

**BORNEAN GROUND CUCKOO OBSERVATIONS IN
GUNUNG PALUNG NATIONAL PARK, WEST KALIMANTAN**

by

T.G. Laman, J.L. Bumaford & C.D. Knott.

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The Bornean Ground cuckoo *Carpococcyx radiceus* is endemic to Borneo, having been separated from Sumatran Ground cuckoo *C. viridis* (Collar & Long 1995). It has been little observed in the wild, and its distribution and habits are poorly known (Holmes & Burton 1987, MacKinnon & Phillipps 1993, Smythies 1981). Laman *et al.* (1996) documented the presence of this species at the Cabang Panti Research Site in Gunung Palung National Park, West Kalimantan, Indonesia (1°36'S, 110°06'E). Here we report in more detail our observations on the Borneo Ground cuckoo at this locality.

In October 1994, JLB successfully stalked and observed a calling adult, making the first documented sighting of this species at Gunung Palung. The bird was initially on the ground, and then moved up to a fallen log one metre above the ground. It repeated a monotone "koo" at several second intervals, raising its tail with each call. In June 1995, CDK had an excellent view of an adult walking along a fallen tree trunk on the river bank. TGL made two sightings in August 1995, one in September 1995, and one in March 1997. All were near the river edge or on adjacent flood plain areas of lowland dipterocarp forest. On three of these occasions, the bird produced a vocalization consisting of a repeated harsh "khaaa",

about one second duration, and repeated at one to two second intervals. The note had a very metallic vibrating quality. With each call, the bird jerked its wings down and out pan way, in typical cuckoo fashion. The bird gave this apparent alarm call while running away on the ground, but also gave it on one occasion when it did not appear to have detected the observer.

In one of the August 1995 sightings, TGL observed and photographed a pair of Ground cuckoos, one in adult plumage with barred belly and a second individual with plain brown belly and generally duller coloration, presumably a juvenile. Both birds were following closely behind and to the side of a young Bearded Pig *Sus barbatus*, which was digging in the loose sandy soil of a river bank. The birds repeatedly snatched food items, presumably arthropods, from the turned up earth. The pig ignored the birds, which were less than one metre away. This type of foraging behavior in Borneo Ground cuckoos, as well as the observation of a juvenile travelling with an adult, may not have been reported before.

It is not surprising that little is known about Sunda Ground cuckoos, as they appear to be extremely wary and exist at low densities. Gunung Palung is a relatively pristine primary forest and thus presumably good habitat. Yet, we have only made six sightings during a total field time of approximately seven years between us less than one sighting per field year. Don't count on seeing this species on a weekend rain forest excursion.

It is noteworthy that while the Cabang Panti Research Site spans a diversity of habitat types from peat and freshwater swamp forests up through lowland dipterocarp forests to lower and upper montane habitats, all of the sightings of the Bornean Ground cuckoo were made in the strip of lowland dipterocarp forest on alluvial terraces near the river. This supports Wells' (1985) contention that this species is an extreme lowland specialist. We hope that the few protected lowland forest sites like Gunung Palung will remain intact and be sufficient to maintain viable populations of the Borneo Ground cuckoo and other lowland specialists.

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Addresses

Timothy G. Laman, Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University, 22 Divinity Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138, USA.

Jen L. Bumaford, Dept. of Zoology, Oregon State University, 3029 Cordley, Comllis, OR 97331, USA.

Cheryl D. Knott, Dept. of Anthropology, Harvard University, 11 Divinity Ave., Cambridge, MA 02318, USA.