

BIRDING HOTSPOT

Birdwatching in Kerandangan Natural Park, Lombok, Nusa Tenggara Barat, Indonesia

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Introduction

Until recently, Lombok, Nusa Tenggara Barat, Indonesia, had been rather neglected by ornithologists and birdwatchers, with few observers having visited the island—the most westerly of the Lesser Sunda islands, lying just inside Wallacea, although only about 35 km east of Bali across the Lombok Strait. Alfred Russel Wallace did indeed visit the island and noted that ‘the great contrast between the two divisions of the archipelago is nowhere so abruptly exhibited as on passing from the island of Bali to that of Lombok [sic], where the two regions are in closest proximity’. Birdwatchers’ neglect of the island was probably due to the belief that it held no single-island endemic species and only a small number of the endemic and near-endemic birds of northern Nusa Tenggara. A consequence of the infrequent and in recent times mostly rather brief visits has been a poorly known avifauna, particularly as most visitors concentrated their efforts on the evergreen rainforest on the slopes of the island’s greatest feature, Gn Rinjani, the third highest peak (3,726 m) in Indonesia and a large, active volcano. The lowlands—once dry deciduous monsoon forest—were not deemed worth visiting, having been largely cleared for agriculture, mainly

rice-fields, by the large human population, today in excess of four million and making up about 50% of the total population of the Lesser Sundas (Myers & Bishop 2005).

In the last decade, the situation has changed; it is now possible for birdwatchers to take advantage of the proximity of Bali, also an interesting location for birdwatching but probably better known as a holiday destination, and plan a visit to Lombok that could easily be accommodated during a family holiday to Bali. However, much more important to the international birdwatcher was the revelation by Sangster *et al.* (2013) that a taxon hitherto widely thought to be a race of the Moluccan Scops Owl *Otus magicus* was in fact a new species, endemic to Lombok, the Rinjani Scops Owl *O. jolandae*—the island finally had its first single-island endemic. What is more, since 2012 the Kerandangan Natural Park has achieved some prominence as a birdwatching location. The park is a small (396 ha) conservation area (8.338°S 116.068°E) near Senggigi village, west Lombok, managed by the Natural Resource Conservation Centre, Nusa Tenggara Barat. The park is a small fragment of the dry deciduous lowland monsoon forest that today has been lost from most parts of the island. It lies in a small steep-sided valley watered

Plate 1. The main trail starts from the guest house and goes to Putri Kembar waterfall, Kerandangan Natural Park, Lombok, October 2016.



by a stream running along its length and flowing in a south-westerly direction to the Lombok Strait in the Senggigi area. The altitude of the valley floor near the guesthouse at the entrance to the park is 47 m (Plate 1), whilst the trail to the ridge on the park's northern boundary rises to 459 m and the one on the southern boundary rises to 650 m. Forest clothes both the ridges that form the watersheds to the north and south of the valley (Plates 2–4). Particular attractions found in the park include

the Rinjani Scops Owl and the Elegant Pitta *Pitta elegans*, a much sought-after Wallacean endemic. Several other species recorded from Lombok before 1930 but which subsequently seemed to have disappeared from the island (Myers & Bishop 2005) have also recently been observed in the park. Since 2012, when word started to spread among foreign birdwatchers that Elegant Pitta could be enjoyed here, the park guesthouse has welcomed birdwatchers from other parts of Asia and Europe.

Plate 2. Kerandangan forest from the northern hill track with Gili Trawangan and Meno in the background, 29 March 2016.



Plate 3. Kerandangan forest from the northern hill track, 28 March 2016.



Plate 4. Kerandangan forest from the southern hill track with Gn Agung (Bali) in the background, 29 March 2016.



Logistics

Kerandangan Natural Park is located just a ten-minute drive from the Senggigi beach tourism area, the most popular part of the island with foreign tourists. For birdwatchers visiting Bali and planning a trip, there are three ways of travelling to Lombok: take a ferry from Padang Bai Harbour to Lembar Harbour (four hours); a fast boat from Padang Bai Harbour to Senggigi (one hour); or a flight from I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport, Bali, to Lombok International Airport (30 minutes). You can also fly direct from Jakarta, Indonesia, and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Lombok. From Lembar Harbour or Lombok International Airport it takes about an hour and a half to get to the Senggigi area, either by taxi or public transport. As the main tourist area on Lombok, Senggigi has a variety of hotels, restaurants and other tourist facilities. If you have time to spare, it is worth remembering that at certain times of year some interesting seabird species may be seen in the Lombok Strait and the ferry may offer the best opportunities to observe them. Species seen have included Matsudaira's Storm Petrel *Hydrobates matsudairae* (May and September), Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* (September and October), Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna pacifica* (May), large flocks of Little Terns *Sternula albifrons* (October), several

other tern species and Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* (October), Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* and Red-footed Booby *S. sula* (October), and three species of Frigatebird—Great *Fregata minor*, Lesser *F. ariel* and Christmas *F. andrewsi* (May and October); for more details see Myers & Bishop (2005) and Sykes & Sykes (2005).

Some avian highlights of Kerandangan Natural Park

During several surveys of the park avifauna carried out by the authors in 2015, 50 species were recorded (Appendix 1). According to BirdLife International (2016a), one—Flores Hawk Eagle *Nisaetus floris*—is classified as Critically Endangered and three are classified as Near Threatened—Rinjani Scops Owl, Cinnamon-banded Kingfisher *Todiramphus australasia* and Rufous-chested Flycatcher *Ficedula dumetoria*.

Flores Hawk Eagle *Nisaetus floris* CR

The Flores Hawk Eagle is known to occur on the islands of Flores, Rinca, Sumbawa, Satonda and Lombok (Gjershaug *et al.* 2004), and Alor (Collaerts *et al.* 2013). Sight records have also been reported from the mangrove forest about 800 m off the coast of the island of Komodo (Coates & Bishop 1997, Collaerts *et al.* 2013). Due to widespread ongoing

Plate 5. Flores Hawk Eagle *Nisaetus floris*, Kerandangan Natural Park, Lombok, 3 May 2015.



forest degradation in Nusa Tenggara, the species's population is predicted to decline significantly over the next 10 years. Flores Hawk Eagles have been found in tropical lowland and submontane forests up to 1,700 m, but they most often frequent lowland forest and farming areas, always close to natural or semi-natural forests (Gjershaug *et al.* 2004). These conditions are found around Kerandangan Natural Park, which is located in the lowlands, bordered by agricultural and residential areas. In May 2015 we observed a pair of Flores Hawk Eagles engaged in courtship displays, with the male flying back and forth following the female (Plate 5). The breeding period on Flores is around June to July (Gjershaug *et al.* 2004) and our observations on Lombok match these dates.

Rinjani Scops Owl *Otus jolandae* NT

The Rinjani Scops Owl was described by Sangster *et al.* (2013) as endemic to Lombok. It appears to be common in those areas where it has been found—secondary forest, scattered woods and also along quiet roads—suggesting that the species does not require unbroken tracts of primary forest and tolerates disturbed or damaged habitat. In Kerandangan Natural Park, these owls are easy to find around the guesthouse and along some of the trails (Plate 6), calling to each other at night.

Plate 6. Rinjani Scops Owl *Otus jolandae*, Kerandangan Natural Park, Lombok, April 2015.



The song consists of a single whistle without pronounced overtones (<http://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Otus-jolandae>) and differs from all the geographically adjacent congeners; the song of the Moluccan Scops Owl, hitherto treated as conspecific, is a rough, raven-like croak.

Cinnamon-banded Kingfisher

Todiramphus australasia NT

The Cinnamon-banded Kingfisher has a widespread distribution in the Lesser Sundas—Lombok, Sumba, Timor, Wetar, Damar, Babar—as well as the Tanimbar islands in the Banda Sea. The species inhabits primary and tall secondary forest, forest edge, monsoon woodland, open forest, woodlands and groves of shade trees in villages and cultivated lands up to 700 m, although it appears to require habitat with closed canopy (Trainor *et al.* 2009). It is generally uncommon, with a fragmented distribution, although locally more common in some areas. Loss and degradation of habitat is likely to have had serious adverse effects and the species is potentially Vulnerable—it apparently went unobserved on Lombok for many years (Myers & Bishop 2005). This bird is easy to detect by its distinctive loud call and can be found in the southern part of the valley near streams, but is hard to locate and very rarely seen; during our surveys, there were two sight records in July 2015, including a juvenile bird (Plates 7 & 8).

Elegant Pitta *Pitta elegans*

The Elegant Pitta (Plate 9) is a Wallacean endemic, with Lombok being the type locality of the subspecies *P. elegans concinnus* (White & Bruce 1986), first collected here by Wallace (1863). It is found in a variety of habitats, including humid primary forest, dry monsoon forest, forest edge, heavily degraded forest, logged and selectively logged monsoon forest and scrub, as well as areas dominated by cultivation, apparently being at least partly adaptable to disturbed areas. The species is easy to find in Kerandangan Natural Park.

Rufous-chested Flycatcher *Ficedula dumetoria* NT

Lombok is also the type locality of the Rufous-chested Flycatcher (White & Bruce 1986), first collected and described by Wallace (1863). The species's range extends from southern Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia, the northern and western parts of Sumatra and Java, Lombok, Sumbawa and Flores, through to the lowlands of Kalimantan, Borneo. It frequents bamboo-rich lowland and lower montane forests, with an altitudinal range that varies from location to location; because of the well-documented loss of lowland forest, the species is classified as Near Threatened (BirdLife



Plate 7. Cinnamon-banded Kingfisher *Todiramphus australasia*, Kerandangan Natural Park, July 2015.

Plate 8. Juvenile Cinnamon-banded Kingfisher, Kerandangan Natural Park, July 2015.





Plate 9. Elegant Pitta *Pitta elegans*, Kerandangan Natural Park, 4 April 2015.

Plate 10. Rufous-chested Flycatcher *Ficedula dumetoria*, Kerandangan Natural Park, October 2016.



International 2016b). In Kerandangan Natural Park, they are usually to be found on the Southern Valley Trail in the dense, mixed vegetation near the guesthouse (Plate 10) and may also be encountered on the Main Trail, between the second and third shelters. They generally frequent the lower levels of the vegetation, about 30 cm to 2 m from the ground.

Kerandangan birdwatching trails

There are five trails in Kerandangan Natural Park of interest to birdwatchers: Main Trail, Northern Hill, Southern Hill, Northern Valley and Southern Valley, and an observation point by the guesthouse.

The Main Trail (1.85 km) starts from the guesthouse and runs close by the stream to the Putri Kembar waterfalls; it is relatively flat through the woods and riverside (Plate 1). Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus* and Green Junglefowl *G. varius* are frequently encountered foraging for grain or exposed tubers where wild boar have been rootling. Elegant Pittas are often encountered searching for earthworms or insects on the ground. The elusive Oriental (Rufous-backed) Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca rufidorsa* may also be heard, if not seen, in this vicinity.

The Southern Hill Trail (2.4 km) and Northern Hill Trail (2.1 km) are steeper trails which less active visitors may find more difficult, but for those who like a challenge the climb can be worthwhile. These trails run along the hilly ridges that form the northern and southern boundaries of the park. Along the Southern Hill Trail, the Orange-footed Scrubfowl *Megapodius reinwardt* has been observed, another species recorded on Lombok in the past but not seen for many years. Flores Hawk Eagle has been seen from the Southern Hill Trail and it is another place to look for the Rinjani Scops Owl. From both ridges, raptors such as Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* can be easily observed.

The short Southern Valley Trail (0.46 km) can be very productive—both Cinnamon-banded Kingfisher and Rufous-chested Flycatcher have been found along it. Black-naped Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus melanospilus* has also been seen here.

The Northern Valley Trail (0.78 km) starts from the guesthouse and passes the camping ground, terminating at the Goa Walet waterfalls. Although often quiet, it is another place where Rinjani Scops Owl has been found at night.

Plate 11. Scaly-crowned Honeyeater *Lichmera lombokia*, close to the entrance of Kerandangan Natural Park, 11 March 2016.



The observation point—the area within about 100 m around the guesthouse—may yield Elegant Pitta and Scaly-breasted Honeyeater *Lichmera lombokia* (Plate 11) and at night is a good place to look for Rinjani Scops Owl and Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macurus*. As the forest canopy is not too dense, birdwatchers who enjoy photography may find plenty of opportunities to indulge their hobby.

Conservation

Globally, lowland rainforest is one of the most threatened natural habitats—easily destroyed by logging and then converted to agriculture. Kerandangan Natural Park is a very important refuge for several threatened lowland forest bird species on Lombok. Birdwatchers can help Kerandangan Natural Park just by paying the area a visit, thereby contributing to the local economy and helping to highlight the importance of its long-term conservation.

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Appendix 1.

List of bird species recorded at Kerandangan Natural Park and encounters with them on the trails.

Abbreviations: SH = Southern Hill; NH = Northern Hill; MT = Main Trail; SV = Southern Valley; NV = Northern Valley; GH = Guesthouse. NT = Near Threatened; CR = Critically Endangered.

Species	Birdwatching trails					
	SH	NH	MT	SV	NV	GH
Orange-footed Scrubfowl <i>Megapodius reinwardt</i>	x					
Red Junglefowl <i>Gallus gallus</i>			x			
Green Junglefowl <i>Gallus varius</i>	x		x	x		
Barred Buttonquail <i>Turnix suscitator</i>	x		x			
Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker <i>Picoides moluccensis</i>			x			
Oriental (Rufous-backed) Dwarf Kingfisher <i>Ceyx erithaca rufidorsa</i>			x			
Collared Kingfisher <i>Todiramphus chloris</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cinnamon-banded Kingfisher <i>Todiramphus australasia</i> NT				x		
Blue-tailed Bee-eater <i>Merops philippinus</i>		x				
Oriental Cuckoo <i>Cuculus saturates</i>			x			x
Brush (Rusty-breasted) Cuckoo <i>Cacomantis variolosus sepulcralis</i>			x			x
Shining Bronze Cuckoo <i>Chalcites lucidus</i>			x			
Lesser Coucal <i>Centropus bengalensis</i>	x	x	x	x		
Cave Swiftlet <i>Collocalia linchi</i>	x	x	x			
Edible-nest Swiftlet <i>Aerodramus fuciphagus</i>		x				
Rinjani Scops Owl <i>Otus jolandae</i> NT	x				x	x
Large-tailed Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus macrurus</i>						x
Metallic Pigeon <i>Columba vitiensis</i>			x			
Ruddy Cuckoo Dove <i>Macropygia emiliana</i>			x	x		
Grey-capped Emerald Dove <i>Chalcophaps indica</i>			x	x		
Black-naped Fruit Dove <i>Ptilinopus melanospilus</i>				x		
Green Imperial Pigeon <i>Ducula aenea</i>			x			
White-breasted Waterhen <i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>				x		
Oriental Honey Buzzard <i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	x	x	x	x		
Brahminy Kite <i>Haliastur indus</i>			x			
Chinese Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter soloensis</i>			x			
Flores Hawk Eagle <i>Nisaetus floris</i> CR	x					
Green-backed Heron <i>Butorides striata</i>			x			
Elegant Pitta <i>Pitta elegans</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x
Scaly-crowned Honeyeater <i>Lichmera lombokia</i>			x			x
Helmeted Friarbird <i>Philemon buceroides</i>				x	x	
Long-tailed Shrike <i>Lanius schach</i>		x				
Mangrove Whistler <i>Pachycephala cinerea</i>	x		x	x		
White-breasted Woodswallow <i>Artamus leucorhynchus</i>	x	x				
Black-naped Oriole <i>Oriolus chinensis</i>	x		x	x		
White-shouldered Triller <i>Lalage sueurii</i>		x				x
Wallacean Drongo <i>Dicrurus densus</i>			x	x		
Black-naped Monarch <i>Hypothymis azurea</i>			x	x	x	x
Sunda Thrush <i>Zoothera andromedae</i>				x		
Snowy-browed Flycatcher <i>Ficedula hyperythra</i>				x		
Rufous-chested Flycatcher <i>Ficedula dumetoria</i> NT			x	x		
Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>	x		x	x	x	x
Yellow-vented Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus goiavier</i>	x	x	x			x
Golden-headed Cisticola <i>Cisticola exilis</i>		x				
Lemon-bellied White-eye <i>Zosterops chloris</i>	x		x	x	x	x
Olive-backed Tailorbird <i>Orthotomus sepium</i>	x		x	x	x	x
Arctic Warbler <i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>				x	x	x
Red-chested Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum maugei</i>	x		x	x	x	x
Brown-throated Sunbird <i>Anthreptes malacensis</i>			x			x
Olive-backed Sunbird <i>Nectarinia jugularis</i>	x				x	