

martin. Black throat, undertail-coverts and tail; black/blue upperside; underside white, not dusky; white rump fairly narrow; tail more or less square; looks "neater" than European House Martin *Delichon urbica*; noticeably smaller than Dusky Crag Martin. We watched these birds for over 30 minutes, while they flew in front of us, above and below our own elevation, often passing within 20 m.

The above description seems diagnostic of Nepal House Martin *Delichon nipalensis*, which has not been previously recorded from Thailand (P. D. Round *in litt.*). In particular, the combination of square tail with black throat and undertail-coverts eliminates the other *Delichon* species. Our description fits well with that in Ali and Ripley (1972) except that we did not see the 'broken white collar on hind-neck'. This is shown in Ali (1977) as a very fine broken line, and examination of museum specimens suggests that it would be visible in the field in less than 10% of individuals (less than three birds in our flock).

The avifauna of Phu Kradeung has been poorly studied to date (P. D. Round *in litt.*). The Nepal House Martin may occur there regularly but has perhaps been overlooked hitherto. Although not recorded before in Thailand, it is known from northern Burma and northern Viet Nam (Ali and Ripley 1972). In Burma it breeds in the Arakan range in the west (subspecies *nipalensis*) and occurs in the north-east (subspecies *cuttingi*) where its status is uncertain (Smythies 1953) and from where it may extend into Yunnan (Meyer de Schauensee 1984). It is recorded as resident in Viet Nam, in north-west Tonkin (King *et al.* 1975), although the subspecies there has not been determined (Vaurie 1959). We were not able to determine the subspecies of the Thai birds.

The records from north-east Burma, Yunnan, north-west Tonkin, and our record from north-central Thailand, all fall along the margins of the Yunnan range of mountains, which reach their southernmost extent in Burma, Thailand, Laos and Viet Nam. Possibly, the race *cuttingi* breeds widely within these mountains, moving to lower altitudes and latitudes in winter. Along the margins of the Himalayas, the Nepal House Martin's altitudinal breeding range is 2,000–4,000 m, descending to c. 350 m in winter (Ali and Ripley 1972). We saw it, in winter but further south, at c. 1,300 m.

The species is highly gregarious and subject to sporadic winter movements (Ali and Ripley 1972), suggesting that it might well be expected to occur in the ornithologically little-known areas of northern Thailand, east Burma (Shan States) and Laos. The status of the Nepal House Martin in Thailand remains uncertain: our record was from the non-breeding season. The large flock seen, rather than one or two birds, suggests it is not a vagrant but may be (at least) an irregular or regular winter visitor. If it is a migrant, it presumably comes from further north in Laos, Burma or Yunnan, whereas the known populations to date seem to undertake only short-distance, altitudinal migrations (Ali and Ripley 1972). Hence, either the birds we saw come from a migratory population or, possibly, they breed locally in northern Thailand. Suitable breeding habitat is present at Phu Kradeung and other mountainous areas in north-west Thailand, where rock overhangs occur on vertical cliff faces (its preferred nest site: Ali and Ripley 1972), some at over 2,000 m.

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## Does the Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos* breed in the Philippines?

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On 5 July 1975 I saw a pair of Pied Harriers *Circus melanoleucos* in the rolling cogon grasslands (*Imperata* sp.) east of Laguna de Bay along the road from Tanay, Rizal, to Siniloan, Laguna Province, Luzon. The male was in full adult plumage and the two birds executed an apparent aerial food-pass, though no actual prey exchange could be confirmed. After the birds separated neither landed within view. All my other records of this species from the Philippines are from October to February inclusive.

Parkes (1973) considered an August record of Lint and Stott (1948) to be unusually early, citing Brown and Amadon (1968). The timetable of migration given by the latter authors agreed with that of Smythies (1953) for Burma and with my own experience in Thailand, but adequate data on the seasonal occurrence of the species in the Philippines has not been published.

The species has nested in Burma – in April/May in a grassy plain south of Myitkyina – and may do so regularly in small numbers (Smythies 1953). Brown and Amadon (1968) underlined that breeding in Burma, in the south of its range, is six to eight weeks earlier than in the north. Hence one might expect records in the Philippines as late as May to be northern migrants, and for these to have returned by August would indeed be unusually early.

M. LeCroy (*in litt.*) has revealed the existence of a skin from Mindoro collected on 30 July 1963, and additional evidence of 'oversummering' is to be found in the manuscript notes of E. A. Mearns held by the United States National Museum (USNM). Much of his information was gathered in Mindanao and he found *C. melanoleucos* there in every month except July and December. Many of his records were from 'the broad sweep of cogonal country extending from the Serenaya Marsh

to the upper Libungan River east of Cotabato' and the Lake Lanao basin, and here in 1904 there were 'many' on 12 and 13 March, the species was 'noted' from 3 to 10 April and 'some were seen' on 28 and 29 May. His notes also say: 'At Tagulaya, on the west shore of the Gulf of Davao, June 14, 1904, I noted "The black and gray harrier is here in abundance upon the cogonals; but I saw none to-day"'. This implies sightings within the preceding few days since a chronological review of his collecting places him in that area only after 11 or 12 June. He also recorded the species from the 'base of Mt. Mayon, Tobacco side, Albay Province, Luzon' on 4 and 5 June 1907.

In summary there seems to be good evidence of occurrence throughout the year (although no doubt northern migrants augment the population in winter) and in habitat entirely suitable for breeding. The apparent food-pass described above is suggestive, but obviously formal evidence of breeding has yet to be found.

Dr. George Watson (USNM) was good enough to provide copies of Mearns's notes and Mary LeCroy details of the July specimen in the American Museum of Natural History.

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- Edward C. Dickinson, *Chemin du Chano 8, 1802 Corseaux, Switzerland*.

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