



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.152 JUNE 1994

Society News

STOP PRESS !!

There may be a delay with the book launch.
Please confirm date with WWF before 4th July

1994 BIG BIRD RACE.

Congratulations to the winning team, the On Fem Holdings Team (formerly the Stonechats), whose second consecutive victory was achieved with a total of 167 species. A full account is included inside the bulletin. At time of going to press \$1.63m had been raised. Please remember to entertain your sponsors ready for next year. The Committee are looking for fresh ideas, on a postcard please, to increase the potential of this event without changing the traditional format.

NEW HIDE FUND Plans are well advanced, and > \$75,000 has been collected. Ideas and suggestions are welcomed, and Mike Chalmers and Ian Tyzzer are still collecting donations (Hint). Provisional drawings and plans are included inside.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS are welcomed. **TIM WOODWARD** has accepted the considerable responsibility as Secretary, and **JULIAN WEBSTER** has taken on the vital role as Treasurer. (Rumour has it that Julian was born on the same day that Hainan Blue Flycatcher was first recorded in Hong Kong). Your new Bulletin Editor is **PETER HOPKIN**, whose task has been made very much simpler by **CHEUNG HO FAI** for the loan of a laptop computer, and by **HELEN BENNETT** for the typing. The Society is very grateful to outgoing committee members **JANET STOTT** for her accounting skills, and to **LIZ LEVEN** for her prompt and classy editing skills. Janet will continue to hold the membership list. Changes to the Bulletin Format are due to your new editor learning Word Perfect from scratch.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

R Stott Chairman
T Woodward Secretary
J Webster Treasurer
M Chalmers Recorder &
 Breeding Birds
M Chan Bulletin Editor
G Carey Annual Report
BIRDLINE HOTLINE

NEXT MEETING will be on July 22

C Y Lam Vice Chair
D Melville WWF Liason
Ng Cho-nam Conservation &
 Slide Library
I Tyzzer Hide Project
H F Cheung Librarian
P Hopkin Editor
 Work Fax

APPEAL FOR SLIDES AND ARTWORK

The Society's Slide Librarian Dr.C.N.Ng is looking for slides of "Common and Colourful" species for Education and Publicity purposes. The current collection of about 150 photographs lacks Chinese Bulbul, for example. Artwork would also be welcomed. Contact Dr.D.C.Ng, Flat 6D, Pittosporum Court, New Town Plaza Phase Three, Sha-Tin. Telephone _____ or _____

. A full list of species needed is included at the end of "Society News" after the Breeding Birds.

RECORDS COMMITTEE. July is the ideal month for writing up those winter and spring records on cards and sending them to Mike Leven, 1-3 Unicorn Gardens, 11 Shouson Hill Road East, Hong Kong. Record cards ease the processing workload, and will assist any future computerisation. Rare bird records should be submitted promptly to speed the adjudication process. Stapling a donation to the New Hide Fund to your rare bird descriptions record card will not influence the Records Committee but will ensure more room in the hide in 1995.

YELLOW NIB DUCKS come in two races in Hong Kong, and WWF(HK) needs information on which race actually breeds here. The two races are easily distinguished: *Anas paercilorhyncha harringtonii* has a plain face, while *A.p.zontrachylla* is striped. If you do not believe me, take a good look at the Mai Po birds this month, and send all records of broods to WWF.

SELANGOR INTERNATIONAL BIRD RACE 1994.

The Malaysian Nature Society, Persatuan Pencinta Alam Malaysia has invited the Hong Kong Birdwatching Society to participate in this year's bird race, which will be held in October. In recent years, Malaysian Airlines have provided very subsidised airtickets for overseas participants. Teams need a minimum of US\$1500.00 corporate sponsorship, but can advertise in any way imaginable. Money raised will be used to maintain the Kuala Selangor Nature Park, for example staff salaries, trail enhancement and hide construction. The Bird Race Co-ordinator, Tilak Leslie, P.O. Box 10750, 50724 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, will answer all queries, and members who are interested in forming a team should contact the Bulletin Editor who will keep a list of names.

INDONESIAN DONATIONS APPEAL

The Society has been approached by Padjadjaran University in Indonesia requesting funds to sponsor a survey of White Winged Wood Duck, *Cairina scutulata*, locations in Sumatra to take place from July to September 1994. Anyone interested in either donating money or obtaining further information about the project should contact the expedition leader D. Agista at HIMBIO-UNPAD, JL. Semarang 48, Antapani, Bandung 40291, Indonesia, . Tim Woodward has some brief details of the proposed expedition, which will also be raised at the next committee meeting.

BREEDING BIRDS SURVEY

By the time that you read this bulletin the 1994 breeding season will be ending for most species. Whilst the cuckoos will mostly have stopped calling and the amount of birdsong will be less, it is still relatively easy to complete surveys and log breeding records from the large number of juvenile birds about. Often adults carrying food or the calls of young birds begging for food are easy pointers to prove breeding has occurred.

Remember that the target this year is to complete logging of every 1Km square in Hong Kong. Last year did over half, so the target is achievable. Please check your squares and make that extra effort to survey that remote corner that you didn't reach last year.

As surveys of the highest peaks and remotest islands are the most difficult, any member visiting such areas is asked to log all breeding birds (S = Seen B = Breeding Proved) and send either to the observer responsible for that square or to Mike Chalmers with accurate data on the location (a marked up map is ideal). An updated list of squares and observers is given below. As before, numbers in brackets indicate 1Km squares remaining at the start of the year.

At the end of the survey and no later than 1 September, please send all log sheets to the following address:

M.L.Chalmers
1 Fairview Villas
52 Ma Lok Path
Kau To Shan
Sha-tin.

| | | | |
|-----------|------|------------------------------|--------------|
| 1,2,3 | (3) | Shau Tau Kok | N Croft |
| 4,5,13,14 | | | |
| | (20) | Kat O Chau | I Tyzzer |
| 7,8,17 | (23) | Ma Tso Lung | P Leader |
| 9 | (11) | Ping Yuen | S Schaum |
| 10 | (12) | Yim Tso Ha | L Young |
| 11,12 | (21) | Luk Keng | D Cook |
| 16 | (8) | Mong Tseng | G Walthew |
| 18 | (15) | Beas River | N Croft |
| 19 | (2) | Fanling | N Townsend |
| 20,21 | (13) | Sha Lo Tung, Tai Mei Tuk | R Lewthwaite |
| 22 | (17) | Tolo Channel | J Holmes |
| 23,35,36 | | Hoi Ha Wan, Tai Long Wan, | |
| | (25) | | |
| 24,25 | (2) | Tap Mun, Gau Tau | I Tyzzer |
| 26,27,28 | | Nim Wan, Ha Tsuen | H Cheung |
| | (31) | | |
| 30 | (15) | Shek Kong | G Cooper |
| 32 | (6) | Tai Po Kau | G Carey |
| 33 | (15) | Ma On Shan | M Grabandt |
| 34 | (13) | Three Fathoms Cove | P Stevens |
| 37,39 | (27) | Castle Peak | H Cheung |
| 40 | (1) | Tai Lam | J Andrews |
| 41 | (25) | Ting Kau | N Grimshaw |
| 44 | (17) | Buffalo Hill | W Parfitt |
| 45 | (12) | Sai Kung | M Grabandt |
| 46,47 | (23) | High Island | T Woodward |
| 48,49 | (4) | Shau Chau etc | G Carey |
| 50,59,60, | | | |
| 71,72 | (41) | N. Lantau | G Carey |
| 51, | (17) | Ma Wan,Penny Bay | P Hopkin |
| 52 | (14) | Tsing Yi | M Chalmers |
| 53 | (24) | Kowloon Reservoirs | C Ng |
| 54 | (10) | Lion Rock | D Diskin |
| 55 | (8) | Ho Chung | M Hale |
| 56,67 | (8) | Clearwater Bay | R Lygo |
| 57,58, | | | |
| 68,69 | (29) | Port Shelter | I Tyzzer |
| 61 | (22) | Discovery Bay | J Bryant |
| 62,63 | (13) | Peng Chau etc | J Bryant |
| 64,76 | (12) | Mt Davis,Aberdeen | M Turnbull |
| 65(N) | (11) | South Kowloon | C Y Lam |
| 65(S) | | North Point | D Cook |
| 66(N) | (12) | Lei Yue Mun | R&M Lygo |
| 66(S) | | Quarry Bay | M M Chan |
| 70,82 | (5) | Tai O,Fan Lau | G Mathew |

| | | | |
|----------|------|---------------------------|------------|
| 73 | (5) | Mui Wo | P Hopkin |
| 74 | (7) | Hei Ling Chau | C Viney |
| 78 | (20) | Tai Tam | P Aston |
| 80,81 | (15) | Ninepins | I Tyzzer |
| 83,84 | (7) | Lantau Special Survey | |
| 85 | (7) | Chi Ma Wan | M Williams |
| 87,88,94 | | | |
| | (5) | Lamma | R Morrish |
| 89,90 | (12) | Chung Hom Kok, Stanley | M Leven |
| 91,92,93 | | | |
| | (27) | Soko,Po Toi | I Tyzzer. |

MAI PO UPDATE.....Lew Young

BOARDWALK EXTENSION

We have finally obtained approval from the District Lands Office in Yuen Long for the extension to the floating hide to go ahead. At time of writing, about \$75,000 has been raised, the bad news is that there is still \$75,000 to go. With a further fundraising drive this summer, it will be possible to construct the hide this autumn if enough money is available. An early start is to be made on mangrove clearance for the new Boardwalk. Contact Lew Young at Mai Po and get your shorts ready!

ILLEGAL MUDSKIPPER FISHERMEN

In late May, there were again reports of illegal mudskipper fishermen on the mudflat in front of the floating hide, and the incidents have been reported to the Dept. of Agriculture and Fisheries. This is a reminder to all members that if you do see mudskipper fishermen from the hide, to inform the AFD Wardens immediately, as well as any of the WWF HK Mai Po staff so that we can take appropriate action.

WWF HK BOARDWALK VISITS

Over the coming months, there will again be a number of member visits out to the Boardwalk, as follows:

| | | |
|----------|---------|-------|
| Saturday | 23 July | 1800h |
| Saturday | 30 July | 1800h |
| Saturday | 6 Aug | 1800h |
| Saturday | 13 Aug | 1800h |
| Saturday | 20 Aug | 1800h |

There will be no membership visits in September.

ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB NEWS

The OBC is looking for ornithologists in Mainland China to sponsor as honorary members of the Club. The idea is to give free membership to persons who may have difficulty in paying for the subscription or arranging the necessary overseas money transfers, but for whom membership would be mutually advantageous. There are already a number of Honorary Members in China, but Mike Chalmers is looking to extend the list.

SLIDES REQUESTED BY NG CHO-NAM: All please! but especially the following:

Little Grebe, Little Green Heron, Cattle Egret, Lesser/Intermediate Egret, Grey Heron, Black-faced Spoonbill, Oriental White Stork, Shelduck, Wigeon, Falcated Teal, Mallard, Pintail, Shoveler, Eastern Marsh Harrier, Buzzard, Kestrel, White-breasted Moorhen, Moorhen, Coot, Black-winged Stilt, Avocet, Kentish Plover, Grey-headed Lapwing, Redshank, Spotted Redshank, Common Sandpiper, Caspian Tern, Feral Pigeon, Rufous Turtle Dove, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, House Swift, Grey Wagtail, Chinese Bulbul, Grey Throated Minivet, Scarlet Minivet, Violet Whistling Thrush, Long-tailed Tailor Bird, White-eye, Rufous-backed Shrike, Blue Magpie, Magpie, Jungle Crow, Collared Crow, Great Tit, Tree Sparrow.

STOP PRESS !!

There may be delays with the Book Launch.
Please contact WWF before attending the launch party.

STOP PRESS !!

BOOK PAGE

LAUNCH OF THE REVISED "BIRDS OF HONG KONG AND SOUTH CHINA"

All HKBWS members are invited to the launch of the revised and Chinese edition of this essential book. It will be held on Monday 4th July at WWF HK Central Office at 5:30 pm. Refreshments will be served and there will be the opportunity to meet the three authors, Clive Viney and C.Y.Lam, and the illustrator Karen Phillips. Please complete the form enclosed with the bulletin.

REVIEW.....By H.F.CHEUNG

It is exciting to read this long awaited Chinese edition of "The Birds of Hong Kong and South China" by Viney, Lam and Phillips. This is an excellent work. I can appreciate the good intention of the authors. They have done many things correctly this time and they should be congratulated on their effort.

There are major revisions throughout the book. Over the past few years there has been significant progress in the identification of some difficult species such as leaf warblers, bush warblers and gulls, and the new edition has incorporated all these advances. The result is a much more useful book than the old one, though the reader will still have some problems with these groups. As for familiar species, some welcome update on juveniles has been included. During the next few years, the most active field problems could well be Seabirds and American Waders. The new edition has included sufficient knowledge in these challenging areas.

The book has been greatly enlarged by adding many South China species.

The section on Flycatchers and Buntings, Pipits and Larks have been expanded greatly. Considering the scarcity of information on Chinese Birds, I hope that the authors will continue in their effort to make this book the standard for South China. The Chinese text is well written. Chinese terms are well adopted, and the Chinese version should be reasonably easy to follow. From time to time there are references to Cheng, which would be helpful for studying Chinese birds.

In this edition the good style of putting illustration and description on opposite pages are retained. Many drawings have been replaced, with generally good improvement. New drawings include Gulls, Seabirds, Flycatchers, Warblers and Buntings. The Flycatchers are excellent. The drawings on the Paradise Flycatchers remind me that reading books is highly enjoyable. Warblers are the most difficult, and improvements are needed in those drawings. Buntings are sufficiently good. To my knowledge, the drawing on Moustached and Rufous Laughing Thrushes is the only one on the market. The drawing on Parrotbill is also very delightful.

The only problem seems to be that for beginners, there are too many birds in this book. To correctly pick up one bird would be increasingly difficult, unless one already has some knowledge in identifying birds. A job well done and congratulations!

A BIRDWATCHER'S GUIDE TO MALAYSIA by John Bransbury (Published by Waymark Publishing in November 1993) & WHERE TO FIND BIRDS IN AUSTRALIA also by John Bransbury, Re-issued 1993. These will be reviewed in the next bulletin.

BIRD NEWS...BIRD NEWS....BIRD NEWS....BIRD NEWS

- Schrenck's Bittern 1 at Yung Shue O, Sai Kung. 7 May (MLC) and another at Luk Keng. 23 May (SS).
- Glossy Ibis An immature at Mai Po 1-3 May.(PJH) The first since 1978.
- Slaty-legged Crake 1 at The Peninsular Hotel, Kowloon (per DSM), singles heard calling at night Yung Shue O, Sai Kung. 5-6 May and Sheun Wan. 15 May (RWL).
- Water Rail 2 at Tin Shui Wai. Mid-late April (GW et al.).
- Ruddy Crake 1 at Tin Shui Wai in Mid April (GW et al.).
- Ringed Plover 1 from the Boardwalk, regularly during late Jan-Feb (PL et al).
- Long-billed Plover 1 at Kam Tin from 20 Feb (PA et al). If accepted, the first for Hong Kong. Photographed by J.Holmes.
- Oriental Plover 1 Female from the Boardwalk. 6 May (PL).
- Spoon-billed Sandpiper Up to 2 during late March and first half of April.
- Grey Phalarope 1 at Mai Po 26-27 April (RWL et al). The 3rd Record for HK.
- Long-tailed Skua in Mirs Bay, 11 adults on 13 April (GJC), 2 on 16 April (MSW).
- Great Black-headed Gull 1st W at Mai Po on 8 Feb.(PL), then regular in late Feb/early Mar with a record count of 5 on 8 Mar.(PL) of which 2 were summer plumaged adults.
- Common Gull Up to 3 in late Feb, 1st Winter plumage, one of which showed characters of the nearctic race brachyrhynchus, colloquially known as Mew Gull. If accepted, the first for Eurasia.
- Glaucous Winged Gull 1st Winter at Mai Po. 24 Jan. (PL).
- Glaucous Gull 2nd Winter at Mai Po. 20, 28 Feb. (PL).
- Ancient Auk 1 in Mirs Bay. 29 Jan. (ISRE et al).
- White-bellied Green Pigeon 1 Female on Dong Ping Chau.28 April (MH,JAH et al).
- Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo 1 seen and heard in Tai Po Kau. 15 April (PDR et al).
If accepted, the second record for Hong Kong.
- Blue-throated Bee-eater 1 Shek O Country Park. 4 June (DRB).

SOCIETY TRIPS

YUNG SHUE O 7 May 1994

M.L.Chalmers.

The idea for this new outing came from visiting Yung Shue O in search of Thick Billed Pigeon and Brown Fish Owl, and in walking the nearby Mcle hose Trail and finding the interesting upland plateau around Cheung Sheung.

My enthusiasm for exploring a new venue obviously was not catching as only myself and Langdon and Mary Barone turned out. Birds were in abundance around Yung Shue O with Fork tailed Sunbird, Great Barbet and Blue Magpies around us on the stiff climb up to Cheung Sheung. Fortunately the day started cloudy and cool, and the views from the top were worth it, with Pacific Swift swishing past and elusive Chinese Francolins teasing us with their nearby calls. Highlights at Cheung Sheung was a male Chestnut Bittern, Broad Billed Roller and a female Shrenck's Bittern.

To increase our coverage for the Breeding Birds survey, we split to return, with Langdon and Mary taking the Mcle hose Trail West and turning down the Fish Owl Valley. Unfortunately the path became overgrown halfway down and Langdon, in a subsequent fax, graphically described the experience in the following terms: "Ahhhhhhhhh ! Tangled Vines, spider webs, two hours to go half a mile downhill ! Ahhhhhh ! " However, hot showers and cold beers had the usual healing effects. Anyone for next time?

TOLO HARBOUR 8 May 1994

P.J.Hopkin

A more leisurely way of spending the day I cannot imagine, with good

company, beautiful scenery, and never to be more than 6 feet from a chilled beer. We chugged down Tolo Harbour heading for Ping Chau, with Chalmers hoping for a spot of Breeding Bird survey en-route. The first stop was to inspect a navigational beacon in mid-channel, on which were sitting three Black-naped Terns in roseate breeding plumage. The first new bird of the day for me, and they were well up to expectations. About 25 were nesting on an adjacent rocky island, together with some Reef Herons and one Crested Myna. We drew a blank at two older nest sites, and with clear blue skies and a flat sea, it was hardly surprising that these were the only seabirds of the day. My attempts to engender enthusiasm in distant flying dots failed, although by general agreement the third flock were egrets.

Ping Chau is the nearest to a desert island you are likely to see in Hong Kong. The tallest trees can be found near the Police Post, and we quickly found Arctic Warbler, Grey Streaked and Sooty Flycatcher, the latter giving ideal comparative views as they fed side by side in the same glade.

After lunch in a beach-side cafe, we set sail to inspect more rocks in the vastness of Mirs Bay. We drew a blank as regards breeding terns, but one lighthouse had a lonely Brown Shrike perched on the top.

The afternoon was spent enjoying coastal scenery the like of which I would never have imagined would be found in Hong Kong. Two Peregrines put up a stunning flying display over the cliffs, creating a scene which was so like my native Devon (England) that I felt a pang of homesickness. A day out to remember.

OVERSEAS BIRDING HOLIDAYS

SOUTH KOREA
5-13 FEBRUARY 1994
Tim Woodward.

Phaik and I decided to brave the weather and head up to Korea in search of cranes. It was only after I'd booked everything that I realised that we should have gone to Kyushu or Poyang. With notes supplied from Mike Leven we had hopes to salvage the situation. But our bumblebings would have remained bumblebings had we not bumped into an English birder at the Naktong - Nick Lethaby - who had coincidentally written to the Society asking for Korea gen. The three of us seemed to be the only foreigners in the country outside Seoul and helped immensely by Nick - car, decent scope and general expertise - we were able to see a lot more.

The Naktong Estuary near Pusan is an inspiring site - thousands of Whooper and Whistling Swans to start with, and then with some careful checking at least 100 Saunter's Gulls, c.15 Relict Gulls and a few Kamchatka Gulls. As a place to find Reed Buntings the area fails miserably now - there is massive reclamation work going on and there's no reeds left. However I got some nice photos of reserve signs against industrial crane backgrounds.

Once we had escaped the jams of Pusan, finding the Baikal Teal site was quite easy. However the place refused to yield us 12,000 Baikal Teal - only around 150 in fact. Hopefully the rest

were hiding on another reservoir nearby. We did locate a couple of Baer's Pochards, 7 European Spoonbills plus hundreds of Bean and White-fronted Geese. The final topping was watching 5 White-naped Cranes descend to the lakeside, legs outstretched.

Not having had enough the next day we went to the Hooded Cranes site. The ferry which had to be taken across the river has now been replaced by a bridge. The river has been leveeed, and most of the area covered with greenhouses. We spent some time hunting for the cranes along the alleys between the greenhouses, feeling rather stupid. Eventually one of us had the bright idea of going to the hill in the park and scanning the area. So we found the flock of cranes - lurking next to the industrial park, the furthest finger of Taegu's sprawl. There were 95 feeding rather nervously in the dried paddyfields - a wonderful sight.

By now Chinese New Year was upon us, so we holed up in Kyongju for 3 days. Each morning I took a walk along the river where there is some good scrub area and lots of stones/gravel. As the weather got worse I just had time to find Japanese Wagtail, and single Pallas' Reed Bunting and Long-billed Plover. Then the worst snowstorms for 15 years hit central South Korea. Public transport ground to a halt (nice to see a country where this happens other than Britain) and we scabbled about desparately for two days in order to get back to Seoul for the return flight.

Korea seems to be a good birding country badly in need of a book and lots more information. The Japan guide is pretty woeful on distribution for Korea. I also reckon that some of the Korean islands - eg Ulleung-do could be as good as the Japanese ones during migration periods.

DANUM VALLEY-SABAH

Dec 24, 1993 to Jan 3 1994

Jim Hackett

Danum Valley is a stand of untouched rainforest in lowland Sabah; it is beautiful and very good for birds. A brief trip report (with bird list) has been lodged with the Society; it contains important information on beer (bring your own) and booking (beware the "package tours" place). Peter Stevens report (*re* visit of July 1993) is invaluable - he (and I) also have full park lists. We got to Danum *via* Manila (much cheaper than direct to Kota Kinabalu). I had Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker, Philippine Hanging Parrot, Lowland White-Eye, and Pied Bushchat in the U.S. Military Cemetery in Manila. We overnighed in Kota Kinabalu and got to Danum on Christmas Eve for 9 full days of birding. The Field Centre is situated in the middle of the forest, beside 2 rivers. It is restful and pleasant. Room and board are fine. There are tracks through the rainforest, a canopy platform, a viewing tower, and a lilypond. All are useful. I saw 164 spp.; a more experienced (and perhaps slightly luckier) birder could expect 200.

It had been very wet prior to our arrival, and for the first 2 days. This made forest walking difficult; I fell down 4 times on day 2. Leeches were plentiful, and a centipede (10

cm) crawled up my shorts and assaulted my manhood. Very painful, but no lasting effects. (They take six months to show up ...Editor)

To the birds. My Christmas present was Garnet Pitta (called out of the forest). Other good birds were Short-Toed Coucal (seen and called out), Giant Swift (a small flock), Black Eagle (soaring), Rufous-Bellied Eagle (perched and soaring), Dusky Broadbill (a pair perched), Lesser Fish-Eagle (one flying along the river), and Chestnut-Backed Scimitar-Babbler (one bird). I got so close to a Buffy Fish-Owl (feeding on the ground) that I had to back off as my binoculars wouldn't focus down further. A Large-Tailed Nightjar was seen on a night drive. I got most or all broadbills, cuckoos (some seen!), babblers, woodpeckers, and bulbuls. Dips were Bornean Bristlehead and Blue-Headed Pitta. The bird list included 52 lifers, and I've been to Taman Negara, Fraser's Hill, and other well-known sites in the Malaysian peninsular. The best mammal was a female Orang-utan and baby, in the tree next to the canopy platform. The valley is accessible, rich in birds, and very pretty: go for it, and call me for more details.

Jim Hackett

VIETNAM

1-10 April 1994

Tim Woodward.

Four of us spent 10 days in North Vietnam - rather distant from the endemics which are mostly in the Central Annam Highlands. I could find no-one who had been to North Vietnam before so pre-planning information was almost zero.

Places like Vietnam are usually a lot easier than you expect - it's quite easy to get a hotel in Hanoi for around US\$20 per night, the scam operating in 1992 of charging US\$50 upon arrival at Hanoi airport because papers "are not in order" has now finished. We did however find that public transport is a problem - there are few buses, even fewer trains and no taxis. So you need to hire a car - normally a grandly comfortable Russian model. This costs about US\$15-20 per hour - average travelling speed being about 30 km per hour - and that's on the good roads near Hanoi.

Our first call was Catba Island, a large limestone island at the mouth of the Red River, about 100km from Hanoi. The best trip from Haiphong was superb - there are marshes and some mangroves on either side - lots of Marsh Harriers, Egrets and some Sandpipers. Catba Town itself is a Vietnamese tourist spot and popular honeymoon destination (karaoke has reached here too). We hired the local People's Committee van and took a day-trip to the reserve. Most of the vegetation in the central part of the island is secondary, apparently because the Americans bombs burned out most of the primary forest. We visited a cave where the villagers had lived for months to protect themselves from the bombs. The reserve itself is in a valley, surrounded by steep limestone scarps, one of which has to be crossed before you descend into the reserve and the primary forest core. Common birds here are Crimson Sunbird, Olive-backed Sunbird, Black Bulbul and Chinese Bulbul (hainanus race with the all black crown). After the leeches forced us to retrace our steps we walked along the entrance road -

many Stripe-throated Bulbuls plus a single Racket-tailed Treepie. Our hotel on Catba (US\$3 per night) faced a scrubby hillside, just like one might find in Hong Kong. Stripe-throated Bulbuls were common here but we also had White-throated Fantail.

We left Catba and did the standard tourist trip around Halong Bay - this was made memorable for me by the sound of Blue Rock Thrushes singing from every tiny island in an otherwise silent place.

After returning to Hanoi we then travelled north to Tam Dao, a former French hill station 80km away. Ben King & co had been there 6 weeks before. They probably had better weather than we did - the clouds stayed thick throughout the three days. The hill station was probably once a grand place, now it's a few buildings surrounded by a mass of ruins (it was blown up during the wars) gradually being encroached upon by the jungle. This is no Fraser's Hill luxury but the local restaurants can offer roast boar, fox, deer and Silver Pheasant. To get to Tam Dao you first need to buy insurance (!) from the authorities controlling the roadblock at the foot of the mountain - the premium will pay for transporting your corpse back to Hong Kong etc. It's a very official document and not too expensive (although a lot by Vietnamese standards).

Due to the cloud we spent long hours pouring over King and Round attempting to put names to calls - there are certainly lots of Barbets (I thought Black-browed but stand to be corrected). Other than that we did see quite a lot - mixed flocks of Black-naped Monarchs together with up to 3 Yuhina species (Black-chinned,

Striated and White-bellied), Golden Babblers, Grey-throated Minivets. We also had odd Golden Spectacled Warblers, Red-breasted Trogons and a number of migrating Grey Drongos. It was interesting to see lots of groups of Black-throated Laughingthrushes - noisy groups of them bonding together with loud crescendos in the bush - so different from the relatively shy and quiet birds in Hong Kong.

We did see a potential first for Vietnam - on two consecutive days a female Tristram's Bunting was feeding on the path, close enough to see in the fog.

Back in Hanoi again we visited the main tourists spots - the Ho Chi Minh mausoleum & museum was an interesting place (not least because we discovered that Ho Chi Minh was imprisoned as an illegal immigrant in Hong Kong in the 1930s). While a squad of soldiers in white changed guard we boldly bashed the long grass around the mausoleum - Maarten flushed a buttonquail sp. Here too there were Asian Palm Swifts, Plaintive Cuckoos and possibly Grey-backed Shrike. We had trouble with Shrikes - outside the history museum we found a possible Burmese Shrike. On our final morning, in a park between the mausoleum and the lake the trees were full of birds - Rufous-bellied Woodpecker being the highlight but also including Red-breasted and Mugimaki Flycatchers plus Eastern-crowned Warblers. It was a good note to leave on.

WINNING THE BIRD RACE

by Mike Leven

Long Valley 5.55pm. The On Fem Holdings Team (new sponsor but still the team unchanged from the 1993 Stonechats) are impatiently watching the clock. We have all agreed that Long Valley offers a chance of picking up some difficult species, and some easy ones, and we are surprised that only one other team-The Locals-has opted to start here. So much the better. 6pm arrives at last and our carefully staked out Painted Snipe perform on schedule. Within the next twenty minutes we have added Japanese Quail, Swinhoe's and Pintail Snipe, Bluethroat and a very obliging Rubythroat. Paul's pre-race visits have paid off. Off to Tau Chau, where we are the first to arrive-where are the other teams? A visiting birder attracts our attention to a calling Barred Owlet- a definite bonus. Savannah Nightjar performs almost too early, no Eagle Owl (no surprise): so all we need to complete our Friday itinerary is Collared Scops Owl, but it seems too early to pack it in.

We decide that it would be worth giving Tsim Bei Tsui a try-the lights are bright along the Fence and maybe we can get a few waders on call. An attempt to get Long-toed Stint at Tin Shui Wai proves fruitless-the car headlights work but there weren't any waders. Birding the Fence under artificial lights is somewhat bizarre-there are not many waders around and even Redshank look a bit strange, but we find Lesser Sandplover and Fantail Snipe while a Green Heron is definitely worthwhile. We also hear Collared Scops Owl near Mong Tseng village, before heading for the Better Ole in Fanling for supper and beer. We are a dry team and this is the only beer permitted during the race. Not unexpectedly, we meet the

Police Team; while they have the skill, they no longer have the killer instinct to be serious competition. We are well pleased with our beginning: a good start might not win the race, but a bad one will lose it.

4:15 am, hear Violet Whistling Thrush, and it is now up to my stake outs on Hong Kong Island. This year we have a slight variation and we detour to Shouson Hill for an Indian Cuckoo that had woken me up at 5am on Friday. It is still calling and we hardly have to leave the car. Up at Mount Austin, all is shrouded in thick mist and dawn is very slow to come. A number of other teams are also present, the Jebson Ladies, The Wandering Tattlers, China Resources and Jardine Pacific, and we are all creeping around in the gloom keeping our ears open and our eyes on each other. The balance between fundraising and winning is rather narrow; we want everyone to get a good score, but have identified The 'Tattlers and especially Jardine Pacific amongst the main competition. The Peak is moderate, producing expected Black-throated Laughing Thrush and Blue Magpie, but staked out Hair-crested Drongo and Chinese Bush Warbler fail to show. These are balanced by singing Red tailed Robin, but everyone else gets these too.

Down to the ZBG where we have a short hit list: Sulphur Crested Cockatoo, Ring-necked Parakeet, White-cheeked Laughing Thrush and Azure-winged Magpie. The first three are easy, and we decide not to waste time on the magpie. As usual, Kowloon Park proves well worthwhile, with Brown Flycatcher, a lovely Narcissus Flycatcher (thanks to Mike Kilgour), Alexandrine Parakeet, and two major bonuses, a Brown Shrike and a singing Black-browed Reed Warbler amongst the flamingoes.

Our decision last year to visit Ho Chung had given us the edge over other teams on woodland birds and, once again, our strategy called for a second site to back up Tai Po Kau. On the day it turns out to be a bit slow, producing Crested Serpent Eagle and Crested Goshawk, but little in the way of passerines other than Striated Yunina and Asian Paradise Flycatcher. On to Tai Po Kau, and the ranks of minibuses at the bottom make it clear that our detour has put us behind the other teams. Have we made a mistake? A birdless walk up the hill and it certainly looks that way. By the picnic site we are still struggling, but a seen and heard Hainan Blue Flycatcher seems to break the logjam. No big flocks, but as both minivets, Chestnut Bulbul, Yellow-cheeked Tit, Red-winged Crested Cuckoo & Great Barbet fall it starts to look a bit better. The Locals tip us off about a Japanese Paradise Flycatcher up the Blue Loop-thank you-and we decide to press on a bit further. We are now behind schedule, but Captain decides that this can be remedied if we do a bit of running: all the way out. This has the added advantage that we pass about six other teams. Deliberately ignoring what they are looking at, we race down the hill. A bit of gamesmanship at this stage of the day is important if you are going to win.

We now have a wader agenda, and with no real concentrations anywhere we need to pick them off one by one. So it is off to Tin Shui Wai for Long-toed Stint, which is back on the lagoon, and then onto the reclamation for staked out Oriental Skylark and Kestrel. At the fence we collect a few waders, but no surprises, and we are starting to get anxious about Red-throated Pipit. We would just have to do Lok Ma Chau

after all. Coming out through the Industrial Estate, Paul sees a starling, but despite a rapid stop the rest of us miss it, but in scanning around we manage to see Spotted Munia which is adequate compensation.

At Mai Po we opt for the Fence: a flock of Herring Gulls passing overhead is a surprise, and in a fit of uncharacteristic generosity we point them out to the Ladies, who are a couple of hundred metres behind us. Despite our handsignals, they start looking in the reedbeds-so much for trying to be helpful. After flyover Black-faced Spoonbill and Black-headed Ibis, and Penduline Tit, it starts to look as though our luck is in. The ponds at the Rocky Outcrop are brilliant with masses of closely packed waders. Potentially difficult species including Red Knot, Far Eastern Curlew and Asiatic Dowitcher are all there, and best of all it is apparant that despite their undoubted skill at woodland birds, the Professionals haven't been out on the mud-flats recently. Arriving at the Boardwalk, the tide is still very high, so we opt for a quick dash to the Waterfowl Collection where the plastic ducks and the hopefully non-plastic Smew are logged. Back at the rainhut, the tide has dropped and the two team members for the Boardwalk have all departed. Have we left it too late? Paul and Dave leg it down the Boardwalk, while Ian and I have the important task of checking out the opposition. The Birdwatching Society has clearly has a bad race with near rebellion in the ranks; Peregrine has pursued an eccentric itinerary as usual and can probably be written off. China Resources seem to be combining out-of-practice with inexperience, whilst we have already written off the Professionals and the Police. Clive Viney of WWF looks

happy, but we put this down to the relaxed attitude of an elder statesman. The main threats are the 'Tattlers', who look faintly sinister, and Jardine Pacific who look smug.

Paul and Dave lose nothing and actually gain a couple of birds down the boardwalk. We now have 161 species. Before the race, we thought that 155-160 would win it, but both waders and passerines have been better than expected. We still need a couple of easy species and have two hours left. Again, running is in order and again we have fun passing the other teams strung out along the Fence. Lok Ma Chau for Red-throated Pipit, surely. But there is no sign. Back to Chau Tau and there is still no Lesser Coucal, nor any Bonelli's Eagle. Back to Long Valley for Red-throated Pipit. Coming in the back way, we finally find one, and also a Red-necked Phalarope on a fishpond invisible to teams entering from the Ho Sheung end. As we are leaving, a Bonelli's Eagle flies over -165- and 5:30pm. Back to Chau Tau for the 4th time, and a Lesser Coucal flies in front of us. Well pleased, the unmistakable call of Large Hawk Cuckoo is heard as we arrive at the check-in point. The winning total is 167. Team members were Captain Paul Leader, Dave Diskin, Ian Tyzzer, and myself.

THE BULLETIN welcomes all articles, either typed or on disk (WP 5.1). A fax or letter might be easier for other computer formats, and Scientific Names greatly assists the Chinese Translator. The deadline for the next issue will be AUGUST 25th, but please submit pieces as soon as they are ready.

THE BULLETIN EDITOR is also looking for a second-hand **LAPTOP** computer on which to write it. Any offers?

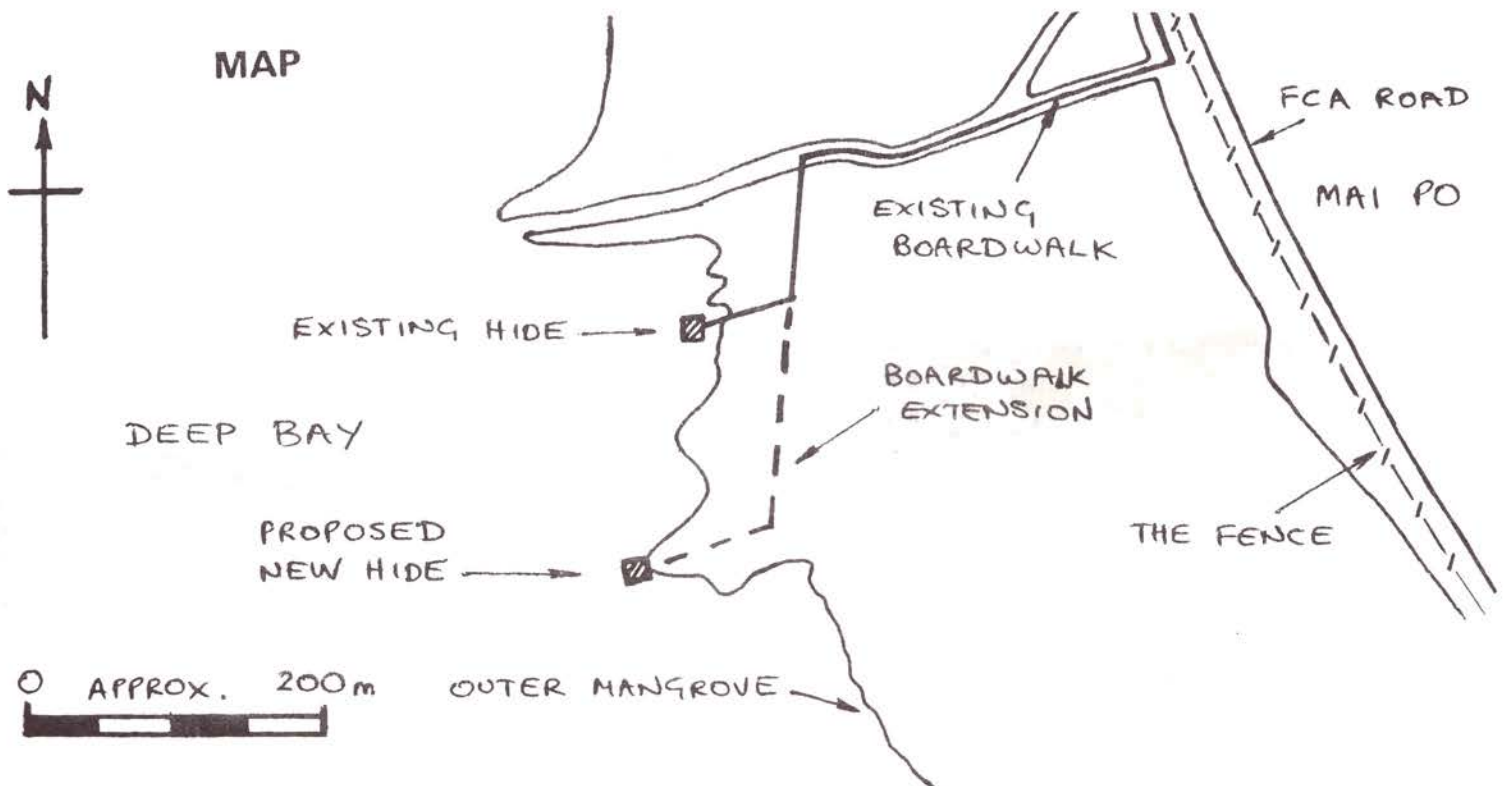
NEW BOARDWALK HIDE AT MAI PO

The approximate route of the new boardwalk has already been marked out by tapes through the mangroves. As shown on the sketch, it will be located about 170 metres south of the existing hide on the tip of the next mangrove promontory. From this point wide views will be available to the south along the outer mangroves and curves of the bay towards Tsim Bei Tsui, as well as north including the area in front of the existing hide. See attached maps and diagrams.

The proposed new features of the hide and boardwalk are as follows:

- (a) Fixed non floating boardwalk approx 150 metres long without handrail, similar but narrower than Gei Wei 19. (How about passing places ? Ed)
- (b) Outer section approx 50 metres long to be floating units as existing with plastic drum floats and bamboo side screen.
- (c) New hide to be construction on position secured by concrete sinkers and moorings as existing hide.
- (d) New hide to be V-shaped with two wings facing different directions to suit morning and afternoon sunlight.
- (e) Capacity for about 30 birdwatchers comfortably spaced divided equally between north, centre and south sections. Seats along rear wall to be added for overspill.
- (f) Shelf below windows to be designed for telescope mounts and lens rests to discourage the use of tripods (straddling seats and wasting space) and camera lenses poking out of the window slats.
- (g) Ventilation openings to be fitted in lower rear wall.
- (h) Design to use recycled or sustainably produced materials where possible.

An early start is to be made on mangrove clearance for the boardwalk. Volunteers are asked to contact Lew Young at Mai Po (471-6306). The next step is to order long delivery materials (such as hide cladding), completing designs and tendering for the hide, pontoon and floating units. If members have any comments or suggestions to make, please contact M.Chalmers at 605-7719(H) or 492-8131(O).



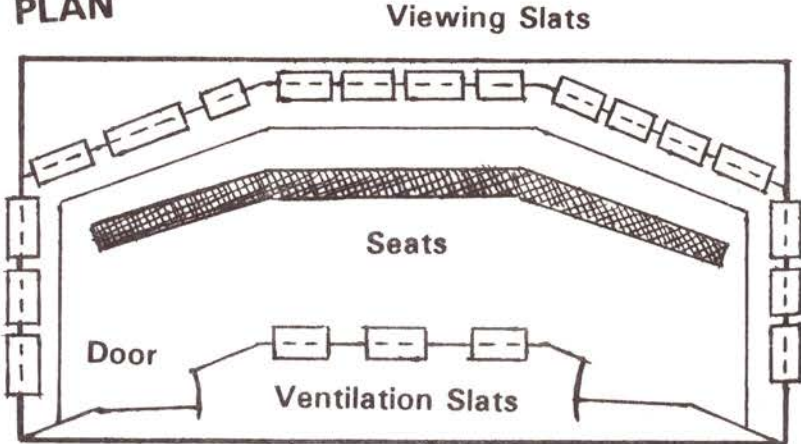
FUTURE MEE1

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

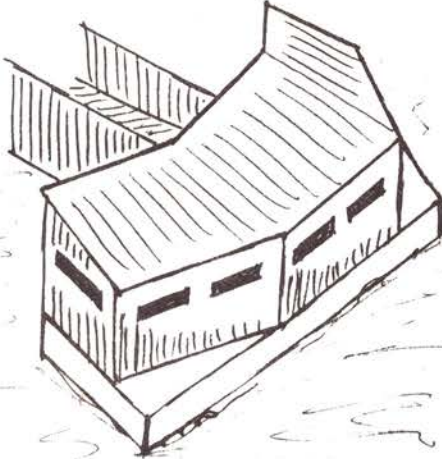
| DATE | LEADER | VENUE | TIME |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-------|
| 4 September Sunday | Andrew Young Chinese Co-leader | Mai Po Bi-lingual * High Tide 09:10 2.6m Coach leaves Kowloon Tong at 08:00 | 09:00 |
| 17 September Saturday | Keith Wilson | Luk Keng Swamp Bash Wear Rubber Boots/Long Trousers Phone leader to confirm. | 07:30 |
| 25 September Sunday | John Burton Chinese Co-leader | Tsim Bei Tsui Bi-lingual * High Tide 14:18 1.8m Coach leaves Kowloon Tong at 08:00 | 09:00 |
| 8 October Saturday | John Holmes | Tai Po Kau Meet at Car Park | 07:30 |
| 16 October Sunday | John Edge | Tai Long Wan Meet at Mal Liu Shui Ferry -18:30 Pier near University KCR | 08:15 |
| 29 October | Peter Stevens ? | Ping Yeung Meet at R.C.P. in Ping Yeung village | 07:30 |

PROPOSED PLANS OF NEW BOARDWALK HIDE

PLAN



PERSPECTIVE VIEW



Bamboo Screen

Mangroves

