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Aleem Ahmed Khan, Ornithological Society of Pakistan, 109-Block D, Dera Ghazi Khan, 32200, Pakistan. Present Address: Institute of Pure and Applied Biology, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan. Email: aleembzu@yahoo.co.uk
Mikio Takashi, Amami Ornithologists' Club, Naze, Kagoshima, Japan.

Extension of the breeding range of Blue-winged *Pitta Pitta moluccensis* in peninsular Malaysia

ROBERT HUTCHINSON and ANDY MEARS

During a visit to Taman Negara National Park, Pahang state, peninsular Malaysia on 25 July 2005, we were surprised to observe a Blue-winged *Pitta Pitta moluccensis*, a species known to breed only in the north of peninsular Malaysia (Lambert and Woodcock 1996, Medway and Wells 1976), carrying food, suggesting that it may have been breeding. The following day c.150 m from the location of the initial sighting, RH located the nest, which contained three nestlings estimated to be approximately one week old.

The nest was located on a steep slope c.6 m above ground level in the top of a dead tree stump with one open side, an unusual location since the nests of Blue-winged *Pitta* are typically found on or close to the ground, occasionally up to c.4 m above ground level (Lambert and Woodcock 1996). The nest was a quite large dome-shaped structure formed mainly of large dry leaves and small or medium-sized branches, with a vertical west-facing entrance hole on the open side of the tree stump. We were able to watch the nest regularly from 25 to 30 July. Both parents fed the nestlings with approximately equal frequency and with a variety of prey items, which appeared to include a large proportion of earthworms.

During our observations, the typical territorial call—a clear double whistle—was given briefly on only one occasion, but the adults gave a loud sharp *chyeew* alarm call if the nest was approached by humans closer than c.20 m. Another individual was heard giving the territorial call almost continuously from an overgrown oil palm plantation close to the village of Kuala Tahan, just outside the national park boundary, between 07h30 and 08h00 on 29 July 2005.

Subsequent to our observations, on 9 and 10 August 2005, K. David Bishop and Susan D. Myers observed a pair of Blue-winged *Pittas* directly feeding two well-grown immatures at the same site as our observations, and thus

these birds were likely to be the same pair. The birds were silent but fairly easy to approach and observe, with the immatures still at least partly dependent on the adult birds and frequently observed actively begging for food. (K. D. Bishop and S. D. Myers *in litt.* 2005).

Assuming that our estimation of the age of the nestlings was accurate, this represents an extension to the known breeding period in peninsular Malaysia, where eggs have previously been recorded between 10 May and 11 July (Medway and Wells 1976), although nest-building was reported on 14 July at Ban Bang Tieo, Krabi, Thailand (Wells *in press*).

Although Blue-winged *Pitta* is a common non-breeding visitor to the Malay Peninsula, breeding within this region has only ever been confirmed in the extreme north, in Perlis state and on adjacent Langkawi Island (Lambert and Woodcock 1996, Medway and Wells 1976). This breeding record, more than 300 km to the south-east of previous records therefore considerably extends the known breeding range of Blue-winged *Pitta* within the Malay Peninsula. Medway and Wells (1976) gave the dates of wintering birds in the peninsula as 25 September to 12 May. By the mid-1990s the period of absence had shrunk to just 7–8 weeks, centred on July. By 2000, calling birds were being reported from mid-Perak and the Pahang sector of Taman Negara national park throughout July (Wells *in press*, T. Carlberg *in litt.* 2005, W. Veraghtert *in litt.* 2005, C. Robson verbally 2005). It would seem that the southerly limit of over-summering birds has shifted southwards and this confirmation of breeding at Taman Negara national park is not entirely unexpected.

The changes in distribution appear to have coincided with climate change in central Malaysia where long-term regional warming has been observed over the last couple of decades (D. Wells *in litt.* 2005). These climatic changes

may also be a causal factor in the increased elevational limits of at least six species observed at Bukit Fraser, Pahang, peninsular Malaysia in August 2003 (Rheindt 2004). Further monitoring is desirable to track any further changes in either elevational or range limits for this and other species within the region that might be related to regional or global climate change.

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Robert Hutchinson, c/o 26 Sutton Avenue, Chellaston, Derby DE73 1R7, U.K. Email: robhutchinson@birdtourasia.com
Andy Mears, 34 Conygre Green, Timsbury, Bath BA2 07U, U.K.

Observations of Cinnabar Hawk Owl *Ninox ios* in Gunung Ambang Nature Reserve, North Sulawesi, Indonesia, with a description of a secondary vocalisation

ROBERT HUTCHINSON, JAMES EATON and PHIL BENSTEAD

Cinnabar Hawk Owl *Ninox ios* was described as recently as 1999 on the basis of a single specimen collected in 1985 at 1,120 m in the eastern section of Bogani Nani Wartabone National Park, North Sulawesi (Rasmussen 1999). Subsequent published records involve an individual disturbed from its roost at 1,700 m in Lore Lindu National Park in December 1998 (Mauro 2001), a bird mist-netted at 1,420 m within the Gunung Ambang Nature Reserve in November 1999 (Lee and Riley 2001), a bird responding to tape-playback of the recently described call in September 2000 (King 2005) and a bird seen and heard at 1,250 m, again within Gunung Ambang Nature Reserve, in August 2001 (Trainor *et al.* 2006). This latter record involved only the second nocturnal observation of the species and the first description of a secondary vocalisation. Here we report another sighting of this species, describe nocturnal behaviour and produce sonagrams confirming the recently described secondary calls.

RH and JE visited Gunung Ambang Nature Reserve on 7–11 September 2004. On 8 September, they were birding at night in selectively logged primary forest at 1,290 m along the trail to Paya Swamp (00°46.295'N 124°23.442'E) when at c.21h00 they heard a series of unfamiliar owl calls. The calls appeared similar to the description they had been given by PB of vocalisations of a Cinnabar Hawk Owl he had heard and seen here on 24 August 2001, although PB was uncertain whether the call was territorial in nature or the begging call of a young bird or female. Such secondary calls are rarely given by most Asian *Ninox* owls (personal observations, König *et al.* 1999). After the description of the territorial call by King

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(2005), it became apparent that this call did indeed represent a secondary vocalisation.

Despite calling regularly, the bird proved rather elusive and was quite unresponsive to playback of recordings of its call. It was some time before the bird was finally located calling from exposed branches high in the canopy. Despite the initially rather distant views, the combination of predominantly chestnut plumage, lack of facial markings and yellow irides immediately suggested that it was indeed Cinnabar Hawk Owl. Fortunately, the bird then gave good views. It called frequently until c.01h00 hours when it became more elusive, called less frequently and was only seen on two more occasions prior to dawn. Closer views allowed us to note other key features, including: the lack of white markings in the wing-coverts and flight feathers, these being restricted to the scapulars; pale markings giving a dappled effect on the chestnut underparts; and the entirely pale bill and cere. The bird appeared short-tailed (with the wing-tips falling level with tail-tip) and rather compact in appearance. The bird was again present in the same small area on the evenings of 9 and 10 September and we were able to study it at length for c.3 hours in total. In addition, another bird was heard and recorded at 1,280 m, c.2 km away just after dusk on 9 September. Unfortunately this individual was fairly distant on a steep forested slope and was not seen, but the calls of the two birds seemed identical.

On 9 and 10 September, the bird began calling at c.17h50 (just prior to dusk) and foraged for c.10 minutes shortly after dusk in the same clearing, created by a recently felled tree, near the top of a moderately steep slope at a