

Second Singapore record of the black-and-red broadbill in the last 50 years

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Subject: Black-and-red broadbill, *Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchos* (Aves: Passeriformes: Eurylaimidae).

Subject identified by: Muhammad Fadhli bin Ahmad, Muhammad Ghufuran bin Tahir, Ramakrishnan s/o R Kolandavelu, Mishak bin Shunari and David Li.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, freshwater pond area; 20 March 2019; around 0830 hrs.

Habitat: The freshwater pond area (Fig. 1) is part of a wetland habitat matrix comprising secondary forest and grassland at the edge of mangrove. Floral composition includes *Dillenia suffruticosa*, *Dillenia indica*, *Ficus* species and *Talipariti tiliaceum*. Vegetation height varies between 6 to 15 m. This densely vegetated habitat is believed to provide shelter and food resources for forest dwelling birds.

Observers: Muhammad Fadhli bin Ahmad, Muhammad Ghufuran bin Tahir, Ramakrishnan s/o R Kolandavelu and Mishak bin Shunari.

Observation: An adult example (Fig. 2 & 3) was caught during a bird ringing session. The bird was ringed with an aluminum alloy ring (number M2176) on its right tarsus and then released. During the ringing process, the following features on the bird were noted: iris clear emerald green; upper mandible brilliant turquoise blue; lower mandible cadmium yellow to orange; throat patch, underparts and rump reddish-maroon; upperparts blackish; breast with black band; wing with broad white streak. Measurements: wing 93 mm; tail 88 mm; bill 27 mm; tarsus 21 mm; weight: 56.4 g.



Fig. 1: The habitat where the black-and-red broadbill was caught. Photograph by Muhammad Fadhli bin Ahmad



Fig. 2: Dorsal view of the subject.



Fig. 3: Ventral view of the subject.

Photographs by Muhammad Fadhli bin Ahmad

Remarks: The black-and-red broadbill has an extensive range from Indochina, down the Thai-Malay Peninsula, to Sumatra and across to Borneo. Although listed as ‘Least Concern’, the global population of this species seems to be decreasing as a result of ongoing destruction of lowland forest (BirdLife International, 2020). Formerly a resident bird in Singapore, it was common on Pulau Ubin, and was recorded from Choa Chu Kang and the Botanic Gardens (Bucknill & Chasen, 1990; Gibson-Hill, 1950; Lim, 2009). Nine specimens obtained from Pulau Ubin in 1921 are in the Zoological Reference Collection of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, at the National University of Singapore. Since then, there had been no confirmed record of this species in Singapore until a male bird was observed in a woodland and mangrove area at Pulau Ubin on 7 and 22 August 2004 (Lim 2004, Wells 2007). This observation represents the second confirmed record of the black-and-red broadbill for Singapore in the past 50 years, and the first confirmed record of this species for the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve. In August 2015, one of the authors (Ramakrishnan) had seen a black-and-red broadbill in flight at the same location. Due to lack of photographic evidence and further observations, it was treated as an unconfirmed record.

Four months after the featured record, another black-and-red broadbill was observed during a joint survey at Pulau Ubin on 7 July 2019 by the National Parks Board and the Nature Society, Singapore (Lim & Tan 2019). The featured bird and other recently sighted examples are likely to have dispersed from neighboring Malaysia, possibly displaced by loss of forest habitat. The rediscoveries of this bird in Singapore at Pulau Ubin and the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve show that well conserved pockets of natural habitats are important for bird conservation in our largely urbanised city-state. In addition, establishing a well-connected network of green spaces can facilitate the dispersal of rare birds to other suitable habitats on Singapore Island.

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