

Report on the 7th Fall Migration Bird Census

By Lim Kim Seng

The 7th Fall Migration Bird Census (FMBC) held on 12th September 2010, was blessed with clear, sunny weather unlike the wet conditions in 2009. 57 people participated in counting at 28 sites, an improvement from 51 observers at 23 sites last year. In all, 8,666 birds of 137 species were counted, compared with 7,381 birds of 119 species in 2009. Figure 1 offers a peek at the trend for the last seven years. Overall, bird diversity seems stable while abundance fluctuates rather more markedly.

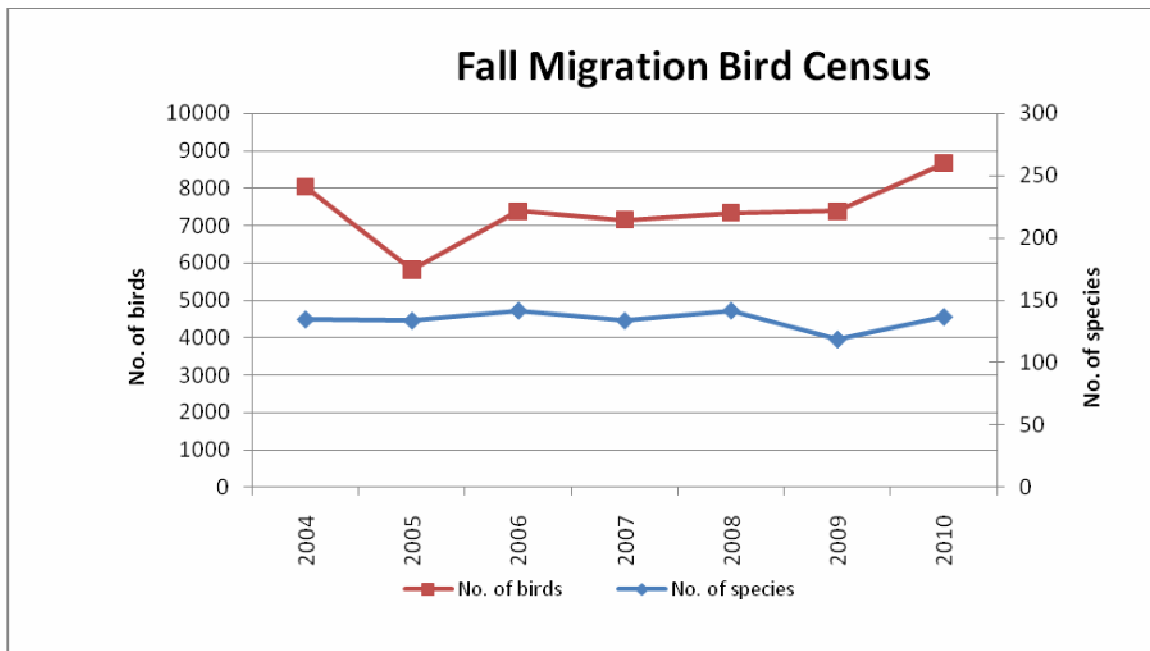


Figure 1: Trends in Bird Diversity and Abundance, FMBC 2004-2010

Of the 28 sites counted, Neo Tiew Lane 2 and Serangoon were the most bird diverse with 49 species counted, followed by Ubin Central with 47 species. The least diverse sites were Bishan Park, Telok Blangah Hill Park and Mandai Mudflats, all with 19 species.

The most bird populous site was Mandai Mudflats which had 1,497 birds, an improvement from 1,122 birds last year and an illustration of its importance. This year, it held 17% of all birds counted country-wide. Coming in second was Buloh 1 with 608 birds and third was Ubin Central with 480 birds. The least populous sites were Telok Blangah Hill Park (101 birds), Nee Soon (110) and Bishan Park (123).

Because of the lack of volunteers, Admiralty Park, Bukit Batok West and Bukit Brown were left out of this year's census.

So, which was Singapore's most abundant bird this year? Well, last year's runner-up, White-vented Myna, returned to top position this year with a total of 1,063 birds, up from 885 birds last year. Dropping to second place was last year's champion, Asian Glossy Starling, with a total of 1,039, down from 1,153 of 2009. Retaining third position was a migrant shorebird, Lesser Sand Plover, with a total of 988 birds up from 805 birds last year, again with most birds coming from Mandai Mudflats alone!

Coming in fourth to tenth positions were Pacific Golden Plover (432 birds), Yellow-vented Bulbul (318), Pink-necked Green Pigeon (258), Pacific Swallow (256), Common Redshank (245), Black-naped Oriole (204) and Striped Tit-babbler (172).

Making up the eleventh to twentieth positions were a six non-passerines and four passerines, including a surprise entrant, Baya Weaver, at nineteenth place with 100 birds.

The top 20 birds of FMBC 2010 are listed below (Table 1).

RANKING	SPECIES	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
1	WHITE-VENTED MYNA	1063	12.27
2	ASIAN GLOSSY STARLING	1039	12.34
3	LESSER SAND PLOVER	988	11.4
4	PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER	432	4.98
5	YELLOW-VENTED BULBUL	318	3.67
6	PINK-NECKED GREEN PIGEON	258	2.98
7	PACIFIC SWALLOW	256	2.95
8	COMMON REDSHANK	245	2.83
9	BLACK-NAPED ORIOLE	204	2.35
10	STRIPED TIT-BABBLER	172	1.98
11	LONG-TAILED PARAKEET	162	1.87
12	SPOTTED DOVE	159	1.83
13	WHIMBREL	157	1.81
14	DAURIAN STARLING	146	1.68
15	COMMON PIGEON	141	1.63
16	LITTLE EGRET	138	1.59
17	HOUSE CROW	121	1.39
18	OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD	101	1.17
19	BAYA WEAVER	100	1.15
20	OLIVE-WINGED BULBUL	95	1.09

Note: Species in yellow denotes a migrant.

Table 1: Top 20 Most Abundant Birds in FMBC 2010

Of the 56 nationally threatened species, 23 species or 41% of the total number of threatened species were recorded in the census. This compares well with the 28% of 2009 and 36% in 2008 and is only marginally lower than the 45% representation in 2007. The most numerous threatened species was once again Grey Heron, 22nd overall, with a count of just 90 birds, down sharply from 165 birds counted in 2009 and 167 in 2008. Also showing well were Straw-headed Bulbul, 29th

overall with a record count of 66 birds compared with 29 birds in 2009 and 57 in 2008, Red Junglefowl (28 birds), Oriental Magpie-robin (25) and Lesser Whistling-duck (23). Notable too was a Great-billed Heron at Khatib Bongsu, the first for the area.

Two globally threatened species were recorded during the census. The first was the Straw-headed Bulbul which was present at ten sites, up from 5 sites in 2009 and 9 in 2008. Undoubtedly the bird of the day was a Nordmann's Greenshank which was reported at Sungei Buloh. This would be our third record in thirty years if accepted by the Records Committee. Also notable was the globally near-threatened Asian Dowitcher, which appeared at Mandai Mudflats.

28 (20.4%) of the 137 species recorded were true migrants compared with 15% in 2009 and 18% in 2008. Perhaps the delay of six days in holding the census led to this increase? Of the 28 species, six were among the top twenty birds counted. The other 22 species (in order of decreasing abundance) included Barn Swallow, Common Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover, Common Kingfisher, Greater Sand Plover, Arctic Warbler, Wood Sandpiper, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Indian Cuckoo, Nordmann's Greenshank, Terek Sandpiper, Asian Dowitcher, Red-necked Stint, Crested Honey Buzzard, Cattle Egret, Brown Shrike, Asian Brown Flycatcher and Forest Wagtail.

Unlike in past years, one migrant raptor did put on a show and this was a lone Crested Honey Buzzard at Bukit Batok Nature Park.

The following fantastic people led or assisted in FMBC 2010:

Doreen Ang, Samantha Ang, Azmi Mohamed, Cai Yixiong, Chan Kim Cheng, MY Chan, Chee Wei-lin, Alfred Chia, Anthony Chia, Serene Chng, Andrew Chow, Geoffrey Davison, Estella Flotow, Horst Flotow, Willie Foo, Gerard Francis, James Heng, Jane Heppel, Terry Heppel, Ho Hua Chew, Kenneth Kee, Khari, Susan Knight, Maurice Kwan, Nessie Khoo, Lam Hon Pui, Danny Lau, Lee Ee Ling, Jimmy Lee, Pauline Lee, Lee Yoke Kheng, Amanda Lewis, Jeremy Lewis, David Li, Haibi Lim, Lim Kim Keang, Lim Kim Seng, Loke Wai Yin, Joan Low, Ng Chay Tuan, Cyril Ng, Winters Ng, Alan Owyong, Peng Ah Huay, Mick Price, John Spencer, Liana Knight Spencer, Tan Hang Chong, Tan Ju Lin, Tan Kok Hui, Tan Soon Im, KP Teh, Wee Sau Cheng, Wong Chung Cheong, Yang Pah Liang, Yong Ding Li and Yong Yik Shih.

Thanks once again to everyone who helped ensure the success of this year's FMBC. See you in 2011!