

Birding Singapore - 17 November 2013

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November is a rainy month for birding but always full of promise because of the presence of migrants. Luckily for Paul Saraceni, a birder from California, USA, it was dry when we arrived for the start of our walk in the rainforests of the Central Catchment Nature Reserve.

We entered the rainforest in semi-darkness, the clouds helping to dim the light of the full moon. It was quiet for the first ten minutes except for some tree frogs and crickets. We also encountered three trail runners, all with head lamps, stumbling past us. We heard one bird calling real close at the top of the hilly trail. We switched off our torches and ambled closer. Holding my breath, I shone my torch and was surprised to see a Collared Scops Owl perched rather high up a slender branch. After Paul have had a good look, we left it alone and moved on. It was getting light and we increased the pace of our walk. Near Jelutong Tower, we heard a Brown Hawk Owl calling and we tracked back to where it was calling. This time, the twilight helped us and we could see its silhouette on a low liana. Our torches revealed not one but two birds perched, one with its front facing us in field guide pose. Wow! Two owls seen in just half an hour!

I tried to get to the boardwalk at MacRitchie Reservoir but it was already too bright for nightjars. It was just after 6.30 am, a period of inactivity when the day and the night changed shifts. We walked on the edge of the golf course but there was little activity and few bird calls other than the omnipresent Greater Racket-tailed Drongo and Common Hill Myna.

The cloudy weather meant that bird activity at MacRitchie Reservoir was low other than the usual parakeets, swiftlets, swallows and starlings. We managed to find a Grey-rumped Treeswift amongst the swiftlets and a Brown-backed Needletail that sped past us. We could not find the usual kingfishers and raptors at the reservoir edge and so we moved on to a fig tree at the edge of the golf course. Here we could detect more activity as it got brighter and warmer. A dead tree at near the buggy causeway provided some excitement. We counted 25 Blue-crowned Hanging Parrots resting and preening there together with a Blue-tailed Bee-eater and some swallows. There were also about half a dozen Coppersmith Barbets plus the usual Pink-necked Green Pigeons and Asian Glossy Starlings arriving at or feeding on the figs. We also saw three Thick-billed Green Pigeons and three Asian Fairy-bluebirds.

We retreated to the shade of the rainforests and climbed up Jelutong Tower. Here at the top we could feel the heat of the morning but thankfully it was not too warm due to the clouds. We saw the usual green pigeons, drongos, sunbirds and flowerpeckers but found the Banded Woodpecker elusive. We did however see a distant Black-headed Bulbul and then around 8.45 am, a series of raptors flying over. These included Crested Honey Buzzard, Brahminy Kite, Japanese Sparrowhawk and Changeable Hawk Eagle.

Our walk back out of the reserve was marked by a bird wave at 10.00 am that comprised Chestnut-bellied Malkoha, Blue-winged Leafbird, Asian Paradise-flycatcher, Eastern Crowned Warbler and Chestnut-winged Babbler.

After breakfast, we explored Bukit Batok Nature Park. Again, it worked out beautifully for us as we saw two White-crested Laughingthrushes within 15 minutes of descending the steps followed immediately by two singing Straw-headed Bulbuls. Our main targets here secured, we took a leisurely walk to the quarry pond where we heard another singing Straw-headed Bulbul and to the playground before leaving. A troop of Long-tailed Macaques kept us entertained as we climbed back up to the Lorong Sesuai area with a credible 17 species inside an hour.

We arrived at our third site, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve to find a persistent drizzle. Undeterred, we explored the bridge where we had a fun time studying Collared and Stork-billed Kingfishers, followed by a visit to the main hide where we saw the usual six shorebird species. Due to the inclement weather, our walk around the mangrove boardwalk was unproductive as the much desired Copper-throated Sunbird remained a heard only. Even though we stayed less than an hour in rainy weather, we recorded 28 species.

After lunch, we visited Kranji Marsh and it proved to be the most productive site of the day. The drizzle fizzled out as we walked with our umbrellas all the way to the two ponds and back. We logged a remarkable 53 species in just 90 minutes, not including 3 unidentified snipes flying high above us. Notables here included Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker, Common Goldenback, Black-capped Kingfisher, White-winged Tern, Osprey, Black Baza, Long-tailed Shrike, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and Oriental Reed Warbler.

We still had time so we dropped by the Singapore Botanic Gardens. We checked out the area around the Ecolake. It was a smart move with Lesser Whistling Duck, Black-crowned Night-heron, Yellow Bittern and Eurasian Tree Sparrow new additions to our lists.

It was a sensational day as reflected by the fantastic final species list. We succeeded in birding at five different sites in relatively good weather. Our day total was an excellent 105 species, including 11 heard only. These included five kingfishers, two owls, seven raptors and four bulbuls.

List of Species Recorded on 17th November 2013

Species denoted with an asterisk (*) indicate those that were heard only during the tour.

- 1 RED JUNGLEFOWL *Gallus gallus**
- 2 LESSER WHISTLING DUCK *Dendrocygna javanica*
- 3 SUNDA PYGMY WOODPECKER *Dendrocopus moluccensis*
- 4 BANDED WOODPECKER *Picus miniaceus**
- 5 LACED WOODPECKER *Picus vittatus**
- 6 COMMON GOLDENBACK *Dinopium javanense*
- 7 LINEATED BARBET *Megalaima lineata**
- 8 COPPERSMITH BARBET *Megalaima haemacephala*
- 9 ORIENTAL DOLLARBIRD *Eurystomus orientalis*
- 10 COMMON KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*
- 11 STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER *Pelargopsis capensis*
- 12 WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER *Halcyon smyrnensis*
- 13 BLACK-CAPPED KINGFISHER *Halcyon pileata*
- 14 COLLARED KINGFISHER *Todiramphus chloris*
- 15 BLUE-TAILED BEE-EATER *Merops philippinus*
- 16 INDIAN CUCKOO *Cuculus micropterus*
- 17 ASIAN KOEL *Eudynamys scolopacea*
- 18 CHESTNUT-BELLIED MALKOHA *Phaenicophaeus sumatranus*
- 19 LESSER COUCAL *Centropus bengalensis*
- 20 BLUE-CROWNED HANGING PARROT *Loriculus galgulus*
- 21 ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*
- 22 RED-BREASTED PARAKEET *Psittacula alexandri*

- 23 LONG-TAILED PARAKEET *Psittacula longicauda*
- 24 GLOSSY SWIFTLET *Collocalia esculenta*
- 25 BROWN-BACKED NEEDLETAIL *Hirundapus giganteus*
- 26 GREY-RUMPED TREESWIFT *Hemiprocne longipennis*
- 27 COLLARED SCOPS OWL *Otus lempiji*
- 28 BROWN HAWK OWL *Ninox scutulata*
- 29 COMMON PIGEON *Columba livia*
- 30 SPOTTED DOVE *Streptopelia chinensis*
- 31 RED TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia tranquebarica*
- 32 ZEBRA DOVE *Geopelia striata*
- 33 PINK-NECKED GREEN PIGEON *Treron vernans*
- 34 THICK-BILLED GREEN PIGEON *Treron curvirostra*
- 35 WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
- 36 RUDDY-BREASTED CRAKE *Porzana fusca**
- 37 WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*
- 38 COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*
- 39 MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatilis*
- 40 COMMON GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*
- 41 COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos*
- 42 CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*
- 43 LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*
- 44 WHITE-WINGED TERN *Chlidonias hybridus*
- 45 OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*
- 46 BLACK BAZA *Aviceda leuphotes*
- 47 CRESTED HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

- 48 BRAHMINY KITE *Haliastur indus*
- 49 WHITE-BELLIED SEA EAGLE *Haliaeetus leucogaster*
- 50 JAPANESE SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter gularis*
- 51 CHANGEABLE HAWK EAGLE *Spizaetus cirrhatus*
- 52 LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*
- 53 GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*
- 54 PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*
- 55 GREAT EGRET *Casmerodius albus*
- 56 STRIATED HERON *Butorides striatus*
- 57 BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax*
- 58 YELLOW BITTERN *Ixobrychus sinensis*
- 59 ASIAN FAIRY-BLUEBIRD *Irena puella*
- 60 BLUE-WINGED LEAFBIRD *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*
- 61 BROWN SHRIKE *Lanius cristatus*
- 62 LONG-TAILED SHRIKE *Lanius schach*
- 63 HOUSE CROW *Corvus splendens*
- 64 LARGE-BILLED CROW *Corvus macrohynchos*
- 65 BLACK-NAPED ORIOLE *Oriolus chinensis*
- 66 PIED TRILLER *Lalage nigra*
- 67 ASHY MINIVET *Pericrocotus divaricatus*
- 68 CROW-BILLED DRONGO *Dicrurus annectans*
- 69 GREATER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO *Dicrurus paradiseus*
- 70 ASIAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER *Terpsiphone paradisi*
- 71 COMMON IORA *Aegithina tiphia*
- 72 ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa dauurica*

- 73 ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN *Copsychus saularis*
- 74 ASIAN GLOSSY STARLING *Aplonis panayensis*
- 75 COMMON MYNA *Acridotheres tristis*
- 76 WHITE-VENTED MYNA *Acridotheres javanicus*
- 77 COMMON HILL MYNA *Gracula religiosa*
- 78 BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*
- 79 PACIFIC SWALLOW *Hirundo tahitica*
- 80 STRAW-HEADED BULBUL *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*
- 81 BLACK-HEADED BULBUL *Pycnonotus atriceps*
- 82 YELLOW-VENTED BULBUL *Pycnonotus goiavier*
- 83 OLIVE-WINGED BULBUL *Pycnonotus plumosus*
- 84 YELLOW-BELLIED PRINIA *Prinia flaviventris**
- 85 PALLAS'S GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER *Locustella certhiola**
- 86 ORIENTAL REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus orientalis*
- 87 COMMON TAILORBIRD *Orthotomus sutorius**
- 88 DARK-NECKED TAILORBIRD *Orthotomus atrogularis*
- 89 ASHY TAILORBIRD *Orthotomus ruficeps**
- 90 ARCTIC WARBLER *Phylloscopus borealis*
- 91 EASTERN CROWNED WARBLER *Phylloscopus coronatus*
- 92 WHITE-CRESTED LAUGHINGTHRUSH *Garrulax leucolophus*
- 93 SHORT-TAILED BABBLER *Malacocincla malaccensis**
- 94 CHESTNUT-WINGED BABBLER *Stachyris erythroptera*
- 95 STRIPED TIT-BABBLER *Macronous gularis*
- 96 ORANGE-BELLIED FLOWERPECKER *Dicaeum trigonostigma*
- 97 SCARLET-BACKED FLOWERPECKER *Dicaeum cruentatum*

- 98 BROWN-THROATED SUNBIRD *Anthreptes malaccensis*
- 99 COPPER-THROATED SUNBIRD *Nectarinia calcostetha**
- 100 OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD *Nectarinia jugularis*
- 101 CRIMSON SUNBIRD *Aethopyga siparaja*
- 102 EURASIAN TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*
- 103 YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*
- 104 SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA *Lonchura punctulata*
- 105 BLACK-HEADED MUNIA *Lonchura malacca*