

Around the World in 60 days (March – May 2019) with a bit of birding along the way.

I had long held ambitions to do a Round-the World trip. After much studying of the Star Alliance RTW tool on their website I had a plan that started with a flight from Manchester on Singapore Airlines to Houston, Texas; and then zigzagged in a largely westerly direction, (you are allowed certain detours within a continental block) taking in Ecuador, Panama, Los Angeles, Hawaii, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, Bali, Thailand, Myanmar and Belgium before touching back down in Manchester.



The locations were a mix of new, some old favourites and the convenient. The trip wasn't solely about birds or wildlife watching but being us we had arranged a few stops to hopefully see some good species along the way.

We couldn't really carry all the field guides around so I used the Audubon app for the US, Merlin for Panama and Hawaii, and copied the plates from my Ecuador, Japan, New Zealand and Indonesia guides and just took the concise Robson – South East Asia guide for the three countries it covers.

Rather than a day by day report – I'll cover the locations we birded on the stops that had some wildlife element.

Houston

I had been to Texas on business a couple of times but Sarah had never been. We decided to base ourselves in Clear Lake which is good for a few birding sites and very close to Houston Space Centre which we wanted to visit. We birded Armand Bayou, Anahuac Wildlife Refuge, High Island and Texas City Dike. Migration hadn't really got going yet (we arrived on 15th March).



Armand Bayou: we spent the best part of a day here – birding highlights were: **Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Parula, Black and White warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Purple**



Martin, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal and Great Blue Heron but we did really well with other wildlife getting sightings of a **Bobcat, White-tailed Deer, Fox's Squirrel, American Alligator and Green Anole**. We also heard a Tropical Parula and missed a flock of **Cedar Waxwings** despite walking the flooded Ladybird trail where they had been seen earlier that day, we did get a quick flight view of three but not great; fortunately on return to our hotel I heard them out the window and managed to

get Sarah on a group of around 100, we then managed to see these birds feeding each day in the grounds of the hotel and on the roadside trees.

Anahuac Wildlife Refuge - nothing much at visitor centre only things worth mentioning were distant **Eastern Bluebird, Blue Jay and American Goldfinch**. In the reserve proper, a good 20 minute drive away, we did a bit of walking, drove the Shoveler Loop and did the boardwalk and woods. Worth a mention were **White-tailed Kite, Blue-winged Teal, Roseate Spoonbill, Fulvous Whistling Duck, Long-billed Dowitcher, Stilt Sandpiper, Pied-billed Grebe, Tricoloured Heron, Osprey, Least Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Pectoral Sandpiper** a very confiding **Lesser Yellowlegs**.



We also had some great views of a **Killdeer** that was feeding on a small pool near the visitors centre and car park. The bird was certainly approachable but a second bird wouldn't stay around.

In the ditch on the Hackberry Trail was a close up Alligator and a skulky **Common Yellowthroat** that didn't offer up a photo opportunity. We also saw all three Grackles and hundreds of **Red-winged Blackbirds** in the Willows Trail plus a confiding **Eastern Meadowlark** and a flyover **Bald Eagle**.



We then went to High Island (mainly spent at the rookery at Smith Oaks), great photo opportunities of Egrets, Spoonbills and Cormorants but the only new migrant in the woods among dozens of **Yellow-rumped Warblers** was a **Blue-headed Vireo**. Things just

hadn't got going yet according to a birder we met.

Houston Space Centre

Unlike the space centre in Florida there wasn't a lot of wildlife



to see in the margins of our visit – I did manage to photograph an **Eastern**

Bluebird but that was about it. Until back at the hotel when watching the **Cedar Waxwings** again we added **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and **Blue-grey Gnatcatcher**.



Texas City Dike

Texas City is famous as being the home of the first US Air force, set up in 1913.

However, a volunteer we met at Anahuac told us that it was good for gulls and terns and there would be a few hundred Skimmers, so on our last day, before handing back the car at the airport, we decided to give it a look. It was a lovely relaxing place to visit and just watch **American White** and **Brown Pelicans** fish alongside the local fishermen.



Terns were **Royal, Caspian, Least, Forster's** and **Sandwich Tern** there were almost 400 **Skimmers** in a single flock and a few singles, and we also had one **Roseate Spoonbill**. Gulls were mainly **Laughing** but with a few **Franklin, American Herring Gull**, a rare here **Mew Gull**, **Ring-billed** and a single **Bonaparte's Gull**. In the little park with the Spirit of Texas statue we added **Loggerhead Shrike** and **Marsh Wren**.



Our drive to the airport was uneventful and we got our evening flight to Quito.

Quito / Mindo

Overnight at airport hotel before heading early next morning to Mindo, our base for 5 nights. We visited Ecuador 15 years ago but although we visited Amazonia, the Quito area and the Galapagos, I always wanted to do the Mindo area and hopefully see the guy who had famously trained Antpittas.



Refugio Le Paz de Aves

This is the Angel Paz place that he runs with his son and extended family.

Angel Paz - Nowhere else in the world can you experience a man calling out up to 5 species of Antpitta, which he does using their individual names. Maria is a Giant Antpitta, Willamena and Esmeralda are Yellow-breasted Antpittas, and there are also Chestnut-crowned, Ochre-breasted and Moustached Antpittas. Angel Paz worked for the logging company that was deforesting his area, but he wanted to save the forest on his family's

60ha, as he went about his work he noticed the Antpittas and tried to bring them into the open with meat scraps. Of course being Antpittas they disappeared as soon as they could, however Angel noticed if he landed the food right at the Antpittas feet it would quickly take it before disappearing. He worked on this for 2 or more months until he could get them to come at his call. They now hopefully pop out of cover right into the open of the path and with luck follow him to a view point. Entrance including Breakfast and Coffee is \$35 or just \$10 for the Cock of the Rock lek.

The first thing you do on arriving at the reserve, just as day breaks, is visit a Cock of the Rock lek, we have visited Leks in Peru and Colombia but I would rate this one best (just above Cock of the Rock Lodge in Peru) as the lighting is slightly better and a few perches offer better photographs than any of the other organised places.



We saw 11 males and 2 female **Andean Cock of the Rock** in our spell here.

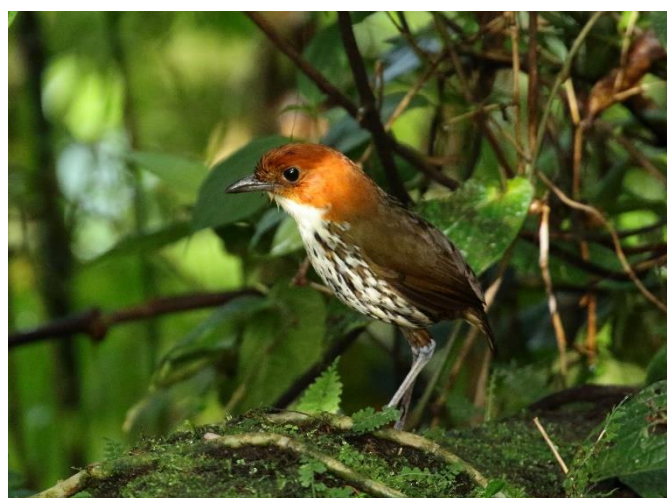
After spending an hour or so at the lek, most of the 16 people present headed back down to Mindo with just a Chilean/Uzbekistan couple going on to hopefully see at least 3 species of Antpitta. Until now I had impression that all the Antpittas were fed on worms, as we had seen in Colombia, but a few actually favour bananas over worms.

We had taken a taxi from our Lodge (La Terrazas de Dana) to the Refuge but although we got up to the Lek, and then the first feeding area and toilet we couldn't get further by Taxi, fortunately we were able to squeeze in with Angel and his son to the highest area. It worked OK for us but probably best to get 4 wheel drive transport as the other couple had done.

We used the same driver (Miguel who speaks a little English) to take us here, Santa Tadeo and Santa Rosa, we didn't use a guide who charged about \$90 per session per person (for anyone interested).



We were pretty lucky at our first stop, we had the delight of a **Giant Antpitta** coming to a roadside clearing and giving us good view then a **Black-backed Wood Quail** also appeared and I took the photos of that getting good photos of the Wood Quail but only bits of the Giant Antpitta – despite Sarah saying to take photos of the first bird (in the moment I thought it was another Giant but in different plumage with no lines on front), we next tried a place for Moustached Antpitta, no joy and then another spot but a Weasel



was about and we didn't strike lucky, although the much bolder **Chestnut-crowned Antpitta** did put in an appearance along with a chick.

Up to the highest area and while trying for **Yellow-breasted Antpitta** we heard a Toucan call and all managed to see **Plate-**

billed Mountain Toucan and then the Antpitta came out and gave excellent views. We also saw **Strong-billed Woodcreeper** and **Black-chinned Mountain Tanager**

Fortunately we had taken some coffee and muffins before 5am when we left the lodge, as breakfast was still some time away; we first spotted a **Toucan Barbet** and got good photos of him and then walked down to a final Antpitta spot and had two **Ochre-breasted Antpitta**



come out almost immediately – one of them named Shakira

showed us her dance moves. Finally around 11am we went to

breakfast at the Hummingbird view point (a nice brunch as it

turned out). We saw at the feeders **Collared Inca**, **Green Crowned Brilliant**, **Violet-tailed Sylph**, **White-necked Jacobin**, **Brown**



Violetear, Purple-throated Woodstar, Purple-bibbed Whitetip and **White-whiskered Hermit**. We also got close up views of **Blue-winged Mountain Tanager** and the **Toucan Barbet** coming in really close.



In a productive time on the balcony we also saw **Golden Tanager**, **Blue-grey Tanager**, **Golden-naped Tanager**, **Thick-billed Euphonia** and a **Speckled Hummingbird**.



San Tadeo (Tanager and Hummingbird Garden)

I had never heard of this place but it was recommended by Dave the manager at La Terrazas de Dana Lodge as a place that has really improved in the last year, it is only a \$5 dollar taxi each way from Mindo and then a \$5 dollar entrance fee per person so \$20 dollar for a morning birding we arrived at 8am and left after a few hours. The price includes free coffee or hot chocolate. While there are two really good viewing areas (upper is primarily for Tanagers and lower is for Hummingbirds, there are no trails just the walk from one level to the other and a path full of Orchids to the gift shop on which the lady owner pointed out two great little Lizards (**Iridescent Dwarf Iguana** and one yet to ID).



Best Birds at the Tanager area were: **Golden Tanager**, **Golden-naped Tanager**, **Flame-faced Tanager**, **Black-capped Tanager**, **Toucan Barbet**, **Tropical Parula**, **Thick-billed Euphonia**, and a visiting **Barred Hawk** which moved things along.



At the Hummingbird station the stars were: **Fawn-breasted Brilliant**, **Andean Emerald**, **Velvet-purple Coronet**, **Brown Violetear**, **Violet-tailed Sylph**, **Brown Inca**, **Booted Racket-tail**, **White-whiskered Hermit** and **Green-crowned Brilliant**.

Santa Rosa (Birdwatching Resort)

This seems to be a much touted spot, and is famous as the best place to see **Plate-billed Mountain Toucan** and some shy birds that come in at first light to month lights that the owner has set up with a blind. It also has a nice round walk where we spotted a few good birds.



On arrival just before first light we headed to the moth traps. Even before sunrise we had **Streak-capped Treehunter**, **Spotted Woodcreeper**, **Spillman's Tapacula**, **Yellow-breasted Antpitta**, **Grey-breasted Wood Wren**, **Slaty-backed Thrush-Nightingale**, **Russet-crowned Warbler** and **Choco Brush Finch** (we believe as one guide in the hide called it this but another later said it was too low – but it looked slight different in head pattern to a Tricoloured we saw later).

We then went to the Toucan blind as urged by the owner

but due to a noisy guide and her party the bird stayed in the trees and didn't come near to the fruit. We did go back after having our breakfast by the Hummingbird feeders and got excellent views of two **Plate-billed**



Mountain Toucans, also here was Flame-faced, Golden and Blue-winged Mountain Tanager.

On our walk we added Pearled Treerunner, Red-rumped Woodpecker, Green Lancebill, Hoary Puffleg, Ecuadorian Thrush, Grey-headed Bush Tanager and Masked Flowerpiercer.

The hummingbird garden was also pretty productive with a glorious Gorgeted Sunangel, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Empress Brilliant, Buff-tailed Coronet, Collared Inca, Purple-throated Woodstar, Violet-tailed Sylph and just below the feeder a Band-tailed Barbthroat. Even though she was a bit noisy, it was nice to hear the guide with the other party and the owner confirm our ID's as they pointed them out to their guests.



On way back down the hill we added an always welcome Golden-headed Quetzal that our driver Miguel spotted and managed to reverse up hill to get us good views and a Plumbeous Pigeon.

Mindo Area (around Lodge and up to Tarabita waterfalls)

There were plenty of birds around the town and on the walk to the waterfalls, highlights for us were Choco Toucan, Cock of the Rock (it really pleased Dave that a bird had checked out a new moth area he was setting up), nesting Tropical Parula, Slaty Spinebill, Fawn-breasted Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, Lemon-rumped Tanager, Black-striped Sparrow, Orange-billed Sparrow, Tricoloured Brush Finch, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, White-whiskered Hermit, Supercilliated Hemisphingus and Green-crowned Brilliant.



Off to Panama City

There are many spots we could have tried to go in Panama, in fact a couple of friends are on separate birding trips to Panama in the next two weeks but for us this more of a convenience stop getting us a trip to the Canal and a couple of birding walk on the Radisson Summit Resort Trails. We picked this as the trails adjoin the Rainforest Reserve (no guide required and easy access) and there was a shuttle bus to the canal and it was within an hour of the airport.

So birding around the Rainforest Trail, there are 4 trails, Summit (the longest and best but quite a few steep climbs, Green (good birds especially just before the railway), La Palma (not a lot seen) and Heliconia – mainly tanagers and flycatchers.

There was a lot of visible raptor migration and the area near the first tee was good to watch this, mainly **Swainson's, Broad-winged, Red-tailed** and **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, we also saw a couple of **Bat Falcon's** hunting at the forest edge from here.

We saw quite a lot but less than if we had paid the \$150 for a guide and a few got a way as we couldn't identify fleeting glimpses of flycatchers or antbirds but we enjoyed our time here.



Notable birds were **Black-tailed Trogon**, **Moustached Antwren**, **Lesson's Motmot**, **Red-crowned Woodpecker**, **Ruddy Woodcreeper**, **Bicoloured Antbird**, **Green Manakin**, **White-shouldered Tanager**, **Crimson-backed tanager**, **Brown-throated Parakeet**, **Saffron Finch**, **Fork-tailed Flycatcher**, **Crimson-crested Woodpecker**,

Spotted Woodcreeper and perhaps best a **Rosy Thrush Tanager** (unfortunately heard only when we called it and tried to point it out to a couple of German birders the next day).

Not many photos of this section as the lens mount on my camera lost three screws and was in my case until I reached LA and could buy a tiny screwdriver and screw kit to mend it.

Los Angeles

This was definitely not a birding stop, we had birded California a few times and there were no real targets in the area.

We did see a few common birds at Universal Studio, around Pasadena and at the Santa



Anita race track but the only real attempt was a couple of hours at Huntington Gardens and Museum.

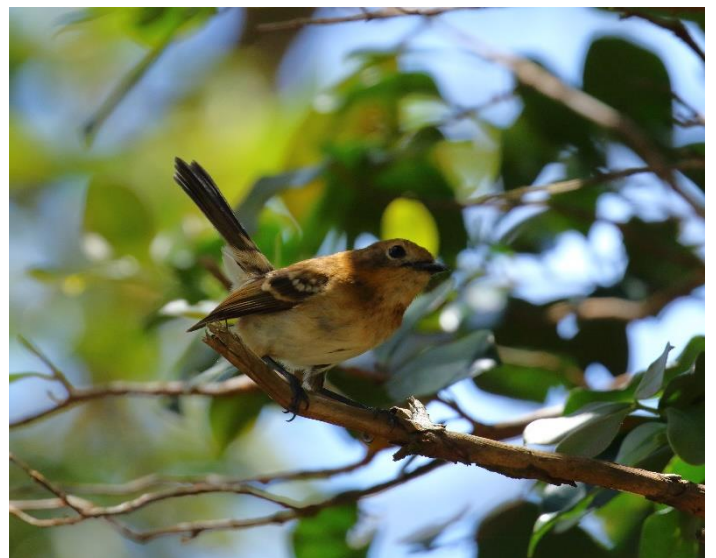
Nothing stunning but good to see **Acorn Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, California Blue Jay, Red-whiskered Bulbul, House Finch, Red-tailed Hawk, Anna's Hummingbird, Osprey and Violet-green Swallow.**

I also managed to buy a spectacle repair kit to mend my lens mount.

Hawaii

Originally we wanted to do a couple of islands but the RTW ticket didn't cover the internal flights and costs were mounting up, when we added car, amenities tax, etc., so we stuck with just 4 nights in Oahu and we planned to at least try to see a few endemics and see some of the other colourful birds. We had a hire car but with Valet parking costing \$45 a night at our hotel (Aston Waikiki Beach), we chose to leave it a mile or so away where parking was free albeit we had to drive around the block a couple of times to find a space and once I had to leave it on a meter for an hour and a half.

The first thing to say about Oahu is that most birds you see are not native even if they now



have sustainable and growing populations and trying to see native birds is quite difficult.

We visited **Aeia** three times, the first was rained out and it wasn't until the third trip when



we did the full loop that we got good views of the three main targets **Oahu Elepaio**, **Oahu Amikihi** and **Arapane** although I only managed to photograph the flycatcher despite the Amikihi coming out in the open on two occasions (light was poor) but I was pleased to be able to tell a local guide and her party where we had found the last two species. We also saw all the usual introductions like **Red-crested Cardinal**, **Red**

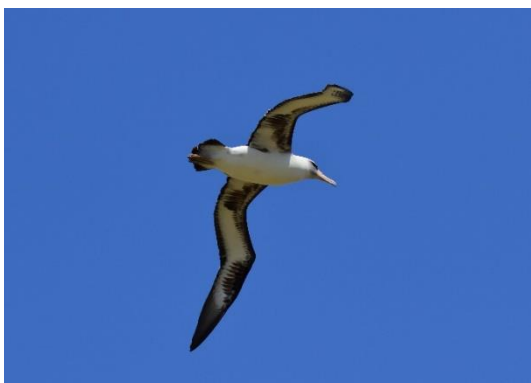
JungleFowl, **White-rumped Shama**, **Japanese White-eye** and both **Bulbuls**

There were also a few **Pacific Golden Plovers**

Moana Waterfall park and entry area to Arboretum – we saw a couple of distant **Arapane**, but everything else was strangely familiar with **Red-billed Leiothrix**, **White-rumped Shama**, **Red-vented Bulbul**, **Northern Cardinal**, **Japanese White-eye**, **Common Myna** and **House Finch** all about the paths and stream.



Makapu'u



The **Lighthouse trail** was good for seabirds and we saw plenty of **Sooty Tern**, **Red-tailed** and **Red-Billed Tropicbirds**, **Great Frigatebird**, **White Tern** and a first distant **Laysan Albatross**.

We also saw **Japanese White-eye**, **Red-crested Cardinal** and on the sea a couple of **Humpbacks** and a smaller unidentified whale.

Ka'ena Point – the most westerly point and famous for its breeding Albatross, we did see a few chicks and about a dozen **Laysan Albatross** adult birds fly in to nests or chicks, we also saw a few **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters** including one in a burrow and best of all two **Hawaiian Petrels** that flew in off the sea into and over the cliffs, we had tried to see this bird species off the California Coast a few years ago but missed the well twitched bird.



We did look briefly on the golf course / air strip for Bristle-thigh Curlew but with no success; as we were now into April, I assumed, I think wrongly, from a conversation with the group we met at Aiea, that they had all moved on but I think that a few are still around if you know where to look.

Japan

We both loved Japan and as our last trip was full on birding across 3 Islands, I agreed that this time we would hopefully see the cherry blossom, visit some shrines and do normal tourist things.

I did though allow 2 days at Karuizawa to try for Copper Pheasant, a bad miss last time and also any early spring arrivals.

Tokyo (Ueno Park and Zoo, Shinjuku Gyoen National Gardens), blossom was full out on a lovely warm week-end in Tokyo. That meant that there were thousands of people in the parks. We saw **Brown-eared Bulbul**, **White-cheeked Starling**, **Brown-headed** and **Dusky Thrush** and it looked like a large fall of migrants had brought in a few **Japanese Thrush** and a single **Japanese Robin**. Only other birds worth a mention were **Great Cormorant**, **Grey Heron**, **Tree Sparrow**, **Ring-necked Parakeet** and **Azure-winged Magpie**.



Karuizawa (mainly bird park and Shiotsubo Onsen), we finally saw the **Copper Pheasant** after two days of covering every trail and off-shoot, not brilliant views – partial, then flight



and then quite distant of a pair on the leaf litter but a great relief none-the-less and worth waiting ages at the pond area. Unfortunately spring hadn't reach this area and we had cold and snow and no summer arrivals except a single **Japanese Thrush**.

There was some good birding though, with highlights including **Red-flanked Bluetail**, **Japanese Wagtail**, **Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker**, **Japanese Green**

Woodpecker, **Oriental Greenfinch**, **Hawfinch**, **Varied Tit**, **Japanese Tit**, **Japanese Accentor**, and **Great Spotted Woodpecker**.

In really heavy snow we walked to **Sengataki Falls** on our last morning. It looks like this could be a great spot in better weather, loads of **Red-flanked Bluetail**, **Brown Dipper**, **Bullfinch**, **Hawfinch**, **Oriental Greenfinch**, **Winter Wren**, **Japanese Accentor**, **Dusky Thrush**, **Japanese Grosbeak**, all the regular tits, **Spot-billed Duck**, and best off all a final pair of **Copper Pheasants** on the hillside just before the falls. On the way down to the road we added a couple of **Siberian Meadow Bunting**.



Kyoto

Mainly tourist stuff but at **Shosei-en Gardens** we saw a **Blue and White Flycatcher** (showed really well but I only had my phone (main camera was back at the room as we were sight-seeing)), **Japanese White-eye**, **Japanese Bush Warbler**, **White-cheeked Starling**, **Grey Heron**, loads of **Barn Swallows**, a **Pacific Swallow** and a single **Japanese Robin**. There were lots of insects and flowers about and it looked like migration was now really getting going.



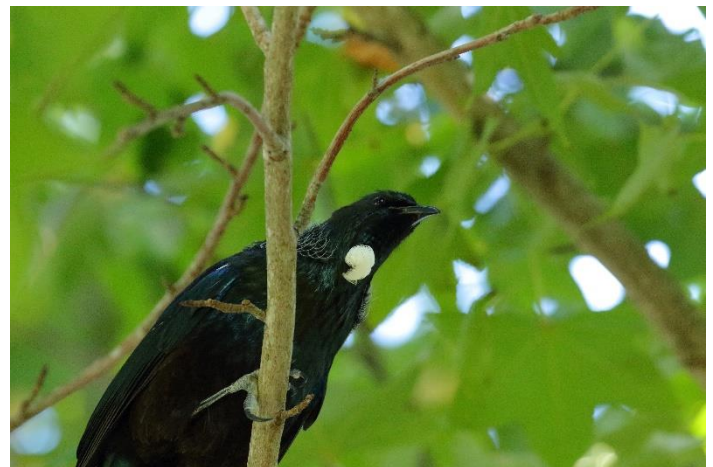
Kyoto Gyoen Nation Park (**Imperial Palace**) – last afternoon here we saw loads of thrushes, mainly **Dusky**, but with a single **Japanese**, a couple of **Pale** and an **Eye-browed Thrush**. We also saw **Oriental Turtle Dove**, **Japanese Wagtail**, **Carrion Crow** and **Thick-billed Crow**.

New Zealand

We birded New Zealand quite extensively 8 years ago, so birding was not really full on. Just as well really because due to having an extra night in LA we were arriving in Auckland on a Sunday morning and were only there until Tuesday so unable to do Tiri or any of the predator free Islands this time. Instead we did some birding around Davenport, they are setting traps for predators on Mount Victoria and North Head so some endemic birds are now to be found here.

Devonport

We saw **Variable Oystercatcher** and **Red-billed Gull** on the way to North Head. At North Head we had our first **Tui** of the trip and near a garden with some nectar feeders on the lower loop, saw **NZ Bellbird**, **Tomtit** and another **Tui**. Other birds were mainly introductions with **Greenfinch**, **Goldfinch** and **Chaffinch** out numbering **Welcome Swallows** and **Southern**



Black-backed Gulls.

On the way to Mount Victoria we had our first **NZ Fantail** of the trip, only other birds were **Blackbird**, **Silvereye** and **Grey Warbler** (Gerygone).

On the walk back to the harbour we had a single **Eastern Rosella**.

Miranda

We also returned to **Miranda**; distant views of just a few Wrybill last time we were here was a major disappointment; we wanted to put that right. When we arrived at the visitor centre 4 hours before high tide we were delighted to see that yesterday's Wrybill count was approx. 2000 birds. With hours to kill we were recommended to go to the RV parking area (Roy's Rest). Here we got reasonably close to **Wrybill, Southern Pied Oystercatcher and**



Black-tailed Godwit feeding among the crab fishermen.

We then drove into the hills for coffee and a snack, on the way we saw loads of **Skylark, Yellowhammer, Goldfinches, Starling, Common Myna** and **Tree Sparrow** also lots of quartering **Harriers**. Unfortunately on the road above Miranda, we found a dead Northern Brown Kiwi, it looked like it had been hit by a vehicle, and this was the only Kiwi this trip.

90 minutes before high tide we went to the Stilt hide, hundreds of **Pied Stilt**, plenty of **Black-tailed Godwits, Grey Teal, Little Pied Shag** and a single **Banded Dotterel**; on the main estuary hides birds got closer as the tide came in but unfortunately high tide didn't flood the main channel, so the views of 600+ **Wrybill, Paradise Shelduck, Royal Spoonbill, Turnstone, Knot, White-fronted and Caspian Tern** were more distant than we hoped.



Only other birds we saw were **Australasian Swamphen (Pukahe)**, **Barred Rail** and **Pacific Golden Plover**.

Rotorua – we birded around the lake, mainly **Sulphur Point area** and in the **Wai O Tapu Thermal area**.

Around the lake we had **NZ Dabchick**, **NZ Scaup**, **Black Swan**, **Black-billed** and **Black-backed Gulls**, **NZ (collared) Kingfisher**, **Pokahe**, **Australasian Magpie**, **Pied Shag**, **Silvereye** and **Spur-winged Plover**. In the forest every bird seemed to be a **Fantail**, **Silvereye** or **Blackbird** but we eventually sorted out **Tui**, and singles of **Whitehead** and **Bellbird** and had our only **Song Thrush** of this visit



Napier – unfortunately the beach walk to cape kidnappers is officially closed due to rock falls, I walked around the beach until I could at least see some Gannets on Black Reef, much to Sarah's annoyance, whilst she waited about a mile back; **Australasian Gannet** seen but no close-up shots this time. It appears the only way to get to the Cape is using Overland Gannet Tours who are still going until the last birds fly off in the next few weeks.

We did bird around Ahuiriri Estuary a couple of times, some pretty good birding included: **Australian Shoveler**, **White-faced Heron**, **Royal Spoonbill**, **Kingfisher**, **Red-billed Gull**, **Spur-winged Plover**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Caspian Tern**, **Variable Oystercatcher**, **Pied Stilt**, **Grey Teal**, **Paradise Shelduck**, **Goldfinch**, **Greenfinch** and **Skylark**.



We also went to a little waterfall (Masalata) and Te' mata Peak, more **TUI**, **Fantail** and a **Tomtit** but best sighting was a **NZ Falcon** that Sarah spotted flying in to a tree on the drive back to Matamata.

Singapore

We did two half days birding: one to the Botanic Gardens (a.m. only as afternoon was washed out); and one to Kranji (Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve).

Botanic Gardens

Not as productive as previous visits but we did see; **Black-naped Oriole**, **Red-breasted Parakeet**, **Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot**, **Common Flameback**, **Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker** and **Olive-backed Sunbird** before the rain set in for the afternoon. On the way out the park after sheltering for four hours we saw **Common Flameback** in poor light and a family of **Crimson Sunbird**.



Sungei Buloh

It takes about an hour to get here from down town via Kranji MRT and the 925 bus to Kranji Reservoir Park, but we found it well worth it.

The reserve is in two parts the coastal trails with its own visitor area, and the wetland area. We spent just under 4 hours here.



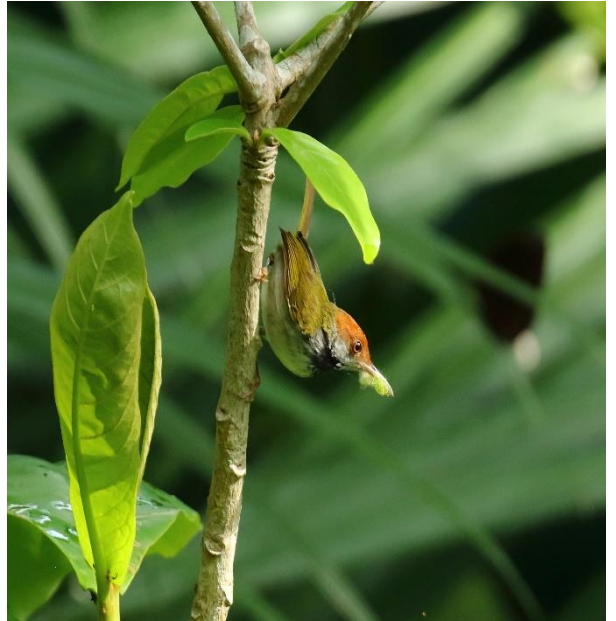
Star birds were **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo**, totally unexpected for us and **Laced Woodpecker**, we were told **Mangrove Pitta** was possible but hadn't been seen recently, instead we contented ourselves with **Collared and Black-capped Kingfishers**, **Ashy Tailor bird**, **Grey-rumped Tree-swift**, **Pink-Necked Green Pigeon**, **Javan Pond Heron**, **Black Bittern**, **Yellow Bittern**, **Little Heron**, **Redshank** and what I thought was a single **Spotted Redshank** (a bit unexpected – *turns out this was very dark Common Redshank*), **Oriental Pied Hornbill**,



Painted Storks and a single **Milky Stork** and a fairly tame **Baya Weaver**.

In the forest second time round we added **Dark-necked Tailorbird**, **Common Flameback**, **Abbot's Wren Babbler**, **Asian Glossy Starling**, **Copper-throated Sunbird** and **Black-naped Oriole**.

Other wildlife included: **Smooth Clawed Otter**, **Estuarine Crocodile** really splashing as he caught some large fish, **Plantain Squirrel**, **Water Monitor**, and 4 types of **Mudskipper** (**Blue-spotted**, **Yellow-spotted**, **Giant** and **Grey Frilled**), **Green-crested Lizard**, **St Andrew's cross** and **Golden Orb spiders** and **Telescope Snail** were also seen.



Bali

We had never been to Bali and only briefly stayed on Java in Jakarta so there were quite a few target birds. We decided to spend 4 days at Menjangan, in a resort at the edge of Bali Barat NP with just a day in Canggu on the way back giving us the possibility a quick look in the Botanic Gardens at Bedugul.

I had been given a recommendation of Hery as a guide from Carlos Bocas and decide to have a full day guiding in Bali Barat. Hery was in a meeting that day with Chester and Tokyo Zoo on Bali Myna (starling) breeding programmes so we were guided instead by his colleague Bayu who was very good.

Bali Barat

The first targets at the bird tower were **Black-winged Starlings**, there were two pairs around but although we saw them they didn't show very well. However these were quickly forgotten when I shouted **Bali Myna** as 2 birds flew over. Happily we watched 10 birds for the next 30 minutes and even



managed a few decent photos. We also watched **Pink-necked** and **Orange-breasted Green Pigeons**, **Javan Myna** and **Edible Nest Swifts**.

Towards the jetty we had **Bar-winged Prinia** calling and nest building and **Javan Tailorbird** pairing up with a mate and a fly over **White-breasted Woodswallow** and finally a **Scarlet-headed Flowerpecker**.



We intended to go to the salt-pans but a **Javan Cuckoo Shrike**, **Freckle-breasted Woodpecker** and a **Lineated Barbet** held us up and it was now very hot, so we headed to the pitta area. The Pitta territories are either side of an open field, on the way to the first viewpoint we had **Javan Pond Heron**, **Common Flameback** and a number of **Green JungleFowl**. In the blind we first saw a pair of **Laced Woodpeckers**, then a **Fulvous-chested Jungle Flycatcher** before the star of the show a female **Javan Banded Pitta** appeared, there was also a young bird in tow, but it appears



that no male is with them (he was eaten by a snake was the speculation).

At the other blind, we saw a **Horsfield's Babbler** only our second ever and then both male and female **Banded Pitta** at one point both were in view together. In the clearing we also saw 2 **Changeable Hawk eagles**.



On that happy note we took a short break for lunch, before travelling into the rainforest.

On crossing a bridge to the rainforest our driver stopped suddenly and we were on a **Javan Kingfisher**, what a beautiful bird. In the rainforest near the cemetery we heard our



main target but couldn't find him, making do with a nice **Mangrove Whistler**, before Bayu got us on one of our main targets, (that I'd previously given to Hery), a **Crescent-chested Babbler**. What a great bird but I just couldn't get a clear shot of him or the other couple of birds who joined despite good binocular views through the thick vegetation.

Next we tried the temple near the sea for the split **Yellow-eared (little) Barbet** and also saw **Grey-cheeked Green Pigeon**, **Chestnut-headed Bee-eater**, **Ornate Sunbird** and the local race of **Coppersmith Barbet**.

Stops at the ferry and the salt-pans added a fairly good few birds, **Sunda Teal**, **Pied Stilt**, **Whimbrel**, **Terek's Sandpiper**, **Javan Plover**, **Little Tern**, **Great Crested Tern**, **Grey-tailed Tattler**, **White-headed Munia**, **Savannah Nightjar**, **Cerulean Kingfisher**, **Sunda Collared Dove** and **Small Button Quail**.

Other wildlife included **Timor Deer**, **Long-tailed Macaque**, **Bali Flying Lizard** and **Plantain Squirrel**.



Bedugul

We only allowed ourselves 90 minutes here on the way to Canggu. We had already agreed a rate with a driver, Restu, who took us to Menjangan and the Naya Gawana Resort and that was the maximum stop we could have. We knew that we had quite a few



targets and Bayu had told us quite a few were tricky, not helped by some of my Xeno Canto downloads failing. That said we did see a few birds, a **Long-tailed Shrike**, **Brown Shrike** and a probable Indonesian Honeyeater, right size and shape but we couldn't pick it up again after the Shrikes had spooked it, so no tick. We did get reasonable views of **Javan Whistling Thrush**, glad that call worked and brought

it in, but no sign of Sunda Bush Warbler or Javan Flameback, we did get flight views of a couple of **Dark-backed Imperial Pigeon** but after that it was just Myna, Flowerpecker and Sunbirds, birding wasn't helped by a little bit of rain and loud music from some visitors from Java (our driver said it was a school holiday and they all come to Bali for the day). So birds were probably well off the trails.



Naya Gawana

We did a little birding around the resort which is more famous for snorkelling and diving. Best birds were two **Bali Myna (Starlings)**, **Sooty-headed Bulbul**, **Scarlet Minivet**, **Javan tailorbird**, **Ornate Sunbird**, **Sunda Pied Fantail** and **Grey-cheeked Green Pigeon**.



Thailand

Only one morning birding at Lumpini Park. We didn't do Thailand justice on an earlier trip and certainly need to go back to better birding areas at a better time. So as expected nothing too stunning seen on a baking hot morning, **Asian Koel**, **Coppersmith Barbet**, **Olive-backed Sunbird**, **White-vented** and **Common Myna**, **Chinese Pond Heron**, **Little Egret**, **Javan Pond Heron**, **Glossy Swiftlet**, **Streak-eared Bulbul**, **White-cheeked** and **Black-collared Starlings** and a **Grey-backed Shrike**.



Myanmar

Myanmar probably deserves a proper full-on birding trip but that was due to the nature of our trip which at times almost felt like business birding (I used to travel a lot with work and would do a couple of days around the city I was based in and this was similar). In this trip

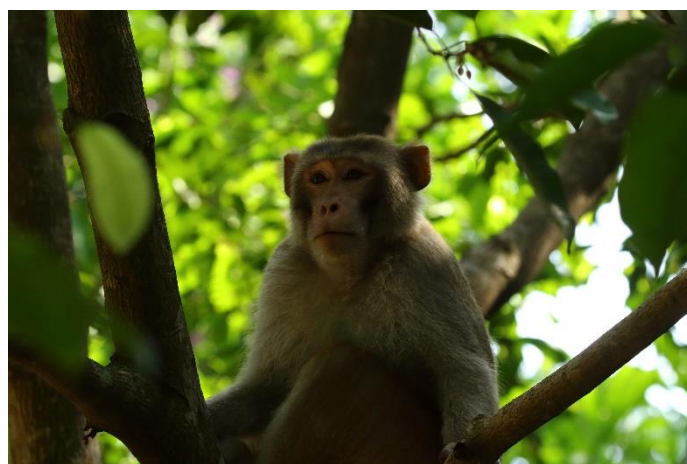
we were based in Yangon and only did a mornings birding at Hlawga Park. This park has a mini zoo, a wild area and a transition area. We took a taxi (US\$30 return including 3 hours waiting time). We arrived before the park officially opened, got our tickets 5000K each (about \$3) but there was no maps or information and the little shuttle bus hadn't started yet, so we navigated using MAPS ME to just get around the lake and into the forest. It did mean we had to walk around the zoo as well, not a great experience although we did speak to a keeper who had just cleaned up the pond and was really happy to see the tiger enjoying it and having a good stretch and wash.

On the first trail we had **Black-crested Bulbul**, **Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker**, **Red-whiskered Bulbul**, **Coppersmith Barbet**, **White-throated Kingfisher** and **Tree Sparrow**. When we walked down to the lake edge we had **Racket-tailed Treepie**, **Greater Racket-tailed Drongo**, **Red JungleFowl**, **Green Peafowl**, **Red-wattled Lapwing** and **Green Bee-eaters** before we lucked upon a couple of the main target birds, the **Ayerawaddy**



Bulbul other birds in this area included **Red-vented Bulbul**, **Common Iora**, flyover **Black Baza**, **White-rumped Shama** and Sarah spotted a **Lesser-necklaced Laughing Thrush** and got me on the flying bird. Sarah also spotted a **Greater Coucal** which I missed.

Other wildlife was disappointing with only **Rhesus Macaque**, **Plantain Squirrel** and some unidentified Lizards seen.



Brussels / Bruges

No birding as such but we did add **Jackdaw**, **Shelduck**, **Mute Swan**, **Rook**, **Magpie**, **Great Tit**, **Blue Tit** and **Common Kestrel** to our trip list.

Summary

This was far from being a birding trip so to add 67 life birds was a good haul and almost 500 birds wasn't bad either, although a couple of dedicated weeks in Indonesia or Ecuador could easily have surpassed this total.

Texas



Ecuador



Panama



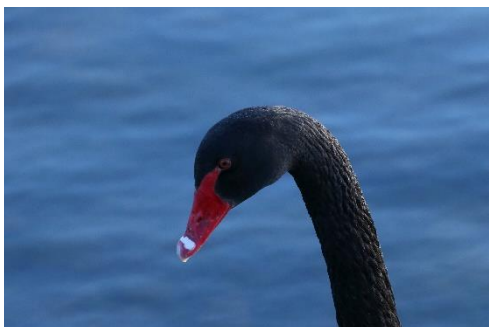
Hawaii



Japan



New Zealand



Singapore



Bali



Thailand



Myanmar



Other Wildlife

