

Avifauna of Ginseng Camp, Maliau Basin, Sabah, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT. During a five day survey of avifauna in the immediate vicinity of Ginseng Camp, 64 species of 26 families were seen or heard, most of which were lowland and hill forest species. Three migratory species of flycatcher were sighted; the remainder of species are Sabah residents. Three Bornean endemics were found in the area. No species identified are new to the Maliau area. No endangered species were sighted, although 15 species are considered globally Near Threatened. Observations of a nesting White-bellied Yuhina is the first described from Borneo.

Keywords: Avifauna, Ginseng Camp, Maliau Basin, Borneo.

INTRODUCTION

The scope of this bird study was to conduct a survey of birds around the Ginseng Camp area with the aim of producing a species list for the area, and to identify any bird species of special concern, especially species of international, regional, national or conservation importance.

METHODOLOGY

Surveying was done on foot along trails and rivers, and from vantage points of the camp overlooking the valley, by noting the bird species seen or heard. Equipment used included 8 x 32 Swarovski binoculars. The findings reported did not include birds seen at Agathis Camp or away from the Ginseng Camp area.

Limitations

As is often the case in such short-term surveys, the results are probably skewed towards birds which vocalise more, and towards those that have more penetrating calls. Conversely, birds which could not always be satisfactorily identified by call are probably under-represented in the survey list. In addition, there is probably an under-representation of small upper crown canopy birds due to difficulty in getting clear observations.

Any survey which is confined to a short period of time has severe limitations. These limitations were exacerbated by the ongoing construction work at the camp, from early morning to well into the night. The extreme noise pollution drove birds away, or silenced them, or made identification by call difficult. Given the high diversity but low densities of birds in a tropical rainforest, it should be noted that failure to record a species does not mean that it was missing from the area. The result should not be considered a final indication of the richness of avifauna in the area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sixty-four species from 26 families were seen or heard during a 5-day survey period in the vicinity of Ginseng Camp (Appendix 1). All species have been previously recorded in Maliau Basin (Yong *et al.*, 1996).

Absent species

The most significant absence was that of any representatives of Columbidae (pigeons), an absence that may have reflected either by the seasonal fruiting cycle or the forest floral composition. Also missing were all nightbirds, although this might have been a result of construction noise continuing into the night.

Altitudinal anomalies

As the altitude of the camp (620m) is below the level of a montane forest, the avifauna comprised lowland birds, especially those normally found in hill forests. Exceptions were as follows:

Hill Myna: In spite of the name, normally a bird of flat lowland forests was heard calling and several were seen in the evening. It has been recorded before at mountain forests (Smythies, 1999).

Kinabalu Leafbird: Usually found above 900m, but in the absence of the Blue-winged Leafbird in Sabah, has been known to occur at 550m (Smythies 1999).

Great Argus: Heard above the camp, probably above 800m. Normally found at lower elevations, but exceptions do occur (Smythies, 1999).

Endangered species / endemics

No endangered species were sighted, although 15 species found are considered globally Near Threatened (Appendix 1). Three Bornean endemics, the Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker, the Kinabalu Leafbird and the White-crowned Shama were all found in the area.

Migratory species

Only three migratory species were sighted, all flycatchers (Dark-sided Flycatcher,

Asian Brown Flycatcher and the Mugimaki Flycatcher).

Breeding birds

The following species were seen exhibiting breeding behaviour:

Silver-rumped Needletail (*Rhaphidura leucopygialis*)

A pair were seen swooping down and hovering about 10cm in front of a slit leading to a hole in the trunk of a tree, evidently inspecting it as a possible nesting site. This action was repeated some 15 times in 5 minutes. The slit was about 15m above the ground. The hole was not entered (the slit may have been too narrow) and the birds were not seen there again in subsequent days.

Swiftlet (*Aerodramus/ Collocalia* sp.)

The nest was located to the side in front of the waterfall, away from the spray, on the roof of a deep overhang about 2 m above the floor. It was round, but with one side open from the top to about halfway down the "ball" of the nest. The nest was attached above, self-supporting, by a thin layer of transparent white material. From the rear, the nest appeared to be a round ball attached to the roof of the cave above. The bird(s) attending the nest approached it by flying up the river below a waterfall. To observers, they appeared to be of small size (?10-14 cm) and lacked both glossy plumage and white underparts. They could not be identified.

?Forktail sp. Nest

A nest, unattended, was found on the opposite side of the river. This nest was in the open, but tucked into a narrow fold of a boulder, supported by the indentation of rock. It was made from mosses, lined with leaves. Possibly a forktail species.

White-bellied Yuhina (*Yuhina zantholeuca*)

A pair was seen building a nest 10 – 11 m

above the ground in a tree at the edge of a busy clearing near the campsite. The half-finished nest was made of pale-green tree lichens attached, at the rim, to the y-shaped join of two stems in a spray of leaves. The nest has not been previously described from Borneo (Smythies, 1999).

Update note

The Kinabalu Leafbird (*Chloropsis kinabaluensis*) has been separated from the Blue-winged Leafbird (*Chloropsis cochinchinensis*) in the updated Malaysian Checklist (MNS-Bird Conservation Council, 2005). Earlier Maliau Basin checklists cite the Blue-winged as being present in Maliau, but as this species is now not considered to be present in Sabah, these previous sightings should therefore be considered to be the Kinabalu Leafbird.

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Appendix 1. Checklist of birds from Ginseng Camp, Maliau Basin, Sabah

No.	Family	Common name	Scientific name	Distribution and status in Sabah	Protection status in Sabah	RDB status
1.	Accipitridae	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	R	P	~
2.		Hawk-Eagle sp	<i>Spizaetus sp</i>	R	~	~
3.	Phasianidae	Great Argus	<i>Argusianus argus</i>	R	P	NT
4.	Cuculidae	Rusty-breasted Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis sepulcralis</i>	R	~	~
5.	Apodidae	Glossy Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia esculenta</i>	R	~	~
6.		Silver-rumped Needletail	<i>Rhapidura leucopygialis</i>	R	~	~
7.	Hemiprocnidae	Whiskered Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne comate</i>	R	~	~
8.	Trogonidae	Diard's Trogon	<i>Harpactes diardii</i>	R	~	NT
9.		Orange-breasted Trogon	<i>Harpactes oreskios</i>	R	~	~
10.	Alcedinidae	Banded Kingfisher	<i>Lacedo pulchella</i>	R	~	~
11.	Meropidae	Red-bearded Bee-eater	<i>Nyctornis amictus</i>	R	~	~
12.	Bucerotidae	Bushy-crested Hornbill	<i>Anorrhinus galeritus</i>	R	P	~
13.		Rhinoceros hornbill	<i>Buceros rhinoceros</i>	R	P	NT
14.		Helmeted Hornbill	<i>Rhinoplax vigil</i>	R	P	NT
15.	Megalamidae	Gold-whiskered Barbet	<i>Megalaima chrysopogon</i>	R	~	~
16.		Red-throated Barbet	<i>Megalaima mystacophanus</i>	R	~	NT
17.		Yellow-crowned Barbet	<i>Megalaima henricii</i>	R	~	NT
18.		Blue-eared Barbet	<i>Megalaima australis</i>	R	~	~
19.		Brown Barbet	<i>Calorhamphus fuliginosus</i>	R	~	~
20.	Picidae	Buff-rumped Woodpecker	<i>Meiglyptes tristis</i>	R	~	~
21.		White-bellied Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus javensis</i>	R	P	~
22.	Eurylaimidae	Banded Broadbill	<i>Eurylaimus javanicus</i>	R	~	~
23.		Black and Yellow Broadbill	<i>Eurilaimus ochromalus</i>	R	~	NT
24.		Green Broadbill	<i>Calyptomena virdis</i>	R	~	NT
25.	Campephagidae	Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>	R	~	~
26.	Chloropseidae	Green Iora	<i>Aeginthina viridissima</i>	R	~	NT
27.		Lesser green Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis cyanopogon</i>	R	~	NT
28.		Greater Green Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis sonnerati</i>	R	~	~
29.		Kinabalu Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis kinabaluensis</i>	R	~	~
30.	Pycnonotidae	Grey-bellied Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cyaniventris</i>	R	~	NT
31.		Red-eyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus brunneus</i>	R	~	~
32.		Ochraceous Bulbul	<i>Alophoixus ochraceus</i>	R	~	~
33.		Hairy-backed Bulbul	<i>Tricholestes criniger</i>	R	~	~
34.		Ashy Bulbul	<i>Hemixos flavala</i>	R	~	~
35.	Dicruridae	Drongo sp	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>			
36.	Irenidae	Asian Fairy-Bluebird	<i>Irena puella</i>	R	~	~
37.	Sittidae	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>	R	~	~
38.	Timalidae	Moustached Babbler	<i>Malacopteron magnirostre</i>	R	~	~
39.		Scaly-crowned Babbler	<i>Malacopteron cinereum</i>	R	~	~
40.		Rufous-crowned Babbler	<i>Malacopteron magnum</i>	R	~	NT
41.		Chestnut-rumped Babbler	<i>Stachyris maculata</i>	R	~	NT
42.		Chestnut-winged Babbler	<i>Stachyris erythroptera</i>	R	~	~
43.		Brown Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe brunneicauda</i>	R	~	NT
44.		White-bellied Yuhina	<i>Yuhina zantholeuca</i>	R	~	~
45.	Turdidae	White-crowned Shama	<i>Copsychus stricklandii</i>	R	~	~
46.		Rufous-tailed Shama	<i>Trichixos pyrropyga</i>	R	~	NT
47.		Ashy Tailorbird	<i>Prthotous sepium</i>	R	~	~
48.	Muscicapidae	Dark-sided Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa sibirica</i>	M	~	~
49.		Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	R,M	~	~
50.		Mugimaki Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula mugimaki</i>	M	~	~
51.		Hill Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis banyumas</i>	R	~	~
52.		Grey-headed Flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	R	~	~
53.	Rhipiduridae	Spotted Fantail	<i>Rhipidura perlata</i>	R	~	~
54.	Monarchidae	Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>	R	~	~
55.		Rufous-winged Philentoma	<i>Philentoma pyrropterum</i>	R	~	~
56.	Sturnidae	Hill Myna	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>	R	P	~
57.	Nectariniidae	Plain Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes simplex</i>	R	~	~
58.		Ruby-cheeked Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes singalensis</i>	R	~	~
59.		Purple-naped Sunbird	<i>Hypogramma hypogrammicum</i>	R	~	~
60.		Little Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera longirostra</i>	R	~	~
61.		Grey-breasted Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnotera modesta</i>	R	~	~
62.	Dicaeidae	Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker	<i>Prionochilus xanthopygius</i>	R	~	~
63.		Yellow-vented Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum chrysorrheum</i>	R	~	~
64.		Orange-bellied Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum trigonostigma</i>	R	~	~

Note: this checklist does not include bird mist-netted by the netting team over the same period

KEY TO THE CHECKLIST (MNS Bird Conservation Council, 2005)

DISTRIBUTION

SBH (*Sabah*)

The geographical territory of Sabah, north-eastern Borneo, including the islands of Labuan, Balambangan, Banggi, Malawali and Sipadan. Sabah represents an ornithological province in itself, with species, sub-species and races not found elsewhere on Borneo. The atoll of Swallow Reef (Pulau Layang-layang) is included under Sabah.

STATUS

R (*Resident*)

A species is considered resident if it is known to breed within Malaysia's political boundaries. This includes feral species (those that originated from introduced or accidentally-released individuals, and have subsequently breeding populations within Malaysia).

M (*Migratory*)

A species is considered migratory if it is known to use Malaysian territory during the northern or southern winters. Migratory species are not differentiated as passage or wintering, although certain species are known to occur in Malaysia only during passage. Local migrants, defined as populations of resident species that are subject to local movements during breeding and non-breeding periods, are also included.

LEGAL PROTECTION STATUS

Sabah

The *Wildlife Conservation Enactment 1997* provides two categories of protection: Totally Protected (**TP**) and Protected (**P**), under Schedule 1 (Section 25(1)): Part I (Totally Protected Animals) and Schedule 2 (Section 25(1)): Part I (Protected Animals). However, no bird species are listed under Schedule 1 (Section 25(1)): Part I (Totally Protected Animals). A total of 131 species are listed under Schedule 2 (section 25(1)): Part I (Protected Animals). Under this Schedule, the bird species may be hunted with a license to a quota.

GLOBAL STATUS

RDB

A global listing of threatened birds found in *The Threatened Birds of Asia: The Bird Life International Red Data Book* (Birdlife International, 2001). The categories of threat are described according to the criteria developed by IUCN. The checklist indicates the RDB status of a species according to this publication. The threat categories are consistent with the IUCN-SSC Red List (IUCN, 2004). Refer to www.reslist.org for detailed definitions of the categories and the criteria used to evaluate threat status for species

NT (*Near Threatened*)

A taxon near threatened when it has been evaluated against the criteria but does not qualify for Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable now, but is close to qualifying for or is likely to qualify for a threatened category in the near future.

