

A gathering of brahminy kites at Tanah Merah

Subjects: Brahminy kite, *Haliastur indus* (Aves: Accipitriformes: Accipitridae).

Subjects identified by: Contributors.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Tanah Merah; 13 January 2017; 1915-1930 hrs.

Habitat: Over secondary coastal forest on reclaimed land and intertidal shore.

Observers: Contributors.

Observation: A total of 35 brahminy kites were counted in what seemed to be a single-species gathering. They were observed congregating over the reclaimed land and shore at dusk. Some were flying and continuously emitting mewing cries (Fig. 1). Some were perched at the tops of trees (Fig. 2). Those with mottled colouration were identified as immature brahminy kites. Some of the birds were seen clasping talons with each other in mid-flight. Eventually, all the brahminy kites appeared to have settled on the branches of a bare tree. When approached to a distance of around 100 m, most of them took flight. Other species of raptorial birds were not seen.

Remarks: Brahminy kites are solitary or occur in family parties. However, loose gatherings of up to 26 individuals at roost in Australia, and up to 35 at an abundant insect food source in New Guinea, have been recorded (see Ferguson-Lees & Christie, 2001: 389). In Singapore, the brahminy kite is a common resident that is known to gather to roost on some offshore islands (Yong et al., 2016: 34). The kites in the featured observation were gathering at dusk, so they were most likely settling in to roost for the night.

References:

- Ferguson-Lees, J. & D. A. Christie, 2001. *Raptors of the World*. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, USA. 992 pp.
- Yong D. L., K. C. Lim & T. K. Lee, 2016. *A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of Singapore*. 2nd edition. John Beaufoy Publishing, United Kingdom. 176 pp.



Fig. 2. Ventral profile of a brahminy kite in flight. Note the distinct white head and breast. Photograph by Tan Heok Hui



Fig. 2. Congregation of brahminy kites over Tanah Merah. Within the frame, about 17 are in flight, and at least one individual perched on the top of the bare tree in the yellow circle. Photograph by Tan Heok Hui

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