



香港觀鳥會  
THE HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY  
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## BULLETIN NO.153 SEPTEMBER 1994

### Society News

**AN INDOOR MEETING** will be held on 23rd November. **RAY TIPPER** will speak on "A Bird Photographer's World" featuring some of his best photographs. See Meetings Page inside for details.

**NEW HIDE** Final designs and tenders will be presented at the next committee meeting, and the Society is actively looking for a major sponsor for the project. If you have any specific recommendations or ideas for a sponsor, please contact Richard Stott before making a definite approach, to avoid possible duplication.

**A TELEPHONE LIST** is included with this bulletin. Please check for mistakes or alterations and keep Tim Woodward up to date with changes during the year.

**RECORD CARDS** can be submitted throughout the year. Stocks are kept at the WWF office at Tramway Path and at the Mai Po shop, but please notify Mike Chalmers if there are any problems with the supply.

**AGM MINUTES** and a summary of accounts for 1993 are also included with this bulletin.

**BREEDING BIRD RECORDS 1994** Completed log sheets for 1994 should be sent **NOW** to Mike Chalmers at 1 Fairview Villas, 52 Ma Lok Path, Kan To Shan, Shatin. All information is being updated on the database and it is planned to print sample distribution maps for selected species by the end of the year.

Some areas of Lantau will require work next year to complete the coverage of the Territory.

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#### 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

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#### NEXT MEETING will be on Sept.14

**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

**OUTDOOR MEETINGS** Can now be paid for by Electric Transfer, to Account No. 004-567-899661-001, of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank Ltd., in the name of the Hong Kong Birdwatching Society. Please also send the Meeting Slip to C.Y. Lam as before, as a record of the payment; otherwise you will not be able to claim a refund.

**HAWKS ALOFT WORLDWIDE** have sent the Society their newsletter 'FLYER'. HAW researches migrating raptors, from their base at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, RR2 Box 191, Kempton, PA 19529-9449, USA. The Society has already corresponded with information on Hong Kong, but any member interested should contact The Secretary, Tim Woodward.

**HONG KONG BIRD REPORTS 1963-1972** have recently been donated to the Society by Mr David Robertson. These reports will be auctioned for the New Hide Fund. The report 1970-71 covers two years, all the rest are annual.

Please send your sealed bid to me, Peter Hopkin, G/f 46 Mui Wo Kau Tsuen, Tai Tei Tong, Mui Wo, Lantau, by November 10th, and copies will be distributed at Ray Tipper's Indoor Meeting on November 23rd, when payment will be expected! In the event of two equal offers, be prepared to offer more over the telephone.

**COLOUR FLAGGED WADERS** are passing through Hong Kong again, and Paul Leader is collecting details for his research project. A list of spring birds seen is given below. A yellow flagged Curlew Sandpiper was recently seen on the Scrape at Mai Po, so please look for more this autumn. Please send Species, Extent of summer plumage, colour and leg of

flag details to Paul Leader, Tel 471-3932 Fax 482-0369.

**RAMSAR DESIGNATION FOR MAI PO.** As you may well already be aware, the Government is considering Mai Po under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Habitat. In June, the Society joined The Conservancy Association, Friends Of The Earth, Green Power and WWF to make recommendations to the Government about the proposed designation of Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay as a Ramsar Site. Their advice can be summarised as follows:

1 The objective of the site should be aimed at the sustainable and wise use for enhancing and/or preserving the Biodiversity, Education, Scientific Research, Public enjoyment and cultural heritage of the area.

2 The wider coverage of Option Three is better than Option Two, and also four extension areas are suggested:

- Tin Shui Wai ( 32 ha)
- West of Shan Pui River (9 ha)
- Nam Sang Wai (22 ha )
- San Tin and Lok Ma Chau (230 ha)

3 Private land holdings be included as already occurs in the UK.

4 The area below high water mark in Inner Deep Bay be designated as a marine park or reserve.

5 Any management of the Deep Bay area, marine area and buffer zones be integrated with and interact with the objectives of the Ramsar site.

6 There is an urgent need for a conservation management plan.

**7** The proposed Ramsar and Wetland Management Committee should always be consulted prior to any change in land use or planning, and should involve public participation, both of individuals and groups.

**8** The Government ensures sufficient financial and human resources for the future management of the Ramsar Site and Buffer Zone.

Further details of the Ramsar Convention, Preliminary Options On Management Strategies, and maps of the various Options and Extension areas can be obtained from the Conservation Officer or the Bulletin Editor.

This links perfectly to the next item.

**THE MANGROVES TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COMPANY, SHENZHEN** has recently been launched, and an introductory leaflet has accidentally blown over the fence into Mai Po. The Bulletin editor found a copy in a reedbed, and quotes from the Introduction:  
"Futien Mangroves National Nature Reserve in Shenzhen City is planning to be built as a Seabirds World. The 11 Km long mangroves has been raising thousands of seabirds with over 250 kinds and is a rest stop for northern and southern migratory birds. At sunny day, colorful clouds and dreamly birds flying back and forth, background being Hong Kong and water merging mounts, the mangroves twining around you like a blue ribbon, all these looks like a three-dimensional natural picture with combining still and motive, so mysterious and so silent. The picturesque and enchanting will enjoy you so much that you would forget

going home..... Mangroves Tourism Development Co. Shenzhen is planning hold birds-viewing fair...and build up, on the scores of hectares of water range, International Centre, Water Amuse Park, Village Club, Vacation village, Mangroves Research Base (including waste water biopurify) as well as Restaurant, Travel and Trade Business. The scenery area is a vivid land waiting for being cultivated...varieties of projects may be invested. The Company is willing to run it jointly on equity or contract with both home and foreign traders, basing on the spirit of concurrent consideration to ecological, social and economic benefits". (sic)

Director General Manager Hou Yi is waiting to hear from Society Members.

#### **REVIEW OF PORCUPINE! NUMBER 10 SPRING 1994**

(Contributed by Paul Leader)

Porcupine! is the newsletter of the Hong Kong University Ecology Research group, and, for anyone interested in wildlife in Hong Kong essential reading.

The general tone of Porcupine! is informal but informative, being packed with masses of, on the whole, interesting information. Articles of note in this edition include: Mass flowering of bamboos; Sighting of Yellow-throated Marten in Hong Kong; Hong Kong Dragonfly Update; Fungus-growing termites in Hong Kong; The Chinese White Dolphin Project; and a summary of environmental related news reports. At twenty pages there is lots more besides especially the very interesting

'Wildlife Windows' - similar to our 'Report on the birds' but covering birds, reptiles, mammals and more. The bird information will be of little interest to birders, although the record of a Blue-throated (Chinese Blue?) Flycatcher is being followed up!. However other records are of interest especially sightings of mammals and records such as a 2m King Cobra at Kadoorie ARC!

There is a clear attempt by the editors to introduce some healthy debate on the topics covered and as a result the letters page makes for some interesting reading.

Remarkably, subscription to Porcupine! is FREE! Printing and mailing costs are paid by Dept. of Zoology HKU.

To get your free copies of Porcupine! send your name and address to:

Porcupine!  
Kadoorie Agricultural Research  
Centre, HKU  
Lam Kam Rd, Yuen Long  
New Territories, HK.

## BEHAVIOR SECTION

### Inter-action between Blue Magpie and Juvenile Cuckoo sp.

(Contributed by John Burton)

Between 09:30 and 10:00 hrs on Saturday 27th August I checked out Mount Davis; at the time a Typhoon Signal No 3 was hoisted. There was a strong blustery wind and intermittent heavy squalls. There was quite a lot of bird activity in a sheltered clump of

trees, and my attention was drawn to the calls of a party of Blue Magpies and an unfamiliar loud, monotone high pitched call similar to the "yowl" of a kitten. I located a large dark bird perched prominently, which I identified as a fledgling Koel. It was barred all over, with particularly dense barring on the breast. Back and wings were **less** heavily barred. In good light, the bird was pale dove grey with dark barring while in poor light the colours appeared a dark dull ashy brown on beige background, with dark chocolate wings showing coppery spotted barring. Bill was heavy and pinkish, legs and feet grey. It was constantly "yowling", gaping and fluttering its wings in a begging gesture. In the vicinity were a party of 7 Blue Magpies; all were wet, scruffy, and in various stages of moult. Three recently fledged young Magpies were foraging in the leaf litter, the remaining four being adults.

After a while, the magpies flew off but remained within the same small sheltered area of trees and the cuckoo went with them. Every time that a Magpie went near it, the young cuckoo gaped and wing fluttered, begging for food, but the adult birds did not feed it at all. This constant food begging was observed for 20 minutes, and contrasted with the behavior of the young magpies that were actively foraging for themselves. From their behavior, I consider that two family groups of Magpies had joined together, highlighting the young Koel that appeared unable to feed itself. Probably the Koel had parasitised one Magpie nest.

## LEG-FLAGGED WADERS

The following leg-flagged waders were recorded during spring 1994

SPECIES	DATE	FLAG	PLUMAGE	OBSERVER
Great Knot	27 Mar	Yellow R	FBP-	RHH DLC
Great Knot	31 Mar	Yellow R	FBP	RHH,DLC
Great Knot	31 Mar	Yellow R	FBP	RHH,DLC
Great Knot	31 Mar	Yellow R	FBP	RHH,DLC
Curlew Sandpiper	01 Apr	Orange R	???	GJC
Curlew Sandpiper	03 Apr	Red R	1/5 BP	RHH,DLC
Curlew Sandpiper	09 Apr	Yellow R	1/2 BP	PRS
Curlew Sandpiper	09 Apr	Yellow R	FBP-	AR,CB
Greater Sandplover	09 Apr	Yellow R	1/2 BP	AR,CB
Greater Sandplover	11 Apr	Yellow R	FBP	PJL
Red-necked Stint	14 Apr	Orange R	???	???
Curlew Sandpiper	15 Apr	Orange R	???	???
Curlew Sandpiper	17 Apr	Orange R	FBP	MRL
Curlew Sandpiper	22 Apr	Red R	FBP	PJL
Curlew Sandpiper	23 Apr	Yellow R	1/2 BP	PJL
Curlew Sandpiper	23 Apr	Orange R	1/2 BP	PJL
Curlew Sandpiper	23 Apr	Yellow R	1/4 BP	PJL
Curlew Sandpiper	26 Apr	Orange L	1/2 BP	PJL
Curlew Sandpiper	26 Apr	Orange R	FBP-	PJL
Curlew Sandpiper	26 Apr	Yellow R	1/2 BP	PJL
Broad-billed Sand	27 Apr	Yellow R	FBP	HMT
Curlew Sandpiper	29 Apr	Red R	FBP-	PJL
Curlew Sandpiper	29 Apr	Red R	FBP-	PJL
Curlew Sandpiper	29 Apr	Orange R	3/4 BP	PJL
Curlew Sandpiper	29 Apr	Orange R	1/3 BP	PJL
Curlew Sandpiper	30 Apr	Yellow L	1/2 BP	VBP
Curlew Sandpiper	30 Apr	Red R	FBP	PH
Curlew Sandpiper	02 May	Orange R	2/3 BP	PJL
Curlew Sandpiper	02 May	Orange R	FBP-	PJL
Red-necked Stint*	06 May	Red R	3/4 BP	MH
Red-necked Stint*	07 May	Orange R	???	RWL
Red-necked Stint	07 May	Red R	FBP-	MH,PJL
Greater Sandplover	07 May	Red R	FBP	PJL
Turnstone	13-17 May	Orange R	FBP	PJL
Red-necked Stint	13 May	Orange R	TraceBP	PJL
Lesser Sandplover	13 May	Orange R	FBP	PJL
Red-necked Stint	15 May	Orange R	FBP	PJL
Red-necked Stint	17 May	Orange R	FBP-	PJL

\* At Tsim Bei Tsui, all others at Mai Po.

**Observers:** Chris Bradshaw, Geoff J. Carey, David L. Clugston, Matt Heindal, Angus H. Hogg (RHH), Peter Hopkin, Paul J. Leader, Michael R. Leven, Richard W. Lewthwaite, Verity B. Picken, Adam Rowland, Peter R. Stevens, Henrik Moller Thomson.

Anyone with information in addition to that given above please call Paul Leader on

## BOOK PAGE

**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.

The purpose of a guide book must be to entertain and enthuse the armchair traveller, and at the same time provide accurate and reliable information for the tourist. Both of these fine books succeed brilliantly on all counts. The **Malaysia** Guide looks good on initial impression, with a varied selection of colour photographs of birds, animals and habitats, taken by the author. For each site there is a clear sketch map, a readable, clearly defined text which is broken down into "introduction", "good birdwatching areas", "access and accommodation", "when to visit" and "other attractions". Although short, this last section broadens the scope of the book, because not everyone will spend all of their holiday time birdwatching and families will need beaches and temples to visit as well. The bird information is summarised in an annotated list for each site: I am no fan of lists, but these are clearly laid out and the comments make them interesting. I felt happy to run through each one. Scientific names are included in the complete list of the birds and mammals of Malaysia at the end of the book, although the English names essentially follow Ben King and Phil Round. The maps are of the annotated sketch style, with hand written text and comments familiar to birdwatchers using photocopied trip reports. I felt they could have been larger ( Fraser's Hill and Bukit Gasing for example ) but the sites I do know were recognisable and brought back

many happy memories. The book is a convenient size to fit a rucksack, paperback to save weight, and covers 42 sites, 26 in Peninsular Malaysia, the remainder in Sarawak and Sabah. I would feel lost to travel without a copy.

I have not been "down under", but the **Australia** guide fills me with enthusiasm. John Bransbury has done a thorough job to produce a good range of sites within each state. The travel tips are good, and with the aid of a large scale map it is easy to plan a holiday itinerary. In the Introduction, Bransbury explains that those sites that he has not been able to visit (it is not stated which, but I suspect not many) have been described with the assistance of National Park Staff and Guides. This accounts for the long list of acknowledgements: what could be better than local knowledge? The maps are generally clearer and more consistently drawn than on the **Malaysian Guide**, with a pleasing uniformity of style, and each site description is not burdened with a complete list of bird species. The avian highlights are put in a national or regional context, which is useful in such a large country, where most tourists can only visit a few sites in one region at once. Short anecdotes, for example hints on seeing Ground Parrots in waist high grass, enliven the already interesting text, and although I would be keen to see more photographs of the spectacular species, the habitat pictures give a good flavour of the landscape. This book is a re-issue rather than a revision, and I hope Mr Bransbury is able to keep updating this book in the future, because this book is essential for all birdwatchers visiting Australia. Both books are available from The Natural History Book Service in UK.

## OVERSEAS BIRDWATCHING

SRI LANKA

29-30 October 1993

Robin Restall

On the 29th October 1993, I had a free weekend in southern Sri Lanka. Accompanied by my wife and my friend and guide Deepal Warakagoda, we drove to Hambantota where we based ourselves for the full two days. During this time we visited Bundala, Kataragama and the Yala National Park.

This was not a high-intensity bird seeking expedition. We left the Peacock Beach Hotel at 7am each morning, and arrived back before dusk. We saw 117 species of birds, which is undoubtedly a modest record; had we been out before dawn, used sound equipment to call out some particularly reticent species, spent more time studying the waders, and covered the evening nightfall, I have no doubt the list could be extended significantly.

My first sight of a Painted Stork was a thrill. A single bird only 50 metres from where we stopped at the roadside, stood and watched us uncertainly for a few minutes before deciding it would be safer airborne. It took off and flew in small circles alternatively flapping its wings and gliding just above the spot where it had been standing. This afforded us a perfect view of its flight recognition characters. Later that day we saw a flock of about 50 of these beautiful birds relaxing in the afternoon sun, accompanied by Spot-billed Pelicans, Black-winged Stilts, Egrets and many waders. This time we were on some estuarine flats at Bundala. In the distance we identified White-necked and Open-billed Stork, but neither close enough to enjoy the detail of the plumage as was possible with the Painted Storks.

On another occasion a solitary Black-necked Stork posed 100 metres from the roadside. And a few minutes later an Adjutant Stork sailed into view and wheeled in several circles before

Indian Pipit *Anthus rufulus malayensis*

Bush Lark *Mirafra affinis ceylonensis*



coming to land, bringing our total of storks to the full 5 species found in Sri Lanka.

Spoonbills cropped up in small numbers among the massed storks and egrets, cryptically white and unmoving or preening desultorily. However, not long after entering the Yala Nature Reserve we stopped to watch some Sambur running from a Leopard, when all at once a single Spoonbill appeared and began working its way industriously across a pond. Once the drama of the mammals was past, the demonstration of feeding behaviour with the immersed bill swinging side to side, was amazing. This spot was particularly good for we also saw Elephants and Water Buffalo.

The official tracker designated to every vehicle in the Yala National Park pointed out a nest saying it belonged to the Indian Shama. He lapsed into silence when two Black-hooded Orioles flew to it and one bird, after carefully inspecting the contents, settled itself down as if to brood, but only 5 minutes later it left the nest and flew away.

A little further along the track we noticed a pair of Sirkeer Cuckoos displaying on the ground in some open scrub only a couple of metres from the car. The birds were less than a metre apart, each almost still, but moving with a shuffle from time to time. The posture of each bird was remarkable, the head pointed upwards with the bill open, showing yellow



Southern Sirkeer *Taccocua l. leschenaultii*



and red clearly. It seemed to me that their pupils were dilated but I cannot be sure of this. The wings were drooped with the feathers opened, the primaries resting on the ground. The body feathers were all slightly fluffed out, but those of the rump were fully erect. The tail was fanned. Each bird was broadside on to the other, but with the tail twisted slightly towards the other bird, and sometimes the head also. As the Sirkeer nearest to us moved forward a short way, the other bird followed suit. It was as if each were pumped up, "*buchipluma*" the way fighting cocks will circle each other looking for an opening to strike, except the cuckoos' action was in slow motion. After several minutes the birds had shuffled a distance of maybe half a metre and one, its view of the other obscured by a plant, and disturbed by a vehicle which passed us by, flapped into the bush. The second bird awakened from its trance-like state and followed.

The Pied Crested Cuckoo seemed determined to be photographed as it landed several times and perched in full view right in front of us. We also saw Plaintive and Small Cuckoo.

The Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker obligingly landed in a tree just in front of us and spiralled several vertical branches enabling us to see it from every angle. The third Red-backed Woodpecker that we saw stole the show, posing for a full half minute in full view, then leisurely working its way through a large open tree quite oblivious to our presence.

I am particularly bad at identifying raptors in flight and gazing at the multiple plumage phases in the specialist books only confuses me

more, so I was particularly grateful for Deepal's instant and confident recognition of Crested Hawk Eagle, as it perched on a tree stump by a pond, Serpent Eagle, Honey Buzzard and Fish Eagle, the latter at some distance. I came into my own with the Brahminy Kite! A female Kestrel, showing only her head and shoulders with the light behind, brought a vote of "Shikra" from our tracker, but her facial tear stripe suggested otherwise. As we circled the large bush and had a perfect view of her back she flew out and began hovering only 50 feet away leaving no possible doubt as to her identity.

Egrets abounded and we took delight in identifying Little and Cattle, and Large Egrets were also fairly common. It was only when we saw an Intermediate that I truly appreciated the diagnostic of the kink in the neck. As one stood quite near to a Large Egret the comparison was perfect. A similar "side-by-side" occurred with the other two, and as if to make it obvious the Cattle Egret was pulsating its chin, emphasising this easy diagnostic feature.

At the estuarine flats we were attracted by a large crocodile resting on a slope with its mouth open and a black-headed White Ibis nearby, but Deepal found one muddy area populated by Little Stints, Marsh and Common Sandpiper and a few Garganey. As I spotted a few Little Pratincole, my companion spotted a pair of Finch-larks which pleased me no end. Among the waders a flock of Black-tailed Godwit came in, landing together and causing a flush of excitement.

In the afternoon of the second day we went to Kataragama to see the

shrines and experience the peaceful atmosphere. The gardens abounded with birds and in one large tree near the great dagoba we saw Pompadour Pigeons, both Coppersmith and Small Barbets, Rose-ringed Parakeet, a pair of Malabar Pied Hornbills, White-browed Fantailed Flycatcher, Common Myna and a Black Robin. On the ground were dozens of Spotted Munias which I watched with fascination. Some of these were clearly nest-building as a bird would fly off trailing a stem of grass. On another occasion we stopped and watched 2 or 3 pairs of Spotted Munias nest-building in a solitary Mangrove tree, on the edge of a small grove.

On the road back to the hotel we stopped from time to time to watch the road-side regulars, Purple Gallinules, Indian Roller, Lesser Whistling Teal, Peafowl, Bush Larks, and a Yellow Wagtail. The latter deserved particular attention as Deepal was on the alert for a Citrine Wagtail, which we did not see.

A pair of Bustard Quail walked unhurriedly across the dirt road we were driving slowly on, and a few minutes later a beautiful male Jungle fowl hurried out of sight, to be glimpsed again as it slowed down and sidetracked. We could hear the Indian Pitta calling everywhere; one gave us a reasonable sighting as it flew across our path.

We stopped to watch some Water Buffalo that were drinking at a very muddy waterhole, and were rewarded by a long study of a Snipe that stood nearby, quite motionless for several minutes. Nearby, a Monitor Lizard had been killed by a passing car and a dozen Jungle Crows were vying with

each other, but seemingly in quite a cooperative manner, to pull the corpse apart. Barn Swallows were wheeling and swooping and I saw a russet-bellied morph, the entire underparts being reddish. There were also a few Red-rumped Swallows. White-rumped Swifts and Palm Swifts were recorded often, and in the area bordering the Yala Reserve we saw several Tree Swifts. I was fascinated to see one bird sitting tight on its nest, quite unmoved by the activity of other birds including a couple of Shikra that perched in the same tree. A Small Cuckoo was quite noticeable in the tree and I wondered if the nest of the Tree Swift would hold any interest for it. Apparently not.

Of the smaller birds we spotted Franklin's, Ashy and White-browed Prinia, and the "choweel" of the Tailor Bird advertised its presence a dozen times more often than when we saw it. Perhaps the commonest bird in Sri Lanka ... the one most often seen I'd guess ... is the Red-vented Bulbul. This species would surely be an easy one for an in-depth study. In the two days I observed all manner of behaviour; particularly noteworthy was the aggressive chasing of one male by another, and the apparently tight pair bond.

An Indian Pipit walked about and posed in short grass just by the roadside and while we focused my wife drew my attention to a Bush Lark nearby, pointing out how similar it was in its cryptic colouring yet so different in its posture. As if it had heard her, it walked within half a metre of Pipit just as the Pipit stopped and adopted that distinctive vertical pose.

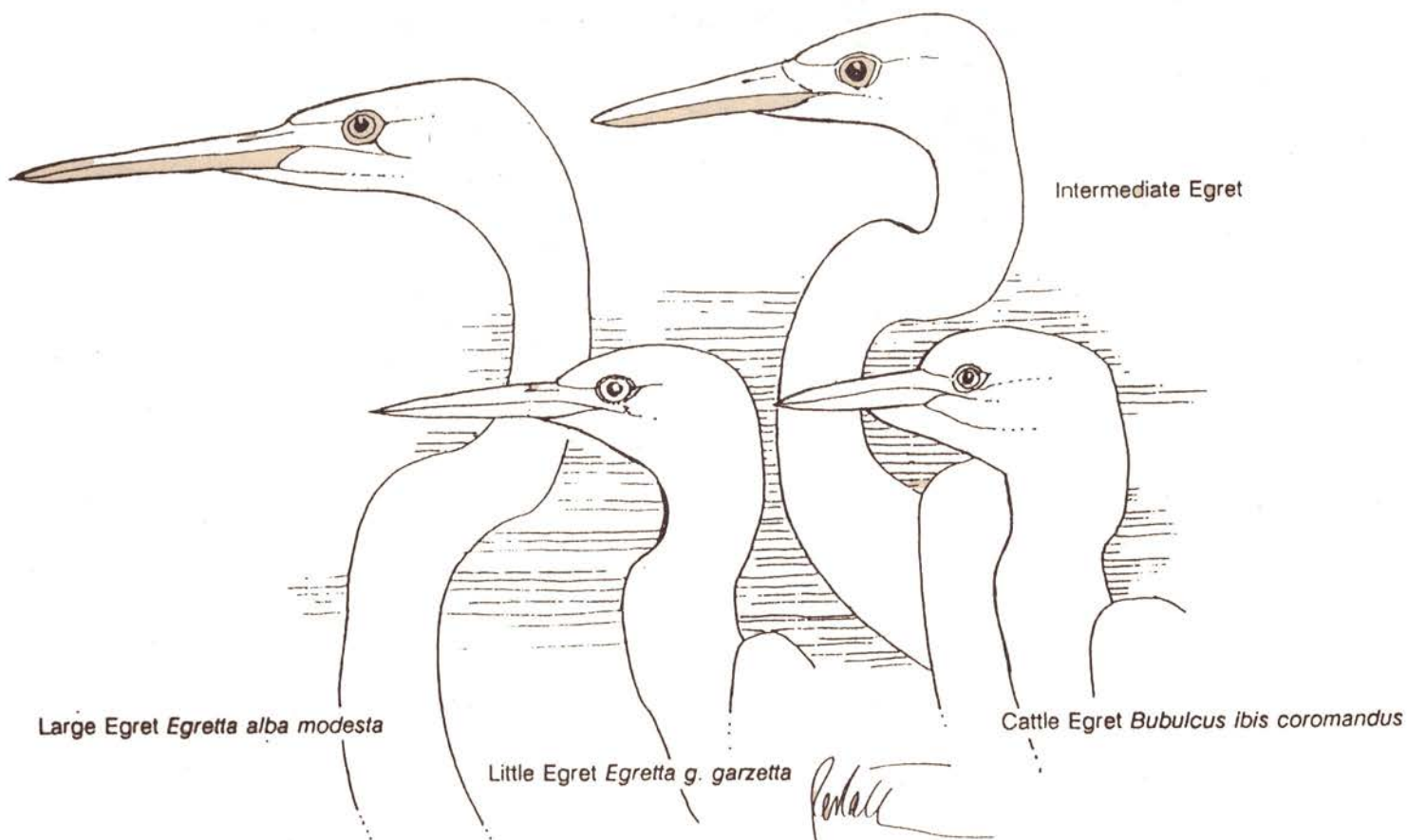
I mentioned two instances where the

tracker was wrong, but in fact he was an ace-spotter and several times picked something out in the middle of a bush that had been sitting silently waiting for us to pass, that we would not otherwise have seen. One such prize was a Brahminy Myna, the only one seen. Another was a Brown Flycatcher, and it was Deepal who usually spotted the Common Babblers.

Bird watching by car along the main road from Hambantota to Kataragama and Bundala is easy and a pleasure. One can always stop and get out to see a bird properly, as we did when a pair of Curlews wheeled across the road and landed in some wet paddy right by the roadside. In contrast, being confined to the car inside the Yala National Park is frustrating and at times quite uncomfortable.

Furthermore the rapid passage of utility vehicles that breeze by just as you're focusing on some uncertain bird, flushing it deeper into cover, is irritating or down right annoying. I urge any birdwatcher visiting Yala to spend a good time in the vicinity of the national park, and not only inside. The wet flats of Bundala are particularly rewarding.

I feel that a combination of 117 species combined with some interesting and leisurely observations in just two days, merits recording if only to encourage the more industrious to a more worthwhile result. (The original report, which includes a full species list has been lodged with the society library ... Ed)



**KHAO YAI, THAILAND**  
**2nd to 10th Dec. 1993**  
**Langdon Barone.**

Last December I took one week's vacation to visit Khao Yai National Park in Central Thailand. From Bangkok, air-con busses run every fifteen minutes from the Northern Bus Terminal for the 2 1/2 hour ride to Pak Chong. I had called Tom and Maew, (owners of Jungle Adventure Guesthouse in Pak Chong) from Hong Kong and made reservations (not essential). They offer a room with a foam mat on the floor, a fan and a hearty breakfast for 70 Baht. For 650 Baht they offer a day and a half tour into Khao Yai by truck and foot. I found Jungle Adventure was an excellent place to meet other birders. Tom is accustomed to hard core birders and knows what we want. He was quite willing to make special arrangements for our assembled group, a German biologist, a British conservationist and his girlfriend, A Swedish birder and myself.

On the afternoon of my arrival, Maew led a large group to two caves in the Pak Chong area. We saw a flock of Lineated Barbets in the trees outside the first. The real spectacle came after hiking up a rather sheer hillside to the second cave where we waited for hordes of bats to come swarming out at dusk. We were told that Bat Hawks occasionally show up, but all we saw were Peregrine Falcons, Blue Whistling Thrush and an owl that defied typing. The next day, Tom had arranged for the birders to go in one of his trucks at 5am. Khao Yai is an elevated sandstone plateau and the drive in can be chilly. It is recommended that everyone brings a sweatshirt as the drive takes

approximately 30 teeth chattering minutes.

After paying the 5 Baht Park entry fee, the road wound through beautiful dipterocarp forest. Macaques and wild pigs were in evidence throughout, and Tom willingly stopped for a variety of birds spotted in the treetops. We saw Green-eared Barbet, Wreathed and Southern Pied Hornbills, Racket-tailed and Hair Crested Drongos, and a Long-tailed Broadbill. Every time the truck stopped, the surrounding jungle was filled with the atmospheric calling of Gibbons, while giant white butterflies filled the air.

As we hit the trail through open grassland headed for the Kong Phak Chi watchtower we walked past Sambar deer and four foot long Tree Squirrels. At the watch tower we split off onto a trail that yielded Black-crested and Puff-throated Bulbuls, Broadbills, a Red headed Trogon and a spectacular Banded Kingfisher. We also saw Mountain Imperial Pigeons and White-bellied Yuhinas. After lunch at a delightful waterfall, a drive to a limestone outcrop got us Black Eagle and a Black-shouldered Kite. We then watched eight wild elephants, one of whom charged our truck. After super at a roadside restaurant, we spotlighted for night animals which revealed many species of Civet Cats and a Slow Loris but no birds. What was first thought was a bintaurong we later agreed was probably just a big palm civet. The other truck with non-birders reported a house-cat sized leopard cat, not to be confused with Clouded Leopard.

Next day we independently arranged a taxi into the reserve for 300 Baht. There is some question as to whether one could stay in the dormitories inside the park. Ultimately we found that this was possible although the

facilities were somewhat primitive. For the time being, it was more convenient to stay in Phak Chong with Tom and base out of there.

Starting from the park headquarters we hiked back up through a stream bed intending to make a long loop back to the HQ for lunch. Here we were again rewarded with a Great-eared Nightjar, Orange-breasted Trogon, White-crowned Forktail, White-rumped Sharma, Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrike, and the crowning glory, Eared Pitta. After lunch, (one food stand features a dish called The Untold Miseries of Pork ) we hooked up with our reliable taxi driver who took us back to the watchtower. Sighting an industrious monitor lizard thrashing through the lake, our attention was focused, however, by the sound of trumpeting elephants. Our group looked like contestants in the Olympic walking race as we sped down the road for our taxi. We had heard many tales of people being stranded all night in the watchtower because elephants had blocked their way along the trail. We made it to the main road, and were treated to the sight of 34 elephant enjoying a roadside saltpan in the golden night of evening.

Next morning we covered the two miles between the access road and the park HQ. Species logged included Black-winged Cuckoo Shrikes, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Grey-headed flycatcher, Scarlet Minivet, Blue-winged Leafbird, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Verditer Flycatcher, White-rumped Munia and some Vernal Hanging Parrots. With the wind in our faces, a Barking Deer walked up onto the road just ten metres away, oblivious to our presence. After lunch we set off along the trails behind the park HQ, up the park's main river. In the afternoon the woodlands were

somewhat dead. We stopped and waited silently by an elevated portion of the trail beside a stream. What sounded in the silent forest like a hunting tiger as it panted towards us turned out to be two Great Hornbills who ultimately perched directly over our heads. Before we left, a troupe of twenty forest pigs thrashed their way across the stream, doggedly en route for some porcine destination.

Back at the HQ, I met Mark Graham, author of the article in Action Asia that led me to Khao Yai in the first place. We spent the next morning working his favourite trails west of the Kong Phak Chi watchtower. Mark works with the WWF Tiger Project in Thailand, and pointed out a tiger track in the salt lick near the tower. We did not get many birds that morning, for some reason just a Hill Blue Flycatcher and a Black-and-Buff Woodpecker. We worked through a lot of bordered grassland, but as the day grew hot we make little further progress.

The group split up after the mornings trail. I returned to Phak Chong and hence to Bangkok, while my companions made arrangements to stay in the dormitories inside the actual park.

I wholly recommend Khao Yai as a spectacular wildlife experience accessible from Hong Kong. The park is excellent all year round, but the cool/dry season from November to February would be the best time to visit. The high elevation makes it a kind of air conditioned forest, and old bush hands will know what I mean when I say this is a non threatening jungle. We had few leeches and mosquitoes and mites were not a severe problem. There is no Japanese encephalitis either. If I can offer any additional tips, please feel free to call me at . As for me, I cannot wait to go back.

## CHINESE BIRDING HOLIDAYS

Birding In Sichuan  
29 May to 14 June 1994  
H.F.Cheung.

Last April, Clive Viney kindly invited CY Lam and myself to join a Sichuan birding trip, which we gladly accepted with deep thanks. The other members on the trip were John Edge, Bob Ferguson, Stuart Smith and Angus Lamont. Bird information was compiled before the trip by Clive and Stuart, and we also had fresh information from Wendy Young's earlier trip. Travel arrangements were made by a local Travel Company in Chengdu, and our guide, Joshua Luo, had arranged everything properly for us.

On 29th May we flew to Chengdu, and after checking in to an hotel we visited the Wuhuo Temple. A dense population of common breeding birds was present, including Red-rumped Swallow and a Tiger Shrike. Nothing else exciting in the area around Chengdu and on the road were found.

From 30th May to 4th June we were in Wolong National Park. Wolong was famous for Panda preservation. The areas we visited were on the main traffic route. It is along a valley that runs all the way up to a 15000' pass, with high peaks well covered by trees and shrubs along the way. The accommodation was very reasonable here. On the road to Wolong, Upland Buzzard, Gould's Sunbird, Siberian Rock Bunting and Long-tailed Minivet were among other familiar birds. We took one 02:30 morning call in order to be at the 15000' pass for dawn,

and we were rewarded with Lammergeyer, Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Snow Partridge, Snow Pigeon, Rosy Pipit, Alpine Accentor, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Grandala, Brandt's Mountain Finch, White-rumped Snowfinch, Red-breasted Rosefinch and Yellow-billed (Alpine) Chough. Birds were tame and easy to see but all of us were uncomfortable after half a day at this altitude.

Lower down the pass, birds appeared at different altitudes. At around 12000' we saw Wood Snipe, Spotted Bush Warbler, Tickell's Leaf Warbler, Willow Tit, White Collared Yuhina, Wren, Blood Pheasant, Koklass Pheasant, Temminck's Tragopan and Blyth's Pipit. The expected White-eared Pheasants could not be found. At still lower altitude, Golden Pheasant, Chestnut Thrush, Giant and Elliot's Laughing Thrushes, Two-barred, Chinese, White-tailed Leaf Warblers, Buff-throated Warbler, Lesser Cuckoo, Firethroat, Nutcracker, Grey-crested Tit, Grey-headed Bullfinch, and White-browed Rosefinch could be seen. Parrotbills have been much affected by the loss of Bamboo during the last ten years and so only Spectacled Parrotbill and Three-toed Parrotbill were seen.

Along the valley in Wolong, Blyth's Leaf Warbler, Common Rosefinch, Thick-billed Warbler, Mountain Bush Warbler, Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Grey-backed Shrike and Asian House Martin are common. Birds that we missed were White-eared Pheasant, Chinese Monal and Tibetan Snowcock.

From 5th to 7th June we were on the eastern rim of the Tibetan Plateau. Accommodation was crude in this region. Snow had just melted and the short grass covered this very flat area. Near Ro'ergai there were some large marshy lakes. The birds were basically highland birds and very different from those in the other areas. On the way up to the plateau, we saw Blue Rock Thrush, Mountain Crag Martin and Golden Eagle. On the plateau were Lammergeyer, Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Black Vulture, Common Pheasant, Ferruginous Duck, Red-crested Pochard, Greylag Goose, Common Tern, Brown-headed Gull, Little Owl, Long-billed Calandra Lark, Shore Lark, Oriental Skylark, Sand Martin, Common Cuckoo, Pere David's Laughing Thrush, Chinese Grey Shrike, Black Redstart, Twite, Mongolian Trumpeter Finch, Tibetan Snow Finch, Hume's Ground Jay, Daurian Jackdaw, Raven, Carrion Crow, White-rumped Snowfinch, Red-footed Falcon, Saker Falcon, Black Stork, Black-necked and Common Crane. We missed Mongolian Lark and Greater Short-toed Lark.

From 8th to 12th June we were down in the area around Jiuzhaigou. This extremely popular tourist site has similar habitat to Woolong but with addition blue mineral lakes for the tourists. Accommodation could have been better and the room service was very poor. In the higher areas around we saw White-winged Grosbeak, Severtzov's Tit Warbler, White-bellied Redstart, Chinese Fulvetta and Red-billed Chough. At the lower areas, birds were similar to those at Woolong. Phylloscopus Warblers were still common, including Blyth's Leaf, Two-barred Greenish, White-tailed, Large-billed, Chinese, Pale-rumped

and Tickell's. The best birds in the area were White-throated Redstart, Rufous-vented Tit, Grey Nightjar, Long-tailed Tit, Three-barred Rosefinch, Maroon-backed Accentor, White-throated Dipper, Sichuan Grey Jay, Three-toed Woodpecker, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, Treecreeper, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Hill Blue Flycatcher, Yellow-browed Tit and White-browed Tit. Birds that we missed were Blue-eared Pheasant, Wallcreeper, and Gould's Shortwing.

We felt that late May was just right for this trip. Most of the birds were singing in the open for us to tick. However we were several weeks late for pheasants, and so only a few were seen with difficulty. Other birds that we did badly for were Owls, Woodpeckers, Parrotbills and Forktails. However we managed excellent practice with Leaf Warblers, Tits and Rosefinches. Around the Jiuzhaigou area, most tourist sites were not good for birds, but undisturbed sites were wonderful and there are many more to be discovered. We saw about 230 species out of which were 80 life ticks for me. In addition to birds, the trip produced some 10 mammal species including wolf and fox, and one captive Panda. What else could you ask for?

(A mouth watering bird list. Who will join me next May ? Ed)

NAN KUN SAN REVISITED,  
December 1993 and June 1994.  
John Holmes.

Nam Kun Shan is an area of hills in Longmen County, Guangdong Province, about 120 kms from Hong

Kong. Between 1984 and 1991 several groups of HK birders went there accompanied by the Guangdong Forestry Bureau (See Clive Viney's account in the 1984/5 HK bird report and CY Lam's piece in Bulletin 140).

NKS is nominally a "Nature Reserve" but is mainly a tree farm with bamboo in the lowlands and native secondary forest on the hills between 500-1200 metres. Armed respectively with the Pearl Delta Touring Map and passable Cantonese, Paul Aston and I went there on public transport last Christmas. ( I was last there in 1989).

The most direct route on the map worked out. We got a train from Shenzhen to Shilong and stayed overnight there. We then caught successive buses to Zhengcheng, Wing Han and Ha Ping, the main village of NKS. North of Zhengcheng the countryside becomes very traditional looking with old walled villages overlooking paddyfields. The final minibus Ha Ping village climbs the hills into the reserve from the south-east. There is a barrier but the gate keepers were only checking lowland bound logs. A guest house room cost RMB 138.

Oh yes, the birds. The best area near Ha Ping is the water catchment where in winter Brown Dipper and Slaty-backed Forktail are common. There are flocks of Minivet, where Grey-chinned outnumbered Scarlet by four to one. Large mixed flocks were often encountered. There were typically one-half Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, and one-quarter each Rufous-capped Babblers and Pekin Robins, with a couple of Rufous-necked Scimitar Babblers along for good measure. In December raptors were hard to find, but included Crested Goshawk,

Peregrine and Mountain Hawk Eagle. Other birds not normally seen in Hong Kong are Striated Yuhina, Brown Fulvetta, Bay Woodpecker, Treepies and Lesser-necked Laughing Thrush in good numbers.

In June, Paul and I ( team name OPTIMISTS-R-US ) were hoping for something like the Chinese Pittas seen in May 1989, however it rained heavily throughout the three days we were there. Black Bazas were seen daily as were Chinese (Horsfields) Goshawks, with a maximum daily count of six. A Crested Kingfisher flying along Ha Ping's main road was a highlight.

Birding in the free-fire zone that is much of Guangdong can be hard work. On each 3-4 day trip we struggled to find 50 species. However we were consoled by the idea that we were boldly birding where few have boldly birded before. A knowledge of NKS puts Hong Kong's birds into context. There are no Velvet-fronted Nuthatches or Blue Winged Minlas for example, but Chestnut Bulbuls are the commonest bird with Black Bulbul a close second in winter.

Gourmets will be heartened to learn that Ha Ping's "Wild Delicacy" restaurants offer most of one's favourite species to eat. Barred Wood Owl and Buffy Fish Owl were both claimed to have been caught locally, as were Collared Scops and Grass Owls. Quadruped fans can sample Civets, Leopard Cat, Hamsters and Rabbits. Those seeking a Broader Cultural Experience will be glad to learn that Karaoke has reached Nan Kun Shan. The attendant ladies had the "jizz" of the Public Relations sub-species but Paul forbade me from getting close enough to confirm this.



Nan Kun Shan is developing as a hill resort, with all that entails. Access is getting easier but the birding visitor must take it as he finds it. Social anthropologists may view NKS as a microcosm of contemporary Guangdong, but Nature Purists should stay at home. It is not all bad though: highlight of the two trips : Rickett's Hill Partridge, nearly run over as we left.

## MAI-PO NEWS

There will be WWF Visits to the Boardwalk hide on the following dates:

October	29	09:00-11:00
November	12	09:00-11:00
	13	15:30-16:50
	19	09:00-11:00
	26	15:30-16:30

### MAI PO BI-LINGUAL SUNDAY 6 NOVEMBER

I wish to reserve \_\_\_\_\_ places on the coach.

( ) \$40 Members ( ) \$60 Guests ( ) \$20 Students.

I enclose a cheque for \$\_\_\_\_\_ (In English. Payable to **Hong Kong Birdwatching Society**)/Paid by Electronic Transfer.

Send to C.Y.Lam, Royal Observatory, 134a Nathan Road, Kowloon, to arrive before 25 October.

NAME.....TELEPHONE.....

MAI PO

### TSIM BEI TSUI BI-LINGUAL SUNDAY 20 NOVEMBER 1994

I wish to reserve \_\_\_\_\_ places on the coach.

( ) \$40 Members ( ) \$60 Guests ( ) \$20 Students

I enclose a cheque for \$\_\_\_\_\_ (In English, payable to **Hong Kong Birdwatching Society**)/Paid by Electronic Transfer

Return to: C.Y.Lam, Royal Observatory, 134a Nathan Road, Kowloon to arrive by 15 November.

NAME.....TELEPHONE.....

Tsim Bei Tsui

## FUTURE MEETINGS

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
8 October Saturday	John Holmes	Tai Po Kau Meet at Car Park	07:30
16 October Sunday	John Edge *** CANCELLED ***	Tai Long Wan	
29 October Saturday	Peter Stevens	Ping Yeung Meet at R.C.P. in Ping Yeung village	07:30
6 November Sunday	Tim Woodward + Chinese Leader	Mai Po Bi-Lingual High Tide 2m at 13:38 Coach from Kowloon Tong	09:00-15:00 08:00
12 November Saturday	Ian Tyzzer	Ping Yeung Meet at R.C.P. in Ping Yeung village.	07:30
20 November Sunday	Andrew Young + Chinese Leader	Tsim Bei Tsui Bi-lingual High Tide 1.9m at 12:48 Coach from Kowloon Tong	09:00-15:00 08:00
23 November Wednesday	Ray Tipper	"A Bird Photographer's World" Gazetted Police Officers Mess, Police H.Q., Arsenal Street, Wanchai Doors Open 18:00 Talk Start 18:30 \$50 On the Door, Drinks Extra.	
3 December Saturday	John Edge	Wu Kau Tang	07:30
11 December Sunday	Chinese Leader	Hok Tau Reservoir	07:30
Followed By Curry Lunch in N.T. Depot, Fanling. Estimated Cost \$50-100. Contact Ian Tyzzer for details. Booking Form will Assist Arrangements.			
17 December Saturday	Jim Hackett	Ho Chung Valley, Sai Kung.	07:30
31 December Saturday		Christmas Count	

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 therefore essential that members inform the leader whether they will attend in advance. Failure to do so will result in other members being refused access to Mai Po. Members who use the coach will confirm their attendance by using the booking slip.

A coach will collect members from Kowloon Tong KCR one hour before assembly time and return there after the meeting. Please return the form given at the end of this bulletin with a cheque in **English** (note the new prices for guests) made out to the **Hong Kong Birdwatching Society** if you wish to use the coach. Please bring drink and food, and appropriate clothing (e.g. Wellington Boots for Swamp Bash)

Leaders are requested to find a substitute leader if they are unable to attend.

Payment can also be made by Electronic Transfer to Account No 004-567-899661-001 Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank in favour of **The Hong Kong Birdwatching Society**. Please send the attendance slip to C.Y.Lam confirm a place.

## **BIRD NEWS...BIRD NEWS....BIRD NEWS....BIRD NEWS**

JUNE-AUGUST 1994 PAUL J LEADER

Black-faced Spoonbill	1 at Mai Po 8 July (PJL)
Besra	A sub-ad male at Ma Tso Lung on 22 Aug (PJL)
Black-shouldered Kite	at Tin Shui Wai 22 Aug (RWL)
Asiatic Dowitcher	2 at Mai Po on 23 July (MRL,PJL) after which up to 9 in August.
Painted Snipe	6 at Long Valley on 29 Aug (PJL,JAH)
Bridled Tern	5 at Gau Tau on 14 Aug (PJL et al) 3 from Cape D'Aguilar on 27 Aug (MLC)
Aleutian Tern	55 From Cape D'Aguilar on 27 Aug (PJL,VBP)
Eagle Owl	1 at Ting Kau on 7 Aug (MLC)
White-vented Needletail	2 Shek Kong Catchment on 1 July (MDW)
Bay Woodpecker	1 heard in Tai Po Kau on 22 August (RWL)