

香港觀鳥會 The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society



bulletin

會員通訊

184

Summer 2002 ~ 夏



鶚 (魚鷹) (尖鼻咀) — 李鶴飛 Osprey (Tsim Bei Tsui) – Lee Hok Fei



亞歷山大鸚鵡 (九龍公園) — 江敏兒 Alexandrine Parakeet (Kowloon Park) – Michelle Kong



The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited

(Approved Charitable Institution of a Public Character)

Contents

From the Chairman – <i>Lam Chiu Ying</i>	2
Society News	2
HKBWS Projects – <i>Carrie Ma</i>	4
Conservation News – <i>Mike Kilburn</i>	7
Mai Po Update – <i>Lew Young</i>	9
BirdLife Update – <i>Mike Kilburn, Carrie Ma</i>	10
Brief report on HKBWS strategy development workshop – <i>Mike Kilburn, Carrie Ma</i>	11
White-eared Night Herons sighted at Che Be Ling – <i>Richard Lewthwaite</i>	13
Shantou visit – <i>Richard Lewthwaite</i>	14
Xinjiang – <i>Mike Kilburn</i>	15
Take a closer look – <i>Cheung Ho Fai, Lee Yuk Ying</i>	23
World Bird News – <i>Steve Burrows</i>	24
Hong Kong Bird News :	25
A White Bellied Sea Eagle flown to UK for conservation – <i>Steve Burrows</i>	
Little Ringed Plover breeding in Zhuhai – <i>Goa Yuren</i>	
Richard's Log Books – <i>Richard Lewthwaite</i>	25
Recent Reports – <i>Richard Lewthwaite</i>	26
Outing Report : Mai Po – <i>Dickson Wong</i>	28
Lamma – <i>Simon Wong</i>	29
Coming Activities – <i>Cheung Ho Fai</i>	30

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<i>Hon Secretary</i>	Ms. Jimmy Chim
<i>Hon Treasurer</i>	Mr. Stanley Ng
<i>Hon Recorder</i>	Mr. Richard Lewthwaite
<i>Executive Committee members</i>	Dr. Ng Cho Nam Ms. Ronely Lee Mr. Robin Fung Dr. Lew Young Mr. Henry Lui Mr. Forest Fong

Hon. Auditor

John Wu & Co

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<i>Chairman</i>	Mr. Mike Kilburn
<i>Committee members</i>	Dr. Ng Cho Nam Mr. Forrest Fong Dr. Beta Yip

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<i>Committee members</i>	Mr. Paul Leader Mr. Mike Leven Dr. Cheung Ho Fai Mr. Richard Lewthwaite

Education and Publicity Committee

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Membership Affairs Committee

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<i>Committee members</i>	Ms. Ada Chow Mr. and Mrs. T.P. Luk Ms. Jimmy Chim Mr. Simon Wong

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At its Extraordinary General Meeting on 8 August 2002, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society resolved to transfer its members and its business to the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited. The Society is now formally a different entity, but the people, and the focus on bird watching, remain the same.

The move to become a Limited Company puts the management of the Society, especially decision-making and finance, under the strict rules required by law. This is to ensure that the resources provided by members and the public are put to good use in respect of science, education and conservation. Our so-called Limited Company has no shares, does not pay its directors and the members of the Executive Committee, can only use its assets for public benefit and cannot pass its assets to members. We are therefore completely different from a commercial company. Having checked our objectives and our composition, the government has confirmed that we are a charitable institution of a public character.

In its new form, the Society will continue its efforts for birders and birds. We held two workshops in May and July, one in English and one in Chinese, to explore the future directions of the Society. We realize that bird watching allows us to bring together a group of enthusiastic members. We realize too that we have to work on a number of shortcomings in Society affairs. In the broader environment, while more people know about bird watching and support the cause of conservation, the increasing tension between conservation and development will have to be addressed. This brings both opportunities and uncertainties for the Society. We shall have to work on these matters carefully.

In the coming year, the Executive Committee will further explore the Society's directions and study measures to strengthen manpower development and communication, both internally and externally. Our aims are to enable birders to enjoy bird watching and to enable members to work together to promote bird watching to the community, always bearing in mind the science, education and conservation aspects of our pursuit.

I sincerely hope that members will participate to the extent they are able, to let more Hong Kong people appreciate the joy and peace of bird watching.

C Y Lam, *Chairman*

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited

An incorporated body, The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited (HKBWS Ltd.) has been set up and recognized as a charitable institution of a public nature by the Inland Revenue Department. The EGM held on 8 August 2002 resolved to dissolve the society and to transfer its business, members, assets and liabilities to the HKBWS Ltd. Please see the Chairman's comments in this issue.

New Executive Committee 2002/2003

The AGM held on 8 August 2002 elected a new committee for the coming year. The line up is:

Chairman	Mr. LAM Chiu-ying
Vice-chairman	Dr. CHEUNG Ho-fai
Vice-chairman	Mr. Mike Kilburn
Hon. Secretary	Ms. Jimmy Chim
Hon. Treasurer	Mr. Stanley Ng
Hon. Recorder	Mr. Richard Lewthwaite
Executive	Ms. Ronley Lee
Committee	Mr. Ng Cho Nam
Members	Mr. Robin Fung
	Dr. Lew Young
	Mr. Henry Lui
	Mr. Forrest Fong

The first five people in the list constitute the Board of Directors of the HKBWS Ltd and will take up related statutory responsibilities.

HKBWS Ltd. Membership and Subscription Fee

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) has gone through the transition to become the HKBWS Ltd., an approved Charitable Institution of a Public Character. All paid-up members of HKBWS at the time of the AGM are now individual members of the HKBWS Ltd. Registered family members of these paid-up members are also accepted as individual members of HKBWS Ltd. for the year 2002, and have voting rights. Because members of a limited company must be individuals, "family membership" cannot exist in the HKBWS Ltd. The new membership scheme is now as follows:

Membership	Subscription Fee (HKD)	Conditions	Bulletin	Bird Report
Individual Member	255	Age 18 or above residing in Hong Kong	Yes	Yes
	50	Parents, children (aged 18 or above) or spouse of Individual Members residing in Hong Kong	No	No
	60	Age 65 or above residing in Hong Kong	Yes	No
	310	Age 18 or above residing outside Hong Kong	Yes	Yes
Student Member	60	Student aged below 18	Yes	No
Corporate Member	415	Company or corporate entity	Yes	Yes

** As a policy, the society welcomes family members of Individual Members to participate in society activities, without the need to join as members. However, a reduced subscription rate is available for family members of an Individual Member.*

New Bank Account

A new Hong Kong Bank account has been set up for "The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited". The new account no. is 534-361423-838. Members are reminded to use the new account for transactions, as the old account will be closed shortly.

New Committee Member

Starting from this year, Mr. Forrest Fong becomes a member of the Society's Executive Committee. His main focus will be administrative affairs and the development of volunteers. Forrest is a member of the Society's Conservation Committee and an experienced waterbird surveyor. Members who would like to provide help in general society affairs are welcome to contact him at hkbws@hkbws.org.hk.

Hong Kong Bird Report 1998

The Hong Kong Bird Report 1998, now at its final phase of production, is expected to be published by the end of this August. Mike Turnbull and Carrie Ma are busying themselves with the editing and production. Our target is to resume the practice of having the Report published within 12 months after the end of a year. Such target should be achieved in three years. We hope that this would persuade members to hand in their bird records on time, so that the results of field observations can be disseminated quickly.

To this end, all members are encouraged to submit their report in the form of Excel spreadsheets in the following format (to minimize the translation effort, please use English as far as possible):

Species no.	species	date	place	number	notes	name
139	Red-necked Phalarope	2-Apr-99	Long Valley	5		RF
134	Wood Sandpiper	3-Apr-99	Long Valley	10		RF
255	Yellow Wagtail	4-Apr-99	Long Valley	10		RF
74	Eastern Marsh Harrier	3-Apr-99	MP pond 20	1	Female	RF

New Editor for the English Bulletin

Mr. Steve Burrows taken up the editorship of the English edition of the Bulletin. Being a writer and field editor for Asian Geographic magazine, Steve is well versed in editorial and publishing matters. Mr. Lawrence Johnstone retired after having served as our former editor for more than a year. We express our heartiest thanks to him for his valuable contribution.

Project staff and project office

The Society had renewed the employment contracts for employing Miss Carrie Ma and Miss Shirley Lam as Project Officer and Assist. Project Officer. The Society thanks them for their hard work and is very glad to have their continuous service in the coming year.

The Society will continue to rent the existing office for a further two years.

Species numbers can be found in "The Avifauna of Hong Kong". Your work will be an important contribution to the bird records in Hong Kong. It will also determine whether our target to resume the original publishing schedule could be achieved within a reasonable time.

Donation of Binoculars and Telescopes

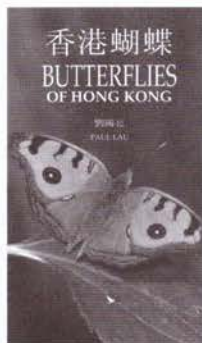
If you have "upgraded" your binoculars or telescope, or if you have old ones that you don't want to discard, please consider donating them to the Society's Project Office. The equipment will be loaned to outside organizations during our promotion activities. Besides helping others, this will facilitate the promotion of bird watching and the idea of conservation. Please contact the Project Office on 2377 4387 or hkbws@hkbws.org.hk.

Call for Translators of Presentation Material

The Society has produced several sets of Powerpoint presentation material for promoting bird watching among schools and organizations. We are looking for English translators to join in the production of such material. If you have a good command of English, are conversant with Powerpoint software and would not mind doing the translation at the Project Office after work (evening or weekend), please contact the Project Office.

Member's Discount for "Butterflies of Hong Kong"

To promote observation of nature in general, members may purchase the book "Butterflies of Hong Kong" at a reduced price of \$99 (the original price is \$290) starting from July.



Acknowledgement: Book Donation

We would like to thank Ms Lorna Christofis for contributing "The Complete Book of Birds of Southern Africa" to the Society in June.



Projects Sponsored by the AFCD:

Waterbird Monitoring at Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site



The Society was invited to the Wetland Management Committee Meeting held at the Agriculture, Fisheries

and Conservation Department, Cheung Sha Wan on 26 June, 2002. During the meeting, the results of the Society's waterbird monitoring work in 2001 and 2002 were reported and proposals on projects for 2002 were raised. In addition to continuing with the existing well-established waterbird projects in 2002 and 2003, we recommended including two new projects: an international Black-faced Spoonbill Survey and the setting up of a public accessible database on bird ringing.

On 27 June, Yu Yat Tung and Carrie Ma visited the Guangdong Neilingding Futian National Nature Reserve as representatives of the Society. The Society's work on waterbird monitoring was shared with Professor Wang Yong-jun, who also joined the visit to the Fengtang River and the Nature Park. We sincerely thank Prof. Wang for his participation and support, which has made the waterbird monitoring work a more comprehensive exercise.

For those who are interested in waterbird counting, the third training course will be held in November.

Survey on Age Structure of Wintering Black-faced Spoonbills



A photographic survey on the age distribution of adult and juvenile Black-faced Spoonbills was

conducted in winter, 2001. The results have already been published in a report sent to the AFCD in July. The survey comprised 20 field sessions between October 2001 and April 2002, during which photographs of 915 bird counts were taken. Consistent with results of the last survey, it was

found that 60% of the birds wintering at the Deep Bay are adults. The study also forecast the global population of Black-faced Spoonbills in the coming year. Members who want to see the report may contact the AFCD (afcdenvq@afcd.gov.hk) or our Project Office.

2 Education and Promotion Projects

Training Campaign: "Bird Watching - Learning from Nature"

This campaign has been in operation for 6 months and has been well received by senior citizens. Up to mid June, we had contacted 31 organizations and provided service to 2,426 elders. Details are as follows:

	Target	Actual
"Birds of Hong Kong" Talk Series	11,500 (headcount)	1,599 (headcount)
Field Trip Senior Nature Guide Training	1,000 (headcount)	827 (headcount)
Percentage of Frail Elderly, Elderly under Care and Elderly Singles	50 persons	97 persons (registered)
Number of Organizations Contacted	40%	34.4%
Contact with Individual Senior Citizens	30	31
Service Headcount	—	27 person
Field Guide Leaflet	2,500	2,426
(no. of copies)	30,000	21,750



Phase 1 activities were held as scheduled and proved to be a success, as reflected in the participants' positive evaluation after the events. At the same time, we have produced a field guide leaflet, 21,000 copies of which have been distributed to 500

organizations for the elderly. The leaflet was also given to all participants of talks and field trips.

Five small group outings were specially organized for elderly individuals who have shown a liking for bird watching. The purpose is to improve our communication and contact with the elders, so that

the training could be better tailored to their interests.

From the number of participants and their response, the project seems to match the needs of our senior citizens. There also appears to be a great demand for bird watching activities from both the elderly and organizations that serve them.

In response to such demand, we have submitted an application for funds to the Community Partnership Scheme under the Elderly Commission, proposing to expand and strengthen the contents of the campaign. Their response is awaited.

Central & Western District Council: Ecology Trail

The Central & Western District Council is developing an ecology trail that covers Lung Fu Shan, Lugard Road at the Peak, and Tramway Path, as well as Hong Kong Park. The opening is

planned for 27th October. The Society will assist the Council in providing bird photographs and written information about Lung Fu Shan and Hong Kong Park, all to be used in field guide leaflets.

Bird Life Chat Room

Starting from 14 July, the Society will be writing a "Bird Life Chat Room" column in the Sing Tao Daily on Sundays. Starting with those species close around us, the column will provide introductions to each bird species and observation tips. Members of our Education and Promotion Committee will take turns to write the articles. Anyone who would like to contribute is welcome to email your work, in about 200 characters, to the Project Office (hkbws@hkbws.org.hk). Please include your pseudonym (if any), real name and contact point. Examples of the articles can be found in the Sing Tao Daily every Sunday.



Swarovski Sponsored Project

Sponsored by Swarovski Hong Kong Limited, the Society is going to organize a series of programmes which promote bird watching among Secondary Schools. These include 25 school visits, and a bird watching course for teachers. Promotion for the school visits was started at the beginning of September. The response from schools was satisfactory, all quotas were booked within two days.



We have got the support of Hong Kong Professional Teacher's Union, for assisting promotion and provision of venue. The following is the schedule of bird watching course:

14 Nov	(6:30 - 8:30)	"Introduction to birds of HK"
16 Nov		Outdoor bird watching : Kowloon Park
28 Nov	(6:30 - 8:30)	"Wetland and Farmland birds"
30 Nov		Outdoor bird watching : Luk King and Nam Chung
12 Dec	(6:30 - 8:30)	"Forest birds"
14 Dec		Outdoor bird watching : Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve

For enquiry, please contact Ms Ma at 2377 3847 or hkbws@hkbws.org.hk

Newspapers and Magazines

HIM: Beauty of Nature

Swarovski, in arrangement with the HIM magazine, recently interviewed Robin Fung, chairman of our Education and Promotion Committee. The interview covered information on local bird watching, equipment and bird watching sites. We thank Dr. Cheung Ho Fai for the bird photos.



Ming Pao Daily: Sunday Local Tour and Sing Tao Daily:

A colour full-page account on bird watching in Hong Kong appeared in the Ming Pao Daily on 7 July. It featured the egrettries at A Chau and Penfold Garden, House Swifts at CUHK and birds at Kowloon Park. Many thanks to Robin Fung, Captain Wong, Michelle Kong, Peter Wong, Cheung Ho Fai, Henry Lui and Yam Wing Yiu for their assistance and photographs.

Spur Line – Now in doubt?

– Mike Kilburn

Sing Tao Daily: “Winged Migration” Hong Kong Edition

466 鳥類

《鳥與夢飛行》香港版

本地生態特殊吸引候鳥

「候鳥與本地生態」是「鳥與夢飛行」系列中，最受讀者歡迎的一輯。這輯內容豐富，包括：本地生態特殊吸引候鳥、候鳥的遷徙、候鳥的食性、候鳥的繁殖、候鳥的保護、候鳥的觀賞、候鳥的攝影、候鳥的繪畫、候鳥的音樂、候鳥的舞蹈、候鳥的戲劇、候鳥的電影、候鳥的電視、候鳥的廣播、候鳥的網路、候鳥的雜誌、候鳥的書籍、候鳥的展覽、候鳥的研討會、候鳥的講座、候鳥的比賽、候鳥的頒獎、候鳥的慶祝、候鳥的紀念、候鳥的傳承、候鳥的發揚、候鳥的光大、候鳥的輝煌、候鳥的永存。

候鳥不迷路 縱橫升縱覽

「候鳥不迷路」是「鳥與夢飛行」系列中，最受讀者歡迎的一輯。這輯內容豐富，包括：候鳥的遷徙、候鳥的食性、候鳥的繁殖、候鳥的保護、候鳥的觀賞、候鳥的攝影、候鳥的繪畫、候鳥的音樂、候鳥的舞蹈、候鳥的戲劇、候鳥的電影、候鳥的電視、候鳥的廣播、候鳥的網路、候鳥的雜誌、候鳥的書籍、候鳥的展覽、候鳥的研討會、候鳥的講座、候鳥的比賽、候鳥的頒獎、候鳥的慶祝、候鳥的紀念、候鳥的傳承、候鳥的發揚、候鳥的光大、候鳥的輝煌、候鳥的永存。

學生觀鳥

「學生觀鳥」是「鳥與夢飛行」系列中，最受讀者歡迎的一輯。這輯內容豐富，包括：學生觀鳥的意義、學生觀鳥的場所、學生觀鳥的器材、學生觀鳥的方法、學生觀鳥的記錄、學生觀鳥的分享、學生觀鳥的傳承、學生觀鳥的發揚、學生觀鳥的光大、學生觀鳥的輝煌、學生觀鳥的永存。

On 28 June, the Sing Tao Daily reported on bird migration in Hong Kong and favorite local observation sites.

Ming Pao: Alexandrine Parakeet Fledglings

Two Alexandrine Parakeet fledglings at Kowloon Park were captured by some HKBWS members – on film. The story was published in the Ming Pao Daily on 14 June, after the birds had left the nest.

Making use of this opportunity, a caution against disturbing birds during the breeding season was given in the article. Thanks to Robin Fung, Michelle Kong and Peter Wong for providing information and photographs.

亞歷山大鸚鵡誕兩小BB

十多年來，亞歷山大鸚鵡在九龍公園的繁殖情況一直受到關注。最近，在該公園的一處樹叢中，發現了一對亞歷山大鸚鵡的鳥巢，巢內有兩隻剛誕下的小鸚鵡。這兩隻小鸚鵡體態嬌小，羽毛尚未長齊，顯得十分可愛。

據悉，亞歷山大鸚鵡是一種原產於中國南方的鳥類，具有較強的適應能力。在九龍公園，由於環境優美，食物豐富，吸引了不少亞歷山大鸚鵡前來築巢繁殖。然而，由於該公園位於城市中心，人類活動頻繁，對鳥類的繁殖造成了一定的干擾。

為了保護亞歷山大鸚鵡的繁殖地，有關部門已採取了一系列措施，包括在繁殖地周圍設置圍欄，禁止遊客靠近，以及加強巡邏等。希望通過這些措施，能為亞歷山大鸚鵡提供一個良好的繁殖環境，使該物種在九龍公園繁衍生息。

Acknowledgement

We thank Schmidt Marketing (H.K.) Ltd. for sponsoring HK\$2,000 for part of the production cost for this bulletin.

Last month the Chinese media carried articles in which both Sarah Liao, the New Environment & Transport Minister and Michael Tien, the new Chairman of KCRC, questioned the justification of building the Lok Ma Chau to Sheung Shui Spur Line.

The comments come in the light of low traffic predictions for West Rail and numbers of border-crossers at Lo Wu not meeting the growth figures predicted by KCRC during the time of the Spur Line EIA.

The same articles once again raised the issue of connecting the new Lok Ma Chau Border crossing to West Rail and western Kowloon by bringing forward the proposed Northern Links line. In transport planning terms this makes good sense. We would then have two rail connections for border crossers which served two distinct population groups in both Hong Kong and China. The plan for the Spur Line was for everyone to be filtered onto the already busy East Rail, wherever in Shenzhen they were coming from, and wherever in Hong Kong they were trying to reach.

What does this mean for the birds? Its too early to say. But if the Spur Line were to be scrapped the tunnel under Long Valley would no longer be necessary, although it would seem likely that the station at Lok Ma Chau would be built anyway.

At present KCRC is still proceeding with the project as planned. Mike Kilburn, Lew Young and Ng Cho Nam have all been invited to sit on the Environmental Committee for the Spur Line project. Currently the role of this committee is

somewhat unclear. KCRC staff heavily outnumber representatives from environmental groups and the terms of reference are rather unclear. It is hoped that this committee will have the opportunity to closely scrutinize the construction and monitoring of the Spur Line and the reserve being created at Lok Ma Chau.

On both issues matters remain unclear. Watch this space.

Disturbance to tern colony results in low breeding success

Over the last two years the tern colony in Sai Kung has been disturbed by fishermen and hikers visiting the small, barren rock island where the birds breed. Current information suggests this is one of only four breeding sites for terns on the China coast.

When the issue last came up two years ago HKBWS attempted to list the island as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). AFCD turned down the request, claiming that anonymity was the best way to protect the birds. Instead they put up a sign on the island warning visitors to the island to stay on the jetty. It has clearly not been a success. The island is frequented by hikers and also by amateur fishermen, both of whom cause the terns to fly up in alarm from the island, leaving their chicks and eggs exposed to the harsh sunlight. The sign was mysteriously removed. Worse still the hikers, who arrive by ferry in groups of up to 100 people, wander all over the island and even handle the eggs and chicks - a clearly unacceptable situation.

As a result, more than 300 pairs of Bridled, Roseate and Black-naped Terns have produced less than 60 fledged young in each of the last two years - an unnaturally low number. HKBWS members have surveyed the colony for the last five years - this last year with funding from AFCD - and have good data to support these poor results.

The worst affected appear to be the Roseate Terns which breed on the top of the island, where there is the least shelter for their eggs and chicks. Numbers have fallen from around 100 birds several years ago to around ten birds which have summered on the island in the last two years.

Black-naped and especially Bridled Terns have fared rather better.

HKBWS is currently in discussions with AFCD to have the breeding colony designated as an SSSI and a protected area, with access between May and September limited exclusively to those issued with a permit for research by AFCD. The permit system would work in the same way as that which protects the Green Turtle breeding beach on Lamma during the summer months.

We would also like AFCD to use patrol boats from the Dong Ping Chau or Hoi Ha Wan Marine Parks to patrol the island and enforce the protected area status of the island to prevent people landing.


HKBWS also expects to assist AFCD in educating the hikers, the fishermen, and the boatmen, who take them illegally to the island, on the importance of leaving the birds in peace during the summer months.

We hope that this will lead to reduced disturbance and greater breeding success next year.

Route 10 - Same Old Story One Year On

The Highways Department and their consultants continue to make a mockery of the impact assessment process. Despite heavy criticism from HKBWS and other environmental organisations over the poor and duplicitous quality of their fieldwork for the first gazettal, they have submitted no new data in their re-gazettal for Route 10.

They conducted just four surveys outside the breeding season, finding just 4 species of birds. They claimed to have found no breeding birds. The main reason for this was that their survey was conducted outside the breeding season.

HKBWS members living locally have identified twenty breeding species and the presence of birds protected under China's conservation laws, including White-bellied Sea Eagle and Crested Goshawk. The consultants, ERM claimed that they did not have enough money from the engineers to conduct more surveys. If this is true then both the engineers and their clients the Highways Department, must accept some of the blame for this shamefully dismissive handling of their environmental responsibilities. 

Mai Po Management Plan

WWF Hong Kong manages Mai Po according to a 5-year Management Plan, which is reviewed by experts from a variety of fields, including those in the HKBWS, before it is accepted. The current plan runs out in March 2003 so work is now starting to begin drafting a new plan, to run from 2003 to 2008. A specialist working group has been set up to give comments to the Mai Po Reserve Manager on the drafting of the new plan. However, if members of the HKBWS have any comments on the running of the reserve in recent years, or on what they hope to see in future, they can pass these on to Lew Young at Mai Po who will then see how to incorporate these ideas into the plan. Lew can be contacted at Mai Po by phone (2471-6306), fax (2482-0369) or e-mail maipo@wwf.org.hk. Thank you very much in advance.

Earthmoving work in gei wai 16/17 (The Scrape)

The work to lower the height of the three large islands on the 'Scrape' was temporarily stopped in February to allow the pond to be re-filled in time for the spring passage of shorebirds. Now that the shorebirds have gone north, the 'Scrape' has been drained again so that the work can continue. It is hoped that the work this summer will not be delayed too much by the rains, but anyhow, the 'Scrape' will be refilled in July for the autumn shorebird passage.


Habitat management in the southern gei wai

Over the past few years, the newly created rain-fed 'freshwater' ponds in the

southern part of Mai Po have been quite attractive for wintering ducks. However, more recently, the number of waterbirds has gradually declined. This could have been for a number of reasons, but an important one is the presence of fish, especially Catfish, which have eaten nearly all of the 'freshwater' plants in the gei wai, where the wintering ducks used to roost. As a result, gei wai 20 and 24 will be drained over the course of this summer so that the fish inside can be removed and if necessary, more freshwater plants planted inside. The pond will be refilled with rainwater in time for the arrival of the ducks this winter.

Maintenance to the Waterfowl Collection

One of the long-term problems in managing the Waterfowl Collection is maintaining good water quality in the Collection, especially when it has been used by thousands of ducks over the winter. After the ducks have departed in spring, one way to do this is to drain the two ponds in the Waterfowl Collection in turn, and refill them with clean rainwater. Draining the ponds down also bakes the mud on the bottom of the ponds, which has a number of beneficial functions including killing any bacteria on the mud.

Another way of maintaining the water quality in the Collection is to regularly flush the water through with cleaner water from an adjacent gei wai. This summer, whilst the ponds are being drained, a series of pumps and pipes will be installed through the walls of the Collection, so that this water exchange can take place. All of these works will be completed by September, before the arrival of the wintering ducks. 

“Building on Experience” Training

The one-year “Building on Experience” (BoE) training is coming to an end. Mike and Carrie are preparing the final assignment to be submitted to BirdLife International. Carrie completed the final training session in India, hosted by The Bombay Natural History Society. This module focussed on campaigning, use of the media (with many of the participants from other countries interested and inspired by our success over Long Valley), and managing change.



Although rather time-consuming, the training has greatly benefited the Society. We believe that this first year of BoE training organized by RSPB has created a blueprint for capacity development within the international NGO community. Through the course we have articulated a strategy, activities and volunteer involvement of HKBWS into a drafted management plan (which can be viewed at: home.hkstar.com/~mkilburn/mandate/mandate.html.)

BoE has enabled us to communicate with members in a more interactive way, through an HKBWS Development Workshop, which was conducted in both English and Chinese. During the workshop we conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis to present the current position, looking at the internal strengths and weaknesses of the Society, and the external opportunities and threats.

In addition, we have established a “Strategic Development Working Group” which is responsible for determining the structures necessary to upgrade our current project office to a permanent office with a small full-time staff. This group is working to finalise the strategic plan for the Society and begin implementing a fundraising plan to allow us to fund the new positions we hope to establish.

The BoE training has also enabled us to build contacts, communication and assistance among BirdLife partners: Mike has assisted the Bombay Natural History Society in preparing guidelines for marketing and promotional materials and Carrie assisted Ghana Wildlife Society in

building its first website. In addition, Mike presented the work for the Long Valley Campaign as a Powerpoint presentation to the International Section of the RSPB on a recent visit to the UK. These activities expand the Society’s international exposure, and pave the way for us to seek assistance from other BirdLife partners in our own development, and in preparing for issues that we are yet to encounter.

BirdLife inChina – Regional partners meet in Hong Kong

A meeting organized by BirdLife Asia Council was held on 6-7 July at the Hong Kong Observatory. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss bird conservation strategies in Mainland China. A working group for the China Programme was established and CY Lam will act as a facilitator. A representative of our Society will seek advice and comment from Chinese ornithologists during the International Ornithological Congress in Beijing in August.

Participants of the meeting include Noritaka Ichida and Cristi Nozawa from BirdLife Asia Division, Simba Chan from International Centre of Wild Bird Society of Japan, Lim Kim-keang from Singapore Nature Society, Simon Liao from Wild Bird Federation of Taiwan, CY Lam, Cheung Ho Fai and Ng Cho Nam from HKBWS.

BirdLife Asia Division



BirdLife Asia Division is moving its office from Indonesia to Japan. The office will house the Regional Chairman, Mr Noritaka Ichida, and the regional head Richard Grimmett. At the same time, BirdLife International Indonesia Programme will cease to operate in September, and will be replaced by an independent NGO, BirdLife Indonesia, established and registered on 15 July 2002.



Brief report on HKBWS Strategy Development Workshop

– Mike Kilburn, Carrie Ma

English Workshop

Date: 10 May 2002

Venue: Room 1025 HK Scout Centre

No. of participants: 25

Chinese Workshop

Date: 4 July 2002

Venue: P4701, City University of HK

No. of participants: 22

Two “HKBWS Strategy Development Workshops” were organized in May and July. The target audiences of the two-hour workshops were members interested in and willing to support the Society’s development. Results of the workshop and target approaches will be considered and incorporated in the draft of the Society Development Strategy Plan.

The workshop reviewed recent achievement of Society affairs; research, education and publicity, nature conservation and related human resources. In order to increase interaction and direct participation by the audiences, we added a SWOT Analysis, which considered the existing structure of the Society, its internal strengths and weaknesses, and current and future opportunities and threats facing the Society. The following is the result of the two workshops:

Table 1: Competitiveness of the Society

Strengths

- Bird watching enables members to acquire in-depth knowledge of nature and environment, this forms a professional basis for the Society’s work
- Members from different backgrounds provide active

support in various ways, e.g. field records, data analysis, Society affairs and management etc.

- Education and publicity events and campaigns on nature conservation enhance the Society’s professional image and encourage public “goodwill”.

Weaknesses

- Lack of established management structures, communication channels and meeting places;
- Bulletin punctuality, frequency of website updating
- Lack of manpower and financial resources, overwhelming workload for volunteers
- Society’s long term goals and direction need to be better defined

Opportunities

- Environmental conservation and education is on the public agenda
- There is a general increase in public awareness on bird and wildlife conservation
- There is potential to explore more projects on bird and habitat conservation in both Hong Kong and China

Threats

- Government policy is poorly defined
- Competition between NGOs re: bird conservation
- Public interest in environmental issues affected by the change in the economic situation
- Development and changes in land use threaten to reduce bird habitat

Suggestions:

Internal affairs and external demand reveals the Society’s strong competitiveness on publicity and education issues. There is a need to arrange more manpower to further enhance and maintain the quality. We obtained a number of suggestions from members:

Brief report on HKBWS Strategy Development Workshop (con't)

A. Internal affairs

“Manpower” and “Communication” are areas of both strength and weakness in the Society:

A1. Manpower and resource

- a. Maintain participation and smooth coordination of Society activities and affairs
- b. Identify members who are interested in providing assistance to the Society. For example, insert questionnaires in membership application/renewal forms to gauge members' willingness or ability to contribute to the Society
- c. Identify members who can provide professional support in specified areas, e.g. tour leaders, writers, photographers etc.
- d. Explore the possibility of recruiting clerical staff

A2. Membership communication

- a. Improve internal communication between committee and Society members
- b. Organize large-scale events, e.g. Christmas Count, Bird Race, to encourage interaction between members

A3. Enhance professionalism

- a. Design and carry out an audit system for tour leaders to enhance the Society's outdoor activities
- b. Maintain a systematic administration system and stabilize development of Society affairs

B. External influence

Members put forward a number of strategies with respect to external demand and influence:


B1. Response to external demand

- a. Strengthen the work on education and publicity, increase communication with media and educational institutes
- b. With respect to the potential for environmental education, increase communication between members of Education and Publicity Committee, or invite experienced personnel as advisors.

B2. Explore more resources and projects

- a. Seek sustainable financial resources and funding for project development
e.g. applying for projects, fund raising, fees for lectures and guided activities
- b. Explore potential projects in China.

B3. Develop communications with outside agencies

- a. Maintain good relationships, collaborations or partnerships with other green groups;
- b. Increase our competitiveness in the marketplace, stressing our professionalism;
- c. Enhance the Society's public image by increasing the emphasis on education and publicity. 



White-eared Night Herons sighted at Che Ba Ling

– Richard Lewthwaite

Participants: Judith Fruin-Ball,
Lawrence Johnstone,
Richard Lewthwaite &
Martin Williams

The principal aim of our visit to Che Ba Ling NNR in northern Guangdong during 5-8 December last year was to look for White-eared Night Heron and large owls. We therefore took an array of flashlights and headlamps and spent time at dawn and dusk in suitable-looking areas both inside and outside the reserve.



Though no plumage features were noted, the birds appeared comparable in size to Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), but were very different from that species in structure, showing a highly distinctive combination of broad, blunt wings and long, thin neck. In addition, JFB & LJ heard a night heron-like call from one of the

We eventually obtained views of two White-eared Night Herons, at least one of which was an adult, in silhouette against the sky at dusk on 6th. They were flying up-river through a large, almost gorge like U-bend on the river. JFB & LJ saw two night herons approaching in leisurely flight with retracted necks, before suddenly changing direction and banking sharply with necks extended and legs lowered. Almost simultaneously, from a slightly different vantage point RL & MW saw, first, a Eurasian Eagle Owl drop down from a ridge, and then about a minute later a single night heron, neck stretched out, flying upwards towards the ridge-top, in the process evading the owl which had come dangerously close. There were no further views that night or the next.

approaching birds and were able to see an obvious crest on one individual, thus identifying it as an adult. On a visit to the reserve museum, we had earlier noted the long- and thin-necked structure on two specimens, both juveniles. No other species of night heron *Nycticorax* / *Goisachus* has been reported by HKBWS observers from the reserve or its environs.

The Eurasian Eagle Owl was also a new record for HKBWS observers (in fact the reserve museum contains several specimens). Other birds of note were a Bianchi's Warbler and, in farmland about 10 minutes drive from the reserve, a flock of Bramblings. It would otherwise have been a rather uneventful visit with few thrushes, warblers or buntings found.



Winter visit to Shantou, eastern Guangdong

– Richard Lewthwaite

Formerly known as “Swatow”, the city of Shantou is on the coast of eastern Guangdong close to the border with Fujian and c 300 km NE of Hong Kong. La Touche, who lived there for a period of time in the late 1880s, found it to be one of the best sites for waterbirds on the South China coast. He described varied and extensive wetland habitats and recorded over 220 bird species there.

Following a trip last summer when Martin Williams and I were amazed to find that extensive areas of wetland habitat still remained at Shantou despite massive reclamation and development, I got the chance to visit again during the Christmas holiday of 2001. Mo-yung Yuk Lin and I spent two days at the fishponds of the Niu Tian Yang nature reserve and the adjacent Rong Jiang estuary and a further afternoon at the Da Hao salt-pans.

It was an enjoyable trip, but overall results were very mixed. The number and diversity of wintering waterbirds have clearly declined compared to the past. Though areas of wetland habitat comparable to Inner Deep Bay still remain, they are intensively utilised by fish- and oyster-farmers, and the once extensive mangroves have been entirely lost. Bird-netting appears to be rampant, even within supposedly protected areas. I estimated that approximately 750 metres of mistnets had been placed on drained ponds along a one kilometre

Bird Report, but here is a summary of the main findings.

Waterbirds. No cranes, geese or divers were found, but a minimum of 10,000 waterbirds of about 40 species were present. This included peak day-counts of 154 Great Cormorants, 804 Grey Herons and five other ardeid species, single Black-faced & Eurasian Spoonbills (both at the salt-pans), 1550 Eurasian Wigeons, 82 Falcated Ducks, 1760 Tufted Ducks (higher than the peak Hong Kong count), six other duck species, all the duck being at great distance (out of rifle range?), 279 Kentish Plover and 190 Dunlin, and 11 other shorebird species. We recorded three gull species, with peak day-counts of 1635 Black-headed, four Saunders’ and one Heuglin’s. Perhaps most surprising, given the near absence of marsh terns in Hong Kong in winter, was the concentration of up to 3,000 Whiskered Terns at Niu Tian Yang, where tadpole-sized fish were super-abundant on the fishponds and connecting creeks. Also noted there were single White-winged and Caspian Terns.

Raptors. Day counts of up to four Black Kites and five Ospreys, and a single Common Kestrel on one day.

Aerial feeders. Good numbers of Little Swifts, Barn & Red-rumped Swallows daily. Local people associate them with good luck, we were told.

Resident farmland birds. Despite spending a lot of time in fishponds areas and adjacent farmland, I saw only two Black-necked Starlings (described as “very abundant” by La Touche), no Crested Mynas (also formerly “very abundant”) and no resident corvids (formerly three “common” species) at all. The lack of resident farmland birds was also a feature of a trip to Daya Bay in September, and this scenario is possibly repeated across Guangdong, in which case Hong Kong’s populations and

I plan to write a fuller account for the Hong Kong

the areas which sustain them increase in importance.

Wintering farmland birds. Far fewer seen than expected - one Richard's Pipit, 10-20 White Wagtails daily (of 3 sub-species in all), a total of just four Stonechats during the three days, a single Bluethroat, and up to 5 Red-billed Starlings on three occasions, and also one sighting of a flock of c 50. Thus, no Red-throated Pipits or Yellow Wagtails (both described as common in winter by La Touche).

Shantou is only 4 hours from Hong Kong by bus. Mo-yung and I stayed on the Shantou University campus at the newly-refurbished Academic Conference Centre, which was pleasantly quiet and comfortable, and also very convenient, being only 10 minutes drive from the Niu Tian Yang nature reserve. Our room cost RMB 240 per night. Christopher Tsang of the university's Foreign Language Department, who was our host, has said that birdwatchers are welcome to stay there or at another guest house on campus. If anyone wants further details, contact me by e-mail <myrl@kthk.com.hk>.

Thanks to Christopher Tsang for his help. 

Xinjiang

10 – 27th June, 2001 – Mike Kilburn

This trip to Xinjiang followed immediately on the heels of two very successful trips to western China: a fortnight in northern Sichuan at Wolong and Jiuzhaigou, and another two weeks searching for the Tibetan Plateau specialities of eastern and southern Qinghai. I had been to Xinjiang three years previously and covered large areas of the country, travelling a massive 7,000km and seeing 240 species in 20 days, which provided a benchmark for this trip with Lawrence Johnstone and Judith Fruin-Ball. We were accompanied by Professor Ma Ming of the Academia Sinica. He is one of China's most active field ornithologists - and needs to be, as he is the only full time ornithologist in a province larger than Germany!

We drove first from Urumqi to Turpan, which competes with the Dead Sea for the title of the lowest place on Earth, on the newly completed and very fast highway, stopping only to pick up a distant Pied Wheatear and nesting Common Swift on some scorching sandstone cliffs. Turpan is also one of the hottest, driest places on the planet, making it excellent for growing grapes, but limiting birding to just a few hours at each end of the day. We arrived at the Academia Sinica's desert flora research station and found plenty of Common Cuckoos and Isabelline Shrikes in the well-watered compound garden. We spent the hour before dusk and a brief stint the next morning in the desert flora botanical garden, failing to sort out a difficult hippolais warbler, which on the last trip we thought was Olivaceous. We also added Laughing and Turtle Doves, a couple of Hoopoe, not quite spotless Eurasian Starlings (check undertail coverts) and Barred Warbler.

On day two we drove almost non-stop to Bosten Lake, halting only for lunch and to check out a small reed-fringed stream as we climbed out of the Turpan Depression. Here we found a Wigeon, three Gadwall, a Common Buzzard, and a Eurasian Kestrel. Compared to 1998, however, the roadside birding was extremely disappointing, a situation which continued until we left southern Xinjiang.



Birdwise, Bosten Lake was not a disappointment. Driving round to the fishing village on the southern edge of this 100km long lake we found our first Long-Legged Buzzards, good numbers of Isabelline and Desert Wheatears and three Desert Finches in the arid areas. In the marshy pools and reed-beds we added Bluethroat, Little Bittern, Great Reed Warbler, Common and Whiskered Terns, Black-winged Stilt, Kentish Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Redshank and several pristine Citrine Wagtails.

We birded around the village before dusk, finding Grey Heron and Great Egret, a single Black Stork, thirty Yellow-legged Gulls, Ferruginous Duck and Red-crested Pochard. Our best bird here was the quirky (and endemic) Chinese Hill Warbler, which is not a warbler at all, but a rather long-tailed, slender and striated babbler. As dusk fell we headed for Korla, finding six European Nightjars perched on telegraph poles and churring away like the birds I remember from my childhood in southern England.

Next day we headed south to Puhui, a desert edge town where we encountered our first wind-blown sand dunes trying to eat the road, but also scored well, finding our first Pallas' Sandgrouse, Northern Wheatear, Red-headed Bunting, more Barred Warblers and Short-toed and Crested Larks. The freshwater reservoir appeared to support few birds, but we did add our only Osprey, three Black Kite and a light phase Booted Eagle overhead. A well-

vegetated canal produced brief views of a Golden Oriole and a surprised Long-eared Owl, which flushed from close range. Black-necked Grebe and a creche of 35 adult and juvenile Ruddy Shelduck were on the now freshwater saline pool.

The next day was depressing. We drove south into the Taklamakan Desert to look for White-winged Woodpecker, the endemic Biddulph's Ground Jay and Saxaul Sparrow. Although we found all of them we spent the day in a sandstorm caused by the ploughing up of the Desert Poplar and Tamarisk cone desert edges for cotton growing. This is exactly what caused the dustbowls in the US and the USSR. Sadly the local authorities have not learned from these environmental catastrophes. Even worse, the Tarim River no longer flows in summer as so much water has been pumped out of it to irrigate the cotton fields. We did add a Pallas' Sandgrouse, Great Grey Shrike, Desert Lesser Whitethroat, Desert Wheatear and a pair of Desert Finches before stopping in Luntai for the night.

The next morning was our last in the Tarim Basin before heading north in to the Tian Shan Mountains. Ma Ming took us to a reservoir which held a pair of Barbary Falcon. We did well here, finding a Booted Eagle as we arrived, then worked hard to find three of the Falcons perching on the cliffs and flying along the edges of the gorge. Spanish and House Sparrows flocked together on the village

rubbish tip near where we stopped for lunch.

The mountains provided a welcome change of scenery. As we left the Tarim Basin we headed through a protective outer rampart of jagged rock slabs then crossed a stony plain before reaching a huge sandstone gorge complete with a boulder-rock riverbed stretching across the valley floor. This was where birds began to appear in good numbers. The trees of an abandoned farm dropped Golden Oriole, Rock Thrush and Barred Warbler, while the sandstone cliffs produced Pied Wheatears, Crag Martins and both Common and Great Rosefinch (which we missed in Qinghai) and the fields by the river held several singing Red-headed Buntings. At the same spot, a gang of Ravens plodded soberly along a shingle bank in the river, another Booted Eagle soared over, and we clocked our first Himalayan Griffons.

As we climbed, the vegetation became progressively more lush as the gorge narrowed. Roadside birding produced several Black Redstarts, a female Goosander coming off a nest twelve feet up a tree, a Chukar calling from a cliff ledge and several Rock Buntings showing a distinctly brownish tinge to the head stripes. This is confusing as the recently split Godlewski's of eastern China has brown head stripes, while Rock Bunting, which, in China occurs only in Xinjiang, should have black stripes instead!

Winding higher we reached a small lake surrounded by pastureland dotted with rocks and small bushes, while crags and steeply sloping forests stretched away into the distance. Here we found a family of Mallard, several Northern Wheatears and a Smoky Warbler, probably the first record for Xinjiang. It was easily identifiable by its small size, black legs and bill, very dark smoky-brown back and underparts, and short yellow supercilium. We finished the day by driving along the shore of the larger Big Dragon Lake, adding 17 Black Storks, Ruddy Shelduck and a group of four Tufted Ducks.

Walking over the broad meadows behind our hotel, we found numerous Plain Mountain Finches, an Azure Tit, Red-fronted Serin, Grey Wagtail, a single Mistle Thrush and three Golden Eagles floating with Himalayan Griffons over the crags.

Next morning we drove up into the snow along a now precipitate mountain road, seeing little until we stopped at the pass on the top. Here we found both Alpine and Red-billed Chough, 3 of our 5 Lammergeyers of the day, a cracking male Great Rosefinch that came off the crags to drink from a meltwater puddle, and on the other side of the pass I had very brief flight views of a Himalayan Snowcock. As we dropped and drove through the Tiger's Mouth pass, we entered a huge grassland. The river here hosted Dipper and Common Sandpiper, but no sign of the hoped for (but not expected) Ibisbill. However we had compensation in the form of Brown Accentor, House Martins, Rock Thrush, Citrine Wagtail and Eurasian Snowfinch, all before lunch.

As we were leaving the village, we found a flock of around 2000 Brandt's Mountain Finches feeding in meadows that were full of flowers. We also found several Twite and a trio of Linnets amongst them. The finch theme continued an hour or so later when, stopping to photograph Long-legged Buzzards we had brief flight views of Mongolian Trumpeter Finch. The final highlight before entering Bayanbruke was a group of 3 Black Vultures slouching by a picked-clean yak carcass.

Bayanbruke is the most southerly breeding ground of Whooper Swan, although numbers here have declined steadily with the increase of yak and sheep herding by local people. On our way into the reserve we found a couple of Grey-necked Buntings on the crags by the park entrance. Here we stayed overnight in a Mongolian yurt campsite, which was close to the edge of the wetlands. A walk here before dark produced some superb birding. The best waterbirds

included a dozen Whooper Swan, over 100 each of Cormorant and Black-headed Gull, numerous, Greylag and Bar-headed Goose, Gadwall, Mallard, Shoveler, Common and Red-crested Pochard, Tufted Duck, and a pair of Slavonian Grebes on a nest. We also added Common and White-winged Black Terns, 5 Yellow-legged Gulls, Coot and half a dozen Common Cranes.

The next morning we returned to the same area, where we added a calling Great Bittern, Pintail, Common Teal, Garganey and Grey Heron to the list of waterfowl. But the highlights of the morning were an adult Pallas' Fish Eagle, which flew in and landed in good view, and four Demoiselle Cranes stalking elegantly over the meadows. This superb site also had a couple each of Himalayan Griffon, Golden Eagle and Black Vultures, and we also added Avocet to the list. As we left the plain we found a female Goosander on the river and 3 more Common Cranes.

Beyond Bayanbruke town we came to the edge of the Gong Nai Si River valley, where, after a short climb the meadows give way to steep hillsides covered with low scrubby vegetation. Our best birds here were three Himalayan Rubythroats, which differ from Siberian in showing white outer tail feathers and a broad black band beneath the shining red throat, and a pair of Black-throated Accentors, confined in China to the Tian Shan. The same area produced our first Tree Pipits and Common Whitethroat calling, but frustratingly unseen Quail and Corncrakes, and a pair of Stonechats. However, the highlight for me was a Grasshopper Warbler which we found reeling in thick weeds lower down the hillside. It proved difficult to locate, but eventually we enjoyed prolonged views. In the lower valley we added Coal and Songar Tits, the very grey eastern race of Goldfinch, and our first Nutcrackers in Xinjiang.

Next day we worked the Gong Nai Si Valley from

top to bottom. This is a stunning part of the Tian Shan, with a range of birds of which we merely scratched the surface. We started very early in the morning by driving up to the pass at the top of the valley. Our prime target here was Himalayan Snowcock. As we got out of the car Ma Ming pointed out the calls of at least two birds, and after some desperate scanning we found a bird perched prominently on a rock and shouting at the dawn. We had tremendous views through the scope of one of the top targets of our trip.

The other special bird here is Altai Accentor, which looks like an Alpine Accentor with a clearly marked white throat. They seemed especially happy hopping about on the rock scree close to the edge of the cliffs and eventually showed very well. Two singing Bluethroats, another Himalayan Rubythroat and a Hobby zipping over the pass at high speed added high quality support as did the superb scenery of snow-capped mountains, and the panorama of lush meadows and thick pine woods covering the valley slopes.

Two more target birds here were Eversmann's and Blue-headed Redstarts. Sadly only I had the briefest views of a male Eversmann's on a roadside wire and we completely dipped on Blue-headed, which had been so abundant in '98. Partly this was because we were short of time, which also prevented us from searching for Black Grouse in the conifers, although the local Kazakh herders said they often saw them and knew good places to look for them. However we did add Greenish Warbler and Great Tit, and Mistle Thrushes were abundant. As we descended the valley it spread out into a broad tract of arable land, which produced little initially, but on entering some rough grassland we started adding high quality Central Asian birds. These included European Roller coming in and out of its nesting hole, Calandra Larks and Lesser Kestrels over the bare ground, and several Lesser Grey Shrikes, European Bee-eaters and Rosy Starlings.

We also heard Quail and saw Red-headed Bunting here.

We stopped a couple of times to look at the river and found a wonderful flock of White-winged and Black Terns feeding together. We were also able to compare Oriental and Eurasian Turtle Doves as both were in the weeds alongside the river, along with the tamest Red-headed Buntings I've ever seen. We pulled into the Ili Binguan just as it was getting dark, but had time to see and hear our first Nightingales and Common Mynas of the trip. There must be 25 or 30 pairs of the former in the grounds of the hotel, making it probably the best place in the world to see and hear this lovely bird. After so much driving, we decided on a rest day and did little the next morning. Going round the well-wooded grounds of the hotel I added Rook, Azure and Turkestan Tits to the Nightingales. In the afternoon all of us headed for Ili Riverside Park, which was humid but birdy. We found 4 Little Bitterns, Common Snipe sitting on a wall, Common Kingfisher, Little and Common Terns and several each of Great Reed, Savi's and Cetti's Warbler, the latter two singing lustily and eventually

giving good views.

Next day we left Ili and headed north to Sayram Lake. We stopped just before it at the well forested Guozi Valley, where we were relieved to finally find a couple of Blue-headed Redstarts singing from the tops of pines and Dipper, Grey Wagtail and Black-throated Accentor either on or close to the stream. Later stops produced Rock Thrush, good views of Mongolian Trumpeter Finch, a couple of Grey-headed Buntings, and above the lake itself, our first Pine Buntings, which also obliged by choosing the tops of pine trees to sing from. We stopped overnight in Wusu, having failed to get into a reserve close to Aibi Lake because recent rain had turned the path to a porridgy sludge.

The next day again was spent largely on the road driving north across the arid Junggar Basin. We stopped briefly at Karamy, to check its pools and reservoirs, but found little of interest amongst the nodding donkeys except for a couple of Common Shelduck, 8 Great Crested Grebes, and a few each of Kentish Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Lapwing (with 3 chicks), and Avocet (including a dozen



chicks). We did a little better just south of the turning to Ulungur Lake. Here a couple of well-vegetated small ponds had attracted a booming Great Bittern, a couple of Tawny Pipits, several Greater Short-toed Larks, an Upland Buzzard, and an adult Spotted Eagle.

After overnighting in Burchin on the Ertix River, the gateway to the Altai region of northern Xinjiang, we went west towards Haba He, birding the roadside marshes between the sparse rocky hills and the sand dunes. This area was far richer than the stony deserts of the day before and we quickly found a male Western Marsh Harrier, two Black Terns with a flock of 60 White-winged terns, three Pallas' Reed Buntings and a couple of Paddyfield Warblers among the commoner waterbirds. Just before Haba He we stopped to check out some fields and came up trumps, with a highly unexpected Lesser Spotted Woodpecker in some roadside trees. We also found a Willow Tit here before heading north into the mountains.



As the habitat changed, so did the birds. Our first stop in some rather dry hills was for a flock of over 300 Western Jackdaws, clearly identified by their pale irides. The short scrubland higher up produced Ortolan Bunting and another Spotted Eagle, and as we dropped into the woods on the northern slopes we found Spotted Flycatchers, Dark-throated Thrushes, Lesser Whitethroat, Tree Pipit, and our

first pristine male Red-backed Shrike. The foothills of the Altai and the Ertix River demarcate the boundary between Isabelline and Red-Backed Shrikes - we had seen 15 Isabellines the day before and no Red-backed, while the situation was completely reversed in the Altai where we had Red-backed only. We also had three Brown Shrikes at Bei Haba showing concolorous crown, nape and back and no white patch in the wing. They breed just to the north and east of the Altai and clearly migrate through the area.

Before arriving at Bei Haba we passed through Terek, where birding more resembled England than China - with Fieldfare, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Grey Wagtail, Chaffinch, Spotted Flycatcher and House Martins common close to the river, while we had to wait until our return to locate a singing Yellowhammer. Bei Haba produced our first Common Redstarts, and a reluctantly flushed Common Quail. On our way down two days later we added Treecreepers and a pair of caligata Booted Warblers.

The drive brought us close to the borders with Kazakhstan before we climbed over a ridge and eased down to the entry gate for Kanas Lake Reserve. Here we heard, but didn't see, Corncrake. We did get onto a group of vultures, which showed only poorly in the declining light but were most likely Eurasian Griffons.

Kanas Lake is one of the best areas in China for game birds - Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Ptarmigan and Hazel Hen have all been seen and Altai Snowcock greatly wished for! We headed into the mountains early the next morning and missed all of the above, despite a tough climb of several hundred metres through conifer woods and meadows. In fact our only good birds of the day were 3 Three-toed Woodpeckers, which were almost certainly of a different species from the one we'd seen in Qinghai. We also added Nuthatch and Mountain Chiffchaff,

but most enjoyed the Coal Tits nesting between the inner and our walls of our chalet. The other highlight here was smoked Pike, fresh from the lake.

With time again pressing, we headed back to Haba He the next morning. However we did first visit the lake itself. It is a beautiful alpine lake, which feeds a fast and furious river. We found Mallard, Goosander and Goldeneye with chicks on the lake and a lone drake Pochard, but the highlight was a last gasp discovery of a small party of Crossbills in exactly the same place as I had ticked them in 1998!

As we left the reserve we found a pair of Wrynecks at a nest hole - the first breeding record for Xinjiang, which were duly photographed by Ma Ming. While he was busy we were distracted by a party of three noisy Black Woodpeckers - a bird I have lusted after and consistently dipped on for the last ten years! They flew up from some riverside trees and smacked a dead log to pieces before moving off into the forest still shrieking at each other. We also found three Hobbies and dipped again on Corncrake, despite getting to within six feet of one calling bird, which drove Judith close to the dementia of the more unhinged Victorian explorers!

We added a White-backed Woodpecker at Bei Haba, a Northern Sparrowhawk at Terek, and a flock of over a thousand Rose-coloured Starlings as we emerged from the foothills. They were all in superb summer plumage and rooted for food among the pasture on both sides of, and some times on, the road. We also added a couple more Lesser Kestrels and a bizarrely plumaged Pied Wheatear, which closely resembled the vittata variation. But the finest moment of the day was a rest stop just to the north of Haba He. As we approached four Black-bellied Sandgrouse appeared, flying at speed over the fields and dropped into a stream bed right by the road. Creeping up to the edge we watched them gingerly approaching the water, taking several gulps and sinking down to soak their bellies in order to carry

the water back to their nest for their chicks.

As this finished I spotted a distant harrier which we decided was probably Montagu's. We didn't have to wonder for long. The bird began flying towards us along a ridge, and as we watched, four more birds appeared, including a pristine adult male and two immature males. It was a stunning moment and perhaps the defining "Xinjiang moment". The area also held Red-headed Bunting, a singing male Bluethroat and a couple of Richard's Pipits, but these paled a long way into insignificance! A final stint along the Burqin Road produced 23 Black Storks circling across the road towards the river to roost, two Western Marsh Harriers and a singing Savi's Warbler.

The next day we went to the Haba River to search for Oystercatcher and Penduline Tit. We dipped on both, but did add Grey-headed Woodpecker, at least five Golden Orioles, and three Blyth's Reed Warblers in the well-wooded areas along the river, and a couple of Curlews on the flood plain. As we entered Altai County, we stopped at a marsh known to Ma Ming, where we found several Bearded Tits, breeding Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Great Reed and Savi's Warblers. We also found a pair of Black-tailed Godwit.

Much more exciting was a detour into the desert south of the road to look for a salt lake where Ma Ming had found China's first breeding colony of Little Gull last summer. As we approached the lake we were greeted by the bizarre sight of Gull-billed Terns flying out across the desert hunting for lizards. As we got to the edge of the lake we found 20 Little Gulls sitting on the water and flying above us, from where we had superb views of the silveredged black underwings of this beautiful, elegant bird.

We arrived in Fuhai close to Ulungur Lake, stopping only for a pair of Little Owls and their fully fledged chicks sitting on low ledges right next to the road. A very unpleasant drive down a road under



construction, which had been turned to desert for a hundred and more metres either side, was made it even better by the knowledge that we had to return along it the next day!

Ulungur Lake itself was our main site for Mute Swan and Oystercatcher. We dipped big-time, adding only Caspian Tern flying over the lake, but did see a couple of Desert Lesser Whitethroat and a fine flock of 7 Lesser Kestrels. There is now so much disturbance here from fishermen in inner tubes and giant floating baskets that any swans or White Pelicans, seen here in the past, must be on other parts of the lake, if they are still here at all! We next headed for the eastern Altai, seeing Bee-eaters and Western Jackdaws at Beitun dump and four Steppe Eagles close to the road near Fuwen, where in '98 we had seen over 30 gorging on the results of a good rodent year. Coming off the plain edging the Junggar Basin we drove through low dry hills which held a Green Sandpiper that flew away at high speed and another Little Owl. We overnighted in Qinghe.

The next morning we tried to go to a reserve on the border with Mongolia which held Eurasian Beaver. Sadly, we got stopped just outside by border troops, who refused to let us through without a permit. However on the way back we birded along the river and added several Booted Warblers, Barred Warbler, a flock of 8 Goosander and a couple of wonderful Yellow-breasted Buntings in breeding plumage. We also heard a reeling Grasshopper Warbler but were driven off by heavy clouds of mosquitoes.

river which we hoped would hold Penduline Tit. Scanning from the bridge we saw several Common Sandpipers and Grey Wagtail on the river itself. We scoured the willows in vain until a tiny grey-brown blob shot across the river and landed on a willow tree just long enough for me to see a neat black mask, grey head and rufous-brown wings and back - a male Penduline Tit! Unfortunately it promptly vanished, but more searching produced a nest on a riverside willow. The bird gave frustratingly brief views, perching briefly on a nearby branch as it shuttled in and out of the nest - a curious dangling bag of willow seed fibres with a built on entrance tunnel. Other good birds included a bizarre record of 2 Caspian Tern, several Azure Tits, 4 Common Rosefinch and flock of 100 Jackdaws.

From here we began our southward journey back to Urumqi, arriving late that afternoon at a village on the Ulungur River. On the way we found Grey-necked Bunting, Mongolian Trumpeter Finch, and Pied Wheatear in the dry hills which separated Qinghe from the Junggar Basin and once on the desert road itself, a Long-Legged Buzzard, and a couple of Great Grey Shrikes.

An evening walk by the river was productive, delivering another nest-building Penduline Tit, several Nightingales, 3 Wrynecks, which included a pair and an adult carrying food, Red-headed Bunting, three Bee-eaters, Ruddy Shelduck, Common Tern, a heavily-worn Black Vulture and a Pallas' Sandgrouse. Once again we found no Oystercatcher.

On our final morning a very early start produced

Our last stop here was a bridge over the Qinghe


more passerines in the fields and pools along the river. Two of the best were a very young Bluethroat which stood on an overgrown mudbrick wall just a few metres from us for several minutes, and a couple of Pallas' Grasshopper Warblers singing in full view in the early morning sunshine. We also found several Hoopoes and their breeding holes, and a party of Lesser Grey Shrikes in the trees. 30 Red-crested Pochards flew west along the river in the direction of Ulungur Lake, while the larger pools hosted a Common Teal, a drake Pintail and a pair of Shoveler.

Despite assiduous searching, we resigned ourselves to dipping on Oystercatcher, but in one of those rare and excellent moments, when all hope appeared lost we ran into one lurking on a small gravelly pool on our walk back to the hotel for breakfast. A trio of White-backed Woodpeckers feeding on roadside trees directly opposite was our final bird before departing.

We headed south into some of the most barren and harsh desert we had yet encountered, but nevertheless continued to add birds. Most spectacular was a group of 17 Pallas' Sandgrouse coming very close

to the road to drink from pools of water still lingering from the winter months - the best sandgrouse views of the entire trip. Lesser Short-toed Larks were also taking advantage of the same pools and sunning themselves on the road.

Having decided that it was too late in the year to look for Bustards at Muli and wanting to minimise our driving time, our last chance of a good bird was Desert Warbler in the dune desert south of Volcano Town. In 1998 we'd decided this area was ideal, marched into the dunes and found one within 10 minutes. This time it took 20 minutes before Ma Ming found one of these sandy brown sylvia warblers in a dead tamarix in almost exactly the same location.


We saw 227 species in our 18 days in Xinjiang. Grateful thanks once again go to Ma Ming, for his knowledge of Xinjiang's birds and where to find them, but most of all for his friendly and enthusiastic companionship. Thanks are due also to the usual suspects who provided information which helped us to plan our trip - Richard Lewthwaite and Jesper Hornskov. 

Take — a — closer — look —

— Cheung Ho Fai, Lee Suk Ying



cited for the drastic changes in number, and the bird is now listed as 'vulnerable' in the 2000 Birdlife International "*Threatened Birds of the World*".

In Hong Kong, very small numbers of Baikal Teal are recorded most winters. The peak period for sightings is from late November to late March, though birds have been known to stay until late April. 

The **Baikal Teal** is named for Lake Baikal in Eastern Russia, the deepest lake in the world. Baikal Teal breed in large areas just north of Lake Baikal and winter in South Korea.

Baikal Teal is one of several duck species to undergo severe population declines in recent years. Hunting and habitat destruction are



Wild Condors Breed Successfully

For the first time in 18 years, a California condor egg laid in the wild has hatched in the wild. The egg hatched on Thursday April 11, in a nest in the rugged back country of California's Ventura County. The chick's parents were captive-reared at the Los Angeles Zoo and San Diego Wild Animal Park, then released into the wild at the age of one by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1995.

Four other condor nest sites have been observed this year, two in California and two in the Grand Canyon in Arizona. There are 63 condors now living in the wild in California and Arizona, 18 in field pens ready for release and 104 in captivity at the Los Angeles Zoo, San Diego Wild Animal Park and the Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho. Seven more captive-bred juveniles were released in California this spring.

The goal of the California Condor Recovery Plan is to establish two geographically separate populations, one in California and the other in Arizona, each with 150 birds and at least 15 breeding pairs.



Kakapo Comeback

The world population of New Zealand's endangered kakapo increased by an astonishing 39% over the breeding season just ended. 24 chicks were successfully reared, with 20 of the world's 21 adult females laying eggs.

This year's breeding success has raised the world population to 86 birds. However, as New Zealand's Prime Minister Helen Clark pointed out, "The bird remains an endangered species and it will need a number of successful breeding seasons before the population could be considered safe from extinction."

In the mid-1990's, with the numbers of

World Bird News

World Bird News

World Bird News

World Bird News

the giant green parrot falling to just 50 individuals, the Government launched a recovery programme, placing the birds on protected islands off the southern tip of New Zealand.

This year's breeding success has been attributed to a bumper yield of the native rimu trees, on whose seeds the kakapo feed.




Bird Protectors Get Serious

Bird conservationists in Britain have turned to one of the British army's most fearsome regiments, the Gurkhas, to help in their fight against egg thieves.

Inspectors from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) will be trained in camouflage and surveillance by the Nepalese troops. "The soldiers who are going to be doing the training have seen action in East Timor, Bosnia and Sierra Leone. We couldn't have hoped to be trained by anyone better," said RSPB spokesman Graham Madge. "The sort of message that we want to give egg collectors is that we want to stamp out this nefarious practice."

The Gurkhas' base in the south of England is ideally placed to help protect rare birds such as the marsh harrier. RSPB officers will hide in undergrowth and photograph potential thieves passing near endangered birds' nests, using skills taught by the Gurkha signals brigade, soldiers accustomed to operating way behind enemy lines.

Egg-collecting threatens to kill off several populations of endangered birds in Britain, said Mr. Madge, adding that it was hard to understand the habit. The RSPB says that there is no significant market for stolen eggs and that thieves cannot display their trophies because taking endangered birds' eggs is illegal in Britain.


British courts have cracked down on egg collectors in the past year, handing out the first jail sentence for nest-raiding last September, but only in mid-May a pair of osprey nests were robbed in Scotland. 

Hong Kong Bird News

A White Bellied Sea Eagle flown to UK for Conservation


A female White-bellied Sea Eagle has been transferred from the KFBG Wild Animal Rescue Centre in Hong Kong to the Hawk Conservancy in the UK, to join a conservation breeding programme. The Hawk Conservancy, a well-known raptor conservation centre in the UK, recently made a request to KFBG for disabled female white-bellied sea eagle to join a single disabled male bird at their facility, for the purpose of captive breeding and education.

The bird, named 'Jo', was handed to KFBG Wild Animal Rescue Centre by the previous Agriculture, Fisheries Department (AFD) in November 1994 after she was confiscated from a hawker attempting to sell her in Sheung Shui. "We hoped we could release Jo back to nature but we could not because of a serious injury to her left wing," explained Rupert Griffiths, KFBG Senior Conservation Officer. Though it was impossible to re-release Jo into the wild, it is hoped that she may still be able to make a contribution to the conservation of the species through this breeding programme.


White-bellied Sea Eagles are rare residents in Hong Kong, with only 5 breeding pairs recorded in recent years. They prey on mammals, birds, reptiles, fish and other tideline offal and they nest mostly on small islands and wooded habitat adjacent to the coastal area. White-bellied Sea Eagles, including their eggs and nests, are protected by the "Wild Animals Protection Ordinance" in Hong Kong. Any illegal trading of this animal should be immediately reported to AFCD (Tel.: 2150 6666). 

Little Ringed Plover breeding in Zhuhai

– Gao Yuren

The Little Ringed Plover is a winter visitor cum passage migrant in southern China. Since the first confirmed breeding record in Hong Kong in 1981, it has been found breeding on reclaimed land every year. However, breeding has not been recorded elsewhere in southern China. On 4 April this year, Gao Yuren of the South China Institute of Endangered Animals saw two adults moving around with three chicks on open grounds in Qi'ao Island of Zhuhai (22°25.50N, 113°38.21E). This observation supports the view of Hong Kong birders that the Little Ringed Plover is a resident in Hong Kong. It appears that the regional distribution of resident Little Ringed Plover might be extended to at least the Pearl River estuary. 

Richard's Log Books

Richard Lewthwaite welcomes bird data from China and can provide HKBWS members with log-books for many different sites or provinces in China. For some sites, Richard can also supply maps & background information. Examples are Ba Bao Shan and Che Ba Ling (Guangdong), Da Yao Shan (Guangxi), Wuyi Shan (Fujian), Poyang, Guan Shan and Wuyuan (Jiangxi), Bawaling (Hainan), Yangxian and Qinling Shan (Shaanxi), and Tian Shan (Xinjiang). In return, HKBWS members are asked to send Richard a completed copy of the log at the end of their trip. The results can contribute to our knowledge of the present-day distribution of birds in China. Richard can be reached at: * ELT Unit, CUHK, Sha Tin, NT, Hong Kong E-mail: <myrl@kthk.com.hk> 

Recent Reports, March – June 2002

– Richard Lewthwaite

Please note that these are unchecked records. Members are strongly encouraged to submit records of all species on Excel spreadsheets or rarity cards, which can be downloaded from the Society's website. If you have no access to the website, you may submit hard copy reports to the recorder via the HKBWS postal address.

March

As usual, levels of activity were high during the annual WWFHK Big Bird Race, held this year on 1st-2nd March. Among the highlights were a Long-billed Dowitcher, a Greater Scaup, a Baikal Teal, three Oriental Pratincoles and three Chinese Penduline Tits at Mai Po, three Red-breasted Mergansers in Deep Bay, an Eagle Owl at Chau Tau, a Citrine Wagtail at Long Valley, a Dusky Thrush at Kam Tin and a Common Rosefinch at Wo Hop Shek. The following day a Grey-capped Greenfinch was noted on the Gold Coast and the Daurian Jackdaw discovered in February was again seen at Tsim Bei Tsui.

Reports on 8th included a Great Crested Grebe in Shuen Wan Bay and a Black-winged Kite, a Lesser Whistling Duck, a Nordmann's Greenshank, a Pallas's, seven Yellow-legged, and 550 Heuglin's Gulls, and the two over-wintering Carrion Crows, all at Mai Po or in Deep Bay.

Among notable mid-month reports were a Fujian Niltava in Tai Po Kau on 13th, nine Falcated Duck at Mai Po on 17th, a Mrs Gould's Sunbird (Cat. E) at Lugard Road on 18th and a Eurasian Hoopoe on 21st. There were also occasional sightings of the Lesser Whistling Duck, Nordmann's Greenshank and Long-billed Dowitcher at Mai Po.

The first clear sign of spring passage came on 24th when a Blue-and-white Flycatcher and a Narcissus Flycatcher were found at Mount Davis. On Lamma Island, a small influx of starlings (one White-

cheeked, four White-shouldered and two Silky) was noted the next day, three Ashy Minivets on 29th, and single Blue-and-white and Narcissus Flycatchers on 31st. Meanwhile in Tai Po Kau, a Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo, a Forest Wagtail, and single Blue-and-white and Narcissus Flycatchers were noted on 27th, as once again was a Pygmy Wren Babbler. At Mai Po, shorebird numbers were building up, with 1000 Curlew Sandpipers present by 30th.

April

The first day of the month was very promising, with an Eastern Grass Owl on the hills above Discovery Bay, a Pectoral Sandpiper in the Shenzhen River area, three Long-billed and three Asian Dowitchers at Mai Po, an Ashy Minivet and an early Indian Cuckoo (singing) at Cheung Chau, and two Narcissus Flycatchers at Po Toi. Flycatchers found during 2nd-4th included a Mugimaki and Blue-and-white in Kowloon Park, several Hainan Blues, a Ferruginous, and single Asian and Japanese Paradises in Tai Po Kau, and a Narcissus at Mount Austin, where there were also single Pale and Dusky Thrushes.

However, as an unusually hot and dry spell set in, migrant landbirds became very scarce up to 12th, as evidenced by a complete lack of migrants noted on a visit to Po Toi island on 7th. In Deep Bay, though, a good spread of shorebirds were present, including two Pectoral Sandpipers, three Long-billed Dowitchers, 91 Great Knots and 85 Bar-tailed Godwits, and at Mai Po a Black-naped Oriole, now rare in spring, was seen on 10th. Elsewhere there were two Grey-faced Buzzards and 50 Silver-backed Needletails at Mong Tseng on 11th, and a Chestnut-eared Bunting at Mai Po on 12th, whilst in Tai Po Kau two Pygmy Wren Babblers were present until at least 20th and two Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoos throughout the month and into May.

The passage of landbirds continued to be light during 13th-20th, highlights during this period being a Baillon's Crake, a Citrine Wagtail and six Chinese Penduline Tits at Long Valley, an Ancient Murrelet at Po Toi, up to three Swinhoe's Egret, a Little Stint, up to 13 Little Curlews, 32 Asian Dowitchers and 11 Nordmann's Greenshanks in Deep Bay, an Oriental Cuckoo, up to six Blue-tailed Bee-eaters and two Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers at Mai Po, an Arctic Warbler at Sha Tin Park, a late Common Kestrel, Siberian Blue Robin and Blue Rock Thrush at Tai Mo Shan, a late Mugimaki Flycatcher at Tai Po Kau and a Black Bulbul and an Oriental Cuckoo at the nearby Tai Po Kau Headland.

Towards the end of the month there were reports of 52 Chinese Goshawks heading north at Lamma Island on 26th, two Black Bazas at Ho Chung, a total of ten Arctic Warblers and one Grey-streaked Flycatcher at Cheung Chau and Dong Ping Chau, and the first Spoon-billed Sandpiper of the year at Mai Po, all on 27th, and 10 Blue-tailed Bee-eaters at Tsim Bei Tsui on 28th.

Also in this month, three Greater Painted Snipe chicks were found at Long Valley, while Brownish-flanked and Russet Bush Warblers, Lesser Shortwing and Mountain Tailorbird all appeared to be holding territory on the upper slopes of Tai Mo Shan.

May

On the first day of the month an Ancient Murrelet was found in Tolo Channel and a Manchurian Reed Warbler and a Lanceolated Warbler were at Mai Po. Also of note in the first week of the month were two Swinhoe's Egrets at High Island and a Black Baza at Mong Tseng on 4th, and two Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoos at Tai Po Kau on 6th.

In coastal waters, totals of 50 Black-naped and 210 Bridled Terns and 357 Red-necked Phalaropes were logged on 11th, an unidentified frigatebird was sighted at Dong Ping Chau on 16th.


Visits to Tai Mo Shan around mid-month confirmed the continued presence of the Brownish-flanked and Russet Bush Warblers. Lesser Shortwings and Mountain Tailorbirds had been found there in April.

At Mai Po, a good spread of shorebirds were noted, including up to 11 Nordmann's Greenshank throughout the month, up to two Pectoral Sandpipers on 10th and 18th, and a Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Little Stint during 12th-16th. Heavy rain in mid-month brought reports of a Pechora Pipit at Mai Po on 19th, single Pheasant-tailed Jacanas at three localities there (including the boardwalk) during 14th-20th, and Schrenck's, Cinnamon, Yellow and Black Bitterns at Long Valley during 18th-20th.

Following three late Ashy or Swinhoe's Minivets at Mai Po on 24th, a series of unusual sightings on 25th included a Great Bittern, four Red Turtle Doves and 16 White-cheeked Starlings, (all late or very late), along with two Black Bitterns at Mai Po, two Schrenck's, a Cinnamon and five Yellow Bitterns together with a Savanna Nightjar at Long Valley (possibly the first there), and five Himalayan Swiftlets near Happy Valley. In the last week of the month, Yellow and Cinnamon Bitterns were fairly widespread in the northern New Territories, and a Watercock was at Long Valley.

June

In June, due to a lack of typhoons and the distractions of the World Cup, very few reports were received.

Birds of note in this month were a Striated Heron at Long Valley on 10th and a Purple Heron at Luk Keng on 18th, both unusual localities for these species in summer. A Eurasian Collared Dove was recorded at Tsim Bei Tsui on 15th, a Lesser Frigatebird near Castle Peak power station on 16th, and two unidentified frigatebirds near Tap Mun on 22nd. 

Outing Report -

Mai Po, 19 May, 2002

- Dickson Wong



An unusually small group of 20 members (including 3 leaders) gathered at Mai Po car park, where we waited for 15 minutes because of the heavy rain. Once we started, the weather brightened up and the birds became active. Juvenile Plain Prinia came out from the shrubs, their curiosity about us making them quite approachable. Passing through the Chinese Pond Heron heronry, we heard the calls of the chicks from their nests, crowded above in the large fig tree. An Indian Cuckoo was also calling as it flew high above the fishponds. This dove-sized bird, but dusky and slimmer, was trying to declare its territory with its flying and calling display.

At the 3-story hide, an Intermediate Egret was among a group of egrets standing near the left, closer "island" of gei wai no.8. At the far end of this island, a female Painted Snipe was showing off her brilliant plumage, and also on view was the male. Black-winged stilts were wandering in the water at the right hand side and behind them some yellow-nib ducks were holding swimming races. Sadly, though, they had no spectators. However, a Yellow Bittern was seen by a member of our group.

Originally, we had planned to head directly to the boardwalk, but I got a phone call mentioning that a Pheasant-tailed Jacana had been seen at the waterfowl collection the day before, so we decided to try our luck. At the artificial island, we spotted a Little Green Heron, and just below it, at the water's edge, there was the Pheasant-tailed Jacana, busily feeding. The plumage was still light, not as contrasting and bright as in full breeding plumage, and the tail was just protruding out


a bit. But some of the members were amazed by its very long toes and we all were satisfied with this close look.

Since we were expecting a higher tide, due to the heavy rain of the previous few days, we hurried on to the boardwalk. Once we got there, I was disappointed to find a mud-skipper collector gliding around on the mudflats. There were almost no small waders on view. Calling the police, WWF and AFCD seemed useless since they appear unable to

control these irritating people. In this terrible situation, only a Chinese Egret gave our spirits a lift. Its distinctive side-ways-bent neck and shifting feeding behavior made it very quaint and lovely to watch. We left the boardwalk and headed to the 'Scrapes', hoping for a better chance of waders.



Gei wai no.16 and 17 were crowded with waders and from the border fence, someone spotted another two Jacana. We decided to go into the no. 5 hide for closer look at the waders. The views were much better than at the boardwalk, where the waders were moving very fast with the incoming tide. Inside the scrape, most of them were resting and we were able to watch them for as long as we liked. Most of our group members were able to get really good views of rare species like Nordmann's Greenshank, Asiatic Dowitcher, Pectoral Sandpiper, a pair of Jacana (one with a long tail) and Lesser Whistling Duck. Some of the waders, like Spotted Redshank, Turnstone, Great Knot and Red Knot, were in their unmistakable breeding plumage.

But the most exciting thing of the day happened when we left the hide and headed back to the car park. Mike Leven spotted a Pechora Pipit (my new tick!!!) and it stayed long enough for us to have a look through telescope and a take a snapshot. The total number of species recorded for the day was around 60, so the outing really was like a rainbow after the rain. 

Lamma Island Camp

27 members participated in this year's Lamma Island Camp on May 11th and 12th. We started off at about 3 p.m. on a ferry for Sok Kwu Wan. The weather was fine with a light breeze.



Under the balcony of a seafood restaurant, the group watched with great interest their first "score" of the day: three chicks in a Swallow's nest. Two Reef Egrets, a Little Egret and a Common Sandpiper were spotted easily on the muddy beach at low tide. Calls of the Indian Cuckoo and



Lesser Coucal were heard near Lo So Shing. A male Fork-tailed Sunbird was seen resting under the shade of bamboos. On the mound just outside the camp, we saw a Chinese Francolin being chased away by Magpies. Fortunately, the bird resumed calling on its perch rock shortly afterwards. As usual for the



Lamma Island Camp, Savannah Nightjars began their show towards nightfall. Their characteristic call was first heard from a distance, becoming louder as they approached and finally seen flying over the camp. One of them swooped down and passed us at just 3 meters!

Then came the "Safari Barbecue Dinner" hosted by Wong Tin Wah, one of the camp leaders. Members had a chance to try various survival skills: chopping up

firewood with an axe, lighting a fire without matches and fashioning forks out of bamboo. The day was rounded off by a late-night show featuring Wong's videos and slides.

Early birders started the following day at around six, enjoying the songs around the camp under the morning sun. We packed up after breakfast and left the camp for Yung Shue Wan. A male Mallard was found basking under the sun at Hung Shing Yeh Beach. We were told that he had stayed there continuously for over one year, probably after being separated from the wintering flock. Anyone interested may go and have a swim with this chap!





After putting down our bags at TW's home, we trained our telescopes on a Black-eared Kite nest on a small hill opposite the front door. Lesser Coucal and Black Drongos were identified near Tai Peng, where two adult White-bellied Sea Eagles were also found flying a short distance away. A Black-eared Kite was repelled by Black Drongos every time it flew low over some trees, probably raiding their nests. The kite was seen feeding among the trees afterwards, but we could not tell whether the catch was a Drongo chick.

When we took the return ferry after lunch, four Black-naped Terns bade us farewell on navigation light 99 off the pier at Yung Shue Wan.

About 30 species were recorded during this two-day trip, a total undoubtedly affected by the hot weather.



Coming Activities

Date	Leader/Speaker	Activity / Gathering location	Time	Difficulty
1 Oct (Tue)	Kwok Hon Kai Captain Wong	Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve 08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark (Tsung Tsai Yuen)	08:00 – 13:00	XXX
3 Oct (Thur)	Yu Yat Tung Forrest Fong	Indoor meeting <Seabird of South East China: Photo and video Presentation> Conference Hall, HK Observatory	18:45 – 20:00	
6 Oct (Sun)	Yam Wing Yiu Forrest Fong	Shing Mun 08:00 Tsuen Wan MTR Station Hang Seng Bank	08:00 – 13:00	XXX
14 Oct (Mon)	Kwan Tze Hoi Cheung Yung	Wu Kau Tang 08:00 Tai Po Market KCR station (Taxi station) or 08:40 Wu Kau Tang Carpark	08:00 – 15:00	XX
20 Oct (Sun)	Karl Ng Grace Chan Stanley Ng	Mai Po 08:00 Kowloon Tong KCR Station (B1/B3 exit) or 09:00 Mai Po carpark, coach leaves at 15:00 and back to Kowloon Tong at 16:00  	09:00 – 15:00	XX
27 Oct (Sun)	Cheung Ho Fai Eugene Yeung	Kam Tin 08:00 Sha Po Tsuen Carpark	08:00 – 13:00	XX
31 Oct (Thur)	Cheung Ho Fai	Indoor meeting <Winter Atlas Surveyor Workshop> Conference Hall, HK Observatory	18:45 – 20:00	
3 Nov (Sun)	Mike Chalmers Luk Tsun Pun Hung Wai Ming	Mai Po 08:00 Kowloon Tong KCR Station (B1/B3 exit) or 09:00 Mai Po carpark, coach leaves at 15:00 and back to Kowloon Tong at 16:00  	09:00 – 15:00	XX
10 Nov (Sun)	Richard Lewthwaite Chu Cho Yan, Chu Chui Ping	Sha Lo Tung, Hok Tau 08:00 Tai Po Market KCR station Taxi station)	08:00 – 13:00	XX
24 Nov (Sun)	Cheung Ho Fai	Winter Atlas Surveyor Workshop <Mirs Bay>	Please contact leader	
	Yu Yat Tung	Waterbird Count Training 9:00 Mai Po Carpark (Intermediate and advanced bird watchers only, for information and enrollment, please refer attachment)	Please contact HKBWS Project Office (Tel: 2377 4387, Fax: 2314 3687, e-mail: hkbws@hkbws.org.hk)	
28 Nov (Thur)	Lee Kwok Shing	Indoor meeting <Identification of Thrushes> Conference Hall, HK Observatory	18:45 – 20:00	
8 Dec (Sun)	Cheung Ho Fai	Winter Atlas Surveyor <Lantau>	Please contact leader	
15 Dec (Sun)	Forrest Fong	HKBWS Bird Watching Competition (for members only) Details to be announced later	If you are interested, please contact Forrest Fong (forrest_fong@yahoo.com.hk)	

Date	Leader/Speaker	Activity / Gathering location	Time	Difficulty
19 Dec (Thur)	Guest speaker: Dr. Richard Corlett	Indoor meeting <Should we reintroduce "missing" birds to Hong Kong?> Conference Hall, HK Observatory	18:45 – 20:00	
22 Dec (Sun)	Cheung Ho Fai	Winter Atlas Surveyor <Mirs Bay>	Please contact leader	
5 Jan (Sun)	Cheung Ho Fai	Winter Atlas Surveyor <Lantau>	Please contact leader	
19 Jan (Sun)	Simon Wong	Shum Chung 08:15 Ma Liu Shiu Pier	08:15 – 13:00	
23 Jan (Thur)	Michelle Kong Peter Wong Man Chup Ming	Indoor meeting <Bird photography> HK Observatory Conference Hall	18:15 – 20:00	

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 Ms. Ada Chow, the Mai Po tour coordinator - 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.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by phone or by e-mail at least one week before the outing. If you wish to check your booking, please contact Ms. Ada Chow at 2580 6472.

From 2000 onwards, 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 Ltd" OR
- (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 Ltd", but please send the booking slip in as well to confirm your payment and attendance.



Transportation arrangement



Please fill in the booking slip and return

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>

- ** Location for indoor meeting: Conference Hall, Hong Kong Observatory, 134A Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, HK

Activity Booking Slip

I wish to reserve places for _____ members and _____ non-members for the tour on: _____.

- * 20 Oct 2002 (Sun) Mai Po 3 Nov 2002 (Sun) Mai Po

The number of person(s) using the coach is _____. Coach fare:

- * _____ x HK\$40/Member _____ x HK\$60/Guest # _____ x HK\$20 Student member

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

Cheque for HK\$ _____ (Payable to The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Ltd)

Name : _____ Contact No. : _____

Address : _____

Date : _____ Signature : _____

Note: Please send this application together with crossed cheque by mail to Ms. Ada Chow, P.O. Box 28554, Gloucester Road Post Office, Wanchai, Hong Kong. Application should be made at least two weeks before the date of the outing. Late application will only be accepted if places are available.

* Please as appropriate

The Story of "Bad-luck Spoon-bill" (2)

黑仔的故事(二)

— 任永耀 Yam Wing Yiu

熱鬧的氣氛給鎗聲打破，雀鳥都爭相走避。

The cheerful atmosphere has been broken by a shot.
All the birds are escaping.



這裡還是不安全，
真是沒有更好的地方嗎？

It's not safe here. Isn't there a
safer place we can go to?

途中，黑仔遇上了受傷的啄木鳥大哥。

Bad-luck spoon-bill meets the wound woodpecker
on the way.

老兄！你是怎樣受傷的？

Hey friend, how did you
get hurt?



我在樹上休息時，

給那些小朋友用石頭弄成這樣子的！

I was hit by stones thrown by some kids
while I was resting in a tree!

..... 未完待續 to be continued

聚雀店

Hi! 各位鳥友，又到「聚雀店」向大家推介新貨品的時候了！

新鮮抵港的是一批批緻的雀鳥公仔，樣子可愛之餘更會發出叫聲，款式多不勝數，篇幅所限不能盡錄，這裡刊出幾款供各鳥友參考，有興趣的鳥友可選擇親臨本會項目辦公室或於出席本會舉辦之講座時選購，無任歡迎！

bird hop

Hi all birders!

The newly-arrived items are a series of beautiful bird soft toys.

They not only look cute, they give out a cute sound, too! There are so many different models, we don't even have enough space to show them all here. If you would like to place an order, please come to our project office or see us at the indoor seminars.

You are always
welcome!



實物呎吋(大約):
18 厘米(橫) x 12 厘米(高)
Actual size (approximate):
18cm(w) x 12cm(h)





紅咀藍鵲 (九龍公園) — 黃理沛 Blue Magpie (Kowloon Park) — Peter Wong

