



*Three Mount Slamet Rufous-fronted Laughingthrushes by B.Ferns – YCKT*

## **Update from Andrew Owen**

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After more than 3 years of no field trips, it was really nice to visit Java and Chester Zoo's conservation partners at Cikananga Wildlife Centre.

Along with Javier Lopez, Chester Zoo's Head of Veterinary Services and in our capacity as technical advisers to Cikananga Conservation Breeding Centre (CCBC), we spent several days with Bertie Ferns (Conservation Breeding Manager) and Inge Tielen (Deputy Life Sciences Director), discussing any challenges, future plans and progress that's been made despite the COVID-19 pandemic and funding challenges.



In the last two years, work at CCBC has continued, including the building of two very impressive new aviary blocks. These two high quality units provide 80 new valuable breeding aviaries for Javan Green Magpies (*Cissa thalassina*), Black-winged Myna (*Acredotheres melanopterus*), Rufous-fronted Laughingthrushes (*Garrulax rufifrons rufifrons*) and the Mount Slamet subspecies *G.r. slamatensis*. These new aviary blocks were funded by Chester Zoo, EAZA's Silent Forest campaign, Waddesdon Manor Aviary and Montpellier Zoo.



There are currently 40 Javan Green Magpies at CCBC, so only a little under half the entire known global population, five birds were reared in 2020, two reared in 2021 and the breeding season is about to start for this year. The other breeding highlight has been six Rufous-fronted Laughingthrushes of the *slamatensis* subspecies reared in 2022, which is thought to be the first time this taxa has been bred anywhere in captivity.



A new insect breeding facility has been built, thanks to funding from Prague Zoo. This will be used to rear a variety of invertebrates for the centres' songbirds, with the future aim of becoming self-sufficient in these expensive items. Another exciting development is an organic farm that produces fresh – cut vegetables for the animals in the wildlife centre. Future plans are to expand this to produce a wide variety of fruit and vegetables for the entire centre.



On the final leg of my trip, along with the CCBC team, I spent a week in the field on one of Java's mountains (name not included for security reasons). As part of an integrated Javan Green Magpie project, supported by Manchester Metropolitan University, Chester Zoo, CCBC and Silent Forest, the team are carrying out community engagement activities, ornithological surveys, including the use of song meter sound recorders to gather data on the presence or absence of Javan Green Magpie and other highly threatened species, which will help inform us of our next steps in trying to protect or recover these species in the wild.



Working in the steep muddy and wet mountain terrain was really tough (especially for my dodgy old knees!), but was very useful. The first surveys have recorded some 90 bird species so far and continued surveys are planned, supporting the local BKSDA (forestry department) in gathering ecological data for the whole mountain.

Finally, Bertie Ferns and I were able to join a very useful discussion with local IUCN members on the conservation challenges and opportunities and were delighted to have the opportunity to meet with IUCN species survival commission Chair Jon Paul Rodriguez and discuss some of the Asian Songbird issues and challenges with him.