

WINGED WONDERS *in* MALAYSIA



PHOTOGRAPHS BY
HUM KIM CHOY with OOI POH SIM
EDITED BY KANDA KUMAR

WINGED WONDERS in MALAYSIA

is the culmination of about twenty years of bird watching and bird photography. Without exception, all the bird photographs have been taken in the wild, i.e. in their natural habitat and environment. The photographer is very protective of all birds, particularly those that are nesting. He has strictly ensured that, in photographing the birds, there is very minimal stress and disturbance to them, as the welfare of the birds is more important than the photographs.

Having enjoyed the hobby of bird watching and bird photography all these years, the photographer has, through the urging of his family and friends, finally decided to share his enjoyment, his vision and wonderful experiences, as captured through his camera lenses, in this coffee table book, with the ardent hope, that more people take up the hobby of bird watching and bird conservation. May the beauty in these photographs cultivate and nurture an appreciation for these WINGED WONDERS. May we protect and conserve their habitats for our children and their children`s children.

Quote: poem by William Henry Davies

*“What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.
No time to stand beneath the boughs,
And stare as long as sheep and cows.*

*.....
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.”*



WINGED WONDERS
in MALAYSIA



PHOTOGRAPHS BY
HUM KIM CHOY with OOI POH SIM

EDITED BY
KANDA KUMAR



PUSTAKA PERDANA



1013706



Proceeds are for Malaysian Nature Society Penang Branch
for education and conservation projects
[email : mnspenang@yahoo.com]

Copyright © 2004 Photographer
All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system
or transmitted in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording
or otherwise, without the written permission of
the copyright holder.

Photographer : Hum Kim Choy
Editor : Kanda Kumar
Produced by Lingo Company
Graphic Artist : Teo Hean Teik of Sungrafix
Colour Separation : A. Sani KW Sdn. Bhd.
Printers : Bagan Printers Sdn. Bhd.

Printed 2004
ISBN 983-41787-0-0



Birdwatching has been a regular and consistent activity of the Penang Branch of the Malaysian Nature Society. From the time when I used to lead a small group of hard core birders in the early 1970s to the present day, I have seen a steady growth in the number of people taking up birdwatching. It is heart warming to see young people who, as kids tagged along with their parents or family members, are now accomplished birders, going out in the field on their own, identifying rare and uncommon birds and generally adding to the knowledge and data on the avifauna of Malaysia.

In the early days, I was about the only one in Penang concentrating on bird photography and Hum Kim Choy was already an accomplished nature and bird photographer. Hum is among the few bird photographers I have the privilege to know personally, who goes about photographing birds in a professional and ethical manner, where the welfare and well-being of the birds is paramount. His excellent photographs do not bring him financial gains, only personal pleasure and satisfaction, yet he goes about it as if it was his profession. In my more than 3 decades of involvement in birds I have come across a quite a number of so called nature or bird photographers with technically, highly excellent photographs, but to a trained eye, the birds in the photographs show signs of stress or unnatural behaviour, to me, these people are not bird photographers but just plain run of the mill photographers.

In one of our frequent meetings, Hum threw in

the idea that we should produce a coffee table book on our local birds, as a Branch project and that he would donate all the photographs required to MNS Penang so that the book would be one of the sources of revenue for the Branch. In the past, opportunities to be involved in a project such as this was something I had missed out due to other commitments and knowing how much time and effort Hum had spent in photographing the birds, I was more than willing to lead the team that would put this coffee table book together. Furthermore the bird photographer in me kept nagging me never to let another fellow enthusiast down no matter what the constraints were.

The concept of the book slowly developed as Hum and his wife, Poh Sim and myself, discussed and studied the photographs, from being a book that not only gave viewing pleasure but to be a source of the wonders of birds and the pleasures and rewards of birdwatching and not just a book of bird photographs. This book is also intended to encourage more people to take up birdwatching and for beginners to browse through it after a session of bird watching, to fortify their identification skills and to take note of any details that they may have failed to notice in the field.

The Latin and common names of birds in this book follow, as far as possible, those listed in 'An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Oriental Region'.

I thank Hum for giving me the opportunity and the pleasure in working on this book.

Kanda Kumar
Chairman
Malaysian Nature Society, Penang.



Foreword by the President of the Malaysian Nature Society

I would like to congratulate the Penang Branch of MNS for publishing this coffee table book on Malaysian birds, especially Hum Kim Choy, Kanda Kumar and Ooi Poh Sim. I have always stressed and encouraged MNS Branches to carry out projects on their own and to be less dependent on the MNS Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur, needless to say the Secretariat and other Branches are more than willing to assist any Branch when necessary. Penang Branch has been one of the more active Branches of the Society and I am sure with the capable members in Penang, it will continue to do so in the years to come.

The strength of MNS lies in its members in the Branches and not in just the office bearers. It really warms my heart to see members volunteering their time and expertise in embarking on projects like this coffee table book, *Winged Wonders in Malaysia*. One of the fortes of MNS has been in documenting the many aspects of nature, from the scientific research to the laymen's point of view. Only by publishing our findings, views and feelings can we pass on our knowledge to others and create awareness. The *Winged Wonders in Malaysia*, with Hum's excellent photographs, Kanda's input and Poh Sim's assistance, is a good example of what could be done to share our knowledge and pleasures of birdwatching with others.

Birdwatching and its related activities by MNS members has and will play an important role in strengthening and expanding our Society. Members from this special interest group have been involved in serious scientific work for the conservation of nature and biodiversity but at the same time they have not lost the concept of just enjoying the wonders of nature.

Dato Dr. Salleh Mohd. Nor
President
Malaysian Nature Society

TYPES OF HABITATS

Lowlands

Lowland habitats and ecosystems include coastal and tidal mudflats, mangroves, ricefields, scrublands, marshes, freshwater wetlands, peat swamp forests, drier flatlands, inland forests and lowland hill forests. Generally, the altitude up to 700 metres is considered lowlands, including small hill forests. Between 700 to 900 metres is the transitional zone, which lies between lowland and sub-montane zone. As birds are highly mobile, they do not always stay within the boundaries that we have arbitrarily demarcated for them. However, some species of birds are highly specialized in their niche habitats and ecosystems and cannot survive in other areas. Even then, these birds are spotted occasionally in the fringe habitats.

Mudflats and Mangroves

The coastal mudflats and mangroves are very rich in biodiversity, an ecosystem that is vital for tropical marine organisms. The destruction of mangroves and reclamation of coastal mudflats have vastly affected the bird populations, especially at tidal mudflats where resident and migratory waders forage. Such destruction has resulted in the decline and depletion of coastal marine stock as well as the fishing industry.

Ricefields

Although ricefields are man-made, they are an important habitat for resident and migratory wetland and grassland birds. It is also an open country environment. The diversity of bird species in the ricefields vary according to the state of the rice crop. The ricefield environment is quite different during the different stages, ranging from ploughing to post harvesting. There is also diversity in migrant species. In coastal ricefields, even the height of the sea tide has an influence because many wader species forage and even roost in the ricefields during high tide.

Freshwater Wetlands

Most of the freshwater wetlands in Peninsular Malaysia are man-made, namely ex-tin mining and sand mining areas and shallow irrigation dams. There are a few naturally occurring freshwater wetland areas.

Scrublands

Scrubland and open country areas exist due to human interference. Many of these are areas on the fringe of mangroves, forests, ricefields, plantations, around human settlements and other cultivated lands. Scrublands do not have many tall trees as most of the vegetation include shrubs, bushes and grasses with patches of bare earth or short grass. More often than not, the big trees have been felled.

Lowland Forests and Small Hill Forests

Almost all of the lowland forests have been cleared or logged, including vast areas of peat swamp forest. Those forests that are still intact are forest reserves. Hill forests have fared better, especially those on steep inclines. In fact, a vast majority of forests in the lowlands are small hill forests that are either forest reserves or water catchment areas. These last remaining lowland forests are under great threat as the pressure is mounting to log these areas for their timber. Even very steep hill forests are being targeted. Primary forests are close-canopy forests. Logged-over forests become secondary forests and, if left alone, they will regenerate to primary forests. Badly logged forests cannot recover that well and may take hundreds of years to regenerate into primary forests. Secondary and logged-over forests are not considered close-canopy forests as the canopy is loose with small and large gaps. Certain species are easier to spot in the intermediate areas between primary forests and secondary forests or areas bordering plantations or scrublands. Birds may be easier to spot in secondary and logged-over forests as the vegetation, especially in the middle and upper-storeys, are sparse. The under-storey and undergrowth can be very dense and impenetrable.

Highland Forests (montane)

Above the altitudinal elevation of 900 metres is the beginning of the highlands or the montane region. The intermediate 700 to 900 metres altitude range is often referred to as sub-montane ecotone. The lower reaches of the montane forests are referred to as lower-montane while the higher reaches are the upper-montane. The forests on the very high mountain peaks have a number of fancy names like cloud forest, mossy forest and elfin forest. These forests have heavy growth of moss on the forest floors, the tree trunks and branches. Due to the altitude, montane forests and especially upper-montane forests are more damp and have a lower ratio of bird species and bird population densities as compared to other forest habitats.

Due to encroachment of development, land clearing for agriculture, logging, construction of highland resorts and excessive development of the hill stations, the mean temperature of many such highland areas have, over the years dropped a couple of degrees. Though it may not seem to be a significant drop to a layperson, even a half a degree drop can have devastating effects to the ecosystem because the fauna and flora have evolved and adapted to this fragile ecosystem. More and more lowland birds have been observed at the hill stations, as the temperature gets warmer in these highland areas. These lowland species that are moving up into the highlands will slowly displace the resident highland species.





*with more than 230
Spectacular Full-Colour Photographs
that Explore the Winged Wonders in Malaysia*

ISBN 983417870-0



9 789834 178703