

## Biodiversity Record: First breeding record of the lesser whistling duck on Pulau Ubin

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**Subjects:** Lesser whistling duck, *Dendrocygna javanica* (Aves: Anseriformes: Anatidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Noel Thomas, Teo Kah Ming, Teo Li Feng Cheryl, Jacky Soh, Tok Ming Li and Ruth Foo.

**Location, date and time:** Pulau Ubin, Pekan Quarry; 9 May to 29 June 2022; during the day.

**Habitat:** Freshwater quarry lake with artificial floating wetlands.

**Observers:** Noel Thomas, Teo Kah Ming, Cheryl Teo, Jacky Soh, Tok Ming Li and Ruth Foo.

**Observation:** On 9 May 2022 at 1606 hrs, a family of two adults and 10 ducklings were observed swimming in Pekan Quarry (Fig. 1). The ducklings always swam close to the adults, either behind or in between them. They were observed and heard calling several times over the next week.

On 13 June 2022, the family was seen with two adults and nine juveniles (Fig. 2). The juveniles were larger and in post-juvenile plumage. They appeared to be more independent and individuals would occasionally swim away from the group before returning. The juveniles were displaying wing flapping and feather nibbling behaviour (Fig. 3). The family was observed feeding at the vegetation along the edge of the floating wetlands, and swam to and from the floating wetlands. The adults appeared to be demonstrating to the ducklings how to flap their wings and make short flights by leaping off floating vegetation.

On 29 June 2022, the family was observed for the last time at Pekan Quarry. There were two adults and six juveniles. The juveniles were almost the same size as the adults and difficult to distinguish from their parents. The whole family was preening on some floating logs. (Fig. 4).

**Remarks:** The first sighting of lesser whistling ducks in Pulau Ubin was in March 2017, when a pair was recorded at the Sensory Trail Pond (Thomas et al., 2017). Another four were seen flying at the same location on 7 July 2018. (Robert C. H. Teo & Noel Thomas, personal observations). The species was first recorded at Pekan Quarry on 25 June 2021, where a pair was seen using the floating wetlands and floating logs to roost. The family observed on 9 May 2022 is the first record of lesser whistling ducks breeding in Pulau Ubin.

Pekan Quarry is the site of a habitat enhancement project by the National Parks Board where artificial floating wetlands were installed to provide habitats for wildlife (Tan & Cheong, 2022). The main target species were waterfowl such as ducks, grebes, herons and waterhens, as well as otters and odonates.

The floating wetlands are planted with various species of marsh vegetation to provide shelter and food for waterfowl. The wetlands also contain secluded bodies of water for waterfowl to raise their young, or to shelter those of a shy nature. Floating mats fitted around the wetlands allow for wildlife to easily enter and leave the wetlands or to forage from. All these factors are possible reasons that attracted the ducks to breed in Pekan Quarry.

### Literature cited:

- Tan A & Cheong M (2022) How to get the benefits of wetlands in places they don't grow naturally? Make artificial ones. *The Straits Times*, 17 January 2022. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/environment/how-to-get-the-benefits-of-wetlands-in-places-they-dont-grow-naturally-make-artificial-ones> (Accessed on 7 July 2022)
- Thomas NJ, Alphonso L & Teo RCH (2017) Lesser whistling ducks on Pulau Ubin. *Singapore Biodiversity Records*, 2017: 82–83.



Fig. 1. Adult pair swimming in the quarry with 10 ducklings in tow on 9 May 2022. (Photograph by: Cheryl Teo).



Fig. 2. Adult pair swimming with nine juveniles on 13 June 2022. (Photograph by: Noel Thomas).



Fig. 3. Ducklings displaying wing flapping and feather nibbling behaviour on 13 June 2022. (Photograph by: Noel Thomas).

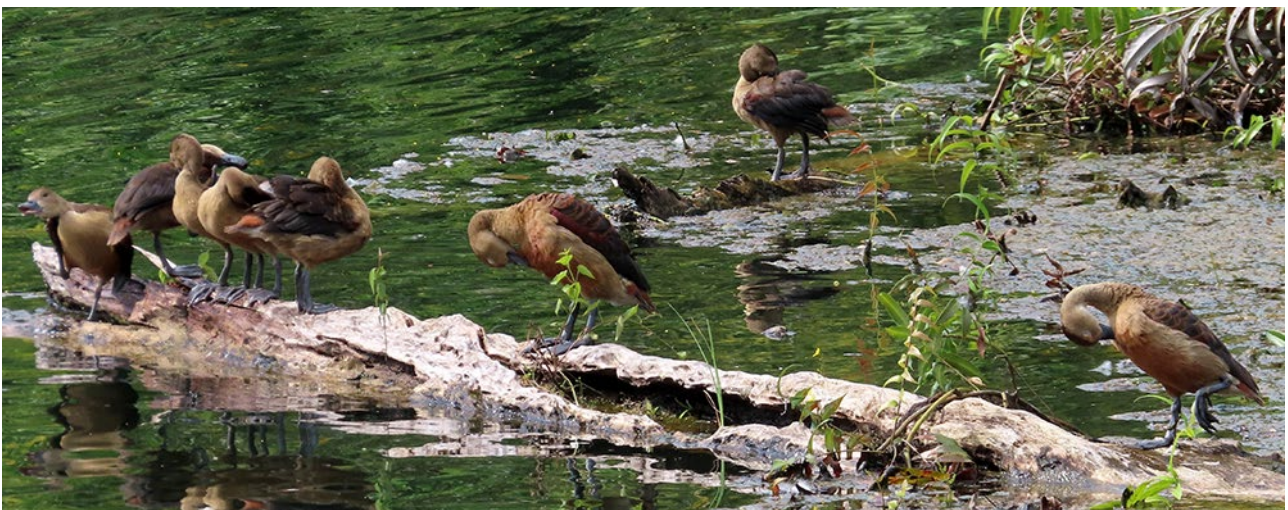


Fig. 4. The family preening on floating logs on 29 June 2022. (Photograph by: Noel Thomas).