

Records Committee Report 2022

By Lim Kim Seng

Chairman, Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group Records Committee.



Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* at Singapore Botanic Gardens, 29 Dec 2021. Photo by Justin Jing Liang.

The Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group Records Committee continues to receive records of new bird species to the Singapore List and rarities as it has done every year since the early 1980s. 2021 was an exceptional year with 12 new species in Category A alone being added to the List. This report updates the findings for the period, January 2021 – January 2022.

New Species

Seventeen new bird species were added to the Singapore List, bringing the total number of species to 421, up from 407 in 2021 (Lim 2021). These included thirteen additions to Category A, three additions in Category C and one addition in Category D.

Category A: Species which have been recorded in an apparently wild state in Singapore within the last thirty years

Javan Plover *Charadrius javanicus*

Two birds photographed on 16 July 2021 at Pulau Tekong by Frankie Cheong were the first record for Singapore and mainland Southeast Asia. Prior to this record, the Javan Plover was recorded from South Sumatra, Java east to the Lesser Sundas. In addition, examination of photos taken in June at the same site revealed three birds including a juvenile. This indicates probable breeding in Singapore or somewhere nearby. One individual was still present at the site on 15 September. Amazingly, another individual was also seen at the Marina East breakwater on 17 December 2021 by Pary Sivaraman, the second record for Singapore and the first from the Singapore mainland.



Javan Plover, *Charadrius javanicus* at Pulau Tekong on 16 July 2021. Photo by Frankie Cheong.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna pacifica*

One individual was seen found by a resident of the estate around Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park on 23 June 2021. He brought it to the park seeking help for the weakened bird since there were bird photographers present according to William Khaw who photographed it. The bird was eventually rescued by ACRES but did not survive. This is the first confirmed record of the Wedge-tailed Shearwater for Singapore. It ranges widely in the tropical waters of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and breeds on small tropical islands from hose off Japan to waters off Eastern and Western Australia. Two subspecies are known: *A.p. pacifica* and *A. p. chlororhyncha*.



Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna pacifica* at BAMK Park on 23 June 2021. Photo by William Khaw.

Christmas Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi*

Previously in Category B. An immature bird photographed at Marina East breakwaters by Evelyn Lee on 26 January 2022 reinstates this species in Category A. The Christmas Frigatebird breeds only on Christmas Island but ranges widely in the Indo-Malay Archipelago during the non-breeding season.



Christmas Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi* over Marine East on 26 Jan 2022. Photo by Evelyn Lee.

Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

One with five Himalayan Vultures *Gyps himalayensis* at the Learning Forest, Singapore Botanic Gardens, on 29 December 2021 first spotted by Justin Jing Liang and Cecilia Yip and shortly after by Yip Jen Wei and Martin Kennewell was a first record for Singapore. The Cinereous Vulture breeds in western and south-eastern Europe, Algeria, the Middle East, Himalayas east to central Asia.



Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* at Singapore Botanic Gardens on 30 Dec 2021. Photo by Vincent Yip.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

An individual photographed being pestered by House Crows at Marina East Drive on 20 November 2021 by Choo Shiu Ling was our first record for Singapore. The Long-eared Owl has a wide distribution occurring in North America, Europe, Eurasia and Far Eastern Asia south to Northern Indian Subcontinent. Four subspecies are known.



Shiu 2021

Long-eared Owl *Asio Otus* at Marine East on 20 Nov 2021. Photo by Choo Shiu Ling.

Black-thighed Falconet *Microhierax fringillarius*

Previously in Category B. Three records, all in 2021: A juvenile seen and photographed at a HDB block along Yishun Street 71 on 12 February 2021 by Lee Lay Na, an adult from Goldhill Avenue on 20 May 2021 by Art Toh and another adult at Jalan Mashhor from 9 to 12 July 2021 by Art Toh, Tan Choon Siang and Vincent Lao (Lim 2021b). The Black-thighed Falconet is resident in the Thai-Maly Peninsula, Sumatra, Borneo and Java.



Black-thighed Falconet *Microhierax fringillarius* at Goldhill Ave on 20 May 2021. Photo by Art Toh.

Malayan Black Magpie *Platysmurus leucopterus*

Previously in Category B. One seen at Hindhede Quarry on 9 June 2021 by Vinod Saranathan, Kenneth Chow and Ash Foo was the first confirmed record since the 1950s. The Malayan Black Magpie is a forest resident of the Thai-Malay Peninsula and Sumatra. It was previously considered conspecific with Bornean Black Magpie, *P. aterrimus*.



Malayan Black Magpie *Platysmurus leucopterus* at Hindhede Quarry on 9 June 2021. Photo by Kenneth Chow.

Siberian House Martin *Riparia lagopodum*

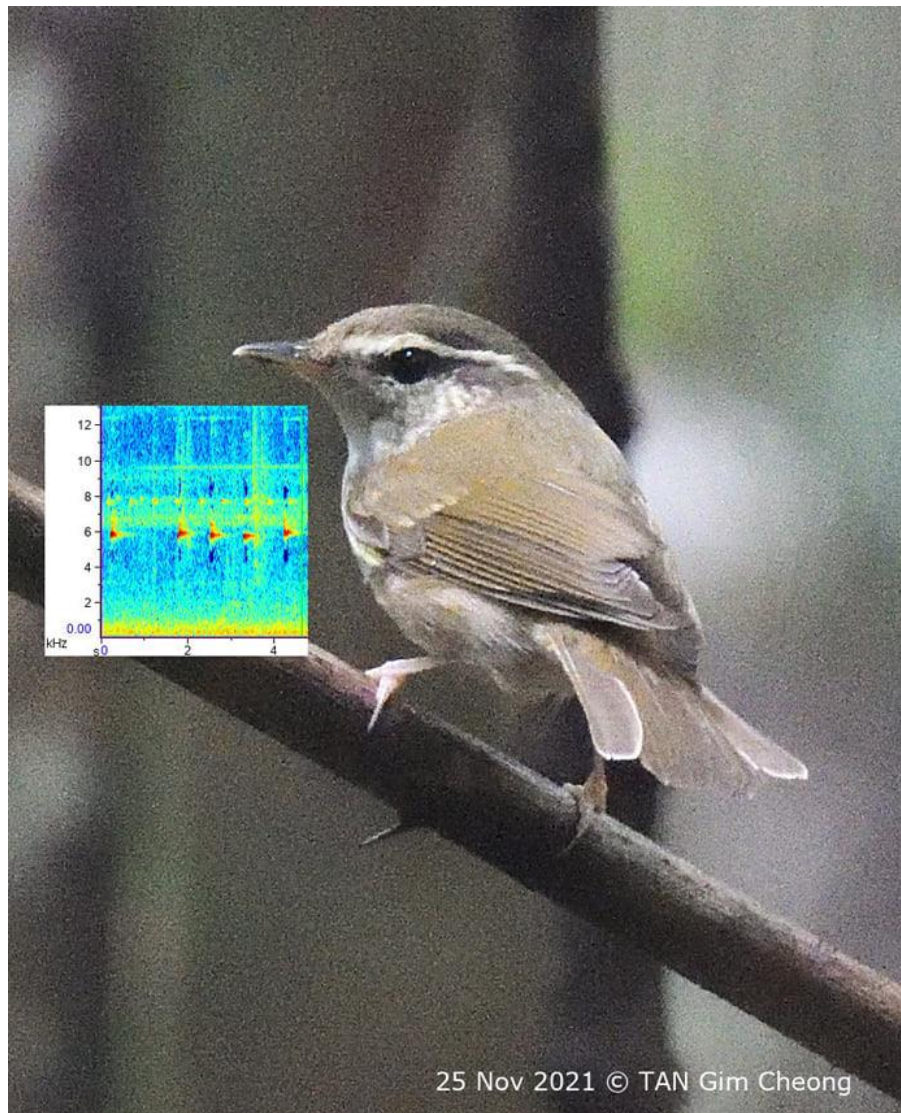
One seen at Neo Tiew Harvest Lane on 3 January 2021 by Mike Hooper and another at Marina East Drive on 28 December 2021 by Oliver Tan were the first records for the country. The Siberian House Martin breeds in north-eastern Russia, Mongolia and northern China and winters in Myanmar and Indochina. It was previously considered conspecific with Common House Martin, *R. riparia*.



Siberian House Martin *Riparia lagopodum* over Harvest Lane on 3 Jan 2021. Photo by Oliver Tan.

Pale-legged Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus tenellipes*

An individual seen, sound recorded and photographed at Petai Trail, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, between 12 and 27 November 2021 by Yong Ding Li, Sreekar Rachakonda, T Ramesh, Tan Gim Cheong and Tan Kok Hui was the first acceptable record for Singapore. A sonogram is needed to distinguish this species from the near-identical Sakhalin Leaf Warbler, *P. borealoides*. The Pale-legged Leaf-warbler breeds in Manchuria and winters in Southeast Asia.



Pale-legged Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus tenellipes* at Petai Trail CCNR on 25 Nov 2021. Photo by Tan Gim Cheong.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

An adult seen at Marina East Drive on 13 December 2021 by Gabriel Koh and subsequently by many other observers was the first record for Singapore. It breeds in Europe and the Palearctic eastwards to Mongolia. Northern populations are migratory and winters south to Spain and Africa. It has also been introduced to Australia, New Zealand, North America, Mexico, Argentina, South Africa and Fiji. 12 subspecies have been described.



Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* at Marine East on 13 Dec 2021. Photo by Jenny Koh.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

One photographed at Kent Ridge Park on 15 October 2021 by Alex Kang was the first record for Singapore. It breeds most of Europe and the Palearctic and winters in Africa and south-western Asia. Five subspecies are known.



Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* at Kent Ridge Park on 15 Oct 2021. Photo by Alex Kang.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrorus*

One female seen at Springwood Walk on 28 November 2021 by Ian Cash was initially identified as a Daurian Redstart. It was seen again 6 December 2021 by Art Toh who correctly identified it as a Black Redstart. This is a widespread breeder in Europe, Asia and northern Africa. Northern populations are migratory and winter in southern and western Europe and Asia, and north-west Africa, south to Morocco and east to central China. Between five and seven subspecies are known to exist.



Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrorus* at Springwood Walk on 6 Dec 2021. Photo by Art Toh.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

One seen at the Ulu Pandan Park Connector (beside Clementi Road) on 23 October 2021 by Soo Kok Choong was our first record for Singapore. The Tree Pipit occurs through most of Europe and the Palearctic and migrates south to winter in Africa and Southern Asia. Two subspecies are known: *A.t. trivialis* and *A.t. haringtoni*.



Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* at Ulu Pandan PC, besides Clementi Road, on 23 Oct 2021. Photo by Soo Kok Choong.

Category C: Species which although introduced by man have now established a regular breeding population which may or may not be self-sustaining

The following species have been accepted as new entrants in Category C:

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*

Previously in Category E (Lim 2009). A polytypic species ranging New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand, the Masked Lapwing was first recorded in Singapore when four birds were sighted at Lower Peirce Reservoir on 3-9 September 1994 (Lim 2009). They were believed to be escapees from the nearby Zoo. Subsequently, there were reports from other parts of the Central Catchment Nature Reserve, Kranji Reservoir, Lower Seletar Reservoir, Seletar Country Club, Tanah Merah and Marina East. The first breeding record was from Seletar Country Club on 24 November 2004 and, more recently, chicks have been seen at Marina East. This Australasian species appears established in the localities listed and is therefore added to Category C.



Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* at Marina East. Photo by Alan OwYong.

Milky Stork *Mycteria cinerea*

Previously in Category E (Lim 2009). The Milky Stork is a monotypic species with a range covering the Thai-Malay Peninsula, Indochina, Greater Sundas and Sulawesi (Clements 2007). It was first reported in Singapore when 2 birds were reported on 9-22 September 1997 at Seletar Farmway (Lim 2009). The birds were believed to be free-flying birds from the Zoo. Subsequently, sightings became regular in the north and northwest of Singapore. Breeding has not yet been reported outside the Zoo but juveniles are frequently seen and are indicative of local breeding.



Milky Stork *Mycteria cinerea* at Chinese Gardens. Photo by Alan OwYong.

Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*

Previously in Category E (Lim 2009). The Painted Stork is a monotypic species ranging from the Indian Subcontinent to South China and Southeast Asia (Clements 2007). It is a common escapee, presumably from free-flying stock from the Zoo, first reported in Singapore at Senoko on 29 March 1987 (Lim 2009). Subsequently, sightings have become frequent in coastal wetlands in the north and north-west of Singapore, especially at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve. Like the preceding species, breeding has not yet been reported outside the Zoo but juveniles have been seen. Hybrids with the previous species are common and care should be taken to separate them.



Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*. Photo by Alan OwYong.

Category D: Species which have occurred in an apparently wild state but for which the possibility of escape or release cannot be satisfactorily excluded

The following species have been accepted as a new entrant in Category D:

Ashy-headed Green Pigeon *Treron phayrei*

A male seen in the Central Catchment Nature Reserve on 9 Oct 2021 by Yip Jen Wei was the first record for Singapore. However, since it was not clear if the bird was a genuine straggler as it is over 1,000 km from its normal range, or whether it is a product of the regional cagebird trade, this record was assigned to Category D, pending further evidence.



Ashy-headed Green Pigeon *Treron phayrei* at CCNR on 9 Oct 2021. Photo by Yip Jen Wei.

Other updates to the Checklist

The taxonomy, nomenclature and systematics follow that of the latest IOC version 12.1 which was released in January 2022.

An update done by the committee was to review species in Category C and apply a shorter timeframe to introduced species. Instead of 30 years as applied for species in Category A, Category

C species must be present in the last ten years and there must be records of breeding within that period. As a result, two species, Crested Myna and Black-winged Starling, have been removed.

Another important change is an update on the nationally threatened species of Singapore using IUCN criteria and extending the coverage to include non-resident species except introduced species. This was possible through the excellent work of the Singapore Red Data Book Working Group for Birds, headed by Yong Ding Li. The recently completed re-assessment also highlighted the plight of wild birds in Singapore and the rest of the world from a multitude of threats of extinction including habitat loss and disturbance, poaching, pollution and climate change.

Please click on the link to download the [NSS Bird Checklist 2022](#).

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following observers for submitting their records for review and for the use of their photographs in this report: Ian Cash, Frankie Cheong, Choo Shiu Ling, Kenneth Chow, Ash Foo, Mike Hooper, Alex Kang, William Khaw, Gabriel Koh, Jenny Koh, Vincent Lao, Evelyn Lee, Lee Lay Na, Justin Jing Liang, Pary Sivaraman, T. Ramesh, Soo Kok Choong, Sreekar Rachakonda, Tan Choon Siang, Art Toh, Tan Gim Cheong, Tan Kok Hui, Oliver Tan, Vinod Saranathan, Vincent Yip, Alan OwYong, Yip Jen Wei and Yong Ding Li. Finally, thanks are also due to my fellow committee members for their expertise in the deliberation process: Benjamin Lee, Lim Kim Keang, Tan Gim Cheong, Tan Kok Hui, and Yong Ding Li.

References

Clements, J.F. (2007). *The Clements Checklist of the Birds of the World, Sixth Edition*. Christopher Helm, London.

Lim, K.S. (2009). *The avifauna of Singapore*. Nature Society (Singapore), Singapore.

Lim, K.S. (2021a). *Records Committee Report 2021*. Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group Records Committee, Singapore. Accessed on 24th March 2022. <https://singaporebirdgroup.wordpress.com/2021/02/02/birds-records-committee-report-jan-2021/?msclkid=6dd4d878ab7011ec99532166de9b43cb>

Lim, K.S. (2021b). The Black-thighed Falconet in Singapore. Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group, Singapore. Accessed on 24th March 2022. <https://singaporebirdgroup.wordpress.com/2021/09/11/the-black-thighed-falconet-in-singapore/>