



THE HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

香港觀鳥會

**Bulletin 通訊 179**

*Spring 2001*  
春季

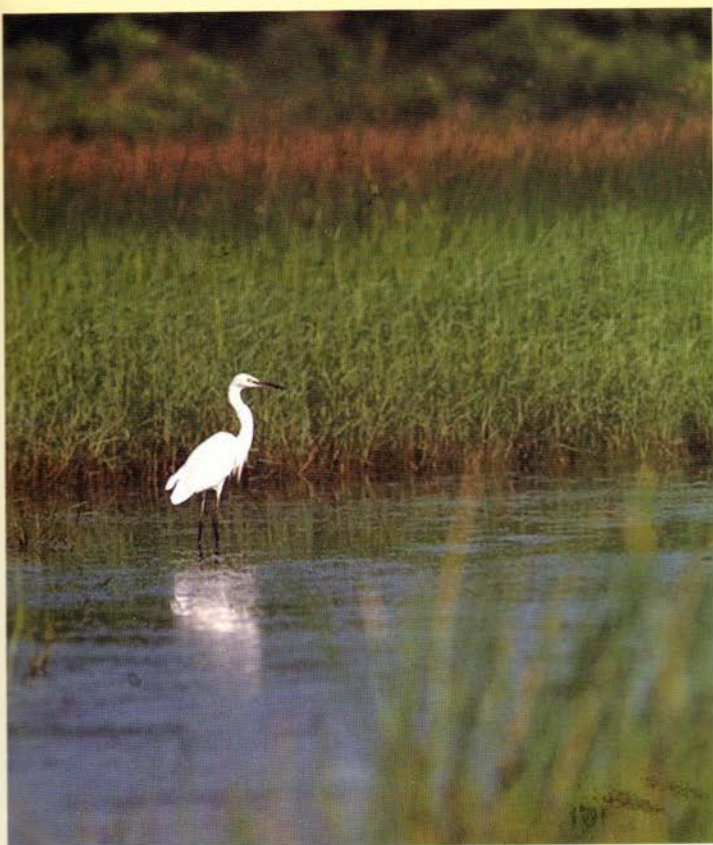


# 雀影集

## Photographing Birds

大白鷺  
Great Egret

飛鳥  
Feiniu



田鸚 (塋原)  
Richard's Pipit (Long Valley)

張浩輝  
Cheung Ho Fai



## THE HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

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## Renew your support for the Society

Members who haven't renewed their membership are reminded to return their subscriptions together with the renewal form contained in this issue as soon as possible (Cheque payments are preferable). Otherwise, this is the last bulletin you will receive.

If you wish to take a more active role in running the society and feel you have skills which could be of use, please contact Carrie Ma at 2377 4387.

## Avifauna of Hong Kong

The new annotated checklist which will be named "Avifauna of Hong Kong" is now in final check. This book is funded by the Environment and Conservation Fund. It will be published soon.

## International Ornithological Congress

The once-in-four-years International Ornithological Congress will be held in Beijing, 11-17 August 2002. This is the first time it has been held in China. Submission date for symposium abstracts will be 1 April, 2001; the submission date for abstracts of contributed papers and proposals for round-table discussion will be 1 July, 2001. Registration for attendance starts on 1 November 2001. For more details, please visit the website: <http://www.ioc.org.cn>

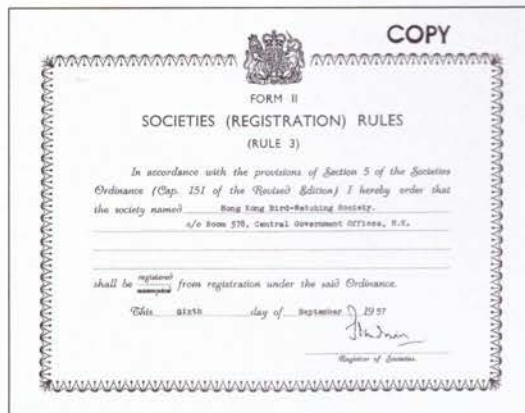
## China Conservation Fund

Last year, more than HK\$8,000 was donated to the China Conservation Fund. According to our agreement, the Society topped the donation up to HK\$10,000. One project was funded during last year.

There are 21 applications to the Fund this year. The Society has decided to transfer HK\$10,000 to the Fund no matter how much is received in donations. In order to give more support to the bird surveys in mainland China, we would like to seek your donation to the Fund. Your generous support could fund more bird surveys in China. Please fill in the form in the last page of this bulletin.

## HKBWS Certificate of Registration

The previous Certificate of Registration of the Society has been donated to Hong Kong Museum of History, A new certificate has been issued. Let's have a look at the previous "historic" certificate:



## HKBWS Projects

### 1. Quality Education Fund

The Project "Promoting Bird Watching as an Extra-curricular Activity in Secondary School" has been going for 10 months. For the Bird Watching Clubs in 5 secondary schools, we have organized and tailor-made a series of activities according to their age, reception ability and experience. The programme series comprised 12-16 activities, including talks on special topics, indoor and outdoor activities. The overall response was quite good and students were able to identify an average of 40 bird species, with some of them able to identify more than 200 species.

This is a one-year project. In order to encourage schools to organize their bird watching or club activities we are going to organize a talk series on the afternoon of May 12 and 19 at City University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Scout Centre, namely "Take a Closer Look at Birds around Us".

In addition, we have organized talks and field study trips for 24 schools and have reached 3,500 students and teachers.

### 2. Waterfowl Monitoring at the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site

#### *Expert from Wetlands International*

HKBWS has carried out the waterbird monitoring programme since spring 1998 and has been active for nearly three years. In order to have a better monitoring programme for the waterbirds in Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site and to improve its effectiveness, an overseas expert, Mr. Doug Watkins of Wetlands International was invited to examine the Programme from January 12-16, 2001.



Mr. Watkins did site visits and had discussions with the HKBWS Waterfowl Count Coordinator to understand field conditions, survey methodology and process.

A public lecture namely "Waterfowl Monitoring in Hong Kong: Methods, results and global perspective" was held on January 15. Mr. Watkins was able to provide an instructive international perspective that illustrated just how the monitoring programme, in particular the monthly counts and the shorebird surveys, fits into a broader framework of monitoring along the Asia-Pacific flyway.



Mr. Watkins provided a report on his findings and gave advice on what modifications might be necessary to make the survey scientifically sound and conform with latest practices and international standards.

#### *Education and Publicity*

Contents of the Waterfowl Count reports, summaries and activities have been uploaded on the Society website at [www.hkbws.org.hk/waterbird/index.html](http://www.hkbws.org.hk/waterbird/index.html). A leaflet on waterfowl count has been produced. Members who would like to get some leaflets or stock for distribution, are welcome to contact the Society Office at 2377 4387.



### 3. Bird Survey in Country Parks

From April to April, the Society will organize three bird surveys in six selected country parks, including Aberdeen, Shuen Wan, Shing Mun, Sha Lo Tung and Sai Kung, for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. Information on habitat, bird record, food and breeding behaviour will be recorded.

### 4. The Earth Day 2001

The Society has provided AFCD a set of exhibition boards for their function "The Earth Day 2001" held on April 21 and 22.

### 5. Final Year Project

From last October to April, the Society assisted a final year project for four students from the Higher Diploma in English for Professional Communication at City University of Hong Kong. The theme of birds and environmental education was selected. A series of programmes including talks, exhibition and drawing competition namely "the Best Home for Birds" was organized among primary school students. The project was finished and presented on April 27, and it was included in the selection list of the best final year project.



### 6. Bird Watching Class for Gold Award Holders' Association

In order to promote bird watching among young people, the Society organized a bird watching course for GAHA, which is a sub-section of the Hong Kong Award for Young People, from last November to April. There were altogether 20 people on the course, including a student who used bird watching as "skill" section for his Bronze Award examination.

The Programme introduced local habitat, birds and environment and there were also field studies. The Society has submitted another proposal to GAHA for an advanced bird watching class in order to provide further chance for potential award winners to improve their skills.



### 7. SPACE Bird Watching Class

In order to promote bird watching and nature appreciation among working people, the Society organized an eight-section bird watching class called "Watching Birds in the Wild" for the School for Professional and Continuing Education from February to March. There were 15 participants in the class and they were encouraged to experience watching birds and develop related skills.



## Acknowledgements

### 1. The Hong Kong 2001 Stamp Exhibition

The Society has been invited by Hongkong Post to participate in the Hong Kong 2001 Stamp Exhibition. The Exhibition's theme was "Nature", and the Society had an exhibition booth introducing birds and their environment in Hong Kong. We thank Hongkong Post for the support of Hong Kong's birds and natural environment.

According to the records of the organizer, the 5-day exhibition attracted 150,000 visitors. We would like to thank the following birding friends for their active help on organization, booth design and set up, provision and collection of photographs, design education pamphlets, professional comments and various help:

C.Y. Lam, Jimmy Chim, Robin Fung, Carrie Ma, Ying Hak King, Mr. and Mrs. T.P. Luk, Anthony Lo, Ronley Lee, Sham Tin Lung, Li Wai Ki, Henry Lui, William Tsui, Simon Wong and Justin Wan.



### 2. Quality Education Fund Expo

Sponsored by QEF, the Society participated in the QEF Exposition from March 9-12, using the project as our theme. We thank the following people for the support and help on booth design, set up, promotion and booth activities:

Schools - bird watching clubs:

Hong Kong Tang King Po College, Fanling Renish Church Secondary School, Baptist Wing Lung College, Buddhist Tai Hung College and Q.E.S.O.S.A. Secondary School.

Birding friends:

Robin Fung, C.Y. Lam, Angus Ho, Chan Ka Chuen, Ying Hak King, Aukie Au, Noel Chan and Mrs. T.P. Luk.

### 3. World Wetland Day

To Celebrate World Wetland Day, HKBWS has co-organized with AFCD a bird watching training and competition on February 3, 10 and 17.

This activity delivered a message on wetland and bird conservation among students. Some of the schools have shown interest in organizing school bird watching activities. We would like to thank the following birding friends for their help in designing the contents of exhibition boards, promotion among schools, training of student and provide professional assistance: H.F. Cheung, C.Y. Lam, Forrest Fong, Carrie Ma, Wong Chap Cheong, Yam Wing Yiu, Simon Wong, Ho Man Fai, Lee Kwok Shing, Robin Fung, Li Wai Ki, Chu Chui Ping, Chu Cho Yan, Anthony Lo, Chan Yung, Ying Hak King, Tai Sheung Lai.



### 4. Picture of Crested Ibis

The Society has obtained approval to publish Dr. Ding Chiang-qing's picture of breeding Crested Ibis taken at Shaanxi, see inside back cover. We would like to thank him for his support.

Crested Ibis is a globally threatened species of "critically threatened" status. According to records, there is only one population in the wild, located in Yan Xian in Shaanxi Province. Crested Ibis breeds from March to May in pine trees at an altitude of 700-1000m. Each of their nests holds 2-4 eggs, which take about 28 days to hatch, and chicks begin to leave the nest after 40 days. During this period Crested Ibis's preferred habitats are mixed pine and broad leaf forest, paddy fields, dry field and river plain. Their food is fish, reptiles and insects (Source: "Newsletter of China Ornithological Society" Vol. 8 No. 2).



Spring 2001

by Mike Kilburn

## Black-faced Spoonbills Found Dead

This winter has been a tough one for Black-faced Spoonbills. Four birds have been affected by an infection which is normally associated with water containing high levels of organic waste. Unfortunately three were found dead. However the fourth was captured and taken in to care. It received treatment with antibiotics from the veterinary team at Kadoorie Farm, and was later released.

A fifth bird was found with fishing line wrapped round its bill. Sadly this bird has disappeared and is assumed to have died.

These deaths point to two of the more serious problems which AFCD will face when the Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site Management Plan comes into operation. In addition to monitoring the water of Deep Bay for pollutants including e.coli, the studies will have to take in the general level of bacterial contaminants. Resolving the issue, when it is known that a huge quantity of raw sewage is pumped into Deep Bay from Shenzhen, will be a huge task.

The issue of birds being caught by fishing lines and hooks is also significant. The fish pond operators of Deep Bay use a number of methods to catch and kill birds they claim are eating their commercial fish. They use hooks baited with live tilapia in the shallows to catch herons and egrets, and also suspend fish hooks from lines over active ponds to catch birds flying over the ponds.

Members finding these illegal traps are asked to report them to AFCD at 24714411. However, prosecutions can only be brought if the trap setters are caught red-handed. Therefore members are requested to leave the traps in place, giving AFCD the opportunity to catch the perpetrators. However, trapped birds should if possible be caught as they can be treated by staff at Kadoorie. Members are also requested to report all incidents to WWF at Mai Po on 24716306 and to the Society (Mike Kilburn on 2555 6237). In addition, posting such incidents on the society website helps to increase awareness.

## West Rail Dumping at Kam Tin Shows Weakness of Government's Environmental Protection Measures

The buffalo fields at Kam Tin have now been completely destroyed by dumping from the West Rail construction site. Sadly this means that the only regular wintering site for Grey-headed Lapwing, a key area for Painted Snipe, starlings and Yellow-billed Grosbeak, and a regular site for Pheasant-tailed Jacana has disappeared under several thousand tons of construction earth.

As noted in the previous bulletin, it appears that KCRC was legally within its rights, if not its environmental responsibilities, to dump on the site. In addition to KCRC's environmental cynicism, what this demonstrates is the lack of adequate protection for Hong Kong's wetlands, despite being signatory to the Ramsar Convention, and the weaknesses of land zoning designations set by the Planning Department.



Currently these designations are very loose, particularly in the practices permitted under “village” land and “agriculture”. For example, a field can be covered with asphalt, a few water tanks can be used for holding fish and this is considered a fish farm and hence is agriculture (this has actually happened at a site near Plover Cove Reservoir).

Once designated in this manner, it appears that all environmental considerations become irrelevant, and development of village land in particular is subject to no additional controls.

Unsurprisingly there is no move within Government to address these issues, except for shaking of heads and mutterings about how hard it would be to change anything.

Perhaps this is the time for Green Groups to propose some amendments to the Planning Department. While it is important to recognise the rights of villagers, this does not mean they should have carte blanche to cut down trees or fill in wetland within village zones without regard for the environmental conditions of the area.

- EPD, Planning Department, and Lands should work together to develop a more environmentally sensitive framework for village development in ecologically sensitive areas.
- Designations for Agriculture and Conservation Area should be tightened to recognize the intrinsic ecological value of a given agricultural practice (e.g. wet agriculture) and tighten controls on how this can be changed.
- The Departments responsible for monitoring the construction industry should increase environmental education amongst all contractors to reduce unnecessary damage to sensitive sites during the construction phases of projects.
- An environmental black list should be established which “named and shamed” environmentally irresponsible developers and construction companies responsible for environmentally unsound practices.
- The same companies should be barred from working on future government contracts in the same way that companies with poor safety records are barred.
- Increase fines for breaches of environmental permits and regulations. Currently many companies see these fines as an inconvenient but acceptable operating cost rather than a serious deterrent.

Members are encouraged to express their views on these terms either by writing to the Conservation Officer (Mike Kilburn) for publication in the bulletin, or by posting their views on the website bulletin board. Those with professional insight into either planning or the construction industry in particular are encouraged to state their views.

### **Tai Long Wan Under Development Pressure**

According to plans in the South East New Territories Development Study, the Planning Department intends to permit the construction of houses for up to 1,000 people in the largely abandoned villages in the Tai Long Valley in East Sai Kung.

This is an area of outstanding natural beauty, with a wide list of birds recorded from the site. These include Crested Serpent Eagle, White-Bellied Sea Eagle, Chestnut Bittern, Black Bittern and Yellow Bittern. It is an especially good site for migrants during easterly winds.

The issue is the fact that to adequately house 1000 people in the valley it would become necessary to provide a great deal more infrastructure including sewage treatment facilities, and road access through the country park. It seems that the Planning Department has failed to take these points in to consideration when considering the merits making this provision. It also appears to have ignored the fact that there has been no development in this valley for over twenty years, so quite why it wants to make this a centre for rural population is a mystery. To find out more about protesting against these plans visit the Friends of Tai Long Wan website on <http://www.geocities.com/drpandahk/tailongwan.htm>

If you plan to complain, the Long Valley case has taught us that the most productive way is to ask questions which highlight the problem and demand a written answer from the appropriate government representative.

### **Poyang - an ongoing environmental disaster**

A visit to Poyang Lake in Jiangxi this winter by two society members has added further weight to concerns about the continuing degradation of the site, which is famous particularly for the wintering flocks of Siberian Cranes, Oriental White Storks, Asian Yellow Rail and Japanese Marsh Warbler. When members first began visiting the site in the 1980s they were recording thousands of ducks and geese and over 100 Great Bustards.

However, visits in recent years tell the tale of a steady decline in numbers, particularly of wildfowl and raptors.

According to reserve staff the two largest problems are the draining down of lakes by the local fisherman to harvest the fish, and the poisoning of geese and ducks for sale in the urban markets. The draining down of the lakes means that they dry out, which diminished the feeding opportunities for birds inside the reserve, causing many to disperse to other areas of Poyang Lake beyond the reserve boundaries.

When I visited Poyang in December, 1999 I saw many small piles of flour left on the ground. Apparently these were laced with poison. In just a couple of days we saw several hundred of these piles and one day even watched a man laying them on the far edge of a lake.

Not only does cause direct losses to the numbers of waterfowl - Bean Goose appears to be a particular target - but has a knock-on effect in the food chain, as poisoned birds are eaten by large raptors which either die or have their reproductive abilities impaired by the poisons. The number and diversity of raptors is now just a fraction of the total seen in the far smaller Deep Bay during the winter, with large raptors in particular being affected.

Several tens of thousands of people live inside the reserve boundary, and consider the wildfowl an endless resource of free meat and a source of ready cash. It appears that prevention of such activities is beyond the capabilities of the reserve staff and not important enough for either the provincial or central government to take action.

Poyang is a Ramsar site which receives extensive overseas funding, but despite this, is evidently failing to protect the birds which use the site adequately. This summer there will be a Hong Kong University-sponsored review of reserve management in China and elsewhere in North Asia. It is understood that this is expected to show how much progress has been made. It is equally important to show where progress is not being made and to create an environment where these issues can be addressed and solutions found.

Members who have visited Poyang are encouraged to submit any data they have on numbers of wildfowl raptors, waders, cranes and other key species (e.g Great Bustard, Dalmatian Pelican) recorded at the site. In addition, members with insights into the causes of the declines at Poyang are encouraged to submit them to Mike Kilburn at [mkilburn@hkstar.com](mailto:mkilburn@hkstar.com) or fax them to +852 2549 4019 or to post them on the Society bulletin board.

## **Mai Po Update**

*by Lew Young, Manager of Mai Po Nature Reserve*

### **Pond Repair work**

From the end of March, the Waterfowl Collection and Pond 20 will be drained for repair work. The work in the Waterfowl Collection will be to repair many of the bunds which have become eroded due to the water in the pond washing up against them, and the feet of the ducks walking up and down. The work in Pond 20 will be to similarly maintain the bunds but also, to remove the Cat Fish that have got inside and which have eaten up much of the grass in the middle of the pond. It is hoped that the works can be completed as soon as possible so that the two sets of ponds can be refilled with rain water this summer.

### **Mai Po construction/habitat management works**

The Pedal Cart Association is generously funding the construct of a fixed boardwalk that will go through the landward end of the mangroves in gei wai #13, then through the reedbeds in gei wai #14, and then through a freshwater marsh in Pond 16c at the back of the Scrape. This will be used by school students, weekend visitors and any other visitor who are interested. The aim is to let visitors experience the variety of wetland types in Mai Po within a short walk from the Education Centre. It is hoped that work will begin in June and be completed in Autumn.

Also, earthmoving works has been carried out at the front half of gei wai #23 this winter to turn the pond into a shallow freshwater pond and it is hoped that the works can be completed by April 2001. This winter (2001/2002), similar work will be carried out at the back half of the pond.

### **Mai Po Birdringing**

The Lions Club Hong Kong South has generously provided funding for the Bird-ringing Group to begin colour leg-flagging waders this year. This involves catching waders and places colour 'leg-flags' on their legs where the colour combination is unique to that country or region of a particular country. There is an agreement amongst wader researchers along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, that waders caught in Guangdong Province will be marked with a white leg-flag over a yellow leg-flag, and this is the combination that will be used in Hong Kong under this project. The idea is that once the bird is released and continues along its migration, any birdwatchers who sees it can identify that it has used Hong Kong along its migration. From this work, which is also taking place in many other parts of Asia, we hope to get a better idea of how waders migrate through the region.

The Birdringing Group has begun a long-term study of bird use of the reedbeds in gei wai #8 at Mai Po. It is hoped that the results from this study can help in providing information for improved management of the reedbeds in future.

# Hong Kong Birding

## Recent Reports:

### October - December 2000

by Richard Lewthwaite

*Please note that these are unchecked records and not accepted records. Members are strongly encouraged to submit records of all species on the Excel spreadsheet, or rarity card, which can be downloaded from the Society website. If you have no access to the website, please submit hard copy reports to the Recorder at the HKBWS postal address.*

## October

The month opened very well with reports of a Siberian Blue Robin and Bianchi's Warbler at Ho Chung, a Brown-chested Flycatcher at Kap Lung, a Greenish Warbler at Mai Po, 10 Daurian Starlings at Kam Tin, and single Black-naped Monarch, Sooty, Japanese and Asian Paradise Flycatchers at Tai Po Kau, all on 1st, and a Sakhalin Leaf Warbler at Kadoorie FBG the next day.

In a fine autumn for *Phylloscopus* warblers and flycatchers, Japanese Paradise Flycatchers were noted from widespread areas up to 23rd and Sooty and Asian Paradise Flycatchers to 28th. There were further reports of single Sakhalin Leaf Warblers trapped at Mai Po on 15th and 22nd, a Blyth's Leaf Warbler of the form *goodsoni* trapped at Kadoorie FBG on 23rd and two Greenish Warblers there on 28th.

Also notable in the first half of the month were 16 Blue-tailed Bee-eaters on 6th, single Pheasant-tailed Jacanas at Mai Po on 7th and 15th, a very early Baer's Pochard there from 15th, an Ashy Minivet at Cheung Chau on 6th and 11 Black-naped Orioles at Po Toi on 8th. Reports from Long Valley included 33 Black Bazas on 11th (the second highest autumn count of this species), a Citrine Wagtail on 12th and a Schrenck's Bittern and Watercock on 14th.

Long Valley continued to attract rarities in the second half of the month, with reports of up to eight Eurasian Skylarks from 16th, including a rufous-coloured individual which attracted much interest, up to two Black-headed Buntings during 22nd-29th, a Buff-bellied Pipit from 29th, and a Pallas's Reed Bunting from 31st. Larks were also reported at Chek Lap Kok, with ten Oriental on 30th and one Eurasian on 31st.

In the Mai Po area, a female or immature Amur Falcon was seen perched on wires on 19th. On the same day, there were 450 Black-winged Stilts and a Machurian Reed Warbler there, while the high tides of 27th brought within view a Long-billed Dowitcher, a Common Ringed Plover, a very late Asian Dowitcher and three Far Eastern Curlews.

Among reports from Kam Tin during this period were a Japanese Grosbeak on 18th, up to seven Grey-headed Lapwings, and a Pheasant-tailed Jacana on 31st.

Elsewhere, a Lesser Frigatebird joined the roosting kites at Magazine Gap on 24th and a Eurasian Collared Dove was seen in the Shenzhen River area on 27th.

There were two unusual autumn reports of Brown Hawk Owls - one found in urban Mei Foo on 18th and released after a short period in care at Kadoorie FBG and one seen in Tai Po Kau on the evening of 24th. An Eagle Owl was seen at Kau Si Chau on 8th and for the second consecutive month over 20 Savanna Nightjars were counted there during the Nightbird Survey. The only other Savanna Nightjar reported was at Cloudy Hill on 15th, while single Grey Nightjars were reported at Sha Lo Tung on 22nd and 24th.

## November

As the autumn passage of flycatchers and warblers started to level off, an influx of thrushes was evident during this month and record numbers of Black-faced Spoonbills arrived.

Apart from a Pheasant-tailed Jacana at Kam Tin on 1st and a Grey Nightjar at Cloudy Hill on 4th, the highlights of the first few days of the month were all raptors, with a Pied Harrier at Kam Tin on 1st, a Black-shouldered Kite at Long Valley on 3rd, a late Eurasian Hobby there on 4th, an Amur Falcon, the second report of the autumn, at Mai Po on the same day and a Eurasian Sparrowhawk at Kam Tin on 5th.

Two further Eurasian Skylarks, in addition to those which remained at Long Valley until at least mid month, were reported at Sha Po on 5th.

Migrant passerines noted during 4th-6th included 60 Eyebrowed Thrushes, a Sakhalin Leaf Warbler, two Mugimaki Flycatchers and 200 Chestnut Buntings at Kadoorie FBG and a Lanceolated Warbler, a Radde's Warbler, a Large Grass Warbler, the first Red-flanked Bluetail of the autumn, three Daurian Redstarts, a White's Thrush and four Common Rosefinches at Sha Lo Tung.

Among reports at Mai Po during 11th-12th were 173 Black-faced Spoonbills, a Baikal Teal, a Baer's Pochard, a Common Ringed Plover, two late Nordmann's Greenshanks, an Asian Dowitcher and two Long-billed Dowitchers. Numbers of Black-faced Spoonbills at Mai Po subsequently rose to 252 by 25th, a new high count and almost exactly 50% up on the peak number reported the previous winter.

Following a Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush at Kadoorie FBG on 19th, an influx of thrushes was evident, highest counts being 200, mainly Grey-backed and Eyebrowed, at Mong Tseng on 21st and 130 Eyebrowed at Kadoorie FBG on 26th. Other passerines noted included seven Chestnut-flanked White-eyes and a late Sooty Flycatcher in Tai Po Kau on 22nd, a Dusky Thrush at Mount Austin on 23rd, up to 30 Striated Yuhinas near Fanling and at Tai Po Kau during 23rd-25th, four Mugimaki Flycatchers at Hok Tau, a Slaty-backed Forktail and a Blue-and-white Flycatcher at Ng Tung Chai on 25th, and an Ashy Minivet and 90 Chestnut Bulbuls, possibly heralding a winter irruption, at Kadoorie FBG, a Black Bulbul and another Blue-and-white Flycatcher at Shek Kong Catchwater, and a Grey Bushchat at Sha Lo Tung, all on 26th.

Rare owls were reported on two dates, both in the second half of the month. An Oriental Scops Owl was trapped at Mai Po on 18th and a Short-eared Owl (potential 2nd record) seen at Chek Lap Kok airfield on 24th.

## December

The late autumn/early winter period continued to produce rarities, including two potential first records.

Noteworthy birds early in the month included two Common Starlings and seven Grey-headed Lapwings at Kam Tin, a Bianchi's Warbler in Tai Po Kau on 4th and a male Japanese Robin there on 8th, a Black-headed red-headed Bunting at Ma Tso Lung on 4th, two Northern Lapwings at Shuen Wan on 7th (very rare away from Deep Bay) and a minimum of 10 Red-flanked Bluetails at Twisk Nature Trail on 8th. Also there on the same date, a flock of 20 thrushes (Eyebrowed, Grey-backed, Pale and White's) feeding in a fruiting *Mallotus paniculatus* attracted the attention of an accipiter, tentatively identified as a Besra, which was twice flushed from close to the tree and was thought to have predated a White's Thrush, a pile of whose feathers were found nearby. Also reported here the next day were Grey Thrushes, Blackbirds, a Mugimaki Flycatcher and a Chestnut-flanked White-eye.

A single Eurasian Oystercatcher, a long-awaited shorebird, present in Deep Bay on 9th and 10th was seen by many observers and photographed. This is potentially a first record following the rejection a few years ago of the only previously-published record of one in Deep Bay on 10 December 1958. The same week a Water Pipit, also a potential first, was found and photographed on 14th at San Tin fishponds, an area where two Buff-bellied Pipits had been seen on 7th.

Other rarities during the second week of the month included two Baer's Pochards at Mai Po on 10th, a Eurasian Sparrowhawk at Nam Sang Wai on 11th and a lugens White Wagtail at San Tin on 14th. A Terek Sandpiper from the Mai Po boardwalk on 11th was unusually late.

The second half of the month was somewhat quieter, highlights being a Pygmy Wren Babbler heard at Ho Chung woods on 16th, a flock of 35 Striated Yuhinas in Tai Po Kau from 26th and a Black Stork at Mai Po on 28th. Small flocks of Grey-cheeked Fulvettas (Cat E) were seen in Tai Po Kau and Twisk Nature Trail.

A probable Eagle Owl was seen near Chau Tau on 19th and 29th.

## Photographing Birds XI

*Feiniu*

### Composition

Technical matters and the role of automation have already been discussed in the past few articles. However, there is one thing with which automation can't help, and that is composition.

Composition is about arranging the elements of a scene to present a particular message. It is totally subjective. Different people have different views on things and will express them differently. First you need an idea of what you are trying to achieve. At this stage it doesn't matter if it's just a blurred image in your head or some kind of vague thought. Composing the picture is about taking your thoughts or ideas and deciding how they can be expressed using the technical elements of your camera. The expression of your ideas is the basis of composition and there are no real rules.

Little Egret: This is not an example. I just want to share the process of composing this picture.

Structure of the picture: The picture can be divided into three parts-the main subject, which is the egret; the foreground, which is the pile of grass; and the background, which is the reed bed.

Thought processes: This was the growing season for reeds. The reedbed had a little egret standing in front of it. There were, however, many obstacles in the foreground, particularly the grass, which made the picture untidy. What, then, was the best way to express the scene? Little egrets are usually shy but I wanted a good view of the bird. This produced the idea of "peeking" as the approach. I chose a view which kept the grass in the foreground in order to give the feeling that I was hiding behind the grass. The bird was placed in the left of the frame to make it more interesting than a standard center frame position. This position also left out the top of the grass and reduced the importance of the egret. The reflection of the bird on the wave enlarged the subject and made the picture more interesting. It also made the picture more balanced. The egret's white feathers made the subject stand out more and reduced the influence of the grass in foreground. The picture gets across the idea of observation in the field which is what I wanted to express.

Technical processes: The structure of the picture had foreground, middle and background with the subject in the middle. A vertical view was chosen, mainly to reduce the influence of the grass in the foreground, and this simplified the picture and suited the position of the subject. I focused on the eye of the bird and the 300mm f4 lens was sufficient to blur the foreground. Exposure had to be calculated to suit both the surroundings and the egret. This meant slightly over-exposing the bird but still keeping the details. The bird was a relatively small proportion of the picture so the exposure suited the surroundings. The slight over-exposure of the bird didn't destroy the picture but made the subject stand out.

Whether or not you like the picture, the process shows the relationship between the photographer and the subject and the photographer's understanding of the subject. The effectiveness of the composition and the expression of the ideas behind the picture depend on the right combination of the technical elements of photography so basic skills can't be ignored.

*[Ed.-See example pictures at the inside front cover]*

# Coming Activities

## Notes

Priority is given to members of the Society. Please contact the leader several days before the meeting to confirm attendance, otherwise you may miss out on changes in timing. The X rating conveys the degree of difficulty in each outing in terms of seeing the birds; Members are of course more than welcome to attend any event.

- \* Members who use the Society coach to Mai Po must confirm their attendance by returning the booking slip with payment. Those using own transport please also notify Dr H F Cheung - this is important because the maximum number of members who can attend the outing is 50, as set by the AFCD permit. Failure to do so may result in being refused access to the reserve

**Non-members joining Mai Po trips will have to pay the coach fare  
irrespective of whether they make use of the coach.**

Payment to the Society may be made in two ways:

- (1) Please return the attendance slip with a cheque in English made out to the "Hong Kong Bird Watching Society"
- (2) Payment can also be made by depositing the fee into the A/C no. 500-208152-838 of Hongkong Bank in favour of "Hong Kong Bird Watching Society", but please send the booking slip in as well to confirm you payment and attendance.

- \*\* New location for indoor meeting:

Room 604 Wilson House, 19-27 Wyndham Street, Central, Hong Kong unless otherwise stated

On all outdoor meetings please bring drink and food, appropriate clothing for the location, and sun cream and mosquito lotion if needed!

Tidal information

<http://www.info.gov.hk/hko/astron/pretide/epremap.htm>



Date	Leader	Activity / Gathering location	Time	Difficulty
3 June (Sun)	Yu Yat Tung [REDACTED]	Tap Mun 8:20 at Ma Liu Shui public pier, back to Sai Kung at 14:00	8:30 ~13:00	X
17 June (Sun)	Cheung Ho Fai [REDACTED] Simon Wong [REDACTED]	Nine Pins 8:45 Sai Kung Public Pier (Opposite to bus terminal) 15:30 finish at Tsimshatsui Pier	8:00	XX
17 June (Sun)	Captain Wong [REDACTED]	Woodland Breeding Bird Survey	8:00 ~12:00	XXX
24 June (Sun)	Cheung Ho Fai [REDACTED]	Shum Chung 8:20 at Ma Liu Shui public pier, finish at Ma Liu Shui at 13:00	8:20 ~13:00	X
10 July (Tue)	Cheung Ho Fai [REDACTED]	Indoor meeting: Endemic birds of China Conference Hall - HK Observatory	18:45 ~20:00	X
22 July (Sun)	Carrie Ma [REDACTED] Robin Fung [REDACTED]	Mt. Austin 15:00 at Peak Tram Station, finish at 18:30	15:00 ~18:30	X
5 Aug (Sun)	Stanley Ng [REDACTED] Forrest Fong [REDACTED]	Dong Ping chau 08:45 Ma Liu Shui Pier or 08:30 at KCR University station (taxi stand)	09:00 ~18:30	XXX
21 Aug (Tue)	Lam Chiu Ying	Indoor meeting - Overseas trip reports Conference Hall - HK Observatory	18:45 ~21:00	X

## Activity Booking Slip

I wish to reserve \_\_\_\_\_ places for the Nine Pins Junk Trip, a deposit of \$150 is payable for each person (additional fee may be necessary)

Cheque for HK\$ \_\_\_\_\_ (In English. Payable to **Hong Kong Bird Watching Society**)

Name : \_\_\_\_\_ Contact No. : \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_ Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

*Note:*

*Send this application together with crossed cheque by mail to **Membership Service Committee, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, G.P.O. Box 12460, Hong Kong.***

*Application should be made at least one week before the date of the outing. Late applicants will also be accepted subject to the space available.*



## HKBWS China Conservation Fund

In order to encourage the study of birds in China, HKBWS will arrange an amount of HK\$10,000 per year as "HKBWS China Conservation Fund". Members wishing to donate to the Fund should fill in and return the form below with a cheque payable to the "Hong Kong Bird Watching Society", and mark "HKBWS China Conservation Fund" on the back of the cheque (Send to: G.P.O. Box 12460, Hong Kong)

*Please complete in BLOCK LETTERS*

Mr/ Ms/ Miss/ Mrs/ Surnam/ \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Page: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I wish to make a donation of HK\$ \_\_\_\_\_ (cheque no. \_\_\_\_\_) to HKBWS China Conservation Fund.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_





朱鷄 (中國陝西)  
Crested Ibis (Shanxi, China)

丁長青  
Ding Chang-qing



朱鷄 (中國陝西)  
Crested Ibis (Shanxi, China)

丁長青  
Ding Chang-qing



北灰鶇 (貝澳)  
Asian Brown Flycatcher (Pui O)