

BREEDING THE SOOTY-HEADED BULBUL

Pycnonotus aurigaster

by Jim Jerrard

In the autumn of 2004, I purchased four Sooty-headed Bulbuls. This species has a black head with a slight crest, white or dusky white cheeks, slightly darker dusky white underparts and a yellow or red vent, depending on the subspecies. My birds have a yellow vent. The upperparts are brownish-grey, with a whitish patch on the upper tail-coverts; the tail has a white tip.

This bulbul is a common and widespread resident in south-east Asia, from Myanmar (Burma) and Thailand eastwards into China and southwards to Java and Bali; it is said (Strange, 2002) to have been introduced onto Sumatra and southern Sulawesi, where it is now well established and has recently been recorded in southern Kalimantan and on Timor. This expansion is thought to have resulted from escaped cage birds. There seems to be some question as to whether or not those introduced onto Singapore continue to survive (King et al. 1976).

Not knowing their sexes, I housed all of my four birds in a flight measuring 9ft x 3ft x 6ft (approx. 2.7m x 0.9m x 1.8m). All went well through the winter months, until the end of February, when I found one bird dead. I left the remaining three birds together, then a week later I found another of them dead. Unlike the first bird which did not have a mark on it, the second bird had been pecked about the head. This led me to believe that the remaining two birds must be a true pair.

In April I put up a nesting tray 7in square x 3in deep (18cm square x 7.5cm deep), into which I had stuffed some hay. In May the two started to build a nest of coconut fibre and lined it with hessian. The first egg was laid May 17th and eventually there was a clutch of three eggs. They hatched on June 1st, after a 12 day incubation period. One chick died the next day, but the other two survived, fed on buffalo worms, fruit flies, small crickets and a little fruit. I ringed the chicks when they were seven days old, using IOA rings size K. Dull replicas of their parents, they left the nest at 13 days.

On June 16th the female laid again. On that occasion she laid a clutch of four eggs. Incubation started on June 19th and after 12 days two of the eggs hatched. The other two were clear. All went well until the chicks were four days old, when the parents deserted the nest. I do not know why this happened, other than that two days before the eggs were due to hatch, I had removed the two young from the first brood. The pair did not nest again.

These bulbuls were more restless and noisy than other species I have bred in the past. On my entering their flight, they soon left the nest and

chattered and screeched until I was out of sight. Were they in a larger flight with more cover, perhaps they would have been more successful.

References

King, B., Woodcock, M., Dickinson, E.C. 1976. *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*. Collins, St James's Place, London.

Strange, M. 2002. *A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Indonesia*. Christopher Helm, London.

Jim Jerrard is a UK member who lives in South Yorkshire.

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THE AUTUMN SOCIAL MEETING - 2005

On Saturday, September 24th 2005, 50 members and their guests visited Paignton Zoo Environmental Park, Devon. They spent the morning viewing the extensive collection, while Avicultural Society Council Members met in the zoo boardroom. The boardroom houses a full set of the *Avicultural Magazine* dating back to 1894, many of the magazines having been collected by the great Herbert Whitley, who founded the zoo.

After lunch the Chairman of the Avicultural Society, Christopher Marler, presented Curator of Birds and Reptiles Colin Bath with the society's Certificate of Merit for the first breeding in the UK of the Pigeon Guillemot *Cepphus columba*, at the zoo's Living Coasts exhibit at Torbay. Following the presentation there was an escorted tour of the collection, for which members and their guests split into two groups, one led by Colin Bath and the other by Jo Gregson, Senior Head Keeper of Birds.

The bird collection is wide ranging and includes several species, such as the Socorro Dove *Zenaida graysoni*, Giant Wood Rail *Eulabeornis ypecaha* and the Grey Gull *Larus modestus*, which are not often seen in UK collections. For many, the highlight of the visit was the behind the scenes tour of the new Avian Breeding Centre, from which the Bird Section is run. This large building contains food preparation areas, incubation and rearing rooms, in which members and their guests saw 2005 Paignton-bred Orange-headed Ground Thrushes *Zoothera citrina*, Hooded Pittas *Pitta sordida*, Bali Starlings *Leucospar rothschildi*, Yellow-shouldered Amazons *Amazona barbadensis* and a Grey-winged Trumpeter *Psophia crepitans*.

Paul Boulden
Hon. Secretary/Treasurer

COTSWOLD WILDLIFE PARK REVIEW OF 2005

by Louise Peat

The past three years have been very busy here on the Bird Section at the Cotswold Wildlife Park, Burford, Oxon., during which time an impressive 24 new species have been added to the collection.

The new species are:

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*

Madagascar Teal *Anas bernieri*

Hottentot Teal *Anas punctata*

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Delacour's Crested Fireback *Lophura ignita macartneyi*

White-naped Crane *Grus vipio*

Sunbittern *Eurypyga helias*

Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis*

Blacksmith Plover *Anitibyx* or *Vanellus armatus*

Scheepmaker's Crowned Pigeon *Goura scheepmakeri sclaterii*

Pheasant Pigeon *Otidiphaps nobilis nobilis*

Duyvenbode's Lory *Chalcopsitta duivenbodei duivenbodei*

Greater Roadrunner *Geococcyx californianus*

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*

Boreal Owl *Aegolius funereus*

Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*

Blue-winged Kookaburra *Dacelo leachii*

Blue-bellied Roller *Coracias cyanogaster*

Snowy-headed Robin Chat *Cossypha niveicapilla*

New Caledonian Crow *Corvus moneduloides*

Red Shoveler *Anas platalea*

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*

Blue-eared Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*

Red-billed Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis autumnalis*

The influx of new species is a result of the park's collection plan, which has resulted in us now having one of the most varied bird collections in the UK. We have been privileged to have received three species on loan. Two of these, a pair of Delacour's Crested Fireback Pheasants *Lophura ignita macartneyi* and a pair of Great Blue Turacos *Corythaeola cristata*, are on loan from Michel Klat. We are very pleased to have Great Blue Turacos back in our collection. This species had been absent from the park since



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