

## Singapore Bird Report – November & December 2021

By Geoff Lim, Isabelle Lee,  
Tan Gim Cheong (ed.)

*November and December continued with a bull run of rarities, with the year culminating with the sad but spectacular arrival of five Himalayan Vultures and Singapore's first record of a Cinereous Vulture at the Singapore Botanic Gardens. No less exciting were the first ever record of another four species for the country – the Black Redstart, the Pale-legged Leaf Warbler, the Long-eared Owl, and the Common Starling. In addition, we had the second ever sighting of the Grey-streaked Flycatcher, thirty years after the first.*



Common Starling, photo by Lee Chin Pong, Marina East Drive, 14 Dec 2021

## Central Catchment Nature Reserve (CCNR) & vicinity

The **Fairy Pitta**, *Pitta nympha*, that was spotted in end-October 2021 at Hindhede Nature Park continued to be seen for the first four days of November 2021, with Rene Sun providing the last report on 4 Nov 2021. Visitors also saw an unspecified number of **Cinereous Bulbul**, *Hemixos cinereus*, on 2 Nov 2021 (Kyaw Htay) at the foothills of Bukit Timah while queuing for the pitta. Visitors to Hindhede during subsequent weeks reported the presence of the resident pair of **Brown Hawk-Owl**, *Ninox scutulata*, on 6 Dec 2021 (Kwok Tuck Loong), 15 **Eyebrowed Thrush**, *Turdus obscurus*, on 6 Dec 2021 (Gan Lee Hsia), a single **Siberian Thrush**, *Geokichla sibirica*, on 7 Dec 2021 (Russell Boyman), one **Orange-headed Thrush**, *Geokichla citrina*, on 8 Dec 2021 (Fitri Adnan), the **Oriental Darter**, *Anhinga melanogaster*, on 16 Dec 2021 (Jai Humphries), and a **Hooded Pitta**, *Pitta sordida*, on the last day of the year (31 Dec 2021, Max Khoo).

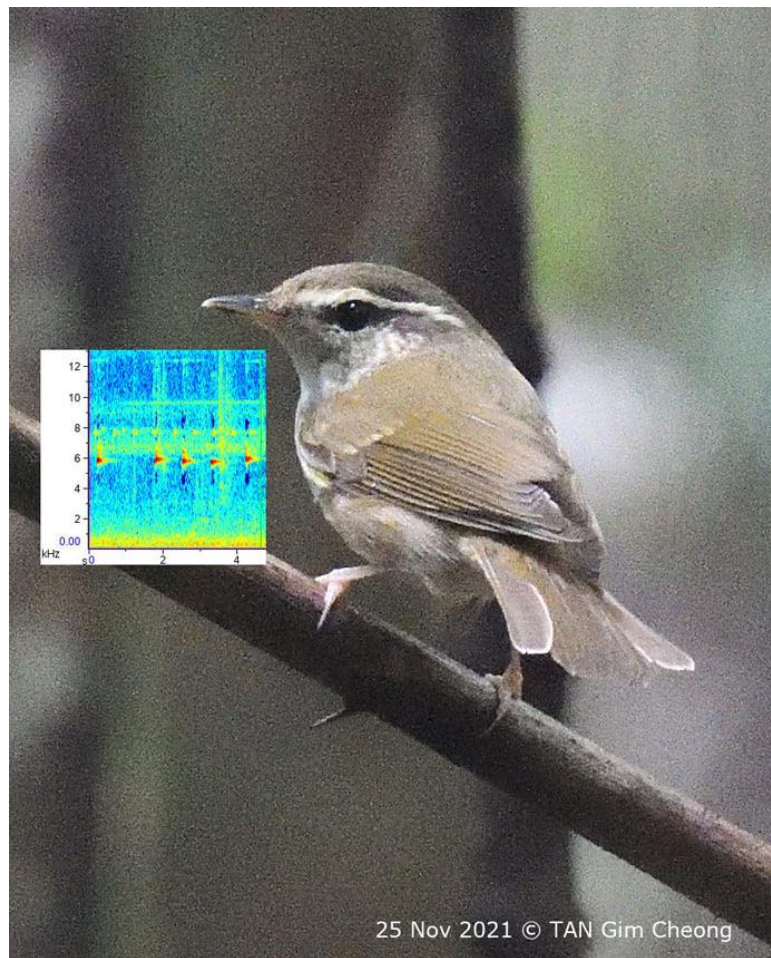


Fairy Pitta, 2 November 2021 at Hindhede Nature Park by Geoff Lim.

The brave souls who traversed Bukit Timah's steep incline were amply rewarded by sightings of a **Violet Cuckoo**, *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*, on 15 Nov 2021 (Fadzrun A), three **Asian House Martin**, *Delichon dasypus*, on 20 Nov 2021 (Lua Wai Heng), a **Streaked Bulbul**, *Ixos malaccensis*, on 29 Nov 2021 (Ee-Ling Wong), and a **Yellow-vented Flowerpecker**, *Dicaeum chrysorrheum*, on 1 Dec 2021 (Boon Chong Chen). Other notables included an **Abbott's**

**Babbler**, *Malacocincla abbotti*, on 30 Nov 2021 (Leslie Loh), a **Black-crested Bulbul**, *Pycnonotus flaviventris*, and three **Asian Red-eyed Bulbul**, *Pycnonotus brunneus*, on 15 Dec 2021 (Sreekar Rachakonda). The most significant find at the hill top was a **Scarlet-breasted Flowerpecker**, *Prionochilus thoracicus*, which made a brief appearance on 19 Nov 2021, photographed by Boo.

Within the confines of the CCNR, a **Blyth's Paradise Flycatcher**, *Terpsiphone affinis*, was seen on 28 Nov 2021 (Fadzrun A), and a male **Cinnamon-headed Green Pigeon**, *Treron fulvicollis*, photographed at Jelutong Tower on 7 Dec 2021 by Shuna Maekawa. Meanwhile, while meandering around the mature secondary forests of MacRitchie on 12 Nov 2021, Drs Yong Ding Li and Sreekar Rachakonda came upon the single note calls of an unseen bird that was initially thought to be the Sakhalin Leaf Warbler. Further analysis of the audio recordings revealed that the notes were 1,000 Hertz higher than that of the regular visitor, and on 25 Nov 2021, Tan Gim Cheong managed to photograph and record the call of the bird, and this constituted our first confirmed record of the **Pale-legged Leaf Warbler**, *Phylloscopus tenellipes*. Other sightings at this location included an **Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher**, *Ceyx erithaca*, on 26 Nov 2021, a **Short-tailed Babbler**, *Malacocincla malaccensis*, and **Siberian Blue Robin**, *Larvivora cyane*, on 14 Dec 2021, and two sightings of an **Orange-headed Thrush**, *Geokichla citrina*, on 21 and 27 Dec 2021 by Marcel Finlay.



Pale-legged Leaf Warbler, photo by Tan Gim Cheong, Petai Trail, 25 Nov 2021

Sightings in buffer parks around CCNR showed these habitats to be important in supporting sensitive species. Over at Windsor Nature Park, a **Forest Wagtail**, *Dendronanthus indicus*, was spotted on 6 Dec 2021 (Boon Chong Chen), while further north at Thomson Nature Park, a pair of **Chestnut-winged Babbler**, *Stachyris erythroptera*, were spotted on 8 Dec 2021 (Sylvester Goh) and on 26 Dec 2021 (Vinchel Budhardjo). Meanwhile, at Chestnut Nature Park, a **Blue-winged Pitta**, *Pitta moluccensis*, was spotted on 15 Dec 2021 (Vivian Neo).

Dairy Farm Nature Park continued to shine with reports of good species, due to its proximity to Bukit Timah Hill and the adjacent mixed mature secondary and mature coastal dipterocarp forest. Previously seen regularly at Bidadari before the woods were lost to development, there was a sighting of the **Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher**, *Cyornis brunneatus*, on 14 Nov 2021 by Low Zhi Hao within the park.

The park also supported a **Barred Eagle-Owl**, *Bubo sumatranus*, which was spotted on 6 Nov 2021 (at the Jalan Asas end of the park) by Lucas Oh, **Streaked Bulbul**, *Ixos malaccensis*, on 20 Nov 2021 and 22 Nov 2021 by Norhafiani A Majid and Alex Low respectively, a **Red-crowned Barbet**, *Megalaima rafflesii*, and **Ferruginous Flycatcher**, *Muscicapa ferruginea*, on 12 Dec 2021 by Mike Hooper, and a **Cream-vented Bulbul**, *Pycnonotus simplex*, on 13 Dec 2021 by Kaeden Sim.

This season we had four sightings of the **Green-backed Flycatcher**, *Ficedula elisae*, on 8 Dec 2021, 11 Dec 2021, 19 Dec 2021, and 20 Dec 2021 (by Andy Lee, Saw Than Oo, Betty Shaw and Sin Wai Jack, respectively). It appears that Dairy Farm is a location where this species may be regularly spotted.



Green-backed Flycatcher by Ho Siew Mun, 8 December 2021 at Dairy Farm Nature Park.

One or more **Dark-sided Flycatcher**, *Muscicapa sibirica*, was also spotted at Dairy Farm on 2 Nov 2021, 22 Nov 2021, 9 Dec 2021, 12 Dec 2021, 13 Dec 2021 and 14 Dec 2021 (Andy Lee, CY Tan, Lee Chin Pong, GS Goh, Vish M and Ho Siew Mun, respectively). On 9 Dec 2021, Lee Chin Pong and friends witnessed an individual that became trapped in a spider web. The bird could not break free on its own and was rescued when someone broke the web with a branch.



Dark-sided Flycatcher trapped in spider web, by Lee Chin Pong, 9 December 2021 at Dairy Farm Nature Park.

## Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG)



Cinereous Vulture, 30 December 2021 at Singapore Botanic Gardens by Geoff Lim.

Visitors to SBG spotted a **Dark-sided Flycatcher**, *Muscicapa sibirica*, on 12 Nov 2021 (Vincent Chin) and a **Malaysian Hawk-Cuckoo**, *Hierococcyx fugax*, on 27 Nov 2021 (Steven Woon). The following month, a male **Blue-and-white Flycatcher**, *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*, was photographed on 1 Dec 2021 by Frankie Lim, and a single **Himalayan Vulture**, *Gyps himalayensis*, was spotted on 8 Dec 2021 by Marcel Finlay. Other species seen within the month included a **Red-legged Crane**, *Rallina fasciata*, on 9 Dec 2021 (Kwok Tuck Loong), a surprise find of a **Little Grebe**, *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, on 11 Dec 2021 by Tan Chuan Yean, a **Common Moorhen**, *Gallinula chloropus*, on 15 Dec 2021 (M Tay), a **Mugimaki Flycatcher**, *Ficedula mugimaki*, on the same day (Vinchel Budihardjo) and a **Black-crowned Night Heron**, *Nycticorax nycticorax*, on 16 Dec 2021 (Elisha Lee). These were followed by the spectacular sighting of the five Himalayan Vultures and a single **Cinereous Vulture**, *Aegypius monachus*, on 29 Dec 2021 by Cecilia Lee and Justin Jing Liang.

Central Singapore



Eyebrowed Thrush by Dr Yong Ding Li, 1 December 2021 at Kay Siang Road.



The body of an **Eyebrowed Thrush**, *Turdus obscurus*, was recovered by Dr Yong Ding Li on 1 Dec 2021 outside the BirdLife International office at Kay Siang Road. Other notables include the regular **Crested Serpent Eagle**, *Spilornis cheela*, spotted on 15 Dec 2021 at Goldhill Ave by Leong Yan. In addition, the five **Himalayan Vulture**, *Gyps himalayensis*, mentioned above were first detected on 27 Dec 2021 over Novena by Wong Weng Fai, and on 28 Dec 2021 over Orchard Road by Yip Jen Wei.

An **Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher**, *Ceyx erithaca*, (black-backed subspecies) at Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park was a darling for birders, but on 13 Nov 2021 the diminutive jewel failed to re-appear after diving into the pond where a family of predatory snakehead fish was present, reported Woo Jia Wei. A pair of **House Crows**, *Corvus splendens*, were attending to two chicks of the **Asian Koel**, *Eudynamys scolopaceus*, (their brood parasite) in their nest at Ang Mo Kio Autopoint on 17 Dec 2021, photographed by Tracy Thu.

### Northern Singapore

The mega-find for the season and region was a **Grey-streaked Flycatcher**, *Muscicapa griseisticta*, located on 9 Nov 2021 by Desmond Yap at a private plant nursery in Sembawang. Initially thought to be a regular Asian Brown Flycatcher, other birders checked in to confirm that the sighting was indeed of a rarity last seen in Singapore in 1991.



Grey-streaked Flycatcher by Joseph Lim, 15 November 2021 in Sembawang.

Over at Halus Wetlands, a **Grey-faced Buzzard**, *Butastur indicus*, and an **Amur Falcon**, *Falco amurensis*, were spotted on 14 Dec 2021 by Lim Yu Jun, who also spotted a **Grey-headed Fish Eagle**, *Haliaeetus ichthyaetus*, and a **Peregrine Falcon**, *Falco peregrinus*, the next day. Also on 15 Dec 2021, a **Pacific Swift**, *Apus pacificus*, was seen by Vish M. At nearby Coney Island, a **White-shouldered Starling**, *Sturnia sinensis*, two **Jerdon's Baza**, *Aviceda jerdoni*, and **Chinese Sparrowhawk**, *Accipiter soloensis*, were seen on 15 Dec 2021 on Coney Island by Evelyn Lee.

Other sightings in the north included a **Dark-sided Flycatcher**, *Muscicapa sibirica*, seen on 21 Nov 2021 at Punggol Park by Lim Sheen Taw, a **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler**, *Locustella certhiola*, spotted on 26 Nov 2021 at Sengkang Floating Wetlands by Andy Lee, a skulking **Von Schrenck's Bittern**, *Ixobrychus eurhythmus*, seen on 4 Dec 2021 in the monsoon canal adjacent to Block 833 Hougang Avenue 10 by Joel Wee, as well as a **Grey Nightjar**, *Caprimulgus jotaka*, on 9 Dec 2021 at Hampstead Wetlands Park by Larry Lim,

Over at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, visitors spotted a **Black-capped Kingfisher**, *Halcyon pileata*, on 16 Nov 2021 (Lynn Tan), a **Blue-eared Kingfisher**, *Alcedo meninting*, on 29 Nov 2021 (John Chin), a **Great-billed Heron**, *Ardea sumatrana*, fifty **Whimbrel**, *Numenius phaeopus*, thirty **Common Redshank**, *Tringa totanus*, and a pair of **Copper-throated Sunbird**, *Leptocoma calcostetha*, on 12 Dec 2021 (Lukasz Wojciech).

Visitors at Turut Track reported four **Red-billed Starling**, *Spodiopsar sericeus*, on 12 Dec 2021 (Martin Kennewell) and up to twenty invasive **Golden-backed Weaver**, *Ploceus jacksoni*, on 13 Dec 2021 (Alan OwYong). Over at Neo Tiew Harvest Lane, ten **Eastern Yellow Wagtail**, *Motacilla tschutschensis*, were spotted on 15 Dec 2021 by Krishna Gopagondanahalli, while a solitary **Red-throated Pipit**, *Anthus cervinus*, was seen on 17 Dec 2021 by Raghav Narayanswamy.

## Eastern Singapore

Visitors to Pulau Ubin spotted a **Ruby-cheeked Sunbird**, *Chalcoparia singalensis*, on 4 Nov 2021 (Martin Kennewell), an eruption of numerous **Cinereous Bulbul**, *Hemixos cinereus* on 5 Nov 2021 (Tan Gim Cheong) at Chek Jawa, a **Great Knot**, *Calidris tenuirostris*, on 6 Nov 2021 (Yap Bao Shen) and one **Lesser Crested Tern**, *Thalasseus bengalensis*, on 6 Nov 2021 (Mike Hooper). On 6 Dec 2021, a single **Chinese Egret**, *Egretta eulophotes*, was seen by Joshua Chong, who also spotted five **Grey Plover**, *Pluvialis squatarola*, three **Bar-tailed Godwit**, *Limosa lapponica*, one **Terek Sandpiper**, *Xenus cinereus*, one **Ruddy Turnstone**, *Arenaria interpres*, twelve **Red-necked Stint**, *Calidris ruficollis*, and one **Curlew Sandpiper**, *Calidris ferruginea*. A pair of **Cinnamon-headed Green Pigeon**, *Treron fulvicollis*, were seen on 8 Dec 2021 at the Ubin Living Lab by Chen Boon Chong, while a **Booted Eagle**, *Hieraaetus pennatus*, was spotted on 20 Dec 2021 by Lim Yu Jun. One **Ruddy Turnstone**, *Arenaria interpres*, was also seen on 30 Dec 2021 (Darren Leow), while three **Bar-tailed Godwit**, *Limosa lapponica*, were spotted on 31 Dec 2021 (Kaeden Sim).



White-throated Kingfisher caught a Changeable Lizard, 14 December 2021 at Pasir Ris Park by Wong Sangmen.

Over at Pasir Ris Park, a male **Von Schrenck's Bittern**, *Ixobrychus eurhythmus*, was photographed in the mangroves on 17 Nov 2021 by Kevin Sim. A pair of **Crested Goshawk**, *Accipiter trivirgatus*, had a nest with two chicks in Dec 2021, while a **White-throated Kingfisher**, *Halcyon smyrnensis*, caught a Changeable Lizard on 14 Dec 2021 (Wong Sangmen), a male **Yellow-rumped Flycatcher**, *Ficedula zanthopygia*, was seen on 16 Dec 2021 (Gan Lee Hsia) and 21 Dec 2021 (Joseph Lim); while on 24 Dec 2021, an **Oriental Pied Hornbill**, *Anthracoceros albirostris*, fledged from its nest (Theresa Chow), and on 28 Dec 2021 a pair of **Zebra Doves**, *Geopelia striata*, mated (Wong Sangmen).

In the meantime, a **Hooded Pitta**, *Pitta sordida* was found at the hedges beside the multi-storey carpark at Blk 450B Tampines Street 42 and reported in eBird on 15 Dec 2021 by Alan Tan. At East Coast Terrace on 1 Dec 2021, a **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo**, *Clamator coromandus*, was found dead on a ledge by Tok Sock Ling, while on 6 Dec 2021, a **Blue-winged Pitta**, *Pitta moluccensis*, was photographed in a passenger lift at an apartment block at Bedok North Street 3 by Andy Lim who reported that the pitta flew out after a ride.



**Hooded Pitta, 15 November 2021 at Tampines St 42 by Geoff Lim.**

## Southern Singapore

The first record of the **Black Redstart**, *Phoenicurus ochuros*, came as a surprise as Ian Cash, who discovered the bird at Jambol Place on 28 Nov 2021, had thought it was the more likely Daurian Redstart. It was fortuitous that Art Toh, Lee Chin Pong and Lum Lai Har visited the location to investigate the sighting, and realised that it was a Black Redstart, a new species for Singapore. The redstart was seen foraging along a small drain and adjacent areas around Jambol Place for the remaining weeks of 2021.



Black Redstart, 6 December 2021 at Jambol Place by Art Toh.

Along the Southern Ridges, a **Common Buzzard**, *Buteo buteo*, was spotted on 6 Nov 2021 at Henderson Waves by Joshua Chong and Adrian Silas Tay, while a **Silver-backed Needletail**, *Hirundapus cochinchinensis*, was also seen on the same day on the bridge by Choong YT. On 17 Nov 2021, Alan OwYong spotted a **Pied Harrier**, *Circus melanoleucos*, from Telok Blangah Hill Park. Spotters at Mount Faber reported seeing a **Booted Eagle**, *Hieraetus pennatus*, on 6 Nov 2021 (Tay Kian Guan), a **Common Kestrel**, *Falco tinnunculus*, on 14 Nov 2021 (Max Khoo) and a **Greater Spotted Eagle**, *Clanga clanga*, on 21 Nov 2021 (Raghav Narayanswamy). Over at Kent Ridge Park, a **Cinereous Bulbul**, *Hemixos cinereus*, was spotted on 11 Nov 2021 by Lee Chin Pong, while an **Eyebrowed Thrush**, *Turdus obscurus*, was seen on 12 Dec 2021 by John Marriott.

Marina East proved to be exciting ground, following the sighting of a **Long-eared Owl**, *Asio otus*, a first for Singapore, on 20 Nov 2021 by Choo Shiu Ling, who spotted the bird during the day harassed by crows; a **Common Starling**, *Sturnus vulgaris*, another first for Singapore, on 14 Dec 2021 by Gabriel Koh, a family of **Greater Painted-Snipe**, *Rostratula benghalensis*, with four chicks on 15 Dec 2021 by Alan OwYong, as well as a **Dusky Warbler**, *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, on 30 Dec 2021 by Martin Kennewell. Other notable sightings included a single **King Quail**, *Excalfactoria chinensis*, seen on 11 Dec 2021 by Marcel Finlay, a **Watercock**, *Gallixrex cinerea*, spotted on 13 Dec 2021 by Yip Jen Wei, thirteen **Pacific Golden Plover**, *Pluvialis fulva*, on 14 Dec 2021 by Martin Kennewell, one **Kentish Plover**, *Charadrius alexandrinus*, on the same day by Kaeden Sim, a **Baillon's Crake**, *Porzana pusilla*, two **Oriental Pratincole**, *Glareola maldivarum*, two **Oriental Reed Warbler**, *Acrocephalus orientalis*, a **Laced Woodpecker**, *Picus vittatus*, five **Baya Weaver**, *Ploceus philippinus*, and one **Black-browed Reed Warbler**, *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps*, on 15 Dec 2021 by Oliver Tan, one **Malaysian Plover**, *Charadrius peronii*, and one **White-faced Plover**, *Charadrius dealbatus* on the same day (15 Dec 2021) by Prasad Shinde, and a report of what appeared to be a **Javan Plover**, *Charadrius javanicus*, on 17 Dec 2021 by Pary Sivaraman. Towards the end of the year, we noted reports of a **Sand Martin**, *Riparia riparia*, and the second record of the **Siberian House Martin**, *Delichon lagopodum*, on 28 Dec 2021 by Oliver Tan, a **Brown-backed Needletail**, *Hirundapus giganteus*, on 29 Dec 2021 by Yip Jen Wei, as well as a **Pheasant-tailed Jacana**, *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*, on 30 Dec 2021 by Mithilesh Mishra.



Dusky Warbler, 30 December 2021 at Marina East, by Vincent Yip.

At Tiong Bahru, a juvenile **Malayan Night Heron**, *Gorsachius melanolophus*, was photographed in an urban area on 20 Nov 2021 by Ant Wilson. Over at Central Boulevard, a single **Lanceolated Warbler**, *Locustella lanceolata*, was seen on 2 Dec 2021 by Yip Jen Wei, while a **Large Hawk-Cuckoo**, *Hierococcyx sparverioides*, was seen on 14 Dec 2021 by Oliver Tan. Two **Lesser Whistling Duck**, *Dendrocygna javanica*, were reported from Satay-by-the-Bay on 13 Dec 2021 by Elisha Lee.

Visitors to the southern islands reported one **Mangrove Whistler**, *Pachycephala cinerea*, on Pulau Hantu on 6 Nov 2021 (John Ascher), two **House Swift**, *Apus nipalensis*, over Lazarus Island (Joshua Chong), and a **Western Osprey**, *Pandion haliaetus*, on 16 Dec 2021 (John Marriott).

Other sightings in the south include a dead **Northern Boobook**, *Ninox japonica*, on 1 Nov 2021 at Block 23 Ghim Moh (Tan Yen Yi), a **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**, *Cacatua galerita*, on 13 Dec 2021 on The Greenway at Alexandra (Yip Jen Wei), a **Blue Rock Thrush**, *Monticola soltarius*, on 29 Dec 2021 at Dawson (Ganesan Siba Siba). A **Mangrove Whistler**, *Pachycephala cinerea*, showed up at Berlayer Creek in December, seen by many including Low Zhi Hao on 30

Dec 2021; and Karen Chiew realised that she had photographed the whistler at the same location on 9 Oct 2021.

## Western Singapore

Visitors to Jurong Lake Garden were delighted by the sighting of an **Eastern Marsh Harrier**, *Circus spilonotus*, on 20 Nov 2021 (Martti Siponen), four **Oriental Darters**, *Anhinga melanogaster*, photographed in flight on 8 Dec 2021 (Philip Toh), three **Ruddy-breasted Crane**, *Porzana fusca*, on 13 Dec 2021 (Joshua Chong), a **Hodgson's Hawk-Cuckoo**, *Hierococcyx nisicolor*, on 15 Dec 2021 (Kaeden Sim), a single **Blue-and-white/Zappey's Flycatcher**, *Cyanotila sp.*, on 15 Dec 2021 (Alan Tan), and two **Indian Cuckoo**, *Cuculus micropterus*, on 16 Dec 2021 (Evelyn Lee). At the south promenade, a rare **Asian Emerald Cuckoo**, *Chrysococcyx maculatus*, was photographed on 28 Dec 2021 by TP Voon.

Over at Tuas, a **Black Drongo**, *Dicrurus macrocercus*, was spotted on 1 Nov 2021 at Tuas Bay Street by no less than Singapore's intrepid twitcher and author, Albert Low. Visitors plying the fields at Tuas South Boulevard found a **Ruddy Kingfisher**, *Halcyon coromanda*, on 3 Nov 2021 (Martin Kennewell), a rare **Band-bellied Crane**, *Porzana paykullii*, on 13 Nov 2021 (Lau Jia Sheng), four **Malayan Night Heron**, *Gorsachius melanolophus*, on 6 Dec 2021 (Martin Kennewell), one **Spotted Wood Owl**, *Strix seloputo*, on 15 Dec 2021 (Yip Jen Wei), and two **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler**, *Locustella certhiola*, on 16 Dec 2021 (Raghav Narayanswamy).

Other species spotted in the west included an **Ashy Drongo**, *Dicrurus leucophaeus*, on 1 Nov 2021 at NTU by Frank Chen, a **Blue Rock Thrush**, *Monticola soltarius*, on 12 Nov 2021 at Farrer Road by Cheng Li Ai, an **Oriental Scops Owl**, *Otus sunia*, found along the roadside at Jurong West Street 51 on 17 Nov 2021, photographed by Chen Boon Chong, and an **Asian Pied Starling**, *Gracupica contra*, on 30 Nov 2021 at Warren Golf and Country Club by Yip Jen Wei.

*This report is compiled/written by Geoff Lim and Isabelle Lee, and edited by Tan Gim Cheong. We are grateful for the birders and photographers whose postings in various Facebook birding pages, bird forums, individual reports and extracts from eBird make up this report. This compilation is not a complete list of birds recorded for the month and not all the records were verified.*

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