

grown nestlings. Because of the proximity of buildings and frequent human foot traffic, the laughingthrushes were relatively habituated to people and I was able to count at least five birds feeding mainly on the ground within a 30 m radius of the nest. The area around the nest encompassed open woodland, from which the underbrush had been removed, close to houses, as well as some denser forest with tangled undergrowth in a steep-sided gully.

I watched the nest without interruption from 14h53 to 15h28 at a range of about 20 m. At 15h08, three birds came to the nest tree and two of them delivered food in quick succession, while the third individual perched less than 0.5 m from the nest. At 15h20, two individuals again visited the nest and fed the young, while a third bird perched nearby with a spider in its bill. However, this bird did not visit the nest and probably consumed the spider itself. After dark (19h40) I checked the nest by flashlight from a range of about 15 m, and with the aid of binoculars could see an adult brooding the young.

On the following morning I watched the nest from 06h13 to 07h00, during which period the adults paid it a total of 15 separate visits. From 06h19 to 06h29, there were no fewer than eight visits to feed the nestlings (including three feeds by three different individuals within one minute). A fourth individual that fed the young at 06h17, and again at 06h33, was individually recognisable as it had a yellow gape-spot on the right side. In addition, because the habitat was rather open, most birds could be located in view simultaneously, aiding differentiation of individuals. The usual pattern was for one bird to feed the young, and then remain on the nest until another bird came in and displaced it. At least four different individuals in the group provisioned the young.

The young were already well-grown, with partly grown wing and tail feathers, a black-and-white face pattern, and rufous upperparts similar to the adult pattern. On the morning of 13 August, one of the nestlings clambered out of the nest and perched c.20 cm above it, flapping its wings for 20–30 seconds before returning to the nest. When I checked the nest that evening, it was empty and the young were presumed to have fledged.

In addition to the two visits (out of six) on 12 August when no food was delivered to the chicks, the 15 visits on the following day also included three cases when an adult

perched close to the nest but did not feed the young. Two of these visits involved the individual with the yellow gape-spot. In one of these, the bird came to the nest without food, while in the other it consumed the food itself. Such behaviours (adults either coming in to the nest without food or consuming the food themselves) are well known among other birds that have nest-helpers. Boland *et al.* (1997) termed the behaviour ‘deceptive helping’ and thought it was a form of advertisement that individuals used to enhance their status within the group, perhaps increasing their future likelihood of acquiring a mate (Putland 2001). However, Canestrari *et al.* (2002) observed these behaviours, which they termed ‘false feeding’, in instances when no other individuals were present as onlookers, and also at unassisted nests (those that lacked helpers). Since breeding females exhibited this behaviour more often than other group members, Canestrari *et al.* (2002) suggested that deception was unlikely to be involved, and that the decision to provision the chicks represented a trade-off between the chicks’ hunger and that of the provisioning adult.

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Nesting of the Scarlet-breasted Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus bernsteinii*

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In September 2005, we found an active nest of the Scarlet-breasted Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus bernsteinii* at a site not far from Kali Batu Putih near Sidangoli, Halmahera, Indonesia, while searching for endemic bird species in the area. Scarlet-breasted Fruit Dove is a medium-sized, sexually dimorphic fruit dove endemic to Halmahera and its satellite islands of Bacan, Ternate and Obi, in the

Moluccas group of eastern Indonesia (White and Bruce 1986, Coates and Bishop 1997).

Over several days we birded a narrow logging track leading north from a site known locally as ‘Gunung Jen’, 12 km by road east of Sidangoli at c.0°55′N 127°34′E. The site was a remnant of selectively logged primary forest at c.400 m. On 10 September, we flushed a smallish pigeon

from the vicinity of a spiny rattan palm (family Palmae, genus unidentified) which was partly overhanging the logging track. Over the next few days we flushed this or another bird from much the same location almost daily. During this time RFF had sufficiently good views to identify the species as Scarlet-breasted Fruit Dove. Sometimes the bird appeared to have a pale head and at others, more uniformly green, so we deduced that we had flushed both male and female birds. Only one bird was flushed each time. The birds were apparently incubating, with male and female sharing these duties. We had several other sightings of this species during our stay in the area.

On the morning of 15 September, PSL found the nest itself. It was located 2.5 m above the ground on the apex of a rattan palm frond directly overhanging the track. It was constructed from slender twigs that measured about 2 mm in diameter, forming a scanty oval-shaped platform of about 15×10×4 cm. One white egg was clearly visible from the underside of the nest.

Breeding activity by other species was taking place at the time of our visit, e.g. a Paradise-crow *Lycocorax pyrrhopterus* was seen carrying nest material and Goliath Coucal *Centropus goliath* was seen with fledged young.

There would appear to be only three previously documented nest records of Scarlet-breasted Fruit Dove, all of which date from 1931 (Heinrich 1956). Of these, one with a nestling was in April and two with eggs were in June of the same year (*contra* del Hoyo *et al.* [1997], who stated July). Two of the nests were located in ferns and the other in a small tree, low to the ground. Standard family monographs (e.g. Goodwin 1983, Gibbs *et al.* 2001) and del Hoyo *et al.* (1997) quote only the records presented in Heinrich (1956). Searches in other publications and enquiries among experts on Indonesian birds have turned up only one other recent record of a nest of this species. P.

Morris (*in litt.* 2005) found a female of this species incubating a single egg in a flimsy nest c. 1 m off the ground on a palm frond in the Kali Batu Putih area in August 1996. This record and our own extend the known breeding season to September, show that nests may be placed on rattan palm fronds, and indicate that both sexes share incubation.

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Ornithological surveys of two reserves in Guangxi province, China, 2004–2005

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INTRODUCTION

Human impacts on natural landscapes of South-East Asia have been intense for thousands of years, but particularly so in south-eastern China and Vietnam during the past 50 years. This subregion is heavily populated and almost all lowland forests have been cleared. Areas with relief are highly disturbed, with virtually all forest being secondary (MacKinnon 1997, personal observations). Recently, reserves have been established to protect remnants of this formerly continuous swathe of tropical and subtropical

evergreen forest that once extended from the southern China coast south to northern Vietnam east of the Red River.

In September–October 2004 and April–May 2005, we surveyed parts of two recently established reserves in southern Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, People’s Republic of China (henceforth called Guangxi). The following ornithological results are part of a multi-year, multi-disciplinary survey of birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, and associated parasites across southern China.