



# 香港觀鳥會

THE HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

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BULLETIN NO. 147

March 1993

## Society News

### Annual General Meeting

The 1993 AGM will be held on **Wednesday 31st March** at the **Auxiliary Police Officers' Mess, 3/F Beaconsfield House, Queen's Road Central**, at 6.00pm. **NOTE THE REVISED DATE!!!**

### Bird Report.

The 1991 Bird Report, is probably the best Report ever produced by the Society. The credit for this goes to **Verity Picken**, who worked incredibly hard to ensure all aspects of the Report are as good as they can be. Verity is now standing down as Editor, and the 1991 Report will be edited by **Geoff Carey**. Contributions, suggestions, comments should be addressed to **Geoff, 1st Floor, 32A Chek Nai Ping, Sha Tin, NT**. Photographs for publication would be particularly welcome.

### Bird Hotline

As most members discovered the number published in the December Bulletin was wrong! The **correct number is** . The hotline has proved so successful that a Cantonese version is being set up. Unfortunately the number was not available as the Bulletin went to the printer, but the Hotline should be running in a month or so.

### Breeding Bird Survey

This spring and summer sees the start of the HKBWS Breeding Bird Survey. Surprisingly little is known about the distribution of Hong Kong's breeding birds and this survey, which will probably run for several years, is intended to rectify this. It is an **opportunity for every single member of the Society to get involved**. You can observe the birds from your balcony, or in your local park, or hack your way into the less well known parts of the New Territories or Lantau! Enclosed with this Bulletin is an explanation sheet, and a survey form. Do not let the form put you off, the whole thing is really very simple. **Mike Chalmers** will be discussing it at the AGM on 31st March, and **all** the summer outings will be recording data for the survey. Any questions contact Mike

**All contributions to the June Bulletin should be sent to Liz Leven, I-3 Unicorn Gardens, 11 Shouson Hill Road East, Hong Kong by May 14th. Many Thanks.**

The outgoing committee members are listed below. A new committee will be elected at the AGM and advertised in the June Bulletin.

Gavin Cooper  
Mike Chalmers  
David Melville

Richard Stott  
Simba Chan  
C Y Lam  
Verity Picken

Ian Tyzzer  
Liz Leven  
Li Wai-ki

The Bird Hotline Number is . Record cards should be sent to **Paul Leader c/o McKenna and Co. 36/F Gloucester Tower, The Landmark, Central, Hong Kong.**

國際保護鳥類委員會香港分部

HONG KONG SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION

PRINTED ON RE-CYCLED PAPER

### Thanks from the Treasurer

The Treasurer (and his manual labourer) would like to thank all members for efficiently paying their subs - not one cheque had to be returned and hardly anyone moved house! This eased the load considerably, so a big thank you from the Stotts.

### Mary Ketterer's Farewell

Several members of the Society have expressed a desire to say a proper farewell to Mary, who has done so much to progress the interests of the Society with her work for WWF and the continuing development of Mai Po. To this end we have booked a private room at the **Shinta Restaurant, 1F Kar Yau Building, 36-44 Queens Road East on Wednesday, 24th March at 7.30pm**. Car parking may possibly be available. In order to organise this effectively we need to know who will be coming. So please call **Janet Stott on** (answering machine if not at home, please leave name, numbers and car registration if you want to park) or fax on . **Cut off date is 20 March** so call now if you want to come.

### Stewart Smith's Departure Dinner

Stewart, a stalwart and active member of the Society, will be leaving Hong Kong sometime in July and the Society would entertain Stewart and Sandy to a farewell dinner. The date will be **18 June**, so phone Janet Stott to let her know if you want to come, so that she can assess numbers and decide on a venue, and put you on the list. **Cut off date is 15 June**.

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### Bird Markets

Geoff Carey has started to collect data on **birds available for sale in Hong Kong Bird Markets**. Any records of species, number, condition of bird, date and place - past and future - would be very welcome. Also locations of any markets would be useful.

Of course if you see any **wild birds for sale** (or any other wildlife) tell **Billy Hau at WWF immediately**.

### Birding Sites in Hong Kong

Geoff Carey has produced a **Guide to Birding Sites in Hong Kong** in English. The guide details how to get there (by public transport), when to go, birds to look out for and so on. It is available to society members at the knock down price of **\$50**. **Contact Geoff** to get your copy.

### Black-faced Spoonbills

The Tsen-Wen River Estuary in SW Taiwan is under severe development threat from the government. The area is an important wintering ground for many waders and waterfowl, and it plays host to around **66% of the world population of Black-faced Spoonbill**, with about 20% wintering at Mai Po. The Wild Bird Society of Taiwan has asked the Society to help in a **letter writing campaign** to put pressure on the Taiwanese Government to stop their development proposals. **Contact Liz Leven** for the relevant addresses.

### Colour Ringed Chinese Egrets

During 1990 and 1991 381 Chinese Egret chicks were ringed on Shin-Do Island, Korea. In October 1992 one of these birds was seen on Pulau Ubin Island, off the coast of Singapore. This is the **first record** of a Korean Chinese Egret in Singapore, and throws a little more light on the migration route of this rare species. If you see a colour ringed Chinese Egret (or any other species) in Hong Kong, tell Lew Young at Mai Po, note it down in the Mai Po records book or phone David Melville

### Fruit Eating Birds

Richard Corlett of HKU is investigating fruit eating birds, especially **less common birds** or those birds which are **not normally considered fruit eating**, but have been seen to do so. Any information on species (birds and plants - send him a leaf or fruit if you cannot identify the tree!), numbers of fruits, season, place etc. would be useful, from the past as well. Contact Richard on

Thank you.

## **Big Bird Race 1993**

It is that time of year again, when over 70 people will be chasing all over Hong Kong to see as many birds as possible, **to raise money to run Mai Po**. This year an extra special effort is needed (See Mai Po Update) so **sponsor a team today**, a form is enclosed with this Bulletin, so no excuses!

## **Mai Po Update**

### **Relocation of the Swire Hide.**

The dismantled Swire hide has now been rebuilt next to the HKBWS hide, and the two form a much larger, walk-through hide on the southern side of the scrape. The overcrowding in the HKBWS hide in previous years has, hopefully, now been alleviated.

### **WWF membership and permits**

This spring, in an effort to reduce overcrowding of the hides, WWF will be conducting random checks to ensure visitors have valid WWF HK membership cards in order to use the hides, and also valid permits for going out to the floating hide. So please remember to renew your memberships and permits when they come due.

### **Group visits to Mai Po**

Still with overcrowding (!) would Society members taking groups out to Mai Po, please phone the Reserve office before they visit, so that staff can inform them how many other groups will be on the Reserve that day. It also means staff will have some idea of how many people will be using the hides on any particular day. Many thanks.

### **Mai Po Record Book.**

There is a record book kept near the shop at the Peter Scott Centre for bird (and other) records, counts etc. Please use it! This spring an attempt to assess the numbers of birds going through Mai Po will be made, so all the information will be useful, and ultimately will help in the management of the Reserve.

### **Boardwalk.**

The signing in book is back at the rain shelter. Please use it! This is the only way WWF can

assess the use of the boardwalk hide, and in the past has been invaluable in proving to the powers-that-be the need to allow access through the gate.

### **Gei Weis 6 and 7**

Members may have heard that thanks to the generosity of Wharf Holdings, WWF now manage gei weis 6 and 7. In addition, on a recent visit to Mai Po the Governor, Chris Patten, indicated the Government's intention to make funds available to purchase the remainder of the reserve area still in private ownership. This is fantastic news, but the increase in management costs will also be fantastic, so make sure you sponsor one of the teams in the Bird Race!

### **Mud flats disturbance reduced**

AFD and the police earlier in the winter made a major effort to tackle the mudskipper fishermen problem, with the result that there has been very little activity on the mud flats, and consequently much less disturbance to feeding and roosting birds. This may be why Mai Po has been playing host to 15 Dalmation Pelicans this year, compared to last years three!

### **Old Optical Equipment**

Just treated yourself to a new pair of bins or a new scope? Wondering what to do with your old ones? WWF will solve your problem. Your old optics can be put to good use helping visitors and school children appreciate Mai Po. Contact Simba Chan

## **The Rare and Endangered Gamebirds in China** **ed. Lu Tai-chun, Fujian Science and Technology Press, Fuzhou, China. 1991**

It is a pleasure to read a book on Galliformes in the year of Gallus gallus. The scope of this book is far wider than the title suggests, for the thirty eight species covered include some of the more commoner species, such as the wild ancestor of the bird of the year! It is a very informative book covering distribution (with maps); habitat; behaviour; breeding biology (including captive breeding techniques); population densities in various areas; the impact of human activities; and even genetic studies of some species.

A few words of criticism: since the book is a collection of writings by many different authors (all experts in this field) there is no standard format. Some chapters are very detailed and probably too technical for the layman, whilst others are rather sketchy and short on information. Some species are covered in more detail than others. This has led to important data on, for example, status or estimated population numbers, being omitted for a number of species. Despite these shortcomings the book effectively updates and supplements the 'Fauna Sinica Aves Vol 4 Galliformes' edited by CHENG Tso-hsin, published in 1978, and is definitely THE reference for anyone interested in the Galliformes of China. An English translation should be available soon.

Simba Chan

## Yellow Waders to be seen again in Deep Bay!

(Steve McChesney)

This spring, yellow plumage dye will again be applied to waders during regular ringing at Mai Po. Waders with leg flags will also be passing through. The Australians continue to use orange flags, and the Taiwanese have used yellow flags.

There are three reasons for colour-dying waders:

- 1) to determine the length of time waders spend at Mai Po during migration;

- 2) to estimate the total number of waders passing through Mai Po; and

- 3) to launch distinctive birds and improve knowledge on migration routes.

A different part of the bird is marked during each capture session. The minimum duration of stay is simply the length of time between a bird being marked and the last time that mark is seen.

The total number of birds passing through is determined based on a number of assumptions. The total number of birds marked in the area is assumed to be proportional to the number of marked birds counted in a sample of all the birds present in the area. Changes in the numbers of marked birds represents the changes in the population.

### Results

Using this method last spring, the passage of waders through Mai Po between 30 March 1992

and 15 May 1992 was 16,300 waders! Most people believe this total is critically low. To be added to this is perhaps 7,000 over-wintering waders and early passage migrants (probably Asiatic Golden Plover, Curlew Sandpiper, Curlew, and Black-tailed Godwit). Still, the total is low because of the problems explained next.

### Problems

One error is the disproportionate distribution of marked birds among the species present. For instance, there are 2,500- 3,000 Dunlin present during winter but only two were captured. Because so few Dunlin were marked, their contribution is severely underrepresented in the calculations.

Another error arises from detectability. As the total number of birds increases, the ability to see a marked bird decreases.

By marking more individual and checking more samples of birds which contain fewer individuals, the accuracy of the statistical calculations will increase.

### YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

1. Your observations are valuable! Any observations of marked birds will help determine minimum duration of stay. These observations should include: **SPECIES, PART OF THE BIRD THAT IS COLORED, DATE, and LOCATION.**

2. Observations to assist in calculating turnover are more valuable but must include: **TOTAL NUMBER OF BIRDS PRESENT** (the sample size), **NUMBER OF MARKED BIRDS PRESENT BY SPECIES, PART(S) OF THE BIRDS COLORED, LOCATION, DATE, AND TIME.**

3. Sighting of leg flags will assist in learning more about migratory flyways. Observations should include: **SPECIES, FLAG COLOR, WHICH LEG FLAGGED, LOCATION, DATE, TIME**

Plumage characteristics (e.g. 1/4 breeding plumage) is also useful information.

All observations should be reported to Steve McChesney at Mai Po tel \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_  
or by post: Mai Po Marshes Nature Reserve, Mai Po, Yuen Long or simply record them in the birdwatcher's notebook in the WWF carpark. Please include your name so I can thank you!

## OVERSEAS BIRDING

### Inner Mongolia and Heilongjian 28 May - 27 June 1992

(Jerry Ziarno)

"There's three mergansers" came the cry from the front of the bus. "Are they Scaly-sided?", was the simultaneous question from the rest of the group as the bus lurched to a stop. Finally, after much maneuvering of 'scopes and binoculars and some deliberation, the consensus was, "Yes, three Scaly-sided Mergansers!!". In eclipse plumage but unmistakably *M. squamatus*, one of the rarest birds of the trip, a bird confined to northeast China, Russia and the island of Hokkaido in Japan was in view after two hard, long days of searching the scenic river.

This was one of the highlights of this trip which took place during the month of June 1992. The tour was led by Ben King with assistance from Hong Kong's own Richard Lewthwaite and took us through the northern and eastern part of Inner Mongolia and the northern and eastern parts of Heilongjian, in search of the rarer resident birds, as well as some of the more interesting migrant species passing through at that time of year. Whilst Ben had made an exploratory trip into these areas in August/September of 1990, this was the first group that he had taken into this part of China.

Accommodation varied from very good in Beijing to quite primitive in some of the other places, including two nights in a "yurt" in Inner Mongolia. The food provided was fair to good, in adequate quantities, with local beers at every stop providing the necessary dietary supplements. Clean boiled water in vacuum containers was available almost everywhere but sufficient quantities with which to bathe was another story. Travel, once we reached Qiqihar by air, was by minibus, train (four overnights) and, in Genhe, via a rather strange contraption consisting of a bus body and chassis modified to ride on the narrow gauge railways. We travelled on what seemed like thousands of kilometres of dry, dusty, extremely bumpy roads in square-wheeled buses. We also did a lot of walking and rode on the back of trucks and tractor trailers.

The trip really started in Beijing where we spent an afternoon at the grassland and lakes surrounding the Summer Palace and the next morning walking the trail running along the Great Wall at Badaling, with a later stop at the Ming

Tombs. Birds of note here were Yellow Bittern, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Bohemian Waxwing, Plain Laughingthrush, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Pallas's Warbler, Short-tailed Bush Warbler, Chinese Hill Warbler, Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, Grey-capped Greenfinch, Eurasian Rock Bunting, Meadow Bunting and Oriental Great Reed Warbler.

We then flew to Qiqihar and took a comfortable bus ride to the Zhalong Crane Reserve. The various species of captive cranes were very interesting to see but made sightings of Japanese, White-necked and Demoiselle Cranes at this location highly suspect. However, a lot of effort paid off with excellent sightings of the following: Great and Schrenk's Bitterns, Common and Baer's Pochards, Pied Harrier, Amur Falcon, extended views of Daurian Partridge, Northern and Grey-headed Lapwings, Oriental Pratincole, White-winged Black, Whiskered and Common Terns, Asian and Short-toed Larks, Siberian Blue Robin, Chinese Parrotbill, Black-browed Reed, Lanceolated, Thick-billed, Japanese Marsh and Radde's Warblers, Red-throated and Sooty Flycatchers, Penduline Tit and Japanese and Common Reed Buntings.

We then took the overnight train to Hailar, waking up to the sight of snow in the mountains, and then the long bus ride to Manzhouli in Inner Mongolia, located on the border with Russia. We then spent the next few days driving around Hulun Nur (lake) where we, nine of us, spent two short, cold nights in a yurt. This area provided open, dry grassland birding with some river-bottom wetlands thrown in. Good birds included Black-necked and Great Crested Grebes, European Spoonbill, Whooper Swan, Greylag and Bean Geese, Garganey, Smew, Upland Buzzard, Steppe Eagle, Saker Falcon, White-necked and Demoiselle Cranes, Great Bustard, Baillon's Crake, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Blue Hill Pigeon, Little Owl, Mongolian and Horned Larks, Greater and Asian Short-toed Larks, Blyth's and Petchora Pipits, Isabelline Shrike, Northern and Isabelline Wheatears, Spotted and Chinese Bush Warblers, Chestnut-eared Bunting, Pallas's Reed Bunting and Grey Starling.

After the long, circular bus trip around Hulun Nur, we arrived back at Hailar for the train trip to Genhe in the extreme northeastern part of Heilongjian (Manchuria). Then by bus-body/rail coach to a lumber camp located in the forested Greater Hinggan Mountains northwest of Genhe. Our main quest here was the magnificent, large, Black-billed Capercaillie. Much brush-busting and swamp-sloshing produced, amongst the more

common species, Common Goldeneye, Hen Harrier, Spotted Eagle, Hawk, Ural, Great Grey and Short-eared Owls, Grey Nightjar, Three-toed, Great Spotted and Black Woodpeckers, Eye-browed Thrush, Long-tailed Tit, Eurasian Nuthatch, Yellow-throated Bunting and, after a lot of work, the group had good views of a lone Capercaillie flying overhead. The size of this "grouse" is rather awesome!

After a couple of long train trips we ended up in Dailing in the Lesser Hinggan Mountains, a ski resort where the hotel was closed for renovations so we stayed in the dormitory of a forestry teachers school! This mountainous area was very scenic with most of our birding being done along the fast running streams and in a forestry preserve. Interesting birds here were Northern Goshawk, Hazel Grouse, Band-bellied Crake, Northern Hawk-cuckoo, Northern Eagle Owl, White-backed and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Northern Wren, Siberian Rubythroat, Red-tailed Robin, Siberian Thrush, Manchurian Bush Warbler, Yellow-rumped and Mugimaki Flycatchers, Chestnut-flanked White-eye, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Common Crossbill, Hawfinch, Japanese Grosbeak, Eurasian Nutcracker and the birds that really were the highlight of the trip the three Scaly-sided Mergansers, a genuine "mega-tick".

After another long train ride followed by hours in a square-wheeled bus, we arrived at a fishing camp on Lake Khanka (Xingkai Hu) on the extreme eastern border of China with Russia. In fact, the border runs east-west across the middle of this lake with our camp being on the north (Chinese) shore. Our hopes for some of the species we had missed previously were not to be fulfilled. Some of the desired areas were closed to us, probably because of military installations, and it can also be concluded that active hunting and egg collecting may be taking their toll on the local bird life.

The long train ride to Harbin, a delicious lunch and a little time for shopping and sightseeing was followed by the flight back to Beijing and a glorious hot shower and clean bed.

This was a long, hard trip that produced a total of about 225 species, many of which were "good" birds with a few "once in a lifetimes". A trip long to be remembered.

## Palau, Micronesia 10-19 September 1992

(Nigel Croft)

I was persuaded that I should take up scuba diving during my leave this summer and, furthermore, that Palau would be an excellent place to learn to dive. I had no idea where the hell Palau was and was therefore somewhat reluctant to agree to the idea. I found out that Palau is a series of islands, atolls and rock islands in Micronesia. I still had to find Micronesia on the globe, although by this time I had narrowed it down to Polynesia, Hawaii or thereabouts. In fact the capital, Koror, is about 1300 km (two and a half hours by Air Micronesia/Continental Airways) due east of Manila. Yap and Guam are north-east of Palau. The population of Palau is about 14,000 and during World War II about 12,000 people, mostly Japanese and American, were slaughtered fighting for control of one of the islands. I note all this for general information since most people are probably as ignorant of the existence of Palau as I was a few months ago.

A travel guide mentioned "A Guide to the Birds of Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific" by Pratt, Bruner and Berrett. This is not available in Hong Kong, unless of course you happen to grovel to the Hon. Sec. who has a copy (thanks Ian). With eight to 12 endemic species (depending upon who you believe/read) in Palau my initial reluctance vanished in double quick time. Because the main purpose of the holiday was to learn how to dive, bird watching was a secondary pastime with only one day spent on the large island of Babelthuap devoted to (semi) serious birding. Fortunately some of the endemics are confined to rock islands where lunch was taken between dives.

Between 10th and 19th September I stayed at the Palau Marina Hotel, which was very pleasant. It was also situated a few minutes walk from the local rubbish dump which I was told was the best site for birding on the whole of Palau - reminiscent of Fraser's Hill. There was a wide range of wading birds, fewer in numbers but far more confiding than in Hong Kong. All these waders can be seen in Hong Kong; although other waders do occur I did not identify any (perhaps others can do better). Rufous Night Herons in large numbers were at this rubbish dump. Amongst other birds seen were Audubon's and Streaked Shearwaters, Red-tailed (one) and White-tailed (plenty) Tropic Birds, Brown and Black Noddies, Fairy and Crested Terns. These

seabirds, in such a wonderful background kaleidoscope of sea colours and rock islands were truly beautiful to observe.

Micronesian Pigeons are not easy to see although several Nicobar Pigeons were seen, mostly in flight. The Palau Fruit Dove is a right cracker and can be heard in most places but is difficult to see. Micronesian Megatuck (or is it Megapode?) was spotted on a small rock island where many divers took lunch. Incidentally, clambering over these rock islands is hard work and required good footwear. Other endemics seen were Morning Bird, Palau Brush Warbler, Mangrove Flycatcher and Dusky White-eye.

At the end of the nine days I had accrued a little over 50 species about half of which were new to me.

Diving, or going on those boats, is not cheap. The birds seen were, in my opinion, well worth it and I hope I have made some members envious enough to make a trip themselves. Incidentally the diving is reckoned to be some of the best in the world.

## Selangor Bird Race 17-18 October 1992

(Wendy Young)

On 14th October Andrew and I flew to Kuala Lumpur to participate in the Selangor International Bird Race at the invitation of Hugh Buck (or Dr Huge Buck as Andrew's secretary mistakenly refers to him). Peter Kaestner was to be the other member of our team.

We were met airside by Peter who whisked us through immigration and into his 4 wheel drive/4 litre Cherokee Jeep brought with him from his last posting in Colombia. I have to add here that Peter has been trained in defensive (and offensive) driving by a special American Embassy task force and was awarded first prize on the course. He was to prove during the next few days his expertise in this field and I must say that I have never been driven so fast or so efficiently in my life before and what is more I have lived to tell the tale!

The next few days were spent recce-ing all the likely spots - the ash pits at the power station, the lowland secondary forest by the airport and the various fire break roads in the Genteng Highlands. We chalked up quite a few new birds for our list - Orange-headed Trogon, Black Hornbill, Jambu Fruit Dove, Blyth's Hawk and Changeable

Hawk Eagles, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Gold-whiskered Barbet and a nondescript Flower-pecker (Brown-backed) which got Peter and Hugh very excited.

The race started on the Saturday afternoon after an extremely official hour of photographs and dancing girls. Our photographs were taken with us holding the Hong Kong flag and billed as the Hong Kong Team which was a surprise to us especially as Hugh and Peter are KL based. However, it did lend an international flavour to the affair.

We all set off half an hour before the advertised time almost running down two traffic police, and had chalked up about 30 birds before darkness. We then spent the next two hours with Peter's 170,000 candle power spotlights ticking off nightjars, several species of owls and even a family party of Smooth Otters. Ten pm found us in the chilli prawn restaurant waiting for the moon to rise gasping from thirst and desperate for food (Andrew had nearly expired by this stage!). We then headed back into the lowland forest for the last of the owls and perhaps a nightjar or two. Suddenly out of the dark Dennis Yong (the adjudicator of the race) appeared saying that a Large Frogmouth was calling nearby and that he was going in to "get" it. Sixteen of us (four teams) then crept into the probably leech-ridden jungle in the pitch darkness, and there in Dennis's light and only about 12 feet away was my first species of frogmouth and a more magnificent bird I have never seen. It was a fitting finale to a very exciting first day.

Peter drove us back to KL and Hugh allowed us three hours sleep before we crawled back into the jeep and sped to Genteng for the pre-dawn chorus. We had about 140 species by mid-morning including a tantalising glimpse of Yellow-vented Pigeon, Blue Nuthatch, Pale Blue and Hill Blue Flycatchers, Chestnut-backed Scimitar-babbler and eight species of bulbuls. On the return journey down the mountain I was elected, by virtue of my size, to sit on the roof of the jeep whilst travelling at 60mph and to spot raptors from this rather precarious position. Needless to say this was not entirely successful, I was far too busy trying to cling on for dear life! However with the addition of a rather magnificent Rhinoceros Hornbill and several mixed flocks by the roadside, and by the time we had left the Polo Club, a pair of Slaty-breasted Rails in Hugh's neighbour's garden, brought the total to 160 species and last year's winning score.

The next few hours were tough going but the score rose very slowly and surely and by the time we had driven into Kuala Selangor Reserve we had reached 185 and the end of the race. We celebrated with two ice cold beers each and a Dr Pepper for Peter (who is American after all!).

The nearest score to our winning total was Subharaj's Singaporean team. However, I have to say that the Malaysian teams had entered into the spirit of the race, families and all and although perhaps they had not treated the race quite so seriously as us, I am sure that they enjoyed themselves just as much as we had.

Thank you Hugh and Peter for a great race!

## **Guan Shan Nature Reserve, Yifeng County, Jiangxi Province, China, 11-16 November 1992**

(Stewart Smith)

If you can stomach it, read the following:

JSRE very self-satisfied at identification of Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*.

PRS: Of course, there are a lot of those on sale in the markets in Canton.

JSRE: Really?

PRS: Yes, it's the Ren men buy.

This, I fear, was very much the flavour of a most enjoyable trip taken by five of us (Peter Stevens, John Burton, John Edge, John Lee and Stewart Smith) to the Guan Shan Nature Reserve Area in the Jin Ling Shan mountains of northwestern Jiangxi Province. This was only the second visit by western birdwatchers, following a brief exploratory trip by Richard Lewthwaite in mid December 1991.

Guan Shan lies about 200km west-northwest of Nanchang, the provincial capital of Jiangxi province, and lies between approximately 500m and 1,500m above sea level, with the Reserve accommodation at Dong He at about 750m. The Reserve was created in 1981, but according to Reserve management was reduced from an original 97,000 meus (6,500 ha) to the present 33,000 meus (2,200 ha) in 1986. The terrain is similar to that in the other upland areas of southeastern China with which many of us are now familiar.

The natural vegetation is very reasonable prim-

ary temperate forest, but the Reserve is divided into two distinct areas. In the first, to the east and surrounding the Reserve accommodation, the primary forest is thin and is interspersed with oldish plantings of conifers and some bamboo. Both the latter are being harvested in a managed way, although the volume of harvested conifer seen at the side of the Reserve roads is initially a shock. It is clear that there is replanting of harvested conifers, as well as modest new planting on disused village paddy. The harvesting process itself produces some habitat disturbance during the day, but not unduly so. We were told that this eastern area, of about 14,000 meus, was to be harvested on this basis until 1995, and that all harvesting in the Reserve would then stop.

The western area, of about 18,000 meus, was said to be unharvested, and a cursory view suggested that it was much more substantially primary temperate forest, although still with both coniferous and bamboo pockets. We visited the fringe of this area, where there was a logging camp, and evidence of logging, though much less extreme than in the eastern area, and again of conifers and bamboo only.

Reserve literature states that 87.8% of the area is covered by forest, and this would not be out of line with our observations. It indicates also that the Reserve contains, on a preliminary investigation, about 2,000 species of plant, including over 500 species of grass (including, doubtless, various bamboos).

During our stay the weather was excellent, with bright blue skies and warm sunshine at perhaps 20°C for the bulk of the day, but with overnight and early morning cold, perhaps just above freezing. It was interesting that overnight temperatures at 750m seemed warmer than those down at Tu Qiang Dun (see below), or in the lowland approaches to the reserve, where there was regularly morning rime frost. Perhaps humidity was lower at modest altitude. We were told that there were heavy rains from February to April.

It is said that 250 species of bird have been recorded in the Reserve. The speciality is Elliot's Pheasant which has a very restricted range, with a reputed 1,000 birds on the Reserve. We had three sightings of seven birds in aggregate. Koklass Pheasant is also said to be present, although "rare", and we did not see it. Silver Pheasant is common, with an average 30 birds seen daily; the proportion of males to females is about 1:10.

Otherwise the avifauna was wholly in line with



what is seen in similar hill country elsewhere in southeastern China at this time of year. If anything, we thought birds thinner on the ground than elsewhere (contrasting strongly, for example, with Wuyi Shan, Fujian Province, and Fung Kai, Ba Bao Shan and Nam Kwan Shan, all Guangdong Province), but still very pleasurable. We did note that, although northern thrushes (*Turdus* and *Zoothera* spp.) were in, and Orange-flanked Bush Robin was abundant, there was little significant passerine flocking, even of mini-vets. Sightings of Wren appear to have been of migratory birds of the race *idius*, and daily sightings of Crested Goshawk confirm Richard's observation of further easterly expansion by this species. The Brown-capped Fulvetta (*Alcippe brunnea* race seen was *superciliaris* rather than *genestieri* (or *A. dubia*), and that only once. We were struck by the absence of both black corvids and Magpie, even in the lowlands.

Our time was spent in six basic areas:

(1) on the woodland, and in part riverine, forest roads leading east (uphill) and west (downhill) from Reserve accommodation: one uphill path to the west ("pheasant alley") produced good pheasant sightings morning and evening;

(2) in the disused paddy and orchard area immediately behind Reserve accommodation;

(3) on wooded ridges immediately to the south-east of Reserve accommodation, which held much promise but little reality of pheasants;

(4) in a cultivated area at Tu Qiang Dun, half-way from the Reserve entrance to Reserve accommodation, at about 600m;

(5) in mostly primary forest at about 900m on the periphery of the western area; and

(6) on a ridge walk to Ma Gu Jian, the highest part of the Reserve, behind Reserve accommodation and above the local treeline (PRS).

In addition we were able to bird lowland garden and paddy areas at the county town, Yifeng, on the way out (early morning) and back (mid morning) and intermittently on roadside stops. The rice crop had just been harvested and the paddy was hard and dry.

Notable in the lowland en route were what after much careful consideration we have recorded as Black-browed Reed Warbler found in bushes in the hotel compound in Yifeng, and Hen Harrier and Black Stork both soaring over the road from Yifeng to Nanchang on our return.

The fully sanitized list has not yet emerged, but about 70 species of birds were identified in the Reserve and a total of close to 100 for the trip.

Mammals noted in the Reserve were a small striped squirrel *Tamias swinhoei* (very common, and a confusable for almost any tree-haunting bird species - they are extremely agile and often astoundingly avian in appearance); Ferret-Badger (three seen); Short-tailed (Rhesus) Macaque, (although the only wild ones we saw were two very obvious males seeking access to the principally female captive "research" group held at Reserve accommodation); Barking Deer (spoor); and Chinese Porcupine (scats). PRS noted abundant scats on the top of his ridge walk which he was told were of wolves.

At Reserve headquarters at Yifeng a modest stuffed collection was maintained, among which were noted, in addition to species seen, Koklass Pheasant, Broadbilled Roller, Chinese Pitta, Short-eared Owl, Black-naped Oriole, Hair-crested Drongo, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Baikal Teal and Oriental White Stork. Live Silver and Elliot's Pheasant were held in a stable. PRS took villagers at Reserve accommodation through some illustrations in Viney & Phillipps and Chinese Pitta and Eastern Grass Owl achieved vibrant recognition.

Nanchang is easily accessible by China Eastern Airlines from Hong Kong (presently 4 flights per week) and Song Xiang Jin and his colleagues afford excellent and enthusiastic liaison. Accommodation, and particularly food, at Guan Shan are first rate. We overnighted on the way out at Yifeng and on the way back at Nanchang. Total cost per person was about HK\$5,000.

A full trip report and systematic list with contact and travel details is now available.

## OUTING REPORTS

### Wu Kau Tang/Lai Chi Wo 28 November 1992

(John Edge)

Twelve participants - thirteen if you include the Wu Kau Tang dog which attached itself to our group and led us all day - enjoyed beautiful weather and a fair spread of species: 63 confirmed plus an Accipiter which on wing shape looked like a Northern Goshawk, and two possible Dusky Thrushes flying high over. Some of us also saw two individual wild boars, one flushed out by our redoubtable dog.

The day was perhaps best remembered for five species of bush warbler - Chinese, Short-tailed, Mountain, Russet *Bradypterus seebohmi* (the "zee-bit" bird) and Brown *B. luteoventris*; the Brown was quite well seen by a number of the group, just outside Kau Tam Tso village. Earlier we had seen a female Verditer Flycatcher by the car park at Wu Kau Tang and, also there, two or three Common Rosefinches. There were also two or three separate flocks of Greater Necklaced Laughing Thrushes, one at Ha Miu Tin and one at A Ma Wat; the latter flock was of the local race *picticollis*. There was also one Savannah Nightjar at Lai Chi Wo.

The scenery was, as always, lovely and the outing was also socially enjoyable, with beers and noodles at suitable intervals.

### Tai Po Kau 2 January 1993

(Wendy Young)

Eleven of us assembled at the bottom car park on a morning which started off quite chilly but developed into a beautiful sunny day. We heard that a few good birds were about and hopes were high as we set off up the hill. Several flocks passed by and we were able to get good views of Grey-headed Flycatcher, Yellow-cheeked Tit, Yellow-browed, Pallas's and Blyth's Leaf Warblers and a gorgeous Verditer Flycatcher. Velvet-fronted Nuthatches were seen on several occasions and as we ticked off the minivets and Ashy Drongo in the distance, a male Grey Thrush landed in a tree just over our heads. We also had a quick glimpse of a smallish Accipiter chasing its lunch although I haven't a clue which species - the Accipiter or the lunch! At the dam we had yet

another, even better, view of the Verditer Flycatcher, a Brown Flycatcher and a splendid and very short glimpse of a single Red-headed Tit.

The actual forest paths proved to be much quieter and, as the day wore on were even more so, apart from several Red-flanked Bluetails heard and one finally seen, two White's Thrushes and a single Grey-backed Thrush. However, we did make contact with one last flock where we had close views of Blyth's Leaf Warbler and most of the party were able to come to grips with its field characteristics. A single Blue-winged Minla ended the count at 35 species for the day.

### Chiu Keng 9th Jan. 1993

(John Holmes)

On a fine but rather mild morning, nine of Hong Kong's more discerning birders turned up for the first Society outing around the Chiu Keng area. The actual start was from by the Experimental Farm at Tai Leng, then through Lin Tong Mei, Tong Kung Leng and Cheung Lek to a Buddhist temple at the foot of Kai Kung Shan. We then returned eastwards to Chiu Keng Village itself.

As we set off the first birds heard were Pallas's Warblers. A number of common winter birds were seen before a flock of twelve Rose-ringed Parakeets surprised us near Lin Tong Mei. Large numbers of Silky Starlings were about in heavily-cultivated fields. A Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike was seen flying into the Fung Shui wood at the back of Cheung Lek Village. Just beyond this point a strange rasping call was heard in some scrub. This turned out to be a lone Bright-capped Cisticola. After some persuasion it provided most people with decent views.

A Wryneck and shortly afterwards a Hoopoe provided some excitement. Both birds allowed us prolonged views in the 'scope. As the morning wore on we saw several raptors over Kai Kung Shan. Those of us who struggle to identify birds of prey were heartened by the difficulty other members of the party had identifying them. We settled on "Bonelli's Spotted Hawk Eagle", a life tick for most present.

The outing total was a fifty-two species, with six more seen separately in the area by Stewart Smith to make a respectable fifty-eight. A promising start in a little-birded area.

# REPORT ON THE BIRDS

(These unchecked records include sightings of possible escapes)

## December 1992 - February 1993

(Paul Leader)

Whilst rather quiet in terms of the regular winter visitors, the period was remarkable for rarities including seven possible additions to the Hong Kong list.

Of these four were of south-west China origin and were found in a five day period in late January. These were Chestnut-tailed Starling, Rufous-gorgetted Flycatcher, Blue-throated Flycatcher and White-tailed Robin. The other potential firsts were White-browed Shortwing, Grey Phalarope and Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler.

The Grey Phalaropes were discovered during a boat trip looking for seabirds and further prove the potential of such 'pelagics'.

**Dalmatian Pelican** A single adult had arrived in Deep Bay by mid-December and remained alone until numbers surprisingly increased to seven by 14 Jan. A further increase followed with 12 present on 31 Jan, 14 on 5 Feb and finally 15 on 12 Feb (RWL). Of these four were in first winter plumage. An encouraging increase in numbers (highest since Dec 1990) which may well be a direct result of the reduced disturbance by mudskipper collectors this winter.

**Bittern** Two at Mai Po on 3 Dec (PJL) and singles on other dates.

**Black Stork** One seen going to roost at Tin Shui Wai on 12 Dec (PRK,PJL,MRL *et al*) and another seen over Aberdeen Country Park on 31 Jan (JB).

**Oriental Stork** Max. 16 at Tsim Bei Tsui on 5 Feb (RWL) was an increase on last year's max. of 11.

**Black-faced Spoonbill** Fifty-one at Mai Po on 10 Jan (RWL) increasing to a record 73 by 14 Feb (PJL,MRL), about 20% of the world population. The previous highest count was 57 on the same day last year.

**Ruddy Shelduck** One at Mai Po on 2 Jan (MRL) and two on the Scrape from 12 Feb.

**Mandarin** Max. five in WFC at Mai Po. Some, if not all were birds that escaped from Fairview Park in early December.

**Scaup** A female in the WFC at Mai Po on 6 Feb (PJL).

**Black-shouldered Kite** One over Lok Ma Chau on 26 Jan (PJL,VBP,IT).

**Black Vulture** One near Nim Wan from 10 Jan (MH *et al*).

**Imperial Eagle** Twenty-one flew east over Mai Po 27 Feb (DAD).

**Saker Falcon** The bird found in November was last seen at Mai Po 5 Dec (PJL).

**Purple Gallinule** One at Mai Po on 2 Jan (MRL) was probably one of two which escaped from Fairview Park in early December.

**Lapwing** Two at Tin Sui Wai on 8 Dec (DAD) and two over Deep Bay on 31 Jan (MRL).

**Spoon-billed Sandpiper** The wintering individual was still present on 15 Jan (RWL).

**Woodcock** Four on the lower slopes of Tai Mo Shan on 2 Jan (DAD), one at Ho Chung on 6 Jan (RWL) and one at Shing Mun on 20 Jan (DAD).

**Red-necked Phalarope** A total of about 50 in Mirs Bay on 20 Feb (DAD,PJL,MRL *et al*). The first record in winter.

**Grey Phalarope** Four in Mirs Bay on 20 Feb (DAD,PJL *et al*), three of which were in flocks of Red-necked Phalaropes. If accepted, the first record for Hong Kong.

- Relict Gull** One first winter remained until the end of February.
- Saunders's Gull** Max. 107 on 12 Feb (RWL).
- Slender-billed Gull** An adult from Mai Po Boardwalk on 27-28 Feb (PRK *et al*). The third record for Hong Kong.
- Common Gull** A first-winter at Tsim Bei Tsui on 7 Feb (MT) and Mai Po Boardwalk on 28 Feb (PJL *et al*).
- Slaty-backed Gull** Single first-winters at Mai Po on 15 Jan (RWL), 26 Jan (PJL *et al*), 13 Feb (PRK,PJL,MRL), 28 Feb (MRL *et al*) and second-winters on 30 Jan (PRK,PJL *et al*), 31 Jan (PRK,PJL *et al*), 27 Feb (MLC *et al*) and Tsim Bei Tsui (MT). At least six or seven different individuals were involved.
- Glaucous-winged Gull** A first winter at Mai Po on 27 Feb (RWL *et al*).
- Eagle Owl** One at Chau Tau on 2 Jan (MRL *et al*) and 25 Jan (GGHC).
- Black-backed Wagtail** A male at Shuen Wan on 26 Feb (RWL).
- White-tailed Robin** One in Tai Po Kau on 26 Jan (NG). Potentially an addition to Category A or D in view of other south-west China birds seen at the same time. Currently in Category E on the basis of an obvious escape trapped at Kadoorie ARC in Nov 1990.
- Grey Bushchat** One at Tsim Bei Tsui paddies on 14 Feb (*per* PRK).
- White-throated Rock Thrush** A female/jimm. in Aberdeen Country Park on 25 Jan (VBP). Fifth record for Hong Kong.
- Brown Thrush** One at Hong Kong University on 9 Feb (GAW).
- Dusky Thrush** One at Ho Chung on 18 Feb (MH), two near Tsim Bei Tsui paddies on 26 Jan (MDW) and one in Tai Po Kau on 12 Feb (RWL).
- White-browed Shortwing** A male at Sha Lo Tung on 13 Feb (JAH). If accepted, the first for Hong Kong.
- Yellow-bellied Bush Warbler** The individual initially ringed at Mai Po on 29 Nov was retrapped there on 30 Jan (FW).
- Bright-capped Cisticola** Recorded from Hok Tau, Wu Kau Tang and Tan Shan during the period.
- Russet Bush Warbler** Recorded from the usual upland sites except for one at Mai Po on 20 Feb (PJL *et al*).
- Yellow-eyed Flycatcher Warbler** Singles at Ho Chung wood from 24 Jan (JAH *et al*), Tai Po Kau on 24 Jan (DAD) and Mount Davies on 28 Jan (VBP).
- Fulvous-faced Flycatcher Warbler** One at Ho Chung wood from 10-25 Jan (JAH *et al*). The third record for Hong Kong and the first since one in Feb 1964 which was also at Ho Chung.
- Sulphur-breasted Warbler** One in Tai Po Kau on 20 Feb (PJL) and one at Ho Chung wood from 10 Jan (JAH).
- Two-barred Greenish Warbler** One in Lam Tsuen Valley Golden Triangle from 20 Dec (PJL *et al*) and another at She Shan on 3 Jan (PJL).
- Chiffchaff** One trapped at Mai Po on 6 Feb (PJL,DSM *et al*) represents the fourth record for Hong Kong.
- Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler** One at Mai Po on 26-27 Feb (PJL *et al*). If accepted, the first record for Hong Kong.
- Rufous-gorgetted Flycatcher** A male in Tai Po Kau on 23 Jan (FW). If accepted, the first record for Hong Kong.
- Mugimaki Flycatcher** A male at She Shan on 24 Jan (MDW) and another the same day at Ho Chung wood (MH).

**Blue-throated Flycatcher** A male at Ho Chung wood of the race *glaucicomans* from 24 Jan-5 Feb (MH, JAH *et al*) If accepted, the first record for Hong Kong. This race is sometimes considered a separate species, **Chinese Blue Flycatcher**.

**Rufous-necked Scimitar Babbler** Two near Tai Tam Reservoir on 4 Dec (PA), two at Shing Mun on 20 Jan (DAD) and four in the Aberdeen Country Park on 22 Feb (GAW).

**Grey-cheeked Fulvetta** Six near Tai Tam Reservoir on 4 December (PA).

**Striated Yuhina** Ten at Mount Nicholson on 31 Jan (IT).

**Grey-headed Parrotbill** A flock of eight to ten on the Maclehole Trail near Lion Rock on 7 Feb (JH).

**Gould's Sunbird** A male in Tai Po Kau on 1 Feb (DS).

**Bull-headed Shrike** An adult male at the bottom of the Sha Lo Tung road from 4 Dec into Feb (RWL *et al*) and a female at Shing Mun on 20 Feb (DAD).

**Carrion Crow** The first for Hong Kong remained at Tsim Bei Tsui into Feb.

**Chestnut-tailed Starling** Two at Tsim Bei Tsui paddies from 22 Jan into Feb (IT *et al*). If accepted, the first record for Hong Kong.

**European Starling** Two at Tsim Bei Tsui paddies from 25 Jan (MDW).

**Japanese Grosbeak** One in the Lam Tsuen Valley Golden Triangle from 5-6 Dec (MLC *et al*) and two there from 30 Jan-7 Feb (DAD *et al*).

**Reed Bunting** A female trapped at Mai Po on 10 Jan (ACG, PJL, DSM *et al*), three more females trapped on 30 Jan (FW *et al*) and one seen on 6 Feb (PJL).

# FUTURE MEETINGS

DATE	LEADER	VENUE	TIME
<b>20 March</b> Saturday	John Burton	<b>Tai Po Kau</b> Meet Car Park	7.00
<b>24 April</b> Saturday	Michael Leven	<b>Luk Keng Swamp Bash</b> Wear wellingtons or long trousers	7.30
<b>25 April</b> Sunday	Roger Costin Ng Cho-nam	<b>Mai Po***</b> Bilingual	10.00-15.00
<b>1 May</b> Saturday	David Carrier	<b>Junk Trip for Skuas</b> Meet Aberdeen Boat Club.Limited numbers so book a place early	0900-1700
<b>8 May</b> Saturday	Mike Chalmers	<b>Shing Mun / Lead Mine Pass</b> <b>Breeding Birds Survey #</b> Meet Pineapple Dam, Shing Mun Road Bring Packed Lunch	0730-1500

<b>19 May</b> Wednesday	<b>INDOOR MEETING</b> <b>Lumps, splits and DNA</b> An informal talk on the world of Sibley and Munroe. Mike Chalmers, Jim Hackett et all <b>WWF Office, 1 Tramway Path, Central</b>	18.30
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<b>22 May</b> Saturday	Peter Stevens	<b>Tai Po Kau</b> <b>Breeding Birds Survey #</b> Meet Car Park	07.30-1230
<b>5 June</b> Saturday	Mike Turnbull	<b>Tai Mo Shan</b> <b>Breeding Birds Survey #</b> Meet Car Park	0730
<b>14 August</b> Saturday	David Carrier	<b>Junk Trip for Terns</b> Meet Aberdeen Boat Club.Limited numbers so book a place early	0900-1700

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

\* 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 to see if any seats are still available. Please bring packed lunch and drink.

# These outings will be used as "teach-ins" for the new breeding birds survey, using the criteria and mapping described on the loose sheet enclosed with this bulletin