

A NOTE ON THE JAVAN SCOPS-OWL *Otus angelinae* FINSCH

by Paul Andrew and G. Randy Milton

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The Javan Scops-Owl *Otus angelinae* is an endemic of Java and known from nine specimens (Marshall 1978). The type, a female, was collected by M. Bartels in August 1911 at an altitude of approximately 2,000 m on the southern slope of Gunung Pangrango, West Java (Kuroda 1936), an area since incorporated into the Gunung Gede - Pangrango National Park (Andrew 1985). Since 1911, *O. angelinae* has been found on the northern side of the Gede - Pangrango mountains, and a skin housed in the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden, was collected on Gn. Tangkubanprahu by Max van Balgooy, approximately 100 km to the east (K.D. Bishop, pers. comm.) A search of the literature suggests that this is the known range of *O. angelinae* and that there are no published accounts of the species being seen or heard in the field. A note on two birds observed in the Gn. Gede - Pangrango National Park is therefore given here.

At 21.35 hrs on 4 February 1985 a call reminiscent of the contact call given by young fledged *Otus bakkamoena* was heard at 1,400 m on the main trail on the northern slope of Gn. Pangrango. The call was given repeatedly every five or six seconds and is best phoneticised as a hard 'tch-tschschsch'. A young but fully-fledged scops-owl was spotted perched on a bare branch approximately 4 m above the ground in the beam of a 60 W lamp within 25 m of the trail. On being approached the bird flew to another branch a similar height above the ground and was observed from a distance of approximately 4 m. After several minutes a second bird was located in another tree, perched on a bare branch at the same height and within 10 m of the first bird. Neither bird showed any inclination to move and were left after about 20 minutes of observation. The forest at the site is undisturbed primary montane rainforest with a well developed understorey and the period of observation coincided with a lull in heavy rain that had persisted all afternoon and into the evening.

FIELD DESCRIPTION

It was assumed at the time that the birds were a fledged young and an adult but after correspondence with Dr. J.T. Marshall it is apparent that both birds were fledged young and that an adult was not seen. The adult shows pronounced black streaks superimposed on the transverse barring on the underparts but otherwise is similar in plumage to what was assumed to be the older of the two birds.

The most prominent features on both birds were the conspicuous white eye-brows. These were especially pronounced on the older bird, well-defined and separated by a dark vertical line between the eyes. The iris was golden. The throat and breast on both birds were vermiculated and on the older bird the slightly darker feather tips formed well-defined transverse bars that ended abruptly at a white belly and thighs. The upperparts of the younger bird appeared uniformly medium grey but the older bird was apparently brown above and had prominent white wing and covert spots. Neither bird showed any trace of a collar and the colouration was uniform on the mantle, nape and the back of the head.

POPULATION STATUS

The Javan Scops-Owl is usually treated as a subspecies of the more widespread Mountain Scops-Owl *O. spilocephalus* (Howard and Moore 1980). However, Marshall (1978) spent many nights on the slopes of Pangrango and Gede and failed to elicit from *angelinae* the whistled call so typically and frequently given by *spilocephalus*. Moreover, the trails in this area have been walked at night a minimum of once a month throughout the year by the first author, and yet nothing resembling the distinctive call of *spilocephalus* has been recorded. Marshall (1978) has cited its habitual silence as one criterion for excluding *angelinae* from *spilocephalus*.

It is apparent that this species must breed on the slopes of Pangrango and Gede and the fact that no call attributable to an adult *angelinae* has been heard would suggest it is silent for much of the year and that only the contact calls of fledged young will draw attention to its presence. It may be an altitudinal migrant as Bartels collected the species at 2,000 m in August, but given the difficulty with which *spilocephalus* is observed, despite the fact that it calls repeatedly, it is clearly extremely difficult to observe the habitually silent *angelinae*, let alone determine its population status and seasonal distribution.

It is therefore possible that *angelinae* is a common bird within its restricted range. Few nocturnal mist-netting studies have been carried out but two specimens were caught on the night of 25 November 1969 at approximately the same altitude as this record and one kilometer to the east. One bird was retrapped and re-released the following night. Until information can be obtained to clarify this species' population status it is recommended that its status be treated as indeterminate in accordance with the criteria of the IUCN/ICBP Red Data Book (King 1978-1979).

Moreover, it should be included in Indonesia's list of protected species and be afforded the protection provided under the legislation Undang-undang Perlindungan Binatang-binatang liar 1931 no. 134.

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