

Ruddy breasted crakes at Marina South

Subjects: Ruddy-breasted crake, *Porzana fusca* (Aves: Gruiformes: Rallidae).

Subjects identified by: Tan Heok Hui.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Marina South, Gardens by the Bay; 18 June 2016; 0900-0915 hrs.

Habitat: Urban parkland atop reclaimed land. On grass lawn by some shrubs near a pond.

Observers: Contributors.

Observation: A single black chick of about 15 cm (head and body length) was seen foraging on grass near a pond (Fig. 1). Shortly after, it was joined by three other chicks (Fig. 2) and they continued to forage in a haphazard manner. An adult crake of about 20 cm (head and body length), presumably their mother, then emerged from the shrubs and foraged alongside the chicks (Figs. 3 & 4). One of the chicks persistently tried to push itself underneath the adult (Fig. 3). All the birds appeared oblivious to the presence of around half a dozen people photographing them from about 5 m away. However, they seemed to be spooked when two golf carts passed by, and rapidly retreated amongst the shrubs. After more than 10 minutes, the birds did not emerge again.

Remarks: The ruddy-breasted crake is considered to be an uncommon resident bird in Singapore. It has been locally recorded from the Kranji Marshes, Lorong Halus Wetlands, Punggol, Tampines Grassland and the Sime Road area. It inhabits secondary scrub, marshes and wet grasslands, and is difficult to observe because it tends to keep to thick vegetation (Lim, 2009: 139; Yong et al., 2016: 45). Thus, it is interesting to note that the birds featured here did not seem to be disturbed by human observers. Being in a location with high human traffic, it is possible that they have become accustomed to people being in relative close proximity. It probably also helped that the group of observers, being intent on photographing the birds, made no sudden movements and did not attempt to move nearer to their subjects.

References:

- Lim K. S., 2009. *The Avifauna of Singapore*. Nature Society (Singapore), Bird Group Records Committee. 611 pp.
Yong D. L., K. C. Lim & T. K. Lee, 2016. *A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of Singapore*. Second edition. John Beaufoy Publishing, Oxford, England. 176 pp.



Fig 1. One of the crake chicks. Note its large feet and downy feathers. Photograph by Tan Heok Hui



Fig. 2. Three crake chicks foraging on grass patch.

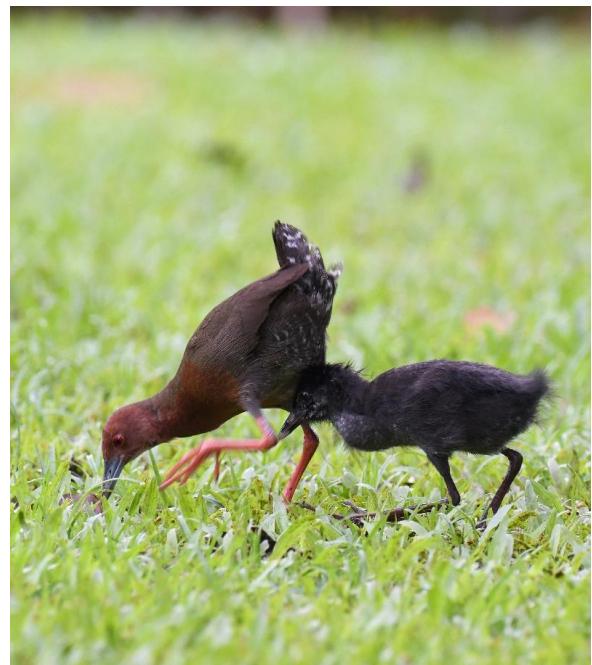


Fig. 3. Chick 'head-butting' its mother.



Fig. 4. Mother crake being followed closely by a chick.

Photographs by Tan Heok Hui

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