

NSS Bird Group Report – January 2020

by Geoff Lim, Alan Owyong (compilation), & Tan Gim Cheong (ed.)

The turn of the new year yielded several amazing sightings, such as twelve Himalayan Vultures gathering at the Central Business District, a rare Slaty-legged Crake feeding regularly over several days at Punggol, Black-headed Gulls at Yishun Dam, a splendid male von Schrenck's Bittern at SBWR, an appearance by a very rare Green Sandpiper at Lim Chu Kang, and the first sighting of a White-cheeked Starling in Singapore!

Himalayan Vultures



Himalayan Vulture over Peck Seah Street on 9 January 2020, photo by Zacc HD.

Following the report of two **Himalayan Vultures**, *Gyps himalayensis*, at Hindhede on 28 December 2019, a flock of vultures were reported on 8 and 9 January 2020 over the Central Business District by [the news](#) and [birders](#) like T. Ramesh. On the morning of 9 January 2020, Lee Chuin Ming reported 12 vultures at the CBD area, and on the afternoon of the same day, Raghav Narayanswamy had a sighting of ten vultures at Cashew Road. On 11 January 2020, a flock of nine birds were photographed at West Coast Park (Tan Chuan Yean).



A Himalayan Vulture being mobbed by a Brahminy Kite on 11 January 2020 over West Coast Park, photo by Tan Chuan Yuan.

Central Catchment Nature Reserve (CCNR) and Fringe Parks



Juvenile Jambu Fruit Dove spotted on 12 January 2020 at DFNP, photo by Gan Lee Hsia.

The CCNR core yielded one **Brown-backed Needletail**, *Hirundapus giganteus*, two **Black-headed Bulbuls**, *Pycnonotus atriceps*, and five **Cinereous Bulbuls**, *Hemixos cinereus*, on 4 January 2020 by Adrian Silas Tay at Jelutong Tower, as well as a single female **Green-backed Flycatcher**, *Ficedula elisae*, seen between Dillenia Hut and the stream. Several days later, two **Eyebrowed Thrush**, *Turdus obscurus*, and one **Forest Wagtail**, *Dendronanthus indicus*, was spotted on 7 January 2020 by Martin Kennewell, while an **Indian Pond Heron**, *Ardeola grayii*, in breeding plumage was photographed on 15 January 2020 by Millie Cher.

Other notable migrants included a **Blyth's Paradise Flycatcher**, *Terpsiphone affinis*, on 17 January 2020 by Richard Davies, an **Amur Paradise Flycatcher**, *Terpsiphone incei*, on 18 January 2020 by Martin Kennewell, and a **Sakhalin Leaf Warbler**, *Phylloscopus borealoides*, on 24 January 2020 by YT Choong. Resident species spotted included a **Chestnut-winged Babbler**, *Stachyris erythroptera*, on 26 January 2020 by Marcel Finlay, a **Chestnut-bellied Malkoha**, *Phaenicophaeus sumatranus*, on 28 January 2020 by Oliver Tan, who also spotted three **Red-crowned Barbets**, *Megalaima rafflesii*, on the same day.

Two **Black-crested Bulbul**, *Pycnonotus flaviventris*, were reported on 16 January 2020 by Keita Sin who surmounted the steep incline that snaked its way up Bukit Timah Hill, while three **Cream-vented Bulbul**, *Pycnonotus simplex*, were spotted on 19 Jan 2020 along Rifle Range Link by Fadzrun A. .

Hindhede Park, which buffers the old growth Bukit Timah forest core, yielded a **Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle**, *Lophotriorchis kienerii*, and one **Asian House Martin**, *Delichon dasypus*, on 15 January 2020 by Martin Kennewell, who also saw an Asian House Martin again on 18 January 2020. The park also hosted a **Hooded Pitta**, *Pitta sordida*, which was reported on 26 January 2020 by Francis Yap, followed by two **Red-legged Crakes**, *Rallina fasciata*, on the same day by Geoff Lim, who noted that the crakes flushed the pitta from the undergrowth. On 28 January 2020, a **Malayan Night Heron**, *Gorsachius melanolophus*, in full adult regalia was spotted and reported by Leslie Loh, while a **Violet Cuckoo**, *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*, was seen on 28 January 2020 by Lim Kim Chuah.



Orange-headed Thrush at DFNP on 10 January 2020; photo taken by Danny Khoo.

Dairy Farm Nature Park, another excellent buffer park abutting the Bukit Timah forest core in the west, continued to yield exciting species, which included a **Siberian Thrush**, *Geokichla sibirica*, on 1 January 2020 by John Ascher, an **Orange-headed Thrush**, *Geokichla citrina*, on 10 January 2020 by Danny Khoo, a juvenile **Jambu Fruit Dove**, *Ptilinopus jambu*, 11 January 2020 by Gan Lee Hsia, a female **Japanese Paradise Flycatcher**, *Terpsiphone atrocaudata*, on 12 January 2020 by Jackie Yeo, a **Grey Nightjar**, *Caprimulgus jotaka*, on 21 January 2020 by Martin

Kennewell, and a **Blue-winged Leafbird**, *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*, on 26 January 2020 by Karyne Wee.

Further afield at the Singapore Quarry, a **Barred Eagle-Owl**, *Bubo sumatranus*, and a **Pacific Swift**, *Apus pacificus*, were spotted on 23 January 2020 by Martin Kennewell.

Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG)

The garden grounds received three **White-rumped Munia**, *Lonchura striata*, spotted on 16 January 2020 by Dillen Ng, as well as two **Asian Palm Swift**, *Cypsiurus balasiensis*, seen on 24 January 2020 by Mike Hooper, as was a **Black-crowned Night Heron**, *Nycticorax nycticorax*, on 30 January 2020 by Samuel Ng.

Central Singapore

At Ang Mo Kio, a single **Chinese Sparrowhawk**, *Accipiter soloensis*, was reported on 25 January 2020 by Norhafiani A Majid, while a **Chinese Hwamei**, *Garrulax canorus*, a recent escapee, and a **Yellow-rumped Flycatcher**, *Ficedula zanthopygia*, were spotted at Toa Payoh Town Park on 30 January 2020 by Richard Davis.

Northern Singapore

The northern region yielded a rare **Slaty-Legged Crake**, *Rallina eurizonoides*, which was reported on 6 January 2020 at the HDB carpark at Block 305D, Punggol Road by Oliver Tan and Kwok Tuck Loong, and remained until 12 January 2020. On 8 January 2020, George Presanis and Geoff Lim noticed that the bird was actively foraging in a planter at the basement carpark from about 10:15pm to 11:10pm. At one stage, the crake managed to find an earthworm in the soil and tugged at it until the worm came free from the soil. (*Note: the Slaty-legged Crake was first photographed at nearby Block 299 Punggol Central by Stephen Cheok, who posted his pic for ID on 30 December 2019*).



Slaty-legged Crake at Punggol on 11 January 2020, by Tan Gim Cheong

Between 5 and 14 January 2020, there were up to two **Black-headed Gulls**, *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*, at Yishun Dam, first spotted by Ng Wei Khim, followed by many other birders.



Black-headed Gull over Seletar Dam on 10 January 2020, photo by Zacc HD.

Other sightings included one **White-shouldered Starling**, *Sturnia sinensis*, at Seletar Aerospace Drive on 15 January 2020 by Wang Wee Woan, one **Barred Buttonquail**, *Turnix suscitator*, on 16 January 2020, at Picadilly by Martin Kennewell, and a potential national first **White-cheeked Starling**, *Spodiopsar cineraceus*, spotted on 16 January 2020 at Seletar Aerospace Drive by Martin Kennewell. The White-cheeked Starling was last seen on 24 January 2020 (Norhafiani A. Majid).



A White-cheeked Starling at Seletar on 24 January 2020, photo by Norhafiani A Majid

A **Mangrove Pitta**, *Pitta megarhyncha*, was discovered at Woodlands Park on 24 January 2020 by Loh Wei, Norhafiani A Majid and others, a first for the location. On 25 January 2020, Geoff Lim found it unresponsive and unmoving despite having passers-by barely 2 metres away. At one point in time, a **White-breasted Waterhen**, *Amaurornis phoenicurus*, rushed at the pitta, forcing it to hop about 10 metres from where it was first found. There, it remained quiet and closed its eyes for long periods of time. It was subsequently rescued by NParks, with assistance from Clarinda Yap, Vincent Lao and Kwok Tuck Loong, who stayed around to ensure that the rescuers could locate it. The bird subsequently died, possibly from swelling and possible internal bleeding.



Mangrove Pitta found at Woodlands Park on 25 January 2020, photo by Geoff Lim

Eastern Singapore

Visitors to Pulau Ubin reported spotting one **Curlew Sandpiper**, *Calidris ferruginea*, on 11 January 2020 by Martin Kennewell, a **Crested Serpent Eagle**, *Spilornis cheela*, on 19 January 2020, by Vicki Stokes, two **White-rumped Shama**, *Copsychus malabaricus*, along with 45 **Grey Plover**, *Pluvialis squatarola*, one **Lesser Sand Plover**, *Charadrius mongolus*, three **Bar-tailed Godwit**, *Limosa lapponica*, two **Red-necked Stint**, *Calidris ruficollis*, and 23 **Greater Crested Tern**, *Thalasseus bergii*, reported on 23 January 2020 by Oliver Tan, as well as one **Chestnut-Winged Cuckoo**, *Clamator coromandus*, spotted on 27 January 2020, by Hannu Kemola.

Other birds spotted in the east included the report of one **Booted Eagle**, *Hieraaetus pennatus*, on 7 January 2020 at Pasir Ris Park by Oliver Tan, three **Jerdon's Baza**, *Aviceda jerdoni*, on 11 January 2020 at Coney Island by Ng Wei Khim, a **Cinnamon-headed Green Pigeon**, *Treron fulvicollis*, on 27 January 2020 at the broadwalk in Pasir Ris Park by Serin, two **Yellow-browed Warbler**, *Phylloscopus inornatus*, on 29 January 2020 at Changi Business Park by Oliver Tan, and an **Indian Cuckoo**, *Cuculus micropterus*, on 31 January 2020 by Peter Bijlmakers.

Southern Singapore

Nest building by **White-Rumped Munia**, *Lonchura striata*, on New Year's Day was reported at Telok Blangah Heights by Vincent Chiang, while a **Grey-faced Buzzard**, *Butastur indicus*, was spotted on 3 January 2020 on St John Island by Dillen Ng. On 8 January 2020, about 150 **Oriental Pratincole**, *Glareola maldivarum*, were spotted overflying Ayer Rajah by Lillian Sng, while a **Brown-backed Needletail**, *Hirundapus giganteus*, was seen on 9 January 2020 from atop Pinnacle@ Duxton by Oliver Tan.

A female **Daurian Redstart**, *Phoenicurus aureus*, the second record for the season, was reported on 14 and 15 January 2020 at Tanjong Rhu by Manju Gang, while two **Asian Fairy-bluebird**, *Irena puella*, were reported on 11 January 2020 at Hort Park by Millie Cher. Previously restricted to the central forests, the Asian Fairy Bluebird may be using park connectors or other patches of greenery to slowly disperse from the central forests.



Female Daurian Redstart spotted on 14 January 2020 at Tanjong Rhu by Manju Gang

Western Singapore

The marshes and fields around Kranji Marsh proved to be a fruitful venue for birding. The turn of the new year and the ensuing days saw reports of a **Baillon's Crake**, *Porzana pusilla*, on 1 January 2020, a **King Quail**, *Excalfactoria chinensis*, and a **White-browed Crake**, *Porzana cinerea*, on 4

January 2020, and two **Common Moorhen**, *Gallinula chloropus*, on 12 January 2020 at Kranji Marsh by Martin Kennewell. This was followed by the sighting of two **Asian Pied Starling**, *Gracupica contra*, a Cat E-Introduced species, on 19 January 2020 by Martin Kennewell, and a **Watercock**, *Gallicrex cinerea*, on 26 January 2020 by Peng Ah Huay.



A Red-throated Pipit spotted at Neo Tiew on 15 January 2020 by Luke Teo.

The fields encompassed by Neo Tiew Harvest Lane yielded a **Red-Throated Pipit**, *Anthus cervinus*, which was seen on 7 January 2020 by CL Lau, while a **Lanceolated Warbler**, *Locustella lanceolata*, was spotted on 11 January 2020 by Raghav Narayanswamy, who also spotted an **Eastern Marsh Harrier**, *Circus spilonotus*, several days later on 19 January 2020. On 20 January 2020, a **Savanna Nightjar**, *Caprimulgus affinis*, was seen by Peter Bijlmakers, while two **Oriental Pratincole**, *Glareola maldivarum*, were spotted on 22 January 2020 by Choong YT, while a **Stejneger's Stonechat**, *Saxicola stejnegeri*, was seen on 28 January 2020 by Lu Kiat.

A distance away, birders at Lim Chu Kang Lane 3 spotted various species, including a **Common Snipe**, *Gallinago gallinago*, and a **Swinhoe's Snipe**, *Gallinago megala*, on 18 January 2020 by Dillen Ng, while a very rare **Green Sandpiper**, *Tringa ochropus*, was photographed on 18 January 2020 by Fadzrun Adnan, and recorded again on 19 & 20 January 2020 by other birders; upon checking his photos, Art Toh realised that he had unknowingly photographed the Green Sandpiper on 11 January 2020. Visitors seeking out the Green Sandpiper also saw a **Greater**

Coucal, *Centropus sinensis*, on 22 January 2020, and a **Barred Buttonquail**, *Turnix suscitator*, on 23 January 2020, both spotted by Luke Teo.



Green Sandpiper at Lim Chua Kang Avenue 3 on 11 January 2020 by Art Toh.

Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR) yielded a **Von Schrenck's Bittern**, *Ixobrychus eurhythmus*, on 11 January 2020 (Adrian Silas Tay), which stayed through the Chinese New Year holidays and was last reported on 30 January 2020 (John Spiler). The reserve also held a **Black-capped Kingfisher**, *Halcyon pileata*, on 14 Jan 2020 by Richard Lim, five **Lesser Adjutants**, *Leptoptilos javanicus*, on 22 January 2020 (Hannu Klemola), a **Thick-billed Green Pigeon**, *Treron curvirostra*, and a **White-headed Munia**, *Lonchura maja*, on 25 January 2020 (Fadzrun A), another **Lesser Adjutant** on 26 January 2020 (Geri Lim), and a **Blue-winged Pitta**, *Pitta moluccensis*, on 27 January 2020 (Mike Hooper). Shorebirds reported included one **Terek Sandpiper**, *Xenus cinereus*, spotted on 14 Jan 2020 (Martin Kennewell), thirty **Pacific Golden Plover**, *Pluvialis fulva*, on 27 January 2020 (Mike Hooper) and one **Common Greenshank**, *Tringa nebularia*, on 28 January 2020 by YK Han.



Von Schrenck's Bittern at SBWR on 25 January 2020 by Geoff Lim.

Other notable sightings in the west included a **Watercock**, *Gallicrex cinerea*, on 22 January 2020 by Kaikee Leong at Jurong Lake Gardens, a male **Daurian Redstart**, *Phoenicurus aureus*, at U-Town, Kent Ridge on 29 January 2020 by Lynette Chia, two **White-shouldered Starling**, *Sturnia sinensis*, by Oliver Tan, a **Dark-sided Flycatcher**, *Muscicapa sibirica*, by Choong YT, both on 30 January 2020 at Jurong Lake Gardens.

Abbreviations:

CCNR: Central Catchment Nature Reserve

SBWR: Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

This report is compiled and by written by Geoff Lim and edited by Tan Gim Cheong. We are grateful for the birders and photographers whose postings in various Facebook birding pages, bird forums, and 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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