

# Laem Pak Bia – Thailand.

January 19 – 21, 2011.



Salt pans in Laem Pak Bia

Photo B.Legnell

**This tripreport is part of a journey that also includes Vietnam and Cambodia. On this trip we not only had the privilege to see over 420 species of birds, of which a number now is on the brink of extinction, but also a few of the rarest mammals in the region. We traveled west-ward from southern Annam in Vietnam, through northern Cambodia and ended by the Burmese border in the northern part of the Thai peninsula. This gave us a cross-section of habitats, as well as impressions of how nature and wildlife preservation functions in these countries.**

**-Another 2 tripreports from Laem Pak Bia, conducted a few weeks later, are also included.**

**Participants; Bengt Legnell, Organizer and tourleader**

**Göran Elmquist**

**Olof Karlsson**

**Henrik Hultén**

**Mathias Karlsson**

**January 18.** Early in the morning we started our journey from Siem Reab in Cambodia to Thailand. We had found an extremely cheap mini-van service that would bring us to Kao Sarn Road in Bangkok. The price was only US\$ 10/person!!!. Apart from a time-consuming border-crossing between Poi Pet in Cambodia and Aranyaprathet on the Thai side, the journey went very well. If one was to subtract the 2 hour delay there, the trip only took about 5-6 hours. It is probably better to travel to the border and work out the transport from there in order to avoid the van-operators trying to puzzle a group into next van. (you have to change vans at the border.) And, AVOID KAO SARN!!! The hotels and restaurants in this part of Bangkok are no longer a back-packers paradise...it is a tourist trap of magnitude with European prizes on food and accommodations!

**January 19.** Daeng, the faithful driver I always use in Thailand, already stood waiting outside our hotel with his Toyota van, as we scrambled out early in the morning. The goal for the next couple of days was the salt-pans along the Gulf of Siam, just outside Pethburi, about 2-3 hours drive south of Bangkok. Laem Pak Bia (LPB) is well known for it's wintering waders and the **Spoonbilled Sandpiper** is first prize!



Painted Stork

**Spoonbilled Sandpiper.** This year there were at least 7 of them in Laem Pak Bia (Pak Thale). Another 2-3 were seen in Koh Kam, between LPB and Bangkok. A wintering juvenile was reported from Koh Kam last summer (2010) You can read some of the latest Spoonbilled Sandpiper news by "clicking" the links below;  
<http://www.sbsproject.wordpress.com>  
<http://www.arcona.com/spoonbilled.htm>  
<http://www.birdlife.org/community/2011/07/birdlife-species-champions-strike-gold-in-chukotka>  
Late News!!! Nov. 13. 13 chicks just arrived to UK. See link below;  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=jJw3He1u9JE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=jJw3He1u9JE)

(On the way down to Laem Pak Bia I often stop at a new birding hot-spot just north of Pethburi city – see birdlist - Here 4-5 different species of Eagles, huge numbers of Kites etc. spend their winter. It is best to visit the site late afternoon. I visited the place 3 times Jan-March and saw **Imperial, Greater Spotted, Steppe and Tawny Eagle**, groups of up to 50 **Black Kites** as well

as **Brahminy`s**, 5-8 **Black-shouldered Kites** hovered over rice-stubble. Late afternoon up to 5000 **Open-billed Storks** circled over the mountaintops. In the wetter part of the harvested ricefields small flocks of **Red-throated Pipits & Yellow Wagtails**. In March a 3-400 **Oriental Pratincoles** flew over the fields in groups of 10 -50 ).

On the way to our nice bungalows (with swimmingpool!) by the beach in Sam Ran, falcon-eyed Mathias and Henrik spotted a Spoonbill flying across the road as we drove by. Thinking it was a "Common" Spoonbill they didn't say anything until evening report time...only I knew there are no "common" Spoonbills in LPB. However, a rare, **Black-faced Spoonbill** has been seen wintering in LPB the last 3 winters (I managed to take a photo of it in LPB only a week later. See below) Click [www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/04/black-faced\\_spoonbill.html](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/04/black-faced_spoonbill.html) for more info.



...but the day was not over yet...despite heavy winds and a setting sun, we decided to give Pak Thale and yet another type of Spoonbill a chance. Once we arrived there the wind blew so hard

our scopes could hardly be used as we scanned the salt-pans for *Calidris* waders...if we could find a flock of Red-necked Stints there just might be one with that “spoonbilled” beak... Yes, a flock of **Red-necked Stints**...and didn't one of them look slightly larger, with cleaner white below. We found some shelter behind a wall and could get a closer look at it...and, indeed, there it was, a **Spoon-billed Sandpiper**...and a little further away...another one...and a 3:d!!! What a day; 2 of the world's rarest “spoonbills” in the same afternoon!!!



**There were at least 7 Spoonbilled Sandpipers at Laem Pak Bia this winter...in about the same salt pans as usual...since I guess there is a lot of pressure on these poor birds from Papparazi photographers, I don't try to get close or scare them – they get daily visits from all over the world. ...and there already are some fantastic photos of them...let them live their frail life in peace...and maybe contemplate if they may be yet another prophet telling us what to come...**

**January 20.** ChaoSamran, where we slept, is a small beach village, with a few resorts catering to rich Bangkok people who go there to spend a week-end by the beach together with their loved ones...during the week it is empty...and only a few kilometers from the waders...The owner of our resort never stopped marveling at “those strange foreigners” who came there, paid good money for the bungalows...and then, instead of relaxing by the pool or go for a swim in the ocean, spent their whole day under gazing hot sun, walking up and down in the salt-pans just like a poor peasant...”what a stupid way to spend a vacation!”

We got up before sunrise, – usually 06.00 – 10.30 is the best time of the day for waders in the salines, - and went back to Pak Thale for yet another view of **The Spoonbilled`**. This morning we only could find one. As we scanned the flocks of *Calidris* we found one **Dunlin** among the flocks of **Snowy Plovers, Pacific Golden Plovers, Black-bellied Plover, Lesser and Greater Sand Plover, Black-tailed Godwit (>500), Bar-tailed Godwit (5), Whimbrels (5), Euroasian curlews (>200), Far-eastern Curlew (3), Great Knot (>300), red Knot (>50), Sanderling (10) Red-necked Stint (>200), Long-toed Stint (>40), Curlew Sandpiper (>200)** etc.

It has been a little more difficult to locate **Nordman's Greenshank** in LPB this winter. They are



Adult Nordman's Greenshank are not so difficult to separate from Common Greenshank...2-colored bill and cleaner white in face...but juveniles can be hard. In LPB they often stay in groups...sometimes up to 30-40 individuals...much more so than Common...here with Great Knots. Photo B.legnell.



Greater Sand Plover (here starting to get breeding plumage) are larger with a bigger head. But the longer heavier bill is the best lead. They often mix with Lesser Sand Plover (like here) but sometimes group together in deeper water. B.Legnell

there, but in smaller numbers compared to previous years. This year they seem to move around more and split up in smaller groups. Nordman's usually like to hang around flocks of **Great Knots**, **Black-tailed Godwits** or Sandpipers – often **Great Sandplover**- in deeper ponds just inside the Mangrove-belt. This was the case when we found 7 of them in a deeper saline not far from the fishing village. We also saw 3 **Gray-headed Lapwings** there.



Marsh Sandpiper , winter plumage



Curlew Sandpiper breeding plumage (March)



Red-necked Stint - winter



Little, Intermediate and Great Egret together

After lunch in LaemPak Bia fishing village we asked Mr. Daeng, a local fisherman-turned-birdwatcher, to bring us out to the sand-spits outside the canal. It is here the newly (re-)discovered **White-faced (or Swinhoe's) Plover** *Charadrius dealbatus* can be seen.

The "White-faced" (Swinhoe's) Plover *Charadrius a. dealbatus* was first described by Robert Swinhoe during his visit to southern China in 1870. This discovery somehow later got lost in archives and the race of Kentish Plover, *dealbatus*, common in China and South-east Asia, mistakenly also got the same name Swinhoe gave this plover; *dealbatus*...and his findings were forgotten... During the winter 1993-94 David Bakewell and Peter Kennerly first reported a strange *alexandrinus* Plover from Singapore. As birders got aware of its existence, reports from Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Sabah followed. Philip Round caught one in Laem Pak Pia and DNA was extracted. There has been some discussion if this *alexandrinus* should gain full species status based on the DNA – which is similar to Kentish, though features like leg color, bill & head-size, plumage etc., differs -. Philip Round seems convinced it should. However, as is, it is not accepted as a full species.

It still is unknown how rare this bird is, there are only a few wintering locations known, with few individuals. Breeding sites have been located in the same province, Guangdong, by the South China Sea in the very south of China- where Swinhoe first found and described it.

This winter both a male and female was present. Much more aggressive than the resident **Malaysian Plover**, that also can be seen here – we had about 20 – The male refused to let any of them come close to his territory! (this proved to be a good way to get a few shots at the bird, as he was more interested in getting rid of Plovers, than to watch out for paparazzi's). Unfortunately, there were no Gulls (except **Brown-headed**) out here this time and only **Common** and **Little Tern**. A week later I saw Heuglin's (2) and Pallas's Gull(1) as well as Greater

& Lesser Crested Tern in numbers....



Here a male White-faced plover ( winter)

Photo. B.Legnell

Unfortunately, we missed the Chinese Egret that usually winter around the mouth of the Laem Pak Bia Canal. (We saw it on all other trips to LPB this winter.) After the visit on the sand-spits, we met a couple of Thai birders who informed us about a **Brahminy Starling**, a rare vagrant to Thailand, at a nearby dump. We went there and had a good view of this Indian subcont. species. It is always a great delight to visit Laem Pak Bia, a place that never is short of birds to watch!



Chinese Egret (from a trip to LBP a week later)



Asian Dowitcher (from a trip to LBP a week later)

If anyone plans to visit Laem Pal Bia...or any other place in Thailand – or the rest of South-East Asia- and want information or need a guide – don't hesitate to contact me – I am usually stationed in Thailand (or neighbouring countries) between December – March! [kontakt@orientbirding.com](mailto:kontakt@orientbirding.com) or phone +46(0)707741777. I am happy to help you.



Whiskered Tern



Little Heron



Whitebreasted Kingfisher



Little Cormorant

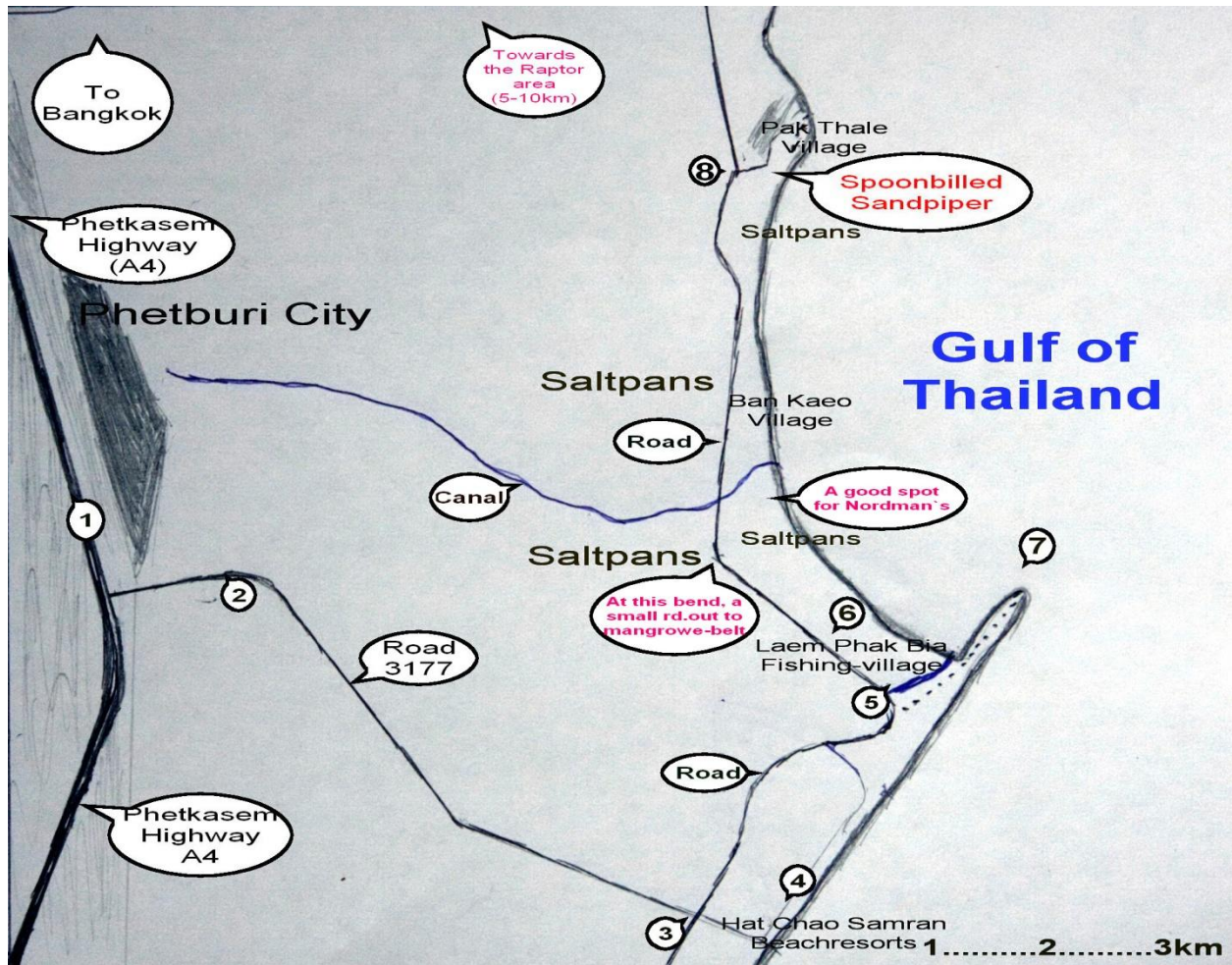


Little Egret

**Laem Pak Bia** is situated about 100km south of Bangkok, just east of the city Phetburi (Petchaburi). It is easy to drive there from Bangkok along Phetkaserm Rd (A4, the main road going south). At Phetburi look for road nr. 3177 on the left side of the road towards the coast. There is also a sign to Hat Chao Samran there. Below is a map of the area with nr's indicating spots of interest. Just north of the area this map covers (15-20km) many eagles can be found. Imperial, Steppe, Greater Spotted, Tawny Eagle etc.

1. The Phetkaserm Highway.
2. Road nr. 3177 that goes to Hat Chao Samran.
3. The intersection. Straight- to the resorts. North - to the saltpans and the waders.
4. Hat Chao Samran. Here are resorts from \$10 – for 50/night. Aircon, some with pool. Avoid weekends.
5. Laem Pak Bia fishing village. Here there are boats hire out to the sandspits. About \$20 for half day. Ask for Mr. Daeng – he knows where all the birds are.
6. The Royal Waste Water development plant. Fantastic place to take close-up bird photos. Lot's of waders, Crakes , Egrets, Plovers, Storks.etc. It was here Philip Round re-discovered Large-billed Reed-Warbler!
7. The Sandspits. Best when water is high. Whitefaced & Malaysian Plover, Chinese Egret, Greater & Lesser Crested Tern, Palla's Gull. If Daeng brings you out, he knows where to find the birds.
8. At a sign with a Spoonbilled Sandpiper, turn right towards the coast. Drive a few hundred meters to a sharp 90 degree left-turn. On the right, in the curve, a small road leads out to an old shack in the midst of the saltpans. The dams around this shack often have Spoonbilled!





Name	2011-01-19-20	2011-01-25-26	2011-03-03-04
<b>Grebes</b>			
Little Grebe.....	1-7 daily.....	2-9 daily.....	3-10 daily
<b>Cormorants</b>			
Indian Cormorant.....	.....	1.....	8
Great Cormorant.....	20.....	1-3 daily.....	.....
Little Cormorant.....	great numbers.....	great numbers.....	great numbers
<b>Hérons, Egrets &amp; Bitterns</b>			
Yellow Bittern.....	1.....	1.....	2
Black Bittern.....	.....	.....	1
Striated Heron (Little bittern).....	1.....	1+1.....	2+1
Gray Heron.....	>40 daily.....	10-50 daily.....	10-20 daily
Purple Heron.....	.....	1.....	1
Great Egret.....	common.....	common.....	common
Intermediate Egret.....	>10.....	>10.....	>10
Little Egret.....	common.....	common.....	common
Chinese Egret.....	.....	1.....	1
Pacific Reef Heron.....	3.....	3.....	4

Name	2011-01-19-20	2011-01 25-25	2011-03-03-04
Pondheron SP.....	very common,	but winter-plymage and unable to tell Java from Chinese!	
Chinese Pond Heron.....			1 started summer
Cattle Egret.....	common.....	common.....	common
Black-crowned Night Heron.....	5.....	12.....	30
<b>Spoonbills &amp; Storks</b>			
<u>Black-faced Spoonbill</u> .....	1.....	1.....	1
Asian Openbilled Stork.....	1-200daily.....	2-300dail.....	>3000 at raptor place
<u>Milky Stork</u> .....		1.....	
Painted Stork.....	1.....	30.....	5
<b>Hawks, Eagles, Falcons etc</b>			
Ospery.....		2.....	2
Black Baza.....			2
Black Kite.....	1.....	>30 at raptor place.....	>20 at raptor place
Brahiminy Kite.....	4-8 daily.....	>20 at raptor place.....	>20 at raptor place
Black-shouldered Kite.....	1-3 daily.....	2.....	1+7 at raptor place
Crested Serpant Eagle.....		1.....	
Eastern March Harrier.....	2.....	1.....	3
Pied Harrier.....			2 at raptor place
Shikra.....	1.....		
Japanese Sparrowhawk.....			3 at raptor place
Greater Spotted Eagle.....		3 at raptor place.....	1 at raptor place
Imperial Eagle.....		2 at raptor place.....	2 at raptor place
Steppe Eagle.....		1 at raptor place.....	
Euroasian Kestrel.....		1.....	
Peregrin Falcon.....		1.....	
<b>Rails</b>			
White-breasted Waterhen.....	2+5.....	3.....	3
Ruddy-breasted Crake.....	2.....		4+4
Slaty-breasted Crake.....			1
Common Moorhen.....		4.....	2
<b>Plovers &amp; Lapwings</b>			
Gray-headed lapwings.....	3.....		
Red-wattled Lapwing.....	common.....	common.....	common
Pacific Golden Plover.....	10-20 daily.....	10-20 daily.....	5
Black-bellied (Gray) Plover.....	5-50 daily.....	common.....	common
Lesser Sandplover.....	>400 daily.....	>300 daily.....	common
Greater Sandplover.....	3 probably much more.....	10 probably more.....	20 probably more
Malaysian Plover.....	>20.....	>20.....	>20
Snowy (Kentish) Plover.....	common.....	common.....	common
<u>Whitefaced Plover</u> .....	1.....	2.....	1
Common Ringed Plover.....	2.....	3+5.....	2
Little Ringed Plover.....	2.....		2
<b>Avocets &amp; Stilts</b>			
Black-winged Stilt.....	common.....	common.....	common
Pied Avocet.....		15.....	
<b>Jacanas</b>			
Bronze-winged Jacana.....			1

Name	2011-01-19-20	2011-01 25-26	2011-03-03-04
<b>Sandpipers</b>			

Terek Sandpiper.....	1.....	1.....	1.....
Common sandpiper.....	2.....	5+10.....	5-10 daily
Green Sandpiper.....	1.....	1.....	2
Common Redshank.....	2.....	2.....	3
Spotted Redshank.....	>50.....	>30.....	10
Common Greenhank.....	>100.....	>50.....	>30
<u>Nordman's Greenshank</u> .....	7.....	5+15.....	3
March sandpiper.....	very common.....	very common.....	very common.
Wood Sandpiper.....	>20.....	>10.....	>5
Ruddy Turnstone.....	1.....	1.....	1
Great Knot.....	>300.....	3-400daily.....	>200
Red Knot.....	>200.....	3-400 daily.....	>50
Sanderling.....	>10.....	>50.....	>10
Red-necked Stint.....	>200.....	>100.....	>100
Temminck's Stint.....	2.....	2.....	9
Long-toed Stint.....	>30.....	>30.....	>10
Curlew Sandpiper.....	>100.....	>50.....	>30
<u>Dunlin</u> .....	1.....	4.....	4
<u>Spoon-billed Sandpiper</u> .....	3.....	7.....	1
Broad-billed Sandpiper.....	>7.....	>7.....	3
Ruff.....	5.....	2.....	2
Red-necked Phalarope.....	1.....	1.....	1
<b>Snipes, Godwits, Dowitchers &amp; Curlews</b>			
Common Snipe.....	8.....	1.....	>10
Pintailed Snipe.....	3.....	3.....	3
Asian Dowitcher.....	1.....	1.....	1
Black-tailed Godwit.....	>500daily.....	>200.....	>200
Bar-tailed Dodwit.....	5.....	5.....	3
Whimbrel.....	30.....	5.....	2
<u>Far-Eastern Curlew</u> .....	3.....	3.....	3
Euroasian Curlew.....	>100.....	>300.....	>500
<b>Pratincoles</b>			
Oriental Pratincole.....	4.....	4.....	>500 *2
<b>Gulls &amp; Terns</b>			
Brown-headed Gull.....	very common.....	very common.....	very common
Black-headed Gull.....	<30.....	<10.....	<10
Palla's Gull.....	2.....	2.....	2
Heuglin's Gull.....	3.....	3.....	3
Little Tern.....	>50.....	>200.....	>50
Gull-billed Tern.....	1.....	>20.....	3
Caspian tern.....	>50.....	>300.....	>40
Whiskered Tern.....	common.....	common.....	common
Common Tern.....	>100.....	>500.....	>50
Great Crested tern.....	11.....	>200.....	11
Lesser Crested Tern.....	8.....	8.....	2
<b>Pigeons &amp; Doves</b>			
Rock Pigeon.....	common.....	common.....	common
Red Collared Dove.....	common.....	common.....	common
Spotted Dove.....	common.....	common.....	common
<b>Name</b>	<b>2011-01-19-20</b>	<b>2011-01 25-26</b>	<b>2011-03-03-04</b>
Zebra Dove.....	Fairly common.....	Fairly common.....	Fairly common

**Cuckoos**

Plaintiv Cuckoo.....1.....1  
Asian Koel.....>5.....>5.....>5  
Greater Coucal.....>5.....>5.....>5

**Nightjars**

Large tailed Nightjar.....Heared.....

**Swifts**

Germain”s Swiftlet.....a few around.....a few around.....a few around  
Fork-tailed Swift.....2-3.....  
Asian Palm Swift.....Common.....common.....common

**Kingfishers**

Common Kingfisher.....>5.....>5.....>7  
White-throated Kingfisher.....5-10daily.....>7.....>10  
Black-capped Kingfisher.....3.....>5.....3-5 daily

**Bee-Eaters, Hoopoes & Rollers**

Green Bee-eater.....10-30 daily.....10-50 daily.....>50 daily  
Blue-tailed Bee-eater.....1.....  
Hoopoe.....1.....1.....1  
Indian Roller.....>10.....>10.....>10

**Barbets & Woodpeckers**

Coppersmith Barbet.....1.....1  
Laced Woodpecker.....1.....1

**Thornbirds & Allies**

Golden-bellied Gerygone.....fairly common.....fairly common.....Fairly common

**Woodswallows**

Ashy Woodswallow.....4-5 daily.....4-5 daily.....4-5daily

**Ioras**

Common Iora.....2.....

**Cuckoo-shrikes, Shrikes & Minivets**

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike.....1.....  
Scarlet Minivet.....4  
Long-tailed Shrike.....1+4.....  
Brown Shrike.....>5.....7.....5

**Orioles & Drongos**

Black-naped Oriole.....1  
Black Drongo.....common.....common.....common  
Ashy Drongo.....1

**Fantails & Monarch Flycatchers**

Pied Fantail.....5-10 daily.....5.....Fairly common  
Black-naped Monarch.....1.....2

**Crows and Magpies**

Rufous Treepie.....3.....  
Racket-tailed Treepie.....2.....3  
Large-billed Crow.....Fairly common.....Fairly common.....Fairly common

**Larks**

Indochinese Bush-lark.....2.....  
Oriental Skylark.....1.....

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**Swallows**

Bank (Sand) Swallow.....				10
Barn Swallow.....	very common	very common	very common	
Red-rumped Swallow.....	3	3		1
Asian Martin.....	2			

### Bulbuls

Yellow-vented Bulbul.....				1
Streak-eared Bulbul.....	common	common	common	

### Cisticolas, Prinias etc

Zitting Cisticola.....	3	>5		>5
Plain Prinia.....	fairly common	fairly common	fairly common	

### Old World Warblers

Lanceolated Warbler.....		1		
Black-browed Warbler.....		1+2		2
Oriental Reed-warbler.....		4		>7
Thick-billed Reed-warbler.....		2		1
Common Tailorbird.....		>10		10
Dusky Warbler.....		2		>10
Yellow-browed Warbler.....		2		1
Striated Grassbird.....	1	1		

### Old World Flycatchers, Magpie Robins

Asian Brown Flycatcher.....		1		
Taiga Flycatcher.....	10	2		2
Magpie Robin.....	common	common	common	

### Starlings

White-vented Starling.....	common	common	common	
Common Myna.....	common	common	common	
Black-collared Starling.....	5	7		3
Asian Pied Starling.....	common	common	common	
White-shouldered Starling.....				50
<u>Bramany Starling</u> .....	1			

### Flowerpeckers & Sunbirds

Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker.....		1		3
Plain Sunbird.....				1
Olive-backed Sunbird.....	Fairly common	Fairly common	Fairly common	
Purple Sunbird.....		4		

### Wagtails & Pipits

Eastern Yellow Wagtail.....	Fairly common	Fairly common	Fairly common	
Oriental Pipit.....	about 10	about 10	about 10	
Red-throated Pipit.....		about 4	about 50	

### Old World Sparrows & Weavers

House Sparrow.....	5	4		3
Plain-backed Sparrow.....				4
Tree Sparrow.....	common	common	common	
Baya Weaver.....	common	common	common	

