

## Singapore Raptor Report Spring Migration, March 2010

### Summary:

79 raptors from 8 migrant species were reported this month. **Black Bazas** continued to be the most numerous with a total of 41 birds. **Oriental Honey Buzzards** came in second in terms of numbers again with a total of 16 birds. The third most numerous was the **Peregrine Falcon** with 8 birds. One (very) rare/accidental migrant species was recorded for the 1st time this season and two rare resident species were reported.

Martti Siponen spent many weekends at Tuas hoping for a repeat of the hundreds seen on spring migration last year but the birds did not show. Ulf Remahl kept up the vigilance concerning the Black Bazas at Singapore Quarry and he found out that the dead tree is a staging post in the morning. After roosting in the surrounding trees, the Black Baza spend up to an hour in the dead tree before taking off for the day.



*A (very) rare first winter male Lesser Kestrel at Changi Cove, March 2010.  
Note the back of the bird which is more plain and less spotted compared to the Common  
Kestrel. Photo by Jonathan Cheah*

### Highlights for migrant species:

The most exciting sighting of the month was of a single first winter male **Lesser Kestrel** at Changi Cove. First detected on 6<sup>th</sup> March, Nicholas Tan photographed the bird on 13<sup>th</sup> March and Jonathan Cheah reported seeing and photographing the bird from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> March. The observers took it as a Common Kestrel until Peter Kennerley identified the bird as a first

winter male Lesser Kestrel. Thanks to Peter Kennerley for the ID and David Bakewell for passing the message. This is the second time this species is recorded in Singapore. The only previous record was of 4 birds, with at least one male, from Jan-Mar 2001. What makes the sighting of this species all the more significant is the fact that the Lesser Kestrel has not been recorded in Peninsular Malaysia and Thailand. The nearest records are from Laos and Myanmar! (This record is currently being reviewed by the Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group's Records Committee.)

For the uncommon migrant raptors, 2 **Chinese Sparrowhawks** were seen at Pulau Seletar/ Pulau Punggol by Alan Owyong and friends while one was seen during the Sentosa survey by Willie Foo and Ali Jaafar. A total of 3 **Eastern Marsh Harriers** were recorded – 2 seen in flight at Changi (Nicholas Tan and separately - Frankie) and one at Tuas South (Martti Siponen). Small numbers of **Ospreys** and **Japanese Sparrowhawks** were also reported.

**Highlights for sedentary species:**

For the sedentary species, it was a good month for the rare **Crested Serpent Eagle** as there were 4 sightings - at Springleaf by Leslie Fung; at Malcolm Road by Jane Rogers and friends during the Census; at MacRitchie by Richard Carden and on Pulau Ubin by Doreen Ang. For our rare **Grey-headed Fish Eagle**, there were 3 sightings – at MacRitchie by Richard Carden; at Kranji bund by Lim Kim Seng and at Chinese Gardens by Peter Jones. Nesting activity was observed for the White-bellied Sea Eagle and Changeable Hawk-eagle.



*A rare Crested Serpent Eagle at Springleaf.  
Photo by Leslie Fung.*

**Table 1**

S/N	Species	No.	S/N	Species	No.
1	Osprey	4		<b><i>Residents / Sedentary Species</i></b>	
2	Black Baza	41	9	Black-winged Kite	4
3	Oriental Honey Buzzard	16	10	Grey-headed Fish Eagle	3
4	Eastern Marsh Harrier	3	11	Crested Serpent Eagle	4
5	Chinese Sparrowhawk	3	12	Changeable Hawk-eagle	7
6	Japanese Sparrowhawk	3			
7	Lesser Kestrel	1		<b><i>Unidentified</i></b>	
8	Peregrine Falcon	8	14	Unidentified Raptors	2
			15	Unidentified <i>Accipiters</i>	1
<b>Total for Migrants</b>		<b>79</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>100</b>

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

**1. Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (4)**

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
18	2	Kranji bund, circling and then flying northeast, 11am	Ian Rickword, Ho Hua Chew & Gerard Francis
18	1	Pulau Tekong	Lau Jia Sheng
20	1	Pulau Semakau, the bird was feeding on a fish, morning	Wing Chong, Tan Hang Chong & Sunny Yeo
21	1	Turut Track, the bird was perched on the wires eating fish	Wei Luen & Richard
27	1	Kranji Bund, bird was fishing unmolested by other raptors in the area, morning	Lim Kim Seng

**2. Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes* (41)**

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
1	3	Jalan Asas (access road to Singapore Quarry), on the usual dead tree, 7.21am  <i>"I was at the dead tree access road to Singapore Quarry straight in from Jalan Asas already @ 06:50 to find out if my latest theory was correct. That one is that all the Black Baza roost in some denser trees and then very early in the morning right at dawn flies to the dead tree. On my arrival there were no birds at all of any kind. Suddenly @07:21 there were 3 Black Bazas. I didn't see them coming as I at the same time looked at other birds like two very noisy drumming woodpeckers. One of the 3 Black Bazas left a couple of minutes before eight, which I have found out is their normal behavior. Then the very last Black Baza will be gone somewhere between 08:15 -08:20. I was very pleased to have found out that my theory was correct but I am still confounded why these predators always assemble in this very tree. There are many more dead trees in the area. The only differentiating feature I can see is that the assembly tree seems to be slightly taller than the other dead trees in the area."</i>	Ulf Remahl
3	1	Singapore Quarry, in flight	Lim Kim Seng
4	1	Jalan Asas (access road to Singapore Quarry), on the usual dead tree, 7.55am	Ulf Remahl
5	6	Jalan Asas (access road to Singapore Quarry), on the usual dead tree, 7.50am	Ulf Remahl
5	1	Springside Canal, in flight from direction of Yishun towards SLE, 8.45am	Margaret Yeo
5	2	Bidadari, 1pm	Fang Sher Chyet

6	1	Jurong West, on Pan Island Expressway, 8.30am	Martti Siponen
6	5	Bidadari, 10am	Fang Sher Chyet
6	1	Kent Ridge, circling, late morning	Horst Flotow
6	3	Pasir Ris Farmway 1	Cyril Ng, Ho Hua Chew, Jimmy Lee & uGerard Francis
9	3	Chinese Gardens, 4pm	Nicholas Tan
13	1	Pulau Ubin, perched on a coconut tree	Doreen Ang
14	1	Dairy Farm, perched on a tree on the path to Wallace's House, 8am	Gerard Francis, Lim Poh Bee, Margaret Yeo & Steve Early
14	1	Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, 2pm  <i>"Observed coming from the direction of SBWR look-out point on route 1 and over the pond toward hide 1C in a low glide, perched, and hopped from tree branch to tree branch, and in a low glide right to left across the pond. Followed this manner of movement for about 10 minutes and the last sighting of it was again, the glide- and-hop at a low level from tree to tree into the "no entry" section across from the entrance/exit of the pathway to hide 1C."</i>	Margaret Yeo
16	7	Jalan Asas (access road to Singapore Quarry), on the usual dead tree, 7.45am  <i>"Between March 5<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>, I checked the site regularly between 07:30 and 08:00 but during this period not even one Black Baza turned up."</i>	Ulf Remahl
18	2	Neo Tiew Lane 2, by the barrier opposite D'Resort, flying westwards, 8am	Ian Rickword,
20	6	Jalan Asas (access road to Singapore Quarry), on the usual dead tree, 7.35am	Ulf Remahl
21	4	Bukit Batok West, morning	Wing Chong & Phang Seng Khai
21	3	Malcolm Road, morning	Jane Rogers, Doreen Ang, Nessie Qui, Ian & Freda Rickword
21	4	Pulau Tekong	Lau Jia Sheng
23	3	Jalan Asas (access road to Singapore Quarry), on the usual dead tree, 7.30am  <i>"Interestingly enough this is the only time I have seen a bird as late as @ 09:00. The only explanation I have for that is a very heavy down pour that morning. I got stuck in it myself at the shelter in Singapore Quarry. It also turned out</i>	Ulf Remahl

		<i>that this was the very last date in March there were any Black Baza at the site. I checked the site also on March 25th, 27th , 30th and 31st but there was no sign of any Black Baza. It will be interesting to see if these birds will use this staging point during 2010 again.”</i>	
27	4	West Coast Beach, circling high, 11.30am	Ian & Freda Rickword

### 3. Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhyncus* (16)

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
2	1	Pan Island Expressway Tampines exit, 8am	Fang Sher Chyet
6	1	Bidadari, 10am	Fang Sher Chyet
6	2	Kent Ridge, 1 sub-adult and 1 dark phase, zooming over the ridge, late morning	Horst Flotow
7	1	Singapore Botanic Gardens, Eco Lake, 4pm	Fang Sher Chyet
21	1	Bukit Batok West, morning	Wing Chong & Phang Seng Khai
21	3	Sembawang Park, dark morph, 10.30am  <i>“Sunday March 21st, Sembawang Park Bird Census, 10.30 am just at the end, Wee Sau Cheng and I came across a dark morph Oriental Honey Buzzard sitting in a very low tree, almost a bush. After a few minutes it took off and then rose into the sky on the thermals above the Andrews Avenue/Simpang area, to join another two circling above that we had not noticed before. All three just went higher and higher.”</i>  <i>“This was interesting because several years ago, doing the same census, we had seen tiny specks up in the sky on thermals at the end of the census and not been able to identify them. Also we had been at the November Raptor watch at Sembawang Park and seen nothing except a single Black Baza. It is very small evidence, but it fits with the idea that routes in both directions of migration are not always the same.”</i>	Margie Hall & Wee Sau Cheng
21	1	Pulau Ubin, flying very high, 11.45am	Ben Lee
21	3	MacRitchie Reservoir, section adjoining golf course, late morning	Richard Carden
21	1	Aero-green Aeroponics Farm, opposite SBWR entrance.	Ulf Remahl
26	1	Pan Island Expressway Paya Lebar exit, 8am	Fang Sher Chyet
28	1	Portsdown Road, in flight	Alan Owyong

**4. Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus* (3)**

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
1	1	Changi Airshow area, morning	Frankie
13	2	Tanah Merah, male and female, 9am	Nicholas Tan
21	1	Tuas South Fields, male hunting, 9.23am	Martti Siponen

**5. Chinese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter soloensis* (3)**

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
14	2	Seletar West, 1 of them was a male	Alan Owyong, Alfred Chia, Doreen Ang, Peng Ah Huay & Yang Pah Liang
27	1	Sentosa, perched near Mt. Imbiah, morning	Willie Foo & Ali Jaafar

**6. Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis* (3)**

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
5	1	Tampines Bike Trail, flying low, 6.15pm	Fang Sher Chyet
6	1	Bah Soon Pah Road, in flight, noon	Alan Owyong
27	1	Sentosa, flying northerly, morning	Alan Owyong, Kenneth Kee & Alfred Chia

**7. Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (1)**

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
6	1	Tanah Merah/Changi Cove, first year male	Wong LH
13	1	Tanah Merah/Changi Cove, first year male	Nicholas Tan
16-18	1	Tanah Merah/Changi Cove, first year male	Jonathan Cheah



*Lesser Kestrel at Tanah Merah/Changi Cove. Note the position of the wing tips relative to tail tip in the left photo, in the Common Kestrel, the wing tips does not reach as far. Photos by Nicholas Tan.*

### 8. Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (8)

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
6	3	Pasir Ris Farmway 1	Cyril Ng, Ho Hua Chew, Jimmy Lee & Gerard Francis
6	1	Tuas South Fields, 10.55am	Martti Siponen
13	1	Pulau Ubin, at usual haunt on the tower	Doreen Ang
16	1	Changi Cove	Jonathon Cheah
21	2	Tuas South Fields, 2 birds chasing each other, 9.23am	Martti Siponen
31	1	Kranji Marsh, dive bombing a White-bellied Sea Eagle, 5pm	Leslie Fung



CWK @ 2010

*Peregrine Falcon at Changi Cove on 160310. Photo by Jonathon Cheah.*

### Resident raptors

Note: For resident raptors, the counts for the 2 very common resident raptors – Brahminy Kite and White-bellied Sea Eagle were not tabled.

### 9. Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (4)

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
5	1	Tuas South Fields	Martti Siponen
6	2	Tuas South Fields	Martti Siponen
14	1	Tuas South Fields	Martti Siponen
21	1	Tuas South Fields	Martti Siponen
23	2	Tuas South Fields	Martti Siponen
27	2	Pulau Semakau	Ian & Freda Rickword

**10. Grey-headed Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus* (3)**

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
21	1	MacRitchie Reservoir, section adjoining golf course, circling above reservoir, late morning	Richard Carden
27	1	Kranji Bund, bird flew low over the bund and into a tree in the marsh, morning	Lim Kim Seng
31	1	Chinese Gardens  “A tatty-looking grey-headed fish eagle moulting a few primaries soared over Chinese Garden”	Peter Jones

**11. Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela* (4)**

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
3	1	Springleaf, in flight, 10am	Leslie Fung
13	1	Pulau Ubin, adult seen flying above Jalan Jelutong. Bird was calling in flight.	Doreen Ang
21	1	Malcolm Road, morning	Jane Rogers, Doreen Ang, Nessie Qui, Ian & Freda Rickword
21	1	MacRitchie Reservoir, section adjoining golf course, circling above reservoir, late morning	Richard Carden

**12. Changeable Hawk-eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus* (7)**

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
3	2	Dairy Farm Quarry, 1 pale and 1 dark morph	Lim Kim Seng
4	1	Dairy Farm Quarry, dark morph, late morning	Lim Kim Seng
6	1	Kent Ridge, late morning	Horst Flotow
14	1	Lorong Halus, dark morph	Alan Owyong, Alfred Chia, Doreen Ang, Peng Ah Huay & Yang Pah Liang
16	1	Singapore Quarry, heard and seen.	Ulf Remahl
21	1	Malcolm Road, morning	Jane Rogers, Doreen Ang, Nessie Qui, Ian & Freda Rickword
25	1	Singapore Quarry, heard and seen.	Ulf Remahl
27	1	Pulau Semakau	Ian & Freda Rickword

**13. Unidentified Raptors (2)**

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
18	1	Tai Seng Avenue, 7.50am, big bird mobbed by 2 mynas	JinZhao



18	1	Pulau Tekong  <i>"I suspected Jerdon's Baza/buzzard? sighted on 18/3: broad, longish and oval-shaped wings, brownish underwing"</i>	Lau Jia Sheng
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#### 14. Unidentified Accipiters (1)

Date	No.	Location and Details	Reported By
6	1	Kent Ridge, late morning  <i>"Small Accipiter (on top of the ridge over the battle tank viewpoint), too fast to get a good look"</i>	Horst Flotow

*Compiled by Tan Gim Cheong*

*Note:*

*The numbers in brackets beside the bird names indicates the total number seen for this month. Different reports of the same raptors from the same area have been discounted to prevent duplication.*

*Many thanks to those who have sent in their reports and especially to Jonathon Cheah, Leslie Fung and Nicholas Tan for the use of their photos.*