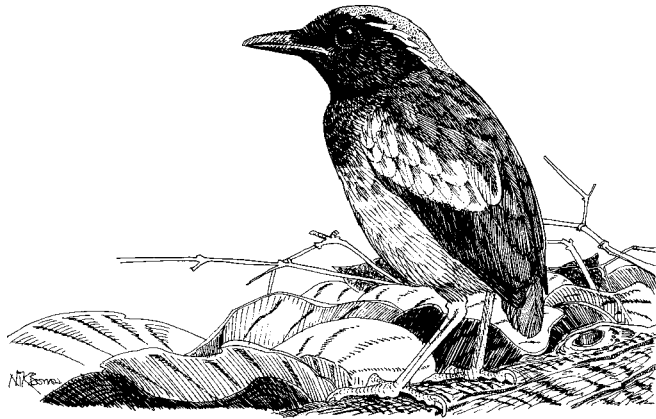


## THE MALAY PENINSULA

Monday 9th August – Sunday 22nd August 2010 (14 days)

Leader: Simon Harrap

Group Size Limit: 8



Garnet Pitta (Nik Borrow)

The long, narrow Malay Peninsula, which encompasses both West Malaysia and southern Thailand, offers some of the most exciting birding in South-East Asia, possessing an enormously rich avifauna. For birdwatchers it is the awe-inspiring rainforests that still survive here that are the prime attraction. Rainforests are the richest habitat on earth and those of South-East Asia are thought to be the oldest of all. There are more tree species found here than in the forests of Amazonia and this floristic wealth is reflected in the remarkable diversity of the forest avifauna. Formerly the entire peninsula was covered with these lush forests but clearance for rubber and oil-palm plantations and other uses has taken its toll.

The Malay Peninsula is definitely a classic destination for anyone wanting to see tropical Asian birds: after India and the Himalayas, Thailand and Vietnam, the next obvious gap on the Asian mainland is here. Good accommodations and food, and pleasant

travelling conditions, makes birding in the area a pleasure. This comprehensive tour concentrates on the finest areas for birds in West Malaysia.

First we shall visit the mangroves and coastal habitats at Kuala Selangor, where specialities include Mangrove Pitta, Mangrove Blue Flycatcher and, with luck, Buffy Fish Owl.

From the coast we will climb up into the highlands to Fraser's Hill, an attractive hill-station. The excellent broadleaved evergreen forests surrounding the resort offer a sharply contrasting avifauna to that of the lowlands, including many species of Himalayan origin such as Pygmy Wren-Babbler and Long-tailed Sibia, as well as more localized specialities like Fire-tufted Barbet, Black-and-crimson Oriole, Javan Cuckooshrike, the endemic Malayan Whistling Thrush, Rufous-browed and Pygmy Blue Flycatchers, Blue Nuthatch, the handsome Black Laughingthrush and the endemic Malayan Laughingthrush (split from Chestnut-crowned). More

difficult specialities include the endemic Malayan Partridge, Ferruginous Partridge, Mountain Peacock-Pheasant, Yellow-vented Green Pigeon, Rusty-naped Pitta and Marbled Wren-Babbler.

Finally, after travelling by boat into the interior of the peninsula, we shall come to the immense Taman Negara National Park. The reserve protects by far the largest remaining tract of virgin rain forest in the Malay Peninsula and is widely considered to be amongst the finest reserves in the world. A visit to Taman Negara is a profound experience for any naturalist. On entering the forest one is immediately overwhelmed by the awesome tranquillity and timelessness of this vast natural cathedral. Lofty evergreen trees with their huge buttress roots, luxuriant lower storey undergrowth, clambering lianas, spectacular butterflies and strange-looking insects are all integral features of this superbly-balanced and stable environment which is the end-product of millions of years of evolution.

The bewildering variety of birds, ranging from the stately Crested Fireback and magnificent Rhinoceros Hornbill to forest floor gems

like Garnet Pitta and Striped Wren-Babbler, includes the full range of South-East Asia's lowland forest families. Other specialities we have a good chance of observing include Black-thighed Falconet, the extraordinary Great Argus, Large Green Pigeon, Black-bellied Malkoha, Blue-rumped Parrot, Reddish Scops Owl, Rufous-backed Kingfisher, Banded Woodpecker, Banded Pitta, Black Magpie, Black-throated and White-necked Babbler, Large Wren-Babbler, Long-billed Spiderhunter and Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker. We should also come across at least one of Taman Negara's most difficult specialities, which include Crested Partridge, Malayan Peacock-Pheasant, Rufous-collared Kingfisher, Malaysian Honeyguide, the strange Rail-Babbler and Grey-chested Jungle Flycatcher.

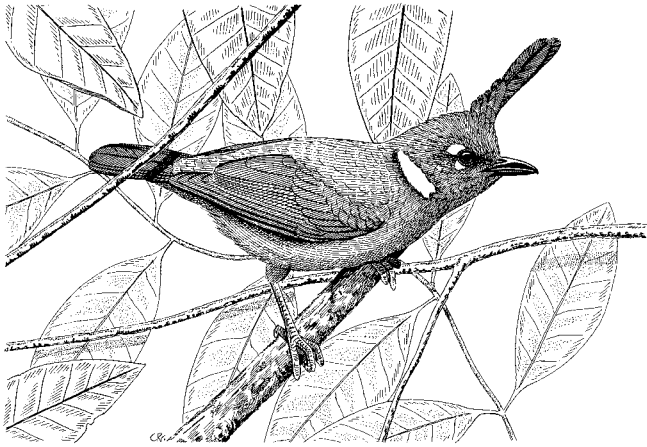
Birdquest has operated tours to the Malay Peninsula since 1987.

### Itinerary

**Day 1** Morning flight from London bound for Kuala Lumpur.

**Day 2** Morning arrival at Kuala Lumpur. From here we will drive to Kuala





Crested Jay (Craig Robson)

Selangor, situated on the west coast of West Malaysia, for an overnight stay. In the afternoon we will begin our exploration of the area. As dusk falls we should hear the rhythmic 'chonking' of Large-tailed Nightjar and pick one out on by its eyeshine, like blazing embers. A nocturnal foray here could turn up Collared Scops Owl and Brown Boobook (or Brown Hawk-Owl).

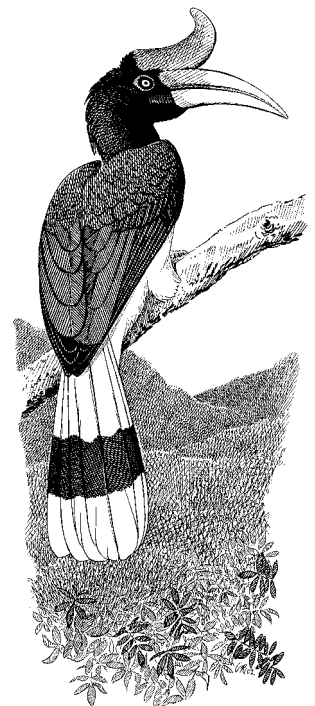
**Day 3** During the morning we will continue to explore Kuala Selangor Nature Park, which protects extensive areas of mangroves and intertidal mudflats. Specialities here include the brightly coloured Mangrove Pitta and Mangrove Blue Flycatcher. Amongst the many other species we may well encounter in this interesting area are Little and Great Egrets, Striated (or Little) Heron, Black-shouldered and Brahminy Kites, White-bellied Sea Eagle, White-breasted Waterhen, Pink-necked Green Pigeon, Peaceful Dove, Asian Koel, Greater Coucal, Germain's Swiftlet, House Swift, White-throated and Collared Kingfishers, Blue-throated Bee-eater, Dollarbird, Coppersmith Barbet, Laced and Sunda Pygmy Woodpeckers, Common Flameback, Pacific and Striated Swallows,

Common Iora, Yellow-vented and Olive-winged Bulbuls, Black-naped Oriole, House and Large-billed Crows, Abbott's Babbler, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Golden-bellied Gerygone, Common and Ashy Tailorbirds, Yellow-bellied Prinia, Pied Fantail, Mangrove Whistler, Paddyfield Pipit, Asian Glossy Starling, Common and Javan Mynas, Brown-throated and Olive-backed Sunbirds, Oriental White-eye and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. If we are lucky we will come across one or two of the scarcer birds of the area, which include Lesser Adjutant, Red Junglefowl, Little Bronze Cuckoo, Chestnut-bellied Malkoha, Pied Triller or even a roosting Buffy Fish-Owl. In addition, Silvered Leaf Monkeys are quite common here. Later we will drive to Fraser's Hill for a four nights stay, arriving in time for some initial exploration.

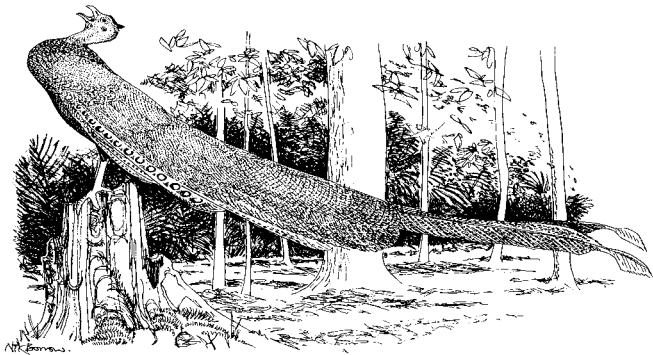
**Days 4-6** Fraser's Hill is an attractive hill-station set amidst mature montane forest. From the highest point in the area (at about 1300m) there is a breathtaking vista of forested hills stretching away as far as the eye can see. Trails run into the forest but in fact the low density of development means that many species can actually be found close

to the roads. The avifauna here is strikingly different from that of Taman Negara, consisting largely of montane forms. Major targets during our stay will include the endemic Malayan Whistling Thrush and Malayan Laughingthrush (split from Chestnut-crowned), as well as Fire-tufted Barbet, Black-and-crimson Oriole, Javan Cuckooshrike, Rufous-browed and Pygmy Blue Flycatchers, the handsome Black Laughingthrush and Blue Nuthatch. More difficult specialities, of which we will be lucky to see more than one or two, include the endemic Malayan Partridge, Ferruginous Partridge, Mountain Peacock-Pheasant, Yellow-vented Green Pigeon, the elusive Rusty-naped Pitta (easy to hear but a devil to see!) and Marbled Wren-Babbler. The thickly vegetated treetops shelter larger species like Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Little Cuckoo-Dove, Green-billed Malkoha and Black-browed Barbet. Skulking in the understorey are many subtler, though no less interesting birds, such as Streaked and Pygmy Wren-Babblers, and Lesser Shortwing. Long-tailed Broadbill and Green Magpie are amongst the more colourful forest inhabitants, though hard to see, while hiding in the darker forest recesses will be Red-headed Trogon. An excellent variety of more widespread flycatchers occur, with Verditer, Little Pied, Hill Blue and Grey-headed Canary Flycatchers, as well as Large Niltava, all possible. Other species that we are likely to encounter include Blyth's Hawk Eagle, Glossy Swiftlet, Asian Palm-Swift, Orange-breasted Trogon, Red-bearded Bee-eater, Speckled Piculet, Greater and Lesser Yellownapes, Silver-breasted Broadbill, Grey-chinned Minivet, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Black-crested, Ochraceous and Mountain Bulbuls, Bronzed, Lesser Racket-tailed and Greater

Racket-tailed Drongos, the spectacular Sultan Tit, Large Scimitar Babbler, Buff-breasted Babbler, Golden and Grey-throated Babblers, Chestnut-capped Laughingthrush, Silver-eared Mesia, White-browed and Black-eared Shrike-Babblers, Blue-winged Minla, Mountain Fulvetta, Long-tailed Sibia, White-bellied Yuhina, Slaty-backed Forktail, Yellow-bellied, Chestnut-crowned and Mountain Leaf Warblers, Mountain Tailorbird, White-throated Fantail, Everett's White-eye, Black-throated Sunbird, Streaked Spiderhunter and Fire-breasted Flowerpecker. We are also likely to encounter at least one or two of the area's uncommon but widespread inhabitants, which include Rufous-bellied Eagle, Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Large Hawk-Cuckoo, Sunda Cuckoo (split from Oriental), Collared Owllet, Wreathed and Helmeted Hornbills, Bay Woodpecker, Ashy Bulbul, Himalayan Cutia and Collared Babbler (split from White-hooded).



Rhinoceros Hornbill (Craig Robson)

*Great Argus (Nik Borrow)*

Amongst the local mammals, we can expect to see a variety of squirrels, as well as Banded Leaf Monkeys and, if we are lucky, a family of Siamangs. The latter are a large species of black gibbon, and their extraordinary vocalizations can frequently be heard echoing around the hills in the early mornings.

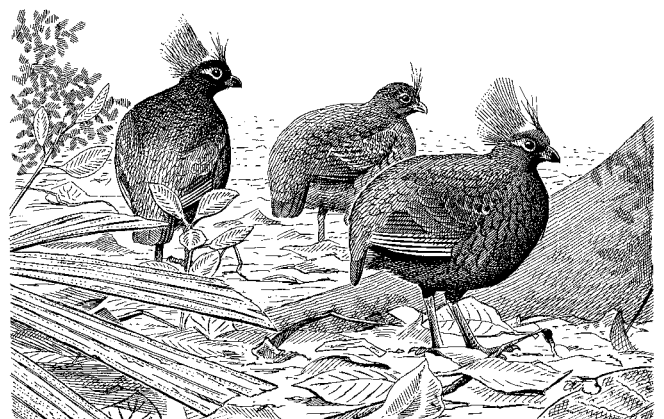
**Day 7** After some final birding at Fraser's Hill we will travel to Taman Negara National Park for a six nights stay. First we drive through forest and large areas of rubber and oil-palm plantations to Kuala Tembeling and then we shall travel by boat for nearly 60km upriver to the park's headquarters and lodge at Kuala Tahan. Although we will not be able to identify many birds from the motorized longboats, the journey itself is an unforgettable experience. As we gradually leave civilization behind, we enter pristine rainforest.

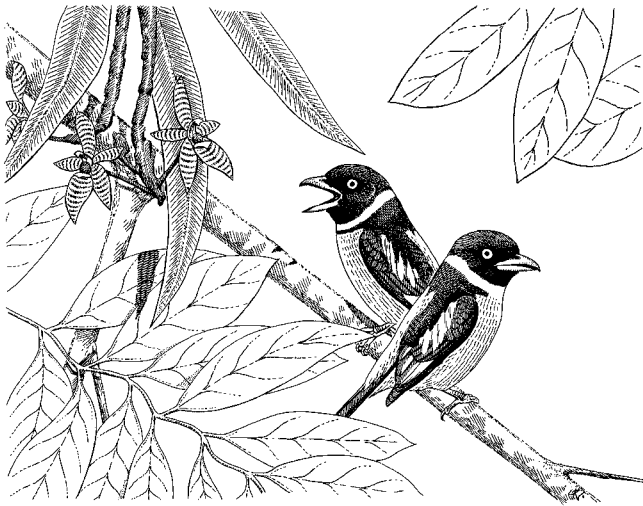
**Days 8-12** Taman Negara is Malaysia's foremost national park, protecting over 4300 square kilometres of virgin tropical rainforest extending from the lowlands to the highlands. The upland areas of the park are very hard to reach, so we shall

concentrate on the more diverse lowlands. There are no roads inside the park, but an excellent network of trails allows access to many areas. There is a fantastic variety of fauna and flora within the park and many bird families reach their greatest diversity in rainforests such as this. Woodpeckers are a typical example and we will be in with a good chance of seeing Rufous Piculet, Rufous, Crimson-winged, Checker-throated, Banded, Buff-rumped, Buff-necked, Great Slaty, White-bellied, Grey-capped, Maroon and Orange-backed Woodpeckers and also Greater Flameback. There is an equally wide variety of bulbuls, with likely species including Black-headed, Puff-backed, Stripe-throated, Cream-vented, Red-eyed, Spectacled, Grey-cheeked, Yellow-bellied, Hairy-backed, Buff-vented and Streaked. Inside the forest, sounds are all-important. A host of babblers are also found here, and we should see Black-capped, Short-tailed, Ferruginous, Moustached, Sooty-capped, Scaly-crowned, Rufous-crowned, Chestnut-rumped and Black-throated Babblers, Chestnut-winged and Striped Tit-Babblers, and Striped Wren-Babbler, and perhaps also Chestnut-backed Scimitar Babbler, Fluffy-

backed Tit-Babbler, Large Wren-Babbler and Brown Fulvetta. One of the best ways of seeing large numbers of species is to find a fruiting tree and wait nearby as fruit-eating birds fly in to reap the forest's bounty. The park's wide variety of frugivores include Thick-billed, Little and Large Green Pigeons, Blue-rumped Parrot, Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot, Black, Oriental Pied and Rhinoceros Hornbills, Gold-whiskered, Red-throated, Yellow-crowned, Blue-eared and Brown Barbets, the gorgeous Green Broadbill (which seems to glow like an emerald amongst the leaves), and Yellow-breasted, Crimson-breasted and Orange-bellied Flowerpeckers. The park is well-watered and the variously sized rivers and streams provide niche habitats for a variety of more striking species. Along the larger waterways we will watch for resting Stork-billed and Blue-banded Kingfishers and listen for the beautiful melodious song of Straw-headed Bulbul. The smaller streams and rivulets support the tiny, dazzling Rufous-backed Kingfisher and striking White-crowned Forktail, as well as the more sombre White-chested and Horsfield's Babblers. We will no doubt hear the frustratingly hard-to-locate

call of the Garnet Pitta and we should eventually be able to track down this gem of the forest glowing in the shadows as it calls from a low perch. Other typical forest and edge species that we will search for include Crested (or Oriental) Honey Buzzard, Crested Serpent Eagle, Black-thighed Falconet, Crested Fireback, Emerald Dove, Long-tailed Parakeet, Banded Bay, Plaintive and Drongo Cuckoos, Black-bellied, Raffles's, Red-billed and Chestnut-breasted Malkohas, Silver-rumped and Brown-backed Needletails, Grey-rumped and Whiskered Treeswifts, Red-naped, Diard's and Scarlet-rumped Trogons, Banded Kingfisher, Black-and-red, Banded and Dusky Broadbills, the striking Black-and-yellow Broadbill, the attractive Banded Pitta, Bar-winged and Black-winged Flycatcher-shrikes, Lesser Cuckooshrike, Large Woodshrike, Scarlet Minivet, Green Iora, Greater Green, Lesser Green and Blue-winged Leafbirds, Dark-throated Oriole, Asian Fairy-Bluebird, Black Magpie, the bizarre Crested Jay, White-rumped Shama, Dark-necked and Rufous-tailed Tailorbirds, Rufous-chested and Tickell's Blue Flycatchers, Rufous-winged and Maroon-breasted Philentomas, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Black-naped

*Crested Partridges (Craig Robson)*



*Black-and-yellow Broadbills (Craig Robson)*

Monarch, Hill Myna, Plain, Red-throated, Ruby-cheeked and Purple-naped Sunbirds, and Little, Spectacled, Yellow-eared and Grey-breasted Spiderhunters. Although we shall hear the loud calls of the Great Argus every day, for most of the time one has to be very fortunate indeed to catch even a glimpse of this huge but elusive pheasant, but from time to time a male becomes habituated to the presence of people and will stand guard over its dancing ground seemingly oblivious to one's presence! We should come across a few of Taman Negara's other shy or more

uncommon inhabitants, which include Lesser Fish Eagle, the extraordinary Crested Partridge, Malayan Peacock-Pheasant, Jambu Fruit Dove, Rufous-collared Kingfisher, White-crowned and Wrinkled Hornbills, Malaysian Honeyguide, Grey-and-buff Woodpecker, Scaly-breasted and Black-and-white Bulbuls, Fiery Minivet, White-necked Babbler, the strange Rail-Babbler, Rufous-tailed Shama, Grey-chested Jungle and Malaysian Blue Flycatchers, Spotted Fantail and Long-billed Spiderhunter. As evening descends we may hear

the distinctive whistles of Malaysian Eared Nightjars as they patrol the darkening skies around the headquarters. We will venture out in search of other nightbirds and with luck we will find Reddish Scops Owl and perhaps even one of the more difficult species such as Gould's or Javan Frogmouths. A wide variety of mammals occur in Taman Negara but, apart from Crab-eating Macaque and a variety of squirrels, most are rather retiring. However, we should encounter Wild Boar and Lesser Malay Mouse-Deer.

**Day 13** After some final birding in Taman Negara we will return by boat to Kuala Tembeling and then drive back to Kuala Lumpur. After dinner we will catch a late evening flight bound for London.

**Day 14** Morning arrival at London.

**Accommodation & Road**

**Transport:** The hotels/lodges are of normal Birdquest standard throughout. Road transport is by small coach and roads are good.

**Walking:** The walking effort is easy to moderate.

**Climate:** At lower altitudes many days are hot, dry and

sunny, but overcast and rainy weather is not infrequent. At higher altitudes at Fraser's Hill conditions are similar but temperatures range from warm to cool. It is often very humid in the lowlands.

**Bird Photography:**

Opportunities are worthwhile.

**Tour Price:** £2770, €3269, \$4571 London/London (or £1980, €2336, \$3267 Kuala Lumpur/Kuala Lumpur). Please note that the London/London price includes the peak season airfare that applies for travel in July/August. Price includes all transportation (including all flights), all accommodations, all meals, bottled water, some drinks, all excursions, all entrance fees, all tips for local drivers/guides and for accommodations/restaurants, leader services.

**Single Room Supplement:**

£242, €286, \$399.

**Deposit:** £300, €354, \$495. If booking more than 12 months before departure, the initial deposit is only £150, €177, \$248.

**Linking Birdquests:** This tour can be linked with Borneo. Please contact us for further information.