

UNSEASONAL OCCURRENCE OF BLUE ROCK-THRUSH
MONTICOLA SOLITARIUS IN SUMATRA

by Kenneth M. Burton

At approximately noon on 29 July, 1985, while walking through dry, open, rocky, montane pine forest near Isak, Central Aceh (4°29' N, 96°57' B), an all dark blue thrush type bird was seen standing on a large boulder. Upon closer inspection, it was seen to have well-defined scales, especially on the belly. The bill and legs were completely dark. Its behaviour of hopping about on the rock and flicking its tail was indicative of a thrush, and with the aid of the two books listed below it was identified as a male Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius*. The somewhat similar shiny whistling Thrush *Myiophonus melanurus* could be ruled out by habitat, behaviour, and the lack of any bright markings.

The identification was confirmed about an hour later when a female was seen perched on a low dead branch of a nearby pine tree. She also had a very scaly appearance below (the back not clearly visible). In this case the only other possibility was the female of the Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*, but the bird clearly lacked eyebrows, a distinct throat patch, and rufous washing on the breast.

This sighting raises the intriguing possibility of a resident population of this species in Sumatra, perhaps belonging to the race *M. s. madoci*, at present known only from the Malay peninsula. Otherwise, based on the colour of the male (without chestnut on the belly), they may have been over-summering birds of the migrant Himalayan race, *M. s. pandoo*.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Derek Hollies for his comments and suggestions.

Ringkasan

Monticola solitarius pandoo jantan dan betina diamati pada sekitar tengah hari tanggal 29 Juli 1985 di hutan pinus dekat Isak, Aceh Tengah. Besar kemungkinan, burung ini adalah *M. s. madoci*, yang sampai saat ini hanya ditemukan di Semenanjung Malaysia. Berdasarkan kepada warna bulu burung jantannya, burung yang diamati itu adalah *M. s. pandoo*, burung migran dari Himalaya yang terlalu dini sampai di Sumatra.

Reference

Delacour, J. 1947. *Birds of Malaysia*. The MacMillan Company, New York.

King, B.F., E.G. Dickinson & H.W. Woodcock, 1975. *A field guide to the birds of South-East Asia*. Collins, London.

Address:

114 Hazel Ave., Mill Valley CA 94941, U.S.A.
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