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SOME GENERAL BIRD NOTES FROM THE FOURTH DIVISION OF SARAWAK**J.E. Duckett****INTRODUCTION**

Whilst Smythies "The Birds of Borneo", first published in 1960 and with a third revised edition issued on 1981, does give an excellent reference, it is evident that inputs therein from Sabah do appear to proliferate and that the status of many species in Sarawak are uncertain and in some cases totally unknown.

The Sarawak Museum Journal has over the years published numerous short papers but for the most part, these refer to rarities and there have been very few papers relating to "General Notes" particularly in recent years.

Sarawak is a vast area within which are a very wide variation of habitats and it is most unlikely that any one individual can do justice to a description of the bird life, particularly in view of the inaccessibility of so many areas.

In view of the above, it is most desirable that as many observers, from as many locations as possible, report and publish their observations as contributions to increase the overall knowledge on distribution and habits of the bird life of Sarawak.

Sarawak has an amazing wealth of bird species and reference to Smythies will quickly indicate how little is known of so many of these species, so we still have here a situation where an observant amateur can contribute significantly in filling-in the gaps of knowledge that exist.

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by

J.E. Duckett

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It is with this object in view that, as a truly amateur but interested observer, I have put together my notes made over the period April 1981 to June 1984 and have the temerity to offer these for publication with all their imperfections, in the hope that others will themselves offer similar or more refined contributions to this Journal that will be of benefit and aid to us all.

Peninsular Malaysia has, since independence, had the benefit of the Zoology Department of the University of Malaya as a centre to which all queries can be directed, and via the *Malayan Nature Journal*, a vehicle for publication of new information. Until Sarawak can develop such a type of centre I believe it is up to the amateur, and interested professional, to utilise the *Sarawak Museum Journal* to the full in order to build up Sarawak's own data-bank on its avian wealth.

The Basis of These Notes

These notes have been assembled over a series of fifteen regular visits from Peninsular Malaysia, each of which ranged from four to ten days in duration and are confined to an area extending from Kuala Baram, in the north, to Batu Niah Village, in the south, apart from some observations made whilst on a river trip on the Baram, Tutuh and Melinau Rivers of four days duration made in June 1983. By far the majority of my time in Sarawak was spent on Batu Niah Estate, approximately 16 miles east of Batu Niah Village where an oil palm estate is being developed from primary and secondary jungle areas.

It should be appreciated that serious bird-watching and observation was not the object of any of these visits and such observations as have been made were only secondary to other matters that I had to deal with and as a "bird of passage" myself. If I had been able to spend periods of time specifically for bird observation these notes would have been greatly extended, as the areas travelled were very rich in bird life and many species were seen that were unable to be followed up on as regards positive identification and notes on nests, feeding habits etc.

These notes have been put together with the aim of recording where possible the following:—

- 1) Locations at which each species has been found present,
- 2) Location and dates observed for migrants and birds of passage,
- 3) Indication of breeding dates, nesting, eggs and presence of young birds,
- 4) Indication of any positive instances of diet habits,
- 5) Inter-relationships with other bird species,
- 6) Habits of individual birds and groups of birds,
- 7) Mention of any points that appear out of the norm from previous available records.

In the list that follows the common names and scientific names given are those used by Smythies in his 3rd Edition of "The Birds of Borneo" 1981, which is the major reference. They are however followed by a number which refers to the number given in King et al. in "The Birds of South East Asia" 1975, which is a smaller more convenient and well illustrated book for the traveller. It should be noted however that the latter does not cover all Borneo birds and that King's common names given do, in some cases, differ from those given by Smythies.

ORIENTAL DARTER (*Anhinga melanogaster*) —19

Sightings of these have been as follows:—

- a) One bird seen on a semi-submerged log in a roadside pool at Lambir Hills on 29th April 1982.
- b) One bird seen taking to flight from a pool in jungle at Batu Niah Estate on 1st May 1982.
- c) One bird on the top of a 50-foot dead tree at the edge of a large pool at Batu Niah Estate in April 1983. Seen on the same perch on two consecutive days.