

First Nest and Egg of the Sumatran-endemic Rusty-breasted Wren-babbler *Napothera rufipectus*

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Ringkasan: Berencet Dada-karat *Napothera rufipectus* adalah jenis endemik pegunungan montana di Sumatera yang informasi mengenai biologi pembiaknya sampai saat ini belum didokumentasikan. Pada bulan Agustus 2009, sarang pertama jenis ini ditemukan di Gunung Kerinci, Sumatera Barat, sekitar 2,200 meter dpa. Pengamatan yang dilakukan terhadap jumlah dan warna telur lebih memperkuat pendapat bahwa jenis ini memang terpisah secara alopatrik dari Berencet Besar *N. macrodactyla*.

The Rusty-breasted Wren-babbler *Napothera rufipectus* is a babbler (Pellorneidae) endemic to Sumatra where it occurs in lower and upper montane forest between c. 900 and 2,500m asl (van Marle & Voous 1988; Holmes 1996)). It occurs in mountains including isolated mountain tops (van Marle & Voous *loc cit*) throughout Sumatra from Singkut, near Brestagi in the north to Gunung Kerinci in the west (Holmes 1996). This species is absent from the lowlands where it is replaced by the allopatric and geographically wider-ranging Large Wren-babbler *N. macrodactyla*. Although Chasen (1935) and Delacour (1950) considered this species conspecific with *macrodactyla* it is now generally treated as a separate species endemic to Sumatra (e.g. Voous 1950; Collar & Robson 2007).

Rusty-breasted Wren-babbler is locally common on or near the forest floor in dense vegetation within the understorey of montane forests (MacKinnon & Phillipps 1993). Our experience of this species is similar in that we found this species to be common on the summit trail of Gunung Kerinci and heard or saw it daily between 5 and 9 August 2009. Prior to our observations nothing appears to have been published about the breeding biology of this species (Collar & Robson 2007).

On 5 August 2009 at 17:00 hrs we flushed a Rusty-breasted Wren-babbler from its nest while walking along the trail about 100 m below Camp Cochoa, Gunung Kerinci, in central-western Sumatra at c. 2,200 m asl in Upper Montane Forest (per van Marle & Voous 1988). The nest was situated c. 0.5m from the main summit trail and was wrapped around the branches of a leaning woody tree c. 1 m off the ground (Plate 1). There were many herbaceous climbers surrounding the nest which served to conceal it despite its proximity to the well-used summit trail. It was a shallow cup-shaped structure which was, based on the photograph of the bird at nest (Plate 2), c. 12 cm in diameter and 6-8 cm deep. It was constructed from dead leaves, twigs and hairs.

The bird flew off from the nest soon after we discovered it. We therefore took the opportunity to check its contents, which revealed a single pale brownish blunt-ended but ovate egg lacking any speckles, blotches or lines. We did not photograph or measure the egg since it was an active nest. The adult bird returned to the nest

after c. 30 min and resumed incubation. No other birds were seen in the vicinity of the nest during more than 60 min of observation.

On 9 August 2009, we again saw the bird incubating at the above nest and again the bird flew off. We checked the nest and noted there was still only one egg. There appeared to be only one bird incubating the nest during the one-hour period we were present. The bird was apparently aware of our presence as it hopped on or near the ground and looked nervously around for about 10 min before hopping onto the nest to resume incubation. During the two days on which we observed the nest we did not hear any vocalisations attributable to the species.



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Plate 1. Nest site of Rusty-breasted Wren-babbler *Napothera rufipectus* at c.2,200m asl, Gunung Kerinci, Sumatra. Arrow indicates position of the nest.



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Plate 2. Rusty-breasted Wren-babbler *Napothera rufipectus* at its nest at c.2,200m asl, Gunung Kerinci, Sumatra.

The nest of the Rufous-breasted Wren-babbler that we observed, and its placement, seem consistent with those of the Large Wren-babbler, which is described as a large cup of dead leaves, c. 10 cm in diameter and 6 cm deep, lined with a thin layer of twigs, roots and hairs, and built into the frond axils of a rattan or pandan, or crown of a spiny palm, 0.4 -1.3m off the ground (Collar & Robson 2007; Wells 2007). However, the single, unmarked egg we observed contrasts with descriptions for the Large Wren-babbler, which is said to lay a clutch of two eggs that are pale pinkish-white or pinkish-red, irregularly marked with dark reddish-pink or brownish spots or blotches, flecks and lines or squiggles (Collar & Robson 2007; Wells 2007). The significant differences in clutch size and egg coloration between Rufous-breasted Wren-babbler and Large Wren-babbler would appear to further strengthen the case for treating them as separate species.

Our observations suggest that the breeding season of the Rusty-breasted Wren-babbler includes late July or early August, broadly fitting within that of the Large Wren-babbler in Peninsula Malaysia, which comprises April to July, September and December (Wells 2007), although in West Java most clutches appear to be laid in February and December (Hellebrekers & Hoogerwerf 1967).

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