

Some New and Overlooked Food Plants of Dicaeidae and Nectariniidae

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During the preparation of 'Sunbirds of the World' (Cheke & Mann 2025) an important publication on the biology of mistletoes was, regrettably, overlooked. Docters van Leeuwen (1954) published a comprehensive account of the biology of the Loranthaceae including information on avian visitors to flowers and fruits of this family of mistletoes, and to other plant varieties, mostly noted in Java. Many of these included plant-bird interactions additional to those provided by Cheke & Mann (2025), which are listed below together with a few other additional records (Table 1). Docters van Leeuwen's paper includes, *inter alia*, descriptions of how some mistletoe flowers 'explode' when probed by birds' bills, line drawings of the development of mistletoe plants from their deposition on branches by flowerpeckers and photographs. Amongst the drawings are illustrations of a longitudinal section of the stomach of a Grey-sided Flowerpecker *Dicaeum celebicum* showing the gizzard, which consists of a sack emerging from the lower end of the upper stomach just below the oesophagus, and a picture of a string of excreted seeds of two species of mistletoe suspended together by a slimy strand. The photographs include pictures of a nest of a Scarlet-headed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum t. trochileum* amongst leaves of *Enterolobium saman* and of the approximately 45 seeds of *Dendrophthoe pentandra* deposited by a young *D. trochileum* during a single day, whilst it was still being fed by its parents.

Other additional food-plants of flowerpeckers and sunbirds have been published more recently. A summary list of mistletoes visited by 13 species of flowerpeckers in Malaysia has been published by Amar-Singh et al. (2026); their list also includes some records additional to those listed by Cheke & Mann (2025). Similarly, Navarro et al. (2025) have published eight new food plants of the Tboli Sunbird *Aethopyga tibolii*: *Amyema serata*, *A. incarnatiflora*, *Agalmyla chorisepala*, *Aeschynanthus mindanaensis*, *A. asclepioides*, *Cyrtandra apoensis*, *Heptapleurum ovoideum* and *Saurauia copelandii*.

Table 1: Some records of plant foods of Flowerpeckers, Spiderhunters and Sunbirds additional to those listed in Cheke & Mann (2025) from Docters van Leeuwen (1954), references therein, Amar-Singh et al. (2025), Huang et al. (2025) and Jacobs (1961).

Bird species	Plant species	Notes	Reference(s)
Yellow-vented Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum chrysorrheum</i>	<i>Scurrula ferruginea</i>	Nectar & fruit	Amar-Singh HSS et al. (2026)
Thick-billed Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum agile</i> (= <i>Pachyglossa agilis</i>)	<i>Dendrophthoe falcata</i>	Berries taken	Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Pale-billed Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>	<i>Ficus racemosa</i> (= <i>F. glomerata</i>)	Fruits taken	Ryan (1899) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Nilgiri Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum concolor sollicitans</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe pentandra</i>	Pollination reported	Cammerloher (1928) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Plain Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum minullum</i>	<i>Viscum ovalifolium</i>	Fruit	Amar-Singh HSS et al. (2026)



Bird species	Plant species	Notes	Reference(s)
Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum cruentatum</i>	<i>Viscum ovalifolium</i>	Fruit	Amar-Singh HSS <i>et al.</i> (2026)
Scarlet-headed Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum t. trochileum</i>	<i>Scurrula atropurpurea</i>	Feed at flowers. Pollination reported	Cammerloher (1928) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Black-sided Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum monticolum</i>	<i>Taxillus chinensis</i> <i>Scurrula ferruginea</i> <i>Amyema beccarii</i>	? Fruit Nectar	Amar-Singh HSS <i>et al.</i> (2026)
Fire-breasted Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum ignipectus</i>	<i>Scurrula ferruginea</i>	Fruit	Amar-Singh HSS <i>et al.</i> (2026)
Red-striped Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum australe</i>	<i>Flueggea virosa</i>	Fruit	Barredo (2024)
Whitehead's Spiderhunter <i>Arachnothera juliae</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe longituba</i>		Jacobs (1961)
Brown-throated Sunbird <i>Anthreptes m. malacensis</i>	<i>Macrosolen cochinchinensis</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Brown-throated Sunbird <i>Anthreptes malacensis</i>	<i>Scurrula atropurpurea</i>	Nectar	Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Olive Sunbird <i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>	<i>Agelanthus</i> (= <i>Tapinanthus</i>) <i>kraussianus</i>		Evans (1895) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Mouse-coloured Sunbird <i>Cyanomitra verreauxii</i>	<i>Agelanthus</i> (= <i>Tapinanthus</i>) <i>kraussianus</i>		Evans (1895) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Purple-rumped Sunbird <i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe falcata</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954),
Crimson-backed Sunbird <i>Leptocoma minima</i>	<i>Scurrula</i> spp.		Ali (1932) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Purple Sunbird <i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe falcata</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Purple Sunbird <i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>	<i>Scurrula</i> spp.		Ali (1932) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris o. ornatus</i> (includes <i>pectoralis</i> ; Listed as <i>Nectarinia jugularis pectoralis</i>)	<i>Dendrophthoe pentandra</i>	Nectar and fruits. Pollination reported	Docters van Leeuwen (1954), Cammerloher (1928)
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris o. ornatus</i>	<i>Macrosolen cochinchinensis</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris ornatus</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe pentandra</i>	Pollination reported	Cammerloher (1928) in Docters van Leeuwen (1954).
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris ornatus</i>	<i>Scurrula atropurpurea</i>	Nectar	Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris ornatus</i>	<i>Erythrina variegata</i> (= <i>E. indica</i>)		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Ornate Sunbird <i>Cinnyris ornatus</i>	<i>Helixanthera cylindrica</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Loten's Sunbird <i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe falcata</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)



Bird species	Plant species	Notes	Reference(s)
White-flanked Sunbird <i>Aethopyga eximia</i> (listed as <i>Aethopyga eximea</i>)	<i>Rhododendron retusum</i>	The sunbird chased a <i>Bombus rufipes</i> bee away from the flowers	Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Black-throated Sunbird <i>Aethopyga saturata</i>	<i>Colquhounia elegans</i>	Pollination reported	Huang <i>et al.</i> (2025)
Javan Sunbird <i>Aethopyga mystacalis</i>	<i>Dendrophthoe pentandra</i>		Docters van Leeuwen (1954)
Vigors's Sunbird <i>Aethopyga vigorsii</i>	<i>Scurrula</i> spp.		Docters van Leeuwen, (1954), Ali (1932)

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