

Attempted predation on young Malaysian Plovers *Charadrius peronii* by sand crabs

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The coastal flats north-west of Kuching, near Kampung Sibu Laut are extensive and very gradually shelving, resulting in large areas of sand being exposed at low tide.

Malaysia's only resident, and rather uncommon wader, the Malaysian Plover *Charadrius peronii* is found in this habitat. I have located two pairs over a stretch of 10 km of this beach.

On 24 July 1994 I observed a pair of Malaysian Plovers feeding on the sand, accompanied by two downy young. Feeding was interrupted frequently as the male adult ran at crabs in the vicinity of the young and warded them off using a 'kick-boxing' technique. I watched this performance for 10 minutes or so and it was clear that

the young were adequately protected. On a subsequent visit on 23 January 1995, I saw four full-grown birds in the area of the incident, so it would appear that the brood had been successfully reared.

With the aid of an entrenching tool I collected four crabs from their deep holes in the sand and preserved them in formalin for identification. These fast-moving sand crabs were red with a carapace width of 40 mm and overall width with legs relaxed of 80 mm. Their eyes were on tall stalks, and their pair of pincers were powerful and sharp enough to draw blood from my finger. The crabs were subsequently identified as *Ocypode ceratophthalma* of the family Ocypodidae.

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Notes on the diet of nestling White-throated Kingfishers *Halcyon smyrnensis* in Malaysia

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The food of adult White-throated Kingfishers *Halcyon smyrnensis* has been well documented (Ali and Ripley 1970, Mukherjee 1976, Cramp 1985, Roberts 1991, Fry *et al.* 1992), large insects such as beetles Coleoptera, grasshoppers and crickets Orthoptera, ants, crustaceans, fish, frogs Anura and lizards Sauria forming the major part of their diet. Only recently, however, has the diet of the young been described and this only in parts of their large range. Roberts (1991), for example, reports that a pair in Pakistan fed their young only on insects when they were small, and Cramp (1985) includes a record from Sri Lanka of nestlings being fed primarily on freshwater crabs and less frequently on frogs and fish. The following is a summary of six periods of observation, ranging from 10 minutes to 1 hour, taken from 12-17 March 1991, at a nest site in Kuala Selangor, Malaysia. The nest was in a 3 m high roadside bank within a public park, where dry grass areas were interspersed with large, often non-native tree species. The bank contained several old nest holes. A second pair of kingfishers was nesting approximately 200 m away, also in a roadside bank within the park. White-throated Kingfishers in Malaysia

are attributed to the subspecies *fusca* (Fry *et al.* 1992).

In all, in 200 minutes of observation, the adults fed the young 21 times, both parents feeding themselves for periods of up to 20 minutes. Prey was mostly caught within a short distance of the nest and the adults were not thought to be visiting more distant wet areas (by the Selangor river and in the Kuala Selangor Nature Park). Observed prey brought to the young consisted of four lizards (from 4-9 cm in length), ants twice and other insects, including beetles taken from an area of freshly cut grass, on 14 other occasions. Towards the end of the study, the young approached the tunnel entrance to be fed and took larger prey. At this time one adult attempted to bring them a cicada - caught in flight as it left a tree branch - but was prevented from doing so because of human disturbance. During the periods of observation, the adults were prevented from feeding their young on two other occasions, in all cases the adults subsequently ate the food themselves. When feeding their young, the adults spent between 2 and 8 seconds in the nest tunnel (mean = 5.0, $n = 11$), this being a good indication of the nestlings' relatively advanced age. One adult spent