BLACK-NAPED ORIOLE *Oriolus chinensis*
Two cup-shaped nests were located during January and March 1997 in the subcanopy of *Alstonia kurzii* and *Syzygium samarangense* trees at a height of 40 m and 42 m. The first pair built three incomplete nests and one complete nest during a 13 day period until the first egg was laid. Clutch size was two eggs (N=2), and mean egg size was 20.4 x 28.7 mm (N=2). On 11 February 1997 an Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis* (of which many nested in tree-holes in the same tree) was observed apparently sitting on the oriole nest for a few seconds. Once the adult oriole returned, it immediately left, and no further interactions were noted.

GREATER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO *Dicrurus paradiseus*
Eight nests were located between February and March 1997–1998 in the subcanopy of *Terminalia bialata* (N=2), *Celtis timorensis* (N=1) and *Macaranga peltata* (N=5) trees. Mean ± SE nest height was 17.3 ± 8.1 m (range: 8-35 m). Clutch size was two eggs (N=8), and mean egg size was 19.9 x 27.6 mm (N=2). Osmaston (1906) recorded mean dimensions of 20.8 x 28.7 mm for this species in the Andaman Islands.

HILL MYNA *Gracula religiosa*
Four nests were located during March and April 1998 in holes in *Terminalia bialata* (N=3) and *Terminalia catappa* (N=1) trees. Mean ± SE nest height was 18 ± 0.9 m (range: 17–20 m). Clutch size was two eggs (N=4), and mean egg size was 24.9 x 36.8 mm (N=8).

OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD *Nectarinia jugularis*
Six pendulous nests were located between February and September in 1997–1998 in a variety of bushes and trees including *Syzygium samarangense* and *Celtis timorensis*. Mean ± SE nest height was 3 ± 0.8 m (range: 1–5 m). Mean ± SE clutch size was 2.2 ± 0.2 eggs (range: 2–3 eggs); mean egg size was 15.3 x 11.8 mm (N=2), and mean ± SE egg mass was 8 ± 0.6 g (N=3).

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Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* in Malaysia: the first record for Asia

GRAHAM TEBB, PAUL K. VERON and MARKUS CRAIG

On 1 April 2000 we visited a power station on the west coast of peninsular Malaysia near the small town of Kapar (3º07´N 101º20´E), approximately 25 km south of Kuala Selangor and 40 km west of Kuala Lumpur. The cooling ponds of the power station are well known among local ornithologists as a roost for waders. We arrived around 16h30, timing our visit to coincide with high tide, when the highest concentration of birds is to be expected. In addition to a large number of waders, a flock of terns (Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* and White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*) was also present on the pools. Amongst them we noticed a single gull. Even a brief look was sufficient to reveal that it was neither of the two species listed in our field guides (Jeyarajasingam and Pearson 1999, Robson 2000a) as occurring in Malaysia. Our initial thought was that the bird was a Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*, a species with which we are very familiar, but in the absence of any other literature we were unable to eliminate the possibility that it was a species unknown to us. We thus observed the bird for about an hour, taking careful notes. The

light was good: the sky was slightly overcast but there was no precipitation and the sun was behind us. Unfortunately the bird never approached closer than 150 m and we were unable to photograph it.

The following description was recorded at the time. The gull was noticeably larger than a Gull-billed Tern but smaller (although naturally more 'massive') than a Caspian Tern. It was seen standing next to both of these species. Its bill was blood-red (darker than that of Caspian Tern) and approximately three quarters of the length of the head. The hood was very dark slate in colour and extended over the nape to the hindneck (in the same fashion as in an adult Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus* rather than in a Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*). The eye was bordered by pronounced white crescents above and below. The body was white with a slight pale pink suffusion on the breast. The legs were dark. The mantle and greater coverts were slate-grey. Particular attention was paid to the wing pattern: the tertials were very narrowly tipped white (seen clearly when the bird perched) and the primaries were very dark, with the wing-tips noticeably darker than the inner upperwing. In flight the bird showed absolutely no wing-mirrors at all but a white trailing edge could clearly be seen across the secondaries. The underwing revealed dark primaries and paler secondaries. The contrast was seen particularly well when the bird landed. The tail was uniformly white above and below. Several times the bird took to the air and landed again, and on two occasions it was seen to chase White-winged Terns. It also called (a single yelp), with the head pointing upwards.

When we returned to Europe, we checked our provisional identification and were immediately confident that the bird we had seen was an adult Laughing Gull in breeding plumage. The three authors independently spent a considerable time with the literature available (e.g. Harrison 1983, Grant 1986, del Hoyo *et al.* 1996) and each independently reached the same conclusion. The following sentences present a very brief summary of our considerations. The 'hooded' gulls recorded from South-East Asia were all easily eliminated. Pallas's Gull *L. ichthyaetus* is considerably larger and the breeding adult shows a largely yellow bill and white wing tips. Brown-headed Gull *L. brunnicephalus* has prominent white mirrors in the outer primaries. Black-headed Gull shows much less black in the primaries and the wings are overall much paler; in addition, the nape is white. Breeding Saunders' Gulls *L. saundersi* have shorter, darker bills, the outer primaries are largely white and the underwings show characteristic dark 'windows'. Finally, the rare Relict Gull *L. relictus* also shows white-tipped primaries. We thus turned to a consideration of extralimital species. Both Mediterranean and Little Gull *L. minutus* have much paler upperwings, while the underwings of Mediterranean Gull are pure white and those of Little Gull uniformly dark, none of which would fit the bird we observed. Andean Gull *L. serranus* shows extensive white on the primaries and very large mirrors (and has to our knowledge never been recorded outside of South America). Bonaparte's Gull *L. philadephia* is relatively small and shows an all-dark bill, extensive white in the outer primaries and a white leading edge to the outer wing. The species most frequently confused with Laughing Gull is Franklin's Gull *L. pipixcan*, but this shows prominent white mirrors on the outer primaries, and the bird we saw had none. In second-year plumage, Franklin's Gull frequently shows a wing pattern similar to that of Laughing Gull, but the large bill, the broken white 'eye-lids' and the all-white tail eliminate the possibility that the bird was a Franklin's Gull in this plumage. The light pinkish tinge to the underparts is more frequently seen in Franklin's Gull than in Laughing Gull, although it is not unknown in the latter species (K. M. Olsen *in litt.* 2002). We recognize that identification of gulls is notoriously difficult but the fact that the bird we observed was an adult in breeding plumage made identification comparatively straightforward. No part of the description is at variance with the identification as a Laughing Gull.

We thus alerted the ornithologists we knew in Malaysia in the hope that the bird could be relocated and photographed. Unfortunately, however, none of the local birdwatchers had time to visit the site. In addition, they informed us that access to the Kapar power station is restricted and permission must be sought in advance, which made it impossible for them to go there at short notice. Our sighting is thus documented solely by the notes we took at the time, reproduced above. We have submitted a full account to the Malaysian Records Committee (at the Bird Conservation Council, Malaysian Nature Society) but the Committee has yet to reach a decision.

The Laughing Gull breeds mainly in eastern North America, along the coasts of east New Brunswick and Nova Scotia south to Florida, around the Gulf of Mexico and through the Caribbean islands to the northern coast of Venezuela. It also breeds in southern California and western Mexico. During the non-breeding period it is widespread on the eastern coast of the Americas from the Gulf of Mexico south to the estuary of the River Amazon in Brazil and on the Pacific coast from southern Mexico to southern Peru (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). Small numbers are regularly found on the Hawaiian islands (Pratt *et al.* 1987) and vagrants have occurred on several atolls in the Pacific (Higgins and Davies 1996, and references therein).

Gulls are among the most widely recorded of vagrants, but the Laughing Gull, with its relatively short migration routes, is not especially prone to vagrancy. The species is regularly reported from Britain and Ireland, with typically 2–3 records per year, but sightings in the remainder of Europe are less frequent (Hoogendoorn and Steinhaus 1990, Alström *et al.* 1991). There have been several reports of the species from North Africa, e.g. Morocco (Andrews 1997, Dufourney 1997), and from West Africa (Baillon and Dubois 1992, Yésou and Triplet 1995) but to our knowledge there have been no confirmed sightings from further south in Africa. There exists a single report of an adult in Namibia from 9–13 March 1995 (D. Filby *in litt.* 2002; see also Robertson 1995) but this seems not to have been submitted to the appropriate rarities commission (P. Hockey *in litt.* 2002). The first record from Australia related to two birds seen in Cairns, Queensland in autumn 1988 (Fischer and Fischer 1989). Other Australian records were not long in following and by the end of 1989 the species had been reported an additional three times from widely separated localities

(Higgins and Davies 1996, and references therein).

As far as we have been able to ascertain, Laughing Gull was unknown in Asia before our observation (see also Robson 2000b). Shortly afterwards, however, there were a number of sightings in Japan. The first Laughing Gull for the country was observed and photographed on Hasaki, Ibaraki on 17 June 2000 (H. Ikenaga *in litt.* 2002; we have been unable to locate any published reference to the sighting). The second record came a mere nine days later on 26 June 2000, when one in second-year plumage was photographed on Iuo tou Island, near the Bonin islands (Watanabe 2001). On 9 September 2000 a Laughing Gull (possibly the same individual) was found and photographed at Toyohashi in Aichi prefecture (Yamagata 2001; see also Onishi 2000). This bird remained in the area until at least November. We are unaware of any records from the year 2001 but an adult Laughing Gull in breeding plumage was observed several times at Namasaki, Ibaraki prefecture and at nearby Choshi, Chiba prefecture from 26 May until 4 June 2002 (H. Ikenaga *in litt.* 2002).

The fact that the species represents a comparatively recent addition to the bird lists of such 'well-watched' countries as Australia and Japan suggests that the lack of records in Asia before our sighting may not have resulted solely from a comparative lack of interest in gulls in the region. Nevertheless, we hope that the present report will encourage others to devote more attention to this group and we are confident that further discoveries will result.

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Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria*: a new species for Pakistan

MARK MALLALIEU

In August 1987, following the failure of the monsoon, Rawal Lake, Islamabad, Pakistan (33°42´N 73°10´E) had large areas of exposed mud which attracted wader species seldom seen in inland Pakistan (Roberts 1991). These included a Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, several Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus* and