



GUNUNG IJEN, EAST JAVA, IN JUNE-JULY 2015

Petri Hottola (phottola@gmail.com)



Fig. 1. An **Indigo Flycatcher**, one of the most attractive inhabitants of Gunung Ijen forests.

In June – July 2015, 29th to 1st, I had an opportunity to visit East Java and the Gunung Ijen area from Denpasar, Bali. The visit was arranged for a period of three transit days between arrival from Flores and departure to Manila, the Philippines, on a private RTW birding tour. In June 2011, when visiting Bali, I had regretted missing East Java, as a result of overlooking the fact that there is a frequent ferry connection from Gilimanuk, Bali, to Banyuwangi, Java. Four years later, it was time to correct the mistake.

I approached the Ijen area with an open mind, without too many expectations, because the Internet information on local birdlife and conditions was limited indeed. The Burung Nusantara site had been hacked in spring 2015 and closed for the time being, and I was not sure if they even had anything on Ijen. There were not many trip reports in the Internet, either. My best resource was a report (see Surfbirds.com) published by Yann Muzika, on a March 2012 visit, made together with a guide I knew, Hery Kusumanegara.

What is more, there currently is no comprehensive field guide available either for Indonesia or for any part of the archipelago nation, despite the fact that Indonesia belongs to the most diverse

birdwatching destinations on Earth. For example, the Birds of Wallacea has been sold out ages ago. In that sense, Indonesia should be a publishing priority number one in the world.

On the other hand, the inadequate information motivated me to write this report, which should give others a little bit better idea of the conditions at Gunung Ijen, and update the existing information. I did not, however, venture into the forest, on the few available paths perhaps known to local bird guides, because there was more than enough to see from the Kawah Ijen access road. It was my first visit to Java and lifers kept on coming, partly as a result of recent taxonomic developments in the region, by IOC.

Grey-breasted Hill Partridge is the main motivation to go off road at Gunung Ijen. For me, however, hearing the partridge was satisfactory enough. Overall, us Nordic birders do not make a difference between birds seen or reliably heard. Both senses may be equally deceptive or reliable, and we also have blind birders, who naturally focus on the calls and songs of the birds, instead of regretting the lack of sight records!

From the viewpoint of bird conservation, it is an advantage if not everything has to be seen. As we know, bird tours and also individual birders keep on terminating the breeding activities of shy, endangered species all over the world, just because they have to see one, even though the bird would be easy to hear, like a **Whiskered Owlet**, a prime example, may be. Seeing one is a bonus, but in my mind it is not something to be attempted at any cost. The same applies to photography.

In 2015, I witnessed a territorial fight between a **Cinnamon Screech Owl** and a **Whiskered Owl**, the latter attacking the intruder at Abra Patricia, Peru. It was fascinating to listen to the owls calling, screaming and fighting around me. I was, after all, alone in the pitch dark and otherwise silent forest, at a new trail not yet open for tour groups. I did not, however, use my power-torch to disturb the spectacle.

In the following text, I am going explain how the East Java visit was conducted, day by day, with information on field arrangements such as accommodation and transportation, in addition to locations, birds and mammals. Even though the focus is on species endemic to the Java-Bali sub-region, and especially Java, each and every species recorded on the trip will be mentioned.

ORGANIZATION

Arrangements

In early 2015, I tried to arrange the visit without any local help. Unfortunately, a number of problems surfaced. First of all, it was not allowed to drive a Bali rental car to East Java. If it was, the cost of the trip would have been one third of the final total. Second, across the straits, the rental rates were exorbitant (several times higher than in Bali), with or without a driver. I could not afford the car hire deals offered by Banyuwangi tour operators. On top of that, some of them only arranged half-day sightseeing visits to Gunung Ijen, being in other words not accommodating towards birdwatchers, or customer needs in general.

I could have taken a bus to Gilimanuk, even though they departed from Ubung Bus Terminal, which would have necessitated a long taxi ride from Kuta, but there was also the return ride to be considered, open for serious rip offs at Ubung (more in the Internet). If I wanted to do the Gilimanuk ride by a taxi, the Bali companies demanded many times the local fees, from a tourist (e.g. IDR2.500.000; €160!). What is more, I would still lack transport in Java.

Without going too far into details, visiting East Java was almost given up altogether, because of the lack of agreeable transportation services. For some reason, the local operators were adamant in shooting themselves in the leg, instead of earning from business with tourists. I guess they get enough unsuspecting customers the way they act now. Or, perhaps not?

In the end, I turned to Hery Kusumanegara (hery_kn@yahoo.co.id), the trusted Bali Barat National Park bird guide with a network of tested contacts in Bali and East Java, to hire the local transportation. It was he, after all, who had suggested me a visit to East Java, when we birded Bali Barat together in 2011. Hery was still recovering from a guiding accident, a fall in a forest which had fractured a bone and forced a sick leave of several months, but that did not prevent him from sending emails and making phone calls. His contacts would not be a budget deal either, but in many ways worth the money if we could agree a rate I was able to pay.

This we did, after short negotiations. I am not going to write out the price (case sensitive), but the car and driver rentals such as mine could cost, approximately, in the range of IDR5.000.000 (€300). The average annual income in Indonesia is IDR44.000.000, €2.664 per year. I reserved my accommodations by myself and also planned the route and timetable independently. There was no need for guide services.



Fig. 2. In Indonesia, one needs millions in cash; the contents of my pockets on a hotel table.

Kuta to Banyuwangi

On the 29th, at 9.00, a taxi driver with his daughter picked me up at Hotel Alron, Kuta, as had been agreed. The late departure was dictated by my misconception that somebody would need to drive to Kuta from Gilimanuk. The driver was, however, from Denpasar, and the daughter accompanied us on her school holiday, to cross the strait by a ferry and to visit Java, both her firsts. On the way to Gilimanuk, I tried to spot the site of my 2011 car accident (a motorbike crashed on my car), but the highway had been improved and identifying the correct location proved to be difficult.

A **Javan Kingfisher** (Java-Bali endemic) was seen, as expected, at rice fields half way to Gilimanuk. In the same rural area, many **Eastern Cattle**, **Little**, **Intermediate** and **Great Egrets** occupied the fields, together with an odd **Large-billed Crow** and a pair of **Javan Mynas** (Java-Bali endemic). Other roadside birds included **Spotted Doves**, **Zebra Doves**, **Asian Palm Swifts**, **Yellow-vented Bulbuls**, an **Asian Glossy Starling** and **Tree Sparrows**. Towards Gilimanuk, several **Long-tailed Macaques** roamed on the roadsides.

The drive to Gilimanuk may take anything between 2.5 and 8 hours, depending on traffic. We were lucky and arrived there early, in less than three hours. A ranger colleague of Hery waited for us at the Bali Barat Headquarters, collected the car rental money in cash, and guided us to the ferry terminal, past a security check point, and all the way to the ferry. The driver paid my ferry ticket (IRD7.500, €0.45, one way) and insisted on carrying the luggage up to the passenger level, the girl carrying a 12 kg bag. I bought the nice man and his daughter cold sorbets as an expression of my gratitude.



Fig. 3. One of the many ferries on the Ketapang – Gilimanuk route, Bali in the background.

The ferry ride was nice, with the first views of the massive volcano Raung, which had already started to erupt the day before. The eruption eventually closed the regional airports, including

Denpasar, in the beginning of July. The dire situation continued till the third week of August, with airports on a constant on/off alert.

At Ketapang harbor, Java, the landing was busy and we had to wait for our turn. A few **Greater Crested Terns** patrolled the strait. At the ferry terminal, one of several landing sites, the next driver was waiting, with a beat up Toyota Landcruiser which already had 760.000 km under its belt. Both of its seat belts were finished and there was a consequent feeling of insecurity.

Ketapang Indah

The driver took me to Hotel Ketapang Indah, my prepaid accommodation. The room was not ready at 14.00 (!), and I had to leave my bags in a storage room. At Ketapang Indah, a standard room cost €29 per night in a double, two breakfasts included (Agoda reduced price). The service at the reception and in the restaurant was a bit slow, at times. On the other hand, I got ample take away breakfasts before sunrise and some of the meals at the restaurant were good. The prices of the food and drinks appeared quite competitive initially, but the serving sizes were unusually small for Indonesia. In the evenings, the atmosphere was generic, without a local flavor. I had my dinners as fast as possible, before returning to the room, for a proper rest.



Fig. 4. Ketapang Indah restaurant, with generic tourist resort decorations such as camels...

Ayam Kampung ('village chicken') is not only more expensive but tastes much better than the other ayam, the broiler. The latter seems to be universally despised in Indonesia. The 'standard room' would have been quite good, if the bed had not been so hard and there had not been a connecting door to a neighboring flat. I opened the door to check if it was locked and got a view to the other flat, with somebody's suitcases and other things on the bed. Their door had been left open, which is not good for soundproofing. I locked mine. There was some disturbance at night, but fortunately nothing serious.



Fig. 5. Having already cleaned my piece of Ayam Kampong, I wait for the delayed rice.

Visiting Gunung Ijen

On the 29th of June, we left Ketapang Indah at once, for Ijen, stopping only to buy bottled water and snacks at a shop in the Banyuwangi town center. Afterwards, we drove the Kawah Ijen Road, straight up to Pos Paltuding, the start of a well-known trekking trail, arriving at 15.00. There is no entrance fee, unless one wants to do the trek to the volcano and its deposits of sulfur, a subject of security considerations. In that case, the entrance costs IDR150.000 (€9) for foreigners. In 2014, it was IDR15.000 (€0.90), before the recent rise in tourist fees.

The driving directions to Pos Paltuding are as follows: Drive to Banyuwangi downtown on the coastal highway, Jalan Nasional III. I saw a **Feral Rock Dove** there. At one point, there is an airplane on the yard of a shop on the left. Shortly afterwards, one turns right at a four-way junction with traffic lights. From there on, it is 30 kilometers to Pos Paltuding. There are signs to Kawah Ijen to follow. Eventually, one arrives at the edge of primary forest, from where the good habitat begins.

When the road to Ijen was improved and paved a few years ago, and there was no need for 4x4s anymore (today, one could drive up in a Ferrari), the local taxi operators revolted, closing the road and forcing people to leave their cars there, before coercing a 4x4 rental. This is the impression some Internet sources keep on producing. Tempers have calmed down and nowadays anybody may drive the road up and down, in peace. At times, the road is busy, with vans and motorbikes.

I visited Pos Paltuding and the Gunung Ijen access road three times for birdwatching, as will be explained later.



Fig. 6. Waiting for a train to pass in Banyuwangi. In Finland, leaving this little space between cars could instigate some aggressive behavior, as I know from personal experience.

Ijen to Kuta

After the last visit to Ijen, we returned to Ketapang and I boarded a ferry to Gilimanuk. Two **Black-naped Terns** were seen on the way there, in addition to the resident **Greater Crested Terns**. On the other side, a third driver and a taxi waited, in order to take me to Hotel Alron, Kuta. Much the same birds as on the first drive were seen by the highway, including the **Javan Kingfisher**, which sat on top of the same barn as three days ago.

Unfortunately, the traffic got jammed by a truck which had stopped on the highway (engine failure) and the ride took six hours this time, despite an alternative route around the worst jam, close to Denpasar. For the last kilometer, I acted as a guide, knowing the area better than my driver. Jalan Blambangan, in front of Hotel Alron, is a one-way street, and needs to be approached in a certain way. In the vicinity of Kuta, I saw a **Barn Swallow** and a **Pacific Swift**, both rather early in season, or 'summering' individuals.

Hotel Alron, Kuta

At 19.00, I was at the Alron reception and got my room key, for the largest top level room of the building. At my Kuta transit hotel, I paid €20 to 25 per night, breakfast included, great Agoda deals.

Hotel Alron is a small business hotel with excellent non-smoking rooms and small restaurant with good, even though slightly pricey food. From the airport, the official airport taxi, the only available option at the arrivals, costs IDR95.000 (€6) to Alron, whereas the return drive in a metered taxi is only IDR32.000 (€2), tips excluded. At the Alron reception, they kindly recommended the metered taxi, instead of a more expensive hotel shuttle.

By European standards, both the prices may be small, but especially in areas such as Kuta, one should respect the local society and spend one's money according to its standards, in order to not to inflate the cost of living for the locals.



Fig. 7. My bed at Hotel Alron, Kuta; a most comfortable place for a rest.

THE BIRDS OF IJEN

First afternoon

On the 29th of June, in the afternoon, I did a short scan of the slopes around Pos Paltuding at 15.00. My first new species was a **Javan Cuckooshrike**, an island endemic after recent taxonomic decisions. In the blue sky, hundreds of swiftlets were circling, including many **Cave Swiftlets**, but also smaller numbers of **Edible-nest Swiftlets**, and one **Mossy-nest Swiftlet** and two **Asian Palm Swifts**. The identification of the swiftlets is difficult, but the **Cave Swiftlets** are relatively easy because of their underside pattern, and there was at least one swiftlet with a completely dark rump (**Mossy-nest**) among the other type pale-rumped (**Edible-nest**) swiftlets. After explaining the

driver that he should follow me only after 17.30, and after repeating this when he started to do it at once, I walked the tarmac access road down for some two kilometers, meeting him at 17.45.

The late afternoon was sunny and very good for birding at the high altitude forest, first mixed coniferous/broad-leaved and then all broad-leaved. In the pines, a **Freckle-breasted Woodpecker** was spotted. In the same area, I recorded my only **Horsfield's Thrush**, either a subspecies of **Scaly Thrush**, or a full species, depending on taxonomy, and few **Orange-spotted Bulbuls**. Some *Carduelis* type calls disturbed my peace of mind a lot, a **Mountain Serin** being quite possible there, but I did not manage to locate the source of the calls.



Fig. 8. Orange-spotted Bulbuls favor the high altitudes; the spots are bright and attract attention.

Predictably, **Sunda Bush Warblers** were common in thick roadside vegetation. **Javan Bush Warblers** were also readily discovered; first, one singing at Pos Paltuding, and then, a total of three seen in the rank roadside vegetation 100 to 200 meters lower down, the area pointed out by Yann Muzika. The birds were skulking, but inquisitive, responding to pishing. As the name indicates, the bird is endemic to Java, if one considers the **Timor Bush Warbler** a separate species.

In the short time, a number of interesting birds were observed down the main road. **Dark-backed Imperial Pigeons** were common and pleasingly bold. In addition, I saw a **Ruddy Cuckoo-Dove** and a **Grey-cheeked Green Pigeon**. Some mixed passerine parties were worth a scrutiny, including two **Trilling Shrike-Babblers**, another Java endemic, a **Sunda Warbler** and a **Sunda Bulbul**. **Mountain Leaf Warblers** were common (dozens), just like **Mees's White-eyes** (>50). The odd roadside birds included a *vulcani* **Snowy-browed Flycatcher**, a *hasselti* **Little Pied Flycatcher** and a male *javana* **Rusty-breasted Whistler**.

The star bird was, however, a surprise male **Javan Tesia** singing its heart out and giving great views at a certain streamside (right hand) bend of the road, very roughly (guessimate; see the photo)

about 800 meters below Pos Paltuding. According to BirdLife, the species is extant at Gunung Raung – Gunung Ijen area, but I have not seen it mentioned in previous trip reports.

Towards the lower elevation, a **Violet Cuckoo** and a **Flame-fronted Barbet** (a Java-Bali endemic) were heard calling. My first **White-bibbed Babblers**, a Java endemic pair, were also seen there.



Fig. 9. The bend which had a singing male **Javan Tesia**, and a mixed party of less territorial birds.

The first morning

In the first morning, the 30th of June, we started at 4.00 (Java time, -1 h of Bali time), to enable some owl and frogmouth searches along the Kawah Ijen Road, in the forested section. The weather was fine and it did not take long to score, with the aid of recordings. Both a **Javan Owlet** and a **Javan Frogmouth** were discovered below and above the Rest Area number 3. Again, two Java-Bali endemics!

After arrival at Pos Paltuding, soon after sunrise, I checked the grassy openings and then repeated my walk down the tarmac road. This time, I covered some four kilometers before the driver arrived, as instructed, and took me back up at 11.00. At Pos Paltuding, three **Green Junglefowl** were actively calling from trees at the grasslands, a memorable morning concert. The endemic **Grey-breasted Hill Partridges** were active, too, constantly calling both there and along the main road. At the latter area, one was vocal close to the road but unfortunately not quite close enough to be attracted by my Xeno.Canto recording.

Three **Sunda Pygmy Woodpeckers** and a **Crimson-winged Woodpecker** were seen in the coniferous zone, together with **Sooty-headed Bulbuls** and eight **Mountain White-eyes**. Six **Javan Bush Warblers** were added to the day list, without any aid from recordings. They are curious and came out to inspect me.

This time, the doves and pigeons included many **Dark-backed Imperial Pigeons**, three **Ruddy Cuckoo-Doves**, one **Grey-cheeked** and a *korthalsi* **Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon**, and last but not least, a splendid **Pink-headed Fruit Dove**! The latter species was unexpected to me. A **Yellow-throated Hanging Parrot** showed its throat well. **White-bellied Fantails**, a Java endemic, were scarce with only two records of single birds. The two male and three female **White-flanked Sunbirds** (Java endemic) were just as handsome as their scientific name *eximia* suggested! A **Streaky-breasted Spiderhunter**, on the other hand, was a Java-Bali endemic.

Other birds in the higher part of the walk included a **Javan Cuckooshrike**, a total of four **Sunda Minivets**, 15 **Sunda Bush Warblers**, six **Mountain Leaf Warblers** (much less than the day before), eight **Sunda Warblers** (two too close for my binoculars), four **Orange-spotted Bulbuls**, 12 *ottolanderi* **Chestnut-backed Scimitar Babblers**, 15 **Crescent-chested Babblers** (a Java-Bali endemic) and some 120 **Mees's White-eyes**. The tesia could not be coaxed out of its streamside den; it remained silent.

Low down, there was also a party of three **Wreathed Hornbills**. An *affinis* '**Oriental Paradise Flycatcher**' was apparently a good find, because the species is supposed to be rare in Java. Two **White-breasted Babblers** and a **Grey-cheeked Tit-Babbler** were new Java endemics, just like the attractive three male and two female **Javan Sunbirds**. **Indigo Flycatchers** are very pretty birds, in a modest, stylish way, and I was happy to locate a total of five.

Otherwise, towards the end of the walk the birds included a **Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher**, a *prillwitzii* **Cream-vented Bulbul**, seven *edela* **Common Tailorbirds**, a **White-vented Shama**, two **Velvet-fronted Nuthatches**, a *prillwitzii* **Little Spiderhunter**, three *phoenicotis* **Ruby-cheeked Sunbirds** and a female **Scarlet-headed Flowerpecker**.

Second afternoon

Between 11.15 and 13.35, I tried to rest on the warm grass just below Pos Paltuding, but lying down was difficult because of the views, including the resident birds of prey. There were territorial **Black Eagles** and an immature **Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle** there, and a **Javan Hawk Eagle**, the price bird of the site, was once seen soaring low over the Gunung Ijen slope. Swiftlets were even more numerous than the day before, with dozens of apparent **Mossy** and **Edible-nest Swiftlets** this time, in addition to some 500 **Cave Swiftlets**.

The warm semi-open area also attracted some lowland generalists, such as **Spotted Doves**, **Long-tailed Shrikes**, a *fuscicola* **Zitting Cisticola** and a *javanus* **Black Drongo**, out of which the shrikes were also seen just below the start of the forest, along the Kawah Ijen road.

At 13.45 the driver took me back to the spot where I had stopped at 11.00, and I walked downhill till 14.05, when heavy rain arrived and spoiled the plan. Fortunately, the driver had also noticed the change in weather. He returned and picked me up again. As it was clear that the weather was unlikely to improve during the remaining hours of light, I decided to call it a day and we eventually returned to Ketapang Indah, after a wait at Rest Area nr. 3 (see below), being at the hotel at 15.35.

It was not raining on the coast. I therefore checked the hotel grounds, including the strait (**Greater Crested Terns**). The grounds were fenced and produced just **Tree Sparrows** and *nisoria* **Scaly-breasted Munias**.



Fig. 10. At Pos Paltuding, there are tall grass meadows with brush, and conifers such as pines.

By the seashore, a low-flying exceptionally large swiftlet was seen crossing from Bali and passing me at a close distance. It was uniformly dark, almost black, and with a deeply-forked, long tail. To me, it looked like a **Giant Swiftlet**, an enigmatic species I have earlier seen only at Mt. Kinabalu, Borneo. The distribution and movements of the species are unclear, but its stronghold is known to be in West Java. The species must occur in Bali, too.

Second morning

In the last morning, the 1st of July, I was already more than happy with the results at Gunung Ijen. I had seen much more than anticipated. We left the hotel at 4.30 and stopped at Rest Area nr. 3, in the forest. Along the access road, there are three rest areas with shelters: First, at the edge of the

forest, nr. 1. Second, there is an abandoned ruin of a rest area. Third, there is the number 3, next to a valley with a stream, a great spot for birds, just before a particularly steep section of the road.

Again, I told the driver to wait for me there, or to go up to Pos Paltuding for company and hot coffee, if he got bored, and to pick me up downhill, at 10.45. Just like in the previous morning, I gave him a breakfast box, too. At Ketapang Indah, I paid for a double and therefore had received two take-away breakfasts. First, I would walk a short distance uphill, and on some paths by the stream, and would then start walking down the slope, on the Kawah Ijen Road. After ten minutes, I saw the red Landcruiser cruising uphill...

Unfortunately, he followed me later, arriving just when I had located the best mixed bird party of the morning, and he parked below me, right in the middle of the birds, scaring everything away, including a **Javan Flameback**!

Overall, this particular driver had excellent skills in negotiating the roads and the traffic, and did his best to accommodate my needs, succeeding most of the time. After a discussion, he stayed behind and picked me up at 11.05, at Rest Area nr. 1, where I was waiting in the company of two local girls. It had started to rain again at 10.36, lightly, but at that time I had already almost finished the walk.



Fig. 11. The derelict Rest Area nr. 2, along the Gunung Ijen access road.

In the low section of the forest, the species composition was in many ways similar to that of higher altitude, with some additions. Barbets were particularly common there, with about 20 **Lineated**, about 40 **Flame-fronted**, 8 **Blue-eared**, 2 *rosea* **Coppersmith** and four **Black-banded Barbets** (a Java endemic). In addition, two **Common Flamebacks** and two **Javan Flamebacks** (a Java-Bali endemic) were recorded. I stayed on the main road for the most of the time, utilizing a few short paths only to gain better vantage points to birds and their food sources, or to 'stalk my prey' between tree trunks, Jim Corbett style.

Grey-breasted Hill Partridges were present all the way down, and also a **Green Junglefowl** was heard there. The new species included a **Black-thighed Falconet**, a *deningeri* **Chestnut-breasted Malkoha**, an **Orange-breasted Trogon**, two **Oriental Pied Hornbills**, a **Red-breasted Parakeet**, a *siebersi* **Scarlet Minivet**, three *jentincki* **Hair-crested Drongos**, a **Malaysian Pied Fantail**, an **Olive-backed Tailorbird** (a Java-Bali-Lombok endemic), a *turcosa* **Asian Fairy-bluebird** and three **Blue Nuthatches**.

Among the already seen species, **Dark-backed Imperial Pigeons**, a **Ruddy Cuckoo-Dove**, two **Pink-headed Fruit Doves**, **Cave Swiftlets**, five **Wreathed Hornbills**, a **Yellow-throated Hanging Parrot**, a **White-bellied Fantail**, two **Indigo Flycatchers**, one **Little Pied Flycatcher**, eight **Sunda Warblers**, four **Common Tailorbirds**, a party of five **White-bibbed Babblers**, about 10 **Crescent-chested Babblers**, more than 50 **Mees's White-eyes** and two **White-flanked Sunbirds** were observed.

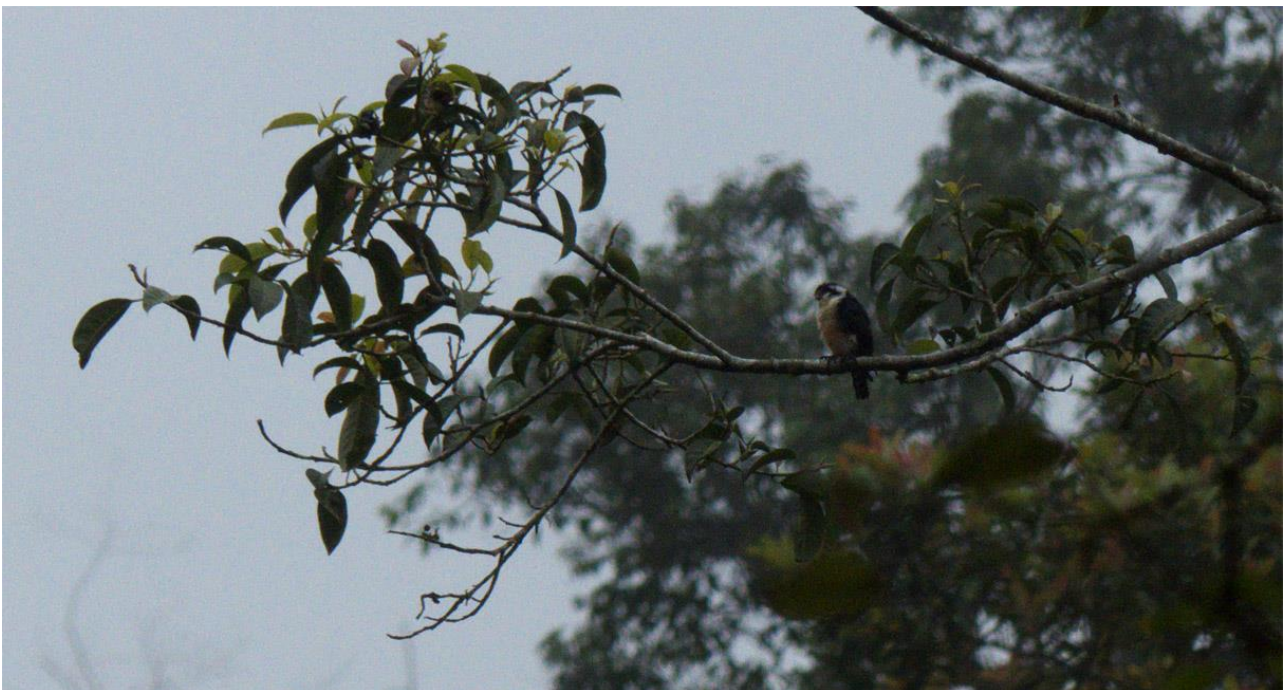


Fig. 12. A diminutive (15 cm!) **Black-thighed Falconet**, in the gloom of approaching rain.

There were some mammals along the Kawah Ijen road, too. During the three visits, I recorded the following: **Wild Boar** 1, **Long-tailed Macaque** 35, **Javan Lutung** (the best discovery) 1 female with a baby, **Javan Tree-Shrew** 1 and **Sunda Black-banded Squirrel** 2.

CONCLUSIONS

Gunung Ijen was more than a pleasant surprise. The majority of Java endemics could be recorded there, during a relatively short visit, despite the lack of detailed site information. The weather was mostly fine and walking the access road downhill was not strenuous at all. The road was peaceful early in the morning and late in the afternoon, and at times busy in-between. The drivers of the taxis and the rental car were good company, and did their job professionally, with a friendly service attitude. The accommodations, on the other hand, were fair (Ketapang Indah) to excellent (Alron).

The transportation services remain a problem in East Java, just like anywhere else in Indonesia, except in Bali, especially in regard to independent access from the main regional air traffic hub, the Denpasar Airport. Hery Kusumanegara was a great help in hiring the transportation, but there should be a variety of options to meet the variety of needs among the visitors, if a significant increase in birdwatching tourism was expected.

For the moment, my way may well be one of the most feasible ways to do Gunung Ijen, with comfort, and possibly other sites in East Java, too, if one desired to visit them. One could of course take the buses all the way and hitch-hike (for a fee, I would guess) to Gunung Ijen, camping on the grass at Pos Paltuding. That would be quite possible, too, if one is ready to rough it. It often rains on the slopes of Ijen, but the high altitudes, including Pos Paltuding, tend to be sunny, albeit rather cold at night. On the plus side, I did not see a single mosquito or leech there.

Good luck for your visit, however you decide to organize your visit!

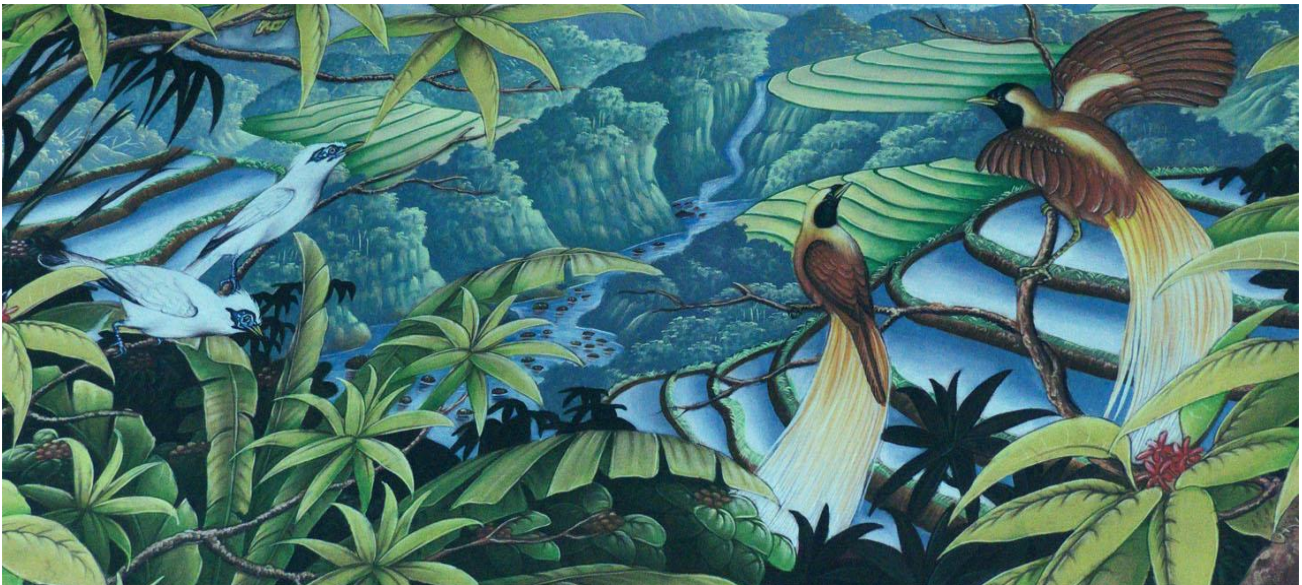


Fig.13. Are you able to spot the mistake? A fantasy painting at Denpasar International Airport departure area, depicting two species of Indonesian birds, which are, however, not exactly neighbors...

