

BIRDING SINGAPORE 19-20 SEPTEMBER 2013

By Lim Kim Seng (ibisbill@yahoo.com)

It was F1 season and also an opportunity to catch up on some birding in Southeast Asia, so an arrangement was made for two days of birding in Singapore with Bob and Matthew Yates, keen birders from Glasgow, Scotland.

On the first day, we started early and were ready to walk into the Central Catchment Nature Reserve by 6.00 am. It was also the day of the Lantern Festival and the lovely moon was also at its brightest. The trail into the forest was dark though and we soon heard our first Collared Scops Owls. A pair was calling but they were deep inside the forest and we moved on. We heard two more but again these were distant and we focused our attention on seeing the Brown Hawk Owl. We found one calling close by near a stream but it got spooked and disappeared. By the time we got on to the boardwalk at MacRitchie Reservoir, it was 6.40 am and already too bright for night birds.

The first birds we saw were two Common Hill Mynas perched on a casuarina tree by the golf course. We waited at the edge of MacRitchie Reservoir for birds flying by. The first swiftlets soon appeared along with Long-tailed Parakeets, Large-billed Crow, Barn and Pacific Swallows, Yellow-vented and Olive-winged Bulbuls and three Greater Racket-tailed Drongos calling from the canopy. Despite the spectacular sunrise, it was one of the duller days here and even the fig trees were unproductive.

At Jelutong Tower, things were slightly more promising with flocks of all three native parrots – Blue-rumped Parrot, Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot and Long-tailed Parakeet – showing well. We also got good looks at distant Banded Woodpecker and a juvenile Changeable Hawk Eagle but the small birds were not so active other than a small flock of Oriental White-eyes, a male Greater Green Leafbird and the usual Orange-bellied Flowerpecker and Crimson Sunbird.

We left the forest at 9.45 am with 29 species in the bag, and opted for breakfast as the next thing to do. We had South Indian breakfast of prata washed down with lime juice, got some more bottled water and chewies from a nearby supermarket and were ready for our next place – Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve. This wetland had been real hot in the previous two weeks with Asian Dowitcher, Grey-tailed Tattler and Ruddy Turnstone turning up recently.

We got there at 11.30 am and were soon at the bridge overlooking Sungei Buloh Besar. It was high tide and relatively quiet except for a lone Grey Heron, a few Common Sandpipers and two Collared Kingfishers. The breeze was lovely as the temperature climbed into the low 30s. The main hide was similarly quiet except for some Striated Heron. It meant that we had to take a walk around the main pond. We added Common Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper and Common Greenshank to our list and a male Copper-throated Sunbird before we got to Hide 1D, where most of the waders were roosting. A big group of waders and egrets were here, some 400 strong. Other than the species listed earlier, we also saw a lone Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, a lone Broad-billed Sandpiper, Pacific Golden Plover and Lesser Sand Plover to make up 11 wader species in all. We spent a delightful hour here before moving on back to the bridge.

Lunch was next and after that we continued with a walk at Kranji Marsh. Matthew was feeling the effects of jet lag and had left to catch up on lost sleep back at the hotel. The humidity had climbed again and the skies had darkened appreciably. Nevertheless, bird activity in the open woodlands along the country road leading to the ponds kept us busy. We spotted Oriental Dollarbird, Red-breasted and Long-tailed Parakeets with endless streams of Asian Glossy Starlings on a feeding frenzy. Another neat find along the road was a female Asian Paradise Flycatcher. The recent rains have flooded the ponds somewhat and we only saw Red-wattled Lapwing and a Common Sandpiper there. Raptors made for up the disappointment at the ponds and we saw Brahminy Kite, White-bellied Sea Eagle and a dark morph Changeable Hawk Eagle very well to end the day on a high. The species tally for the day was 75 species.

We started at 6.30 am on Day Two and selected the Singapore Botanic Gardens as the starting point. It was nice to get in early but we were beaten by the ladies doing their taichi as we scoured the area around Symphony Lake for birds. A Grey-rumped Treeswift spotted by Bob was a good bird to start the day and it was soon joined by a noisy Tanimbar Corella, six Rainbow Lorikeets, a few Long-tailed Parakeets and a few Blue-crowned Hanging Parrots. A loud trill announced the presence of a Violet Cuckoo and we were soon enjoying scoped views of a handsome male. Having seen all the parrots possible, we moved on to the Ecolake area to find 15 Lesser Whistling Ducks, two Black-crowned Night-herons and three Oriental Magpie Robins. We ended our birding session at 8.30 am with 34 species and most of the usual suspects seen.

After breakfast, we headed for Bukit Batok Nature Park to look for the globally threatened Straw-headed Bulbul. We descended the steep trail leading to the quarry pond and waited. Sure enough, a family of 5 birds appeared and foraged in full view. Target achieved, we looked for another resident of the area, White-crested Laughingthrush. It wasn't difficult to locate them and we soon found two birds preening by the pavement. Matthew went forward to take some photos and we were soon joined by two Laced Woodpeckers. Mission accomplished, we left Bukit Batok and headed east.

At 11.15 am, we arrived at the old cemetery called Bidadari. I was hopeful that we would find some migrants. We did see some bird photographers but found no migrants at all. We did however add the elusive Lineated Barbet to our list in the 45 minutes spent there.

Shortly after noon, we arrived at Pasir Ris Park hoping to add to our list. The park was deserted and we saw a Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker and flushed a rather shy Spotted Wood Owl. Matthew and I saw it but Bob missed it as it flew off and was not seen again despite a thorough search of the area.

Lunch was next and we chose Changi Village was its laidback ambience and of course good food. We opted for Chinese noodles and rice, and it took a lot of effort to go looking for birds as the meals were really good.

Our final stop was Lorong Halus Wetland and we got there at 3.00 pm. It was blisteringly hot, and we took shelter at the red bridge overlooking the Serangoon Reservoir. We got good views of several Little Terns in different plumages, Oriental Dollarbird, Grey Heron and a Little Grebe. An hour later, we called it a day and returned to the hotel.

Over two days, we had recorded 94 species of birds including an incredible tally of 13 species of waders, 7 parrots, 4 woodpeckers, 4 kingfishers, 4 sunbirds and 3 raptors. It was a memorable tour!

LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED ON 19-20 SEPTEMBER 2013

Species highlighted in yellow indicate “heard only” records.

#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME
1	RED JUNGLEFOWL	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
2	LESSER WHISTLING-DUCK	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
3	SUNDA PYGMY WOODPECKER	<i>Dendrocopus moluccensis</i>
4	BANDED WOODPECKER	<i>Picus miniaceus</i>
5	LACED WOODPECKER	<i>Picus vittatus</i>
6	COMMON GOLDENBACK	<i>Dinopium javanense</i>
7	LINEATED BARBET	<i>Megalaima lineata</i>
8	ORIENTAL DOLLARBIRD	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>
9	COMMON KINGFISHER	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
10	STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
11	WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
12	COLLARED KINGFISHER	<i>Todiramphus chloris</i>
13	BLUE-THROATED BEE-EATER	<i>Merops viridis</i>
14	LITTLE BRONZE CUCKOO	<i>Chrysococcyx minutillus</i>
15	VIOLET CUCKOO	<i>Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus</i>
16	ASIAN KOEL	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>
17	RAINBOW LORIKEET	<i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>
18	TANIMBAR CORELLA	<i>Cacatua goffiniana</i>
19	BLUE-RUMPED PARROT	<i>Psittinus cyanurus</i>
20	BLUE-CROWNED HANGING PARROT	<i>Loriculus galgulus</i>
21	ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
22	RED-BREASTED PARAKEET	<i>Psittacula alexandri</i>
23	LONG-TAILED PARAKEET	<i>Psittacula longicauda</i>
24	GREY-RUMPED TREESWIFT	<i>Hemiprocne longipennis</i>
25	COLLARED SCOPS OWL	<i>Otus lempiji</i>
26	SPOTTED WOOD OWL	<i>Strix seloputo</i>
27	BROWN HAWK OWL	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>
28	COMMON PIGEON	<i>Columba livia</i>
29	SPOTTED DOVE	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
30	RED TURTLE DOVE	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>
31	COMMON EMERALD DOVE	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>

32	ZEBRA DOVE	<i>Geopelia striata</i>
33	PINK-NECKED GREEN PIGEON	<i>Treron vernans</i>
34	WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
35	BAR-TAILED GODWIT	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
36	WHIMBREL	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
37	COMMON REDSHANK	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
38	MARSH SANDPIPER	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
39	COMMON GREENSHANK	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
40	COMMON SANDPIPER	<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>
41	RED-NECKED STINT	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>
42	CURLEW SANDPIPER	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
43	BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER	<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>
44	PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
45	LITTLE RINGED PLOVER	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
46	LESSER SAND PLOVER	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
47	RED-WATTLED LAPWING	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
48	LITTLE TERN	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
49	BRAHMINY KITE	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
50	WHITE-BELLIED SEA EAGLE	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
51	CHANGEABLE HAWK EAGLE	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>
52	LITTLE GREBE	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
53	LITTLE EGRET	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
54	GREY HERON	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
55	PURPLE HERON	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
56	STRIATED HERON	<i>Butorides striatus</i>
57	BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
58	GOLDEN-BELLIED GERYGONE	<i>Gerygone sulphurea</i>
59	ASIAN FAIRY-BLUEBIRD	<i>Irena puella</i>
60	GREATER GREEN LEAFBIRD	<i>Chloropsis sonnerati</i>
61	HOUSE CROW	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
62	LARGE-BILLED CROW	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
63	BLACK-NAPED ORIOLE	<i>Oriolus chinensis</i>
64	PIED TRILLER	<i>Lalage nigra</i>
65	GREATER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>
66	ASIAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
67	COMMON IORA	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
68	ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
69	ASIAN GLOSSY STARLING	<i>Aplonis panayensis</i>
70	COMMON MYNA	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
71	WHITE-VENTED MYNA	<i>Acridotheres javanicus</i>
72	COMMON HILL MYNA	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>

73	BARN SWALLOW	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
74	PACIFIC SWALLOW	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>
75	STRAW-HEADED BULBUL	<i>Pycnonotus zeylanicus</i>
76	YELLOW-VENTED BULBUL	<i>Pycnonotus goiavier</i>
77	OLIVE-WINGED BULBUL	<i>Pycnonotus plumosus</i>
78	YELLOW-BELLIED PRINIA	<i>Prinia flaviventris</i>
79	ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
80	COMMON TAILORBIRD	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
81	DARK-NECKED TAILORBIRD	<i>Orthotomus atrogularis</i>
82	ASHY TAILORBIRD	<i>Orthotomus ruficeps</i>
83	WHITE-CRESTED LAUGHINGTHRUSH	<i>Garrulax leucolophus</i>
84	STRIPED TIT-BABBLER	<i>Macronous gularis</i>
85	ORANGE-BELLIED FLOWERPECKER	<i>Dicaeum trigonostigma</i>
86	SCARLET-BACKED FLOWERPECKER	<i>Dicaeum cruentatum</i>
87	BROWN-THROATED SUNBIRD	<i>Anthreptes malaccensis</i>
88	COPPER-THROATED SUNBIRD	<i>Nectarinia calcostetha</i>
89	OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD	<i>Nectarinia jugularis</i>
90	CRIMSON SUNBIRD	<i>Aethopyga siparaga</i>
91	EURASIAN TREE SPARROW	<i>Passer montanus</i>
92	YELLOW WAGTAIL	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
93	PADDYFIELD PIPIT	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
94	SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>