

BIRD OBSERVATIONS IN THE MURATUS MOUNTAINS, KALIMANTAN SELATAN

by
G.W.H. Davison

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Summary

A brief survey was made of birds in the Muratus Mountains, Kalimantan Selatan, in October 1996. At least 21 montane specialists occur there. These are all first records for the area, and major extensions of known range are made for Mountain Tailorbird *Orthotomus cuculatus*, White browed Rhinomyias *Rhinomyias gularis* and Black capped White eye *Zosterops atricapilla*.

Introduction

The Muratus (or Meratus) Mountains in South Kalimantan form one of the most isolated blocks of montane habitat in Borneo. Smythies (1957, 1960) gave the maximum altitude as 5,107 ft (1,557 m), but more recent maps show the altitude of Gunung Besar as 1,892 m. Several peaks exceed

1,600 m.

Taking the altitude of the lowland/montane transition as 800 m, the length of the Muratus Mountains is about 140 km from north to south, and the range is isolated from other montane habitat to the north and north east by a similar distance. The more southerly parts, including peaks up to about 1,300 m, are included within the Martapura Pleihari Reserve (Holmes & Burton 1987).

There have been some early general descriptions of the Muratus Mountains (Bock 1881; Lumholtz 1921), and more specific descriptions of the forest (Laan 1925; Witkamp 1928). The University of Kyoto organised a botanical expedition in 1973, and an endemic pitcher plant *Nepenthes borneensis* has been described (Jumaat & Wilcox 1990). Although the foothills are now accessible to tourists, there do not seem to be any published observations of the montane birds.

The author visited the central part of the range from 30 September to 10 October 1996, spending two days at Loksado at about 240 m altitude, six days in shifting cultivation with small secondary forest patches at Balai Kedayang, 900 m, and two nights (one full day) camping in montane forest close to the peak of Gunung Karokangan which reaches 1,686 m. Most of the forest has already been cleared up to the bases of rugged limestone outcrops at 900 m; above this are large stretches of continuous forest, although old and new clearings occur in a few places up to 1200 m.

Eighty species of birds were recorded above 800 m altitude. Many of these, plus another eight mainly open country species, were also recorded between 240 and 800 m. Another seven species were described by local residents clearly enough for certain identification, but their presence is not claimed. Nomenclature follows Andrew (1992). Species considered to be montane specialists are marked by an asterisk (*).

Two lists of montane birds in Borneo are those of Wells (1985) and of MacKinnon & Phillipps (1993: Appendix 4). The first lists 62 species that are largely or exclusively dependent on montane forest. The second includes 84 species but has some minor errors (for example the name *Otus rufescens* instead of *O. spilocephalus*), omissions and oddities (for example, listing of *Alcippe brunneicauda* as montane). I used both lists for comparison, with greater reliance on Wells (1985) for definition of which species to consider montane, and on MacKinnon & Phillipps (1993) for details of their distribution.

The avifauna of the Muratus Mountains includes at least 21 of the species denned as montane by Wells (1985). Since rain fell on nine out of ten days, only two nights were spent at high altitude, and since netting was not possible, it is very likely that other montane birds occur here but were not found.

Annotated Species List

Crested Serpent eagle *Spilornis cheela*

Goshawk sp. *Accipiter* sp. A single bird, believed to be Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*, at 900 m, soaring in tight circles above the canopy. Undersides barred rufous.

* Mountain Imperial Pigeon *Ducula badia*. Montane, and abundant at 1600 m, seen and heard.

* Little Cuckoo dove *Macropygia ruficeps*. Montane, abundant in the forest from 1000 to 1660 m. Single birds and pairs were seen in flight several times over clearings for hill rice. A nest was found on 10 October, a single egg in the cup of leaves of a bird's nest fern *Asplenium* sp., about 4 m up on a small tree.

Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*.

* Large Hawk cuckoo *Cuculus sparverioides*. The three note repetitive call, increasing to frantic pitch, was heard frequently in tall forest at 1000 m. Another call, given by the same individual, was a straight series of 10 to 12 spaced, deliberate whistles all on the same pitch, neither quickening nor falling. On 4 October a single bird was seen briefly, perched about 3 m up in a small tree before it flew off.

Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*. Positively identified from voice.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*. A four note call of this species was heard on 8 October at 1200 m, but this is not adequate to differentiate between possible resident and migrant populations. The call consisted of four flat notes, all on the same pitch, with the interval between the second and third notes slightly briefer than the intervals between the other notes. The resident subspecies, with a three note call (Wells 1982) is found in montane forest, but migrants can occur almost anywhere. Residence here would be an extension of known range.

Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus*

Drongo Cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris*

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*

* Pale headed Frogmouth *Batrachostomus poliolophus*. A small, short tailed frogmouth flew directly overhead in the dusk at 18.20 hours on 9 October, at 1650 m altitude on Gunung Karokangan. It was about 4 m above the ground, in tall upper montane forest. At 18.55 a single bird gave bursts of high pitched, scolding, squirrel like notes, "Chiok! Chiok! Chiok!" both when perched and in flight. Other calls continued at intervals until 00.20 h on 10 October, and again that morning between 04.50 and 05.40 h. These later calls included a series of whistles, each lasting slightly under one second, "tsiiiu", with a slight downward inflection at the end; three or four such whistles were given in each series, at intervals of about a second, each note tending to begin at a slightly lower pitch than the last.

Another call types was a series of disyllabic whistles, each note briefer than that described above, "tsiutsiu, tsiiutsiiu, tsiiutsiiiu", with a pause of five to seven seconds between each disyllabic, and each note tending to be a little longer than the last. There were from three to seven disyllables in each series. This call type seemed to carry a long way. Various mixtures of these call types were also heard, for example a disyllabic followed by a series of monosyllabic whistles, apparently from a single bird. Altogether, however, at least three individuals were thought to be present at different points around the camp, and possibly more. Based on these calls, an attempt was made to spotlight the birds. One seen was small, heavily mottled and vermiculated all over, with a few white scallops on the scapulars, with the tail extending slightly beyond the folded wings. This was thought to be Pale headed Frogmouth, Subsequent comparison with recordings made by S. van Balen in Kayan Mentarang confirms this

identification.

Malaysian Eared Nightjar *Eurostopodus temminckii*. At about 800 m, bursts of calling occurred every morning at about 05.40 h, and every evening at about 18.15 to 18.40 h,

Swiftlet sp. cf. Black nest Swiftlet *Aerodramus maximus*

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*

Silver rumped Swift *Rhaphidura leucopygialis*

Banded Kingfisher *Lacedo pulchella*

Rufous collared Kingfisher *Actenoides concretus*

Red bearded Bee eater *Nyctornis amictus*

Bushy crested Hornbill *Anorrhinus galeritus*

Wreathed Hornbill *Rhyticeros undulatus*

Rhinoceros Hornbill *Buceros rhinoceros*

Helmeted Hornbill *Rhinoplax vigil*

Gold whiskered Barbet *Megalaima chrysopogon*

Red throated Barbet *Megalaima mystacophanos*

* Mountain Barbet *Megalaima monticola*. Every day, the distinctive call was heard from 1000 m upwards, about 20 rapidly delivered notes before a hiccup, the whole phrase running in a continuous series. The misleading description of the call by Smythies (1960) implies that there are only four quick notes followed by a hiccup. This is compounded by an erroneous 'sonosketch' in MacKinnon & Phillipps (1993: Appendix 6) and wrong description by Davison & Gale (1992).

Blue eared Barbet *Megalaima australis*

Rufous Piculet *Sasia abnormis*

Grey capped Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*. Habitat scattered trees at forest edge adjacent to burnt Imperata grassland.

Brown capped Woodpecker *Dendrocopos moluccensis*. Habitat fruit trees and a burnt tree in mixed farmland.

Maroon Woodpecker *Blythipicus rubiginosus*

Green Broadbill *Calyptomena viridis*

Banded Broadbill *Eurylaimus javanicus*

Black and Yellow Broadbill *Eurylaimus ochromalus*

Banded Pitta *Pitta guajana*

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*

Bar winged Hemipus *Hemipus picatus*

Black headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus atriceps*

Scaly breasted Bulbul *Pycnonotus squamatus*

Yellow vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier*

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- *Ochraceous Bulbul *Criniger ochraceus*. This montane bird was found from 1050 m upwards, from upper hill dipterocarp forest to at least 1300 m, and probably also occurs higher up. It was found in the lower storey, and at the edge of newly cleared land for hill rice cultivation, where the trees had been felled but not yet burned.
- Grey cheeked Bulbul *Criniger bres*. Occurring up to at least 1100 m in upper hill dipterocarp forest, in the lower storey, and overlapping there with the previous species.
- *Ashy Bulbul *Hypsipetes flavala*. Seen up to 1650 m in the lower and middle storey of tall upper montane forest.
- Asian Fairy Bluebird *Irena puella*. Present at all altitudes up to the peak of Gunung Karokangan.
- Oriental Magpie robin *Copsychus saularis*
- White rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*
- *White crowned Forktail *Enicurus leschenaulti*. One pair was present every day on a montane stream at 1100 m, in a valley between two limestone walls. Although the altitude makes it likely that these were of the highland subspecies *E. l. borneensis*, this could not be determined without measuring birds in the hand.
- *Temminck's Babbler *Trichastoma pyrrogenys*. Single birds and pairs were seen foraging from ground level up to 3 m in the understorey of forest and the dense vegetation at the edges of clearings. The only records were at 1100 m.
- Chestnut backed Scimitar babbler *Pomatorhinus montanus*. The calls of this species were heard every day, from the lower limits of the remaining continuous forest at about 900 m to near the peak at 1680 m. Several were seen in different mixed feeding flocks, foraging at all levels from the lower storey to the canopy of upper montane forest. The most frequent call was a two note "boh dweep" (occasionally "boh dweep dweep"), and the calls and behaviour resemble those of montane birds in Sumatra and Java as pointed out by D. Holmes in Kvkila 8:39 40.
- *Grey throated Babbler *Stachyris nigriceps*. Small groups occurred in forest fragments and patches of overgrown rubber and bamboo from about 500 m or less, up to the peak of Gunung Karokangan at 1686 m. Around the peak they were one of the commonest species.
- Grey headed Babbler *Stachyris poliocephala*.
- Striped Tit babbler *Macronous gularis*
- *Chestnut capped Laughing thrush *Garullax mitratus*. Calls were heard, and one individual seen, in montane forest, with records from about 1200 to 1600 m.
- *White browed Shrike babbler *Pteruthius flaviscapis*. A pair was seen in a mixed foraging flock at 1580m.
- Yellow bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris*
- *Mountain Tailorbird *Orthotomus cuculatus*. This species was seen and heard several times near the camp at 1650 m, being commonest in disturbed areas that included an old landslide site covered in ferns. This is a major extension of known range, as the only other record from Kalimantan is from Gunung Niut in western Borneo (Prieme & Heegaard 1988).
- Rufous tailed Tailorbird *Orthotomus sericeus*

Ashy Tailorbird *Orthotomus ruficeps*

Arctic Leaf warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*

*Mountain Leaf warbler *Phylloscopus trivirgatus*. One of the commoner species in the forest canopy, singly and in small groups, becoming commoner with increasing altitude and abundant in upper montane forest.

*Yellow breasted Warbler *Seicercus mentis*. Seen twice, in mixed foraging flocks at 1580 m and 1650 m altitude.

Yellow bellied Warbler *Abroscopus superciliaris*

*White browed Rhinomyias *Rhinomyias gularis*. Montane, seen from 1060 m to 1650 m, in the lower storey of tall lower and upper montane forest. The pale brow is white over the lores, pale grey further back; the cheeks and a line bordering the eyebrow above are rather bright rufous, the crown greyish brown. Throat pure white, sharply defined from the grey breast. All the colours of the plumage are rich. Legs bluish grey, bill black. The species occurs in the Philippines and Borneo (Smythies 1981), but in Kalimantan it has only been recorded from Kayan Mentarang (van Balen, this issue). This is therefore the second record for Kalimantan and Indonesia (cf. Andrew 1992), and a substantial further extension of known range.

Dark sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*. Immatures and adults were seen singly, at forest edges near clearings for the cultivation of hill rice. One immature watched on several days seemed always to be present within an area of about 1.5 hectares.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*

* Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermanni*. Present in lower montane forest and forest edge at 1100 m, and presumably higher up.

Hill Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis banyumas*. This flycatcher was very common at 1000 to 1200 m. MacKinnon & Phillipps (1993: Appendix 4) indicate *C. superbus* to be the montane blue and orange flycatcher, but *C. banyumas* is typically found at the higher altitudes; Wells, Hails & Hails (1979) found the transition from *superbus* to *banyumas* to occur at about 450 m on Gunung Mulu. Other blue and orange flycatchers might have been seen on Gunung Karokangan, but only this species was identified with confidence. The tiny amount of black feathering on the chin was very difficult to see in the field, only visible in the best views.

Flyeater *Gerygone sulphurea*

* White throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*. This was a common montane species from 900 m to 1650 m, sometimes alone but often in mixed feeding flocks. Spotted Fantail *Rhipidura perlata*. The upper altitude limit of the species was not determined, but this species and the last were seen in precisely the same understorey trees at 1100 m, but on different days.

* Orange bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma*

* Black sided Flowerpecker *Dicaeum monticolum*. Single males were seen twice, at 1000 m, once in the top of an isolated tree remaining in shifting cultivation, and once in *Macaranga* and other

secondary growth at the edge of a clearing. Other unidentified flowerpeckers at the same location on other days may have included this species.

- * Scarlet Sunbird *Aethopyga temminckii*. The only individuals seen, a male and female, were part of a mixed foraging flock at 1580 m, with White browed Shrike babbler and Yellow breasted Warblers. Little Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostra*
 - * Black capped White eye *Zosterops atricapilla*. At 1600 to 1650 m this was by far the commonest species of bird, tame and inquisitive. Entirely olive below, paler and more yellowish on the throat and under tail coverts, the upperparts darker olive, with a brilliant white eyering emphasized by darker surrounding feathering on the face and forehead. There was individual variation in the yellowness of the underparts. They were particularly common in the lower and middle storey, probing amongst moss hanging from twigs and petioles, hanging upside down to probe from beneath. The species occurs in Sumatra and Borneo (Smythies 1981), but in Kalimantan it has only been recorded from Kayan Mentarang (van Balen, this issue). This is therefore the second record for Kalimantan and Indonesia (cf. Andrew 1992), and a substantial further extension of known range.
 - * Everett's White eye *Zosterops everetti*. Flocks were seen on several days, in remnants of upper hill dipterocarp forest mixed with secondary growth around villages, and at the edges of clearings for hill rice, between 800 and 1100 m. They were identified by the clear yellow breast, and a rather sharp transition to grey flanks with a yellow centre of belly. The species has not yet been recorded from the central highland block of Borneo including the Muller and Schwaner Ranges, so that the present record is a moderate extension of its known range.
- Dusky Munia *Lonchura fusca*
- Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*. Only heard once at 800 m in a forest patch, this is a lowland species.
- Crested Jay *Platylophus galericulatus*. Abundant in upper hill dipterocarp forest at 1100 m, it may also occur higher up.
- Slender billed Crow *Corvus enca*. Occasionally heard up to 850 m altitude over patchy forest and cultivation

Birds in disturbed lowlands

The following species were seen and heard only below 800 m, in clearings and secondary growth, including mixed rubber and bamboo.

Lesser Coucal *Centropus hengalensis*

Blue throated Bee eater *Merops viridis*

Brown capped Woodpecker *Picooides moluccensis*

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Red eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus brunneus*
 Chestnut naped Forktail *Enicurus ruficapillus*
 Brown throated Sunbird *Anthreptes malaccensis*
 Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*

Additional species reported by residents

Local residents, living at Balai Kedayang at 800 m altitude, convincingly described the following species which they said occurred locally. Each one of the following, except for White breasted Waterhen and Rufous backed Kingfisher, was named and described by them, without prompting from books or pictures. They knew the difference, for example, between Bulwer's Pheasant and the Crested Fireback *Lophura ignita*. The presence of these species, however, is not herein claimed for the area.

Crested Wood partridge *Rollulus rouloul*
 Chinese Painted Quail *Cotumix chinensis*
 Bulwer's Pheasant *Lophura bulweri*
 White breasted Waterhen *Amawomis phoenicurus*
 Blue crowned Hanging parrot *Lorictilus galgulus*
 Rufous backed Kingfisher *Ceyx mfidorsus*
 Pintailed Parrotfinch *Erythrura prasina*

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Address :

G.W.H. Davison, WWF Malaysia, Locked Selangor, Malaysia. Bag No. 911, Jalan Sultan P.O., 46990 Petaling Jaya,