

Trip report: Taman Negara, Malaysia (18/04/2018 - 24/04/2018)

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Birding in the lowland rainforests of Southeast Asia is something I will probably never get bored of. This short report summarises my second independent trip to Taman Negara (Kuala Tahan side) in Peninsula Malaysia I embarked on with my partner.

Main Locations Birded

Taman Negara



Blue-banded Kingfisher

Planning the trip

I had some [prior experience](#) with the Kuala Tahan side of Taman Negara and just followed what I previously did.

Field Guide used: Robson, C. (2008). Birds of South-East Asia Second Edition. Bloomsbury Publishing.

General Logistics

Transport

Since we were based in Singapore, we took an overnight train from Johor Bahru (JB) to Jerantut. We booked our two-way train tickets on easybook.com and exchanged both tickets at JB Sentral. There were sleeper decks for both ways but we were unable to book those for the JB – Jerantut section (and could not upgrade our tickets at the train station either).

The train left JB at 2015 and reached Jerantut station around 0630. There were already several taxi drivers waiting at the station upon our arrival and we engaged one of them to get to Kuala Tahan. The journey was about 1 hour 20 minutes and cost 100RM. There are buses from Jerantut to Kuala Tahan (likely from the terminal at GPS: 3.939780, 102.357821) but we opted to take the taxi to save time.

For our return journey, we took the bus from Kuala Tahan to Jerantut. It left Kuala Tahan around 1700 (the timing seemed to vary and we checked with our accommodation's staffs to be sure). The cost was 7RM per person and ride was about 1 hour 30 minutes. The food courts at GPS: 3.939660, 102.359874 were open past midnight and we spent time there as our train back to JB was scheduled for 0220 the next day morning. The train arrived slightly late and reached JB around 1100.

Food

There were plenty of shops and convenience stores in the town of Kuala Tahan where we purchased snacks for the field. There was also a water dispenser in Mutiara resort (the entrance to Taman Negara) where we could refill our bottles. The restaurants in Kuala Tahan were open throughout the day (and until quite late, at least till around 2200) and food was hence not an issue at all.

Accommodation

Taman Negara Travellers Lodge

Booked via booking.com. I stayed here on my first trip as well. Unfortunately, the wifi was not working from our room so I was unable to get any work done. There were no water dispensers unlike my first trip either. The balcony had a clothesline to hang our manually washed laundry.

Birding

Kuala Tahan is separated from Taman Negara itself by a narrow river and the 1-minute boat ride across (from GPS: 4.383749, 102.401164) was 1RM. The entrance fee and camera permit (effective for the whole trip) was a total of 6RM per person.

Bird activity was low in the day and we hence birded in the morning, returned to Kuala Tahan for lunch and a short nap, before birding again from about 1600.

Mutiara resort

The numerous fruiting trees within the resort compound attracted frugivores including **Asian Fairy-bluebirds, bulbuls** (nine species within one hour in the late morning, though sadly no rarities like the Black-and-white Bulbul) and **pigeons (Thick-billed and Little)**. Here we also managed unbeatable views of **Golden-whiskered, Blue-eared and Yellow-crowned Barbets** that were otherwise heard only inside the forest.

Swamp Loop and Tahan Hide

The entrance towards this area was immediately to the right of the national park headquarters. Tahan Hide offered good views of a clearing with a huge fruiting tree in the middle. We did not spend much time birding this area in the day, but night birded the loop multiple times. The hide and main trail were packed with tour groups from the resort every night (the tours started around 2000) but only a few groups entered the loop where we focused on. The species assemblage was strangely never consistent within the short loop. Over the few nights we heard **Brown Hawk-owl, Reddish Scops Owls**, several **Oriental Bay Owls** and **Gould's Frogmouths** but only managed to see one **Sunda Scops Owl**. There was an annoying **Large Frogmouth** that called every time we visited but it never showed up.

Kumbang Hide

Kumbang hide is located upstream along the river and we decided to spend a night there in hope to find some mammals. There is a need to register and book a bed with the national park before staying over at Kumbang Hide. During my previous trip, I had to share the hide with two other big groups which made mammaling and night birding difficult. Hence, we decided to book the whole hide (total of 12 beds in Kumbang, 5RM per bed, so 60RM total) following what other birders have done, although this did not deter two other park users to crash the hide that night anyway.

The journey to the hide via the trails is about 10km long, so rather than making the hike, we engaged a boatman in Kuala Tahan (at the same place where the rides across to Taman Negara depart from) to bring us to the nearest "jetty" called Kuala Terenggan and pick us up on the next day. The two-way cost was 225RM in total and each boat ride was about 1 hour. We purchased plenty of water and food at Kuala Tahan before heading there. The hide had no water source (apart from the stream) nor toilet facilities.

The walk from Kuala Terenggan "jetty" to Kumbang Hide was about 2km and we spent the day birding around this general area. Birding was fairly decent and here we encountered **Malayan Peacock-pheasant, Grey-chested Jungle Flycatcher, Orange-backed Woodpecker** and **Garnet Pitta**. We also managed to tape an unexpected response from a **Giant Pitta** once but could not find it. Birding from the hide itself was productive, with species seen including **Red-billed Malkoha, Bronzed Drongo, Greater Green Leafbird, Violet Cuckoo, Large Green Pigeon** and **Wreathed Hornbill** among others.



We did not venture too far from the hide for our night birding session but were able to connect with a **Reddish Scops Owl** at the first stream crossing from the hide (only about 200m away). Other heard only night birds included **Malaysian Eared Nightjar**, **Brown Hawk-owl** and **Gould's Frogmouth**.

In hope of finding mammals – especially the Malayan Tapir – we stayed up and waited in the dark hide at two hour shifts to listen for movements but all we saw was one wild boar.



Reddish Scops Owl

Lubok Simpon

The trails to the left from the national park headquarters led to a recreational spot by the river called Lubok Simpon (about 1km from the resort), then to Jenut Muda within less than 100m, and eventually to Tabing Hide. We heard a **Crested Partridge** at the trailhead once.

We spent multiple evenings at Lubok Simpon as there was a terrific clearing for flybys. A pair of very friendly **Blue-banded Kingfisher** was regular here (cover photo) and flocks of **Silver-rumped Spinetails** and **Brown-backed Needletails** circled the sky every evening. Other significant flybys included **Blue-rumped Parrot**, **Large Green Pigeon** (quite easily encountered at clearings in Taman Negara), **Large** and **Bar-bellied Cuckooshrike**, as well as **Black** and **Wrinkled Hornbills**. On one evening we caught a glimpse of what-must-have-been-a-darn-Bat-Hawk but we never saw this bird again. We night birded from Lubok Simpon back to Mutiara resort twice and on one occasion found a **Blyth's Frogmouth** along the main trail at the staircase right before Lubok Simpon.

Jenut Muda

We birded Jenut Muda from the main junction all the way until the first (and very obvious) stream crossing (not a bridge across a stream, but a proper stream crossing) and back on three occasions. The path after the stream crossing is supposed to be a known site for a Great Argus lek but we regrettably did not visit the area.

This trail was one of the most productive sites during our trip. There were multiple vocal **Malayan Banded Pittas** along the whole trail, one of which we managed to find after some effort. We were also surrounded by a troop of eight **Crested Firebacks** once and they gave us quite a good show by chasing each other around and tripping over branches.

This was also where we managed to see the **Garnet Pitta** properly (that we heard many times throughout the forest) after several days of trying. This species, seemingly with an evil preference for the most impenetrable of places, was shockingly friendly once we managed to track it down and we walked away from the bird after 40 minutes of point-blank views. Other key species we encountered at Jenut Muda included the **Diard's** and **Red-naped Trogon**, **Large Wren-babbler** (a flock of at least three birds near the stream crossing) and **Maroon Woodpecker**. We also taped a response from yet another **Giant Pitta** but were frustratingly not able to find it.



Garnet Pitta



Large Wren-babbler

Tabing Hide

We visited Tabing hide just once in hope to find the Malaysian Honeyguide that I saw during my previous trip. We unfortunately drew blank but were instead rewarded with top down views of a beautiful **Crested Jay** here. A **Red-throated Barbet** was also excavating a tree hole, presumably with the aspiration to make more Red-throated Barbets in the near future.



Red-throated Barbet

Systematic List of Birds

128 species seen, 39 heard only

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows Gill F, D Donsker & P Rasmussen (Eds). 2020. IOC World Bird List (v10.1). doi : 10.14344/IOC.ML.10.1.

TN = Taman Negara

HO = Heard Only

No	English Name	Latin Name	TN
1	Crested Partridge	<i>Rollulus rouloul</i>	HO
2	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>	
3	Crested Fireback	<i>Lophura ignita</i>	
4	Malayan Peacock-pheasant	<i>Polyplectron malacense</i>	
5	Great Argus	<i>Argusianus argus</i>	HO
6	Large Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus auritus</i>	HO
7	Gould's Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus stellatus</i>	HO
8	Blyth's Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus affinis</i>	
9	Malaysian Eared Nightjar	<i>Lyncornis temminckii</i>	
10	Large-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus macrurus</i>	HO
11	Grey-rumped Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne longipennis</i>	
12	Plume-toed Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia affinis</i>	
13	Silver-rumped Spinetail	<i>Rhaphidura leucopygialis</i>	
14	Brown-backed Needletail	<i>Hirundapus giganteus</i>	
15	House Swift	<i>Apus nipalensis</i>	
16	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	HO
17	Raffles's Malkoha	<i>Rhinortha chlorophaea</i>	
18	Red-billed Malkoha	<i>Zanclostomus javanicus</i>	
19	Chestnut-breasted Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus curvirostris</i>	
20	Violet Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus</i>	
21	Banded Bay Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis sonneratii</i>	HO
22	Plaintive Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis merulinus</i>	
23	Rusty-breasted Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis sepulcralis</i>	HO
24	Square-tailed Drongo-cuckoo	<i>Surniculus lugubris</i>	
25	Malaysian Hawk-cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx fugax</i>	HO
26	Indian Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus micropterus</i>	
27	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	
28	Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>	
29	Little Green Pigeon	<i>Treron olax</i>	
30	Thick-billed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron curvirostra</i>	
31	Large Green Pigeon	<i>Treron capellei</i>	
32	Mountain Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula badia</i>	
33	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	HO
34	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	
35	Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>	
36	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	
37	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	

38	Crested Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	
39	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	
40	Blyth's Hawk-eagle	<i>Nisaetus alboniger</i>	
41	Rufous-bellied Eagle	<i>Lophotriorchis kienerii</i>	
42	White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	
43	Oriental Bay Owl	<i>Phodilus badius</i>	HO
44	Reddish Scops Owl	<i>Otus rufescens</i>	
45	Sunda Scops Owl	<i>Otus lempiji</i>	
46	Brown Hawk-owl	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>	HO
47	Red-naped Trogon	<i>Harpactes kasumba</i>	
48	Diard's Trogon	<i>Harpactes diardii</i>	
49	Scarlet-rumped Trogon	<i>Harpactes duvaucelii</i>	
50	Rhinoceros Hornbill	<i>Buceros rhinoceros</i>	HO
51	Great Hornbill	<i>Buceros bicornis</i>	HO
52	Helmeted Hornbill	<i>Rhinoplax vigil</i>	HO
53	Oriental Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthraceros albirostris</i>	HO
54	Black Hornbill	<i>Anthraceros malayanus</i>	
55	Wreathed Hornbill	<i>Rhyticeros undulatus</i>	
56	Wrinkled Hornbill	<i>Rhabdotorrhinus corrugatus</i>	
57	Oriental Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>	
58	Banded Kingfisher	<i>Lacedo pulchella</i>	
59	Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>	
60	Blue-banded Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo euryzona</i>	
61	Blue-eared Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo meninting</i>	HO
62	Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx erithaca</i>	HO
63	Red-bearded Bee-eater	<i>Nyctornis amictus</i>	HO
64	Blue-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops viridis</i>	
65	Golden-whiskered Barbet	<i>Psilopogon chrysopogon</i>	
66	Red-throated Barbet	<i>Psilopogon mystacophanos</i>	
67	Yellow-crowned Barbet	<i>Psilopogon henricii</i>	
68	Blue-eared Barbet	<i>Psilopogon duvaucelii</i>	
69	Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Yungipicus canicapillus</i>	HO
70	White-bellied Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus javensis</i>	HO
71	Banded Woodpecker	<i>Chrysophlegma miniaceum</i>	
72	Checker-throated Woodpecker	<i>Chrysophlegma mentale</i>	
73	Crimson-winged Woodpecker	<i>Picus puniceus</i>	
74	Maroon Woodpecker	<i>Blythipicus rubiginosus</i>	
75	Orange-backed Woodpecker	<i>Reinwardtipicus validus</i>	
76	Buff-rumped Woodpecker	<i>Meiglyptes tristis</i>	
77	Buff-necked Woodpecker	<i>Meiglyptes tukki</i>	
78	Great Slaty Woodpecker	<i>Mulleripicus pulverulentus</i>	HO
79	Black-thighed Falconet	<i>Microhierax fringillarius</i>	
80	Blue-rumped Parrot	<i>Psittinus cyanurus</i>	
81	Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus galgulus</i>	
82	Black-and-red Broadbill	<i>Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchos</i>	HO
83	Banded Broadbill	<i>Eurylaimus javanicus</i>	

84	Black-and-yellow Broadbill	<i>Eurylaimus ochromalus</i>	
85	Green Broadbill	<i>Calyptomena viridis</i>	
86	Giant Pitta	<i>Hydrornis caeruleus</i>	HO
87	Malayan Banded Pitta	<i>Hydrornis irena</i>	
88	Garnet Pitta	<i>Erythropitta granatina</i>	
89	Blue-winged Pitta	<i>Pitta moluccensis</i>	HO
90	Golden-bellied Gerygone	<i>Gerygone sulphurea</i>	HO
91	Black-winged Flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus hirundinaceus</i>	
92	Rufous-winged Philentoma	<i>Philentoma pyrhoptera</i>	
93	Green Iora	<i>Aegithina viridissima</i>	
94	Bar-bellied Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina striata</i>	
95	Large Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>	
96	White-bellied Erpornis	<i>Erpornis zantholeuca</i>	
97	Dark-throated Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthonotus</i>	HO
98	Bronzed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>	
99	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>	
100	Spotted Fantail	<i>Rhipidura perlata</i>	
101	Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>	
102	Blyth's Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone affinis</i>	
103	Crested Jay	<i>Platylophus galericulatus</i>	
104	Black Magpie	<i>Platysmurus leucopterus</i>	HO
105	Slender-billed Crow	<i>Corvus enca</i>	HO
106	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	
107	Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	HO
108	Straw-headed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus zeylanicus</i>	
109	Black-headed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus atriceps</i>	
110	Grey-bellied Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cyaniventris</i>	
111	Puff-backed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus eutilotus</i>	
112	Stripe-throated Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus finlaysoni</i>	
113	Yellow-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus goiavier</i>	
114	Olive-winged Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus plumosus</i>	
115	Cream-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus simplex</i>	
116	Asian Red-eyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus brunneus</i>	
117	Spectacled Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus erythroptalmos</i>	
118	Grey-cheeked Bulbul	<i>Alophoixus bres</i>	
119	Yellow-bellied Bulbul	<i>Alophoixus phaeocephalus</i>	
120	Hairy-backed Bulbul	<i>Tricholestes criniger</i>	
121	Buff-vented Bulbul	<i>Iole crypta</i>	
122	Streaked Bulbul	<i>Ixos malaccensis</i>	
123	Pacific Swallow	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>	
124	Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>	
125	Yellow-bellied Prinia	<i>Prinia flaviventris</i>	HO
126	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	
127	Dark-necked Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus atrogularis</i>	HO
128	Rufous-tailed Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sericeus</i>	HO
129	Grey-headed Babbler	<i>Stachyris poliocephala</i>	

130	Chestnut-rumped Babbler	<i>Stachyris maculata</i>	
131	Black-throated Babbler	<i>Stachyris nigricollis</i>	
132	Chestnut-winged Babbler	<i>Stachyris erythroptera</i>	
133	Rufous-fronted Babbler	<i>Stachyridopsis rufifrons</i>	HO
134	Pin-striped Tit-babbler	<i>Macronus gularis</i>	
135	Brown Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe brunneicauda</i>	HO
136	Large Wren-babbler	<i>Napothera macrodactyla</i>	
137	Abbott's Babbler	<i>Malacocincla abbotti</i>	
138	Short-tailed Babbler	<i>Malacocincla malaccensis</i>	
139	Moustached Babbler	<i>Malacopteron magnirostre</i>	
140	Sooty-capped Babbler	<i>Malacopteron affine</i>	
141	Scaly-crowned Babbler	<i>Malacopteron cinereum</i>	
142	Rufous-crowned Babbler	<i>Malacopteron magnum</i>	
143	White-chested Babbler	<i>Trichastoma rostratum</i>	HO
144	Ferruginous Babbler	<i>Trichastoma bicolor</i>	HO
145	Striped Wren-babbler	<i>Kenopia striata</i>	
146	Black-capped Babbler	<i>Pellorneum capistratum</i>	
147	Asian Fairy-bluebird	<i>Irena puella</i>	
148	Asian Glossy Starling	<i>Aplonis panayensis</i>	
149	Common Hill Myna	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>	
150	Javan Myna	<i>Acridotheres javanicus</i>	
151	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	
152	Oriental Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	
153	White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>	
154	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	
155	Pale Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis unicolor</i>	HO
156	Indochinese Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis sumatrensis</i>	
157	Grey-chested Jungle Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis umbratilis</i>	
158	Rufous-chested Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula dumetoria</i>	HO
159	Greater Green Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis sonnerati</i>	
160	Blue-winged Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis cochinchinensis</i>	
161	Orange-bellied Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum trigonostigma</i>	
162	Brown-throated Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes malacensis</i>	
163	Purple-naped Sunbird	<i>Kurochkinogramma hypogrammicum</i>	
164	Long-billed Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera robusta</i>	
165	Yellow-eared Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera chrysogenys</i>	
166	Grey-breasted Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera modesta</i>	
167	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	