



# SINGAPORE AVIFAUNA

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*Oriental Pied Hornbill at Pulau Ubin, photographed by Chris Lee on 3 August 2008*



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## Bird Report

August 2008

By Albert Low

### Highlights

#### Singapore

August is the time of the time of the year, when the patient waiting of birders and photographers alike comes to an end and the migrants from the North, notably the waders, start streaming in again.



Juvenile Blue-eared Kingfisher at Lower Pierce on 17 Aug 2008. Photo © Calvin Chang

lucky photographer. Another interesting record from SBWR was that of a single **Red-necked Stint**, a species associated with the sandy beaches along the east coast of Singapore but turns up every once in a while in the mudflats of SBWR.

Singapore's migratory season got off to a good start this year, with several notable records over the course of the month. No prizes for guessing that Bird of the Month went to a single **Asian Dowitcher** photographed at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve. In recent years singles like this have been reported as "1-day wonders" during similar periods of the south-bound passage to their primary wintering grounds in Sumatra, the only difference being that this year, 1 such individual was photographed by a

It was also a good month for flycatchers, with several **Yellow-rumped Flycatcher** sightings at the end of the month setting a new early arrival date for the species. Special mention goes out to a single **Brown-streaked Flycatcher** photographed in the Central Catchment this month, a rare migrant which is likely to be overlooked or dismissed as its far more common yet similar looking Asian Brown Flycatcher.

There was also some excitement amongst the resident birds, with the photographic record of a juvenile **Blue-eared Kingfisher** at Lower Peirce. This was only the 2<sup>nd</sup> record of a juvenile locally, and offers a glimmer of hope that the increasingly fragmented Central Catchment Area still supports a viable breeding population. Other notable residents include the sighting of a pair of the localised **Sooty-headed Bulbul**, a recent addition to the Singapore Checklist; a **Blue-winged Leafbird** of questionable provenance at Pasir Ris; a Crested Serpent-eagle at SBWR and a diurnal sighting of the resident Spotted Wood Owl at Singapore Botanic Gardens.

Notable nesting records include the continued presence of the **Grey-headed Fish-eagles** at Little Guilin as well as more exciting news from the Central Catchment with the photographic record of a juvenile **White-rumped Shama** around Jelutong Tower, perhaps an encouraging sign that the species is making a very slow comeback after being widely considered to be extinct from the mainland. Nevertheless, supplements from a formerly captive population can never be ruled out.

## **Summary**

This report covers noteworthy bird sightings in August 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](mailto:denislim@starhub.net.sg) or Lim Kim Chuah @ [pitalover@yahoo.com.sg](mailto:pitalover@yahoo.com.sg) or Yong Ding Li at [zoothera@yahoo.com](mailto: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.

We would like to thank the following contributors:

Doreen Ang (DA), Richard Carden (RC), Calvin Chang (CC), Jimmy Chew (JC), Mark Chua (MC), Ender (En), Con Foley (CF), Lau Weng Thor (LWT), Chris Lee (ChL), Pauline Lee (PL), Lee Tiah Khee (LTK), Lim Kim Chuah (LKC), Lim Kim Seng (LKS), Harry Ong (HO), Kim Ong (KO), Alan Owyong (AOY), Tan Boon Chong (TBC), Tan Kok Hui (TKH), Mendis Tan (MeT), Myron Tay (MT), KP Teh (TKP), Robert Teo (RT), K C Tsang (TKC), Felix Wong (FW), Wong Chung Cheong (WCC) and all those who contributed by posting their sightings in the wildbirdsingapore E-group.

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### **Abbreviations Used:**

BBNP: Bukit Batok Nature Park  
SBWR: Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

## SINGAPORE

**RUFOUS WOODPECKER** (*Celeus brachyurus*)

1 female seen and photographed 6/8 at Punggol (TKC). 1 seen 24/8 at BTNR on a fruiting tree near the visitor centre (DA).

**LINEATED BARBET** (*Megalaima lineata*)

1 seen 2/8 at Choa Chu Kang area (LWT).

**COPPERSMITH BARBET**

(*Megalaima haemacephala*)

1 seen 24/8 at BTNR on a fruiting tree near the visitor centre (DA).

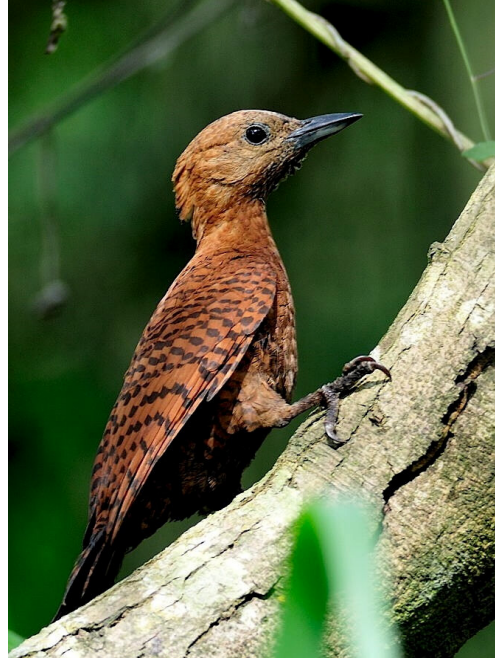
**ORIENTAL PIED HORNBILL**

(*Anthracoceros albirostris*)

A few seen and photographed 3/8 at Pulau Ubin (ChL)

**COMMON KINGFISHER** (*Alcedo atthis*)

1 seen 9/8 at Neo Tiew Lane 2 (DA/HO/KO/MT) sets a new early date for Singapore. This is 5 days earlier than the previous early date for this winter visitor of 14 August 1990 (Singapore Avifauna Vol 4 No 5, Jul - September 1990).



Female Rufous Woodpecker at Punggol on 6 Aug 2008. Photo © K C Tsang

**BLUE-EARED KINGFISHER** (*Alcedo meninting*)

1 juvenile observed and photographed at Lower Pierce Reservoir (CC). The kingfisher has rufous cheeks and ear-coverts and a predominantly reddish bill. These features indicate the bird to be a juvenile. This is only the second record of juvenile in Singapore. The last record was in 1997 at Sime Forest.

**STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER** (*Pelargopsis capensis*)

1 seen 8/8 at SBWR (WCC).

**RUSTY-BREASTED CUCKOO** (*Cacomantis sepulcralis*)

1 heard 10/8 at SBWR and another heard at Lorong Halus on 11/8 (LKS).

**GREATER COUCAL** (*Centropus sinensis*)

1 seen 2/8 at Choa Chu Kang area (LWT). 1 seen 10/8 at SBWR (LKS).

**RED-BREASTED PARAKEET** (*Psittacula alexandri*)

About 20 seen 10/8 feeding on fruits of oil palms at Aloha Resort, Pasir Ris Park (LKS).

**ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET** (*Psittacula krameri*)

2 seen 11/8 at Aloha Resort, Pasir Ris Park (LKS).

**COMMON EMERALD DOVE** (*Chalcophaps indica*)

1 seen 3/8 at SBWR (LKS).

**SPOTTED WOOD OWL** (*Strix seloputo*)

1 seen 10/8 at 7:45pm behind Botanic Gardens in the NUS Bukit Timah Campus perched low on a Tembusu tree (FW).

**RED TURTLE DOVE** (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*)

2 seen 9/8 at Neo Tiew Lane 2 (DA/MT/HO/KO).

**COMMON MOORHEN** (*Gallinula chloropus*)

1 seen 9/8 at Lorong Halus (TKH).

**WHIMBREL** (*Numenius phaeopus*)

17 observed 8/8 at main hide of SBWR, 2 of which have a green over white flag on them (WCC). Several seen 30/8 at SBWR (FW).

**COMMON REDSHANK** (*Tringa totanus*)

17 observed 8/8 at main hide of SBWR, 3 of which have a green over white flag on them (WCC). 10 seen 10/8 at SBWR (LKS). Several seen 30/8 at SBWR (FW).

**MARSH SANDPIPER** (*Tringa stagnatilis*)

1 seen 30/8 at SBWR (RC).

**COMMON GREENSHANK** (*Tringa nebularia*)

14 seen 8/8 at main hide of SBWR (WCC). Several seen 30/8 at SBWR (FW).

**COMMON SANDPIPER** (*Tringa hypoleucos*)

2 seen 2/8 at SBWR (LWT). 2 seen 10/8 at Sungei Buloh (LKS).

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*)

4 to 5 seen 30/8 at SBWR (FW) in partial breeding plumage.

**ASIAN DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus semipalmatus*)

1 seen and photographed 26/8 at SBWR (MeT).



Asian Dowitcher at SBWR on 28 Aug 2008.

Photo © Mendis Tan

**RED-NECKED STINT** (*Calidris ruficollis*)

1 seen 30/8 at SBWR (RC).

**PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER** (*Pluvialis fulva*)

Several seen 30/8 at SBWR (FW).

**MALAYSIAN PLOVER** (*Charadrius peronii*)

Several juvenile and adults observed 9/8 at Changi (LWT).

**LESSER SAND PLOVER** (*Charadrius mongolus*)

About 30 seen 9/8 at Changi, some in breeding plumage (LWT). Several seen and photographed 29/8 at SBWR. One of them is rather pale looking, with a white face and a complete collar. According to David Bakewell, It is not an unusual plumage variation as autumn sand plovers often show a pale nape which may appear as a whitish collar as well as white lores (MC). Several seen 30/8 at SBWR (FW).



A rather pale looking Lesser Sand Plover among others at SBWR on 29 Aug 2008.

Photo © Mark Chua

**RED-WATTLED LAPWING** (*Vanellus indicus*)

4 seen 2/8 at Warren Country Club area (LWT). 2 seen 9/8 at Neo Tiew Lane 2 (DA/KO/HO/MT).

**LITTLE TERN** (*Sterna albifrons*)

2 seen 2/8 at Kranji Dam (LWT).

**CRESTED HONEY-BUZZARD** (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*)

1 pale morph seen 2/8 at "Little Guilin", Bukit Gombak (LWT).

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

1 heard in the vicinity of Mandai Orchid Garden, 22/8 (LKC)

**CRESTED SERPENT EAGLE** (*Spilornis Cheela*)

1 observed 8/8 circling the main hide of SBWR, causing the waders to disperse for a short while before returning minutes later (WCC).

**CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE** (*Spizaetus cirrhatus*)

1 dark morphed seen 2/8 at Warren Country Club area (LWT).

**LITTLE GREBE** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

2 adult and 2 juveniles observed 9/8 at Lorong Halus (TKH). 2 adults seen at Lorong Halus on 11/8 (LKS).

**LITTLE EGRET** (*Egretta garzetta*)

36 seen 3/8 (LKS), 24 seen 8/8 (WCC), 10 seen 10/8 (LKS) and several seen 30/8 at SBWR (FW).

**CHINESE EGRET** (*Egretta eulophotes*)

A single photographed at SBWR on 28/8 (JG/DAL/MET) sets a new early date for Singapore.

**GREY HERON** (*Ardea cinerea*)

5 seen 3/8 and 8 seen 10/8 at SBWR (LKS). Several seen 9/8 along Sungei Serangoon (TKH). Also 3 at Lorong Halus on 11/8 (LKS).

**PURPLE HERON** (*Ardea purpurea*)

1 seen 3/8 at SBWR (LKS). 2 seen 9/8 along Sungei Serangoon (TKH).

**GREAT EGRET** (*Casmerodius albus*)

Several seen 30/8 at SBWR (FW).

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

10 seen 9/8 feeding along Sungei Serangoon (TKH).

**ASIAN FAIRY BLUEBIRD** (*Irena puella*)

1 male seen 24/8 at BTNR on a fruiting tree near the Visitor Centre (DA).

**BLUE-WINGED LEAFBIRD** (*Chloropsis cochinchinensis*)

1 male observed 14/8 at Pasir Ris Dr 1 foraging at the top of a 7-m fruiting Tembusu tree just beside the busy road (RT). This is an interesting record as this individual was observed outside its preferred habitat of forests and was apparently an escapee.

**YELLOW-RUMPED FLYCATCHER** (*Ficedula zanthopygia*)

1 female seen at Chinese Garden (TKP) and another seen at Kranji Nature Trail (MY), both on 31/8, a new early date for Singapore.

**BROWN-STREAKED FLYCATCHER** (*Muscicapa williamsoni*)

An immature photographed 9/8 at Upper Seletar (TKC) sets a new early date for this species in Singapore.

**ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN** (*Copsychus saularis*)

1 seen 10/8 at SBWR (LKS). 1 female seen at SBWR 30/8 (FW).

**SOOTY-HEADED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus aurigaster*)

2 seen 9/8 at Lorong Halus (TKH).

**RUFOS-TAILED TAILORBIRD** (*Orthotomus sericeus*)

1 seen 2/8 at Kranji Nature Trail (LWT). 2 seen 30/8 at SBWR (FW).

**ABBOT'S BABBLER** (*Malacocincla abbotti*)

1 heard at Mandai Orchid Garden, 31/8 (LKC)

**COPPER-THROATED SUNBIRD** (*Nectarinia calcostetha*)

2 seen 10/8 at SBWR at Platform 2 (LWT).

**GREY WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla cinerea*)

1 observed and photographed 2/8 at Choa Chu Kang foraging in a canal (TBC). This is one of the three passerines; including Barn Swallow and Asian Paradise Flycatcher; that are normally the first to arrive at our shores. The earliest date for this species here is 18 July.



Grey Wagtail in a canal at Choa Chu Kang on 2 Aug 2008 Photo © Tan Boon Chong

**LITTLE SPIDERHUNTER**

(*Arachnothera longirostris*)

2 seen feeding on Torch Ginger flower (*Etilingera elatior*) at Mandai Orchid Garden, 31/8 (LKC).

**ESCAPEES**

**RED JUNGLEFOWL** (*Gallus gallus*)

2 males seen 10/8 on the banks of Sungei Buloh (LKS).

**BLOSSOM-HEADED PARAKEET** (*Psittacula roseata*)

A male seen 10-11/8 at Aloha Resort, Pasir Ris Park (LKS).

**GREAT COMMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

1 observed 2/8 at Mandai Mudflat sunning itself with wings wide opened (LWT).

**BREEDING / NESTING REPORTS**

**RUSTY-BREASTED CUCKOO** (*Cacomantis sepulcralis*)

1 juvenile observed and photographed while being fed by a Pied Fantail 27/8 at SBWR (DA/MC)



©cajuca\_MARKchua

Juvenile Rusty-breasted Cuckoo fed by a Pied Fantail at SBWR on 27 Aug 2008.  
Photo © Mark Chua



**WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN** (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*)

An adult with a black chick seen 3/8 at SBWR (LKS).

**PINK-NECKED GREEN PIGEON** (*Treron vernans*)

A male sitting in a nest in a mahogany tree at Kranji Dam carpark on 3/8 (JC/LKS). This nest was first discovered in July.

**CHESTNUT-BELLIED MALKOHA** (*Phaenicophaeus sumatranus*)

Adults seen feeding one chick in an untidy nest of sticks at Mandai Orchid Garden, 21/8 (LKC/CF/LTK). The nest was about 2 meters high and on a Pulasan tree (*Nephelium ramboutan-ake*). Among the food items included a Flying Dragon. The chick was observed to have fledged on 27/8 (LTK).



Juvenile Chestnut-bellied Malkoha fed by and adult at Mandai Orchid Garden on 22 Aug 2008. Photo © Lim Kim Chuah

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

1 adult and 1 juvenile seen 2/8 at "Little Guilin", Bukit Gombak (LWT). The nesting was first reported on 13/7 by Ulf Remahl, nesting was confirmed later 16/7 by Danny (LWT) when he sighted and photographed 2 adults with a juvenile at the same location.

**GOLDEN-BELLIED GERYGONE**

(*Gerygone sulphurea*)

2 adults seen taking turns sitting in a nest on a tree at Kranji Dam carpark on 3/8 (JC/LKS). This nest was first discovered in July. Following up on the above nesting report, the parents were observed to continue to feed the chick at Kranji Carpark, 5/8 (LTK) and 9/8 (LKC). The chick subsequently fledged on 20/8 and was reported to be a Little Bronze Cuckoo (TKC/CF)



**PIED TRILLER** (*Lalage nigra*)

Following up on last months' report, further observations were made on the nesting pair of Pied Triller at Kranji Carpark. Two chicks were observed to be in the nest on 10/8 (LKC/LTK). Both parents were observed to feed the chicks. Both chicks were estimated to fledge around 20/8 (TKC/CF)

Golden-bellied Gerygone feeding a Little Bronze Cuckoo, Kranji Carpark. Photo © Lee Tiah Khee



Pied Triller nesting at Kranji Carpark. Photo © Lee Tiah Khee

**COMMON IORA** (*Aegithina tiphia*)

A male seen 3/8 feeding a juvenile at Kranji Dam carpark (JC/LKS).

**RUFOUS-TAILED TAILORBIRD** (*Orthotomus sericeus*)

One juvenile seen 8/8 begging for food from an adult at SBWR (WCC).

**ASHY TAILORBIRD** (*Orthotomus ruficeps*)

A begging juvenile seen 10/8 following an adult at SBWR (LKS).

**WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA** (*Copsychus malabaricus*)

1 adult & 1 juvenile observed and photographed 3/8 at the Sime Forest near the Jelutong Tower (En). The juvenile was seen flying around the area where an adult was also seen.



Juvenile White-rumped Shama near Jelutong Tower, Sime Forest on 3 Aug 2008. Photo © Ender

**OLIVE-WINGED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus plumosus*)

1 adult seen feeding a juvenile at Mandai Orchid Garden, 31/8 (LKC)

**RUFIOUS-TAILED TAILORBIRD** (*Orthotomus sericeus*)

A juvenile observed begging for food from an adult 8/8 at SWBR (WCC).

**COPPER-THROATED SUNBIRD** (*Nectarinia calcostetha*)

1 female observed 30/8 flying into a nest at SBWR (PL/AOW)

## JOHOR

**WHIMBREL** (*Numenius phaeopus*)

2 flocks, each about 12 to 20 strong, observed 3/8 at Tg. Piai mudflats & Pulau Kukup (PL).

**COMMON REDSHANK** (*Tringa totanus*)

About 12 to 20 counted 3/8 along the Tg. Piai mudflats (PL).

**LESSER ADJUTANT** (*Leptoptilos javanicus*)

4 seen 3/8 along the Tg. Piai mudflats (PL).

## Records Committee 2008 Update – New Species for Singapore

By Lim Kim Seng  
Chairperson,  
NSS Bird Group Records Committee

This short note highlights the new species discussed and accepted during the last Records Committee meeting of April 2008.

The following records have been accepted:

### **Asian Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx maculatus* (Figures 1 & 2)**

A female and an immature bird photographed by KC Tsang at Upper Seletar Reservoir Park on 31 May 2006 were the first confirmed record for Singapore.

### **White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* (Figure 3)**

An individual photographed at the summit of Bukit Timah on 5 April 2008 by Chong Boon Leong, and observed by Simon Cockayne and Richard Carden, was the first confirmed record for Singapore. The good quality photographs taken by Chong were accompanied by a report from Simon. This species has long been expected to occur but good documentation was never received.

### **Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* (Figure 4)**

An adult female photographed at Changi on 21 November 2007 by Con Foley and Tan Gim Cheong was accepted as a new record for Singapore. Photographs were also accompanied by good written reports by both observers. Recent evidence from Peninsular Malaysia also supported the theory of regional vagrancy by this species. In addition, past surveys of bird shops in Singapore have failed to produce this species.

The total number of species of indigenous and naturalized birds recorded for Singapore is now **367**, up from 364 in 2007 (Lim 2007).

#### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the observers and photographers who contributed to all records cited above for their valuable contribution to Singapore ornithology and the use of their photographs in this article: Richard Carden, Simon Cockayne, Chong Boon Leong, Con Foley, Tan Gim Cheong and KC Tsang.

#### Reference

Lim, K.S. (2007). *Pocket Checklist of the Birds of the Republic of Singapore, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Nature Society (Singapore), Singapore.



Figure 1: Female Asian Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx maculatus* at Upper Seletar Reservoir Park, May 2006 (Photo by KC Tsang)



Figure 2: Juvenile Asian Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx maculatus* at Upper Seletar Reservoir Park, May 2006 (Photo by KC Tsang)



Figure 3: White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* at Bukit Timah, April 2008 (Photo by Chong Boon Leong)



Figure 4: Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* at Changi, November 2007 (Photo by Con Foley)