

Visit to Singapore 18th – 21st June 2013

This report covers the birds seen on a business trip to Singapore. Therefore the species list is understandably low, but it gives a good idea of the species that can be encountered with only a little bit of effort. I was based at the Riverview Hotel, Havelock Road which was a good base both for the city and for getting to most other locations. Travelling around Singapore is extremely easy but the journeys made were all made by taxi which I found were fairly cheap and efficient.

Itinerary

18th June

Arrived at Changi Airport 0730. Even before getting off the airplane I spotted the **White-vented Mynah**. This bird is the most ubiquitous species in the city and even the non-birders can't fail to see this cheeky, noisy urban dweller. The taxi journey also gave good views of **House Crow**, and **Swiftlet** species (the two species are almost identical and I certainly wouldn't be confident in pinning the birds I saw down to either species). **Tree Sparrow** was also seen in the streets approaching the hotel. These four birds were seen each day without any effort.

Arrived at the hotel and after checking in, sat on the terrace which overlooked the river. Within minutes the **White-vented Mynah** were around my feet checking to see if I had ordered any food! Two **Striated Heron** flew along the river a couple of times. The trees on the opposite



side of the river provided **Common Mynah** (another common species) and **Yellow-vented** and **Red-whiskered Bulbul**. I had the morning to explore the hotel environs so chose to walk down the river to Clarke Quay where a **Brown-throated Sunbird** was seen feeding on one of the bird-of-paradise plants and a pair of **House Crow** were nesting outside a bar. One of the **Striated Herons** from earlier was found sitting on a floating barrage where the river was being diverted and gave some great views. I continued into Fort Canning Park for a couple of hours. This proved a very good spot for an introductory lesson to the common Asian species. More Brown-throated Sunbird, Yellow-vented Bulbul and White-vented Mynah were seen again, and new birds were Black-naped Oriole, Collared Kingfisher, Pacific Swallow, Common Tailorbird and a very distant White-bellied Fish Eagle over the marina area. A very brief view of a small black-and-white bird had me pondering so I already decided

to come back to the Park. On the walk back to the hotel, at Robertson Quay, I found an Oriental White-eye and an Asian Koel singing from the palms next to the river.

Afternoon was in the office but on the taxi journey back to the hotel a Brahminy Kite floated through the city streets. Amazingly this was seen again as I was looking out from the hotel window and it drifted past at eye level, giving perfect views.

19th June

Office based all day

I returned to Fort Canning Park for a brief early evening visit to capture some of the species seen on video from yesterday. I also bumped into the black and white bird and it turned out to be Magpie-Robin, with a male and female seen well. Due to a lack of proper time I only managed to see repeat birds which were Yellow-vented Bulbul, Brown-throated Sunbird, Common Mynah, Swiftlet, White-vented Mynah with a possible Common Iora but I couldn't be sure enough.

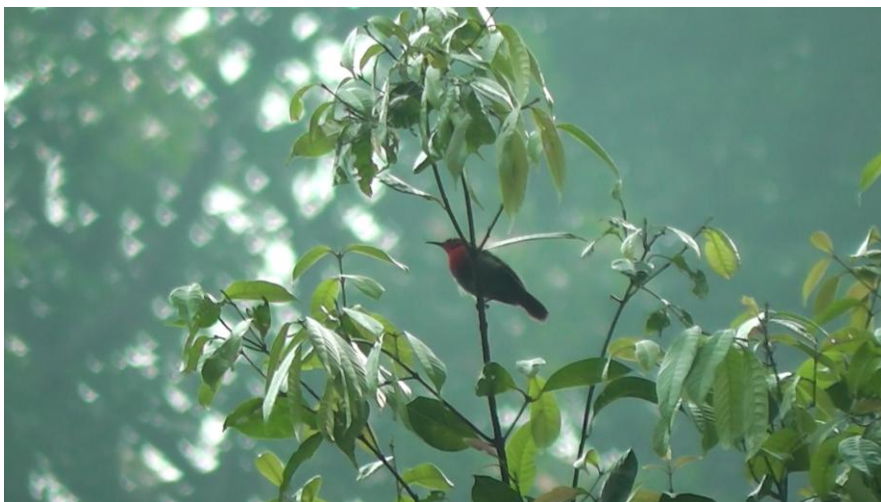
After our evening meal I decided on another visit to Fort Canning Park to see if this location holds any night birds. I got to the Park at midnight and despite walking all the way round I couldn't find any calls of the nightjar or any owls. There were some strange clicking and wheezing sounds high in the trees and I did imitate these with some success but no really good views were had. One shape flew across a clearing but I couldn't say whether this was an owl or one of the bat species.

20th June

Office based all day so no birds seen. Had a walk through Chinatown and saw a Spotted Dove on a tv aerial but with no binoculars with me, this was a distant view. An evening meal in Little India provided a good walk round this interesting area of the city. A fruiting tree provided some street side views of a species of bats.

21st June – Day off to explore Singapore

0730-1230 Visited Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. I decided to ignore the advice of the people I was visiting who suggested I visited Sungei Buloh Reserve. This is mainly a wetland reserve (so I understand) and in June there are very little coastal/wetlands birds in Singapore. I thought I would



try for the more forested areas instead. It was a good choice and a fantastic walk took me to the top of Bukit Timah Hill and then I took each path around the hill to return me to the car park.

The car park area and around the visitor

centre had Pacific Swallow, Common Tailorbird, Striped Tit-Babbler (which once I learned the call, appeared to be quite common around the reserve). Plantain Squirrel could be seen hopping around the car park too. At the summit the Swiftlets were very common with plenty circling the trees. Brahminy Kite could be heard through the trees. There were also a huge array of butterflies along the paths and these are listed at the bottom of this report. Just north of the summit on the Seraya Loop an interesting series of strong strident calls had me chasing birds backwards and forwards until I finally got good views of Asian Fairy Bluebird. A Dollarbird perched briefly in a dead tree and shortly after this some more confident sounding calls lead me to my first Greater Racket-tailed Drongo singing from a branch just under the canopy. Onto the North View Path and a vantage point near a clearing gave me great views of Striped Tit-Babbler, Common Tailorbird and Crimson Sunbird. I also wished to find the quarry, as I had read that bee-eaters sometimes nested. There is a Quarry Road from the main path up to the summit so I returned along this to find a small building against a fence which guarded the edge of the cliff-face. With some dancing around I managed to get views through the foliage of part of the quarry faces. I couldn't find any bee-eater but there were some sunken branches in the quarry lake which held two Brahminy Kites. On the return to the car park I found a Water Monitor and a Common Sun Skink. I also found Slender Squirrel to be fairly common on the reserve. Some of the other bugs seen included the Giant Forest Ant and some sort of large wasp of the genus Scleriphon, collecting sand and mud by the side of a stream. Just as was giving up hope on finding any monkeys I stumbled across three feeding along the South View Path. These were my first wild monkeys and I have to admit in finding it rather an exciting moment. I returned to the hotel for a freshen-up and a bite to eat.

1345- 1600 Botanic Gardens

The idea was that some birds not encountered so far might be found in and around the lakes at the Gardens. On arriving at the gates I found Spotted Dove (seen well this time!) as well as Common and White-vented Mynah. Yellow-vented Bulbul were very common as were the Swiftlets. After wandering through the Evolution Garden I came down to the Symphony Lake. At the eastern end of the lake is a



viewing area with Red-eared Terrapin aplenty. A small area of lily and reedbed held a pair of White-breasted Waterhen with two fluffy chicks. A Pink-necked Fruit Pigeon flew across the lake and landed in some palms giving good but brief views. Further around the lake a very confiding Purple-throated Sunbird allowed some video footage. Water Monitor was seen several times and the Swiftlets gave good views as they dipped into the lakes for a drink. The Symphony Stage provided a White-throated Kingfisher a good fishing vantage point, and the grassy areas with palms held Asian

Glossy Starling nests and Pacific Swallow, Magpie Robin and Common Mynah. I would suggest to anyone on a brief visit to Singapore that they visit the Botanic Gardens as I'm sure the list could be vastly improved upon given a bit more time.



1930-2200 Night Safari

Night Heron and Yellow-billed Stork were seen in one of the enclosures but I'm unsure whether these could safely be assigned to wild birds so for the purpose of my Singapore list I'm ignoring them. The only other bird I saw was the Large-tailed Nightjar which was calling from the treetops and eventually seen distantly.

Birds seen – with locations/idea of status

1. White-vented Mynah – seen in all urban areas, almost impossible to open your eyes without spotting one
2. House Crow – common in the city, flock of 8 seen over the skyline
3. Eurasian Tree Sparrow – common in all areas
4. Swiftlet species – common over the city but only really seen well at Botanical Gardens where they came down to drink
5. Common Mynah – common but not as ubiquitous as White-vented Mynah
6. Striated Heron – 2 seen along river and around Clarke Quay
7. Red-whiskered Bulbul – one seen twice opposite Riverview hotel
8. Yellow-vented Bulbul – fairly common in Fort Canning Park, more seen in Botanical Gardens
9. Brown-throated Sunbird – common around Fort Canning and Botanical Gardens. One seen feeding along river near Clarke Quay
10. Black-naped Oriole – seen in Fort Canning Park and Bukit Timah. Heard at Botanical Gardens.
11. Collared Kingfisher – singles seen in Fort Canning Park on two occasions, with another along the river near Clarke Quay
12. Pacific Swallow – seen well at Botanical Gardens, others seen over Fort Canning Reservoir
13. White-bellied Fish-Eagle – one fishing around Marina area

14. Common Tailorbird – seen with difficulty at Fort Canning Park. One seen well at Bukit Timah and others heard
15. Magpie-Robin – three seen at Fort Canning Park. Singles at Botanical Gardens
16. Oriental White-eye – only one seen along river near Clarke Quay
17. Asian Koel – only one seen along river near Clarke Quay
18. Brahminy Kite – Single flew over the city. Two seen in quarry from Bukit Timah Quarry Road
19. Spotted Dove
20. Striped Tit-Babbler
21. Asian Fairy Bluebird
22. Dollarbird
23. Greater Racket-tailed Drongo
24. Crimson Sunbird
25. Asian Glossy Starling
26. White-breasted Waterhen
27. Pink-necked Fruit Pigeon
28. Purple-throated Sunbird
29. White-throated Kingfisher
30. Large-tailed Nightjar

Butterflies (all seen at Bukit Timah, with some seen in the Botanic Gardens)

Painted Jezebel

Common Grass Yellow

Common Faun

Common Caerulean

Archduke/Black-tipped

Archduke



Ypthina species

Purple Duke

Malay Viscount

Short-banded Sailor

Dragonflies

Neurothemis fluctuans – Botanic Gardens



Variable Sentinel – *Orchithemis pulcherrima* – Botanic Gardens

Spine-tufted Skimmer – *Orthetrum chrysis* – Botanic Gardens

Reptiles & Amphibians

Malayan Water Monitor – Botanic Gardens & Bukit Timah

Common Flying Lizard – Botanic Gardens

Common Sun Skink – Bukit Timah (this photo shows its quick sprint across my path!)



Common Tree Frog – around Fort Canning Park



Gecko species – seen only along the river one night

Mammals

Plantain Squirrel – Bukit Timah

Slender Squirrel – Bukit Timah

Long-tailed Macaque – Bukit Timah