

Recent Records of Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* in Java

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Ringkasan. Alapalap Walet *Falco subbuteo* merupakan burung pemangsa migran yang jarang tercatat di Indonesia. Dalam pengamatan di Puncak, Bogor, Jawa Barat, yang dilakukan sepanjang September-November 2012, tercatat kehadiran lima individu Alap-alap Walet. Tulisan ini menguraikan tiap perjumpaan yang ada dan mendiskusikan indikasi kehadirannya yang lebih umum dari yang selama ini diperkirakan.

Introduction

The Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* breeds across Asia, Africa, and Europe. It is a long-distance migrant, wintering south to sub-Saharan Africa, Indian sub-continent (except Srilanka) and Asia. It is a rare to local passage migrant in South-east Asia (Robson 2000). In Indonesia, this species is a rare visitor with only two previous specimens and two unconfirmed sightings. The first was of a specimen of an immature collected by Bacelar in January 1876 from East Timor (see Bruce 1978). The second was a female collected by Bartels on 12th February 1927 (Mees 1971), with the location given as Pangrango, (sic; presumably Gn. Pangrango in West Java), subsequent to these records. Sukmantoro (2007) reported twelve birds seen during observations on the Greater Sundas and Nusa Tenggara between 2001-2004, but no other details given. Finally a single bird was reported hunting over Pulau Rambut, West Java, on 6th December 2008 by Simon Cockayne and Piet Opsteale (Nick Brickle, pers. comm.).

Observations

Between 29 September and 8 November 2012 teams of observers were positioned at Bukit Paralayang, Puncak, Bogor, West Java (6°41'S, 106°59'E) to monitor migrating raptors. Observations were made on 2-3 mornings per week (from 05.30am onwards). As part of these monitoring surveys, I recorded five individual Eurasian Hobby on four separate days within a one month period. Details of all the encounters are described below.

On 9 October 2012 at 07:40hrs one adult was seen flying close to a flock of Chinese Sparrowhawks *Accipiter soloensis* (Plate 1). The weather was cloudy and windy. At first, I identified it as a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, but subsequent examination of photographs by a number of people confirmed the identification as Eurasian Hobby. The bird was a small raptor, long-winged, with rufous thighs and vent, creamy white underparts, heavily streaked with black.

On 30 October 2012 at 12:35hrs a single juvenile was seen soaring very high. Following my experience with the first encounter the identification of this second bird was straightforward. The bird was identified as a juvenile on account of a generally browner underparts with lighter streaking (Plate 2).

On 6 November 2012 two observations were made, the first at 10:40hrs of an adult flying low then gliding into the forest (Plate 3) and the second at 10:55hrs of another adult assumed to be a second bird soaring very high with a group of Chinese Sparrowhawks (Plate 4).

On 8 November 2012 at 13:12hrs a single adult was observed flying with six Chinese Sparrowhawks (Plate 5).

Discussion

These repeated sightings of a species formerly considered to be very rare in Java are unusual. They may suggest that Eurasian Hobby is more common than previously thought and simply overlooked, or that the observations reported here are exceptional. Raptor migration monitoring has been conducted annually in the Puncak area since 1996 and these are the first records of Eurasian Hobby. The records presented here bring a number of previous unconfirmed observations of Hobby spp into question. In March and April 1997 van Balen observed a single hobby hunting bats in the Bogor Botanical Garden, West Java. The bird looked quite pale below and at the time was assumed to be Oriental Hobby *F. severus*, but the observations were made just before dawn in poor light and the identification remains unclear (van Balen pers. comm.). Hoogerwerf also reported Oriental Hobby from the same area in the 1940s during the winter months, and some of them may well have been Eurasian Hobby (van Balen pers. comm.).

With the increasing number of experienced observers now active in Java (and Indonesia) it is possible that sightings of Eurasian Hobby will now increase. In addition, the greater use of digital photography can support the identification of birds, as proved by the sightings reported here. We recommend all birdwatchers active in the region pay close attention to the identification of any small raptors encountered in future.

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Plate 1. First encounter with adult Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* at Bukit Paralayang, Puncak, Bogor on 9 October 2012, 07:40.



Plate 2. Juvenile Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*. 30 October 2012, 12:35.



Plate 3. Adult Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*. 6 November 2012, 10:40.



Plate 4. Adult Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* soaring high. 6 November 2012, 10:55.



Plate 5. Adult Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* flying high. 8 November 2012, 13:12.