

Dalit Bay

January 31 - February 14 - 2001

The Dalit Bay area is centered around the Shangri-La hotel "Rasa Ria Resort". I spent a fortnight here on a charter tour, of which 10 days were partially spent birdwatching around the hotel (1-4 hours per day).

The intention with this short report is to describe an area, unknown to most birders, which is easily accessible and at the same time hosts some interesting bird life. Although there are no extra ordinary species found around Dalit Bay, the area is on the way from KK to Mount Kinabalu, so most birders will pass nearby. A short detour here can add some lowland species to your list with little effort. The 3 km beach is also a perfect place for a refreshing swim!

This small area sports a variety of habitats: a sandy beach, semi-open grassland, scrub, marshes, secondary rainforest, mangroves and a golf course. Most of the rainforest is within a nature reserve managed by the hotel. Entrance is not permitted without a guide. Several Orang-utans roam the reserve as a part of a rehabilitation program and these are fed twice daily. Ask at the hotel if you want to participate. The best birding is however along the dirt roads in the southern part of the area.

The hotel is easy to find, 40 km north of KK, and 35 km south of Kota Belud. Drive north from KK and follow the white signs to Rasa Ria Resort. You can park at the hotel parking or drive the dirt roads in the southern part of the area. It is of course possible to eat at the hotel, but prices are rather high, about 25 MLR for a main course. The golf club restaurant is cheaper and also open to the public.

Observed species

Purple Heron *Ardea cinerea*

1-2 seen almost daily.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*

A few seen on two days.

Reef Egret *Egretta sacra*

5-6 white phase birds present daily near the river mouth. 2 dark phase birds seen one day.

Great Egret *Egretta alba*

1-3 seen almost daily.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

5-10 seen daily.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Common.

Little Green Heron *Butorides striatus*

1 seen in the marsh area.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*
1-2 seen in the marshes on three days.

Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*
1-2 seen in the marshes on three days.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*
1 seen over the golf course on three days.

Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*
1 seen flying into the nature reserve.

White-bellied Sea-eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*
1 adult seen almost daily.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
1 seen catching fish in the golf course ponds.

Crested Fireback *Lophura ignita*
1 immature male feeds regularly at nature reserve HQ in early mornings.

Crested Wood Partridge *Rollulus rouloul*
1 male flushed in the nature reserve.

Blue-breasted Quail *Coturnix chinensis*
1 pair seen at the beginning of "the right road".

White-breasted Waterhen *Amauornis phoenicurus*
Common. Mainly seen on the dirt roads.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*
Fairly common on the beach and sometimes also on the golf course.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*
5-10 birds seen on the beach daily were most likely of this species.

Mongolian Plover *Charadrius mongolus*
On 2 occasions a smaller and slimmer plover were seen together with the Great Sand Plovers, which most likely were Mongolian Plovers.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*
1 at the Golf Club Marsh.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucis*
Fairly common.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*
1 seen off the beach.

Little Green Pigeon *Treron olax*
2 half way up the "left road".

Pink-necked Pigeon *Treron vernans*
Fairly common in the marsh area.

Peaceful Dove *Geopelia striata*

1-2 seen on four dates in the marsh area.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*

Fairly common.

Blue-throated Bee-eater *Merops viridis*

1 seen on two dates in the marsh area, 1 seen on the southern hill.

Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus*

1-2 heard almost daily. 1 seen near the golf club house.

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*

2-5 heard daily. 1-2 seen almost daily.

Collared Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena*

1 seen during daytime in the nature reserve. Heard calling one night at 21.00 from the nature reserve, close to HQ.

[**Giant Swiftlet** *Collocalia gigas*]

Four uniformly dark swifts were seen from the observation tower in the nature reserve. They seemed to be the same size as, or possibly slightly larger than, accompanying Pacific Swallows. Can these swifts have been of this scarce species?

White-bellied Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*

Common some days, absent other days.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*

Common.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Of the approximately 20 swallows that were positively identified 2 were Barn Swallows, the others Pacific Swallows.

Collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris*

Fairly common.

Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata*

1 seen in the strip of forest alongside the beach, close to the horse stables.

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*

1 seen at the beginning of the "right road".

Wreathed Hornbill *Rhyticeros undulatus*

1 tame, but free flying immature bird roams the hotel garden.

Black-and-red Broadbill *Cymbirynchus macrorynchus*

1 heard from the nature reserve, close to HQ. 1 seen at "right fork road".

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

1-3 seen almost daily. Often seen close to the horse stables.

Pied Triller *Lalage nigra*

Fairly common.

Yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava*
Common on the golf course.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*
Fairly common on the golf course.

Fiery Minivet *Pericrocotus igneus*
1 male at the beginning of "righ road".

White-breasted Wood-swallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*
Fairly common.

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*
Fairly common in trees in the marsh area.

Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier*
Common.

Olive-winged Bulbul *Pycnonotus plumosus*
1 at the edge of the nature reserve, close to the beach.

Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus brunneus*
1-2 seen on three dates.

Spectacled Bulbul *Pycnonotus erythrothalmos*
1 at nature reserve HQ.

Magpie Robin *Copyschus saularis*
Common, especially in the hotel garden.

Striped Tit-babbler *Macronous gularis*
1 in the nature reserve, 1 on the southern edge of southern hill.

Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris*
Fairly common in the marsh area

Eastern Great Reed Warbler *Accrocephalus orientalis*
1 in a pond at the golf club house

Striated Grassbird *Megalurus palustris*
Fairly common in open and semi-open areas

Ashy Tailorbird *Orthotomus ruficeps*
1-3 seen on most days.

Pied Fantail *Rhipidura javanica*
1-3 seen on most days.

Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma*
1 male seen in the hotel garden.

Brown-throated Sunbird *Anthreptes malacensis*
1-2 seen on three days, often near the hotel's main entrance.

Olive-backed Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis*
Common.

Crimson sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*
1-2 seen on four days, often close to nature reserve HQ.

Dusky Munia *Lonchura fuscans*
1 seen on two days close to golf club house.

Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*
1-5 seen on most days, often near golf club house.

Chestnut Munia *Lonchura malacca*
Common.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*
Common.

Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis*
Common.

