

Report on the 22nd Annual Bird Census

By Lim Kim Seng

The 22nd Annual Bird Census (ABC) was held on 25th March 2007 in generally fair weather and saw the involvement of a total of 47 people at 23 sites. 7,667 birds from 145 species were recorded compared with 10,366 birds from 168 species in 2006, 9,100 birds from 156 species in 2005 and 6,772 birds from 145 species in 2004 (Lim, K.S. 2004, 2006; Lim K.C. 2005). The total number of birds and species counted showed a dip for the first time in three years (Lim, K.C. 2002, 2005; Lim, K.S. 2003, 2004, 2006; Figure 1).

Of the 23 sites counted, Ubin Central and Halus were the most diverse with 55 species each counted followed closely by Neo Tiew Lane 2 with 53 species. The least diverse sites were Bukit Brown with 17 species recorded, followed by Sentosa and Botanic Gardens, both with 22 species.

The most bird populous site was, as expected, Sungei Mandai which had 1,465 birds down from 1,950 birds of 2006. Coming a distant second was Neo Tiew Lane 2 with 608 birds and joint third were Ubin Central and Bishan Park, both with 448 birds. The least populous sites were Bukit Brown with 99 birds counted, followed by Mount Faber with 141 birds and Sentosa (156).

Pulau Ubin and Sungei Buloh were two megabiodiversity protected areas which had two sites each in ABC 2007 but it was Ubin which had a better overall diversity with 64 species compared to Buloh's 54. In terms of abundance, Pulau Ubin was also well ahead with 826 birds compared to Buloh's rather mediocre 571.

Because of the lack of observers, Bukit Timah, Changi Beach, Nee Soon, Pasir Ris Park, Simpang Grassland, Telok Blangah Hill Park, and Upper and Lower Seletar Reservoirs were not covered in this year's census. Two sites in particular lost their leaders less than 24 hours before the start of the census due to unforeseen circumstances but they were once again more sites to cover than available leaders. It is hoped that the pool of leaders can be increased in the years ahead, with the involvement of more people from the birding community.

What then was Singapore's most abundant bird? Well, it was none other than our ubiquitous sturnid, White-vented Myna, which retained its pole position for the first time in three years with a score of 979 birds, up from 862 in 2006. The Pacific Golden Plover was second with a nation-wide count of 851, a big drop from 1,577 of last year (Table 1). Coming in third to fifth positions were Yellow-vented Bulbul (441 birds), Asian Glossy Starling (372 birds) and Pink-necked Green-pigeon (363). Other than the bulbul, all showed declines in numbers, with that for the starling halved compared with 2006.

Barn Swallow dropped to sixth position with 337 birds, a drop from 428 birds counted last year. Seventh again was Little Egret (276 birds) and eighth was Black-naped Oriole which scored 213 birds to jump four places back into the top ten placing despite numbers being down from 2006. Ninth was Spotted Dove (186) and tenth was House Crow (182).

The top 20 birds of 2007 are listed below (Table 1) together with comparative numbers and rankings from 2006:

Number	Species	ABC 2007	ABC 2006
1	White-vented Myna	979	862 (2)
2	Pacific Golden Plover	851	1577 (1)
3	Yellow-vented Bulbul	441	380 (6)
4	Asian Glossy Starling	372	831 (3)
5	Pink-necked Green-pigeon	363	415 (5)
6	Barn Swallow	337	428 (4)
7	Little Egret	276	301 (7)
8	Black-naped Oriole	213	204 (12)
9	Spotted Dove	186	230 (10)
10	House Crow	182	269 (8)
11	Pacific Swallow	181	193 (14)
12	Collared Kingfisher	168	122 (20)
13	Whimbrel	165	201 (13)
14	Grey Heron	128	139 (17)
15	Common Greenshank	121	158 (16)
16	Long-tailed Parakeet	118	83 (26)
17	Common Redshank	111	221 (11)
18	Common Iora	111	123 (19)
19	Olive-backed Sunbird	100	136 (18)
20	Asian Koel	96	97 (24)

Table 1: Top 20 Most Abundant Birds in ABC 2007

Of the 56 nationally threatened species, 19 or 34% were recorded. The most abundant nationally threatened species was Grey Heron with 128 birds counted, down from 139 in 2006. The only globally threatened species encountered in this year's census was Straw-headed Bulbul of which 50 birds were recorded.

The most exciting birds observed during ABC 2007 were arguably a Chestnut-winged Cuckoo at Bukit Batok West, an Ashy Drongo at Kent Ridge Park and a male Yellow-rumped Flycatcher at Sime Road.

The following people led or assisted in ABC 2007 and made it a success:

Doreen Ang, Arturo Balayut Jr, Cai Yixiong, Denis Chan, Chan Kim Cheng, Chan Kim Sian, Kelvin Chen, Alfred Chia, Avian Chia, Geoffrey Davison, Con Foley, Willie Foo, Goh Si Guim, Margie Hall, James Heng, Ho Hua Chew, Ali Jafaar, Kenneth Kee, Azmi Mohamed, Nessie Khoo, Kuet Ee Yoon, Maurice Kwan, Jade, Jessie, Danny Lau, Lee Ee Ling, Lim Kim Keang, Lim Kim Seng, Lin Yang Chen, Azmi Mohamed, Cyril Ng, Alan Owyong, Pat, Jane Rogers, Freda Rickwood, Ian Rickwood, Gloria Seow, Soon Tze Chien, Tan Ju Lin, Tan Kok Hui, Tan Siew Kwang, Tan Soon Im, Wee Sau Cheng, Wing Chong, Wong Chung Cheong, Yang Pah Liang, Yap Chung Kui, Margaret Yeo and Sunny Yeo.

I would like to applaud the response of the 2007 leaders. For once, forms were returned very rapidly, with 50% within the day itself and almost 100% within 3 days. Alan Owyong in particular holds the record for the fastest response. He returned his counts within half an hour!

Thanks once again to all who helped ensure the success of this 22nd edition of the ABC. Hope you had fun and see you again in 2008! Bring your friends and family along too!

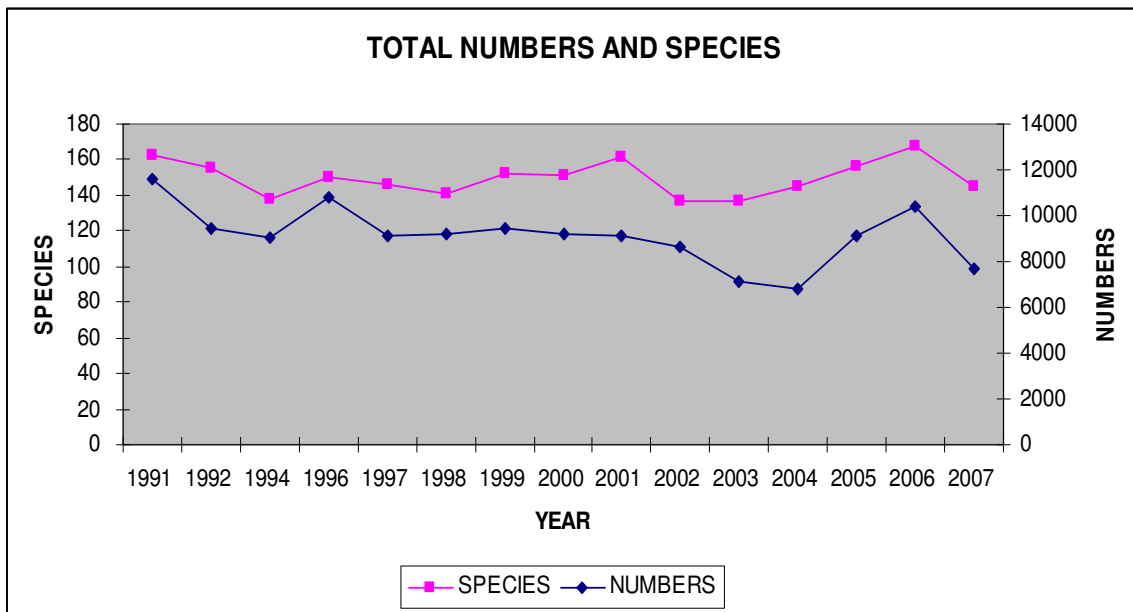


Figure 1: Total bird numbers and species of Annual Bird Census, 1991-2007

References

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