birders - ourselves absolutely included - shorebird identification is notoriously challenging. More often than not, these birds are:

- Observed from immense distances through a heat haze.
- Dressed in frustratingly homogeneous shades of non-breeding grey and white.
- Congregated in massive, swirling, mixed-species flocks.

Tackling this requires more than just high-end optics and endless patience; it demands a core set of identification skills grounded in a structured framework. If we want to contribute to avian conservation in a meaningful way, we have to master this art. After all, accurate data is the bedrock of protection because 'Every Bird Counts – Your Observations Matter!'

Basic Tenets of Shorebirds Identification

Day One at Dewan Nelayan Sungai Tembus kicked off with Dave engaging us in an interactive breakdown of a comprehensive, three-step methodology designed to maximize our success on the mudflats.



Plate 2: Day 1 of Shorebirds ID Workshop 2025. Dewan Nelayan Sungai Tembus, Penang, Malaysia, May 2026.

To truly master the art of shorebird identification, you have to realize that the work begins long before you even unpack your spotting scope, binoculars and high-res cameras.

- **BEFORE:** This involves researching environmental variables before arriving at the site - such as local tide tables, weather patterns, and the specific habitats of the species you expect to encounter.
- **DURING:** Once in the field, the focus shifts to documenting structural traits, unique behavioural movements, feeding styles, and distinct calls.
- **AFTER:** The final stage happens back at home or camp, requiring a thorough review of captured photos or audio recordings and the systematic logging of findings into citizen science databases like eBird.



Plate 3: 3-Step approach to maximize success in Shorebirds Identification.

By utilizing this disciplined, three-step methodology, birders can significantly improve their accuracy, ensuring that every sighting is carefully verified and recorded to contribute meaningful data to migratory bird conservation.

"Hey, What's That Bird?" - Waterbirds vs. Sandpipers vs. Plovers

One of the most common hurdles for emerging enthusiasts is answering the fundamental question: "What's that bird?" Are all shorebirds waterbirds? Is that silhouette a sandpiper or a plover?

Dave tackled these core distinctions head-on, laying down a clear taxonomic foundation:

- **Waterbirds** is a broad, catch-all umbrella term that includes everything from herons and egrets to ducks and terns.
- **Shorebirds** (or **Waders**) are a specific subset within the umbrella of 'waterbirds'.
- Within the shorebird family, we frequently have to separate **Plovers** (typically short-billed, large-eyed, visual hunters that run-and-pause) from **Sandpipers** (typically longer-billed, smaller-eyed, tactile feeders that probe the mud continuously).



© Eng-Keong Chng

Plate 4: Sandpiper (left) vs Plover. Teluk Air Tawar-Kuala Muda, Penang, Malaysia, 31 May 2026.

Clearing up these foundational definitions immediately sharpened our eyes for the field sessions to come.

Topography: Back to Hiking?

Next, we dived into the essential 'tools and hacks' needed to elevate our ID skills, starting with Topography - which, despite sounding like a mountain hiking term, is actually the detailed mapping of a bird's external anatomy.



© Shorebirds Peninsular Malaysia Project

Plate 5: Topography assignment - a test of our cognitive skills.

This was a highly engaging, interactive session that put our cognitive powers to the test. We found ourselves collectively recollecting and tracing the complex jigsaw puzzle of a bird's plumage: from scapulars and coverts to primary projection, supercilium, and orbital rings.

Learning exactly where to look on a bird's body allows you to take precise mental notes (or field sketches) rather than just looking at grey silhouettes and guessing. Combined with a flurry of other practical field hacks shared by Dave and comprehensive information on www.shorebirds.my compiled by SPMP, we left the classroom feeling significantly more equipped to face the daunting flocks waiting for us on the shoreline.

Birds of a Feather Flock Together

In the afternoon, the workshop transitioned from lecture to collaboration. The participants were divided into four operational 'flocks', intentionally pairing seasoned shorebird veterans with newer observers. To be firmly grounded, a practitioner must put theory to the test - and doing it as a team made the steep learning curve immensely fun and easier. This collaborative approach allowed us to cross-examine our notes, debate tricky identification features, and pool our collective knowledge.



Plate 6: Collaborative discussion on a tactical boat trip plan. Dewan Nelayan Sungai Tembus, Penang, Malaysia, May 2026.

Each 'flock' was handed a crucial tactical assignment to research the specific environmental layout of the Teluk Air Tawar - Kuala Muda (TAT-KM) wetlands and map out the exact shorebird species we were highly likely to encounter.

'Flock Chep-Chep' enthusiastically presented their strategic breakdown to the class, analysing the specific tide timings, wind directions, and habitat zones of TAT-KM to predict exactly where the birds would push as the water rose. They honed in on two of the most sought-after and easily confused target groups expected on the mudflats: Godwits and Dowitchers, a true test

of a birder's structural ID skills, highlighting the key differences, subtle structural nuances and behavioral quirks.



© Shorebirds Peninsular Malaysia Project

Plate 7: Presentation by members of "Flock" Chep-Chep. Dewan Nelayan Sungai Tembus, Penang, Malaysia, May 2026.

The Mudflat Challenge

Day Two of the workshop was all about taking the theoretical framework, anatomy maps, hacks and strategic plans built on Day One and testing them against the dynamic, fast-paced reality of the natural environment. Participants arrived eager to share their morning insights and put their collective observation skills to the ultimate test.

The excitement peaked as we boarded six boats and headed out onto the expansive 450-hectare tidal mudflats of Teluk Air Tawar - Kuala Muda in Penaga, Penang. Stretching 10 km from the Sungai Muda estuary down to Sungai Abdul estuary in Teluk Air Tawar, this vital ecosystem features Penang's largest remaining undeveloped mangrove forest, covering 620 hectares and widening up to 2 km between Sungai Tembus and Sungai Lahar Endin. When the tide drops, it exposes a massive, pristine expanse of mud flats—a sanctuary of flora and fauna, and a critical lifeline for the flyway's migratory shorebirds. Teluk Air Tawar-Kuala Muda is an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a significant site for globally endangered migratory shorebirds.



© Shorebirds Peninsular Malaysia Project

Plate 8: An awe-inspiring experience at the mudflats of Teluk Air Tawar-Kuala Muda, Penang, Malaysia, May 2026.



© Shorebirds Peninsular Malaysia Project

Plate 9: Glassing and capturing images of the Shorebirds. Teluk Air Tawar-Kuala Muda, Penang, Malaysia, May 2026.

Conducting a shorebird survey from a moving boat introduces a whole new layer of complexity: balancing optics against the gentle roll of the water, dealing with changing light conditions, and tracking flocks as they shift with the incoming tide. This intense, two-hour

challenge was exactly what we needed to truly anchor Dave's identification methodologies into our muscle memory.

The mudflats did not disappoint as we collectively and successfully identified an interesting array of shorebird species, namely, Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* and the diminutive, hyperactive Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*. Other waterbirds sighted include the rare and majestic Milky Stork *Mycteria cinerea* foraging along the shoreline, Black-crowned Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* keeping watch near the mangroves, and Great Crested Terns *Thalasseus bergii* perched on artificial roosts consisting of installing ropes between existing poles, another innovative and cost-effective project initiated by SPMP. Refer to [eBird Malaysia for species](#) details.

Consolidating the Mental Model - Age and Plumage

Returning to the jetty didn't mean the learning stopped. In fact, we immediately dove into the deep end of advanced shorebird identification: Plumage, Ageing, and Moulting.

If understanding structure and jizz gets you to the right species, mastering moult and plumage tells you the story of the individual bird. Dave led a fascinating session showing us how a shorebird's feathers can reveal its age, its origin, and even its recent migration history. We learned to look beyond just the colour of a bird and instead examine the condition of its feathers. For instance, finding fresh, neatly fringed juvenile plumage looks completely different from the worn, ragged, fading feathers of an adult that has just flown thousands of kilometres.



Plate 10: Dave imparting advanced ID techniques of Shorebirds Identification. Dewan Nelayan Sungai Tembus, Penang, Malaysia, May 2026.

To cement this advanced mental model, the session became highly participatory with quiz questions. In addition, attendees were invited to project their own photos taken during the morning boat trip. Together as a group, we cross-examined the images, debating feather wear, looking for active moult, and collectively putting into practice what we have just learned.

Bonus Field Trip

Just when we thought the workshop was winding down, we were treated to a bonus land-based field trip.



Plate 11: Bonus Track: Reinforcing Shorebirds ID techniques on Solid Ground. Penang, Malaysia, May 2026.

Switching from a moving boat to solid ground gave us a completely different, highly practical perspective. With our tripods firmly planted, we deployed high-magnification spotting scopes to scan the shorebirds at leisure. Without the roll of the waves, we could patiently put our afternoon theory into practice - fine-tuning our scopes on distant birds to better differentiate them, and comfortably practise what Dave had spent the weekend instilling in us. It was the perfect, grounded conclusion to an incredibly intensive weekend of learning and birding.

Final Thoughts: The Timelessness of Field Craft

As the Shorebirds Identification Workshop 2026 drew to a close, all twenty of us left Penaga with a profoundly clearer understanding of how to maximise our chances of successfully identifying these incredible birds before, during, and after our field trips. The raw enthusiasm

shared across the group throughout the weekend was nothing short of inspiring. Even now, back from the mudflats, many of us find ourselves constantly reminiscing about the spectacular sightings at TAT-KM and the wonderful camaraderie we shared.

In an era dominated by high-resolution digital cameras and instant AI bird identification apps, it might tempt some to think that traditional, old-fashioned field identification has been pushed to the sidelines. On the contrary, our weekend in Penaga proved exactly the opposite.

Technology can capture an image, but it cannot replace the human eye, the patience of observation, or the deep understanding of a bird's behaviour. The structured methodology and ID techniques shared by Dave Bakewell will equip us with the fundamental field craft required to not just look, but truly see, transforming us into more accurate, active, and valuable contributors to global avian conservation.

Acknowledgement

This transformative weekend would not have been possible without an incredible, dedicated 'kampung' of researchers and community leaders. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Shorebird Peninsular Malaysia Project (SPMP) organizers—in particular, 'Mohd Nasir and 'Nur Munira Azman - and our guru, Dave Bakewell, for his completely selfless sharing of expertise, passion, and knowledge. The East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) supported this workshop with a World Migratory Bird Day Small Grant 2026.

Our heartfelt thanks also go out to the tireless volunteers who kept everything running seamlessly and safely behind the scenes: Abdul Afiq Abdul Rahman (NEST), Fiza Ummu Fateh & Kak Ani (Noraini Tahir), Aini Hasanah (UMT), Mat Noor (Head of Unit Nelayan Sungai Tembus).

Finally, thank you to all of our fellow participants for the wonderful friendship. Together, we enjoyed great food, shared endless laughs, and made some truly meaningful observations. Equipped with these new skills, we return to the field ready to ensure that every single bird counts!

Useful Links:

Shorebirds Malaysia - <https://shorebirds.my/>

ebird Malaysia checklist on 31 May 2026 - <https://ebird.org/checklist/S355291049>

Kinta Nature Park Biodiversity Day 2026

Ching-Fong Lau, Amar-Singh HSS, Ain Maisyara Yazrol, Indra Nachiappan, Nur Atikah Abd Rashid & Kim-Chye Lim

The Perak State Parks Corporation held a Biodiversity Day at Kinta Nature Park, Perak, Malaysia on 06 June 2026. The programme aimed to:

1. Increase public awareness of the importance of biodiversity and nature conservation.
2. Foster community involvement in conservation efforts of sensitive areas and natural habitats.
3. Introduce the uniqueness of biodiversity and conservation values.
4. Promote the CEPA (Communication, Education & Public Awareness) approach in conservation area management.



The event was officiated by Loh Sze Yee, chairman of the Perak State Tourism, Industry, Investment and Corridor Development Committee, and attended by Orang Besar Jajahan Kampar, Azman bin Dato' Seri Yeop Junior. It was supported by a number of government agencies and organisations including Forest Research Institute Malaysia Incorporated, University of Malaya, Nature Educational Society (NEST), Stewards of Environmentally Aware Development (SEAD), Malaysia Nature Society (MNS), Malaysian Bird Report (MBR) and industry players. Birdwatchers from Perak and NEST supported the event.

Activities for the public included an interactive birdwatching walk, DIY organic composting session, exhibition booths (including birds) and talks on biodiversity and conservation of bird species in Malaysia, habitat planting and enrichment projects, etc.



Plate 1: Guided birdwatching with the VIPs, Biodiversity Day, Kinta Nature Park, 06 Jun 2026



Plate 2: Bird photography exhibition, Biodiversity Day. Kinta Nature Park, 06 Jun 2026

Some of the birds shown to visitors during the Biodiversity Day include:

1. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
2. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
3. Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
4. Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger*
5. Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*
6. Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*
7. Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*
8. Grey-headed Swamphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus*
9. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
10. Javan Myna *Acridotheres javanicus*
11. Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis*
12. Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*
13. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*
14. Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis*
15. Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*
16. Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*
17. Blue-throated Bee-eater *Merops viridis*
18. Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*
19. Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*

Kinta Nature Park (aka Taman Alam Kinta) came into being due to advocacy from the Perak Branch of the MNS. In 1998 MNS Perak proposed to the authorities that an area of ex-mining land should be set aside as a nature park. This idea was keenly supported by the then Kinta District Officer. In 2001, Kinta Nature Park came into being in an area just outside Batu Gajah and more than half a million ringgit was spent on basic infrastructure, including a viewing tower, toilets and rest huts. The KNP Technical Committee that was set up made plans to survey and map the site for the purpose of gazettment. However, as changes in the posting of key government officers resulted in a lack of follow-up and waning interest in the project.

The development and management plans provided by MNS Perak were not acted on and the project foundered, with facilities falling into disrepair.

Fortunately, Kinta Nature Park was finally gazetted as a state park on 12 January 2018 with public facilities rebuilt and personnel assigned to safeguard and maintain the area. It has now come under the care of the Perak State Parks Corporation.



Plate 3: Aerial view of part of Kinta Nature Park, Perak, Malaysia.



Plate 4: Smooth-coated Otters *Lutrogale perspicillata* can be seen at Kinta Nature Park.

Kinta Nature Park is a key ecotourism destination in Perak. The gazetted park comprises close to 400 hectares (within a larger ~900 ha of former mining lands) and is a rich, biodiverse wetland habitat for a wide variety of flora and fauna. The park is a shared ecosystem for birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fishes and butterflies. This remarkable biodiversity demonstrates that areas damaged by human activities, such as ex-mining lands, when left to recover, can eventually become habitats for wildlife.

The eBird checklist documents 137 resident and migratory bird species observed at the park (as of June 2026). It is of particular importance as a protected nesting site for wetland birds like the Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* and the Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger*. It is considered one of the largest heronries in Malaysia for the Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, as well as other heron and egret species.



Plate 5: A small segment of the many nesting birds. Kinta Nature Park, Perak, Malaysia.

Kinta Nature Park has a four-level bird observation tower to aid birdwatching. As the key nesting site (heronry) is located on an island (see Plate 3) it is advisable to have a spotting scope or long lens for viewing or photographing the birds. However, many birds can be seen in the trees and aquatic vegetation around the park. It is worth checking out the old trees for wood-owls, woodpeckers and broadbills.



Plate 6: A few of the many iconic birds that can be seen at Kinta Nature Park, Perak, Malaysia.

Kinta Nature Park is open daily between 8am and 5pm.
GPS Coordinates: N 04° 25.444' E101° 03.567'.

It is best accessed by car by the back road via Gopeng and Kota Bharu, Perak. Aim for Masjid Jamek Kota Bharu and then on to Taman Alam Kinta, Batu Gajah. Note that Google Maps does not show this route but Waze does (see Plate 7).



Plate 7: Waze directions from Ipoh to Kinta Nature Park, Perak, Malaysia.

Global Big Day 10th May 2026 Report

Swee-Yian Lim

Global Big Day May 2025 in brief:

- 2.1 million people identified birds with [Merlin Bird ID](#)—Merlin's Biggest Day ever!
- 22.2 million Merlin Sound ID detections
- 8,023 species reported
- 4,127,929 bird observations
- 197,640 eBird checklists submitted
- 80,245 eBirders from 203 countries
- [118,518 photos of birds](#) shared with the Macaulay Library
- [8,406 bird audio recordings](#) shared with the Macaulay Library

Global Participation Highlights

The highest numbers of species recorded were contributed by Colombia (1,566 species), followed by Peru (1,438 species) and Brazil (1,204 species). These countries continue to lead global species diversity reporting, reflecting both rich biodiversity and strong engagement from local observers.

In terms of checklist submissions, the United States remained the largest contributor with 89,726 checklists, followed by Canada with 17,085 and Colombia with 15,086. These figures underscore the sustained participation of North American birders and the growing involvement of observers in Colombia.

Several countries demonstrated substantial growth in checklist submissions compared to May 2025. The most notable increases were recorded in Vietnam (+203%), Mongolia (+134%), and El Salvador (+116%), indicating expanding community engagement and rising interest in bird monitoring activities across these regions.

Regional Highlights: Asia

Within Asia, India once again led the region in both species recorded and checklists submitted, contributing 853 species and 3,275 checklists. This continued leadership reflects India's large and active birding community as well as its high biodiversity.

On the checklist leaderboard, Taiwan ranked second with 1,188 checklists, followed by Türkiye in third place with 857 checklists. These figures indicate strong and growing participation across different parts of the region.

For species diversity, China placed second with 660 species, while Nepal ranked third with 437 species. Malaysia secured fifth place, contributing 372 species to the regional total.

State-Level Participation in Malaysia

Participation across Malaysian states showed clear variation in both checklist submissions and species diversity, with several regions demonstrating particularly strong engagement.

Sabah ranked first overall, contributing 57 checklists and recording 197 species, reflecting its position as one of Malaysia's most biodiverse and actively birded regions. Selangor followed in second place with 48 checklists and 166 species, supported by its mix of urban parks, wetlands, and accessible forest edges. In third place, Johor submitted 16 checklists and documented 143 species, indicating solid participation and good habitat coverage. Pahang ranked fourth with 10 checklists and 102 species, while Kuala Lumpur placed fifth with 9 checklists and 46 species, showing continued engagement from urban birders.

Several states contributed smaller numbers of checklists but still added meaningful species records. Kedah (6 checklists, 37 species) and Sarawak (6 checklists, 34 species) demonstrated moderate activity, while Pulau Pinang recorded 61 species from just 4 checklists, highlighting high species richness relative to effort.

Lower-volume contributions came from Melaka (2 checklists, 20 species) and Negeri Sembilan (1 checklist, 45 species), both of which nonetheless added valuable data to the national total. No data was available for Perak during this reporting period, resulting in the state being absent from the rankings. Its omission highlights the importance of continued outreach and engagement to ensure comprehensive national coverage in future counts.

Overall, the distribution of checklists and species across states reflects a combination of habitat diversity, observer density, and local birding activity. High-performing states such as Sabah, Selangor, and Johor continue to anchor national participation, while contributions from smaller states ensure broad geographic coverage across Malaysia.

Malaysian results:

Rank	Region	Checklists	Species
1	Sabah	57	197
2	Selangor	48	166
3	Johor	16	143
4	Pahang	10	102
5	Kuala Lumpur	9	46
6	Kedah	6	37
7	Sarawak	6	34
8	Pulau Pinang	4	61
9	Melaka	2	20
10	Negeri Sembilan	1	45

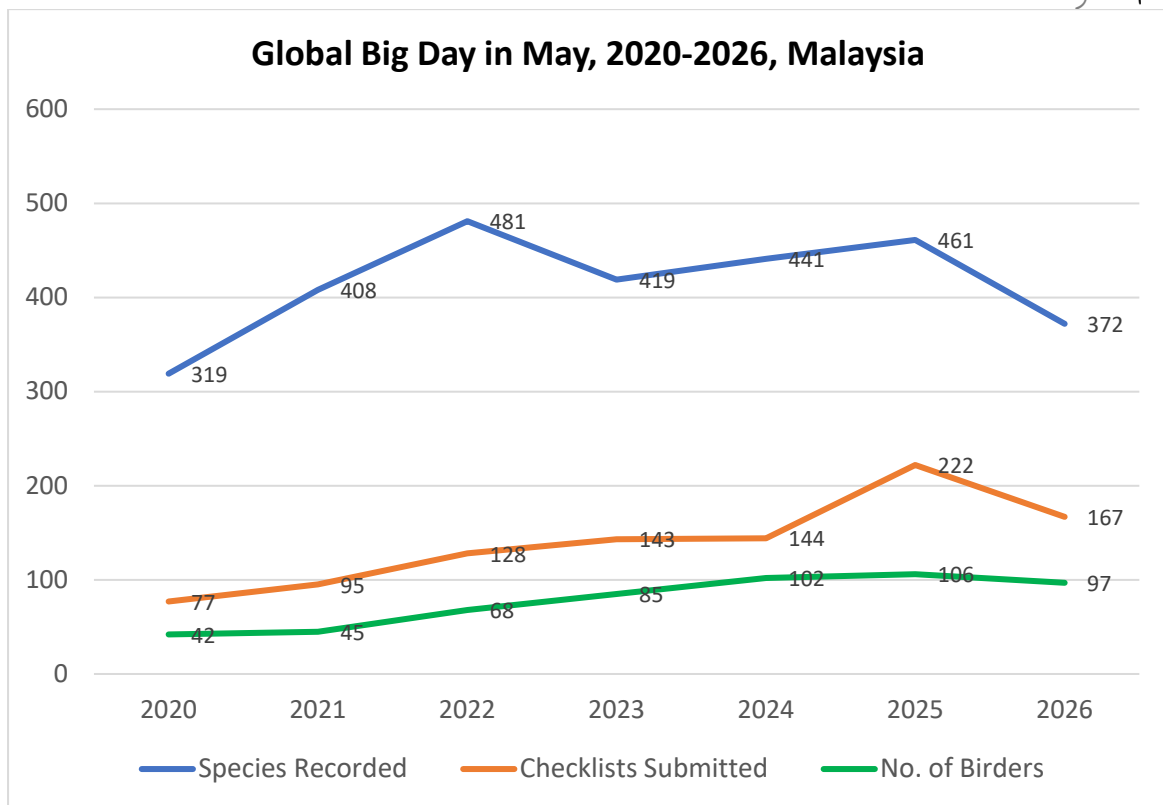


Figure: Global Big Day in May, Participation and Submission for Malaysia 2020-2026
Graph prepared by Amar-Singh HSS

MY Garden Birdwatch (MYGB)

Date : 18-19 July & 25-26 July 2026

Your backyard is more than just a patch of green – it's a vital sanctuary for our feathered friends. My Garden Birdwatch is just round the corner, we need your eyes on the skies! It takes 30 minutes to sit back, grab a cold drink, and count the birds that land in your garden, on your balcony or the playground across from you.

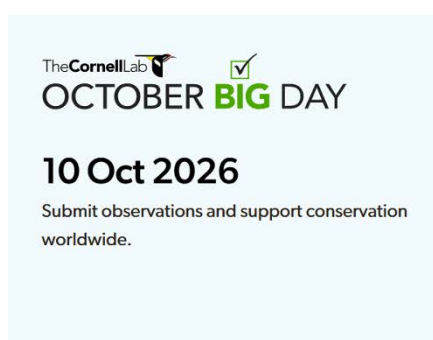


Refer to the article by Lai Wah Liu, MY Garden Birdwatch (MYGB) 18-19 July & 25-26 July 2026, to find out all about it.

October Big Day 2026

Dates: October 10, 2026

Location: Nationwide
(Individual/Group Participation).



Malaysian birders, let's come together and make the 2026 October Big

Day our strongest showing yet. During this 24-hour global birding celebration, you're encouraged to visit as many of your favourite birding spots as you can and record every species you encounter. Whether you're a seasoned birder or just starting out, your participation matters.

The goal is simple: **record as many bird species as possible in 24 hours**. Every sighting counts. Every checklist helps scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology better understand bird populations and migration patterns.

Big Days can also be an outlet for creative expression. Around the world, birders turned their October Big Day experiences into sketches, photos, films, and stories, showcasing their passion for birds in many mediums and forms. You can do the same for your local birding group or your friends and neighbours. Can be as simple as inviting friends to coming along and after the count go for the teh tarik.

Submit your sightings through the **eBird website** or the **free eBird Mobile app**.

To help with identification by sound or appearance, download **Merlin Bird ID**. If you don't yet have an eBird account, create one now so you can share what you see and hear on Global Big Day: <https://ebird.org/globalbigday>

Both **eBird Mobile** and **Merlin Bird ID** are available on the **Google Play Store** (Android) and **Apple App Store** (iPhone).

For more information : <https://ebird.org/octoberbigday>

9th International Galliformes Symposium

Venue: Hotel Barahi, Pokhara, Nepal

Date: 26 – 30 October 2026 (**Postponed**)

The 9th International Galliformes Symposium, originally scheduled for 20 – 30 October 2026 in Pokhara, Nepal, has been postponed. A tentative rescheduled date is now listed for October 19-21, 2027, in the same location, according to the [Galliformes Specialist Group](#).

For more information, visit :

<https://www.pheasant.org.uk/second-calling-notice-9th-international-galliformes-symposium/>

Borneo Bird Festival 2026

Venue: Rainforest Discovery Centre (RDC), Sepilok, Sandakan, Sabah

Date : 7 – 8 November 2026

This is Malaysia's premier birding event, celebrating the rich avian diversity of Borneo. The festival typically features the **Borneo Bird Race**, bird photography workshops, and guided walks. It is the best opportunity to spot Borneo's "Big Five" endemics, including the Bornean Bristlehead and various pittas.

Registration for the bird race and workshop bookings open officially on 1st June 2026

For more information :

Email : borneobirdclub@gmail.com

Tel. no. : +6089553780

Facebook: Borneo Bird Festival Official

Instagram: @borneobirdfestival



Third Asian Ornithological Conference (AOC 2026)

Venue: National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore

Dates: 14 – 17 November 2026



AOC 2026 brings together ornithological experts across the world to facilitate knowledge sharing and productive regional collaborations on Asian ornithology. This conference will feature plenary talks and presentations from across all disciplines of ornithology, with some of the focal topics being ecology, genomics and speciation, conservation management, the Asian songbird crisis and the illegal Asian bird trade, migration along the East Asian–Australasian Flyway, avian biogeography across Asia and more.

For more information: <https://www.aoc2026.sg/>

15th Asian Bird Fair – Xiamen

Venue: Xiamen, China

Date: 26 – 30 November 2026



This major regional event brings together birders, conservationists, and nature lovers to promote bird protection and ecotourism through exhibits, expert talks, and tours. The event features international exhibitors, including NGOs, eco-product vendors, and photography groups.

Highlights of the event:

- Exhibitions from bird clubs and NGOs across Asia
- Talks and panel discussions by leading ornithologists and conservationists
- Bird photography showcases and competitions
- Youth programmes and hands-on learning activities
- Cultural performances and local craft displays
- Guided birdwatching excursions to Xiamen's key hotspots

For more information: <https://asianbirdfair.org/>

MY Garden Birdwatch (MYGB) 18-19 July & 25-26 July 2026

Lai-Wah Liu, MNS Selangor Branch Bird Group

The MY Garden Birdwatch (MYGB) is an annual nationwide survey on the garden birds in Malaysia, held in conjunction with World Nature Conservation Day in July. MYGB is the 1st citizen science project on garden bird count in Malaysia. Anyone residing in Malaysia is welcome to participate.



MYGB ran for 12 years from 2010 till 2022, so many are familiar with this event. After a long pause, we are excited to relaunch MYGB over 2 weekends on 18-19 July and 25-26 July 2026 allowing for greater participation. Malaysia has over 850 species of birds and some of them can be found in your backyard or in the parks near you.

Everything one needs to know about MY Garden Birdwatch can be found at this website, including Q&A:

www.mygardenbirdwatch.com (scan QR code)



- 30 minutes a year -- that's all it takes for you to contribute to MY Garden Birdwatch.
- Use of a binoculars is optional. It gives a better view of birds from afar.
- Identify the bird species using the MGB Countsheet (see below), count and record them.
- Submit the data using the Submission Form on the My Garden Birdwatch website using the QR code above.
- You may submit more than 1 submission form for different locations. Stay stationary and confine to 30 mins of observation for each location within the survey period.



SOME DOs & DON'Ts

DOs:

When conducting the MYGB bird survey, do adhere to the **T.O.P.** protocol:

- **T: TIME** - The MYGB Count must only be done in 30 Minutes **TIME** during the designated weekends. No more or less.
- **O: OBSERVE** - **OBSERVE** only the perched birds. Count the highest no of Species seen at one time.
- **P: PLACE** - Stay at one **PLACE**. Count at a **PLACE** where you can visit every year for consistency i.e. Backyard, garden or nearby park.

DON'Ts:

- Don't count for more than 30 minutes and during other dates, other than the announced / official annual Survey dates.
- Don't count flying birds or birds that you only hear.
- Don't walk around. Stay in one spot.
- Update with the correct location of survey, provide at least a street name, town and state. Don't indicate location as "My garden" or "My house".

Start practising. You can sharpen your identification skill with this [MYGB countsheet](#) which is downloadable for FREE from the website.

MY Garden Birdwatch is also on Facebook under this logo

<https://www.facebook.com/mygardenbirdwatch>



One of the MYGB achievements was the publication of a [scientific article](#) using the data generated from the MYGB Count. This truly demonstrates how citizen science works.

Your participation goes a long way.

All queries may be forwarded to:

Email: chirp@mygardenbirdwatch.com

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/mygardenbirdwatch>

Book & Site Reviews

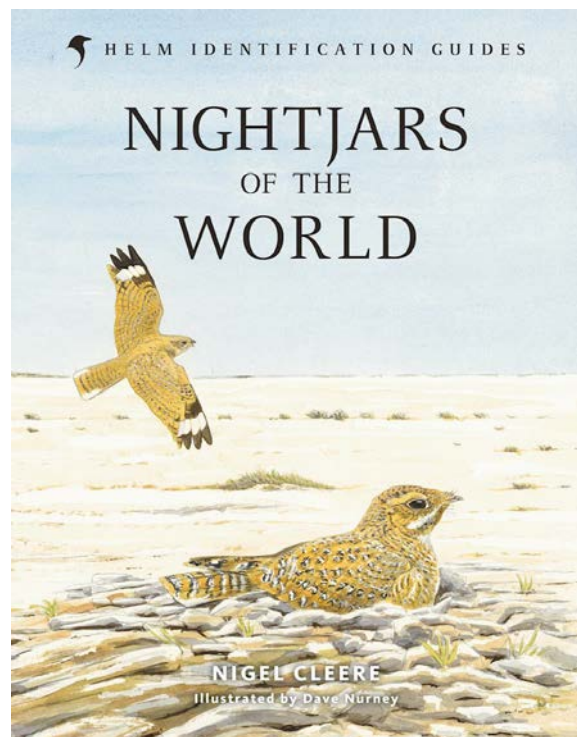
Nightjars of the World: A Guide to the Caprimulgidae by Nigel Cleere

Illustrated by Dave Nurney. Helm Field Guide, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2026

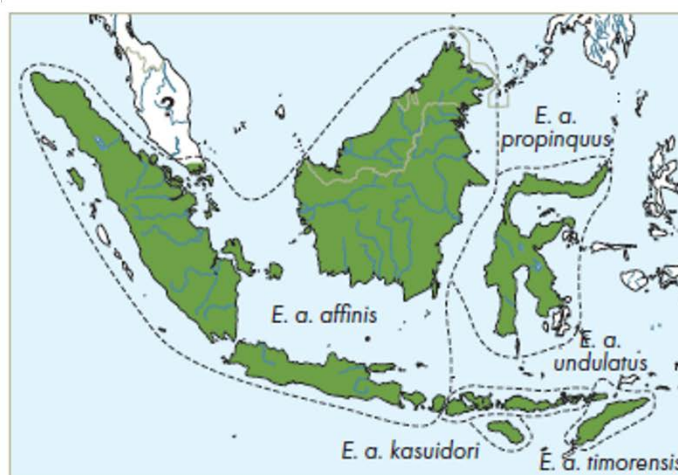
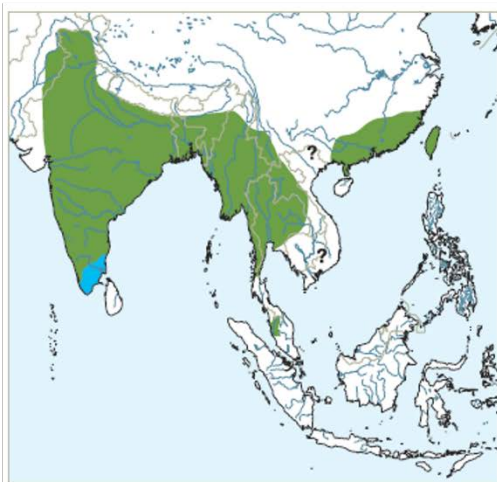
Amar-Singh HSS

It has been almost three decades since Nigel Cleere published 'Nightjars: A Guide to Nightjars and Related Nightbirds'. This publication, as Cleere says, was intended to be an updated second edition but the vast scope of work made him decide to concentrate exclusively on the family Caprimulgidae - nightjars, nighthawks, poorwills and pauraques - setting aside the frogmouths, potoos, owlet-nightjars and oilbird that his earlier work included. Although the scope may have narrowed taxonomically, the depth has expanded considerably

The most significant change from 1998 is taxonomic. The movement from reliance solely on anatomical and morphological characters, to the growth of molecular sequencing employed alongside morphological and vocal studies, has helped uncover previously unrecognised taxa. Where previous classifications recognised roughly 90 species across about 15 genera, Cleere now accepts 106 species of Caprimulgidae distributed among 31 genera, arranged in two subfamilies. The subfamily Eurostopodinae is carved out for the Australian and Pacific nightjars (7 species). The remainder sit in the greatly reorganised Caprimulginae (99 species). Cleere accepts that some taxa still remain undetected.

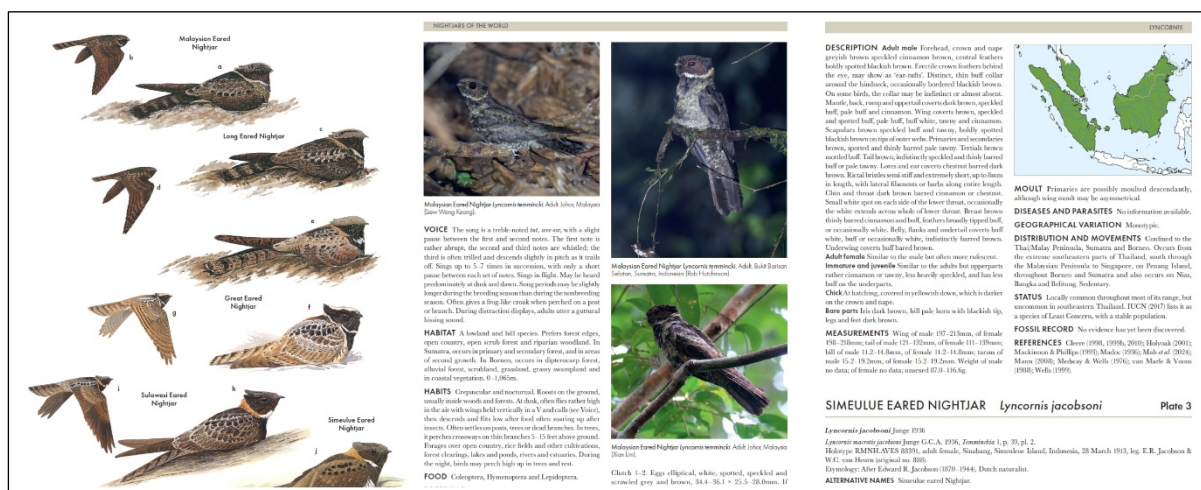


Many familiar names will look strange to readers of the previous edition or those using references like Clements Checklist of Birds of the World, eBird or Birds of the World. What was once an Indian Nightjar called *Caprimulgus asiaticus* is now *Rossornis asiaticus*. The Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* is now *Eximiornis aegyptius*. Of more interest to local birdwatchers will be the split of the Savanna Nightjar *Caprimulgus affinis*. Cleere now uses Franklin's Nightjar *Eximiornis monticolus* (Franklin's Nightjar was an older name for Savanna Nightjar) for birds seen in Peninsular Malaysia and the rest of Asia, including the Indian subcontinent, and Savanna Nightjar *Eximiornis affinis* for birds in Singapore, Borneo and Indonesia (see image below). The split is from work by Sangster et al (2021; <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40657-021-00288-z>) and is based on discriminant function analysis avian vocalisation research. Both discriminant function analysis and principal component analysis are useful tools, but whether bioacoustics alone in any form, satisfies the scientific threshold required for formal species delimitation is uncertain. It would require an integrative framework combining vocal analysis with genetic, morphological, and ecological data to determine a new taxonomic designation.



Species distributions based on *Nightjars of the World: A Guide to the Caprimulgidae* by Nigel Cleere, Helm Field Guide, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2026

Any concerns about the taxonomic changes proposed by Cleere in no way diminish the excellent, comprehensive and in-depth work of a man, who has studied nightjars for more than 60 years. The book is a serious scientific review. The species accounts, which constitute the bulk of the volume, follow a rigorous and consistent structure: full synonymy with type specimens and their museum accession numbers, complete etymologies of both generic and specific names, taxonomy, identification (at rest and in flight), voice, habitat, habits, food, breeding, full plumage descriptions by age and sex, measurements, moult, diseases and parasites, geographical variation, distribution and movements, conservation status, fossil record, and references. Dave Nurney's excellent colour plates are supported by field photographs from a wide network of contributors.



Sample pages from the book, Helm Field Guide, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2026.



The introductory chapters on nightjar biology make for fascinating reading. Cleere covers physiology and behaviour, plumages and moult, foraging, food and breeding; drawing on decades of field and laboratory research. The function of rictal bristles, gular-flutter rates, retinal structure and breeding patterns are well described, as is the unusual short-term torpor physiology or longer term hibernation of a few species.

While casual birdwatchers would benefit from reading about selected species, this is clearly not a book aimed at the casual observer or for use in the field. It is a monographic treatment of an entire avian family and succeeds impressively.

Cleere's decades of commitment to the nightjar family has produced something that goes well beyond a revision. This is the most comprehensive and systematically thorough set of nightjar accounts published in a single volume.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to David Wells and James Eaton who offered some insightful comments on taxonomic changes.

Contributions to the Malaysian Bird Report

Editorial Team, Malaysian Bird Report

The Malaysian Bird Report is intended to be an inclusive publication, one that offers a vehicle for established and young birdwatchers, and bird photographers, to share their field observations and expertise.

We welcome articles that help the birdwatching community to grow its understanding of bird behaviour, social interactions, identification, nesting, etc.

We hope to encourage all of us to go beyond capturing images and try to document and write-up our observations, especially of uncommon and unusual bird ecology, nesting behaviour, etc. The editor is committed to helping birdwatchers to write up their observations.

We welcome you to share the publication freely with all interested birdwatchers and bird photographers, as well as with the general public.

Guidelines for Submission of Articles:

1. All written contributions should be sent to the editor at: malaysianbirdreport@gmail.com using a Microsoft Word or Google Docs file. Articles submitted can be in English, Malay and Chinese. Malay and Chinese articles should contain an abstract in English.
2. Images submitted should be in JPEG (.jpg) format. As this is an electronic publication, we recommend images either 1000 pixels wide or 1000 pixels high. There should be no borders to the image. We will ensure that images submitted contain a watermark/copyright to identify the photographer; this will not obstruct the image in any way.
3. Images chosen for the cover page, back page, or other pages, to illustrate the publication, should be of higher resolution (2500 x 3500 pixels, 300dpi or higher) and not contain any watermark/copyright.
4. Copyright of images submitted will remain that of the photographer.
5. Any maps or other illustrative images should be sent as high-resolution JPEG or TIFF files.
6. Please use this reference for all bird names: MNS Bird Conservation Council. 2021. A Checklist of the Birds of Malaysia. 2020 Edition. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Nature Society. (MNS Conservation Publication No. 22).

We encourage collaborative work and hope that birdwatchers and bird photographers will combine observations to produce reports of interest to all of us.

We would like to thank all individuals who have contributed to the Malaysian Bird Report with articles, data, reports and images.