

# Report on the Raptor Migration in Singapore from Autumn 2007 to Spring 2008.

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The Asian Raptor Migration Survey (ARMS) Project was launched in 1999 by the Asian Raptor Research & Conservation Network (ARRCN) to support and coordinate data from the raptor counts in the field from different member countries. The project is coordinated by Yasunori Nitani-san and reports can be accessed at <http://www5b.biglobe.ne.jp/~raptor/index.htm>

Even though we do not have thousands of raptors migrating through Singapore, the Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group decided to submit records of migrating raptors to ARMS from October 2007. This was based on reported sightings in the wildbirdSingapore e-forum from members and birding community in Singapore during the autumn and spring seasons.

## Analysis:

As I started compiling only in the later part of October, the records for that month were not representative. We had only 4 species totaling 29 raptors. But in November with a full month of records, we hit the jackpot with the highest count of **241** raptors from **10** species. This pointed to a peak for migrating raptors flying south in the autumn migration in November. The next four months from December to March averaged 102 raptors monthly, with the highest at 128 in January and the lowest at 83 in February. It would appear that many of these raptors could be wintering here as their numbers looked pretty much the same over these months. However more studies have to be done to confirm this. So far the records indicated that **Black Bazas**, **Crested Honey-buzzards** and **Japanese Sparrowhawks** bypassed our island and took a different route flying back north, when you compared their numbers for November and March. See Table 1.

We recorded a total of **15** migrating raptors over the last two seasons, more than half of the 28 species of raptors wintering, passing through or accidental arrivals as listed in the Pocket Checklist of the Birds of Singapore (Lim KS, 2007).

In Thailand and Malaysia, **Black Baza** was the top recorded species counted during their Spring migration season and not surprising, it was also our top migrant during this period. It hit a high count of 122 birds in November, going down to 82 and 93 birds in December and January before dropping further to about 60 birds in February and March.

The **Crested Honey-buzzard** came in a distance second but still with creditable counts of 58 in November and slow to around 10 for the following months. The **Japanese Sparrowhawk** sightings showed very clearly the migration pattern for the two seasons. They came through in good numbers in autumn – 12 in October and 20 in November but showed a drastic drop to a few birds in the next few months including 3 in March.

Both the **Ospreys** and **Peregrine Falcons** seemed to be wintering here as their numbers were pretty the same, averaging 5 throughout the six months. They like to stay at their favorite feeding grounds in Pulau Ubin, Kranji and Jurong.

The surprising statistics was only a single record of the **Chinese Sparrowhawk** in November, when good numbers were reported in Perak and Selangor, Malaysia in September.

Not so surprising were the 10 **Black Kites** recorded in November with 4 reported by Horst Flotow in Sungei Buloh, 3 by Kok Hui in Seletar and another 3 by Mike Tan in Lim Chu Kang. There were no records after this. This uncommon winter visitor doesn't seem to like wintering here for some reasons.

## Highlights :

The top and most important raptor sighting for the season was the **Amur Falcon** at Changi Cove on 21<sup>st</sup> November. Con Foley and Tan Gim Cheong made the observation during early morning. Con submitted a photograph of a female perched on the tip of a casuarina tree to the Records Committee and if accepted will be our first record of this out-of-range *falco*. Note that this record was not included in Table 1 due to the late notification.



The Amur Falcon is a rare passage migrant for Thailand (*Chaiyan Kasomdorkbua, pers. comm.*). It is also a vagrant for Malaysia, with a female reported wintering in Kuala Terengganu last year by Anuar McAfee (*Suara Enggang Vol.15. No 6*). Like the one in Singapore, it was also sighted in November, perching on a casuarina tree. What a coincidence!

Amur Falcon breeds in Siberia, China and Mongolia, wintering mainly in Southern Africa.

*Amur Falcon by Con Foley*

On 6<sup>th</sup> November, Albert Low and Ding Li recorded the largest one day raptors migration over Bukit Timah Hill. They counted a total of 65 to 70 raptors comprising of 5 species in one afternoon. Lee Tiah Khee photographed three **Himalayan Griffon Vultures** at Bukit Timah Hill on 23<sup>rd</sup> January adding to the single vulture seen at Seletar on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January and another at Simpang reported by James Heng on 26<sup>th</sup> January. Like Thailand and Malaysia, we are seeing these Vultures more regularly at the end and beginning of the year.

A globally threatened **Greater Spotted Eagle** was photographed by Mike Tan at Jalan Murai in November, this being our only record for this period. We had three records of the rare **Rufous-bellied Eagle**; Ding Li and Albert Low at Bukit Timah Hill on 6<sup>th</sup> November, Ah Huay & Doreen record from Venus Drive on 2<sup>nd</sup> December and Sutari and the ramblers group at Bukit Brown Cemetery on 31<sup>st</sup> December.

Danny Lau, Kok Hui, Jia Sheng and gang again proved to be the top raptors team with excellent records of the much sought-after **Jerdon's Baza** hunting at the CCK cemeteries on 26<sup>th</sup> January adding to Con Foley's record and photo of one flying at the Chinese Gardens on 30<sup>th</sup> November. They then topped this with the only record of a dark morph **Booted Eagle** on the 8<sup>th</sup> March at Seletar Airport. Jia Sheng had earlier reported a pale morph **Booted Eagle** at the same location on 1<sup>st</sup> March. This rare accidental raptor used to turn up regularly at the dump site at Lorong Halus before it was closed. They also contributed to our only record of a female **Pied Harrier** at Tuas on 17<sup>th</sup> February, which is a new location for this raptor followed by another one at Changi Cove on 14<sup>th</sup> March. Well done guys!

KC Tsang photographed a **Chinese Sparrowhawk** at Sungei Buloh on 15<sup>th</sup> November. We had expected more to come down to Singapore from Malaysia as they have recorded around 1000 in September and 4000 in October at Taiping. The second record for this bird came from a late photo submitted by Leslie Fung taken at Sungei Buloh on 21<sup>st</sup> February.

The **Common Buzzard**, a regular visitor, was first seen by Alfred Chia along Changi Coastal Road in January and later seen again at the same place in March by Kenneth Kee and Alan OwYong. There seemed to be a pair of **Eastern Marsh Harrier** at Changi Cove hovering over the vast expanse of reclaimed land. It was first reported by Ding Li in early February and was still around in March. Mike Hooper got another one at Marina East in early March.

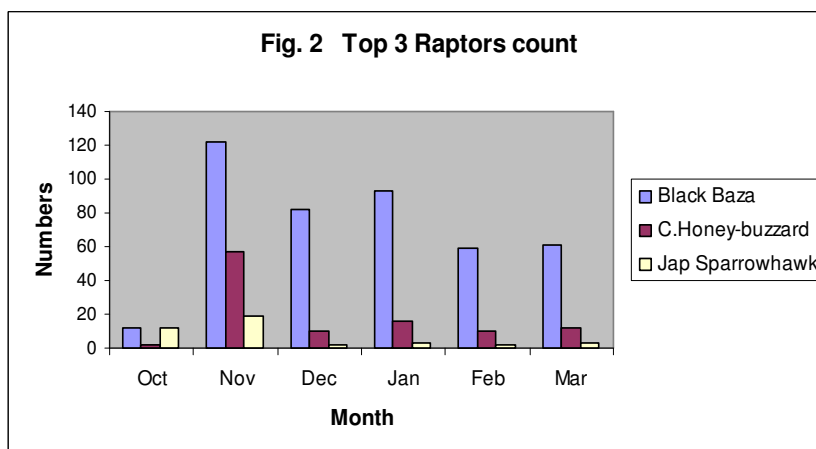
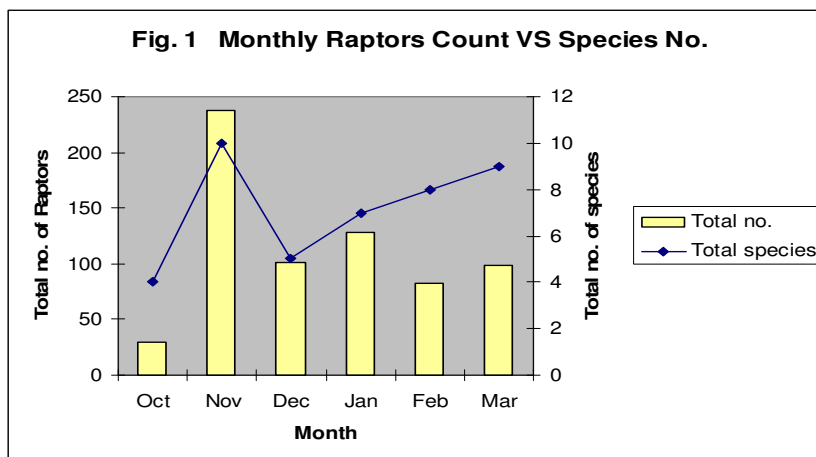
Single high species count for the **Black Bazas** came in from Mike Hooper with 30 at Marina East in November, Kim Seng's record of 60 at Gambas Avenue in December and a roosting flock of 25 at Admiralty Park by Tsen Thauming in February.

True to their nature, **Peregrine Falcons** were reported in our urban area; Capital Square and downtown CBD and HDB heartlands at Sengkang. We can assume that they were after our city pigeons for an easy meal.

Table 1. Summary of Records

No	Species	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
1	Black Baza	12	122	82	93	59	61
2	Crested Honey-buzzard	2	58	10	16	10	12
3	Japanese Sparrowhawk	12	20	2	3	2	3
4	Black Kite		10				
5	Osprey	3	6		5	4	6
6	Peregrine Falcon		4	2	2	3	7
7	Chinese Sparrowhawk		1			1	
8	Rufous-bellied Eagle		1	2			
9	Greater Spotted Eagle		1				
10	Jerdon's Baza		1		3		
11	Common Buzzard				1		1
12	Eastern Marsh Harrier					1	3
13	Pied Harrier					1	1
14	Booted Eagle						2
15	Himalayan Griffon Vulture				5		
	Unidentified <i>Accipiter</i>		17	3		2	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>99</b>
	<b>Number of Species</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>

Note : Amur Falcon is not reflected in the above table due to late notification.



This report is condensed from the monthly compilation of records send in to the WildbirdSingapore e-group from October 2007 to March 2008. The compiler wished to thank all who sent in the records, Kenneth Kee for editing & graph work and Con Foley for the use of his photo.