

Birding Singapore 4 December 2010

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It was dark and gloomy when Mike and I got to the trail leading to MacRitchie Reservoir. The constant rain in the past week had made a trail a muddy mess and it was hard work stepping on the right spots to make sure we didn't get our shoes wet.

We paid special attention to the owls. However, we got only a distant **Collared Scops Owl** and so we moved on until we reached the Old Pumphouse. About halfway down the path after this, we came across a calling **Brown Hawk-owl**. It was quite near and we were able to locate the bird after a short while. It was perched at the top of a dead branch and was perched long enough to enable scope views!

We passed by Jelutong Tower to be surprised by the call of a **Blue-winged Pitta** but could not locate it in the dark pre-dawn conditions of the swamp forest at this spot.

As it was getting bright, we headed straight for MacRitchie Reservoir. The sky at this time was looking threatening. It was very cloudy and dark in patches. We located a pair of **Common Goldenbacks** while making our way to the reservoir as well as two **Oriental Dollarbirds**.

At the reservoir, we scanned for more birds. Unfortunately, the obliging **Grey-headed Fish Eagle** of the day before didn't show and we only heard a single call. However, we picked up **Blue-tailed Bee-eater**, **Pacific Swallow** and at a nearby *Dillenia* bush, **Yellow-vented** and **Olive-winged Bulbuls**, and **Brown-throated Sunbird**. Scanning the far shore for birds, we found two silent **White-throated Kingfishers** perched on a partially submerged branch.

The dull sky was certainly having an effect on bird activity. There were fewer birds on the move. Other than the ubiquitous swiftlets, we also had a single **Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot**, a flock of 20 **Long-tailed Parakeets** and 3 **Large-billed Crows**. The biggest find here was a passing **Brown-backed Needletail**.

The fruiting fig still managed to attract some birds despite a dwindling fruit supply. We saw a few **Asian Red-eyed Bulbuls** feeding together with 2 **Lineated Barbets**, **Black-naped Oriole**, **Common Iora**, **Asian Glossy Starling**, and **Yellow-vented** and **Olive-winged Bulbuls**. The edge of the reservoir also attracted a hunting **Purple Heron** posing so irresistibly that Mike took out his camera to capture.

We left MacRitchie Reservoir around 8.30 am and spent some time at Jelutong Tower. The main highlights here were a flock of **Thick-billed Green Pigeons** scoped to great effect and a passing **Peregrine Falcon**.

The increasingly gloomy sky forced us to make an early retreat from the forest and near the end, the rains came.

Despite the overcast conditions and the premature end caused by the rain, we recorded a decent total of 45 species. Happy with our efforts, we stopped for breakfast at a local coffee shop and were soon on our way to our next site.

We arrived at the carpark of Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve at 11.00 am and decided to check the trees for migrants. We were amply rewarded with sightings of **Asian Brown Flycatcher**, **Arctic Warbler** and a single female **Mugimaki Flycatcher**.

The river was our next stop and we were soon setting up our scopes to look for birds at the river. The tide was high and we did find a couple of **Collared Kingfishers**, 3 **Oriental Dollarbirds**, two **Common Sandpipers** and a **Crow-billed Drongo** chasing off a **Black-naped Oriole**.

The main hide was deserted but we found both **Common** and **Ashy Tailorbirds** in the sea hollies below us.

At the sluice gates beside the main hide, we found our waterbirds. The decreasing tide was making the shorebirds nervous and we found the usual mix of **Whimbrel**, **Common Redshank**, **Marsh Sandpiper** and **Common Greenshank** plus the lone **Grey Plover**. In addition, there were 25 **Little Egrets** and 3 **Striated Herons**.

The walk around the main pond was uneventful except for sightings of **Brahminy Kite** and **White-bellied Sea Eagle** as well as a pair of **Oriental Pied Hornbills**. Rain followed us for much of the walk and we took shelter in the hides.

The calls of a **Stork-billed Kingfisher** made us hurry back to the main bridge where, after much effort, we found one bird perched on a distant mangrove. We also picked up a rather brief view of a **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo** flying across the river.

We made a brief stopover at the café to quench our thirst and, much to our surprise, found a **Yellow Bittern** skulking in the adjacent freshwater pond.

We had spent three hours at the wetland reserve and our species tally here was a very respectable 52 species.

In view of the inclement weather, we decided to head for Kranji Marsh. The cool weather made birding here rather appealing for us. For once, the albizia woods produced quite a bit of activity as we located several **Red-breasted Parakeets**, a **Black Baza**, a flock of 25 **Ashy Minivets** as well as **Common Iora**, **Asian Glossy Starling** and **Brown-throated Sunbird**.

The open country was just as productive with **Osprey**, **Changeable Hawk Eagle** and **Japanese Sparrowhawk** present in addition to the usual **Brown** and **Long-tailed Shrikes**, **Zitting Cisticola**.

The ponds were overgrown and it was hard work finding the birds but we did find a **Purple Swampphen** and a **Yellow Bittern**. We also saw an **Oriental Reed Warbler** and heard a **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler**.

At a hilly spot overlooking Kranji Reservoir, we scanned and found 12 **Little** and 4 **White-winged Terns** roosting on buoys as well as a foraging **Yellow-billed Egret**. We also saw two **Ospreys** chasing each other over the reservoir.

Our two hour stopover at Kranji Marsh was fruitful and, for the first time that day, dry. We recorded 48 species and then headed for our late lunch.

Our last stop was Bukit Batok Nature Park. The weather remained cloudy but dry. It was already 6.00 pm and the birds were getting ready to call it a day. It took a while for us to find the birds as they were mostly silent. We found a calling **Lineated Barbet** high up an albizia, a **Banded Woodpecker** and then four **White-crested Laughingthrushes**. Eventually, we decided to call it a day and head for home.

Despite the wet and rainy conditions in the morning, we did very well to record 102 species in just twelve hours. These included 8 raptors and such jewels as **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo**, **Brown-backed Needletail**, **Eyebrowed Thrush** and **Mugimaki Flycatcher**.

Species List

Birds

Nomenclature, sequence and taxonomy follows Lim, K.S. (2009)'s "The Avifauna of Singapore".

Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus**
Banded Woodpecker *Picus miniaceus*
Laced Woodpecker *Picus vittatus**
Common Goldenback *Dinopium javanense*
Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata*
Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*
Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*
Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*
Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*
White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*
Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris*
Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*

Chestnut-winged Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus*
Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea**
Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot *Loriculus galgulus*
Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*
Long-tailed Parakeet *Psittacula longicauda*
Brown-backed Needletail *Hirundapus giganteus*
Collared Scops Owl *Otus lempiji*
Brown Hawk-owl *Ninox scutulata*
Common Pigeon *Columba livia*
Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*
Zebra Dove *Geopelia striata*
Pink-necked Green Pigeon *Treron vernans*
Thick-billed Green Pigeon *Treron curvirostra*
Slaty-breasted Rail *Gallirallus striatus**
White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
Purple Swampphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*
Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*
Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*
Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*
Swift Tern *Sterna bergii*
Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*
White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*
Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes*
Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*
White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*
Grey-headed Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus**
Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis*
Changeable Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
Great Egret *Casmerodius albus*
Yellow-billed Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia*
Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*
Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*
Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*
Blue-winged Pitta *Pitta moluccensis**
Golden-bellied Gerygone *Gerygone sulphurea**
Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella**
Blue-winged Leafbird *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*
Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*
House Crow *Corvus splendens*
Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*
Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*
Ashy Minivet *Pericrocotus divaricatus*
Pied Fantail *Rhipidura javanica*
Crow-billed Drongo *Dicrurus annectans*
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*
Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*
Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*
Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*
Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki*
Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane**
Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis**
White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus**
Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis*
Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*
White-vented Myna *Acridotheres javanicus*
Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa**
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*
Straw-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus**
Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goavier*
Olive-winged Bulbul *Pycnonotus plumosus*
Asian Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus brunneus*
Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*
Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris**
Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus**
Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola**
Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*
Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*
Dark-necked Tailorbird *Orthotomus atrogularis*
Ashy Tailorbird *Orthotomus ruficeps*
Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*
White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus*
Short-tailed Babbler *Malacocincla malaccensis**
Striped Tit-babbler *Macronous gularis*
Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum cruentatum*
Brown-throated Sunbird *Anthreptes malacensis*
Copper-throated Sunbird *Nectarinia calcostetha**
Olive-backed Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis*
Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*
Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

(An asterisk indicates heard only.)

Mammals

Long-tailed Macaque *Macaca nemestrina*

Plantain Squirrel *Callosciurus notatus*

Slender Squirrel *Sundasciurus tenuis*

Reptiles

Changeable Lizard *Calotes versicolor*

Malayan Water Monitor *Varanus salvator*