

# SINGAPORE BIRD TOUR 6 APRIL 2012

By Lim Kim Seng (ibisbill@yahoo.com)

I met my clients, Jan and Hazel Niemandt, who hail from South Africa, at the hotel lobby at 5.30 am and we were quickly on our way to the Central Catchment Nature Reserve. We arrived at the end of Rifle Range Road just before 6.00 am, for our hike into the rainforests of the Central Catchment Nature Reserve, Singapore's largest reserve at some 2,000 hectares.

It was still dark even with a full moon in the overcast sky. The ground was soggy from the week's rains and we had to walk slowly in the darkness. Near the part of the trail where it turns left, I caught a movement in the *simpoh ayer* bushes and quickly shone my torch at it. It turned out to be a Collared Scops Owl! It perched cooperatively for almost a minute before disappearing into the darkness. Wow! A good start!

By the time we reached Jelutong Tower, it was getting light and we had still not heard any Brown Hawk Owls. I tried a few bursts of my tape and waited. Nothing! With the sky getting brighter by the minute, I signaled to Jan and Hazel to follow me to the edge of the golf course. We were just in time to see two Large-tailed Nightjars fly over us as dawn came.

We returned to the boardwalk leading to MacRitchie Reservoir and saw our first diurnal birds. We saw Striped Tit-babbler and Olive-winged Bulbul in a bush, and a Greater Racket-tailed Drongo with its spectacular looking tail.

At the reservoir, we got the usual Collared and White-throated Kingfishers, Blue-throated Bee-eater and Pacific Swallow. Checking a small fruit tree, we saw several Pink-necked Green Pigeons and after scanning for some time, a male and a female Thick-billed Green Pigeon. The best bird here was probably the gorgeous male Yellow-rumped Flycatcher just behind the pump-house. It was cooperative and we managed to see it well.

At 8.00 am, we turned back to Jelutong Tower, picking up Dark-necked and Rufous-tailed Tailorbirds along the boardwalk and after some searching, the multi-coloured Red-crowned Barbet.

We spent some time at Jelutong Tower, waiting for the canopy dwellers to show themselves. We also bumped into some other birders there who were looking for Blue-rumped Parrot. Unfortunately, the parrot didn't show although we had fantastic sightings of a Japanese Sparrowhawk, a Banded Woodpecker, a male Asian Fairy-bluebird, a pair of Blue-winged Leafbirds, Common Hill Myna, and Olive-winged and Asian Red-eyed Bulebuls. Sunbirds were also showing well and we saw Brown-throated, Purple-throated and Crimson Sunbirds, as well as the colourful male Orange-bellied Flowerpecker.

At 9.30 am, we left Jelutong Tower for the long walk back to Rifle Range Road. It was a good start. The weather was good and we recorded a total of 46 species.

After a quick breakfast at a coffee shop, we headed for Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve and arrived at the carpark at 11.00 am amidst light rain. It was high tide at the river and we heard several thunderclaps. We saw a group of egrets huddled in mangroves in the rain. Both Little and Cattle Egrets were present, as were roosting Common Redshanks and Common Sandpipers, and the few Collared Kingfishers.

We checked the main hide briefly but it was full of water and birdless. Returning to the main bridge, we discovered some bird activity. A pair of Rufous Woodpecker flew and landed near us, enabling great views. Not to be outdone, a pair of Common Goldenbacks also appeared and the grand finale was when a Stork-billed Kingfisher flew in and landed on a tall tree for yet another fantastic view.

As the rain appeared to be getting lighter, we continued exploring the Mangrove Boardwalk. It was rather quiet but we were rewarded with an Oriental Pied Hornbill cackling on a tree as we finished our walk.

We got 34 species in all in the ninety minutes we were here in pouring rain, so it was a good haul. Lunch was next, and when it was over, we opted to return to Kranji Marsh, for open country species that we had yet to see.

We were glad to start our walk at Kranji Marsh in overcast weather. At least, it stayed dry and we could see birds becoming active again. A Brown Shrike perched next to a Yellow-vented Bulbul was a rather interesting sighting as we walked the quiet country road. It was again the woodpeckers that stole the limelight. We saw a Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker, a female Laced Woodpecker and a male Common Goldenback. At the pond, we saw the usual Purple Swampphen, Common Moorhen and Yellow Bittern, as well as an obliging adult Plaintive Cuckoo and a skittish White-browed Crane.

We had spent 90 minutes at Kranji Marsh and we were rewarded with our highest species total of the day - 52 species.

Our next site was the primary rainforest at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. We got here at 4.00 pm. The carpark was full but fortunately, the crowd seemed to be elsewhere. We saw the roosting pair of Brown Hawk Owl, to make up for the ones we missed earlier, at the usual spot near the foot of Bukit Timah. Happy with the sighting, we continued our walk to nearby Hindhede Nature Park. Here, we were dismayed by the presence of a bunch of noisy Indonesian kids, who spoke and laughed at the top of their voices, with total disregard for other park users.

We checked the quarry pond for our main quarry, Straw-headed Bulbul, but it was nowhere to be seen. Luckily, we had a surprise sighting of the very pretty and locally threatened Blue-eared Kingfisher. It flashed from below us to the other side of the quarry. As we could not locate the bulbuls even after fifteen minutes, we decided to check the playground. The noisy kids were just ahead of us and we made sure we stayed a distance behind. We were rewarded by the presence of two White-crested Laughingthrushes and much later, our much desired Straw-headed Bulbuls. We also got a view of a Lineated Barbet as well.

The one-hour stopover at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve produced just 17 species but what fantastic birds they were – Blue-eared Kingfisher, Brown Hawk owl, Straw-headed Bulbul and White-crested Laughingthrush.

Our final stopover was Bukit Gombak. We didn't have to stay long to get our target bird – Grey-headed Fish Eagle, two birds were together on a branch midway up a cliff. With that finale, it was time to call it a day and return to the hotel.

It was a fantastic day with a total of 100 species of birds recorded despite a period of rain in the late morning. These included our Bird of the Day, Red-crowned Barbet, the smashing Blue-eared and Stork-billed Kingfishers, all five possible woodpeckers, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Asian Fairy-bluebird, Yellow-rumped Flycatcher and Purple-throated Sunbird.

### **List of Birds Recorded on 6 April 2012**

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

1. Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopus moluccensis*
2. Rufous Woodpecker *Celeus brachyurus*
3. Banded Woodpecker *Picus miniaceus*
4. Laced Woodpecker *Picus vittatus*
5. Common Goldenback *Dinopium javanense*
6. Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata*
7. Red-crowned Barbet *Megalaima rafflesii*
8. Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala\**
9. Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*
10. Blue-eared Kingfisher *Alcedo meninting*
11. Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*
12. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*
13. Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris*
14. Blue-throated Bee-eater *Merops viridis*
15. Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneratii*
16. Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus*
17. Rusty-breasted Cuckoo *Cacomantis sepulcralis\**
18. Little Bronze-cuckoo *Chrysococcyx minutillus*
19. Violet Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus\**
20. Asian Drongo-cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris\**
21. Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*
22. Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*

23. Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis*
24. Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*
25. Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot *Loriculus galgulus*
26. Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri\**
27. Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*
28. Long-tailed Parakeet *Psittacula longicauda*
29. Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*
30. House Swift *Apus nipalensis*
31. Collared Scops Owl *Otus lempiji*
32. Brown Hawk Owl *Ninox scutulata*
33. Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus*
34. Common Pigeon *Columba livia*
35. Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*
36. Red Turtle Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica\**
37. Zebra Dove *Geopelia striata*
38. Pink-necked Green Pigeon *Treron vernans*
39. Thick-billed Green Pigeon *Treron curvirostra*
40. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
41. Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca\**
42. White-browed Crake *Porzana cinerea*
43. Purple Swampphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*
44. Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
45. Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*
46. Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*
47. Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
48. Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*
49. White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*
50. Grey-headed Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*
51. Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis*
52. Changeable Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*
53. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
54. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
55. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
56. Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*
57. Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*
58. Blue-winged Pitta *Pitta moluccensis\**
59. Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella*
60. Blue-winged Leafbird *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*
61. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*
62. House Crow *Corvus splendens*
63. Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*
64. Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*

65. Pied Triller *Lalage nigra*
66. Pied Fantail *Rhipidura javanica*
67. Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*
68. Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*
69. Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*
70. Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia*
71. Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis*\*
72. Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis*
73. White-vented Myna *Acridotheres javanicus*
74. Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*
75. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
76. Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*
77. Straw-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*
78. Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier*
79. Olive-winged Bulbul *Pycnonotus plumosus*
80. Asian Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus brunneus*
81. Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris*\*
82. Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*
83. Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*\*
84. Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*\*
85. Dark-necked Tailorbird *Orthotomus atrogularis*
86. Rufous-tailed Tailorbird *Orthotomus sericeus*
87. Ashy Tailorbird *Orthotomus ruficeps*\*
88. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*
89. White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus*
90. Short-tailed Babbler *Malacocincla malaccensis*\*
91. Striped Tit-babbler *Macronous gularis*
92. Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma*
93. Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum cruentatum*
94. Brown-throated Sunbird *Anthreptes malaccensis*
95. Purple-throated Sunbird *Nectarinia sperata*
96. Copper-throated Sunbird *Nectarinia calcostetha*\*
97. Olive-backed Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis*
98. Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*
99. Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*
100. Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*