

## CONSERVATION

At Buxa Tiger Reserve, Jerdon's and Black Bazas are not directly targeted for hunting or persecution. Both species are listed on Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.

A wide range of pesticides are used in the tea gardens surrounding the reserve where bazas feed, and this may have detrimental consequences for them. Monitoring pesticide use and residues in birds would be desirable. Illegal woodcutting was noted throughout the reserve. Selective removal of mature tall trees may reduce the availability of nest sites for bazas. Prevention of such activities is needed immediately.

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# Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* at Tanggu, Tianjin: first record for China

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In recent years, a large coastal reclamation project south of the mouth of the Hai river, Tanggu, Tianjin, China, has provided excellent opportunities to study a variety of shorebirds and gulls at close quarters. In September and early October 2004, I spent about three weeks birding this area. On 18 September at 09h30, I found an adult winter-plumaged Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* with a handful of other gulls at the high tide roost (38°58'N 117°44'E). The bird was watched for about five minutes at c.120 m range in good light with the sun at almost 90° to my left, using a 30× eyepiece on a tripod-mounted telescope. Unfortunately I did not see the bird leave: it presumably took flight while I was changing the lens on my telescope, but several digital photographs (Plate 1) and some brief field notes were taken. These field notes were later supplemented by additional notes based on study of my photos.

## DESCRIPTION

The bird was very distinctive, and I was able to rapidly and confidently identify it based on previous experience with the species. Clearly a small gull, it was

noticeably smaller and more compact than an adjacent Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*. At rest it also appeared to have relatively longer legs, plumper body, rounder head, and it was both shorter- and deeper-billed than that species. Its stance was more horizontal, the wings were not drooped and this probably contributed to its compact, portly jizz. Structurally it resembled (but was larger than) Little Gull *L. minutus* (one of which was present on the same tank later that day), while its plumage was radically different to any Asian gull and most closely resembled that of the extralimital Laughing Gull *L. atricilla*—a species with which I was also familiar.

The bird's dark grey mantle was immediately eye-catching, and was similar in shade to that of mature west European Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus graellsii*, Heuglin's Gull *L. heuglini taimyrensis* (neither of which was present for direct comparison) or a mature Black-tailed Gull *L. crassirostris*, many of which were present on the impound not very far from the Franklin's Gull. The bird's prominent white tertial- and, to a lesser degree, scapular-crescents contrasted well with the dark upperparts. It also had the distinctive partially hooded head-pattern typical of a

winter-plumaged Franklin's Gull. The dramatic head pattern comprised a small dark pre-ocular spot, extensively and almost solidly blackish ear-coverts and a less uniform area of dense streaking that extended broadly up and over the rear of its head and crown. The forehead and fore-crown were white and unmarked, while the area from the centre of the crown to the back of the hood was prominently streaked with black (particularly to the rear). This head pattern, coupled with two bold eye-crescents, the latter bulging slightly and almost merging to the rear of the eye, as well as a broad and clean white hind-collar, all contributed to give the bird a very distinctive appearance.

The bird also had conspicuous broad white tips to at least its four outermost primaries, which were clearly visible on the folded wing (especially the outermost three: at rest the white tip to P7 often appearing to merge with the white tertial crescent). On two occasions the gull slowly stretched one of its wings, displaying the species's diagnostic adult wing-tip pattern. It had conspicuous black subterminal marks on the four outermost primaries (and possibly a small black subterminal mark on the fifth outermost primary). The outermost primary did not have the small white mirror shown by many adult Franklin's Gulls, but it did have the largest amount of black, this black decreasing inwards and basally. There was an extensive white area, effectively a continuation of the white trailing edge to the secondaries and inner primaries, distal to, and on the inside edge up of the black subterminal marks on all of these outer primaries. Taken together these features produced a particularly attractive upperwing pattern, one that was reminiscent of the much larger Pallas's Gull *L. ichthyaetus*.

The bill was rather short, deep and relatively blunt-tipped. Lacking the lengthy drooping shape normally readily apparent on Laughing Gull, it appeared dark as did the relatively long legs. The bill, and less noticeably the legs, had a barely perceptible dark claret-red hue.

## RANGE AND STATUS

Franklin's Gull breeds locally throughout the interior provinces of temperate western Canada, east to the Great Lakes and south to mid-west U.S.A.; it winters primarily along the Pacific coast of South America, from Guatemala to Chile (Rogers 2003). The species is an increasingly regular, almost annual, vagrant to western Europe and there have now been over 74 records in that region: 41 in Britain up to the end of 2002 (Rogers 2003) and 33 elsewhere up to the end of 1994 (Mitchell and Young 1997). Cottridge and Vinicombe (1996) convincingly argued that the occurrence pattern in Britain suggests that most vagrants are birds that first crossed to the Old World in the southern hemisphere and then migrated north after wintering in Africa. Since there have been 12 accepted records in Australia up to August 2004 (Palliser 2004) and there are still apparently only three other records in the whole of the Oriental region (all from Japan: Brazil 1991), a similar pattern may well occur in Asia. Birds may initially cross the southern Pacific before migrating north up the coast of the Asian landmass.



**Plate 1.** Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* at Tanggu, Tianjin, China in September 2004, with Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* to the left and Relict Gull *L. relictus* to the right.

During the time I spent at Tanggu, I noted over 170 species, including 41 shorebird species. These included four globally threatened species (BirdLife International 2004): Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides* (Endangered; one south on 20 September), Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaeus* (Endangered; a winter plumaged adult on 7 September and a first-winter on 5 October), Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi* (Vulnerable; a single first-winter, possibly the same individual, on 4 and 24 September, and two adult winter-plumaged birds on 7 October) and up to 1,582 Relict Gulls *L. relictus* (Vulnerable). The site lies very close to Dagou where some of the first Relict Gull specimens were collected in October 1934 and April 1935, and Tanggu's importance for the species has been recently documented by Zhang *et al.* (1999), Robson (2002, 2004) and Liu *et al.* (2003). In addition I recorded two Near Threatened species: Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* (up to 40 on 3 September) and Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*. Particularly large daily totals of shorebirds included 5,200 Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (18 September), 4,500 Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* (7 September), 453 Temminck's Stint *C. temminckii* (18 September) and 7,000 Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (18 September). I also recorded a few local rarities at this same site: Little Stint *Calidris minuta* (a moulting summer-plumaged adult on 23–24 September), Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* (a juvenile on 7 September) and Little Gull (single winter-plumaged adults on 18 September and 7 October).

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## The song of Cinnabar Hawk Owl *Ninox ios* in North Sulawesi, Indonesia

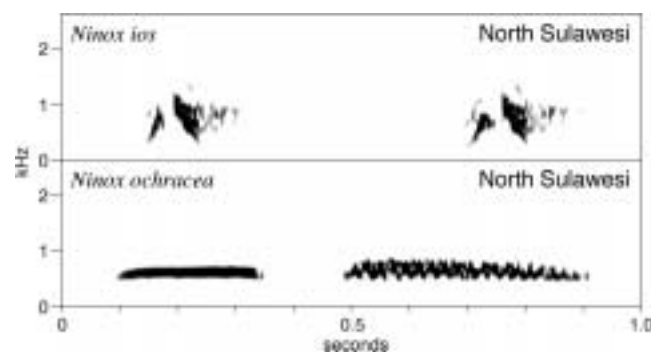
BEN KING

Cinnabar Hawk Owl *Ninox ios* was described by Rasmussen (1999) from a specimen mist-netted by F. G. and C. Rozendaal on the night of 5–6 April 1985 at 1,120 m near Clark's camp (Hill 1,440) in the east-central part of Bogani Nani Wartabone National Park, North Sulawesi, Indonesia (c.0°40'N 123°0'E). Subsequently, a second bird was mist-netted by Lee and Riley (2001) at 19h00 on 14 November 1999 in primary forest at 1,420 m in the Gunong Ambang Nature Reserve in North Sulawesi, about 30 km east of the type locality. The second individual was measured, photographed and released, but no further observations of the species were made. Mauro (2000) recorded one at 1,700 m in Lore Lindu National Park in central Sulawesi on 18 December 1998.

With Jon Riley's help, I visited the site in Gunong Ambang Nature Reserve on 13 and 15 September 2000 with the hope of tape-recording the owl. The species appeared to be common and I tape-recorded one of ten individuals heard on 15 September. Tape playback attracted one individual to within 5 m, where it called repeatedly and allowed excellent views at eye-level through 10× binoculars. The owl was entirely bright rufous with yellow eyes, no distinct facial pattern, and no ear-tufts. It appeared smaller than Ochre-bellied Hawk Owl *N. ochracea*, which has much darker and browner plumage, with a contrastingly paler ochraceous belly.

The song was a hard *wruck-wruck*, the two notes of the couplet being c.0.5 seconds apart (Fig. 1). The individual notes sounded very much like (and were initially mistaken for) the alarm call notes of Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus* (and other species in this complex), and harder than the territorial calls of species in that complex. In contrast, the song of Ochre-bellied Hawk Owl is a mellow hollow couplet, *whoo-whoooo*, with c.0.15 seconds between the notes, with the second note being longer and with a rasping quality (see Fig. 1). These vocal differences lend further support to the separation of Cinnabar Hawk Owl from Ochre-bellied Hawk Owl.

Both Rasmussen (1999) and Lee and Riley (2001) expressed some concern that Cinnabar Hawk Owl might be rare. My estimate of ten individuals heard in one night suggests that at this site at least it appears not to be rare. Further, the habitat was a mosaic of primary forest, cleared areas and cultivation, suggesting that the



**Figure 1.** Sonograms of songs of Cinnabar Hawk Owl *Ninox ios* (recorded on 15 September 2000 in Gunong Ambang Nature Reserve, Sulawesi, Indonesia) and Ochre-bellied Hawk Owl *N. ochracea* (recorded in August 1985 in Dumoga-Bone National Park, Sulawesi, Indonesia). The song of Cinnabar Hawk Owl is a hard couplet, *wruck-wruck*, while that of Ochre-bellied Hawk Owl is a mellow, hollow couplet *whoo-whoooo*, the second note with a raspy quality.

species may be able to tolerate degraded habitat to some degree. This would improve the prognosis for its survival.

I believe that 'hawk owl' is a misnomer for the owls of the genus *Ninox*. With their forward-looking eyes, large rounded heads and short tails, they are obviously owls and bear no resemblance whatever to hawks. I prefer the Australian appellation 'boobook' for the smaller members of the genus. Further, I suggest that 'rufous' is preferable to 'cinnabar' as the entire bird is a rich rufous colour, while cinnabar is the mineral from which the pigment vermilion was originally made, which is a different colour to that of the plumage of *Ninox ios*.

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