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**A RECORD OF A *Bradypterus* WARBLER
PROBABLY BREEDING IN BALI**

by Peter R. Kennerly
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Late evening on 20 June 1989, while birdwatching near Lake Bratan, Bali, I heard a bird in song which sounded very similar to the song of *Bradypterus seebohmi* from southern China. Knowing that there were no records of any *Bradypterus* warblers from Bali, although *B. (seffbohmi) mentis* occurs in eastern Java, I dismissed the song as being that of some other species with which I was unfamiliar.

At dawn on 21 June, I was ascending a tree-covered hillside close to where I heard the song the previous evening when I heard the same song again. The song, a very distinctive and monotonous "zeeurt zeeurt" repeated at intervals of approximately 0.5 seconds, was being delivered from a higher up the hill. While the song was very similar to that given by *B. Seebohmi* in southern China, with which I am familiar, it was slightly less piercing and rather more buzzing.

I started to climb the hill to the point where the song was coming from but almost immediately, I disturbed a bird from underfoot which, as it moved, uttered a quiet "tuk" call. The bird moved into a clump of ferns and although rather skulking, it did eventually give good prolonged views and was watched continuously for some 15 minutes. This bird was clearly a warbler and greatly resembled *Bradypterus seebohmi* from southern China.

Plumage description

Upperparts

The whole of the upperparts including the mantle, wings, rump and tail were a dark russet brown colour, lacking any contrast. The dorsal wing was quite uniform and did not exhibit any fringes to the feather edges. The tail was quite long and noticeably graduated.

Head

The nape and crown were dark russet brown, similar in colour to the

remainder of the upperparts. The head was marked by a very indistinct greyish supercilium which was barely discernible over the eye and became diffuse over the ear coverts. There was a narrow brown eye stripe running through the eye and below this, the ear coverts were distinctly grey.

under-parts

The chin and throat were pale brown as were the breast and flanks; paler and more fulvous than the upperparts. The upper breast was marked with an indistinct narrow gorget of spots, at times quite difficult to discern but obvious when the bird was seen head on.

The belly was whitish but the undertail coverts were the same colour as the flanks and appeared to lack any dark terminal fringes.

Soft parts

The bill was entirely black while the legs were pale pink and quite thick. The eye was dark and there was no obvious eye-ring.

Differences between the Bali birds and *S. seetsohmi* in southern China

Despite their overall similarity, there were minor differences between the birds seen in Bali and those previously seen at Ba Bao Shan, Guangdong province, China, most recently in June 1988. These differences were:

1. The ear coverts of the Bali bird appeared grey while those of the Chinese birds are brown.
2. The undertail coverts of the Chinese birds usually show strongly marked fringes to the feathers. The Bali birds lacked this feature.
3. The song of the Bali birds, while very similar to the Chinese birds, was slightly more buzzing and did not have quite such an obvious break in the two parts of the song. The song of the Bali birds could be described as "zeeurt" while that of the Chinese birds "cree-ut". However, the differences were minor and did not detract from the similarity of the two songs.

Behaviour

This individual appeared to have been disturbed from a nearby nest. It never left the immediate vicinity of the area where it was originally located and throughout the period of observation, it carried a beakful of insects and collected others while being watched.

It spent most of its time very close to the ground in the dump of ferns; running along the fronds and occasionally descending on to the ground where it ran rather than hopped. It made occasional "tuk" calls while being watched.

Throughout the period of observation, the "zeeurt" song had continued without a break higher up the hill. After ensuring that I had made detailed

notes of the original bird, I ascended the hill to confirm that the singing bird was indeed the same species as that which I had just been observing. This individual proved to be more difficult to observe well as it was singing from the centre of a dump of ferns. Eventually however, it did come out into the open and gave good but brief views. It appeared to be identical to the original bird apart from the throat which appeared to be whiter; perhaps an impression created by the feathers being fluffed out as the bird held its head back while singing.

Discussion

The plumage and song of this *Bradyptus* warbler was extremely similar to that associated with *B. seebohmi* in southern China. While this species does exhibit regional variation in its song throughout its range, it does seem remarkable that the birds on Bali, whatever their final identity is proven to be, should look and sound so similar to *B. seebohmi* whose nearest population occurs in northern Thailand, some 3500km to the northwest.

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REVIEWS

BIRDS OF JAVA AND BALI

Java has a long and distinguished ornithological history. It is the type locality for many species widespread in the Indo-Malayan region and has a massive ornithological bibliography. But still surprisingly little is known about the ecology of its birds. The monumental, two volume work of Kuroda (1933, 1936 *The birds of the island of Java*) was pedantic in its synonymy, descriptions and references, but dealt more with specimens than species; it did not, for instance, describe a single call. For the last fifty years, whilst ornithologists elsewhere were concentrating on the habits and habitat of species, Java was an ornithological backwater. And yet, the island has a fascinating avifauna; set on the edge of the Sunda Shelf and the first of the Greater Sundas to be separated from the continental landmass it possesses a host of endemic forms and the study of its fauna is crucial to an understanding of the biogeography of the whole region.

Unfortunately, this fauna is already much depleted. The changes wrought on the island in the latter half of this century have been massive: the population has exploded to 95 million, the lowland rain-forest has all but