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Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*: a new species for Thailand

GRAHAM CLARK

On Friday, 28 March 1986 I was driving north along the shore road at Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park, Prachuab Khirikhan province (12°08'N 99°59'E). I stopped to look at some waders on the lagoons and, whilst scanning with my binoculars, examined a line of starlings Sturnidae on a telephone wire some 40 m away. The small flock was comprised of about 30 Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis*, six Asian Pied Starlings *Sturnus contra* and another individual which immediately caught my attention because it was bright pink.

I observed the bird for about 30 secs before it took off and flew east with the rest of the flock. I obtained the following brief description: size and structure similar to those of the Asian Pied Starlings alongside, but perhaps a little smaller; head, throat and upper breast, wings, tail and undertail-coverts black; mantle, upper breast and belly bright salmon-pink; bill yellow.

From this brief observation I concluded that it was an adult Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*. Although I searched for 15 minutes amongst the dunes in which the bird had disappeared it was not seen again.

An adult Rosy Starling, presumed to be a different individual, was seen by P. D. Round, in mid-May 1986, in the aviary of Siam Farm, an animal trading company in Bangkok. The proprietor of the company mentioned that the bird had been trapped in Langsuan district, Chumphon province, c. 200 km south of Khao Sam Roi Yot.

The species breeds from central and south Russia, and occasionally in south-east Europe, across central Asia to the Altai mountains and south to northern Afghanistan (Sibley and Monroe 1990). It winters in the Indian subcontinent (Ali and Ripley 1987). It is nomadic in its behaviour, frequently

occurring outside of its normal range and, since it migrates on a north-west to south-east axis, its occurrence in Thailand is perhaps not surprising.

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Plain Sunbird *Anthreptes simplex* feeding on arils of acacia seeds

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Three Plain Sunbirds *Anthreptes simplex* were seen on the edge of the Universiti Pertanian Malaysia forest reserve near Ayer Hitam, c. 20 km south-west of Kuala Lumpur, Peninsular Malaysia on 20 July 1993. They were identified by their olive upperparts, grey throat, dull yellow underparts, red eyes and short dark bills. Only one bird had a dark patch on the forehead, which I did not see reflecting light. As they moved amongst the phyllodes of acacia trees (*Acacia mangium*) they behaved more like warblers than sunbirds. When I watched them more closely I realised that they were taking the orange-red arils which attach the seeds to the pods. Although they were swallowing the arils I could not see if they also consumed the seeds. One bird was present for at least 20 minutes.

The aril in acacias is a fleshy appendage which has grown from the apex of the ovule along the seed stalk. It is often brightly-coloured and is frequently consumed by insects such as ants; it can contain high concentrations of fat and protein (Glyphis *et al.* 1981). Honeyeaters (Meliphagidae) and a few other birds in Australia consume the red or yellow funicles of several acacia species (Forde 1986). *Acacia cyclops* has been introduced into South Africa from Australia and its arils and seeds are eaten by a variety of birds there (Middlemiss 1963). *Acacia mangium* is native to northern Australia and has been planted widely in South-East Asia for timber and pulp.

I know of no account of birds consuming acacia arils in South-East Asia, nor of sunbirds eating them anywhere. However, Plain Sunbirds and