

SINGAPORE BIRD TOUR 22 JANUARY 2012

By Lim Kim Seng (ibisbill@yahoo.com)

I met Lee and Sean Sun, who were from USA, at their hotel at Bugis at 5.30 am for a single day bird tour of Singapore. After about half an hour, we arrived at the end of Rifle Range Road. It was still dark when we got into the rainforests of the Central Catchment Nature Reserve. The muddy trails were devoid of calls. Perhaps the heavy rain of the previous evening was having an effect on the owls. Eventually, we arrived at Dillenia Hut but the hoped for Buffy Fish Owl was nowhere to be seen. We moved on and then stumbled upon our first owls. We heard a hoot from a nearby Collared Scops Owl but it was deep in foliage and we only managed a poor view of it flying away. We could not find it again and were a bit disappointed when we heard hoo-hoop calls above us. Looking up in the brightening sky, we found one Brown Hawk Owl calling on a bare tree. Bingo!

As it got light, we started to hear more calls. Striped Tit-babblers and Short-tailed Babblers filled the forest with their distinct melodies and they were soon joined by Dark-necked Tailorbird, Olive-winged Bulbul and Little Spiderhunter.

Our best moment in the morning happened at MacRitchie Reservoir. The generally fine weather meant that birds were about and we were kept really busy! We saw three different kingfishers here – White-throated, Collared and Stork-billed. We also saw Banded Woodpecker, Common Goldenback, five Thick-billed Green Pigeons and about 23 Coppersmith Barbets on two trees, a Brown Shrike and a Grey-rumped Treeswift. There appeared to be plenty of insects in the air for we saw several swiftlets and swallows circling the sky above us with scores of Blue-tailed Bee-eater and Oriental Dollarbirds.

We also stopped by at Jelutong Tower for the sunbirds but the highlight here was a stunning male Blue-winged Leafbird and the equally photogenic Asian Fairy-bluebird.

At 10.45 am, we were out of the forest and had recorded 47 species just over four hours.



A male Crimson Sunbird at Bukit Batok Nature Park. Photo © Lee Sun

We had a quick breakfast at a café and then it was more birding in the parkland at Bukit Batok Nature Park. It was mid-day and I was expecting a hot and unrewarding time. Luckily, the birds proved me wrong. We saw all four target birds we had hoped to see here – Lineated Barbet, Glossy Swiftlet, Straw-headed Bulbul, and White-crested Laughingthrush. While waiting for the bulbul to appear, we witnessed a pair of Changeable hawk Eagle – one pale and one dark – interacting and then, apparently sunning themselves on the slope of the quarry.



A pair of Straw-headed Bulbul singing at Bukit Batok Nature Park. Photo © Lee Sun

We ended our enjoyable but warm morning at Bukit Batok with 18 species. Next was lunch at an air-conditioned food court.



An adult pale morph Changeable Hawk Eagle sunning itself on the slope of Bukit Batok quarry. Photo © Lee Sun

We arrived at Sungei Buloh around 3.00 pm and immediately headed for the main river. It was low tide and so we decided to focus on the birds at the river. It was a kingfisher fiesta as we got Stork-billed, Collared and Common, all at the same time! Other birds seen here included Little and Great Egrets, White-breasted Waterhen, and most surprising of all, two Oriental Pied Hornbills!



An Oriental Pied Hornbill foraging in mangrove at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve. Photo © Lee Sun

At the main hide, we saw about 50 Common Redshanks and 2 Pacific Golden Plovers but not many other birds. We decided to check out the Mangrove Boardwalk and here we saw the gorgeous male Copper-throated Sunbird.

Our last spot was Kranji Marsh and we got here at 4.45 pm. The walk along the country road was pleasant and we saw Red-breasted Parakeet, Common Iora, Pied Triller as well as an unexpected first winter male Mugimaki Flycatcher. The ponds were unfortunately empty of much activity except for a Purple Heron. Workers were clearing the pond off vegetation and as a result it was quite birdless. The walk back produced few birds as it became gloomy. We heard thunderclaps towards the end and as we reached our car, the first drops of rain fell to herald the end of a very good day spent birding.

We had seen 77 species of birds in diverse habitats and in differing weather conditions, all in one day!

List of Birds Recorded on 22 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. Banded Woodpecker *Picus miniaceus*
2. Laced Woodpecker *Picus vittatus*
3. Common Goldenback *Dinopium javanense*
4. Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata*
5. Red-crowned Barbet *Megalaima rafflesii**
6. Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*
7. Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*
8. Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*
9. Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*
10. Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*
11. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*
12. Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris*
13. Blue-throated Bee-eater *Merops viridis*
14. Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*
15. Rusty-breasted Cuckoo *Cacomantis sepulcralis**
16. Asian Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea**
17. Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot *Loriculus galgulus*
18. Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*
19. Long-tailed Parakeet *Psittacula longicauda*
20. Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*
21. Grey-rumped Treeswift *Hemiprocne longipennis*
22. Collared Scops Owl *Otus lempiji*
23. Brown Hawk Owl *Ninox scutulata*
24. Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*
25. Zebra Dove *Geopelia striata*
26. Pink-necked Green Pigeon *Treron vernans*
27. Thick-billed Green Pigeon *Treron curvirostra*
28. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
29. Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca**
30. Common Redshank *Tringa totanus**
31. Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*
32. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
33. Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*
34. Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*
35. White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*
36. Changeable Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*
37. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

38. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
39. Great Egret *Casmerodius albus*
40. Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella*
41. Blue-winged Leafbird *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*
42. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*
43. Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*
44. Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*
45. Pied Triller *Lalage nigra*
46. Ashy Minivet *Pericrocotus divaricatus*
47. Crow-billed Drongo *Dicrurus annectans*
48. Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*
49. Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*
50. Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*
51. Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki*
52. Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis*
53. Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis*
54. White-vented Myna *Acridotheres javanicus*
55. Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*
56. Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*
57. Straw-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*
58. Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier*
59. Olive-winged Bulbul *Pycnonotus plumosus*
60. Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris*
61. Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*
62. Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius**
63. Dark-necked Tailorbird *Orthotomus atrogularis*
64. Rufous-tailed Tailorbird *Orthotomus sericeus**
65. Ashy Tailorbird *Orthotomus ruficeps**
66. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*
67. White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus*
68. Short-tailed Babbler *Malacocincla malaccensis*
69. Striped Tit-babbler *Macronous gularis*
70. Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma*
71. Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum cruentatum*
72. Brown-throated Sunbird *Anthreptes malaccensis*
73. Purple-throated Sunbird *Nectarinia sperata*
74. Copper-throated Sunbird *Nectarinia calcostetha*
75. Olive-backed Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis*
76. Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*
77. Little Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostris*