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Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo on 26 June 2008, Photo © Frankie



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Bird Report

June 2008

By Albert Low

Highlights

Singapore



Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo at Marina East on 8 June 2008
Photo © Mike Hooper

June 2008 was the month of the Cuckoo. With the exception of the Rusty-breasted Cuckoo, virtually all the resident cuckoos were seen and reported. In addition to that, the rare **Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo** made another appearance in the same general area of Marina South/East after a 2-year hiatus, with the last reported sighting being in 2005. However, despite the follow-up trips made by some observers, the birds could not be relocated.

Elsewhere around the island, all the resident cuckoos showed well with **Chestnut-bellied Malkoha** & **Asian Drongo Cuckoo** in the forests of the Central Catchment, **Banded Bay** & **Violet Cuckoos** in Hindhede Park & both **Little Bronze** & **Plaintive Cuckoos** in Marina East as well, rounding off the whole merry band.

Another interesting avian event this month was the fruiting of the *Ficus* tree on the summit of Bukit Timah Hill. This usually bi-annual event has the potential to attract a slew of frugivores including some of Singapore's rarest birds. Expectedly, the mid-year fruiting was relatively quiet, but still produced some of our rarer forest denizens. These included a single **Jambu Fruit-Dove**, a pair of **Thick-billed Pigeons**, a single **Lesser Green Leafbird** & 2 **Cream-vented Bulbuls**.

Some of the other notable residents observed this month included 3 **Ruddy-breasted Crakes** at Marina East, a good sign that the localised resident population is still present in spite of the development in this area, a very interesting record of a juvenile **White-rumped Shama** present throughout the month at Mount Faber, 2 individuals of the increasingly rare and localised **Abbott's Babbler** observed at Sime Forest and a single **Red-legged Crake** in the same area.

Special mention goes out to the failed nesting of a pair of **Red-wattled Lapwings** in Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, the first record for the Reserve and probably the first nesting record in the Northwest. Unfortunately, The parents and the eggs were nowhere to be found by the middle of the month, with the exposed location of the nest likely responsible for its own downfall. On a happier note, a **Changeable Hawk-Eagle** successfully fledged from a nest at Mount Faber, adding 1 more to the population of this locally threatened raptor.



*Red-wattled Lapwing nesting at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve
Photo © Kenneth Kee*

Johor

It was an uneventful month in Panty Forest Reserve, with few noteworthy records outside of the birds 1 would come to expect to see on an average birding trip there.

The best of the bunch would be a group of 6 Crested Partridges foraging by a campsite alongside a stream. As mentioned before, any galliformes observed in Panty are good records, especially considering the increasing encroachment of Oil Palm around this increasingly fragmented forest.

Sightings of Malaysian Rail-Babbler were surprisingly non-existent, with only 1 observed early in the month and not even a heard-only for the rest of it. Other notable records this month included a single Wrinkled Hornbill, ironically what is becoming an increasingly regular site for this species, as well as the globally near-threatened Finsch's Bulbul appearing in the records for the 2nd consecutive month. Special mention also goes out to the sighting of 2 Ashy Bultuls, a species normally associated with hill-slopes and montane elevations in the Malay Peninsula, and an infrequently recorded species in the PFR.

Summary

This report covers noteworthy bird sightings in June 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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Doreen Ang (DA), Chow Chong Peck Andrew (CCP), Frankie (Fr), Ho Hua Chew (HHC), Kenneth Kee (KK), Lau Weng Thor (LWT), Lau Jia Sheng (LJS), Lee Tiah Khee (LTK), Lim Kim Chuah (LKC), Lim Kim Seng (LKS), Low Bing Wen (LBW), Ong Kiem Sian (OKS), Tan Gim Cheong (TGC), Jimmy Tan (JT), Tan Kok Hui (TKH), Wong Chung Cheong (WCC), Alan Lewis (AL), Andy Sims (AS), Con Foley (CF), Mike Hooper (MH), Pete Morris (PM) and all those who contributed by posting their sightings in the wildbirdsingapore E-group.

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Abbreviations Used:

BTNR: Bukit Timah Nature Reserve
BBNP: Bukit Batok Nature Park
PFR: Panti Forest Reserve

SINGAPORE

RUFIOUS WOODPECKER (*Celeus brachyurus*)

2 observed at BBNP actively picking off food from one tree to another on 28/6 (DA).

LINEATED BARBET (*Megalaima lineata*)

1 observed at BBNP calling and flipping its tail at the same time on 28/6 (DA).

RED-CROWNED BARBET (*Megalaima rafflesii*)

1 observed at Sime Forest near SICC swimming pool by the road side flying from one fruiting tree to the next on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS).

ORIENTAL PIED HORNBILL (*Anthracoceros albirostris*)

1 male seen feeding on papaya on Pulau Ubin, 1/6 (CCP/LKC).

STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER (*Pelargopsis capensis*)

1 observed at Sime Forest from the boardwalk on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS).

BANDED BAY CUCKOO (*Cacomantis sonnerati*)

1 observed at Hindhede Park pond area calling while perched on a bare branch on 13/6 (CCP). 1 heard at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 21/6 (LKS).

PLAINTIVE CUCKOO (*Cacomantis merulinus*)

1 observed at Marina East 14/6 (TKH/LJS) and 1 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 8/6 (LKC)

RUSTY-BREASTED CUCKOO

(*Cacomantis sepulcralis*)

1 heard at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 21/6 (LKS).

LITTLE BRONZE CUCKOO

(*Chrysococcyx minufillus*)

3 observed (2 adults & 1 juvenile) at Marina East 14/6 (TKH/LJS). 1 juvenile observed at Neo Tiew Lane 2, chased around by a Brown-throated Sunbird on 21/6 (LKS). 1 female at Punggol Park, 21/6 (LKC)

HORSFIELD'S BRONZE CUCKOO

(*Chrysococcyx basalis*)

Two immature observed together on the road at Marina East on 8/6 (MH). 1 photographed 26/6 at north-eastern Singapore (Fr). This is the 6th & 7th record of this austral migrant. The extreme dates recorded here is 23 May and 20 Aug.



Little Bronze Cuckoo.

Photo © Lim Kim Chuah

VIOLET CUCKOO (*Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*)

1 seen at Hindhede Park calling as it flew over the pond area on 13/6 (CCP). 1 heard flying over Hindhede Nature Park on 15/6 (LKS). 1 heard at BBNP, 29/6 and 1 at Bukit Gombak, 29/6 (LKC)

ASIAN DRONGO CUCKOO (*Surniculus lugubris*)

1 observed at Sime Forest near NP Office perched on a short tree on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS). 1 heard at BTNR, 22/6 (LKC)

CHESTNUT-BELLIED MALKOHA (*Phaenicophaeus sumatranus*)

1 observed at Kampong Trail BTNR perched near to the ground on 13/6 (CCP). 1 observed at Sime Forest by the road side at Kalang PUB Station on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS). 1 observed at Belukar Track in open woodland near BTNR on 25/6 (LKS)

RAINBOW LORIKEET (*Trichoglossus haematodus*)

2 seen flying over Botanic Gardens on 22/6 (LKS).

YELLOW-CRESTED COCKATOO (*Cacatua sulphurea*)

1 seen in the same area associating with Tanimbar Corella at Mount Faber & Telok Blangah Hill, 1/6 (LWT). This is probably the same bird that has been observed in this area in recent months.

TANIMBAR CORELLA (*Cacatua goffini*)

4 seen along the bridge between Mount Faber & Telok Blangah Hill 1/6 (LWT). 2 at BBNP, 29/6 (LKC). Birds were alarmed by the presence of a Changeable Hawk-eagle.

BLUE-RUMPED PARROT (*Psittinus cyanurus*)

1 seen flying over Lower Peirce Reservoir on 1/6 (LKS).

BLUE-CROWNED HANGING PARROT (*Loriculus galgulus*)

A few observed at Sime Forest at different location and a female observed from the boardwalk feeding on a casuarina tree on 16/6. (DA/PM/AL/AS) 1 seen flying over Botanic Gardens on 22/6 (LKS).

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (*Psittacula krameri*)

3 flying noisily about at the Ecolake, Botanic Gardens on 22/6 (SA/LKS).

LONG-TAILED PARAKEET (*Psittacula longicauda*)

1 observed at Neo Tiew Lane 2 perched on a bare branch on 13/6 (WCC). 2 observed at BBNP on 28/6. A male was first observed circling in the sky while calling. It shrieked when perched. The process was repeated, before another parakeet flew in to join it. Together, they flew off. (DA) A flock of at least 30 on several Eugenia tree in the evening (~7 pm) in the midst of HDB block of flats at Hougang Avenue 8. It could not be ascertained if they were feeding on the fruits. The flock was later harassed and chased off by a House Crow (LKC).

COLLARED SCOPS-OWL (*Otus lempiji*)

1 seen and at least 6 others heard at Rifle Range Road, 25/6 (LKC/LTK). Birds were observed to be most vocal between 8-9 pm.

RED TURTLE DOVE

(*Streptopelia tranquebarica*)

A female at SBWR, 1/6 (KK/LKS). 1 male at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 8/6 (LKC). 3 at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 21/6 (LKS).

COMMON EMERALD DOVE

(*Chalcophaps indica*)

1 male observed at Sime Forest on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS). 1 observed at SBWR, 1/6 (LKS).



Thick-billed Green Pigeon (female) at Marina East on 8 June 2008. Photo © Mike Hooper

THICK-BILLED GREEN PIGEON (*Treron curvirostra*)

1 observed and photographed on the ground at Marina East on 8/6 (MH). 1 observed at Sime Forest on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS). 1 male and 1 female observed at BTNR summit feeding on the fruiting fig tree on 27/6 (CCP).

JAMBU FRUIT DOVE

(*Ptilinopus jambu*)

1 female/juvenile observed at BTNR summit feeding on the fruiting fig tree on 27/6 (CCP).

RED-LEGGED CRAKE

(*Rallina fasciata*)

1 seen at Hindhede Nature Park on 13/6 (DA) and 15/6 (LKS). 1 flushed at Sime Forest along the track just before SICC carpark, in the vicinity of some fruiting durian on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS). 1 heard at Rifle Range Road in the night (~8 pm), 22/6 (LKC/LTK)

SLATY-BREASTED RAIL (*Gallirallus striatus*)

1 very obliging (probably a juvenile) at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 8/6 (LKC/LTK)

RUDDY-BREASTED CRAKE (*Porzana fusca*)

1 seen at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 8/6 (LKC/LTK)

PURPLE SWAMPHEN (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)

4 observed at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 13/6 (WWC) and 1 on 8/6 and 20/6 (LKC/LTK).

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*)

9 birds, all of race *phaeopus* (whitish rump), were seen at the main pond at SBWR on 1/6 (KK/LKS).

LITTLE TERN (*Sterna albifrons*)

At Neo Tiew Lane 2 (Kranji Reservoir), adults and juveniles observed on 13/6 (WCC). Also 6 (both breeding and non-breeding plumages) on 8/6 (LKC/LTK) and 12 on 20/6 (LKC/LTK). Courtship feeding was observed on both dates.



Little Tern at Kranji. Photo © Lee Tiah Kee

WHITE-BELLIED SEA-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*)

1 juvenile perched next to the nest on Pulau Ubin, 1/6 (CCP/LKC)

CRESTED HONEY-BUZZARD (*Pernis ptilorhyncus*)

1 observed at Changi area on 20/6 (Fr).

CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE

(*Spizaetus cirrhatus*)

1 pale morph observed at BBNP on 29/6 (DA/LKC). 1 heard at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 21/6 (LKS).

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*)

2, one showing head and back plumes, at SBWR, 1/6 (KK/LKS).

GREY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*)

2 at SBWR, 8/6 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX).

PURPLE HERON (*Ardea purpurea*)

1 seen at Sungei Buloh on 8/6 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX) and 3 at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 21/6 (LKS).

GREAT EGRET (*Casmerodius albus*)

1 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 8/6 (LKC)



Changeable Hawk-eagle (pale morph) at BBNP on 29 June 2008. The Red-breasted Parakeet & Yellow-crested Cockatoo around were screaming away when it landed.

Photo © Lim Kim Chuah

YELLOW-BILLED EGRET

(*Egretta intermedia*)

4 observed at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 13/6. 3 of them observed with Cattle Egrets at BBC field (WCC). Also 1 on 20/6 (LKC/LTK).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

About 20 birds, including juvenile on Pulau Ubin, 1/6 (CCP/LKC)

ASIAN FAIRY BLUEBIRD (*Irena puella*)

1 male observed at BTNR summit feeding on the fruiting fig tree on 27/6 (CCP).

LESSER GREEN LEAFBIRD (*Chloropsis cyanopogon*)

1 male at BTNR summit feeding on the fruiting fig tree on 27/6 (CCP).

ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN (*Copsychus saularis*)

1 at SBWR, 1/6 (LKS). Another heard at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 21/6 (LKS).

WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA (*Copsychus malabaricus*)

1 observed at Sime Forest feeding on the road leading to Kalang PUB Station on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS). A single juvenile observed at Mount Faber on 8/6 & 29/6 (LWT) is a very interesting record outside the Central Catchment Forest.

COMMON HILL MYNA (*Gracula religiosa*)

1 observed at Hindhede Park on 13/6 (CCP). 2 observed at Sime Forest perched on a bare tree calling on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS). 1 at Dairy Farm Road on 25/6 (LKS). 2 observed at BTNR summit feeding on the fruiting fig tree on 27/6 (CCP). 2 at BBNP, 29/6 (LKC) and 2 at Singapore Botanic Garden, 26/6 (LKC)

STRAW-HEADED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*)

A family group of 4 at the quarry pond at BBNP, 8/6 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX). 1 observed and few others heard at Hindhede Park pond area on 13/6 (CCP). 2 observed at Alexandra Hospital compound on 18/6 (HHC). 1 observed at BBNP singing on 28/6 (DA).

CREAM-VENTED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus simplex*)

2 observed at BTNR summit feeding on the fruiting fig tree on 27/6 (CCP).

ASIAN RED-EYED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus brunneus*)

1 observed at Sime Forest perched on a Simpoh Ayer beside Jelutong Tower on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS).

ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops palpebrosus*)

2 at Hindhede Nature Park on 28/6 (LKS).

RUFOUS-TAILED TAILORBIRD (*Orthotomus sericeus*)

A few observed at Hindhede park on 13/6 (CCP). 1 observed at Sime Forest on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS). 1 observed at BBNP making a single note call on 28/6 (DA).

WHITE-CRESTED LAUGHINTHRUSH (*Garrulax leucolophus*)

4 at BBNP, 8/6 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX).

ABBOTT'S BABBLER (*Malacocinda abbotti*)

2 observed at Sime Forest at different locations with good view on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS).

SHORT-TAILED BABBLER (*Malacocinda malaccensis*)

1 observed at Sime Forest up close at eye level on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS).

ORANGE-BELLIED FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum trigonostigma*)

1 male observed at BTNR summit feeding on the fruiting fig tree on 27/6 (CCP).

LITTLE SPIDERHUNTER (*Arachnothera longirostris*)

2 seen at Hindhede Nature Park on 15/6 (LKS). 1 observed at Sime Forest in flight on 16/6 (DA/PM/AL/AS).

BAYA WEAVER (*Ploceus philippinus*)

Few observed at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 13/6 (WCC). Several observed with 2 incomplete nests at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 21/6 (LKS).

JAVAN MUNIA (*Lonchura leucogastroides*)

1 observed at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 13/6 (WCC). 3 observed at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 21/6 (LKS).

ESCAPEES

RHINOCEROS HORNBILL (*Buceros rhinoceros*)

1 observed along Bukit Timah road in front of Royalville Condominium on 24/6 (ECS).

SULFUR-CRESTED COCKATOO (*Cacatua galerita*)

1 at BBNP together with Tanimbar Cockatoo, 29/6 (LKC)

BREEDING / NESTING REPORTS

COPPERSMITH BARBET (*Megalaima haemacephala*)

1 pair seen feeding chick on 26 June at the Singapore Botanical Garden (read full story on Page 21 in our article section).



Coppersmith Barbet nesting at Botanic Gardens. Photographed on 28 Jun 2008
Photo © Lee Tiah Kee

VIOLET CUCKOO (*Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*)

1 juvenile female fed by a Male Olive-backed Sunbird observed at Hindhede Park on 28/6 evening. The hapless male Olive-backed Sunbird back and forth to feed a hungry juvenile female Violet Cuckoo in the canopy of the Albizias. The sunbird emitted a continuous high-pitched chirping and the cuckoo reacted each time with shivering wings. The type of food being fed could not be discerned due to the distance and constant movement of both birds. Other hosts of this species recorded from Singapore in the past have included Purple-throated and Brown-throated Sunbirds. It is worth noting that the Golden-bellied Gerygone, a common brood host of another parasitic *Chrysococcyx* cuckoo, the Little Bronze Cuckoo, is not known to fall prey to this species (Violet Cuckoo) in Singapore.

PINK-NECKED GREEN PIGEON (*Treron vernans*)

A male seen carrying nest material to a bush at SBWR on 8/6 (LKS).

RED-LEGGED CRAKE (*Rallina fasciata*)

2 adults with a chick seen at Hindhede Nature Park on 15/6 (DA/AL/PM).

WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*)

An immature at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 21/6 (LKS).

RED-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus indicus*)

A pair with 3 eggs, first observed at SBWR on 1/6 (KK/OKS), is the first record of this species from the reserve and probably the first nesting record from the northwest. They are seen again on 8/6 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX). The eggs and parents were still present on 15/6 (KK) but both abruptly vanished by 16/6 (DA/LTK). It was concluded that the exposed nesting site was probably responsible for its downfall.

CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE

(*Spizaetus cirrhatus*)

A single dark morph chick was observed by various observers from the month of May until it successfully fledged and left the nest in late June. The nest, located at Mount Faber, was first discovered on 11/5 (LWT). Subsequently, various observers tracked the progress of the chick until it left the nesting tree on 29/6. During this time, in addition to an increase in size, observers noted the gradual disappearance of the white breast patch. The parents were speculated to be a dark morph and a light morph. Unfortunately, no feeding behaviour was observed despite frequent follow-ups. The chick first left the nest proper on 1/6 but hung around the general area for the rest of the month.

List of some of the observers:
LWT/LJS/TGC/TKH/CF



Nestlings of Changeable Hawk-eagle at Mount Faber. Photo © Tan Gim Cheong



Changeable Hawk-eagles at Mount Faber.
Photo © Tan Gim Cheong



Changeable Hawk-eagles at Mount Faber.
Photo © Lau Jia Sheng

GOLDEN-BELLIED GERYGONE (*Gerygone sulphurea*)

1 pair was seen building nest at Punggol Park, 7/6. The nest was built only 1.5 m above the ground and next to the Punggol Park Pond. Subsequent visits found the nest abandoned.

BLACK-NAPED ORIOLE (*Oriolus chinensis*)

An adult seen with nest material at SBWR on 1/6 (LKS).

COMMON IORA (*Aegithina tiphia*)

1 female appears to be incubating in a nest, about 2 m high on a Golden Shower Tree at Punggol Park, 21/6 (LKC/LTK). Subsequent visits found the nest abandoned.

1 male with 2 nestlings observed at BBNP on 28/6 (DA).

Report by Kim Chuah

Following up on Doreen's tip on a nesting lora on 28 Jun, I managed to squeeze sometime in the afternoon of 29 June to check on the lora. Thanks to Doreen's precise direction, I located the birds without any problem.

As reported by Doreen, the nest contained two fully grown chicks. In fact they were so big that one would have mistaken them to be the parent incubating in the nest. On one occasion, one of the chicks actually hopped out of the nest and then started flapping its wings. Both parents were observed to take turns to feed the hungry chicks and also diligently removing faecal sac from the young chicks. Feeding was very fast and I could not really make out what was been fed to the chicks.



Nestlings of Common lora at BBNP on 29 Jun 2008
Photo © Lee Tiah Khee

The two chicks were observed to be still in the nest in the morning of 30 Jun by Lee Tiah Khee. Tiah Khee also observed the restlessness of the birds and that of the chicks would leave the nest and perch around the surrounding branches

Doreen and Alan made another trip in the evening and found that the nest empty. Presumably the chicks have fledged and left the nest.

Besides the lora, the surrounding area also attracts numerous Red-breasted Parakeet, Lineated Barbet, White-crested Laughingthrush, Common Hill Myna, Straw-headed Bulbul and both Tanimbar and Sulfur-crested Cockatoo. On one occasion, the Red-breasted Parakeet screamed and took off when a light phase Changeable Hawk-eagle landed. This also frightened the hell out of the two cockatoos. They circled around the unwelcome visitor and made loud raucous calls to attempt to frighten the intruder away. Sensing that the eagle was going to stay put, the cockatoos gave up and left.

WHITE-VENTED MYNA (*Acridotheres javanicus*)

1 seen flying with twigs at SBWR on 8/6 (LKS) was apparently adding to its nest.

YELLOW-VENTED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus goiavier*)

1 young and 1 adult observed at BBNP on 28/6 The young was begging food from the adult (DA).

RUFIOUS-TAILED TAILORBIRD *Orthotomus sericeus*

A pair with attendant juvenile at Hindhede Nature Park on 15/6 (LKS).

OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD *Nectarinia jugularis*

A female seen adding to an incomplete nest situated at the top of a 3 metre high mini-fig tree at Orchid Country Club on 15/6 (SA/LKS/LWH/LWX). Another female was also seen tending to a juvenile at Pasir Ris Park on 29/6 (LKS).

BAYA WEAVER *Ploceus philippinus*

A male seen at an incomplete nest on an acacia at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 21/6 (LKS). Another incomplete nest was also seen here but without any activity.

SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA *Lonchura punctulata*

1 observed at Neo Tiew Lane 2. It was observed building an unseen nest in a road side bush on 21/6 (LKS). 2 observed at National Shooting Range flying back and forth collecting nesting materials on 29/6 (DA).

BLACK-HEADED MUNIA *Lonchura malacca*

1 adult feeding 3 juvenile photographed on 11/6 at Marina East (LTK).



A family of Black-headed Munia at Marina East on 11 Jun 2008

Photo © Lee Tiah Khee

JOHOR

CRESTED PARTRIDGE (*Rollulus rouloul*)

6 observed at the campsite near the former "Shrine" Bunker Trail 7/6 (LBW)

RUFOUS PICULET (*Sasia abnormis*)

1 observed at Bunker Trail, PFR 21/6 (LWT/LJS/TKH)

WHITE-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Dryocopus javensis*)

2 observed at Bunker Trail 1/6 (CF).

CHECKER-THROATED WOODPECKER (*Picus mentalis*)

1 observed at Bunker Trail 28/6 (LWT/TKH)

BLACK HORNBILL (*Anthraceroceros malayanus*)

1 male observed at Bunker Trail 1/6 (CF)

WRINKLED HORNBILL (*Aceros corrugatus*)

1 observed at Bunker Trail 28/6 (LWT/TKH)

RUFOUS-BACKED KINGFISHER (*Ceyx rufidorsa*)

1 observed at the 5km stream Bunker Trail 1/6 (CF). 2 observed in Bunker Trail 21/6 (LWT/LJS/TKH).

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

2 observed at Bunker Trail 21/6 (LWT/LJS/TKH).

BLACK-THIGHED FALCONET (*Microhierax fringillarius*)

1 observed at Bunker Trail 1/6 (CF)

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*)

3 at Lido Beach, JB, on 7/6 (LKS) were apparently summering.

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

At Lido Beach, JB, 2 seen on 2/6 and 1 on 3/6 (both LKS). These are apparently escapees from Singapore.

MALAYSIAN RAIL-BABBLER (*Eupetes macrocerus*)

1 observed at Bunker Trail 1/6 (CF)

LESSER CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina fimbriata*)

1 male observed at Bunker Trail 28/6 (LWT/TKH).

BLACK MAGPIE (*Platysmurus leucopterus*)

1 observed at Bunker Trail 21/6 (LWT/LJS/TKH)

SPECTACLED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus erythrophthalmos*)

2 observed at Bunker Trail 28/6 (LWT/TKH)

FINSCH'S BULBUL (*Alophoixus finschii*)

2 observed at Bunker Trail 21/6 (LWT/LJS/TKH)

ASHY BULBUL (*Hemixos flavala*)

2 observed at Bunker Trail 28/6 (LWT/TKH). This species is usually associated with forested hills and hill-slopes.

SCARLET-BREASTED FLOWERPECKER (*Prionochilus thoracicus*)

1 male seen and photographed 3/6 at Bunker Trail (JT).

SPECTACLED SPIDERHUNTER (*Arachnothera flavigaster*)

2 observed in Bunker Trail 21/6 (LWT/LJS/TKH)



Scarlet-breasted Flowerpecker at Bunker Trail. on 3 Jun 2008
Photo © Jimmy Tan

The Status of the Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* (Charadriidae) in Singapore

By Yong Ding Li

Introduction



Fig 1. A pair of Red-wattled Lapwing in Sungei Buloh Nature Reserve (Lee Tiah Kee)

The Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*, a familiar medium-sized plover, is one of the most widespread members of the genus *Vanellus*, which consists of about 22 member species distributed throughout the Old World and the Neotropics (Rosair & Cottridge 1995). In Singapore, it is one of two species of lapwings, the other being the Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* which is a very rare winter visitor based on two known records. Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* is not included here as it is feral in Singapore. According to Wells (1999), the resident subspecies of the Red-wattled Lapwing present in the Malay Peninsula and Southeast Asia is the well-marked *V. i. atronuchalis*, which is comparatively darker than its counterparts in the Indian Subcontinent and the Middle East.

In the past, the Red-wattled Lapwing was extremely rare in Singapore and Gibson-Hill (1950) described it as an occasional visitor or only a probable resident based on a few sight records. Based on the increasing frequency of sight records, the Red-wattled Lapwing has been experiencing local expansion in the past decades and has spread beyond the Western Catchment area. It can now be found in pockets of suitable open

marshy habitat throughout the island, including even some of the offshore islands like Pulau Ubin and Pulau Tekong.

Global Range and Biology

Lapwings are among the most widespread and successful genera of plovers and occur on virtually all continents except, strangely North America. The Red-wattled Lapwing is no exception. Its breeding range covers a large expanse of tropical and subtropical Eurasia, extending from Southern China and continental Southeast Asia westwards towards the Middle-East in Iraq and Iran (see Jonsson, 1992). It also occurs occasionally as a straggler to parts of Israel and Oman (Rosair & Cottridge 1995). Throughout the Indian Subcontinent, it is one of the most familiar local birds and can be found even in urban ditches and ponds as long as some patches of vegetation persists (Pers obs). One of the reasons for its success is its ability to exploit small patches of open clearings and marshy fields, a habitat which either is increasing in response to deforestation or is consistently maintained in agricultural lands (in ploughed fields, fallow or grazing pastures).

Breeding in Singapore



Fig 2. Incubating Red-wattled Lapwing at nest in Sungei Buloh (Lee Tiah Kee)

For a long time, the year-round of the Red-wattled Lapwing suggested that they must have been breeding in Singapore. This has been recently confirmed by a number of breeding records, the most recent involving a pair nesting on the ground on sand-mud substrate in Sungei Buloh Nature Reserve (Kee, K. *in litt.* 2008). The Tuas grassland near

the Asia-Pacific Breweries, a locality where Red-wattled Lapwings have been present for a number of years since the late 1990s had a recent nesting. Unfortunately, the nesting failed as the eggs were apparently abandoned for unknown reasons (Lee, T.K. *in litt.* 2008).



Fig 3. Nesting Red-wattled Lapwing in Sungei Buloh (Lee Tiah Kee)

Estimated Population

The total population of the Red-wattled Lapwing is estimated to number in the low one hundreds. Further inventory work would have to be carried out to identify population concentrations throughout Singapore and the satellite islands. The largest concentration of Red-wattled Lapwing probably is the Western Catchment area where considerably marshy habitat still exists but is beyond public access due to military training. The Tuas Grassland, a long known haunt of the species measures about ten hectares and supports at least three pairs of Red-wattled Lapwing. Given the extent of marshy habitat along the western fringes of the Kranji Reservoir, at least ten pairs could be present. Recent observations of large numbers (15 birds in one instance, November 2005) on Pulau Ubin and Pulau Tekong indicate that a significant population, possibly breeding, exists there. Large areas of barren newly reclaimed land probably already support individuals, as aided by newly colonizing birds from either Johor or mainland Changi. Changi, given its extensive areas of barren – grassland could support an additional 10 - 12 pairs.



Fig 4. A flock of Red-wattled Lapwing in Pulau Ubin (Robert Teo)

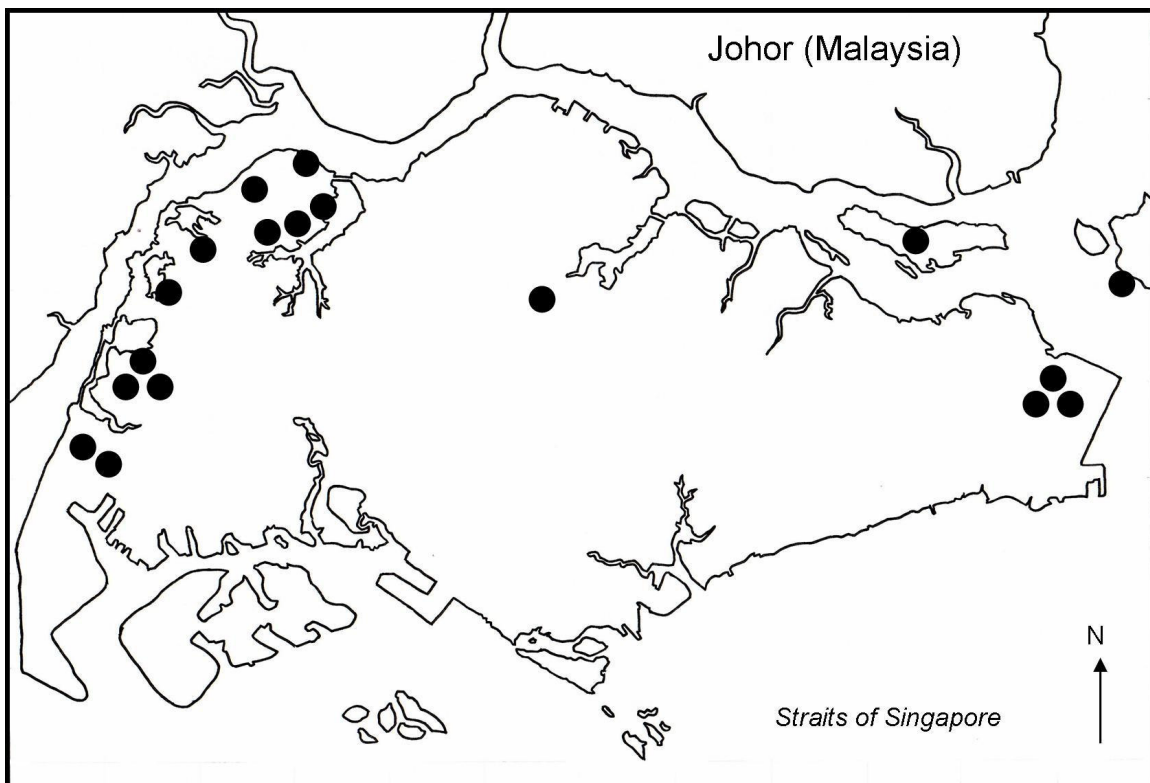


Fig 5. Map of localities in Singapore where Red-wattled Lapwing were recorded (Yong Ding Li)

Status: Past and Present

Wells (1999) provided a neat account of the Red-wattled Lapwing's status in the Malay Peninsula. A resident species present all year-round, it is able to exploit various open

country habitats such as cattle pasture, paddyland and other grassy areas or fringe habitats including watermelon plantations, river banks, airfields, golf courses and clear field sites. In the Peninsula, it is increasingly common in the far south and supposed dispersants were found to be breeding in South Pahang and Johore by the mid 1980s (Wells 1999). In Singapore, it reappeared in 1993 after a long absence, in the Poyan area (Wells 1999) though there were sporadic records prior to that (e.g. Senoko). According to Wang & Hails (2007), one of the earliest documentation of the Red-wattled Lapwing was of a pair shot in the Tanglin area in 1879 as described in Kelham (1883). Based on sight records as evidence, Gibson-Hill (1950) mentioned it occurring as a probable resident or visitor though it is likely that it could have been overlooked in Singapore.

More recently, Lim & Gardner (1997) described it as a rare non-breeding visitor or resident to Singapore. However, in view of current knowledge, the Red-wattled Lapwing is certainly a resident breeder as evidenced by a number of recent breeding records from Singapore, including one failed nesting from the Sungei Buloh this year (Lee, T.K. *in litt.* 2008). As suggested by the increasing number of sites where it has been recorded, the Red-wattled Lapwing must have undergone a significant range expansion in Singapore, partly due to the increased availability of suitable habitat in the form of open grassy areas from land reclamation. By the mid 1990s, the national range of the Red-wattled Lapwing was still more or less restricted to the western Catchment area. In the following years, it was subsequently discovered at other sites in the Western Singapore, including Sarimbun, Kranji, Sungei Buloh, Tuas (Per obs, not in chronological order).



Fig 6. Foraging Red-wattled Lapwing in Sungei Buloh (Lee Tiah Kee)

Birds were also increasingly recorded in scrubby or barren reclaimed land in Changi Cove. By 2005, there were already records coming from the offshore islands in Pulau Tekong (Lua, W. verbally) and Pulau Ubin (Teo, R. *in litt.* 2008) although it is likely that colonizing birds came not from the original source population in the western Catchment, but from Johore across the Tebrau straits where deforestation have been extensive (Pers obs). High counts of more than 20 individuals in separate flocks have been recorded in 2005 in Pulau Ubin (Teo, R. *in litt.* 2008). Recently, it has also been recorded in Nee Soon Swamp Forest (Per obs). Given its crepuscular habits, it is likely that Red-wattled Lapwing is more widespread in Singapore than thought and would be discovered at more sites in future. At present, it would be apt to revise its national status to 'locally common' as opposed to 'rare' to more accurately represent its true population trends. Furthermore, ongoing reclamation would probably create more potential habitat for it in future in the form of short, occasionally flooded grass fields. On the converse, it would be prudent to keep it under the red-list as a nationally threatened species (endangered) given the rapid rate of loss of freshwater marshy habitats in Singapore.

Acknowledgement

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Nesting of Coppersmith Barbet

Reported by Lee Tiah Khee and Lim Kim Chuah
Photos by Lee Tiah Khee

Coppersmith Barbet (*Megalaima haemacephala*) is a common bird found in our parks and gardens. Its monotonous “tonk-tonk” call is often heard although seeing one can occasionally proved to be challenging as this small bird prefers to perch at or near the canopy.

Coppersmith Barbet typically nests from late December to mid June. They nest in holes in rot-softened wood of dead snags or entirely dead trees.

Since June 26, 2008 Tiah Khee and I (but mostly TK) made periodic observations on the nesting of a Coppersmith Barbet at the Singapore Botanical Gardens. The nesting hole was located on a dead snag about 20 m above ground. The branch was angled at about 70 deg from the horizon.

At the time of discovery, the parents were already feeding the young. From our observation, there appeared to be only one chick in the hole. Food were brought in by both parents and consisted mainly of berries, figs and other kind of fruits. But there was one occasion when one of the parents brought in what looked like a winged insect. On one occasion, one of the parents was observed perched at the outside the hole at about 7 pm (just before night fall). The bird spent some time preening itself before finally entering the nest, probably brooding the chick for the night.

Our observations carried into July and during the second week, the parents were observed to feed the chick at more frequent intervals, probably an indication that the chick has grown bigger and close to fledging.

Then on 15 July, TK observed an inquisitive Plantain Squirrel foraging next to the nest hole. The squirrel was seen gnawing at the dead snag and it left significant damage to the nesting hole. Probably fearful of its young life and not knowing what it was facing, the barbet chick abandoned its hole and flew off. One of the parents subsequently returned but obviously could not find anyone home. It started to call for the chick and left the hole after some moments.

This brought an abrupt end to the nesting. Hopefully the barbet chick managed to re-unite with its parents.



A panic and desperate barbet chick and the intruding Plantain Squirrel



By Lee Tiah Khee

The chick abandoned the nest after awhile



By Lee Tiah Khee

A parent inspecting the abandoned nest



By Lee Tiah Khee

A parent in distress