



THE HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

G P O BOX 12460, HONG KONG

BULLETIN NO. 137 SEPTEMBER 1990

SOCIETY NEWS

- i) A volunteer is required to assist Richard and Janet Stott with secretarial duties. For further information please telephone 524 9938.
- ii) List of library books. If any member would like a copy of the list (c18pp) of books currently in the Society's library, please contact Peter Kennerley on . A charge of \$10 will be made to cover photocopying and mailing costs.
- iii) Library additions. Martin Williams has kindly presented to the Society a copy of 'The Birds of Northern Shantung Province, China' by Rufus H LeFevre and two slides of Blyth's Pipit taken at Beidaihe in May 1990.

APB ON SWINHOLE'S EGRETS

In July 1990 the Asian Wetland Bureau and Kyung Hee University, Seoul colour-marked 82 fledgling Swinhoe's Egrets on Shin Islet, South Korea. The birds were marked on the tibia using red or white bands. Please report all sightings giving full details to Mike Chalmers on or Mike Turnbull on .

BIRDWATCHING TRIPS TO CHINA

Although we have published a number of reports on trips into China in the bulletin, these trips have, in fact, been organised by individuals and have not been 'official' Society visits or funded by the Society. Should any member wish to arrange a visit, or to volunteer to organise trips for the Society, the Committee would be very happy to offer advice on locations and contacts, and guidance on how to make the necessary arrangements. Please contact the Secretaries, Richard or Janet Stott on or any Committee member.

The next committee meeting will be held in late October 1990; if any Society member wishes a matter raised please contact one of the committee members on the telephone numbers given below.

Hong Kong Bird Watching Society officers and committee members:

Gavin Cooper
Janet Stott
Simba Chan
Peter Kennerley
David Melville
Mike Turnbull

Richard Stott
Mike Chalmers
John Edge
C Y Lam
Verity Picken
Michael Webster

NATIONAL SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION

MAI PO UPDATE (Michael Lau)

Deep Bay Fishing Activities

In the last issue, it was reported that the Hong Kong Government had approved in principle the proposal to list Inner Deep Bay under the Sixth Schedule of Cap. 170. Unfortunately this was incorrect and recently the proposal was turned down because of the enforcement complexities. Some technical problems are expected if restricted access is to be enforced on the mudflat but these are not unsolvable.

The situation is worsening in Inner Deep Bay. This is the first summer that the Chinese fishermen have remained in the area and continued their fishing activities. Fish net removal is not an effective deterrent any more because they now concentrate on trapping mudskippers. Unless a new strategy is adopted, the tens of thousands of migratory shorebirds and waterbirds visiting Deep Bay in the next few months will find their best feeding ground severely disturbed.

Captive Waterfowl Collection

Although the collection was established less than a year ago, the captive waterfowl have adapted well to the local conditions and several of them bred this year. Nineteen Mandarin, four Yellow-nib Duck and seven Javan Tree Duck have been successfully raised. Pintail and Tufted Duck also attempted to breed but the eggs of the former were predated by rats and the Tufted Duck hatchlings did not survive the heavy rains. All the ducklings were subsequently captured, pinioned and released back to the collection to prevent the accidental establishment of feral populations in the wild as these might affect native species. Another interesting finding is that wild birds, which include a Common Pochard drake, a Mandarin duck and several Garganey, have stayed in the collection all through the summer.

Earthmoving Work

Various earthmoving and dredging works will be carried out on the Mai Po Marshes this autumn and winter. A new channel about 200m long will be dredged in the mangroves outside gei-wai 19 to bring better-quality water from the middle of Inner Deep Bay to its sluice. Channels at the edges of gei-wai 18 will also be dredged to improve water circulation inside the pond. The reedbeds in front of the two birdwatching hides at the southern side of gei-wai 18 will be deepened to create an open area for shorebirds and waterfowl. During the course of the work, the hides at the southern side of the scrape will have to be closed because the access bridges will be dismantled temporarily. We are sorry for the inconvenience caused but it is a small price to pay in order to improve the conditions in gei-wai 18 for wildlife.

If the appropriate equipment is available, the island opposite the disabled hide in gei-wai 16/17 will be lowered this winter (outside the migration season) to improve the view from that hide. The grassy patch to the left of the island will also be cleared and deepened to enlarge the open area in the scrape. This small piece of earthmoving work, if it goes ahead, will be completed as quickly as possible to minimize disturbance on the scrape.

CURRY LUNCH RESURRECTED

In spite of last year's announcement of the demise of the ever-popular annual curry lunch at PTU, the police have kindly offered to host another - and at the same location! This has now been taken over by the Field Patrol Detachment. The lunch will be held on Sunday 9 December and will be the usual alfresco event.

Anyone wishing to come (families are welcome too) should complete the form at the end of this bulletin and send it to Peter Stevens by 18 November AT THE LATEST. The cost, which includes food and drink, is likely to be \$80 per head, payable in advance.

CHRISTMAS COUNT - 30 December 1990 (C.Y. Lam)

The sixth Christmas count organised by the Bird Watching Society will take place on Sunday 30 December 1990. The purpose of the count is to get an idea of the abundance of various species in Hong Kong around the end of the year. The results of the count are published in the Society's annual Report. A total of 227 species (excluding escapes) has been recorded from the five previous counts.

Different parts of Hong Kong will be covered by small groups of birdwatchers. A tentative list of leaders of such groups is given below. Members are welcome to join the groups. Naturally members may also choose to cover their favourite patches on their own.

<u>Area</u>	<u>Leaders</u>
Mai Po	Simba Chan
Tsim Bei Tsui, Mong Tseng	Wendy and Andrew Young
Castle Peak (incl. Nim Wan)	Mike Chalmers
Northern N.T. (incl. San Tin)	Nigel Croft, John Holmes
Sek Kong, Tai Mo Shan	Shirley and George O'Brien
Shing Mun	W K Ng
Lam Tsuen Valley	Verity Picken
Northeast N.T. (incl. Fanling, Luk Keng, Plover Clove)	Janet and Richard Stott
Tai Po Kau	Richard Lewthwaite
Tai Long (incl. Tolo Harbour)	John Edge
Ma On Shan, Sai Kung	Li Wai Ki
Kowloon	Yu Yat Tung
Stonecutters Island	Sam Clegg
Hong Kong Island	Peter Kennerley, John Gerson, Anthony Tse
Lamma Island	John Kier
Cheung Chau	Martin Williams
Lantau Island	Roger Costin, C.Y. Lam (see note below)

In view of the imminent disruptions on Lantau arising from the Chek Lap Kok airport project, it is hoped that Lantau will be given better coverage this year. Roger is trying to work out traffic arrangements. Those who are interested in joining the Lantau survey (transportation on a cost-sharing basis) are requested to contact Roger or C.Y.

On the day of the count, members are invited to note down the number of birds they see and submit a report on a prescribed form. The form and the confirmed list of group leaders will appear in the December bulletin. All

participants in the count are entitled to submit a guess of the total number of species seen on the day. Whoever gets it right (or closest to being right) will receive a copy of the 'Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Hong Kong'. Should more than one person get it spot on, it will be decided by drawing lots.

Note to leaders: Please advise C.Y. Lam (office 732 9361) if you cannot take up this task. We will try to find a replacement.

THE LAST WORD ON LISTING

After publishing the letter debunking listing in the last bulletin, the Editor has been inundated with words and letters.

Confessing his authorship of the letter, Clive Viney wrote 'I had no idea that my letter, dated 1 April 1990, would stir up such a storm and even cause our Chairman to put pen to paper to allay the unrest. My gibe at the Records Committee was made very much tongue in cheek for I am still, as far as I know, a member of that august body.'

The issues causing the most feathers to be ruffled were not the pros or cons of listing but the apparent slurs against the Records Committee and the integrity of bird-racers.

Geoff Carey summed up by stating 'The public questioning of the procedures of, and decisions made by, the Records Committee by one of its members ... brings both the Committee and the Society into disrepute ... As for the jibe at the highest day list, I admit to having my own axe to grind here as I took part in that team ... I can assure the writer that each of those 164 species was positively identified.'

Professor Ivor Longlist, B.A., M.T. pointed out that it is 'just as well the magical date of All Fools' Day reminds us that this is all in light-hearted vein, otherwise one might find it all positively distasteful' and goes on to conclude that 'What we are left with is not humour, but the ugliness of totalitarian thought in the form of a latter-day Inquisitor who would "outlaw" listing'. The piece produced a 'decidedly bitter aftertaste'.

Taking a more jocular view, Ray Tipper wrote from the UK that he had 'no desire to enter into the pro/anti-listing debate' but if there were a Highest Photographic List he would tentatively claim the latter with a total of 145 (140A including two in the hand + 3C + 2D) ... which includes no less than 40 species of waders!

Tony Galsworthy commented 'What a lot of fuss about nothing. Listing? Of course, it has little or no scientific value, except under limited and carefully regulated circumstances. But does it do any harm? And if it gives enjoyment, and maybe even helps to interest some people who wouldn't otherwise be interested, maybe it does some good. That surely is one function of a birdwatching society.' He considered that 'the argument about categories is a bit like Byzantine discussions about the number of angles that can sit on the head of a pin.'

The Society's Chairman, Gavin Cooper, reminded newer comers to the Society and Hong Kong birding that 'it is almost a tradition, certainly amongst some of the older/longer-serving members, to use a bit of stick on each other now and then. This may not be very seemly but it does tend to keep

one on one's toes. And Clive, bless his heart, is hardly always the most amiable of people when he is riding a favourite hobby horse. Why, only last week during lunch he gave me an awful savaging, and I was paying!' Later he went on to say 'I have to caution those amongst the members who have taken umbrage that while the odd pen may have dripped a little watery poison there was really no ill intent in all this debate and that all parties remain as they have always been the very best of friends and full of respect for each other's whims, oddities, individuality and ornithological knowhow.'

Finally, a number of members considered it curious that pollution in Deep Bay failed to generate the same response as a letter about listing. On that note, and in the interests of preserving the editor's sanity and the Society's unity, no further correspondence on this topic will be published.

CONFERENCE ON THE ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION OF PALEARCTIC-AFRICAN MIGRANTS

A major international conference organised jointly by the British Ornithologists' Union, the British Trust for Ornithology and the International Council for Bird Preservation will be held from 4 to 7 April 1991 at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

The conference will be structured around the annual cycle of passerine and near-passerine migrants and will cover the following topics: 'Breeding and Winter Ecology', 'Migration', 'Population Dynamics' and 'Conservation'.

For further information please contact Mrs G. Bonham, Administrative Secretary, BOU, c/o British Museum (Natural History), Tring, Herts HP23 6AP, UK.

THE AUSTRALASIAN WADER STUDY GROUP - A DECADE OF COORDINATED RESEARCH (Hugo Phillipps)

The term 'Australasia' may at first seem to be a mere geographical convenience, lumping the continent of Australia and the large islands of New Guinea, Tasmania and New Zealand with the archipelago of the southwest Pacific. Ornithologists recognise it as a zoogeographical region for the endemicity of its terrestrial fauna. However, it also has importance in the field of wader studies, as a large proportion of the Palearctic migrants of the West Pacific/East Asian flyway use the region during the non-breeding season.

The Australasian Wader Studies Group, then, is interested in research and information regarding all resident and migrant waders of the region and, by extension, also those of the whole flyway.

The other great wader flyways of the globe, the East Atlantic and the New World, have received a lot of attention in the past, and the movements and dynamics of their species have become relatively well known. In contrast to these, the Western Pacific flyway had been much less intensively studied until the late 1970s, and in a fairly haphazard and uncoordinated fashion.

Even within Australia there had been little coordination between the

enthusiasts and researchers of the nation's scattered capitals. Students and their studies were often isolated from each other by time, space and methodology. Fragments of information came to light here and there, although much of the literature of that earlier period is obsessed with recording the occurrence of rare vagrants, and with defending the credibility of their observers.

Waders have always attracted the attention of 'twitchers', because of the level of experience and expertise necessary to separate some species, as well as the ever-present possibility of seeing a bird far from its usual range. However, an increasing number of people were beginning to see waders as worthy of much more attention than merely being ticked off, or added to, a list.

Studying the commoner species in depth became more important than recording rarities. The need for conservation of feeding and roosting habitats became a matter for concern and, in some places, for alarm. It became apparent that some sort of regional coordinating body was necessary to structure existing data and future research.

The origins of the AWSG date from 1980 after a steep increase in wader research in Australia over the previous few years, and after the ratification of the agreement between Australia and Japan concerning the protection of migratory birds and their habitats. Its formal birth came about in 1981, under the auspices of the Royal Australian Ornithologists' Union. It immediately initiated an ambitious programme of counts to establish base-line data for future research. It also organised the first of the North-West Australia Wader Expeditions to examine the hitherto unrecognised importance of the Australian coast between Port Hedland and Broome for Palearctic migrants. Over the last decade the AWSG has grown in the breadth and depth of the research it has coordinated and sponsored, its membership, and its geographical coverage. Since the flyway includes the rapidly developing nations of southeastern and eastern Asia where much wader habitat is threatened, the necessity of extending the Group's area of concern has become imperative, and it works closely with the Asian Wetlands Bureau (AWB). The AWSG is now becoming a truly inter-regional organisation. 'The Stilt' is the main vehicle of the AWSG for disseminating information about wader studies within Australasia and Asia, and for publishing the results of research there. It appears twice a year, and some recent examples of the sort of material it contains are:

News regarding two forthcoming training and banding (ringing) expeditions, in conjunction with AWB and local authorities, to Java and Vietnam. In West Java the annual waterbird harvest is estimated to be 330,000 birds. Of these about 45,000 are Oriental Pratincoles, and one expedition will focus on the population dynamics of this species. The Red River delta of Vietnam is southeast Asia's first RAMSAR site and is an extremely important staging and wintering area; Vietnamese biologists will be trained in identification and counting techniques as well as capture and banding methods.

News regarding the Broome Bird Observatory. This has now been officially opened and is running short courses which will include studies of the spectacular wader population of Roebuck Bay. It is the RAOU's first observatory in tropical Australia, in a place which is undoubtedly one of the most important in the world for waders, and possibly the best as far as suitability for long-term research is concerned.

A study by Mark Barter on the morphometrics of the Eastern Curlew, demonstrating strong sexual dimorphism and indicating that members of this species do not breed until the end of their third year of life, a year later than most Palearctic species.

Banding Round-up: details of international recoveries of birds banded in the flyway.

A study of the dynamics of body composition of overwintering Dunlin near Shanghai, by Shi Ming and Lu Jian-jian, indicates that the severity of the winters causes the weight of the birds to decrease until the mudflats begin to warm up in spring.

Waders have always been birds for the more dedicated birdwatcher, the more poetic naturalist, the more rugged researcher. They are also pre-eminent as a group that requires international cooperation and awareness for their effective conservation. Wader enthusiasts, possibly more than any other ornithological interest group, have to think and act globally as well as locally, and the AWSG is well placed to assist in information and research coordination for the West Pacific/East Asian flyway.

Membership of the AWSG is essential for those interested in waders in this segment of the world. It includes 'The Stilt', and costs A\$15 for Australasian members, and A\$20 for those further away. Enquiries regarding membership should be directed to the Administrative Secretary, AWSG, 34 Centre Avenue, Vermont, VIC 3133, Australia.

OVERSEAS BIRDING

XISHUANGBANNA SURVEY TRIP, March 4 - 18 1990 (Angus Lamont)

[This was the second of two research visits to Xishuangbanna in Yunnan Province, the first having taken place in June 1989. The objective was to assess to what extent the size of each forest block, and its isolation, affected the bird communities in the blocks. For further information on the survey technique and a report on the first visit, see Bulletin no. 133 (September 1989). A detailed analysis will be produced by WWF at a later date - Ed].

The party left Hong Kong on Sunday by Dragonair for Kunming where Dr. John Mackinnon and a number of Chinese scientists were waiting to meet us and after boarding the bus, we started on what turned out to be a two-day bus ride. The first overnight stop was on the banks of the Red River and the following day's travel ended at Simao when we ran out of fuel and no more was available until the next morning. Apart from a few rest stops there was very little opportunity for birding until we finally made San Cha He on Tuesday afternoon and we then spent the remainder of the day and all of Wednesday in this area.

This reserve was well forested with a small river running through it and the presence of elephants meant that the paths and trails were kept clear which made it fairly easy to get around. Two of us were extremely lucky to see an adult male elephant noisily splashing along the river apparently unconcerned by the presence of humans. Although most people had accommodation in rooms with beds, the four 'bachelors' (John Mackinnon, Paul Leader, Peter Kennerley and I) slept on the concrete floor of the dining area and as this was adjacent to the kitchen there was a resident rat or two to keep us company. The birding at San Cha He was quite good

but the birds were extremely wary and it was not hard to see why as every able-bodied male over the age of ten seemed to go about carrying a smooth-bore, muzzle-loading gun. Good birds seen here included Silver-breasted Broadbill, Radde's Warbler, Siberian Blue Robin, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, and Green Magpie. Phil Round also heard Grey Peacock Pheasant.

Thursday morning found us on the way to the highest mountain in the area, Nang Gong Shan, for a brief visit en route to Bubong. On the slopes of this mountain David Melville and I saw a Blackbird from the coach - a first record for Xishuangbanna. Good views were had of a large flock of Pin-tailed Pigeons during a walk along the roadside while the bus was being repaired. Delays caused us to stay overnight at Meng Cha which was a low point in accommodation as there was no running water and the toilets were appalling even by local standards. While out shopping for nappies for his daughter, Julia, David Melville found that the local supermarket also sold tiger traps!

In the forestry compound at Bubong the 'bachelors' once again found themselves sleeping with the resident rats who, during the course of our three-night sojourn, became progressively bolder and on the last night Paul was throwing snooker balls at them to keep them at bay. It was here that during her ablutions Verity Picken managed to find a dead, five foot long snake under her washing basin. Birding at Bubong was split up into time spent in small patches of primary forest usually surrounded by rubber plantations, and larger areas of parashorea forest which contained some magnificent trees. Tiger tracks had been reported from this area close to an aerial walkway that was under construction but no trace was seen of these large carnivores. Exceptional birds included a Yellow-vented Warbler, a first for China, found by Peter Kennerley, and a Pied Hornbill seen by the Melvilles. Other interesting species seen were Slaty-bellied Tesia, Pale-legged Bush Warbler, Mountain Hawk Eagle, Green-billed Malkoha, Brown Hawk Owl, Himalayan Swiftlet, Long-tailed Broadbill, Rufous-faced Warbler, and White-tailed Flycatcher. There were also plenty of leeches along the streams in the forest and most people picked up one or two.

From here we went to the Meng Sai forest close to the Laotian border which was a very steep climb following logging trails through thick forest. As with all forest birding this was very hard work but was not without rewards as Golden Babbler, Black-chinned and Whiskered Yuhinas, Bay Woodpecker, Little and Streaked Spiderhunters were all seen. Returning to Nang Gong Shan after dark provided the competition of nocturnal tent erection easily won by Paul, Peter and yours truly whose efforts to erect a state-of-the-art tent left the rest of the group convulsed with laughter. The following day was spent on the mountain and most people had a good day's birding. Keen types like Phil Round actually reached the summit whereas most others only managed the upper car park and it was on the way down from there that Verity and I saw a Black Eagle, the second record for Xishuangbanna. Other interesting species seen here included Scarlet Finch (a spectacular male) Blue-tailed Minla, Rufous-gorgetted Flycatcher, Lesser Necklaced Laughing Thrush, Large-tailed Nightjar, and Grey-headed Parrotbill; Grey Peacock Pheasant was also heard.

We proceeded by coach to Menglun from where we walked to Chenzi Longshan and then covered some hills behind a Thai-style village which was complete with monastery and wat. It was here that Sue Earle got arrested while wandering around with her camera. This area was mostly secondary growth and produced little of ornithological interest but the beauty of the

surroundings was ample compensation. After lunch we pressed on to the Botanic Gardens where a stone path ran through a portion of preserved rainforest. This was a very interesting area full of flycatchers and skulking babblers, many of which were difficult to see. Phil found White-tailed Robins and Peter saw an Upland Buzzard. Other species seen here included White-rumped Shama, Black-headed Bulbul, and Chestnut-tailed Starling. The next morning was spent at the Limestone Cliffs looking unsuccessfully for a Limestone Wren Babbler but there was some compensation as Paul Leader found another Yellow-vented Warbler.

The homeward journey commenced after lunch and two days later we were at Kunming. During the overnight stop at the Red River John worked all night at his laptop computer compiling data from the bird lists that everyone had given to him. Just outside Kunming the coach stopped at a large lake where Brown-headed and Great Black-headed Gulls were seen as well as several species of duck.

Arriving at Kunming we stayed overnight at the South-west Forestry College and during the early morning birding the next day I found a flock of Fire-capped Tits for Peter who had dipped out on them earlier in the trip. Bird calls were something else as even the Hainan Blue Flycatcher has a different call in that part of the world and because of Phil's knowledge of bird calls he was constantly being inundated by people playing tapes to him. It was also here that the Melvilles, Phil Round, and Verity Picken were locked in their rooms and were only released after the 'bachelors' rallied around to help.

There were about 180 lists made on this trip compared to about 100 from the earlier expedition. The total number of species should be around 330 - about 10% up this time due largely to the presence of winter visitors but the overall data was in keeping with previous results. I saw 188 out of which 94 were new to me. As can be expected, King's book was in almost constant use but everyone seemed eager to help a newcomer.

OUTING REPORTS

TAI MO SHAN - 9 June 1990 (Gavin Cooper)

This outing, originally scheduled to be led by John Burton, was held during a period of heavy rain and hangovers. The trip, however, turned out to be so full of interest and enjoyment that one of the participants insisted on writing up the report and this may be found below.

TAI MO SHAN - 9 June 1990 (Shirley O'Brien)

At 6.40 a.m. standing outside Tsuen Wan M.T.R. station in the pouring rain George and I made the decision to continue on our journey to Tai Mo Shan - come what may. We did not expect to see anyone else let alone any birds. The taxi-driver obviously thought we were mad. 'You stop here?' he said every time we came to a lay-by on the twisting road to the summit. Eventually, in thick swirling mist he stopped his taxi, made a cross with his arms on the windscreen and shook his head. We knew that that was as far as he was going.

As we opened the taxi door we were greeted with the song of the Yellow-bellied Wren-warbler - we were not the only ones braving the weather. Then in very poor light we saw a Richard's Pipit and had an excellent close view of a Large Grass Warbler. The rain stopped and a few

bulbuls joined in unison with the Yellow-bellied Wren-warblers; in the distance we heard a Koel.

We were eventually joined by Mark Nunns who informed us that the replacement leader for the trip had been spotted in the lower car park catching up on some sleep! He was also seen NOT to be wearing the appropriate gear for a morning's bird-watch in the mist and rain - and there was no Stetson in sight! So the three of us bravely went it alone.

In damp and misty weather conditions on Tai Mo Shan a good ear for bird calls is essential. We recognised the Hwamei, the Chinese Francolin, the rising call of the Richard's Pipit and I think I can safely say that the Chinese Babax were keeping very quiet if they were in our vicinity. But what did we miss?

When the mist occasionally gave way to a patchy weak blue sky we saw Lesser Coucal, Violet Whistling Thrush, Rufous-backed Shrike and another glimpse of a Large Grass Warbler. After a couple of hours the rain returned and looked set for the day so we decided to turn back and head for Mark's place and a welcome cup of coffee. As we reached the car the Yellow-bellied Wren-warblers were still calling - they had outlasted us.

MAI PO - 8 July 1990 (John Edge)

Only C.Y. Lam and I had appeared at the start time of 0600h, but Peter Kennerley and Mike Turnbull turned up a little later. The idea was to make a comparison with 1 July 1989 when Clive Viney and I had a most pleasant morning at Mai Po, recording 63 species including 21 species of wader.

The weather this year was equally beautiful but the birds not quite as plentiful. The birdwatching from the tower hide, where we started, was superb, in perfect light - a good selection of herons and egrets, including two Lesser Egrets, all highly active. There was no sign, however, of the Watercock and Pheasant-tailed Jacana seen a month or so earlier. The habitat in front of this hide has real potential.

The scrape held large numbers of Yellow-nib Duck - 81 were counted on the morning - and four Black-faced Spoonbills whose presence over the summer months now appears to be regular. A partially-drained pond south of the managed area, and the scrape itself, produced the following waders: Little Ringed Plover (2), Sand plover sp. (6), Curlew (33), Whimbrel (6), Black-tailed Godwit (8), Wood Sandpiper (6), Redshank (32), Greenshank (10), Common Sandpiper (6), Grey-rumped Sandpiper (20), Curlew-sandpiper (1), Black-winged Stilt (26).

Not as diverse a spread as last year, but still good to see.

The balance of the list of 50 plus two spp. was much as one would expect, but a Great Reed Warbler was heard grumbling away in thick cover, a wagtail (probably Grey) flew high over, and at least 50 Spotted Munias were seen; this bodes well for the August outing, when other munias, such as White-headed, are sometimes seen. There was enough interest to delay my returning to the car until 1100h; downy young Little Green Herons were seen, absolutely immobile, in the dead mangroves south of the managed area.

MAI PO - 15 July 1990 (Gavin Cooper)

This visit to the marshes was arranged for the late afternoon in order to

miss the main heat of the day and that is how it turned out for the dozen or so participants.

Of this number all but a couple were pretty much beginners and so we concentrated on the common species rather than on looking for the more unusual birds. It was also pleasant to find two-thirds of the party consisting of local members, all of whom were very keen to learn.

The large number of different species of wader which had been previously reported were absent, the tide presumably being wrong, but the scrape proved highly interesting and colourful as right in front of the hide we were confronted by flocks of Red Avadavats (including some beautiful males), Spotted Munias with many young and, moving amongst them, a finely plumaged Golden Bishop, presumably having a little R & R in Hong Kong.

Only 40 species were recorded but that was more than enough for what was really more of a teaching session than a ticking session.

This outing also allowed me to try out my brand new Kowa TSN-4 Prominar telescope with flourite lens. It was really excellent and should be worth at least an extra ten species in next year's Big Bird Race!

MAI PO - 5 August 1990 (John Edge)

Fourteen enthusiasts turned up on the outing, on a showery morning, and three other experienced members put up with us in the hides; for this report, I shall include all sightings as, taken together, they make an interesting spread.

Sixty-two species were recorded and again it was the waders (19 species) which attracted most of the attention. These included several Greater Sand Plovers, a solitary Grey Plover, about equal numbers of Curlew and Whimbrel, up to seven Asiatic Dowitchers (one of which we at first took to be Long-billed), many Redshanks and Greenshanks, several Spotted Redshanks, up to four Terek Sandpipers, Red-necked Stint (PRK), two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, and several Curlew-Sandpipers and Black-winged Stilts. Mike Webster commented that the number of waders present (Redshanks were especially plentiful) compared favourably with the peak of the autumn passage in the old days. More power to Mai Po's elbow.

Best of the rest: up to 200 Spotted Munias (but no White-headed or avadavats, which had been seen on 1 August); a Golden Bishop, a Gull-billed Tern, two Pied Wagtails (PRK), a male Watercock (ME) and Banded Rail, four Black-faced Spoonbills and two Chestnut Bitterns. Young Yellow Bitterns were also seen. Perhaps the abiding memory for everyone, however, will be the superb views from the tower hide of beautiful Leopard Cat Felis benghalensis, which Peter Kennerley photographed - I look forward to seeing the results.

Owing to my impending leave and Things To Do at home, I had to abandon my charges at 1130h - they were still going strong on a very humid morning; using the hides was sauna-like. Such is the attraction of Mai Po these days.

REPORT ON THE BIRDS - 1 June to 31 August 1990 (Mike Turnbull)

June

Barred Owlets were seen at Sek Kong Catchwater on 1st and Ho Chung on 4th,

the latter site also holding a pair of Chestnut Bulbuls on 5th (MH). A group of Treepies was reported from near Sunset Peak on 2nd (per KP). The immature male Watercock was still present at Mai Po on 3rd when there were also three Spoon-billed Sandpipers, two non-breeding plumage Swinhoe's Egrets and 22 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (GJC). A Velvet-fronted Nuthatch at Carolina Gardens, the Peak on 4th was the first record away from Tai Po Kau of this recent arrival on the local scene (VBP). Also on 4th a Red-winged Crested Cuckoo was noted at Wu Kau Tang (RWL) while a male Watercock was noted at Luk Keng on 6th (MH). A frigatebird over Hung Shing Yeh, Lamma on 7th appeared to be an immature Lesser (JP). On 10th a Pheasant-tailed Jacana at the tower hide, Mai Po, delighted several observers (WY, PRK et al.). Twenty White-winged Black Terns, together with two or three Caspian and three Gull-billed, were also on the Marsh that day (PRK). Reports of single Black Bazas came from Tai Mei Tuk on 18th (RWL), near Sha Tau Kok on 24th (ARL) and Wu Kau Tang on 30th, this last bird being observed carrying prey (JSRE). A Hoopoe was noted at Kadoorie Farm on 21st while two House Crows were seen amongst a group of Jungle Crows at Carolina Gardens, the Peak on 22nd (WY, VBP). A visit to Gau Tau on 24th confirmed the continued absence of terns there. Peregrines were seen several times in urban parts of Hong Kong Island, a bird in Leighton Road on 25th giving particularly good views (JSRE). On 28th a Swinhoe's Egret was at Mai Po, with a single Black-faced Spoonbill also present (RWL) and on the same day a Black Bittern was observed near Tung Chung, Lantau (per KP).

July

The continued presence of Rufous-necked Scimitar Babblers in Aberdeen Country Park was confirmed when one was again heard at Lady Clementi's Ride on 1st (JEB). A group of Yellow-cheeked Tits seen nearby by the same observer on 3rd seemed to be a family party. At Ho Chung a Plumbeous Water Redstart which remained from 7th throughout August, would appear to be the first summering record for Hong Kong (MH, TM). A visit to Mai Po on 8th produced ten species of heron including three Purple Herons and two Intermediate Egrets. Four Black-faced Spoonbills were present that day and were to remain throughout August. Apart from 81 Yellow-nib Ducks there were also a few waders present, the most numerous of which were Black-winged Stilt (26) and Redshank (18) (JSRE, PRK, MT). The only other report received for July concerned JEB, observed during an early morning round of golf at Discovery Bay on 12th by a bold pair of Banded Rails.

August

A visit to Mai Po on 5th produced about 1,000 waders of 18 species including seven Asiatic Dowitchers (one adult and six juveniles), 600 Redshanks, many of which were juveniles, 260 Greenshanks, 12 adult Red-necked Stints and two Grey-rumped Sandpipers. Other interesting birds included two Chestnut Bitterns, a male Watercock, a Gull-billed Tern and two leucopsis White Wagtails (JSRE, PRK). A Common Tern was seen off Po Toi on 18th (PRK, JEB) around which time early reports began to be received of Asian Paradise Flycatchers and Arctic Warblers from Hong Kong Island and Tai Po Kau (MH). Large numbers of waders similar to those on 5th were again noted at Mai Po on 19th; they included five Asiatic Dowitchers. The two Chestnut Bitterns were also still present. In addition a Yellow Wagtail was heard and a female Peregrine was seen, while two adult Bonelli's Eagles were noted at Lok Ma Chau (PRK). A Forest Wagtail was seen at Tai Po Kau on 22nd (MH) and was still present on 27th. The 23rd saw the first Brown Shrike of the return passage at Tai

Mei Tuk (RWL). Two Eastern Crowned Warblers were found near Sai Kung on 24th and the following day a Swinhoe's Snipe was observed at the tower hide, Mai Po (MH). Two Arctic Warblers were observed at Mount Davis, also on 25th, along with several Large White-rumped Swifts (PRK). On 26th a Forest Wagtail was seen near Lai Chi Wo (JH) with a Bonelli's Eagle nearby, while at Shek O another Forest Wagtail was trapped (AJG). The season's first Tricolour Flycatcher was noted at Tai Po Kau on 29th (RWL), and the month closed with another Eastern Crowned Warbler trapped on the Peak (AJG) and an unstreaked Acrocephalus warbler reported at Mai Po, both on 31st (RWL).

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LEADER</u>	<u>VENUE</u>	<u>TIME</u>
23 September Sunday	Mike Chalmers Li Wai-ki	Tai Po Kau Meet: car park Bi-lingual	0700
29 September Saturday	Nigel Croft	Ting Kok Road Meet: Tai Mei Tuk Visitors' Centre	0730
7 October Sunday	Simba Chan Mike Turnbull	Mai Po *+*+* Bi-lingual	1100 - 1700
13 October Saturday	Mike Bishop	Tai Po Kau Meet: car park	0730
21 October Sunday	C.Y. Lam Richard Stott	Tsim Bei Tsui *+*+ Bi-lingual	1000 - 1600
22 October Monday		AFRICA REVISITED - NEW WWF OFFICE 1 Tramway Path, Central an illustrated talk on South Africa, Namibia and Botswana by Peter and Peggy Stevens	1830
27 October Saturday	John Edge	Tai Long Wan Meet: top deck Tolo Harbour ferry. Check time with HK & YF Co. Leaves from Ma Liu Shui where parking is difficult/impossible - best take KCR.	Ferry: 0715
28 October Sunday	Stewart Smith	Ping Yeung Meet: where road ends in Ping Yeung village	0730
3 November Saturday	John Burton	Tai Po Kau Meet: car park	0730

4 November Sunday	Li Wai Ki Nigel Croft	Mai Po *^^ COMPLETE ENCLOSED FORM Bi-lingual	1100 - 1700
10 November Saturday	Wendy Young	Lam Tsuen Valley Meet: Chung Uk Tsuen car park	0730
17 November Saturday	John Edge	Lamma Island Meet: phone John for details	0630
25 November Sunday	Stewart Smith	Sai Kung Meet: phone Stewart for details	0730
1 December Saturday	John Edge	Wu Kau Tang Meet: car park	0700
2 December Sunday	Richard Stott Simba Chan	Mai Po*^^ COMPLETE ENCLOSED FORM Bi-lingual	1000 - 1600
9 December Sunday	Mike Turnbull	Hok Tau reservoir Meet: reservoir car park off Sha Tau Kok road	0700
		followed by CURRY LUNCH - FPT (formerly PTU) COMPLETE ENCLOSED FORM	1200
16 December Sunday	Gavin Cooper C.Y. Lam	Tsim Bei Tsui* COMPLETE ENCLOSED FORM Bi-lingual	1100 - 1700
30 December Sunday		CHRISTMAS COUNT	
5 January Saturday	John Edge	Kap Lung Trail Meet: lower Tai Mo Shan car park	0730

Leaders are requested to find a substitute leader if they are unable to take an outing.

++ If any member wishes to use the coach but did not send off the form provided in the last bulletin please phone Janet Stott to see whether there are still seats available (\$30 coach hire charge).

* A coach will collect members from Kowloon Tong KCR one hour before assembly time and will return them there at the end of the outing. Please return the form at the end of this bulletin with a cheque for \$30 (\$15 for students) made out to the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society if you wish to use the coach. Please bring drink and packed lunch.

^^ Would members who plan to use their own transport to reach this venue please inform the leader in advance as problems with permits can arise if the Mai Po outings are over-subscribed.