

## Birding Singapore 27 November 2010

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It was Mark's first trip to Singapore in seven years and he wanted to see what was around, so we decided to do a full day trip. During his absence, Singapore has changed much. We now have a much changed cityscape that included the Singapore Flyer, Marina Barrage and the impressive Marina Bay Sands Resort. We met at the hotel lobby at 5.30 am and were soon on our way to the Central Catchment Nature Reserve. We reached the carpark shortly after 6.00 am and were soon enjoying the sounds of a rainforest that was waking up. There was a half moon present but that did not affect the nocturnal birds. We were soon greeted by a calling **Collared Scops Owl**. It was too far to try and see, so we moved on. About 100 metres down the soggy trail, we found a calling **Brown Hawk Owl** and then found that it was joined (or challenged?) by two more birds. We waited patiently for a bird to perch in the twilight and sure enough, one was perched 8 metres up a branch and we got good if rather brief looks.

Greater Racket-tailed Drongos and Striped Tit-babblers were already singing their dawn choruses in the ever-brightening forest and we put in a brisk walk to reach the old pumphouse between Upper Peirce and MacRitchie Reservoirs. Around here, we heard the soft chirps of **Siberian Blue Robins** and glimpsed at least two **Ashy Bulbuls** in a densely foliated tree. Near Jelutong Tower, we heard and managed to coax two **Short-tailed Babblers** into view.

We reached MacRitchie Reservoir in time to see anglers crowding the edge of the lake with the morning sun in our eyes. We scanned and saw an **Oriental Dollarbird** high on a dead tree and an adult **Purple Heron** preening at the other end of the reservoir.

At the fig trees on the shores of the lake, we found some activity although it was not as frenetic as the previous week. **Pink-necked Green Pigeons** and **Asian Glossy Starlings** were well in evidence as were bulbuls of four species – **Yellow-vented**, **Olive-winged**, **Cream-vented** and **Asian Red-eyed**. They were eating small figs that did not seem attractive to the larger frugivorous birds. We also saw **Black-naped Oriole** and **Common Iora** here in addition to three **Oriental Magpie-robins**, two **Common Hill Mynas** and a male **Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker** feeding on a mistletoe nestled high up an *Acacia* tree.

Heading back to forest, we heard a **Rufous-tailed Tailorbird** just beside the boardwalk and were fortunate to attract the attention of not one but two birds. They came close to investigate and we had great views. Shortly after, we climbed Jelutong Tower and waited for the birds to come by. We saw the strikingly-coloured **Orange-bellied Flowerpecker** and an **Arctic Warbler** at close range. It was becoming quite warm and we anticipated some raptors but didn't see any above us.

We left the tower around 9.30 am and walked back to Rifle Range Road. Along the way, we got great looks at the same pair of **Short-tailed babblers** we had seen earlier – only this time, within touching distance! – and a pair of **Crimson Sunbirds** feeding on tapioca flowers on the edge of the trail.

After a quick breakfast of roti prata and coffee, we proceeded on to our second site of the day – Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

At the carpark, we met two bird photographers and they mentioned quite a few good birds were in the area. We stayed and managed to find an **Asian Brown Flycatcher** and a female **Yellow-rumped Flycatcher**.

The tide was high when we reached the river. Scanning around, we found no crocodiles or anything of interest other than a few **Little Egrets**. At the main hide, the water level was kept low and it proved to be quite productive. We had all the usual shorebirds present in addition to two **Great Knots**.

After studying the shorebirds for a while, we moved back on the trail and looked for mangrove species. We found a particularly noisy **Asian Brown Flycatcher** practicing its song near the main hide and above Pulau Buloh, the weird sounding calls of a **Grey-headed Fish Eagle** made me look up and we found not one but two eagles, chasing each other in the clear blue sky above.

We completed the route round the main pond without any major findings and then went on to the bridge at nearby Kranji Nature Trail to check for terns. We found about 30 terns, mostly **Lesser Crested**.

Our next stop was Kranji Marsh. It was blisteringly hot when we arrived around 3.00 pm. The light breeze was therefore welcome and we spent our time checking the albizias for birds.

It took us a while but we managed to find a female **Common Goldenback** and then several **Ashy Minivets**. A **Red Junglefowl** also crowed and made us detour to the water pipes. Here we found a **Greater Racket-tailed Drongo**, two **Straw-headed Bulbuls** and a **Black Baza**.

Moving on, we found a **Common Kingfisher** on a fence and two **Brown Shrikes**. The pond was lifeless except for a flushed **Purple Swamphen**. The hoped-for Black-capped Kingfisher was not around.

Moving back, we found an **Asian Drongo-cuckoo** that posed for our scope. It showed a shallow fork that indicated it was the migrant taxon.

We finished our open country birding at Kranji Marsh in just ninety minutes and went for our late lunch at an air-conditioned food court.

Our final stop-over for the day was Bukit Batok Nature Park. Two **Lineated Barbets** were the first birds we saw and there were followed by a **Glossy Swiftlet** that zipped swiftly over our heads.

Down at the quarry pond, we spent some time looking around before we found our quarry. It was a family of **Straw-headed Bulbuls** and they duly obliged with decent scope views as they foraged on the walls of the quarry for food. Also seen here even though totally unexpected was a very shy **Blue-eared Kingfisher**. It flashed by quickly to land hidden in a *Dillenia* bush. It took a while longer to get a better second look as it eventually flew past us again, giving us good views of its deep blue and rufous body and red bill. What a bird!

Another star bird observed here was a first winter male **Blue-and-white Flycatcher**. It flew to perch on a *Macaranga* tree before vanishing for good.

Happy at our success, we called it a day at 6.00 pm. It was another successful day with 92 species recorded in just 12 hours. These included 6 raptors and 7 shorebirds, and some great birds such as Blue-eared Kingfisher, Asian Drongo-cuckoo, Purple Swamphen, Great Knot, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Blue-and-white Flycatcher and Ashy Bulbul.

## Species List

### Birds

Nomenclature, sequence and taxonomy follows Lim, K.S. (2009)'s "The Avifauna of Singapore".

Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*\*  
Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopus moluccensis*  
Banded Woodpecker *Picus miniaceus*\*  
Common Goldenback *Dinopium javanense*  
Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata*  
Red-crowned Barbet *Megalaima rafflesii*\*  
Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*  
Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*  
Blue-eared Kingfisher *Alcedo meninting*  
White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*  
Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris*  
Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*  
Asian Drongo-cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris*  
Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*  
Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis*  
Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*  
Long-tailed Parakeet *Psittacula longicauda*  
Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*

Collared Scops Owl *Otus lempiji*\*  
Brown Hawk-owl *Ninox scutulata*  
Common Pigeon *Columba livia*  
Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*  
Zebra Dove *Geopelia striata*  
Pink-necked Green Pigeon *Treron vernans*  
White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*  
Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*  
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*  
Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*  
Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*  
Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*  
Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*  
Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*  
Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*  
Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*  
Swift Tern *Sterna bergii*  
Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*  
Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes*  
Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*  
White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*  
Grey-headed Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*  
Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis*  
Changeable Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*  
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*  
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*  
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*  
Great Egret *Casmerodius albus*  
Yellow-billed Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia*  
Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*  
Golden-bellied Gerygone *Gerygone sulphurea*\*  
Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella*\*  
Blue-winged Leafbird *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*  
Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*  
Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*  
Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*  
Pied Triller *Lalage nigra*  
Ashy Minivet *Pericrocotus divaricatus*  
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*  
Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*  
Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*  
Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia*  
Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*  
Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane*\*  
Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis*  
Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis*

White-vented Myna *Acridotheres javanicus*  
Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*  
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*  
Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*  
Straw-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*  
Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier*  
Olive-winged Bulbul *Pycnonotus plumosus*  
Cream-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus simplex*  
Asian Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus brunneus*  
Ashy (Cinereous) Bulbul *Hemixos flavala (cinereus)*  
Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris*\*  
Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*  
Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*\*  
Dark-necked Tailorbird *Orthotomus atrogularis*  
Rufous-tailed Tailorbird *Orthotomus sericeus*  
Ashy Tailorbird *Orthotomus ruficeps*  
Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*  
White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus*  
Short-tailed Babbler *Malacocincla malaccensis*  
Chestnut-winged Babbler *Stachyris erythroptera*\*  
Striped Tit-babbler *Macronous gularis*  
Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma*  
Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum cruentatum*  
Brown-throated Sunbird *Anthreptes malacensis*  
Copper-throated Sunbird *Nectarinia calcostetha*  
Olive-backed Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis*\*  
Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*  
Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

(An asterisk indicates heard only.)

## **Mammals**

Long-tailed Macaque *Macaca nemestrina*  
Plantain Squirrel *Callosciurus notatus*  
Slender Squirrel *Sundasciurus tenuis*

## **Reptiles**

Changeable Lizard *Calotes versicolor*  
Green Crested Lizard *Calotes cristatellus*  
Common Sun Skink *Mabuya multifasciata*  
Malayan Water Monitor *Varanus salvator*  
Clouded Monitor *Varanus nebulosus*