

Summer 2000 Report

G.J. Carey



WATERFOWL MONITORING AT THE MAI PO INNER DEEP BAY RAMSAR SITE

Organized by:



The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

Sponsored by:



Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

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WATERFOWL MONITORING AT THE MAI PO INNER DEEP BAY RAMSAR SITE

Waterfowl Count Coordinator

Geoff J Carey

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Summer 2000 Report

Report

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G.J. Carey

Introduction

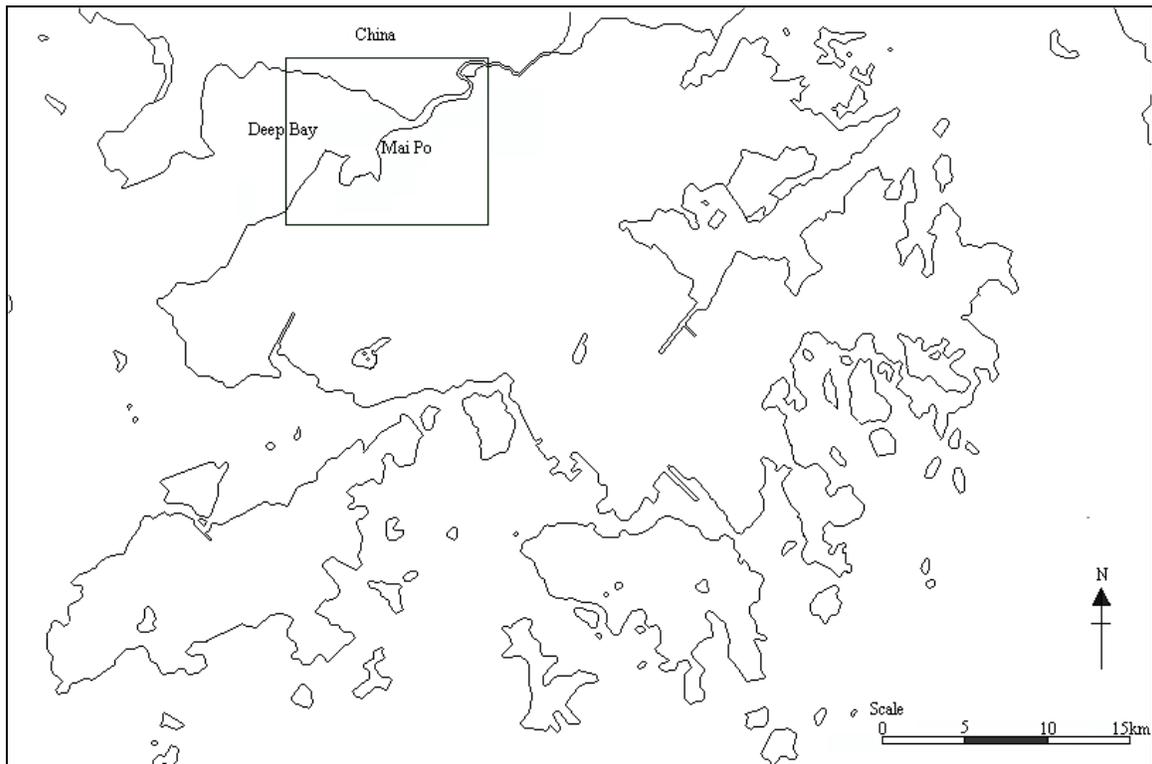
Comprehensive counts of waterbirds in the Deep Bay area were first carried out as part of an annual midwinter waterbird census first undertaken by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) in 1979. These continued in January every winter (excluding 1980) until 1992-93 when they were expanded to cover the winter period from November to March. With the establishment of the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site it was decided to establish a waterbird monitoring programme that expanded on this base. Systematic, long-term monitoring of waterbirds in the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site commenced in March 1998. This project is coordinated and carried out by the HKBWS and funded by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. Monthly counts of waterbirds in the area form one part of this programme, the others being counts of shorebirds during the migration season, and egret surveys during the breeding season. This report concerns the monthly waterbird monitoring component.

Methodology

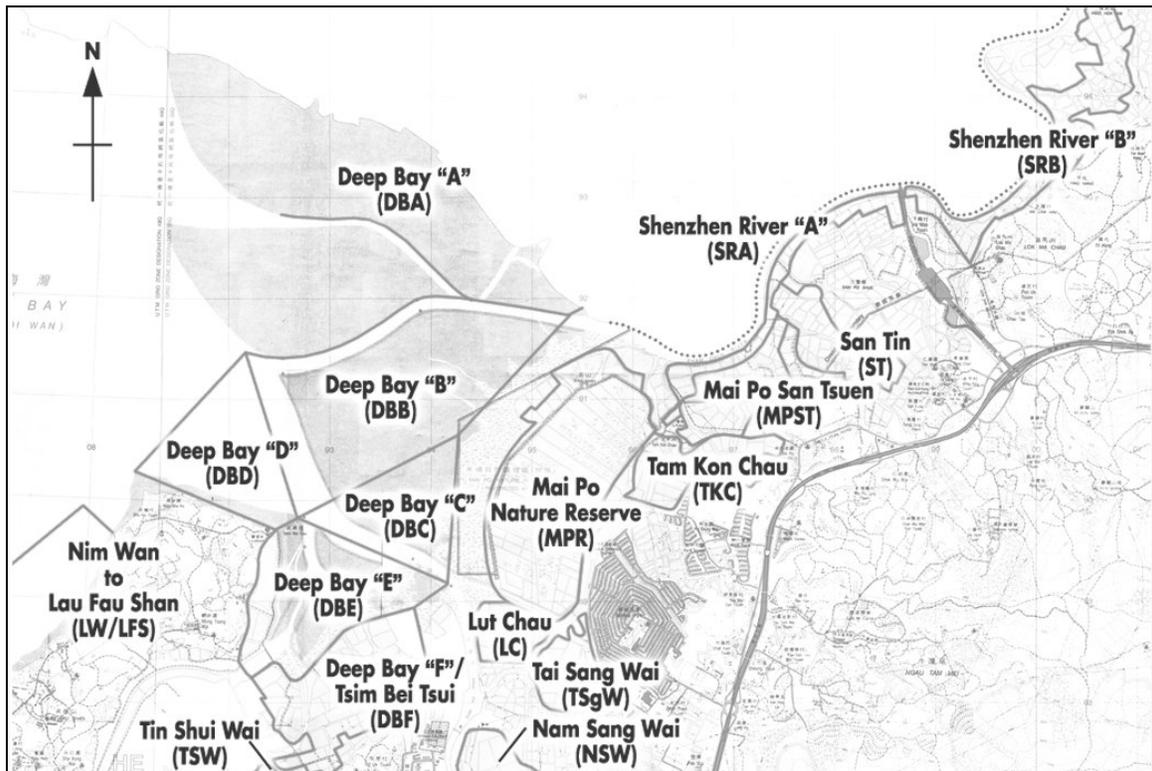
The methodology selected was based on experience gained during waterbird counts carried out by the HKBWS since 1979, and in particular since winter 1992-93 when the frequency of these counts was increased and attempts were made to improve on their accuracy, in particular through ensuring the use of mobile communications to coordinate counters' efforts and guarantee, as far as possible, simultaneity of counting. In addition, given that a significant percentage of the land area of the Ramsar Site consists of fish ponds, attention was focused on devising a survey technique that might easily be adopted by amateur birdwatchers, yet would produce a large amount of useful data.

The final methodology adopted and the areas covered are described in detail in the *Waterfowl Count Handbook*. In general terms, however, it involves surveying the relevant area and, where possible, mapping birds to individual fish ponds or *gei wai*. Other variables such as the vegetation surrounding each pond, the height of exposed edge to the pond and the percentage of pond

Map 1. Map of Hong Kong showing location of the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site



Map 2. Locations of count sites of the Waterfowl Monitoring Programme



bottom exposed as a result of drain-down are also measured. Tidal areas of Inner Deep Bay are surveyed simultaneously so as to ensure as little double-counting as possible occurs. During the summer months counts occur at high tide. During the winter months when there are substantial numbers of birds in the bay, and when there are no diurnal tides of a sufficient height to force inland all birds off the mudflat and onto tidal roost sites inland, counts occur on a rising tide, preferably one that comes to about 2.0m, though in practice there are rather few of these. Higher counts of individual species one week either side of the count date are included if they are considered to be more accurate than those made on the day.

Summary reports are produced bi-annually, one for the summer period from April to September, and one for the winter period from November to March. This report concerns the summer period of 2000.

Results

May

The intertidal areas of Deep Bay (C, D and E) were not surveyed. In addition, the stretch of coast from Nim Wan to Lau Fau Shan was also not counted; though this area lies outside the Ramsar Site, it is usually counted in all months of the year.

A total of 2,206 waterbirds were recorded in the Deep Bay area, with 1,862 of these recorded in the Ramsar Site. The number of birds recorded in Inner Deep Bay is usually low from April to October as the count is made at high tide. Consequently, had these areas been counted, it is unlikely they would have added significantly to the total. A comparison of these two groups with the Ramsar Site figures for 1998 and 1999 is contained in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of selected waterbird count figures in the Ramsar Site for May 1998-2000.

	1998		1999		2000	
	count	% of total	count	% of total	count	% of total
Ardeids	1521	49.7	912	26.5	696	37.4
Waders	1482	48.4	2363	68.7	1000	53.8
Total	3003	98.1	3275	95.2	1696	91.2
All waterbirds	3063		3438		1862	

It can be seen that in terms of both numbers and proportion of the overall total of waterbirds, no obvious trend is evident. Numbers in 2000 are obviously lower than both previous years, but the extent for each group varies; with regard to percentage of the overall total, the results for ardeids and waders are both intermediate between those of 1998 and 1999.

June

The June 2000 waterbirds count was cancelled to continuous, very heavy rain.

July

All sites within the Ramsar Site were covered, apart from Mai Po San Tsuen. A total of 1487 waterbirds were recorded in the Deep Bay area, of which 1173 occurred in the Ramsar Site. Table 2 provides a comparison of counts of ardeids for July in the years 1998-2000.

Table 2. Comparison of selected waterbird count figures in the Ramsar Site for July 1998-2000.

Species	July 1998	July 1999	July 2000
Cattle Egret	208	55	121
Chinese Pond Heron	108	121	103
Little Egret	680	464	291
Great Egret	510	350	150
Total (% of all waterbirds)	1506 (76%)	990 (77%)	665 (56%)
All waterbirds	1976	1273	1173

As usual in midsummer, ardeids comprise the bulk of waterbirds recorded in the Ramsar Site. It can be seen that the proportion is lower this year than in previous years; in addition, the number of ardeids is significantly lower than during the past two years.

As with other counts this summer, the number of waterbirds was similar to the total for 1999, but lower than that for 1998.

August

All sites within the Ramsar Site were surveyed. A total of 3178 waterbirds were recorded in the Deep Bay area, of which 2232 occurred in the Ramsar Site. Table 3 provides a comparison of selected counts for the years 1998-2000.

From Table 3 it can be seen that the total number of ardeids and waders recorded was broadly in line with the figures for 1999, and that both were somewhat lower than the equivalent figures for 1998. In terms of ardeids, such a pattern over the three years was also evident for the month of May.

Table 3. Comparison of selected waterbird groups in the Ramsar Site for August 1998-2000.

	1998		1999		2000	
	count	% of total	count	% of total	count	% of total
Ardeids	1588	56.4	861	37.7	826	37.0
Waders	1153	40.9	1363	59.6	1331	59.6
Total	2741	97.3	2224	97.3	2157	96.6
All waterbirds	2817		2287		2232	

Table 4 compares counts of the most numerous ardeids in the Ramsar Site in August of the last three years. The figures suggest that lower numbers of Little and Great Egrets are largely responsible for the relatively low number of ardeids in 2000 compared with 1998.

Table 4. Comparison of counts of selected ardeids in the Ramsar Site for August 1998-2000.

Species	August 1998	August 1999	August 2000
Cattle Egret	187	111	222
Chinese Pond Heron	156	112	142
Little Egret	866	407	318
Great Egret	296	204	113
Total	1505	834	795

September

All sites within the Ramsar Site were surveyed. A total of 4945 waterbirds were recorded in the Deep Bay area, of which 3580 occurred in the Ramsar Site. Table 5 provides a comparison of selected counts for September in the years 1998-2000.

Table 5. Comparison of selected count figures in the Ramsar Site for September 1998-2000.

	1998		1999		2000	
	count	% of total	count	% of total	count	% of total
Ardeids	1132	24.1	993	33.2	1054	29.4
Waders	3366	71.5	1889	63.1	2121	59.2
Total	4498	95.6	2882	96.3	3175	88.6
All waterbirds	4705		2994		3580	

From Table 5 it can be seen that the total number of waterbirds in the Ramsar Site is slightly higher than was recorded in 1999, and somewhat lower than that in 1998.

The only species count of interest is perhaps that of Grey Heron, of which 101 were recorded in the Deep Bay area. This is the highest count of this species in Hong Kong in September. With regard to the ardeid species that regularly breed in Hong Kong, Table 6 compares totals for each with those of the past two years.

Table 6. Comparison of counts of selected ardeids in the Ramsar Site for September 1998-2000.

Species	September 1998	September 1999	September 2000
Cattle Egret	138	136	95
Chinese Pond Heron	97	122	162
Little Egret	428	506	433
Great Egret	288	137	250
Total	951	901	940

The three counts for September are very similar in terms of the total number of ardeids, all lying between 900 and 952. Chinese Pond Heron numbers are relatively the highest this year, a welcome development, and one that it is hoped will continue, as numbers of this species were relatively low during much of the 1990s.

Discussion

The general pattern for total waterbird numbers in the Ramsar Site during the summer months of the three years since the Waterbird Monitoring Programme began has been one of relatively high numbers during 1998, relatively low numbers in 2000 and similar or somewhat intermediate numbers in 1999. That this is a trend noted across all counts suggests that the data being collected are representative of actual waterbird numbers. Interestingly, a similar pattern is apparent with regard to shorebird numbers recorded during the three years. With regard to these groups, however, because the dataset is relatively short, it is not known whether the number in the past two years has been relatively low, or whether the 1998 figures were relatively high.

During May and July, relatively low numbers were recorded. The cause for this may be very simple, and relate to one or both of two factors, viz. i.) a significant number of ardeids were feeding on fish ponds outside of the count area, ii.) the May 2000 count occurred relatively late in the month allowing time for more waders to have departed on their northward migration. A longer dataset would allow a better context in which to examine these results.



Summer 2000 Report

APPENDIX

Counts of waterbird in April 2000

SPECIES	SRA*	SRA	SRB	MPR*	DBA	DBB*	DBC*	DBD*	DBE*	NW/LFS	TSW	NSW	CT	DBF*	DBF	TKC*	TKC	ST	MPST*	LC*	TSgW*	Ramsar ponds	Ramsar Site	DEEP BAY	SW	SI	TOTAL	
Little Grebe			7	17										5			1					5	22	30			30	
Great Crested Grebe																						0	0	0			0	
Great Cormorant %																						0	0	0			0	
Dalmatian Pelican																						0	0	0			0	
Great Bittern																						0	0	0			0	
Yellow Bittern																						0	0	0			0	
Cinnamon Bittern																						0	0	0			0	
Night Heron			13	4				1	1							4	1				6	10	16	30	2	312	344	
Striated Heron				2																		0	2	2			2	
Cattle Egret			38	21					1					13	1						28	2	43	65	104	2	63	169
Chinese Pond Heron			20	4		1		2	1					13	4	2	4				11	6	32	40	68	15	6	89
Little Egret			46	24		16	12	6	48					44	10		8				11	13	68	174	238	6	87	331
Intermediate Egret			1	5																		1	1	6	7	2	7	16
Great Egret			6	23		2	6		9					19	5	2	4				4	1	26	66	81	30	111	222
Grey Heron			1	7										1	1						1		2	9	11		4	15
Purple Heron																						0	0	0			0	
Black Stork																						0	0	0			0	
Oriental Stork																						0	0	0			0	
Black-headed Ibis																						0	0	0			0	
Eurasian Spoonbill																						0	0	0			0	
Black-faced Spoonbill#				9																		0	9	9			9	
Ruddy Shelduck																						0	0	0			0	
Common Shelduck																						0	0	0			0	
Eurasian Wigeon				29																		0	29	29			29	
Falcated Duck																						0	0	0			0	
Gadwall																						0	0	0			0	
Baikal Teal																						0	0	0			0	
Common Teal																						0	0	0			0	
Mallard																						0	0	0			0	
Chinese Spotbill																						0	0	0			0	
Burmese Spotbill																						0	0	0			0	
Spotbill (unsub)																						0	0	0			0	
Northern Pintail																						0	0	0			0	
Garganey				5																		0	5	5			5	
Northern Shoveler				3																		0	3	3			3	
Common Pochard																						0	0	0			0	
Baer's Pochard																						0	0	0			0	
Tufted Duck																						0	0	0			0	
Greater Scaup																						0	0	0			0	
Red-breasted Merg.																						0	0	0			0	
Duck sp.																						0	0	0			0	
Slaty-breasted Rail																						0	0	0			0	
White-breasted W'hen			1											5	1						4	4	13	13	15	1	3	19
Common Moorhen			12	14										1	2		1					1	15	30		2	32	
Eurasian Coot				1																		0	1	1			1	

Counts of waterbird in May 2000

SPECIES	SRA*	SRA	SRB	MPR*	DBA	DBB*	DBC*	DBD*	DBE*	NW/LFS	TSW	NSW	CT	DBF*	DBF	TKC*	TKC	ST	MPST*	LC*	TSgW*	Ramsar ponds	Ramsar Site	DEEP BAY	SW	SI	TOTAL
Little Grebe	6	5	1	26										1					4			11	37	43			43
Great Crested Grebe																						0	0	0			0
Great Cormorant %																						0	0	0			0
Dalmatian Pelican																						0	0	0			0
Great Bittern																						0	0	0			0
Yellow Bittern			3	2														1	1	5		5	7	12			12
Cinnamon Bittern																						0	0	0			0
Night Heron	1	9	2	9										5	1		5	5	10	9	4	29	38	60	2		62
Striated Heron			9											1						1		2	2	11			11
Cattle Egret		3	120	1										31	6				1	10		42	43	172	7		179
Chinese Pond Heron	2	16	9	8		1								15	9		3	30	10	13	15	55	64	131	7		138
Little Egret		9	23	131		28								52	11		1	17	5	26	61	144	303	364	22		386
Intermediate Egret				3										2							1	3	6	6			6
Great Egret		2	7	156		8								53	1		3	3	3	7	2	65	229	245	6		251
Grey Heron			1	4																		0	4	5			5
Purple Heron																						0	0	0			0
Black Stork																						0	0	0			0
Oriental Stork																						0	0	0			0
Black-headed Ibis																						0	0	0			0
Eurasian Spoonbill																						0	0	0			0
Black-faced																						0	0	0			0
Ruddy Shelduck																						0	0	0			0
Common Shelduck																						0	0	0			0
Eurasian Wigeon				6																		0	6	6			6
Falcated Duck																						0	0	0			0
Gadwall																						0	0	0			0
Baikal Teal																						0	0	0			0
Common Teal																						0	0	0			0
Mallard																						0	0	0			0
Chinese Spotbill																						0	0	0			0
Burmese Spotbill																						0	0	0			0
Spotbill (unsub)																						0	0	0			0
Northern Pintail																						0	0	0			0
Garganey																						0	0	0			0
Northern Shoveler				3																		0	3	3			3
Common Pochard																						0	0	0			0
Baer's Pochard																						0	0	0			0
Tufted Duck																						0	0	0			0
Greater Scaup																						0	0	0			0
Red-breasted Merg.																						0	0	0			0
Duck sp.																						0	0	0			0
Slaty-breasted Rail																						0	0	0			0
White-breasted W'hen	1	3	1	2										2				4	1	6	2	12	14	23			23
Common Moorhen	2	6	1	6																		2	8	15			15
Eurasian Coot				3																		0	3	3			3

Counts of waterbird in July 2000

SPECIES	SRA*	SRA	SRB	MPR*	DBA	DBB*	DBC*	DBD*	DBE*	NW/LFS	TSW	NSW	CT	DBF*	DBF	TKC*	TKC	ST	MPST*	LC*	TSgW*	Ramsar ponds	Ramsar Site	DEEP BAY	SW	SI	TOTAL	
Little Grebe	2	14	7	14										4	3						3	9	23	47			47	
Great Crested Grebe																							0	0	0			0
Great Cormorant %																							0	0	0			0
Dalmatian Pelican																							0	0	0			0
Great Bittern																							0	0	0			0
Yellow Bittern	1	1		3	3																		1	4	5			5
Cinnamon Bittern																							0	0	0			0
Night Heron			4	6	233											3	4					2	5	11	19	5		24
Striated Heron				3	4				1					1								1	2	6	6	1		7
Cattle Egret		5	21	3	14				1					44	5		1				15	58	117	121	153		153	
Chinese Pond Heron	4	20	41	10	161	1	1		2	1				16	10	11	11				39	19	89	103	186	28	214	
Little Egret		4	21	87	674	15	38	2	33	39				61	6	8	22				21	26	116	291	383	76	459	
Intermediate Egret																							0	0	0			0
Great Egret		9	29	50	415	3	47	1	23	1				12	3	6	5				5	3	26	150	197	12	209	
Grey Heron				5																			1	6	6			6
Purple Heron																							0	0	0			0
Black Stork																							0	0	0			0
Oriental Stork																							0	0	0			0
Black-headed Ibis																							0	0	0			0
Eurasian Spoonbill																							0	0	0			0
Black-faced Spoonbill#																							0	0	0			0
Ruddy Shelduck																							0	0	0			0
Common Shelduck																							0	0	0			0
Eurasian Wigeon																							0	0	0			0
Falcated Duck																							0	0	0			0
Gadwall																							0	0	0			0
Baikal Teal																							0	0	0			0
Common Teal																							0	0	0			0
Mallard																							0	0	0			0
Chinese Spotbill																							0	0	0			0
Burmese Spotbill																							0	0	0			0
Spotbill (unsub)																							0	0	0			0
Northern Pintail																							0	0	0			0
Garganey																							0	0	0			0
Northern Shoveler				1																			0	1	1			1
Common Pochard																							0	0	0			0
Baer's Pochard																							0	0	0			0
Tufted Duck																							0	0	0			0
Greater Scaup																							0	0	0			0
Red-breasted Merg.																							0	0	0			0
Duck sp.																							0	0	0			0
Slaty-breasted Rail										2													0	0	2			2
White-breasted W'hen	1	3	4	2	18			1		2						1	4				8	5	15	18	31	1		32
Common Moorhen					2																		0	0	0			0
Eurasian Coot																							0	0	0			0
Black-winged Stilt				10	3																		0	10	10			10

Counts of waterbird in August 2000

SPECIES	SRA*	SRA	SRB	MPR*	DBA	DBB*	DBC*	DBD*	DBE*	NW/LFS	TSW	NSW	CT	DBF*	DBF	TKC*	TKC	ST	MPST*	LC*	TSgW*	Ramsar ponds	Ramsar Site	DEEP BAY	SW	SI	TOTAL	
Little Grebe	10	13	7	12	1									8		1	2		2		3	46	58	59			59	
Great Crested Grebe																							0	0	0			0
Great Cormorant %																							0	0	0			0
Dalmatian Pelican																							0	0	0			0
Great Bittern																							0	0	0			0
Yellow Bittern				3	4	1																	0	4	8			8
Cinnamon Bittern																							0	0	0			0
Night Heron		7	2	7	39	1								1	1	1	2		2	1	2	7	15	66			66	
Striated Heron					2									2						1	1	4	4	6			6	
Cattle Egret		3	13	2										181	1		1		27	10	2	220	222	240			240	
Chinese Pond Heron	2	34	15	11	94	2	1		1	3				28	19	17	44		22	18	40	127	142	351			351	
Little Egret		18	14	32	327	13	4	4	37	5				65	22	23	33		86	20	34	228	318	737			737	
Intermediate Egret																			2	1	1	4	4	4			4	
Great Egret		7	73	25	69	2	3	4	33	13				11	4	1	2		25	3	6	46	113	281			281	
Grey Heron				1										2								2	3	3			3	
Purple Heron				1																		0	1	1			1	
Black Stork																						0	0	0			0	
Oriental Stork																						0	0	0			0	
Black-headed Ibis																						0	0	0			0	
Eurasian Spoonbill																						0	0	0			0	
Black-faced Spoonbill#																						0	0	0			0	
Ruddy Shelduck																						0	0	0			0	
Common Shelduck																						0	0	0			0	
Eurasian Wigeon																						0	0	0			0	
Falcated Duck																						0	0	0			0	
Gadwall																						0	0	0			0	
Baikal Teal																						0	0	0			0	
Common Teal																						0	0	0			0	
Mallard																						0	0	0			0	
Chinese Spotbill																						0	0	0			0	
Burmese Spotbill																						0	0	0			0	
Spotbill (unsub)																						0	0	0			0	
Northern Pintail																						0	0	0			0	
Garganey																						0	0	0			0	
Northern Shoveler				2																		0	2	2			2	
Common Pochard																						0	0	0			0	
Baer's Pochard																						0	0	0			0	
Tufted Duck																						0	0	0			0	
Greater Scaup																						0	0	0			0	
Red-breasted Merg.																						0	0	0			0	
Duck sp.																						0	0	0			0	
Slaty-breasted Rail																						0	0	0			0	
White-breasted W'hen		5	1	3	4					1				3			7		2	4	3	12	15	33			33	
Common Moorhen					2																	0	0	2			2	
Eurasian Coot																						0	0	0			0	
Black-winged Stilt				2	3																	0	2	5			5	

Counts of waterbird in Sept 2000

SPECIES	SRA*	SRA	SRB	MPR*	DBA	DBB*	DBC*	DBD*	DBE*	NW/LFS	TSW	NSW	CT	DBF*	DBF	TKC*	TKC	ST	MPST*	LC*	TSgW*	Ramsar ponds	Ramsar Site	DEEP BAY	SW	SI	TOTAL	
Little Grebe	4	30		27										18			9		16		5	43	70	109	1		110	
Great Crested Grebe																							0	0	0			0
Great Cormorant %																							0	0	0			0
Dalmatian Pelican																							0	0	0			0
Great Bittern																							0	0	0			0
Yellow Bittern		1		4										1		4				2	1		8	12	13	1		14
Cinnamon Bittern																							0	0	0			0
Night Heron		3		1					1	1							2	6	9				9	11	23	6	41	70
Striated Heron				2						1													0	2	3	1		4
Cattle Egret		1		2										35	19		4			5	23	30	93	95	119	15	134	
Chinese Pond Heron	5	57		15					5	6				25	1	23	19	40	28	18	43	142	162	285	7	292		
Little Egret	1	547		58		4	62	12	60	96				60	73	49	15	70	20	48	59	237	433	1234	40	66	1340	
Intermediate Egret		1		1																	2	2	3	4		3	7	
Great Egret	1	43		55		10	55	16	61	12				30	25	6	5	39	6	4	6	53	250	374	16	175	565	
Grey Heron		1		27				8	28	4				13	2	4	6	2	1	2	3	23	86	101	4	13	118	
Purple Heron																						0	0	0			0	
Black Stork																						0	0	0			0	
Oriental Stork																						0	0	0			0	
Black-headed Ibis																						0	0	0			0	
Eurasian Spoonbill																						0	0	0			0	
Black-faced Spoonbill#																						0	0	0			0	
Ruddy Shelduck																						0	0	0			0	
Common Shelduck																						0	0	0			0	
Eurasian Wigeon																						0	0	0			0	
Falcated Duck																						0	0	0			0	
Gadwall																						0	0	0			0	
Baikal Teal																						0	0	0			0	
Common Teal				45																		0	45	45			45	
Mallard																						0	0	0			0	
Chinese Spotbill																						0	0	0			0	
Burmese Spotbill																						0	0	0			0	
Spotbill (unsub)																						0	0	0			0	
Northern Pintail																						0	0	0			0	
Garganey				251																		0	251	251			251	
Northern Shoveler						21																0	21	21			21	
Common Pochard																						0	0	0			0	
Baer's Pochard																						0	0	0			0	
Tufted Duck																						0	0	0			0	
Greater Scaup																						0	0	0			0	
Red-breasted Merg.																						0	0	0			0	
Duck sp.																						0	0	0			0	
Slaty-breasted Rail																						0	0	0			0	
White-breasted W'hen		4		4						2				1		4	2	1	2	3	3	13	17	26	3		29	
Common Moorhen		3		1													2					0	1	6			6	
Eurasian Coot																						0	0	0			0	

