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

BULLETIN NO. 155 MARCH 1995

SOCIETY NEWS

AN INDOOR MEETING will be held on Tuesday 14th March. **Jeb Barzen**, Director of Field Ecology of The International Crane Foundation, will give a slide presentation on the "Conservation of Waterbirds in South China and Vietnam". The venue is Lecture Theatre 6, Level 4, City University of Hong Kong, 83 Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon Tong. The talk will cover ICF work in Vietnam as well as in Guizhou, China, and will include slides and information on the diversity of birds in the two regions. The evening is sponsored by our society, WWFHK, The Conservancy Association and the City University. The University Campus is very close to Kowloon Tong MTR and KCR, and Parking is available on request. Please call Cho Nam Ng

for more details.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held on Weds 29 March at The Auxiliary Police Officers Mess, 3rd Floor, Beaconsfield House, Queen's Road, Central, at 18:00 hrs. There will be a Cash Bar and Snacks. Afterwards Mike Chalmers will show his Siberian slides, taken on a trip last summer.

DEAD BIRDS WANTED! Fox Wong is collecting dead birds, both to build up a skin collection and on behalf of a German researcher working on genetic analysis. The bird tissue samples can be from either dead bird muscle or live bird blood sample. He is interested in raptors, gulls, babblers, warblers and shrikes, while Fox Wong will collect anything. Please freeze the specimen and phone Fox on him at HKU Ecology on

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

R Stott Chairman

***** **Secretary** *****

J Webster Treasurer

**M Chalmers Recorder &
Breeding Birds**

MM Chan Bulletin Editor

G Carey Annual Report

BIRDLINE HOTLINE

NEXT MEETING will be The A.G.M.

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

Fax

國際保護鳥類委員會香港分部

HONG KONG SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

MAI PO PERMITS. WWF will be checking permits at Mai Po this spring, so before you use ANY of the hides make sure that you have your WWF membership card with you at all times. Otherwise you will be asked to leave. So join WWF now!

BLACK KITE CENSUS. At present there are thought to be only two night time Black Kite roosts in Hong Kong, at Stonecutters and Magazine Gap on the Peak. Do you know of any other roosts, no matter how small? If so please inform Geoff Carey Tel and Fax 2608-1281. Geoff has been doing some work on the status of Black Kites in Hong Kong and would like to ensure that a census is done of all the regular roosts during 1995.

PHOTOGRAPHS PLEASE

The following photographs are needed for forthcoming identification papers:

* **Immature frigatebirds** in flight in HK, especially the immature Lesser at Magazine Gap.

* **Large "Herring Gulls"** in Deep Bay, both immatures and adults, especially close-ups from the Boardwalk both at rest and in flight.

Please contact Mike Chalmers if you can help.

PS . I would also like to make a specific request for positive records of **HERRING GULLS**, either the yellow-legged beady-eyed gull or pink-legged adult gulls, with detailed descriptions of mantle colour, head streaking (or not), wing-tip pattern etc. This data is not always submitted on record cards.

LOCAL CONSERVATION NEWS

Exploring Migratory Birds, organised by the Society and WWFHK, was held on 21st January. About 50 pupils and their teachers from various secondary schools enjoyed a day of counting and

watching birds. To most of the participants, this first encounter with birds, especially in such large numbers, was an enlightening experience. Their total did match closely the Society waterfowl count. We would like to thank all the volunteers who contributed so much to make the event a great success: Chan Ming Ming, Cheung Ho Fai, Fung Po Kei, Ho Yuen Ying, Kwok Hon Kai, Kong Ping Wah, Lee Jing Fong, Lee Kwok Shing, Ng Cho Nam, Wong Ah Ping, Wong Chah Cheong, Fox Wong, Yip Wai Hung, and Yu Yat Tung.

BULLETIN COMPUTER STILL NEEDED. The Bulletin Editor is still looking for a secondhand computer.

BULLETIN CONTRIBUTIONS are welcomed, especially from members who have not written before. The earlier the better, to allow time for translation and printing.

DEADLINE FOR JUNE BULLETIN is May 20th.

BIRDWATCHING COMPANIONS

Ross MacLeod is planning a birding and photography trip to China and Indonesia this summer, and he would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in joining him on any or all of the following provisional itinerary:

May-Beidaihe, Hebei & Zhalong Reserve, Heilongjiang.

June-July-Tibet & Qhinghai.

July-August-Indonesia.

Ross is leaving Hong Kong this year and wants to explore some of Asia's best bird areas, hence the rather short notice. Contact Ross on

for more details.

Alternatively, if you have a trip planned and would not mind one extra person he would also like to hear from you.

MAI PO NEWS

FCA Permits: in future, FCA Permits will likely become valid for one year, similar to AFD Mai Po Entry Permits, which will save a lot of WWF HK staff time renewing everyone's permits every six months. However, please pick up your permit from the WWF Central Office otherwise, do not expect to have it automatically renewed the next time.

After the crush in some of the hides last spring, WWF staff will be checking people's AFD Permit and WWF Membership more frequently at Mai Po this spring, and particularly FCA Permits in the boardwalk hide. So please try and renew all your permits/memberships and bring proof of these when you come to the reserve.

Mai Po Visits: there will be no WWF HK member's visits up until the end of June.

Saving the Deep Bay wetlands: by the time this Bulletin goes out, a decision should have been made by the Government's Executive Council on whether to go ahead and designate Deep Bay and Mai Po as a Ramsar site. Over the past few months, we have had letters of support to the Governor for the designation from, amongst others, Birdlife International, Friends of the Earth - Japan, The Wildfowl and Wetland Trust and prominent British Government Ministers. There have also been many articles about Mai Po, newspapers and magazines. The signature campaign yielded over 40,000 names and was presented to Government on Valentine's Day and so on. Thank you for everyone's help!!

After the decision by the Town Planning Appeal Board to approve the housing and golf-course development at Nam Sang Wai last autumn, a further five developers have now also submitted their proposed developments to be heard by the Appeal Board. Each of these have already been twice rejected by the Town Planning Board. Apart from these private developments, Government also have a number of infrastructural projects around Mai Po and if they were all to go ahead, they will lead to the loss of 42% of the area of fish ponds.

A central argument in the whole case, is the ecological value of fish ponds and what effect the loss of these would have on Deep Bay. Studies by the University of Hong Kong and others have already shown that these wetlands do benefit wildlife, particularly herons and egrets, and the Planning Department are now funding a 17-month study to look further into this. Therefore, please note down all significant birds records that you may find around these fish ponds (drained or filled), and pass them onto Lew Young at Mai Po (Fax: 24820369).

LAST ISSUE's MYSTERY BIRD:

Upland Pipit.

This species can be difficult to separate from the small and dark resident race of Richard's Pipit, but the best feature is the bill size, shorter and deeper on Upland, and the call and song. It will be the subject of a special survey this year to determine its true status in Hong Kong.

BREEDING BIRDS SURVEY - THE LAST YEAR

A summary of what was achieved in 1994, the second year of the survey, was given in the December Bulletin. The following figures illustrate some of the results to date:

- Figure 1 5km squares (reference numbers)
- Figure 2 Coverage of 1km squares to date (1993 & 1994)
- Figure 3 Total species in each 5km square
- Figure 4 Chinese Bulbul (interim results)
- Figure 5 Long-tailed Tailorbird (interim results)
- Figure 6 Greater Necklaced Laughing Thrush (interim results)

Note in Figures 4 - 6 open circles indicate Seen (S) and solid circles indicate Breeding (B). These Figures have been plotted by hand but it is intended to plot final results by computer using the HK Ecological Map Geographic Information System.

This year is the third and last year of this milestone survey. The objectives for the forthcoming breeding season (March to August) are as follows:

- (a) Complete surveys of ALL outstanding 1km squares. The number remaining is only 207 (17%) out of a total of 1,238.
- (b) Repeat selected areas where further coverage is expected to produce additional results.
- (c) Investigate queries from last year's results (eg status of Upland Pipit).

The remaining 5km squares, with numbers of outstanding 1km squares, are listed below in groups for ease of coverage:

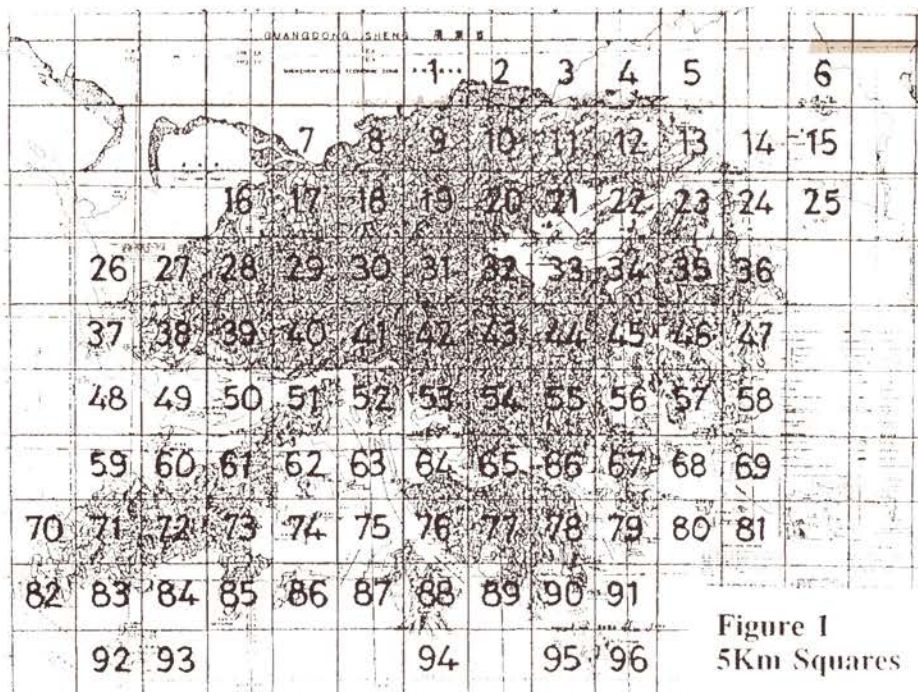
5km	Location	1km(no)	Observer
3,11	Starling Inlet	3	
2,7,8,9	Border Closed Area	24	PJL
10	Hok Tau	6	
18	Beas River	15	
21,22	Plover Cove	8	RWL
23	Hoi Ha	3	
27	Nim Wan (PFA Lagoons)	1	HFC
30	Shek Kong	10	
33,34	Ma On Shan, Three Fathoms Cove	6	MFG
36	Tai long Wan	10	
45,46,57,58	High Island, Kau Sau Chau	20	WP
50,51	North Lantau	12	PH
61,62	Discovery Bay, Peng Chau	22	
64,65,66	Kowloon	14	RL
67	Clearwater Bay	3	MH
71,73	South Lantau	6	
74	Hei Ling Chau (restricted access)	5	JEB
85	Chi Ma Wan	6	MDW
88,94	South Lamma	3	
89,90	Chung Hom Kok, Stanley	6	VBP

The following are planned to be covered by junk trips (each one day)

4,12,13	Tolo Harbour, NW Mirs Bay (Kat O Chau etc)	12
56,69,80	Port Shelter, Basalt & Bluff Islands	4
83,92,95,96	Soko, Po Toi & Beaufort Islands	8

Volunteers who are confident in being able to dedicate enough time to complete surveys are asked to contact Mike Chalmers (tel & fax 2605-7719) to claim their preferred areas. Some observers have already expressed interest and are included. Others have been allocated areas based on previous experience. If any changes are necessary, please comment quickly. Maps and log sheets will be issued at the AGM or by post afterwards. This is the last chance to take part in this major survey which will be the yardstick for HK's breeding birds for many years to come.

Lastly, special thanks are due to the following observers who undertook fieldwork in 1994:
 P.Aston, G.J.Carey, H.F.Cheung, D.Cook, D.A.Diskin, J.S.R.Edge, M.F.Grabandt, N.S.Grimshaw, M.Hale, J.Holmes, P.Hopkin, C.Y.Lam, R.W.Lewthwaite, R.Morrish, W.Parfitt, S.Schaum, P.R.Stevens, N.R.Townsend, M.Turnbull, G.Walthew, M.D.Williams, T.Woodward and L.Young.
 (apologies to anyone missed off).



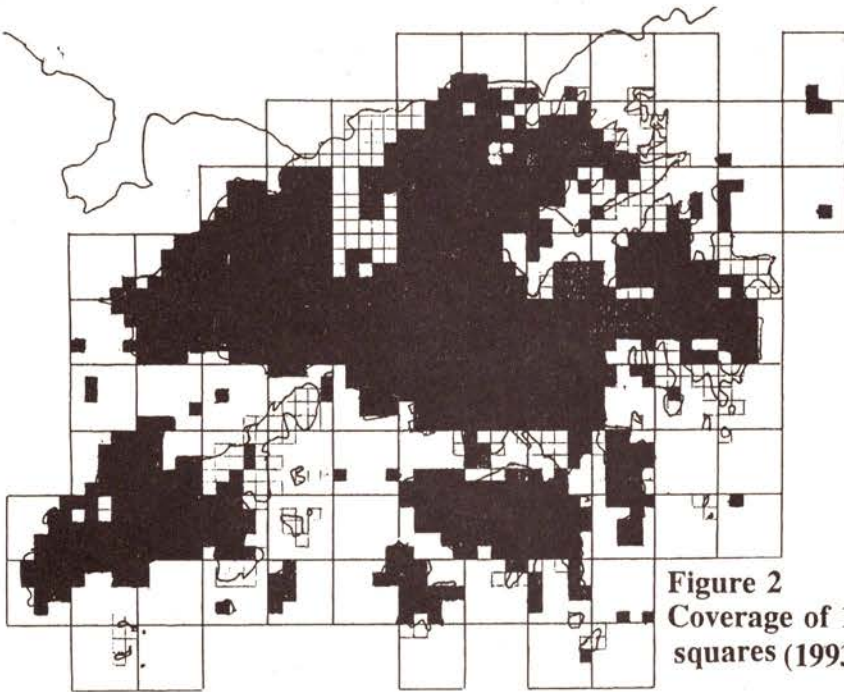


Figure 2
Coverage of 1Km
squares (1993 & 1994)

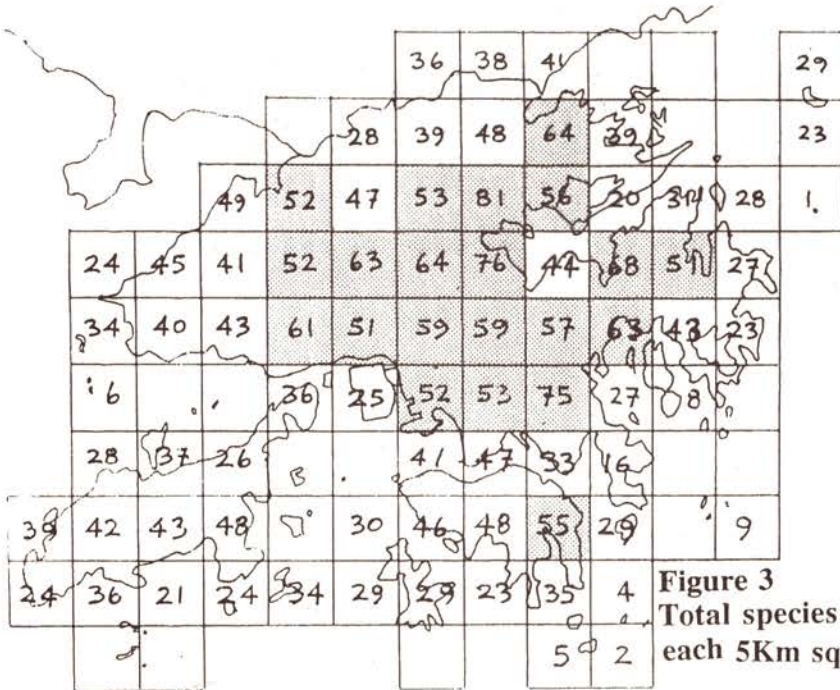


Figure 3
Total species in
each 5Km square

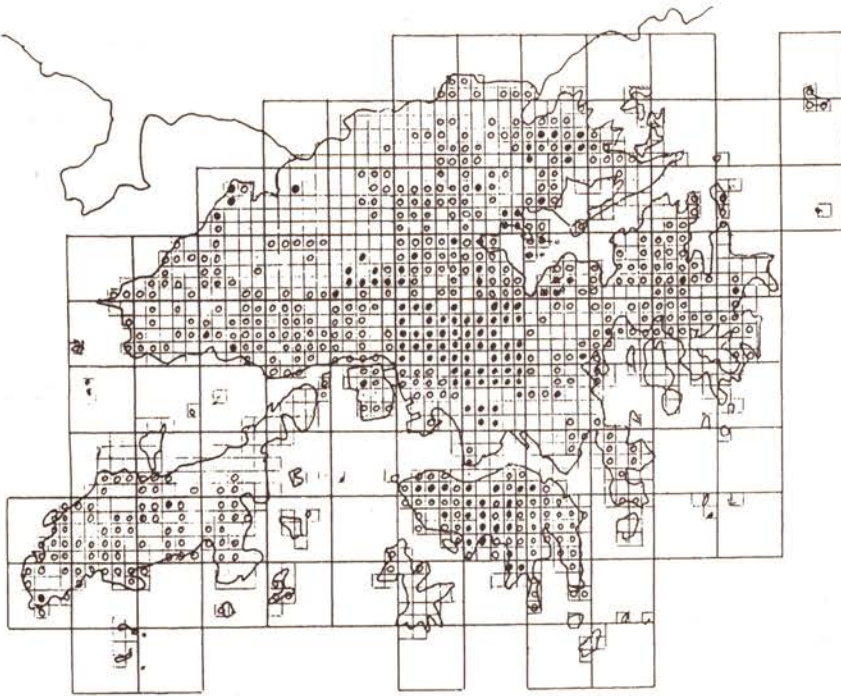


Figure 5
Long-tailed Tailorbird

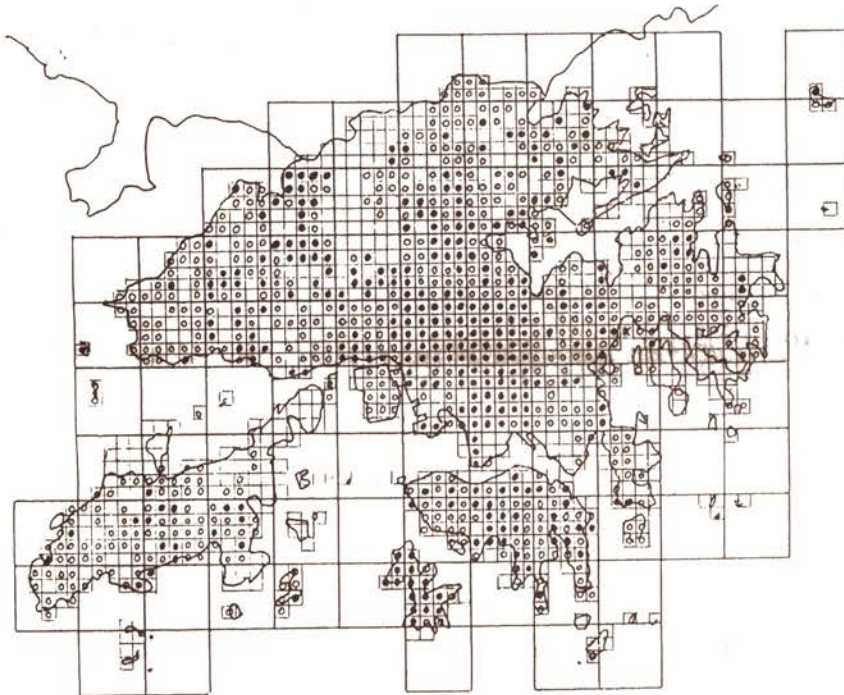


Figure 4
Chinese Bulbul

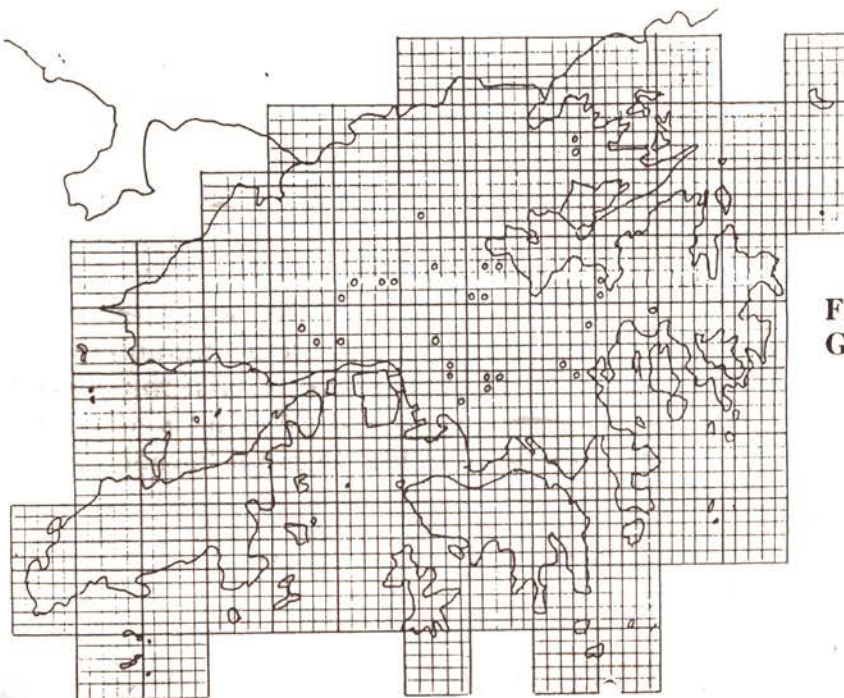


Figure 6
Greater Necklaced Laughing Thrush

ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB NEWS **TWO GRAND AWARDS FOR** **ORIENTAL CONSERVATION**

The 1994 Forktail-Leica Award has been won by Chinese ornithologist Wen Xianji who will spend the GBP1,000 grant researching the Green Peafowl (*Pavo muticus*) in South Yunnan.

The first ever OBC/In Focus Conservation Awareness Award - also worth £1,000 - has gone to Rinekso Soekmadi and his Biodiversity Conservation Indonesia Foundation. The money will be spent training teachers in conservation education for schoolchildren aged seven and upwards.

The Oriental Bird Club has now paid out grants totalling £30,000. A voluntary conservation body with 1,400 members worldwide, the OBC is only 10 years old. To date the club has funded more than 70 conservation projects in Asia since its first award - for research on the newly rediscovered Gurney's Pitta in Thailand in 1987.

The subject of the 1994 Forktail-Leica Award, is the Green Peafowl, the far rarer cousin of the Blue Peafowl, a familiar ornamental bird in Europe. The Green Peafowl is found in lowland forest near rivers or marshes from north-east India to peninsular Malaysia. It is classified as Vulnerable by Birdlife International which means it faces a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium term future.

The OBC/In Focus Conservation Awareness Award is generously sponsored by optics retailer "In Focus". This new award seeks to encourage projects submitted by Oriental nationals to foster conservation awareness in their countries.

And the first winner will do just that. The Biodiversity Conservation Indonesia Foundation (Yayasan Konservasi Ragam-Hayati Indonesia) based at Bogor in Indonesia will use the money to run training courses for schoolteachers so they can better inform the next generation of Indonesians about the wealth of wildlife in their rapidly dwindling forests.

Both these major conservation awards were announced at the OBC's 10th anniversary meeting in London on December 10. And there's more conservation cash to come: the annual MagaPrize Draw raised £4,300 - a record.

The winner of the raffle's first prize, Leica 10x42 binoculars, was Alan McBride of New South Wales, Australia. He also happens to be OBC's Australia rep!

SOCIETY OUTINGS

MAI PO

19th Feb 1995

Tim Woodward

What promised to be a miserable day, viewed from a gloomy flat on Hong Kong Island at 6.30am turned out to be a much better experience than expected. It was a welcome change, for the weather in the New Territories was much clearer and brighter than the Island.

Together with the sole member of the Korean branch of the HKBWS (and her sister), about 25 people in total gathered together for the meeting, and the group was small enough that it was unnecessary to split into two halves as normal. We all went the Fence route first in order to reach the

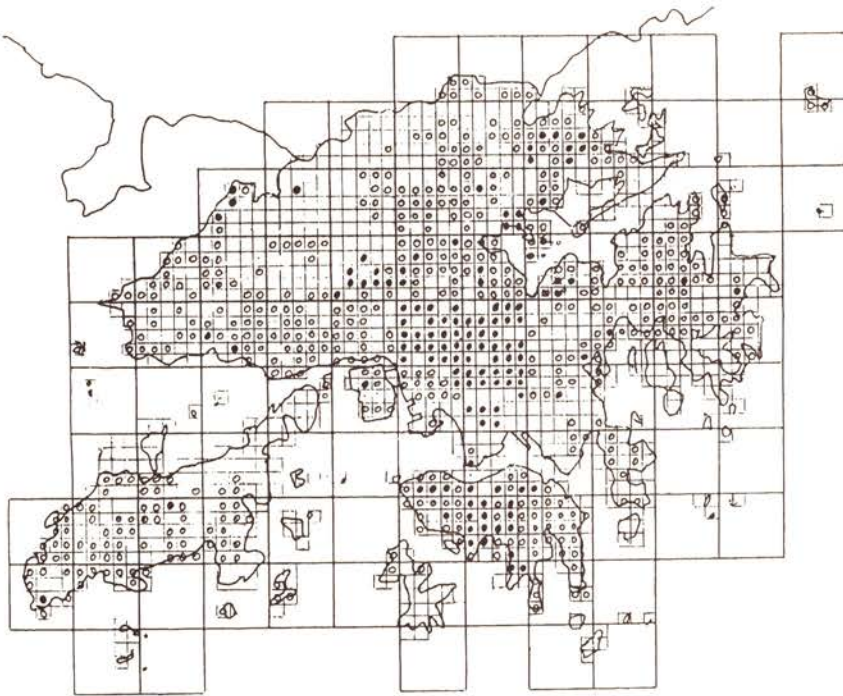


Figure 5
Long-tailed Tailorbird

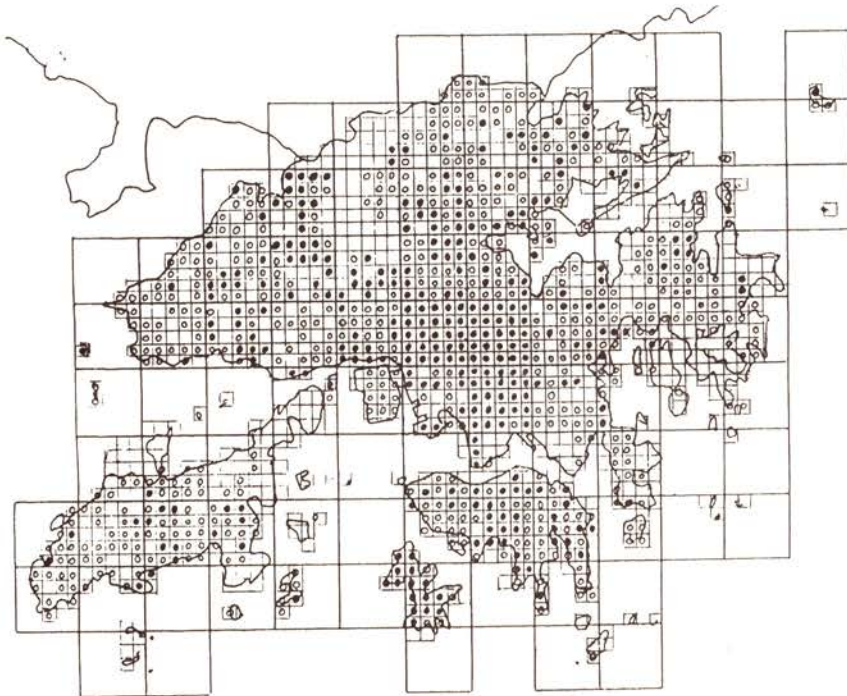


Figure 4
Chinese Bulbul

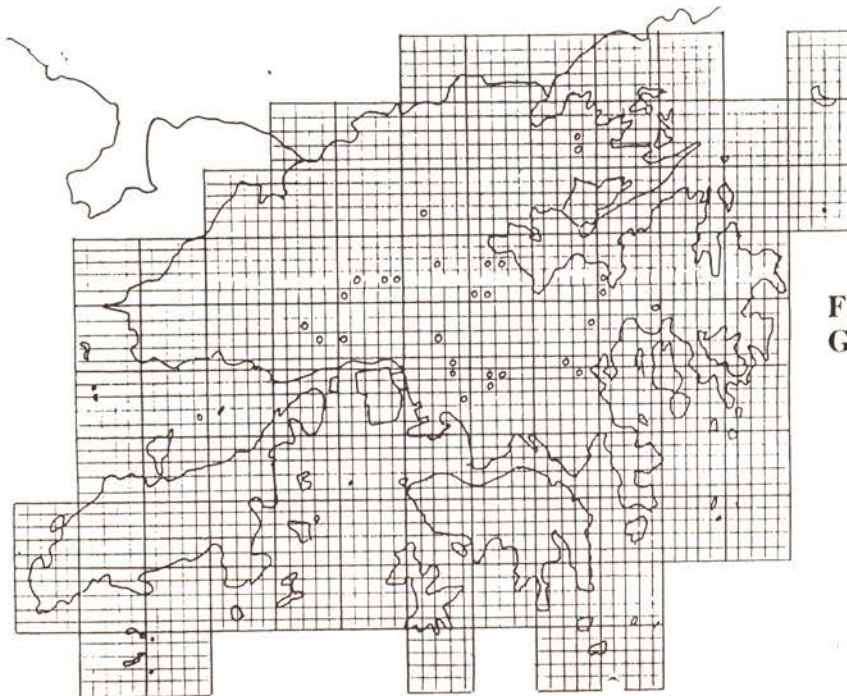


Figure 6
Greater Necklaced Laughing Thrush

Boardwalk in time for a midday tide. The high point was watching a female Peregrine swoop over a flock of mixed waders who then all reacted in panic and swirled round in circles for a while. Meanwhile the Peregrine, apparently satisfied with the effect, then settled down to preen herself in a tree on one of the bunds. We had lots of time to get good views in the 'scopes.

We timed the Boardwalk perfectly and were treated to six Dalmatian Pelicans sailing past at not too great a distance. There were also a number of Saunder's Gulls feeding, including a couple already well-advanced into summer plumage.

At the Scrape we had a bonus view of three Oriental White Storks. This together with a broad swathe of 57 species in all was enough to complete a satisfying day. And although we might have missed the female Scaup most people were pleased to see eight species of duck at relatively close range. It seems strange to me why the meetings in February are always less popular than the sweltering October-November meetings when there is quite often less to see. A nice cloudy and cool day in February is infinitely more pleasant.

BIRDS FROM MY WINDOW

Bird watching at Wanchai Gap Road
by CHAN Ming Ming

Wanchai, lying on the northern coast of Hong Kong Island, is a typical district of this busy metropolis. Both pre-war and post-war buildings give way to modern business complexes. The urban boundary expands on both sides, sky-scrapers are erected on the ever-enlarging reclaimed land area as well as on hill slopes bordering the

southern side of Wanchai. And, what about the birds?

Peregrine Falcon flies over Wanchai occasionally, Yellow-crested Cockatoos may call on anybody in the daytime, Jungle Crow, chasing after Swallows, may swoop down abruptly, just low enough to avoid hurting "the men in the street"..... Forget these if you want to enjoy bird watching in Wanchai. Victoria Park may be the first name that comes to your mind, another tip is Wanchai Gap Road.

Starting from Kennedy Road, winding up to Stubbs Road, and crossed by Bowen Road, Wanchai Gap Road is a popular morning walk trail. With some steep sections, it takes about forty-five minutes to finish from bottom to top. However, you do not have to labour all the way up to find your birds. The best section is the lowest part of the trail - between Kennedy Road and Bowen Road. The woodland is not too dense, thus providing a very good view. On one side of the road is a wide culvert where Green Heron has been reported. Wagtails and Grey-backed Thrush are regular Winter visitors.

As the trail is close to my office, my favourite time here is not in the morning but at lunch time. The walk is not just relaxing but also exciting at times: I got my first Yellow-cheeked Tit right here, and on another part of Bowen Road, a Chestnut-crowned Warbler (the seventh local record and the first bird on Hong Kong Island).

This is a good place for spotting Blue Magpie and Violet Laughing Thrush. Although not as abundant as Black-faced Laughing Thrush and Hwamei, Black-throated Laughing Thrush can be found without too much difficulty.

Entertain yourself with the beautiful Asian Paradise Flycatcher in Summer. In Winter, it is unlikely to miss the orchestral performance led by Flycatchers (Grey-headed and Asian Brown), *Phylloscopus* Warblers (including Pallas's), Short-tailed Bush Warblers and Tree Pipits. Hovering above the trees can be a Buzzard, while displaying high in the sky would be Crested Goshawks (an exception was a young Goshawk being mobbed by Blue Magpies among the trees at noon some time last year).

Do not expect rarities, just stroll along and wait. Look! Through the binoculars, three Flowerpeckers (Scarlet-backed and Fire-breasted), packed side by side on a little branch. Miss it? Then, try the Great Tits, Fork-tailed Sunbirds, House Swifts, Magpie Robins, Long-tailed Tailorbirds, Chinese and Crested Bulbuls, with Black Kites whinnying on the pylons.

MA WAN, by Peter Hopkin.

The island of Ma Wan is off the east end of Lantau, adjoining the Kap Shui Mun and Tsing-Yi Channels. It is more famous for the mega bridges and viaduct being carved across it, and as the site for a proposed theme park. The highest point is about 50m above sea-level, and although there are some small woodland patches, the habitat is mostly rough grassland. I have been working on the island for one year, and although by birdlist is comprised of fairly standard Hong Kong species, the variety does show that a little awareness can reap some surprising rewards. My office is in a small valley overlooking a scrubby hillside-at the time of writing a Daurian Redstart is singing on a dead tree, three bulbul species are in view, and that greatest of opportunists, a

White-breasted Moorhen, is feeding under a pile of scaffolding. The island seems to be a regular stop for a trickle of migrants-one fall in October saw Great Reed and Black-browed Reed Warblers climbing around my construction site, and on my lunchtime stroll I flushed Rubythroat, Japanese Quail and a Snipe, as well as Black-faced and Little Buntings. Bird of the autumn has to be the Lanceolated Warbler that skuttled away from my feet into a small bush; by putting my head in the bush I obtained excellent point blank views, but convinced my colleagues' suspicions of my sanity. I also found another Lanceolated Warbler that had been squashed by a lorry. Three species of kingfisher regularly feed around the coast, although last summer the distant song of a White-breasted Kingfisher puzzled me for ages, until I noticed the bird perched right on the top of one of the tower cranes, at least 100m up in the air.

A Pied Kingfisher is very fond of a telephone post along the south coast: the same post is also used by a Blue Rock Thrush-possibly the same bird I saw flying up to sit on the top of our 150 metre tower, obviously the biggest rocky crag that it had ever seen. Birds in the woodland areas have been excellent this winter, with Grey-backed Thrushes, Red-tailed Robins, a dozen Bluetails and a Rubythroat feeding among the overgrown graves. Pride of place must go to the White-bellied Sea Eagles that I often see over the island, and whose soaring display makes for a spectacular distraction from the Lantau Fixed Crossing. One afternoon I watched them from the top of the tower, as they displayed underneath me in the winter sunshine. Magic.

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CHINESE BIRDING HOLIDAYS

HEISHIDING

16-21 September 1994

Tim Woodward

I had heard tales of the fabled Heishiding reserve, somewhere in the far west of Guangdong, where the birds were the best in the province and the food was the worst. Many years ago (1986) two groups of Hong Kong Birdwatching Society members had visited the reserve and its status was assured by a write-up in the 1986 Annual Report. After that dazzling start there was nothing. No-one went there again for more than eight years.

Ever since hearing of this place I had wanted to go. The trouble was that no-one knew exactly where it was - in common with a lot of other reserves in Guangdong. You had to go past a large black rock but exactly where was not clear. I spent a lot of time poring over maps purchased clandestinely in stalls in Jiangmen and Doumen, maps unavailable in Hong Kong. Then I found it, an area in the hills about 100Km north-west of Zhaoqing.

I persuaded Maarten Grabandt to come along for a six day trip. We took an overnight ferry to Zhaoqing. That was easy enough. From there the main road goes west along part of the way and there are many buses, so we got one as far as a place called Wing Fung. It means "eternally beautiful" but it was a drab dusty place. We soon became prejudiced against it when we were quoted outrageous prices to hire a "saam

geuk gai" (three-leg chicken motorised rickshaw) to Heishiding. Eventually in exasperation we took a bus to the next junction and then got a rickshaw from there. Inevitably this broke down on the way up to the Heishiding hills and we had to hitch on a lorry the last stretch.

Our first afternoon was spent negotiating all the prices for our stay. Unfortunately the letters I had written the Zhongshan University Biology Department (which maintains the reserve) had not been received or passed on and so we were not expected. In the end we agreed prices of around 700RMB for a 4 night stay. At the end we were presented with a bill for more than 1000RMB partly because we were presented with a special meal of local frogs (I'd been quite vociferous in my rejection of turtles beforehand but forgot to mention that we did not want frogs either). To avoid problems it's probably better to pay by the day and if you want variety in your diet then bring your own food - we subsisted on rice, eggs and Chinese lettuce with congee for breakfast.

The reserve itself is mostly mature secondary forest, although there is some primary at the core (Black Crag Peak). We had 'guides' each day for a nominal sum - necessary and worthwhile as we learned quite a lot about peoples' lives and were invited into the villages in the reserve.

Unfortunately the birds were not as good as were hoped for, perhaps because of the time of year - we had

only one forktail (Slaty-backed), in 1986 the groups had two or more (Little and White-crowned); we found Hill Prinia, Brown-capped Fulvetta, Mountain Scops Owl, Bay Woodpecker, numerous Eastern Crowned Warblers, and a flock of more than one hundred Blue-throated Bee-eaters. We missed the Crested Kingfisher recorded here previously.

Other wildlife was in evidence - notably Striped and Red-bellied Squirrels, and yellow-throated Marten. The most exciting event was coming across a magnificent Oriental Whip Snake on the road. It posed for photographs, possibly culture-shocked due to removal from its normal arboreal habitat. There were a lot of good butterflies and moths, including both Lesser and Greater Atlas moths.

On the way back we spent a night in Zhaoqing and the morning before the ferry we went to Seven Star Crag. This always seems quite full of birds. Walking back through the ponds to the city we spotted what seemed to be two or three Pheasant-tailed Jacanas. The lakes there are quite large and could conceivably be sufficiently sizeable for this species to breed. Ironically this was probably the most interesting bird record of the trip.

BIRDING KUNMING

12-15 January 1995

Martin Hale

~~This was a solo effort birding the~~ Western Hills from 12 to 15 January.

Arriving at the hotel in Kunming at 4pm, I was unable to resist the temptation to go out to "the Hill" for the last couple of hours of daylight, and what a decision! In this two hours

I managed to stumble across a new species for the area, Naga Nuthatch, a male Lady Amherst's Pheasant (100m below Huating Temple, from the road at dusk) and a pleasantly large number of other desirable species (for which read life ticks).

The second day (actually half a day) was almost as good, with, amongst other things, a pair of Vinaceous Rosefinches, and a badly seen but probable Fulvous faced Flycatcher Warbler, which would have been another addition to the Hill list. I also found that the Naga Nuthatch of the previous day had been joined by a second, so perhaps there will soon be lots of little Naga Nuthatches at this site!

In the afternoon I visited the Kunming Institute of Zoology to look at their Swiftlet skins. Whilst here I took the opportunity to attempt to put to rest the debate over whether the Fulvettas commonly seen on the Hill are Spectacled or Streak-throated. As a consequence I can say with some degree of certainty that I, at least, saw Spectacled.

On my third day I spent the whole day on the Hill. Dawn at the rubbish tip at Sanqingge Temple produced five species of thrush (Chinese Song, Chestnut, and Chestnut-bellied Rock being notable) plus White Crowned Forktail, all in about twenty minutes. After a pretty good morning, activity rather predictably trailed off around mid-day, and things stayed rather quiet until a couple of hours before dusk. A last ditch attempt to find Buff-throated Warbler at the allotment just before Gaoyao Bus Station, produced not only about a dozen of this species, but a very unexpected Isabelline Shrike. This individual, an

adult female or first winter bird, appears to have been an awfully long way away from it's normal wintering grounds in the Indian subcontinent!

All in all a very enjoyable and productive trip, and the Western Hills are strongly recommended if you find yourself with a free long weekend. The crowds really aren't that bad, and probably account for the fact that the birds are much tamer here than in many places you will visit.

For information on logistics I would recommend the trip report produced by Richard Stott after his 1991 visit, and for a list of birds you can expect to see, Richard's paper in the 1993 Annual Report.

OVERSEAS BIRDING TRIPS

Sulawesi and Halmahera (Indonesia)
by John Holmes

John Edge and I arrived in Manado on Christmas Eve. I had been there previously in March 1993. Our "Guide" was a trip report on "Wallacea" by David Gibbs. We found the predominantly-Christian locals curiously obsessed with the festive season and, unable to hire a suitable car, we arrived on public transport at Tangkoko-Batuangus Reserve at about midday on Christmas Day. We had already encountered two endemic species on the way: Flame-breasted Flowerpecker and Finch-billed Myna.

Tangkoko is at the very northern tip of Sulawesi and comprises the jungle-clad surrounds of a volcano gently sloping to the sea. The beaches consist of black volcanic grit, so this feature and ferocious sand flies should prevent "Club Med" from

developing the area.

White-bellied Sea Eagles and Lesser Frigate Birds were commonly seen from the waters' edge. Elsewhere, there were plenty of birds about and the flies dropped away once we got into the woods.

Tangkoko gets a steady stream of "general interest" visitors and thus it was at dusk we tramped into the woods to see Tarsiers (the world's smallest monkey).

A morning outing found more animals, namely Cuscus (related to the Koala) and Black Macaques as well as Celebes Green Kingfisher. I think three or four nights would be about right for Tangkoko but we returned to Manado, having to press on to Dumoga-Bone the following day. Lunchtime on the 27th found us in our Toyota Kijang near Mt. Muajat where we saw such wonderments as Fiery-browed Myna (male and female) and Blue Hanging Parrot. Approaching Dumoga I was pleasantly surprised to find the road paved and the Maleo site at Tambun signposted. We took a swift detour and woke the curator. We were able to scope two Maleo in the bare trees above the nesting site almost immediately, and then left with indecent haste, driving at Torakt at about 4pm. The buildings are pleasantly set at the edge of the forest and were renovated in early 1994. However, due to a broken pipe, there was no running water in the toilet so tubs were fetched from the stream. The following day we had several good lifers before breakfast, including the endemic Lilac Kingfisher, Celebes Dwarf Kingfisher and Purple-bearded Bee Eater. Five hours in the middle of the day were well spent on the porch

of the office block where the scope was used to view Knobbed Hornbill, Gold-mantled Racket-tailed Parrot, Piping Crow, Moluccan Kestrel and Rufous-bellied Eagle, among others.

Osprey and Brahminy Kite were present along the river, and careful scanning from the road turned up a steady succession of Fruit Doves at the forest edge.

Dumoga-Bone (and especially Toraut) suffers from a lack of tourist attention. They seem to get hardly any visitors, which is a great pity. Most of the guides just don't get any practice. Ours, called Juneid, did not know many calls, but he at least knew the paths and was quiet.

We were well fed by the park warden's wife, so the catering was cheap and painless. Five or six days would probably be ideal for this area.

On 30th December we flew to Ternate, and caught the ferry to Halmehera on the following day. Birding before dusk in the mangrove and fields south of the main town brought us two endemic fruit doves and Pink-necked Pigeons (*Treron vernans*). This last appears to be a "first" for Halmehera. This species is said to be an open country bird so if you're a pessimist you could take the view that it is a symbol of environmental decline. The best-known birding site on Halmehera is at Kali Batu Putih about 10 kilometers inland.

Our information was that the local guide, ANU, lived at the site, and had built a hut for visiting birders. We had no means of contacting him (no telephones around) and so turned up

out of the blue in mid-morning, New Years Day.

We found a shack with a sign on the porch in English - "Bird Watching Home". There was no sign of Mr ANU but his dogs were about so we were confident he would be returning. With birds such as Papuan Hornbill, Eclectus and Red-faced Parrot to distract us we were not concerned. I made a food-buying sortie into town and returned to find John scoping Moluccan Kingfisher by the road.

Supper, however, consisted of scotch and rich tea biscuits (Advice: take a tin opener!). Bedtime was a character-building experience sleeping on bare benches at front (me) and back (John) of the huts. The following day, after eight life-ticks each, it was John's turn to venture into town. Having walked nearly all the way he bumped into someone who knew Mrs ANU and returned with her and the hut door keys. ANU showed up later and the following morning led us into the woods. His local knowledge was a revelation. That first morning we only glimpsed a Standard Wing Bird-of-Paradise but the day after we witnessed a 10 minute display by a male to a female. Too far for the flash, I fear. In four days at ANU's we had 23 of Halmehera's 34 endemic species, including Sombre Kingfisher, Brown Oriole, Chattering Lory, White Cockatoo, Ivory-breasted Pitta, Moluccan Scrubfowl, Giant Coucal, Blue-crowned Fruit Dove - need I go on?

The score: 151 good jungle species in what came to 10 day's birding with 90 with life ticks for JSRE and 63 for me.

To get by we used Mackinnon & Phillipps "Guide to birds of Java, Bali etc" and BPZ's "Birds of New Guinea". The BOU's Wallacea checklist (with limited descriptions) complemented photocopied plates from Fry & Harris "Kingfishers, Bee Eaters & Rollers" and Forshaw & Coopers "Parrots of the World". JSRE's extracts from Goodwin's "Doves of the World" was particularly useful.

The excellent birding was offset by fairly lengthy and sometimes tedious travelling. How much you allow this to affect your enjoyment depends on the state of your sense of humour. In Wallacea you won't get your birds on a plate, but don't be put off. The birds are excellent and the people friendly.

NEXT ISSUE... Northern Thailand, by Jim Hackett, and Egypt and Israel, by Fox Wong.

BIRD NEWS

January and February

The new Birdline Number is 2667-4537. Richard Lewthwaite will update the information in the early evening, so please phone before 7pm.

The first notable reports in 1995 were four **Red-tailed Robins**, a **Yellow-eyed Flycatcher Warbler** and a **Yellow-bellied Tit** at Hatton Road, Hong Island (MT) and at least three **Dusky Thrushes**, the start of an influx, at Tai Po Kau (RWL, FW), all on 5th Jan. Subsequently, 13 **Dusky Thrushes** were seen at Sha Lo Tung on 6th Jan (RWL), 30 at KARC on 8th Jan (MRL), at Mt Austin (VP), 29 at Pat Sin Leng on 15th Jan (JMCW), 10+ at Tsim Bei Tsui on 12th Feb (PA) and smaller numbers from widespread areas until

at least 18th Feb. Also first reported in the first half of January were **Mugimaki**, **Red-breasted** and **Verditer Flycatchers**, all single birds at the Chinese University on 7th (GJC). Of these flycatchers, up to two **Verditer**s were subsequently present in Tai Po Kau on 13th and 14th (GJC, RWL), one was at Shing Mun on 16th Feb (MDW), while single **Red-breasted** and **Mugimaki**s were seen again at the Chinese University on 2nd Feb (GJC) and another **Mugimaki** was found at Wu Kau Tang on 12th Feb (DAD, MH).

The star bird of early January was undoubtedly a **Manchurian Reed Warler** *A. tangorum* (1st for Hong Kong if accepted) trapped at Mai Po on 8th Jan and present until at least the 20th Jan (RWL, PJJ, MRL, et al). Also on 8th Jan one of the overwintering **Citrine Wagtails** and the **Bull-headed Shrike** were again seen at Long Valley (GJC) and there was a **Rufous-capped Babbler** at Hatton Road (MT).

A succession of surges and replenishments of the NE monsoon started in mid January and culminated in a sustained cold spell over the Chinese New Year holiday in early February, filling the Hong Kong woodlands with thrushes, bluetails and robins and bringing in the most exciting series of rarities in recent Winters, especially to Ng Tung Tsai. Several other sites also provided excellent birding at this time. A trip to Yung Shue O on 14th Jan turned up a **Grey Bushchat**, a **Brown Thrush**, five **Bright-capped Cisticolas**, three **Brown Bush Warblers**, a **Radde's Warbler**, a **Two-barred Greenish Warbler**, a **Red-breasted Flycatcher**, a **Common Rosefinch** (recently becoming scarce in Hong Kong) and a

Chestnut-flanked White-eye (CAV et al). At Sha Lo Tung, an adult male **Besra** and a female **Grey Bushchat** were seen on 14th Jan (RWL, JMCW) and a **Black-winged Cuckoo-Shrike** and **Radde's Warbler** on 21st Jan (JMCW). **Besras** were subsequently reported at Wu Kau Tang on 8th Feb (PJL) and Shing Mun on 16th Feb (MDW). Without doubt, through, the most exciting site was Ng Tung Tsai where there were **Japanese Robins** on four days 4th-7th Feb including six on 5th Feb (as against a total of only two in the last ten years) (MLC, PJL, MRL, MT, JMCW et al), two **Red-tailed Robins** on 5th Feb and seven on 6th (MT et al), up to five different **Siberian Thrushes** reported between 15th Jan and 7th Feb (EMSK et al), two **Slaty-backed Forktails** (will they breed?) from 15th Jan to at least 12th Feb (MRL et al), a stunning male **Vivid Niltiva** (2nd for HK if accepted) from 14th Jan to 7th Feb (JAH et al), a male **Fukien Niltava** between 28th Jan and 6th Feb (JAH et al) and a female there on 5th Feb (MT), a first-winter **Rufous-gorgetted Flycatcher**, only the second record for HK, on 1st-8th Feb (EMSK et al), a male **Chinese Blue Flycatcher**, another second for HK, on 29th Jan (MH), a **Pale-footed Bush Warbler** on 2nd Feb (RWL, MDW), a **Sulphur-bellied Warbler** on four dates between 20th Jan and 4th Feb (RWL et al), a **Yellow-eyed Flycatcher Warbler** on 31st Jan and 1st Feb (MDW et al); a flock of up to five **Striated Yuhinas** from 15th Jan to 2nd Feb (MT et al), and one of two **Grey-cheeked Fulvettas** between 20th Jan and 4th Feb (RWL et al). At least two of the latter species were seen in Tai Po Kau on 2nd and 4th Feb (CAV, MT) and there were single **Yellow-eyed Flycatcher Warblers** at Tai Po Kau on 1st Feb (JAH). Meanwhile at Shing Mun, there was a male **Chinese**

Blue Flycatcher in the Lo Wai fung shui wood from 31st Jan to 3rd Feb (PA et al) as well as six **Rufous-capped Babblers** and two **Rufous-necked Scimitar Babblers** on 8th Feb (RWL, MDW). Elsewhere in the Central New Territories, a **White-throated Rock Thrush** was found at Lion Rock Fitness Trail on 21st Jan (MT) and there were three **Rufous-necked Scimitar Babblers** at the same site on 2nd Feb (CHF), while three **Red-tailed Robins** were seen in Aberdeen Country Park on 2nd Feb (JEB), two on Cheung Chau on 5th Feb (MDW) and one at Wu Kau Tang on 16th and 17th Feb (MDW). Two **Siberian Blue Robins** were found in Tai Po Kau on 1st Feb (JEB).

During the cold weather over Chinese New Year, there were big influxes of thrushes and **Red-flanked Bluetails**, with over 100 thrushes at Aberdeen Country Park on 2nd Feb (JEB) and about 50 at Wu Kau Tang on 5th Feb (PJL et al) and at Shing Mun on 8th Feb (RWL, MDW). All six *Turdus* species on the Hong Kong list (**Blackbird, Grey-backed, Grey, Eyebrowed, Pale and Brown Thrushes**), two of the three *Zoothera* species (**Siberian and White's Thrushes**) and the resident **Violet Whistling Thrush** were all seen feeding or flying close to one native tree, a fruiting Cochin China *Helicia* *Helicia cochinchinensis* (R & KB), at Wu Kau Tang between 5th and 15th Feb (GJC et al), while at Tai Po Kau, the third *Zoothera* species (**Orange-headed Ground Thrush**) was present at the bottom carpark on at least three dates between 15th Jan and 12th Feb (AH et al). During the period of cold weather over Chinese New Year, **Grey-backed** was the most widely-reported thrush, followed by **White's**, with at least ten at Ngong Ping, Lantau and five at Shing Mun on

31st Jan (PJH, PA as well as widespread singles. Up to six **Eye-browed** and from one to three **Grey Thrushes** were seen in a number of woodlands, while **Pale Thrush** was reported in ones and twos from several sites. In addition to the **Brown Thrushes** at Yung Shue O and Wu Kau Tang, there was also one at Shing Mun on 8th Feb (RWL, MDW). Wu Kau Tang also produced a **Slaty-legged Crake** on 12th Feb (DAD, MH, MT), while at Brides Pool there were two **Crested Kingfishers** on 30th Jan (JSRE), up to three **Plumbeous Redstarts** between 31st Jan and 17th Feb (GJC) et al), and four **Yellow-bellied Tits** on 15th Feb (IT).

With the tides during January as high as predicted, there were fewer reports from Mai Po than usual. However, there were four new high counts for Hong Kong - 5,800 **Dunlin** on 9th Jan (PJL) and 6,590 **Cormorants**, 8,082 **Shovelers** and 18,729 **Black-headed Gulls** in Deep Bay in the annual waterbird count on 21st Jan (per GJC). A count of 1,220 **Black Kites** coming in to roost at Magazine Gap and Stonecutter's Island on 15th Jan (per GJC) was the highest in over twenty years. From the boardwalk, **Dalmation Pelicans** increased to 19 from 2nd Feb, there were single **Great Black-headed Gulls** on 26th Jan, 28th Jan and 18th Feb, single **Kamtchatka Gulls** on 28th Jan, 2nd Feb and 3rd Feb, and single **Slaty-backed Gulls** on 1st, 3rd, and 18th Feb (PJL, EMSK). On the marshes, there was a **Black-shouldered Kite** on 26th Jan (RWL), a **Watercock** (unusual Winter record) on 3rd Feb (PJH) and a female **Scaup** on 4th and 5th Feb (MRL, JAH). The only other rare duck was a **Baikal Teal** near the 7th hole, Fanling Golf Course (per MLC). A **Chestnut-tailed Starling** was seen near the Mai Po car park on

several dates between 27th Jan and 20th Feb (PJL, MRL).

Other wetland sites had their moments. On 29th Jan a flock of swifts of a fishpond at Tin Shui Wai, where there was a Ruddy Crake and a male Citrine Wagtail, contained a Himalayan Swiftlet (PJL et al). An extraordinary report of a Lammergeyer (JEB, KDW) and 50 Himalayan Swiftlets (JEB) at the same site.

At Long Valley, a **Black-shouldered Kite** was seen on 26th Jan and a **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** (rare Winter record) on 13th Feb. A **Hoopoe** and **Northern Skylark** were at Kam Tin on 27th and 29th Jan (PA, DAD). A **Great Bittern** taking a stroll among a flock of **Great Egrets** in the early morning of 10th Feb was the first seen in Winter at Shuen Wan (RWL).

Other notable reports were two **Eagle Owls** at Chung Hom Kok on 24th Jan (CAV), a **Siberian Meadow Bunting** at Ping Yeung on 2nd Feb (JAH), a **Common Rosefinch** at Chek Lap Kok on 3rd Feb (GJC), a **Yellow-streaked Warbler** at Ho Chung Valley on 9th Feb (MH), single **Mountain Bush Warblers** at Ngong Ping, the only ones reported, on 13th and 31st Jan (PJH) and single **Pale-legged Leaf Warblers** (rare in Winter) at Cheung Chau on 30th Jan and 12th Feb (MDW).

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
14 March Tuesday	Jeb Barzen	"THE CONSERVATION OF WATERBIRDS IN S.CHINA & S.VIETNAM." *** Hong Kong Polytechnic ***	18:30
19 March Sunday	Jim Hackett Ng Cho Nam	Mai Po Coach leaves Kowloon Tong at 08:00	09:00-15:00
26 March Sunday	C.Y.Lam	Hong Kong Park Meet at top of escalator from Admiralty MTR. Good for Beginners and families.	08:00-11:00
29 March Wednesday	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. Followed by		"A Siberian Experience" Slide show by Mike Chalmers
7/8 April	BIG BIRD RACE		
16 April Sunday	Chan Ming Ming.	Mai Po. Coach leaves Kowloon Tong at 08:00.	
20 May Saturday	*** Mike Chalmers	***	Breeding Survey by Junk 08:00 Coast of N.W. New Territories. Meet at Ma Lin Shui Ferry Pier, near Chinese University KCR. Send Return Slip and \$200. No refund unless trip cancelled.
19 August Saturday	*** Cheung Ho Fai	***	Tolo Harbour Tern Junk Trip Details as 20 May above.

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 must confirm their attendance by using the booking slip.

*** Please phone leader five days in advance to confirm departure time ***

NOTE: NEW ADDRESS FOR POSTING CHEQUES AND SLIPS

MAI PO BI-LINGUAL SUNDAY 19 MARCH 1995

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**) /I have paid by Bank Transfer.
Return to: M.M. CHAN, Flat H 14 Floor, Foong Shan Mansion,
Taikoo Shing, H.K. to arrive by 15 March.

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

Meetform1

MAI PO BI-LINGUAL SUNDAY 16 APRIL 1995

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**) /I have paid by Bank Transfer.
Return to: M.M.CHAN, Flat H 14 Floor, Foong Shan Mansion,
Taikoo Shing, H.K. to arrive by 1 April.

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

Meetform3

JUNK TRIP SATURDAY 20 MAY

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**) / I have paid by Bank Transfer.
Send to M.M.CHAN, Flat H 14 Floor, Foong Shan Mansion,
Taikoo Shing, H.K. to arrive before 1 May.

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

Meetform2

JUNK TRIP SATURDAY 19 AUGUST 1995

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**) /I have paid by Bank Transfer.
Return to: M.M.CHAN, Flat H 14 Floor, Foong Shan Mansion,
Taikoo Shing, H.K. to arrive by 1 August.

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

Meetform4