



THE HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

P. O. Box 12460, G. P. O., Hong Kong.

BULLETIN NO. 145

SEPTEMBER 1992

Society News

Curry Lunch

There will be a Curry Lunch on Sunday 13th December. However, the location is uncertain at the time of going to press! If you wish to participate in the social event of the year, please complete the tear-off slip at the end of the Bulletin and return it to Ian Tyzzer by **December 1st**. Please include your telephone number, so we can confirm the details later!

Society Library

The Library Catalogue is currently being revised by Fox Wong Kai-on. If you would like a copy, contact Fox Wong Kai-on, Island House, Kwong Fuk Estate, Tai Po, NT. The donation of any trip reports (as detailed as possible) and suitable books/material to the Library would be most welcome.

Membership List

A full list of members and telephone numbers will be issued with the December Bulletin. If your home or office telephone number was incorrect last time, or you have moved in the last year, please tell Janet Stott. She can be contacted on fax 524 2488 or write to her at 503, May Tower, 7 May Road, Hong Kong

Overseas Members

As some of you may be aware, banks across the world have recently dramatically increased their charges for foreign exchange transactions. During 1991/92 the Society has borne these in part, but it cannot afford to do so any longer. We prefer if you pay your subscription of **HK\$160 denominated in Hong Kong dollars**. If payment is made in any other currency, then the total amount paid must be the **equivalent of HK\$210**. Please understand it is the bankers who are penalising you, not the Society!

Notes for Contributors

As always articles, comments and information are very welcome. The deadline for the December Bulletin is **November 27th 1992**. The editor can be contacted by **telephone or fax** on 524 2488, written material to Liz Leven, Flat I-3 Unicorn Gardens, 11 Shouson Hill Road East, Hong Kong. Material on disk is very much appreciated. All IBM compatible word processor programmes can be accommodated. **Please do not underline, or use bold, italics etc.**, and please note your name, the file name and the programme used on the disk. Disks will be returned as soon as possible. For foreign trip reports please include the latin names of all bird species or list the reference books you used. This helps with the translation and prevents confusion. Thank you.

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

Gavin Cooper
Mike Chalmers
David Melville
Verity Picken

Richard Stott
Simba Chan
C Y Lam

Ian Tyzzer
Liz Leven
Li Wai-ki

The Bird Hotline Number is **891 0694**. Send record cards etc to Paul Leader, **Flat 11B 4C Kensington Court, Shui Fai Terrace, Stubbs Road, Hong Kong**

The Society Librarian is Fox Wong Kai-on (656 1272) Island House, Kwong Fuk Estate, Tai Po, NT.

Errata

There were two 'deliberate' mistakes in the June Bulletin. Stewart Smith's poetical muse put me right on the spelling of Schrenk!

I am writing on behalf of old Leopold von Shrenck,

Who was jealous of the spelling of his name.

In our revision of the list, I see some accuracy's missed

(Though I,m sure there's no telling who's to blame!).

Acrocephalus and bittern were his major claim to fame,

But we cannot simply spell just as we've heard.

We should see that it's germane that he bears a Prussian name,

And make sure we "c" the name if not the bird.

Secondly, having harangued members for not phoning in bird news to the local 'Bird Hotline', I neglected to publish the telephone number! It is on the front page and will be there every edition for those of you who never get round to noting it down.

I am not to blame, however , that the answer-phone has not been working recently. It has now been repaired and it should be fully functional during the forthcoming Autumn.

Information wanted on Babblers and Logrunners

Craig Robson and Clive Byers are working on a new book, provisionally entitled "**Babblers and Logrunners of the World: an identification Guide**". The book aims to deal with the identification of all babbler and logrunner species, as well as all the distinctive subspecies; all will be illustrated in colour. Apart from the more obvious genera, the following will provisionally be included in the book: *Orthonyx*, *Androphobus*, *Pso-phodes*, *Cinclosoma*, *Ptilorrhoa*, *Melampitta*, *Ptyrticus*, *Garrinornis*, *Pomatostomus*, *Neomixis*, *Chamaea*, the parrotbills *Panurinae*, *Lioptilus*, *Parophasma*, *Phyllanthus*, *Geomalina*, *Malia*, *Horizorhinus*, *Oxylabes* and *Mystacornis*. The author/artist and artist would welcome any information on babblers and logrunners, particularly photographs (in the wild or otherwise), recordings or transcriptions of vocalisations, details of breeding

bioogy and behaviour, habitat requirements, status and diet. All contributions that are used will be acknowledged. If you can help please contact **Craig Robson, 63 Stafford Street, Norwich, Norfolk NR2 3BD, UK.**

Aleutian Terns

The unprecedented arrival of Aleutian Terns in Hong Kong waters in late August was a unique occurence. These are the first records of large numbers of this species away from the breeding grounds, and it is **very important that as much information is gathered as possible**. Any members who saw any of these birds (or any other terns) are asked to submit all the information they have (descriptions, locations, numbers, different age groups, photos (!)) to Paul Leader as soon as possible. Even if you were out in a boat after August 15th and did not see any terns, this is useful information.

Christmas Count

The Christmas count will take place on **Sunday, 20th December 1992**. Members who can help are requested to contact **C Y Lam (732 9232)**. It proved very difficult last year to find enough people to cover the whole of Hong Kong. Please check your diaries and make an effort to join in.

Antartica???

Any one who is interested in a one month cruise on a Soviet (is this the right nationality now?) icebreaker, taking passengers to Antartica, and the sub-Antarctic islands of the Indian Ocean, contact **C Y Lam (732 9232)** for details. The ship will leave **Freemantle, Australia, on 27th December 1992** and will return there one month later. So you can still take part in the Christmas Count!!

Good Luck Angus

Long time member of the Society, Angus Lamont, recently left Hong Kong for Singapore. Angus was an enthusiastic participant in the Big Bird Race, and was a willing helper with the Annual Report. He is a keen sailor, and submitted many interesting sea bird records, as well as his land birds sightings. He was a valuable and well-liked member of the Society, and we wish him well for the future.

Hill Fires

With the dry season on its way, it seems a good time to publish the **Fire Control Hotline** telephone number. If you see a hill fire telephone **723 8787**. The policy is to attend every fire, so don't just ignore the fire (and do not assume some-one else has reported it!)

Illegal Bird Nets

It is illegal to trap birds without a licence in Hong Kong, but we all know it goes on. Evidence is required before the law can be enforced. If you discover any nets, contact **Y.K. Chan, in the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, telephone 733 2128**, with as much information (photos, location maps etc) as possible. Please also let **Billy Hau at WWF (526 1011)** know, as he will be able to pursue it with AFD.

Illegal Land-filling.

This is also an on going problem in Hong Kong. If you suspect a piece of land is being filled in without planning permission, then again contact **Billy Hau** with the details. Unless well documented evidence is presented, nothing can be done!

Mai Po Update

Dredging in Gei Wai 8

This summer WWF bought a dredger to help with habitat management works around the reserve. Primarily this will be for dredging out the channels around the inside of the gei wais, which silt up due to the mud that gets washed in each time water enters. As a result dredging has to be done every 10 -12 years. By doing so there will also get a better shrimp harvest from the gei wais, since there will be areas of deeper water for the shrimps to lie up in when the water temperature gets very hot or very cold.

The dredger will also help with the earthmoving works. There is still some excess mud left in the new area in front of the Tower Hide from last winter's earthmoving, and you will see the dredger moving it onto the bunds. This work will be finished by early October, after which it will be moved down to the west end of no 8 so as not to disturb the birds.

Bridge Construction

A new bridge (non floating) will be built across the back of gei wai no 19 this autumn, to allow students and visitors to experience walking through the phragmites, mangroves and ferns growing in the centre of the gei wai. Of course we will keep disruption and noise to a minimum, so that wintering birds will not be disturbed.

Access to the Boardwalk

The new system for access to the boardwalk and the floating hide is now in operation. There have been a few teething problems, which hopefully have been sorted out. If you have any problems please contact Lew Young, who can take it up with the police.

Submission Of Records

(Paul J. Leader and Michael R. Leven)

There seems to be some confusion regarding both the process for the submission of records and as to which records are "worth" submitting... hopefully the following article will make this clearer.

Firstly, all records fall into two categories: rarities and non-rarities.

(1) Rarities

Rarities are birds which require a written description to be submitted to, and assessed by, the Records Committee prior to acceptance. **IF YOU SEE (not just find) A RARITY YOU SHOULD SUBMIT A WRITTEN DESCRIPTION!** This ensures that a rarity is documented as fully as possible. It is especially important to submit a description for a rarity if you see it after its initial discovery so that its full stay is recorded.

No description is too long, but many are too short. Some rarity records are submitted with no description whatsoever. **SUCH RECORDS ARE AUTOMATICALLY REJECTED.** Don't be afraid of writing too much - whilst it is helpful if a record is submitted on a Society Record Card (see below) supplementary pages can be attached. If you took rough notes or made a sketch whilst watching the bird in question attach these too.

(2) Non-rarities

The authors are frequently asked whether a record of a non-rarity is "worth" submitting - the

answer is almost always "Yes!".

For a variety of reasons, for a number of years the Annual Report only published records of Rarities but it was realised that much useful data was being lost. As a consequence, it was decided in 1990 to publish a Systematic List in the Report covering **ALL** species and it is intended that this will continue. However, many observers have got out of the habit of submitting their records of non-rarities and it is hoped that the following will provide an indication of the type of records which are useful.

(a) Scarce species

E.g. Japanese Yellow Bunting or Spoon-billed Sandpiper - **submit ALL records**.

(b) Breeding Records

Very few are received - **submit ALL breeding records** (egrets are particularly poorly covered).

(c) Migrant Records

Records should be submitted even of common migrants such as Yellow-browed Warbler; **early and late dates and significant counts are especially important**.

(d) Flocks

Counts of e.g. waders and ducks are infrequently received and **all counts of flocks of such groups are very useful**.

IF IN DOUBT, SUBMIT THE RECORD.

Record Submission

As with rarities, all records of **non-rarities should be submitted on record cards to Paul Leader** who will pass the cards on to Michael Leven who is responsible, with the assistance of Geoff Carey, for the production of the Systematic List. **A description is not required**. However, in a case of (e.g.) exceptional numbers or a very unusual date (especially of a difficult to identify species) you may be asked to substantiate a claim.

In order to assist subsequent record processing it is very helpful if you fill in the **species number** (from the Annual Report or the Checklist) on the card.

Telephone Calls and Monthly Summaries

The purpose of these is essentially topical and/or to let other observers share your good fortune in finding a good bird. **RECORDS SUBMITTED TO THE TELEPHONE ANSWERLINE WHICH IS ORGANISED BY PAUL LEADER OR WHICH ARE SUBMITTED IN LETTER FORM (ESPECIALLY SOCIETY TRIP REPORTS) SHOULD, SUBSEQUENTLY, BE BACKED UP BY RECORD CARDS - WHETHER OR NOT THE BIRD IS A RARITY.**

There are good reasons for this. Telephone messages can become garbled or inaccurate. Observers often (and rightly) 'phone in their friends' reports or reports from non-birders and these obviously require to be corroborated. The same danger of inaccurate reporting exists with regard to Society outings where leaders often report on birds which they do not see themselves. There is nothing wrong with this for news items but it is clearly unsatisfactory for the permanent record.

As a subsidiary point, please note that neither Bird Race nor Christmas Count records are included in the Systematic List unless backed up by cards but waterfowl records (except Rarities) from the Mid-winter Count do not require to be submitted separately.

Record Cards and Dates for Submission

Record Cards are available from Paul Leader, or WWF at Tramway Path. To speed up processing it is helpful if Rarity Cards are submitted soon after the sighting - alternatively observers might like to consider submitting them quarterly or at least twice yearly. To keep the number of cards manageable it is suggested that cards for non-rarities are submitted at the end of the year (with all records of the species on the same card), but if observers with a large number of records wish to submit more frequently this is perfectly acceptable.

Submitting records can be a bit of a chore, but the effort involved is very much appreciated. After all, the Systematic List in the Annual Report, and the quality of general bird data in Hong Kong, is only as good as the observers!

Tin Shui Wai Pond.

The Tin Sui Wai New Town has resulted in the loss of extensive areas of wetland habitat. However, one side effect has been the creation of a very promising pond close to the new housing developments. Richard Lewthwaite, who has been birding the area regularly in recent months, makes the following comments.

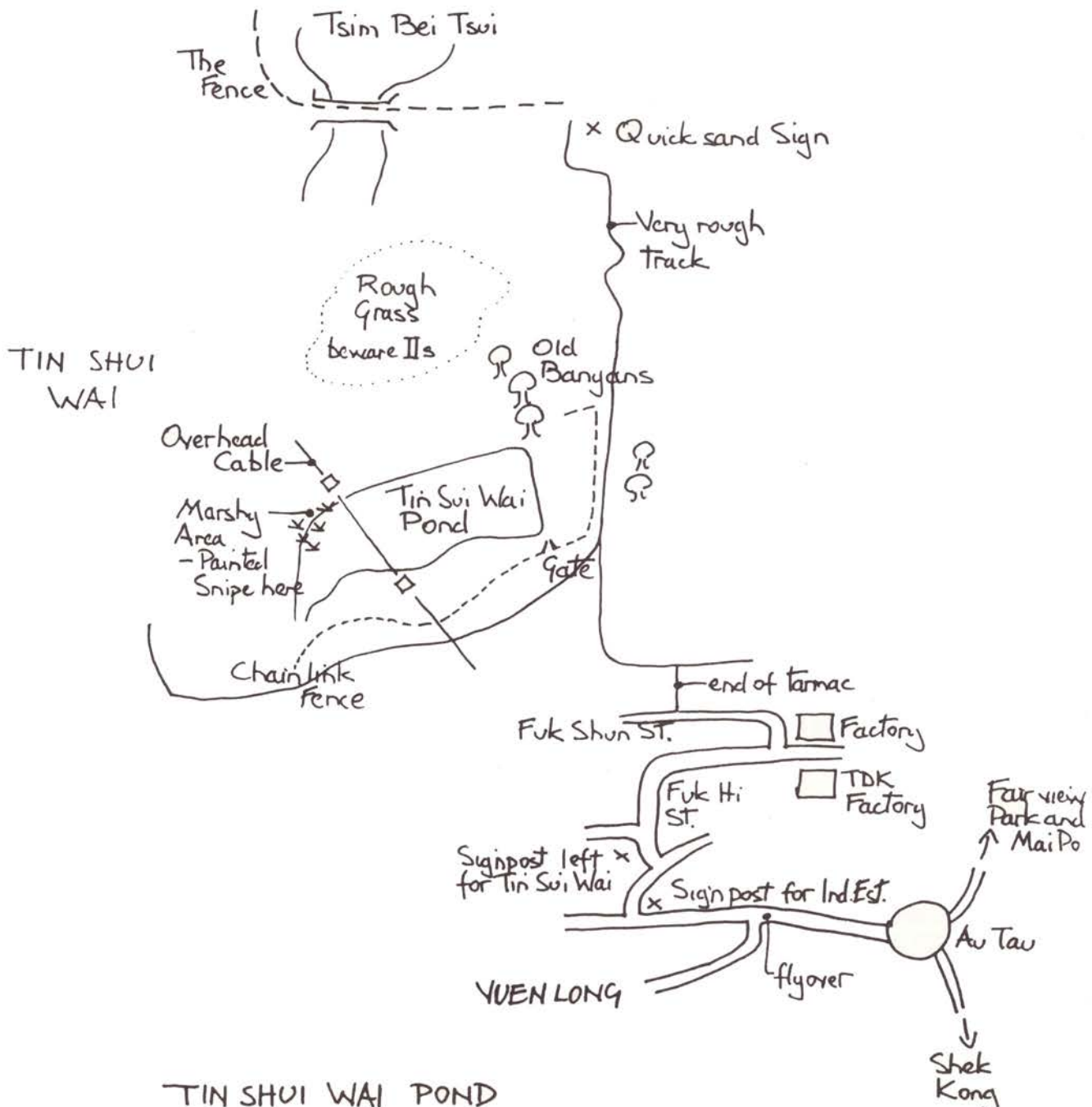
It is a large pond with plenty of open mud, very lush (and crakey!) emergent vegetation in the middle and at the sides. Judging by the number of birds actively feeding there is a generous input of nutrients. In August, typically a dull month, it was full of birds, with juvenile Banded Rails, the summering Black-faced Spoonbill, and up to five Painted Snipe regularly seen. As there were 400 Red-necked, and one Little Stint in May this year,

it is probably one of the best stint sites in the Territory. Also well worth checking out is the grassy area behind the pond - Japanese Quail and Oriental Skylarks were quite easy to find last spring - though beware of lls

The pond lies close to the 'back road' which runs from Yuen Long to The Fence (see map). This is a road for tough vehicles with high axles, that can handle the water filled potholes. If your vehicle is not so tough, park near the end of the tarmac road and walk in.

Given enough coverage, classy habitat like the Tin Sui Wai Pond is sure to turn up something new for Hong Kong.

Editor's note: The Pond appears to be in an area zoned for development in the not too distant future, so visit it whilst you can!



Rare Birds of Britain & Europe Lewington, Alstrom and Colston HarperCollins, London, 1991

Given its emphasis on rare European birds, many Hong Kong birdwatchers may be disinclined to buy this book. However, it covers almost 100 species on the Hong Kong list, 40 of which are rarities here, including such recent additions as Paddyfield Warbler and Pallas's Reed Bunting.

The one serious fault of this book is that the colours of the plates are too strong. As a result the male Eye-browed and Naumann's Thrushes look like they would glow in the dark, but more distressing for me were the very brown Phylloscopus warblers, with Arctic and Eastern Crowned almost lacking any green above. Despite this, the Phylloscopus plate is good, although the head patterns of Pallas's and Eastern Crowned are too striking. As an aid to identifying birds in the field they are undoubtedly excellent and, more importantly, better than in any Asian field guide. The same (despite the colours) applies to the rest of the plates covering Asian species. Faults are few, although the primary projections of Blyth's Reed Warbler and Paddyfield Warbler are, incorrectly, almost the same; the adult male Black-faced Bunting looks like the race *sordida* (the text refers only to the nominate race); and Ian Lewington has clearly never seen Thick-billed or Lanceolated Warblers.

The text is even better, being comprehensive and very readable. Mistakes are even harder to find (I found one - the statement that the whitish underparts contrasting with yellow undertail coverts is unique to Eastern Crowned among Phylloscopus warblers). The book covers many plumages, mainly immature, neglected in Asian guides (eg waders and buntings), regularly occurring species not covered by Viney and Philips (eg Thick-billed Warbler) and many potential additions to the Hong Kong list (eg Gray's Grasshopper Warbler and Blyth's Pipit) and as such, despite its European focus, is a thoroughly useful guide to the Hong Kong birdwatcher.

Paul Leader

'Il y a onze ans'

(Stewart Smith)

I've had occasion recently to glance back through some old HKBWS Bulletins, and in them I've come across the musings of an ancient sage in

the centenary bulletin of March 1981. Called himself "Mike Chalmers" then - and expressly a "ticker".

Chalmers' theme was a "Shopping List" [*sic*] for 1981" and laid out the following set of "new species [which] might appear this year" - his likely top thirty species. 1981 itself was not a spectacular year, but as the notes below show, a lot of these species have now been recorded in one form or another in Hong Kong. Although a couple of the records are 1980, I don't think there was any cheating - the 1980 report was still "in prep."

		List/Year
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps caspicus (migricollis)</i>	A 1986
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	
Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	A 1981
Besra	<i>Accipiter virgatus</i>	A 1988
Mountain Hawk Eagle	<i>Spizaetus nipalensis</i>	A 1988
Blue-breasted Quail	<i>Coturnix chinensis</i>	
Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	A 1988
Bridled Tern	<i>Sterna anaethetus</i>	A 1985
Grass Owl	<i>Tyto capensis</i>	A 1991
Chestnut-headed (Blue-throated) Bee-eater	<i>Merops viridis</i>	A 1991
Speckled Piculet	<i>Picumnus innominatus</i>	
(Northern) Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	A 1991
Carion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	
Finch-billed Bulbul (Collared Finchbill)	<i>Spizixos semitorques</i>	
Green-winged (Mountain) Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes maclellandii</i>	
Ashy Wood Swallow	<i>Artamus fuscus</i>	
Blue-capped Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola cinclorhynchus</i>	
Lesser Necklaced Laughing Thrush	<i>Garrulax monileger</i>	
Small Niltava	<i>Niltava macgrigoriae</i>	D 1986
Gray's Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella fasciolata</i>	
Lanceolated Warbler	<i>Locustella lanceolata</i>	A 1980
Paddyfield (Blunt-winged) Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus (agricola) concinens</i>	A 1991
Thick-billed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus aedon</i>	A 1982
Radde's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus schwarzi</i>	A 1986*
Two-barred Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	A 1989
Bright-capped Fantail Warbler	<i>Cisticola exilis</i>	A 1991
Large Grass Warbler	<i>Graminicola bengalensis</i>	A 1981
White-crowned Forktail	<i>Enicurus leschenaulti</i>	
Plain Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum concolor</i>	A 1988
Masked Hawfinch (Japanese Grosbeak)	<i>Eophona personata</i>	A 1987

Mike Chalmers suggested that the following birds in the then Category E (suspected escapes) might in time prove to be of Category A status:-

Streaked Shearwater	<i>Puffinus (Procellaria) leucomelas</i>	A 1985
Amur Falcon	<i>Falco amurensis</i>	A 1983
Orange-bellied Chloropsis (Leafbird)	<i>Chloropsis hardwickii</i>	A 1987
Rufous-necked Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus ruficollis</i>	D 1986*

Lesser Scaly-breasted (Pygmy) Wren-babbler	<i>Phoebastria pusilla</i>	B 1991
Vinous-throated Parrotbill	<i>Paradoxornis gularis</i>	D 1986*
Grey-headed Parrotbill	<i>Paradoxornis gularis</i>	D 1986*
Pekin Robin	<i>Leiothrix lutea</i>	A 1986*
Rustic Bunting	<i>Emberiza rustica</i>	A 1986*

Lastly, he thought the following birds in the then Category F (doubtfuls) might recur and claim Category A status:-

Bulwer's Petrel	<i>Bulweria bulwerii</i>	
Resplendent Shag (Pelagic Cormorant)	<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i>	
White-tailed Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	
White-legged Falconet	<i>Microhierax melanoleucosa</i>	A 1980
Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	A 1985
Chinese Crested Tern	<i>Sterna zimmermanni</i>	
Tiger Shrike	<i>Lanius tigrinus</i>	A 1986*
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	
Fukien Niltava	<i>Niltava davidi</i>	A 1986*
Mountain Bush Warbler	<i>Cettia fortipes</i>	A 1986*
Yellow-bellied Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus subaffinis</i>	
White-browed Hill Warbler (Hill Prinia)	<i>Prinia atrogularis</i>	
Ruddy (Russet) Sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>	D 1987

(* = as (re)classified in the Annotated Checklist, though not apparently remarked on in the Annual Report. There may be other such reclassifications, of species not on Chalmers' List - for these I have only checked the Annual Report).

This list represents 28 A List additions (including reclassifications) since Mike wrote his note. As far as I can see, and excluding the other reclassifications, there have been 39 others (plus one new race - Green-winged Teal), making a total of 67 new A List species in the 12 years to end 1991. This is very much E&OE; in particular I can't see what (if anything) has happened to the *Bradypteri*.

Anyone like to punt for the likely list in the balance of the 20th century?

OVERSEAS BIRDING

Pelagic Trips to Xiamen and Shanghai May 1992

(Richard Lewthwaite)

On 1st May, Ed White and I sailed out of Hong Kong Harbour on a ship bound for Xiamen, about 500km east of Hong Kong. We were hoping to see a few tubenoses, but, alas, saw none either in the late afternoon or early the following morning, probably because the ship never

seemed to venture more than a few miles from land. We did see terns - 15 Black-naped, four White-winged, two Common and a single Bridled - and, most interestingly, about 100km east of Hong Kong, we saw five skuas migrating north-east along the coast - two adult Long-tailed, then two more, then a single dark-phase Pomarine.

Birding in Xiamen on 2nd and 3rd May, we had most success in what was left of the Yuang Dang Lake area, where some drained ponds held over 200 waders of 16 species, including at least two pairs of Kentish Plover with unfledged chicks. Nearby, Little Tern and Oriental Skylark appeared to be ready to nest. There was a heavy passage of *lucionensis* Brown Shrikes (though apparently not through Hong Kong at the same time) and Great Reed Warblers, with one or two Thick-billed Warblers among them. Chestnut Bitterns were seen both days. We also checked out the wooded area between the Nanputuo Temple and the Botanical Gardens, but it was poor stuff with few birds of interest except for a single Chinese Goshawk and a single Crested Goshawk.

Later the same month, from 17th to 20th, Mo-yung Yuk Lin and I enjoyed a wonderful voyage to Shanghai, which is about 1500km from Hong Kong on the MV Hai Xing. This time, with the ship sailing well out to sea, there were a good number of tubenoses. In a two hour period early on the first morning, off the Fujian coast, a Belgian birder, Bart de Schuster, and I, counted over 300 Streaked Shearwaters, all coming from the direction of the coast and heading out to open sea. There were also up to 15 Bulwer's Petrel, with one Long-tailed Skua, 30 Bridled, 10 Roseate and 10 Common Tern. The weather, which had been mild, suddenly worsened, and we did no further birding that day. It was clearer the next morning, when the ship was off the coast of Zhejiang, and I noted totals of 20 Streaked Shearwaters, one Bulwer's Petrel, 10 Common, three Bridled and two Whiskered Tern, as well as a distant flock of small waders.

Good birding then and a very relaxing cruise. The ship was well-fitted, nicely maintained, quiet and comfortable. The crew were unfailingly courteous and friendly, our cabin was almost luxuriously spacious, and the atmosphere on board was magical. Sailings depart Hong Kong at 1430 hrs on 2nd, 7th, 17th and 22nd day of each month, arriving in Shanghai after three nights aboard, at 0700 hrs. Twin cabins in 1st Class cost about HK\$1,000 per person, including all meals. Of the two ships sailing this route, MV Hai Xing is reported to be much better, and I recommend her highly.

Bhutan 10-20 May 1992

(John Holmes)

Some Police colleagues had an invitation to go to the Kingdom of Bhutan and - although it was not a birding trip - Nigel Croft and I were able to join them. We flew via Bangkok to Paro, which is a two-hour drive from the Bhutanese capital of Thimphu.

Russet sparrows *Passer rutilans* and Hoopoes *Upupa epops* were feeding young in the eaves of a large chorten (a tomb-like receptacle for religious offerings) opposite the front entrance of the guest house. Common in the nearby fields were Rufous Turtle Doves *Streptopelia orientalis*, Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* and Tibetan Grey Shrikes *Lanius tephronotus*. On a stream we found Plumbeous Water Redstarts *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*, Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii* and White-capped Redstarts *Thamnoea leucocephalus*. Our first life tick was Speckled Wood Pigeon *Columba hodgesoniani*. The "zoo" near Thimphu had an interesting range of Himalayan mammals, but we were more interested in the stuff outside the cages which included two good laughingthrushes, Red-headed and White-throated *Garrulax erythrocephalus*, *G. albugularis*.

Our first four days were spent seeing such things as the National Museum and the National Library. We were fortunate to be able to go inside a number of temples and dzongs (fortified monasteries) which are closed to most visitors. A sightseeing highlight was a monastery clinging to a mountainside two thousand feet above the valley floor, known in English as the "Tiger's Lair" (I was promised that they don't make the names up just for tourists). On the walk up there were many Nutcrackers *Nucifraga caryocatactes*, Jays *Garrulax glandarius* and Yellow-billed Blue Magpies *Cissa flavirostris*. Smaller birds in the woodland included Rufous-vented Yuhina *Yuhina occipitalis*, White-browed Fulvetta *Alcippe vinipectus* and Brown-crested Tit *Parus dichrous*, often in mixed flocks together. More familiar for South China birders were Gould's Sunbird *Aethopyga gouldiae* and Rufous-necked Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*. A splendid life tick (Whoops - I mean "record for ornithological posterity") was White-spotted Laughingthrush *Garrulax ocellatus*.

The second half of the holiday comprised a five-day four-night trek which was quite strenuous. We spent much of the walk above ten thousand feet and found few new species in the

Rhododendron scrub, but areas of woodland produced Allied Grosbeak *Mycerobas affinis*, White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas camipes*, Red-headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythrocephala* and prolonged views of a Chestnut-headed Tesia *Tesia castaneocoronata*. Near the highest point of the trek we saw a herd of Bharal, or Blue Sheep *Pseudois nayaur*. Several times on the walk unidentified pheasants were put up from the path by the fitter members of the party, which didn't include NJGC or myself. A compensation was a pair of Monal Pheasants *Lophophorus impejanus* well seen by Nigel Croft on a hillside overlooking Thimphu.

I have to admit that the species of the trip was spotted on a broad river in the Paro valley by a non-birder. As the minibus went along he said "What were those grey birds with a black face and long bill we passed a few minutes ago?". Suspecting a practical joke by Nigel Croft I accused him of coaching our friend to come out with this. After heated denials we turned the bus round and went back to find a party of five Ibisbills *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*.

Due to the imposed limitation on tourism (two and a half thousand visitors per year) Thimphu has a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere. The Bhutanese are compelled by law to wear their national dress and they look dignified in it. People were polite, we saw no begging, and English seemed to be spoken at least as much as in India. Huge taxes are imposed over and above hotel bills for most visitors (although we were lucky enough to be exempted), and the cost of these means that package tours to Bhutan are very expensive compared to places like Darjeeling and Sikkim, where many similar birds can be seen. If your criterion is 'dollars-per-bird' you are wasting money in Bhutan, but if you are ready to pay the extra, the unspoilt atmosphere makes the country well worth a visit.

Danum Valley, Sabah June 11 - 16 1992

(Stewart Smith)

John Edge and I spent a quite excellent five days at the Danum Valley Field Centre from 11 to 16 June, returning a trip list of 135 of which 123 were recorded from Danum itself, much of real quality. Travel is via Kota Kinabalu and onward flight to Lahad Datu on the southeast coast of Sabah. There is no same day connection, so an overnight in KK is necessary. This means you reach Danum by Field Centre van after a two

hour journey westward from Lahad Datu, or about 80km, at about lunch time on the following day.

Danum is 438 square kilometres of lowland tropical rain forest carved out (if that is the right expression) of the highly extensive Sabah Logging Concession, and the Field Centre is a research and education facility established on its eastern edge in 1986. There are modest facilities for outside visitors to stay when the accommodation is not needed for professionals, and the public areas have very recently been expanded in fine fashion with a superb and relaxing terrace overlooking the rain forest and worthy of the best hotels. We were very comfortably placed there if a little sweaty overnight when the electricity, and thus the fan, was turned off and the total cost at Danum including transport, accommodation, full board and beer came to just under HK\$4,000 for the two of us. Air fares and costs in KK brought the total trip up to about HK\$7,500 each. Danum is extremely welcoming, relaxing and secure we were quite unconcerned about cash and valuables in unlocked rooms and thoroughly to be recommended.

The weather was generally bright with some early morning mist, which quickly cleared, and periodic and sometimes torrential rain, not more than once in every 24 hours but at varying times noon, late afternoon and midnight by way of example. Humidity was high after about mid-morning, and temperature outside the forest too oppressive around midday. Leeches were not generally a problem if you were alert a lot less frequent than in the peninsula in March but I had an unpleasant stripey one on the neck and one of the regular brown jobs on mid thigh and heading north.

After initial forays a deux we found (on advice from Jonathan Eames of ICBP, who was there for about the same time and who helped us a great deal) that working the forest was much better done solo, and we developed the routine of an 0530h wake up, a morning bird from 0600h to 1200h or thereabouts, lunch and a siesta on the terrace until 1530h and three hours more birding (this mostly together) until dusk. We turned in most nights before 9 o'clock.

The run in to the Field Centre from the east is through logged and beinglogged country. Some older trees have been preserved in this and some of the secondary growth is very well established we had Crested Serpent Eagles, Great Slaty Woodpeckers and Crested Fireback from the van in this stretch. Access to the main

"reserved" part of the forest is by a footbridge west over the Sagama River, which runs past the foot of the Field Centre and varies dramatically in level with the rains. We were surprised at the lack of riverine species, but perhaps this variation accounts for it. Although there are a couple of longer trails to surrounding ridges, most of the birding is done in a gridiron of cut paths through this forest, covering about 2 sq. km. (see plan). There are clear marker posts every 100m, so it is extremely easy to give coordinates of sightings e.g. Green Broadbills at W3N5. On one day John did a vastly extensive trip to W20 (i.e. all of 2 km into the forest!) and we also explored shortish tracks on the other (Field Centre) bank, to great advantage, especially in the afternoon. There are two tower hides, one giving excellent views over open country, the other more restricted and less productive, and a fine canopy platform reached by a rather exhausting (at least for a 16 stone weakling), and certainly terrifying, vertical 30m climb up a 6 inch ladder we only did this once!

Birds: well we did superbly well with hornbills (Bushy-crested, Wrinkled, Wreathed, Black and Rhinoceros just like the cover of Smythies) and woodpeckers (Whitebellied, Chequer-throated, Orange-backed, Olive-backed, Buff-necked, Grey and Buff, Rufous and Great Slaty), pretty well with babblers (Black-capped, Short-tailed, Ferruginous, Horsfield's, Abbott's, Rufous-crowned, Bornean Wren, Striped Wren, Black-throated Wren, Grey headed, Chestnut-rumped, Chestnut-winged and Striped Tit, with Brown Fulvetta and White-bellied Yuhina), sunbirds (Plain, Brown-throated (at KK), Red-throated, Ruby-cheeked and Purple-naped), spiderhunters (Little, Long-billed, Spectacled and Grey-breasted), flycatchers (Grey-chested, Rufous-chested, White-tailed, Rufous-winged, Bornean Blue and Large-billed Blue, with Spotted and Pied (at KK) Fantails), and malkohas (Chestnut-breasted, Red-billed and Raffles'). Of the specialities we managed between us to see Bat Hawk (daily over the Centre at noon and dusk, and once at 0830h), Great Argus, Crested Fireback, Crested Wood Partridge, Diard's, Red-naped and Scarlet-rumped Trogons, Blue-eared and Blue-banded Kingfishers, Black and Red, Black and Yellow, Green and Dusky Broadbills, and Crested Jay. John found an unusual late Siberian Blue Robin. For the most part we both got everything. Daily species average at Danum was about 70.

Without doubt the highlights for both of us were the Buffy Fish Owl, said to be regular (though not for us) at the badminton court each evening, but best and superbly seen at day roost at about 30

ft., the White-fronted Falconet, a Sabah endemic, which gave a fine showing every day at noon, and the two pittas we managed to call out Black and Crimson (said now to be split from Garnet) and Blue-headed, each quite magical in the dark forest. We failed with the three other pittas which are there, and with Red-bearded Bee-eater and Bornean Bristlehead, but Birdquest who were there for our first 24 hours had a flock of the latter and Eames (I think) had a full set of pittas. He also birded at night, to find Great and Javan Frogmouths. Next time!

Other wildlife was also in good supply and we had three close quarter orang utan sightings, a couple of parties of white-handed gibbons and one of pig-tailed macaques, a party of red leaf monkeys, a bearded pig, a huge horse-tailed squirrel, many interesting lizards (flying and otherwise) and the odd snake. Eames saw

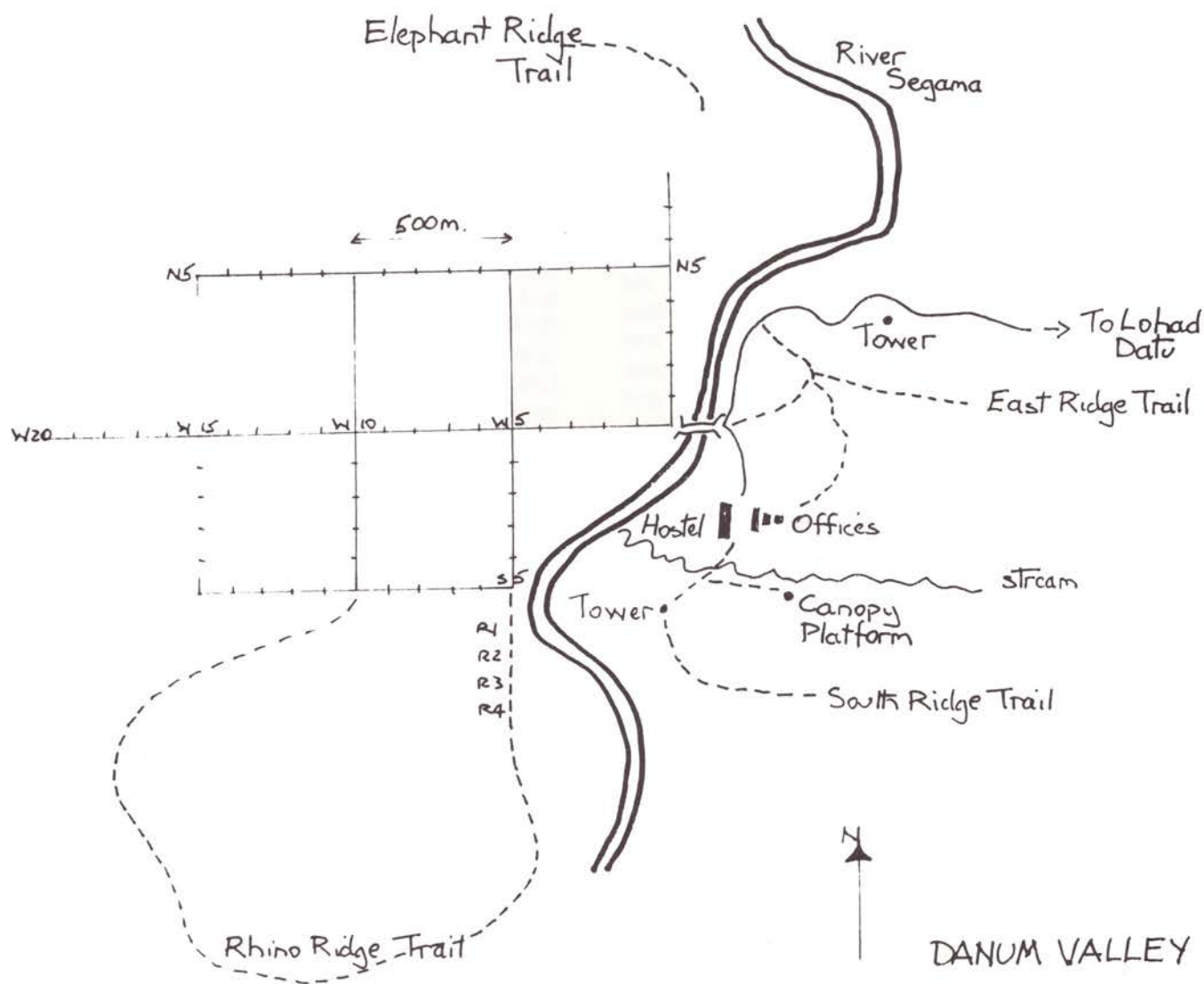
yellow-throated martens and shortclawed otters, and he and Birdquest ran into a couple of nocturnal elephants. What with oranges, gibbons and birds, there was a point where I fancied we wanted only a crusty medic to imagine ourselves in the ZBG!

Try to obtain a tape of bird calls, especially pittas and barbets, to learn as much as to use for calling out - pittas seem responsive to very average human imitations.

Books:

- A. Birds of Thailand - invaluable
- B. Smythies Pocket Guide - much better in the field than we expected
- C. Birds of Borneo.

Altogether a first rate trip. Further details from either of us. A systematic list is being prepared.



LUO FU HILL, GUANGDONG 20-21 June 1992

(John Holmes)

Midway between the Hong Kong Border and Nam Kwun Shan the Luo Fu Hills rise to a height of 1281 metres above sea level. The closest train station is Shek Lung (Shilong) which lies halfway to Guangzhou, about seventy-five minutes journey on the faster local trains. Having studied my 'Pearl Delta Touring Map' I decided it would be worthwhile to check the area for Grey-cheeked Fulvetas, a bird common in other known woodland in Guangdong but absent in Hong Kong.

On a hot Saturday afternoon in Shek Lung the sight of a foreign face excites the local taxi owners into a frenzy of (mainly exorbitant) offers of a lift. I eventually got a ride on the back of a motorcycle. The Taoist Temple at the foot of the Luo Fu Hills was a terrifying hour's ride away. The Temple is popular with weekend visitors, and appears to have been renovated in the mid-eighties. Outside it are fairground-type stalls, ice-cream salesmen, and a boating lake. Rather like Ding Hu there were guest houses of various grades, and I found a comfortable place to stay.

There was a good cover of mature trees in the area in front of the Temple but once away from the marked walking routes at the base of the hills the habitat became fairly scrubby. The few birds I saw were very shy. There were also a huge number of noisy insects, so it appears that there must be a lot of hunting and trapping going on. Birds seen included Scarlet Minivet, Chestnut Bulbul, and a flock of five White-bellied Yuhinas. Heard but not seen were Hainan Blue Flycatchers. Swallows - including Red-rumped Swallows - were common over the rice paddies at the foot of the hills. The Red-rumped Swallow is also present at Cheung Muk Kiu in June, a distance of only 30 miles from Lo Wu. It is interesting - well it interests me anyway - that a bird can be so common so close to Hong Kong and yet be absent in the Territory itself at that time of the year. Although Luo Fu Hill had quite a lot of suitable secondary growth there were no "morrissonias" to be seen.

Generally a fairly disappointing trip, but it seems harsh to judge a place on a visit in mid-June, and so a return in winter is called for. Any volunteers?

OUTING REPORTS

Seabird (!) Trip 23 August 1992

(Michael Leven)

Despite the relative success of a trip to the sea area around Po Toi in August 1991 (when four species of terns including one Roseate were seen in the wake of Typhoon Fred) I was very sceptical about the chances of seeing anything on a predetermined date - as opposed to going out after a typhoon. However, in the week before the arranged date, Tropical Storm Mark had been weaving an erratic path around the northern part of the South China Sea and, after making a landfall in eastern Guangdong had headed back out to sea again. Though it was now only a tropical depression, it was lying to the south of Hong Kong so there did at least appear to be the prospect of some birds.

Other people obviously thought so too, and about 14 members set off from Aberdeen towards the Soko Islands where I thought that (at least) there might be a few Black-naped Terns. We were hardly out of the harbour when the first Red-necked Phalaropes were seen - typically tame they allowed a close approach by the boat - not a bad start.

Out in the West Lamma Channel three terns flew past rather distant - rather dark above and below with contrasting white cheeks - Common Terns of the race *longipennis* or were they, Peter Kennerley was muttering "why weren't they Aleutian?" The next group of terns was resting on pieces of driftwood and were approached cautiously. Grey above and below, white rump and tail, solid black bill, white forehead with a black crown and nape and a black line through the eye, flew off with a whistling call like a *Charadrius* plover - Aleutian Terns!

There was a degree of (controlled) pandemonium on the boat.... but everyone got good views, Martin Hale got some photographs and a new member was told that no, it wasn't that usual to get a first for Hong Kong and China on a Society outing. Continuing past Cheung Chau, almost every piece of driftwood had one or two Aleutian Terns on it and it took us some time to find a definite Common Tern. The Sokoes themselves were rather quiet (no driftwood) but Reef Egrets were seen well. However, heading towards Po Toi more Aleutian Terns were found, with two Whiskered Terns for variety. Thoughts of stopping for

lunch had long since been abandoned but as we headed through the gap between Po Toi and Beaufort Island celebratory beers were beginning to reduce concentration until a brown tern was noted on yet another piece of flotsam. Close approach produced stunning views of a Bridled Tern which subsequently "performed" as it flew effortlessly up and down the channel.

Homeward bound now, and extremely well satisfied, the icing on the cake was provided by an immature Lesser Frigatebird soaring above us and further Aleutian Terns and Red-necked Phalaropes brought the totals for each species to 190 and 50 respectively.

Many thanks are due to David Carrier who provided the junk which was not only stocked with such necessities as coffee and beer, but also a mobile phone which allowed the news to be broadcast whilst we were actually watching the birds, and to John Burton whose prior organisation made the trip possible - but who was unfortunately unable to be there on the day.

REPORT ON THE BIRDS

(These unchecked reports include sightings of possible escapes)

June

On 4th, at Mai Po, there were 2 Black-faced Spoonbills and a Nordmann's Greenshank (JH). A Crested Kingfisher was at Yi O, Lantau on 9th (JSRE) and an immature frigatebird sp. was seen at Wong Nai Chung Gap on 13th (IT). On 26th there was a Black Baza near the Ting Kok Road.

July

The Lesser Frigatebird returned to the Peak on 7th and 8 July (VBP). On 11th there was a Black-shouldered Kite at Mai Po, 2 had apparently been present a few days earlier (MRL). A further 2 Black Bazas were seen on 12th, this time at Ho Chung (MH). A second Crested Kingfisher was at Brides Pool on 13th (*per* JSRE). A Treepie was seen near the Peak Cafe on 15th (JSRE) and the Crested Kingfisher at Brides Pool remained until at least 19th on which date a flock of 9 Jays was also seen there. Also on 19th, an adult and 2 recently fledged juvenile Vinous-throated Parrotbills were seen on Tai Mo Shan (MRL,PJL). Waders at Mai Po on 28th included an Asiatic Dowitcher, Long-toed Stint, 2 Terek Sandpipers and a Great Knot (RWL).

August

At Mai Po on 2nd there were 252 Greenshank, 1337 Redshank, 131 Curlew Sandpipers, two Grey-tailed Tattlers, two Long-toed Stints and eight Asiatic Dowitchers, four of which were juveniles (MRL). On 7th a frigatebird sp. was seen at Waglan Island (VBP), and on 9th the Lesser Frigatebird returned to its Peak roost site (VBP). At Tin Siu Wai Pond on the same date, there were two Painted Snipe, three Long-toed Stints and seven Chinese Starlings, with a Black-faced Spoonbill seen at the Fence (RWL). On 13th, at Sheun Wan two adult and one juvenile Bonellis Eagles were reported (RWL), and at Mai Po the following day there was a Hobby (DAD). On 17th two Common Terns were in the East Lamma Channel (VBP). A Whimbrel and 12 Grey-tailed Tattlers were at Sheun Wan on 19th, and at Lok Ma Chau the next day six Pintail Snipe were present (DAD).

The Society Boat Trip south of Hong Kong Island on the 22nd produced an absolutely astonishing 190 Aleutian Terns, not only a first for Hong Kong, but also China! Records of this beautiful tern away from the breeding grounds are surprisingly few, and the occurrence of such large numbers makes this one of the most amazing Hong Kong records of all time. Other highlights of this historic trip included five Common Terns, two Whiskered Terns and an adult Bridled Tern, 55 Red-necked Phalaropes and a Lesser Frigatebird (MH,PRK,PJL,MRL *et al*). The Aleutian Terns continued to be seen in much smaller numbers upto the end of the month.

On 28th, at Tin Sui Wai Pond, there were five Painted Snipe (including three full-grown juveniles), 45 Chinese Starlings and a Black-faced Spoonbill (RWL *et al*). An Asian Paradise Flycatcher was noted in Tai Po Kau on 28th (RWL). At Mai Po the same day, one Swinhoe and one Pintail Snipe (DAD), a Garganey and a Mandarin were reported (RWL) and at Lok Ma Chau a rather early Stonechat was seen (DAD)

A Pale-legged Leaf Warbler, a Thick-billed Warbler (first August records) and two Yellow-rumped Flycatchers were trapped at Mai Po on 29th, with an Arctic Warbler also seen (PRK). On 30th further Pale-legged Leaf Warblers were on Mount Davis (PRK) and in Tai Po Kau (PJL,MRL), where there were also two Japanese Paradise Flycatchers and an Arctic Warbler (JH,PJL,MRL). Also on 30th a Hobby was at Mai Po (PJL *et al*) and another was seen at Tin Sui Wai the next day with a Black-shouldered Kite, five Red-turtle Doves, three Pacific Swifts and 20 Chinese Starlings.

FUTURE MEETINGS

DATE	LEADER	VENUE	TIME
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 Lam Ian Tyzzer	Tai Long Wan. Meet Kowloon Tong KCR for coach (complete enclosed form) Bring lunch	7.30 to late afternoon
25 October Sunday	Li Wai Ki Mike Chalmers	Tsim Bei Tsui ++ Bilingual	10.00-15.00
1 November Sunday	Stuart Smith	Ping Yeung Meet where road ends in Ping Yeung village	7.30
7 November Saturday	Roger Costin	Tai Po Kau Meet at Car Park	7.00
15 November Sunday	C Y Lam Andrew Young	Mai Po* Bilingual	10.00-15.00

18 November	INDOOR MEETING Fox Wong will talk about Saunders' Gulls , having been visiting their breeding grounds this summer WWF Office - 1 Tramway Path Central Note the address!!!	18.30
--------------------	--	-------

22 November Sunday	John Burton	Lam Tsuen Valley Meet Chung Uk Tsuen Car Park	7.30
28 November Saturday	John Edge	Wu Kau Tang Meet Car Park	7.30
6 December Sunday	Li Wai Ki Mike Chalmers	Tsim Bei Tsui Bilingual	10.00-15.00
13 December Sunday	Mike Turnbull	Hok Tau Reservoir Meet Car Park, off Sha Tau Kok Road	7.30
Followed by THE CURRY LUNCH Complete the enclosed form			
20 December Sunday 1993		Christmas Count contact C Y Lam for details	
2 January Saturday	Wendy Young	Tai Po Kau Meet Car Park	7.30

9 January Saturday	John Holmes 471 1684 (O)	Tsui Keng New Outing Meet RHK Golf Club Car Park off Fan Kam Road	7.00
10 January Sunday	Fox Wong 656 1272 (H) Ian Tyzzer 861 4516 (O)	Mai Po* Bilingual	10.00-15.00
16 January Saturday	Mike Leven 554 7424 (H)	Tai Mei Tuk / Nam Chung Meet at AFD Car Park	8.00-12.30
30 January Saturday	Peter Stevens 792 9020 (H)	Tai Po Kau Meet at Car Park	7.30

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.

++ If any member wishes to use the coach, leaving Kowloon Tong one hour before assembly time and returning there after the outing, but did **not** send off the form in the last Bulletin, please phone Ian Tyzzer 861 5416 (O) to see if any seats are still available. Please bring packed lunch and drink.

Please complete these forms and make out your cheque in English

Tai Long Wan - Sunday 18th October 1992

I wish to reserve ____ places on the coach (\$35 for ordinary member,
\$15 for student member)

I enclose a cheque for \$ _____ (make cheque payable to Hong Kong Birdwatching Society)

Please return to:

Ian Tyzzer, B3 Celestial Garden, 5, Repulse Bay Road by 2nd October 1992

NAME

TELEPHONE NO.

Mai Po - Sunday 15th November 1992

I wish to reserve ____ places on the coach (\$35 for ordinary member,
\$15 for student member)

I enclose a cheque for \$ _____ (make cheque payable to Hong Kong Birdwatching Society)

Please return to:

Ian Tyzzer, B3 Celestial Garden, 5, Repulse Bay Road by 30th October 1992

NAME

TELEPHONE NO.

Tsim Bei Tsui - Sunday 6th December 1992

I wish to reserve ____ places on the coach (\$35 for ordinary member,
\$15 for student member)

I enclose a cheque for \$ _____ (make cheque payable to Hong Kong Birdwatching Society)

Please return to:

Ian Tyzzer, B3 Celestial Garden, 5, Repulse Bay Road by 20th November 1992

NAME

TELEPHONE NO.

Mai Po - Sunday 10th January 1993

I wish to reserve ____ places on the coach (\$35 for ordinary member,
\$15 for student member)

I enclose a cheque for \$ _____ (make cheque payable to Hong Kong Birdwatching Society)

Please return to:

Ian Tyzzer, B3 Celestial Garden, 5, Repulse Bay Road by 21st December 1992

NAME

TELEPHONE NO.

Curry Lunch Sunday 12th December 1992

I wish to reserve ____ places at the Curry Lunch. Payment for the lunch should be made on the day, and there will be a cash bar available. Please contact me when the venue has been arranged. I can be contacted on _____

Please return to:

Ian Tyzzer, B3 Celestial Garden, 5, Repulse Bay Road by 1st December 1992

NAME

TELEPHONE NO.
