

THE SUNBIRD

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BIRDING IN SINGAPORE AND SOUTHERN MALAYSIA

HUGH BUCK

INTRODUCTION

There is probably nowhere in the world changing as rapidly as Singapore is and, for the resident or visiting birder, none of the changes are good. Every month more and more habitat is lost to the country's urban progress and to a visitor from Australia, two and a half million people crammed into an island of 617 sq.km. may seem very overcrowded.

It may come as a surprise, therefore, that during the course of the last five years during which urbanisation has reached an all time high, over 275 species of birds have been reliably recorded in Singapore. A "big day" count late in the year when "winter" migrants and visitors are at their peak may exceed 120 species. Although primary forest has largely disappeared, areas of secondary forest, scrub and mangrove survive. The island remains an important staging post for migrants heading to and from Indonesia and Australia.

Singapore's paucity of true forest birds can be effectively remedied by a brief excursion into Southern Malaysia where many of the most spectacular oriental species can be encountered in easily accessible rainforest. This article covers Singapore and areas of Malaysia which can be conveniently reached during a standard two or three day weekend from Singapore. In Table 1, the bird names follow King *et al.* (1975) and the format follows Alden and Gooders (1981). "Winter" refers to the Northern Hemisphere (October to April).

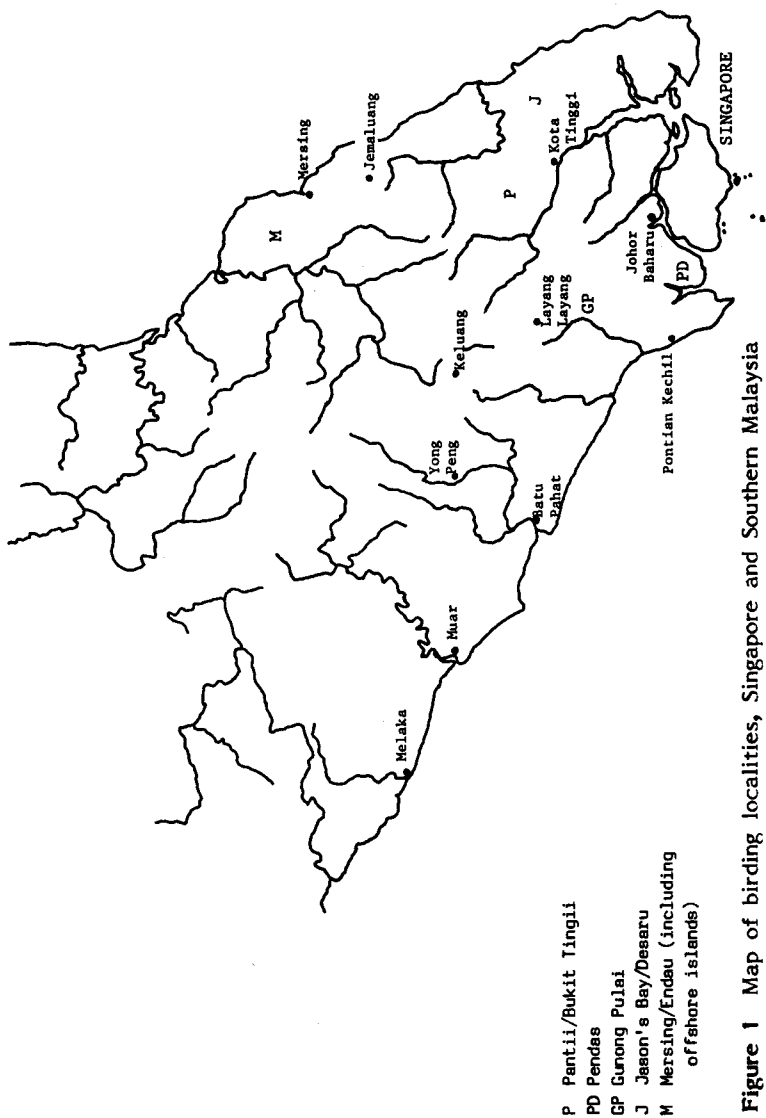


Figure 1 Map of birding localities, Singapore and Southern Malaysia

TABLE 1

BIRDS RECORDED IN SINGAPORE AND SOUTHERN (JOHORE)
MALAYSIA 1978 - 1983

Notes	r = resident
	c = common
	u = uncommon
	m = migrant
	v = vagrant
	w = winter (October to April)
	() = no. of records

For Malaysia, unless otherwise stated, birds are resident.

The following place symbols are used (see Figure 1).

P	= Pantii/Bukit Tinggi
PD	= Pendas
GP	= Gunong Pulai
J	= Jason's Bay/Desaru
M	= Mersing/Endau (including offshore islands)

SingaporeMalaysia

Streaked Shearwater	m		
Swinhoe's Storm-petrel	m		
Brown Booby	v (1)		
Lesser Frigatebird	v (1)	M Christmas Frigatebird	um
Great-billed Heron	ur	M Lesser Frigatebird	c
Grey Heron	cr	M Great-billed Heron	u
Purple Heron	cr	Purple Heron	c
Little Heron	cr	Little Heron	c
Chinese Pond Heron	uw		
Cattle Egret	ur		
Reef Egret	ur		
Chinese Egret	uw		
Great Egret	cr		
Plumed Egret	ur		
Little Egret	cr	Little Egret	c
Black-crowned Night-Heron	cr		
Malayan Night-Heron	um		
Yellow Bittern	cr		
Schrenk's Bittern	v (1)		

Singapore

Cinnamon Bittern	cr
Black Bittern	uw
Lesser Tree-Duck	ur
Pintail	v (1)
Common Teal	v (1)
Garganey	uw
Shoveler	v (1)
Cotton Pygmy Goose	v (1)
Osprey	cw
Black Baza	cm
Asian Honey Buzzard	cm
Black-shouldered Kite	cr
Black-eared Kite	uw
Brahminy Kite	cr
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	cr
Short-toed Eagle	v (2)
Grey-headed Fish-Eagle	v (1)
Crested Serpent-Eagle	ur
Eastern Marsh Harrier	uw
Pied Harrier	v (1)
Japanese Sparrowhawk	cw
Grey-faced Buzzard	um
Common Buzzard	um
Greater Spotted Eagle	uw
Rufous-bellied Eagle	v (1)
Changeable Hawk-Eagle	ur
Black-thighed Falconet	v (1)
Eurasian Kestrel	uw
Peregrine Falcon	um
Blue-breasted Quail	ur
Barred Button-Quail	ur
Slaty-breasted Rail	cr
Red-legged Crake	v (1)
Baillon's Crake	uw
Ruddy-breasted Crake	ur
White-browed Crake	cr
White-breasted Waterhen	cr
Watercock	uw
Moorhen	ur
Purple Swamphen	ur
Coot	v (1)
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	v (1)

Malaysia

Osprey	cw
Black Baza	cm
Honey Buzzard	cm
Black-shouldered Kite	c
Brahminy Kite	c
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	c
P Lesser Fish-Eagle	u
M Grey-headed Fish-Eagle	u
Crested Serpent-Eagle	c
Japanese Sparrowhawk	cw
P Northern Goshawk	v
P Crested Goshawk	u
P Chinese Goshawk	um
Common Buzzard	um
P Blyth's Hawk-Eagle	u
P Rufous-bellied Eagle	u
PD Booted Eagle	v (1)
Changeable Hawk-Eagle	c
Black-thighed Falconet	c
P Crested Wood Partridge	u
J Red Junglefowl	c
P Crestless Fireback	u
P Great Argus	u
PM Red-legged Crake	u
Ruddy-breasted Crake	u
White-breasted Waterhen	c

Singapore

Greater Painted Snipe	uw
Grey-headed Lapwing	v (1)
Grey Plover	cw
Lesser Golden Plover	cw
Common Ringed Plover	v (1)
Little Ringed Plover	cw
Kentish Plover	cw
Malaysian Plover	ur
Mongolian Plover	cw
Greater Sand-Plover	uw
Eurasian Curlew	cw
Whimbrel	cw
Bar-tailed Godwit	uw
Black-tailed Godwit	uw
Spotted Redshank	v (1)
Common Redshank	cw
Marsh Sandpiper	cw
Common Greenshank	cw
Nordmann's Greenshank	v (1)
Green Sandpiper	v (1)
Wood Sandpiper	cw
Terek Sandpiper	cw
Grey-tailed tattler	um
Ruddy Turnstone	cw
Asiatic Dowitcher	um
Pintail Snipe	cw
Common Snipe	cw
Red Knot	v (1)
Great Knot	um
Red-necked Stint	cw
Temminck's Stint	v (1)
Long-toed stint	cw
Sharp-tailed sandpiper	um
Dunlin	v (1)
Curlew Sandpiper	cw
Sanderling	cw
Spoon-billed Sandpiper	v (2)
Broad-billed Sandpiper	cm
Ruff	um
Black-winged Stilt	um
Great Thick-Knee	ur
Oriental Pratincole	uw
White-winged Black Tern	cw
Gull-billed Tern	uw

Malaysia

Grey Plover	cw
Lesser Golden Plover	cw
Little Ringed Plover	cw
Kentish Plover	cw
J Malaysian Plover	c
Mongolian Plover	cw
Whimbrel	cw
Common Redshank	cw
Common Greenshank	cw
Wood Sandpiper	cw
Terek Sandpiper	cw
Ruddy Turnstone	cw
Red-necked Stint	cw
Curlew Sandpiper	cw
Sanderling	cw
White-winged Black Tern	cw

SingaporeMalaysia

Caspian Tern	v (1)		
Common Tern	uw		
Black-naped Tern	ur	M Black-naped Tern	c
Bridled Tern	cm	M Bridled Tern	c
Little Tern	cr	Little Tern	c
Saunder's Tern	um		
Great Crested Tern	cm	Great Crested Tern	cr
Lesser Crested Tern	ur	M Lesser Crested Tern	u
Thick-billed Pigeon	ur	P Thick-billed Pigeon	c
		J Cinnamon-headed Pigeon	u
		PM Little Green Pigeon	u
Pink-necked Pigeon	cr	Pink-necked Pigeon	c
Jambu Fruit Dove	ur	P Jambu Fruit Dove	u
		PM Green Imperial Pigeon	u
		J Pied Imperial Pigeon	u
(Rock Pigeon	cr)	(Rock Pigeon	c)
Red Turtle-Dove	ur		
Spotted Dove	cr	Spotted Dove	c
Peaceful Dove	cr	Peaceful Dove	c
Green-winged Pigeon	cr	Green-winged Pigeon	c
		Nicobar Pigeon	u
			(Pontain)
(Rose-ringed Parakeet	ur)		
(Red-breasted Parakeet	ur)		
(Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	ur)		
(Lesser Sulphur-crested			
Cockatoo	ur)		
(Salmon-crested Cockatoo	ur)		
Long-tailed Parakeet	ur	Long-tailed Parakeet	c
Blue-rumped Parrot	ur	P Blue-rumped Parrot	c
Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot	ur	P Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot	c
Chestnut-winged Cuckoo	um		
Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo	um	P Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo	um
Indian Cuckoo	uw	P Indian Cuckoo	u
Banded Bay Cuckoo	ur	Banded Bay Cuckoo	u
Plaintive Cuckoo	ur	Plaintive Cuckoo	c
Brush Cuckoo	ur(?)		
Violet Cuckoo	ur	P Violet Cuckoo	c
Horsefield's Cuckoo	um		
Malayan Bronze Cuckoo	ur	P Malayan Bronze Cuckoo	u
Drongo Cuckoo	ur	P Drongo Cuckoo	c
Common Koel	uw		
Chestnut-bellied Malkoha	ur	P Chestnut-bellied Malkoha	c
		P GP Raffle's Malkoha	c

<u>Singapore</u>		<u>Malaysia</u>	
		P GP Red-billed Malkoha	u
		P Chestnut-breasted Malkoha	c
		P Short-toed Coucal	u
Greater Coucal	cr	Greater Coucal	c
Lesser Coucal	cr	Lesser Coucal	c
Barn Owl	ur	P Reddish Scops-Owl	u
Collared Scops-Owl	cr	Collared Scops-Owl	c
		P Barred Eagle-Owl	u
		PJ Buffy Fish-Owl	u
Brown Hawk-Owl	cr	M Spotted Wood-Owl	u
		P Gould's Frogmouth	u
		P Javan Frogmouth	u
Malaysian Eared Nightjar	ur	PM Malaysian Eared Nightjar	c
Large-tailed Nightjar	cr	Large-tailed Nightjar	c
		GP Giant Swiftlet	v (1)
Edible-nest Swiftlet	cr	Edible-nest Swiftlet	c
Black-nest Swiftlet	ur	M Black-nest Swiftlet	u
		P Himalayan Swiftlet	um
White-bellied Swiftlet	um	White-bellied Swiftlet	c
White-vented Needletail	v (2)	P White-vented Needletail	um
Brown Needletail	um	P GP Brown Needletail	c
		P GP Silver-rumped Swift	c
Fork-tailed Swift	cm	Fork-tailed Swift	cm
House Swift	cr	House Swift	c
Asian Palm Swift	cr	Asian Palm Swift	c
Grey-rumped Treeswift	cr	Grey-rumped Treeswift	c
Whiskered Treeswift	v (1)	P GP Whiskered Treeswift	c
		P Red-naped Trogon	u
		P GP Scarlet-rumped Trogon	u
		P Diard's Trogon	u
Common Kingfisher	cr	Common Kingfisher	c
Blue-eared Kingfisher	u	P Blue-eared Kingfisher	c
		P Black-backed Kingfisher	u
		P GP M Rufous-backed Kingfisher	u
Stork-billed Kingfisher	ur	J Stork-billed Kingfisher	c
		P Banded Kingfisher	u
Ruddy Kingfisher	ur(?)	J Ruddy Kingfisher	um
White-throated Kingfisher	cr	White-throated Kingfisher	c
Black-capped Kingfisher	cw	Black-capped Kingfisher	cw
Collared Kingfisher	cr	Collared Kingfisher	c
		P Rufous-collared Kingfisher	u
Blue-tailed Bee-Eater	cw	Blue-tailed Bee-Eater	cw
Blue-throated Bee-Eater	cr	Blue-throated Bee-Eater	c
		P GP Red-bearded Bee-Eater	u

<u>Singapore</u>		<u>Malaysia</u>	
Dollarbird	cw	Dollarbird	c
		P Bushy Crested Hornbill	u
Wreathed Hornbill	v (?)	P Wreathed Hornbill	c
		P Black Hornbill	c
		J M Southern Pied Hornbill	c
		P GP Rhinoceros Hornbill	c
Great Hornbill	v (?)	P Helmeted Hornbill	u
		P Gold Whiskered Barbet	u
		P Yellow-crowned Barbet	u
Red-crowned Barbet	ur	P M Red-throated Barbet	u
		P GP M Blue-eared Barbet	c
Coopersmith Barbet	ur	Coopersmith Barbet	c
		P GP M Brown Barbet	c
		P Rufous Piculet	u
Rufous Woodpecker	ur	Rufous Woodpecker	c
Laced Woodpecker	ur	Laced Woodpecker	c
Crimson-winged Woodpecker	ur	P Crimson-winged Woodpecker	c
		P GP Checker-throated Woodpecker	c
Banded Woodpecker	cr	Banded Woodpecker	c
Common Goldenback	ur	Common Goldenback	c
		Greater Goldenback	u
		P Olive-backed Woodpecker	u
		P Buff-rumped Woodpecker	c
		P Buff-necked Woodpecker	u
Great Slaty Woodpecker	ur	PM Great Slaty Woodpecker	c
White-bellied Woodpecker	ur	PM J White-bellied Woodpecker	c
		P Grey-capped Woodpecker	u
Brown-capped Woodpecker	cr	Brown-capped Woodpecker	c
		P Grey-and-Buff Woodpecker	c
		P Maroon Woodpecker	u
		P Orange-backed Woodpecker	u
		P Dusky Broadbill	u
		P M Black-and-Red Broadbill	c
		P Banded Broadbill	u
		P Black-and-Yellow Broadbill	c
		P Green Broadbill	c
Mangrove Pitta	ur	P Garnet Pitta	u
Sand Martin	uw		
Barn Swallow	cw	Barn Swallow	cw
Pacific Swallow	cr	Pacific Swallow	c
Red-rumped Swallow	um		
Asian House Martin	um	GP Asian House Martin	um
		Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrike	c
		P Large Wood Shrike	c

SingaporeMalaysia

			P Bar-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike	u
			P Lesser Cuckoo-Shrike	u
Pied Triller	cr		Pied Triller	c
Ashy Minivet	cw	J	Ashy Minivet	cw
		P	Fiery Minivet	u
Scarlet Minivet	ur	P	Scarlet Minivet	c
		P	Green Iora	c
Common Iora	c		Common Iora	c
Great Iora	ur		Great Iora	u
Lesser Green Leafbird	ur	P GP M	Lesser Green Leafbird	c
		P	Greater Green Leafbird	c
		P GP M	Blue-winged Leafbird	c
			Straw-headed Bulbul	u
		P	Black-and-White Bulbul	u
Black-headed Bulbul	ur	P GP M	Black-headed Bulbul	c
		GP	Black Crested Bulbul	c
		P GP M	Grey-bellied Bulbul	c
(Red-whiskered Bulbul	ur)			
(Sooty-headed Bulbul	ur)	P	Puff-backed Bulbul	u
Yellow-vented Bulbul	cr		Yellow-vented Bulbul	c
Olive-winged Bulbul	cr		Olive-winged Bulbul	c
Cream-vented Bulbul	cr		Cream-vented Bulbul	c
Red-eyed Bulbul	cr		Red-eyed Bulbul	c
		P	Spectacled Bulbul	c
		P	Fisch's Bulbul	c
		GP	Ochraceous Bulbul	u
		P	Grey-checked Bulbul	c
		P	Yellow-bellied Bulbul	c
		P GP M	Hairy-backed Bulbul	c
		P GP M	Buff-vented Bulbul	c
		P GP	Streaked Bulbul	c
Ashy Bulbul	um	GP	Ashy Bulbul	u
Black Drongo	um	P	Bronze Drongo	u
Crow-billed Drongo	uw	P	Crow-billed Drongo	cw
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	cr		Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	c
		P	Dark-throated Oriole	c
Black-naped Oriole	cr		Black-naped Oriole	c
Asian Fairy Bluebird	ur	P GP M	Asian Fairy Bluebird	c
		P	Crested Jay	u
		P	Black Magpie	u
(House Crow	cr)	P	Slender-billed Crow	v
Large-billed Crow	cr		Large-billed Crow	c
		P	Sultan Tit	u
		P	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	u

SingaporeMalaysia

			P Black-capped Babbler	u
Short-tailed Babbler	cr		P Short-tailed Babbler	c
White-chested Babbler	ur	P PD	White-chested Babbler	u
			P Ferruginous Babbler	u
Abbott's Babbler	ur		P Abbott's Babbler	u
			P Moustached Babbler	c
			P Sooty-capped Babbler	c
			P Scaly-crowned Babbler	c
			P Rufous-crowned Babbler	c
			P Chestnut-backed Scimitar Babbler	u
			P Striped Wren-Babbler	u
			P Rufous-fronted Babbler	u
			P Grey-headed Babbler	c
			P White-necked Babbler	u
			P Black-throated Babbler	u
Chestnut-winged Babbler	cr		P Chestnut-winged Babbler	c
Striped Tit-Babbler	cr		Striped Tit-Babbler	c
		P GP	Fluffy-backed Tit-Babbler	c
Greater-necklaced Laughing- Thrush	ur			
(Hwamei)	ur			
			P Brown Fulvetta	u
		P GP	White-bellied Yuhina	c
			P Malaysian Rail-Babbler	u
Siberian Blue Robin	um		P Siberian Blue Robin	um
Magpie Robin	ur		Magpie Robin	c
White-rumped Shama	v (1)		P White-rumped Shama	c
			P Rufous-tailed Shama	u
		P GP	Chestnut-naped Forktail	c
Stonechat	uw		P White-crowned Forktail	u
		GP	Siberian Thrush	um
Eye-browed Thrush	um	P GP	Eye-browed Thrush	cm
Flyeater	cr		P Flyeater	c
Inornate Warbler	v (1)		P Eastern Crowned Warbler	cw
Arctic Warbler	cw		Arctic Warbler	cw
Great Reed-Warbler	cw			
Black-browed Reed-Warbler	cw			
Pallas's Grasshopper- Warbler	uw			
Lanceolated Warbler	um			
Common Tailorbird	cr		Common Tailorbird	c
Dark-necked Tailorbird	cr		Dark-necked Tailorbird	c
Ashy Tailorbird	cr		Ashy Tailorbird	c

<u>Singapore</u>		<u>Malaysia</u>	
Rufous-tailed Tailorbird	ur	P Rufous-tailed Tailorbird	u
Yellow-bellied Prinia	cr		
Zitting Cisticola	cr	Zitting Cisticola	c
		P Grey-chested Flycatcher	u
Dark-sided Flycatcher	um	P Dark-sided Flycatcher	um
Asian Brown Flycatcher	cw	Asian Brown Flycatcher	cw
Yellow-rumped Flycatcher	um		
Mugimaki Flycatcher	um	GP Mugimaki Flycatcher	um
Blue-and-White Flycatcher	v (1)	P Blue-and-White Flycatcher	v
		P White-tailed Flycatcher	v
Mangrove Blue Flycatcher	ur	M PD Mangrove Blue Flycatcher	u
		P Grey-headed Flycatcher	c
Pied Fantail	cr	Pied Fantail	c
		P GP Black-naped Monarch	c
		P Maroon-breasted Flycatcher	u
		P Rufous-winged Flycatcher	c
Japanese Paradise Flycatcher	v (1)	P GP Japanese Paradise Flycatcher	um
Asian Paradise Flycatcher	um	P GP Asian Paradise Flycatcher	c
Mangrove Whistler	ur	PD Mangrove Whistler	u
White Wagtail	um		
Grey Wagtail	um	P GP Grey Wagtail	cw
Yellow Wagtail	cw	Yellow Wagtail	cw
Forest Wagtail	uw	P Forest Wagtail	uw
Richard's Pipit	cr	Richard's Pipit	c
Red-throated Pipit	um		
Brown Shrike	cw	Brown Shrike	cw
Tiger Shrike	uw	P Tiger Shrike	cw
Long-tailed Shrike	cw	Long-tailed Shrike	cw
Philippine Glossy Starling	cr	Philippine Glossy Starling	c
White-shouldered Starling	um		
Purple-backed Starling	cm		
Common Myna	cr	Common Myna	cr
(White-vented Myna)	cr)	(White-vented Myna)	cr)
(Crested Myna)	ur)		
Hill Myna	ur	P GP M Hill Myna	c
(Black-winged Starling)	ur)		
Brown-throated Sunbird	cr	Brown-throated Sunbird	c
		P Red-throated Sunbird	u
		P GP Ruby-cheeked Sunbird	c
		P GP Purple-naped Sunbird	c
Purple-throated Sunbird	um	Purple-throated Sunbird	ur
Copper-throated Sunbird	ur	PD Copper-throated Sunbird	cr
Olive-backed Sunbird	cr	Olive-backed Sunbird	c
		P GP Plain Sunbird	u

<u>Singapore</u>		<u>Malaysia</u>	
Crimson Sunbird	cr		Crimson Sunbird u
		P	Scarlet Sunbird c
Little Spiderhunter	ur	P GP	Little Spiderhunter c
		P	Thick-billed Spiderhunter u
		P	Long-billed Spiderhunter u
		P	Spectacled Spiderhunter u
		P	Yellow-eared Spiderhunter u
		P	Grey-breasted Spiderhunter c
		P GP	Scarlet-breasted Flowerpecker c
		M	Yellow-vented Flowerpecker u
		P GP	Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker c
		P	Thick-billed Flowerpecker v
Orange-bellied Flowerpecker	cr	P GP M	Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker c
Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker	cr		Orange-bellied Flowerpecker c
		GP	Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker c
			Plain Flowerpecker u
Oriental White-Eye	ur		Oriental White-Eye c
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	cr		Eurasian Tree Sparrow c
Baya Weaver	ur	M	Baya Weaver c
(Java Sparrow	ur)		
(Javan Munia	cr)		
Scaly-breasted Munia	cr		Scaly-breasted Munia c
Chestnut Munia	cr		
White-headed Munia	ur		
Yellow-breasted Bunting	um		

SINGAPORE WATERBIRDS

In relation to Singapore, the report in Alden and Gooders (1981) is outdated and most of the forest species mentioned can no longer be found. However, the water and seabird list is understated and 17 species of Ardeidae, 10 Rallidae and no less than 42 species of waders have been recorded in recent years.

The herons include the Great-billed (resident on offshore rocky islands), the elusive Malayan Night-Heron and a regular wintering flock of 20 or more Chinese Egrets which are usually easily found between November and April.

The waders include virtually every breeding species on the eastern Palearctic list including Spoon-billed Sandpiper (twice), Nordmann's Greenshank (one recent and several historical records) and regular "autumn" records of Asiatic Dowitchers. The Ponggol Estuary, Serangoon Sewage Works, Changi Beach and Kranji area remain good spots to try for these species.

SEABIRDS

In common with most equatorial countries, Singapore lacks a great variety of seabirds although 10 species of tern have been recorded in recent times. They include Saunder's Little which discerning observers can usually identify around April when they attain full plumage. The list does not yet include Chinese Crested Tern but it is nevertheless worthwhile checking every large tern in these waters. A small passage of Streaked Shearwaters and Swinhoe's Storm-petrels seems to occur in the Straits of Singapore around October/November but this has been poorly studied.

RAPTORS

A much larger and more obvious passage of raptors occurs in October/November. Eurasian Honey Buzzards, Black Baza and Japanese Sparrowhawks seem to be the core species but occasionally others join them and records include Short-toed Eagle, Rufous-bellied Eagle, Common and Grey-faced Buzzard. A few Spotted Eagles reliably winter in Singapore, particularly at Serangoon (the rubbish tip) and Kranji. They add variety to the resident species which include White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Black-shouldered and Brahminy Kites.

LANDBIRDS

Turning to the land itself, the visitor will very quickly become acquainted with Oriental and Palearctic species even in urban Singapore. Tree Sparrows, Common and the (introduced) Javan race of the White-vented Mynas, Yellow-vented Bulbuls and Spotted Doves abound. Overhead, common species include Pacific Swallow, Barn Swallow (in winter) and Little Swift. They are often joined by Grey-rumped Treeswifts and Edible-

Nest Swiftlets (which nest in several colonies around Collyer Quay). Black-Nest Swiftlets nest on Santosa but defy reliable separation in the field.

Wherever there are trees, the gawdy Black-naped Oriole and the colourful Pink-necked Green-Pigeon can be seen and two species of Sunbird and two of Flowerpecker should be searched for. The Botanic Gardens offer good opportunities for these and other species.

For other forest species, Singapore's central core is a water-catchment area serving three large reservoirs which offer kilometres of walking tracks through thick secondary and (on Bukit Timah Hill) primary forest. The tracks around McRitchi and Pierce Reservoirs, Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and on Sentosa and St. John's Islands are recommended. Some of the species to be expected are Crimson Sunbird and Red-crowned Barbet (both surprisingly difficult to locate in Malaysia), Jambu Fruit Dove, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Chestnut-bellied Malkoha, Blue-throated and (in winter) Blue-tailed Bee-Eaters, several Woodpeckers, Arctic Warbler (in winter), Rufous-tailed Tailorbird and (at dawn and dusk) Malaysian Eared and Large-tailed Nightjars, and Collared Scops and Brown Hawk Owls. Late in the year both migrant and wintering Flycatchers may be seen, including the Brown, Dark-sided, Asian Paradise and, in some years, large numbers of Magimaki and Yellow-rumped Flycatchers.

Mangroves are the most threatened habitat and it is now difficult to find extensive tracts in Singapore. On some of the offshore islands (especially Pulau Ubin), and at Kranji and Senoko, tracts do survive and characteristic species include the Mangrove Whistler, Copper-throated Sunbird, Ashy Tailorbird, Flyeater and occasionally the Mangrove (Blue-winged) Pitta. On Pulau Ubin there are recent (1983) records of Mangrove Blue Flycatcher and a summer plumage Ruddy Kingfisher.

INTRODUCED BIRDS

Singapore has a long and regrettable history as a bird import and export centre and several species of exotic parrots are occasionally seen, often in unexpected places.

Of greater interest is a small selection of Oriental species, mostly from Indonesia. The Javan Myna (which has also

spread into Southern Malaysia) and the Javan Munia are well established but the Javan Sparrow, once common, is now rare and largely confined to the Serangoon area. On certain offshore islands, notably St. John's, the Indonesian Black-winged Starling and the Crested Myna are well established and the former has been recently found breeding in Singapore city. Both Red-whiskered and Dark-capped Bulbuls are sometimes encountered as in the Hyamei, although the latter suffers heavily from the attention of illegal bird-trappers.

SOUTHERN MALAYSIA

Extensive tracts of mangrove still fringe the coastline of Southern Malaysia (Pendas being a good and accessible area), but it is for the true forest species that most people make the crippling early morning start from Singapore necessary for a day trip. The southern fringe of Malaysia's vast and famous rainforest is easily accessible within two hours from Singapore and in the Pantii area, old logging roads and aboriginal footpaths make even the most elusive species possible.

These include six Hornbills (including the rare and spectacular Helmeted), at least 15 Woodpeckers, 16 Bulbuls, 21 Babblers, 5 Broadbills, 6 Spiderhunters, 6 Sunbirds, and 8 Flowerpeckers. If this is not enough you can turn your hair grey searching for Argus Pheasant, Crested Wood Partridge, Garnet Pitta, Malaysian Rail Babbler, Short-toed Coucal and several other forest floor species. The Pheasants call persistently from about April to August and several dancing grounds are known, but these suffer heavily from disturbance and poaching. For added spice, mammals to be seen include Elephant, Leopard, Wild Boar, Tapir, Mouse Deer, Gibbons and various Monkeys.

Slightly different habitat can be found at Gunong Pulai. A rough road ascends to the top of this 1000 metre hill, high enough to add certain submontane species to the list, notably Black Crested and Ashy Bulbuls. Late in the year the Summit is a good area to watch for Swifts (Giant Swiftlet being recorded in 1978) and Swallows including Asian House Martin. The Summit also seems to be a favourite site for Siberian and Eye-browed Thrushes at this time of year.

Good coastal forest is accessible at Jason's Bay and Desaru, where the local Pied Imperial and Cinnamon-headed Pigeons

are specialties. Southern Pied Hornbills and (on the sandy beaches) Malaysian Plovers are usually common.

Off Mersing, visits to the famous tropical islands of Rawa or Tioman offer the chance to see pelagic birds, especially Lesser and, in smaller numbers, Christmas Island Frigatebirds. On the other side of the Peninsula off Pontian, the elusive Nicobar Pigeon was seen in 1982 on one of the small offshore islands. Pied Imperial Pigeons are common here and the island is reportedly very good for Autumn and Spring migration. The raptor passage in November 1982 included several Chinese Goshawks.

The list in Table 1 is based on personal observations from members of the Malay Nature Society, based in Singapore. It is not by any means fully comprehensive because it includes only species seen during the last five years. Other species doubtlessly await the persistent observer. The symbols used are also based on personal experience rather than scientific investigation. The author is currently resident in Singapore and can offer advice and, where possible, assistance. As much advance notice from intending visitors as possible would be appreciated. On occasions, especially at week-ends, trips in Singapore and to Malaysia can be arranged.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr. Glen Ingram of the Queensland Museum kindly drew the map.

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MR. HUGH BUCK, 4 Hume Heights, Lorong Sesuai, Singapore 2159.

THE RAPTORS OF WIDGEE

P. HUGHES and B. HUGHES

INTRODUCTION

The following notes were obtained from regular observations of raptors on our Widgee property during the period 1966-1983. Widgee (26°13'S, 152°28'E) is about 20 kilometres west of Gympie in south-east Queensland.

Our property is located on the western side of a large valley surrounded by mountains. The valley is essentially open grazing country studded with small groups of trees and tree-lined creeks. Land use has changed little over the last sixteen years. We have not grazed cattle on our property for the past five years and the pasture grasses are now tall and dense. Forest occurs on hills and in gullies; *Eucalyptus*-dominated open forest (Ironbark and Spotted Gum) on the slopes and vine scrub dominated by Hoop Pine *Araucaria cunninghamii* in the gullies. We share a boundary with a State Forest which is harvested on a 30-year rotation. Rainfall in the years 1975 to 1981 was well below normal, being about two-thirds the average, and the period May 1979 to May 1980 was particularly dry.

A systematic list of nocturnal and diurnal raptors is presented below. For each species, the information is presented in the following order:

- (a) How frequently seen;
- (b) Evidence of any breeding;
- (c) Any fluctuations in status noted and;
- (d) Food items recorded.

Descriptions of the frequency of sightings are as follows:

Common - Seen almost daily.

Uncommon - Seen on average every three to four weeks.

Rare - Seen perhaps twice a year or less.

THE SPECIES

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus notatus*

Uncommon. There have been no fluctuations in our area. A pair appears to occupy a range of about 100 hectares. Small skinks, grasshoppers.

Pacific Baza *Aviceda subcristata*

Seasonally common (May to September). Earliest sighting late March, latest end of November, but only once in 17 years in November. Breeding. Numbers apparently declining. Phasmids and orthopterans taken from outer leaves of eucalypts; once a large moth taken in the air.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Rare. One bird seen in Spring 1966 and two in September, 1982.

Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura*

Rare, not seen for seven years. Apparently nesting in a large dead tree in April, 1978.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*

Common, numbers apparently increasing.

Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrhocephalus*

Uncommon, numbers stable in all years.

Grey Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae*

Uncommon, numbers remaining stable. A pair of white-phase birds nested in late Winter 1966 in a Spotted Gum. Grey-phase birds are most numerous.

Red Goshawk *Erythrotriorchis radiatus*

Rare. Occasional pairs and individuals. In April 1982 and February 1984, distinctive display flights were recorded. The pair would spiral high in the air before the male would fold its wings and repeatedly 'dive-bomb' the female which adroitly avoided encounter.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

Rare. One bird seen flying through, record undated.

Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*

Common. Breeding June-September each year since 1978. Dead wallabies and bandicoots; a snake; a live Sugar Glider *Petaurus brevipes* and apparently a Torresian Crow *Corvus orru*.

Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides*

Uncommon, numbers remaining stable.

Spotted Harrier *Circus assimilis*

Uncommon, numbers apparently increasing.

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*

Uncommon, numbers remaining stable. No seasonal fluctuations recorded.

Black Falcon *Falco subniger*

Uncommon. Occasionally breeding (June to August) in old nests of either Torresian Crows or Australian Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen*. Numbers apparently increasing. Quail (probably Stubble Quail *Coturnix pectoralis*) taken in flight; Australian Magpies, Tawny Frogmouths *Podargus strigoides* and Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguinea*.

Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis*

Uncommon, numbers remaining stable.

Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*

Uncommon, numbers apparently increasing. One took a Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* in flight.

Australian Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*

Uncommon. Numbers decreasing in recent years. Small skinks, mice, grasshoppers.

Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua*

Rare. More numerous in early years. Prefers scrub bordering open country. Once seen catching, killing and flying off with a three-quarter grown Hare *Lepus capensis*.

Southern Boobook *Ninox novaeseelandiae*

Common. Small rodents on roadways.

Barking Owl *Ninox connivens*

Uncommon, but numbers possibly increasing. Calls heard from scrub areas and sometimes seen in tractor or house lights.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Uncommon. Numbers remaining stable.

MR. PETER HUGHES, Hawkins Road, Widgee, via Gympie,
Qld. 4570.

MRS. BEVERLY HUGHES, Hawkins Road, Widgee, via Gympie,
Qld. 4570.

COLONIAL BREEDING IN THE FIGBIRD

PETER F. WOODALL

The Figbird *Sphecotheres viridis* is widely distributed in eastern and northern Australia and is generally found in small parties or flocks (Pizzey 1980). There are several reports of the Figbird forming loose colonies with several pairs nesting together in the same tree. Most of these references apply to the northern subspecies *S.v. flaviventris* (North 1901-1904; Gill 1970; Campbell 1974) although Campbell (1974) also writes that the southern subspecies *S.v. vieilloti* "Nests in small families". Without distinguishing the subspecies, Pizzey (1980) writes "several nests may be built in adjoining trees", and similarly Lucas and Le Souef (1911) note, "Three or four pairs of birds will frequently build their fragile twig nests in the same forest tree." Other references make no mention of colonial breeding in the Figbird (Vernon 1968; Cayley 1981; Chapman 1979; O'Grady 1979; Beruldsen 1980; Kloot & McCulloch 1980) or only record it from the northern subspecies (MacDonald 1973). Woodall (1980) has described communal breeding in Figbirds, a feature often associated with species which tend to flock all the year (Dow 1980).

On 20 November 1983, five Figbird nests were found in the picnic area below the spillway of Lake Moogerah, south-east Queensland (28°02'S, 152°34'E). Four of these, together with the nest of a Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*, were in a Moreton Bay Ash *Eucalyptus tessellaris*, and the fifth nest was in an adjacent *E. tessellaris*, only 5m from the nearest nest. Three of the nests contained young nestlings which were being fed regularly by the adults. The other two nests presumably contained eggs since the (?incubating) adults were only relieved once during the one-hour period of observation. A Little Friarbird *Philemon citreogularis* was also nesting 30m away.

This record indicates that the southern subspecies of the Figbird does nest in loose colonies, but this is not always the case and individual nests are also found (*op.cit., pers.obs.*). Further investigation of this situation is clearly required. Several authors have also recorded the Figbird nesting in close proximity to other species; Helmeted Friarbird *Philemon buceroides* and Spangled Drongo (North 1901-1904); and Silver-crowned Friarbird *P. argenticeps* (Campbell 1974).

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DR. P.G. WOODALL, Reproductive Biology Group,
Department of Veterinary Anatomy,
University of Queensland,
St. Lucia, Queensland, 4067.

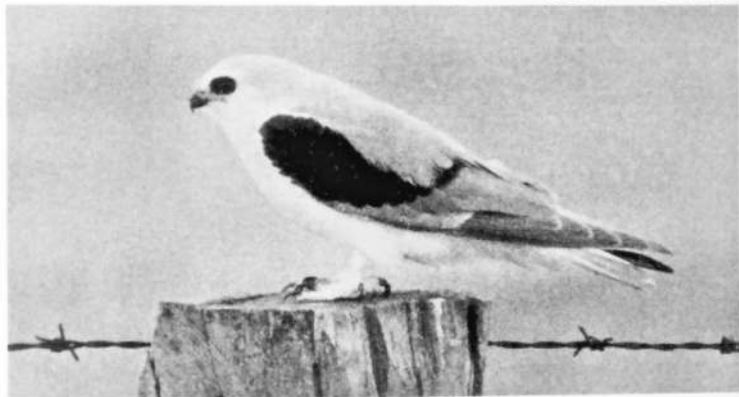
MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS

No. 1 Obviously, this photo depicts one of the small kites of the genus *Elanus*, either Letter-winged *E. scriptus* or Black-shouldered *E. notatus*. But how can the species be determined when the diagnostic underwing pattern is not visible? I know of only one way - by the pattern of black around the eye. In a Black-shouldered, the black extends behind, over and in front of the eye but not along the lower, near margin. Most of the black is separated from the eye by a narrow, white partial eyering. A Letter-wing has black right around the eye, with no trace of a white eyering, and the black is narrower behind the eye and broader in front of it than in a Black-shouldered. On this basis, the bird in Mystery Photograph No. 1 (and reproduced here) can be positively identified as a Black-shouldered. The photo was taken by Tony Palliser at Brisbane in early 1984.



The photo below, taken by me at Werribee Sewage Farm, Victoria in early 1977, clearly shows the difference.

CHRIS CORBEN



1. Letter-winged Kite *Elanus scriptus* at Werribee Sewage Farm, Victoria (Chris Corben).

Mystery Photograph 2. Identify the species. Answer next issue.

