

ORANGE-FLANKED BLUETAILS  
*TARSIGER CYANURUS*  
WINTERING IN SOUTH-EAST SUMATRA

by  
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At 10.15 hrs. on the 28th December 1984 while canoeing along the upper reaches of the Way (River) Kanan within the Way Kambas National Park, Lampung Province, S.E. Sumatra we observed a strikingly marked 'blue flycatcher' type with rufous-orange flanks. The bird was perched on a small branch, low in dense forest vegetation alongside the river. A second bird with similar plumage attacked the first and as they flew across the river and disappeared into the vegetation, they were joined by a third bird.

While perched the bird appeared generally mid to dark blue with rufous-orange flanks and white underparts. However, immediately it and the other two individuals took flight the up-perparts appeared brilliant cobalt blue in the sunlight with very distinctive rufous-orange flanks and white underparts. The overall jizz of the bird was quite different from that of a typical flycatcher, rather characteristic of the chats (Turdidae). These characters alone are sufficiently diagnostic to preclude confusion with any other species except perhaps the Siberian Blue Robin *Erithocus cyone*, which lacks entirely the rufous-orange flanks and bears a distinctive black line from the bill to the eye and down the sides of the throat. The latter is a winter visitor to the reserve (Bishop pers obs). One other species, Malaysian Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis turcosa*, should be considered. This species is resident in forest along the Way Kanan (pers obs, and P. Andrew & D. Holmes pers comm) and resembles Orange flanked Bluetails superficially in colour pattern. However, in the field it appears a relatively diminutive bird by comparison although it is actually only half an inch smaller (King *et al* 1975). Its posture is entirely different and it has a completely bright blue throat and rich orange upper breast. The upperparts are noticeably deeper brighter blue.

It is evident from these clear albeit brief observations that the birds were male Orange-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus*. This species normally winters south to N.W. and S.E. Thailand, northern Indochina and Hainan (King *et al* 1975) and there is a single record from Klias, Sabah (East Malaysia) during Mid-December (Smythies 1981). Apart from the latter this appears to be the first record for the Sunda region and for Indonesia.

References

- King, B.F., E.C. Dickinson & M.W Woodcock, 1975, *A field guide to the birds of South-East Asia*. Collins, London.  
Smythies, B.E., 1981. *The birds of Borneo*. 3rd ed. Sabah and Malayan Nature Societies, Malaysia.

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