



SINGAPORE AVIFAUNA

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Palawan Peacock Pheasant - © Yong Ding Li



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Bird Report

December 2008

By Andrew Chow and Albert Low

SINGAPORE HIGHLIGHTS



Northern Shoveler at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve on 27 December 2008. Photo © David Tan Siah Hin

The month of December revolved around the tale of 2 birding sites, the first of which the Ole' Grand Dame for Singapore birders, and the second a relatively unknown patch of woodland in the northeast of the country.

It was a month of proverbial "1-day wonders" in Sungei Buloh, hot on the heels of The Great Greenshank Twitch which received media attention last month. The undoubted highlight must have been the female **Northern Shoveler** which dropped by for just a day to mingle with the locals, the first time in more than a decade this locally rare *Anas* has been recorded in the country. Another rarity, a non-breeding **Pheasant-tailed Jacana**, was fortuitously recorded by some hardworking photographers during the working week but unfortunately did not stay long, the lack of lilies to trot on a likely factor in instigate the bird to search for greener ponds! Other interesting records from the Reserve included a single **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo**.

The second site, the small area of woodlands bordering Bidadari Cemetery, proved to be a magnet for an incredible diversity of rare migrants. Birders and photographers alike, first lured to the site by point-blank pictures of showy **Hodgson's Hawk-Cuckoos** and **Hooded Pittas**, did their rounds around the site and were rewarded with goodies such as **Orange-headed & Eyebrowed Thrushes**, a roosting **Grey Nightjar**, the oft-overlooked **Yellow-browed Warbler** and a dazzling male **Blue-and-white Flycatcher**. Needless to

say, such sightings have firmly consolidated the site's reputation as a must-visit next winter!

Changi Cove, the last bastion for Singapore's sandy shore waders, rewarded intrepid birders who braved the security and the terrain with the continued presence of up to 7 **"White-faced" Plovers**, a high count of **4 Pied Harriers** and an excellent sighting of the increasingly irregular and freshwater-habitat dependent **Long-toed Stint**, of which a total of 6 were observed.

Other interesting records from around the island include sightings of both **Ferruginous** and **Mugimaki Flycatchers** from Hindhede Park, a probable **Malayan Night Heron** from Jurong Lake Park and the continued presence of wintering **Blue-winged Pittas** within the Singapore Zoo for the second consecutive year.

JOHORE HIGHLIGHTS



Plain Sunbird at Pantí Forest Reserve on 21 Dec 2008. Photo © Yong Ding Li

A brief visit to the famed Pantí Forest Reserve in the middle of the monsoon was decidedly uneventful although the sighting of a pair of the rare **Olive-backed Woodpecker** made the journey worthwhile. Other notable Pantí residents identified by call include **Rufous-collared Kingfisher**, **Javan Frogmouth** and the unofficial avian mascot of Pantí, the enigmatic Rail-babbler, of which Pantí Forest Reserve appears to be the easiest place in the world to come across this much-desired avian taxonomic mystery.

SUMMARY

This report covers noteworthy bird sightings in December 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](mailto:Lim Kim Seng @ ibisbill@yahoo.com) or Lim Kim Chuah @ pittalover@yahoo.com.sg or Yong Ding Li at zoothara@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:

SBWR Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve
SBG Singapore Botanic Gardens
CCNR Central Catchment Nature Reserve

SINGAPORE

RED JUNGLEFOWL *Gallus gallus*

1 heard near the headman's house on Pulau Ubin on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

LESSER WHISTLING DUCK *Dendrocygna javanica*

3 seen at the West Coast Marsh Garden on 25/12 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX).

NORTHERN SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

1 female seen on 27/12 at SBWR (DT/SG/LKC/LKS/TPL/TJL and many other observers).



Northern Shoveler at SBWR on 27 Dec 2008. Photo © Sreedharan G.

LINEATED BARBET *Megalaima lineata*

2 seen at Dairy Farm Road on 20/12 (LKP/LKS).

ORIENTAL PIED HORNBILL *Anthracoceros albirostris*

2 seen at the main town on Pulau Ubin, 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

COMMON KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

1 juvenile seen 3/12 at Japanese Gardens (HB). 1 seen 19/12 at Neo Tiew Lane (WCC), along the canal.

BLACK-CAPPED KINGFISHER *Halcyon pileata*

1 seen 15/12 at SBWR (JP). One seen at the quarry at Dairy Farm Road on 20/12 (LKP/LKS).

STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER *Pelargopsis capensis*

1 seen and 1 heard at Sungei Buloh on 21/12 (LKP/LKS) and 27/12 (LKS).

CHESTNUT-WINGED CUCKOO *Clamator coromandus*

One flew into a sea hibiscus patch at SBWR on 21/12 (LKS).

HODGSON'S HAWK-CUCKOO *Hierococcyx nasicolor*

1 adult seen 1/12 (CF) and 2/12 (DT) at Jurong Lake Park. 1 seen 3/12 at Chinese Gardens near Jurong Lake (BL). 1 adult seen 15/12 on Kusu Island (JP). 1 seen 16/12 (LTK), 20/12 (LKC/LTK) and 21/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (DA/AC/YPL/AOY).



Hodgson's Hawk-Cuckoo at Jurong Lake Park on 1 Dec 2008. Photo © Con Foley

INDIAN CUCKOO *Cuculus micropterus*

1 seen on 20/12 (LKC/LTK) and 21/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (DA/AC/YPL/AOY).

BANDED BAY CUCKOO *Cacomantis sonnerati*

1 heard at Hindhede Nature Park on 29/12 (LKS).

VIOLET CUCKOO *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*

1 heard at Hindhede Nature Park on 29/12 (LKS).

ASIAN DRONGO CUCKOO *Surniculus lugubris*

1 seen 9/12 at Hindhede Park (DA). 1 seen at Bidadari Cemetery on 20/12 (LKC/LTK) and 21/12 (DA/AC/YPL/AOY).

BLUE-CROWNED HANGING PARROT *Loriculus galgulus*

2 at MacRitchie Reservoir on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

RED-BREASTED PARAKEET *Psittacula alexandri*

3 seen 2/12 at Lorong Asrama (AC).

LONG-TAILED PARAKEET *Psittacula longicauda*

About 200 birds in several flocks seen over MacRitchie Reservoir on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS). A flock of 50 at CCNR, 25/12 (LKC/LTK/TBC)

FORK-TAILED SWIFT *Apus pacificus*

1 seen 9/12 at Hindhede Park (DA) together with a flock of swiftlets. 2 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

COLLARED SCOPS OWL *Otus lempiji*

About 6 individuals heard at dawn at CCNR, 25/12 (LKC/LTK/TBC)

BROWN HAWK-OWL *Ninox scutulata*

1 seen and 4 heard at Sime Road on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS). 1 seen and another 8 heard at CCNR, 25/12 (LKC/LTK/TBC)

THICK-BILLED GREEN PIGEON *Treron curvirostra*

4 males seen in a fruiting Indian Rubber Tree with several Pink-necked Green Pigeons at MacRitchie Reservoir on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS). 1 male with **Pink-necked Green Pigeon** at Jurong Lake, 27/12 (LKC/TBC)

GREY NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus indicus*

1 seen 17/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (TKC), in the late morning.



Grey Nightjar at Bidadari Cemetery on 23 Dec 2008. Photo © KC Tsang

RED-LEGGED CRAKE *Rallina fasciata*

2 seen 26/12 at SBG (StC).

RUDDY-BREASTED CRAKE *Porzana fusca*

1 seen 2/12 at Lorong Asrama (AC).

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

At SBWR, 20 were counted on 21/12 (LKP/LKS) and 100 on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

At SBWR, 200 were counted on 21/12 (LKP/LKS) and 100 on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatilis*

At SBWR, 80 counted on 21/12 (LKP/LKS) and 100 on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

COMMON GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

1 seen 2/12 at Lorong Asrama (AC). At SBWR, 2 counted on 21/12 (LKP/LKS) and 60 on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS). 1 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

4 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

TEREK SANDPIPER *Tringa cinerea*

4 seen 9/12 at Pulau Tekong (AC), along the sandy beach near the jetty. 2 seen 20/12 at SBWR (LWT).

COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos*

Few seen 21/12 at SBWR (LKS).

RUDDY TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

6 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

3 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

RED-NECKED STINT *Calidris ruficollis*

3 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

LONG-TOED STINT *Calidris subminuta*

6 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK), around a freshwater pool.

PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

1 seen 15/12 at screen 1.1 of SBWR (MT/Kri), feeding among the grasses.



Pheasant-tailed Jacana at SBWR on 15 Dec 2008. Photo © Mendis Tan

LESSER CRESTED TERN *Sterna bengalensis*

5 on kelong at Kranji Nature Trail on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

SWIFT TERN *Sterna bergii*

2 on a kelong at Kranji Nature Trail on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS). Also 5 off Pulau Ubin on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis fulva*

About 500 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

4 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

5 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*

3 seen 9/12 at Pulau Tekong (AC), along the sandy beach near the jetty. More than 40 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

WHITE-FACED PLOVER

7 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

MALAYSIAN PLOVER *Charadrius peronii*

Around 30 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

LESSER SAND PLOVER *Charadrius mongolus*

About 10 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE *Glareola maldivarum*

Around 30 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

1 seen 6/12 at SBWR (MaS). 1 seen 13/12 at Pulau Ubin (MaS). 1 seen 14/12 at SBWR (MaS). 1 seen 19/12 at Neo Tiew Lane (WCC), perched on top of a tower feeding and 2 more seen flying towards the reservoir. 1 on a kelong at Kranji Nature Trail on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS) and 1 at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 24/12 (LKS).

BLACK BAZA *Aviceda leuphotes*

5 seen 2/12 at Lorong Asrama (AC). 5 seen 6/12 at SBWR (MaS). 2 seen 13/12 at Pulau Ubin (MaS). 1 seen 14/12 at SBWR (MaS). 3 at Dairy Farm Road on 20/12 (LKP/LKS), 1 at SBWR on 21/12 (LKP/LKS). 2 seen 21/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (DA/AC/YPLAOY). 1 seen 21/12 at SBWR (LKS). 7 on Pulau Ubin on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS). 1 at Choa Chu Kang Christian Cemetery on 24/12 (SA/LKS) and 45 at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 24/12 (SA/LKS).

CRESTED HONEY-BUZZARD *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

1 seen 6/12 at SBWR (MaS). 2 seen 13/12 at Pulau Ubin (MaS). 1 seen 13/12 morning along cemetery path, at the fringe of Western Catchment (LWT), making repeated parallel flights around a cluster of dense foliage trees. It was then observed to fly low

into the thick foliage to raid a bee hive. 1 seen 17/12 at King's Avenue (MH), calling from a Persian Lilac Tree. 1 seen 20/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (WCC), flying towards Bradell Road direction. A dark morph seen on a dead tree at MacRitchie Reservoir on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS). 1 *torquatus* race adult photographed on 24/12 at Choa Chu Kang Christian Cemetery (LKC).

GREY-HEADED FISH EAGLE *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*

1 heard at MacRitchie Reservoir on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

EASTERN MARSH HARRIER *Circus spilonotus*

6 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

PIED HARRIER *Circus melanoleucos*

4 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK).

CHINESE SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter soloensis*

1 adult female seen on 26/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (LeC/TKC).

JAPANESE SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter gularis*

1 seen 6/12 at SBWR (MaS). 1 juvenile seen 13/12 at Pulau Ubin (MaS). 2 at MacRitchie Reservoir on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS) and 1 over Henderson Waves on 25/12 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX).

CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE *Spizaetus cirrhatus*

1 seen 13/12 at Pulau Ubin (MaS). 1 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK). A dark morph at Dairy Farm Road on 20/12 (LKP/LKS) and a pale adult at MacRitchie Reservoir on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus*

1 seen 13/12 at Pulau Ubin (MaS), at the Jetty. 1 seen resting on a roof at Woodlands Checkpoint on 17/12 (LKS). It flew off just before sunset. 1 seen 18/12 at Church Street (EL), circling Capital Square and Samsung Hub. 1 seen 19/12 at Teck Whye (LJS). 1 seen 19/12 at Neo Tiew Lane (WCC), perched on top of a tower. 6 seen 21/12 at Changi Cove (SC/PH/MtH/MK), screaming low over several time in pursuit of waders around the reclaimed land.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

2 adults in breeding plumage at an abandoned quarry at Dairy Farm Road on 20/12 (LKP/LKS) and 2 adults at Lorong Halus on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

4 seen 3/12 at Japanese Gardens (HB). At SBWR, 35 on 21/12 (LKP/LKS) and 50 on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS). Also 20 on Pulau Ubin, 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS) and 1 at the West Coast Marsh Garden on 25/12 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX).

PACIFIC REEF HERON *Egretta sacra*

1 dark morph seen 13/12 at Pulau Ubin (MaS). 1 dark morph seen 28/12 at Chek Jawa, Pulau Ubin (BL). I was observed foraging and fighting for food a Little Egret on the beach.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

1 seen 9/12 at Pulau Tekong (AC), along the sandy beach near the jetty. At SBWR, 5 were counted on 21/12 (LKP/LKS) and 12 on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS). About 50 birds counted at the heronry at Pekan Quarry on Pulau Ubin, 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

GREAT EGRET *Casmerodius albus*

2 seen on 21/12 (LKP/LKS) and 10 on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS) at SBWR and 2 were also seen at Pekan Quarry, Pulau Ubin on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*

1 seen 3/12 at Japanese Gardens (HB). 2 seen on 21/12 (LKP/LKS) at SBWR and 1 on 23/12 at Pulau Ubin (PD/RD/LKS).

POND HERON SPP. *Ardeola Spp.*

2 seen 21/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (DA/AC/YPLAOY). 1 winter at Lorong Halus on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON

Nycticorax nycticorax

4 adult and 1 juvenile roosting at Jurong Lake, 27/12 (LKC/TBC)

MALAYAN NIGHT HERON

Gorsachius melanolophus

1 probable reported 4/12 (SY) at Jurong Lake Park.

YELLOW BITTERN *Ixobrychus sinensis*

1 at the West Coast Marsh Garden on 25/12 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX).

BLACK BITTERN *Ixobrychus flavicollis*

1 seen 13/12 (CLF/CYW) at Upper Seletar Reservoir along Mandai Track 15.

HOODED PITTA *Pitta sordida*

1 seen 7/12 (CF), 16/12 (LTK), 18/12 (DT) and 20/12 (WCC/LKC/LTK)) at Bidadari Cemetery.

BLUE-WINGED PITTA *Pitta moluccensis*

1 seen 8/12 within the Singapore Zoo compound (FeW).



Hooded Pitta at Bidadari Cemetery on 16 Dec 2008. Photo © Lee Tiah Khee

BLUE-WINGED LEAFBIRD *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*

1 heard at CCNR, 25/12 (LKC)

BROWN SHRIKE *Lanius cristatus*

1 seen 2/12 at Lorong Asrama (AC).

LONG-TAILED SHRIKE *Lanius schach*

1 seen 19/12 at Neo Tiew Lane (WCC), perched on the fencing. 1 at Lorong Halus on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

ASHY MINIVET *Pericrocotus divaricatus*

1 seen 8/12 within the Singapore Zoo compound (FeW). 4 seen at Dairy Farm Road on 20/12 (LKS) and a flock of 7 seen over Choa Chu Kang Christian Cemetery on 24/12 (SA/LKS).

CROW-BILLED DRONGO *Dicrurus annectans*

1 seen 15/12 near SBWR (JP); 1 at CCNR, 25/12 (LKC/LTK/TBC); 1 at Jurong Lake, 27/12 (LKC).

ASIAN PARADISE FLYCATCHER *Terpsiphone paradisi*

1 seen 21/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (DA/AC/YPLAOY).

ORANGE-HEADED THRUSH *Zoothera citrina*

1 seen 21/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (DA/AC/YPL/AOY).

EYEBROWED THRUSH *Turdus obscurus*

1 seen 6/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (TKC).



Eyebrowed Thrush at Bidadari Cemetery on 6 Dec 2008. Photo © KC Tsang

DARK-SIDED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa sibirica*

1 seen 21/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (DA/AC/YPL/AOY).

ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa dauurica*

1 seen 20/12 (WCC) and 21/12 (DA/AC/YPL/AOY) at Bidadari Cemetery. 1 at Dairy Farm Road on 20/12 (LKS) and 1 at MacRitchie Reservoir on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

FERRUGINOUS FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa ferruginea*

1 seen 12/12 at Hindhede Park (JP).

MUGIMAKI FLYCATCHER *Ficedula mugimaki*

1 female seen and photographed 9/12 at Hindhede Park (DA/MiS).

BLUE-AND-WHITE FLYCATCHER *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*

1 male and 1 female seen 6/12 (RC/NG/Kao/GS) at Jurong Lake Park. They were seen on a figging tree near Far East Flora. They were last seen on a Banyan Tree about 20 to 30m down the path. 1 male seen 21/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (DA/AC/YPL/AOY). A silent but active female seen at Hindhede Nature Park on 29/12 (LKS).



Blue-and-white Flycatcher at Jurong Lake Park on 6 Dec 2008. Photo © Cedric Ng

ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN *Copsychus saularis*

1 juvenile seen and another heard at MacRitchie Reservoir on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA *Copsychus malaricus*

1 heard at Jelutong Tower, CCNR 25/12 (LKC/LTK/TBC)

DAURIAN STARLING *Sturnus sturninus*

Some seen 21/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (DA/AC/YPL/AOY).

COMMON HILL MYNA *Gracula religiosa*

3 seen 2/12 at Lorong Asrama (AC).

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW *Hirundo daurica*

1 at Choa Chu Kang Christian Cemetery on 25/12 (LKS).

STRAW-HEADED BULBUL *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*

3 seen 2/12 at Lorong Asrama (AC). 2 at Dairy Farm Road on 20/12 (LKS). Also 8 counted on Pulau Ubin on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

RED-WHISKERED BULBUL *Pycnonotus jocosus*

1 seen 22/12 at Burgundy Hill Estate (DA), perched on a Rose of India.

CREAM-VENTED BULBUL *Pycnonotus simplex*

5 at CCNR, 25/12 (LKC/LTK/TBC)

ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE *Zosterops palpebrosus*

A flock of 6 seen at Hindhede Nature Park on 29/12 (LKS).

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

1 seen 21/12 at Bidadari Cemetery (DA/AC/YPL/AOY).

ARCTIC WARBLER *Phylloscopus borealis*

1 at SBWR on 21/12 (LKP/LKS) and 1 at Sime Road on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

1 seen 2/12 at Lorong Asrama (AC).

BREEDING / NESTING REPORTS

WHITE-BELLIED SEA EAGLE *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

An adult seen sitting in a nest on a big tree at the Choa Chu Kang Jewish Cemetery on 24/12 (SA/LKS).

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

At the Pekan Quarry heronry on Pulau Ubin, 8 birds were seen on nests, 1 with a fish and 1 with nesting material on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS).

ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN *Copsychus saularis*

A juvenile seen at MacRitchie Reservoir on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS) appeared to be recently fledged.

ASIAN GLOSSY STARLING *Aplonis panayensis*

1 seen emerging on a treehole on Pulau Ubin on 23/12 (PD/RD/LKS) was suspected to be feeding young.

JOHOR

CHECKER-THROATED WOODPECKER *Picus mentalis*

2 seen at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

OLIVE-BACKED WOODPECKER *Dinopium rafflesii*

2 seen at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL).

MAROON WOODPECKER *Blythipicus rubiginosus*

1 seen at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

BUFF-RUMPED WOODPECKER *Meiglyptes tristis*

5 seen at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

SCARLET-RUMPED TROGON *Harpactes duvaucelii*

2 heard at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL).

BANDED KINGFISHER *Lacedo pulchella*

1 seen at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

RUFIOUS-COLLARED KINGFISHER

Actenoides concretus

1 heard at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL).

INDIAN CUCKOO *Cuculus micropterus*

1 heard at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL).

CHESTNUT-BREASTED MALKOHA

Phaenicophaeus curvirostris

2 seen at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

JAVAN FROGMOUTH *Batrachostomus javensis*

1 heard at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL).

MALAYSIAN EARED NIGHTJAR *Eurostopodus temminckii*

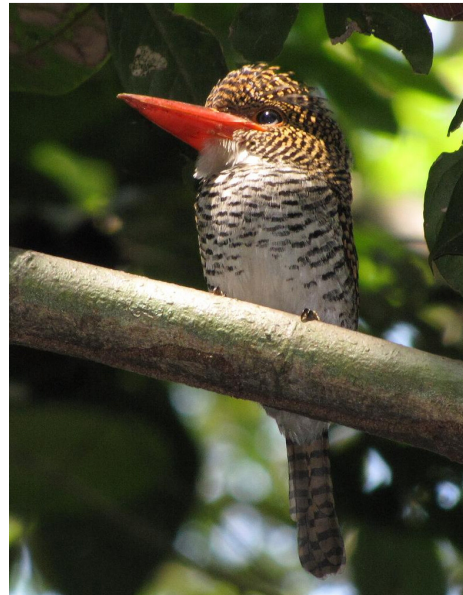
3 seen in flight at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL).

LESSER ADJUTANT *Leptoptilos javanicus*

1 seen foraging on seaward mudflats at Tanjong Piai National Park on 7/12 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX).

DUSKY BROADBILL *Corydon sumatranus*

5 seen at 21/12 Pantí Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.



Banded Kingfisher (female) at Pantí Forest Reserve on 21 Dec 2008. Photo © Yong Ding Li

RAIL-BABBLER *Eupetes macrocerus*

1 heard at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL).

DARK-THROATED ORIOLE *Oriolus xanthonotus*

1 male seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

LESSER CUCKOOSHRIKE *Coracina fimbriata*

4 seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE *Hemipus picatus*

6 seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

LARGE WOODSHRIKE *Tephrodornis gularis*

A few seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

SCARLET MINIVET *Pericrocotus flammeus*

A few seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

ASIAN PARADISE FLYCATCHER *Terpsiphone paradisi*

1 seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

RUFIOUS-WINGED PHILENTOMA *Philentoma pyrhopterum*

1 seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW *Hirundo daurica*

1 seen 3/12 at Sungei Balang (TKC). 30 counted on wires with over 100 Barn Swallows at Kota Rainforest Resort on 30/12 (LKS).

ASHY BULBUL *Hemixos flavala*

2 heard at Kota Tinggi Waterfall on 30/12 (LKS).

EASTERN CROWNED WARBLER *Phylloscopus coronatus*

2 seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

SCALY-CROWNED BABBLER *Malacopteron cinereum*

4 seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

GREY-HEADED BABBLER *Stachyris poliocephala*

4 seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

FLUFFY-BACKED TIT-BABBLER *Macronous ptilosus*

2 seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

PLAIN SUNBIRD *Anthreptes simplex*

2 seen at 21/12 Panti Forest Reserve (YDL), at the second bridge.

Singapore Raptors Report Autumn Migration, December 2008

Reported by Alan OwYong and edited by Kenneth Kee

SUMMARY

December was the tail end of the autumn migration with many of the raptors spending the winter on the island. We had 9 species totaling 143 migrant raptors including 10 unidentified for the month. This was higher than last December 2007 record of 6 species and 102 raptors. The Black Bazas were still the largest group wintering here with Kim Seng reported a flock of 45 birds at Kranji. Changi Cove was attracting lots of Harriers this month with a record of 4 Pied and 6 Eastern Marsh co-existing there. Kim Chuah had our second *Torquatus* Honey-buzzard at the CCK Christian Cemetery, but an adult this time round. Both the Ospreys and Peregrine Falcons were happily enjoying their stay at various places obviously delighted with the abundance of food. The Common Buzzard made it first appearance at Bidadari Cemetery, which was turning out to be a favorite wintering area for both raptors and passerines. We had only one record of the Chinese Sparrowhawk while the smaller Japanese Sparrowhawk was more widespread.



Juvenile white morph Changeable Hawk-eagle by Jimmy Chew taken at Pulau Semakau on 20 Dec graced this month cover

Table 1

S/N	Species	No.		S/N	Species	No.
1	Black Baza	79		6	Easter Marsh Harrier	6
2	Oriental Honey-buzzard	24		7	Osprey	3
3	Japanese Sparrowhawk	7		8	Common Buzzard	3
4	Peregrine Falcon	6		9	Chinese Sparrowhawk	1
5	Pied Harrier	4		10	Unidentified Accipiter Raptor	10
					Total	143

Note: The numbers are indicative only with similar species in the same area discounted to prevent duplication.

Black Baza (79)

Who else but Lim Kim Seng came in with the largest single flock of **45 birds** at Neo Tiew Lane2 on Christmas Eve flying towards Sungei Buloh. Several observers (Doreen Ang, Tiah Khee, David Tan, Danny Lau & Kok Hui) had also recorded seeing between 5 (13th) to 7 (20th) birds there. Bidadari was another roosting location with at least 12 reported by Willie Foo on 14th flying towards Potong Pasir. KC Tsang counted a total of 10 wintering there 2 days earlier. Other records were from Punggol (4) by Kok Hui on 6th, Springleaf (7) by Margaret Yeo on 22nd, Pulau Ubin (7) by Kim Seng on 23rd, 3 over at D’Kranji resort by Felix Wong on 13th, 2 flying across Japanese Gardens by Alan OwYong on 7th. Single bird was reported by Kim Seng at CCK Christian Cemetery on 24th and Sungei Buloh on 21st, at Taman Serasi on 14th by Pah Liang and at Ubin quarry by Doreen Ang & Ah Huay on 14th.

Oriental (Crested) Honey-buzzard (24)



Oriental Honey-buzzard by KC Tsang

Lim Kim Chuah reported the second *Torquatus* race on 24th, an adult this time, at the Choa Chu Kang Christian Cemetery. KC Tsang sent dramatic shots of 2 birds in hunting flight taken at Bidadari on 12th. Danny Lau had 4 bee stings on 13th when one bird attacked a bee-hive at the western catchment area. Gloria Seow had 3 circling over Toa Payoh on 7th. Pah Liang also reported 3 birds from his balcony at Taman Serasi. Doreen Ang reported 2 chasing after House Crows and robbing them on 25th at Changi, and

not the other way round.

Alan OwYong seen 2 flying west across Japanese Gardens. Other single bird sighting: Simon Road on 10th by KC Tsang, an adult light morph on 17th at King’s Avenue by Margie Hall, Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 20th by Danny & Kok Hui, Pulau Semakau by Wing Chong on 20th, flying over Bidadari on 22nd by Chung Cheong, an Orientalis perched at MacRitchie Reservoir on 23rd by Kim Seng, a dark morph over Semakau by Wing Chong & Hang Chong on 20th, a juvenile female photographed by Raj Krishnan’s friend at Yew Tee on 23rd and at Tuas Drive by Felix Wong on 24th.

Japanese Sparrowhawk (7)

Alan OwYong reported one soaring over Japanese Gardens on 7th. Kok Hui reported one flying across Admiralty Park on 9th. KC Tsang observed a pair roosting at Bidadari Cemetery on 12th. Wing Chong and Hang Chong reported one at Pulau Semakau on 20th. Kim Seng saw one hunting at MacRitchie Reservoir on 23rd and another on 25th over Henderson Waves Bridge.

Peregrine Falcon (6)

Most of the Peregrine Falcons reported last month were still wintering at their favorite haunts. Doreen & Ah Huay reported one perched on telecom tower at Pulau Ubin on 14th. Ee Ling was still watching the one circling around Capital Square on 19th. Chung Cheong reported one at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on the 19th. Two new site records were reported with one perched at Woodlands Checkpoint on the 17th by Kim Seng and the other by Jia Sheng of one flying over Teck Whye towards NE. Another one was observed screaming low over the waders at Changi Cove by Simon Cockayne and friends on 21st.

Pied Harrier (4) and Eastern Marsh Harrier (6)

Changi Cove proved again to be the favorite wintering ground for the Harriers. On 20th , Simon Cockayne and friends Martin Kennewell & Peter Hayman reported 4 there while wader watching. They also counted a total of 6 Eastern Marsh wintering at the Cove. Chung Cheong on 25th reported a male and a juvenile Pied at the same area reinforced by Sunny Yeo's record of 4 Eastern Marsh there on the same day.

Osprey (3)

All the reports for the month came from the Kranji area. At least 3 were wintering at Neo Tiew Lane 2 based on report from Chung Cheong on 19th, followed by report of 2 birds from Danny & Kok Hui a day later. Other reports came from Doreen, Tiah Khee & David Tan on 5th. Kim Seng had one on a kelong seen from Kranji trail on 23rd and another one at Neo Tiew Lane 2 the next day.



Common Buzzard (3)

The one at Changi Coast Road was still around on the 6th seen by Kok Hui. Alfred Chia sent a photo of one taken at Airport Road on 29th. This was the first record of this buzzard in an urban location. Doreen Ang and others reported one at Bidadari Cemetery on 30th, confirmed by Danny Lau and Albert Low the next day.

Chinese Sparrowhawk (1)

KC Tsang submitted the only record of this Accipiter with an excellent photo of one adult female perched at his favorite hunting ground at Bidadari Cemetery.

Chinese Sparrowhawk by KC Tsang

Unidentified Accipiter (2) and Raptor (8)

Alfred Chia reported an accipiter at Lorong Asrama on 2nd. Danny Lau and Kok Hui had one accipiter and one raptor at Neo Tiew Lane2 on 20th. Pah Liang recorded 2 raptors flying over Taman Serasi on 20th. Doreen counted 4 raptors at Changi Cove on 25th. Kenneth and Willie saw a large raptor flying low, chasing prey at the Albizia forest at Bidadari on 28th.

Resident Raptors

The numbers and species for our resident raptors went down for December. We had only the five commoner species totaling about 40 birds. It could be due to the lower records coming in and lesser sightings.



OHB Torquatus race by Lim Kim Chuah

White Bellied Sea Eagle (12)

- 5th 2 adults and 1 juvenile at Neo Tiew Lane2 by Doreen Ang, Tiah Khee & David Tan
- 6th 1 at Punggol by Kok Hui
- 9th 1 juvenile at Admiralty Park by Kok Hui
- 9th 1 seen at Pulau Tekong by Alfred Chia
- 11th 2 adults seen calling at Pekan Quarry at Pulau Ubin by Doreen & Ah Huay
- 19th 1 juvenile circling above D’Kranji Resort by Chung Cheong.
- 20th 2 adults and 1 juvenile at Neo Tiew Lane2 by Danny Lau & Kok Hui
- 21st 2 juveniles being chased off by an adult Brahminy Kite at SBWR by Kim Seng
- 23rd A pair at Pulau Ubin by Kim Seng
- 24th An adult seen inspecting nest at CCK Parsi Cemetery by Kim Seng
- 25th 1 at the beach at Changi Cove by Chung Cheong
- 30th 1 flying over the West Coast Marshes by Alan OwYong & Doris Lim.

Brahminy Kite (12)

- 6th An adult and 1 juvenile at Punggol by Kok Hui
- 6th 3 seen flying around Jurong Lakeside by Alan OwYong
- 9th An adult flying over Admiralty Park by Kok Hui
- 9th 1 over at Pulau Tekong by Alfred Chia
- 12th 2 at Bidadari Cemetery by KC Tsang. Must be roosting at the cemetery.
- 20th 1 bird was reported at Pulau Semakau by Wing Chong and Hang Chong.
- 21st An adult chasing a juvenile White-bellied Sea Eagle at SBWR by Kim Seng.
- 21st 1 flying over KJE by Kenneth Kee
- 28th A juvenile reported flying over Bidadari by Kenneth Kee & Willie Foo

Black-winged Kite (4-5)

- 6th 1 at Punggol by Kok Hui
20th 1 at Neo Tiew Lane2 by Danny Lau & Kok Hui
25th Chung Cheong reported a few at Changi Cove

Grey-headed Fish Eagle (3)

- 15th Margaret Yeo reported one perched on tree branch at Springleaf Woodlands
20th An adult was reported at Neo Tiew Lane 2 by Danny Lau & Kok Hui
23rd One heard at MacRitchie Reservoir by Lim Kim Seng

Changeable Hawk-eagle (8)



Juvenile white morph CHE by Jimmy Chew

- 6th A dark morph reported at Changi Coastal Road by Kok Hui
13th 1 heard at Bidadari by Willie Foo.
20th 3 at Neo Tiew Lane2 by Danny Lau & Kok Hui
20th A juvenile white morph and an adult over at Taman Serasi by Pah Liang
20th A juvenile white morph was photographed soaring over Pulau Semakau by Jimmy Chew and reported by Dr Ho Hua Chew.
21st One dark morph at Changi Cove reported by Simon Cockayne and friends.
23rd A pale adult was reported at MacRitchie Reservoir by Kim Seng
28th 1 seen soaring over Bidadari Cemetery by Kenneth Kee & Willie Foo.

** The numbers in brackets besides the names indicate the total number seen for this month. Different reports of the same raptors from the same area are discounted to prevent duplication.*

*Compiled by Alan OwYong from reports sent in to the Wildbirdsingapore e-forum.
Edited and Layout by Kenneth Kee. Many thanks to those who sent in their reports and special thanks to Kim Chuah, KC Tsang and Jimmy Chew for the use of their photographs.*

Birds of Palawan, The Philippines

Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park

By Yong Ding Li

Introduction

Stretching like a long thin jagged twig bestrides the masses of islands of the Philippine Archipelago, Palawan Island is truly the last frontier for this overexploited nation of some 80 over million people. Unlike the other islands like Luzon, Mindanao and the Visayas group that have already been heavily settled by and saturated by more humanity than they can sustain, Palawan on the other hand is remote, and has been forgotten for a long long while. Geographically, the unusual island of Palawan is isolated from the rest of the Philippine Archipelago by deep seas all around in, the Mindoro Channel to the north, the vast Sulu Sea to the east and lastly, the huge expanse of the South China Sea severe it from the rest of mainland Asia. Within an island riddled with rich geological heritage and formations, Palawan is home to an avifauna totally unlike any of the other Philippine island. Many bird species that are representative of the Sunda Islands to the south like **Dark-throated Oriole**, **Fiery Minivet**, **Grey-cheeked Bulbul** and **Chestnut-breasted Malkoha**, among others can be found in the Philippines on Palawan only. It is little surprising that many biogeographers link Palawan's wildlife more to Borneo and the Greater Sundas than to the rest of the Philippine Archipelago it belongs to politically. Most of Palawan's rich natural heritage can be easily observed within the well-protected and compact Puerto Princesa Underground River National Park.

Palawan's Physical Geography

Anyone travelling to Puerto Princesa, the largest city on Palawan Island by sea would notice the general undulating topography and countless small islands around it (supposedly some 1768 islands in all), especially when the ferry moves along the Sulu Sea following the island's rugged coastline southwards. Many of these 'islands' are mere islets and support scant biodiversity, but it is generally acknowledged that some of the larger satellite islands do support decent faunal communities, examples being Balabac in the far south, and the Calamian group of islands in the north. Being a long narrow island where the widest point is barely more than 40 km across, Palawan lacks a significant interior compared to its massive neighbour, Borneo to the South. Nevertheless, the centre of the island is still dominated by rolling hills and a few high peaks, the highest being the Mantalingahan Massif in the south, which at 2085 metres, nearly equals the height of Gunung Tahan, the loftiest peak in Peninsular Malaysia. Other major mountains on the island include Victoria Peak, Cleopatra's Needle and Thumb Peak, the last of which can be seen from Puerto Princesa.

Landscape wise, Palawan is remarkably varied. Along the coasts, steep cliffs or long sandy beaches are the main features while in sheltered regimes, mangrove swamps become the most visible natural features. Fairly large swaths of the island's land area, until recently was still cloaked in good primary lowland dipterocarp evergreen forest, but with the ongoing excessive exploitation by timber companies and constant lost to

kaingineros (slash-and-burn cultivators), the land area of this form of natural vegetation cover continues to decline steadily. Elsewhere throughout the greater Palawan region, there are substantial areas of limestone formation island-wide, especially within the confines of Puerto Princesa SR National Park, the southern half of the island and also the northern satellite islands. Fortunately, the unique limestone vegetation of these areas is still relatively intact thanks to difficulty of clearance for agriculture. Limited areas of distinct ultramafic vegetation is confined to south-central Palawan, especially within Victoria Peak.

An Overview of Palawan's Biodiversity

Palawan, being just west of Wallace's line, falls right at the meeting point of the Philippine Archipelago bioregion and the Sunda bioregion of which Singapore is a part. Therefore, the resultant fauna, birdlife in particular, is somewhat a mixture of elements from both bioregions though at any rate, sharing a much greater affinity with Borneo and continental Southeast Asia. Species familiar to many of us as Malaysian birds (and many also found in Pantar) occurs in Palawan and these birds mingle with their counterparts distinctive of the Philippine bioregion. Parrots and Pigeons, signature birds of the Philippine-Wallacean bioregions, are represented here by species like **Blue-naped Parrot**, **Blue-headed Racquet-tail**, **Philippine Cockatoo** and **Black-chinned Fruit-Dove**. These species jostle with birds that typify the Sundaic avifauna, examples being **Chestnut-breasted Malkoha**, **Dark-throated Oriole**, **Grey-cheeked Bulbul** and **Fiery Minivet**.

Likewise, Palawan's mammal fauna share greater affinities with neighbouring Borneo than the rest of the Philippines. It is only here and not anywhere else in the Philippines that one may come across typical widespread Asian species like **Oriental Small-clawed Otter**, **Binturong**, **Malay Civet**, **Leopard Cat** and **Greater Mouse Deer** (to Balabac). Recent taxonomic upheavals has also raised a few Palawan subspecies to full species status, examples being the **Palawan Pig** *Sus ahoenobarbus* which was formerly classified as a subspecies of the widespread Sundaic Bearded Pig, Malayan Pangolin which is now **Palawan Pangolin** *Manis culionensis* and Stink Badger which is now recognized separately as **Palawan Stink Badger** *Mydaus marchei*. This tops off the pre-existing long list of endemic deer (**Calamian Hog Deer** *Axis calamianensis*), porcupine (**Palawan Porcupine** *Hystrix pumila*), squirrels, shrews, mice and treeshrews species.

Palawan's amphibian fauna is also highly unique. While research into the islands native herpetofauna in general has been far and few and barely touch the tip of the iceberg, what little studies have yielded numerous unusual endemic species like **Mary's Frog** *Micrixalus mariae* (Mantalingajan only) and the peculiar **Philippine Discoglossid Frog** *Barbourula busuangensis*. As you might have predicted, Palawan's frog fauna show affinities to that of Borneo and the Greater Sundas. Numerous shared species including frogs like **Everett's Tree Frog** *Rhacophorus everetti* and the **Southeast Asian Horned Toad** *Megophrys montana* are present.

Introducing the Avifauna of Palawan

Since Palawan is zoologically part of the larger Sunda shelf bioregion, the island's birdlife is more or less a subset of that of Borneo (Sundaland). To a lesser extent, it is also home to a few widespread Philippine species (e.g. **Pygmy Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum pygmaeum*). Many species that are residents of Palawan's rainforest have contemporaries among Bornean species and this just goes to reaffirm the strong similarities between the two bioregions. Genera of largely forest birds found on Borneo that also occurs only on Palawan in the Philippines are those like *Polyplectron*, *Malacocincla*, *Malacopteron*, *Dinopium*, *Aegithina*, *Criniger*, *Seicercus*, and *Gracula*.

Most of Palawan's resident birds are forest dwelling. Its bird community resemble those in the Greater Sundas (e.g. Sumatra, Borneo), but is comparatively more species-impooverished. The full array of tree and ground babblers, for instance is represented in Palawan by the genera *Macronous* (one species), *Stachyris* (one species), *Malacocincla* (one species), *Malacopteron* (one species) and *Ptilocichla* (one species). Interestingly, in every genus only one species occurs; unlike in Borneo where multiple *Stachyris*, *Malacopteron* and *Malococincla* type tree babblers coexist together. Generally, this is unlike the species-rich babbler communities throughout the Greater Sundas and elsewhere where many members of one genus co-occur.

Altogether, nearly 20 endemic species of birds can be found within the larger island of Palawan and her corresponding satellites. Most spectacular is the glittering **Palawan Peacock-Pheasant** *Polyplectron emphanum*, whose ancestors must have originated from Borneo when a land bridge joined both islands during the Pleistocene. Cloaked in glittering regalia of stark turquoise blue and emerald ocelli, its resplendent plumage stands out from other peacock-pheasants. This generally uncommon and shy ground bird is threatened as a result of forest clearance and hunting pressure and is now largely confined to nature reserves and remaining pristine forests. Puerto Princesa SR national park is probably the best place to see it as wild populations within have been well protected. One individual have become so habituated to human presence that one can observe a male bird blatantly displaying within 5 metres range.

Another flagship species of Palawan's forest is the endemic **Blue-headed Racquet-tail** *Prioniturus platenae*, a parrot that can be quite easy to see in Puerto Princesa SR national park. Racquet-tails form a small genus of frugivorous parrots *Prioniturus* found throughout the Philippines, Sulawesi and Buru islands in Indonesia. All members possess small extensions of their central tail feather shafts ending in little spatules, vaguely like some of the larger Drongoes and thus giving a racket-like appearance. Blue-headed Racquet-tail is the only member of its genus that has managed to cross Wallace's line as far as its presence of Palawan has indicated and this only goes to suggest the fairly limited biogeographical influence of the Philippine and Wallacean avifaunas on Palawan.

One of the more conspicuous members of Palawan's forest bird community is the neat looking **Palawan Hornbill** *Anthracoceros marchei*, a bird whose closest relatives must have been the Oriental Pied Hornbill in Borneo. The two species share morphological and

ecological similarities. Small parties of four to six hornbills can be seen hunting in coastal or inland lowland forest, picking up lizards and large invertebrate prey as they skilfully manoeuvre through the canopy.

Throughout Palawan, her montane avifauna is still poorly known due largely to the remoteness of the mountains. To illustrate this, **Pin-tailed Parrotfinch** *Erythrura prasina* was only discovered for the first time in Philippines on Mount Mantalingahan in 2007. Bird species that have been recorded in Palawan's montane forests include **Mountain Leaf-Warbler** *Phylloscopus trivirgatus*, **Yellow-breasted Warbler** *Sericeus montis*, **Sunda Bush-Warbler** *Cettia vulcania*, **Mountain White-eye** *Zosterops montanus* and **White-browed Shortwing** *Brachypteryx montana*. One, the **Mangrove Whistler** *Pachycephala grisola*, a bird known to us as a strictly mangrove bird in our part of the world also occurs on Palawan's mountains and mingling with Mountain Leaf-Warblers and Yellow-breasted Warblers in mixed flocks, fills an ecological niche that is otherwise unoccupied. Only one of Palawan's endemic species is strictly montane, the seldom seen **Palawan Striped-Babbler** *Stachyris hypogrammica*. Recent visits by birdwatchers to its type locality at Mount Mantalingahan have fortunately found it to be fairly common. A list of Palawan's 18 endemic species plus a highly similar species from either the Philippines or Sundaland and its corresponding bioregion is shown below.

S/N	Species	Latin name	Similar Species	Island/ bioregion
1	Palawan Peacock Pheasant*	<i>Polyplectron emphanum</i>	Bornean Peacock Pheasant	Borneo, Sundaland
2	Blue-headed Racquet-tail*	<i>Prioniturus platenae</i>	Blue-crowned Racquet-tail	Philippines
3	Palawan Scops-Owl*	<i>Otus fuliginosus</i>	Sunda Scops-Owl, Philippine Scops-Owl	Borneo, Sundaland/ Philippines
4	Palawan Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus chaseni</i>	Javan Frogmouth	Borneo, Sundaland
5	Palawan Hornbill*	<i>Anthraceroceros marchei</i>	Oriental Pied Hornbill	Borneo, Sundaland
6	Yellow-throated Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis palawanensis</i>	Blue-winged Leafbird	Borneo, Sundaland
7	Sulphur-bellied Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes palawanensis</i>	Buff-vented Bulbul	Borneo, Sundaland
8	Palawan Tit	<i>Parus amabilis</i>	Elegant Tit	Philippines
9	Ashy-headed Babbler	<i>Malacocincla cinereiceps</i>	Short-tailed Babbler	Borneo, Sundaland
10	Melodious Babbler	<i>Malacopteron palawanense</i>	Rufous-crowned Babbler	Borneo, Sundaland
11	Falcated Ground-Babbler*	<i>Ptilocichla falcata</i>	Bornean Wren-Babbler	Borneo, Sundaland
12	Palawan Striped Babbler	<i>Stachyris hypogrammica</i>	Luzon Striped Babbler	Luzon, Philippines
13	White-vented Shama	<i>Copsychus niger</i>	White-browed Shama	Philippines
14	Palawan Flycatcher*	<i>Ficedula platenae</i>	Rufous-chested Flycatcher	Borneo, Sundaland
15	Palawan Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis lemprieri</i>	Malaysian Blue-Flycatcher	Borneo, Sundaland
16	Blue Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone cyanescens</i>	Rufous Paradise Flycatcher	Philippines
17	Shelley's Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga shelleyi</i>	Lovely Sunbird	Philippines
18	Palawan Flowerpecker	<i>Prionichilus plateni</i>	Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker	Borneo, Sundaland

Fig. 1 Table of Palawan's endemic species and their respective affinities.

Where to watch birds in Palawan?

Thanks to its remoteness and limited accessibility in the past, any trips made to observe birds on Palawan would have called for a mini-expedition. All these logistical nightmares thankfully are now a thing of the past with vast improvements in infrastructure throughout the Island. A major road connects most of the towns on Palawan and this

artery, heavily served by public transport is the main access mean for nearly all the important birdwatching sites.

Without equals among sites on Palawan undoubtedly is the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, formally known as St Paul's Underground River National Park. Declared a UNESCO world heritage site, the park at only 5600 hectares protects interesting geological features like the eight kilometre long underground river and virtually the full complement of lowland vegetation types. This 'all-in-one' package includes mangrove forest that hugs the coastal creeks, beach forest the line the sandy coasts, swamp forest, limestone forest on limestone outcrops and most importantly, pristine lowland and hill dipterocarp evergreen forests. All of Palawan's endemic bird species with the exception of the **Palawan Striped Babbler** occur within the park. Two species, the **Melodious Babbler** *Malacopteron palawanense* and **Palawan Flycatcher** *Ficedula platenae* are apparently rare here and seldom seen along the park's main trails.

Not too far away from the National Park is a well-known penal colony frequented by birdwatchers, the Iwahig Penal colony. Besides paddy fields and other cultivation, its compounds protect the last intact lowland forests in the vicinity of sprawling Puerto Princesa city. Birdwatching in the colony grounds is mainly centred at the 'Balsahan trail' which runs along Balsahan River. Many forest species including the **Melodious Babbler** and **Palawan Flycatcher** are easily found here. Permits are however needed in order to access the colony.

About 40 kilometres south of Puerto Princesa is another important site known to birdwatchers as the 'Zigzag Road' aptly named due to numbers of frantic turns along the road. Secondary forest interspersed with clumps of bamboo dominates this site and despite the degraded nature of the forest, a surprising variety of birds including **Hooded** and **Red-bellied Pitta** can be readily found. Star of the birds here goes to the globally threatened **Palawan Flycatcher**, reputedly the easiest place to see it in the world.

One of the last populations of critically endangered **Philippine Cockatoos** *Cacatua haematuropygia* still clings on to survival in Palawan's wilderness, having being decimated throughout its range. Birdwatchers keen to see this species, now extremely rare throughout Philippines can put their best bet on remote Raza Island, situated on the southern coast of Palawan and accessed from Narra. Another local specialty is the **Grey Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula pickeringii*, a fruit-eating pigeon that occurs on small islands around Borneo, the Southern Philippines and Sulawesi and the **Mantanani Scops Owl** *Otus mantananensis*.

Shorebird enthusiasts who have had their fair share of forest birds would consider visiting Garceliano beach, a small stretch of undisturbed sandy and rocky coastline south of Puerto Princesa airport. Birds found here include the globally threatened **Chinese Egret** and a wide range of waders like **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Grey-tailed Tattler**, and **Greater Sandplover**.

Other sites that are not mentioned here are generally too difficult for access and therefore seldom feature on any birdwatchers itinerary. These includes the Mount Mantalingahan Massif (For Palawan Striped Babbler and other montane birds) in the far south, Cleopatra's Needle Mountain, El Nido Marine reserve at the mainland's northern tip and lastly Ursula Island in the far south.

Birding the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park

Almost all lowland forest bird species in Palawan can be seen with relative ease in this national park. With its many different habitat types, a birdwatcher should be able to see a large array of birds fairly easily. While the number of access trails is limited, available trails bisect most of the major habitats found within the park. Three main trails are well known to visitors: the Monkey trail, Jungle trail and the less well-known Stream/Mangrove loop trail, which runs along a creek and eventually leads back to the main ranger station.

A poorly marked trail across scrub leads from the end the stretch of beach resorts to a small mangrove creek, a section of a sandy beach and a coastal hill cloaked in beach forest until the central ranger station. This portion of the trail, while seemingly uninteresting can yield a number of interesting species including the **White-vented Shama**. Careful searching should lead one to a flock of **Green Imperial Pigeons** or perhaps a foraging **Tabon Scrubfowl**. On the beach, one should look out for the resident **Malaysian Plovers** and an occasional **Great-billed Heron**.

The Jungle trail at four kilometres long starts near the Central Ranger Station and cuts through much excellent forest. Careful scanning of the canopy should reveal parties of noisy **Palawan Hornbills** and busily foraging woodpeckers. Should one be very lucky, discovery of a fruiting fig would sooner or later render a day's work worthwhile. Here, the hornbills, **Thick-billed Green-Pigeon Blue-naped Parrot**, **Asian Fairy Bluebird**, **Sulphur-bellied Bulbul** and **Black-chinned Fruit-Doves** all congregate to feast on a fruity buffet. Occasional mixed feeding flocks is something to look forward to and with careful searching, should yield species like **Palawan Tit**, **Striped Tit-Babbler**, **Velvet-fronted Nuthatch**, **Blue Paradise Flycatcher**, **Yellow-throated Leafbirds** and **Fiery Minivet**. As one approaches the second ranger station near the Underground River, it is about time to keep the eyes on the forest floor. This is where a really confiding male **Palawan Peacock-Pheasant** lives around, allowing for point blank views..

Another good birding spot is the forest clearing around the Central Ranger Station. Forest edges reduce the need to strain the neck excessively. This spot appears to be busy with bird activity throughout the day. Family groups of noisy **Ashy Drongo** and **White-vented Shamans** constantly move among the low foliage while in the higher treetops, Pigeons, Hornbills and many other bird species are always about. The Station also offers a shelter when it starts to rain in the afternoon.

If one follows the Stream trail loop which branches off to the right before the Central Ranger Station, one would eventually walk through healthy stands of riverine mangroves and swamp forests, pass by some lowland dipterocarp forest and finally beach forest

again, back at the central ranger station. This trail provides fantastic opportunities for observing mangroves birds like **Stork-billed Kingfisher**, **Little Heron** and **Mangrove Whistler**. Small forest openings along the trail are good places to see parties of **Blue-headed Racquet-tail** and **Blue-naped Parrots** flying away from or back to their roosts in the mornings and evenings. The trail branches off to the left at an obscure spot, goes up a hill and leads back to the Ranger Station. Towards the end of the trail, a few hundred metres before the ranger station area, ground bird lovers ought to keep their eyes tuned to the ground once more. Here, a faint rustle of dried leaves or low twigs could be the doings of a hunting **Hooded Pitta**, **Red-bellied Pitta** or even the big noisy **Falcated Ground-Babbler**.

Some Notes on Park Access

Getting to the park is a minor problem for those lacking private transport. For those lodging in hotels downtown, it is necessary to take a motor-tricycle to the main San Jose Bus Station that is 15 minutes out of the city centre. From here, two buses daily runs the four to five hour long route to Sabang, which is the access village to the park. The first bus leaves at 7.00 am and the second leaves by 9.00 am. This information is highly changeable and it would be wise to check again with updated travel guides before travel. From Sabang Village is merely a 15 minute walk to the park entrance and this is where all the resorts, from the most unliveable to the most posh are located.

A Summary of Species Recorded

The table below lists all the species recorded during my entire duration in Palawan. Species recorded are either seen or heard in the wild. Altogether a total of 76 species were recorded.

S/N	Species	Latin Name	PPSR	Zigzag Road	San Jose	Remarks
1	Pacific Reef Egret	<i>Egretta sacra</i>	X			Dark morph
2	Little Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>	X			Crepuscular
3	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	X (H)	X (H)		
4	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>		X (H)		
5**	Palawan Peacock Pheasant	<i>Polyplectron emphanum</i>	X			Very tame
6	Tabon Scrubfowl	<i>Megapodius cummingii</i>	X			
7	Thick-billed Green-Pigeon	<i>Treron curvirostra</i>	X			
8	Pink-necked Green-Pigeon	<i>Treron vernans</i>			X	
9	Black-chinned Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus leclancheri</i>	X (H)	X (H)		
10	Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>	X	X		Common
11	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>			X	
12	Peaceful Dove	<i>Geopelia striata</i>			X	
13	Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>	X			
14	Blue-naped Parrot	<i>Tanygnathus lucionensis</i>	X			Common
15**	Blue-headed Racquet-tail	<i>Prioniturus platenae</i>	X			
16	Asian Drongo Cuckoo	<i>Surniculus lugubris</i>	X (H)	X		
17	Common Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopacea</i>	X			
18	Chestnut-breasted Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus curvirostris</i>	X			

S/N	Species	Latin Name	PPSR- NP	Zigzag Road	San Jose	Remarks
19	Lesser Coucal	<i>Centropus benghalensis</i>			X (H)	
20	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	X (H)			
21	Spotted Wood Owl	<i>Strix seloputo</i>			X (H)	
22	Large-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus macrourous</i>	X			
23	Edible-nest Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia fulcipaga</i>	X			
24	Pygmy Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia troglodytes</i>	X			
25	Glossy Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia esculenta</i>	X			Common
26	Rufous-backed Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx rufidorsus</i>	X	X		
27	Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon capensis</i>	X (H)			
28	Collared Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon chloris</i>	X			
29**	Palawan Hornbill	<i>Anthraceros marchei</i>	X			Gregarious
30	Great Slaty Woodpecker	<i>Mulleripicus pulverulentus</i>	X			4 seen
31	White-bellied Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus javensis</i>	X			
32	Common Flameback	<i>Dinopium javanese</i>	X			
33	Hooded Pitta	<i>Pitta sordida</i>	X	X (H)		
34	Red-bellied Pitta	<i>Pitta erythrogaster</i>	X	X (H)		
35	Pacific Swallow	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>	X			
36	Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina striata</i>	X	X		
37*	Fiery Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>	X	X		
38	Yellow-throated Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis palawanensis</i>	X	X		Very vocal
39	Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>		X	X	
40	Black-headed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonoctus atriceps</i>			X	Likes scrub
41	Olive-winged Bulbul	<i>Pycnonoctus plumosus</i>	X	X	X	Common
42	Grey-cheeked Bulbul	<i>Criniger bres</i>	X	X (H)		Common
43	Sulphur-bellied Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes palawanensis</i>	X	X		
44	Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>	X	X		Very vocal
45	Spangled Drongo	<i>Dicrurus hottentotus</i>	X	X (H)		
46*	Dark-throated Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthonotus</i>	X			
47	Black-naped Oriole	<i>Oriolus chinensis</i>	X			
48	Asian Fairy Bluebird	<i>Irena puella</i>	X	X		
49	Slender-billed Crow	<i>Corvus enca</i>	X	X		
50*	Palawan Tit	<i>Parus amabilis</i>	X			
51	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>	X	X		
52	Ashy-headed Babbler	<i>Tichastoma cinereiceps</i>	X	X		
53**	Falcated Ground-Babbler	<i>Ptilocichla falcata</i>	X			Rare
54*	Melodious Babbler	<i>Malacopteron palawanense</i>			X	
55	Striped Tit-Babbler	<i>Macronous gularis</i>	X	X		
56	White-vented Shama	<i>Copsychus niger</i>	X	X		
57	Rufous-tailed Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sericeus</i>	X	X (H)	X	Widespread
58**	Palawan Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula platenae</i>		X		Localised
59*	Palawan Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis lemprieri</i>	X			
60	Citrine Canary-Flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa helianthea</i>	X (H)	X (H)		
61	Pied Fantail	<i>Rhipidura javanica</i>	X			
62*	Blue Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone cyanescens</i>	X	X (H)		
63	Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>	X	X (H)		
64	Mangrove Whistler	<i>Pachycephala grisola</i>	X			
65	Asian Glossy Starling	<i>Aplonis panayensis</i>	X		X	
66	Hill Myna	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>	X			Very vocal
67	Purple-throated Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia sperata</i>	X			
68	Olive-backed Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia jugularis</i>	X		X	Ssp <i>aurora</i>
69	Plain-throated Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes malaccensis</i>			X	
70	Shelley's Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga shelleyi</i>	X	X		

S/N	Species	Latin Name	PPSR	Zigzag Road	San Jose	Remarks
71	Little Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera longirostris</i>	X	X		
72	Palawan Flowerpecker	<i>Prionichilus plateni</i>	X	X		Common
73	Pygmy Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum pygmaeum</i>	X			Juveniles
74	White-bellied Munia	<i>Lonchura leucogastra</i>			X	
75	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	X		X	
76	Chestnut Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>			X	

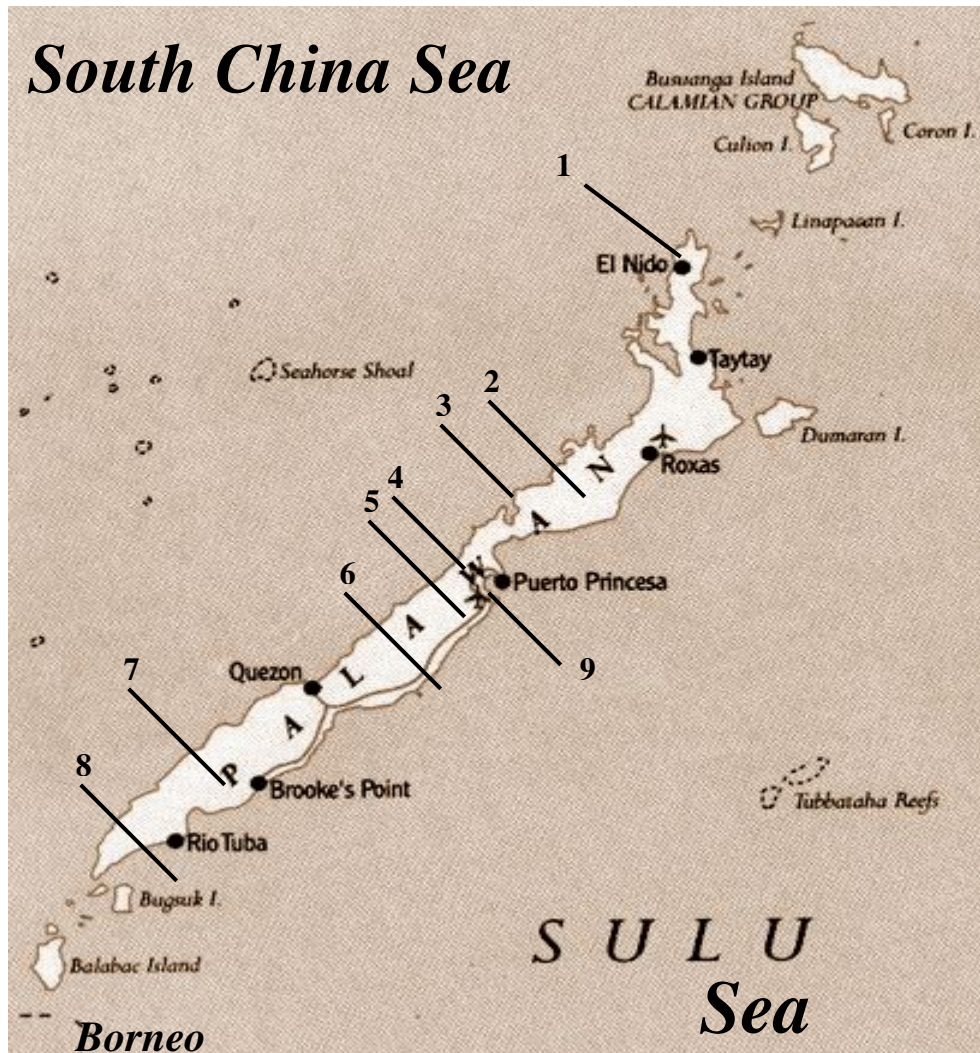
Additional Footnotes

1. Asterisks under the Number (S/N) field are used to denote threat status. 1 asterisk * indicates a *near-threatened /lower risk* species while 2 asterisks ** indicates a *globally threatened/vulnerable* species.
2. Species shaded in **bold** are endemic to Palawan and its satellite islands.
3. 'X' denotes a species recorded for a particular locality and '(H)' indicates that it is heard only.
4. PPSR-NP stands for Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park. San Jose refers to the main Puerto Princesa Bus Station.

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Appendix I: Map of Sites Mentioned



Sites mentioned in text

1. El Nido Marine Reserve
2. Cleopatra's Needle
3. Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park
4. Iwahig Penal Colony
5. Zigzag Highway (km 35-37)
6. Raza Island
7. Mount Mantaligajan
8. Ursula Island
9. Garceliano Beach