

An arbitrator's report on the Singapore Bird Race 2007

Introduction

Seven teams participated in the 24th Singapore Bird Race 2007. The 24-hour race started on 27th October at 1630hrs and ended on 28th October at 1230hrs for the Novice category and at 1630hrs for the Advanced category.

Results

Position	Team Name	No. of Species
ADVANCED		
1	Eagles	112
2	Drongos	97
3	Bulbuls	63
NOVICE		
1	OE Birders	77
2	Rajawali's	72
3	Wagtails	67
4	SWATs	57

Members from the Advanced category winning team, *Eagles*, were Lim Kim Seng, Low Bingwen and Wong Chung Cheong. They were also the first and only team to register 100 species, recorded at 1210hrs, bringing home the Century Shield.

Members from the Novice category winning team, *OE Birders*, were Sunny Yeo, Pandian and Carmen Leong.

The Bird-of-the-Day trophy went to the *Drongos* for their sighting of the nationally-threatened Spotted Wood-Owl at Dover Road.

Special mention must also go to the *Bulbuls*, comprising of three senior citizens - Alan Owyong, Yang Pah Liang and KC Tsang. Besides bird racing, they also found time food hunting for the best olive-oiled *roti prata* and crab bee-hoon in Singapore.

Summary

A total of 146 species or about 40 per cent of Singapore's bird species were recorded by all teams at various locations. This was a significant decrease of 41 species compared to the 187 recorded last year. Of the 146 species recorded, about 100 (64%) were resident species and 46 (36%) were migratory.

Overall, 7 nationally near-threatened species, 19 nationally threatened species, 3 globally near-threatened species and 1 globally threatened species were recorded.

The Central Catchment Forest (MacRitchie, Sime Forest and Rifle Range) was again the most bird-diverse location with 61 species recorded, albeit a sharp decrease from 124 in 2006. This was followed by Lorong Halus (50), Kranji/Neo Tiew (48), Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (48), Mandai Mudflat (27), Bukit Timah/Dairy Farm (15) and Bukit Batok Nature Park (22).

Highlights

Nationally-threatened species recorded at the Central Catchment Forest included the Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot, Thick-billed Green-Pigeon, Blue-winged Leafbird, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Oriental Magpie-Robin, White-rumped Shama, Hill Myna, Black-headed, Cream-vented and Red-eyed Bulbuls, and our globally near-threatened Long-tailed Parakeet and Chestnut-bellied Malkoha.

Other interesting residents seen at various sites included the Buffy Fish-Owl (Lower Pierce Reservoir), Barn Owl (Tanjong Rhu), Spotted Wood Owl (Dover Road), Lesser Whistling-Duck (Botanic Gardens), Little Tern (Neo Tiew and Mandai Mudflat), Black-crowned Night-Heron (Neo Tiew, Sungei Buloh and Lorong Halus), Ruddy-breasted Crake (Ponggol), Pacific Reef-Egret (Pasir Ris), Red-Wattled Lapwing

(Tuas and Lorong Halus), Copper-throated Sunbird (Sungei Buloh), our vulnerable Little Grebe (Lorong Halus), Glossy Swiftlet and the globally-endangered Straw-headed Bulbul (Bukit Batok).

Noteworthy winter visitors recorded included the Crow-billed Drongo, Asian-Paradise, Asian Brown, Yellow-rumped and Mugimaki Flycatchers (Central Catchment), Black-capped Kingfisher and Dark-sided Flycatcher (Lorong Halus), Sand Martin and Ashy Minivet (Neo Tiew), Schrenck's Bittern and Oriental Pratincole (Ponggol), Black-tailed Godwit (Mandai Mudflat), Bar-tailed Godwit, Greater Sand Plover, Lesser Crested and Great Crested Terns (Sungei Buloh).

Some interesting raptors sighted included the Crested Goshawk (Neo Tiew), Peregrine Falcon (Turut Drive), Black Baza (Sime Forest), Changeable Hawk-Eagle (Sime Forest and Neo Tiew), Black-winged Kite (Neo Tiew and Lorong Halus), Crested Honey-Buzzard (Sime Forest, Bukit Batok and Neo Tiew), Japanese Sparrowhawk (Lorong Halus) and Osprey (Mandai Mudflat, Sungei Buloh and Neo Tiew).

Lowlights

None of the teams visited Changi Cove due to the restricted access. This could probably account for all the missing sandy/coastal birds such as Sanderling, Rufous-necked Stint, Grey, Kentish and Malaysian Plovers. Migratory Eastern Marsh-Harrier, Common Kestrel, Grey-faced and Common Buzzards which liked the vast expanse of this reclaimed land were also not accounted for this year.

Notable resident absentees were Lesser and Greater Green Leafbirds, Chestnut-winged and Short-tailed Babblers, Rufous Woodpecker, Rufous-tailed Tailorbird, Red-crowned Barbet, Red-legged Crake, Purple Swamphen, Cinnamon Bittern, Greater Painted-Snipe, Black-headed and White-headed Munias, Malaysian Eared Nightjar, Grey-headed Fish and Crested Serpent-Eagles. None of the resident or migratory cuckoos was recorded.

Some of the migrants recorded in 2006 but missing this year included the Oriental Reed-Warbler, Forest, Grey and Yellow Wagtails, Common and Pintail Snipes, Eye-browed Thrush, Chinese Goshawk and Ruddy Turnstone.

Conclusion

This year's final tally of 146 species recorded was significantly lower when compared to the 187 of 2006 and 205 of 2005. The declining figure is definitely a cause for concern. Further analysis and research will have to be done to determine the reasons. Let's hope the numbers will pick up in 2008 when we celebrate our 25th year of the Singapore Bird Race. Congratulations to all the winners and participants. Special thanks to my co-arbitrator Morten Strange and our sponsor Swarovski Optik and its agent Cathay Photo Store.

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