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ORIENTAL HONEY-BUZZARD
10/07/2009, SINGAPORE, © K. C. TSANG

Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis* mobbing Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* at Simon Lane By KC Tsang



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Bird Report

July 2009

By Lim Kim Seng

SINGAPORE HIGHLIGHTS

July marks the beginning of a new migratory season and this year was no exception. Even though no migrant shorebirds were detected during the Mid-Year Bird Census weekend of 11th and 12th, **Great and Little Egrets** were present. By the end of the month, the usual crop of shorebirds – **Whimbrel**, **Common Redshank**, **Common Sandpiper**, and **Lesser and Greater Sand Plovers** – were all in our shores. Another noteworthy (austral) migrant was an immature **Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo**, first detected in June, extending its stay by more than a month. Yet another intriguing non-resident bird was a juvenile **Brown-streaked Flycatcher**, found at Jurong Lake on 11th, a new early date by three days. On present evidence, this species is a non-breeding visitor present between July and March, but it may eventually prove to be resident as it is elsewhere in its limited range. Continuing the topic of intrigue, the unexpected presence of **Blue-winged Pitta** at Kranji continues to titillate local birders – is it expanding its range in Singapore or are the Kranji birds escapees? Another interesting migrant seen this month was a **Crested Honey Buzzard**, apparently of the sedentary race *orientalis*, seen at Simon Lane. Again, the question is does it breed somewhere undetected in Singapore or are these wanderers from elsewhere?

There were many rare and unusual residents detected during this month, including **Red Junglefowl**, **Oriental Pied Hornbill**, **Blue-eared Kingfisher**, **Blue-rumped Parrot**, **Purple Swamphen**, **Red-wattled Lapwing**, **Grey-headed Fish Eagle**, **Crested Serpent Eagle**, **Mangrove Pitta**, **Greater Green Leafbird** and **Black-headed Bulbul**. It was also pleasing to note the continued existence of another population of **Little Grebe** at Singapore Quarry, in addition to its old stronghold at Lorong Halus. In addition, 15 resident species were recorded breeding this month, including three national threatened species.

The 10th Mid-Year Bird Census held on the 11th and 12th weekend produced a record count of 10,377 birds and 125 species. The best bird of the census and in fact for the whole month was an **Oriental Darter**, a species not on the Singapore List, at Neo Tiew Lane 2.

SUMMARY

This report covers noteworthy bird sightings in July 2009 for Singapore and the surrounding region. In general, the report will include but are not limited to the following categories: rarities, breeding or nesting records, arrival and departure dates for migratory species, new locality records, escapees and unusual behaviour.

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

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

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

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In addition, we would like to thank Doreen Ang, Jonathan Cheah and KC Tsang for allowing us to use their photos in this report.

ABBREVIATIONS USED:

BBNP Bukit Batok Nature Park
BTNR Bukit Timah Nature Reserve
CCNR Central Catchment Nature Reserve
SBG Singapore Botanic Gardens
SBWR Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

SINGAPORE

RED JUNGLEFOWL *Gallus gallus*

18 counted on Pulau Ubin on 12/7 (WF/SBS).

WANDERING WHISTLING DUCK *Dendrocygna arcuata*

2 at SBG on 12/7 (YPL).

LESSER WANDERING DUCK *Dendrocygna javanica*

At SBG, 13 were seen on 6/7 (WCC) and 9 on 12/7 (YPL).

RUFOUS WOODPECKER *Celeus brachyurus*

1 at Sime Trail, CCNR, on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS).

BANDED WOODPECKER *Picus minaceus*

2 in albizia woodland at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS) and 2 at SBG on 12/7 (YPL).

COMMON GOLDENBACK *Dinopium javanense*

3 at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS) and 3 at SBG on 12/7 (YPL).

LINEATED BARBET *Megalaima lineata*

4 counted at BTNR on 12/7 (LKC), 3 at BBNP on 12/7 (ACW), 2 at Bukit Brown on 12/7 (AOY), 3 at Bukit Batok West on 12/7 (WC) and 1 at Malcolm Park on 12/7 (DA/NK).

RED-CROWNED BARBET *Megalaima rafflesii*

1 counted at Upper Seletar Reservoir Park on 11/7 (WC) and 5 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (YDL).

COPPERSMITH BARBET *Megalaima haemacephala*

2 at SBG on 12/7 (YPL).

ORIENTAL PIED HORNBILL *Anthracoceros albirostris*

12 counted on Pulau Ubin on 12/7 (WF/SBS).

BLUE-EARED KINGFISHER *Alcedo meninting*

1 seen at Upper Seletar Reservoir Park on 5/7 (WC).

STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER *Pelargopsis capensis*

1 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS) and 5 at SBG on 12/7 (YPL).

BANDED BAY CUCKOO *Cacomantis sonnerati*

1 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS).

PLAINTIVE CUCKOO *Cacomantis merulinus*

2 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS).

RUSTY-BREASTED CUCKOO *Cacomantis sepulcralis*

1 heard at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 13/7 (JC/LKLS).

LITTLE BRONZE CUCKOO *Chrysococcyx minutillus*

1 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS).

HORSFIELD'S BRONZE CUCKOO *Chrysococcyx basalis*

An adult seen at Tuas Grassland on 16/7 and 20/7 (TGC). First discovered here last month (see SINAV 23:6), these records extend its stay here to 37 days, beating its previous record by 30 days, and possibly implying wintering in Singapore. See article on page 17.

VIOLET CUCKOO *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*

1 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (HF/YDL).

CHESTNUT-BELLIED MALKOHA *Phaenicophaeus sumatranus*

1 at Sime Trail, CCNR, on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS) and 1 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (YDL).

RAINBOW LORIKEET *Trichoglossus haematodus*

2 at Malcolm Park on 12/7 (DA/NK).

YELLOW-CRESTED COCKATOO *Cacatua sulphurea*

2 at Kent Ridge Park on 11/7 (AOY) and 2 at Mount Faber on 12/7 (TSI).

TANIMBAR CORELLA *Cacatua goffini*

4 at Kent Ridge Park on 11/7 (AOY), 4 at Malcolm Park on 12/7 (DA/NK) and 2 at Pasir Ris Park on 12/7 (TSK/WCC).

BLUE-RUMPED PARROT *Psittinus cyanurus*

1 at BTNR on 12/7 (LKC) and 1 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (HF/YDL). This is Singapore's rarest parrot.

BLUE-CROWNED HANGING PARROT *Loriculus galgulus*

3 over SBG on 6/7 (WCC), 2 at Sime Trail, CCNR, on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS) and 6 at Malcolm Park on 12/7 (DA/NK).

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

1 at SBG on 12/7 (YPL).

RED-BREASTED PARAKEET *Psittacula alexandri*

7 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS).

LONG-TAILED PARAKEET *Psittacula longicauda*

5 at Admiralty Park on 6/7 (LKS), 14 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS), 35 at Sime Trail, CCNR, on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS) and 18 at SBG on 12/7 (YPL).

SAVANNA NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus affinis*

1 flushed at Tampines Grassland on 12/7 (JL).

RED TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

4 counted at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS), 2 at SBWR Route 1 on 11/7 (SMA/TPL/TJL) and 1 at Bukit Batok West on 12/7 (WC).

THICK-BILLED GREEN PIGEON *Treron curvirostra*

2 at Sime Trail, CCNR, on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS), 8 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (HF/YDL) and 4 at MacRitchie Reservoir on 20/7 (ST).

RED-LEGGED CRAKE *Rallina fasciata*

1 heard at Admiralty Park on 6/7 (LKS).

WHITE-BROWED CRAKE *Porzana cinerea*

1 seen at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS).

PURPLE SWAMPHEN *Porphyrio porphyrio*

3 seen at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS).

COMMON MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

1 seen at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS).

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

First arrivals: 2 at SBWR on 25/7 (RK/AT).

COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

2 at SBWR on 25/7 (RK/AT) and 29/7 (SA/LKS).

COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos*

At SBWR, 1 was seen on 18/7 (MT) and 20/7 (LKS), and 2 on 25/7 (RK/AT) and 29/7 (LKS/SA).

LESSER SAND PLOVER *Charadrius mongolus*

18 counted at Seletar Air Base on 26/7 (TKC).

GREATER SAND PLOVER *Charadrius leschenaultii*

1 summer bird at Seletar Air Base on 26/7 (TKC).

RED-WATTLED LAPWING *Vanellus indicus*

2 at Bukit Batok West on 12/7 (WC).

BLACK-NAPED TERN *Sterna sumatrana*

1 off Kranji Dam on 11/7 (JS) and 2 off Pulau Ubin on 12/7 (AJ/SBS/RH).

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*

3 seen at Kranji Reservoir on 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS), 2 at Kranji Dam on 11/7 (JS), 2 (1 with fish) at Sungei Seletar on 11/7 (DA/NK/PAH), 3 at Chinese Garden on 12/7 (CMY/TKP), 1 at Khatib Bongsu on 12/7 (HHC/LEL/YFW), 1 at Pasir Ris on 12/7 (TSK/WCC), 3 at Sungei Serangoon on 12/7 (TKH) and 4 at Ubin Central on 12/7 (AJ/SBS/RH).

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

2 counted at Upper Seletar Reservoir Park on 11/7 (WC) and 1 at Sungei Mandai on 12/7 (LKK).

CRESTED HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis ptilorhyncus*

1 at Simon Lane on 10/7 (TKC).



Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhyncus* at Simon Lane By KC Tsang

GREY-HEADED FISH-EAGLE *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*

1 seen at SBWR Route 1 on 11/7 (SMA/TPL/TJL).

CRESTED SERPENT-EAGLE *Spilornis cheela*

1 at Lorong Halus on 12/7 (AC) is the first record for this locality. It is unclear if the bird was a resident wanderer from the Central Catchment or a drifter from Johor.

CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE *Spizaetus cirrhatus*

1 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS) and 13/7 (JC/LKS). In addition, there were 3 at Poyan on 11/7 (CF/DL), 2 at BTNR on 12/7 (LKC), 1 at BBNP on 12/7 (ACW), 1 at Bukit Brown on 12/7 (AOY), 2 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (HF/YDL), 1 at Malcolm Park on 12/7 (DA/NK) and 1 at Khatib on 12/7 (HHC).

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

4 seen at Lorong Halus on 12/7 (AC) and 6-7 at Singapore Quarry on 27/7 (UR).

ORIENTAL DARTER *Anhinga melanogaster*

1 seen flying at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS) is apparently the first record for Singapore. It is not clear if this was an escapee or a genuine wild bird.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Widespread presence in Singapore during MYBC implies a change of status for this migratory waterbird. In total, 14 birds were detected at 5 sites on the weekend of 11/7 and 12/7, including 6 birds at Sungei Mandai (LKK). At SBWR, 3 were seen on 11/7 (SMA/TPL/TJL) and 6 on 29/7 (SA/LKS).

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Notable high counts of 62 birds at Ubin West on 12/7 (WF) and 48 at Sungei Mandai on 12/7 (LKK). Also 2 at Kranji Dam on 19/7 (JG/KK) and 1 at SBWR on 29/7 (SA/LKS).

PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*

2 at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS), 1 at SBWR Route 1 on 11/7 (TJL), 1 at Bishan Park on 12/7 (CKC/MK), 1 at Bukit Batok West on 12/7 (WC), 1 at Chinese Garden on 12/7 (CMY/TKP), 1 at Sungei Serangoon on 12/7 (TKH), 3 at SBWR Route 2 on 12/7 (SY) and 1 at Ubin West on 12/7 (WF).

GREAT EGRET *Casmerodius albus*

1 at Neo Tiew Lane 2, 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS).

CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

17 counted at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS), 4 at Poyan on 11/7 (CF/DL) and 1 at Woodlands Avenue 6 on 26/7 (ST).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax*

1 at SBG on 6/7 (WCC), 5 at Chinese Garden on 12/7 (CMY/TKP), 1 at Khatib Bongsu on 12/7 (HHC), 17 at Pasir Ris Park on 12/7 (TSK/WCC) and 3 at SBWR Route 2 on 12/7 (SY).

YELLOW BITTERN *Ixobrychus sinensis*

1 at Lorong Halus on 12/7 (AC).

CINNAMON BITTERN *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*

1 at Admiralty Park on 12/7 (BL).

BLUE-WINGED PITTA *Pitta moluccensis*

1 heard at Kranji Nature trail on 5/7 (KK) and 11/7 (JS).

MANGROVE PITTA *Pitta megarhyncha*

1 at Ubin Central on 12/7 (AJ/RYS/SBS).

GREATER GREEN LEAFBIRD *Chloropsis sonnerati*

2 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (HF/YDL).

BLUE-WINGED LEAFBIRD *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*

2 at BTNR on 12/7 (LKC) and 1 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (HF/YDL).

LONG-TAILED SHRIKE *Lanius schach*

At Admiralty Park, 1 was seen on 6/7 (LKS) and 3 on 12/7 (BL). Also 2 at Punggol Grassland on 11/7 (JH).

BROWN-STREAKED FLYCATCHER

Muscicapa williamsoni

1 juvenile at Jurong Lake on 11/7 (CWK).

ORIENTAL MAGPIE ROBIN *Copsychus saularis*

5 at SBWR Route 1 on 11/7 (SMA/TPL/TJL), 1 at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 11/7 (AG/LJS/LKS/LS), 5 at Malcolm Park on 12/7 (DA/NK), 8 at Ubin Central on 12/7 (AJ/RYS/SBS) and 3 at Ubin West on 12/7 (WF). At SBG, 10 (4 males, 2 females, 2 juveniles) were counted on 6/7 (WCC) and 7 on 12/7 (YPL).

WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA

Copsychus malabaricus

2 at Upper Seletar Reservoir Park on 11/7 (WC), a juvenile seen at Sime Trail, CCNR, on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS), 2 at Venus Trail on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS), 2 at Ubin Central on 12/7 (AJ/RYS/SBS), 5 at Ubin West on 12/7 (WF) and a female at Kent Ridge Park on 22/7 (STYW).



Brown-streaked Flycatcher *Muscicapa williamsoni* juvenile at Jurong Lake By Jonathan Cheah

COMMON HILL MYNA *Gracula religiosa*

11 counted at SBG on 12/7 (YPL) and 6 at BTNR on 12/7 (LKC).

STRAW-HEADED BULBUL *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*

32 birds were counted on Pulau Ubin on 12/7 (AJ/RYS/SBS/WF) and 6 at BBNP on 12/7 (ACW).

BLACK-HEADED BULBUL *Pycnonotus atriceps*

A flock of 4 birds were seen at Ubin West on 12/7 (WF). This is the second recent record for Pulau Ubin and may indicate irruptive movements from elsewhere.

RED-WHISKERED BULBUL *Pycnonotus jocosus*

3 at Kent Ridge Park on 11/7 (AOY), 1 at Bishan Park on 12/7 (CKC/MK) and 1 at Lorong Halus on 12/7 (AC).

CREAM-VENTED BULBUL *Pycnonotus simplex*

3 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (HF/YDL).

ASIAN RED-EYED BULBUL *Pycnonotus brunneus*

3 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (HF/YDL).

ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE *Zosterops palpebrosus*

13 counted at Chinese Garden on 12/7 (CMY/TKP) and 1 at Kent Ridge Park on 22/7 (STYW).

WHITE-CRESTED LAUGHINGTHRUSH *Garrulax leucolophus*

14 counted at Poyan on 11/7 (CF/DL), 17 at BBNP on 12/7 (ACW) and 7-8 at Kent Ridge Park on 22/7 (STYW).

SHORT-TAILED BABBLER *Malacocincla malaccensis*

2 counted at Upper Seletar Reservoir Park on 11/7 (WC), 7 at Sime Trail, CCNR, on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS), 7 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (HF/YDL) and 2 at BTNR on 12/7 (LKC).

CHESTNUT-WINGED BABBLER *Stachyris erythroptera*

2 at Sime Trail, CCNR, on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS) and 7 at Nee Soon on 12/7 (HF/YDL).

PURPLE-THROATED SUNBIRD *Nectarinia sperata*

6 at Upper Seletar Reservoir park on 11/7 (WC), 1 at Poyan on 11/7 (CF/DL) and 4 at Ubin Central on 12/7 (AJ/RYS/SBS).

BREEDING / NESTING REPORTS

LACED WOODPECKER *Picus vittatus*

A recently fledged male being attended by an adult male at Kent Ridge Park on 22/7 (STYW).

BLUE-THROATED BEE-EATER *Merops viridis*

A juvenile seen at MacRitchie Reservoir on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS) was most probably local bred. 2 were also seen foraging together at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 13/7 (JC/LKS).

WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

An adult with a juvenile at SBG on 6/7 (WCC)

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*

1 adult seen carrying fish at Lower Seletar Dam on 11/7 (DA/NK/PAH) was apparently feeding young.

COMMON IORA *Aegithina tiphia*

A pair seen building a nest about 10m up an *Avicennia* tree at Sungei Mandai on 12/7 (LKK).

ORIENTAL MAGPIE ROBIN *Copsychus saularis*

A newly fledged juvenile was seen at Jacob Balas Garden, SBG, on 5/7 (LKS). Another 2 juveniles were also seen at SBG on 6/7 (WCC), one of which was seen pulling out an earthworm from the ground. Another juvenile was seen in the company of 3 adults at Malcolm Park on 12/7 (DA/NK).

WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA

Copsychus malabaricus

A juvenile seen at Sime Trail, CCNR, on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS) implies local breeding.

YELLOW-VENTED BULBUL

Pycnonotus goiavier

At a nest at Toh Tuck Road, an adult was seen adding nest materials to a potted kum quat shrub on 22/7, with one egg was laid on 23/7 and the second egg on 25/7 (all DA).



Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier* at Toh Tuck Road
By Doreen Ang

COMMON TAILORBIRD *Orthotomus sutorius*

2 family groups were seen with adults feeding young away from their nests at Sungei Mandai on 12/7 (LKK).

RUFOUS-TAILED TAILORBIRD *Orthotomus sericeus*

A juvenile seen preening at SBG on 6/7 (WCC).

ASHY TAILORBIRD *Orthotomus ruficeps*

A juvenile was seen and an adult sitting on its nest at SBWR Route 1 on 11/7 (SMA/TPL/TJL). An adult was also seen with a juvenile in mangrove at SBWR on 29/7 (SA/LKS).

OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD *Nectarinia jugularis*

A female seen attending to a nest on an *Avicennia* tree hanging over Sungei Buloh on 20/7 (LKS/SA).

BROWN-THROATED SUNBIRD *Anthreptes malacensis*

A fledged juvenile male seen with an adult male at Toh Tuck Road on 21/7 (DA) implies local breeding.

CRIMSON SUNBIRD *Aethopyga siparaja*

A pair seen with a chick at Sime Trail, CCNR, on 12/7 (KC/JC/CLe/JLe/LKS).

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

2 juveniles seen at SBG on 6/7 (WCC)

BAYA WEAVER *Ploceus philippinus*

At Neo Tiew Lane 2, 7 nests were counted, 5 on one tree and 2 on another tree on 13/7 (JC/LKS).

REPORT ON ESCAPEES

RED JUNGLEFOWL *Gallus gallus*

Records of apparent escapees from different parts of the island: 1 heard at Neo Tiew Lane 2 on 11/7 (LKS), 1 at Bukit Batok West on 12/7 (WC), 2 at SBWR Route 2 on 12/7 (SY) and 2 at Malcolm Park on 12/7 (DA/NK).

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

4 at SBG on 12/7 (YPL).

BLACK SWAN *Cygnus atratus*

5 at SBG on 12/7 (YPL).

ORIENTAL PIED HORNBILL *Anthracoceros albirostris*

3 at Upper Seletar Reservoir Park on 5/7 and 11/7 (WC), and 2 at Malcolm park on 12/7 (DA/NK).

RHINOCEROS HORNBILL *Buceros rhinoceros*

1 at BTNR on 12/7 (LKC).

RED LORY *Eos bornea*

1 at SBG on 12/7 (YPL).

GREY PARROT *Psittacus erithacus*

1 at Malcolm Park on 12/7 (DA/NK).

BLOSSOM-HEADED PARAKEET *Psittacula roseata*

1 seen at Pasir Ris Park on 12/7 (TSK/WCC).

PIED IMPERIAL PIGEON *Ducula bicolor*

Suspected escapees from Jurong Bird Park: 1 at Kent Ridge Park on 11/7 (AOY) and 4 at Chinese Garden on 12/7 (CMY/TKP).

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

1 at Mandai Mudflats on 12/7 (LKK).

MILKY STORK *Mycteria cinerea*

3 at Lower Seletar Dam on 11/7 (DA/NK/PAH).

PAINTED STORK *Mycteria leucocephala*

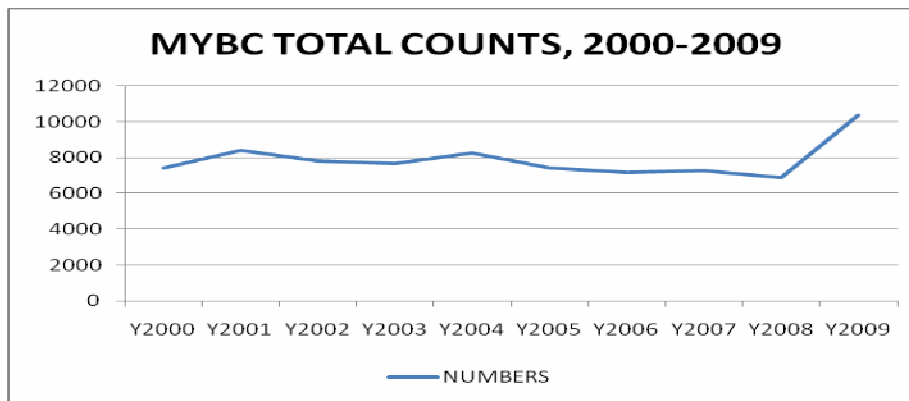
1 at Lower Seletar Dam on 11/7 (DA/NK/PAH).

Report on the 10th Mid-Year Bird Census

By Lim Kim Seng

Our 10th Mid-Year Bird Census (MYBC) was conducted on the weekend of 11-12 July 2009 and saw the participation of 59 people, a huge jump from the 42 people of 2008 and only two short of the record high 61 people set in 2003. A new record total of 32 sites were covered, up from 27 sites last year. Eight sites were counted on Saturday and the remaining 24 on Sunday. Almost all regular sites were counted with the exception of Gambas Avenue because of lack of volunteers, and Sentosa and Marina City Park because of on-going construction work for the new casinos. New sites included Admiralty Park and Toa Payoh Town Garden.

MYBC2009 saw a record tally of 10,377 birds compared to 6,860 birds last year and reversed a trend of decreasing numbers since 2004. In terms of diversity, 2009 saw 125 species, surpassing the record high set in 2006. In comparison, only 116 species were recorded in 2008.



MYBC 2000-2009 Total Number of Birds Counted

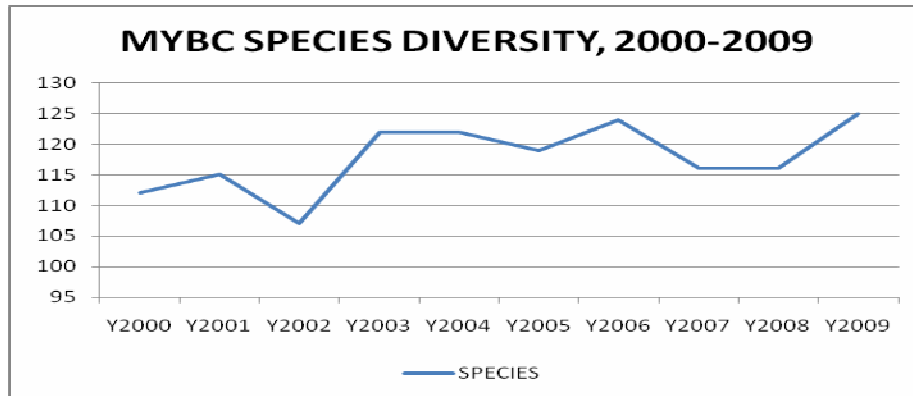
Site-wise, the richest in terms of species diversity was Neo Tiew Lane 2, with 55 species. Following closely behind in species richness was Ubin Central with 54 species and Ubin West with 46 species. Sites with the lowest bird diversity included Toa Payoh with a paltry 17 species, followed by Mount Faber (22) and Sembawang Park and Tampines Grassland, both with 24 species.

In terms of numbers of birds, the richest site was Khatib Bongsu with 653 birds counted. Second was Neo Tiew Lane 2 (610) and third was Ubin West (592). In contrast, the site with the poorest count in terms of numbers was Mount Faber with just 130 birds tallied. Other sites with low bird numbers included Tampines (147 birds) and Lorong Halus (147 birds).

Of the 125 species recorded, four were migrants and included both Little and Great Egrets, Blue-winged Pitta and Barn Swallow. It is perhaps worth noting here that the pitta has been present for the second successive “summer” and may prove to be more than a migrant. Also surprising was the lack of migrant shorebirds or terns. Only one of the 125

species was a non-breeding visitor – the Osprey. Perhaps qualifying as the bird of the weekend was a bird of uncertain status, possibly an escapee – a flying Oriental Darter at Neo Tiew Lane 2, a bird not yet in any of Singapore’s lists!

Birds present in 2008 but missing this year included Blue-eared Kingfisher, Rusty-breasted and Asian Drongo Cuckoos, Red-legged Crake, Yellow-billed Egret, Lesser Green Leafbird and Copper-throated Sunbird. Conversely, species missing last year but detected this year included Wandering Whistling Duck, Blue-rumped Parrot, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Savanna Nightjar, White-browed Crake, Purple Swamphen, Osprey, Great Egret, Blue-winged Pitta, Black-headed Bulbul, Greater Green Leafbird and Javan Munia.



MYBC 2000-2009 Total Number of Species Counted

Once again, White-vented (Javan) Myna remained the most numerous resident with 1,675 birds counted. In second place and quite close behind was Asian Glossy Starling with 1,419 birds, an almost 100% improvement from last year. Next in the top five were Pink-necked Green-pigeon (572 birds), Yellow-vented Bulbul (448) and Pacific Swallow (317). Black-naped Oriole was ranked sixth with a total of 187 birds, an improvement of two places as compared to 2008. Seventh was Common Iora with 181 birds and in eighth place, Spotted Dove, which dropped one place with 173 birds. Bringing up the rest of the top ten positions were House Crow, which dropped two spots to ninth with 165 birds, a decrease of 22 birds from 2008, and the globally near-threatened Long-tailed Parakeet, with 155 birds, up five places from 2008.

In eleventh spot was the nationally threatened Grey Heron, with 189 birds, up from 145 birds last year and maintaining its position as the most numerous ardeid and the only nationally threatened bird in the top Twenty. The other nine birds in the Top Twenty were Common Pigeon (170), Collared Kingfisher (164), Eurasian Tree Sparrow (160), Olive-backed Sunbird (148), Striped Tit-babbler (144), Common Tailorbird (129), Scaly-breasted Munia (119), Striated Heron (110) and Blue-throated Bee-eater (107).

The most dramatic change in the Top Twenty was the rise of the Eurasian Tree Sparrow from 24th to 14th with a 100% increase from last year. Also significant was the lack of migrants in the Top Twenty.

| 2009 RANK | SPECIES | 2009 COUNT | 2008 COUNT | 2008 RANK |
|-----------|--------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| 1 | WHITE-VENTED MYNA | 1675 | 1090 | 1 |
| 2 | ASIAN GLOSSY STARLING | 1419 | 643 | 2 |
| 3 | PINK-NECKED GREEN PIGEON | 334 | 270 | 5 |
| 4 | YELLOW-VENTED BULBUL | 273 | 334 | 3 |
| 5 | PACIFIC SWALLOW | 270 | 273 | 4 |
| 6 | BLACK-NAPED ORIOLE | 187 | 173 | 8 |
| 7 | COMMON IORA | 181 | 165 | 9 |
| 8 | SPOTTED DOVE | 173 | 181 | 7 |
| 9 | HOUSE CROW | 165 | 187 | 6 |
| 10 | LONG-TAILED PARAKEET | 155 | 124 | 13 |
| 11 | GREY HERON | 189 | 145 | 11 |
| 12 | COMMON PIGEON | 170 | 103 | 17 |
| 13 | COLLARED KINGFISHER | 164 | 155 | 10 |
| 14 | EURASIAN TREE SPARROW | 160 | 81 | 24 |
| 15 | OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD | 148 | 122 | 14 |
| 16 | STRIPED TIT-BABBLER | 144 | 112 | 16 |
| 17 | COMMON TAILORBIRD | 129 | 88 | 19 |
| 18 | SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA | 119 | 88 | 19 |
| 19 | STRIATED HERON | 110 | 90 | 18 |
| 20 | BLUE-THROATED BEE-EATER | 107 | 83 | 22 |

Top Twenty Most Numerous Birds of MYBC 2009 (with comparative figures and positions from 2008)

Of 119 residents counted, 25 species, or 21%, were nationally threatened species. Some of these included Red Junglefowl, Lesser Whistling-duck, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Violet Cuckoo, Blue-rumped Parrot, Little Tern, Crested Serpent Eagle, Purple Heron, Little Grebe, Greater Green Leafbird, White-rumped Shama, Straw-headed Bulbul and Chestnut-winged Babbler. Most noteworthy perhaps were four Black-headed Bulbuls and a Mangrove Pitta, both from Pulau Ubin. Most numerous of threatened residents counted was Grey Heron with a record of 189 birds counted, an increase of 44 birds compared to last year. The globally threatened Straw-headed Bulbul was the second best threatened species (33rd overall), with a total of 47 birds, down from 55 in 2008. Likewise, the Oriental Magpie-robin was the third most numerous threatened species (42nd overall) with a count of 33 birds, down slightly from 36 last year. Also doing surprisingly well was the Black-crowned Night Heron which scored 47th overall with a count of 26 birds, 17 of which came from Pasir Ris.

Of naturalised residents three species already occupy the top 20 positions. These included Common Pigeon, House Crow and White-vented Myna. A potential candidate for future Top Twenty placings is the White-crested Laughingthrush. It was placed 29th with 55 birds, an increase from 46 birds nation-wide in 2008.

Seven species of raptors were recorded. The most numerous were White-bellied Sea Eagle and Brahminy Kite, both with 19 birds detected. Third was Changeable Hawk Eagle which scored 12 birds from a total of eight sites. Also of interest were a single Crested Serpent Eagle at Halus, perhaps a stray from Malaysia, and three Ospreys.

Of interest too was the number of unidentified swiftlets counted during MYBC 2009. There were 1,234 nation-wide, indicating the abundance of this group as a Top Ten Bird if these were both Germain's and Black-nest Swiftlets. However, most of the birds seen had pale rumps and distinct forks, indicating that the majority of swiftlets seen were indeed Germain's. If this is proven, it would be ranked third after Asian Glossy Starling. The field identification of swiftlets is indeed an ID problem that is crying out for a swift solution (pardon the pun)!

There were twelve alien species comprising 37 individuals recorded including Rhinoceros Hornbill, Red Lory, Grey Parrot, Blossom-headed Parakeet, Great Cormorant, and the usual Milky and Painted Storks.

The following participants helped either as leaders or assistants in MYBC2009 (bold type indicating counters who did the census on both days – well done guys!):

Ali Jaafar, **Doreen Ang**, Samantha Ang, Richard Carden, Chan Kim Cheng, Chan Mei Yee, Alfred Chia, Andrew Chow, SC Fang & wife, James Heng, Horst Flotow, Con Foley, Willie Foo, Ann George, Ho Hua Chew, Kaori, Kenneth Kee, **Nessie Khoo**, Khuan Jia Hui, Maurice Kwan, Kwek Swee Meng, Danny Lau, Lau Jia Sheng, Ben Lee, Charmaine Lee, Lee Ee Ling, Jimmy Lee, Lim Chor Kiang, **Joseph Lim**, Lim Kim Chuah, Lim Kim Keang, **Lim Kim Seng**, Clarrse Ng, Ng Kim Tee, **Alan Owyong**, Pandian, Peng Ah Huay, Phang Seng Kai, Rehan Yusoff, Leonard Santisteban, John Spencer, Sutari Supari, Tai Ping Ling, Tan Boon Huat, Tan Ju Lin, Tan Kok Hui, Tan Siew Kwang, Tan Soon Im, K.P. Teh, Wee Sau Cheng, **Wing Chong**, Wing Chong How, Wong Chung Cheong, Yang Pah Liang, Yap Lip Kee, Sunny Yeo, Yong Ding Li and Yuan Fook Weng.

Once again, thanks to everyone for making MYBC2009 and our first ten years such a memorable one! We hope to see you again next year!

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Sightings of the Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalis* at Tuas in July 2009

By Tan Gim Cheong

The Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalis* breeds in Australia and is a rare migrant to Singapore during the northern summer months. Following Gloria Seow's sighting of a rare Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo on 14 June 2009 at Tuas, I had the good fortune of having two sightings in July 2009 at the same patch of 'wasteland'. The first sighting was a brief one on 16 July 2009 at around 10h 00 during cloudy weather conditions. The cuckoo was perched quietly at eye-level on an acacia tree. The first impressions were of its largely green and white plumage, with pale edged feathers on the upperparts plus a black bill, a pale supercilium and dull green eye-stripe and ear-coverts. It did not have any red eye-ring and the dark bars on its white belly were not thin and complete like other small cuckoos, instead they were thicker and restricted to the flanks. With all these features, the cuckoo was identified as a Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo. After a short while, the bird flew into the crown of another tree about 50m away and was not relocated.



Immature female Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalis* with a caterpillar of the Tawny Coaster (*Acraea violae*). Note the distinctive rufous at the basal part of the outer uppertail.

The second sighting and feeding observations

The second sighting was on 20 July 2009 under sunny weather conditions at a patch of acacia trees about 200m from my first sighting. The cuckoo was first seen at 11h 45 and was quite approachable. Thus, I was able to keep the bird in view for 1 hour and 45 minutes! The bird spent much of the time foraging for food. It would sometimes leave the patch of acacia trees and fly away to lone trees in the vicinity but it did not fly more than 100m away from the patch of acacia trees.

The cuckoo looked for prey by perching on a low branch, not more than 2m high, and scanning the surrounding grassy ground. From time to time, it would tilt its head to have one eye pointing to the ground and the other into the sky. Apparently, the cuckoo does this to have a better look at the ground and would usually follow up by flying down to pick up the prey item. During the observation period, the cuckoo secured nine prey items. Most of these were hairy caterpillars with dark red bodies and black 'hairs'. These are caterpillars of the Tawny Coster *Acraea violae*, a grassland species that has invaded Singapore as recently as 2006. When the cuckoo was manipulating the caterpillars, some of them showed yellow undersides. At least one of the prey was a small centipede.

In every instance, the prey was picked up from the grassy ground. At no time did the cuckoo pick up prey items from the foliage of the trees. On four occasions, the cuckoo ate the prey on the ground. During the remaining five instances, after picking up the prey, the cuckoo would fly up to a low branch to consume its food. Before swallowing the prey, the cuckoo would usually shake the prey about. A few times during this process, a green droplet of liquid could be seen oozing out from the bottom end of the caterpillar. The cuckoo made no attempts to wipe away the 'hairs' of the caterpillars.

Plumage, eye-colour and aging of the cuckoo

I also had better views of the bird this time round. Its underparts were white and it had dark barrings on the flanks. There were no barrings on the middle of the breast and belly. The undertail was white with dark bars. The basal part of the outer uppertail was rufous – a distinctive feature. The upperparts were bronze-green and feathers pale-edged. It had a white supercilium and white moustachial stripe. Also, it had a dark eye-stripe and dark ear coverts. Its bill and feet were black. The most interesting feature was its eyes - its pupil was dark with a pale iris.

A check on the field guides for this region revealed that they all describe the Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo as having "dark eyes". The same goes for the Sclater Field Guide to Australian Birds. In the field, the bird's eye does look dark from certain angles, but in good lighting, as the picture above shows, the eyes of this bird was not all dark - it actually has a white iris. After posting my sighting on wildbirdsingapore egroup, Lim Kim Seng commented that

"The Handbook of the Birds of the World Volume 4 (p.563) mentions that the iris of adult HBC is brown to red but grey to light brown in the juvenile, so your bird was likely to be an immature bird, even though the side and flank barrings are well developed."

Bruce Ramsay also helped to solve the mystery by adding that

"Reader's Digest "Complete Book of Australian Birds" (2nd edition, 1988) gives the following as iris colours for Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo:

Adult male - red

Adult female - grey

Immature male - pink

Immature female - grey

Based on this, I suggest that the bird in Gim Cheong's photo is definitely female and, judging by the overall dull appearance, I would agree that it is probably an immature."

The cuckoo seen earlier by Gloria on 14 June 2009 also had pale eyes and a dull appearance overall. Thus, it is likely that the cuckoo seen by Gloria was the same individual seen on 16 and 20 July 2009. If it is indeed so, this would be the first evidence of over-wintering by this species in Singapore.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Gloria Seow for reporting her sighting and to Felix Wong for spurring my interest. Thanks to Gan Cheong Weei and Simon Chan for identifying the caterpillar. And, thanks to Lim Kim Seng and Bruce Ramsay who both provided information on the eye colour and the aging of the bird.