

Pin-tailed whydahs at Pasir Ris

Morgany d/o Thangavelu

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Subjects: Pin-tailed whydah, *Vidua macroura* (Aves: Passeriformes: Viduidae).

Subjects identified by: Morgany d/o Thangavelu.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Pasir Ris Farmway 3; 27 July 2018; around 0925 hrs.

Habitat: Scrubland.

Observer: Morgany d/o Thangavelu.

Observation: One male (Fig. 1) was observed apparently performing a series of courtship dances for a female (Fig. 2). Each dance lasted for a few seconds wherein the male would flutter into the air with his long tail vertical (Fig. 3-6). The female would fly away and the male would follow her and began dancing. This kept repeating. Sometimes the female would fly off, but the male would stay in the same area and wait for her to return before resuming his dance. Not including the tail, the birds were each about 13 cm.

Remarks: The pin-tailed whydah has been recorded in Singapore since 1986, and birds have been observed regularly in the north-eastern coast of Singapore Island, especially in the open grasslands at Serangoon and Punggol, as well as Changi. It is regarded as a 'species for which all published records are suspected of being birds which have escaped or have been released from captivity' (Lim, 2009: 499). It appears that the pin-tailed whydah is not established in Singapore, and those observed are most likely escaped or/and released birds imported by the pet trade. The species is not featured in the 2018 edition of the Singapore bird checklist (Lim, 2018). The pin-tailed whydah is native to Africa where it is common over much of the continent south of the Sahara desert in savanna, grasslands, scrub, parks and gardens (see Sinclair & Ryan, 2009: 710).

References:

- Lim K. S., 2009. *The Avifauna of Singapore*. Bird Group Records Committee, Nature Society (Singapore). 611 pp.
- Lim K. S., 2018. *Checklist of the Birds of Singapore* (2018 edition). Nature Society (Singapore) Bird Group Records Committee. <https://singaporebirdgroup.wordpress.com/singapore-bird-checklist/>
- Sinclair, I. & P. Ryan, 2003. *A Comprehensive Illustrated Field Guide. Birds of Africa south of the Sahara*. Struik Publishers, Cape Town, South Africa. 758 pp.



Fig. 1. Male pin-tailed whydah in breeding plumage.



Fig. 2. Female pin-tailed whydah.

Photographs by Morgany d/o Thangavelu



Fig. 3. The male bird (upper right) begins his dance in front of the female (lower left) by fluttering into the air. Note hornet flying past next to the long tail of the male bird.



Fig. 4. While in the air, the male's long tail is straightened such that it points vertically to the ground.

Photographs by Morgany d/o Thangavelu



Fig. 5. Then he flutters back towards his perch...



Fig. 6. Swishing his tail upwards as he lands.

Photographs by Morgany d/o Thangavelu