

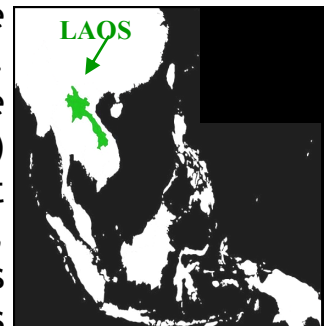


NEW BULBUL SPECIES FOUND IN LAOS

The Bare-faced Bulbul, *Pycnonotus hualon*, was discovered in Laos earlier this year. It is unique among Asian songbirds in having a bald (featherless) face and is the first species of Bulbul to be described from Asia in over a century.

The upper-body colour is mainly olive-green with a bare pink face with blueish skin around the eyes. The breast and stomach is fawn-grey, and the throat is off-white. Only two specimens have so far been collected. They were approximately 20cm (8") in length and weighed 32-40gms. The species epithet "*hualon*" is from the Lao word for "bald-headed".

The Bare-faced Bulbul has only been found in the limestone karst* region near Pha Lom in central Laos. This region is characterised by steep terrain with bare limestone vegetated with low (less than 4m [13']) deciduous shrubs and trees. So far it would appear that the species is entirely restricted to this region. However, there is speculation that they may occur in other parts of Laos with the same type of habitat, as similar birds were observed at another site in 1995.



Map: "ASDFGHJ"

They are mainly arboreal, but sometimes perch on rocks on the steep hillsides. This Bulbul is a conspicuous species, foraging during the day both singularly or in pairs. Single birds tend to make contact calls regularly, and will usually join with another before flying to a fresh foraging site. Researchers have described their call as a "dry bubbly tweet". Joint mixed-species feeding flocks have not been observed. Nothing is yet known of the species' breeding behaviour.

Unfortunately their limestone karst habitat is threatened by both quarrying and habitat degradation caused by overgrazing.

*Karst topography is a landscape shaped by the dissolution of a layer or layers of soluble bedrock, usually carbonate rock such as limestone or dolomite. R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia



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