

# Report on the 10<sup>th</sup> Mid-Year Bird Census

By Lim Kim Seng

Our 10<sup>th</sup> Mid-Year Bird Census (MYBC) was conducted on the weekend of 11-12 July 2009 and saw the participation of 59 people, a huge jump from the 42 people of 2008 and only two short of the record high 61 people set in 2003. A new record total of 32 sites were covered, up from 27 sites last year. Eight sites were counted on Saturday and the remaining 24 on Sunday. Almost all regular sites were counted with the exception of Gambas Avenue because of lack of volunteers, and Sentosa and Marina City Park because of on-going construction work for the new casinos. New sites included Admiralty Park and Toa Payoh Town Garden.

MYBC2009 saw a record tally of 10,377 birds compared to 6,860 birds last year and reversed a trend of decreasing numbers since 2004. In terms of diversity, 2009 saw 125 species, surpassing the record high set in 2006 (chart below). In comparison, only 116 species were recorded in 2008.

Site-wise, the richest in terms of species diversity was Neo Tiew Lane 2, with 55 species. Following closely behind in species richness was Ubin Central with 54 species and Ubin West with 46 species. Sites with the lowest bird diversity included Toa Payoh with a paltry 17 species, followed by Mount Faber (22) and Sembawang Park and Tampines Grassland, both with 24 species.

In terms of numbers of birds, the richest site was Khatib Bongsu with 653 birds counted. Second was Neo Tiew Lane 2 (610) and third was Ubin West (592). In contrast, the site with the poorest count in terms of numbers was Mount Faber with just 130 birds tallied. Other sites with low bird numbers included Tampines (147 birds) and Lorong Halus (147 birds).

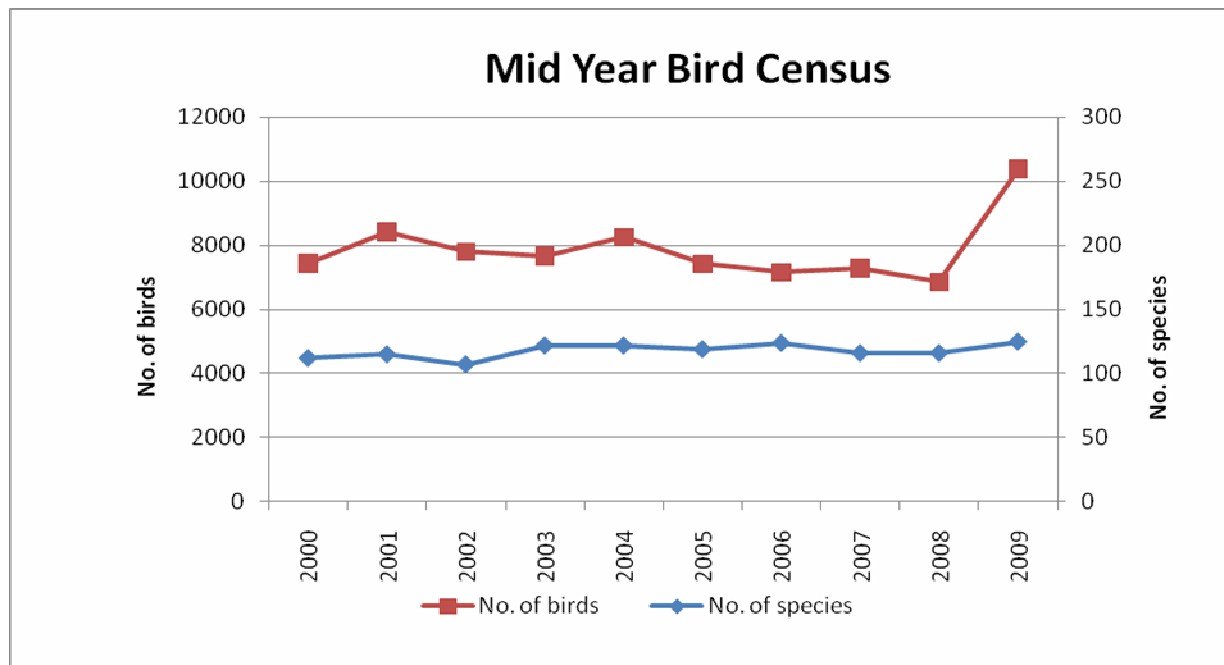


Figure 1: MYBC 2000-2009 Total Counts & Overall Diversity

Once again, White-vented (Javan) Myna remained the most numerous resident with 1,675 birds counted. In second place and quite close behind was Asian Glossy Starling with 1,419 birds, an almost 100% improvement from last year. Next in the top five were Pink-necked Green-pigeon (572 birds), Yellow-vented Bulbul (448) and Pacific Swallow (317). Black-naped Oriole was ranked sixth with a total of 187 birds, an improvement of two places as compared to 2008. Seventh was Common Iora with 181 birds and in eighth place, Spotted Dove, which dropped one place with 173 birds. Bringing up the rest of the top ten positions were House Crow, which dropped two spots to ninth with 165 birds, a decrease of 22 birds from 2008, and the globally near-threatened Long-tailed Parakeet, with 155 birds, up five places from 2008.

In eleventh spot was the nationally threatened Grey Heron, with 189 birds, up from 145 birds last year and maintaining its position as the most numerous ardeid and the only nationally threatened bird in the top twenty. The other nine birds in the Top Twenty were Common Pigeon (170), Collared Kingfisher (164), Eurasian Tree Sparrow (160), Olive-backed Sunbird (148), Striped Tit-babbler (144), Common Tailorbird (129), Scaly-breasted Munia (119), Striated Heron (110) and Blue-throated Bee-eater (107).

The most dramatic change in the Top Twenty (below) was the rise of the Eurasian Tree Sparrow from 24<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> with a 100% increase from last year. Also significant was the lack of migrants in the Top Twenty.

2009 RANK	SPECIES	2009 COUNT	2008 COUNT	2008 RANK
1	WHITE-VENTED MYNA	1675	1090	1
2	ASIAN GLOSSY STARLING	1419	643	2
3	PINK-NECKED GREEN PIGEON	334	270	5
4	YELLOW-VENTED BULBUL	273	334	3
5	PACIFIC SWALLOW	270	273	4
6	BLACK-NAPED ORIOLE	187	173	8
7	COMMON IORA	181	165	9
8	SPOTTED DOVE	173	181	7
9	HOUSE CROW	165	187	6
10	LONG-TAILED PARAKEET	155	124	13
11	GREY HERON	189	145	11
12	COMMON PIGEON	170	103	17
13	COLLARED KINGFISHER	164	155	10
14	EURASIAN TREE SPARROW	160	81	24
15	OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD	148	122	14
16	STRIPED TIT-BABBLER	144	112	16
17	COMMON TAILORBIRD	129	88	19
18	SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA	119	88	19
19	STRIATED HERON	110	90	18
20	BLUE-THROATED BEE-EATER	107	83	22

Table 1: Top Twenty Most Numerous Birds of MYBC 2009 (with comparative figures and positions from 2008)

Of the 125 species recorded, four were migrants and included both Little and Great Egrets, Blue-winged Pitta and Barn Swallow. Surprisingly, there were no migrant shorebirds or terns. Only one of the 125 species was a non-breeding visitor – the Osprey. Perhaps qualifying as the bird of the weekend was a bird of uncertain status, possibly an escapee – a flying Oriental Darter at Neo Tiew Lane 2, a bird not yet in any of Singapore's lists!

Of 119 residents counted, 25 species, or 21%, were nationally threatened species. Some of these included Red Junglefowl, Lesser Whistling-duck, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Violet Cuckoo, Blue-rumped Parrot, Little Tern, Crested Serpent Eagle, Purple Heron, Little Grebe, Greater Green Leafbird, White-rumped Shama, Straw-headed Bulbul and Chestnut-winged Babbler. Most noteworthy perhaps were four Black-headed Bubluls and a Mangrove Pitta, both from Pulau Ubin. Most numerous of threatened residents counted was Grey Heron with a record of 189 birds counted, an increase of 44 birds compared to last year. The globally threatened Straw-headed Bulbul was the second best threatened species (33<sup>rd</sup> overall), with a total of 47 birds, down from 55 in 2008. Likewise, the Oriental Magpie-robin was the third most numerous threatened species (42<sup>nd</sup> overall) with a count of 33 birds, down slightly from 36 last year. Also doing surprisingly well was the Black-crowned Night Heron which scored 47<sup>th</sup> overall with a count of 26 birds, 17 of which came from Pasir Ris.

Of naturalised residents three species already occupy the top 20 positions. These included Common Pigeon, House Crow and White-vented Myna. A potential candidate for future Top Twenty placings is the White-crested Laughingthrush. It was placed 29<sup>th</sup> with 55 birds, an increase from 46 birds nation-wide in 2008.

Seven species of raptors were recorded. The most numerous were White-bellied Sea Eagle and Brahminy Kite, both with 19 birds detected. Third was Changeable Hawk Eagle which scored 12 birds from a total of eight sites. Also of interest were a single Crested Serpent Eagle at Halus, perhaps a stray from Malaysia, and three Ospreys.

The following participants helped either as leaders or assistants in MYBC2009 (bold type indicating counters who did the census on both days – well done guys!):

Ali Jaafar, **Doreen Ang**, Samantha Ang, Richard Carden, Chan Kim Cheng, Chan Mei Yee, Alfred Chia, Andrew Chow, SC Fang & wife, James Heng, Horst Flotow, Con Foley, Willie Foo, Ann George, Ho Hua Chew, Kaori, Kenneth Kee, **Nessie Khoo**, Khuan Jia Hui, Maurice Kwan, Kwek Swee Meng, Danny Lau, Lau Jia Sheng, Ben Lee, Charmaine Lee, Lee Ee Ling, Jimmy Lee, Lim Chor Kiang, **Joseph Lim**, Lim Kim Chuah, Lim Kim Keang, **Lim Kim Seng**, Clarrse Ng, Ng Kim Tee, **Alan Owyong**, Pandian, Peng Ah Huay, Phang Seng Kai, Rehan Yusoff, Leonard Santisteban, John Spencer, Sutari Supari, Tai Ping Ling, Tan Boon Huat, Tan Ju Lin, Tan Kok Hui, Tan Siew Kwang, Tan Soon Im, K.P. Teh, Wee Sau Cheng, **Wing Chong**, Wing Chong How, Wong Chung Cheong, Yang Pah Liang, Yap Lip Kee, Sunny Yeo, Yong Ding Li and Yuan Fook Weng.

Once again, thanks to everyone for making MYBC2009 and our first ten years such a memorable one! We hope to see you again next year!