

Volume 3/2025, September 2025

Malaysian Bird Report



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Rufous-winged Fulvetta (Kekicau-Tikus Sayap Coklat) *Schoeniparus castaneiceps*, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia, August 2025 ©Kelvin Low

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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 bird-watching 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 bird watcher & photographer enthusiasts.

Editorial

Editorial Team, Malaysian Bird Report

We are delighted to announce that Jia-En Ho has joined the Malaysian Bird Report editorial team. She has been birdwatching since a teenager and brings her expertise in animation/illustrating birds and work on window-collision mortality to the team. See her article on drawing birds for the non-artist. Note that all Malaysian Bird Report editorial members and advisors work in an honorary capacity and kindly make time to support the publication.

The September 2025 MBR publication is a feature-rich issue with a great diversity in reports and articles. We have two exciting, first nesting records – the Rufous-bellied Eagle and the Great Iora. A pelagic birding trip to Pulau Perak report and previous undescribed pupil and iris changes during courtship. There is collaborative work on pellet-casting by non-raptorial birds with guidelines on how to analyse bird pellets.

The 'photo-shorts' section again shows us how a single image or a series of images can offer insights to previously undocumented bird behaviour – from food items, courtship, social behaviour and even lifespans.

The report on the 13th ARRCN Symposium (raptors), research and review articles updates us on work conducted in our region. In particular, Tou's site on bird names in Bahasa Malaysia has been valuable for many of us. We hope our summary of upcoming bird activities keeps you updated on bird-related events you can get involved in. Please remember the Global Big Day on 11th October 2025 and let us put our country on the international map by increasing the number of eBirders and checklists.

We have an important article on maintaining ethical bird hides by John Bakar from the Sabah Birdwatchers Association. The Barn Owl and Rodent Research Group offers an interesting report on work with Barn Owls.

Kelvin Low kindly allowed us to use his wonder-full image of a Rufous-winged Fulvetta for the front cover; a bird that many of us were fortunate to see recently in Cameron Highlands.

As always, it is your kind contributions and observations that makes each publication such a rich and meaningful one. We have received a lot of positive feedback from local and international birders and organisations.

We welcome contributions, suggestions and ideas, and encourage different language submissions. Please consider joining the email list to get alerts when a new issue of the Malaysian Bird Report is published (email contact: malaysianbirdreport@gmail.com, website: <https://malaysianbird.report/reports/>).

Field Notes

First Nesting Record of the Rufous-bellied Eagle *Lophotriorchis kienerii* in Malaysia: Evidence from Kenyir Forest, Terengganu

Anuar McAfee

The Rufous-bellied Eagle *Lophotriorchis kienerii* is a striking forest raptor, small-to-medium in size, and easily recognised by its rufous underparts and contrasting dark upperparts (Plate 1). It ranges across much of Southeast Asia and parts of South Asia, and is currently listed as Near Threatened due to habitat loss.

In Terengganu, this species is regularly seen gliding high over the forest canopy or occasionally venturing over nearby open areas. Yet, despite being observed fairly often in Malaysia, no nesting record had ever been documented (Wells 1999).- until now.



© Anuar McAfee

Plate 1: Rufous-bellied Eagle in

As a recreational birdwatcher, I have long hoped to find Malaysia's first confirmed nest of this eagle. For years, one nest in the Tembat Forest Reserve at Tasik Kenyir has caught my attention. My earliest notes go back to 2008, when I saw a dark-headed raptor sitting inside the large stick nest high in a tall Tualang tree *Koompassia excelsa* (Plate 2). The distance and viewing conditions meant I could not confirm its identity at the time, but I made it a point to return whenever I could.



© Aidan Yusuf McAfee

Plate 2: The nesting site of the Rufous-bellied Eagle, a tall Tualang tree *Koompassia excelsa*, Tembat Forest Reserve, Tasik Kenyir, Terengganu, Malaysia.

With the help of drone technology, it became easier to check the nest quickly and with minimal disturbance. A short flight above the tree crown - no more than two minutes - was usually enough to confirm whether the nest was active. For the past four years, I have monitored the site this way alongside more traditional observation from the forest edge with binoculars, a spotting scope, and a camera.

On 18 February 2025, a routine drone check revealed an adult Rufous-bellied Eagle sitting inside the nest. Two days later, closer views confirmed a single egg (Plate 3).



Plate 3: Adult Rufous-bellied Eagle with single egg in nest, Tembat Forest Reserve, Tasik Kenyir, Terengganu, Malaysia, February 2025.

The nest itself is a substantial stick structure positioned about 4 metres below the crown of the giant Tualang tree, estimated at 57 metres tall. Interestingly, this same nest has been used by other raptors in recent years, including Blyth's Hawk-Eagle *Nisaetus alboniger* in 2022 and 2024.

Over the following months, I made 11 brief visits as part of other birdwatching activities in the Kenyir area.

Key moments include:

20 February	An adult and a single egg clearly visible (Plate 3).
5 April	A small downy chick seen for the first time, suggesting it had just hatched (Plate 4).
16 May	One adult arrived carrying a Green Crested Lizard, which was fed to the growing chick (Plate 5 right).
28 June	The young bird, now fully feathered, stood alone in the nest.
10 July	No eagle present; we concluded the juvenile had fledged successfully.



Plate 4: Downy Rufous-bellied Eagle chick with adult, Tembat Forest Reserve, Tasik Kenyir, Terengganu, Malaysia, April 2025.



Plate 5: Rufous-bellied Eagle chick (left) May 2025 and nestling with adult June 2025 (right), Tembat Forest Reserve, Tasik Kenyir, Terengganu, Malaysia.

Discussion

There is limited information on the breeding of this raptor (Clark *et al.*, 2020). Nests are usually large and built in the crown of a large tree in dense forest (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2005; Jayaneththi 2010; Iqbal *et al.*, 2011). Clutch is usually one egg; incubation and care of nestlings is by both parents (Clark *et al.*, 2020).

Why This Matters

This record is significant because it:

- Expands the known breeding range of the Rufous-bellied Eagle into Peninsular Malaysia.

- Adds to baseline data for raptor conservation in Southeast Asia.
- Shows the value of long-term, patient observation in detecting rare breeding events.
- Highlights how citizen scientists - ordinary birdwatchers - can make meaningful contributions to ornithology.

Citizen Science in Action

This finding was not the result of a formal research project, but rather the persistence of a local birdwatcher returning to a site over many years. It demonstrates the important role of Malaysia's growing birding community in contributing new knowledge. By sharing sightings, photos, and notes, birdwatchers can help paint a fuller picture of our avifauna and inspire conservation action.

Conclusion

The successful fledging of a Rufous-bellied Eagle chick at Kenyir marks Malaysia's first confirmed nesting record for the species. For Terengganu, it further enhances the state's reputation as a rich birding destination (McAfee 2024). For me personally, it has been a reminder that even casual birdwatchers, through patient observation, can add something valuable to our shared understanding of Malaysia's wildlife.

Together, citizen and professional scientists can ensure that discoveries like this continue to inform both conservation and the joy of birdwatching.

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Nesting of the Black-capped White-eye

Alim Biun, Amar-Singh HSS & Ron Pudín

Introduction

The Black-capped White-eye *Zosterops atricapilla* is typically associated with montane and sub-montane forest ecosystems and is known to feed predominantly on nectar, fruits, and insects. It is common at Kinabalu Park, Sabah, Malaysia.

Information on the nesting behaviour of Black-capped White-eye is limited to two prior, brief reports. Whitehead states "*I found a nest of this species*" (at 1550 m on Mount Kinabalu, probably in March) "*which was built of fine roots on the underside of a moss-covered bough, in the damp dark forests on the slopes of the mountain. The old birds were feeding their young on grubs*" (Smythies 1999). Robson has reported young in a nest in April at Mount Kinabalu (Smythies 1999). Adults carrying nesting material have been noted in May (Sumatra) and fledglings seen in April (Borneo), June (Sumatra) and July (Borneo) (Van Balen 2020).

Nesting Observation

While watching birds on 23 June 2025 at Kinabalu Park, Sabah, Malaysia (1580 m), the three of us observed a pair of Black-capped White-eyes collecting the flowers of *Poikilospermum scabrinervium* to feed nectar; possibly to feed young nestlings. Alim Biun has previously seen their nest and he explored the area and found the nesting site nearby.

The nest was located at approximately eye level from the ground (1.7-1.8 m) and constructed among the foliage of *Podranea ricasoliana* (ornamental Pink Trumpet Vine, family: Bignoniaceae) (Plate 1). This plant, planted as part of the landscape design in front of a Kinabalu Park hostel building, incidentally provided a concealed and sheltered nesting site, offering protection from both predators and human disturbance. We observed an adult brooding two young chicks.

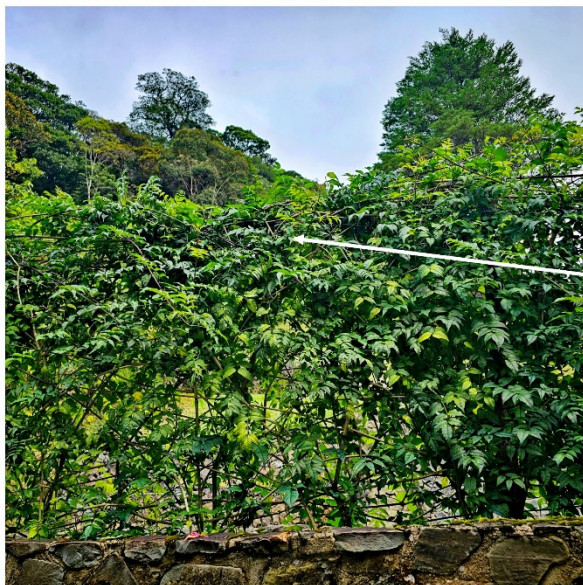


Plate 1: Nest location of the Black-capped White-eye, Kinabalu Park, Sabah, Malaysia, 23 June 2025.

We kept our observations very brief and continued our birdwatching in the park. We were not able to monitor the nest but decided that one person in the team would return for nest measurements once chicks fledged.

Physical Measurement of the Black-capped White-eye Nest

On 19 July 2025, Alim Biun conducted a follow-up field visit to Kinabalu Park to assess the nest. The chicks had fledged but we are uncertain of the date. As planned, structural measurements of the nest were taken during the visit (Plate 2).

Nest Characteristics:

Cup-shaped structure

Construction:

The nest consists of approximately 95 plant fibres intricately woven to form a compact and stable structure. The base was reinforced with dried leaves, supported by a layer of coarse fibres. The inner chamber, used for egg-laying and incubation, was lined with fine plant fibres, believed to act as thermal insulation, protecting the eggs and chicks from low ambient temperatures. The dark coloration observed at the base suggests a densely compacted inner layer, which likely enhances the nest's insulating efficiency.

Nest Measurements:

External Height: 6.0 cm.

Internal Height: 3.5 cm.

Opening Diameter (External): 6.0 cm.

Opening Diameter (Internal): 3.5 cm.

Wall Thickness: 1.0 cm.



Plate 2: Close up view of the Black-capped White-eye nest, Kinabalu Park, Sabah, Malaysia, 19 July 2025.

Discussion

Based on field observations and previous experience, the nest's location is considered unusually low for this species, which typically constructs nests at a height of around 3 metres

above ground level, most commonly within bamboo clumps in the same area. This marks the third recorded instance of a nest of this species found in a similarly low and sheltered location. However, it remains uncertain whether the nest was built by the same individual or by another bird of the same species.

Acknowledgement

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

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Pelagic Birding Trip to Pulau Perak – In Search of the Brown Booby Colony

Afiq Abdul Rahman, Ashwin Kalai Chelvan, Xian Lim & Jia-Jie Ng

Pelagic birding is a specialised type of birdwatching that is focused on finding seabirds that spend most of their lives on the open ocean and only come ashore to breed. While pelagic birding trips are known to occur in countries like the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia and New Zealand, it is not commonly done in Malaysia. In Peninsular Malaysia, pelagic trips usually occur off the coast of Tanjung Dawai in Kedah (Zaini 2024) as well as off the coast of Mersing in the South China Sea.

Pulau Perak, Kedah, Malaysia, a remote speck of land in the Malacca Strait (Plate 1), had long called to us for one reason - its renowned Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* colony. On from 19-20 May 2025 seven birders - Afiq Abdul Rahman, Ashwin Kalai Chelvan, Xian Lim, Ng Jia Jie, Low Kok Hen, and Choo Eng Tan - along with two seasoned boatmen from Jetty Nosh Fishing and Sri Maharani, set out with cameras and binoculars in hand, hearts brimming with anticipation.

Day 1

We departed from the jetty early in the morning, around 0800 hrs. The morning greeted us with clear blue skies and calm waters - perfect conditions for our offshore voyage.

Spirits were high as the island slowly emerged on the horizon, a rocky sentinel surrounded by deep blue waters.

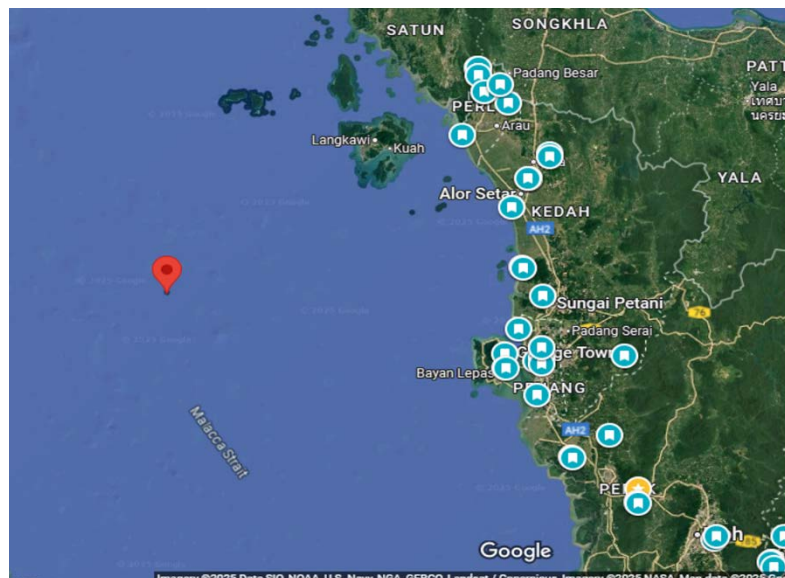


Plate 1: Pulau Perak, Kedah, Malaysia location @Google Maps

During our four-hour journey to Pulau Perak, we were treated to sightings of several pelagic bird species, including the Short-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna tenuirostris*, Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*, Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel *Hydrobates monorhis*, and Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*. The excitement peaked when we spotted our main target - a Brown Booby actively hunting for fish. Energised by the sighting, we eagerly asked the boatman to follow the bird, hoping for a closer look at this remarkable seabird in action (Plate 2).

During the journey, we made several stops in order for our boatman to fish and collect some bait. They were intending to do some fishing at Pulau Perak later in the day for our dinner. Nothing like having fresh seafood while out in the open sea!



Plate 2: Brown Booby feeding method: target 'locked' - diving action - successful catch, Pulau Perak, Kedah, Malaysia, May 2025.

As we approached, the silhouette of Pulau Perak became increasingly visible (Plate 3). Our hearts pounded with worry, fearing that the Brown Booby colony might no longer be there. However, our assumptions were proven wrong - we witnessed a large number of Brown Boobies taking flight as we neared the island. The long journey was rewarded with a truly breathtaking sight.



Plate 3: View of Pulau Perak from the sea and the team with boatmen, Pulau Perak, Kedah, Malaysia, May 2025.

We began photographing the birds. Not only were there Brown Boobies, but also a colony of Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*. We took the opportunity to capture as many photos as possible. After photographing, we conducted a short survey, during which we recorded several migrant species such as the Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*, Amur Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone incei* and Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*.

As for Brown Boobies, we were thrilled to come across a remarkable sight - a pair of Brown Boobies in the midst of mating (Plate 4), with several juveniles present nearby (Plate 5). Observing this natural behaviour up close felt like an extraordinary privilege, as such moments are not commonly witnessed in the wild especially in Malaysia. It was, without a doubt, a true jackpot for our trip, adding immense value to our journey. The presence of both adults and juveniles was also an encouraging sign, indicating that the colony is actively breeding and sustaining its population on Pulau Perak.



Plate 4: Adult Brown Boobies mating, , Pulau Perak, Kedah, Malaysia, May 2025.



Plate 5: Adult Brown Booby with chick (left) & juvenile in flight, Pulau Perak, Kedah, Malaysia, May 2025.

As evening approached, we spotted two Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* soaring through the sky (Plate 6). Its long, slender wings and graceful gliding made for an impressive sight, adding yet another highlight to our journey. By nightfall, the rain arrived, first in drizzles and then in sheets. The boat pitched and rolled in the growing swell - a reminder that sea birding often comes with a dose of sea adventure.



Plate 6: Lesser Frigatebirds soaring in the sky, Pulau Perak, Kedah, Malaysia, May 2025.

Day 2

Dawn on the second day was met with low, heavy clouds. Thunder rumbled in the distance and soon the storm was upon us. Thunderstorms lashed the area, and the once-playful swell turned into choppy, restless waves. We saw two Short-tailed Shearwaters flying. Earlier in the morning, we were delighted to spot a small pod of dolphins gracefully surfacing and swimming near the island. Their sudden appearance brought excitement to everyone on board, and we quickly turned our attention to observing their movements. However, due to the brief encounter and the distance between us, we were unable to determine the exact species. Even so, the sighting added a special touch to our journey, making the day feel even more rewarding and memorable.

The boatman advised us to begin our journey back as the weather conditions were still favourable, ensuring a safe and comfortable return. Taking his advice, we set off from Pulau Perak with smiles on our faces, feeling deeply satisfied with the day's experiences. The incredible wildlife sightings, from the Brown Booby colony to the unexpected dolphins, had made the trip truly unforgettable. As the boat glided across the open sea, we reflected on the adventure with a sense of gratitude and happiness, cherishing the memories we had created together. The trip successfully met its main objective of documenting the Brown Booby colony and recording additional seabird species. Despite adverse weather on the second day, the diversity observed confirms Pulau Perak's role as a significant offshore birding location.

Key Findings and Observations from Pulau Perak

Our trip to Pulau Perak yielded several noteworthy observations. Our survey was conducted from the boat and supplemented with photographs. The nesting colonies of Brown Boobies and Brown Noddies appeared healthy and thriving, with an estimated 200 individuals of each

species. Encouragingly, we also observed several juveniles, indicating ongoing breeding activity with about 50 breeding pairs. Additionally, Bridled Terns were seen roosting on the island, further highlighting its importance as a seabird habitat. It's heartening to see that the two keystone species of Pulau Perak are doing well, and we hope their populations will continue to grow.

Beyond the resident seabirds, we also encountered several migratory species using the island as a temporary stopover, including the Tiger Shrike, Amur Paradise Flycatcher, and Dark-sided Flycatcher. These sightings underscore Pulau Perak's role as a crucial rest point along migratory routes. In the surrounding waters, we spotted pelagic birds such as Lesser Frigatebirds and a Short-tailed Shearwater, suggesting the island serves as a significant landmark for ocean-going species. The nearby waters may also provide an important feeding ground. It would be fascinating to monitor the area throughout the year to observe seasonal variation in pelagic bird presence.

While reaching Pulau Perak isn't the easiest journey, the rewards are well worth the effort. The island offers reliable sightings of Brown Boobies and Brown Noddies, with the added potential to encounter other unique seabirds and migratory species along the way. For birders and nature enthusiasts alike, Pulau Perak is a destination that truly delivers.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Amar-Singh HSS for encouraging us to document this survey and Dave Bakewell for reviewing the manuscript.

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Historical Breeding Numbers of Brown Booby and Brown Noddy at Pulau Perak

Amar-Singh HSS

Brown Booby (Wells 1999)

1949-1956: 4,500-5,000 breeding pairs observed.
1973: 700-800 breeding pairs noted.
1974: 50 breeding pairs among 500 birds.
1975-1976: 60-600 breeding pairs noted in six surveys.
1980: 250 breeding pairs observed.

Brown Noddy (Wells 1999)

1955-1976: A colony of 400-500 breeding pairs observed in three reports.

Wells (1999) notes a number of threats to the nesting pelagic birds. By the 1970s "*a dense population of Malaysian House Rat *Rattus diardii*, introduced and reinforced from fishing boats...*" that feed on the bird eggs. "*By 1980, much of the formerly bald island, including parts of the favoured summit ridge, had been colonized by a dense, in places waist-deep mat of grass and ferns (*Nephrolepis*), completely excluding ground-nesting birds...*" "*However, such effects have been secondary to unfettered predation by people*" i.e. egg and chick poaching by fishermen.

A recent survey of bird life at Pulau Perak in June and August 2004 (Ramli *et al.*, 2008) noted 1,000 Brown Boobies and 5,000 Brown Noddies present. Breeding activities were recorded but breeding pair numbers were not provided.

It is possible that the adult population fluctuates and varies throughout the year. What we require are breeding records. Note that a return visit to the island in August 2025 documented 150 Brown Boobies and 150 Brown Noddies (<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L45505658/recent-checklists>).

Wells (1999) anticipated that Brown Boobies may no longer be breeding residents at the Pulau Perak island colony. This recent survey and the one by Ramli and colleagues is heartening as some breeding is still taking place. It would require a concerted effort of habitat restoration and an eradication of all pests, with sustainability built in, to bring the breeding colony of Brown Boobies and Brown Noddies back to the status of the 1970s. It may also encourage the breeding of other pelagic birds. This is a worthwhile conservation project for a bird-nature group to undertake.

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Pellet Casting by Non-Raptorial Birds in Malaysia

Amar-Singh HSS, Sein-Chiong Chiu, Anthony Wong, Samuel Ong, Lee-Fung Chai, Saravanan Palanisamy, Kelvin Low, Kang-Hui Ooi

Introduction

Birds are known to regurgitate pellets, the indigestible parts of their food items like bones, fur, feathers, bills, claws, teeth, shells, chitinous exoskeletons, seeds, plant matter, etc (Seyfe *et al.*, 2024; Gill *et al.*, 2019). Pellet casting among raptorial birds, including owls, is better known and studied. However, most species of birds cast pellets including herons, cormorants, gulls, terns, kingfishers, crows, jays, swallows, bee-eaters, most shorebirds, flycatchers and spiderhunters (Seyfe *et al.*, 2024; Wang *et al.*, 2009). The International Bird Pellet Study Group listed 18 orders comprising 67 families and 316 species of birds that cast pellets (Wang *et al.*, 2009).

This paper is to document non-raptorial birds in Malaysia observed casting a pellet.

Observations

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*,

A Terek Sandpiper was observed casting a pellet (Plate 1) at Trombol beach, west of Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia in March 2025 by Anthony Wong. The bird was seen drinking sea water before acting strangely - shaking the head and stretching open its mouth before casting the pellet with some difficulties. After casting of the pellet, the bird drank more water with more stretching of the mouth and rhynchokinesis before moving off. The Terek Sandpiper has not been previously documented in literature casting a pellet (Mlodinow *et al.*, 2024).



Plate 1: Terek Sandpiper casting a pellet (top 2 images). Drank more water and stretched the mouth with rhynchokinesis after casting (bottom images). Note pellet on the left of the two bottom images.

Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Amar-Singh HSS and Ron Pudín (2025) recently reported a Black-headed Gull casting a pellet. See link in references.

Red-headed Trogon *Harpactes erythrocephalus*

Samuel Ong was fortunate to observe a male and female Red-headed Trogon, a short distance apart, feeding on some fruit/berry/seed in the morning and then casting the pellet out (Plate 2). This was observed at Fraser's Hill, Pahang, Peninsular Malaysia in September 2022.



Plate 2: Female (left) and male Red-headed Trogon casting a pellet.

Bee-eaters: Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus* & **Blue-throated Bee-eater** *Merops viridis*

Bee-eaters have been documented to cast pellets (Fry & Boesman 2020). Lee-Fung Chai saw the Blue-tailed Bee-eater regurgitating a pellet at Taman TAR, Selangor, Malaysia in February 2019. Sein-Chiong Chiu saw a Blue-throated Bee-eater casting out an undigested food pellet at Kampar, Perak, Malaysia in May 2025 (Plate 3). Lee-Fung Chai also saw a Blue-throated Bee-eater casting a pellet in September 2020 at Taman TAR, Selangor, Malaysia.

Kingfishers: Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher *Ceyx rufidorsa* & **Banded Kingfisher** *Lacedo pulchella*

Kingfishers are well known to cast pellets (Plate 4). Saravanan Palanisamy observed the Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher do this at Sungai Congkak Recreational Forest, Selangor, Malaysia in June 2024, while Sein-Chiong Chiu videoed a Banded Kingfisher doing this in June 2023 at Papan, Perak, Malaysia (video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7cfegF4-10>) .



Plate 3: Pellet casting by a Blue-tailed Bee-eater (left) & Blue-throated Bee-eater.



Plate 4: Pellet casting by a Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher (left) & Banded Kingfisher (video grab image).

Green Broadbill *Calypomena viridis*

In June 2022 Sein-Chiong Chiu videoed a female Green Broadbill regurgitating and casting out a pellet of undigested food (Plate 5) at Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia.

White-bellied Erpornis *Erpornis zantholeuca*

Amar-Singh HSS observed a White-bellied Erpornis regurgitating and ejecting a pellet (Plate 6) in April 2023, at a Forest Reserve, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia (Amar-Singh HSS 2023).



Plate 5: Video-grab composite images of a Green Broadbill casting a pellet. (video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRCepzKDoEg>)



Plate 6: Composite image of a White-bellied Erpornis casting a pellet.

Tiger Shrike *Lanius tigrinus*

Lefranc and Worfolk (2022) state that "*Pellets are regularly regurgitated by shrikes and can be found under their favourite perches or near their nests. Pellets of mainly insectivorous shrikes, are much more fragile and break easily.*" For the Tiger Shrike whose diet is mainly insects the pellet would comprise chitinous remains of insects.



Kelvin Low observed a Tiger Shrike regurgitating a pellet (Plate 7) in February 2024 at Taiping, Perak, Malaysia.



© Kelvin Low

Plate 7: Tiger Shrike casting a pellet.

Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*

The Common Hill Myna is known to cast 'pellets'. Bertram (1970) notes that fruit stones are regurgitated, usually within an hour of consumption; fruit stones with fruit still closely adhering may be swallowed again.

Amar-Singh HSS observed one bird, in a social group of 9 Common Hill Mynas, at a secondary forest site at Ipoh, Perak, Malaysian in November 2022 casting a small pellet (Plate 8) (Amar-Singh HSS 2024)..

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

Amar-Singh HSS saw a male Blue Rock Thrush that cast a pellet (no pictures) at limestone outcropping, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia in April 2019.



Plate 8: Common Hill Myna casting a pellet.

Flycatchers

It is interesting how many flycatcher species have been observed casting a pellet. Flycatchers are generally insectivores and pellets or indigestible material are formed in the gizzard and regurgitated. Often these pellets are small, approximately 1cm in size and hard to find for analysis. Flycatchers observed casting a pellet locally include (Plate 9):

1. **Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa dauurica* by Amar-Singh HSS in October 2017 at a Forest Reserve, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia (Amar-Singh HSS 2017). This occurred early in the morning suggesting that pellets take time to form and are expelled early in the morning or late in the day.
2. **Brown-streaked Flycatcher** *Muscicapa williamsoni* by Sein-Chiong Chiu in May 2025 at Taiping, Perak, Malaysia. (video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P983BEEIts8>)
3. **Large Niltava** *Niltava grandis* by Amar-Singh HSS in March 2015 at Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia
4. **Indigo Flycatcher** *Eumyias indigo* by Amar-Singh HSS in March 2024 at Kinabalu National Park, Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia. Interestingly this bird regurgitated 2 pellets in rapid succession. Most birds are seen to regurgitate a single pellet.
5. **Indochinese Blue Flycatcher** *Cyornis sumatrensis* by Kang-Hui Ooi in March 2025 at Taiping, Perak, Malaysia. A pair was seen and the male cast the pellet which could not be retrieved in the forest. (video link: <https://youtu.be/c3bsMZD16IM>)
6. **Little Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula westermanni* by Amar-Singh HSS in September 2023 at Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia. A juvenile male was seen casting a pellet.

There is an online post by Koel Ko of a **Bornean Blue Flycatcher** *Cyornis superbus* regurgitating a pellet (Macaulay Library ML377934461) in April 2010 at Danum Valley, Sabah, Malaysia.



Plate 9: Flycatchers casting a pellet. Clockwise from top left Asian Brown Flycatcher, Brown-streaked Flycatcher, Large Niltava, Little Pied Flycatcher, Indochinese Blue Flycatcher, Indigo Flycatcher.

Purple-naped Spiderhunter *Kurochkinogramma hypogrammicum*

While watching a Purple-naped Spiderhunter feeding on the fruit of the *Macaranga bancana*, Amar-Singh HSS spotted a self-feeding juvenile cast a small pellet (Plate 10). It was not possible to find the pellet as the undergrowth was too thick (Amar-Singh HSS 2024).



Plate 10: Juvenile Purple-naped Spiderhunter casting a pellet.

There has been inadequate attention given locally to the collection and analysis of bird pellets. Collecting and studying pellets enlarges our understanding of the diet and natural history of birds. They also offer insights into seasonal and long-term diet changes.

The Appendix provides some guidelines on the analysis of bird pellets.

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Appendix: Steps to Analyse a Bird Pellet, from Preparation to Interpretation

Amar-Singh HSS

1. Preparation and Safety

Note that the pellets are not sterile and can contain bacteria or viruses. It is important to wear gloves and probably a mask. Remember to wash your hands after the analysis and clean the work surface with disinfectant. The items you will require include:

- Bird pellet
- Fine-tipped forceps
- Dissecting needles or probes
- Petri dish or a shallow tray
- White paper (to better see food items)
- Small brush (optional, for delicate cleaning)
- Magnifying glass
- Gloves (for safety)
- Mask (for dust/safety)
- Notebook for recording observations
- Digital camera (for documentation)
- Container for preserved contents (e.g., small vial or zip-top bag)
- Disinfectant for tools and workspace.

2. Initial Observation and Macroscopic Analysis

Examine the intact pellet and record observations, including the date, location found, and any other relevant context (e.g., species of bird if known, habitat). Assign a unique identifier to each pellet if you have multiple samples. Note the following:

- Shape and Size: Note the overall shape and measure its length and width. These can sometimes give clues about the bird species.
- Colour: Observe the colour, may vary depending on the prey items and the bird's digestive processes.
- Texture: Feel the pellet (gently, with gloved hands) to assess its firmness or fragility.
- External Contents: Look for any obvious large components protruding from the pellet (e.g., large bones, feathers, fur tufts).

3. Dissection and Microscopic Analysis

- Softening (optional but useful for hard pellets): If the pellet is extremely hard and brittle, you can try to soften it by gently misting it with a small amount of water. Be careful not to over saturate it. Some recommend heating the wet sample (Yalden 2009).
- Careful Dissection: Place the pellet in a petri dish or on a clean surface. Using forceps and dissecting needles, gently break apart the pellet. Start from one end and work your way through, or carefully split it lengthwise. Be meticulous and avoid crushing delicate contents.
- Sort and Separate Contents: As you dissect, separate the different types of materials into distinct piles. Common categories include: bones, fur, feathers, insect exoskeletons (head capsules, legs, wings, etc), plant matter (seeds, leaves, stems), miscellaneous including synthetic materials.
- Try to identify the items consumed by using reference guides or image search. Some fragments may not be identifiable down to the species level.

Data Recording and Interpretation

- Document items by photography.
- Count the number of individual prey items represented and estimate the relative proportion of each prey type. Summarise the prey composition of the pellet.
- Consider the implications for the bird's diet and foraging habits.
- Post findings in eBird and the Malaysian Bird Report.

Preservation (Optional)

If you wish to keep the pellet contents for future reference or study, place the sorted materials in small, labelled vials or sealed bags. You might use a desiccant packet to prevent mould growth.

Useful Sites/Books

1. Barn Owl Trust. (2025). *Barn Owl pellet analysis*. Ashburton, Devon. <https://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/barn-owl-facts/barn-owl-pellet-analysis/#:~:text=It%20is%20easier%20to%20analyse,contained%20within%20an%20individual%20pellet.>
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Pupil and Iris Variation in Doves during Courtship

Amar-Singh HSS

Introduction

The courtship behaviour of doves involves a combination of visual and auditory displays, often including bowing, cooing, head-bobbing, wing-flapping, tail-fanning, billing and allopreening, prior to copulation (Mitoyen *et al.*, 2021, Romagosa & Mlodinow 2022). At times I have observed aerial displays, chasing of potential mates and physical interactions with conflict between males.

I observed a previously unrecorded courtship behaviour that involved a change in pupil and iris during courtship displays in doves.

Observation 1: Little Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia ruficeps*

On 17 April 2023 I was in Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia at a roosting site for Little Cuckoo-Doves where up to 200 birds congregate. I observed a number of birds expressing courtship behaviour. The courtship behaviour of pairs involved them disengaging from the social group. The female would sit on a branch often watching the male. The male would ruffle up the neck feathers and then proceed to bow many times while making low intensity calls (Plate 1). At times the female would also make responsive calls. I also saw males 'chasing' females, as is often seen with other dove courtship.



Plate 1: Little Cuckoo-Dove courtship (male right) showing pupil and iris change, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia, 17 April 2023.

What struck me during observation, of different courting pairs, was the iris colour and pupillary changes of the male. The male's pupil would be constricted, at times near pinpoint, giving the iris a 'white-out' look. The female iris would be unchanged. Plates 1 and 2 show two different courting pairs to illustrate this. The males and females were in similar lighting environments. I also saw males that were not in courtship with irises similar to the females. The iris colour of the Little Cuckoo-Dove has been described as pale grey (Wells 2007) or pale blue to white (Baptista, *et al.*, 2020).



Plate 2: Little Cuckoo-Dove courtship (male right) showing pupil and iris change, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia, 17 April 2023.

I looked for similar observations on the Little Cuckoo-Dove posted online. Sam Hambly has an image of courtship from Kamphaeng Phet, Thailand, July 2024 (Macaulay Library ML621366148) that shows similar changes.

Observation 2: Zebra Dove *Geopelia striata*

Having seen this unusual feature in courtship, I went back to look at my prior photographs of dove courtship in other species. I found two sets of images for the Zebra Dove in courtship that suggest some pupillary changes; both were seen in Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia (Plate 3). Although not as striking or apparent as in the Little Cuckoo-Doves, the male pupil is smaller and the iris more prominent during courtship.

I looked for similar observations on the Zebra Dove posted online. There are 75 images tagged as courtship in the Macaulay Library. Of these a few suggest that the pupil is smaller and iris more prominent in the male during courtship; for example, ML621366721 by Owen

Lawton. Another by Redzlan AR on [his blog site](#) shows the same. Surprisingly, in one Macaulay Library observation by Karyne Wee (ML615127136), the female's iris was more prominent at copulation.

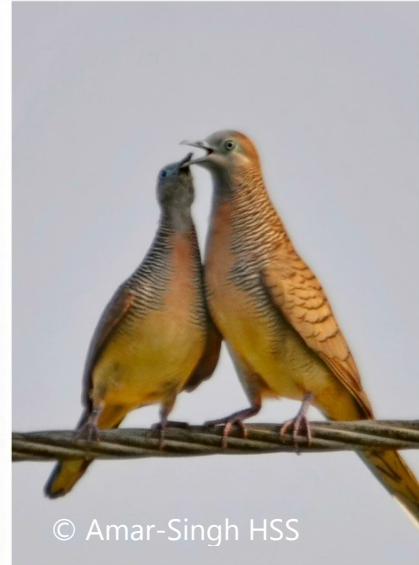


Plate 3: Zebra Dove courtship showing pupil and iris change, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia. First image June 2017 with male on the left. Second image July 2011 with male on the right. Despite the bright light when both these images were taken, the male's pupil was smaller.

Care needs to be taken with these observations of the Zebra Dove as the change is more subtle and appears to be a brief occurrence. Posture and lighting may affect perception of pupil size.

There is a possibility that pupillary and iris changes during courtship also occur in the Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis*. See courtship images in the Macaulay Library by Jhih-Wei (ML467449261) and Ken Tay (ML473217321).

Discussion

There is limited information in literature discussing pupillary and iris changes during courtship of birds. I suspect it is easier to see this in birds that have a lighter or brighter iris.

Recent work done by the Avian Sleep Group at the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology in Germany (Ungurean *et al.*, 2021) showed that the pupil of male pigeons became constricted when courting females. The pupils were less constricted during copulation. Their work also shows that pupil size changes in birds are the opposite of those observed in mammals. They attribute this difference to the iris in birds being controlled by striated muscles as opposed to smooth muscles in mammals (Ungurean & Rattenborg 2024). This research suggests that birds can regulate their pupil size voluntarily and possibly intentionally.

In exploring the literature, there are a number of reports about iris and pupillary changes in courtships. These include:

1. An interesting Netflix documentary called 'Our Planet' in which a courting male Western Parotia *Parotia sefilata* bird-of-paradise changes its iris colour from blue to yellow with the pupil becoming pinpoint, during a mating dance. Link to video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rX40mBb8bkU&t=135s>).

2. The Crested Auklet *Aethia cristatella* male is noted to have full pupillary constriction during intense courtship displays, "creating peculiar glassy-eyed appearance" (Jones 2020).
3. In describing the courtship of the Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Noble and colleagues (1938) state that for the courting/breeding male "the pupil is contracted and the eye ball actually protruded from its socket, exposing the red iris to its maximum extent".

It is possible that a number of bird species can regulate their pupil size and use the iris as part of courtship, possibly even with a change in colour. It would be very useful if birdwatchers were alert as to this possibility and recorded videos of courting birds to explore this further. It would aid our understanding of use of the pupil and iris in social communication during courtship.

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Photo-Shorts

First Report of a Great Iora Nest

Kah-Wan Tan, Kwang-Ming Teh & Yoke-Mooi Liew

There have been no confirmed nest reports of the Great Iora *Aegithina lafresnayei*. Previous records of nests collected belonged to the Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia* (Wells 2007; Wells 2020). On Great Iora breeding, Wells (2007) states there are two reports from South Thailand, one in April of an incubation and another in July of 'an adult attending one or more fledglings', but details were lacking.

On 07 June 2025 Kah-Wan Tan and Kwang-Ming Teh spotted a Great Iora nest in the Gunung Nuang Recreational Forest, Selangor, Malaysia. The location was a path into the forest reserve with mixed secondary and primary growth, at 280 m ASL. The nest was located in a *Macaranga bancana* (Common Mahang) tree, approximately 6-7 meters above the ground. It was built into the fork of a branch and was sheltered by leaves (Plate1).



© Kwang-Ming Teh

Plate 1: Great Iora nest in a *Macaranga bancana* tree with adult male incubating, Gunung Nuang Recreational Forest, Selangor, Malaysia, 07 June 2025.

The nest was a small cup built with plant material and held together with extensive spider silk, very much like the nest structure of the Common Iora and Green Iora *Aegithina viridissima*.

Both the female (Plate 2) and male were observed incubating.



Plate 2: Female Great Iora incubating, Gunung Nuang Recreational Forest, Selangor, Malaysia, 07 June 2025.

A visit to the nesting site one day later by Yoke-Mooi Liew showed the adult male collecting more material to reinforce the nest (Plate 3). The male was collecting the left-over waxy exudate produced by planthopper nymphs, probably of the *Copsyrna maculata* species. This waxy exudate is hydrophobic. This behaviour of enhancing the integrity of the nest despite incubation in progress is also recognised in the Green Iora (Amar-Singh HSS 2024). Link to a video recording here: <https://youtu.be/LkTHJLSKe48>



Plate 3: Male Great Iora collecting waxy exudate produced by planthopper nymphs for the nest, Gunung Nuang Recreational Forest, Selangor, Malaysia, 08 June 2025.

Sadly, we were not able to follow up on this nest and have no further details of this breeding episode.

An online and literature search did not reveal any other nest reports. A search of the 828 images in the Macaulay Library showed one report by Sam Hambly (Macaulay Library ML570649781) of a Great Iora '*nest building at top*' in May 2023 at Chiang Mai, Thailand; the nest was not shown in the image. Another image by Wich'yanan Limparungpatthanakij (Macaulay Library ML21974870) showed an adult feeding an insect to a juvenile in July 2017 at Songkhla, Thailand. There are also a few other images of an adult with food in its beak suggesting it could be taking prey to feed juveniles.

Our observation and available current data suggests that breeding activities happen in the first half of the year.

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How Long Does the Black-capped White-eye Live?

Amar-Singh HSS, Alim Biun & Ron Pudín

The lifespan of birds is difficult to determine without the availability of a capture-recapture programme with ringing of birds. Studies on various white-eye species show that they have been documented to live from at least 3 years to up to 10 years. Some examples from published sources include:

Lifespan Recorded	White-eye Species	Reference
At least 3 years	Warbling (Japanese) White-eye <i>Zosterops japonicus</i>	Van Riper & Van Balen 2020
7 years	Northern (African) Yellow White-eye <i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>	Fry & Keith 2000
9 years	Malagasy (Madagascar) White-eye <i>Zosterops maderaspatanus</i>	Woog <i>et al.</i> , 2018
10 years	Orange River (Cape) White-eye <i>Zosterops pallidus</i>	Symes <i>et al.</i> 2001

On 23 June 2025 at Kinabalu National Park, Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia, we observed a pair of Black-capped White-eye *Zosterops atricapilla* collecting the flowers of *Poikilospermum scabrinervium* to feed nectar to very young nestlings nearby. One of the birds had 4 rings on the feet.



Plate 1: Black-capped White-eye with 4 bands collecting the flowers of *Poikilospermum scabrinervium*, Kinabalu National Park, Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia, 23 June 2025.

The Kinabalu National Park had a bird ringing programme that ended four years ago. The programme lasted for four years and each ring represented a consecutive year. The fact that

this bird had 4 rings indicated it was captured and ringed yearly during that period. This makes the age of the bird at least 8 years.

The lifespan of the Black-capped White-eye and some of the white-eye species quoted above is longer than expected for such small birds. As Healy *et al.* (2014) states "*Maximum lifespan in birds and mammals varies strongly with body mass such that large species tend to live longer than smaller species. However, many species live far longer than expected given their body mass.*" Note however that the lifespan of a species does not speak of survival rates, which may be lower.

It could be possible to keep monitoring this bird's lifespan as the nesting and bands suggest it is localised to an accessible part of the Kinabalu National Park.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Jia-En Ho and Wai-Mun Choy for reviewing the manuscript..

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Dollarbird Protecting Nesting Site from a Raptor

Pungut Luntar

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

Acknowledgement

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Crested Goshawk Attacking a Juvenile Spotted Wood-Owl

Winnie Ooi

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

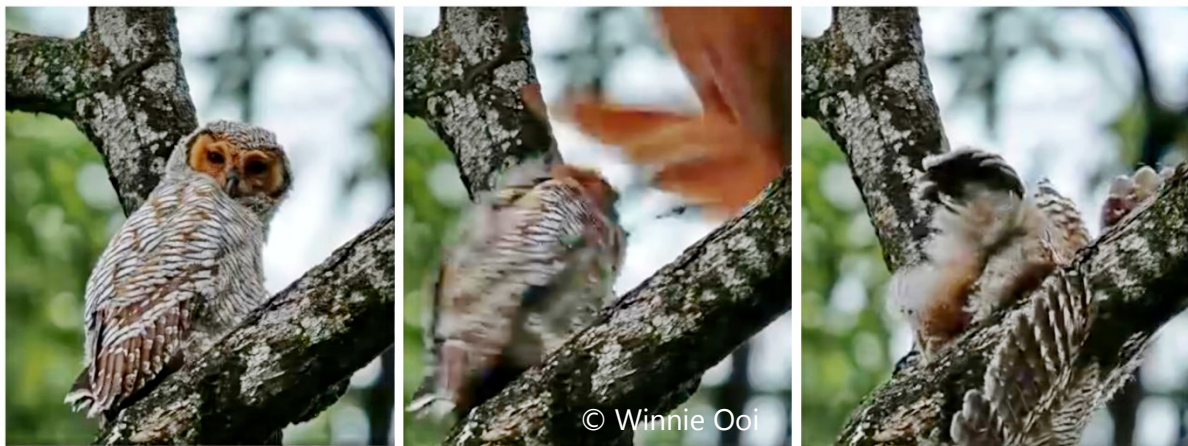


Plate 1: Screen grab composite of a juvenile Spotted Wood-Owl attacked by a Crested Goshawk.

The two adult parent Spotted Wood-Owls came to its rescue and chased away the Crested Goshawk. After the attack, the juvenile Spotted Wood-Owl appeared distressed with some loss of feathers from the head. Post attack video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWDBZiA5T1g>.

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

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

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

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

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

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Amar-Singh HSS for helping me write the manuscript and Kim-Chye Lim for reviewing the manuscript.

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Hornbill Predation of Bats

Amar-Singh HSS

The Gomantong Caves, Sandakan, Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia is well known as a site to observe raptor species feeding on bats. Raptors commonly seen there include the Wallace's Hawk-Eagle *Nisaetus nanus*, Bat Hawk *Macheiramphus alcinus* and Rufous-bellied Eagle *Lophotriorchis kienerii* but others are also known to visit the site.

The late evening exodus of 100,000s of bats also attracts hornbills to feed. On 27 February 2025, starting from 1745hrs, I observed a pair of Oriental Pied-Hornbills *Anthracoceros albirostris* feeding on bats. Like the raptors, the hornbills arrived early, before the bat exodus, to position themselves for the evening meal. But unlike the raptors they are not adept at catching the bats in mid-air as they stream out of the cave. They appear to have learned to place themselves on foliage nearest to the path of some of the streaming bats. They then wait to snag a bat with the beak, fly to another perch to kill and eat it (Plate 1 for image sequence). They then return for another feeding episode. Attempts to fly into the stream of bats to hunt them appear unsuccessful.



Plate 1: Composite of images to show bat feeding sequence of the Oriental Pied-Hornbill, Gomantong Caves, Sandakan, Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia, 27 February 2025.

There are many species of bats reported at Gomantong Caves but the population is dominated by the Wrinkle-lipped Free-tailed Bat *Mops plicatus* which is estimated to be above 200,000 in number (Tella *et al.*, 2025). The Wrinkle-lipped Free-tailed Bat has a body mass of 10.5–18 g and is possibly the bat species taken.

The diet of Oriental Pied-Hornbills is mainly fruit but also includes small animals but bats are not mentioned (Wells 1999; Smythies 1999; Kemp & Boesman 2020; IUCN Hornbill Specialist Group 2025). I have personally seen them take small birds and raid the nest of Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata* to feed on juveniles.

There has been previous documentation of Oriental Pied-Hornbills feeding on bats (Chong 2017; Wee *et al.*, 2019). Cede Prudente, Matt Hamilton, Kecil, Tan and Syahrul observed Oriental Pied-Hornbills preying on bats in 2017 at Gomantong Caves. Recent videos of the behaviour by Cede Prudente are linked here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boPZder8SjU> & <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGl-7mlqmEU>. A British Broadcasting Corporation video (2021) also shows the feeding behaviour that appears to have been filmed at Gomantong Caves: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAe_04vmNRQ.

Other hornbill species in Malaysia that have been documented to feed on bats in the wild include:

1. Black Hornbill *Anthraceroceros malayanus*, also noted feeding bats to juveniles (Hall 1996; IUCN Hornbill Specialist Group 2025).
2. Bushy-crested Hornbill *Anorrhinus galeritus*, also at Gomantong Caves (Tella *et al.*, 2025).
3. Rhinoceros Hornbill *Buceros rhinoceros*, personal observation by Ahmad Amir Isqandar with an image (Malaysian Bird Report 2023).

It is possible that other local hornbill species also take bat prey and I hope this article will alert observers to this behaviour. Why hornbills take bats and other animal prey is still uncertain. It could be related to breeding or food scarcity (Tella *et al.*, 2025) and requires investigation with observation of food sources over time.

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***Piper aduncum* in the Diet of Montane Barbet Nestlings**

Choy-Loi Ng

Adult barbet species are well documented to feed on a variety of fruit, especially *Ficus* species. However, documentation of fruit in the diet of barbet nestlings is lacking for some species.

Regarding the diet of the Black-browed Barbet *Psilopogon oorti*, Short and colleagues (2020a) state "Little known. Fruits comprise most of its diet, takes insects, mainly when breeding, but little information available." On the diet of the Fire-tufted Barbet *Psilopogon pyrolophus*, Short and colleagues (2020b) suggest that the diet for nestling is animal prey "which shifted to all-fruit diet week post-fledging".

From July to August 2025, I had the privilege to observe both the Black-browed and Fire-tufted Barbets nesting at Frasers Hill, Pahang, Malaysia. In both montane species I observed the adults bringing *Piper aduncum* fruit to feed nestlings (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Adult Fire-tufted Barbet (left) (July 2025) and Black-browed Barbet (August 2025) bringing *Piper aduncum* fruit to feed nestlings, Frasers Hill, Pahang, Malaysia.

Piper aduncum (Tree Pepper or Spiked Pepper) is native to the forests of Central and South America. It has been introduced to Malaysia and is now widely distributed. It is an evergreen shrub with a spreading crown and can grow from two to eight metres tall (Tropical Plants Database 2025). Its fruit is a small drupe with black seeds and said to be very sweet with a peppery flavour, and is spread by bats and birds. Locally the Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma*, Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker *Prionochilus percussus*, Yellow-vented Flowerpecker *Pachyglossa chrysorrhea* and Long-tailed Sibia *Heterophasia picaoides* are known to feed on the fruit (Amar-Singh HSS 2010; Amar-Singh HSS 2022).

I also observed the Black-browed Barbet bring a number of other items to feed nestlings (Plate 2). These include a snail, a winged insect and two types of *Ficus* fruit.

These observations suggest that fruit comprises some of the diet of nestlings in these montane barbets, possibly when closer to fledging.



© Choy-Loi Ng



Plate 1: Black-browed Barbet bringing fruit and animal prey items to feed nestlings, Frasers Hill, Pahang, Malaysia, August 2025.

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Crested Goshawk Courtship Feeding Behaviour

Li-Li Wong & Tim Looi

Introduction:

Bird breeding behaviour involves a variety of activities from courtship to fledging, such as, mate pairing, nest building, egg laying and incubation, and parental care of chicks and fledglings. This article is based on observations of part of the breeding cycle of the Crested Goshawk *Lophospiza trivirgata* where, during courtship, the male's mating effort involves offering prey to the female (off the nest). Prey offering may signal the ability of the male to provide for the female and their future offspring and strengthen the bond between the pair (Carlier & Gallo 1995; Royama 1966).

Observations

Observations by Li-Li Wong were made at Taman Rimba Kiara, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from February to March 2024 and involved 19 hours over seven days. Tim Looi watched a pair at Taman Zaaba, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from July to Sept 2021 over 15 days. Both sites are well maintained city parks with large trees; Taman Rimba Kiara also has ponds and streams.

The behaviour involved daily offering of prey, at least one to three times a day. Most times after the offering the pair will copulate (Plate 1). At times, prey offering would occur without copulation (Plate 2). At its peak, 12 times of cloacal copulation by the pair was observed in a single day. However, towards the end of the period, before the female laid eggs, less copulation episodes were observed although prey offering continued.



Plate 1: Copulation after prey being offered. Left Taman Rimba Kiara, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, March 2024. Taman Zaaba, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 2021.

The behaviour of prey offerings were observed in the morning and towards noon and evening. The male was observed to bring prey and perch on a branch while calling out. The female would then fly in, receive the offering and the male would start to copulate just when the female was consuming the prey. There were also times that male perched nearby after the offering, seemingly waiting for the approval from the female for copulation. The courtship

feeding behaviour lasted around 2-3 weeks. During the observation period at Taman Rimba Kiara, the female was almost never seen hunting for food.



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Plate 1: No copulation after prey offering. Taman Rimba Kiara, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, February 2024.

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Comment: Sex Differentiation of Adult Crested Goshawks

Amar-Singh HSS, Sein-Chiong Chiu, Jing-Yi Tou & Li-Li Wong

The Crested Goshawk *Lophospiza trivirgata* is a common bird of prey, primarily forest-dwelling but adaptable to city urban parks. The plumage difference of the adult female and male are hard to appreciate unless they are seen side by side. Some key features to differentiate them are illustrated below (Plate 1).

1. There is size dimorphism with the adult female being larger. However, this is hard to appreciate unless a pair is perched side by side or mating.
2. The side of the head and face in males is grey, with black moustachial and throat stripes. The females have a browner head and face and brown underpart streaks and bars.
3. The central mesial stripe from chin to breast in the male is thinner and longer. In the female this is thicker and 'broken'.
4. Similarly, the breast streaks and belly bands are more 'broken' in females and better defined in males. Females have darker breast 'tear drops' compared to the lighter and more rufous breast streaks of males.
5. It is possible that white undertail-coverts are more prominent in males.
6. 'Winnowing' flight displays (extending ventral feathers and rapid shallow wing beats) may be more common in males.



Plate 1: Sex Differentiation of adult Crested Goshawks, male on the left. Image copyright Li-Li Wong.

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Birds Feeding on Durian Fruit

Alex Yee

Durian is a favourite fruit of many Malaysians. There are many species of durian with some producing edible fruit, particularly *Durio zibethinus* and its many variants. Bats and birds, in particular spiderhunters, are known to visit durian flowers for the nectar and in the process help with pollination. The Plantain Squirrel *Callosciurus notatus* is well known to visit ripe durian fruit and gnaw through the spiky shell to get at the fleshy seeds (Wee 2016). This opening then provides an opportunity for birds to feed on the flesh of the durian fruit.

In June 2025, I was at my family durian farm at Pengkalan Hulu, Perak, Malaysia. I observed some durian fruit that had been opened, possibly by Plantain Squirrels, with a number of birds having a durian feast. I saw a pair of Brown-throated Sunbirds *Anthreptes malacensis* (Plate 1) and a Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier* (Plate 2) feeding. It was clear that they were feeding on the flesh of the fruit and not on insects attracted by the open durian.



Plate 1: Male (left) and female Brown-throated Sunbirds feeding on durian fruit, Pengkalan Hulu, Perak, Malaysia, June 2025.

There have been a number of previous reports of birds feeding on durian fruit in our region (Wee 2016; Wee 2006; Tang Tsair Ching & Wee 2016). They include:

1. Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis* (feeding on *Coelostegia borneensis*, wild Black Durian).
2. Laced Woodpecker *Picus vittatus*.
3. Common Flameback *Dinopium javanense*.
4. Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*.
5. White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus*.
6. Greater Green Leafbird *Chloropsis sonnerati*.
7. Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma*.
8. Brown-throated Sunbird *Anthreptes malacensis*.

This observation adds the Yellow-vented Bulbul to the list.



Plate 2: Yellow-vented Bulbul feeding on durian fruit, Pengkalan Hulu, Perak, Malaysia, June 2025.

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Nectar Feeding by the Himalayan Cutia

Amar-Singh HSS & Michelle MK

The Himalayan Cutia *Cutia nipalensis* is resident in Peninsular Malaysia, occupying the upper montane regions from 1200 to 1950 m (Wells 2007). The diet is reported as predominantly animal prey (Wells 2007; Collar & Robson 2020) comprising caterpillars, larvae, winged insects, beetles, gastropods, pupae and insect eggs. It is often seen foraging by creeping along a branch and probing or stripping lichen cover to look for prey. There are a few reports of feeding on fruit, seeds and pine cones (Wells 2007; Collar & Robson 2020).

We could not find any prior records of nectar feeding by this species in the literature. Here we report two different nectar feeding observations.

In August 2025 Amar-Singh HSS observed a flock of five or six Himalayan Cutias feeding on the nectar of *Rhodoleia championii* (Hong Kong Rose; local name: Kerlik) (Plate 1). This occurred at the Mossy Forest, Gunung Brinchang, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia at 1980 m. There was no doubt that the birds were taking nectar as a group of us watched all five birds feeding from 0754 hrs to 0816 hrs. They fed on the nectar of *Rhodoleia championii* from four different trees, moving from tree to tree as a social group. At least one of the group was an adult female and another appeared to be an immature bird. This feeding activity had also been observed by other birdwatchers for the past two weeks. A video recording of the feeding activity by Sein-Chiong Chiu is available here (shared with permission):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0DFjm1rxUk>



Plate 1: Female Himalayan Cutia feeding on the nectar of flowers of *Rhodoleia championii*, Mossy Forest, Gunung Brinchang, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia, August 2025.

Rhodoleia championii is a small to medium-sized, evergreen tree found in Malaysia and South-east Asia (Gardner *et al.*, 2016; MyBIS 2025). It has hanging scarlet flowers that are noted to be pollinated by birds. In August 2025 Amar-Singh HSS also observed the Streaked Spiderhunter *Arachnothera magna* and the Black-throated Sunbird *Aethopyga saturata* feeding on the nectar of flowers this plant.

In July 2019 Michelle MK observed Himalayan Cutias feeding on the nectar of a different plant, *Eurya acuminata* (local name: Medang Melukut Jantan). This occurred at the Mossy Forest, Gunung Brinchang, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia at 1980 m. There was a flock of five to six birds but only two or three were sighted feeding on the flowers. Michelle MK photographed a male bird that was feeding vigorously on the nectar of small, white flowers (Plate 2). There were a few other photographers who witnessed this nectar feeding action that morning.



Plate 2: Male Himalayan Cutia feeding on nectar of flowers of *Eurya acuminata*, Mossy Forest, Gunung Brinchang, Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia, July 2024.

Eurya acuminata is an evergreen small tree known for its lanceolate leaves with small axillary flowers and berry-like fruits (Tropical Plants Database 2025). It is a montane species widely distributed in Asia including South-east Asia and Malaysia.

Review of Images in Macaulay Library

We reviewed the images in Macaulay Library of the Himalayan Cutia. As of 19 August 2025, there were 1085 images uploaded. We applied the filter "foraging or eating" and it limited images to 110. A review of these 110 images showed three observations that supported nectar feeding.

Warren Regelman observed Himalayan Cutia feeding on nectar at Doi Pha Hom Pok NP-Doi Lang (W), Chiang Mai, Thailand on 16 March 2024 (ML621449882). The plant is an *Erythrina* species, possibly *Erythrina variegata* in view of the thorny stems.

Ramesh Shenai observed Himalayan Cutia feeding on nectar at Mahal Diram Tea Garden, Darjeeling, West Bengal, India on 23 January 2025 (ML629846861). The plant was identified as *Leucosceptrum canum*.

Thomas Churchyard observed Himalayan Cutia feeding on nectar at Dochula-Royal Botanical Park, Thimphu, Bhutan 20 March 2013 (ML536063651). The plant was not clearly identified but appeared similar to *Rhodoleia championii*.

There were also two observations on possible fruit feeding - Akekachoke Buranaanun, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 5 December 2019 (ML608325408) and Badri Narayan, Arunachal Pradesh, India, 19 April 2023 (ML564324031).

The observations we report here, and the supporting ones from the Macaulay Library, clearly indicate the presence of nectar in the diet of the Himalayan Cutia.

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Special Reports

Barn Owls – Our Silent Guardians

Shakinah Ravindran, Afif Farhan Adnan & Hasber Salim

Various stories and superstitious beliefs surround owls in different parts of the world. Owls are both feared and venerated, hated and admired, seen as wise and foolish, associated with witchcraft and medicine, and linked to birth and deaths. In Malaysia, the popular collective name for owls is 'burung hantu' – ghost bird – and among our various species one in particular stands out as the possible reason behind this moniker. It is easy to imagine why the Eastern Barn Owl (Burung Pungguk Jelapang/Serak Biasa) *Tyto javanica* (Plate 1), with its white chest and underwings, could have been assumed to be a 'ghostly figure' when seen gliding silently overhead in the night sky as it soars silently. Couple that with its occasional long screech, it is not hard to imagine why people called owls 'burung hantu'.



Plate 1: Eastern Barn Owl roosting in an Oil Palm tree, FGV Sahabat, Lahad Datu, Sabah, Sept 2023.

But Eastern Barn Owls play a more important role than just a scary story. The silence that accompanies the species in flight is not due to its ghostly powers, rather an adaptation of its wing feathers that aid in hunting its prey. This is among the many reasons why barn owls, which have a global distribution, are widely utilized as a biological control agent in various agricultural landscapes. In Malaysia, the subspecies *T. j. javanica* (previously named *T. alba*

javanica) has been utilized to control rat pests since the 1960s. Today it is relatively common to see barn owl nest boxes in the oil palm plantations and rice fields particularly of Peninsular Malaysia.

There are various factors contributing to the success of barn owls as biological control agents. Their nocturnal nature means they are active and hunt during the same time of the day that rats are actively scurrying around. Studies on the diet of Eastern Barn Owls in Malaysia have shown that at least 90% of their diet is composed of small mammals (including House Shrews but primarily the rat species that are agricultural pests).

Evolutionary adaptation and diet aside, what makes barn owls stand out from other carnivores that could be used as biological control agents, are that barn owls readily accept artificial nest boxes that are put up by humans (Plate 2), enabling it to be relatively easy to establish a local barn owl population that would hunt and breed in selected sites.



Plate 2: Eastern Barn Owl using artificial nest boxes in padi fields, Ulu Dedap, Perak, Malaysia, November 2024 (left) and 2023.

This fascinating species, coupled with its extremely beneficial role in the ecosystem, are among the factors that have led to the establishment of the Barn Owl and Rodent Research Group (BORG). Formed in 2014, BORG is currently working under the banner of School of Biological Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, and was born out of a shared fascination with barn owls and supporting their protection. BORG is made up of graduate students, early-career scientists, and senior researchers, from various backgrounds in pest management, animal science, veterinary, genetics and pesticides resistance, all committed to understanding and protecting barn owls through science, education, and collaboration. The main goal of the group is to conserve Eastern Barn Owls in Malaysia and raise awareness on the role of barn owls as effective biological control agents of rat pest populations; hence promoting sustainable practices to control pest species in agriculture and urban settings.

To achieve these goals, BORG actively conducts research related to Eastern Barn Owls and rats. BORG conducts various studies to tackle rat pest problems; especially those focused on

creating effective control of rats with minimal environmental damage. With regards to barn owls, past and current research projects of the group involve barn owl translocation, introduction and establishment of barn owls, including introduction of the species to Borneo, and research on various aspects of barn owl ecology, such as behaviour, reproduction, growth, movement, and diet, in wild and captive settings. BORG is also in active collaboration with key players from the oil palm and rice industry, government authorities, NGOs and private sectors at both national and international levels to promote and conduct research on barn owls as an important component in developing sustainable pest management.

People play a vital role in conservation, and as such, BORG conducts community programs to create awareness about the importance of barn owls to our ecosystem. Education programs, such as exhibitions and visits, are conducted at various levels, and we especially conduct education campaigns aimed at the younger generation, ranging from kindergarten children to university students, to foster positive attitudes towards barn owls.

BORG also works to increase awareness on the use of barn owls as biological control agents among key players in the agricultural sector to promote sustainable rat pest management. BORG spearheaded the Barn Owl for Oil Palm Smallholders Initiative (BOSI) with the Malaysian Palm Oil Green Conservation Foundation (MPOGCF) to promote sustainable rat management among smallholder oil palm operators by providing barn owl nest boxes and providing our expertise to establish local barn owl populations. The first grant focused on a single site in Perak, and BORG has recently obtained a grant to expand this project to other states in Peninsular Malaysia (BOSI 2.0). Additionally, BORG is working on a similar project in rice fields with our recently awarded Global Giving grant to foster more sustainable practices among B40 rice farmers.

Barn owls are not just apex predators - they're also powerful environmental indicators. Their presence (or absence) can reveal a lot about the health of a forest or a region. Utilising this additional role, BORG also studies the role of barn owls as bio-monitor of anticoagulant rodenticides in the environment. In recent years, we have worked towards spreading awareness of the threat of uncontrolled use of anticoagulant rodenticides, especially second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides. Thus, BORG aims to not only protect barn owls, but also hopes to play a role in protecting other non-target wildlife species from the threat of anticoagulant rodenticides by reducing, and even eliminating, the reliance on harmful second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides and promoting sustainable rat pest management using barn owls.

More details on BORG and the work they do can be found at their website at: <https://borg.usm.my/>.

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Commentary: The Growth of Eastern Barn Owl Population in Malaysia and the Use of Artificial Nest Boxes

Amar-Singh HSS & David Wells

The Eastern Barn Owl *Tyto javanica* live predominantly in non-natural habitats like padi fields and palm oil estates. Their diet at these locations is almost exclusively rat species based on extensive data from pellet studies (Wells 1999). This makes them extremely beneficial to farmers as a biological rather than chemical control of rodent pests.

Prior to the 1970s, Eastern Barn Owls were considered vagrants or casual visitors to Peninsular Malaysia from Java or Sumatra (Lenton 1985; Wells 1999). The first recorded nesting in Peninsular Malaysia was in 1969. With the introduction of Oil Palm *Elaeis guineensis* as a commercial crop, Eastern Barn Owls had become common and by 1976-1978 were found in oil palm plantations throughout Peninsular Malaysia (Lenton 1985). Initial spread was supported by breeding in roof-spaces but the introduction of pole-mounted nesting boxes in the 1970s to 1980s greatly enhanced populations (Duckett 1991; Wells 1999; Wood & Chung 2003). There was also a move of the birds from palm oil estates to padi fields.

The Eastern Barn Owl does not naturally occur in Sabah and Sarawak. Attempts to introduce Eastern Barn Owls in Oil Palm estates in Sabah occurred between 1990 and 1992. There was initial limited success but the Felda Global Venture (FGV) translocation programme in 2009 has shown a significant pollution rise in Sabah estates (Rizuan *et al.*, 2022)

The development of nest boxes (Plate 1) came about as it was recognised that Eastern Barn Owl "*population densities were limited by available nest sites and that many adult birds in estate populations were not breeding because of this lack of nest sites*" (Duckett 1991).



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Plate 1: Artificial nest boxes for Eastern Barn Owls, Ulu Dedap padi fields, Perak, Malaysia, Aug 2025.

This was confirmed in 1976-1978 by a PhD study conducted by Graham Lenton while working under Wells at the University of Malaya (Duckett 1991). Lenton also showed that the artificial nest boxes designed by him were accepted by barn owls, population increased with availability of nesting sites, that barn owls were not territorial in hunting areas and could co-exist in close proximity (Lenton 1984). The findings of this research encouraged the use of artificial nest boxes to boost barn owl population growth at oil palm plantations.

Duckett and Karuppiah (1990) gave practical information on using barn owls to achieve biological control of rats and how to increase populations in oil palm estates with details on the construction of nest boxes.

The current status of the Eastern Barn Owl is uncertain and has not been evaluated since it was split from the American Barn Owl *Tyto furcata* and Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (Debus *et al.*, 2024). There are concerns that the use of more potent second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides in estates in Malaysia appear to increase Eastern Barn Owl deaths from secondary poisoning (Duckett 1991; Debus *et al.*, 2024). One study compared rodenticide-free environments with the effects of first generation anticoagulant rodenticide (chlorophacinone) and second generation rodenticide (bromadiolone) on nestling growth of Eastern Barn Owls (Salim *et al.*, 2016). Rodenticide-free plots scored the highest fledging success (71%) compared to chlorophacinone (43%) and bromadiolone treated (36%) locations. In addition, nestlings that survived in the rodenticide-free area showed higher measurements for body weight and wing length compared to rodenticide treated plots. A detailed review of the available data and studies on the risk of anticoagulant rodenticides in oil palm areas was conducted by Ravindran and colleagues (2022).

Another issue is the maintenance of pole-mounted nesting boxes. Personal observations (Amar-Singh HSS) of nesting boxes in the padi heartland of Perak, Malaysia shows that at times some are in in disrepair with poor upkeep.

The combination of the widespread use of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (Ravindran *et al.*, 2022) and the apparent lack of commitment to maintaining nesting boxes may result in a decline of the population of Eastern Barn Owl.

We urgently require surveys on the current population of the species, population trends over time and the number and quality of nesting boxes.

Hence the work that the Barn Owl and Rodent Research Group (BORG), School of Biological Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, is doing is critical. It is vital to upscale the Barn Owl for Oil Palm Smallholders Initiative (BOSI) project conducted with the Malaysian Palm Oil Green Conservation Foundation (MPOGCF). As well as look at supporting padi farmers to promote the use of Eastern Barn Owl as biological control of rodent pests rather than use chemicals.

**Factors contributing to the success of barn owls as biological control agents**

- Diel activity/hunting cycle.
- Prey specialisation - note that *T. javanica* is about twice the body mass of other Barn Owl species, with much larger, more powerful feet, making it capable of catching and killing rat-sized rather than just mouse-sized prey.
- Acceptance of artificial nest-boxes makes it possible to move free-living populations around to where they are needed simply by installing boxes, which are quickly found by wild birds. Note that initially nest-boxes were a failure; all breeding continued to be in buildings or the occasional natural hollow. In Graham Lenton's study, the first one accepted was fixed to a building. Thereafter, uptake spread regardless of where boxes were sited. Unproven, but likely that a new search-image developed, including among the young that fledged from this box.
- Adults are virtually non-territorial, defending only the nest-site itself, making it possible to boost population density to unnaturally high levels by increasing the distribution density of nest-boxes. Shown that pairs breed successfully in boxes set as little as 50 m apart.
- Also shown that at least females start to breed at less than one year old, and more than once per year, further boosting the rate of population build-up.
- As distinct from chemical control methods, biological control never seeks to exterminate the pest, only to reduce its numbers to a level at which it is no longer economically damaging. In other words, the continuing presence of the pest is itself a key part of a self-sustaining control process. Results in oil palm showed that Barn Owls could indeed achieve an economically acceptable level of damage control independent of chemical methods. In a padi-land experiment owls breeding in a less dense distribution of boxes about halved the number of chemical baiting rounds needed per crop cycle (study didn't continue long enough to reach a final outcome).

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**Report on the 13th ARRCN Symposium held in Taiwan**

Kim-Chye Lim



The Asian Raptor Research & Conservation Network (ARRCN) is a membership-based non-profit organisation concerned with the study and conservation of Asian raptors. Based in Japan, its membership is open to scientists as well as raptor enthusiasts. ARRCN meets every two years during a symposium hosted in turn by member countries. Malaysia hosted the 5th symposium in October 2005 and 12th symposium (online due to pandemic) in January 2022. The 14th symposium is scheduled for

2027 in Nepal. More information on ARRCN can be accessed on its website: <https://www5b.biglobe.ne.jp/~raptor/arrcn.htm>

The 13th ARRCN Symposium was held in Taipei, Taiwan from 26 – 28 April 2025. The event had 3 keynote lectures, 53 oral presentations and 32 poster displays and attracted 323 participants from 16 countries.

Abstracts of the keynote addresses and oral presentations can be accessed from the link below: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DqJwL3q2dl40OTIYWaDUmBqvrATWKJLA/view?usp=sharing>

The following is a list of the papers and posters presented during the conference.

Keynote addresses:

- Trained Raptors in Field Research: A Novel Approach to more Informed Conservation of Predator and Prey - Clint W. BOAL (USA)
- Connecting Stories, Resources and Generations: Building Long-term Strategies and Capacity for Asian Raptor Conservation – Chong Leong PUAN (Malaysia)
- Mountain Hawk-Eagle, a Feathered Hundred Pacer, in Taiwan - Yuan-Hsun SUN (Taiwan)

Raptor conservation country reports were read out by country representatives from Taiwan, Japan, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Austral-Pacific Region and Nepal.

Oral presentations:**1. Migratory Raptors**

- Breeding Home Range and Habitat Use of the Chinese Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter soloensis*) in Korea – Jongbin GO
- Testing Niche Conservatism in the Grey-Faced Buzzard (*Butastur indicus*), a Migratory Raptor Species Breeding in Korea – Hyeok-Jun CHOI
- Loop Migration of the Chinese Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter soloensis*) along the East Asian Flyway – Jo-Szu TSAI
- Long-Term Monitoring of Migratory Raptors in Taiwan: Population Trends and Conservation Implications – Yi-Hua TSAI

- A Note on Annual Raptor Migration Watch at Mt. Segha, Bali, Indonesia – Luh Putu Eswaryanti Kusuma YUNI
- A Framework for Setting Global and Regional Raptor Conservation Priorities – Evan BUECHLEY

2. Resident Raptors

- Breeding Ecology of Flores Hawk-eagle (*Nisaetus floris*) in Ende Regency, Flores, Indonesia – Oki HIDAYAT
- Monitoring of Reproductive Performance of Javan Hawk Eagle (*Nisaetus bartelsi*) in the Rehabilitation Center Using CCTV – Wardi SEPTIANA
- Model Choice for Habitat Prediction of Vulture Species Studied in Northern India – Radhika JHA
- Nestling Diet of Black Kites (*Milvus migrans*) across different Nesting Habitats in Southern Taiwan – Yun-Chieh HUANG
- Landscape influence on diet composition of Australasian Grass-Owl (*Tyto longimembris*) in Southern Taiwan: Insight from pellet analysis – Chih-Yi LU
- The Central Sierra Madre Expeditions and the Discovery of the First Active Philippine Eagle Nest in Mt. Mingan, Luzon Island, Philippines – Rowell L. TARAYA

3. Raptors and Humans

- Using Artificial Perches for Raptor Monitoring and Promoting Ecological Farming – Shiao-Yu HONG
- A Cultural Keystone Species Undergoing Overexploitation-Ethnobiology of the Mountain Hawk-Eagle for the Paiwan People in Taiwan – Yung-Kun HUANG
- Navigating an Urban Matrix - Home Range and Resource Use of Resident Raptors in Singapore – Malcolm Chu Keong SOH
- A Study on the Perception and Tolerance of Malaysians Towards Barn Owls (*Tyto javanica javanica*) – Shakinah RAVINDRAN
- Factors Affecting the Use of Artificial Perches by Black-winged Kites – Le-Yun CHEN
- Discussing Stakeholders' Perspectives towards Existing Payment for Ecosystem Services Schemes in Taiwan, Taking Raptor Conservation for example – Chung-Ping KUO

4. Population Ecology

- Population Expansion and Adaptation to Suburban Habitats of the Black Eagle in Taiwan – Wen-Horn LIN
- Satellite Tracking and Habitat Use of Australasian Grass-Owl – Jo-Szu TSAI
- Assessing Population Trends of the Mountain Hawk-Eagle in Taiwan Using Occupancy Modeling – Lee-Lien WANG
- Estimating the Population Size of Crested Honey Buzzards (*Pernis ptilorhynchus orientalis*) Using the Photographic Mark-Resight Method in Yangmingshan, North Taiwan – Yi-Hua TSAI
- The Populations of Only Two Breeding Raptor Species of Taiwan Have Grown in Recent Decades – Da-Li LIN
- Invasive Species as Breakfast: Predation on the Giant African Snail (*Lissachatina fulica*) by the Crested Serpent-Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*) – Yu-Cheng HSU

5. Raptor Conservation

- Raptor Conservation in northern Southeast Asia – Tulsı R. SUBEDI
- State of the World's Raptors: Indonesia – Zaini RAKHMAN
- Investigating the Importance of Glass Collision Injuries in Raptors: A Retrospective Analysis of Raptor Rescue Cases from 2017 to 2024 in the Raptor Rehabilitation Station in Taiwan – Ling-Min WANG
- Projected Impacts of Climate Change on Raptor Distributions: A Case Study of the Migratory Oriental Honey-Buzzards and the Endemic Javan Hawk-Eagle in Indonesia – Syartinilia
- Slender-billed Vultures: Projected Future in Asia Based on Climate Change and Distribution Modelling – Kaushalendra Kumar JHA

6. Acoustics and Genetics

- Assessing Vocal Activity Pattern of Crested Serpent-Eagle (*Spilornis cheela malayensis*) in a Lowland Forest in Peninsular Malaysia: A Pathway for Long-term Monitoring of Tropical Raptors – Amirul Mukminin Shamsul MIZA
- Collared Owlet Moonlit Songs: Vocalization Patterns under Lunar Cycle Dynamics – Shih-Hung WU
- Seasonal Activity Patterns of the Australasian Grass-Owl (*Tyto longimembris*) Revealed Through Passive Acoustic Monitoring – Chia-Hao CHANG
- DNA-based dietary analysis and evaluation of sampling methods for The Japanese Mountain Hawk-Eagle during the nestling period – Hiromichi ICHINOSE
- Conservation Genetic/Genomic Analyses of the Mountain Hawk-Eagle – Annegret Moto NAITO-LIEDERBACH
- The Reflection of 25th Years of Conservation Efforts of Javan Hawk-Eagle (*Nisaetus bartelsi*) in Indonesia – Zaini RAKHMAN
- Neotropical Raptor Network: A Model for Raptor Conservation in the Americas – Marta CURTI
- Ecology and Conservation of Endangered Flores Hawk-eagle *Nisaetus floris* in Nusa Tenggara Island, Indonesia – Usep SUPARMAN
- Impact of Urbanization on the Nesting Materials of Black Kite Breeding in Pokhara Valley, Central-west Nepal – Sandesh GURUNG
- Twenty Years of Black Kite Conservation in Taiwan: From Scientific Monitoring to Conservation Actions – Hui-Shan LIN

7. Threats to Raptors

- The Impact of Typhoon GAEMI on Australasian Grass-Owl Along Zengwen River – Jia-Jia LYU
- I Know Places: Identifying Threats and Mapping Occurrences of the Globally Endangered South Philippine Hawk-eagle (*Nisaetus pinskeri*) Through Citizen Science Approaches – Tristan Luap P. SENARILLOS
- Raptors and Airports in Indonesia: State, Risk, and Opportunity – Raden Achmad SADIKIN
- Preliminary Study on Secondary Poisoning of Raptors by Rodenticides in Northern Taiwan – Ling-Min WANG
- Risks of avian collision at the Pokhara Regional International Airport, Nepal – Hemanta DHAKAL

Posters

- Haematology and Blood Chemistry of the Japanese Mountain Hawk-eagle (*Nisaetus nipalensis orientalis*) – Toru YAMAZAKI and *Project Team for Research and Conservation of the Japanese Mountain Hawk-eagle, Shiga, Japan*
- Conservation Genetics of Small Island Populations of the Crested Serpent-eagle in Japan – Alisa TOBE *et al*
- Catching the Winds of the World to Study and Conserve Raptors Globally - Diego MÉNDEZ *Aves Rapaces en Bolivia – Programa de Investigación, Sucre, Bolivia*
- The Role of Raptors in Zoonotic Pathogen Transmission Cycles in Northern Taiwan – y HO *et al*
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- Challenge of Cultural Preservation and Ecological Conservation: Promoting Imitated Feathers of the Mountain Hawk-Eagle – Wan-I WANG *et al*
- The Role of ESG in Grass-Owl Conservation: Industry-Academia Collaboration for Biodiversity Protection – O-Szu TSAI *et al*
- Sexual Differences in Parental Behaviour of Mountain Hawk-Eagle (*Nisaetus nipalensis nipalensis*) – Yu-Shen LU & Yuan-Hsun SUN
- Analysis of Autumn Migratory Raptors Survey in the Tataka Area of Yushan National Park from 2020 to 2024 – Wen-Jie LIN *et al*
- Shoushan National Nature Park's Migratory Raptors Survey in Banpingshan – Yu-Hsiang YANG *et al*
- Machine Learning-Driven Modelling of Prey Switching in Raptors: A Framework for Predicting Population Resilience Under Environmental Change – Prihantini PRIHANTINI *et al*
- Modelling Cognitive Disruption in Raptors Due to Urban Light Pollution: A Neural Network Approach to Conservation – Sahnaz Vivinda PUTRI *et al*

Workshop: How to effectively promote the concept of preventing bird window collisions

- Introduction to bird window collisions and the situation in Taiwan
- Bird-friendly building and glass initiatives in Taiwan
- Sharing and discussion of the situation in different countries or regions
- Low-cost methods for preventing bird window collisions, including hands-on practice

Citation: Kim-Chye Lim. (2025). Report on the 13th ARRCN Symposium held in Taiwan. *Malaysian Bird Report*. Volume 3/2025, Sept 2025: pg. 63-67.

Rare Bird Reports

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.

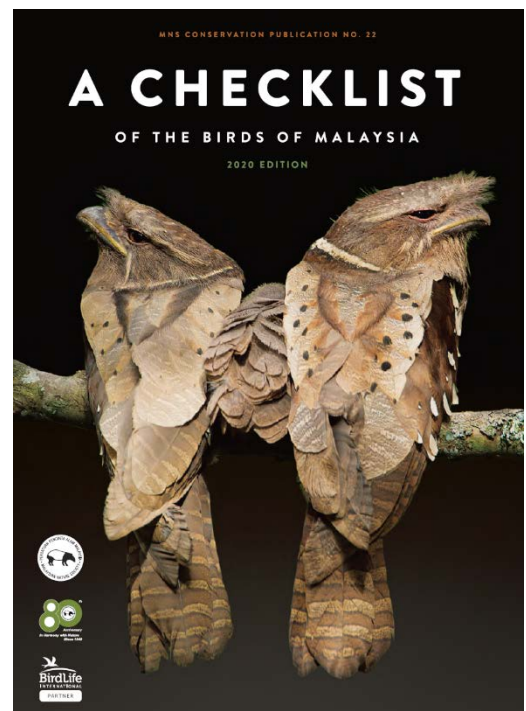
You can download the latest (2020) Malaysia Checklist of birds in pdf format at this link:

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.



Articles

Birdwatching Hotspots Series:

Gunung Alab Bird Viewing Station – Unrestricted Access to Montane Birds

Amar-Singh HSS & Ron Pudín

We had previously written about the Gunung Alab Substation and Tower Station, a spectacular bird watching site (see reference). It was located at 1,900m ASL near the Telekom Tower at Gunung Alab Substation. In the last 6-9 months, a new bird viewing station has been established adjacent to the Gunung Alab Restaurant at 1660m ASL in the Crocker range. While lower than the previous site, the bird diversity and access are remarkable at the new site.

A drive from Kota Kinabalu city through the winding roads of Penampang will take you comfortably to Gunung Alab Bird Viewing Station within 1.5hrs. The viewing station is on the left of the restaurant with a sheer drop into a ravine. The site was established by KK Lee who is well-known, having started the original hide near the Telekom Tower at Gunung Alab Substation and the well-visited Trus Madi Forest Reserve hide.



Plate 1: Entrance to Gunung Alab Bird Viewing Station.

On this occasion KK Lee has changed the style of the 'hide', if it can be called that at all. There is no barrier between the birdwatcher/photographer and the birds. You are in a front-open, covered corridor, sheltered from the rain, and looking out at nature. You can sit or stand or walk about. The site can accommodate up to 30 individuals. He has invested in planting the appropriate bushes/trees that attract birds by their fruit and nectar. These also offer many natural perching sites. In addition, there are a number of white cloths and lights used to attract moths and insects overnight. Many bird species come very early to feed on these moths. Some mealworm feeding activities also take place.



© Amar-Singh HSS



Plate 2: Inside the Gunung Alab Bird Viewing Station with open access to the birds and nature.

Due to the montane location, you are able to watch birds throughout the day and some species come at different times. Generally, it is good to arrive early in view of the moth feeding. Unlike many hides which are inaccessible to those who are elderly or disabled, this site is friendly. You can drive right up to the site, have seats, are sheltered from the rain and have good toilet access. You can also order a hot meal and drinks from the restaurant next door without having to leave. But note that often your meal may be interrupted many times by the arrival of new, exciting birds. There are plans to offer accommodation at the site and this may meet the needs of those travelling from long distances. Note that there is a payment to use the bird viewing station.

You are able to use your tripod while seated, but note that much of the photography is better done handheld. It is best to use a 100-600mm telephoto lens rather than a fixed 600mm or 800mm lens, as the birds come very close. Often no cropping of images is required and instead you are trying to move back to get the full bird in the camera view.



Plate 3: Images of some bird seen at Gunung Alab Bird Viewing Station (most uncropped) June 2025. Clockwise from top left: White-browed Shrike-Babbler, Golden-naped Barbet, Bornean Green-Magpie, Mountain Wren-Babbler, Temminck's Sunbird, Eyebrowed Jungle Flycatcher.

Some birds that are usually hard to observe or only seen fleetingly can now be seen at great length and this allows for better study of their plumage. There are many bird songs and calls but audio recordings are difficult due to the background conversation and noise.

KK Lee has two 'bird-spotters' who will move around and alert you as to the arrival of interesting new species. They are indispensable as you may be focused on a bird at one end



and another species turns up elsewhere. There was also a 'bird-dog' when we visited and he was bird sensitive.

According to eBird records, more than 150 checklists(!) have been submitted in 2025 alone (up to early August) with 110 species reported. A chart of the birds seen at the site is in the image below.



Plate 4: Chart of birds seen at Gunung Alab Bird Viewing Station.

Note that there are other birds to see outside the hide, just a little up the road to the substation; in particular the Bornean Shortwing and Snowy-browed Flycatcher.

In summary, this new bird viewing station is a spectacular location for any new or seasoned birdwatcher and photographer. It is also a great location to introduce birds to children and non-bird watchers, as you can watch birds 'naked-eye' and in comfort.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Jia-En Ho for reviewing the manuscript.

Reference

Amar-Singh HSS & Pudir, R. (2024). Birdwatching Hotspots Series: Gunung Alab Substation & Tower Station - Sub-Montane and Montane Birds 'Worst Kept Secret'. *Malaysian Bird Report*. Volume 2/2024, June 2024: pg. 64-68. <https://malaysianbird.report/wp-content/uploads/Sabah-Borneo-Gunung-Alab.pdf>

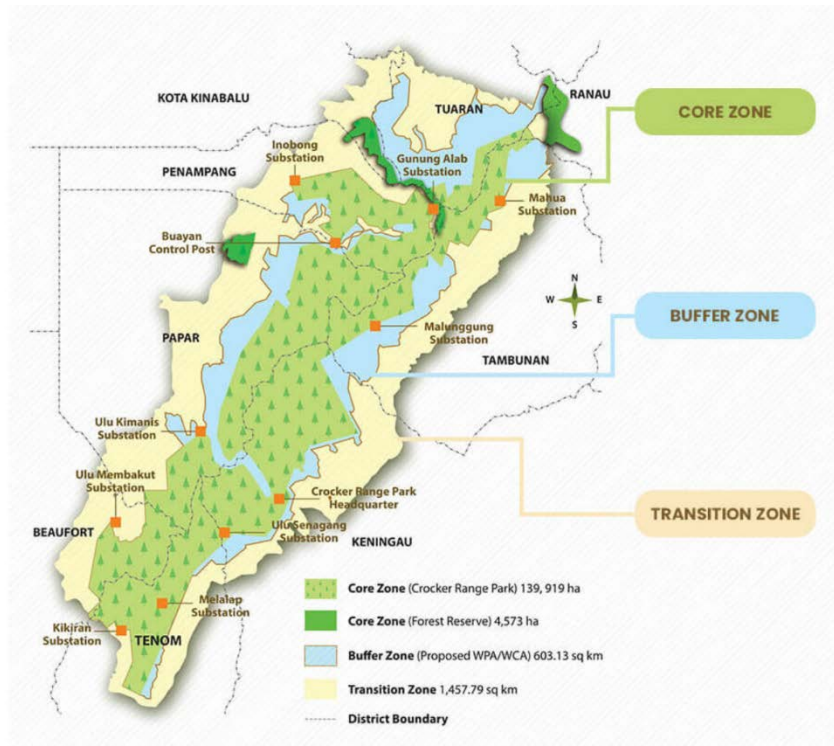
Citation: Amar-Singh HSS & Pudir, R. (2025). Gunung Alab Bird Viewing Station – Unrestricted Access to Montane Birds. *Malaysian Bird Report*. Volume 3/2025, Sept 2025: pg. 69-71.

Birdwatching Hotspots Series:

Inobong Substation – An Easily Accessible Day Birdwatching Site

Amar-Singh HSS & Ron Pudin

The Inobong Substation is nestled within the Crocker Range National Park in Sabah. It is situated in the district of Penampang and is just about an hour drive from Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. It is very popular with walkers and hikers. It has several nature trails and the adventurous Salt Trail; a route traditionally followed by villagers when taking their produce to the tamu (markets).

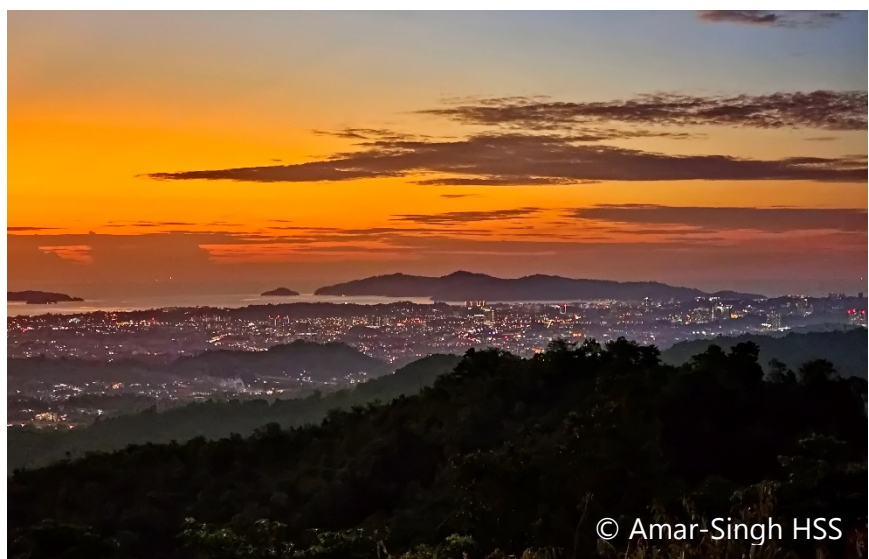


Crocker Range Biosphere Reserve

Plate 1: Crocker Range Biosphere showing Inobong Substation. Copyright Sabah Parks.

<https://crbr.sabahparks.org.my/crocker-range-biosphere-reserve>

A spectacular panoramic view of Kota Kinabalu and the islands can be seen from a vantage point (Nampasan viewing shelter) and the 7m tall Kibambangan Waterfall is within walking distance. Sunrise and sunset views are spectacular and photography of the night sky excellent.



© Amar-Singh HSS

Plate 2: Sunset view of Kota Kinabalu and the islands from Inobong Substation.

As bird watchers we are always looking for new sites to explore birds. Some of us prefer the attraction of finding birds ourselves and not just viewing them at feeding stations or hides. Inobong Substation offers a quick getaway from the city for a day of pleasurable bird watching. It also offers a morning of good birdwatching while you are waiting to catch a flight out of Kota Kinabalu. The site is about 500-600m ASL and hence offers a cooler morning out.

The entry to the park, the Inobong Visitor and Research Station, can easily be accessed by road from Kota Kinabalu, although the last stretch is cement and some gravel. Many hikers will park lower down and hike up, so beware of walkers as you drive up. The park is open 8am to 5pm. There is a small entrance fee of RM 6 for Malaysians and RM 20 for international visitors; rates are cheaper for children.



Plate 3: Entry gate to the Inobong Visitor and Research Station.

The location offers a mix of lowland and montane forest birds in the park's well-preserved forest canopy. The eBird list compiled for the area is 111 birds (104 seen so far in 2025); a mixture of local endemics, regular Bornean species and migrants.

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L36569431/bird-list>



Plate 4: A composite of some of the birds that can be seen in and around Inobong Substation.



Much of the birdwatching is just 1-2 km inside the entrance as you walk up a paved path and also outside before the gate. We saw or heard more than 30 species in a short morning. Interesting birds at the site include the Sunda Brush Cuckoo, Scarlet-rumped Trogon, Black-eared Barbet, Bornean Banded Kingfisher, Black-and-yellow Broadbill, White-breasted Woodswallow, Charlotte's Bulbul, Grey-hooded Babbler, White-crowned Shama, Greater and Lesser Green Leafbirds, and a variety of Flowerpeckers, Sunbirds and Spiderhunters. The Great Argus and Sabah Partridge can be heard calling at the site.

There are chalets, hostels, a rest house and public washrooms for visitors to the substation. We chose to stay overnight at Sinurambi <https://sinurambi.com/>, 200m from the substation, which offers very comfortable accommodation and spectacular meals. The views from Sinurambi are excellent and they maintain a rich garden that attracts many birds out from the forest. A great location for a retreat and armchair birdwatching and a green-lung location near enough when visiting Kota Kinabalu.

In summary, it is the proximity to Kota Kinabalu and the ease of access that makes Inobong Substation a good site. It is probably underexplored.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Jia-En Ho for reviewing the manuscript.

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Citation: Amar-Singh HSS & Pudín, R. (2025). Inobong Substation – An Easily Accessible Day Birdwatching Site. *Malaysian Bird Report*. Volume 3/2025, Sept 2025: pg. 72-74.

Bird Trees Series:

***Debregeasia longifolia* – A Highland Wonder**

Amar-Singh HSS & Alim Biun

Debregeasia longifolia, often called Orange Wild Rhea, is a small 2-7 metres tree (Gardner *et al.*, 2018) that is found predominantly in the montane regions. It has a wide distribution in Asia and Southeast Asia (Tropical Plants Database 2025), and commonly found on the hill stations of Peninsular Malaysia and the montane regions of Borneo. Leaves are narrow and long with scattered hairs above. The plant is best identified when it fruits, twice a year, when it produces copious amounts of reddish or yellowish orange fruit of 1cm dense clusters of spheres (Gardner *et al.*, 2018) (Plate 1). The raw fruits are said to be 'pleasantly sweet' and safe for human consumption (Tropical Plants Database 2025). The local Dusun name is Tonduramai.



Plate 1: *Debregeasia longifolia* fruiting at Kinabalu Park, Sabah, Malaysia, June 2025 (left) and at Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia, December 2011 with a female Fire-breasted Flowerpecker feeding (right).

Many bird species feed on the fruit of *Debregeasia longifolia*, possibly aiding in its propagation. In recent years there has been a proliferation of this plant in Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia.

Bird species we have personally observed feeding on *Debregeasia longifolia* include (Plate 2 & 3):

1. Golden-throated Barbet *Psilopogon franklinii*
2. Golden-naped Barbet *Psilopogon pulcherrimus*
3. Fire-tufted Barbet *Psilopogon pyrolophus*
4. Bornean Treepie *Dendrocitta cinerascens*
5. Mountain Bulbul *Ixos mcclellandii*
6. Bornean Bulbul *Rubigula montis*
7. Penan Bulbul *Alophoixus ruficrissus*
8. Pale-faced Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucops*

9. Hume's White-eye *Zosterops auriventer*
10. Black-capped White-eye *Zosterops atricapilla*
11. Chestnut-capped Laughingthrush *Pterorhinus mitratus*
12. Chestnut-hooded Laughingthrush *Pterorhinus treacheri*
13. Silver-eared Mesia *Leiothrix argenteauris*
14. Blue-winged Minla *Actinodura cyanouroptera*
15. Siberian Thrush *Geokichla sibirica*
16. Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*
17. Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*
18. Indigo Flycatcher *Eumyias indigo*
19. Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki*
20. Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermanni*
21. Fire-breasted Flowerpecker *Dicaeum ignipectus*



Plate 2: Bornean Treepie (left) and Golden-naped Barbet feeding on the fruit of *Debregeasia longifolia* at Gunung Alab, June 2025.

Many birdwatchers and photographers may have seen other bird species feeding on this fruit. As most birdwatchers and photographers do not appear to be aware of the plant's name, an online search for other species feeding on this plant did not offer any data. We did however find images posted of Plain Flowerpecker *Dicaeum minullum* feeding in the fruit. We hope that this article assists birdwatchers and photographers to identify and report the feeding of birds on this plant in eBird.

The owner of the bird viewing station at Gunung Alab, Sabah, Malaysia, has taken advantage of this tree's popularity with birds and planted/encouraged their growth at the site, attracting many birds.



Plate 3: Clockwise from top left Golden-throated Barbet, Blue-winged Minla, Mountain Bulbul & Fire-breasted Flowerpecker (male) feeding on the fruit of *Debregeasia longifolia* at Cameron Highlands, Malaysia, December 2011.

Note that while we have seen birds consuming the fruit they may also be hunting for insects attracted to the fruit. For example, treehoppers are sap-feeding insects belonging to the family *Membracidae*. While treehoppers primarily feed on the phloem of a wide range of host plants, they may occasionally be observed on *Debregeasia longifolia*, which they likely utilise as a secondary or opportunistic host.

Acknowledgement

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

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Citation: Amar-Singh HSS & Biun, A. (2025). *Debregeasia longifolia* – A Highland Wonder. *Malaysian Bird Report*. Volume 3/2025, Sept 2025: pg. 75-77.

**Tips & Tools to Aid Birdwatching & Bird Photography Series:
Guideline for Developing & Maintaining Ethical Bird Hides**

John Bakar, in cooperation with Sabah Birdwatchers Association

Traditionally, bird hides have been set up to provide a concealed vantage point for birdwatching, photography, and research, allowing birdwatchers and ornithologists to observe birds in their natural habitats without causing undue disturbance (Plate 1). Increasingly they are being used by bird photographers and for ecotourism. The ability to get closer to birds and to appreciate bird biodiversity up close is a powerful draw.



Plate 1: An AI generated image of a bird hide for illustration purposes only.

However, the very presence and operation of bird hides, if not carefully considered, can inadvertently lead to negative impacts on the birds they are designed to observe. Unethical practices, such as locating hides too close to sensitive nesting sites, attracting birds with inappropriate food or allowing excessive noise and movement from observers, can cause stress, disrupt breeding cycles, alter natural behaviours and even lead to abandonment of territories. This underscores the critical need for an ethical framework governing the design, placement, and management of bird hides (BirdLife South Africa 2013).

An ethical bird hide prioritises the well-being of the birds and the integrity of their habitat above all else. Key principles include minimising disturbance through careful siting, ensuring appropriate viewing distances, employing sound-dampening materials, and educating visitors on responsible behaviour. This extends to photography, where the pursuit of the perfect shot must never compromise the welfare of the subject (National Audubon Society 2023). Furthermore, ethical hide management often involves habitat enhancement around the hide, such as planting native vegetation to provide food and shelter, and implementing waste management protocols to prevent pollution.

In essence, the concept of an ethical bird hide transforms these structures from mere observation points into active instruments of conservation. By providing controlled viewing opportunities, they can reduce the overall human impact on sensitive areas, channelling visitor pressure away from more vulnerable sites. They also serve as vital educational tools, raising awareness about avian ecology, conservation challenges and the importance of responsible wildlife interaction. When managed ethically, hides become platforms for citizen science, enabling the collection of valuable data on bird populations and behaviours without undue interference, while allowing for ecotourism.

The future of birdwatching and avian conservation increasingly relies on the widespread adoption and adherence to these ethical principles, safeguarding both the birds we value and the habitats they call home.

This article provides a guideline for the development and maintenance of ethical bird hides in the Borneo rainforest but would be applicable to other parts of the country.

1.0 Ethical Considerations

1.1 Minimise Disturbance:

- The primary goal is to observe birds without disrupting their natural behaviour. Locate your hide in an area where birds naturally congregate, avoiding nesting sites or areas of critical habitat.
- Keep noise levels to an absolute minimum during construction and while in the hide.

1.2 Environmental Impact:

- Use sustainable and locally sourced materials whenever possible. Avoid materials that could leach harmful chemicals into the soil or water.
- Design the hide to blend seamlessly with the surrounding environment. Use natural camouflage and avoid bright colours.
- Ensure the hide does not obstruct natural animal pathways or alter water flow.

1.3 Respect for Wildlife:

- Never bait or lure birds to the hide in a way that could endanger them or alter their natural feeding patterns. (Subject to further discussion, if allowed feeding, within expert and authority stipulation).
- Maintain a safe distance and avoid any actions that could cause stress or fear to the birds.
- Limit the number of people using the hide at any one time to reduce disturbance.

1.4 Local Regulations and Permission (Ordinance & Enactment):

KEPKAS (Written Permit)

- i. Forestry Department
- ii. Sabah Parks
- iii. Wildlife Department
- iv. Sabah Tourism Board.

'Multilayer sustainable operation standard adhered'.

- Before beginning any construction, obtain the necessary permits and permissions from local authorities and landowners.
- Respect the regulations of any protected areas or nature reserves.
- It is very important to consider the impact to the local ecosystem, and if possible, to consult with local expert guides, and or park rangers.

2.0 Construction Guidelines



Plate 2: An AI generated image of a bird hide for illustration purposes only.

2.1 Location:

- Choose a location near a reliable water source, feeding area, or known bird activity hotspot.
- Consider the direction of sunlight to avoid glare and ensure good visibility.
- The lay of the land can be used to your advantage, using natural features such as fallen logs or existing vegetation to help with the construction and camouflage.

2.2 Materials:

- Use natural materials such as bamboo, wood, and woven palm leaves.
- Consider using recycled or repurposed materials.
- Ensure all materials are sturdy and weather-resistant.

2.3 Design:

- Build a simple, inconspicuous structure with small viewing windows or slots.
- Provide comfortable seating and adequate space for observers and equipment.
- Ensure the hide is well-ventilated to prevent overheating.
- Path or Trail design to adhere to safety standards. All age and physical abilities friendly (BirdLife South Africa 2013).

2.4 Camouflage:

- Use natural vegetation, such as leaves, branches, and vines, to camouflage the exterior of the hide.
- Avoid using shiny or reflective materials.

3.0 Trail construction

Building a trail to a bird hide in Sabah that prioritises safety and accessibility requires careful planning and execution, especially considering the region's diverse terrain and climate. Here's a breakdown of essential considerations:

3.1 Trail Design and Construction (Surface):

** For accessibility, a smooth, firm, and stable surface is crucial. Options include:*

- Compacted gravel: Provides a stable surface with good drainage.
- Wooden boardwalks: Ideal for wet or uneven terrain, and offer a level surface. Ensure they are built with durable, rot-resistant wood.
- Concrete or paved pathways: Suitable for areas with high traffic, but may be less natural-looking.

3.2 Width:

- The trail should be wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and other mobility devices, as well as two-way traffic.
- A minimum width of 1.2 meters is generally recommended.

3.3 Gradient:

- Minimise steep slopes to make the trail accessible to people with mobility impairments.
- Where slopes are unavoidable, provide resting areas at regular intervals.
- Adhere to recommended maximum gradients for wheelchair accessibility.

3.4 Drainage:

- Proper drainage is essential to prevent water accumulation and slippery surfaces. In Sabah's high-rainfall environment, this is particularly important.
- Consider using drainage ditches or culverts to divert water away from the trail.

3.5 Edge Protection:

- Install edge protection, such as railings or curbs, to prevent falls, especially along elevated sections or steep slopes.

3.6 Signage:

Provide clear and informative signage, including:

- Trail distances and difficulty levels.
- Warnings about potential hazards.
- Information about the bird hide and the surrounding environment.

3.7 Safety Standards Risk Assessment:

Conduct a thorough risk assessment to identify potential hazards, such as:

- Slippery surfaces.

- Uneven terrain.
- Wildlife encounters.
- Falling branches

3.8 Regular Maintenance:

Establish a regular maintenance schedule to ensure the trail remains in good condition. This includes:

- Clearing debris.
- Repairing damaged sections.
- Inspecting and maintaining railings and other safety features

3.9 Emergency Preparedness:

- Develop an emergency response plan in case of accidents or injuries.
- Ensure that first-aid supplies are readily available.
- Establish clear communication protocols.

3.10 Disabled-Friendly Considerations (see BirdLife South Africa 2013 for ideas):

Making hides universally accessible means making them accessible to everyone regardless of their physical, sensory or cognitive abilities. Although usually applied to persons with disabilities, universally accessible hides will also benefit the elderly and children.

- Improve the bird hide to ensure that it is accessible to people with disabilities, with features such as ramps or level entrances, adequate space for wheelchairs and lowered viewing windows.
- Resting Areas: Provide benches or seating areas at regular intervals along the trail.
- Tactile Indicators: Install tactile indicators to help visually impaired visitors navigate the trail.
- Audio Information: Consider providing audio information about the bird hide and the surrounding environment.



Plate 3: An AI generated image of a bird hide for illustration purposes only.

3.11 Environmental Considerations:

- Minimise Environmental Impact:
 - i. Design the trail to minimise disturbance to the natural environment.
 - ii. Use sustainable materials and construction techniques.
- Wildlife Protection:
 - i. Avoid disturbing wildlife during trail construction and maintenance.
 - ii. Provide clear signage encouraging visitors to respect wildlife.

3.12 Key Considerations for jungle trail to bird hides in Sabah:

- The tropical climate requires durable materials and effective drainage.
- The diverse terrain may necessitate the use of boardwalks or other specialised construction techniques.
- Wildlife encounters are possible, so it's essential to take precautions and provide clear warnings.
- Consulting with local experts on Sabah's local environments is very important.
- By adhering to these standards, you can create a safe and accessible trail that enhances the bird-watching experience for all visitors.

4.0 Toilet Facilities

Building suitable toilet standards at bird hides in Sabah, especially in remote areas, requires careful consideration of environmental impact, hygiene, and visitor comfort. Here's a breakdown of key factors and environmental considerations:

4.1 Waste Management:

- In many remote locations, traditional sewage systems are impractical. Consider composting toilets or pit latrines designed to minimise environmental contamination.
- Composting toilets offer a sustainable solution, breaking down waste naturally. Ensure proper ventilation and maintenance to prevent odours.
- If pit latrines are used, they must be constructed to prevent groundwater contamination.
- For areas with higher visitor numbers, consider portable chemical toilets, but ensure proper disposal of waste.

4.2 Water Conservation:

- If water is available, use water-saving toilet fixtures.
- Explore rainwater harvesting systems to supplement water supply.

4.3 Material Selection:

- Use durable, weather-resistant materials that blends with the natural environment.
- Prioritise sustainable materials whenever possible.

4.4 Hygiene and Sanitation. Handwashing Facilities:

- Provide handwashing stations with soap or hand sanitiser.
- In remote areas, consider water containers with taps and proper drainage.

4.5 Cleanliness:

- Establish a regular cleaning schedule to maintain hygiene.

- Provide clear signage encouraging visitors to keep the facilities clean.

4.6 Ventilation:

- Ensure adequate ventilation to minimise odours and prevent the buildup of harmful gases.

4.7 Pest Control:

- Implement measures to prevent insects and other pests.

4.8 Visitor Comfort and Privacy:

- Design toilet facilities to provide adequate privacy.

4.9 Accessibility:

- Consider accessibility for visitors with disabilities.

4.10 Shelter:

- Provide shelter from rain and sun.

4.11 Maintenance:

- It is very important to have a plan for the long term maintenance of any toilet facility.

4.12 Location:

- The location of the toilet should be a reasonable distance from the bird hide, to prevent disturbing the wildlife, but not so far that it is an inconvenience.

4.13 Local Regulations and Guidelines:

- Familiarise yourself with local regulations and guidelines regarding sanitation and waste disposal.
- Consult with local authorities and environmental agencies to ensure compliance.

4.14 Key Considerations for building a toilet at bird hides in Sabah:

- Sabah's rainforest environment presents unique challenges, including high humidity and rainfall.
- Remote locations may require innovative solutions for waste management and water supply.
- Tourism is a significant industry in Sabah, so it's essential to maintain high standards of hygiene and environmental protection.
- By carefully considering these factors, you can build toilet standards at bird hides in Sabah that are both functional and environmentally responsible.

5.0 Conclusion, Important Considerations for Sabah Birdwatching Tourism

- The Sabah rainforest is a delicate ecosystem. It's crucial to prioritise conservation and minimise any potential impact.
- Engage with local communities and guides who have extensive knowledge of the area and its wildlife. Their expertise can be invaluable in ensuring ethical and sustainable bird hide construction.

- Places like Danum Valley, and the Trusmadi region are very popular for birding, and already have established bird hides. Visiting these locations, and supporting the local businesses that run them, can be a great way to view the birds, and support ethical tourism.

By following these guidelines, you can create a bird hide that provides excellent viewing opportunities while minimising your impact on the Sabah rainforest and its incredible birdlife. 'Sustainable resources, Sustainable tourism products'.



Plate 4: An AI generated image of a bird hide for illustration purposes only.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the Sabah Birdwatchers Association for the encouragement to produce this guideline and Amar-Singh HSS for providing ideas and editorial support. I thank Jia-En Ho, Wai-Mun Choy and Ron Pudín for reviewing the article.

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Drawing Birds for Beginners: A Simple Guide for the Non-Artist

Jia-En Ho

Drawing birds is a great way to familiarise yourself with them. By recording shapes and details, you can not only understand and appreciate birds more, but also remember distinct features for better bird identification (ID). A lot of birdwatchers and wildlife artists like to keep bird journals, drawing what they've seen and writing down any notable behaviour from observations afield. While some make simple pencil sketches, and others create fully-rendered paintings, there is ultimately no right or wrong way to draw birds, as long as it helps you in the end. In this article, we'll explore different approaches to drawing birds, as well as some resources to take your art further.

The Basic Shapes

Breaking down the subject can help tackle the bigger picture. Take note of the basic shapes that make up the bird's body. Is the head round or pointy? Is the body long or short? Is the tail squared or curved? These overall features already go a long way in differentiating the bird from other species. Lightly draw these shapes together and you get the rough gesture of the bird. This step is also important in ensuring the proportions are correct and all the shapes work well together. Below are some examples I did to show how to interpret different body shapes.

This Bornean Stubtail's overall features are very round (Plate 1). I've reflected this by drawing a circle for its head and body, as well as a curved tail. I've also drawn a couple lines to connect the head and the body and indicate its neck. If you feel so inclined, you can also draw a marking to help you place the eye, as I've done here by drawing a line on the face. For the wing, I split it up into rough sections by feather group, which I'll explore more in the second step.



Plate 1: Bornean Stubtail *Urosphena whiteheadi* image and sketch.

This Milky Stork is much bigger but still has a round body and head (Plate 2). To me, some of its features are a little more hard-edged than the stubtail's, so I've added some suggestion of that to its head and neck.

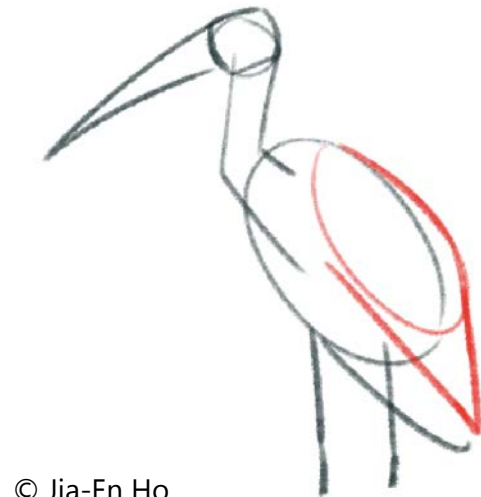


Plate 2: Milky Stork *Mycteria cinerea* image and sketch.

The Ashy Drongo is a bit of a mix of the two in terms of shapes. Its head is a little more square, so I've reflected this by making the top of its head flatter. Furthermore, its tail is also a lot longer and a lot more sharp.



Plate 3: Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus* image and sketch.



The Details

Once you have the basic form down, you can start focussing on the overall details. Begin to draw in features such as the eyes, bill, and feet, as well as markings on the plumage, if any (Plate 4). Similar to the overall body shapes, notice the basic shapes of these features to help you draw them more accurately. Feel free to also sketch in any more shapes or lines that can help you better judge the positioning of these details. Markings can seem overwhelming, especially if they're incredibly detailed, but once again, it helps to break it down into different parts. For instance, you can divide the wing into the primaries, secondaries, tertiaries and primary and secondary coverts, noting the markings present in each section. The same can be done for the head if the bird has features such as a supercilium, eye-ring, or malar stripes. Filling in these details, no matter how rough, can be extremely helpful in aiding later identification of the bird if you use the drawing for this purpose. It can also help you better appreciate small elements you may not have realised were there before. More details on [Understanding Bird Topography](#) can be found in the link.

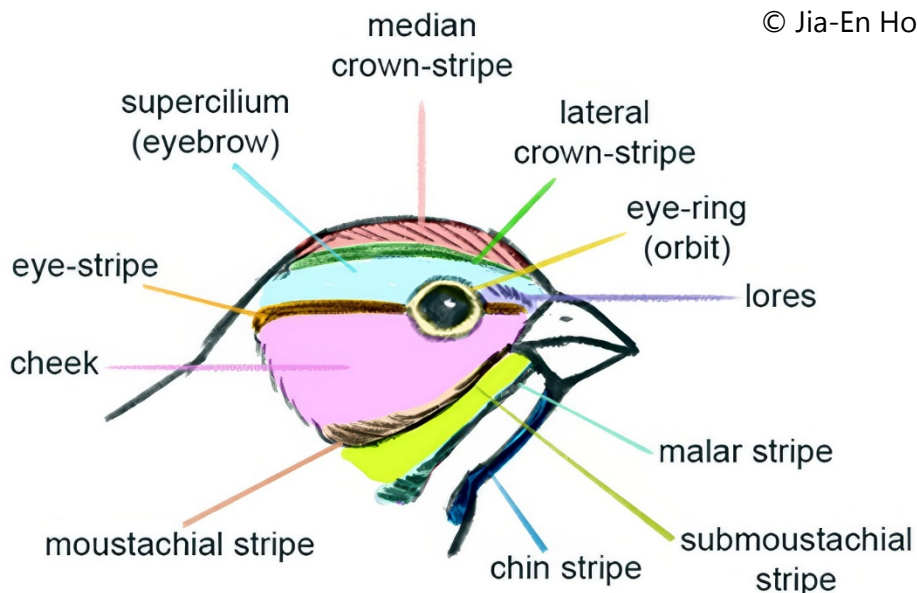


Plate 4: Face and head details.

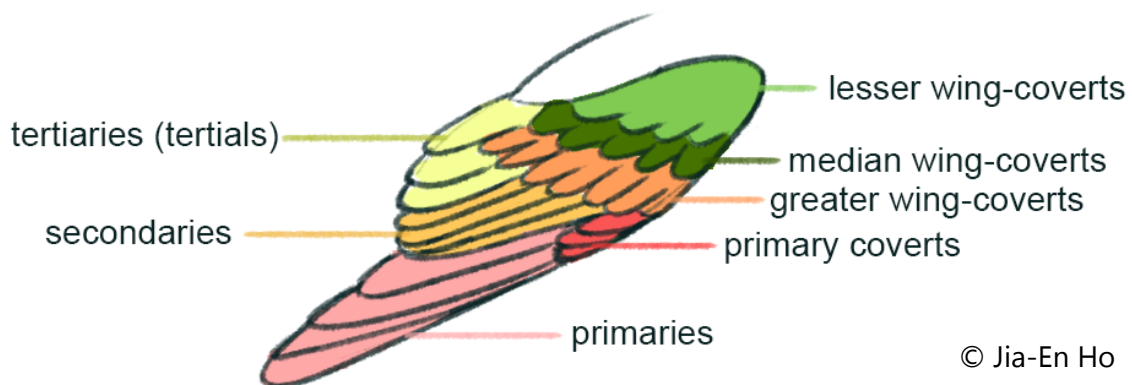
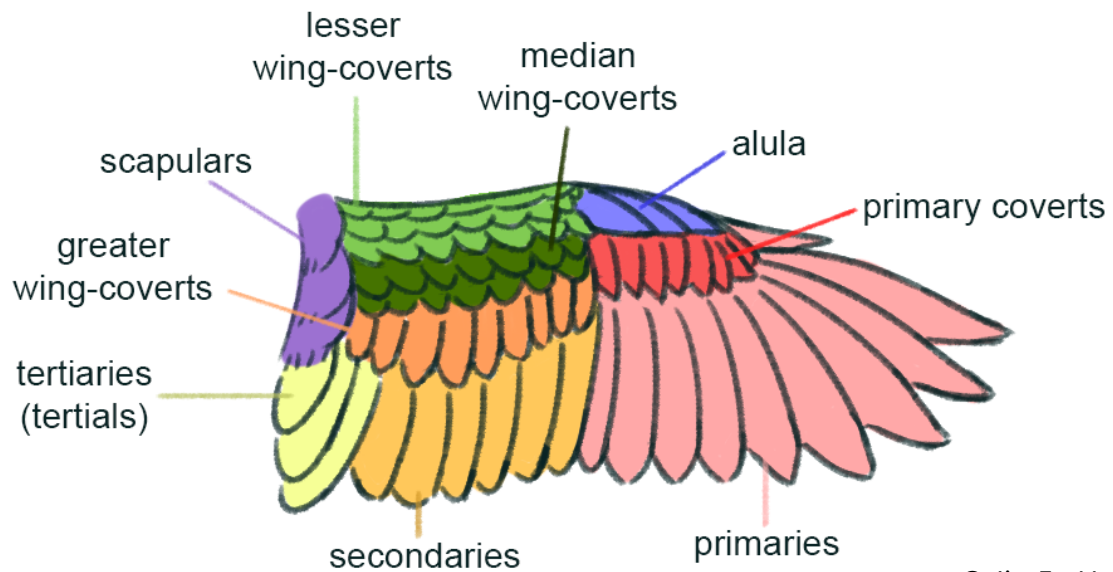


Plate 5: Wing parts and details (closed wing).



© Jia-En Ho

Plate 6: Wing parts and details (open wing).

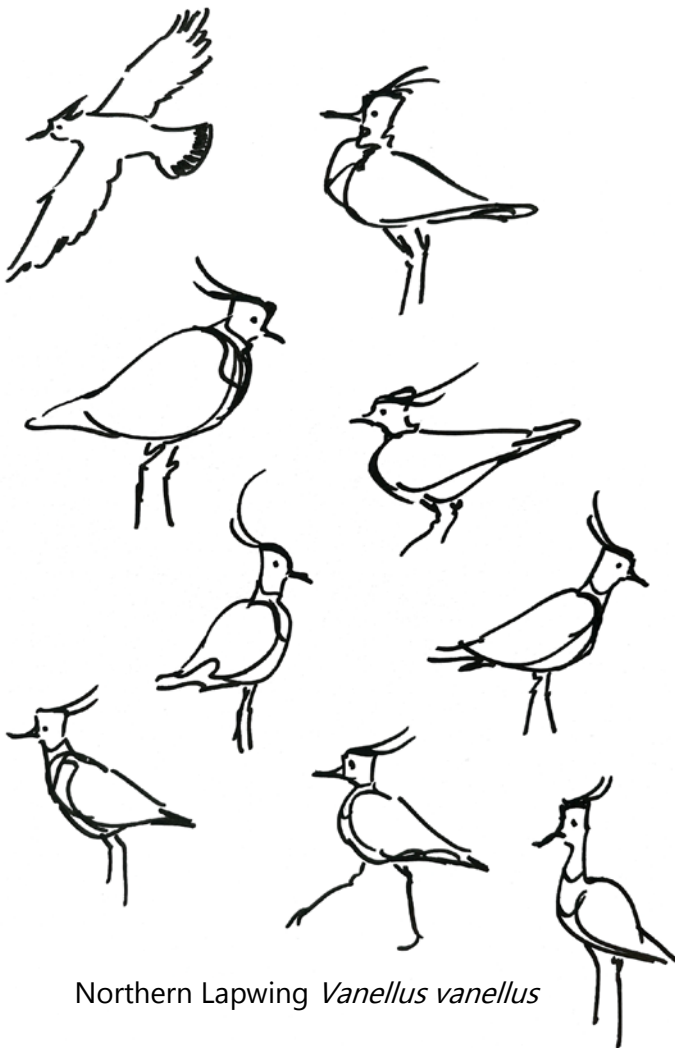
Shading and/or Colours

If you want, you can take your drawing a step further and render it. Doing so requires an understanding of light direction and three-dimensional form. Note where the light is shining from and how that interacts with the bird's body. Parts that are not in direct light would appear a little darker than parts that are. There are many different drawing techniques to shading, but I usually do so by using a hatching technique that follows the contours of the body. This entails drawing short lines that vary in closeness to convey shadow. The closer the lines are, the darker it appears.

The same technique can be applied if you are using something such as colour pencils. If you are painting with something such as watercolour or gouache (an opaque watercolor prepared with gum), you can paint in the overall shadow first using a dull, cool colour such as blue or purple before painting your colours over it.

Overall, it's important to not always worry about the quality of the drawing, but rather if it has captured the essence of the bird. If you've managed to record the body shape and key identification features, that already goes a long way in making your subject recognisable. Most of all, have fun and approach it with curiosity; become interested in how we can appreciate and learn more about birds through drawing.

Below are some examples of a range of my bird artwork, to give an idea of how different drawings are effective in different ways (Plate 7).



Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*



European
Robin
Erithacus rubecula

© Jia-En Ho

Black-crowned
Pitta
Erythropitta ussheri



Long-tailed
Sibia
*Heterophasia
picnoides*

Plate 7: Examples of bird drawings and rendering.



If you're interested in further learning, I recommend the website of John Muir Laws, a naturalist and artist who has free online tutorials on many different aspects of drawing birds. You can access his website at: <https://johnmurlaws.com/>. Ornithologist David Allen Sibley has also published a short guide on making rough but informative sketches. You can read this article on the National Audubon Society's website at <https://www.audubon.org/magazine/learn-draw-birds-david-sibley>. Drawing birds can be a rewarding activity that helps us connect with birds in new ways, and with each pencil stroke you'll be understanding them a little better.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Amar-Singh HSS for the kind use of his images and Swee-Yian Lim for reviewing the article.

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Birds in Art and Culture Series:

The Soul-Bird – An Orang Asli Legend from the Jah Hut Tribe

Colin Nicholas, Center for Orang Asli Concerns

The Orang Asli, meaning 'original people', are the indigenous ethnic groups of Peninsular Malaysia. There are more than 18 ethno-linguistic Orang Asli groups, some with only a few hundred members and others with many thousands. The total Orang Asli population in 2024 was at least 221,098 (JAKOA 2025). The smallest groups are the Orang Kanaq, Mendriq, Kensiu, Kintak, Lanoh, Chewong, Temoq, and Seletar. The groups of medium size are the Batek, Besis, Jahai, Jah Hut, Orang Kuala, Semaq Beri, and Semelai. The largest groups are the Semai, Temiar, Temuan, and Jakun.

The Orang Asli have a rich oral tradition passed down the generations through the ancient art of storytelling. The Orang Asli create stories and narratives to make sense of the world and to impart important social and ethical mores to ensure community living and continuity. Legends and tales are also used to amuse, to teach, to record, to remind and to explain. The Orang Asli oral tradition is based on close observation and understanding of the environment and a belief in the influence of the spirit world. Orang Asli oral tradition therefore represents a repository - and the means of transmission - of generations of wisdom, history and natural observations.

The Center for Orang Asli Concerns attempted to compile and document these Orang Asli stories, legends and myths into a single volume (Nicholas 2018) so that they can serve to educate and inspire us.

Many of the legends and myths refer to birds, often as an agent of the divine being in creation. Others refer to their interaction with the Orang Asli people and nature. Here we reproduce a single Orang Asli legend from the Jah Hut tribe to illustrate the depth of the oral tradition. The Jah Hut are a Senoi group based in Pahang and speak a Central Aslian language. This story was documented by Werner (1975).

The Soul-Bird

The soul of every man is a green bird ... called *Biau*, which has a long beak and feeds on fruit and insects (a Red-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctiornis amicta*). The *Biau* has two cries, one *Kah-Kah-Kah*, the other *Tutoh Buah* (cut fruit).

When a woman is pregnant and hears one of these birds in the jungle, she knows that the soul of her child has arrived.



Plate 1: An AI generated image to depict the Orang Asli legend.

When a man dies, his soul leaves him in the form of a bird. If anyone catches a *Biau*, a great thunderstorm will occur.

Apparently, a man's soul can leave his body during life in the shape of a *Biau* bird. When someone hears one of these birds, he knows that a friend is coming to see him, and he starts calling out the names of people he knows until the bird is silent. The last name mentioned before the bird ceases crying is that of the visitor who is coming.



Plate 2: Male Red-bearded Bee-eater, Taiping, Perak, Malaysia, October 2022.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Amar-Singh HSS for editorial support and images, and Jia-En Ho for reviewing the manuscript.

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Citation: Colin Nicholas, Center for Orang Asli Concerns. (2025). The Soul-Bird – An Orang Asli Legend from the Jah Hut Tribe. *Malaysian Bird Report*. Volume 3/2025, Sept 2025: pg. 92-93.

Pioneers in Birdwatching (Ornithologists in History): G. C. Madoc (1911-1999)

Amar-Singh HSS & Fenella Madoc-Davis

This, our third in the series on Ornithologists in History, features Guy Charles Madoc (1911-1999). Madoc is an ornithologist that is well known and has contributed extensively to data on birds in Peninsular Malaysia. He had a significant impact on birdwatching, especially for many of the older Malaysian birdwatchers, through his published bird book and enormous field data.

Note that a considerable part of this article first appeared in the September 2011 issue of the Malaysian Naturalist magazine, Malaysian Nature Society.

Madoc was born in England on 16 January 1911 and moved to the Isle of Man at 3 months of age. He was raised, and educated on the Isle of Man, at King William's College. His father had been appointed Chief Constable of the Island in 1910, hence the family's residence there. Madoc's father, Henry W Madoc, was a keen and accomplished ornithologist who published 'Birds of the Isle of Man' in 1934. Undoubtedly his father influenced Madoc's passion for ornithology and his choice of career – the Colonial Police. His childhood in the Isle of Man was an idyllic time and fostered in him a love of exploring open countryside and observing its flora and fauna. By the time he left the Island to go overseas to Malaya, he knew the Island as well as anyone. When he retired there in 1959 he continued to walk and explore the island right up until just weeks before his death in August 1999.

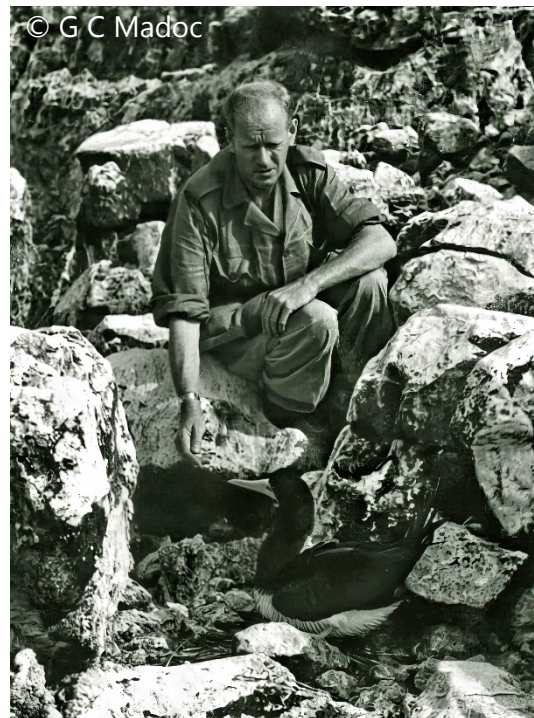


Plate 1: Madoc with a Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, Pulau Perak, Malaysia, 1954.

Madoc, (CBE, KPM, JMN, MBOU) joined the Federated Malay States Police as a police probationer in 1930. He arrived in Malaya in January 1931 and, after a period of 18 months at the Police Depot in KL, was given his first position of responsibility, Officer in Charge of the Police District, in Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan (1932-35). He found the remote rural district quite delightful and, having become fluent in Malay, quickly came to know the country and its people very well. He always used to say that Jelebu was one of his very favourite places in Malaya, and on his 3 return visits after retirement always went back and spent a day walking in the jungle, watching birds.

Soon after arriving in Malaya in 1931 Madoc met Viv Ryves, a Game Warden in Negeri Sembilan and a keen naturalist. This friendship did much to encourage Madoc in pursuing ornithology in his new surroundings. With the help and encouragement of Ryves, Madoc learned jungle lore and the two men undertook several expeditions deep into the virgin jungle of the peninsula. Harvey Ryves, Viv Ryves's son, later became Madoc's junior in the Police and

became a very close personal friend – they shared a cell in Changi, a space intended for one and occupied by three!

During home leave in 1935 Madoc married his childhood sweetheart, Nancy Farrant, also from the Isle of Man. On their return to Malaya his postings were: Kuala Selangor, Klang, Kuantan and, when the Japanese invaded Malaya in 1941, he and his family were stationed in Alor Setar. Following the retreat down the peninsula during the Malayan Campaign, Madoc ended up in Singapore. He was briefly seconded to the British Army in the capacity, as he put it as their 'mangrove expert', based on the fact "*I'd often studied birds in mangrove swamps and knew slightly more about the terrain than the recently arrived soldiers of the 18th Division*".



Plate 2: Madoc with friends. Third from left is Madjid, his 'right-hand man' in bird exploits, Terengganu, Malaysia, 1953.

He was captured at the fall of Singapore in 1942 and became a prisoner of war (POW) in Changi. In 1947 he was promoted to Superintendent of Police and posted for special duties as First Secretary (Malayan Affairs) at the British Embassy in Bangkok. On returning to Kuala Lumpur in 1950, he was promoted to Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP). In 1952 he became head of the Federal Special Branch with the rank of Senior Assistant Commissioner (SAC 'E'). In 1954, he became the Director of Intelligence. With the abolition of the post of Director of Intelligence at Malayan independence in 1957, he became Deputy Secretary (Security & Intelligence) in the Prime Minister's Department.



He left Malaysia on retirement in September 1959 and returned to the Isle of Man. There he was a member of the Police Authority of the Isle of Man from 1963 to 1988.

Madoc wrote the first edition of his book on birds, *An Introduction to Malayan Birds*, while imprisoned in Changi Prison during the Second World War. Anyone who has published a book on birds would recognize how much effort goes into the writing and production of such work, even more so considering the hardships Madoc faced while in prison. That first edition, published in May 1943, was limited to one copy. It was typed on paper stolen from the Japanese commandant's office, with a 'secret typewriter'. D. B. Molesworth (Dr) provided excellent illustrations and diagrams and C. A. Gibson-Hill (Dr) helped in compiling the definitions in the Appendix. The book binders were two French prisoners of war (POWs) who used the red leather from the seat of a wrecked car in Singapore City. You can see that the type print is a bit faint as the typewriter ribbon was running out (Plate 3). As Madoc says "*My acknowledgments are due to the kind gentleman who has lent me his typewriter, and to whose identity must remain a secret lest he be overwhelmed by many machineless typists in Changi.*" This book was circulated widely in the prison and served as the source of his second and third editions of the book.

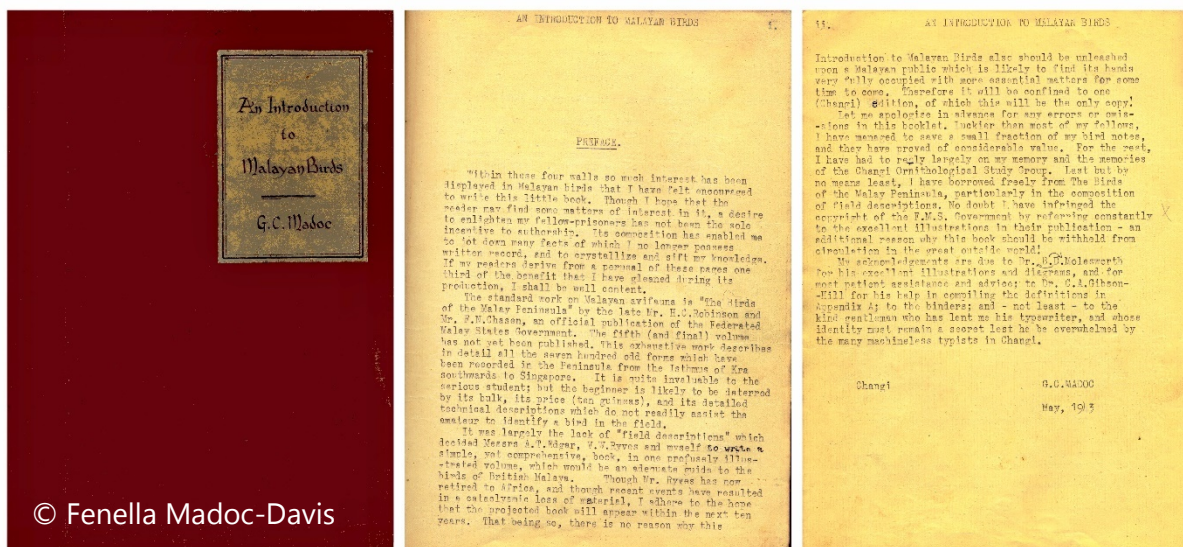


Plate 3: Front cover and preface of Madoc's 1st edition book 'An Introduction to Malayan Birds'.

Fenella relates a story Madoc used to tell her about his time as a POW, which provides an interesting and, retrospectively delightful insight, into those difficult times: "*In the first 18 months of internment conditions in Changi were relatively benign and many classes and societies flourished. In fact, Changi during that period has been referred to as a 'university'. My father gave talks about birds to fellow prisoners and his 1st edition was widely circulated in the prison. On one occasion he was given permission to lecture in the Women's Camp, a rare privilege. In the course of his talk, he gave an imitation of the whooping call of the Hornbill. Seated behind him as he spoke was a Japanese guard armed with a rifle and fixed bayonet. As Guy's whooping cry reached a crescendo the guard sprang to his feet, shouting 'Curra' and waved the bayonet threateningly until Guy returned to a more restrained delivery, without sound effects!*"

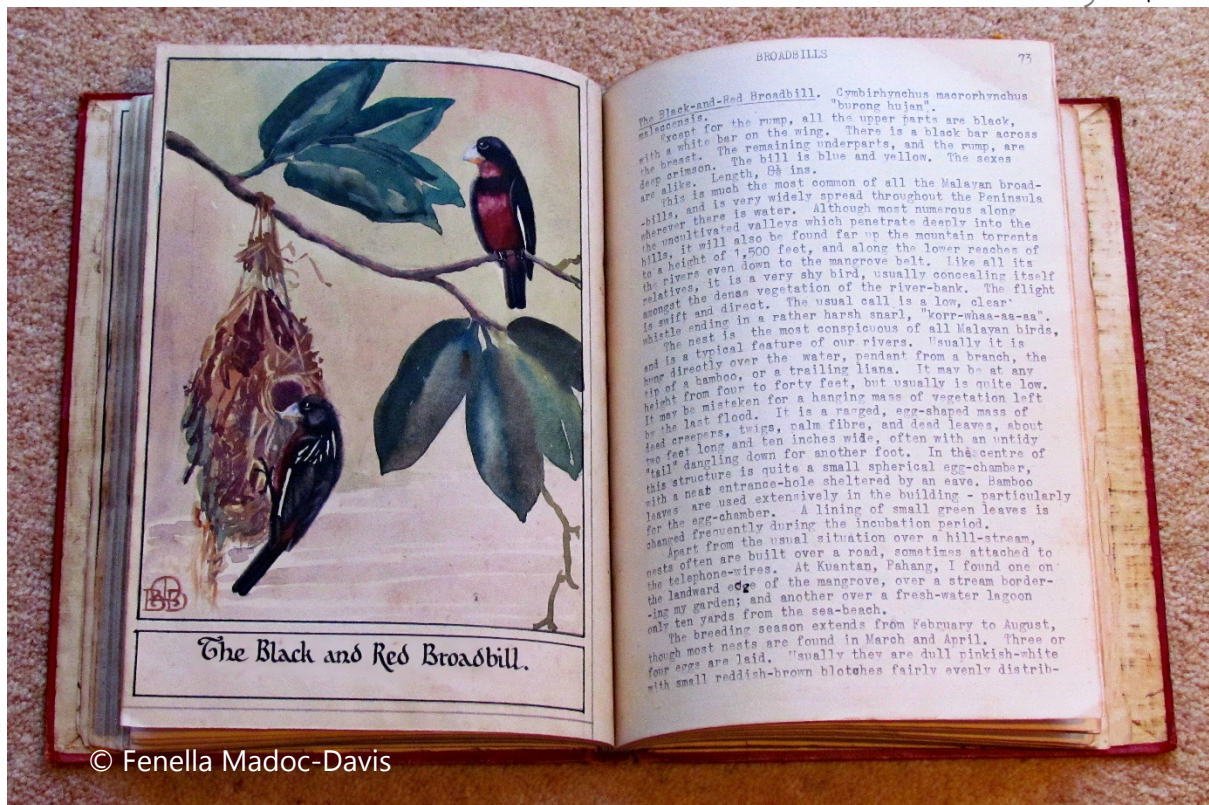


Plate 4: Inside view of Madoc's 1st edition book 'An Introduction to Malayan Birds' with an illustration by Molesworth.

After the war Madoc revised and published the 'An Introduction to Malayan Birds' with the Malayan Nature Society in 1947. It was revised again in 1956 with a second impression in 1976. The beauty of Madoc is that his descriptions of birds and their behaviour were so apt and delightful that they stimulated the interest of many to watch birds further.

The Malayan Nature Society, in their 1976 reprint of Madoc's book says "*There has been a steady demand for the book over the years... It seems desirable that this book, which may now be regarded as a classic, should again be available ...*"

Although there have been a number of books since, most focus on field identification and do not spend sufficient time on describing the birds in any great depth, information that many desire.



Plate 5: Front cover of Madoc's 'An Introduction to Malayan Birds', Malayan Nature Society.

What makes bird watching so fascinating is not the identification or photography of another 'new' bird but the fascinating discovery of more about a single bird, even a common one (of course, to many bird watchers there are no common birds!). Madoc was one of the first to encourage 'depth' in bird watching.

Madoc was a comprehensive and exhaustive birdwatcher, as can be seen from the eight illustrated volumes of extensive field notes that were bequeathed to the British Natural History Museum in London. These comprised 8 volumes in 4 boxes of text typed from observations between 1946-1948, with additional text added over the years until 1959, and illustrations comprising original black and white photos. He had actually lost much of his material during internment in Changi and says *".... though recent events have resulted in a cataclysmic loss of material, ... Luckier than most of my fellows, I have managed to save a small fraction of my bird notes, and they have proved of considerable value. For the rest, I have had to rely largely on my memory."* He also had a habit of sending copies of important records to Chasen at the Raffles Museum and was able to retrieve some of his notes from this source.

Fenella relates that *"Madjid was my father's 'right-hand man' in bird exploits"*. Madjid assisted Madoc in assembling a large egg collection. Majhid regularly constructed bird hides for Madoc (Plate 6). In the image it was a bamboo platform with a framework of bamboo poles supporting a rectangular hide made of hessian. There was a peep hole on the side nearest the bird's nest from which the bird could be observed and photographed. Madoc used to spend hours in these hides, often deep in the jungle, waiting firstly for the bird to become relaxed about the hide, and then to take the best image.



Plate 6: A 1947 photo of Majhid taken with one of the bird hides he regularly constructed for Madoc, Selangor, Malaysia, 1951.

Fenella lived in Malaysia until she was ten and was a regular participant in Madoc's birdwatching expeditions. *"When I was a small child in KL in the 50s Dad brought me up to be a birdwatcher and I have strong memories of many of the garden birds you describe. On Sundays he would take me into the jungle along the road towards the Genting Pass or there would be trips out to the mangrove swamps around Port Swettenham. There were also holidays at Fraser's Hill when Dad took me along the jungle paths around the hill station. I have been back to Malaysia three times in my adulthood. Much has changed but Fraser's Hill was the place I found the most unaltered and nostalgic."* Fenella is also a keen birdwatcher and is focused on species found in Cumbria, north-west England.

When Fenella delivered the eight volumes of field notes to the Library of the British Natural History Museum, in February 2000, she relates that *"there was great excitement and I subsequently received an email from David Wells, who was on the point of publishing the 2nd volume of his bird book, saying how helpful it was to be able to refer to the original notes made between the early 1930s and late 1950s."* Madoc's field notes have formed an important source of information for the exhaustive work produced by Wells.

Madoc states, in the preface to the revised edition of his book (1956), *"I hope someday it (his book) will be superseded by a Nature Society publication in which the pooled knowledge of all Malaya's ornithologists will be presented comprehensively."* Fortunately, we had two excellent publications in this form by David R Wells, with some of the information coming from Madoc's observations. In addition, the Birds of the World now serves as a living and growing repository of all bird knowledge from ornithologists worldwide.

Apart from his book, Madoc has also published a number of articles in the Bulletin of the Raffles Museum and the Malayan Nature Journal. Madoc also has the distinction of having a bird named after him, the Blue Rock-Thrush (madoci) *Monticola solitarius madoci*.

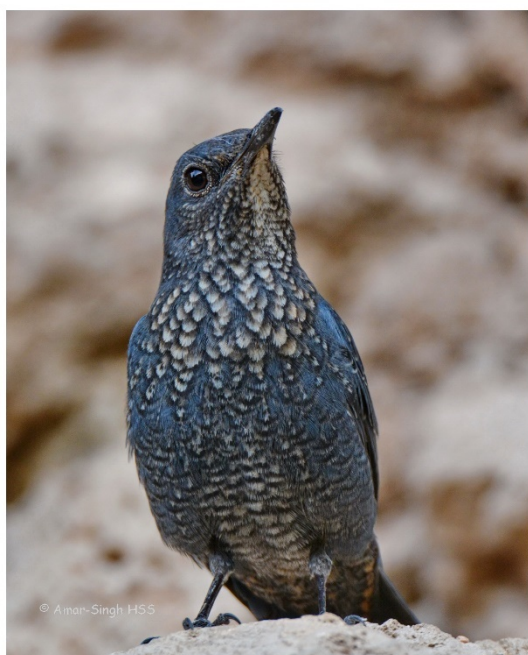


Plate 7: Madoc's Blue Rock-Thrush, female (left) and male, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia.

To summarise, Madoc inspired us to look deeper at birds, see their behaviour and character. He is considered by many to be one of our finest birdwatchers/ornithologists. I hope that many will follow in his footsteps by cultivating 'friendships' with birds.

Postscript

Madoc's legacy lives on.

In 2014 the National Museum of Singapore's Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, the successor of the original Raffles Museum, mounted a permanent display of Madoc's work. This includes several bird species he collected and had stuffed for identification, a reconstruction of the original Changi book and a portable typewriter similar to the one he used to type the book.

Fenella visited the exhibition and while there was shown the original Madoc's Blue Rock Thrush which he collected in 1940 (Plate 8). It was this specimen that enabled him to prove that the bird he had observed in Alor Setar was a different species.



Plate 8: Fenella Madoc-Davis with a display of Madoc's work, Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum December 2014.

In January 2025 Fenella was invited by the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum to take the original, unique Changi book to Singapore for it to be digitised. As a result of the

digitisation Madoc's original book is now permanently available for scholars and historians to access.

Acknowledgment

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

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Citation: Amar-Singh HSS & Madoc-Davis, F. (2025). Pioneers in Birdwatching (Ornithologists in History): G. C. Madoc (1911-1999). *Malaysian Bird Report*. Volume 3/2025, Sept 2025: pg. 94-101.

Common Garden Birds Series:

A series specially for the non-birdwatcher, children and families, to learn about our common Malaysian garden birds. And how to make our gardens and cities bird friendly to support them.

Common Garden Bird 9: Pink-necked Green-Pigeon (Punai Kocok) *Treron vernans* Amar-Singh HSS

This pigeon has been increasing in many urban areas in the past few decades but often goes unnoticed by the majority of city dwellers. They are very beautiful with the male having a purple neck and orange breast. The female lacks the brilliant colours but is still a pretty sight. They have a double coloured iris, lavender-pink outside with a bright blue inner ring.



They generally do not come to the ground but feed on fruits in trees, especially palm and ficus fruits. The increase in urban numbers may be a result of the tendency of city councils to plant more palms.

They tend to stay in flocks and fly together to regular feeding sites every day. They have an interesting, hard to describe, whistling call; often heard when roosting.

They are swift fliers. They remain wary of mankind, perhaps some genetic memory of having been hunted for a long time. So getting close to them is not easy. They however will allow some viewing if they are secure in a tall tree or on a high wire or pole. We have a flock that roosts daily in our garden and occasionally builds nests.

Common Garden Bird 10: Common Myna (Gembala-Kerbau Rumah) *Acridotheres tristis*
Amar-Singh HSS

There are a number of mynas species present locally with the Common Myna featured here. Sadly, they are becoming less common as the Javan Myna *Acridotheres javanicus* has overrun much of Peninsular Malaysia and appears to be doing the same for parts of Sabah and Sarawak; the Javan Myna appear to be displacing the Common Myna.

The Common Myna is easily distinguished from the other mynas by its yellow patch of naked skin around the eye. A closer look will also reveal the wonderful 'stars' that are present in the iris.



Mynas are great opportunists and will use grazing cattle or human grass cutters to flush out insects for them to eat.

Common Mynas are often seen in our housing estates, parks or foraging in grassy fields; often walking in pairs or small family groups.

The Common Myna has a strong male-female pair bonding and are quite affectionate to each other. I have occasionally seen one partner refuse to leave the mate that was killed by a passing car – repeatedly going up to the dead body to try and get the partner up.

The Common Mynas are like 'wise elders' - they have a habit of sitting in the cool shade of a tree during the heat of the day and talk for long hours. We suspect that they may be discussing serious issues that plague the planet.

10 Common Garden Birds of Malaysia

MALAYSIAN
BIRD REPORT



The Malaysian Bird Report has a series specially for the non-birdwatcher, children and families, to learn about our common Malaysian garden birds. Details on each bird possible to download from the "Resource Material & Links" – "Common Garden Birds" site – use the QR code. This graphic is to illustrate 10 common gardens birds to make it easier for you to identify them.



**Yellow-vented Bulbul
(Merbah Kapur)**

Pycnonotus goiavier

Yellow-vented Bulbuls should be considered as a candidate for the national bird as they best symbolise the average Malaysian. Like many of us they seem to 'think with the stomach' and are always ready to try new tasty food.

**Common Iora
(Kunyit Kecil-Biasa)**

Aegithina tibia

The Common Iora is a charming bird with a large call repertoire. They are very 'acrobatic' and will often cling to thin branches upside down looking for prey.



Oriental Magpie-Robin (Murai-Kampung Biasa) Copsychus saularis

Magpie Robins are one of the most intelligent birds in the garden. Nothing happens without them being aware of it.



Asian Glossy Starling (Perling-Kilat Asia or Perling Mata Merah) *Aplonis panayensis*

Very gregarious species that roost in large numbers in trees. They can be quite beautiful when seen in good light.



White-throated Kingfisher (Pekaka Dada Putih)

Halcyon smyrnensis

They have a rather solitary personality and are loners most of the time. They breed in a hole in a bank of earth beside a road but will also use a blocked manmade pipe.

Common Myna (Gembala-Kerbau Rumah) *Acridotheres tristis*

Common Mynas have yellow skin around the eye with stars in the iris. They have a habit of sitting in the cool shade of trees during the heat of the day and talk for long hours, possibly discussing serious issues that plague the planet.



Zebra Dove (Merbuk Biasa) *Geopelia striata*

Doves and Pigeons evoke an emotive response in individuals – the element of peace – and the Zebra Dove lives up to this.

Black-naped Oriole (Kunyit Besar) *Oriolus chinensis*

They are the only moderate sized bird that is brightly yellow-orange. If anyone tells you they saw 'a large yellow bird' in the city then you can say with confidence that it was an Oriole.



Eurasian Tree Sparrow (Pipit Rumah) *Passer montanus*

Sparrows are underrated birds. Not everyone can be a superstar, but the world will not go round without the average folk.

Pink-necked Green-Pigeon (Punai Kocok) *Treron vernans*

Beautiful pigeons with a double coloured iris. They generally feed on fruit in trees, especially the palm fruits.



Recent Publications & Research

Research/Review Articles Relevant to Malaysia

Kim-Chye Lim

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The 13th ARRCN & 7th Taiwan Raptor Symposium Abstract Book, p 46. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DqJwL3q2dl40OTIYWaDUmBqvrATWKJLA/view?usp=sharing>

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Upcoming & Recent Bird Activities

Swee-Yian Lim

1st World Bird Fair 2025

Date: 19 – 23 September 2025

Venue: Taichung City Square, Taiwan

The World Bird Fair 2025, the first of its kind, will take place from September 19-23 at Taichung City Civic Square, Taiwan. The event is organized by the World Birdfairs Council (WBC) in collaboration with Taiwan's Tourism Administration, the Taiwan Wild Bird Club and the Taiwan Ecotourism Promotion Association. It aims to promote bird conservation and ecotourism on a global scale.



This inaugural fair will bring together birdwatching enthusiasts, conservationists, photographers, and ecotourism businesses from around the world. Attendees can expect workshops, seminars, exhibitions, networking events, and guided birdwatching tours in Taiwan's Daxueshan National Forest, a prime location for spotting endemic bird species. Additionally, a free-entry public exhibition will be held in Taichung's Civic Plaza on September 20-21, featuring live bird photography showcases, interactive conservation exhibits, and talks by renowned ornithologists.

Taiwan, known for its rich biodiversity and commitment to sustainable tourism, is an ideal host for this groundbreaking event. Sounds like a fantastic opportunity for bird lovers worldwide!

Event Highlights and Schedule

The World Bird Fair 2025 will feature a variety of activities, including:

1. Birdwatching Ecotourism Symposium
2. Exclusive Birdwatching Tour in Daxueshan National Forest
3. Free Public Exhibition in Taichung
4. Networking and Business Opportunities

Website: <https://www.2025wbf.com.tw/en-us>

The Carey Heritage Bird Photography Contest 2025

Date: 3 – 5 October 2025

Venue: Carey Island, off the coast of Selangor

Registration Date: 11 – 28 August 2025

Sponsor: SD Guthrie Bhd.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/1DN7Mb3LXG/>



Global Big Day 11th October 2025

Global Big Day is on the October 11, 2025. Join the world birdwatching fraternity in celebrating Global Bird Weekend and World Migratory Bird Day. It is autumn migration season in Malaysia. On this day, Malaysian birdwatchers can give back to the birds we love so much by spending a few minutes enjoying birdwatching and sharing on eBird.

How do you share:

- Open an eBird account
- On 11 October 2025, spend at least 10 minutes birdwatching between 12 am to 12 pm, from your window, in your housing estate, your favourite local patch, the cool hill resorts or the lush tropical rainforests.
- Enter what you see and hear in the eBird website or the eBird mobile app. All entries by the 14 October 2025 will be included in the results announcement.
- Submit eBird Trip Reports to share not only what you see and hear but also locations, photographs and audio recordings.

Mark 11 October 2025 on your calendar, you've got a date with some birds. Enjoy!

Website : <https://ebird.org/news/october-big-day-2025>



White-throated Dipper Cinclus cinclus © Iker Fernández Martínez / Macaulay Library

Sony Bird Race 2025

Date: 10 -12 October 2025

Location: Fraser's Hill, Pahang

Entry fee: RM100

There's a total of RM 30,000 prize money to be won besides 2 Sony lenses and other accessories.

Register at:

<https://cloud.engage.sony.com.my/Sony-Bird-Race-2025-ROI>



Taiping Bird Week

Date: 10 – 12 October 2025

Venue: Taiping Lake Gardens, Perak.

The main event is at the Taiping Zoo. There will be talks, nature awareness programs, exhibition booths, sales of optics, bird race for young birders guided by experienced birdwatchers, a bird race and bird photography competition.

This bird is collaborative effort by the Majlis Perbandaran Taiping and Nature Educational Society (NEST).

For more information, see:

<https://www.facebook.com/taipingbirdweek2022/>



Borneo Bird Festival

Date: 25 – 26 October 2025 (TBC)

Venue: Rainforest Discovery Centre, Sepilok, Sandakan, Sabah.

If you are into bird watching, this festival is a must as over 600 species of bird have been recorded in Borneo. There will be a Bird Race competition where a team of three must identify and record as many bird species as possible within 24 hours.

Other possible events are bird photography competition, wildlife photography competition, camera and optics exhibit, guided birdwatching walks, activities for children, nature awareness programs and a food and local produce bazaar.

Tel: +6017 8987069

Contact: borneobirdclub@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BorneoBirdFestival>



**Asian Bird Fair 2025**

Date: 31 Oct – 3 Nov 2025

Venue: Seosan Birdland and
Seosan Cheonsu Bay, South
Korea

The 14th Asian Bird Fair 2025 will take place from October 31 to November 3 at Seosan Birdland, South Korea. This year's theme, "Coexistence of Humans and Nature," highlights the importance of conservation and sustainable birdwatching practices.



Seosan Cheonsu Bay, the event's venue, is a globally recognized wintering stopover site for migratory birds, hosting over 300,000 birds annually and featuring more than 220 documented species. The fair will include birdwatching tours, symposiums, forums, exhibitions, and a migratory birdwatching competition.

Visitors can also enjoy Korean traditional performances, magic shows, and craft-making programs, making it a well-rounded experience for bird enthusiasts and families alike. With a diverse range of activities and opportunities for learning and networking, the fair will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact on all who attend.

To register for the event email: 2025abf@gmail.com

Website: <https://asianbirdfair.org/#:~:text=The%2014th%20Asian%20Bird%20Fair,hope%20this%20sparks%20your%20interest>

The Northernmost International Bird Race

Date: 31 Oct - 2 Nov 2025

Venue: Perlis State Park, Wang Kelian, Perlis
Organised by the Jabatan Perhutanan Negeri Perlis. There is a bird race (three categories) and a photo race with attractive prizes. In addition, there are talks on introduction to birdwatching, biodiversity and a birding clinic.

Further Information & Registration:

Website: <https://www.mep21-online.com/event-info.php?eid=17210>

HP Contact: +6019-6099096 (Sulaiman) &
+6017-6134939 (Afandi)



Book & Site Reviews

Nama-nama Burung Di Malaysia

Swee-Yian Lim

Tou Jing Yi is a lecturer at the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia. A long-time member of the Malaysian Nature Society, his interest in birds led him to initiate 'Nama-nama Burung Di Malaysia', a project to collate and integrate all the vernacular names of birds. His knowledge of birds, bird nomenclature and taxonomy together with his command of both English and Malay has resulted in this comprehensive work which offers an invaluable resource for the local non-English speaker in identifying and learning the birds of Malaysia.

In the early years, field guides to the birds of Malaysia tended to use differing Malay names for a species, with the authors using names based on preference. Subsequent field guides listed all vernacular bird names together. Malay bird names can refer to more than one species. Locals use 'burung tiong' to refer to the Common Myna, Javan Myna, Jungle Myna and Hill Myna, a vernacular name that is inadequate for identification and communication. Also, a species can have more than one name, for example Crested Serpent Eagle was Lang Jambul (Tweedie 1960) and Helang Kuik (Robinson & Chasen 1939). In addition, new species such as Hadada Ibis, Willie Wagtail and White-capped Munia were being recorded in Malaysia for which there were no Malay bird names. This uncertainty in language caused problems for researchers and birdwatchers alike, leading to confusion in deciding which proper name to use without creating misunderstanding.

Tou stepped up and took on the task of developing a standardised list of Malay names for all bird species, native and non-native, recorded in Malaysia. He published this list in 2019 in his website: <https://sites.google.com/view/burungdimalaysia/laman-utama>



The main page of his website 'Nama-nama Burung di Malaysia' features the Malay names of species in the Checklist of the Birds of Malaysia (MNS Bird Conservation Council 2021). This checklist was based on the 2019 Clements Checklist and published in 2020. Since then, there have been many changes in the status of the birds of Malaysia, including new additions, common name changes and taxonomic changes according to the periodic Clements Checklist (Clements *et al.*, 2024). To keep readers updated, the page 'Kemas Kini Senarai Kebangsaan' incorporates all the latest changes to the national checklist. In addition, where the taxonomy differs from Clements', Tou uses colour codes to denote the source: Blue for IOC (International

Ornithological Congress; Gill *et al.*, 2025), Red for HBW (Handbook of the Birds of the World), Purple for HBW/IOC and Green for H&M (Howard and Moore; Aves Systematics 2025).

His website also includes the species not yet in the national checklist, but which have good evidence of presence in Malaysia. Further to this, he has devised new Malay names, with spelling consistent with that of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, for species and families of birds not found in Malaysia, so that his system of naming birds in Malay can be adopted for all bird species in the world. Thus, anyone wishing to know the Malay names of birds from neighbouring regions (Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore) or other parts of the world can use this website to search in the pages 'Senarai Tambahan (Tak Pasti)', 'Senarai Tambahan (Wilayah Jiran)' and 'Famili Bukan Passeriformes'.

The website is user-friendly. Laptop and desktop computer users have a shortcut to search for the Malay names of birds. Ctrl-F launches a box in the top right-hand corner. Type in the English or scientific or generic name of the bird, then use the up and down arrows to scroll through the list of highlighted names. When accessing the site on handphones, use the search icon. The website is easy to navigate as the main topics are clearly labelled in the tabs. Links are provided when there is a need to quickly refer to another page.

Kudos to Tou Jing Yi for this much needed and long-awaited list of Malay bird names. 'Nama-nama Burung Di Malaysia' has harmonised all the confusing vernacular bird names into one comprehensive and practical list of Malay bird names. This is a significant step for scientific studies in the Malaysian context as well as communication among local birders. As the website is maintained by the author himself and the Malay bird names have been adopted in the national checklist and in two recent field guides, we can use it as reference with confidence that the information provided is up to date and correct.

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Pittas, Broadbills and Asities by Frank Lambert, Second Edition, Helm Identification Guide, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2025

Amar-Singh HSS

Pittas and broadbills are bird species that are much sought after by birdwatchers and photographers. They are colourful and delightful birds. Pittas are often found on the ground and hard to see, being rather secretive. Broadbills are quite different, more sociable and not terrestrial. They build large, hanging nests and have broad beaks, some fascinatingly coloured. Of the 52 species of pittas in the world, 13 can be seen in Malaysia with 11 known to nest locally. There are 18 species of broadbills in the world of which 9 are present in Malaysia. The Asities are a unique family of birds that are endemic to Madagascar and not found in Malaysia.

With such a large range of pittas and broadbills in Malaysia, the second edition of *Pittas, Broadbills and Asities* by Frank Lambert (Plate 1) is of great interest to us.

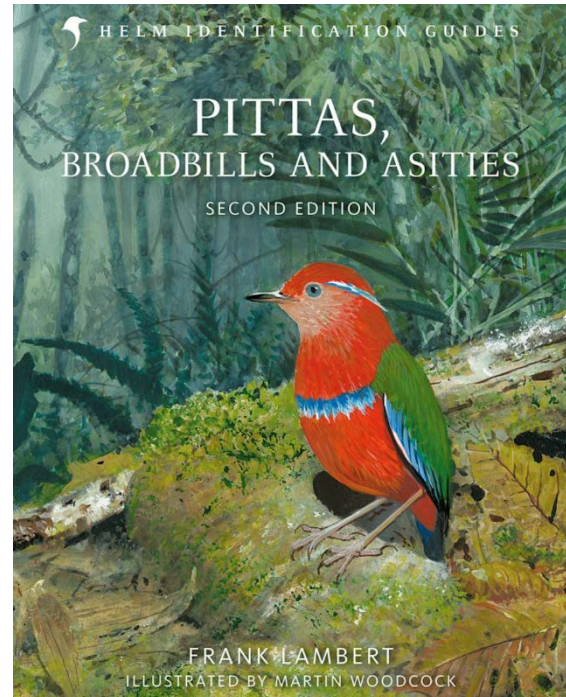


Plate 1: Front jacket cover of the book.

This is a completely revised and updated version of the 1996 first edition. The text covers everything from taxonomy and identification to the detailed habitat and ecology of each of the pitta, broadbill and asity species (Plate 2). Frank's wealth of knowledge on the species is supplemented with extensive literature from published and unpublished sources. It is beautifully illustrated with the artwork of Martin Woodcock from the first edition. Martin Woodcock sadly died in 2019 and was not involved in this second edition. Paintings from the first edition by Martin Woodcock have been digitally updated. This edition is also accompanied by superb photographs.

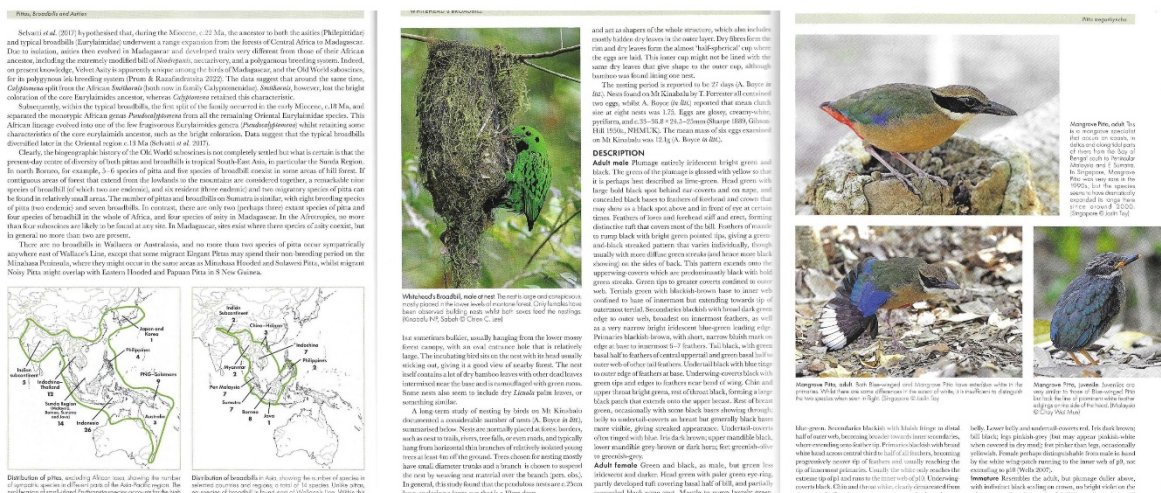


Plate 2: Sample pages from the book.

I found the level of detail in-depth and comprehensive. What impressed me was the inclusion of images of juveniles and nests, something not often seen in similar species account books.

Frank's immense experience with call and song recordings showed in the detailed descriptions of vocalisation and the inclusion of the occasional sonogram. Call and song recordings, with sonogram/spectrogram analysis, are often neglected by many birdwatchers.

For those of us who would like to learn and understand each of these species, this is an indispensable guide. For anyone who owns the first edition, the second is a necessary upgrade. For newcomers, it is simply the definitive starting point for these species.

There is still much to learn about these birds and this book identifies what is known to us and the gaps in knowledge that we need to search for.

In summary, Pittas, Broadbills and Asities by Lambert provides an unmatched level of detail, marrying authoritative text with exquisite artwork and photographs to create a comprehensive and indispensable in-depth guide.



Plate 3: Composite of a few sunbirds, flowerpeckers, spiderhunters. Clockwise from top left: Black-crowned Pitta *Erythropitta ussheri*, Bornean Banded-Pitta *Hydrornis schwaneri*, Western Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida*, Banded Broadbill *Eurylaimus javanicus*, Black-and-red Broadbill *Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchos* & Black-and-yellow Broadbill *Eurylaimus ochromalus*.

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.