

Birding Singapore 20 August 2013

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I will always remember 20 August 2013 as the day when everything seemed to work perfectly. I was out birding with a Peter and Sylvia Kemp, a couple from Dundee, Scotland and thankfully, the weather remained dry as we approached the end of Rifle Range Road.

We arrived at the first site, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, early and were soon on the bumpy, ankle-twisting trail in semi-darkness. Despite the near full moon, the owls were vocal. The first Sunda Scops Owl was calling too far inside the forest and so we moved on until the intersection with Upper Peirce Reservoir when we heard one really close. It called from a high position and I motioned to Peter and Sylvia to follow me as we crept into the forest. Eventually, I got close enough to shine my torch and find the owl perched on a horizontal branch directly above us. It was cooperative and stayed while Peter and Sylvia moved in behind me and got good looks at it. We moved on quickly as we did not want to disturb it any longer. Strangely enough, we got an even better look at another bird at eye level just as dawn was breaking near Jelutong Tower. Wow!

The Brown Hawk Owls were less active but we still managed a sighting of one near Jelutong Tower. As dawn broke, we were standing on the edge of MacRitchie Reservoir scanning the brightening sky for over-flying birds. Long-tailed Parakeets, swiftlets, Barn and Pacific Swallows, and Large-billed Crows were amongst the first birds we saw. We were also happy to pick out a lone Grey-headed Fish Eagle perched on the tallest dead tree at the reservoir. The fig trees on the edge of the golf course were relatively quiet and we moved quickly to Jelutong Tower. Along the way, we saw and scoped a lone Crested Goshawk preening on the lofty branches of a casuarina at the golf course.

Jelutong Tower proved to be more active than in the past week and we got good looks at Banded and Rufous Woodpeckers, Chestnut-bellied Malkoha, Thick-billed Green Pigeon, a dark morph Changeable Hawk Eagle, Crimson and Van Hasselt's Sunbirds, and our bird of the day, a Buff-rumped Woodpecker. It perched long enough to confirm its ID before flying off. As far as I know, this is the second known record of this forest woodpecker in ten months in the same area after being unreported in Singapore since the 1940s!

We had a quick breakfast of *roti prata* and coffee at a neighbourhood coffee shop before moving on to the only wetland reserve in the northwest of Singapore.

We got there about half an hour before noon and despite the large crowds of students present there and the unusually hazy conditions, we managed to add Ashy Tailorbird and Copper-throated Sunbird to our lists together by working the mangrove boardwalk area. The river was high with the only two waders present, Whimbrel and Common Sandpiper. There were no waders present at the main hide but we saw 18 Little Egrets roosting in a mangrove tree. We also got a close up view of a young Mangrove Pit Viper at the visitor centre, thanks to the NParks staff for the alert.

Our third spot was Kranji Marsh. We spent just 70 minutes investigating the birdlife of this fabulous open country site as the clouds were getting darker and the not so distant rumbling of thunder getting more frequent. 36 species were recorded including 2 Purple Swamphens, a Purple Heron and a Long-tailed Shrike. We also scoped a Red-breasted Parakeet and heard a panicky Red-wattled Lapwing.

Lunch was *nasi goreng* and water melon juice at a pleasant café nearby and we also logged in additional species including Little Ringed Plover and Scaly-breasted Munia.

After lunch, we headed for northern coast of Singapore where the Lower Seletar Dam is located. We arrived just before 4 pm to find that the low tide had exposed a large area of sandy and muddy flats containing a host of waders numbering about 200 birds that included Pacific Golden Plover, the much desired Malaysian Plover, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, and two partial summer Curlew Sandpipers. It was fun finding the waders and going through the differences in identification and plumages, especially for the tricky duo of Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers. Lesson over, we headed further east towards Changi passing the fast changing landscape near Seletar Airport.

Our final stop was Pasir Ris Park. We arrived to be greeted by three screaming Tanimbar Corellas and a party of Sunda Pygmy Woodpeckers. Adding to the excitement were an immature Brown-streaked Flycatcher hanging near the bicycle shop. We also added Red Junglefowl and Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker before eventually finding the main target of the park, two sleepy and adorable Spotted Wood Owls roosting high up a tree. The walk around the mangroves was largely unexciting but we did see a party of 3 Laced Woodpeckers, an active Stork-billed Kingfisher and a few locally rare Black-crowned Night-herons.

Our species total for the day was 87 species, with ten “heard only”. It was an unusually productive day, one where all the star birds from the sites visited performed fantastically well. Exceptional!

COMPLETE LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED ON 20 AUGUST 2013

Species highlighted in yellow indicate “heard only” birds.

#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME
1	RED JUNGLEFOWL	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
2	SUNDA PYGMY WOODPECKER	<i>Dendrocopus moluccensis</i>
3	RUFOUS WOODPECKER	<i>Celeus brachyurus</i>
4	BANDED WOODPECKER	<i>Picus miniaceus</i>
5	LACED WOODPECKER	<i>Picus vittatus</i>
6	COMMON GOLDENBACK	<i>Dinopium javanense</i>
7	BUFF-RUMPED WOODPECKER	<i>Meiglyptes tristis</i>
8	COPPERSMITH BARBET	<i>Megalaima haemcephala</i>

9	ORIENTAL DOLLARBIRD	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>
10	BLUE-EARED KINGFISHER	<i>Alcedo meninting</i>
11	STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
12	WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
13	COLLARED KINGFISHER	<i>Todiramphus chloris</i>
14	BLUE-THROATED BEE-EATER	<i>Merops viridis</i>
15	ASIAN KOEL	<i>Eudynamys scolopacea</i>
16	CHESTNUT-BELLIED MALKOHA	<i>Phaenicophaeus sumatranus</i>
17	LESSER COUCAL	<i>Centropus bengalensis</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	RED-BREASTED PARAKEET	<i>Psittacula alexandri</i>
22	LONG-TAILED PARAKEET	<i>Psittacula longicauda</i>
23	COLLARED SCOPS OWL	<i>Otus lempiji</i>
24	SPOTTED WOOD OWL	<i>Strix seloputo</i>
25	BROWN HAWK OWL	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>
26	COMMON PIGEON	<i>Columba livia</i>
27	SPOTTED DOVE	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
28	RED TURTLE DOVE	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>
29	ZEBRA DOVE	<i>Geopelia striata</i>
30	PINK-NECKED GREEN PIGEON	<i>Treron vernans</i>
31	THICK-BILLED GREEN PIGEON	<i>Treron curvirostra</i>
32	SLATY-BREASTED RAIL	<i>Gallirallus striatus</i>
33	WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
34	PURPLE SWAMPHEN	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
35	WHIMBREL	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
36	COMMON SANDPIPER	<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>
37	CURLEW SANDPIPER	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
38	PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
39	LITTLE RINGED PLOVER	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
40	MALAYSIAN PLOVER	<i>Charadrius peronii</i>
41	LESSER SAND PLOVER	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
42	GREATER SAND PLOVER	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>
43	RED-WATTLED LAPWING	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
44	WHITE-BELLIED SEA EAGLE	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
45	GREY-HEADED FISH EAGLE	<i>Ichthyophaga iahcthyaetus</i>
46	CRESTED GOSHAWK	<i>Accipiter trivirgatus</i>
47	CHANGEABLE HAWK EAGLE	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>
48	LITTLE EGRET	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
49	GREY HERON	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>

50	PURPLE HERON	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
51	STRIATED HERON	<i>Butorides striatus</i>
52	BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
53	ASIAN FAIRY-BLUEBIRD	<i>Irena puella</i>
54	LONG-TAILED SHRIKE	<i>Lanius schach</i>
55	HOUSE CROW	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
56	LARGE-BILLED CROW	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
57	BLACK-NAPED ORIOLE	<i>Oriolus chinensis</i>
58	PIED TRILLER	<i>Lalage nigra</i>
59	PIED FANTAIL	<i>Rhipidura javanica</i>
60	GREATER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>
61	COMMON IORA	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
62	BROWN-STREAKED FLYCATCHER	<i>Muscicapa williamsoni</i>
63	ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
64	ASIAN GLOSSY STARLING	<i>Aplonis panayensis</i>
65	COMMON MYNA	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
66	WHITE-VENTED MYNA	<i>Acridotheres javanicus</i>
67	COMMON HILL MYNA	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>
68	BARN SWALLOW	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
69	PACIFIC SWALLOW	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>
70	STRAW-HEADED BULBUL	<i>Pycnonotus zeylanicus</i>
71	YELLOW-VENTED BULBUL	<i>Pycnonotus goiavier</i>
72	OLIVE-WINGED BULBUL	<i>Pycnonotus plumosus</i>
73	YELLOW-BELLIED PRINIA	<i>Prinia flaviventris</i>
74	ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
75	COMMON TAILORBIRD	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
76	DARK-NECKED TAILORBIRD	<i>Orthotomus atrogularis</i>
77	RUFIOUS-TAILED TAILORBIRD	<i>Orthotomus sericeus</i>
78	ASHY TAILORBIRD	<i>Orthotomus ruficeps</i>
79	STRIPED TIT-BABBLER	<i>Macronous gularis</i>
80	SCARLET-BACKED FLOWERPECKER	<i>Dicaeum cruentatum</i>
81	BROWN-THROATED SUNBIRD	<i>Anthreptes malaccensis</i>
82	PURPLE-THROATED SUNBIRD	<i>Nectarinia sperata</i>
83	COPPER-THROATED SUNBIRD	<i>Nectarinia calcostetha</i>
84	OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD	<i>Nectarinia jugularis</i>
85	CRIMSON SUNBIRD	<i>Aethopyga siparaga</i>
86	PADDYFIELD PIPIT	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
87	SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>



Bird of the day – a male Buff-rumped Woodpecker – at Jelutong Tower, CCNR. Photo © Peter Kemp