



An Illustrated Field Guide to the Birds Of Singapore. Lim Kim Seng and Dana Gardner, Sunrise Publishing Ltd 1997, ISBN 981-3066-00-8

Kim Seng is one of the foremost birders in Singapore and since early childhood has been recording the status, occurrence and activities of wild birds on the island. His depth of knowledge and detailed observations has at long last been committed to book format. As the Bird Recorder for the Nature Society he has provided us with an accurate up to date record of the wild birds of Singapore.

This well illustrated book provides the most comprehensive coverage of Singapore birds produced so far and meets the needs of all active local and visiting birdwatchers. With most species accurately portrayed in colour and an associated text succinctly written with carefully worded descriptions and useful data on status, range and habitats. Of particular importance and value are the appendices that provide listings of extinct, threatened and escape species and also suggest possible additions to the list.

For the more ancient birders including myself the Sibley and Moore taxonomy and nomenclature will take some acceptance and getting use to and finding the right place for families may initially be a chore. Despite cross references being given a few of these are incorrect (see Magpie Robin and White-rumped Shama) and I would have preferred the format used in the *Birds of Thailand* by Philip Round which has text opposite or at least closer to the plates.

There are useful sections on birdwatching techniques, places to visit and habitats locations but these need associated maps and more information on the generous sized island map would have improved the format. The coloured illustrations have a rather smooth appearance possibly due to printing effects and such things as feather marginations which I suspect were on the original paintings have somehow got lost. Standards in associated bird guides tend to be fairly high these days and one does get fussy I suppose. Despite this, the general jizz of the birds is good and separation of similar species should not prove too difficult using the plates.

I personally found the front cover and inside photographs rather glarey in colour contrast but this is rather subjective. Using the photographs with a small map might have been a better way to present individual site locations on separate pages. The copy I obtained had a spine problem and within a few days of purchase the cover became detached. As this book is designed for use in the field a better quality binding should have been used.

In the text a few points worthy of mention are that the House Crow has now been added to with five other bird species that are no longer protected in Singapore and one of these the migrant Purple-backed Starling which is not a common bird (Wild Animals and Birds Act amendment 1991) (see page 21). I also note the comment that some protected areas have little significance for conservation and are therefore not listed (see page 17). These include a number of parks some of which are very significant as demonstrated by the recent account in this journal by Angus Lamont on Kent Ridge Park (see *Raffles Bull. Zool.* 46: 113) where at least 151 species were recorded and this location has no tidal mudflats.

We should not underrate parks and corridor systems through urban areas as they can in total contribute to supporting good numbers of bird species even if the diversity is less than nature reserves.

As the writer rightly points out the losses suffered to Singapore birds have been quite disastrous. It is hoped that this well written and illustrated local guide will serve to educate future generations sufficiently to save what is left and ensure that no further species join the extinct list in appendix 1!!

Clive Briffett

School of Building and Real Estate
National University of Singapore



Seashore Crabs of Hsin-Chu City. Ping-Ho Ho & Ming-Shih Hung, 1997. Hsin-Chu City Government. 122pp.

To date, there are already numerous colourful and informative publications on the crabs of Taiwan. These publications have brought to public attention the diversified crab fauna of Taiwan. This new book is the first to report on one localised area - the seashore of Hsin-Chu City.

The aim of this book is to serve as a guide book for the citizens of Hsin-Chu City who are interested in nature and conservation and to be used as a teaching text-book in local schools. Its intention is to bring to public awareness that rapid urbanisation is also rapidly destroying the natural habitat of

the coastline.

Hsin-Chu City, being one of the most densely populated cities in Taiwan, is located on the north-western coast of Taiwan, facing the Straits of Taiwan. The coastal stretch is only 13.5 km but comprises of various habitats to support various kinds of crabs. Hence, the diversified fauna. In this book, 43 species from 10 families are being reported.

The first chapter of the book gives an introduction to the various types of habitat found along the seashore of Hsin-Chu City. The second chapter, gives a concise morphological study of the crab. The figures are complete with labelling on the different parts of the crab, so that the reader can immediately relate the labels to the different body parts especially when one is reading the diagnosis. This is very helpful for the general public or non-carcinologist because many of the crabs are very similar and morphological characters have to be used to differentiate them. The third chapter is a pictorial guide to the crabs, complete with excellent colour photographs, its vernacular Taiwanese name, scientific name, diagnosis and habitat. The authors have also included the natural distribution of each species besides their distributions in Taiwan. This is one addition feature not found in previous publications.