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Observations on a nest of Sri Lanka Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger*

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Sri Lanka Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger*, the only frogmouth species in the Indian subcontinent, remains poorly studied owing to its reclusive behaviour. In Sri Lanka, frogmouths are fairly well-distributed and common in the low to mid-elevations (Grimmett *et al.* 1999), yet so difficult to see that the ornithologist G. M. Henry saw the species only twice in his lifetime (Henry 1971). While there have been some descriptions of frogmouth nests previously, knowledge about parental care is lacking for the species (Ali and Ripley 1987).

I observed the nesting behaviour of a pair of frogmouths in the Sinharaja World Heritage Reserve, Sri Lanka (6°26'N 80°21'E, 450 m). The nest was located quite close to a road in the fork of a small tree *Wendlandia bicuspidata* about 6 m from the ground. Like nests that have been previously described (Henry 1971, Ali and Ripley 1987), it was a platform of length 55 mm, width 28 mm, and height 35 mm, made out of small twigs, camouflaged on the outside with lichen and some moss, and filled in the inside with the birds' down.

On the morning of 22 August 2003, I saw the male sitting on the branch, with the beginnings of a nest under him. On 4 and 6 September, I watched during

the early evening (18h45 to 20h00), and saw that both the male and the female contributed to the effort of nest building. The male continued to sit on the empty nest during the daytime. On 7 September, the male left the nest at 18h45, and this time I saw there was a single egg in the nest. The egg was white with no markings, elliptical, and with a length of 30.4 mm, and a width of 22.8 mm.

The male and female birds shared incubation duties over the next week. After leaving the nest at around 18h45, the male would return at 19h00, and leave at



Plate 1. Nest containing chick of Sri Lanka Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger*, Sinharaja World Heritage Reserve, Sri Lanka, 16 September 2003. Photo by K. D. Thandula Jayarathna.



Plate 2. Adult and juvenile Sri Lanka Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger* on nest. Sinharaja World Heritage Reserve, Sri Lanka, 6 October 2003. Photo by K. D. Thandula Jayarathna.

23h00. The female arrived within minutes, staying on the nest past 01h00. When the male left the nest on the evening of 14 September, I saw that the chick had hatched. The male returned two minutes later, gathered the eggshells into its mouth and flew away with them. The chick appeared like a puff of white wool (Plate 1, taken on 16 September). On 21 September, the eyes, and the feathers in the wing, were first noticeable.

On 24 September, I stayed the whole night to observe parental behaviour. Between 18h45 and 21h30, both birds came to the nest to feed the chick, staying for about 5–10 minutes. From 21h30 until 04h40, the birds took turns at the nest, staying for about two hours at a time. After 04h40 the birds again fed rapidly. The male bird returned to the nest to stay at 06h15. I saw that the chick's eyes were open on this day, and the feathers, which were still small, appeared reddish-brown.

On 29 September, the chick filled the entire nest, and was clearly visible underneath the male bird during the daytime (Plate 2, taken on 6 October). The chick now appeared like a miniature version of the female bird. At 19h00 on 9 October 2003, I arrived at the nest to find that the chick had left. Then at 20h30 the male removed the entire nest, which fell to the base

of the tree. I had noticed previous nesting attempts on this same branch in August 2002 and February 2003 that may or may not have been successful; repeated use of the same location may necessitate removal of the nest in order not to attract the attention of predators.

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An incident of elevational displacement of birds at Bukit Fraser, Peninsular Malaysia

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During a field stay at Bukit Fraser (Pahang, Peninsular Malaysia) from 31 July to 3 August 2003, 11 bird species were observed far above their usual elevational limits. Remarkably, most of these sightings were on a single day, 1 August 2003, even though I spent a similar length of time in the field on other days. This day was sunny and dry, although on subsequent days there was light drizzle and overcast skies at Bukit Fraser. Here I list the notable elevational records, in order of their unusualness. Unless stated otherwise, the sightings refer to 1 August 2003. I have previous field experience (often considerable) of all these species.

RAIL-BABBLER *Eupetes macrocerus*

Usual upper elevational limit: 1,005 m (Robson 2000). One silent bird was seen well (for 5 seconds at 5 m distance) in the forest edge on a rocky roadside embankment at 1,400 m along the closed road from 'The Gap' to Bukit Fraser. The bird had presumably crossed the road on its way to higher, wetter elevations.

HODGSON'S HAWK CUCKOO *Hierococcyx fugax*

Usual upper elevational limit: 250 m (Robson 2000). One silent individual was seen perched in a tree near the upper end of the open road from 'The Gap' to

Bukit Fraser at 1,475 m. The diagnostic field marks of this species, including the tail pattern, were seen well.

INDIAN CUCKOO *Cuculus micropterus*

Usual upper elevational limit: 760 m (Robson 2000). A male was seen perched in a tree near the High Pines in Bukit Fraser Village at 1,525 m on 31 July 2003.

CRIMSON-WINGED WOODPECKER *Picus puniceus*

Usual upper elevational limit: 825 m (Robson 2000). A female was seen along the upper stretches of the open road from 'The Gap' to Bukit Fraser at 1,450 m. The bird was seen well for extended periods of time.

BROWN BARBET *Calorhamphus fuliginosus*

Usual upper elevational limit: 1,065 m (Robson 2000). Three (possibly four) individuals seen well and heard near the lower end of the open road from 'The Gap' to Bukit Fraser at 1,350 m.

BUSHY-CRESTED HORNBILL *Anorrhinus galeritus*

Usual upper elevational limit: 1,220 m (Robson 2000). A flock of four, containing at least one female, was seen overhead from the upper stretches of the open road from 'The Gap' to Bukit Fraser at 1,450 m. (Robson