

Birds of USLS Ecopark & Granada



Photography by

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Text by

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Contents

Barred Rail	1
Blue-tailed Bee-eater.....	2
Brown Shrike	3
Common Kingfisher	4
Crested Myna.....	5
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	6
Golden-headed Cisticola	7
Grey Wagtail	8
Grey-streaked Flycatcher or Grey-spotted Flycatcher.....	9
Olive-backed Sunbird	10
Oriental Cuckoo	11
Oriental Pratincole	12
Paddyfield Pipit.....	13
Philippine Coucal	14
Philippine Magpie Robin	15
Pied Bushchat.....	16
Pied Fantail	17
Pied Triller	18
Pink-necked Green Pigeon	19
Richard's Pipit	20
Scaly-Breasted Munia	21
Scaly-breasted Munia or Spotted Munia	22
Striated Grassbird	23
Tawny Grassbird	24
White-bellied Munia	25
White-breasted Woodswallow	26
White-eared Brown Dove	27
(Female) Yellow-bellied Sunbird	28
Yellow Wagtail	29
Yellow-vented Bulbul.....	30
Yellowish White-eye or Golden-yellow White-eye	31

Preface

7 November 2012
Wildlife Month

Dear Friends,

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “the science of ecology studies interactions between individual organisms and their environments, including interactions with both nonspecific and members of other species.”ⁱ Ecology is best done in the real world of nature where we experience a great variety of organisms and environments. For this reason, this publication must be taken in the context of the USLS Ecopark located in Barangay Granada, Bacolod City.

The USLS Ecopark aims to help all those who enjoy its resources to come to a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the marvelous beauty and gifts of Mother Nature. We also want our guests to become more convinced of the delicate and precarious condition of our ecosystems, and thus grow in their commitment to the preservation, promotion and defense of the harmonious balance of the different members and aspects of our ecosystems.

Thus we engage everyone who comes, whether for their first or twentieth visit to the park, to discover the delightful interaction of the basic elements — wind and water, sun and soil, as well as the close relationships that weave these elements with the lives of flora, fauna and human beings.

Unfortunately, we have not taken good care of our forests, rivers and the mountains.ⁱⁱ As one author put it — we now have an environment “under siege”... “the rate of population growth is

quite high... This, along with a depressed economy, has resulted, perhaps most critically, in an environment continually under siege. Many species have a tenuous hold on life, as they require primary-forest habitats.”ⁱⁱⁱ Francia(2010)

Among these living things, more and more species of birds require conservation attention. The list of “threatened (endangered and critically endangered) species” continues to grow.^{iv} Paguntalan (2012) Besides threatened species, scientists are also warning us about threatened ecosystems.^v As our own small contribution towards ecological awareness and conservation, we have come up with this publication — the winged creatures of Barangay Granada and the USLS Ecopark. We feel that it is one way of celebrating the 60th Diamond Jubilee Year of the University of St. La Salle.

We are indebted to Mr. Ely Teehankee, noted wildlife bird photographer and proud Lasallian (DLSU ‘61 - ‘66), for capturing the beauty of these thirty-one species of birds during his “photo-safaris” to the Ecopark in April 2011 and January, 2012. Ely’s avian portraits also provide us with a historical, photographic database of the existing species presently found in the Ecopark and Granada. Ely also identified the birds’ species and referred us to web sites and online references for the descriptions of these birds.

This project reached publication thanks also to the efforts of Dr. Elsie Coscolluela, Ms. Gigi Villamor, Dr. Tess Diaz, Mr. Lito Llantada, and our dedicated staff in the USLS Ecopark. Our thanks also go to them for the success of this project.


Even before any human guests arrived, the birds of the USLS Ecopark and Granada were already there! Their multi-colored ancestors already lived among its trees and sang their songs in its plants and bushes. Our winged forebears knew where to build their nests, which fruit trees would provide them with their meal of insects, seeds, fruits or berries. Some are local residents. Others migrate here every year to escape the harsh conditions of winter in other lands. These living creatures are our predecessors, our

neighbors, our friends. As good neighbors and friends, we are responsible for the preservation and protection of the ecosystem we share in common with them whether in Granada, Negros Island, or wherever we are.

Let us therefore commit ourselves to be caretakers of our environment. We are responsible for these resources. We are duty-bound to hand them on to our children and our children's children. And by studying and caring for these beautiful, winged creatures, we allow them to be our mentors: to show us how all living things depend on each other, sharing the same sun, soil, seeds, air and water.

May these photographs and descriptions of the birds of the USLS Ecopark and Granada inspire all of us to become good friends and neighbors, careful guardians of our ecosystems, and conscientious protectors of our Negrense natural resources.

Your brother in our one Mother - Nature,


Brother Ray Suplido FSC PhD
President and Chancellor
University of St. La Salle

- i Cf. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ecology>. (Downloaded 9 October 2012)
- ii Cf. International Union for Conservation of Nature (<http://www.iucn.org/>)
- iii Francia, Luis H. A HISTORY OF THE PHILIPPINES, New York: The Overlook Press, 2010. p. 25.
- iv Lisa J. Paguntalan, Director For Field Operations/Education Officer, Philippines Biodiversity Conservation Programme, "Workshop on Developing Supplementary Teaching Aids on Biodiversity," October 23 - 25, 2012 held in USLS.
- v Cf. <http://www.ecology.com/2012/09/26/spotlight-worlds-most-imperiled-ecosystems/> (Downloaded 9 Oct 2012).

Barred Rail

(*Gallirallus torquatus*)

A shy but conspicuous bird, the Barred Rail is frequently found in wetlands, grasslands and gardens. It has a prominent white stripe on the cheek, a black face, chin and throat and black and white barred under-parts. Its bill, upper-parts and legs are dark brown.



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@ Ely Teehankee

Blue-tailed Bee-eater

(Merops philippinus)

This bird is a slender, attractive, richly-coloured bird. Its face has a narrow blue patch with a black eye stripe, and it has a black beak, a yellow and brown throat and a blue tail with two elongated tail feathers. It breeds in open fields, farmlands, rice fields and parks and is often spotted near large water-bodies. It catches insects in the air by sorties from an open perch. It nests colonially in sandy banks and open flat areas.

Brown Shrike

(Lanius cristatus)

The Brown Shrike has a distinctive black “bandit mask” through the eye, brown upper parts, creamy underside with reddish-brown flanks and belly, and a rounded tail. Mainly found in open scrub habitats, it is often seen perching on the tops of thorny bushes in search of prey, and flying down to capture them. It feeds on insects which are first impaled on thorns. It has a distinctive chattering call, and moves its tail up and down while singing.

@Ely Teehankee



Common Kingfisher

(*Alcedo atthis*)

This small kingfisher has the typical short-tailed, large-headed kingfisher profile. It has blue upper-parts, orange under-parts and a long bill. Inhabiting clear, slow-flowing streams, rivers and lakes, it perches on overhanging branches close to shallow open water in which it dives for fish. Its flight is fast and direct, with its wings whirring rapidly, revealing an electric-blue “flash” down its back. It has no song, and its flight call is a short sharp whistle repeated two or three times.



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Crested Myna

(Acridotheres cristatellus)

This songbird is a species of starling, and being able to roughly mimic human voices, it is regarded as a delightful pet. It inhabits open grasslands, and nests in vines and trees, poles, and in cavities or crevices. It feeds on insects, fruits and berries.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow

(*Passer montanus*)

The Eurasian Tree Sparrow is a passerine bird with a rich chestnut crown and nape, and a black patch on each pure white cheek. It has a strong preference for nest-sites near wetland habitats, and usually builds its nest in a natural crevice, a roof cavity, or in holes. It feeds mainly on seeds, grain and insects. This bird has a range of monosyllabic chirps and calls, but does not have a true song.



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Golden-headed Cisticola

(*Cisticola exilis*)

Also known as the Bright-headed Cisticola, this warbler is found in rank vegetation in and around wetlands. During the breeding season, males develop a rich and attractive breeding plumage in which their head, throat and breast are a bright golden-orange colour, and their tails become shorter than in winter-plumage. It is known for its exquisitely-woven nest, often made of silken threads stolen from spiders' webs.

Grey Wagtail

(*Motacilla Cinerea*)

This bird has a long black and white tail and a yellow rump and belly. Seen in open marshy fields, it walks solitarily or in pairs along the ground to capture insects, or hovers near shallow water to catch tiny snails and tadpoles. It builds its nest in hollows and crevices lined with moss and twigs. It has a sharp call that is often given in flight.



@Elly Dehondt



@Ely Techankee

Grey-streaked Flycatcher or Grey-spotted Flycatcher

(Muscocapa griseisticta)

A small, slender, long-winged bird, the Grey-streaked Flycatcher has a narrow white bar on the wing and a pale patch between the bill and eyes, which are large and have a white eye-ring. Found mainly in forests, forest edges and open country with scattered trees, it perches in the open, waiting for passing insects, and flies out to catch them before returning to its perch.

Olive-backed Sunbird

(Cinnyris jugularis)

A small songbird known locally as tamsi, this bird has bright yellow underparts. It feeds largely on nectar, and also on insects. Its flight is fast and direct on its short wings. Originally from mangrove habitat, it has adapted well to people, and is now found even in densely populated areas, even nesting in eaves of buildings.



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Oriental Cuckoo

(Cuculus optatus)

The Oriental Cuckoo has a grey head, breast and underparts and a creamy-white belly with dark bars. It has a bare yellow ring around the eye. Mainly inhabiting forests, it feeds on insects and their larvae, foraging for them in trees and bushes. Usually secretive and hard to spot, it is silent except for the breeding season. It lays its eggs in the nests of other birds.

Oriental Pratincole

(*Glareola maldivarum*)

The Oriental Pratincole is also known as the Grasshopper-Bird. Inhabiting open fields near water, it is often seen in the evening, hunting for insects on the wing, though it also feeds on the ground. It has short legs, long pointed wings and a long forked tail. Its back and head are brown, its belly white, and its wings brown with black flight feathers.



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Paddyfield Pipit

(*Anthus rufulus*)

Found in open habitats such as short grassland, this bird has long legs, a long tail, and a long dark bill. It is mainly streaked grey-brown above and pale below with breast streaking. It feeds on insects and tiny snails. In the breeding season, it sings during its descent from a short fluttery flight, a few feet above the ground. It nests under a tuft of grass or at the edge of a bush.



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Philippine Coucal

(*Centropus viridis*)

The Philippine Coucal is one of around 30 species of birds in the cuckoo family, and is endemic to the Philippines. It feeds mainly on insects and builds its nest inside dense vegetation.

Philippine Magpie Robin

(*Copsychus mindanensis*)

Found in open woodland and gardens, this bird is known for its varied and melodious song. A small black and white bird with a long tail, it feeds on insects and fruits, and sips sipping nectar. It sings from its perch, and is sometimes bathes in rainwater caught on the leaves of a tree.



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Pied Bushchat

(Saxicola caprata)

Usually perched at the top of shrubs and bushes, this small bird is found in the countryside and grasslands. It feeds on insects plucked from the ground, and makes its nest in cavities and holes, using grass and animal hair. The males are black with white shoulder and vent patches, while females are brownish and juveniles are speckled.



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Pied Fantail

(Rhipidura javanica)

The Pied Fantail, locally known as Maria Capra, has for its natural habitat tropical moist lowland forests. However, it has become a common garden bird. It is very territorial and protective of its air space. Usually perched on exposed branches, it flies out to catch insects on the wing.

Pied Triller

(Lalage nigra)

This bird is often found on tree tops, catching insects in mid-air, or picking its prey from foliage. It has a black head, white eyebrows, black bill, black back, and black and white wings. Its face is white with one black stripe through each eye. Its open cup nest is made of twigs and mosses and are usually attached to a branch.



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Pink-necked Green Pigeon

(*Treron vernans*)

Feeding mainly on fruits and buds, this bird has a rich colorful plumage which allows it to blend into the foliage of fruiting trees and makes it hard to spot. Its nest is a flimsy patch of twigs, and can be found in low bushes as well as tops of trees.

Richard's Pipit

(*Anthus richardi*)

Found in fertile and moist habitats, this is a slender bird that most often stands upright. It has long yellow-brown legs, a long tail with white outer feathers. Its song is a repeated series of monotonous buzzy notes given in an undulating song-flight. Flying alone or in small group, it makes short flights to catch flying insects.



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Scaly-Breasted Munia

(*Lonchura Punctulata*)

This bird has a distinctive plumage, with its head and upperparts a chocolate brown color, and its underparts white with dark scaly markings. It is found in open habitats including farm fields and gardens where they forage in pairs or in flocks for small herbs and grass seeds. Its song begins with several high notes, followed by a croaky rattle and ending in a slurred whistle.



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Scaly-breasted Munia or Spotted Munia

(*Lonchura punctulata*)

A small gregarious bird found in open habitats including farmlands and gardens, this bird feeds on grass seeds and berries. It has a stubby dark bill, a dark brown head, and white underparts with black scale markings. Its calls include a short whistle, and a chipping alarm note. Its nest is a large domed structure made of grass and bamboo and is tucked in a tree or under the eaves of a house.

Striated Grassbird

(*Megaturus palustris*)

Also known as an “old world warbler”, the Striated Grassbird has a distinctive, cacophonous song. A predominantly brown streaky bird, it has long legs and a long tail. Often found in grassland and ricefields, it feeds on insects and nests in tufts of grass.



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Tawny Grassbird

(Megalurus Timor)

The Tawny Grassbird has an overall brown plumage with black streaks on the back, a whitish line above the eye, short rounded wings and a long tail. It inhabits wet grasslands, forest clearings, ricefields and gardens. It seldom flies, and prefers to forage for insects and grass seeds in dense vegetation.



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White-bellied Munia

(Lonchura Leucogastra)

This bird has blackish brown upperparts and white lower breast and belly, and a brown tail. Like other Munias, it feeds on the seeds of short grasses and builds its nests in trees and bushes. It is often spotted in pairs foraging in open scrub and ripening ricefields.



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White-breasted Woodswallow

(Artamus leucorhynchus)

The White-breasted Woodswallow has a soft-plumage of charcoal grey and white underparts. It is very agile in powered and gliding flight due to its large, pointed wings. It feeds on nectar and insects caught on the wing. Being nomadic, it follows the best conditions for flying insects, and often roosts in large flocks.

White-eared Brown Dove

(Phapitreron leucotis)

Endemic to the Philippines, the White-eared Brown Dove inhabits second growth lowland and montane forests and feeds on fruits and berries. It has a short bill, a greenish bronze collar and a white ear line. It feeds on fruits and berries. It has a soft hooting call.



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Yellow-bellied Sunbird (Female)

(Zosterops Nigrorum)

The Yellow-bellied Sunbird perches on branches to feed on nectar and insects. Its flight is fast and direct. Originally from mangrove habitat, it is now common even in fairly densely populated areas, even forming their nests in houses.

Yellow Wagtail

(*Motacilla flava*)

A long, slender bird with a long, constantly wagging tail, this bird inhabits open fields near bodies of water, and feeds mainly on insects. It is olive above and yellow below. It has for its call a characteristic high-pitched jeet.



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Yellow-vented Bulbul

(Pycnonotus goiavier)

Known locally as kulkul, this bird is found in open habitats and farmlands. It sips nectar, nibbles on berries and small fruits, and eats some insects. It builds a well-camouflaged cup-shaped nest made of grass, leaves, roots, vine stems, and twigs in trees and bushes.



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Yellowish White-eye or Golden-yellow White-eye (*Zosterops nigrorum*)

Yellowish White-eye or Golden-yellow White-eye, *Zosterops nigrorum*, is endemic to the Philippines. Its natural habitat is subtropical or tropical moist lowland forests.

About the Author



Ely Teehankee studied grade school, high school, and earned a degree in BS Mechanical Engineering in 1966 at De La Salle College, Manila, now De La Salle University. After graduating, he worked in Bangkok for 3 1/2 years, and when he came back to Manila he became a stockbroker.

In December of 2008 he joined the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines in one of their bird watching trips. It was held at UP Diliman. When he saw how beautiful the birds were, he wanted to see more. He learned that there were

some 671 species of birds in the Philippines and 245 of them are endemic. Knowing that it would be difficult for him to remember so many kinds of birds, he decided that he would have to photograph them.

After asking a lot of people about bird photography he bought a Canon 800mm f/5.6 lens and was pleasantly surprised to see that it could take clear and sharp pictures of the birds provided they were not too far away. He enjoyed taking the pictures of birds and posted them at the Philippine Bird Photography to share with friends and associates. This brought him to various places in the Philippines like Baguio, Banaue, Mount Makiling, Subic, Candaba, Mount Banahaw, Poro Point, Binangonan, Cavite, Quezon Province, Batangas, Puerto Princesa, Busuanga, Zambales, Pangasinan, Albay, Bohol, Bacolod, Surigao, Valenzuela and various places in Metro Manila where there are birds to be seen and photographed.

Among his favorite birding places are Bangkong Kahoy in Quezon, Villa Escudero in Laguna, UP Diliman, UP Los Baños, Coastal Lagoon in Paranaque and Mount Darala in Coron.

In 2010 he became a Canon Brand Ambassador in the field of Wild Bird Photography and started using Canon's 1D Mark IV, known as a sport photographer's camera. With this his pictures became more vivid and his passion for bird photography grew enabling him to take more than 250 species of Philippine birds.

He has also taken over 200 pictures of birds in Africa, Thailand, Singapore, Australia, United States, and Costa Rica.

The Granada Ecopark

The USLS Granada Ecopark is a 10-hectare Center for Environmental Education as well as a Health and Wellness Retreat open to students and teachers, families, academic and professional societies, civic organizations and business corporations. It is part of the 55-hectare USLS Granada Campus.

Located at Barangay Granada, the Ecopark is nestled at the foothills of the Marapara Mountain Range, which is part of the Northern Negros Natural Park.

The facilities include the Bro. Rolando R. Dizon Ecopark Center which hosts an interactive Rainforest Exhibit, a reception hall and an administrative office; Acacia Hall which is a lecture room for academic field trips; Cafe Verde, a cozy coffee and souvenir shop; and the two-storey Multi-Purpose Hall which accommodates 140 persons on the first floor for retreats and conferences, and 62 persons on the second floor for overnight visits.

The Jose and Claudio Alunan Vauguirard Gardens is a complex composed of 6 picnic huts, 2 cabanas, 2 swimming pools, a fishing lagoon, Mary's Well, a Via Crucis, a Meditation Garden, a bonfire ring, and sprawling picnic and camping grounds shaded by large magnificent trees.

As part of the University's environmental advocacy program, the Ecopark has a Wildlife Rescue Center where one can view the Visayan Spotted deer which is an endangered endemic specie; an Aviary; a Butterfly Park; an Orchid Farm; a small Organic Garden with a vermi-composting feature, and a Nursery for selected endemic trees. The Ecopark is surrounded by tall trees and streams.

Of special interest to children is the Children's Park which has a giant anthill, a hanging bridge, a mini-obstacle course, a pond, and several gazebos.

The Ecopark is ideal for academic fieldtrips, student training camps, retreats and recollections, seminars and workshops, family picnics and reunions, group tours and outings, and special events.

Given its careful balance of development and environmental conservation, the Ecopark remains home of the beautiful birds featured in this monograph, be it permanent, or seasonal and transitory.

Acknowledgements

The description of the birds found in this selection was based on the following sources:

<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/157/articles/introduction>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

<http://sylviamamos.blogspot.com/2011/07/pied-triller.html/>

<http://www.avianweb.com/coucals.html>

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<http://www.birdingphilippines.com/2011/12/15/digiscoping-a-common-garden-bird-pied-fantail-hd/>

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