

# SINGAPORE BIRDING TOUR 20 JANUARY 2012

By Lim Kim Seng (ibisbill@yahoo.com)

Keith Swindle hails from Hawaii and was interested to see some of Singapore's most spectacular birds in a day trip. I picked him from Wilkinson Road and travelled without much traffic to the Central Catchment Nature Reserve. A crescent moon greeted us as we got ready for the walk down the uneven trail of the Rifle Range Link on the western border of the reserve.

It was relatively quiet until we got past the highest point on the Rifle Range Link and began our descent. We heard a Collared Scops Owl giving steady calls on our right but it was deep in foliage and could not be located. Eventually, we gave up and moved on to the pumphouse at Dillenia Hut. We were luckier here. A Buffy Fish Owl perched at the top of the pumphouse was a surprise find but it did not like the torch and it flew off quickly. Nearer the golf course, we had better luck. Brown Hawk Owls were showing well. We saw one on a tall tree near the south bridge and another near the golf course. Another bonus was a Large-tailed Nightjar seen on a nearby pole. It was getting light and we walked quickly to MacRitchie Reservoir to await the sunrise.

The dawn sky at the reservoir was beautiful. We had a poor view of a flying Changeable Hawk Eagle but this was more than compensated by great views of the highly sought after Asian Fairy Bluebird. At the clump of figs at the edge of the golf course, we found several Thick-billed Green Pigeon and several Coppersmith Barbets. This was followed by a Banded Woodpecker and a pair of Goldenbacks in addition to the regular White-throated Kingfisher and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters. To end off the morning at the reservoir, we also had Japanese Sparrowhawk, 5 Common Hill Mynas and a pair of Oriental Magpie Robins.

We spent some time scanning the treetops at Jelutong Tower and obtained good looks at Cream-vented Bulbul, lots of Pink-necked Green Pigeons and several dazzling male Purple-throated Sunbirds. After about forty-five minutes, we moved on and decided on a detour to Upper Peirce Reservoir. It proved a master stroke as it allowed good looks at a pair of CW Babblers, a flock of both Arctic and Eastern Crowned Warblers and an Osprey.

We left the forest at 10.45 am and had a brief stopover at Rail Mall for breakfast. We had clocked 46 species in just over four hours.

At 11.30 am, we were at our second site, Bukit Batok Nature Park. Lineated Barbets were calling as we descended the hill to the quarry pond. It was much warmer now but there was good bird activity. We picked up a party of 3 White-crested Laughingthrushes amongst others. At the quarry pond, we waited patiently for the globally vulnerable Straw-headed Bulbul to show. There wasn't much movement except for a White-throated Kingfisher. We waited. A low buzzing whistle proclaimed the presence of a Blue-eared Kingfisher and we found it after a while, on a low *Macaranga* bush. Its brilliant blend of azure and deep rufous plumage made it a difficult bird to miss, even in the noon shadow. We duly got

our Straw-headed Bulbuls, at least five birds including a pair making a nest of a cliff-side Acacia. We also saw two Banded Woodpeckers at closer range than in the morning and 2 Blue-throated Bee-eaters. We also bumped into Andrew, the resident bird artist, sketching just before the children's playground before finishing our quick tour of the quarry.

After leaving Bukit Batok Nature Park, we stopped by an air-conditioned food court for lunch. And then it was time for the wetland reserve at Sungei Buloh. We arrived at 2.30 pm to be greeted by dark skies and a low tide. At the river, we saw an adult and an immature Oriental Pied Hornbill, Collared Kingfisher and several Little Egrets. The rains came as we reached the main hide and a heavy thunderstorm ensued and it was accompanied by frequent lightning flashes. Despite the rain, we saw storks from the zoo joining the Little and Great Egrets in the exposed pond, plus about 20 Common Redshanks and 2 Pacific Golden Plovers.

It was twenty minutes before the rain lightened enough for us to cross the bridge and entered the Mangrove Boardwalk. We tried looking for a Blue-winged Pitta that was photographed here earlier in the day but it didn't show. Instead, we got smashing looks at a male Copper-throated Sunbird, a mangrove specialist.

Our last stop of the day was at Kranji Marsh. We arrived at 4.45 pm in overcast weather. The rain had stopped and the birds came out. We spent two wonderful hours enjoying the birds that showed well. One of our first birds was a male King Quail that appeared beside a drain. The albizia woods produced Black Baza and the usual Red-breasted Parakeets and the pond at the end of the country road was also productive. We saw an adult and a juvenile Slaty-breasted Rail, a White-browed Crake, 2 Watercock, 5 Purple Swamphen, 3 Common Moorhen, a Yellow-billed Egret and 4 Yellow Bitterns. Both Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler and Oriental Reed Warblers were present but I only managed a glimpse of the former as it disappeared behind reeds. Keith tried waiting but it was to no avail. The two hours we spent at Kranji Marsh produced our highest tally of the day – 55 species.

Overall, we had recorded 97 species despite the bad weather in the late morning. Memorable birds of the day included King Quail, Banded Woodpecker, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Blue-eared and Stork-billed Kingfishers, Brown Hawk Owl, Buffy Fish Owl, Large-tailed Nightjar, White-browed Crake, Black Baza, Yellow Bittern, Asian Fairy-bluebird, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Straw-headed Bulbul and the dazzling Purple-throated, Copper-throated and Crimson Sunbirds.

#### **List of Birds Recorded on 20 January 2012**

Species listed with an asterisk indicates a "heard only" record. Systematics and sequence follow Lim, K.S. (2009), "The Avifauna of Singapore".

1. King Quail *Coturnix chinensis*
2. Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*\*

3. Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopus moluccensis*\*
4. Rufous Woodpecker *Celeus brachyurus*
5. Banded Woodpecker *Picus miniaceus*
6. Laced Woodpecker *Picus vittatus*\*
7. Common Goldenback *Dinopium javanense*
8. Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata*
9. Coppermith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*
10. Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*
11. Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*
12. Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*
13. Blue-eared Kingfisher *Alcedo meninting*
14. Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*
15. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*
16. Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris*
17. Blue-throated Bee-eater *Merops viridis*
18. Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*
19. Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*\*
20. Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis*
21. Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot *Loriculus galgulus*
22. Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*
23. Long-tailed Parakeet *Psittacula longicauda*
24. Collared Scops Owl *Otus lempiji*\*
25. Buffy Fish Owl *Ketupa ketupu*
26. Brown Hawk Owl *Ninox scutulata*
27. Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus*
28. Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*
29. Red Turtle Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*
30. Zebra Dove *Geopelia striata*
31. Pink-necked Green Pigeon *Treron vernans*
32. Thick-billed Green Pigeon *Treron curvirostra*
33. Slaty-breasted Rail *Gallirallus striatus*
34. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
35. Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca*
36. White-browed Crake *Porzana cinerea*
37. Watercock *Gallix cinerea*
38. Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*
39. Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
40. Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*
41. Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*
42. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
43. Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
44. Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes*

45. Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*
46. White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*
47. Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis*
48. Changeable Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*
49. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
50. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
51. Great Egret *Casmerodius albus*
52. Yellow-billed Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia*
53. Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*
54. Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*
55. Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella*
56. Blue-winged Leafbird *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*\*
57. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*
58. Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*
59. Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*
60. Pied Triller *Lalage nigra*
61. Ashy Minivet *Pericrocotus divaricatus*
62. Pied Fantail *Rhipidura javanica*\*
63. Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*
64. Asian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*
65. Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*\*
66. Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*
67. Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia*\*
68. Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis*
69. Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis*
70. White-vented Myna *Acridotheres javanicus*
71. Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*
72. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
73. Pacific swallow *Hirundo tahitica*
74. Straw-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*
75. Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*
76. Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier*
77. Olive-winged Bulbul *Pycnonotus plumosus*
78. Cream-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus simplex*
79. Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris*\*
80. Pallas's Grasshopper-warbler *Locustella certhiola*
81. Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*\*
82. Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*\*
83. Dark-necked Tailorbird *Orthotomus atrogularis*
84. Ashy Tailorbird *Orthotomus ruficeps*\*
85. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*
86. Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus*

87. White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus*
88. Chestnut-winged Babbler *Stachyris erythroptera*
89. Striped Tit-babbler *Macronous gularis*
90. Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma*
91. Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum cruentatum*
92. Brown-throated Sunbird *Anthreptes malaccensis*
93. Purple-throated Sunbird *Nectarinia sperata*
94. Copper-throated Sunbird *Nectarinia calcostetha*
95. Olive-backed Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis*
96. Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*
97. Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*