

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*: a new species for Peninsular Malaysia

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On the morning of 17 January 1998, we visited Tanjong Karang, Malaysia, in search of shorebirds. We were on our way back to the car when a movement among the mangrove roots caught SGM's eye. We both instantly recognized the bird as a Dusky *Phylloscopus fuscatus*/Radde's *P. schwarzi* type warbler. SGM had never seen a member of this group, and CH had seen only one Dusky in California, though both of us had some experience with other *Phylloscopus* warblers, such as Arctic *P. borealis*. We remembered that Dusky, but not Radde's, was on the Malaysian list as a vagrant (Strange and Jeyarajasingam 1993). Thus, our initial assumption was that this bird was a Dusky.

Fortunately, we both recalled a number of marks that distinguished Radde's from Dusky but couldn't remember which mark matched which species so we had no preconceived notions. The bird before us was about the size of an American wood warbler. Its back was uniform olive and the cap was similar in colour. The tail was generally similar in colour, and rump pattern/colour was not noted. The wings were also olive and lacked wing-bars or contrasting tertial tips. Above the eye was a prominent pale supercilium but, unfortunately, we did not note the precise colour or pattern. The eyeline was dark, but the loreal pattern was not noted. In not carefully noting these features, we failed.

However, we did carefully observe the underparts pattern and the bare parts. Notably, the bill was short but stout. Its colour was mostly fleshy pink with a dusky tip. The legs were quite bright fleshy pink. The underparts were in general dull yellowish buff, but the colour became more intense towards the rear with the posterior flanks being bright ochreous buff and the undertail coverts fairly bright yellow. The throat was more whitish than the rest of the underparts and was unstreaked. Finally, the bird did us the favour of calling repeatedly. The call was a soft *chup*. The bird never went more than five feet up into a mangrove.

We watched the bird for five or more minutes at about 50 feet through 10x Swarovski and Zeiss binoculars. The sun was fairly high and mostly to our backs. As we walked back to the car, we reviewed our observations and committed them to memory without consulting a book. We were still operating under the assumption that this bird was a Dusky Warbler, but we remarked on how insipid this bird's call note was. We had both remembered

that the Dusky's call note was supposed to be emphatic and distinctive. I scribbled some brief notes and a few minutes later we looked up the *Phylloscopus* warblers in *A guide to the birds of Thailand*. To our great surprise, the marks fitted Radde's better than Dusky. The notes were tucked away until we journeyed home and other resources could be accessed.

After returning to the United States, we looked at Parmenter and Byers (1991), Baker (1997), and Lewington *et al.* (1991), as well as several photos from *British Birds* and *Birding World*. A tape recording of Dusky Warbler was also reviewed via the Internet. The bill shape and color match Radde's nicely but not Dusky. Also, leg color fitted Radde's as did flank and undertail covert pattern. What we saw in these areas would be atypical for Dusky. Finally, the call note matched that of Radde's but was very different from that of Dusky. Call note also helped eliminate the very similar Yellow-streaked Warbler *Phylloscopus armandii*. After reviewing the above sources and our notes, we feel confident that the bird we saw on 17 January 1998 at Tanjong Karang was a Radde's Warbler.

As far as we know, this would be the first Malaysian record of Radde's Warbler. Both Radde's and Dusky Warbler are common winter visitors to Thailand and normally reach the northern end of the Malay Peninsula (Boonsong and Round 1991). The Yellow-streaked Warbler winters as far south as northern Thailand but does not usually range to the Malay Peninsula (Boonsong and Round 1991). Interestingly, the Philippines also had its first record of Radde's Warbler during the winter of 1997-1998 (Gee 1998).

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