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A Note from the Editors

The month of March brings about some changes in the avian front as our wintering visitors begin their long and arduous journey north and our residents start their courtship and nest building. This issue brings you up to date on some of these records, contributed by you readers out there.

Read on to find out more what you have been missing if you have not been going out.

Lim Kim Seng
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Common Hill Myna at Hindhede Nature Park on 23 March.

Photo © Lee Tiah Khee



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Bird Report

MARCH 2008

By Albert Low

Highlights

Singapore

As is always the case as the migration season draws to a close, March 2008 was a month of many surprises. The month started off with sensational news that at least 2 **Javan Pond Herons** had been sighted in a canal near Lorong Halus. Normally indistinguishable from the more common Chinese Pond Heron in winter plumage, what made the news special was that these 2 birds were in full summer plumage, truly a sight to behold. Thankfully, they stayed around for the better part of the month, much to the delight of local birders & photographers.



Javan Pond Heron at Pasir Ris Farmway 2 Drain
Photo © Con Foley

Changi Cove remained in the headlines as the handsome **Oriental Plover** continued to show itself throughout the early weeks of the month, along with a fine supporting cast that included “**White-faced**” **Plovers**, a single **Siberian Stonechat**, a single **Pied Harrier** & up to six **Red-throated Pipits** in their handsome breeding plumage.

The grasslands of Pulau Punggol came up trumps again as for 2 consecutive weeks in the early half of March they played host to at least 2 **Booted Eagles**, with 1 of each morph for good measure! In the Central Catchment Forests, observers were swamped with a suspected influx of **Chinese Flycatchers** as throughout the later half of the month various observers reported birds of various sex and plumages across most of the Central Catchment from Bukit Timah Nature Reserve right through to the swamp forests around Upper Pierce Reservoir on the eastern end of

the Catchment. Other notable migrants recorded within the same area during the month included vocal **Blue-winged Pittas** & **Eastern Crowned Warblers**.

In addition, the cloudy day of 23rd March 2008 brought together 46 birdwatchers at 27 different sites across the country for the 23rd Annual Bird Census. With so many pairs of eyes scouring for our feathered friends all over the island, it was not surprising that many interesting records were noted. These included, but were not limited to, **Ruddy Kingfishers** at both Nee Soon & Khatib Bongsu, **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo** at Poyan Reservoir, **Mangrove Pitta** on Pulau Ubin & a **Jambu Fruit Dove** at Chinese Garden. For further details, refer to the enclosed Annual Bird Census Report.

Johore

It was a generally quiet month in Johor, with few observers and not much nesting activity noted until the end of the month. Nevertheless, there were several notable sightings during the month, chief among them the observation of the rarely seen **Lesser Cuckooshrike** & **Yellow-crowned Barbet**; the latter was examining a hole in a dead tree while the former engaging actively in incubation. In addition to the above, other noteworthy sightings included 3 **Scarlet-breasted Flowerpeckers** in 1 day, a beautiful & globally near-threatened Sunda Endemic, as well as a host of babblers that included 4 charming **Black-throated Babblers** and rounding off with the spectacular **Temminck's Sunbird**, another lowland forest specialty that is infrequently observed in Panti.



*Yellow-crowned Barbet at Bunker Trail on 29 March
Photo © Lau Jia Sheng*

Summary

This report covers noteworthy bird sightings in March 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 @ denislim@starhub.net.sg 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:

NTL: Neo Tiew Lane

CCNR: Central Catchment Nature Reserve

SINGAPORE

RED JUNGLEFOWL (*Gallus gallus*)

1 pair and 1 female observed on Pulau Ubin with others heard 16/3 (SC).

LINEATED BARBET (*Megalaima lineata*)

1 at Dairy Farm Road on 6/3 (LKC) and 2 on 8/3 and 22/3 (LKS).

RED-CROWNED BARBET (*Megalaima rafflesii*)

2 seen at Sime Road on 23/3 (LKS). One was feeding on fruits of the Terentang Tree. 1 observed along the Lower Pierce Boardwalk 15/3 (SC). 1 seen low in a mixed feeding flock along Rifle Range Link, CCNR 29/3 (SC/RC)

ORIENTAL PIED HORNBILL (*Anthracoceros albirostris*)

1 seen perched on a lamp-post over-looking a buys CTE during the morning rush hour, 29/3 (LKC)

BLACK-CAPPED KINGFISHER (*Halcyon pileata*)

1 at Dairy Farm Road, 6/3 (LKC)

CHESTNUT-WINGED CUCKOO (*Clamator coromandus*)

1 photographed on Pulau Punggol 1/3 (LWT/LJS/TKH). 1 observed at Neo Tiew Lane 2 15/3 (SC). 1 photographed at Murai Farmway 31/3 (CaC).



Chestnut-winged Cuckoo at Pulau Punggol on 1 March
Photo © Lau Jia Sheng

HODGSON'S HAWK-CUCKOO (*Hierococcyx nasicolor*)

1 juvenile at Dairy Farm Road, 6/3 (LKC)

INDIAN CUCKOO (*Cuculus micropterus*)

1 observed in the forests around Mandai Orchid Garden 15/3 (SC)

BANDED BAY CUCKOO (*Cacomantis sonnerati*)

1 heard at Hindhede Nature Park on 9/3, 14/3 and 29/3 (LKC)

VIOLET CUCKOO (*Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*)

1 heard at BTNR, 8/3 (LKC). 1 heard at Hindhede Nature Park on 9/3, 16/3 and 21/3. Also 1 male seen at the same place on 14/3 (LKC) and 1 female on 22/3 (LKC/LTK)

ASIAN DRONGO-CUCKOO (*Surniculus lugubris*)

1 heard at Dairy Farm Road, 6/3 (LKC). 1 heard at Hindhede Nature Park on 9/3, 16/3, 22/3 and 29/3 (LKC)

CHESTNUT-BELLIED MALKOHA (*Phaenicophaeus sumatranus*)

2 at Sime Road, 23/3 (LKS) and 1 at MacRitchie Reservoir, 23/3 (LKS). 2 observed in the forests around Mandai Orchid Garden 15/3 (SC). 1 associating with a mixed feeding flock at Rifle Range Link, CCNR 29/3 (SC/RC)

BLUE-CROWNED HANGING-PARROT (*Loriculus galgulus*)

1 heard flying over Hindhede Nature Park, 22/3 and 29/3 (LKC)

GLOSSY SWIFTLET (*Collocalia esculenta*)

1 seen over the "lake" at Hindhede Nature Park, 16/3 (LKC). The white belly was noted. Also flapping was continuous and wing beats were relatively faster and deeper than other swiftlets seen together with it.

BARN OWL (*Tyto alba*)

1 perched on the fence at Changi Cove 9/3 (SC/PO)

GREY NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus indicus*)

1 observed roosting off Golf Link Boardwalk, CCNR 29/3 (SC/RC) was subsequently flushed by a troupe of macaques.

SAVANNA NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus affinis*)

2 observed at Changi Cove 9/3 (SC/PO)

RED TURTLE DOVE (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*)

1 pair observed on Pulau Ubin, 16/3 (SC).

COMMON EMERALD DOVE (*Chalcophaps indica*)

1 male at Dairy Farm Road, 6/3 (LKC)

PIED IMPERIAL PIGEON (*Ducula bicolor*)

5 birds flying around Jurong Hill, 6/3 (LKC).

RED-LEGGED CRAKE (*Rallina fasciata*)

1 seen and another heard at Venus Drive Trail, 23/3 (LKS).

RUDDY-BREASTED CRAKE (*Porzana fusca*)

1 flushed from a area of wet grassland around Mandai Orchid Garden 15/3 (SC)

MARSH SANDPIPER (*Tringa stagnatilis*)

1 at Changi Coast on 2/3 (DA/JC/LKS).

WOOD SANDPIPER (*Tringa glareola*)

5 at Lorong Halus on 1/3 (LKC) and 8 on 2/3 (LKS).

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*)

5 at Changi Coast on 2/3 (DA/JC/LKS). 4 at the same site 9/3 (SC/PO)

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*)

3 photographed at Changi Cove 8/3 (LWT/LJS/TKH/CF)

PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*)

10 at Lorong Halus on 2/3 (LKS) and 500 at Changi Coast, 2/3 (DA/JC/LKS). 50 counted at the same site 9/3 (SC/PO)

GREY PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

5 at Changi Coast, 2/3 (DA/JC/LKS). 2 at the same site 9/3 (SC/PO)

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius dubius*)

2 at Lorong Halus on 1/3 (LKC), 2/3 (LKS) and 1 on 8/3. 3 at Changi Cove 9/3 (SC/PO)

KENTISH PLOVER (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

20 counted at Changi Cove 9/3 (SC/PO)

MALAYSIAN PLOVER (*Charadrius peronii*)

5 at Changi Cove 9/3 (SC/PO)

LESSER SAND PLOVER (*Charadrius mongolus*)

100 at Changi Coast, 2/3 (DA/JC/LKS).

ORIENTAL PLOVER (*Charadrius veredus*)

1 in breeding plumage, most likely the same bird recorded a month ago, was seen on 2/3 (JE/MK/YDL/LBW), 8/3 (LWT/LJS/TKH/CF), 9/3 (SC/PO) and 14/3 (LWT/LJS/TKH/CF).



Oriental Plover at Changi Cove on 14 March
Photo © Lau Jia Sheng

“WHITE-FACED” PLOVER (*Charadrius* sp.)

2 seen at Changi Coast, 2/3 (DA/JC/LKS) where earlier 6 had been counted (JE/MK/YDL/LBW).
3 at the same site 9/3 (SC/PO) and 1 male was photographed 14/3 (LWT/LJS/TKH).

RED-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus indicus*)

1 vocal individual was observed circling over Lower Pierce Reservoir 15/3 (SC).

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*)

6 counted off Changi Cove 9/3 (SC/PO)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*)

1 over NTL 2 15/3 (SC)

BLACK BAZA (*Aviceda leuphotes*)

7 at Lorong Halus on 2/3 (LKS).

GREY-HEADED FISH-EAGLE (*Ichthyophaga ichthaetus*)

1 at Hindhede Nature Park, 9/3 (LKC)

EASTERN MARSH HARRIER (*Circus spilonotus*)

3 (1 male & 2 females) observed at Changi Cove 1/3 (LWT/LJS/TKH/CF). A male at Changi Coast on 2/3 (LKS) & a female on the same date (JE/MK/YDL/LBW). 1 female photographed at the same site 8/3 (LWT/LJS/TKH/CF)

PIED HARRIER (*Circus melanoleucos*)

3 (2 females & 1 juvenile) observed and photographed at Changi Cove 1/3 (LWT/LJS/TKH). 1 observed at the same site 14/3 (LWT/LJS/TKH)

BOOTED EAGLE (*Hieraaetus pennatus*)

1 pale-morph was observed and photographed soaring over Pulau Punggol 1/3 (LWT/LJS/TKH/CF). 1 dark morph was seen and photographed 1 week later at the same site on 8/3 (Same Observers)

CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE (*Spizaetus cirrhatus*)

1 heard at Dairy Farm Road on 22/3 (LKS).

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*)

1 seen flying over Sime Road on 23/3 (LKS). 1 observed perched in Casuarinas at Changi Cove 9/3 (AC/AOY/KK)

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

2 at Lor Halus on 2/3 (LKS) and 8/3 (LKC). 2 at Dairy Farm Rd on 6/3 (LKC) and 1 on 22/3 (LKS).

CHINESE EGRET (*Egretta eulophotes*)

1 individual of this globally threatened species was reported foraging along the Chek Jawa Coastline 20/3 (RT). The bird was noted to be in summer plumage.

GREAT-BILLED HERON (*Ardea sumatrana*)

1 flying low across the water from the western tip of Sentosa (Rimau) to the coastline off Keppel Club, 16/3 (DA/JR/PAH/NK)

PURPLE HERON (*Ardea purpurea*)

1 at Lorong Halus on 1/3 (LKC) and 2/3 (LKS).

CHINESE POND HERON (*Ardeola bacchus*)

12 winter birds at Lorong Halus on 2/3 (LKS).

JAVAN POND HERON

(*Ardeola speciosa*)

2 summer birds seen with other winter plumaged pond herons at Lorong Halus on 2/3 (LKS) constitute the fourth record for Singapore. The birds were first reported on 1/3 by LKC. These birds were seen and photographed by numerous observers over the course of the month.



Javan Pond Heron at Lorong Halus on 2 March
Photo © Lee Tiah Khee

YELLOW BITTERN

(*Ixobrychus sinensis*)

1 at Lorong Halus on 2/3 (LKS).

BLUE-WINGED PITTA

(*Pitta moluccensis*)

1 heard and another seen in the forests around Mandai Orchid Garden 15/3 (SC). 1 seen at Sime Road on 23/3 (LKS).

BLUE-WINGED LEAFBIRD (*Chloropsis cochinchinensis*)

1 pair observed in the mixed flock along Rifle Range Link, CCNR 29/3 (SC/RC)

ASHY MINIVET (*Pericrocotus divaricatus*)

6 on albizia at Hindhede Nature Park, 22/3 (LKC) and 15 at BTNR, 24/3 (LKC)

BLACK DRONGO (*Dicrurus macrocerus*)

3 at Changi Coast, 2/3 (DA/JC/LKS).

CROW-BILLED DRONGO (*Dicrurus annectans*)

2 observed on Pulau Ubin 16/3 (SC). 1 observed in a mixed flock at Rifle Range Link, CCNR 29/3 (SC/RC).

YELLOW-RUMPED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula zanthopygia*)

1 male seen high up on albizia tree, Hindhede Nature Park, 22/3 (LKC)

CHINESE FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula elisae*)

1 female observed along the boardwalk near Jelutong Tower, CCNR 10/3 (GS/TP/RC). 1 1st winter male was subsequently seen at Hindhede Park 14/3 (LKC/DA). 1 male was then seen at Nee Soon Swamp Forest on 21/3 (AC/AOY/KK/DA). Alfred reports: "This bird had a very narrow and indistinct whitish eye-ring (none of the typical yellow), a very faint supercilium, absence of a loreal stripe, a uniform yellowish belly and underparts, a broad white wing patch against darker wings, a bright yellowish rump and dull-greenish mantle. An active bird, it was heard calling with a soft and low tsrk, trsk..purring-type of sound."

1 observed in a mixed flock at Rifle Range Link, CCNR was determined to be either a female or 1st winter bird 29/3 (SC/RC).



Chinese Flycatcher at CCNR on 15 March
Photo © Timothy Pwee

WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA (*Copsychus malabaricus*)

2 observed and several others heard on Pulau Ubin 16/3 (SC). 1 vocal male observed singing near Bukit Kalang Pumping Station, CCNR on 17/3 (CC)

SIBERIAN STONECHAT (*Saxicola maura*)

1 observed at Changi Cove 2/3 (JE/MK/LBW/YDL)

COMMON HILL MYNA

(*Gracula religiosa*)

A pair at Dairy Farm Road on 22/3 (LKS).

STRAW-HEADED BULBUL

(*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*)

2 seen at Dairy Farm Road, 6/3 (LKC) and at least 4 birds observed in the area around Mandai Orchid Garden 15/3 (SC).

BLACK-CRESTED BULBUL

(*Pycnonotus melanicterus*)

1 at the summit of BTNR, 28/3 (LKC/LTK)



Common Hill Myna at Hindhede Park on 23 March

Photo © Lee Tiah Khee

RED-WHISKERED BULBUL

(*Pycnonotus jocosus*)

1 heard at Lorong Halus on 1/3 and 2 seen on 2/3 (LKS). 1 observed at Nee Soon Swamp Forest 21/3 (AC/AOY/KK/DA)

ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops palpebrosa*)

6 feeding on macaranga at Hindhede Nature Park, 22/3, 4 on 24/3 and 5 on 29/3 (LKC)

EASTERN CROWNED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus coronatus*)

2 birds observed in a mixed flock along Rifle Range Link, CCNR 29/3 (SC/RC) were noted to be vocalising.

SHORT-TAILED BABBLER (*Malacocincla malaccensis*)

1 pair observed foraging on the forest floor was loosely associating with the mixed flock along Rifle Range Link, CCNR 29/3 (SC/RC)

CHESTNUT-WINGED BABBLER (*Stachyris erythroptera*)

1 observed associating with Pin-striped Tit-babblers in a mixed flock along Rifle Range Link, CCNR 29/3 (SC/RC).

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*)

1 pair was seen nesting under the roof rafter in the security guard house on Jurong Island, 7/3. The pair was seen going in and out of the nest probably feeding chicks. (LKC)

FOREST WAGTAIL (*Dendronanthus indicus*)

1 seen at Dairy Farm Road on 8/3 (LKS). The bird was foraging on the forest floor and allowed approach to within 3 metres.

RED-THROATED PIPIT (*Anthus cervinus*)

6 counted at Changi Cove 9/3 (SC/PO). All individuals were noted to be sporting breeding plumage.

NESTING RECORDS

PIED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura javanica*)

1 pair was observed nesting at Hindhede Nature Park, 9/3 (LKC). This was first reported by CCP/DA on 7/3. The small cup-shaped nest was built on the branch of a tree that has fallen over into the quarry. The nest was very exposed and clearly visible. Both parents took turns incubating the egg. A single chick was observed to have hatched on 23/3 (LKC). Both parents took turns to feed the chick. By 30/3, the chick was seen to have develop some quill feathers and the white eye-brow was visible

COMMON HILL MYNA (*Gracula religiosa*)

A pair was seen inspecting a nest hole on an albizia tree at Hindhede Nature Park, 22/3 (LKC/LTK). The nest was constructed on a vertical crack in the tree, about 5 m above the ground. The pair was very intimate and would perched next to each other and caressing each other. On one occasion, the pair chased off a squirrel that got too close to the hole. They chased the squirrel for more than a minute up and down the tree until the squirrel eventually decided to move away. Unfortunately, the nesting was not successful as subsequent visits found a pair of Javan Myna occupying the nesting hole. Obviously there is much competition for the limited number of nesting holes available.



*An intimate pair of Common Hill Myna at Hindhede Park on 22 March
Photo © Lee Tiah Kee*

STRAW-HEADED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*)

1 seen with a string of Dischidia fern in its beak at Hindhede Nature Park (next to the look-out point overlooking the "lake"), 23/3 (LKC). It subsequently disappeared into the dense vegetation

JOHOR

BUFF-RUMPED WOODPECKER (*Meiglyptes tristis*)

1 reported from Bunker Trail 29/3.

BUFF-NECKED WOODPECKER (*Meiglyptes tukki*)

1 reported from Bunker Trail 22/3.

YELLOW-CROWNED BARBET (*Megalaima henrici*)

1 photographed inspecting a suitable nesting hole at Bunker Trail on 29/3 is a good record of this infrequently observed species in Pantl.

BROWN BARBET (*Calorhamphus fuliginosus*)

1 observed at Bunker Trail 22/3 & 4 on 29/3 at the same location

RED-BEARDED BEE-EATER (*Nyctornis amictus*)

2 observed at Bunker Trail 29/3.

BLYTH'S HAWK-EAGLE (*Spizaetus alboniger*)

The nesting pair at 270 Trail is still active. This known nest site must be 1 of the few that are known from Malaysia's lowlands.

MALAYSIAN RAIL-BABBLER (*Eupetes macrocerus*)

At least 2 heard at Bunker Trail on 29/3

LESSER CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina fimbriata*)

1 pair observed take turns sitting on a cup-shaped nest built on the fork of a tree at Bunker Trail 29/3. They were observed changing shifts every 30mins or so.



Lesser Cuckooshrike at Bunker Trail on 29 March
Photo © Lau Jia Sheng

BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE (*Hemipus picatus*)

An active nest featured 2 adults taking turns incubating on 29/3 at Bunker Trail.



Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike at Bunker Trail on 29 March
Photo © Lau Jia Sheng

WHITE-CROWNED FORKTAIL (*Enicurus leschenaulti*)

1 observed at Bunker Trail on 29/3.

SPECTACLED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus erythrophthalmos*)

2 observed at Bunker Trail on 29/3.

STREAKED BULBUL (*Ixos malaccensis*)

1 observed at Bunker Trail on 29/3.

RUFOUS-CROWNED BABBLER (*Malacopteron magnum*)

2 observed at Bunker Trail on 22/3.



Rufous-crowned Babbler at Bunker Trail
Photo © Lau Jia Sheng

BLACK-THROATED BABBLER (*Stachyris nigricollis*)

A party of at least 4 birds observed at Bunker Trail on 29/3.

CHESTNUT-RUMPED BABBLER (*Stachyris maculata*)

2 observed at Bunker Trail on 29/3.



Chestnut-rumped Babbler at Bunker Trail on 29 March
Photo © Lau Jia Sheng

SCARLET-BREASTED FLOWERPECKER (*Prionochilus thoracicus*)

2 males & 1 female of this globally near-threatened Sunda Endemic were observed at Bunker Trail on 29/3.

RED-THROATED SUNBIRD (*Anthreptes rhodolaema*)

At least 3 observed at Bunker Trail on 22/3.

RUBY-CHEEKED SUNBIRD (*Anthreptes singalensis*)

2 observed at Bunker Trail on 22/3.

TEMMINCK'S SUNBIRD (*Aethopyga temminckii*)

1 observed at Bunker Trail on 22/3 rounded off a good day

Note: All records in this section are submitted by (LWT/LJS/TKH) unless otherwise stated.

RAPTOR REPORT

March 2008

By Alan Owyong and Kenneth Kee

Summary

With more observers this month due to the Annual Bird Census (ABC), the number of migrant raptors for March rose to 99 more than the 82 in February. The percentage of **Black Bazas** dropped to 62% from 72% last month but remains at the top with a count of 61. The surprise and bird of the month must be the rare **Booted Eagles**, a pale morph reported by Jia Sheng on the 1st and a dark morph 7 days later by Kok Hui, Danny, Jia Sheng and Con Foley. Both sightings, first for the season, were at the Seletar Airport. The **Common Buzzard** was again seen at Changi Coastal road by Kenneth and Alan on 9 March, after disappearing in February. These two boosted the total species to 9 for March. Kok Hui's group also got a **Pied Harrier** at Changi Cove to add to their sighting of this Harrier at Tuas last month. Kudos to Kok Hui and company for having the best sighting records of rare migrating raptors this season. The pair of **Eastern Marsh Harriers** was still hovering around Changi Cove, first reported in February. The **Peregrine Falcon** seems to be wintering at Pulau Ubin, with one more sighting this month. A STOMPPer, Jason photographed a **Peregrine Falcon** perched on a ledge of a HDB block in Sengkang and posted it to STOMP website. Could this be a first for our heartland? Mike Hooper had another one right in downtown Shenton Way! KC Tsang photographed a pair of **Crested Honey-buzzard** "buzzing" at his place of residence while Margie Hall reported one flying over her garden at Sembawang Park.



Leslie Fung's late photo of the Chinese Sparrowhawk taken at Sungei Buloh on 21st February graced this month cover.

The numbers of resident raptors shot up to 82 compared to 57 in February. This was boosted by a large count of 11 **Black-winged Kites** by Kok Hui's group on 14 March at Changi Cove, Tuas and Seletar. Again the **White-bellied Sea Eagles** and **Brahminy Kites** took up the top two positions. The ABC count gave a very good picture on the distribution of our resident raptors and contributed to this month's record figures. We had the highest count of **White-bellied Sea Eagles** (29), **Brahminy Kites** (26), **Black-winged Kites** (18) and **Changeable Hawk-eagles** (8) since we started compiling this report in Nov'07. Margaret Yeo's sighting of a circling **Grey-headed Fish Eagle** over Sungei Buloh was an excellent record for this nationally and globally threatened bird.

Table 1

| No | Migrating Raptors | Total for the month |
|----|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Black Baza | 61 |
| 2 | Crested Honey-buzzard | 12 |
| 3 | Peregrine Falcon | 7 |
| 4 | Japanese Sparrowhawk | 3 |
| 5 | Osprey | 6 |
| 6 | Eastern Marsh Harrier | 3 |
| 7 | Pied Harrier | 1 |
| 8 | Common Buzzard | 1 |
| 9 | Booted Eagle | 2 |
| | Unidentified | 3 |
| | Total | 99 |

Table 2

| No | Resident Raptors | Total for the month |
|----|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 10 | White-bellied Sea Eagle | 29 |
| 11 | Brahminy Kite | 26 |
| 12 | Changeable Hawk-eagle | 8 |
| 13 | Black-winged Kite | 18 |
| 14 | Grey-headed Fish Eagle | 1 |
| | Total | 82 |

Note : The total numbers in Table 1 & 2 are just an indicative figure for this report only as there could be a possibility of double-counting the same bird in a small island like Singapore.

INDIVIDUAL RECORDS

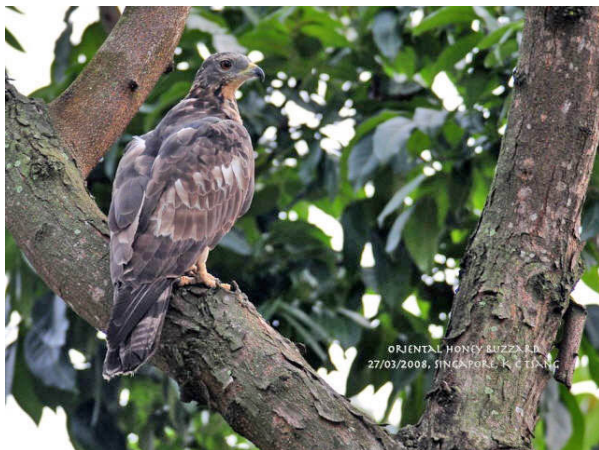
MIGRANT RAPTORS

1. Black Baza

| Date | No. | Location | Reported by. |
|------|-----|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 2/3 | 7 | Lorong Halus | Kim Seng |
| 7/3 | 1 | Punggol Grassland | Kok Hui |
| 8/3 | 1 | Neo Tiew Lane 2 | Doreen |
| 8/3 | 1 | Marina East | Mike Hooper |
| 9/3 | 3 | Circling over Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR) | Margaret Yeo |
| 14/3 | 4 | Seletar | Kok Hui, Con Foley, Danny & Jia Seng |
| 14/3 | 3 | Kranji Trail | Margie Hall |
| 16/3 | 4 | Labrador Park | Doreen, Ah Huay, Jane Rogers & Nessie |
| 21/3 | 1 | Bukit Batok West, photo taken | Ben Lee |
| 21/3 | 2 | Marina East | Mike Hooper |
| 23/3 | 10 | Serangoon during ABC | Kok Hui |
| 23/3 | 10 | Sembawang Park during ABC | Margie Hall |
| 23/3 | 1 | Bukit Batok West during ABC | Wing Chong, Yangchen & Phang Seng Khai |
| 23/3 | 7 | Malcolm Park during ABC | Jane Rogers |
| 23/3 | 1 | SBWR route2 during ABC | Sunny Teo |
| 23/3 | 3 | Khatib Bongsu during ABC | Hua Chew |
| 25/3 | 1 | Marina South | Mike Hooper |
| 29/3 | 1 | Marina East | Mike Hooper |

2. Crested (Oriental) Honey-buzzard

| Date | No | Location | Reported by |
|------|----|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 14/3 | 2 | 1 dark morph & 1 pale morph at Changi Cove | Kok Hui & Company |
| 14/3 | 2 | Soaring very high at Upper Pierce | KC Tsang |
| 16/3 | 1 | Bashing at a Yellow Palm at King's Ave | Margie Hall |
| 21/3 | 1 | Bukit Batok West, photo taken | Ben Lee |
| 23/3 | 1 | SBWR during ABC | Keith Hiller |
| 23/3 | 1 | Perched and preening at Casuarina tree at Kent Ridge | Alan OwYong |
| 23/3 | 1 | Soaring over Telok Blangah Park during ABC | Kenneth Kee |
| 27/3 | 2 | 1 adult & 1 juvenile at Simon's Place, Upper Serangoon | KC Tsang |
| 28/3 | 1 | One flying over Margie's garden at Sembawang Park | Margie Hall |



Crested Honey-buzzard by KC Tsang



Peregrine Falcon (juvenile) by Lee Tiah Khee at Japanese garden

3. Peregrine Falcon

- 8th Doreen reported one at Neo Tiew Lane 2
- 9th Kenneth, Alfred, Avian and Alan had good views of one at Changi Cove.
- 14th Kok Hui, Con, Danny and Jia Sheng reported one at Seletar area.
- 18th Mike Hooper had one right in downtown Shenton Way!
- 23rd One reported at Pulau Ubin by Chung Cheong. This falcon seem to be wintering there for over a month. Kim Seng saw one flying across the Sime Forest.
- 26th STOMPer, Jason photographed one at a HDB block at Sengkang and post it at the following website

: <http://singaporeseen.stomp.com.sg/singaporeseen/viewContent.jsp?id=17145>

4. Japanese Sparrowhawk

- 4th Lee Tiah Khee photographed one at Lorong Halus
- 5th KC Tsang also had a photo taken at the same place.
- 16th One was reported at Labrador Park by Doreen, Jane, Nessie and Ah Huay

5. Osprey

- 8th One reported by Doreen at Neo Tiew Lane 2
- 6th Kok Hui and Lam Soo Yen reported one at Lorong Halus
- 23rd Two were seen at Mandai mudflats by Lim Kim Keang and Lynn Ng.
- 28th One seen flying towards P. Serangoon by Chung Cheong
- 30th One reported by KC Tsang at Upper Seletar, perching on a rotten tree trunk.

6. Eastern Marsh Harrier

- 2nd Ding Li saw a female at Changi Cove.
8th Mike Hooper got one at Marina East
9th Alan, Kenneth, Alfred and Avian reported two flying low at Changi Cove
14th Kok Hui, Con Foley, Danny and Jia Sheng reported one male and one female flying over the Changi Cove. This pair could be wintering there since February.

7. Pied Harrier

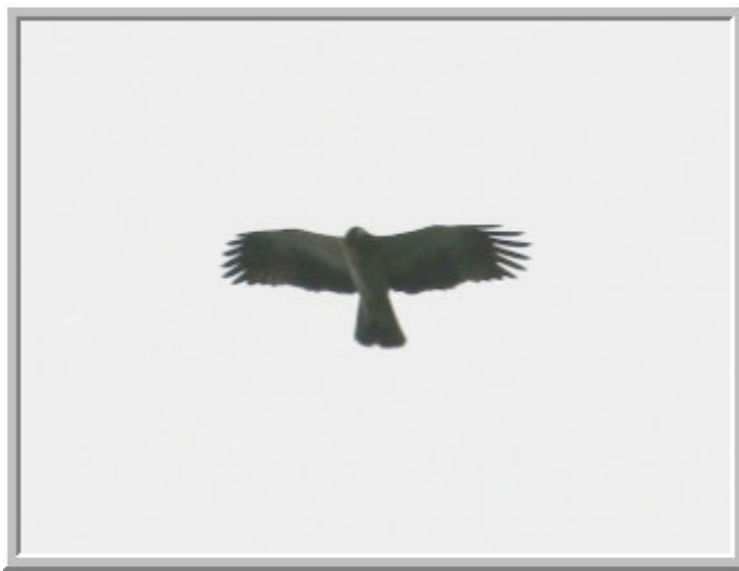
- 14th Kok Hui, Con Foley, Danny and Jia Sheng followed up with a sighting of one at Changi Cove, after their sighting of one at Tuas last month.

8. Common Buzzard

- 9th Kenneth and Alan seen one perched on the airport fence along the Changi Coastal Road. Could this be the same bird Alfred saw in January ?

9. Booted Eagle

- 1st A pale morph was reported and photographed by Jia Sheng at Seletar Airport
8th A dark morph was seen at Seletar Airport by Kok Hui, Con Foley, Danny and Jia Sheng.



**RAPTOR OF
THE MONTH**

Booted Eagle (pale morph), a rare migrant to Singapore by Jia Sheng

Unidentified

- 16th Two unidentified Accipiters reported by Doreen and Company at Labrador Park.
23rd One unidentified Accipiter reported by Wing Chong at Bukit Batok West
23rd One unidentified Accipiter reported by Keith Hillier at Sungei Buloh route 1

RESIDENT RAPTORS



Our majestic White-bellied Sea Eagle, captured by Lam Hon Pui at Botanic Gardens

10. White-bellied Sea Eagle

| Date | No | Location | Reported by |
|-------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1/3 | 2 | Seletar Airport | Jia Sheng |
| 2/3 | 1 | Changi Cove | Ding Li |
| 8/3 | 2 | Neo Tiew Lane 2 | Doreen |
| 8/3 | 1 | Photographed flying over the lake at Botanic Gardens | Lam Hon Pui |
| 10/3 | 1 | Nesting at Yishun Ave | Kok Hui |
| 14/3 | 5 | Changi Cove, Seletar and Tuas | Con Foley, Danny, Kok Hui & Jia Sheng |
| 14/3 | 1 | Upper Pierce | KC Tsang |
| 14/3 | 2 | Kranji Trail | Margie Hall |
| 17/3 | 1 | Nesting at P.Ubin, photo taken | Ben Lee |
| 23/3 | 1 | Juvenile at Sembawang Park | Margie Hall |
| 23/3 | 1 | Bukit Batok West during ABC | Wing Chong, Yangchen Phang Seng Khai |
| 23/3 | 2 | SBWR during ABC | Keith Hillier |
| 23/3 | 2 | Lor Halus during ABC | Alfred Chia |
| 23/3 | 1 | P. Ubin Central during ABC | Chung Cheong |
| 23/3 | 2 | P. Ubin West during ABC | Willie Foo |
| 23/3 | 1 | Nee Soon during ABC | Albert Low |
| 23/3 | 2 | Mandai Mudflats during ABC | Kim Keang, Lynn Ng |
| 23/3 | 1 | Khatib Bongsu during ABC | Ho Hua Chew |

11. Brahminy Kite

| Date | No | Location | Reported by |
|------|----|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1/3 | 4 | Thermaling at Seletar Airport | Jia Sheng |
| 2/3 | 1 | Changi Cove | Ding Li |
| 8/3 | 1 | Neo Tiew Lane 2 | Doreen |
| 14/3 | 5 | Seletar and Changi Cove | Danny, Jia Sheng, Kok Hui & Con Foley |
| 14/3 | 1 | Upper Pierce | KC Tsang |
| 16/3 | 1 | Labrador Park | Doreen, Jane Rogers, Ah Huay & Nessie |
| 21/3 | 1 | Bukit Batok West, photo taken | Ben Lee |
| 22/3 | 1 | Perched on a tree at Pearl Bank Park | Lee Lay Tin |
| 23/3 | 1 | Punggol Grassland during ABC | James Heng |
| 23/3 | 2 | Sungei Serangoon during ABC | Kok Hui |
| 23/3 | 1 | Bukit Batok West during ABC | Wing Chong, Yangchen, Phang Seng Khai |
| 23/3 | 1 | SBWR during ABC | Keith Hiller |
| 23/3 | 1 | Lor Halus during ABC | Alfred Chia |
| 23/3 | 2 | Malcolm Park during ABC | Jane Rogers |
| 23/3 | 2 | P. Ubin Central | Chung Cheong |
| 23/3 | 1 | Mandai Mudflats during ABC | Kim Keang, Lynn Ng |

12. Changeable Hawk-eagle

- 8th Two pale morph reported at Neo Tiew Lane by Doreen and Hua Chew
 8th One heard over Punggol reported by Kok Hui, Danny and Jia Sheng
 14th One at KJE and another at Changi Cove reported by Kok Hui, Con, Danny and Jia Sheng
 23rd One heard calling for 20 mins at S. Serangoon by Kok Hui during ABC
 23rd One at P. Ubin West during ABC by Willie Foo
 23rd One at Nee Soon during ABC by Albert Low
 23rd One at Marina East during ABC by Harry Ong

13. Black-winged Kite

- 2nd One at Lorong Halus reported by Kim Seng
 8th One at Neo Tiew Lane 2 reported by Doreen
 9th One at Changi Cove reported by Simon Cockayne and Piet
 14th A total of 11 counted and reported at Changi Cove, Tuas and Seletar by Kok Hui, Con Foley, Danny and Jia Sheng.
 21st Two at Punggol Grassland by James Heng
 23rd One at Marina East during ABC by Harry Ong
 28th One perched at Punggol grassland by Chung Cheong

14. Grey-headed Fish Eagle

- 9th One circling over Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve reported by Margaret Yeo.

Compiled by Alan OwYong from postings on WildbirdSingapore e-group. Edited and layout by Kenneth Kee. Many thanks to the numerous contributions and reports from the birders and photos from Jia Sheng, Lam Hon Pui, Lee Tiah Khee, Leslie Fung and KC Tsang.

Report on the 23rd Annual Bird Census

By Lim Kim Seng

The 23rd Annual Bird Census (ABC) was held on 23rd March 2008 in generally cloudy weather and saw the involvement of a total of 46 people at 27 sites. 9,153 birds from 153 species were recorded compared with 7,667 birds from 145 species in 2007 and 10,366 birds from 168 species in 2006 and 9,100 birds from 156 species in 2005 (Lim K.C. 2005; Lim, K.S. 2006, 2007). The total number of birds and species counted were both better than 2007 (Lim, K.C. 2005; Lim, K.S. 2006, 2007; Figure 1).

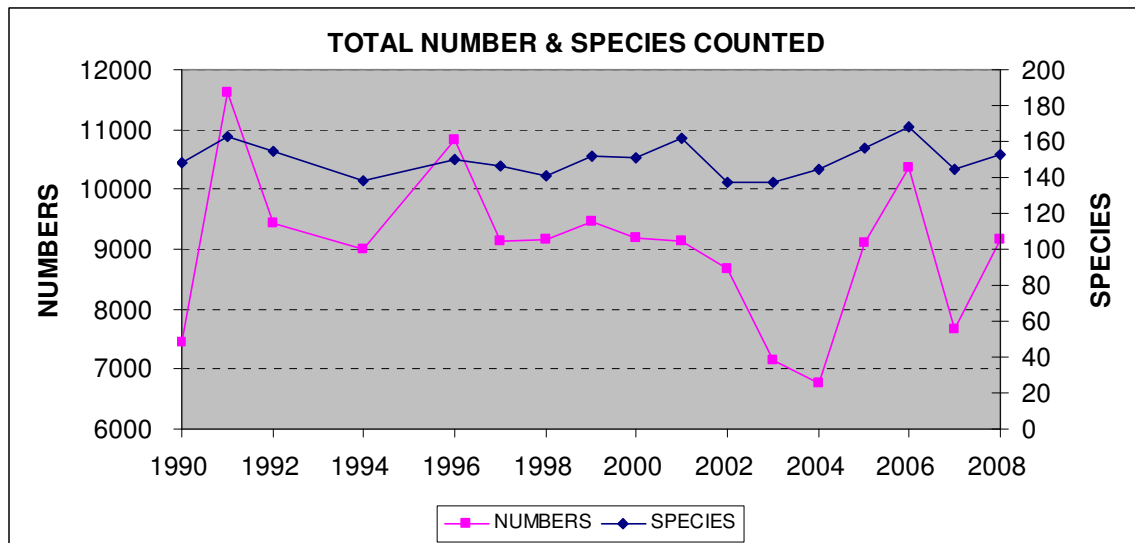


Figure 1: Total bird numbers and species of Annual Bird Census, 1990-2008

Of the 27 sites counted, Lorong Halus and Neo Tiew Lane 2 were the most diverse with 54 species each followed closely by Ubin Central with 52 species. The least diverse sites were Bukit Brown with 16 species recorded, followed by Mount Faber with 24 species and Kent Ridge Park and Marina East, both with 25 species.

The most bird populous site was, as expected, Sungei Mandai. It had 1,896 birds, up from 1,465 birds of 2007 but still below the 1,950 birds counted in 2006. Coming a distant second was Neo Tiew Lane 2 with 625 birds and third was Pasir Ris Park with 436 birds. The least populous sites were Marina East with 110 birds counted, followed by Sime Road with 133 birds and Telok Blangah Hill Park (144).

Pulau Ubin and Sungei Buloh were two megabiodiversity protected areas which had two sites each in ABC 2008 but it was Ubin which had a better overall diversity with 65 species compared to Buloh's 53. In terms of abundance, Pulau Ubin was also well ahead with 685 birds compared to Buloh's rather mediocre 534.

Because of the lack of observers and other extenuating circumstances, Bukit Batok Nature Park, Changi Beach, Kranji Dam, Sentosa, Simpang Grassland and Upper Seletar Reservoir were not covered in this year's census. On the bright side, Chinese Garden and Marina East were new sites counted for the very first time in ABC history and Pasir Ris Park returned after a prolonged

absence. It is hoped that the pool of leaders can be increased in the years ahead, with the involvement of more people from the birding community.

What then was Singapore's most numerous bird? Well, it was none other than our ubiquitous sturnid yet again. The White-vented Myna retained its pole position for the second successive year with a score of 1,364 birds, a big increase from 979 birds in 2007 and 862 in 2006. The Pacific Golden Plover was second with a count of 1,038 an increase from 851 of 2007 but still well below 1,577 of 2006 (Table 1). Coming in third to fifth positions were the same species as in 2007 but with Asian Glossy Starling improving its numbers to take third place ahead of Yellow-vented Bulbul and Pink-necked Green Pigeon. Their numbers in 2008 were 607, 468 and 448 compared with 372, 441 and 363 respectively in 2007. All showed an increase when compared with 2007.

The other top five birds were Black-naped Oriole, which improved from eighth position with a score of 243, followed by Whimbrel (232), Spotted Dove (210), Common Greenshank (202) and House Crow (191).

The top 20 birds of 2008 are listed below (Table 1) together with comparative numbers and rankings from 2007:

| # | SPECIES | ABC 2008 | ABC 2007 |
|----|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| 1 | WHITE-VENTED MYNA | 1364 | 979 (1) |
| 2 | PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER | 1038 | 851 (2) |
| 3 | ASIAN GLOSSY STARLING | 607 | 372 (4) |
| 4 | YELLOW-VENTED BULBUL | 468 | 441 (3) |
| 5 | PINK-NECKED GREEN PIGEON | 448 | 363 (5) |
| 6 | BLACK-NAPED ORIOLE | 243 | 213 (8) |
| 7 | WHIMBREL | 232 | 165 (13) |
| 8 | SPOTTED DOVE | 210 | 186 (9) |
| 9 | COMMON GREENSHANK | 202 | 121 (15) |
| 10 | HOUSE CROW | 191 | 182 (10) |
| 11 | LITTLE EGRET | 190 | 276 (7) |
| 12 | COLLARED KINGFISHER | 165 | 168 (12) |
| 13 | PACIFIC SWALLOW | 162 | 181 (11) |
| 14 | BARN SWALLOW | 152 | 337 (6) |
| 15 | COMMON IORA | 132 | 111 (18) |
| 16 | ASHY MINIVET | 128 | 50 (32) |
| 17 | OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD | 127 | 100 (19) |
| 18 | GREY HERON | 115 | 128 (14) |
| 19 | WHITE-BREADED WATERHEN | 113 | 87 (22) |
| 20 | COMMON PIGEON | 112 | 80 (23) |

Table 1: Top 20 Most Numerous Birds in ABC 2008

Of the 56 nationally threatened species, 21 species (up from 19 in 2007) or 37.5% were recorded. The most abundant nationally threatened species was Grey Heron with 115 birds, down from 128 birds in 2007 and falling to 18th position overall. The only globally threatened species encountered in this year's census was Straw-headed Bulbul of which 51 birds were recorded, up slightly from 50 in 2007 and putting it in 41st position.

The most exciting birds observed during ABC 2008 were two Ruddy Kingfishers at Khatib Bongsu and Nee Soon, a Chestnut-winged Cuckoo at Poyan, a Jambu Fruit-dove at Chinese Garden, two summer-plumaged Javan Pond Herons at Sungei Mandai and Lorong Halus, a Blue-winged Pitta at Sime Road, a Mangrove Pitta at Ubin West, an Asian Paradise-flycatcher at Nee Soon and a male Yellow-rumped Flycatcher at Lorong Halus.

The following people led or assisted in ABC 2008 and made it a success:

Ali Jaafar, Doreen Ang, D Chan, Chan Kim Cheng, Chan Mei Yee, Alfred Chia, Avian Chia, Geoffrey Davison, Willie Foo, Goh Si Guim, Margie Hall, James Heng, Keith Hillier, Ho Hua Chew, Kenneth Kee, Nessie Khoo, Maurice Kwan, Danny Lau, Lee Ee Ling, Karen Lim, Lim Kim Chuah, Lim Kim Keang, Lim Kim Seng, Lin Yang Chen, Low Bing Wen, Lyn Ng, Harry Ong, Kim Ong, Alan Owyong, Peng Ah Huay, Phang Seng Khai, Timothy Pwee, Rehan Yusoff, Jane Rogers, Gloria Seow, Soon Tze Chien, Tan Kok Hui, Tan Siew Kwang, Tan Soon Im, Teh Kiam Poh, Wee Sau Cheng, Wing Chong, Wong Chung Cheong, Yang Pah Liang and Sunny Yeo.



Jambu Fruit-dove (Male) just outside Japanese Garden taken on 25 Dec 2007
Photo © Tan Gim Cheong

As both ABC coordinator and compiler, I would like to applaud the response of the 2008 leaders. All but two of the 27 site leaders returned their forms within a week, most on the day itself. It is hoped that all leaders will attempt to return their forms within the day itself in future. 89% of the leaders also used the designated forms which greatly reduced both transcribing errors and collating time. For example, it takes less than 10 seconds to upload a prescribed form into a master spreadsheet but more than 10 minutes to transfer data from a list in email, Microsoft Word or other formats, and another few minutes to check for errors. It is hoped that the 2009 edition of the ABC will see 100% usage of the official forms. If this happens and forms are received within hours after completion of the census, it may even be possible to send out a report on the day itself! How's that for efficiency?

Thanks once again to all who helped ensure the success of this 23rd edition of the ABC. Hope you had fun and see you again in 2009! Bring your friends and family along too!

Thanks to Tan Gim Cheong for allowing us to use his photo for this report.

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Bird in Focus

HOODED PITTA

Pitta sordida



Hooded Pitta at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve 14 Feb 2007
Photo © Lee Tiah Khee

Order PASSERIFORMES
Suborder EURYLAIMI
Family PITTIDAE

Some Cool Facts

- According to the Handbook of the Birds of the World Volume 8, there are 30 species of pitta in the world of which most are concentrated in Asia.
- Singapore has three species namely Mangrove Pitta, Blue-winged Pitta and Hooded Pitta. Both Blue-winged and Hooded Pitta are migratory.

Distribution

- This species is one of the most widely distributed, with twelve subspecies breeding from the foothill of the Himalayas through South-East Asia to New Guinea, including various islands in Indonesia and Philippines.
- In Singapore, has been recorded in Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, Tyservall Woods, Botanic Gardens, Central Catchment Reserve, Hindhede Nature Park. In addition, it has been found in urban, industrial and housing areas during migration. One dead bird was found on Jurong Island on 18 Dec 2007.

Description

- Relatively small pitta
- Black head
- Brown crown and nape
- Belly and undertail coverts red.
- Rest of body green

Habitat

- Forested and wooded habitats, sometimes including overgrown plantations, orchards and scrub. Largely confined to the lowland.

Food

- Insects of many kinds e.g. beetles, ants, termites bugs and various larva. Also earthworms and snails.

Behaviour

- Highly territorial and mostly found singly
- If disturbed, they usually hop away rapidly rather than flying up into the vegetation in the manner of many other pittas

Breeding

- In South-East Asia, eggs in May-Oct and Dec-Apr in Borneo.
- Nest, built by both sexes is a football-sized flattened dome made of twigs, dead and skeletonized leaves, plant fibres, rootlets and moss and lined with finer material.

Movement

- Several subspecies of Hooded Pitta make migratory or dispersive movements
- Northern populations of subspecies *cucullata* are the only long-distance migrants, traveling from the northern parts of their range in South-East Asia to Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore and Sumatra
- Studies of night-flying migrants at Fraser's Hill have shown that Hooded Pitta pass through the Peninsula from 15 Oct to 22 Dec in the autumn and 7 Apr to 8 May in spring
- In Singapore, early date is 3 Dec and late date is 10 Apr. Southbound passage is Nov-Dec and northbound Mar-Apr. Most birds are detected in Dec-Jan period.

Conservation Status

- Not globally near-threatened.
- Common and widespread to rare and local.

Acknowledgement

Many thanks to Lee Tiah Khee for the use of his photographs.

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