

# This Issue

by Sheldon Dingle, Alhambra, California

I often find myself traveling thither and yon on one sort of mission or another. The advantage is that I can usually manage to visit bird-related people and places while still attending to the task at hand.

Just a few weeks ago, having completed inescapable duty in the Philippines, I thought about the zoogeographical region of this issue – the southeast Asian peninsular area from northern Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam south through Malaysia to Singapore then the islands of the Malay Archipelago as far east as Bali.

Why stop at Bali, you say, right in the middle of Indonesia? Actually, because of the Wallace's Line. What, pray tell, is the Wallace's Line and why do we stop there? Good questions.

In 1856 an Englishman, Alfred Russel Wallace, after three years of Malay travels, was working his way from the Malay Peninsula down through the islands of the Malay Archipelago. Because of the Dutch and English settlements in the area, the birds of the



Photos by Sheldon Dingle

*Many of the enclosures in the Bali Bird Park reflect the very unique traditional architecture of the island's Hindu culture. The small domed structure on the right is routinely decorated with small religious offerings of flowers. Here you will enjoy the beautiful birds in a beautiful and exotic setting.*

region were quite well known. When Wallace reached Bali, he noted many of the same birds that were also found on Java lying just to the west across a narrow strait.

However, when Wallace went eastward to Lombok he made an unexpected discovery. He later wrote:

*On crossing over to Lombok, separated from Bali by a strait less than twenty miles wide, I naturally expected to meet with some*

*of these birds again; but during a stay there of three months I never saw one of them, but found a totally different set of species, most of which were utterly unknown not only in Java, but also in Borneo, Sumatra, and Malacca.*

Most noticeable, perhaps of the "new set of species" on Lombok were the white cockatoos more commonly associated with Australia. Some sort of "line" had been crossed.

This line became known as Wallace's Line in honor of the first fel-



*Jurong Bird Park covers acres of rolling hills and valleys. Some of the aviaries, such as this huge Flamingo display, can be viewed from different levels. If you don't want to walk, ride the modern tramway system and see the whole park.*



The above map shows just where the Wallace's Line runs. A reduced version accompanies each article for pertinent birds of the region west of the Line.

low to recognize and publicize it. Observe the map above and see the clearly marked Wallace's Line.

Later scientists determined that the secret of the Wallace's Line is really deep water. The islands to the west of the line are on the continental shelf with Bali being right on the edge of the shelf. Lombok, to the east, is not on the shelf at all but rises from the deep sea. The Wallace's Line traces the path of the deep water. It marks the boundary between the Asiatic and Australian birds (as well as other flora and fauna).

The islands *on* the shelf were at one time all connected by land to the Malay Peninsula, thus Bali shares many of the animals and plants found on Java, Sumatra, and the Malay Peninsula.

Note that the Philippines are on the Australian side of the line – with the exception of the pristine island of Palawan which is influenced by both the Australian *and* Asian sectors. For that reason, I felt it appropriate to include an article on the Red-vented Cockatoo – the only white cockatoo

found in the zoogeographical region of this issue.

Although this minor treatise of the Wallace's Line is overly simplified, you can easily see why the zoogeographical focus of this issue stops at Bali.

#### Travels in the Malay Archipelago and Peninsula

As mentioned above, having thought about the zoogeographical region of this issue for quite awhile, I decided to take advantage of my having to be in southeast Asia anyway. Only I did it backwards from the path Wallace took – I *began* in Bali and worked west.

Bali does, indeed, present some delights to the bird lover and aviculturist. Here I will merely highlight them with the intention of writing of them in greater detail later.

#### Bali

Believe me, folks, nowhere else is

like Bali. Despite the tourism, Bali has kept its culture and traditions alive and thriving. Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim nation yet the vast majority of people on Bali are Hindu. This lends a totally unique mystique to the island.

It carries over to *Taman Burung* – the Bali Bird Park. The bird park is very well laid out and planted. The first thing Westerners may notice in the tropics is the overwhelming GREEN. The bird park is lush. The aviaries and collection of birds are excellent. The park has the flavor, architecture, and "feeling" of Bali. There is an excellent restaurant and gift shop – all things to make one comfortable in a bird lovers heaven.

When you do go to Bali, I recommend staying at Villa Nilla, a group of delightful bungalows provided by Delano Ruess and his wife Nilla Gunwadi. The bungalows are located in the Sanur district of Denpasar within a short walk to the beach. They are secluded, secure, charming, and not

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\*\* indicates 2 year term has been fulfilled. If no new interested party comes forward and indicates a desire to serve, incumbent remains in position.

For information about contacting any of these member clubs, please call that club's state coordinator.

nearly as expensive as the large hotels – an unbeatable combination.

And Ruess is a bird keeper of the first order. There are aviaries on the bungalow grounds (and a few cages hoisted high into the trees -- some containing the very rare Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi* which will die if not kept at tree top height) as well as a huge and very modern, commercial bird farm a few miles away. I was lucky enough to be invited to the bird farm and really had an eye-opener. I'll do an entire article on it later.

### To Singapore

With a short stop in Jakarta, I arrived in Singapore with a three-fold mission – visit Patrick Tay, the grand old man of Singaporean aviculture (he's not really *old*), meet Dr. Li Chieh HSU, a very knowledgeable veterinarian who is really into birds, and to visit the Jurong Bird Park again.

Patrick Tay really enjoys his birds and has a large bird farm on the outskirts of town. The birds are kept in large suspended flights within several large buildings. The farm contains an excellent incubation and hatching complex that always seems to be busy and full of a wide variety of newly hatched rare and beautiful species. Tay's farm produces a lot of birds for export around the world and is regularly inspected by the authorities of the Singapore government. At another time I'll do a full blown article on Patrick Tay and the aviculture of Singapore.

I was fortunate enough to have spent a good bit of time with Dr. HSU. We met at the Jurong Bird Park where he introduced me to Dr. Wong, the Executive Director of the park and we chatted birds, bird people, and parks for an enjoyable afternoon after which Dr. HSU gave me a guided tour of the bird park.

You all must know that Jurong Bird Park is one of the finest in the world. Having visited it several times, I can enthusiastically confirm that. In the over 50 acres of lush landscaping there are various huge aviary complexes that contain over 8000 birds of about 600 species. I think my favorite is the huge "Waterfall Aviary" which contains the tallest man-made waterfall in the

world. Another favorite is "Jungle Jewels" and yet another is the "Southeast Asian Birds Aviary." The collection of hornbills is the best I've ever seen and there are a variety of bird shows and events. The Lodge on Flamingo Lake is a fine air-conditioned restaurant (it is warm and humid in Singapore) where one can enjoy fine dining in a relaxed and beautiful setting (and since you should spend the whole day at the park, the restaurant is a good place for your midday break).

Again, I cannot do justice to the wonders of Jurong Bird Park here – it will take a full article.

### Conclusion

This issue of *Watchbird* covers a very interesting area of the world – one which bird lovers will find very appealing. Of all the bird species in the region, we've been able to present just a few species with our articles here.

Of course the Fairy Bluebird is among my all time favorites and you'll enjoy the article by Cyril Laubscher who also provided an article and photos on the exceedingly shy but delightful Roulroul Partridge. We have articles on the Pink-necked Dove, Slaty-headed Parakeet, *all* the *Psittacula* of the region, minivets, Blue-rumped Parrot, the Silver Pheasant (there are *many* pheasant species in this region – we'll have to visit it again), the beginning of an excellent series on the waxbilled finches, and an assortment of other articles and photos you will find exciting and informative.

Our next issue will visit Africa. Then we go to Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. And the first issue of 2001 will visit the region *east* of the Wallace's Line. Don't miss them. ❖

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