

Trip report: Gunung Gede, Indonesia (04/07/2022 - 09/07/2022)

By Okamoto Keita Sin

An impromptu visit to the mountain because I had work nearby.



Javan Cochoa

Itinerary

4 July	Reach Jakarta airport, travel to Cibodas
5-8 July	Birding Gunung Gede
9 July	Depart Cibodas, leave via Jakarta airport

Planning the trip

I have visited Gunung Gede before [twice](#) (yes, I failed to clear the major targets twice) and was more or less familiar with the site. Nevertheless, [Burung Nusantara](#) was a useful resource, and trip reports from the following birders were helpful: [Ross Gallardy](#) and [Sjoerd Radstaak](#).

General Logistics

SIM Card

Purchased at Jakarta airport. Be warned that getting a SIM card away from the airport can be difficult for foreigners unless you visit a shop that knows how to register your passport details. Recharging the pre-paid cards is instead very easy and can be done at any SIM stall (which is pretty much everywhere in Indonesia, including Cibodas).

Food

Ample dining options at Cibodas. Obtaining field food can be difficult as there are only small convenience shops there. I stock piled field food at a supermarket in Bogor (a major city – 6th largest around Jakarta) before travelling.

There are typically no shops on the mountain itself, but it was Hari Raya (a public holiday) on my last day there, so there was a makeshift stall set up near the boardwalk. I drank from the streams near Camp 1 and water point at Camp 2 after treating the water with Aquatabs. Also, many campers were present during my visit and all of them that I struck conversations with offered me food and coffee. Yes, I'm not kidding. All!

Weather

It's supposed to be dry(er) in July, but I experienced terrible rain on three of four afternoons. Typical mountain weather. Gede was effectively unbirdable after each rain, with minimal bird activity and thick fog encapsulating the forest.

Accommodation

[Urbanview Hotel Mon Bel](#)

Booked via booking.com, 977,500 IDR for five nights. Pretty clean. Quite chilly at night. Hot shower was available from 0600 hrs - 0800 hrs and 1700 hrs - 1900 hrs. Roughly 20 minutes brisk walk to entrance of Gunung Gede.

Transport

From Jakarta airport I took a bus from the company Damri to Bogor (120,000 IDR; Bogor terminal at GPS: -6.60207, 106.80590). It was very easy to find the airport terminal and all I had to do was follow the "Public Bus" signs after exiting customs. The journey there was smooth and took about 2 hours. To return from Bogor to Jakarta airport I took the same bus, and the even quicker journey took just 1 hour 10 minutes. The buses depart every hour both ways.

To get from Bogor to Cibodas I was initially planning to travel via public transport, but following instructions on [Burung Nusantara](#) did not work out. Staffs at the "small bus terminal left of Damri" (GPS: -6.603681, 106.806032) told me there were no buses to Cipanas, and instead advised me to find one at Ciawi. It took me 35 minutes and 10,000 IDR to get to Ciawi via Angkot 01 (green on blue; Angkots refer to those mini vans you see all over Indonesia, each with different destinations according to their numbers), but there, I was again told there were no buses towards Cipanas, and a local instead offered to take me to Cibodas directly on his bike for 150,000 IDR. I should really have just done that from the start, but for some reason it did not occur to me until then that bike transport was a viable option. Traffic was catastrophic along Puncak Pass (the road connecting Bogor to Cibodas) and this decision to board a bike definitely saved 3-4 hours of my life.

To return from Cibodas to Bogor I booked a ride via Grab (99,000 IDR) which again took about an hour. Large sections of Puncak Pass were closed for four wheeled vehicles, and it would surely have taken me an entire day had I not taken a bike.

Warning: unscheduled road closures along Puncak Pass on weekends/public holidays are typical



Beginning of roadblock along Puncak Pass. Looks one way in the photo, but it was a two-way closure. Bikes were not stopped.

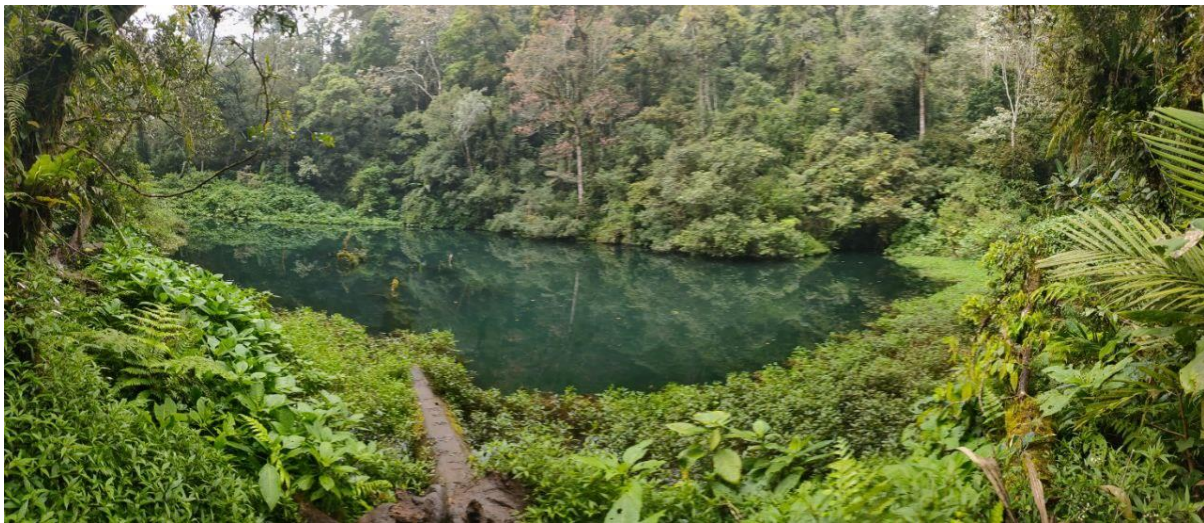
Birding

The general birding area of Gunung Gede are well elaborated in the abovementioned resources, but in summary involves three main parts:

- 1) Entrance to the waterfall X summit junction area (where lower elevation birds can be encountered; at this section there are two key landmarks: the Blue Lake roughly 30 minutes from the entrance, and a huge boardwalk just a few minutes after)
- 2) Waterfall X summit junction to Camp 2 (for most other key targets)
- 3) Beyond Camp 2 to the summit (mainly for Island Thrush and Volcano Swiftlet). Getting from the entrance to the summit at a slow hiking pace took me about 5.5 hours.

The general advice is to avoid birding Gunung Gede on weekends and public holidays. I didn't have much of a choice because of my schedule and spent a morning at the lower section a day before the holiday, and the public holiday itself mainly between the Camp 1 and Camp 2. The trails were not *jam packed*, but I was constantly distracted by giving space to others and making small talks. Having said that, I managed to see the Rufous-fronted Laughingthrush on a public holiday, so I guess on hindsight birding was actually passable.

The sad weather meant that I could only get two mornings + a day of proper birding done. My targets were quite specific during this trip, and I effectively walked through the forest deaf because I had no time to learn the calls of my non-targets. I had the chance to bump into a [BirdTour Asia group led by Mike Nelson](#) that had much better birds, so don't take my list too seriously. Below are notes regarding my key targets.



Blue Lake

Salvadori's Nightjar: several silent birds flying above Blue Lake at dusk (thanks Mike for the advice!), but only two spontaneously calling birds heard despite spending two dawns and dusks each at the appropriate zone. Attempting to find them at the waterfall was hopeless and it felt impractical to listen for their calls amidst the gushing water. Spotlighting only reflected water vapour.

Volcano Swiftlet: was nearly fogged out at the summit but saw at least two and possibly up to seven birds, around 0900 hrs.

Dark-backed Imperial Pigeon: multiple heard beyond Camp 1 but could not see any.

Javan Woodcock: dipped despite efforts, doubt I will ever see it.

Javan Frogmouth: had to work hard for a pair near the Blue Lake at GPS: -6.748380,106.992709, but actually very common between the entrance to the waterfall X summit junction. I even had a chance encounter with a quiet bird perched above the near the Blue Lake.

Javan Owlet: dipped but encountered ~six birds between the entrance and Blue Lake. Was more vocal in the day than at dawn/dusk/night.

Javan Scops Owl: common by call from Blue Lake up to Camp 2 but super tough to see. One eventually seen near the Blue Lake at GPS: -6.748356,106.991666.

Brown-throated Barbet: dipped. Spent a full morning and one late afternoon at the lower section but heard zero and nothing responded.

Javan Scimitar Babbler: dipped. Tried between Camp 1 to Camp 2 but encountered none.

Rufous-fronted Laughingthrush: any poacher that does not know the open secret about where they can be found on Gunung Gede should seriously consider a career change. Not sharing the coordinates regardless since it seems to be taboo. Encountered just a single bird somewhere between Camp 1 and Camp 2 after three laps up and down.

Javan Cochoa: surprisingly silent. Heard a single unresponsive bird at Camp 2 and, after three painful trips to this mountain, finally managed to nail one at GPS: -6.765047,106.983313.

Other birds that might be of interest – **Island Thrush** and **Javan Tesia**, seen between Camp 2 and summit (Tesia can be found lower too); **Pin-tailed Parrotfinch**, feeding on food scraps at Camp 2; **Javan Trogon**, multiple heard and seen from the waterfall X summit junction up to Camp 1, plus a nesting bird at Camp 1; **Chestnut-bellied Partridge**, several calling near the boardwalk and around Camp 2 at dawn, also found one roosting bird when chasing the Javan Scops Owl; **Javan Hawk-eagle**, **Black Eagle**, **Javan Kingfisher**, **Ashy Drongo**, **Sangkar White-eye** among the many species seen from the boardwalk; **Sunda Forktail** along the stream after Blue Lake.



Boardwalk ft. a clearly very fit man



What I saw most of the time



Javan Frogmouth



Javan Scops Owl



Rufous-fronted Laughingthrush



Volcano Swiftlet I guess but honestly I could just include a photo of any Aerodramus swiftlet and you wouldn't know



Island Thrush



~~Tree-Branch~~ Salvadori's Nightjar

Systematic List of Birds

42 species seen, 16 heard only (in grey)

Taxonomy follows IOC 12.1.

1	Chestnut-bellied Partridge	<i>Arborophila javanica</i>
2	Salvadori's Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus pulchellus</i>
3	Javan Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus javensis</i>
4	Cave Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia linchi</i>
5	Volcano Swiftlet	<i>Aerodramus vulcanorum</i>
6	Chestnut-breasted Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus curvirostris</i>
7	Rusty-breasted Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis sepulcralis</i>
8	Sunda Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus lepidus</i>
9	Dark-backed Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula lacernulata</i>
10	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
11	Javan Hawk-eagle	<i>Nisaetus bartelsi</i>
12	Black Eagle	<i>Ictinaetus malaiensis</i>
13	Javan Owlet	<i>Glaucidium castanopterum</i>
14	Javan Scops Owl	<i>Otus angelinae</i>
15	Javan Trogon	<i>Apalharpactes reinwardtii</i>
16	Javan Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon cyanoventris</i>
17	Fire-tufted Barbet	<i>Psilopogon pyrolophus</i>
18	Flame-fronted Barbet	<i>Psilopogon armillaris</i>
19	Buff-necked Woodpecker	<i>Meiglyptes tukki</i>
20	Banded Broadbill	<i>Eurylaimus javanicus</i>
21	Black-winged Flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus hirundinaceus</i>
22	Sunda Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus miniatus</i>
23	Pied Shrike-babbler	<i>Pteruthius flaviscapis</i>
24	Trilling Shrike-babbler	<i>Pteruthius aenobarbus</i>
25	Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>
26	Rufous-tailed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura phoenicura</i>
27	Cinereous Tit	<i>Parus cinereus</i>
28	Orange-spotted Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus bimaculatus</i>
29	Pacific Swallow	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>
30	Striated Swallow	<i>Cecropis striolata</i>
31	Pygmy Cupwing	<i>Pnoepyga pusilla</i>
32	Mountain Tailorbird	<i>Phyllergates cucullatus</i>
33	Sunda Bush Warbler	<i>Horornis vulcanius</i>
34	Javan Tesia	<i>Tesia superciliaris</i>
35	Sunda Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus grammiceps</i>
36	Mountain Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trivirgatus</i>
37	Olive-backed Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sepium</i>
38	Mees's White-eye	<i>Heleia javanica</i>
39	Sangkar White-eye	<i>Zosterops melanurus</i>
40	Crescent-chested Babbler	<i>Cyanoderma melanothorax</i>
41	Horsfield's Babbler	<i>Malacocincla sepiaria</i>
42	Eyebrowed Wren-babbler	<i>Napothera epilepidota</i>
43	Rufous-fronted Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax rufifrons</i>

44	Blue Nuthatch	<i>Sitta azurea</i>
45	Javan Cochoa	<i>Cochoa azurea</i>
46	Island Thrush	<i>Turdus poliocephalus</i>
47	Indigo Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias indigo</i>
48	Lesser Shortwing	<i>Brachypteryx leucophris</i>
49	White-browed Shortwing	<i>Brachypteryx montana</i>
50	Sunda Forktail	<i>Enicurus velatus</i>
51	Javan Whistling Thrush	<i>Myophonus glaucinus</i>
52	Little Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula westermanni</i>
53	Snowy-browed Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hyperythra</i>
54	Blood-breasted Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum sanguinolentum</i>
55	White-flanked Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga eximia</i>
56	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
57	Javan Munia	<i>Lonchura leucogastroides</i>
58	Pin-tailed Parrotfinch	<i>Erythrura prasina</i>