

Birding Singapore – 31st July 2015

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An adult Blue-throated Bee-eater surveying the forest for insect prey. Photo © Lim Kim Seng

Dr Jules Eden, a medical doctor and a birder from London, had just completed a long birding trip to Borneo and contacted me for some birding in Singapore. We decided to do a one-day trip that was designed to find birds that he did not see in two weeks in Borneo, a “mopping-up” operation in effect.

We started early and were inside the rainforests of the Central Catchment by 6.00 am. Despite the full moon, we did well with the nightbirds, seeing our first Sunda Scops Owl close within fifteen minutes and a second one moments later. Our attempts to see a noisy Brown Hawk Owl was foiled by thick vegetation but we made up for it with glorious views of several Large-tailed Nightjars near MacRitchie Reservoir.

We were at the edge of MacRitchie Reservoir before dawn and saw bats trying to catch their last meals before the sun came up. Soon, the sky brightened and we had some bird activity including a fly-by Grey-headed Fish Eagle and several flocks of Long-tailed Parakeets. A fruiting fig delayed us as we checked for rarities but only found the usual Pink-necked Green Pigeons, Asian Fairy-bluebirds and bulbuls. At the golf course, we heard and then found three Lineated Barbets for fantastic scope views.

We were at the famous Jelutong Tower by 8.00 am and enjoyed the scenic view of the forest of green all round us. Our first birds here included Blue-throated Bee-eaters, a male Greater Green Leafbird, Orange-bellied Flowerpecker and Oriental White-eye. An hour later, we had located the resident pair of Chestnut-bellied Malkohas, much to Jules' delight. We left the forest soon after.

We had a quick local breakfast and then it was off to our next spot, Bukit Batok Nature Park. The walk down the hill was uneventful but we quickly picked up the White-crested Laughingthrushes that had the attention of two photographers. We moved on to the playground but there was no sign of our next target, the globally vulnerable Straw-headed Bulbul. Eventually, we arrived at the quarry pond. It was peacefully quiet and bird-less until after about ten minutes when two of the largest bulbuls in Southeast Asia appeared. We had them – Straw-headed Bulbuls. They kept their distance but we got good looks as they foraged in the *Dillenia* bushes on the edge of the cliff. Happy at seeing the bulbuls, we walked back to our car and moved off to our next destination – Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

It was now very warm and we kept our hats on. We spent some time exploring the visitor centre pond at Sungei Buloh. Some large Malayan Water Monitors were swimming in the pond but we also saw White-breasted Waterhen and a pair of Scarlet-backed Flowerpeckers. It was high tide at the river and so we moved on to the main hide, where we saw Little Egrets but no waders. We decided to take a walk to the coastal platform. We saw Grey Herons and Little Terns at the coast facing Malaysia but no sign of the hoped-for Great-billed Heron. After about fifteen minutes, we moved back to the visitor centre and we spent some time exploring the mangrove boardwalk area. This proved to be a good move as we saw a male Copper-throated Sunbird, one of our targets, almost immediately, as well as better looks at a Collared Kingfisher. Back at the visitor centre, we saw a brilliant male Crimson Sunbird displaying as we bade goodbye to the wetland reserve.

Lunch was next and we decided on a café for our lunch of *nasi goreng* and seafood *hor fun* before traveling east for the final part of our adventure. The storm clouds were gathering and we decided to move on. Half an hour later, we were at Lorong Halus Wetland where we met similar conditions. The winds meant that a storm was imminent and we did a quick sweep of the reedbeds. We found three Savanna Nightjars quickly but hardly any other birds. At the coastal road, we saw Baya Weavers mingling with alien Jackson's Golden-backed Weavers, and a lone Purple Heron, and then we moved on to our final destination – Pasir Ris Park.

The rain finally caught up with us as we explored the wonderfully scenic parkland at Pasir Ris. Birds were again quiet as they prepare for the start of the afternoon rain but we still managed to see two Common Flamebacks, a Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker, a pair of Collared Kingfishers, two Golden-bellied Gerygones and a female Common Iora to make up for getting wet. A last-minute check for Spotted Wood Owl

wasn't successful but we were happy nonetheless to have achieved a good haul of birds. As the rain continued, we stopped for some drinks and then called it a day. We had done well in seeing targets such as Chestnut-bellied Malkohas, Sunda Scops Owl, Large-tailed and Savanna Nightjars, Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker, Common Flameback, Straw-headed Bulbul, Pin-striped Tit-babbler and Copper-throated Sunbird for a total tally of 78 species.



Common Flameback at Pasir Ris Park. Photo © Lim Kim Seng

A Checklist of the Birds Recorded in Singapore on 31st July 2015

Sequence, taxonomy and nomenclature follow IOC. Species highlighted in yellow indicate those that were heard only.

#	English Name	Scientific Name
1	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
2	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
3	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
4	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
5	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
6	Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>
7	White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
8	Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus ichthyaeus</i>
9	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
10	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
11	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
12	Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
13	Zebra Dove	<i>Geopelia striata</i>
14	Pink-necked Green Pigeon	<i>Treron vernans</i>
15	Thick-billed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron curvirostra</i>
16	Chestnut-bellied Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus sumatranus</i>
17	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>
18	Sunda Scops Owl	<i>Otus lempiji</i>
19	Brown Hawk-Owl	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>
20	Large-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus macrurus</i>
21	Savanna Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus affinis</i>
22	Oriental Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>
23	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
24	Collared Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus chloris</i>
25	Blue-eared Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo meninting</i>
26	Blue-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops viridis</i>
27	Oriental Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros albirostris</i>
28	Lineated Barbet	<i>Megalaima lineata</i>
29	Red-crowned Barbet	<i>Megalaima rafflesii</i>
30	Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus moluccensis</i>
31	Banded Woodpecker	<i>Chrysophlegma miniaceum</i>
32	Common Flameback	<i>Dinopium javanense</i>
33	Rufous Woodpecker	<i>Micropternus brachyurus</i>
34	Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus galgulus</i>
35	Coconut Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>
36	Long-tailed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula longicauda</i>
37	Golden-bellied Gerygone	<i>Gerygone sulphurea</i>
38	Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
39	Black-naped Oriole	<i>Oriolus chinensis</i>
40	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>

41	Malaysian Pied Fantail	<i>Rhipidura javanica</i>
42	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
43	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
44	Straw-headed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus zeylanicus</i>
45	Yellow-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus goiavier</i>
46	Olive-winged Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus plumosus</i>
47	Cream-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus simplex</i>
48	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
49	Pacific Swallow	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>
50	Yellow-bellied Prinia	<i>Prinia flavicentris</i>
51	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
52	Dark-necked Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus atrogularis</i>
53	Rufous-tailed Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sericeus</i>
54	Ashy Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus ruficeps</i>
55	Pin-striped Tit-Babbler	<i>Macronous gularis</i>
56	Abbott's Babbler	<i>Malcocincla abbotti</i>
57	White-crested Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax leucolopus</i>
58	Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
59	Asian Fairy-bluebird	<i>Irena puella</i>
60	Asian Glossy Starling	<i>Aplonis panayensis</i>
61	Common Hill Myna	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>
62	Javan Myna	<i>Acridotheres javanicus</i>
63	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
64	Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
65	Greater Green Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis sonnerati</i>
66	Blue-winged Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis cochinchinensis</i>
67	Orange-bellied Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum trigonostigma</i>
68	Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum cruentatum</i>
69	Brown-throated Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes malacensis</i>
70	Copper-throated Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma calcostetha</i>
71	Olive-backed Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris jugularis</i>
72	Crimson Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga siparaja</i>
73	Little Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera longirostra</i>
74	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
75	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
76	Chestnut Munia	<i>Lonchura atricapilla</i>
77	White-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura maja</i>
78	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>