



香港觀鳥會
THE HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY
GPO BOX 12460, HONG KONG. 香港郵政總局信箱12460號

BULLETIN NO. 151

MARCH 1994

Society News

1994 Annual General Meeting

The 1994 AGM will be held on **Wednesday 30th March 1994** at the Auxiliary Police Officer's Mess, 3/F Beaconsfield House, Queen's Road Central at 6.00pm.

Bulletin Editor

After editing the English Language Bulletin for three years, Liz Leven is standing down. **A replacement is required!!** Anyone interested should contact **Richard Stott (524 9938 H)** to discuss the job. A native English speaker with access to a pc. would be ideal!

New Hide Fund

Over **\$25,000** has been raised so far for the new hide fund with the subscription appael. A **big** thank you to all contributors. If you havn't given yet, why not send a cheque made out to The Hong Kong Birdwatching Society today

1994 Big Bird Race April 16/17

Don't forget to sponsor the Society team (or another of your choicel) All funds raised go to Mai Po.

Reduced Bulletin

Due to the editor's recent illness, this bulletin is very much reduced. Articles provided on disk have been included, but typed articles have had to be left out. Apologies to the authors, and the articles will be used in the next bulletin, subject to the decision of the new editor.

Birds of Hong Kong

Ray Tipper, the award winning bird photographer, has very generously offered to give his talk "**Birds of Hong Kong**" in aid of the new hide fund. The date is **Friday April 8th**, the place is the **Gazetted Police Officer's Mess, Police Headquarters, Arsenal Street, Wan Chai, Hong Kong**. Doors open at 6.00pm, the talk will start at 7.00pm. Tickets cost **\$50** at the door (first come first served), drinks extra.

The committee members are listed below. The next committee meeting will be in 1994. If any member wishes a matter raised, please contact one of the committee members.

Richard Stott Chairman
Tim Woodward Secretary
Mike Chalmers Recorder
M M Chan Bulletin Editor
(Chinese)
Geoff Carey Annual Report

C Y Lam Vice Chairman
Janet Stott Treasurer
David Melville WWF Liason
Ng Cho-nam Conservation
Li Wai-ki Librarian
Ian Tyzzer Hide Project

The Bird Hotline Number is

Breeding Birds Survey

1994 is the second year of the Breeding Birds Survey. Approximately half of the 1347 x 1Km squares in Hong Kong were covered last year and the target this year is to complete the remaining half. The explanatory sheet and map of squares is enclosed with this bulletin for information. In addition Figures 3 and 4 which were inadvertently missed from the summary of results in the December bulletin are also attached. 5Km squares have been allocated to observers, based on responses to the reply slip in the December bulletin. Many expressed a desire to retain the same 5Km squares as last year and either upgrade the data or fill in the missing 1Km squares. However, where coverage was good last year, the same squares have not been included and instead observers have been allocated new squares where the coverage was lower.

Last year, a special survey was carried out on Lantau over a long weekend by hiring a holiday house and minivan. It is planned to do the same this year as well as to organise several launch or junk trips to survey offshore islands (e.g. Kat O Chau group, Port Shelter group, Ninepins, Waglan, Po Toi and Sokos)

The list of squares and observers is given below, with the number of 1Km squares remaining to be covered in brackets. If you are unable to complete the squares allocated, please contact Michael Chalmers 605 7719 (H). Maps and log sheets with all the 1993 results added will be issued to all named observers either at the AGM at the end of March or by post shortly afterwards.

Last year, the coverage was not good in the urban area or on the highest ground or most remote areas. Please make special efforts this year and remember, **don't** leave it all until June. The cuckoos begin calling in mid- April and have often stopped by June, so when you're satiated with the waders at Mai Po, why not go exploring for breeding birds when there's still a chance of finding spring migrants too.

1,2,3	(3) Shau Tau Kok	NJG Croft
4,5,13,14	(20) Kat O Chau	Special Survey
7,8,17	(23) Ma Tso Lung	P J Leader
9	(11) Ping Yuen	SSchaum
10	(12) Yim Tso Ha	L Young
11,12	(21) Luk Keng	D Cook
16	(8) Mong Tseng	G Walthew
18	(15) Beas River	NJG Croft
19	(2) Fanling	NR Townsend
20	(6) Sha Lo Tung	RW Lewthwaite
21	(7) Tai Mei Tuk	JSR Edge
22	(17) Tolo Channel	J Holmes
23,35,36	(25) Hoi Ha Wan Tai Long Wan	P Aston
24,25	(2) Tap Mun, Gau Tau	Special Survey
26,27,28	(31) Nim Wan, Ha Tsuen	HF Cheung
30	(15) Shek Kong	GCH Cooper
32	(6) Tai Po Kau	GJ Carey
33	(15) Ma On Shan	MF Grabandt
34	(13) Three Fathoms Cove	PR Stevens
37,39,40	(28) Castle Peak	HF Cheung
41	(25) Ting Kau	NS Grimshaw
44	(17) Buffalo Hill	W Parfitt
45	(12) Sai Kung	MF Grabandt
46,47	(23) High Island	T Woodward
48,49	(4) Shau Chau etc	Special Survey
50,51	(22) Yam O, Ma Wan	JBryant
52	(14) Tsing Yi	ML Chalmers
53,54	(34) N Kowloon	D A Diskin
55	(8) Ho Chung	M Hale
56,67	(8) Clearwater Bay	J Hackett
57,58	(29) Port Shelter	Special Survey
68,69		
59,60,71,	(33) Lantau	Special Survey
72,73,83,84		
61	(22) Disco Bay	J Bryant
62,63	(13) Peng Chau etc	MD Williams
64,76	(12) Mt Davis,Aberdeen	M Turnbull
65	(11) S Kowloon North Point	CY Lam/DC Cook
66	(12) Lei Yue Mun/ Quarry Bay	J Hackett/ MM Chan
70,82	(5) Tai O, Fan Lau	G Walthew
74	(7) Hei Ling Chau	Special Survey
78	(20) Tai Tam	V B Picken
80,8	(15) Ninepins	Special Survey
85	(7) Chi Ma Wan	MD Williams
87,88,94	(5) Lamma	R Morrish
89,90	(12) Chung Hom Kok Stanley	MR Leven
91,92,93	(27) Soko, Po Toi	Special Survey
95,96		

Note:

Completed squares are 6, 15, 29, 31, 38, 42, 43, 75, 77, 79, 86

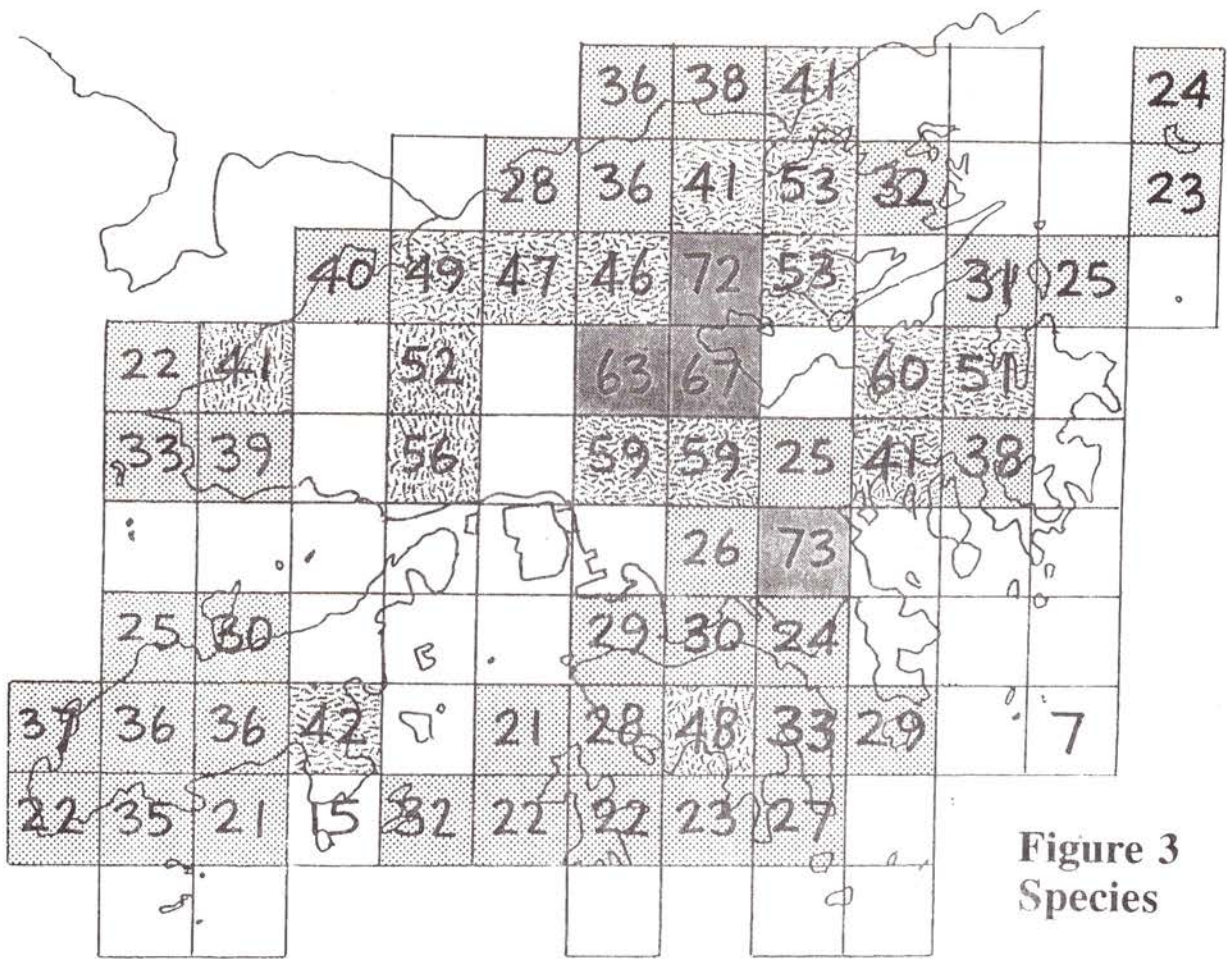


Figure 3
Species

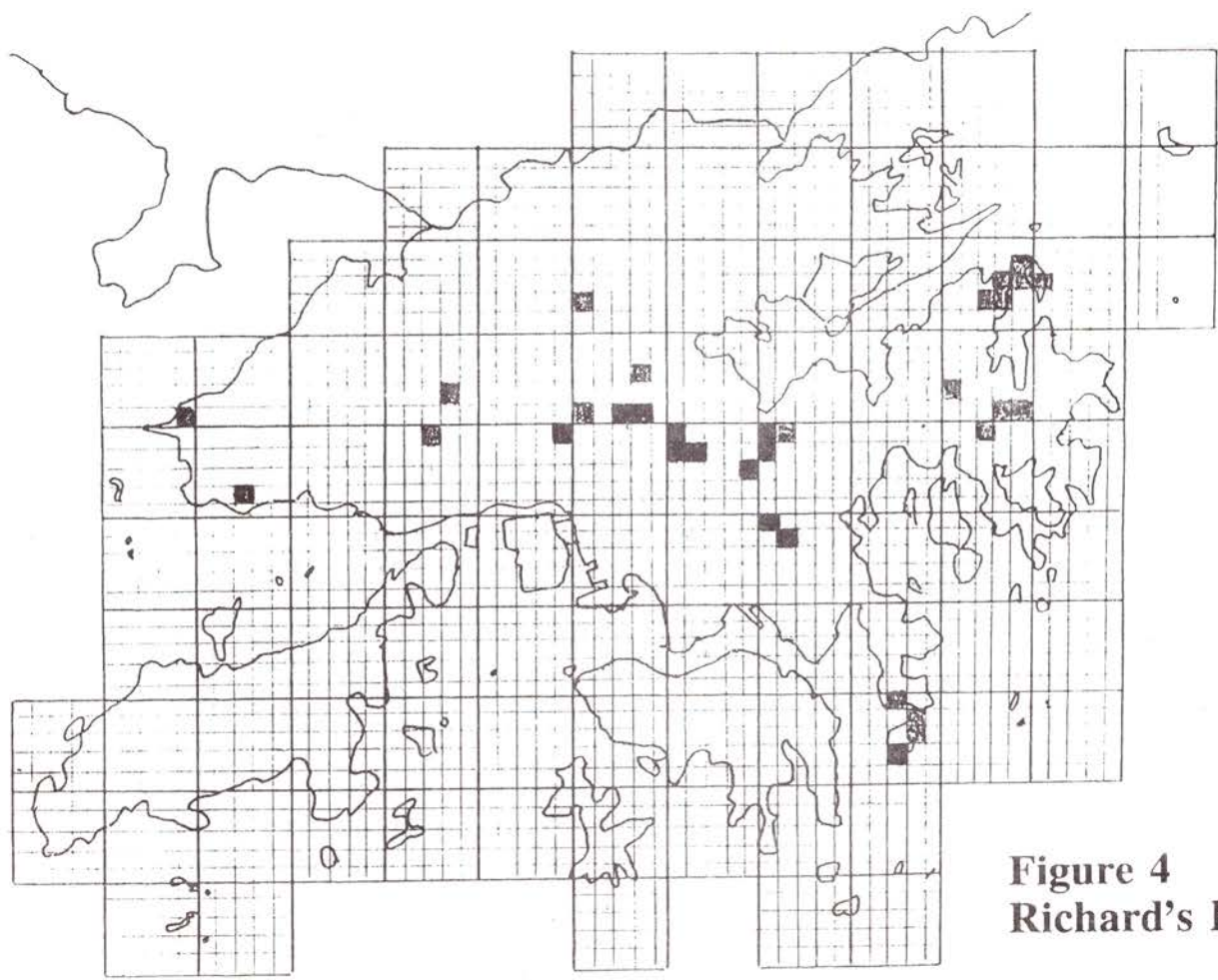


Figure 4
Richard's Pipit

Oriental Bird Club News

OBC Checklist

The long-awaited publication of this new Checklist of Oriental Birds is programmed for later this year. The price will be fixed soon and advance orders will be taken. Further details will be given in the June bulletin.

Conservation Awards

The primary objective of the OBC is to encourage interest in Oriental birds and their conservation. In 1994 the OBC is offering the following funds for conservation.

Forktail-Leica Award for Conservation

The award will be GBP1000-1500 for funding projects including studies or surveys of globally threatened species, habitats of particular importance for birds, and areas supporting concentrations of endemic species or poorly known areas likely to support globally threatened or endemic species. Projects should involve local people and organisations and aim to influence governments.

OBC-In Focus Award for Conservation Awareness

An award of GBP1000 is being offered to nationals of the Orient for a project emphasizing conservation awareness such as an information centre, hide, or nature trail, improving educational facilities or materials or attending conservation training course. The closing date for applications is 10 October 1994.

OBC Small Grants

Grants of up to GBP500 are offered for similar projects as those listed above under the Forktail-Leica and OBC-In Focus awards.

Recipients of awards and grants must write a report on their project and are encouraged to publish results in either Forktail or the OBC Bulletin. Further information and application forms are available from **Melanie Heath, Conservation Officer, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds, SG 19 2DL, UK.**

OBC Membership

In the first half of 1993, membership passed the 1000 mark. HKBWS is itself a member, and there are in addition about 40 individual members. Individual membership entitles subscribers to Forktail and the OBC Bulletin, and provides direct

support to the conservation work of OBC in this region. 1994 is OBC's 10th anniversary and a target to increase membership by a further 30% (as 1993) has been set. Membership forms were published in the HKBWS 1992 Annual Report and further copies, samples of publications, car stickers etc. are available from Michael Chalmers.

OBC Representative

Michael Chalmers has taken over from Peter Kennerley as one of the two OBC Representatives in Hong Kong. David Melville remains as the other. Further information on OBC is available from David or Michael. Any suggestions on how OBC publications or activities can be improved are welcomed.

Request for Gull Photographs

For future identification purposes, photographs of large gull species are requested in Hong Kong and elsewhere in north-east or east Asia. Please send to **Michael Chalmers, 1 Fairview Villa, 52 Ma Lok Path, Kau To Shan, Shatin.**

A Look Back

(Geoff Carey)

I recently decided to get all the back issues of the Hong Kong Bird Report out of the library and, as a relative newcomer of nearly seven years to the Society, I found it very interesting to read through them noting the changes that have occurred regarding the status of certain species since its inception. Some of these changes are more apparent than real but a number are certainly attributable to a change in the birds that can be found - species now considered common were, at one time, rather rare and conversely those formerly fairly numerous are now not so. In both cases the cause is probably connected with habitat changes.

The 1958 Report was the first produced by the Society whose inaugural meeting was held on 7 August 1957. The most interesting reports are the first records of Hainan Blue Flycatcher at Shek Kong and of Long-toed Stint, a bird that was shot at Mai Po. In 1959 Fork-tailed Sunbird was seen for the first time, mainly at Tai Po Kau. In the light of its great abundance in Hong Kong now, this is one of the more interesting new sightings of these early years. By 1962 it was

being seen regularly throughout the year at Tai Po Kau. Also in 1959 came only the second record of Avocet followed, in 1961, by the third record.

In 1960 the first records of Grey-headed Flycatcher and Chinese Babax occurred, the former species is now frequently seen in winter. In 1960 the "truly magnificent sight" of 14 Black-winged Stilts at Mai Po was noted and, perhaps even more surprising from a contemporary point of view, was a Coot for which there were only two previous post-war records. On a different note were the numbers of Painted Snipe ("...from 22nd October...parties of up to four seen mainly in the Deep Bay area...") and Crested Bunting ("Flocks of up to fifty reported in winter." and in 1959 "Reports for every month of the year except August...Twelve pairs...counted along the RAF Road from the top of Route Twisk to the top of Tai Mo Shan on June 25th") - two species whose status is now very different, reflecting the loss of rice paddy and cultivated areas in general in the New Territories. Also in these early years records of Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker were sufficiently few to be listed out in full (12 in 1958, 5 in 1960).

In 1961 Night Heron was regarded as a migrant and in that year there were three records; Moorhen was considered to be a winter visitor and a pair were seen on 7 February; Black-winged Stilt was a vagrant and 1961 brought the seventh and eighth records.

1962 brought the fourth record of Grey-throated Minivet, the third having been in 1960 and the first mention of Scarlet Minivet also occurs in 1962. In 1963 records of the latter species totalled five and were nearly as many as in all previous years. 1963 also brought the fourth record of Shoveler and the first record of Emerald Dove, but this was besmirched with the epithet of escape showing just how eternal this problem is! Although still a vagrant to Hong Kong, it is interesting to note that the second HK record of Lesser Tree Duck was of eleven birds at San Tin. A Peregrine roosting on the China Bank Building on and off during the year is perhaps an example of a phenomenon met with far less nowadays.

In 1965 Night Heron was still uncommon with reports from only one locality and there were no Shoveler or Pintail seen during the winter. There was a Gadwall however and this was the first record for the territory. There were only two spring records of Curlew Sandpiper and Dunlin numbers reached no more than 30 in the winter.

1966 brought the first record of Striated Yuhina. Plumbeous Redstart was far commoner than it now is with up to 13 individual birds noted (at a time when the number of observers was far fewer than now), one of which was seen on Battery Path in Central. The tenth record of Serpent Eagle occurred on 29 September in Lam Tsuen Valley.

The 1967 Report notes Black-tailed Godwit as becoming much more frequent and a summary is provided that shows numbers increasing from one a year to three in 1966 and four in 1967, the latter including 12 birds on 25 April. The first record of Asiatic Dowitcher occurred in this year and Scarlet Minivet was still rare with only one sighting of two females. Black Stork numbers however, were notably higher during these years and in 1967 three were recorded in the first winter period and up to fifteen in the second. The year also brought a total of 13 White's Thrushes compared with only 18 recorded in previous years.

1968 witnessed the first record of Nordmann's Greenshank and 1969 the first of Saunders' Gull. Other firsts in that year included Greater-necklaced Laughingthrush and Yellow-bellied Tit; Scarlet Minivets occurred for the first time in numbers and subsequently became fairly standard Tai Po Kau birds, though initially only in winter. Crested Bunting was still described as occurring fairly frequently in winter although the days of widespread breeding had disappeared. One species which was breeding successfully though, for the first time in Hong Kong, was Pheasant-tailed Jacana. Up to ten were seen regularly near Mai Po with juveniles being seen from 1 September. The site in question was what is now Fairview Park. Another freshwater marsh species that occurred in far greater numbers in the late 60s than nowadays was Watercock with up to eight males and a smaller number of females seen at more than one site. Also during the 60s Moorhens were increasing noticeably and by 1966 the majority of records were of breeding or summering birds; by 1968 about 20 pairs were thought to be breeding.

The new decade began with Black Stork numbers still fairly high with up to 14 noted in the Deep Bay marshes until late March; the highest count of Dalmatian Pelicans in 1970 was 81, similar numbers being present in most winters during the 70s. Urban roosting Peregrines also continued to be noted fairly frequently.

In 1971 Night Herons were still rare and the only record was of a dead bird found at Mai Po. There were four records of Serpent Eagle during the year and a bird seen on 13 June was considered very unusual. Coot is noted as having become exceedingly common on the marshes where before it had been rare to see flocks of more than 20. A high count of 330 Curlew Sandpipers was considered to be "an invasion". The second winter period brought the first record of European Starling and 24 reports of Verditer Flycatcher during the year contrast favourably with the relative scarcity of the species more recently. Another species seemingly more common in the past than now is Chinese Greenfinch which, in 1971, was reported from areas throughout Hong Kong and the New Territories. The first breeding record of White-backed Munia, a species that now does so throughout Hong Kong, was also reported in 1971.

In 1972 a pair of Chinese Egrets bred at Yim Tso Ha as did a pair of Great Egret, the latter the first since 1959. The first record of Baer's Pochard occurred on 19 February and the first record of Black Baza on 14 May. Hwamei was noted as becoming much commoner and more widespread in the New Territories. The 1972 Report also provides a summary of the colonisation of Hong Island by Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. First recorded in 1961, numbers had increased to five by 1964-65, to ten by 1969 and to thirteen by 1972. Up to six Night Herons were present at Yim Tso Ha egretry where breeding probably occurred for the first time in many years.

1973 brought the first Hong Kong record of Siberian Blue Robin, a male in the ZBG on 19 April. Up to 18 White Ibis were regularly recorded at Deep Bay during the early winter period and 25 were seen in the same period in 1974, far higher numbers than are encountered today. Also in 1974 six Yellow-nib on 13 July was considered unusual.

In 1975 Scarlet Minivet was suspected of breeding for the first time; winter numbers were now fairly high and it was recorded from a number of localities in the New Territories. By 1976 Night Heron was well-established flocks of 300 recorded during the year and Serpent Eagle suddenly seemed fairly widespread. The first record of a male Grey-throated Minivet in Hong Kong, and the sixth ever, came in this year and Pekin Robins in Tai Po Kau were noteworthy for being in "perfect plumage" and for displaying "the characteristics of wild birds". Large Hawk Cuckoo was by no means annual at this time

although 1976 and 1977 did have one record each. In 1979 a count of at least 850 Cattle Egrets flying in to roost in the mangroves at Mai Po was very notable as was Hong Kong's second record of Pochard, nine years after the first.

The 80s began with Chinese Egrets still breeding at Yim Tso Ha and a single White-bellied Yuhina seen at Tai Po Kau was the first sighting since Dove and Goodhart in 1953. In 1981 Watercocks were still being seen on a number of occasions in the year although Pheasant-tailed Jacana had well and truly declined. Chestnut Bulbuls were still only winter visitors and not necessarily that common either and Crested Buntings were present in small numbers, mainly in the winter.

Thus, over twenty years of bird watching in Hong Kong of which I have tried to give an idea of the most interesting and notable sightings for today's observer. As noted above, some of the changes are not quite as they seem. Thus, it is likely that the increased frequency of sightings of various wetland species, especially the numbers of waders seen in the spring or the birds that prefer Deep Bay proper in the winter, has more to do with restrictions on hunting and far better access to that area than anything else. As late as the mid-1970's seeing waterbirds in Deep Bay was fraught with difficulties: a far smaller number of wary birds threatened by hunting and trapping; very difficult access such that most people were restricted to viewing distant specks from the Rocky Outcrop or from the hill at Tsim Bei Tsui; little control on access to the Bay resulting in more disturbance.

For an idea of what had to be gone through in order to get a decent view of the birds in the Bay, I can recommend an article by David Bradford in the 1973 Report modestly entitled "A Good Day for Duck". This is an account of a morning spent wading through mud and mangroves with the former "over my knees so that progress was laboriously slow". As the tide rose David was forced to push over a small mangrove which acted as an observation platform. "Scanning the bay in front of me through binoculars I was astonished to see that the whole area was seething with birds" including "several hundred" Falcated Teal. "Far out across the bay....were more masses of wildfowl". Black Kites passing by overhead "caused instant panic and the whole assemblage took to the air with a great roar of wings and rocketed back and forth in wild myriad combinations...". However, by midday David was "approaching a state of physical exhaustion". He continues: "My legs ached with the strain of

balancing on the mangrove, my eyes were red and raw and my clothes were drenched in sweat and mud". Fortunate indeed are we who do not have to go through that to see the birds of the bay!

With the building of the border fences at Mai Po and Tsim Bei Tsui and also the passing of legislation banning the hunting and trapping of birds things improved greatly - for both observers and birds. Subsequently, the creation of Mai Po and then the boardwalk hide enhanced greatly the opportunities for seeing both the winter waterfowl and spring waders. Nevertheless, it does seem that since the establishment of the facilities at Mai Po there has indeed been a real increase in numbers of birds recorded in the Bay and it may be that very real changes have occurred, presumably due to the loss of habitat elsewhere on the south China coast.

The second aspect concerns woodland species. It may be difficult now for some to believe that species such as Fork-tailed Sunbird, Scarlet Minivet, Crested Serpent Eagle and possibly also Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker were, at one time, rare in the territory. There is little doubt that this is due to the increasing quality of woodland habitat after the depredations of World War 2, especially at Tai Po Kau, and it is well evidenced by the relatively recent colonisation by Chestnut Bulbul, a species which prefers fairly good quality woodland for breeding. It may be that recent records of Bay Woodpecker will herald its fairly regular occurrence in the future and maybe even breeding.

Third is the simple process of overlooking species and then realising the mistake, after which its true status becomes known. This is something that is still happening *viz.* Aleutian Tern and Grey Phalarope.

We have not yet had the last word however, nor will we ever I hope. There is still much to be seen out there and thus much to be learned. Things are changing all the time and in, ornithologically speaking, a relatively little-explored region as this there is still much we do not know. It may unfortunately be the case that many of the changes are for the worse in terms of the numbers and variety of birds to be seen but with such riches as do exist, and such places as Mai Po, Tai Po Kau and many others in which to see them, we can still all contribute while enjoying ourselves immensely at the same time!

Overseas Birding

Gaoligon Shan Reserve, November 1993

(Cheung Ho-Fai)

On 14-11 to 28-11-93 W M Chan, W Jetter, Paul Lau, Li Wai-Ki, W Y Lo, C N Ng, T W Wong and I joined the excellently-planned birding trip organised by CY Lam to Gaoligon Shan in west Yunnan. Among us there was a meteorologist, geologist, environmental scientist, minority-race researcher, photographer and doctor. All these made the trip at times look like a serious scientific expedition. We flew to Kunming and with the help of the Kunming Institute of Zoology we gladly met their driver and their van. Next morning we headed for Xi Shan. Nothing really exciting, but for us this was a first taste of this unfamiliar place and all the unfamiliar birds. We did see Brown-capped Fulvetta, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Yellow-browed Tit and a pigeon which we suspected was Mountain Imperial Pigeon. In the afternoon we visited the Kunming Institute of Zoology. Mr. T H Yang allowed us to see the excellent bird skin collection. I was particularly happy to have this chance to see the skins of many of the difficult laughing-thrushes of China.

November 16th, we started very early to Xiaguan. In spite of our insistence to take a few stops to check the birds around, the very-able driver still managed to cover 400 km in very crowded traffic. On the way Black-headed Greenfinch and Russet Sparrow were abundant, Buzzard and Kestrel gave us good identification practice but we had a long debate on those slightly different Black Kite and Long-tailed Shrike / Grey-Backed Shrike. Most people were satisfied with the beautiful Hoopoe seen on the road. We took the next day touring Dali. The morning light was so beautiful at an old Temple that it kept all the cameras busy for a long while. In the wide-open field around the huge lake Er Hai, Water Pipit and Oriental Skylark were abundant. Dusky Crag Martin and Plain Martin showed their face briefly. The best birds was a pair of Hen Harrier flying over. The lake produced a few fowls including Merganser and Brown-headed Gull.

November 18th we started west once more. The first ten miles of the road followed a small stream

down a valley that was terribly polluted by a paper factory. A beautiful White-Capped Redstart gave us a very delightful start. Plumbeous Water Redstart was forever present. Then there was a "slight" traffic jam during the best birding time of the day and so we were stuck on the road for two extra hours. During that time a Wallcreeper showed her face very briefly. A flock of Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrike also passed by. In the afternoon we met another Hen Harrier, another Great Spotted Woodpecker and a Chestnut Bittern. We arrived at Baoshan in late afternoon.

November 19th, we headed for the reserve. During the last few days we noticed that the forest up the hills had mostly been cleared. Most standing trees were in poor shape, and there were not that many birds to see. So we all had high hopes for Gaoligon Shan Reserve, which should be the least disturbed forest in the area. By afternoon we were on the east slope of the mountain in the reserve, a town called Bawan. The mountain was tall but without snow at this time (early winter). It seemed to us that virgin forest exist only at about half way up the valley, and at this high altitude the forest was not dense at all. It looked much poorer than that of Fanjingshan Reserve in Guizhou. Our high hopes had mostly vanished by this time. In spite of that, the area produced Sand Martin, Crested Bulbul, Yellow-eyed Babbler, Flavescent Bulbul, White-throated Fantail and several species of swifts and swallows. Earlier in the day by a large pond on a village we had checked Pied Bushchat, Ferruginous Duck and a prime male Pied Harrier. In the evening we talked to the Gaoligon Shan Reserve manager Mr. Duan. He told us the minimal operation of the reserve and their problems.

November 20th we went over Gaoligon Shan. On the way we first took a stop at a tiny village high up the east slope. There was good forest around the farmlands. Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Grey Bushchat, Black Bulbul and Rufous-capped Babbler offered everybody good views, while Ashy-throated Warbler and a flock of quick Rosefinch gave me headache for a long time. At the ridge top of Gaoligon Shan there were extensive areas of scrub with ripening berries. For this reason the place attracted unexpectedly many sunbirds including Scarlet Sunbird, Fire-tailed Sunbird. Other good birds included Black-chinned Yuhina, Rufous-vented Yuhina, Chestnut-tailed Minla and Blue-fronted Redstart. In the afternoon we were

at Dahaoing, a place on the west slope of Gaoligon Shan, a place where birds are supposed to be more abundant. Here we worked in small groups. We got reports of Black-tailed Crake, Golden Eagle, Mountain Bulbul, Rusty-fronted Barwing, Cutia, Chestnut-flanked White-eye, Grey-cheeked Warbler, Large Niltava, Yellow-bellied Fantail and Silver Pheasant. All these made the day a very satisfying one. We stayed at Dahaoping that night.

Next morning we birded in the area again. The beautiful sea of cloud in the lower valley made this place hard to forget. As for birds, the sunbirds were still very confusing to us and so was the Fukien Niltava / Blue-fronted Redstart. Most of us were satisfied getting a clear view of Chestnut-tailed Minla, Rusty-tailed Barwing and a juvenile Brahminy Kite. Li Wai Ki reported that all the White-eyes he saw had chestnut flanks. Too bad for me, I hadn't seen any! An undulating-flying medium-size bird with all black body and bright red tail was the mystery of the day. There was also reports of Large Scimitar Babbler, Rufous-gorgetted Flycatcher, Wren, Yellow-browed Tit and Green-tailed Sunbird. In the afternoon we moved ever closer to the Chinese-Burma border. We stopped at Tengcong that night.

November 22nd we went through mostly farmlands in a big valley. Wryneck, Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*, White-vented Myna, Citrine Wagtail, Black-shouldered Kite and Buff-throated Warbler were added to our list. We stopped briefly at a place called Yingjiang. This place was at a wide and flat valley with a big river and vast sand bank. There we got a chance to see some river birds, that included Great Thick Knee, River Lapwing and River Tern. Since we were worried about the traffic on the way back, we decided not to spend the night in this seeming good birding area. At dusk we arrived at the border town Ruili. Next day we did some touring. The border checkpoint was astonishingly primitive, with no more than a border stone. People were commuting freely across it. In this area we ticked Coppersmith Barbet, Crimson Sunbird, a small eagle which we called Tawny Eagle, Black Bittern, and Grey-breasted Prinia. A harder examination of the white-eyes produced Oriental White-eye. Later in the afternoon we saw a flock of six Black Storks. They left us wondering why these birds would appear in this dry and heavily-populated area. At night we arrived at Luxi.

November 24th, from Luxi back to Baoshan we stopped by a small forested valley in the morning. The time and place were perfect and all we needed to do was to stand still for two hours ticking birds! Interesting birds included Black-headed Sibia, four species of Minivet, Blue-throated Barbet, Bronze Drongo, two species of Fantail, Maroon Oriole, Crested Finchbill, Ashy Bulbul, a pigeon which we called Yellow-footed Pigeon and other unidentified birds. The driver was the only person not too happy about this! In the afternoon we saw a flock of four male Chestnut-breasted Rock Thrush gliding from tree to tree in the wooded valley below the road. By this day our list was over 200 species.

The next day from Baoshan to Xiaguan we needed to cross some tall mountains and deep gorges. We had to take a longer road to avoid the traffic jam and that means less time for birding. At one gorge when we were all looking at a low bush up the hill, CY Lam and TW Wong reported a White-hooded Babbler. Li Wai Ki and I were looking at the wrong side of the bush, and saw only the Daurian Redstart and Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler. In the afternoon our van broke down. It seemed very serious and so we moved on by bus, leaving behind the driver to get the van repaired. Miraculously by late evening, the van was back in good working condition.

Coming back from Xiaguan to Kunming, we divided the 400 km into two days journey, so we had time to check the hills on the way. In a small thorny valley we saw some unidentified rosefinch and two of us ticked Spotted-breasted Parrotbill. A Wren was also reported. Our photographers were so engaged with those very tame Blue-fronted Redstart that we are forced to drag them off the scene. The next day the Spotted-breasted Parrotbill came out for everybody to enjoy. We also had excellent view of the Crested Finchbill, Vinaceous Rosefinch and Streak-throated Fulvetta. By November 27th evening we were back in Kunming.

The next day was our last day of the trip. We tried to arrange to see the skin collection again. However this did not work out and we wasted a couple of hours on this. Rushing to Xi Shan again, we found that the lake side was not particularly productive. Looking up the cliff of Xi Shan from below I got the feeling that the cliff and the farmland high up may be worth checking. Maybe we could do that some other time.

Sri Lanka 19-28 January 1994

(Verity B. Picken)

Charles and I spent 9 days in Sri Lanka at what is said to be the best time of year to visit. Even so we were fortunate; the wet season, which had continued late this year, ended only on our arrival - a Dutch birding group we met had had several days washed out in the previous week.

We drove from the airport straight to Ratnapura arriving in the early evening. (Having a car and driver the whole time was definitely worthwhile - many roads are not signposted and we would have wasted a lot of time in finding some of the birding sites, if we'd found them at all.) The following morning we set off in a jeep at 4.15 a.m. but in spite of this being before the Dutch birding group it was still too late - the journey to Sinharaja Forest took over 2 hours. Although small, Sinharaja is the only significant patch of primeval forest remaining in Sri Lanka and is famed for holding 19 of the country's 21 endemics. We walked all day with a tracker (compulsory) and though we came across few birdwaves we managed to see some superb birds which included Red-faced Malkoha, Emerald-collared Parakeet, Ceylon Lorikeet, Yellow-fronted Barbet, White-headed Starling, Ashy-headed Laughing Thrush, Rufous Babbler, Ceylon Blue Magpie and Legge's Flowerpecker (all endemics), and a male Malabar Trogon. Unusually for Sinharaja the sun shone nearly all day, the rain only starting at 4 p.m. A top-and-tailed day in Sinharaja is not enough and I would advise birders to stay at the base camp if possible - but you must take in all your own food and drink.

Uda Walawe is a superb National Park comprising fairly open country with a lot of scrub interspersed with small wooded areas and a number of tanks and pools. We only saw one other vehicle during our visit - we were in a roofless jeep, essential for the rutted and potholed tracks as well as good viewing. Birds were plentiful and tame. We saw 30+ Malabar Pied Hornbills while Sirkeer Cuckoo was sighted three times and Pied Crested once; Changeable Hawk Eagles perch prominently as do Indian Peafowl in the early morning though later in the day they are always on the ground. Waterbirds included Spotted-billed Pelican, Painted and White-necked Storks, Indian Shag and numerous egrets and herons. We saw our first Yellow-wattled Lapwings, Ceylon Junglefowls and Orange-breasted Pigeons here.

Next came Yala National Park - and what a contrast. Yala is a 'stop' on the main tourist route so the park was crowded with vehicles; the attitude of the tracker and officials was far less friendly and we were not allowed to remove the jeep's canvas roof - a nonsensical petty regulation given that one is allowed to walk in other areas where leopards etc are found. Although visibility was restricted we saw good numbers of birds including 19 Great Thick-Knees (a stunning bird), a pair of Painted Snipe (difficult in Sri Lanka), and a Black-necked Stork (only a few pairs left). Tracks were flooded to a foot deep in several places causing problems for several vehicles - tow-ropes came in handy. Walking along the beach on our return to our 'hotel' at Amaduwa we found 27 Great Crested and three Lesser Crested Terns perched on a rock beyond the pounding surf.

Amazingly Bundala Sanctuary was something of a disappointment: flooded tracks prevented our reaching the salt pans which normally present a magnificent waterbird spectacle. Amongst others we found 100+ Painted Storks, smallish numbers of a variety of waders, 30+ Green Bee-eaters (common elsewhere too and allowing approach to within two metres), 15+ Hoopoes and a flock of Ashy-crowned Finch-Larks.

Leaving the plains we drove up to Nuwara Eliya in the hill country. The colonial-style Hill Club, where one is served by white-gloved waiters and brought a hot-water bottle on retiring to bed, was a welcome change after our smelly 'little-better-than-a-shack' at Amaduwa. Hakgala Botanical Gardens produced Ceylon Wood-Pigeon, Dusky Blue Flycatcher and Yellow-eared Bulbul (three more endemics) and close views of a very confiding Brown-breasted Flycatcher. We dipped on three specialities here, probably because of accession to a request for a lie-in! The Horton Plains (over 7,000' high) are beautiful - undulating grasslands interspersed with woods of twisted moss- and lichen-hung trees; we saw few birds here though Kashmir Red-breasted Flycatcher, Blackbird (nothing like the HK or UK birds)

and Hill Munia gave good views. At World's End the ground falls away at one's feet in a sheer 2,300' drop and one can see for 40 miles, almost to the south coast.

Kandy is Sri Lanka's second largest town, noisy, bustling and full of tourists. The Udawattakelle Forest Reserve was a quiet oasis but we preferred the Water Catchment Area, another, larger, forest area which is almost totally undisturbed. Some long and hard work creeping about in low undergrowth eventually brought brilliant views of Indian Blue Chat - and several leeches. After several birdwaves and just as we were leaving, we were granted a last endemic, the delightful little Brown-capped Babbler.

As our plane did not depart until after midnight we were able to fit in an hour or so at the Bellanwila Sanctuary south of Colombo. This swampy area added six species to the list including Small Green-billed Malkoha, Black Bittern and Glossy Ibis, a rather unusual bird according to the checklist.

Altogether we saw 187 species including 15 endemics, pretty good considering that several lie-ins and the odd rest day were required! Books used were Henry's *A Guide to the Birds of Ceylon*, W W A Phillips' (1978) *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)* and Ali, Ripley & Dick's (1983) *A Pictorial Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent* but there is considerable confusion over both English and scientific names. Animals sighted were elephant, jackal, spotted and sambar deer, wild boar, several species of monkey, civet cat, mongoose, hare, land monitor, crocodile etc. Sri Lanka has appalling roads (short-distance journeys take hours) and very indifferent food in the hotels, but it's a beautiful country with charming people and some excellent birds. Although we were sad to discover on our return that 15 people had been blown up in a bus while we were there, we felt quite safe in the areas we visited; tourists are not part of their war. I should be happy to provide anyone with more detailed information.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Please contact the leader several days beforehand to confirm attendance, otherwise you may miss out on any changes in timing, venue etc.

DATE	LEADER	VENUE	TIME
2 April Saturday	Richard Stott	Tai Po Kau Meet at Car Park	07.00

INDOOR MEETING

8 April Friday	Ray Tipper on Birds of Hong Kong Gazetted Police Officers' Mess, Police Headquarters, Police Headquarters, Arsenal Street, Wan Chai \$50 per head at the door, profits to the new hide fund	Doors open 6.00pm Talk starts 7.00pm
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24 April Sunday	Richard Lewthwaite	Tolo Harbour Junk Trip Meet Ma Lui Shui Ferry Pier Cost \$200 in advance to Richard no refunds unless trip cancelled Profits to new hide fund.	07.00
24 April Sunday	Chan Ming ming	Mai Po* Chinese, English welcome	10.00 - 15.00
1 May Sunday	Ian Tyzzer Li Wai ki	Tsim Bei Tsui Bilingual	09.00-15.00
7 May Saturday	Mike Chalmers	Yung Shue O Breeding Survey Details from leader	07.30
21 May Saturday	Mike Turnbull	Tai Po Kau Breeding Survey Details from leader	07.00
5 June Sunday	Roger Costin Cheung Ho fai	Mai Po * Bilingual	09.00-15.00
11 June Saturday	Paul Aston	Tai Mo Shan Breeding Survey Details from leader	07.30
14 August Sunday	Richard Lewthwaite	Junk Trip for Terns Meet Ma Lui Shui Ferry Pier Cost \$200 in advance to Richard no refunds unless trip cancelled Profits to new hide fund.	07.00

* The maximum number of members who can attend a Mai Po meeting is 50, as set by the AFD permit. In future this number will not be exceeded. It is essential therefore that members inform the leader that they will be attending, before the trip date. Failure to do so may result in members being refused access to Mai Po! Members using the coach need not inform the leader, as they will have already confirmed their attendance by returning the coach booking slip.

|| A coach will collect members from Kowloon Tong KCR one hour before assembly time and will return 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 a packed lunch.

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

Please complete these forms and make out your cheque in English

Mai Po Sunday 24th April 1994

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: **CY Lam, Royal Observatory, 134 Nathan Road, Kowloon by 8 April 1994**

NAME

TELEPHONE NO.

Tsim Bei Tsui - Sunday 1st May 1994

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: **CY Lam, Royal Observatory, 134 Nathan Road, Kowloon by 15 April 1994**

NAME

TELEPHONE NO.