

# Birding Singapore – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017

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A White-crested Laughingthrush foraging at Bukit batok Nature Park. Photo © Birding Singapore/Lim Kim Seng

I met Judith Allanson, a birder from Canada, at her hotel and, after an exchange of pleasantries, set off for the rainforests. I had studied her list of target species and surmised that going after migrants and localised residents would be more rewarding than following the traditional itinerary. It was her targets that we wanted to see and we did not need to see a whole lot of birds.

Our first stop was Dairy Farm Nature Park. We got there by 6.00 am and, as it was still dark, got our torches out and walked a narrow tarmac road in the hope of catching the eyeshine or call of a Sunda Scops Owl. The first twenty minutes produced nothing so we turned around and headed north instead, towards the Wallace Centre. Within minutes, we heard a bird call about 30 metres away. Unfortunately, we could not locate it as it quickly fell silent. Soon, dawn broke and we spied Pink-necked Green Pigeons landing in the trees around us. The feeding parties were here. I spotted a dumpy bird flying into a tree in

front of us and motioned to Judith to look up. The silhouette was unmistakable but which barbet was it. We could not see any colours but kept our bins on its movement. Soon, the sky brightened considerably and we were able to pick up the red crown and yellow cheeks of a **Red-crowned Barbet**, one of Judith's targets.

We found that we were not alone. We spied Martin, a keen birder living nearby, looking up at a fig tree and we also camped there. The grapevine says this was a hotspot for flycatchers and thrushes and so we waited. A small dark bird flew into the tree and then onwards to the nearby rain tree. It had a long eyebrow and a dark brown plumage. This was a female **Siberian Thrush**, another of Judith's targets. It soon disappeared.

*Tsip!* We heard high-pitched calls and looked up to see a flock of a dozen Eyebrowed Thrushes. More flocks followed including one of fifty birds. A pair of globally endangered Straw-headed Bulbuls also showed up briefly, producing their loud, melodious song for our benefit. We also started to see birds coming in to the original fig tree. First, we saw an Asian Brown Flycatcher and this was followed by at least one female **Mugimaki Flycatcher**. Another hour passed and I spotted an odd flycatcher popping up. By this time, more photographers were on the spot and together, we managed to see it well. It was a female Narcissus Flycatcher! This was Singapore's second record! After about two hours, we walked back to the carpark, and saw a Common Flameback and a noisy **Ashy Minivet**.

We left Dairy Farm at 8.55 am and stopped by a coffee shop for breakfast. Half an hour later, we were birding again, this time in Bukit Batok Nature Park. We came here to see another of Judith's targets, **White-crested Laughingthrush**. The park was however strangely quiet and we had walked 15 minutes without locating its characteristic raucous songs. We detoured up the stairs to the fallen curry tree and sure enough, found four birds picking stuff from the turf nearby. After taking some photos, we moved on to get a look at the picturesque old quarry. A bird flew over and landed on a tree on the cliff. It was a pale morph Changeable Hawk Eagle!

We walked back to the carpark and were very pleasantly surprised to see a big party of over 20 White-crested Laughingthrushes followed by two pairs of foraging Straw-headed Bulbuls. We should have just waited at the carpark!

Flushed with success at our first two sites, we decided to try for an old day roost of a pair of **Sunda Scops Owl**, somewhere in the Central Catchment Nature Reserve. It was a long walk but we succeeded in seeing them sleeping on some palm trees. Yes! Walking back to the car, we spotted a group of six Smooth-coated Otters swimming in the lake. This species had become very common but we were still happy to see them.

Next, we moved on to Marina Barrage, in the new downtown of Singapore. We were trying to see the **Malaysian Plovers**. It required us to walk gingerly on the breakwater but we managed to see 3 pairs along with Common Sandpiper and Lesser Sand Plover.

We were on a roll and so we delayed our lunch and continued our adventure. This time it was a Blue-winged Pitta stakeout at Hougang Central which I saw eleven days ago. Sadly, despite a thorough search of its playground haunt, we could not find it and had to move on after 12 minutes.

Next, we tried the famous Bidadari Cemetery for more of Judith's migrant targets. This was Singapore's hottest migrant trap for the last ten years. Unfortunately, the bulldozers have finally invaded this bird paradise, reducing the woods to just one-fifth of its former area. It was still warm and birding was hard work. We did see Brown Shrike, Arctic Warbler and Asian Brown Flycatcher but none of the species we were hoping to see. We moved on after an hour.

Half an hour later, we stopped for lunch at Changi Village. Here we had a great lunch and enjoyed watching Oriental Pied Hornbill, Red-breasted Parakeet and **Tanimbar Corella**.

Lunch over, we had one more stop and that was at Pasir Ris Park. We explored a patch of woods for bazas but did not find any. We walked past the pond and headed for the coast. We found a skittish **Indian Cuckoo**, a Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker and, best of all, the highly elusive **Spotted Wood Owls**. What a bird to end a day full of birding spectacles!

We had covered eight places in just one day and found ten of Judith's target birds. Overall, we had recorded 62 species of birds, nine of which were "heard only".



A pair of sleeping Sunda Scops Owls at the Central Catchment Nature Reserve. Photo © Birding Singapore/Lim Kim Seng





A Tanimbar Corella guarding a tree cavity at Changi Village. Photo © Birding Singapore/Lim Kim Seng

## A Checklist of the Birds Recorded in Singapore on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Nomenclature, sequence and taxonomy follow IOC. Species highlighted in yellow indicate those that were “heard only” and those in green, the client’s lifers.

#	English Name	Scientific Name
1	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
2	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
3	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
4	Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus cirrhatus</i>
5	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
6	White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
7	Red-legged Crake	<i>Rallina fasciata</i>
8	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
9	Malaysian Plover	<i>Charadrius peronii</i>
10	Lesser Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
11	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
12	Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
13	Zebra Dove	<i>Geopelia striata</i>
14	Pink-necked Green Pigeon	<i>Treron vernans</i>
15	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>
16	Indian Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus micropterus</i>
17	Sunda Scops Owl	<i>Otus lempiji</i>
18	Spotted Wood Owl	<i>Strix selouto</i>
19	Glossy Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia esculenta</i>
20	Oriental Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>
21	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
22	Collared Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus chloris</i>
23	Blue-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops viridis</i>
24	Oriental Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros albirostris</i>
25	Lineated Barbet	<i>Megalaima lineata</i>
26	Red-crowned Barbet	<i>Megalaima rafflesii</i>
27	Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus moluccensis</i>
28	Banded Woodpecker	<i>Chrysophlegma miniaceum</i>
29	Laced Woodpecker	<i>Picus vittatus</i>
30	Common Flameback	<i>Dinopium javanense</i>
31	Tanimbar Corella	<i>Cacatua goffiniana</i>
32	Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus galgulus</i>
33	Blue-rumped Parrot	<i>Psittinus cyanurus</i>
34	Red-breasted Parakeet	<i>Psittacula alexandri</i>

35	Long-tailed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula longicauda</i>
36	Blue-winged Pitta	<i>Pitta moluccensis</i>
37	Ashy Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus divaricatus</i>
38	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
39	Black-naped Oriole	<i>Oriolus chinensis</i>
40	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>
41	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
42	Straw-headed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus zeylanicus</i>
43	Yellow-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus goiavier</i>
44	Olive-winged Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus plumosus</i>
45	Pacific Swallow	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>
46	Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>
47	Dark-necked Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus atrogularis</i>
48	Pin-striped Tit-Babbler	<i>Macronous gularis</i>
49	White-crested Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax leucolopus</i>
50	Asian Fairy-bluebird	<i>Irena puella</i>
51	Asian Glossy Starling	<i>Aplonis panayensis</i>
52	Javan Myna	<i>Acridotheres javanicus</i>
53	Siberian Thrush	<i>Geokichla sibirica</i>
54	Eye-browed Thrush	<i>Turdus obscurus</i>
55	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa latirostris</i>
56	Narcissus Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula narcissina</i>
57	Mugimaki Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula mugimaki</i>
58	Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum cruentatum</i>
59	Crimson Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga siparaja</i>
60	Little Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera longirostra</i>
61	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
62	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>



A well concealed Spotted Wood Owl at Pasir Ris Park. Photo © Birding Singapore/Lim Kim Seng