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Black-chinned Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus leclancheri* and Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma* on Taiwan

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In reviewing the taxonomy of certain Asian bird species, Collar (2004a,b) drew attention to two enigmas in the Taiwan avifauna, unaware that recent photographic and specimen evidence could shed a little more light on the issues. In one case, the paucity of records and specimens of Black-chinned Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus leclancheri* made it difficult to assess the existence and taxonomic status of the island's reputed population; in the other, the slender evidence that the Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma* breeds on Taiwan had never resulted in a satisfactory subspecific attribution, a circumstance which had led some publications to assume that no such population exists.

Black-chinned Fruit-dove

Black-chinned Fruit-dove was first found on Taiwan on 1 November 1922, when a male was captured in Tainan County (Hachisuka and Udagawa 1951, Wang *et al.* 1991, Lin 1997). Hachisuka and Udagawa (1951) gave the precise locality as 'Kijinsho', although we romanise

its name as 'Gwayren', and they mentioned two other specimens, one from 'Koshun (Hengchun)'—indicating that this is in the 'extreme south of the island'—without date, and one, a juvenile, from 'Botel Tobago' (i.e. Lanyu Island) in or before 1934. Forty years later, Ripley (1962) established the island's population as an endemic subspecies *taiwanus*, using a single specimen taken at Kenting on 19 July 1961; he also reported the 1922 specimen as immature, but this is not in Hachisuka and Udagawa (1951).

After another forty years the situation has by no means clarified. Baptista *et al.* (1997) did not recognise the subspecies, and only mentioned the species for 'Lan Hsü' (Lanyu), attributing the population there to the race *longialis* of the islands off the north of Luzon, although Dickinson *et al.* (1991) called *longialis* endemic to the Philippines. Gibbs *et al.* (2001), however, accepted the race *taiwanus*, and listed four localities, Tainan, Hsien, Hengchan and Lanyu. Of these 'Hsien' may merely be a transcription of 'county'

(the comma between Tainan and Hsien is thus probably a slip, or the repeat of a slip), while 'Hengchan' is evidently Hengchun, the peninsula where Kenting is located, in Pingtung County; so they simply seem to be repeating the information in Hachisuka and Udagawa (1951). In any case, both these recent English-language sources overlooked Wang *et al.* (1991), who listed three apparently different sites, which we romanise as Chishan in Kaohsiung County, and Laiyi and Kenting, both in Pingtung County. Gibbs *et al.* (2001) reported that the evident rarity of the species in Taiwan had led Chang (1980)—despite Ripley's establishment of an endemic race (and despite the Lanyu specimen being juvenile)—to speculate if it might not be a vagrant from the northern Philippines. In fact, Ripley himself referred to this notion, so it was evidently in circulation before 1962. Both Wang *et al.* (1991) and Lin (1997) adopted the idea and treated the species as a vagrant. Owing to the lack of sightings in the years 1990–1994 it was removed from the most recent official list of Taiwan birds (CWBF 1995; also <http://www.bird.org.tw/tw/birdall.htm>). Presumably this explains why it is not

treated as either a protected species (TESRI 1996) or a threatened species (Fang 2004) on Taiwan.

However, searches of various websites reveal several recent, excellent-quality photographs of birds from different parts of the main island, and indicate that the species seems likely to be a rare resident, found mainly in the south but with evidence also from Ilan in the north-east. The website source (=ws) records we have traced, sometimes supplemented by information from the observers, concern five localities, and are as follows: (1) Tou Cheng Elementary School, Ilan County, 29 September–8 October 2003 (ws1 and 2, also Lai 2004; Plate 2); (2) Ilan City, where a bird collided with a house window, 30 December 2002, and was subsequently released (ws3, F. T. Lin *in litt.* 2005); (3) Hsinhua, Tainan County, 16 October 2003 (ws4; Plate 1); (4) Nan Ning Senior High School, Tainan City, on 25 February 2004, involving a bird that died after colliding with a window and is preserved at the Taiwan Endemic Species Research Institute (TESRI, catalogue number 2979) (ws5); and (5) Kenting National Park, Pingtung County, 13 March 2002 (ws6); same locality, 31 January 2004 (ws7; observer



Plate 1. Male Black-chinned Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus leclancheri*, Hsinhua, Tainan County, Taiwan, 16 October 2003. Photo: Chien-Yuan Chen.



Plate 2. Female Black-chinned Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus leclancheri*, Tou Cheng Elementary School, Ilan County, Taiwan, 3 October 2003. Photo: Yun-Hsien Lai.



Plate 3. Juvenile Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, Hui-Sun Forest, Nantou County, Taiwan, 29 July 2002. Photo: Tze-Hoi Kwan.



Plate 4. Juvenile Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (same individual as in Plate 3), Hui-Sun Forest, Nantou County, Taiwan, 29 July 2002. Photo: Tze-Hoi Kwan.

Lee *in litt.* 2005); same locality, 28 January 2005 (ws8; observer Lee *in litt.* 2005).

In addition, the Wild Bird Federation Taiwan (WBFT) has the following records in its database: three, Lanyu, 29 March 1997 (observer Chen); one, Ren Shan Botanical Garden (Renshan Nursery Garden), Ilan County, 30 September 2001 (observer Fan) and 28 September 2002 (Y.-H. Lai *in litt.* 2005); two, Wuwei Harbor Waterbird Refuge, Ilan County, 31 December 2002 (F.-T. Lin). Moreover, Chin-Chung Sa (*in litt.* 2005) has given us the following records: one, Kenting, Pingtung County, 15 February 1980 (observer unknown); one, Longluantan (in Kenting National Park), Pingtung County, 31 December 1986 (observer unknown); one, Inda Ecological Farm, Pingtung County, 1 November 2000 (observer Chang). Thus, conflating the older literature with these recent records, the months in which the species has been recorded for the island include January, February, March, July, September, October, November and December, and there is at least one record of a juvenile; this evidence does not suggest vagrancy from the Philippines.

Despite the quality of most of the photographs, it is impossible to use them to validate Ripley's subspecies *taiwanus*, whose characters, as given by Gibbs *et al.* (2001), were repeated by Collar (2004b). However, we can make the following comments. The first is that Ripley made his diagnosis from a single bird, clearly not a particularly safe basis for a taxonomic judgement. Indeed, the specimen was one in which bluish 'splotching' on the upperparts was speculated to be an 'individual aberration', which presumably means that any other of its unusual features could also be considered as such. Ripley's bird matched the northern Philippine race *longialis* in wing and tail measurements, but had a larger bill and longer tarsus, and was rather darker green above and much darker green below, with a 'large and not so dark' breast-spot and 'anterior portion of the chin spot'. However, to us the bill of Taiwan birds in the various website photographs does not obviously appear 'much more massive'. Moreover, Ripley curiously quoted a letter from Y. Yamashina, who had seen three Taiwan specimens (including the 1922 bird; the two others were lost in 1945), and who for two of them gave tail, culmen and tarsus measurements which essentially fall within or at the bounds of measurements given for *longialis* and/or nominate *leclancheri*. Although Yamashina concluded with the point that in colour Taiwanese and Philippine birds were 'quite different', we feel that the case for the legitimacy of *taiwanus* is at present by no means clear, and needs new validation.

Scaly Thrush

The question of the status of the Scaly (or White's) Thrush (*sensu lato*) on Taiwan has also long been problematic. Mees (1977) concluded that there were two forms on the island, the long-winged winter-visiting race *aurea* and a short-winged presumed resident without a taxonomic allocation. Mees's evidence for the latter was, however, just two specimens and he found it impossible to attribute them to subspecies, although several publications which accepted the existence of this resident form (Kobayashi

and Cho 1981, Chang 1985, Wang *et al.* 1991) continued to refer to it mistakenly as *horsfieldi* (*horsfieldi* applies to Indonesian populations only: Collar 2004a). Severinghaus and Blackshaw (1976) did not mention subspecific names, but they too referred to the Scaly Thrush as both a winter visitor and a rare resident. Nevertheless, Clement (2000) attributed all birds found on the island to *aurea*, and again the species was omitted from the recent Red Data Book (Fang 2004).

Recently two photographs of a juvenile bird have been published on a website, indicating that the species must indeed breed in Taiwan. These were taken at Hui-Sun Forest, Nantou County, on 29 July 2002, by a Hong Kong birder, Tze-Hoi Kwan, during a tour being guided by Wen-Horn Lin (ws9-10, Plates 3-4). In both images it is possible to see the gape-flanges of a young, recently fledged bird, and this status is further suggested by its lanky, small-headed, thin-necked, loose-winged and altogether slightly dishevelled appearance. It is, of course, impossible to comment on the bird's subspecific identity, but it must presumably represent the short-winged resident form that Mees (1977) determined to be present on the island. Moreover, a specimen of a newly fledged Scaly Thrush was recently acquired by TESRI: this was sent to the institute on 19 June 2001 from Sitou, also in Nantou County, and bears the number 396 (Cheng-Te Yao *in litt.* 2005). Hui-Sun and Sitou are respectively north and south of Sun Moon Lake, at opposite ends of Nantou County, but these records still tend to suggest that the mountains of central Taiwan embraced by this county are the first place to begin looking systematically for breeding Scaly Thrushes on the island.

Both this and Black-chinned Fruit-dove are presumably all-year residents, and we imagine that they might qualify for treatment as threatened species on Taiwan, given their probably low population sizes.

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- 1: <http://www.wbst.org.tw/exchange/communication/showtopic.asp?c=listandserialno=0310250002>
- 2: <http://www.wbst.org.tw/exchange/communication/showtopic.asp?c=listandserialno=0310170005>
- 3: <http://wildbird.e-land.gov.tw/wildbird/xxxx/birdimage/ss3506.jpg> [xxxx = Chinese characters; URL available by email from authors on request]
- 4: <http://nature.kl.edu.tw/showthread.php?threadid=4248>
- 5: <http://nature.kl.edu.tw/showthread.php?threadid=8020>
- 6: <http://www.wbst.org.tw/exchange/communication/showtopic.asp?c=listandserialno=0204120004>
- 7: <http://nature.kl.edu.tw/showthread.php?s=andthreadid=12337>
- 8: <http://nature.kl.edu.tw/showthread.php?s=andthreadid=19525>
- 9: <http://www.wbst.org.tw/exchange/communication/showtopic.asp?c=listandserialno=0208170002>
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