

# Birding Pantí – 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015

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A view of the famed Bunker Trail at Pantí, home of the mythical rail-babbler. Photo © Lim Kim Seng

Mark Eaton, a birder from California, USA, has birded with me before at Pantí in October 2014. Despite spending four days, we did not see his target bird – the monotypic Rail-babbler. The second opportunity came as he was in town again and so we arranged a day trip to Pantí to try and see Rail-babbler.

We arrived at Pantí at 6.30 am, just as it was starting to get light. Our first stop was the 5 km stream where we spent some time to look for White-crowned Forktail. It wasn't around. We did hear a pair of Blyth's Frogmouths nearby but they were too well hidden and we could not find it. We did however find a Blue-eared Kingfisher as well as both Raffles's and Chestnut-breasted Malkohas, Brown Barbet,

Rhinoceros Hornbill, Dusky and Black-and-yellow Broadbills, a few parties of Fiery Minivets, a couple of Lesser Cuckooshrikes and a bold Black-capped Babbler hawking insects on the road (!) in addition to the usual bulbuls. But there was no sign of Rail-babbler.



A male Lesser Cuckooshrike foraging in upper storey at Panti. Photo © Lim Kim Seng

We moved on to the 7 and 8 km streams to try and listen for calling Rail-babblers but heard only gibbons, so we turned back and spent some time walking in the area around the shrine. We did hear the usual babblers and got close looks of Crimson-breasted, Yellow-breasted and Orange-bellied Flowerpeckers but there was no sign of Rail-babbler.

It was getting close to noon and we were already at the headquarters. Desperate, we waited once more in the stupefying humidity and admired a flock of Blue-winged Leafbirds foraging in *Clidemia* bushes nearby. Then, we heard it! Yes, it was calling very clearly from the forest. We jumped out of our car and followed its call into the forest. We imitated its call and waited. Unfortunately, it did not come in and we were wondering if it had gone off. Luckily, we heard it calling again after some nervous minutes. It had crossed over to the forest on the other side of the road! We moved quickly to the other side, jumping over a ditch in the process. As we moved into the forest, we flushed several Crested Partridges that



protested our presence by running off. We were afraid that the commotion would scare away the Rail-babbler but luckily after another very tense few minutes, it called again. We scanned the forest floor and then, there it was! Less than 20 metres from us, it was walking about, calling and displaying. Mark tried to get photos but there was just too much blockage. We imitated its call again and it went to our right. Despite coming even closer, we did not see it again. After a few more minutes, we decided that was as good as it got and retreated to the car. Hi-fives all around and mission accomplished!

It took us six hours but we had succeeded in seeing the much desired rail-babbler in the end. We also recorded 66 species and an additional five on the road despite this being more of a Rail-babbler hunt than a general birding trip. The drive back to Singapore was surprisingly blissful!



The Rail-babbler! Photo © Lim Kim Seng

### **A Checklist of the Birds recorded at Panti and environs on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

Nomenclature, sequence and taxonomy follow IOC. Species highlighted in yellow indicate those that were heard only.

#	English Name	Scientific Name
1	Crested Partridge	<i>Rollulus rouloul</i>
2	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
3	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
4	Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>
5	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
6	Common Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
7	Zebra Dove	<i>Geopelia striata</i>
8	Thick-billed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron curvirostra</i>
9	Raffles's Malkoha	<i>Rhinortha chlorophaea</i>
10	Chestnut-breasted Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus curvirostris</i>
11	Violet Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus</i>
12	Plaintive Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis merulinus</i>
13	Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo	<i>Surniculus lugubris</i>
14	Blyth's Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus affinis</i>
15	House Swift	<i>Apus nipalensis</i>
16	Rufous-collared Kingfisher	<i>Actenoides concretus</i>
17	Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
18	Blue-eared Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo meninting</i>
19	Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx erithaca</i>
20	Red-bearded Bee-eater	<i>Nyctyornis amictus</i>
21	Rhinoceros Hornbill	<i>Buceros rhinoceros</i>
22	Red-crowned Barbet	<i>Megalaima rafflesii</i>
23	Brown Barbet	<i>Caloramphus fuliginosus</i>
24	Rufous Woodpecker	<i>Micropternus brachyurus</i>
25	Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus galgulus</i>
26	Black-and-yellow Broadbill	<i>Eurylaimus ochromalus</i>
27	Dusky Broadbill	<i>Corydon sumatranus</i>
28	Golden-bellied Gerygone	<i>Gerygone sulphurea</i>
29	Rufous-winged Philentoma	<i>Philentoma pyroptera</i>
30	Green Iora	<i>Aegithina viridissima</i>
31	Lesser Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina fimbriata</i>
32	Fiery Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus igneus</i>
33	Dark-throated Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthonotus</i>
34	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>
35	Rail-babbler	<i>Eupetes macrocerus</i>
36	Black-headed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus atriceps</i>
37	Olive-winged Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus plumosus</i>
38	Cream-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus simplex</i>
39	Asian Red-eyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus brunneus</i>
40	Spectacled Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus erythrophthalmos</i>

41	Finsch's Bulbul	<i>Alophoixus finschii</i>
42	Yellow-bellied Bulbul	<i>Alophoixus phaeocephalus</i>
43	Hairy-backed Bulbul	<i>Tricholestes criniger</i>
44	Buff-vented Bulbul	<i>Iole olivacea</i>
45	Streaked Bulbul	<i>Ixos malaccensis</i>
46	Dark-necked Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus atrogularis</i>
47	Rufous-tailed Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sericeus</i>
48	Chestnut-rumped Babbler	<i>Stachyris maculata</i>
49	Black-throated Babbler	<i>Stachyris nigricollis</i>
50	Rufous-fronted Babbler	<i>Stachyridopsis rufifrons</i>
51	Pin-striped Tit-Babbler	<i>Macronous gularis</i>
52	Fluffy-backed Tit-Babbler	<i>Macronous ptilosus</i>
53	Horsfield's Babbler	<i>Malcocincla sepiaria</i>
54	Short-tailed Babbler	<i>Malcocincla malaccensis</i>
55	Sooty-capped Babbler	<i>Malacopteron affine</i>
56	Black-capped Babbler	<i>Pellorneum capistratum</i>
57	Asian Fairy-bluebird	<i>Irena puella</i>
58	Asian Glossy Starling	<i>Aplonis panayensis</i>
59	Javan Myna	<i>Acridotheres javanicus</i>
60	White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
61	Pale Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis unicolor</i>
62	Lesser Green Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis cyanopogon</i>
63	Blue-winged Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis cochinchinensis</i>
64	Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker	<i>Prionochilus maculatus</i>
65	Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker	<i>Prionochilus percussus</i>
66	Orange-bellied Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum trigonostigma</i>
67	Ruby-cheeked Sunbird	<i>Chalcoparia singalensis</i>
68	Purple-naped Sunbird	<i>Hypogramma hypogrammicum</i>
69	Van Hasselt's Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma brasiliana</i>
70	Little Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera longirostra</i>
71	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>