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Malaysia: Fraser's Hill

15th – 18th March 2015

Leader: Mike Nelson

Participants: Fred and Marianne Wamboldt



Silver-eared Mesia

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This four-day trip was to explore one of peninsular Malaysia's most accessible highland sites, Fraser's Hill. As this was Fred and Maryanne's first time in Asia it was a great introduction to some of Asia's exciting birds and new families. The birds didn't disappoint with great looks at some common but no less stunning birds like Silver-eared Mesia, Spectacled Laughingthrush, Black-and-Crimson Oriole, Orange-breasted Trogon and Orange-bellied Leafbird, along with a few range-restricted megas such as Malaysian Partridge and Malayan Laughingthrush.

We began on the lower slopes of the road up to the gap. The forest along here is quite good and we were soon into the birds with Raffles's Malkoha, Blue-eared Barbet, Greater Green Leafbird, Golden-bellied Gerygone, Orange-bellied Flowerpecker and some noisy Erpornis. We also found a small fruiting tree which was inundated with

bulbuls and for the next half hour we watched as nine species of bulbul came in and out including Grey-bellied, Finsch's, Cinereous, Red-eyed, Buff-vented, Spectacled and Hairy-backed among the best showers. Also visiting was a gorgeous Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker that showed particularly well. A pair of Bamboo Woodpeckers showed reluctantly in a large patch of bamboo, flying back and forth but we finally nailed down some good looks at a female. This was shortly followed by a group of Pin-striped Tit-Babblers that noisily hopped through the understory and across the road into another patch of bamboo.

We spent the afternoon walking Girdle Road, starting off with the first of many showy Spectacled Laughingthrushes followed by a whining Malaysian Cuckooshrike that landed in the top of a tree near us for some great looks. This was followed by another common inhabitant of the hill station in the form of a male Black-and-crimson Oriole. Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo were common and the flowing trains of Long-tailed Sibia were often seen as they would fly from one tree to another in a noisy group.

An afternoon flock of Silver-eared Mesia, with their riot of colours, was enjoyed next to the road soon followed by a mixed flock of Mountain Fulvetta, Golden Babblers, Spectacled Laughingthrushes, Yellow-bellied Warblers and a White-throated Fantail. Another mixed flock contained Blue Nuthatch and both Black-eared and Blyth's Shrike-Babblers to add to the growing list.



Black-and-Crimson Oriole & Orange-bellied Leafbird © Mike Nelson / Birdtour Asia

The next day we began early with a drive down the twisting road to the gap spooking several Large-tailed Nightjar along the way. At the gap we parked up and listened to the cacophony of bird sounds that was the dawn chorus. We had close looks at Verditer Flycatcher, a cute Rufous Piculet, several Grey-chinned Minivet and Lesser Racket-tailed Drongos. In a flowering bottlebrush tree we found several Everett's White-eyes and Fire-breasted Flowerpeckers before moving down the road a bit to find Hill Blue Flycatcher which showed really well in some close bamboo.

At an abandoned hotel Rufous-bellied Swallows were perched on a window frame and farther down we picked up the fluty notes of Chestnut-backed Scimitar Babbler that eventually showed in the canopy above us. We also had a large flock of noisy Sultan Tits jumping around in a tree above us.

We took the entrance road back up and found a beautiful male Orange-breasted Trogon, which showed really well right above us. With the morning chorus of Siamang echoing around us we moved up checking gullies along the way eventually finding our next target - a pair of Marbled Wren-Babblers that moved through the understory quite close to the road. We followed them in as they foraged through the understory and had them singing up slope from us - a very rare sight of this highly desired species. On our way back for lunch we found Slaty-backed Forktail and a singing Long-tailed Broadbill.

In the afternoon we birded along the road finding a nice pair of Orange-bellied Leafbird and a cooperative flock of Grey-chinned Minivets. We found the Slaty-backed Forktail again and picked up a nice pair of Greater Yellownappe outside the lodge.

The next day we hiked along some of the many great trails with great looks at Lesser Shortwing, Red-headed Trogon, Bronzed Drongo, a close Streaked Wren-Babbler singing away, Black Laughingthrush flying noisily around

the canopy above us, Malayan Laughingthrush at eye-level foraging in the leaf litter on the bank above the trail. We also had a little expedition into the forest to find a singing Collared Owlet that finally showed above us through a gap in the canopy. Several Buff-breasted Babblers foraged nosily along the side of the trail giving us snippets of views as they hopped around actively. A pair of very raucous Common Green Magpie circled us at one point, showed well. As we walked along one of the trails a loud burst of sound and alarm calls erupted as the large form of a Chestnut-winged Cuckoo emerged from the brush next to the trail and flew right past us at eye-level. It disappeared into the canopy and was not seen again but its appearance was appreciated.

In the afternoon we tracked down a lovely Large Niltava that showed well with its iridescent blue plumage. Maryanne spotted some raptors which turned out to be four Blyth's Hawk-Eagles and later on a Changeable Hawk-Eagle was seen circling high above us. A nice pair of Blue-throated Bee-eaters was seen perched for some nice views. We picked up several noisy Fire-tufted Barbets and at one point we were treated to great views of several Long-tailed Broadbills just below us as they foraged through the gully. Several Mountain Bulbul were seen as well and a Chestnut-crowned Warbler was picked out of a flock of Mountain Fulvettas and Yellow-bellied Warblers.



Chestnut-backed Scimitar Babbler & Slaty Forktail © Mike Nelson / Birdtour Asia

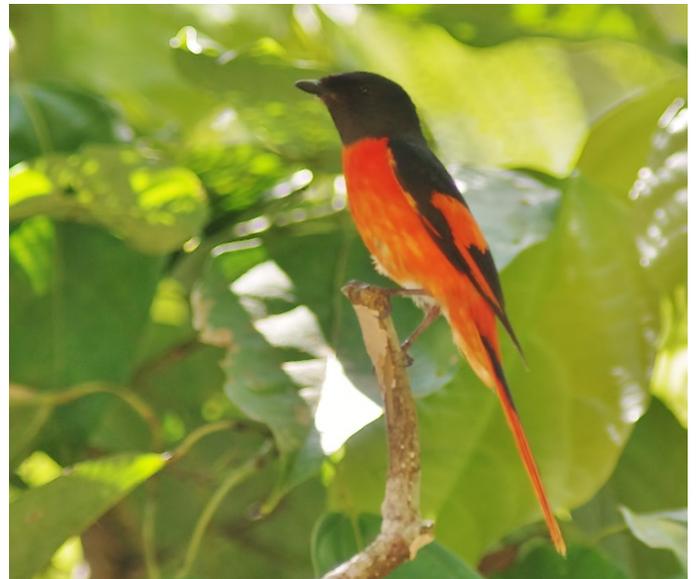
Our last morning was spent along the higher roads where we tracked down a calling Sunda Cuckoo in the canopy and Mountain Imperial Pigeon and Little Cuckoo-Dove. The two-note whistle of Pygmy Cupwing was heard and we stopped to see if we could find it. Peering down into the depths of the foliage below us we waited expectantly for the tiny bird to pop along a small branch when suddenly there it was, right at our feet. It crept like a mouse along the edge of the understory of the bank in front of us, then to our surprise popped out to the edge of the grass and proceeded to hop under the rear of the car out along the edge of the road. It faced us showing its scaled breast before hopping across the road and flying up the bank leaving us aghast at how well this tiny bird had performed. We also found two White-tailed Robins feeding along the road but our main target was always very distant. Eventually we were birding the last part of the road when we heard a close Malayan Partridge calling from down the road a little. We rushed to a spot that looked good and waited a bit set back from the road in some cover. The bird called just up slope from us and crossed an open area but through some understory foliage showing only briefly. It continued to call just up the slope but was moving down towards us. With some coaxing it was now just meters from the edge of the road when we could hear some people walking towards us, disaster! We frantically waved our hands for them to stop and they just waved back a hello at us but quickly enough got the message and froze where they were, crisis averted. Then with a small poof of dead fern leaves the partridge popped down onto the road about ten meters from us and seeing the couple down the road froze solid. We got staggering looks at the bird before it quickly trotted across the road and continued down the embankment.

We continued on birding for the remainder of the morning picking up circling Oriental Honey Buzzard, Little Pied Flycatcher and Black-browed Barbet before heading back to the lodge for an early lunch.

We had a little time on the way back to Kuala Lumpur and we birded the forested road below the gap in several places but as it was the hottest part of the day we didn't have a lot of luck but we did pick up some nice birds like Maroon-breasted Philentoma and Scaly-breasted Bulbul. At a waterfall we enjoyed good looks at both Whiskered and Grey-rumped Treeswift. We continued on down to the bustle of Kuala Lumpur and said our farewells over some tea and the final checklist.



Streaked Wren-Babbler and Spectacled Laughingthrush



Streaked Spiderhunter and Grey-chinned Minivet

Bird-of-the-tour

1. Silver-eared Mesia
2. Malaysian Partridge
3. Pygmy Cupwing
4. Large Niltava
5. Long-tailed Broadbill

Systematic List

GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae

Malaysian Partridge

Arborophila campbelli

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae

Oriental Honeybuzzard

Crested Serpent Eagle

Black Eagle

Blyth's Hawk Eagle

Pernis ptilorhynchus torquatus

Spilornis cheela

Ictinaetus malayensis

Nisaetus alboniger

Changeable Hawk Eagle

Nisaetus limnaeetus

COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae

Little Cuckoo Dove

Macropygia ruficeps malayana

Mountain Imperial Pigeon

Ducula badia

CUCULIFORMES: Cuculidae

Bock's Hawk Cuckoo

Cuculus [sparverioides] bocki

heard only

Sunda Cuckoo

Cuculus lepidus

Violet Cuckoo

Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus

heard only

Plaintive Cuckoo

Cacomantis merulinus

Raffles's Malkoha

Rhinortha chlorophaea

STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae

Mountain Scops Owl

Otus spilocephalus vulpes

heard only

Collared Owlet

Glaucidium brodiei brodiei

CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Caprimulgidae

Large-tailed Nightjar

Caprimulgus macrurus

APODIFORMES: Apodidae

Glossy Swiftlet

Collocalia esculenta cyanoptila

Silver-rumped Spinetail

Rhaphidura leucopygialis

House Swift

Apus [affinis] nipalensis

APODIFORMES: Hemiprocnidae

Grey-rumped Treeswift

Hemiproctus longipennis

Whiskered Treeswift

Hemiproctus comata

TROGONIFORMES: Trogonidae

Orange-breasted Trogon

Harpactes oreskios uniformis

Red-headed Trogon

Harpactes erythrocephalus chaseni

CORACIIFORMES: Meropidae

Red-bearded Bee-eater

Nyctornis amictus

heard only

Blue-throated Bee-eater

Merops viridis viridis

PICIFORMES: Megalaimidae

Fire-tufted Barbet

Psilopogon pyrolophus

Gold-whiskered Barbet

Psilopogon chrysopogon laeta

heard only

Red-throated Barbet

Psilopogon mystacophanus mystacophanus

heard only

Black-browed Barbet

Psilopogon oorti

Yellow-crowned Barbet

Psilopogon henricii

heard only

Blue-eared Barbet

Psilopogon duvaucelii duvaucelii

Sooty Barbet

Caloramphus hayii

PICIFORMES: Picidae

Rufous Piculet

Sasia abnormis

Greater Yellownappe

Picus flavinucha wrayi

Bamboo Woodpecker

Gecinulus viridis viridis

Maroon Woodpecker

Blythipicus rubiginosus

heard only

PASSERIFORMES: Eurylaimidae

Long-tailed Broadbill

Psarisomus dalhousiae

PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae

Pacific Swallow

Hirundo tahitica

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica gutturalis

Rufous-bellied Swallow

Cecropis badia

PASSERIFORMES: Tephrodornithidae

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike

Hemipus picatus

Maroon-breasted Philentoma

Philentoma velata

PASSERIFORMES: Campephagidae

Malaysian Cuckooshrike
Grey-chinned Minivet
Scarlet Minivet

Coracina [javensis] larutensis
Pericrocotus solaris montanus
Pericrocotus speciosus xanthogaster

PASSERIFORMES: Pycnonotidae

Black-crested Bulbul
Scaly-breasted Bulbul
Grey-bellied Bulbul
Cream-vented Bulbul
Red-eyed Bulbul
Spectacled Bulbul
Finsch's Bulbul
Ochraceous Bulbul
Hairy-backed Bulbul
Buff-vented Bulbul
Mountain Bulbul
Cinereous Bulbul

Pycnonotus melanicterus
Pycnonotus squamatus weberi
Pycnonotus cyaniventris
Pycnonotus simplex simplex
Pycnonotus brunneus brunneus
Pycnonotus erythrophthalmos
Alophoixus finschii
Alophoixus ochraceus sordidus
Tricholestes criniger
Iole olivacea
Ixos mccllellandii
Hemixos cinereus

PASSERIFORMES: Chloropseidae

Greater Green Leafbird
Orange-bellied Leafbird

Chloropsis sonnerati
Chloropsis hardwickii

PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae

Lesser Shortwing
White-tailed Robin
Slaty-backed Forktail

Brachypteryx leucophrys wrayi
Myiomela leucura
Enicurus schistaceus

PASSERIFORMES: Cisticolidae

Rufescent Prinia
Dark-necked Tailorbird

Prinia rufescens extrema
Orthotomus atrogularis atrogularis

PASSERIFORMES: Cettidae

Yellow-bellied Warbler
Mountain Tailorbird

Abroscopus superciliaris sakaiorum
Phyllergates cucullatus malayanus

PASSERIFORMES: Phylloscopidae

Chestnut-crowned Warbler

Seicercus castaniceps

PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae

Oriental Magpie Robin
White-rumped Shama
Little Pied Flycatcher
Verditer Flycatcher
Pale Blue Flycatcher
Large Niltava

Copsychus saularis musicus
Copsychus malabaricus
Ficedula westermanni
Eumyias thalassinus
Cyornis unicolor
Niltava grandis

heard only

PASSERIFORMES: Stenostiridae

Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher

Culicicapa ceylonensis

PASSERIFORMES: Rhipiduridae

White-throated Fantail

Rhipidura albicollis

PASSERIFORMES: Timaliidae

Buff-breasted Babbler
Chestnut-backed Scimitar Babbler
Marbled Wren-Babbler
Streaked Wren-Babbler
Pygmy Cupwing
Golden Babbler
Pin-striped Tit-Babbler
Black Laughingthrush
Spectacled Laughingthrush
Malayan Laughingthrush
Silver-eared Mesia
Blue-winged Siva

Pellorneum tickelli
Pomatorhinus montanus occidentalis
Napothera marmorata
Napothera brevicaudata leucosticta
Pnoepyga pusilla
Stachyridopsis chrysaee
Macronus gularis
Garrulax lugubris
Rhinocichla mitrata
Trohalopteron peninsulae
Leiothrix argentauris
Actinodura cyanouroptera

Mountain Fulvetta
Long-tailed Sibia

Alcippe peracensis peracensis
Heterophasia picaoides

PASSERIFORMES: Sittidae

Blue Nuthatch

Sitta azurea

PASSERIFORMES: Acanthizidae

Golden-bellied Gerygone

Gerygone sulphurea

PASSERIFORMES: Nectariniidae

Black-throated Sunbird
Streaked Spiderhunter

Aethopyga saturata wrayi
Arachnothera magna

PASSERIFORMES: Dicaeidae

Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker
Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker
Orange-bellied Flowerpecker
Fire-breasted Flowerpecker

Prionochilus maculatus oblitus
Prionochilus percussus ignicapilla
Dicaeum trigonostigma trigonostigma
Dicaeum ignipectus dolichorhynchum

PASSERIFORMES: Zosteropidae

Everett's White-eye

Zosterops everetti tahanensis

PASSERIFORMES: Oriolidae

Black-and-crimson Oriole

Oriolus cruentus

PASSERIFORMES: Irenidae

Asian Fairy-bluebird

Irena puella

PASSERIFORMES: Dicuridae

Bronzed Drongo
Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo

Dicurus aeneus
Dicurus remifer

PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae

Common Green Magpie
Southern Jungle Crow

Cissa chinensis
Corvus macrorhynchos

PASSERIFORMES: Paridae

Sultan Tit

Melanochlora sultanea

PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae

Javan Myna

Acridotheres javanensis

PASSERIFORMES: Vireonidae

Erpornis
Blyth's Shrike Babbler
Black-eared Shrike Babbler

Erpornis zantholeuca
Pteruthius faeralatus cameroni
Pteruthius melanotis

MAMMALS

White-thighed Langur
Dusky Langur
Long-tailed Macaque
Sunda Pig-tailed Macaque
Western Striped Squirrel

Presbytis siamensis
Presbytis obscurus
Macaca fascicularis
Macca nemestrina
Tamiops mccllellandii

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