



THE HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

BULLETIN NO. 144

JUNE 1992

Society News

1991 AGM

The 1991 AGM was held on April 7th. The minutes of the meeting, including the Chairman's report, are enclosed with this Bulletin. **The new committee members are listed below.**

Wanted for the Bird Report.

If any member has **good quality photographs of any of Hong Kong's more unusual birds**, the editor would very much like to hear from you. The editor would also appreciate some advice from **any member with graphic design skills**. If you can help with either request, please contact **Verity Picken**.

Illustrations

Once again the Bulletin is benefitting from Jeremy Pearse's line drawings. Jeremy has now left Hong Kong, so unless someone else would like to try their hand, this will be the last illustrated Bulletin.

Exchange Trip To Guizhou

CY Lam is coordinating this trip in **late September**, which will be hosted by the College of Education of Guizhou. In November representatives of the College will make a reciprocal visit to Hong Kong. The intention is that each host group will pay the expenses of the visitors. This is an excellent opportunity to make valuable contacts with mainland birdwatchers. There are still a few places available so if you are interested, contact **CY Lam for full details**.

Hong Kong Ecological Map

WWF Hong Kong need your help to make this project a success. **The response from members so far has been very poor**. So, if you know of any sites of interest or areas of habitat in odd places let WWF know. **Do not rely on someone else to send in the information**. If you do not let WWF know about the site it could well be omitted from the Map, which could have serious implications for future development.

The next committee meeting will be in early August 1992. If any member wishes a matter raised, please contact one of the committee members listed below.

Gavin Cooper

Richard Stott

Ian Tyzzer

Mike Chalmers

Simba Chan

Liz Leven

David Melville

C Y Lam

Li Wai-ki

Fox Wong Kai-on

Verity Picken

Records Committee Answerphone Messages

The Records Committee Secretary received a declining number of verbal reports during the spring. A lot of people listened to the recorded message giving the day's news, but **less people actually left any news on the answerphone!** This is a serious problem, not least for the monthly reports in the Bulletin, which are mostly compiled from the verbal reports, since written reports do not usually arrive in time for inclusion. **No messages on the answerphone means less upto date information circulating, and very brief monthly reports.** Please take note and make the effort during the coming autumn.

Name Changes

In order to reconcile some of the more esoteric Hong Kong English bird names with the names used by the rest of the world, the committee has agreed to make the following revisions:-

Existing Name	Proposed Name
Von Shrenk's Little Bittern	Shrenk's Bittern
Horsfield's Goshawk	Chinese Goshawk
Grey-faced Buzzard Eagle	Grey-faced Buzzard
Grey-rumped Sandpiper	Grey-tailed Tattler
Large White-rumped Swift	Pacific Swift
Yellow-bellied Wren-warbler	Yellow-bellied Prinia
Brown Wren-warbler (<i>Prinia subflava</i>)	Plain Prinia (<i>Prinia inornata</i>)
Collared Siva	Striated Yuhina
Masked Bunting	Black-faced Bunting
Von Shrenk's Reed Warbler	Black-browed Reed Warbler
Tricolour Flycatcher	Yellow-rumped Flycatcher
Robin Flycatcher	Mugimaki Flycatcher
Mongolian Sandplover	Lesser Sandplover

Mai Po Update Boardwalk Gate

Since the police took over the patrolling of the Border Fence, the lock of the Boardwalk Gate has been changed. **It will now be open from 6.00 to 18.00 every day**, so there is no need for a 'Boardwalk Key' anymore. However, **only holders of AFD Mai Po Permits and Frontier Closed Permits will be allowed to walk through the Gate, and only WWF HK mem-**

bers have the privilege to use the Boardwalk. If you find anyone infringing these rules, please contact any WWF HK staff immediately.

Overcrowding in Boardwalk Hide

In late March/early April, there were some problems with the Boardwalk Hide being used during the weekends by large groups of visiting birdwatchers, resulting in local birdwatchers being unable to get in! Whilst we realise that it is important to let visitors get their money's worth, and to see how vital Mai Po is as a feeding site for migrant birds, these visitors can come mid-week, but locals can usually only visit Mai Po at weekends. Therefore, a new rule will have to be implemented, whereby **the Boardwalk hide will only be open to foreign birdwatching groups during the week, with the weekend reserved for locals.** Hopefully, this will suit everyone. There is only one Boardwalk Hide, and it has to be shared by a lot of people, including the school groups.

Earthmoving

The earthmoving in front of the Tower hide is finished and you can use the Hide to watch the waterfowl in summer.

Fishermen

We have been trying our best to cooperate with the various government offices to free the mudflat in front of the Boardwalk Hide from fishermen and mudskipper collectors. If you find the fishing activities disturbing, please write to the **Director of Agriculture and Fisheries, 393, Canton Road, Kowloon**, to express your concern.

Birdwatchers' Notebook

Don't forget the Birdwatchers' Notebook near the shop of the Peter Scott Field Studies centre. If you find anything of interest -birds, mammals, reptiles etc. - please **note it down in the book.**

BIG BIRD RACE 1992

(Richard Stott)

By now in the hustle and bustle of Hong Kong the Big Bird Race is but a distant memory. Much of the intervening period has been exceedingly wet,

and the weather on the day was entirely consistent with that. The morning visit of the HKBWS team to Tai Po Kau was the scene of an amazing deluge, not dissimilar to the opening of a Hammer horror film! Torrential rain, lightning and low cloud. All that was missing was the darkened mansion with an ancient retainer holding open the creaking door to welcome in the innocent strangers!

The best news is that the total funds raised by all teams was HK\$1.46 million. In spite of the appalling weather the total species count for all teams was 240, a new record for the event. The latest figures for the amounts raised by the teams and the team results are as follows:

Jardine Pacific	155 species	\$65,825
Police	154 species	\$68,899
Wandering Tattlers	153 species	\$55,820
WWF HK	149 species	\$140,498
Professionals	148 species	\$303,862
Stonechats	148 species	\$80,303
Locals	143 species	\$69,244
Mai Po	142 species	\$51,099
HKBWS	142 species	\$85,662
Peregrine	139 species	\$50,791
Jebsen	138 species	\$67,919
Army	137 species	\$43,804
China Resources	137 species	\$62,512
Birdbrains	136 species	\$90,445
HKR International	124 species	\$54,990
All Stars	124 species	\$75,438
Emperor Intn'l	110 species	\$45,302

There were six people who guessed the winning teams and got the total species count exactly, and it was Keith Wilson, the captain of the winning team, who won after a draw was made so the Zeiss binoculars went to a good home.

I would like to thank the members of all the teams who all put in considerable effort in fund raising, but most of all the members of this Society who so generously supported the event and helped in the most material way to make it a success. Without your support, the event would simply be a curiosity.

OVERSEAS BIRDING

Target - Palawan Peacock Pheasant

(Gavin Cooper)

A Christmas trip to the Philippines in late December brought on the twitching urge again,

so well before departure I had phoned Tim Fisher in Manila and agreed and organised a return visit to Palawan island. Bob Ferguson, who was visiting the country at the same time, agreed to join us.

Travelling round the Philippines at any time is not terribly relaxing and at holiday times can be a real nightmare. Mags and I had to travel south on Boxing Day and tried for a whole hour to fight our way onto a bus in her local town, to get us to Manila, without success. By then my nerves were just a little frayed and I asked her brother for help and within minutes he had a jeepney hired and this took us all the way, at reasonable cost, and delivered us safe and sound, parched and punctual at the front door of the Prince of Wales pub in Makati. Tim was there and Bob and Christine arrived a little later.

We flew out early the next morning to Puerto Princessa. A jeepney was waiting for us there and, after doing the necessary shopping we took off for the three and a half road journey to the coast close to St. Paul's National Park, a 50,000 hectare forest reserve. The road was foul and poor old Bob was not well so we were all very happy on arriving at the sea and getting a cold beer. By some awful mischance we had left it off the shopping list.

A lot of raptors were seen during the journey but very few of the large ones were identified. A short trip in a banca brought us to St. Paul's at about midday. It was very peaceful and the place was full of bird song. We quickly nailed the first of my new birds, the Golden-eyed Bulbul, *Hypsipetes palawanensis* one of four bulbuls on the island and one which had escaped me on my previous visits. The Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea* was soon found as were many other species which I already knew. After settling in we wandered back over the hills to the approach road and birded until nightfall.

This produced a number of interesting species including the Great Slaty Woodpecker *Mulleripicus pulverulentus*, Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus*, the Palawan Hornbill *Anthracoseros marcheii*, and a lone Philippine Cockatoo *Cacatua haematuropygia*, a seriously endangered species. We also found a decent little restaurant that had recently set up shop on the beach.

We were off at dawn the next morning to take a man-made trail into the forest. I say 'man-made' as much of it consisted of climbing up and down very steep series of wooden steps. Apart from the Peacock Pheasant we were also really trying

hard to find three of the five babblers on the island. One I had already seen, one is restricted to an area further south and the other three should have been where we were. Although we had tapes of their calls they remained obstinately quiet and still and only one showed itself and then so swiftly and briefly we couldn't identify it. Even I didn't dare string it!

However, we quickly claimed another lifer when we found the Palawan Hill Blue Flycatcher *Cyomix lemprieri* (which used to be lumped with *C. banyumas*). It proved to be quite common and easy to find. The next bird was also a flycatcher and my number two target for the trip, the spectacular Blue Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone cyanescens*. Even the female of this species is brilliant. It too was not uncommon although there appeared to be a lot more females than males.

On the way back I wandered down a side trail into a very interesting looking valley and on the path came across an almost perfect set of feathers from a male Palawan Peacock Pheasant, no trace of meat left on it. It was, unfortunately, as close as I was to get to this bird. A month or so later Tim took a Kingbird group to the same area and they found a water hole which the pheasant was using.

The following morning with a slightly later start we turned up at least two Megapodes, *Megapodius freycinet* close to the beach and right where Tim expected them to be. Back in the forest we found the really beautiful and aptly named Lovely Sunbird *Aethopyga shelleyi*, plus several Palawan Tits *Parus amabilis* and in the afternoon, while having a swim, a Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bicolor*, was spotted in a tree top down the beach.

A final search was made the following morning and then we left at midday for the journey back to our hotel in Puerto Princessa. We stopped on the way to look over an area of ponds which were full of waders.

Very early the next morning we were back in the jeepney and on our way to the open prison area, at Iwahig, and the Balsahan trail. It was still dark when we arrived and despite a lot of time and effort failed to raise the Javan Frogmouth or any of the babblers, except for a short burst of song from one of them. But we did find the Philippine Whistler *Pachycephala plateni* and there were lots of Edible-nest Swiftlets *Aerodramus fuciphagus* overhead all day.

This is a very interesting area and as the trail

runs beside a river most of the time one can keep cool with constant dips and search for kingfishers at the same time. It is, generally speaking, an easy walk, at least to where we turned around. If you have the energy to fight your way through the forest thereafter and up the mountain the pheasant can also be found there. We looked over the ponds in the prison area on the way out and I was almost certain I had found a female Bluethroat, which would have been new for the Philippines, but what with trying to balance my scope on uneven ground and fighting off prisoners and warders trying to flog me religious carvings (the other two having made a tactical retreat) I let the thing get away. But we did get Palawan's second Avocet record, Tim having got the first the previous year.

Another large area of ponds nearby was thoroughly searched and new species constantly being added to the list until we finally called it a day at dusk. We flew back to Manila early the following morning with a list of 113 species and twelve new ones in my pocket.

This was a thoroughly enjoyable, if short, visit to Palawan. The conditions at St. Pauls are a trifle basic and although we had booked our accommodation, a mob of back-packers had commandeered most of it so that Mags and I were billeted in the Manager's quarters. One has to bring one's own food and Tim did most of the cooking. Apart from the wide variety of birds there are quite a number of mammals and animals to be seen, such as monkeys, large lizards and Short-toed Otters. There was no entrance fee at the time we visited but one has now been introduced and this may keep out the poorer element of tourist?

Winter Birds in Hokkaido, Japan February 1992

(Jerry Ziarno)

Although I formerly lived in Japan for several years and had visited there frequently, I had never taken the opportunity to enjoy the winter birding in Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan. So, when a bird-watching friend informed me of a trip being planned by the Japan Wild Bird Society over a four-day weekend in February, I leaped at the invitation, not really knowing what to expect.

The first surprise was upon my arrival at Haneda airport in Tokyo for the flight to Kushiro to find that they were expecting 45 people to show for the trip. However, as one might expect, everything was very well organised with name tags, schedules with bus seats and room assignments,

listing of anticipated birds, exact times of bus arrivals and departures etc... Everything was in Japanese and, while I have some Japanese capability, my friend provided invaluable assistance in seeing that I did not get left behind and in translating the names of the birds.

Upon arrival at Kushiro, approximately 90 minutes flight from Tokyo (Haneda), the tour in Hokkaido was by comfortable, albeit sometimes overly warm, bus. The tour covered the eastern side of Hokkaido and visited varied habitats from the crane sanctuary at Tsurui-mura near Kushiro to the coastal areas near Nemuro and Rausa, a large lake, Furen-ko, and forest areas near a hot-springs spa, Kawayu.

Accommodation was quite good, but another surprise was having to share a Japanese style room with three complete strangers, none of whom spoke a word of English and one being a chain smoker. Food was mostly Japanese style, seafood and delicious, except for the offering of broiled Sea-lion which was dark red, strong tasting and a little on the tough side.

Considering that, at times, the temperatures were down to minus 15C with winds of 20-30 knots, the birding was excellent. The targeted birds were the Red-crowned Crane, Steller's and White-tailed Sea Eagles, Whooper Swan, Harlequin Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Grey-headed Woodpecker and Marsh Tit. We did manage good sightings of all of these, in fact, the chance to see six White-tailed and four Steller's Sea Eagles in the same group of trees at about 200 metres was awe-inspiring.

We tallied 54 species in all including, in addition to the target birds mentioned previously, Tufted Duck, Greater Scaup, Black and White-winged Scoters, Great Black-headed, Glaucous and Glaucous-winged Gulls, Marbled Murrelet, Common Guillemot, Spectacled Guillemot, Great-spotted Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tit, Red Crossbill, Bullfinch, Hawfinch, Raven, and the red-headed subspecies *brandtii* of our Jay.

The hot bath and a few cups of hot sake were a welcome end to the long, cold but rewarding days birding on the north island of Japan. I would heartily recommend this trip to anyone but be sure to bring plenty of cold weather clothes and then some. Some capability in the Japanese language or a reliable translator will be necessary. If anyone is interested in information on the Japan Wild Bird Society or the dates of the Hokkaido trips next winter, I would be glad to help.

Taiwan 12-19 April 1992

(Michael Leven)

I had never really given much thought to birding in Taiwan until a friend from UK suggested tying in a trip with his visit to Hong Kong, but a look at the "Birds of Taiwan" soon convinced me that there were a few "good birds", including, of course, the 17 or so endemics (in the report below bird names correspond to those in "Birds of Taiwan" except where recent "splits" are discussed).

Four of us went on the trip, and though car hire was arranged from Hong Kong, and we had a rough idea for an itinerary (thanks to PRK), we let the details and accommodation develop as we went along.

After arriving at Taipei in the early afternoon and collecting the car, we drove straight to Kukuang, arriving there after dark. This was a stake-out for Taiwan Blue Magpie which we soon found the next morning, but was also good for a number of birds of the lower-level deciduous forest including Grey-headed Pygmy Woodpecker, Black-browed Barbet, Collared Finchbill, the Taiwan race of Hwamei, Vinous-throated Parrotbill and Varied Tit. We were also pleased to get another endemic, Steere's Liocichla, though we later found that this species is almost ubiquitous even being present in town parks. Kukuang is a tourist spot on account of the waterfall, (or was it the hot springs?), along the river. Anyway, the river itself was worthwhile with Brown Dippers, Plumbeous Water Redstarts and Brown-throated Sand Martins.

Our next stop was the Wushan/Tsuifeng area in the central mountains where we stayed for four days, working the higher deciduous forest, the conifers above this and the scrub and bamboos up to 2500 metres (where there was still snow on the ground and frost in the mornings) on both sides of Hohuanshan. Here we found most of the endemics that we were looking for: Taiwan Sibia, Collared Bush Robin, Taiwan Barwing, Taiwan Laughingthrush, Taiwan Yuhina, the superb Taiwan Yellow Tit and Taiwan Firecrest, Taiwan Whistling Thrush, Gould's Shortwing (now split from White-browed) and Taiwan Island Thrush (split from the Island Thrush complex). Other good birds were Hen Harrier, Ashy Woodpigeon and Japanese Green Pigeon, Grey-headed and White-backed Woodpeckers, Alpine Accentor, Little Forktail, White-tailed and White-browed Bush Robins, Russet Scrub Warbler, Vivid Niltava, Blyth's (Golden) Parrotbill, Vinaceous Rosefinch,

Siskin and Grey-headed Bullfinch. We found Chinese Bamboo Partridge easily but missed, despite much effort, the two endemic pheasants: Swinhoe's and Mikado.

As a break from the mountains we took the road down the Taroko Gorge to the east coast and back. The drive was four hours each way but even a hardened twitcher could not fail to be bowled over by the stupendous mountain scenery, the gorge itself and the sometimes hair-raising road down it. Of course, there was a bird to see at the end of the gorge - the endemic Styan's Bulbul which is confined to the east coast. After seeing a few, as well as the numerous hybrids with Chinese Bulbul, it easily secured the vote for the worst endemic of the trip. However, the trip to the east coast was not in vain. Looking out to sea at the quite inappropriate time of 12.00 noon we were greeted by the sight of a steady passage of birds up the coast. In only one hour we saw flocks of Garganey, Curlew-sandpipers, Red Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Far-eastern Curlew, Whimbrel and Common Tern as well as odd Red-necked Phalaropes, Whiskered Terns and numerous small waders too far out to identify. Best off all though, were White-faced Shearwaters, smaller shearwaters tentatively identified as Wedge-tailed and a single all dark petrel. What would it have been like on a promontory and at dawn?

Unfortunately, our last two days were something of an anticlimax. Leaving the Wushan area we headed south to Hsitou in, as it turned out, a vain attempt to find the endemic Taiwan Hill Partridge. Birding, in the area would probably have not seemed too bad if we had gone there first, and many of the endemics were present, but, as well as missing the partridge, we found very few new birds - the best was probably the Taiwan race of Grey-sided Laughingthrush which is now sometimes split as Scaly-headed Laughingthrush.

Overall, however, I would recommend Taiwan - especially to someone interested in his "China" list. Travel is easy, food good, accommodation not bad (but more like Hong Kong than mainland China prices), scenery superb and most of the endemics easy to get. I think that we were also lucky with the weather with only half a day spoilt by rain. In retrospect a shorter trip of four days would have got us all the birds that we were looking for and we should have tried to contact local birders in advance for more gen on the pheasants. A full trip report will be deposited in the HKBWS library (when I get round to writing it). Meanwhile, I would be happy to offer advice to anyone contemplating a visit.

Guilin, Guangxi, China 2-4 November 1991

(Scott E. Shaum)

Due to the beauty and popularity of the region, the city of Guilin has mushroomed into a major tourist spot. When I was there in 1984 there were only a handful of hotels, now there are well over twenty. Of course this has had its impact on the area, but I discovered that there were still small pockets of 'wilderness' with some decent bird-watching.

The best way to get around is by rented bike. The less populated, agricultural areas produced most of the common birds of Southern China. Probably the best areas to explore were around the temple grounds, and some of the more touristy areas that focused on the unique mountain features of the area. Here, in very small, wooded and bushy patches, we found an abundance of mixed flocks. The two most common birds of these flocks were Yellow-bellied Tits and Yellow-browed Warblers. I also came across a single Pallas's Warbler, and working its way around the bushes was an Aberrant Bush Warbler, as well as a few other unidentified Cettia or Bradypterus sp. These birds seemed to be unbothered by the crowds. In fact I was probably the most disturbed, by the people watching me watch the birds!

The final morning I was able to get out, was the most productive and produced a flock of 15+ Vinous-throated Parrotbills working through some underbush. Several of the green-backed version of the Great Tit were seen and another Pallas's Warbler in with the mixed flocks. The number of Yellow-bellied Tits was so large that I am surprised at their absence in HK last winter.

The highlight of a trip to Guilin is the day-long boat trip down the Lee River to Yangshoa. Birding was frustrating as I frequently saw babbler sp. along the shore or heard large mixed flocks too far away to identify. However the scenery more than made up for it. The mountains there are so beautiful they steal the show! Some good birds were seen, though; Merlin (x2), Collared Finchbill, plenty of Blue Rock Thrush, Daurian Redstart, Asian Barred Owlet, and the most numerous bird Plumbeous Water Redstart. We saw well over 100 males and about six females.

Unfortunately, captive birds were also plentiful. When we docked at a small village, a young man came up with a freshly shot female pheasant sp. and another man had a live Asian Barred Owlet. I also saw many people with firearms shooting into

trees along the way. Back in town I saw a male Ring-necked Pheasant outside a restaurant, The cage bird of choice was Hwamei, which may explain why I only saw one in the wild.

Despite the short time in the area, and the population, the birdwatching was surprisingly good, though one had to be creative and look around a bit. I am sure that searching further into the countryside would produce even more.

OUTING REPORTS

Tai Long Wan 25 April 1992

(John Edge)

Fourteen of us gathered a total of 73 species (plus several unidentified accipiters); not bad, considering we only had four raptor and four wader species. Interesting birds were one Yellow and three Chestnut Bitterns at Ham Tin paddies; at least five Black Bazas; five Grey-rumped Sandpipers at Chek Keng; a Swinhoe's Snipe at Ham Tin; at least 25 Black-naped Terns showing a distinct interest in their old breeding site on Kung Chau; a Barred Owlet at Sai Wan; up to four Broad-billed Rollers; some late Rubythroats and a flock of Greater Necklaced Laughing-thrushes (new for the area). The famous paddies were a little disappointing in terms of variety but they did produce the day's 'mega' - a superb Baillon's Crane, almost two years to the day since the last one there. Stewart Smith went into ecstasy and we all retired to the pub.

Many thanks to Ian Tyzzer and John Burton for organising the police launch to get us from Ma Liu Shui to Chek Keng (via Kung Chau), and also the airconditioned bus, complete with cold box, which took us from High Island back to Ma Liu Shui. All extremely civilised and much better than the now-defunct HYF.

Tsim Bei Tsui 26 April 1992

(Michael Leven)

Only about twelve members turned up for this coach "tour" so, instead of splitting up, the participants were conveyed along to the end of the concrete road (by private car, the bus driver wasn't moving an inch further than he was contracted to do) and meandered back by the ponds and the fence. Unfortunately, it was a clear, sunny day and the tide was high during the entire trip. As a consequence, there were no waders on

the seaward side of the fence and, in the absence of undisturbed drained ponds, very few on the landward side either.

A late Bluethroat as we left the cars was a good start, but we were soon reduced to looking at Yellow Wagtails, Red-throated Pipits and (dare I admit it) wren-warblers along the bunds. Fortunately, a late Grey-headed Lapwing and a few Tringa species on the pond nearest the police post were some compensation for what was otherwise a long, hot and rather disappointing walk.

Mai Po 3 May 1992

(John Edge)

This outing, on a relatively dry and cool day, did not produce anything unexpected for the twenty-five or so participants: Chan Ming-ming had kindly replaced Simba Chan as joint leader. The total of 74 species included those reported by others but not seen by the outing; this total included 21 species of wader, of which the notables included up to three Australian Curlews, three Asiatic Dowitchers and one Sanderling - these all fell into the 'reported' category.

Some of the Asiatic Golden Plovers in front of the tower hide were in full breeding plumage and looked spectacular, as did the Broad-billed Sandpipers on the scrape. A flock of 40 striking White-winged Black Terns (plus two Whiskered) and a perched pair of Pied Kingfishers cheered us up somewhat. It was also good to see a flock of Chinese Starlings in the vicinity of the car park, up to two Sand Martins over nearby ponds and a superb Grey Wagtail with a black throat.

Luk Keng 17 May

(Peter Kennerley)

A very good turnout for the now traditional late May swamp-bash. The group stomped off enthusiastically through the marsh with great expectations, but after an hour or so of futile searching, little of interest had been seen. Only after going through the Phragmites patch did we succeed in flushing our main quarry, a female Shrenk's Bittern, plus a handful of Yellow Bitterns.

By this time things were getting rather hot and sticky, and enthusiasm was lacking so we decided to wander back towards the road. On doing so we stumbled across a Locustella warbler, which the cognoscenti were of the opinion was a Pallas's Warbler. As we had had the foresight to

bring nets with us, these were quickly erected, but the bird evaded capture and could not be refound in the area in which it had landed. Some ten minutes later, it, or another individual, was put up in another patch of grass, and no problems were encountered this time, as the bird gently fluttered into the net - only to be revealed as a Lanceolated Warbler! Red-faces all round or a classic case of the two bird theory? Brimming with renewed vigour, we stomped off for another bash through the marsh, but this turned out to be as futile as the first attempt with three distant displaying Black Bazas (or were they Crested Mynas?) being the highlight.

After this it was off to the Noodle Stall, where Mike Chalmers was buying the beers. Do not miss the next exciting instalment in September!

Mai Po 17 May 1992

(C.Y. Lam)

This coach outing effectively marked the end of the 1991/92 birding season for those without their own means of transport. Seventeen members turned up at Mai Po undeterred by the prospect of rain. Weather was kind to us - heavy rain did not fall until after we had left Mai Po.

A total of 44 species were seen, rather satisfying considering that we did not try very hard. The tower hide was the most productive spot, from where we spotted two Asiatic Dowitchers and two Black-tailed Godwits among other waders. Breeding Great Egrets with black bills were also noted with interest.

The highlight of the day was no doubt the sight of two Mandarins mating in front of the "disabled hide" in close range. It was indeed eye-opening because it took place in water and the female was submerged during the process. The female would have suffocated to death if not for the fact that it was over quickly enough. The birds then flew off. We later saw them again from a different angle and derived much pleasure from seeing the drake guarding its partner at rest on the ground with love and passion (our imagination perhaps).

Concerning birds in flight, Pratincoles and Yellow Bitterns dashing about provided some pleasant sights. An Osprey flew about leisurely and good views were had by all. The hundreds of White-winged Black Terns plus some ten Little Terns along the fence made the long walk back to the carpark all the more worthwhile.

Tai Po Kau Breeding Bird Survey Saturday 23rd May

(Mike Turnbull)

A total of eight members were at the entrance to the Reserve at the perhaps discouragingly early hour of 6am., splitting into three groups who were to cover the higher and middle altitude areas, with the survey co-ordinator left to patrol the lower paths.

Both groups who scaled the heights to survey the higher areas were rewarded with sightings of Red-winged Crested Cuckoos. An excited party of four birds seen at very close quarters must have been particularly spectacular.

For the other group, and the lonely leader, the real highlights of the morning were non-avian - a large and fearsome Wild Boar sow with a number of piglets, and a delightful Barking Deer, which walked out onto the Red Walk.

As for the birds, the most significant discovery was that of a group of four juvenile Red-headed Tits. All the species which previous surveys have consistently found were certainly present, while non-breeders recorded included a minimum of six Rufous Turtle Doves, and at least two Arctic Warblers, one of which was in song.

REPORT ON THE BIRDS

(These unchecked reports include sightings of possible escapes)

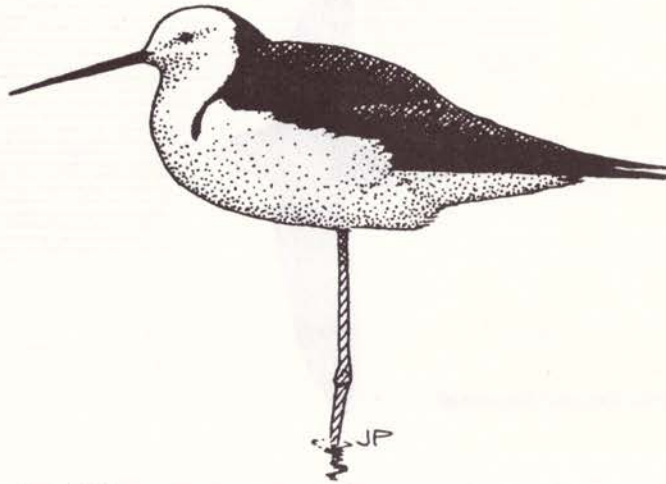
1 March to 31 May

(Paul Leader)

March

The Slaty-legged Crake was still present on the 1st and also in Kowloon Park there was a Ruddy Sparrow (CYL). The first winter Kittiwake was again seen from the Boardwalk (JH) whilst at Tsim Bei Tsui a male Baer's Pochard, the hybrid American Wigeon and a Black-tailed Gull were seen (PRK,PJL). Three Oriental Skylarks were still at the Mai Po reclamation on the same date (PRK,PJL). On the 4th at Mai Po there were six Black-tailed and one Brown-headed Gull and also a Ruddy Crake (VBP). Two Brown-headed Gulls were present on the 6th. The abysmal wet weather during this period produced exceptional numbers of Asian House Martins with 110 on 6th

(PJL,RWL), over 200 on 7th and 30 on 8th (PJL,PRK). One and two Red-rumped Swallows were recorded on 6th and 7th respectively and on 7th over 1500 Barn Swallows were noted, quite a high number for so early, and, interestingly, a juvenile was among the birds trapped, suggesting that, as occasionally happens in Europe, early fledged birds of more southerly populations migrate north after fledging. Also at Mai Po on the 7th were one Bluethroat, one Japanese Quail and one Water Pipit (PJL *et al*). Another Japanese Quail was at the Mai Po reclamation the following day along with single Yellow-breasted and Chestnut-eared Buntings and an Oriental Skylark (PJL,PRK).



Black-winged Stilt

Three Dalmatian Pelicans, a male Pochard and six Baer's Pochards were at Mai Po on 13th (RWL) and in Tai Po Kau two Sulphur-breasted Warblers, one Eastern Crowned Warbler, 40 Black Bulbuls, 11 White-vented Needletails and a Grey-faced Buzzard were seen (PJL,VBP) and a trip to the Mai Po reclamation produced five Japanese Quail and one Chestnut-eared Bunting.

On 14th, Shing Mun Reservoir produced 2 Rufous-necked Scimitar Babblers, 20 Black Bulbuls, one Blyth's Leaf Warbler, two Red-headed Tits, one Velvet-fronted Nuthatch and three White-bellied Yuhinas (DAD), whilst at Tai Po Kau there was another report of the Chestnut-crowned Warbler, an Eastern Crowned Warbler and three Red-headed Tits (WLY). At Tsim Bei Tsui an adult Great Black-headed Gull was seen (RWL) and at Mai Po a Pale Thrush was trapped. The Lesser Frigatebird was seen again on 15th still coming into roost on the Peak. Thirty-five Red-breasted Mergansers were at Tsim Bei Tsui, two Common Rosefinches at Ping Yeung and a Sulphur-breasted Warbler in Tai Po Kau (WLY) also on 15th.

A Jay was recorded from Cheung Shui Tan (GJC) on 18th and on 20th a Barred Owlet was

seen in the Lam Tsuen Valley. Netting at Mai Po on 21st yielded singles of Bluethroat, Yellow-breasted Bunting, Grey Thrush and Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler. A Chestnut Bittern was also seen (PJL,PRK). At Ho Chung on 26th were 20 needletails (sp.) and 12 Black Bulbuls (MH).

The first Nordmann's Greenshank of the spring was seen from the Boardwalk on 27th along with a first-winter Common Gull (PRK). At Shuen Wan on the same date there was a Bittern and a male *lugens* White Wagtail (RWL). At Mai Po on 28th a Chestnut Bittern, 1000 House Swifts, 100 Pacific Swifts, four White-vented Needletails (PJL), two Asian House Martins,

one Red-rumped Swallow, 25 Oriental Pratincoles, 190 Black-winged Stilts (DAD), a male Pochard (RWL) and a Blue-and-white Flycatcher were seen (FW *et al*).

The following day one or two White-vented Needletails were reported from Shing Mun Reservoir, Tai Po Kau and Shuen Wan, with three White-vented and two needletails sp. at the latter site (RWL). There appeared to be a secondary influx of Black Bulbuls on the same date with 110 at Shing Mun (DAD) and 170 at Tai Po Kau (MT). Also at Mai Po was a Crested Honey Buzzard (which remained until 1 April), a Blue-and-white Flycatcher (MH) and a Ferruginous Flycatcher (GJC). At Tsim Bei Tsui a first winter Common Gull, two Wrynecks, two Black-tailed Hawfinches, 20 Asian House Martins, two Red-rumped Swallows, 50 Red-necked, 30 Temminck's and two Long-toed Stints were seen (MRL). At Mai Po on 31st were ten Asian House Martins, 40 Chinese Starlings, one Black-tailed Gull, 300 Curlew-sandpipers, one Nordmann's Greenshank and a male Pochard (PJL).

April

The first half of the month was continuously cloudy, cold and wet. With no real let-up in the weather there was a huge accumulation of

migrants in Hong Kong and a very obvious delay in the departure of many winter visitors. The flycatcher passage was possibly the best ever.

Japanese Paradise Flycatchers were recorded on six dates between 1st and 13th, mainly in Tai Po Kau with a peak count there of six on 8th. A total of 31 bird-days were reported compared with two last spring (which was perhaps one of the worst springs ever for flycatchers). Asian Paradise Flycatchers were reported from Tai Po Kau on 8th and 11th (t2), Mount Austin on 13th and Kowloon Park on 15th. Blue-and-white Flycatchers were reported from Shing Mun (four on 5th), Mai Po (one on 6th), Kowloon Park (two on 9th and one on 11th), Tai Po Kau (one on 12th), Mount Austin (two on 13th), and singles in Tai Po Kau and on Stonecutters Island on 18th. Only one was recorded last spring!

Ferruginous Flycatchers were reported from Kowloon Park on 9th, 10th (3) and 11th and Mount Austin on 13th (5). Two Grey-streaked Flycatchers were at Tai Long Wan on 9th and singles were at Mount Austin on 13th and Lam Tsuen on 18th. Narcissus Flycatchers were recorded in Tai Po Kau on 4th, 8th, 9th, 10th (2), 11th and 15th (3), Mount Austin on 13th (3), Stonecutters on 15th and Repulse Bay on 17th. Three were reported last spring.

The first Spoon-billed Sandpiper of the spring was seen from the Boardwalk on 3rd (PJL *et al*) along with the first April record of Common Gull and, amazingly, the second ever Slender-billed Gull (DC,PJL,RWL *et al*) a first-summer bird which remained until at least 11th, often being seen on the Scrape. Ten Nordmann's Greenshanks, 62 Caspian Terns, two Red-necked Phalaropes, two early White-winged Black Terns, one Little Tern and 1500 Black-headed Gulls were also present, an excellent count for early April. A Brown Crake found outside Tai Wai KCR Station must have surprised the finder (DAD), it remained until at least 6th.

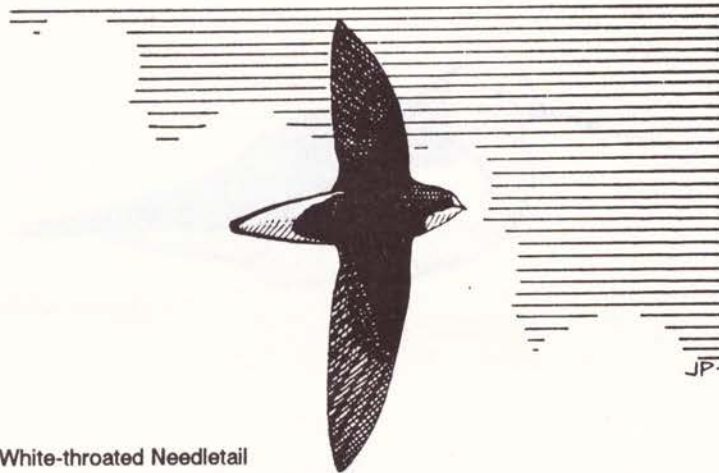
At Mai Po on 4th a male Siberian Blue Robin and

a Pale-legged Leaf Warbler were trapped (PRK *et al*) and Nordmann's Greenshanks increased to 18. Four Swinhoe's Snipe, five Baer's Pochard and two Black-tailed Gulls were also seen and at Lok Ma Chau two Painted Snipe were present (SP). The following day at Shing Mun there were 30 needle-tails and an Eastern Crowned Warbler, whilst at Tai

Po Kau a lucky observer found a Rosy Minivet (MT) which remained until 12th. Twelve Asiatic Dowitchers at Mai Po were the first reported, also present were single Oriental Plovers and Little Whimbrel. A Hobby was also seen and near Tsim Bei Tsui 20 Ashy Minivets were reported.

A Ruddy Crake was at Mai Po on 6th and 7th, an Oriental Plover was again seen, followed by two on 10th and 14th (MH); it would appear that six different birds were involved. Also on 6th there was an Eastern Crowned Warbler in Tai Po Kau with another in Kowloon Park the next day. Another Spoon-billed Sandpiper was present from 7th to 9th, a Little Stint, Chinese Egret and the Slender-billed Gull were also present on the Scrape on 8th (GJC). An interesting feature around this time was the increase in Saunder's Gull numbers (from about two or three at the end of March) to 10-15 between 7th - 12th which were often present on the Scrape, suggesting a small passage. At the Mai Po Police Post also on 8th were 40 White-vented and ten White-throated Needletails, one Ashy Minivet, a Wryneck and 40 Chinese Starlings (RWL). Twenty Black-tailed Hawfinches in Kowloon Park (PJL) was the only record during April, this species is one of only a handful which appeared in lesser numbers than last April. A trip to Tai Long Wan on 9th produced a Chestnut Bittern, two early Grey-streaked Flycatchers, a late Daurian Redstart, a Grey-faced Buzzard (Chek Keng) and at least 150 Red-necked Phalaropes on Tolo Harbour (RWL,SR). Yellow-browed Warblers were particularly obvious during this period with 30 in Tai Po Kau on 9th and 25 in Kowloon Park the following day.

On 10/11 April 17 teams, the highest ever, competed in the Big Bird Race. The winning team,



White-throated Needletail

Jardine Pacific, logged 155 species and the total species for all teams was 240, three more than the previous record. Highlights of the day included single records of Chinese Egret at Mai Po (Emperor), Little Stint at Mai Po (Mai Po), Spoon-billed Sandpiper at Mai Po (All Stars, HKBWS, Police), Slender-billed Gull (the same one as seen during the previous week) at Mai Po (Police), Glaucous Gull at Tsim Bei Tsui (Army), Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo heard at Tai Po Kau (WWF), Eagle Owl at Chau Tau (Wandering Tattlers), Rosy Minivet at Tai Po Kau (Locals), Two-barred Greenish Warbler at Shek Kong (Army) and two different Brown Hawk Owls.

By groups, 14 duck species were recorded (many due to late staying birds in the Waterfowl Collection at Mai Po), 11 birds of prey including Japanese Sparrowhawk but no Grey-faced Buzzards, 43 waders including several Nordmann's Greenshanks, both Japanese and Savannah Nightjars, both White-throated and White-vented Needletails, eight thrushes, 11 flycatchers including Ferruginous, both Paradise and Narcissus Flycatchers and seven buntings including a Rustic Bunting of dubious origin at Cape D'Agui-lar (Birdbrains).

Fifteen Black Bulbuls remained in Tai Po Kau on 12th, when an Eastern Crowned Warbler was also present (PJL,GJC). Gull-billed Tern numbers were exceptional, peaking at 279 on 12th, 239 higher than the previous highest count! The Chinese Egret was again on the Scrape on 12th, along with 15 Black-faced Spoonbills, two European Spoonbills and one White Ibis (PJL,GJC). Three Chestnut-cheeked Starlings were also seen (JH) along with 80 Chinese Starlings. An Oriental Cuckoo was at Mai Po on 12th and 13th (PJL,GJC).

On 14th, late Kestrels were at Tin Shui Wai and

Chau Tau and a Japanese Yellow Bunting was at Tsim Bei Tsui with another the next day at Mai Po (RWL). More exciting birds on the 15th included a male Siberian Thrush in Tai Po Kau (MH), Sooty Tern from Stonecutters Island (JYP) and Eagle Owl at Chau Tau, which was still there on 17th (RWL). A good selection of waders at Shuen Wan from 16th - 20th included four Swinhoe's Snipe and the first six Grey-tailed Tattlers (RWL). Four Spoon-billed Sandpipers were at Mai Po on 17th singles of Oriental Cuckoo, Yellow-browed Bunting (still present next day) and Styan's Grasshopper were trapped. A Japanese Yellow Bunting was also seen (PJL,PRK *et al*). Two hundred and fifty Red-throated Pipits were present on the reclamation near Mai Po along with three Japanese Quail and a late Chestnut-eared Bunting (PRK,PJC,GJC). Two Oriental Cuckoos were in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 18th and the following day at Tsim Bei Tsui came a report of a Pied Harrier and nine Chinese Goshawks (MDW).

On 20th at Mai Po there was a Northern Goshawk and a Little Stint (MRL,RWL), and an intriguing report the following day was of a Common Crane on the football pitches at Sandy Bay (*per* CAV), whilst at Mai Po 581 Asiatic Golden Plovers (PJL) was considerably higher than the previous record count. One hundred and

sixteen Asiatic Dowitchers seen the same day was the peak count for the spring. At Shek Kong on 23rd there were four Black Bazas (GCHC) and at Mai Po there was a Chestnut-cheeked Starling (KS) and a Spoon-billed Sandpiper (GJC).

On 25th there was a Brambling near Tai O, Lantau (MDW) and a Society outing to Tai Long Wan produced three Chestnut Bitterns, four Black Bazas and a Baillon's Crake and 24 Black-naped Terns were seen near Tap Mun (VBP *et al*). At



Red-throated Pipit

Chau Tau the Eagle Owl was seen again (MRL). At Tai Mo Shan on 26th there was one or possibly two Pechora Pipits (PRK) and at Tsim Bei Tsui there was a late Grey-headed Lapwing and a Bluethroat (MRL). Near Tin Shui Wai on 27th there was an Oriental Skylark in song and a male Tristram's Bunting at Mai Po was very unusual (RWL). At Tai Long Wan on 28th were three Chestnut Bitterns and a Chinese Goshawk (RWL *et al*) whilst at Tai Mo Shan a pair of Large Grass Warblers were feeding young (PJL,VBP), the following day there Vinous-throated Parrotbills were also seen carrying food (RWL).

May

Two pairs of Besra were seen at the beginning of the month, one pair at Sheun Wan on 1st and another in Tai Po Kau on 6th (RWL). Two Black Bazas were also at Sheun Wan on 1st. At the Mai Po reclamation a pair of Little Ringed Plover with four five day old chicks were seen on the same day, together with a Swinhoe's Snipe (PJL).

On 3rd at Mai Po there was a Little Stint (PRK), two Sanderling (with another at Tin Sui Wai 5th and 6th), 100 White-winged Black Terns and 10 Sand Martins. The next day there was a Grey-streaked Flycatcher and three Brown Shrikes at Mai Po (PJL), and a Chinese Goshawk and three Arctic Warblers in Aberdeen Country Park (VBP). On 5th and 6th there was another Little Stint and three Nordmann's Greenshank (PJL), with 530 Red-necked Stints on the later date. Poorer weather conditions around this time resulted in

an increase in migrants. Nordmann's Greenshank appeared to reach a second, albeit smaller, peak with seven on 7th, 8th and 10th (PJL,GJC,RWL), and both White-winged Black Tern and Sand Martin were present in very high numbers. White-winged Black Terns peaked on 10th with nearly 700 (PJL,GJC), many of which were seen moving through Mai Po. Sand Martins were recorded on 7th:50; 8/9th:30; 10th:25; 11th:100 (PRL).

On 8th and 16th there was an apparently wild pair of Mandarin Duck at Mai Po (RWL,VBP). On 10th 118 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers was a new high (PJL). Five Arctic Warblers were trapped at Mai Po on 11th, and in Aberdeen Country Park there was a Grey-streaked Flycatcher. On 13th at Mai Po there was another Arctic Warbler, four Brown Shrikes, one female Chestnut Bittern trapped, one Grey-streaked Flycatcher, three Nordmann's Greenshank and a Pechora Pipit (also trapped) (PJL,DSM,FW). From the Boardwalk on 16th there was a Spoon-billed Sandpiper (PJL,GJC,PRK).

An interesting Society outing to Luk Keng on 17th produced a now-expected Shrenk's Bittern, three Black Bazas, one Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler, and a Lanceolated Warbler - the first spring record (PRK *et al*). Even more exciting was a Blue-throated Bee-eater, the second record for Hong Kong, at Ng Fai Tin, Clearwater Bay, on 19th (G and DK), still present the next morning to the relief and amazement of those who twitched it! On 23rd the Lesser Frigatebird returned to its roost on the Peak (VBP), and a Shrenk's Bittern was seen in Tai Tam Country Park (GJC), with another in Mid-Levels on 27th (MT).

FUTURE MEETINGS

DATE	LEADER	VENUE	TIME
22 August Saturday	Mike Leven	Sea Trip from Aberdeen Marine Police Pier Bring Lunch	All Day Contact John Burton 8615323 for details

25 August Tuesday	INDOOR MEETING - OREGON WITH THE STOTTS An illustrated talk given by Richard and Janet Stott, at Police Headquarters, Arsenal Street, Wanchai. Phone Theresa Lai to confirm attendance.	18.30
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30 August Sunday	John Holmes	Mai Po* Meet at Car Park	7.30
✓ 13 September Sunday	Wendy Young Li Wai Ki	Mai Po* Meet at Car Park	7.30
20 September Sunday	Mike Leven Peter Kennerley	Luk Keng Swamp Bash Wear wellies or long trousers	7.00
20 September Sunday	C Y Lam	Tai Po Kau Meet at Car Park	7.00
✓ 27 September Sunday	Fox Wong John Edge	Mai Po* Bilingual	10.00-15.00
11 October Sunday	Simba Chan Gavin Cooper	Mai Po* Bilingual	10.00-15.00
✓ 18 October Sunday	C Y Larr Ian Tyzzer	Tai Long Wan. Meet Kowloon Tong KCR for coach. Bring lunch, cost \$35 (\$15 students)	7.30 to late afternoon
✓ 25 October Sunday	Li Wai Ki Mike Chalmers	Tsim Bei Tsui Bilingual	10.00-15.00

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

|| 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 \$35 (#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.

* WWF HK has asked that all participants on a Mai Po outing must inform the leader they will be attending before the meeting. Please co-operate with this request as there have been problems of too many people attending, in the past. Members using the coach need not inform the leader, as they will have already confirmed their attendance by returning the coach booking slip.