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2008 by Lim Kim Chuah

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1st winter male **Siberian Blue Robin** *Luscinia cyane* at Nee Soon Swamp Forest on 18 October 2008 – Photo © Chong Boon Leong



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Bird Report

October 2008

By Albert Low

Highlights

Singapore



Black-backed Kingfisher at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve on 22 October 2008. Photo © Mendis Tan

The month of October began where September left out, with a flurry of rarities and interesting sightings thanks to the diligence of our resident bird photographers as well as local birders who were doing their rounds in preparation for the 25th Singapore Bird Race.

Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, as if signaling its intentions to provide local birders with an unforgettable 15th Anniversary, continued to remain in the spotlight with a slew of good finds. Starting off with a brief **Eurasian Curlew** in mid-October, the action heated up during the closing weeks with sightings of a lone **Black-backed Kingfisher**, **Broad-billed Sandpiper** and **Red-necked Stint** all in quick succession.

Raptors also put in a strong showing during the month with no less than 12 species recorded at various points around the island. A probable **Common Kestrel**, an uncommon winter visitor to our shores, was actually sighted from the comfort of an SBS bus on its way to Nanyang Technological University! Other interesting raptors during the month included a wintering **Peregrine Falcon** of the resident race *ernesti* in the Central Business District for the second consecutive year, as well as a **Common Buzzard** over Lorong Halus.

Elsewhere around the island, there were photographic records of often overlooked migrants in the form of a **Whiskered Tern** at Jurong Lake and a first-winter male **Siberian Blue Robin** at Nee Soon Swamp Forest. The former may be more common than records suggest due to confusion with the more regular Common Tern in winter plumage, while in the case of the latter, female arrivals are a dime a dozen compared to sightings of resplendent males, of which Nee Soon is probably the best place to encounter one of these forest jewels.

Summary

This report covers noteworthy bird sightings in October 2008 for Singapore and the surrounding region. In general, the report will include but are not limited to the following categories: rarities, breeding or nesting records, arrival and departure dates for migratory species, new locality records, escapees and unusual behaviour.

In addition, contributors are also advised to be as precise as possible concerning records. Please remember to include details such as how many birds were seen, the plumage, sex and age of the birds, the type of habitat in which they were observed, the food they were eating (if possible, identify the plant or animal), the weather encountered (what was the wind direction, tide conditions, etc.). Although it is not necessary to have such details for all record submissions, it is a good habit to cultivate and is normally required for very rare or unusual species.

Please send all your records of interest to Lim Kim Seng @ ibisbill@yahoo.com or Lim Kim Chuah @ pittalover@yahoo.com.sg or Yong Ding Li at zoothera@yahoo.com. Alternatively you can also post your sightings at the NSS Bird Group website at <http://wildbirdsingapore.nss.org.sg> Please send your records no later than one week after the end of every month. Your contributions will be greatly appreciated and acknowledged.

Unless stated otherwise, nomenclature and systematic follow K.S. Lim's (2007) "Pocket Checklist of the birds of the Republic of Singapore (Second Edition)", K.S. Lim & K.C. Lim's (1999) "Pocket checklist of the birds of Johor, Peninsular Malaysia" for Johor, and B.L. Monroe Jr. & C.G. Sibley's (1993) "A World Checklist of Birds" for the rest of the region.

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Abbreviations Used:

BBNP Bukit Batok Nature Park
CCNR Central Catchment Nature Reserve
LH Lorong Halus
NTL2 Neo Tiew Lane 2
SBWR Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve
PFR Panty Forest Reserve

SINGAPORE

COMMON KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis*)

1 seen 4/10 at Japanese Gardens (MT). 1 at SBWR, 12/10 (DA/LKS) and 1 at Lorong Halus, 19/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

BLACK-BACKED KINGFISHER (*Ceyx erithacus*)

1 crash-landed 7/10 at a Tuas factory but fortunately survived (KK). 1 photographed 22/10 at SBWR roundabout near the carpark (MeT).



Black-backed Kingfisher at Tuas area. Photo © Kenneth Kee

STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER (*Pelargopsis capensis*)

1 seen 1/10 at Hindhede Park (JS). 1 seen 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY).

BLACK-CAPPED KINGFISHER (*Halcyon pileata*)

1 photographed 29/10 and 31/10 at gate area of the Japanese Gardens (TKC)



Black-capped Kingfisher at Japanese Gardens. Photo © K C Tsang

BANDED BAY CUCKOO (*Cacomantis sonnerati*)

1 heard 6/10 calling in Durian orchard behind NIE block 7 (YDL).

LITTLE BRONZE CUCKOO (*Chrysococcyx minutillus*)

1 male seen 27/10 at Choa Chu Kang St 64 (FW).

VIOLET CUCKOO (*Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*)

1 heard at Dairy Farm Road, 5/10 (LKC)

LONG-TAILED PARAKEET (*Psittacula longicauda*)

About 40 seen 1/10 at Sime Forest (WCC).

ASIAN PALM SWIFT (*Cypsiurus balasiensis*)

1 seen 1/10 at Sime Forest at Golf Link (WCC). A few seen at Bukit Brown on 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC)

RED TURTLE DOVE (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*)

1 seen 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY).

COMMON EMERALD DOVE (*Chalcophaps indica*)

3 seen 1/10 at Sime Forest (WCC).

THICK-BILLED GREEN-PIGEON (*Treron curvirostra*)

2 females at Bukit Brown, 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

WHITE-BROWED CRAKE (*Porzana cinerea*)

2 at Lorong Halus, 19/10 (LKC/JH/YDL)

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*)

170 seen 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY).

EURASIAN CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*)

1 seen 18/10 at SBWR (THC/RiT/RT/JL/RH/AN/JT/BL/RK/BC) and again on 19/10 (DT/MeT/SY/ JC).



Eurasian Curlew at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve on 18 October 2008. *Photo © Ben Lee*

COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*)

75 seen 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY).

MARSH SANDPIPER

(Tringa stagnatilis)

35 seen 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY).

COMMON GREENSHANK

(Tringa nebularia)

60 seen 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY).

COMMON SANDPIPER

(Tringa hypoleucos)

3 seen 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY).



Red-necked Stint at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve on 26 October 2008. Photo © Jimmy Tan

RED-NECKED STINT

(Calidris ruficollis)

1 seen and photographed 26/10 at SBWR (JiT). Also seen on same day by DA/LKS/WCC.

CURLEW SANDPIPER

(Calidris ferruginea)

4 seen 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY).

BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER

(Limicola falcinellus)

1 seen and photographed 26/10 at SBWR (JiT). Also seen on same day by DA/LKS/WCC.



Broad-billed Sandpiper at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve on 26 October 2008. Photo © Jimmy Tan

GREATER PAINTED SNIPE

(Rostratula benghalensis)

1 seen 26/10 at Marina East (MH).
2 flushed at Tuas Grassland on 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

GREY PLOVER

(Pluvialis squatarola)

1 seen at Changi Cove, 19/10 (LKC/JH/YDL)

PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER *(Pluvialis fulva)*

1 seen 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY). 50 at SBWR, 12/10 (DA/LKS) and 50 at Tuas Grassland, 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

KENTISH PLOVER (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

Within a group of Kentish Plovers, at least 1 ‘White-faced Plover’ was seen on 26/10 at Changi Cove (AC). (Recent studies have shown that the ‘White-faced Plovers’, which have attracted much attention from the regional birding community actually represent a forgotten taxon *Charadrius dealbatus*, described by British ornithologist, Robert Swinhoe in 1870 as a species distinct from the Kentish Plover (see Kennerley *et al.* 2008. *Forktail* 24: 63 - 79) – Editors).

MALAYSIAN PLOVER (*Charadrius peronii*)

2 at Changi Cove, 19/10 (LKC/JH/YDL)

LESSER SAND PLOVER (*Charadrius mongolus*)

1 seen 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY).

GREATER SAND PLOVER (*Charadrius leschenaultii*)

1 at Changi Cove, 19/10 (LKC/JH/YDL). 10 at SBWR, 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

RED-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus indicus*)

1 at Changi Cove, 19/10 (LKC/JH/YDL). One seen at Tuas Grassland, 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

WHISKERED TERN (*Chlidonias leucopterus*)

1 observed 8/10 foraging at Jurong Lake in the evening (MC). It flew towards Japanese Garden at last light.



Whiskered Tern at Jurong Lake on 8 October 2008 Photo © Mark Chua

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*)

1 seen 24/10 (TGC) and 25/10 (MT) at Turut Track. 2 seen 25/10 at Mandai Mudflat and 1 seen at NTL2 (DA/LKS/WCC).

BLACK BAZA (*Aviceda leuphotes*)

1 seen 25/10 at Bukit Batok West (BL). 8 seen 26/10 on thermals at Jelutong Tower in CCNR (DA/LKS/WCC).

CRESTED HONEY-BUZZARD (*Pernis ptilorhyncus*)

1 seen 4/10 at Japanese Gardens (ChL). 1 seen 6/10 along Bukit Batok East Ave 6 mobbed by a crow (YDL). 1 seen 19/10 flying over MacRitchie Reservoir (DA/LKS/WCC). 1 seen 23/10 in a garden at King's Avenue (MgH).

GREY-HEADED FISH EAGLE (*Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*)

1 heard 19/10 and seen 26/10 at MacRitchie Reservoir (DA/LKS/WCC).

CRESTED SERPENT EAGLE (*Spilornis Cheela*)

1 observed 1/10 at Sime Forest flying across the sky at the Jelutong Tower (WCC).

EASTERN MARSH HARRIER (*Circus spilonotus*)

2 females at Changi Cove, 19/10 (LKC/JH/YDL)

CHINESE SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter soloensis*)

2 seen 11/10 at Lower Pierce Reservoir thermaling (TKH/LWT). 1 seen 26/10 at Marina East (MH) and 1 seen flying across MacRitchie Reservoir (DA/LKS/WCC). 1 observed 27/10 at Kent Ridge Park (Amy/TKC) perched on an Albizia tree. White patches were seen on its back.

JAPANESE SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter gularis*)

1 observed 25/10 at SBWR (DA/LKS/WCC) diving into a bush at the Visitor Centre Pond. 1 seen 26/10 at Marina East (MH).

COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo buteo*)

1 observed 19/10 at LH (DA/LKS/WCC) mobbed by a Black-shouldered Kite.

CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE (*Spizaetus cirrhatus*)

1 pale morph seen 1/10 at Hindhede Park (JS). 1 heard 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY). 1 pale morph seen 25/10 at BBNP (BL). 1 pale morph seen and heard 26/10 at MacRitchie Reservoir (DA/LKS/WCC).

COMMON KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*)

1 probable seen 6/10 flying across a grassy field at Jalan Boon Lay, near the Civil Defense Academy (YDL).

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*)

1 seen 10/10 at Neo Tiew above PUB station (WCC). 1 seen 7/10 and 10/10 at Capital Square, perching on the roof ledge of Capital Square overlooking Church Street (LEL). Ee ling had reported 1 last year at the same location and maybe the same individual. 1 seen 14/10 passing United Square, Thomson Road (PO). 2 seen 19/10 at Terut Track (Amy/TKC) perched on BBC's radio pylons calling. 1 seen 25/10 at Turut Track (MT) and at telecom tower at NTL2 (DA/LKS/WCC).

(Most of these records, beside the one at Capital Square involved birds of the migratory race *japonensis* – Editors)

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

3 at Singapore Quarry, 5/10 (LKC). At Lorong Halus, 2 on 12/10 (DA/LKS/WCC), and 1 on 19/10 (LKC/JH/YDL) and 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*)

70 seen 5/10 at SBWR (KK/AOY).

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*)

1 seen 5/10 at SBWR together with a flock of Little Egret. This is unusual since their diet and habitat are totally different (KK/AOY).

CHINESE POND-HERON (*Ardeola bacchus*)

2 winter birds at Lorong Halus on 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

1 observed 4/10 outside Chinese Garden (PAH) feeding on a 6 inches long catfish. It dips the fish in water while holding to its fin with its beak. It then aligning the fish with the head first, swallowing to about a quarter of its length before spitting it. The heron repeated the processes a few times before successfully swallowing the fish.

TIGER SHRIKE (*Lanius tigrinus*)

1 seen 1/10 at Hindhede Park (JS) and another at Neo Tiew Lane 2 (CMS). 1 seen 1/10 at Japanese Gardens and another 2/10 at Venus drive (TKC). 1 seen 10/10 at Neo Tiew feeding on a caterpillar (WCC). All above records are juveniles.

LONG-TAILED SHRIKE (*Lanius schach*)

1 seen 1/10 at Neo Tiew Lane 2 (CMS). 5 seen 10/10 at Neo Tiew (WCC). 8, including a pair with 2 fledglings, counted at Woodlands Crescent on 12/10 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX).

ASHY MINIVET (*Pericrocotus divaricatus*)

10 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 25/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

CROW-BILLED DRONGO (*Dicrurus annectans*)

An immature seen in mangrove at SBWR, 12/10 (DA/LKS) and 1 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 25/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

ASIAN PARADISE FLYCATCHER (*Terpsiphone paradisi*)

2 seen 2/10 at SBWR (MeT). 2 females seen disputing territory at SBWR, 12/10 (DA/LKS). There was tail wagging, slight crest raised and lots of chatter between these two birds on a sea almond tree. 2 were also seen at Sime Road on 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).



Asian Paradise Flycatcher at SBWR. Photo © Mendis Tan

DARK-SIDED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa sibirica*)

1 at Jelutong Tower, CCNR, 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC) and 1 at Dairy Farm Road, 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa dauurica*)

1 seen 9/10 at Mouse Deer trail, Nee Soon Swamp Forest (TKC). 1 seen 10/10 outside Chinese Gardens on a fruiting fig (TGC). 1 seen 19/10 at SBWR (SY).

FERRUGINOUS FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa ferruginea*)

1 seen 18/10 at Nee Soon Swamp Forest (CBL).

YELLOW-RUMPED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula Zanthopygia*)

1 female photographed 1/10 at Hindhede Park (JS). 1 female photographed 1/10 at SBWR (En). 1 male photographed 2/10 between the Chinese and Japanese Gardens (CYY). 2 females seen 4/10 outside Chinese Garden (PAH). 1 female seen 10/10 (TGC) and 15/10 (TKC) outside Chinese Gardens on a fruiting fig.



Female Yellow-rumped Flycatcher at Hindhede Park. Photo © John Spencer

SIBERIAN BLUE ROBIN (*Luscinia cyane*)

1 first winter male 18/10 at Nee Soon Swamp Forest (CBL).

WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA (*Copsychus malabaricus*)

A female in secondary forest at MacRitchie Reservoir, 19/10 (LKS/WCC).

COMMON HILL MYNA (*Gracula religiosus*)

4 seen and several more heard 1/10 at Sime Forest (WCC). 2 seen 11/10 at Toa Payoh, with the housing estate (GS).

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW (*Hirundo daurica*)

1 seen 10/10 at Neo Tiew above PUB Station (WCC). A few seen 19/10 at SBWR (SY) and 2 seen 19/10 at Changi pint (SC). Also 12 seen and probably more around on 19/10 at Changi Cove together with Barn Swallows (LKC).

STRAW-HEADED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*)

1 seen 1/10 at Hindhede Nature Park (JS). 2 adults and a juvenile seen at Hindhede Nature Park on 10/10 (SA/LKS) indicate breeding success at this site. One of the adults was seen eating the seeds of *Simpoh ayer*.

SOOTY-HEADED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus aurigaster*)

1 seen at Lorong Halus on 26/10 (DA/LKS/WCC).

ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops palpebrosus*)

2 at Hindhede Nature Park on 10/10 (SA/LKS).

ARCTIC WARBLER (*Phylloscopus borealis*)

1 photographed outside Chinese Garden (CYY).

EASTERN CROWNED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus coronatus*)

1 foraging actively at BBNP on 10/10 (SA/LKS).

SHORT-TAILED BABBLER (*Malacocinda malaccensis*)

1 seen 1/10 at Sime Forest (WCC).

ORANGE-BELLIED FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum trigonostigma*)

1 female seen 1/10 at Sime Forest at the Jelutong Tower (WCC).

CRIMSON SUNBIRD (*Aethopyga siparaja*)

A male seen visiting a bottlebrush tree in a HDB estate at Woodlands Street 81 on 27/10 (LKS/LWH) was an unusual record.

LITTLE SPIDERHUNTER (*Arachnothera longirostris*)

1 seen 8/10 at Nee Soon Swamp Forest (TKC). One feeding on torch ginger at Dairy Farm Road on 26/10 (LKS).

FOREST WAGTAIL (*Dendronanthus indicus*)

1 seen 6/10 at Nee Soon Swamp Forest (TKC)



Forest Wagtail at Nee Soon Swamp Forest. Photo © K C Tsang

YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla flava*)

9 counted on open field at Kranji Sanctuary Golf Course on 12/10 (DA/LKS). 1 in winter plumage observed 26/10 foraging in a monsoon drain near BBNP at 2pm and again at 5pm (CCP).

WHITE-HEADED MUNIA (*Lonchura maja*)

3 seen 10/10 at Neo Tiew (WCC).

ESCAPEES

ORIENTAL PIED HORNBILL (*Anthracoceros albirostris*)

2 observed 1/10 at Woodleigh Park calling raucously to each other atop some Casurina trees (GS).

BLUE-AND-YELLOW MACAW (*Ara ararauna*)

1 seen 19/10 at SBWR (SY). Its long tail was absent.

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

2 at Mandai Mudflats, 25/10 (sev obs).

BREEDING / NESTING REPORTS

LITTLE BRONZE CUCKOO (*Chrysococcyx minutillus*)

1 fledging seen 5/10 at Jurong Bird Park area fed by a pair of Olive-backed Sunbird (JS). This is an interesting record as it is the first time recorded in Singapore that the sunbird is being victimised by this cuckoo. The Olive-backed Sunbird's traditional brood host is the Violet Cuckoo and it's known that it's usually the unfortunate Golden-bellied Gerygone that gets victimised by the Little Bronze Cuckoo.

COLLARED SCOPS OWL (*Otus lempiji*)

Young birds were first heard calling at Chantilly Rise Condominium on 6/10 (LKC). 2 young birds were subsequently seen on 15/10 and were been fed. On one occasion, an adult was seen feeding one of the young with a gecko. The family stayed within the compounds till 27/10.

COMMON PIGEON (*Columba livia*)

An adult collecting nesting material at Jalan Anak Bukit on 10/10 (LKS).

SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA (*Lonchura punctulata*)

1 seen carrying nest material at Kranji Sanctuary Golf Course on 12/10 (DA/LKS).

JOHOR

SIBERIAN THRUSH (*Zoothera sibirica*)

1 First Winter male 26/10 photographed at Bunker Trail, PFR (CBL).



Siberian Thrush at Bunker Trail, PFR. Photo © Chong Boon Leong

STREAKED BULBUL (*Ixos malaccensis*)

3 seen 26/10 at Bunker Trail, PFR together with the Siberian Thrush (CBL).

Singapore Raptors Report

Autumn Migration, October 2008

Summary :

This year's records for October were a surprise when compared to last year. To be fair, we only started collecting the records in the middle of the month in 2007. Many of the migrant raptors reported this month were not expected. We had an impressive total of 12 species of migrant raptors which to my best estimate came up to 59 raptors. 17 **Oriental Honey Buzzards** formed the largest group followed by **Black Bazas** with 11 counted. Ding Li had an early arrival for the **Common Kestrel** flying over at Jalan Boon Lay on the 6th Oct. Kok Hui and Danny Lau spotted our first **Chinese Sparrowhawk** on the 11th at Lower Pierce after reports of thousands over at Thailand. The **Osprey** seemed to have taken the Kranji area as their favourite haunt with the first report on the 16th by Ramakrishnan. Later on the 25th, another one was reported there by Doreen, Kim Seng & Chung Cheong during the bird race. Other teams also spotted this bird flying over Sungei Buloh and Neo Tiew. A single **Peregrine Falcon** was observed by Ee Ling at downtown Capital Square on the 7th, 10th and 30th with a wonderful video clip of the bird tearing a pigeon apart. This was followed by sightings at Thomson, Kranji, and later at Changi and Hume Heights.



Common Buzzard by Jimmy Chew taken at Changi Cove on the 26th October graced this month cover.

A single **Japanese Sparrowhawk** was reported by Krishnan at Kranji Nature Trail on the 16th and by 26th there were more sightings across the island. The first **Black Baza** was spotted and photographed by Ben Lee at Bukit Batok West on the 25th, followed by a small flock of 8 birds thermaling over Sime forest the next day. We had an early **Common Buzzard** on the 19th at Lorong Halus seen by Kim Seng, Doreen and Chung Cheong. The second was reported at its favourite haunt at Changi during the bird race on the 25th. The bird was still around the next day, seen and photographed by Kim Keang & Jimmy Chew. Those who went to Changi Cove for the Bird Race were rewarded with 2 Harriers species, the common **Eastern Marsh**, the rarer **Northern (Hen) Harrier**. Gim Cheong and Con Foley got the first **Black Kite** of the season at Changi on the 31st Oct.

Oriental Honey Buzzard (17)

1	5 th	One pale morph was photographed at Turf Club	KC Tsang
2	11 th	Three thermaling over Lower Pierce Reservoir	Kok Hui & Danny
3	16 th	A total of 5 Buzzards were reported at Kranji Nature Trail	Ramakrishnan
4	19 th	One reported over MacRitchie Reservoir	Kim Seng/ Doreen/ Chung Cheong
4	24 th	One seen on rooftop Goodluck Gardens, Toh Tuck Road	Daniel Ng
5	25 th	One seen at King's Avenue Garden	Margie Hall
6	26 th	One was reported at Sime, Bt Batok, Adam & Punggol.	Bird Race
7	27 th	One reported at Kent Ridge Park	KC Tsang

Black Baza (11)

- 25th First record of this migrant raptor reported by Ben Lee at Bukit Batok West.
 26th 8 birds seen on thermals near Jelutong Tower at 915am at Sime Forest by Kim Seng, Doreen & Chung Cheong. First Black Baza flock for the season.
 26th We also had a report of the Black Baza at Lorong Halus during the bird race.
 29th One reported over at Admiralty Park by Kok Hui

Japanese Sparrowhawk (8)

- 16th Ramakrishnan of Sungei Buloh reported a single bird flying over Kranji Nature Trail. This is the first report for the season.
 23rd One crash-landed and died at Sixth Avenue reported by Ashley Ng.
 25th One seen diving into the bush at Sungei Buloh visitor center pond by Kim Seng & Doreen
 26th Mike Hooper reported two at Marina East.
 26th This Accipiter was reported at Sime Forest, Sungei Buloh, Neo Tiew, Halus, Punggol, Seletar Camp and Changi by various teams at the Bird Race.

Chinese Sparrowhawk (5)

11th Two were seen thermaling over Lower Pierce Reservoir by Kok Hui and Danny. First record of this accipiter after thousands being reported in Thailand.

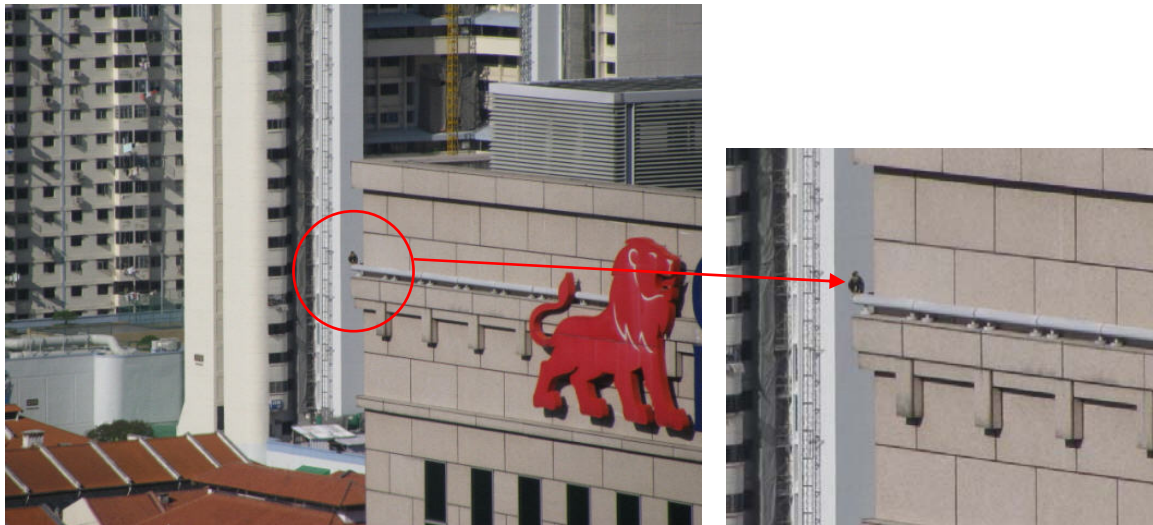
26th Mike Hooper reported one perched low on a tree at Marina East. One bird was seen flying at MacRitchie Reservoir in the late morning by Kim Seng, Doreen & Chung Cheong

27th KC Tsang photographed an adult perched at Kent Ridge Park.



Chinese Sparrowhawk by KC Tsang

Peregrine Falcon (5)



Peregrine Falcon by Ee Ling at downtown central business district!

7th Lee Ee Ling photographed one perched at the corner of Great Eastern Center on the 10th. This Peregrine of race *ernesti* was first seen on the 7th at Capital Square.

10th One reported by Chung Cheong flying above the PUB station at Neo Tiew Lane 2.

14th Piet Opstaele saw one flying past United Square at Thomson Road. This may be the same Peregrine seen by Ee Ling extending its range outside the Central Business District.

19th KC and Amy Tsang photographed a migrant *Japonensis* race perched on the BBC Towers at Turut Track.

- 25th Myron also reported one at Turut Track but did not indicate the race.
25th One was seen by Kim Seng, Doreen & Chung Cheong perched on the BBC towers at Neo Tiew Lane 2.
26th One was reported during the Bird Race at Changi.
30th Doreen reported one sitting on the TV Towers at Hume Heights, one of the favorite perches of this falcon. The bird reported earlier by Ee Ling at Capital Square was still around perching at various ledges feeding on pigeons. Check out her wonderful video clip at youtube here :
www.youtube.com/watch?v=OODZC_qfFwM

Common Kestrel (1)

- 6th Ding Li reported a rufous brown Falcon flapping its wings at an open field along Jalan Boon Lay near Civil Defense Academy.

Osprey (4)

- 16th Ramakrishnan reported a pair at Kranji Nature Trail.
25th One seen perched on the wire at Turut Track by Myron Tay. Likely to be the same Osprey in the area.
25th Sighting of two birds at Mandai mud flats and one at Neo Tiew Lane 2 by Kim Seng, Doreen & Chung Cheong. Another was reported flying past Sungei Buloh during the bird race.
27th Wing Chong reported an individual at Upper Pierce Reservoir.

Common Buzzard (2)

- 19th One seen being mobbed by Black-winged Kite at Lorong Halus by Kim Seng, Doreen & Chung Chong.
26th One seen and counted for the Bird Race at Changi Cove.
27th A single Common Buzzard perched on a casuarina tree going into Changi Cove. Seen and photographed by Lim Kim Keang & Jimmy Chew. Should be the same buzzard.



Common Buzzard by Jimmy Chew

Harrier Species



Eastern Marsh Harrier (immature) by Kim Chuah

Eastern Marsh Harrier (sub-adult male) by Kim Chuah

- 26th Teams covering Changi Cove during the Bird Race reported Eastern Marsh and a Northern Harrier. This is the first Northern Harrier record after quite a long time.
- 31st One Eastern Marsh Harrier spotted by Gim Cheong & Con Foley at Changi.

Black Kite (1)

- 31st One seen by Gim Cheong & Con Foley at Changi, the first of the season.

RESIDENT RAPTORS

Summary:

Both the **White-bellied Sea Eagles** and **Brahminy Kites** as expected topped the list with 17 and 16 birds recorded. This was followed by 9 **Changeable Hawk-eagles**, confirming the healthy population of this nationally threatened *spizaetus*. This number was very similar to those recorded for September confirming a stable population. The **Grey-headed Fish Eagle** was still seen around our central catchment reservoirs. Chung Cheong had the second record for the **Crested Serpent Eagle** with a sighting of one flying over Sime Forest on the 1st October.

White-bellied Sea Eagle (17)

1	1 st	Two perched and one circling low at Kranji Nature Trail	Margaret Yeo
2	3 rd	Two circling over Hort Park towards Telok Blangah	John Spencer
3	4 th	Two juvenile reported at Chinese Gardens near MRT	Ah Huay
4	10 th	One adult above PUB station at Neo Tiew Lane 2	Chung Cheong
5	10 th	One at the Japanese Gardens	Gim Cheong
6	11 th	An adult and one juvenile perched at Lower Pierce	Kok Hui & Danny
7	12 th	An adult was photographed at Admiralty Park	K.C.Tsang

8	13 th	One immature flying with fish at Japanese Gardens	Gim Cheong
9	16 th	One flying over NUS	Gim Cheong
12	16 th	One was seen flying over Kranji Nature Trail	Ramakrishnan
10	19 th	Two reported at Sungei Buloh	Sunny Yeo
11	19 th	Two seen over at Turut Track	KC & Amy Tsang
13	20 th	A flock of 5 juveniles and 2 adults over Kranji Dam	James Heng
14	24 th	One photographed perched on Albizia @ Blackmore Rd.	Seow Boon Quey
15	25 th	One at Bukit Batok NP	Ben Lee
16	25 th	One at Turut Track	Myron Tay
17	26 th	Reports from Kranji, Sungei Buloh, Halus and Botanics	Bird Race
18	27 th	One reported at Upper Pierce Reservoir	Wing Chong

Brahminy Kite (16)

1	1 st	One seen flying over Hindhede N Park	John Spencer
2	3 rd	Three flying over Hort Park to roost at Kent Ridge	John Spencer
3	4 th	Three were seen at the Chinese Gardens near MRT	Ah Huay
4	10 th	One adult above PUB station at Neo Tiew Lane 2	Chung Cheong
5	11 th	Two sunning themselves on a tree at Lower Pierce	Kok Hui & Danny
6	10 th	One reported at the Japanese Gardens	Gim Cheong
7	13 th	One flying over Japanese Gardens	Gim Cheong
8	16 th	One adult and one juvenile seen at Kranji Nature Trail	Ramakrishnan.
9	19 th	Two seen at Sungei Buloh	Sunny Yeo
10	25 th	One at Turut Track	Myron Tay
11	25 th	One reported at Bt Batok N Park	Ben Lee
12	26 th	One reported at Sungei Buloh and another at Sime forest	Bird Race
13	27 th	One reported at Kent Ridge Park	KC Tsang
14	31 st	A few at Changi	Gim Cheong & Con

Changeable Hawk-eagle (9)

- 1st A pale morph reported by John Spencer at Hindhede Park
- 5th KC Tsang photographed one flying at the Turf Club.
- 9th A juv pale morph seen by Doreen Ang & Ivy Tan from the lookout point at Bt Batok.
- 11th One heard at Lower Pierce by Kok Hui and Danny.
- 16th Two were reported by Ramakrishnan at Kranji Nature Trail.
- 20th A pale morph was photographed by Alan OwYong at Keppel Club mobbed by crows.
- 25th Ben Lee photographed a pale morph with a deformed leg at Bt Batok NPark.
- 25th Myron Tay reported one at Turut Track.
- 25th Ben Lee also had one at Bukit Batok West.
- 26th A pale morph adult seen and heard at MacRitchie Reservoir by Kim Seng, Doreen & Chung Cheong.
- 26th Reported by bird race teams at Sime Forest, Neo Tiew, Bt Batok and Bt Timah.

Black-winged Kite (4)



19th KC and Amy Tsang reported two at Turut Track

25th Myron Tay reported one at Turut Track

26th One was reported at Seletar Camp during the bird race

Black-winged Kite by KC Tsang

Grey-headed Fish Eagle (2)

5th One was photographed at Lower Pierce by KC Tsang.

19th One heard at MacRitchie Reservoir by Kim Seng, Doreen & Chung Cheong.

26th A lone adult seen and heard all morning at MacRitchie Reservoir by Kim Seng, Doreen & Chung Cheong. Reported by other bird race teams too.

Crested Serpent Eagle (1)

1st An individual heard and seen flying over Jelutong Tower at Sime Road by Chung Cheong.

12th Chung Cheong again reported hearing the call of an individual at Upper Pierce Reservoir.

**The numbers in brackets besides the bird name indicates the total number of raptor seen during the month. Different reports of the same species in the same area are discounted to prevent duplication.*

Compiled by Alan OwYong from reports sent in to the WildbirdSingapore Forum

Edited and layout by Kenneth Kee. Many thanks to the numerous contributions and reports from the birders. Special appreciation to KC Tsang, Ee Ling, Kim Chuah and Jimmy Chew for the use of their photos.

Bird in Focus

Short notes on the resident race of Crested Honey Buzzard

(*Pernis ptilorhyncus torquatus*)

By Gloria Seow



Image A: OHB *torquatus* race seen in Toa Payoh, Singapore. Photo by Gloria Seow.

On the Monday morning of 10 November 2008, I lingered on at home because of the rain....and it paid off. I happened to look out of the windows while working on my computer, and I saw a raptor fly into the grove of trees in front of my house in Toa Payoh, Singapore, at around 10am. However, the bird got lost in the thick foliage. So I zipped downstairs and after some 15 min of scanning the trees in the constant drizzle, I found the bird huddled high up in the branches above, its back towards me.

I had just met bird photographer Lee Tiah Khee the day before at the Raptor Watch dinner, so I thought of him straight away to help photograph the bird since he works near where I live (as chief photographer for Chinese newspaper Lianhe Zaobao). He kindly obliged, and being a professional photographer, he found us a better angle to snap the bird's front view. The raptor was at the same perch, taking shelter from the rain, for at least an hour.

After consulting local veteran birders Yong Ding Li, Alan Owyong and Lim Kim Chuah, they confirmed that it was a resident (non-migratory) Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzard, subspecies *torquatus* (*Pernis ptilorhyncus torquatus*). See images A & B taken by Gloria & Tiah Khee respectively.

The *torquatus* race is the resident subspecies of Crested Honey Buzzard (CHB) found in Southeast Asia, with breeding records from the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra and Borneo. In Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore, it is regarded as an uncommon resident with only a few records each year. According to Chiu Sein Chiong, the Toa Payoh *torquatus* CHB is too young to determine its sex.



Image B: *P.p. torquatus* race seen in Toa Payoh, Singapore. Photo by Lee Tiah Khee.

In comparison, the commonly-seen migratory Crested Honey Buzzard is called *Pernis ptilorhyncus orientalis* and it breeds in Ussuriland, Siberia, visiting Singapore only in the northern winter months (September to March). So, if you see a CHB in the summer months (outside the migratory season), it is likely the *torquatus* race. Confusion arises when both the *orientalis* and *torquatus* races are present in winter, possibly resulting in the scarcer *torquatus* race being overlooked when the northern migrants are around. In Singapore, most records of *torquatus* therefore come from during the summer months, particularly in July and August, the specific period when post-breeding dispersal may take place. One of the best places to find the *torquatus* race at that time of the year is at the Singapore Botanical Gardens, where it is annual.

In Malaysia, this subspecies was always presumed to be breeding but there were no records until 1998 when a pair of *torquatus* made their home within the grounds of the Royal Perak Golf Club in Ipoh, in front of birder Chiu Sein Chiong's house. This is a suburban area with plenty of mature trees, making it conducive for them to live and breed. The birds were presumed to be breeding when an adult and juvenile were first spotted in October 1998. Later, a nest was discovered in a tembusu tree (*Fagraea fragrans*) within the grounds of the club. Since then, there has been at least one nesting per year, although in 2003 and 2005 there were second nestings, with a total of ten breeding sessions recorded up to 2005.

Image C: CHB *torquatus* race of a 17.5 week old juvenile in Ipoh, Malaysia. Photo by Chiu Sein Chiong.



Image D: CHB *torquatus* race of an adult female in Ipoh, Malaysia. Photo by Chiu Sein Chiong.

To date, there has been no breeding record of the torquatus race in Singapore, and all birds observed here are presumed to be post-breeding dispersal individuals from Malaysia. It is predicted that if more torquatus are dispersed over, Singapore may have its own breeding pair soon.

However, most local birders are not familiar with this SEA (Southeast Asian) resident subspecies and the possibility of overlooking them is high. As such, mapped out below are the differentiating features between the torquatus and orientalis races to help you tell the two apart. Do keep a look out for the much scarcer Crested Honey Buzzard resident in Singapore and please share your sightings.

Crested Honey Buzzard: Comparison of two races seen in Singapore

Torquatus race (Resident)	Orientalis race (Migratory)
Brown Face	Grey Face
Long Head Crest	Short Head Crest
Rufous Neck Dark Gorget (throat)	Brown / Variable-coloured Neck Light Gorget (throat)
Brown Barrings on Belly	Variable belly coloration depending on light or dark morphs

Ferguson-Lees et al (2005) has split the migratory and resident CHBs. The migratory ones are called Eastern Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis orientalis*) while the resident ones have been named Indomalayan (Crested) Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhyncus*). The Toa Payoh individual is thus the Indomalayan (Crested) Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhyncus torquatus*). At this point in time this split is only recognized by Ferguson-Lees et al based on significant morphological differences. However, the latest treatise on Crested Honey Buzzards based on molecular data by Gamauf and Haring (2004) does not provide support for the split as it clearly shows that there is little genetic divergence between any of the taxons and that all CHBs should remain as a single species.

On another note, the torquatus Crested Honey Buzzard race is an excellent example of avian mimicry. Notice that there is a striking similarity between the torquatus Crested Honey Buzzard race to Wallace's Hawk-Eagle and juvenile Blyth's Hawk-Eagle. Likewise, there is one resident Crested Honey Buzzard morph, the rare black-and-white "tweedale" morph, that bears a close resemblance to an adult Blyth's Hawk-Eagle.

A Short Birding Trip to Xishan (Western Hill) in Kunming, China 13-14 June 2008

Lim Kim Chuah

What can you do if you have about two days to spare in Kunming? Well, after some checks, I decided to take a leisurely birding excursion to Xishan (Western Hill) as traveling out of Kunming would have involve more traveling time and two days may not suffice.



Boatmen clearing algae infested Dianchi Lake

Unfortunately there isn't an awful lot of information available in the internet on birding in Xishan although I find a brief report by Frank E. Rheindt in Worldtwitch somewhat useful.

(http://www.worldtwitch.com/china_rheindt.htm) Also Alfred Chia offered some useful advice.

I took a cab from the hotel in the heart of Kunming City to Xishan Cable Station by the heavily polluted Dian Chi Lake (<1/2 hr and cost 40 RMB – one way). This was a mistake. It would have been definitely more fruitful to take the cab directly to the top of the Cable Car Station and bird from there.

Without any idea what to do and also not wishing to drag more than 10 kg of photographic equipment and the ridiculously heavy Birds of China (McKinnon), I decided to take the easy way to the summit. I took the gondola (25 RMB) to the summit area and then made my way down to wherever the trails took me. The ride up was uneventful except for a couple of **Grey-chinned Minivet** flitting around the tree top.



Map showing areas of interest in Xishan

My target bird at the summit area was the Godlewski's Bunting. Not knowing what to do and where to find the bird, I simply took a trail that led to the summit. Many boulders dot the plateau in the summit area.



Many boulders at the summit area



The famous Dragon Gate where tourists flock to.

The trail I took led to the Lin Xu Pavilion. Panting and breathless, I put all my stuff down. Just as I was to sit down, a flock of sparrow-like birds feeding on top of a bush attracted my attention. I took a quick look and followed by a series of spontaneous shots from my camera before the flock flew away. I jumped for joy thinking that I had struck jackpot. But subsequent confirmation by Dave Bakewell proved that my id was woefully wrong. Well better luck next time!

Other than a scenic view at the summit, there was not much to do. Bird-wise there wasn't much around. Hence I decided to make my way down using one of the many trails.



Summit view

Along the way down, I found **Brown-breasted Bulbul**, **White-collared Yuhina**, **Grey-chinned Minivet**, **Rufous-capped** and **Spectacled Fulvetta**, **Great** and **Green-backed Tit**, a beautiful male **Gould's Sunbird**, **Japanese White-eye**, **Black-throated Tit** and **White Wagtail**.

The trail led me down to the Cable Car Station. Since I had time to spare, I decided to explore the area. I found a road that led uphill and this road eventually led to a village. Upon enquiry, this village is a kind of getaway for folks who need to get away from the stress of the city. I birded along this road and found a vocal **Hill Blue Flycatcher**, **Blue-winged Minla**, **Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher**, a nesting **Brown-breasted Bulbul**, **Oriental Magpie-Robin** and more of the same species.

At the village, I met a resident driver (Mr Liu) and struck a conversation with him about the birds in the village. I found out that he used to hunt the Lady Amherst Pheasant.

In fact he had one calling about four days ago in the hill behind his house. I understood from him that the pheasant usually calls in the late evening before going to roost and early in the morning after rousing from its sleep. Our conversation really got me all excited and I decided to make an attempt at the bird.

In order to be on the trail at first light, I decided to spend that night at the village. That evening, I checked into one of the many homestay in the village for 60 RMB including three meals.

At dusk, I followed Mr Duan, a former hunter of the pheasant and the owner of the homestay I was staying, to a forested ridge to try to locate calling birds. The trail leading to the ridge was poorly marked due to years of neglect. This is because few people used the trails now as hunting and wood collection has been outlawed since three years ago. Unfortunately my effort was fruitless and not a single call was heard.

The next morning, I woke up at 5:00 am, retraced my steps from the previous evening and found my way back to the ridge. I found a nice spot, tried to conceal myself and then hoped that an unsuspecting pheasant will stroll along. Minutes ticked by and this was followed by an hour and then two. Finally I gave up. I supposed it was too much to ask for a pheasant to stroll up to me to say "Hello".



Brown-breasted Bulbul with food

But my efforts were not entirely wasted. While waiting for the pheasant, I found a very noisy **Streak-breasted Scimitar-babbler** and a pair of **Rusty-capped Fulvetta** nesting close to the spot where I was hiding. It took me a while to locate the nest as it was very well concealed. The globular shape nest built of dried leaves and small twigs was cleverly concealed in a pile of dried coniferous leaves trapped between a tangle of dead branches. The nest was barely 30 cm above the ground.



Untidy nest of Rusty-capped Fulvetta

The nest obviously contained young as both parents were observed to bring food into the nest at about 10-15 minutes interval. They were observed to often appear together and then taking turns to enter the nest to feed. The birds eventually stopped feeding at about 10 am. One bird flew into the nest and stayed inside (probably brooding). As the nest was difficult to access and not wishing to disturb it, I did not make any attempts to check the inside of the nest.



Rusty-capped Fulvetta with food

At that point, I decided to leave the area and head back to the village. I birded along the way and found more of the same species and the only new addition was a pair of **Russet Sparrow** near a farm and a distant **Oriental Cuckoo** calling away.

Xishan is probably good to visit if you have a day or two to spare. However it is best to avoid the weekends. As I made my way back to Kunming on Saturday, I was aghast at the huge number of visitors roaming all over the mountain. It would have been unpleasant to bird among such a big crowd.