

香港觀鳥會 The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society



bulletin

會員通訊



197

Autumn 2005 - 秋



流蘇鶯 – Neil Fifer (米埔)

Ruff – Neil Fifer (Mai Po)

• 6/9/2005

• Fieldscope and Digital Camera
with adaptor, ISO 80, 1/250th sec.
f/4.8, magnification – camera 2.2x
(full zoom), scope 20x

勺嘴鶯 – 盧嘉孟 (米埔)

Spoon-billed Sandpiper –
Lo Kar Man (Mai Po Pond 16)

• 10/4/2005

• SLR Camera with 800mm/f5.6
lens + 2x Converter, ISO 400



畫雀仔 paint bird .com

大山雀

Great Tit

– 李玉堂 Lee Yuk Ying



The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited

(Approved Charitable Institution of a Public Character)

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(Sha Kok Mei, Sai Kung)
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Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of Hong Kong Bird Watching Society was held at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 4 October 2005 at the Conference Hall, Hong Kong Observatory, 134A Nathan Road, Kowloon.

Record Membership Numbers

According to our data on 12 September 2005, there are 814 members. This number is also a new record for HKBWS! We hope that there will be more people to join us.

Office Equipment

To maintain a sustainable future for the office, we would be grateful if members could look out for and donate second-hand equipment and stationery as follows :-

Equipment: LCD monitor (several), notebook computer, electric fan, digital camera.

Please contact Mr Lo at 2377 4387 if you can assist.

HKBWS IT Facilities

Parts of the IT facilities of HKBWS Office are quite outdated; some of them are not functioning well. The Society plans to improve some of the facilities and the internet service. If you have any suggestion or can provide any volunteer technical support to us, please contact Forrest FONG through email (fkwforrest@yahoo.com.hk).

The Society is grateful to the following sponsors and donors:

- * The "International Symposium on Black-faced Spoonbill" is sponsored by **The Croucher Foundation, Environment and Conservation Fund, and Environmental Campaign Committee.**

- * "Colours on Wings – Hong Kong Wild Bird Photo Contest 2005" is sponsored by **The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust.**
- * **Canon Hongkong Company Limited** sponsored the publication of the "Episodes of Birds" DVD, and donated a printer and a scanner to the Society.
- * **Swarovski Hong Kong** has lent 2 sets of high-quality fieldscopes and 6 pairs of binoculars to the Society to promote birdwatching activities.
- * The following members generously contributed to the "Tap Mun Tern Festival": Mr CHENG Wai-chung, Mr Andrew Hardacre, Mr MAN Kuen-yat, Mr YIU Kwok-kuen, Ms YUEN Wai-man, Mr HUNG Lai-yung, Mr Richard Lewthwaite, Mr PANG Chi-wah, Ms. Ada CHOW, Ms. LU Wei, Mr. KWONG Koon-wan & Ms. CHAN Mei-wan, Ms. WENG Lien-fen & Mr LAM Pong-hing, Mr WONG Lok-hang, Mr CHAN Ka-keung. The total amount is \$11,300.-
- * Mr Henry LUI has donated 10 copies of his book "Birdwatching in the Big City" to the Society for reference of guiding activities in urban parks.
- * Hong Kong Discovery has donated a set of 6 field guides to the Society.
- * Several members have donated papers and other stationery to the HKBWS Office.

New edition of "The Birds of Hong Kong and South China"

The new edition of "The Birds of Hong Kong and South China" (English version) has been published in July 2005. Cost HK\$158 member can get discount price at HK\$135 through the Society. If you are interested, please contact the staff of HKBWS Office (membership@hkbws.org.hk).

The BIRDS of
HONG KONG and
SOUTH CHINA



Edith Wilson
Linda Phillips
Lan Chee Yee

A. Research Projects

Keeping Asia's Spoonbills Airborne -International Symposium on Research and Conservation of the Black-faced Spoonbill

- Organiser:** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society
- Supporting Organizations:** BirdLife International Asia Division, Agriculture, Fisheries & Conservation Department, WWF(Hong Kong) and Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden
- Sponsored by:** The Croucher Foundation, Environment and Conservation Fund, Environmental Campaign Committee
- Date:** 16-18 Jan 2006
- Introduction:** To ensure the long-term future of globally threatened Black-faced Spoonbills and their habitat, the Society will organize an international symposium in Jan 2006. The highlight of the symposium will be a discussion platform to review existing information, to strengthen research efforts and to streamline conservation efforts to protect this species and their natural wetland habitats. We also hope to discuss an action plan for the conservation of the BFS. Experts will be invited from N. Korea, S. Korea, Japan, Mainland China, Taiwan, Macao, Vietnam and Hong Kong.

Research Groups

I. Swallows and Swifts Group

You may remember the story about a swallow nest in Sok Kwu Wan Pier, Lamma Island (please see the column "Swallows and Swifts" in BBS). Although the kind-hearted staff of the ferry company have saved two swallows that time, there are still nests being damaged because of people's ignorance. In order to provide more knowledge to the general public about the conservation of swallow and their nests, we will organise a few activities in the coming months, such as producing poster (collaborate with LCSD) and leaflet, as well as the conducting of swallow survey. Your support and participation in this volunteer work can make a difference. Please contact Mr Apache Lau or our Project Manager WY Lo now.

II. Egret Research Group - Captain Wong

- Two papers about the egret nesting population in Hainan, and an overview of the local egret nesting population trend between 1989 and 2004 were accepted by a journal, *Waterbirds*, earlier this year.
- As in previous years, the summer nest count was conducted by ERG between April and June. The preliminary result showed that the population remains high at around 950 nests. Two volunteers, Kwok Jai and Louis Fung, helped to conduct counts in some colonies.
- Using typical internet search engines, ERG is trying

to locate possible nesting colonies in China. This research is considered the first stage and follow-up work like verifying the locations and nesting species with local birdwatching groups is expected in the subsequent stages.

- A new member, Dr Louis FUNG Chi-lai, joined ERG in August. He is currently a supervisor in KFBG and has rich experience in keeping waterbirds, like Black-faced Spoonbills and egrets, in captivity.

III. Kite Research Group

- During the kite count in August, our group carried out a special count at a new site near the regular kite count site at Stonecutters Island. The site has a better view of Stonecutters Island with a higher count than the regular site. Kite counting in all 3 sites will be carried out when manpower is sufficient. We would like to thank Mr Arthur YAU for offering us the new place.
- The result for the kite count as below:

Date	No. of Night Roosting Kite at Stonecutters Island (Snapshot Count)	No. of Night Roosting Kite at Magazine Gap (Snapshot Count)
5/6	92	65
3/7	29	93
14/8	125	102

IV. Tern Research Group

With generous donations and enthusiastic help from volunteer members, the first Tap Mun Tern Festival was

successfully held this summer. Major events were:

- * Reprint of the Tern Booklet, with sponsorship from Swarovski Hong Kong Limited
- * Launch of the website Terns of Hong Kong (in Chinese)
- * Roadshows on terns at KCR stations, Ma Liu Shi Pier and Tap Mun Pier
- * Four seminars on terns, three to secondary school students and one open to the public
- * Two tern-watching tours to Mirs Bay in July, with over 140 participants
- * Participation in the Tern Conservation Day organized by the Tai Po Environmental Association

We would like to express our thanks to members for their great contributions, particularly elderly members from the Crested Bulbul Club, who ran all the road shows.

Weekly tern surveys were carried out at Mirs Bay as in previous years. Two survey trips were also made to southeastern waters on 12 June and 22 July.

Bridled Terns continued to breed at Tern Island this summer. Count figures were lower than those of the previous year, despite the fact that the amount of disturbance was less. In late May/early June Black-naped Terns abandoned the breeding site at Kung Chau after weeks of continuous heavy rain. They appeared to have relocated to two rocky islands, one near Double Haven and the other to the east of Sai Kung. Roseate Terns were found only on occasion and no breeding was noted.

B. Education, Publicity and Publications

Closing Ceremony of "The Elderly lead the Elderly to Watch Birds (Healthy Ageing Project)" and the "2nd Anniversary of the Crested Bulbul Club"

Sponsored by the Elderly Commission and the Hong Kong Jockey Club, the Healthy Ageing Project has come to an end. It was the continuation of the "Healthy Ageing Project Phase 1" begun in 2001. The aim was to promote bird watching to the elderly by the elderly, including giving talks and conducting site visits. In order to achieve the project goals, the Birdwatching Society trained up about 60 elderly potential bird trip leaders during the past 2 years. HKBWS also provided services to 123 elderly centres and other organizations during the same period, reaching out to about 14,000 people. The formal closing ceremony was held on 25 August officiated by Mr. WAN Man-ye, JP, Chairman of the Community Partnership Committee of the Elderly Commission.

A party was also organized to celebrate the 2nd Anniversary of the Crested Bulbul Club. About 100 members attended.

The end of the "Healthy Ageing Project" DOES NOT MEAN the end of the Crested Bulbul Club or the end of HKBWS promotion of bird watching with the elderly. The Society is firmly committed to the future of these activities.

Meeting Point for Early Morning Bird Watchers at Kowloon Park & Hong Kong Park

- No. of participants in Hong Kong Park during Jan to August 2005: **246**
- No. of participants in Kowloon Park during Jan to August 2005: **349**

New Column in BBS and New Logo for the Crested Bulbul Club

To aid communication among members of the club, there is a new column in the Bulletin Board Section of the website. Members are welcome to browse and make comments.

A new "CBC" logo has been drawn by HO Wing Fai. Many thanks also to Hendrix TO for providing the photo.



Bird watching guiding services and training activities

- 1) 16/7 Talks & practice in Lady MacLehose Holiday Camp (by Robin Fung)
- 2) 24/7 Guiding tour to the Tai Po Tern Conservation Day organised by Tai Po Environmental Association (by HF Cheung and Alan Chan)
- 3) 5/8 Talk and outing for about 15 Greening Volunteers of the Hong Kong Park (outing assisted by Crested Bulbul Club)
- 4) Jul - Aug Bird watching course for Caritas Kwun Tong Elderly Centre (by Crested Bulbul Club)
- 5) 21/8 Eco-tour guide training for Green Peng Chau Association. (by Robin Fung)

New Publications "Bird Life and Behaviour" and "Episodes of Birds" (DVD)

The book "Bird Life and Behaviour" includes 40

interesting and informative stories of bird lives and behaviour happening in Hong Kong. It is the first local popular science book to combine photography with bird ecology.

"Episodes of Birds" by MAN Chup-ming, is a DVD featuring video of 65 species taken in Hong Kong. Other than the shooting, Mr. MAN also edited the material and wrote the script. Interesting themes such as elegant posture, feeding, nesting and flying are included. The production of this DVD has been sponsored by Canon Hongkong Co. Ltd.

Colours on Wings – Hong Kong Wild Bird Photo Contest 2005/9/9

Date: Oct 2005 – Mar 2006

Sponsored by: The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust

- Contents:**
- Wild Bird Photo Contest (please refer to our website and coming publicity materials in due course for the details of the contest)
 - Talks and workshops
 - Exhibition of the winning photos
 - Publishing of booklets


Free Bird Leaflets I

The following informative leaflets are available to members free of charge:

- 1) Bird Watching – Nature is our teacher (includes 36 common bird species) (Chinese only)
- 2) Long Valley – A Living Classroom (includes 36 bird species found in LV) (bilingual)
- 3) Get close to Nature, Get to know Hong Kong (introduces a few common birds in detail) (Chinese only)
- 4) Birds in the City (Chinese only)
- 5) Black-faced Spoonbill (bilingual)
- 6) Wetlands and Migratory Birds (bilingual)

Please send the HKBWS office a return envelope with stamp, and indicate the number of leaflets you require (i.e. 1 to 6). Postage as follows:

- 1 piece - \$1.4
- 2 pieces - \$2.2
- 3 to 6 pieces - \$3.0

(please contact us to confirm the postage first if you request more than 6 leaflets). 

Changes of town planning regulations to protect sites from dumping

In the last couple of months the Government, and in particular the Planning Department and the Town Planning Board have introduced a number of new administrative measures to control dumping on rural land. This has been one of the most serious causes of degradation of important wetland habitats for the last few years. The best-known example is the Kam Tin Buffalo Fields – an important site for a range of freshwater wetland specialists including Greater Painted-snipe, and it is the only regular wintering site for Grey-headed Lapwing in Hong Kong.

In the past it was very difficult for the Government to prosecute those who dumped soil on agricultural land because the dumping itself was not illegal. However, following amendments to the Town Planning Ordinance, anyone wishing to dump soil on land designated as "Agriculture" must demonstrate they are doing so for a genuine agricultural purpose. In practice this means they may only deposit soil to a depth of 1.5 metres.

Mai Po update

– Lew Young

Earthmoving in gei wai 16/17

Over the past few autumns, WWF Hong Kong has been removing the soil off the tops of the three large islands in gei wai 16/17 and using the spoil to create smaller islands around the 'Scrape'. This has been necessary because the original islands were too large and tall so that grasses would quickly grow over and cover them, making them not useful for birds to roost on. Cutting the grasses on a regular basis could have been an option to deal with the situation but this would lead to a lot of disturbance to the birds on the 'Scrape'. Smaller and lower islands would provide habitat for roosting birds and the results of the earthmoving works over the past few years has shown



– Mike Kilburn, *Chairman, Conservation Committee*

In the past all sorts of construction and demolition waste was also dumped. Since it would be impossible to grow any sort of crop on such "soil" such dumping is now illegal, and the dumper can be forced to remove the soil and restore the site. AFCD will work closely with Planning Department to assess cases of dumping to determine their legitimacy, and to assist in prosecutions where appropriate.


In many cases dumping occurs so that the landowner can use his site for open storage of containers, vehicles or construction materials. It used to be possible for an owner to avoid prosecution by applying for permits to carry out open storage. Now, any site used for unauthorised open storage is subject to enforcement action from the Planning Department, and cannot avoid compliance with the enforcement conditions by making these applications, which often took several years to process and gave the owner plenty of opportunity to collect storage rents in the meantime!

While this will not directly stop dumping, it removes one of the commonest incentives for the dumpers. This is also important as the introduction of the Landfill charge has created a new incentive for unscrupulous

contractors to dump their waste away from the landfills.

HKBWS has also been consulted on two other Planning Department initiatives – one intended to control the location of open storage facilities, moving them away from sensitive habitats to less sensitive sites, and the other to move unauthorised industrial buildings to less sensitive locations.

While it has taken a great deal of time to see these changes come to fruition, they must first prove that they can be successfully implemented before any genuine success can be claimed. However, the close co-operation and consultation between the Planning Department and the environmental groups, has been one of the quiet successes of the last couple of years and has created a solid foundation for further co-operation to protect our natural habitats.

Look forward, the issue of dumping is by no means resolved. There will no doubt be more cases of dumping, even in August this year dumping continued to affect the Kam Tin Buffalo Fields. Members who observe dumping in the rural NT should immediately contact either the HKBWS office, Mike Kilburn (6221 2984) so that the appropriate authorities can take action. 

this to be true for the newly created islands.

This autumn, gei wai 16/17 will be drained again for the last set of earthmoving works to reduce the height of Island No. 1 on the landward side of the 'Scrape'. At the same time, work will be carried out to remove the carpet of grasses along the side the 'Scrape' by the dirt access road, that have been growing into 'Scrape' and covering the areas of mud and open water used by waterbirds. This work will begin in September and finish by the end of October in time for the arrival of the wintering birds.

After these works have been completed, then there are no plans to carry out any more work on the 'Scrape' in the coming years.


Grasscutting in Ponds 20 and 24

Regular cutting of the grasses along the bunds of Ponds 20 and 24 will be continuing until October to create a habitat that can be used by roosting waterbirds in winter but also, a place where the wintering Wigeon can graze on short grasses.

Removing mangrove seedlings from the Deep Bay mudflats

Removal of the mangrove seedlings on the Deep Bay mudflats in front of the floating birdwatching hides, will be carried out from September and completed by the end of October before the arrival of the wintering waterbirds. This work is so that we can maintain an open area of mudflat where the birds on the mudflat can roost and feed, and will also allow visitors to the birdwatching hides unobstructed views of the birds on the mudflat.

This work, however, is getting harder each year with the mudflat accreting each year due to the silt that is settling on the top. This causes the mudflat to become higher and drier, making it more suitable for mangroves seedlings to establish as well as grasses to grow. If this work was not carried out, then the mudflat would quickly become covered by mangroves and the mudflat where the birds roost and feed would be lost.

If you have any questions about these works, then please don't hesitate to ask any WWF staff members at Mai Po. You can contact us by telephone (2471-6306) or by e-mail (lyoung@wwf.org.hk) 



Xinjiang Province - 2 - 17 July, 2005



This was our second trip to Xinjiang, coming soon after our first visit last September (see winter 2004 issue Bulletin No 19 pp 13 - 23). We again covered a large area of the province, but this time despite starting in Altai, (阿勒泰), along the eastern fringe of the Gobi Desert, where it borders Mongolia, we spent most of our time in the south, crossing the middle of the Taklimakan Desert (塔克拉玛干沙漠) before following the southern Silk Road along the borders of Qinghai, Tibet and Pakistan, and finishing at Kashi (喀什, Kaxgar). We experienced extremely hot desert weather, and the contrastingly cool oasis air from oasis in deserts, as well as the coldness under the shadow of snow-capped mountains.

The following is my diary to share with birding friends.

2 July: Return to Altai

This is an exciting day for us. We flew into Urumqi (乌鲁木齐) from Shenzhen, then transferred immediately to Altai city (阿勒泰市). During the trip to Altai, the low altitude of the plane allowed us wonderful close-up views of the scenery of the Gobi Desert, Fuhai (福海), Lake Ulungur Hu (乌伦古湖) and Lake Jili Hu (吉力湖, Jililyuzi), the River Etrix He (额尔齐斯河) and the Altai Mountains.

Altai airport is located on National Road #216 (12km milestone), about 10 km from the lake where we saw Little Gull last year (milestone 23km, N47°38'56.6" E88°00'58.3", 659m). We tried there again. The lake was flooded after heavy rainfall, and the two pavilions were submerged in water, leaving only the red roofs visible above the surface. This time there were no Little Gulls, but we did find breeding Black-headed Gulls and Common Terns instead, and watched the adults attacking an intruding Common Kestrel in defence of their chicks. There were also large flocks of Ruddy Shelduck, Redshank, Pallas's Gull and Yellow-legged Gull resting on a small island in the middle of the lake, and on the opposite side were small groups of Little-ring Plovers and a Grey Heron.

As we traveled south towards Beitun (北屯) we found good numbers of White-winged Black Terns breeding close to the road. Some of them were carrying food which they took to their nests hidden in the reedbeds, with some even flying right over us on the road.

3 July: Beitun and Fuhai

Beitun is a well-developed county with the River Etrix He flowing along its edge. At 6:00am in the early morning, there were no other people except us in the street. We visited woodland adjacent to a river. At the entrance there were Great Tits feeding chicks, and a Common Starling bringing food to its nest hole in a tree. Inside the woodland were some active groups of Bluethroats, a Mistle Thrush, a White-backed Woodpecker, some Eurasian Goldfinches, Blyth's Reed Warblers and Sedge Warblers.

We continued along National Road # 318. Poplar plantations line both sides of the road, and behind was a patchwork of small pieces of farmland and semi-desert, where we found breeding flocks of Rosy Starlings and a Great Grey Shrike.

Lake Jili Hu in Fuhai county (福海, Burultokay Xian) (N46°59'25.6" E87°21'23.2", 483m), held breeding Red-crested Pochard, Black-headed Gull, Common Terns and other waterbirds. Again, the birds appeared very alert, and the Common Terns in particular reacted aggressively when we approached the lake. We also found Western Marsh Harrier, Great Reed Warbler, Paddyfield Warbler and Bearded Parrotbill in the reedbeds around the lake.

In the afternoon, we travelled along National Road #216 towards the Qinghe River (青河/青格里省, Qinggil Xian) which runs through the Altai Mountains on the border of China and Mongolia. Construction sites could be found in most of the road sections. The construction work had

left small "walls" of stones on both sides of the road, which had become a favorite breeding sites for good numbers of Rosy Starlings. The starlings kept busy chasing away the Black Kites and Long-tailed Buzzards that were after their chicks.

It took 5 hours to complete a 170km stretch of road. Near Qinghe, the habitat changes significantly from gobi (stone desert) to grassland. We found more stones piled up to a height of 0.5 metres. Our driver told us that the stone piles were used to attract raptors to control the population of rats.

4 July: Along the China-Mongolia border

In the early morning, we spent a few hours time in Qinghe's Hualin Park (青河桦林公園) (N46°41'07.5" E90°21'14.4", 1230m), a breeding site for Common Rosefinch, Spotted Flycatcher, White-crowned Penduline Tit, Yellowhammer and Common Nightingale. We also saw a pair of Common Cranes flying above the park towards the nearby mountains.

We continued along National Road # 876 to the Mongolian Border. Along the road, the environment is extremely silent, and the mountains appeared yellow and greenish. There were flocks of horses and goats, and small stretches of grasslands along the river. There were not many birds, although we did see Pied Wheatear, Desert Wheatear and small flocks of Rosy Starling.

The River Qinggil He River (青格里河) offered a range of beautiful riparian scenery, marked by mudbrick houses and birch woodland, which combined to depict a pure and simple environment. We took a rest at the Akaishiaobao village (阿奈什敖包鄉) (N46°17'07.1" E90°25'09.9", 1090m), where we found a Common Cuckoo and European Goldfinch.

In order to reach the Tianshan (天山) mountains 400km further south that evening, we left the Altay Mountains and traveled along National Road #228 at the eastern fringe of the Jungar Basin (准噶爾盆地). The jeep sometimes reached speeds of 120km/hr allowing us only fleeting views of the black gobi desert and brownish sand dunes whizzing quickly past the window. We were later on forced to slow down by strong winds and heavy rainfall. In this severe desert region, only sparsely distributed shrubs, small flocks of camels, and one small village could be found.

We had our lunch at the only village, Sartokay, (薩爾托

海) (N46°03'29.6" E90°09'08.4", 1001m) before travelling further south. We stopped at milestones 127-140km, 199km and 248km to look for Mongolian Ground Jay. However it was so windy that we found none.

Our drivers took us to a breeding site of Saker Falcon, which had been found by a local research team earlier last month. The place locates on the left hand side of the road leading to a silicified wood forest (矽化木林, milestone #244km). The nest was located near the top of one of the trees, which looked like a landscape of wind-carved "rocky mountain". At 10:30pm, at milestone 300km, we found a Black Kite roosting site, where a number of kites had gathered to spend the night.

As the road was closed due to road construction, we had to change our plans to stay overnight at Mori (木壘哈薩克自治縣, Mori Kazak Zizhixian), and instead went to Qitai county (奇台, Qitai Xian), which we finally reached just before mid-night.

5 July: Across Tianshan to southern Xinjiang

To make sure we stuck to our schedule, we tried to set a timeframe for each of the birding spots. Today, we traveled from Qitai along Provincial Road #303 to Bositan Village (博斯坦鄉) (N43°45'7.1" E90°30'41.3", 1072m) to look for McQueen's Bustard. We started our search along the southern edge of gobi desert, but it is rather difficult to look for one species only, especially when using binoculars in heavy heat-haze. Some Horned Larks were feeding actively on the ground, a Barbary Falcon perched on the ground, and several Long-legged Buzzards were resting on a line of broken fences, but flew off immediately as we approached them.

We tried to find a road through the Tianshan Mount to southern Xinjiang near Qijiaoing Village (七角井鄉) which is a road at the shortest and lowest altitude on the map. However, we were forced to find another road after several abortive attempts to cross a 1m wide ditch which had been cut across the road for installing telephone wires, and at 4:00pm we returned to Sanjiaoquanzi (三角泉子) Village and followed the "trails" left behind by other vehicles, which formed a rough track leading to Shanshan (鄯善, Piqan)! Along the road, we found Hoopoes, Asian House Martins, Richard's Pipits and Green Sandpipers. After climbing for some 60km, we reached the Gaoquan Pass (高泉達坂) (N43°30'20.7" E91°00'36", 2169m) and entered southern Xinjiang.

The route down through the Tianshan was mainly comprised of the mixture of sand typical of the Gobi desert environment. The overall landscape is generally flat with a small slope down towards the Tarim Basin (塔里木盆地). Except for a Lesser Kestrel and several wheatears, we found no other wildlife. After driving for 6 hours, we reached a railway and some oil fields which marked the entrance of Bayingoleng Mogolian Zizhizhou (巴音郭楞蒙古自治州). We continued west, passing oil plants, and grape farms complete with the unique grape drying towers.

We reached Shanshan (鄯善) in the late evening, and here the temperature reached 40°C. Shanshan, which had once been an ancient kingdom, is the political centre of Turpan (吐鲁番) district. At the southern edge of Shanshan is the Kumtag Desert (库姆塔格沙漠) which was one of the most important stopover points of the Silk Road which led to Dunhuang (敦煌) in the past. In both Shanshan and Turpan, which share the title of "the hottest place in China", we were able to find reasonably priced accommodation and restaurants.

6 July: Rainfall in "Fire-island"

Today's trip comprised of site seeing at some selected spots. The first one was the Turpan Bojikelike Buddha Cave (柏孜克里克千佛洞). The yellowish Buddha caves locate at the foot of the hill namely Udege Shan (乌德格山) at B.C. 300. Inside the cave are damaged painting of stories of Buddha and religions development. We were so lucky to find a Common Cuckoo perching in a tree in a small farmland along the riverside under the mountain. The Querdege Shan (雀尔达格山) or the "Fiery Mountain" has been used as an important part of the story "Monkey King, Journey to the West", where the Monkey King put out the fire at the Fiery Mountains with the magic fan, and the Monk and his disciples continue their journey to the west. The mountain shows deeply folded ridges with some reddish patterns, some stories describe this patterns as "fire under the sunlight". However, the weather of today seems not a good day for seeing the "fire", we could only found some greyish-yellow pattern under the occasional rainfall instead.

We visited briefly the Gaochang Ancient City (高昌故城), the Tomb of Asitana (阿斯塔那古墓) and stayed at a grape farm for a while to take some pictures.

We reached Toksun county (托克逊) at noon to look for what our drivers described as "the best ban-noodle". The difference is, the ban-noodle was described as "fast food" in Xinjiang but it used to take an hour or two for

preparation. This time, we only spent 40 minutes in this restaurant, saving lots of time.

The car passed River Ala Gou (阿拉沟) towards Korla City (库车市). On both side of the road gentle slopes climbed to a maximum altitude of 2,100m. Here we found Steppe Eagle, a number of Ravens, and several wheatears.

We reached Yanqi (焉耆) and looked for birds in the reedbeds at Lake Bositan Hu (博斯腾湖, Bagrax). There were good numbers of breeding Black-headed Gulls, Red-crested Pochards, Great Reed Warblers, Paddyfield Warblers and Moorhens.

Korla is a busy city, similar to Urumqi, but the weather appeared foggy and the sky was covered by greyish-yellow haze. Our driver mentioned that a strong sandstorm was coming soon.

7 July: Cunning Xinjiang Ground Jay

We traveled along National Road #218 and entered the Taklimakan Desert (塔克拉玛干沙漠). In this huge desert light reflecting from the shiny sand dunes made the eyes uncomfortable.

It is quite difficult to find vegetation, except some sparsely distributed shrubs and some Desert Poplars (胡杨林) along the edge of Lop Nur basin (罗布泊湖盆). Our driver described this as "the most beautiful" tree in Weiwuer language. The shapes of the leaves vary from being like maple leaves to being elongated. Most of them are found along the Tarim River (塔里木河), which is the longest inland river in China. The main river runs along the eastern edge of Tarim Basin, passing Korla and Yuli (尉犁, Lop Nur Xian), through flat terrain with lots of small lakes. Long ago, water flowed in the Tarim River. However, with the gradual development of agriculture along the upper-river, water was diverted for irrigation or to artificial reservoirs for storage. The amount of water in the lower-river was thus reduced significantly. Water from the Lop Nur (罗布泊) Basin and Lake Tetima Hu (台特马湖) now ends up in Reservoir Daixihai Shuiku (大西海水库) and the The Lop Nor basin has dried up. Along the riverside we found Great Cormorants, Ruddy Shelduck, Black-winged Stilt, Greater Short-toed Lark and several Black Storks.

We passed the entrance of "Lop Nor People Village". The Lop Nor fishermen left Lop Nor basin and scattered around Yuli and Ruoqiang (若羌, Qarkilik Xian) area in the last century.

After having lunch (dumplings) at Workforce #34 (a village build by the military), we continued the journey along National Road #28. Some areas were chosen to stop briefly for birds, and we found Saxual Sparrows and Dessert Lesser Whitethroats. The sparsely distributed Dessert Poplar showed thick tree trunks and a big sand dune at the bottom. This makes its "sand proof" function clearer to us.

Rain fell and evaporated quickly. All of a sudden, a black-and-white shadow sped past us — a Xinjiang Ground Jay (N40°01'17.5" E88°22'5.6", 821m). This cunning bird flew around the area looking for food. It became aware that we were trying to approach it, and flew to the top of some distant shrubs, which impeded our observations. Further along the road, there were several more sites for Xinjiang Ground Jay (National Road#218, milestone 999km, 1000km and 1021km).

We stopped at the "Red bricks road" which was known as the longest highway built of red bricks during the time of Cultural Revolution. The bricks were made of mud, and large amount of desert poplar was burnt as fuel, which caused serious damage to the habitat.

We reached Rueqiang in the evening. During the Hang Dynasty it was known as Loulan Kingdom (樓蘭國). Because most of the hotel was booked by the military, we were lucky to find accommodation there.

8 July: A trip to Altun near Tibet

The weather was again unstable. There had been "muddy-rain" (rainfall comprised of mud and rain water) overnight. Even with light showers, rainwater accumulates in the mountains and flows unchecked across the desert, damaging the road. We met this situation when we approach Mt. Altun Shan (阿爾金山). Luckily our drivers were rally enthusiasts, with long experience and a deep delight in dealing with such conditions!

Aljin is an enclosed high altitude basin, located at the southeastern end of Xijiang, and accessible to Qinghai and Tibet. Recently the film "Kekexili (可可西里)" described the story of protection of the Tibetan Antelope (Chiru) at Hoh Xil Shan (可可西里山), in the southern part of Altun. We went up the mountain, through mostly open terrain. Several Long-tailed Buzzard and Ravens were found along the road, and a flock of Black Stork flew above us. We passed the Alawule Dao Ban (阿拉吾了道班) road maintenance station and climbed further up

the mountain, where we found Black Vultures, Crag Martin, Plain Mountain Finch and Red-billed Chough.

We reached Sha Pass (沙達坂), which leads to Qinhai, at noon. Unfortunately, the foggy, wet weather made it hard to see the road, and we reluctantly decided to go back.

When we reach the foot of the mountain, we took a rest at a oleaster woodland. The fruit of this whitish-leave plant is quite sweet but dry. We tried the direction of Milan Ancient City (米蘭古城) adjacent to Milan Town, where the ancient city can be observed clearly. However when we reach the entrance, the road was blocked and the staff requested us RMB200 for each car, later on changed to RMB300 per person. We left the place immediately.

9 July: Rueqiang to Quemu

We left Rueqiang in the early morning, and travelled south-western to Washixia Village (瓦石峽鄉). There were Chinese Hill Warbler, Barred Warbler and Golden Oriole in one of the farmland patches. We travelled along the rain-damaged National Road #315, seeing lots of muddy water flowing towards the River Qarqan He (車爾臣河).

Generally speaking, in the huge and severe desert environment, it is quite difficult to find people or village houses. People normally surround their villages with tall Lombardy Poplar as protection from the sand and wind making the villages look like "oasis" in the desert. Inside the villages, there is active farming for maize and rice.

Along the road to Quemo (且末/車爾臣, Qarqan), at both side of the gobi desert, we saw numerous tornadoes, which appeared weak and disappeared when it "blows" across the road.

At Tatirang (塔提壤村), we found several Desert Finches. When we looked for our location on the GPS, we found that it was quite different from our planned route on the map. When we wondered whether we got lost, until a villager told us that the National Road had been realigned further north. This saved us much traveling time and we reached Quemo at 5:00pm. After finding a hotel, we decided to do some evening bird watching. In the small garden of the hotel, we found Hoopoes, White Wagtails and Barred Warblers feeding chicks. We also found a small area of farmland and grape farm near the Quemo Revolutionary Ditch Water Management Station (且末革命大渠水管站), where there were a good number of Chinese Hill Warblers and a Hobby.

10 July: Taklimakan Desert

We left Quemo and went along National Road #315 towards the Desert Highway. At milestone 1,936km, we found Xinjiang Ground Jay again N38°11'40.1" E85°01'54", 1,205m). This bird appeared very alert and left quickly, leaving some footprints and a lizard, possibly the bird's food. Later we found the footprints of the same species again close to the Desert Highway National Road #598, milestone 194km, N38°15'8.6" E84°48'03", 1,202m).

The 522km - Desert Highway runs almost due North from Minfeng county (民豐) towards Luntai county (輪台, Buguar Xian). We went to the middle of the desert at Tachong (塔中), and then returned back to the south.

The highway is constructed on sand dunes, which vary in height from a few meters to several tens of meters. The dunes have a variety of shapes, from crescents to pyramids or elongated. The condition of the highway is very good, and we spent only 6 hours to reach the middle of the desert and return back to the national National Road #315, approximately 500 km. In this huge desert, the daily temperature often reaches over 40°C.

Taklimakan Desert is the second largest desert in the world, and is mainly comprised of shifting sand dunes. Along both sides of the highway, there is a newly developed "green corridor". Water for the green plantation corridor is supplied by rubber tubes from water pumping station in each section of the road. Birds found at a large piece of shrubland, included several wheatears, Saxaul Sparrows, Crested Lark and Raven.

We reached Minfeng in the evening. At the entrance to Minfeng, we found a number of Citrine Wagtails, Black-winged Stilt and Common Redshank in the farmlands.

11 July: Minfeng to Yecheng

In order to look for birds of montane pine forest, we rushed for 600km from Minfeng (民豐) to Yecheng (葉城).

After leaving Mengfeng, we traveled along National Road #315, with the snowy Mt. Kunlun Shan on our left. Both sides of the road are mainly sandy or rocky desert areas. Vegetation here is very rare, and birds are few. We only stopped at one or two reedbed areas near rivers and found Crested Lark and Great Reed Warbler.

At Moyu County (墨玉縣, Karakax Xian), there were several jade collectors in the river, our driver said that the

muttan fat jade here is the most famous in China mainland.

We passed a number of places including counties Yutian (于田, Keriya), Qira (策勒), Moyu (墨玉), Zanggyu (藏桂), Pishan (皮山, Guma), all of which had once been important stops on the Silk Road. In the bazaars, villagers were busy trading for seeds, fruit, eggs and chicken, and goats. There were several shoemakers, shepherds flocked to the market on foot or by horse-cart and small tractors. It is not easy to go through this crowded place. In the villages, villagers used to build small overhangs for drying the grapes in front of their homes. These overhangs, connected together to, form a long grape-corridor - an ideal place to take a rest.

We stopped in some of the farmland at Yecheng, found an Azure Tit and several Hoopoes. As usual, this is good opportunity for us to take photos with the Weiwuer villagers.

12 July: Pine forest in Kunlun Shan

In order to grab the opportunity for some morning pine forest birding we started our trip before sunrise. The jeep went along the National Road #219 towards Tibet. After travelling for about 70km, there is a road junction. On the left is the "Bolong Forest Park (坡龍森林旅遊公園)", while on the right is the National Road. We chose the road to the right and went to the mountain pass ("friendship pass" [團結友誼線] 連坂). There is no vegetation at all in this high altitude desert area. We found several Ravens, Common Buzzards, Chukars, Twite, Red-billed and Yellow-billed Chough, and an IbeX.

We decided to go back to the Forest Park (N37°05'27.9" E77°0'51.5" 2,753m). It is located at the lower edge of a "pine forest" with sparsely distributed trees. Along the road we found Brown Accentors, Twite and a hare (*Lepus oiostolus*). However, the road up the mountain was damaged by water, leaving long, deep cracks on the road surface, and making it very dangerous for jeeps to make u-turn to go backwards. We split into two groups and walked up the mountain in different directions. Some of us got into a small river valley, where we saw some Plain Mountain Finches, a Godlewski's Bunting and marmots.

We traveled back to Yecheng (葉城), however in this tourist hotspot, we couldn't find accommodation at a reasonable price, and drove another 70km more to Shache (莎車).

13 July: Shache to Kashi

We reduced our birding to allow time to apply for an entry permit to the Pamir district (帕米尔). We drive along National Road #215 to Markit county (麦盖提), to look for the Elixu reservoir (艾力西湖水库, N38°40'58.2" E77°18'47.5", 1,300m). The reservoir is one of the largest artificial wetland for water storage. It supports large number of breeding Crested Grebes and Red-crested Pochard. Adjacent to the reservoir, we found some farmlands and a Common Cuckoo and Richard's Pipit. We were also surrounded by several curious young shepherds.

We went back to National Road # 315 towards Kashi. At Yinggisar county (英吉沙), we stopped there for lunch and brought knives, which is very famous in China. Before entering Shule county (疏勒), we found over a hundred Great Crested Grebes and several Red-crested Pochard at a lake on the left hand side of the road.

After reaching Kashi, our driver called the relevant department and found that there is no need for "Home Visit Permit" holders to apply for any entry permit to Pamir (but our drivers needed to do so). We spent the rest of the afternoon at the Renmin Park (人民公园), and only found several Desert Finches, Hoopoe, White Wagtail and Tree Sparrows.

Kashi is a busy city. It connects to the Tianshan mountain range in the east, Pamir on the west, Takelamakan Desert on the south, and Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Tadjikistan on the west. It is also a place full of eastern and western culture, colourful clothes, good singers and dancers in the park, as well as a centre of handicrafts and food.

14 July: Along the Chongling Ancient Path

▲ 慕士塔格山

We drove along National Road #314 (China-Pakistan Highway) towards Pakistan. Except for the areas around villages, which were more vegetated, most of the places are mainly high altitude desert environment. At a village adjacent to Gez River (盖孜河 milestone 1542km N39°06'14.2" E75°34'32.1", 1,579m), two Black-bellied Sandgrouses quickly flew above us from the river towards the desert behind the village. Some villagers told us that the sandgrouses are very common there, but we only found a few birds.

We reached the Gez River valley, an the famous "Chongling Traffic Route". "Chong" in chinese means

"spring onion") is an ancient name of Pamir, an important part of the Silk Road, a junction at Kashi toward the western countries, as well as an important point for cultural exchange.

The landscape appeared rather different. Most of the mountains are reddish-brown with patches of dark green, greenish yellow, and some shown orangy rocky layers. The river carries melted snow water from the mountains, it erodes the river edge and brings along yellowish mud and stones. We reached Gez Village in the afternoon to register for entry to Pamir.

On both side of the road are cliffs, and on top of them are the snowy mountains. Here we easily found Plain Mountain Finches, Common Rosefinches and several Himalayan Griffon Vultures. Some of the vultures showed breeding behaviour - bringing pieces of plants to the same platform-like position and remained alert to people and vehicles.

Taxkorgan valley (塔什库爾干河谷) is a large and open plateau, with a number of habitats including wetlands, grassland and deserts. This is a place with Mongolian yurk, villages of Tajik people, and tombs. There are some lakes serving as water collectors along the river. We found a Common Goosander and several Mongolian Finches at the lake edge.

We passed the Karakule Hu (Ka Hu) (喀拉庫裡湖/喀湖), behind which the Mt. Muztagata Shan (慕士塔格峰) rises to an impressive 7,546m. However, it appeared rather less beautiful than as described in our tour guides. When we approached the edge of the lake, we were asked for RMB\$50 per person as entrance fee. We left there and went to a place nearby to get a better view. Inside the lake, we found Black-headed Gull, Common Tern, Greater Short-toed Lark, Horned Lark and White-winged Snowfinch.

Road construction along the road leading to Taxkorgan (塔什庫爾干) caused us to spend 8 hours to travel just 200km! Along the road, we found White-winged Redstart, Ravens, Lammergiers and marmots. As we climbed the mountain, it became cooler. In the evening, we reached Taxkorgan Tajik Zhizhixian (塔什庫爾干塔吉克自治縣), which is the smallest county in China, with only two streets.

15 July: Leaving the snowy mountains for Kashi

At dawn, some of us tried our luck at the farmland nearby. Except for the call of House Sparrow and two

Hoopoes, the street appeared silent. During sunrise, the red and pinkish light reflection on the snowy mountain formed a beautiful morning scene.

There were about 200 km to the border cross Konjirap (紅旗拉甫口岸) towards Pakistan. However, the road condition was very poor and we decided to go back to Kashi and stop occasionally for birding.

The weather was fine, not as windy as the day before. Water evaporates quickly in this kind of weather, and the snow on the mountain and water in the lakes appears much less.

On the way to Kashi, there are several good birding spots in particular at places with vegetation and flowing water. We stopped at Gaz River (National Road # 314, milestone 1542km) again, where we found Common Magpie, Golden Oriole, Great Reed Warbler, Booted Eagle and Chinese Hill Warbler.

After dinner, we toured in Kashi City, including the Idkah square (艾提尕爾廣場) and the old town.

16 July: Kashi old town

Our target today was to look for old buildings. Several places including the Idkah Mosque, Kashi old town, bazaars and the princess tomb were chosen for brief visit.

Idkah Mosque is a Muslim temple with a long history. Luckily there was no worship taking place when we arrived. On the opposite side of the temple is the Kashi old city. Most eye-catching are the dental clinics, each of them with large signboards showing biological pictures of the nasal cavity.

Old buildings are regarded as outdated, and most of them were demolished. We believe some will be maintained and managed, at least we have to pay entrance fee for our visit to one of the largest. Inside the old town, there are small handicraft shops for copper and gold smiths, naan bread, and musical instruments. Children playing on street corners shouted "hello... hello..." to visitors. Some villagers kept birds, including Greater Short-toed Larks, which are mostly caught from the nearby area.

The Princess Tomb is somewhere near Kashi City. We took a taxi (RMB10) to reach the tomb, which belonged to one of the largest family (Abofoka family) whose daughter married the Qianlong Emperor in the Qing Dynasty.

When we returned to the city, we passed the largest bazaar. The most common "vehicle" is donkey carts, and streets appeared extremely busy. We bought some food for "lunch" at 5:00pm, then went to Kashi airport and took an evening flight to Urumqi. We stayed at the Airport Hotel that evening.

17 July: On the way home...

The plan of staying in the Airport Hotel and catch a morning flight was ideal. Unexpectedly, there were lots of people waiting for the same shuttle bus, which delayed our time to reach the airport. The situation was much worse at the airport, long queues were found at each of the check-in counters, which have no indication of flight companies. Later on, it was found that our flight had been re-scheduled to a different number, adding more time to the check-in process.

In the middle of the check-in procedure, the baggage check-in gate closed. After some strenuous arguing with the airline staff we reached the plane at the last minute and our luggage arrived in Shenzhen safely.

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to Prof. Ma Ming of Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography of Academy Sinica. He gave us lots of useful information on habitat and bird records for our planning of the trip. Although Prof. Ma did not join us this time, he kept in touch by phone throughout our trip and offered us useful advice.

We travelled 5,137km (not including the driver's trip between Urumqi, Altai and Kashi). A total of 130 bird species were recorded. This was a good chance again for us, to work as a team – we saw most of the birds together. We thank Mr. Anthony Lo for planning the trip and arrange various meetings; Ms. Doris Chu for taking care of various details and meeting Prof. Ma in Xinjiang before the trip. Mr. C W Lam, our treasurer, arranged us air tickets and transportation in China. Mr. Lego Ho and Mr KY Lau created us lots of fun in addition to taking pictures. We also thank our "birding drivers" Mr. Li Dong and Mr. Liu Yong. Again, they shared with us lots of experience and travelling information, and to Mike Kilburn for editing the English version of this article.

(con't on page 19)

Lesser Kestrel

黃爪隼



- 何禮高 Lego Ho
- 2005.07.03
- 北屯附近
near Beitun
- DSLR Camera
- 600 mm 1/4.0 lens
+ 2X Converter
- digital rated at
ISO 100

戈氏岩鵐

Godlewski's Bunting



- 盧嘉孟 Lo Kar Man
- 2005.07.12
- 崑崙山 Kunkun Shan
- SLR Camera
- 400 mm 1/5.6 lens
+ 2X Converter
- ISO 400 Slide Film

橫斑林鶯 Barred Warbler

橫斑林鶯



- 朱詠兒
Chu Wing Yee
- 2005.07.09
- 且末 Qiemu
- SLR Camera
- 400 mm f/5.6 lens
+ 2X Converter
- ISO 400 Slide Film



- 何禮高
Lego Ho
- 2005.07.12
- 崑崙山
Kunlun Shan
- DSLR Camera
- 600 mm f/4.0 lens
+ 2X Converter
- digital rated at
ISO 100

Smoky Warbler

烟柳鶯

- 瑪嘉慧
Carrie Ma
- 2005.07.04
- 青河
Qinghe
- Fieldscope
and Digital
Camera

灰白喉林鶯



Greater Whitethroat

Pied Wheatear (juvenile)

斑 鳴 (幼鳥)



- 林志榮
Lam Chi Wing
- 2005.07.14
- 喀什附近
阿克陶縣
Aketao near
Kashi
- SLR Camera
- 300 mm 1/2.8 lens
+ 2X Converter
- ISO 400 Slide
Film

石雞 Chukar

- 盧嘉孟 Lo Kar Man
- 2005.07.12
- 崑崙山 Kunlun Shan
- DSLR Camera
- 400 mm f/5.6 lens + 2X Converter
- ISO 400 Slide Film



Common Tern 普通燕鷗

普通燕鷗

- 林志榮 Lam Chi Wing
- 2005.07.02
- 北屯附近小湖 Lake near Beitun
- SLR Camera
- 300 mm f/2.8 lens + 2X Converter
- ISO 100 Slide Film



(con't from page 14)

The following is a summary of our trip:

Date	Birding spot (altitude / m)	Travel distance(Km)	Interesting birds	Accodation
2 July	Altay (阿勒泰) (635m) to Beitun (北屯) (501m)	50	Pallas's Gull, breeding Black-headed Gull, Common Terns	Dianli Building (電力大廈) (RMB120/night/double bed room)
3 July	Woodland adjacent to a river (北屯河畔樹林)(503m) and Fuhai (福海) 483m	403	Red-crested Pochard, Mistle Thrush, Rosy Starling, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Great Reed Warbler	Qinghe Hotel (清河賓館) RMB140/night/double bed room
4 July	Qinghe (清河) to Qitai (奇台)	453	European Bee-eater, Yellowhammer, Rosefinch, Common Crane	Qitai Hotel (奇台賓館) Common RMB140/night/double bed room
5 July	Qitai (奇台) 1000m to Shanshan (鄯善) 550m	395	Barbary Falcon, Eurasian Linnet, Northern House Martin	Tian Ma Hotel (天馬賓館) RMB130/night/triple bed room
6 July	Turpan (吐魯番) (-100m) to Fuerla (庫爾勒) (500m)	506	Red-crested Pochard, Common Crane, Steppe Eagle	Bayingolng Hotel (巴音郭楞賓館) RMB180/night/double bed room
7 July	Korla (庫爾勒) (500m) to Rueqiang (若羌) (800m)	510	Xinjiang Ground Jay, Saxaul Sparrow, Desert Lesser Whitethroat, Black Stork	Rueqiang Tianyanju Hotel (若羌天然居酒店) RMB120 /night/double bed room
8 July	Rueqiang (若羌) (800m) to Altun Mountain (阿爾金山) (3,900m)	240	Black Vulture, Eurasian Crag Martin, Plain Mountain Finch, Yellow-billed Chough, Red-billed Chough	Rueqiang Tianyanju Hotel (若羌天然居酒店) RMB120 /night/double bed room
9 July	Rueqiang (若羌) (800m) to Qiemo (且末) (1100m)	257	Barred Warbler, Chinese Hill Warbler, Golden Oriole	Muztag Hotel (木孜塔格賓館) RMB120/night/double bed room
10 July	Qiemo (且末) (1239m) to Minfeng (民豐) (1200m)	550	Crested Lark, Citrine Wagtail, Saxaul Sparrow, Desert Finch	Liya Hotel (尼雅賓館) RMB140/night/double bed room
11 July	Minfeng (民豐) (1200m) to Yecheng (葉城) 1400m	571	Crested Lark, Azure Tit	Shiliu Hotel (石樓賓館) RMB120QC/night/double bed room
12 July	Yecheng (葉城) 1,400m to Shache (莎車) 1,300	311	Chukar, Brown Accentro, Plain Mountain Finch, Twite, Yellow-billed Chough, Red-billed Chough	Shache County Delong Hotel (縣維維大酒店) RMB150/night/double bed room
13 July	Shache (莎車) 1,300 to Kashi (喀什) (1320m)	276	Red-crested Pochard, Crested Lark	Renmin Hotel (人民飯店) RMB120/night/double bed room
14 July	Kashi (喀什) (1320m) to Taxkorgan (塔什庫爾干) (3,300m)	310	Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Himalyan Griffon, Lammergier, Booted Eagle, Golden Oriole, Common Goosander, White-winged Redstart, Greater Short-toed Lark, Common Rosefinch, Mongolian Finch	Shitoucheng Hotel (石頭城賓館) RMB120/night/double bed room
15 July	Taxkorgan (塔什庫爾干) to Kashgar (喀什) (1320m)	305		Kashi Hengyuan Hotel (喀什恆元賓館喀什) RMB120/night/double bed room

Beyond the trip ...

We covered part of the ancient Silk Road. Here are the names of the 36 states in ancient western China and their present location (source of information: Anhui Internet News 9 May 2005). The desert has covered a number of places and approached some part of the ancient cities in vicinity. These are part of ancient civilization reflecting the effort of human beings to survive in the harsh desert environment. The history appeared near us, but we would never have chance to approach.

Western 36 States*	Present location	Have our trip cover this location? (Y/N)	Remarks
1. Wusun (烏孫)	Around Yili (伊犁)	N	
2. Qiuzi (龜茲)	Fuche (庫車) and Baicheng (拜城)	N	
3. Yangqi (焉耆)	Yangqi Hui Huizu Zizhixian (焉耆回族自治縣)	Y	
4. Yutian (于田)	Hetian (和田)	Y	
5. Rueqiang (若羌)	SE Rueqiang (若羌), NW Lop Nur (羅布泊)	Y	
6. Loulan (樓蘭)	Inside Lop Nur (羅布泊) Desert in Bayingoleng Mogolian Autonomous Region (巴音郭楞蒙古自治州)	Y	Shanshan (鄯善)
7. Qiemo (且末)	SW Qiemo County (且末縣)	Y	
8. Shaoyuan (小河)	South of Qarqan River (車爾臣河)	Y	Now disappeared in Taklimakan Desert
9. Ronglu (戎盧)	South of Yutian County (于田縣)	Y	
10. Mi (彌)	East of Qira County (策勒縣)	Y	
11. Qule (渠勒)	South of Qira County (策勒縣)	Y	
12. Pishan (皮山)	SE Pishan County (皮山縣), near Zangyu (薩柱)	Y	
13. Xiye (西夜)	SW Pishan (皮山)	Y	
14. Puli (蒲犁)	East of Yecheng (葉城)	Y	
15. Yinai (依耐)	SE Yinggisha (英吉沙), East of Lekueryinai (勒庫爾依耐) and Puli (蒲犁)	Y	
16. Shache (莎車)	Shache County (莎車縣)	Y	
17. Shule (疏勒)	Kashgar City (喀什市) and Shule County (疏勒縣)	Y	
18. Weitou (尉頭)	Wushi (烏什, Uqturpan) and Bachu (巴楚地, Maralwexi)	N	
19. Wensu (溫宿)	Aksu (阿克蘇) and Wensu (溫宿)	N	
20. Yuli (于闐)	Korla (庫爾勒) and Yuli (尉犁, Lop Nur)	Y	
21. Gumo (姑墨)	Baicheng (拜城, Bay)	N	
22. Bellu (卑陸)	North of Fukang (阜康)	N	
23. Wutanzi (烏貪婁)	East of Manasi (瑪納斯) and near Changji (昌吉)	N	
24. Post-Beilu Country (卑陸後國)	East of Fukang (阜康)	N	
25. Danhuan (單桓)	NE Manasi (瑪納斯)	N	
26. Pulei (蒲類)	NW Barkol Kazak Zizhixian (巴裏坤哈薩克自治縣西北)	N	
27. Post-Pulei Country (蒲類後國)		N	
28. Xiglemi (西且彌)	SE Wusu County (烏蘇縣)	N	
29. Dongxiglemi (東且彌)	West of Changji County (昌吉縣)	N	
30. Jieguo (劫國)	NE Hutubi (呼圖壁)	N	
31. Guhu (狐胡)	North Turpan (吐魯番)	Y	
32. Shanguo (山國)	East of Yuli County (尉犁)	Y	
33. Pre-Cheshi Country (車師前國)	Turpan Jiaochi Ancient City (吐魯番交河古城)	Y	
34. Post-Cheshi Country (車師後國)	Urumuqi and nearby area	Y	
35. Cheshiyudoguo (車師尉都國)	SE Turpan (吐魯番)	Y	
36. Post-Cheshi Country (車師後城國)	Around Qitai (奇台)	Y	
Others: Dawan (大宛), Anxi (安息), Dayuezhi (大月氏), Kanju (康居), Haohan (浩罕), Kanjuti (坎巨提), Wuyishanli (烏弋山離), etc.		N	Outside Xinjiang

Note: 1. *Translated by Mandarin pronunciation only

2. Most of the geographical names in this article those given in "Gazetteer of China - An Index to the Atlas of the People's Republic of China" published by SinoMaps Press in 1997.



Ruili, Yingjiang and the Gaoligong Shan

10 days birding in Western Yunnan

Ruy & Karen Barretto, Professor Han Lian Xian and myself (joined for three days at Ruili by Richard Lewthwaite and Mo Yung Yuk Lin) spent from 21-30th March 2005 birding in the central and southern Gaoligong Shan mountains in the westernmost corner of Yunnan. We also spent a half-day in Kunming's Western Hills at each end of our trip. During this time we saw a wonderful total of 297 species and another few sightings which could not be assigned to species.

For those familiar with this area this total will come as no surprise, but for the rest of us, this represents a staggering total for a birding trip in China! I don't believe it is possible to see so many birds in such a short time anywhere else in the country. Why is this?

First of all we covered a variety of largely intact habitats in a relatively small area - transitioning from 2400+m montane forest to broad sandy rivers and subtropical forest, and bird-friendly agriculture at 1000m. In particular, the forests around Ruili, while not being primary, were in good condition and appeared to retain highly diversified bird communities. Second, it was migration time. The rich resident avifauna was strongly reinforced by late-staying winter visitors, newly arriving summer visitors and passage migrants heading north out of Indochina and India up the Gaoligong Shan to the Tibetan Plateau and breeding grounds further north and east - The Yunnan list is at 840+ species! Third, the weather was not always perfect, but with temperatures between 10 and 25 centigrade and humidity low it remained pleasant, and almost never stopped us birding!

How did we do so well when all the sites were new to all of us? First and foremost we benefited from high quality information and guiding of Prof. Han Lianxian of the Kunming Institute of Zoology (email: hanlianxian@vip.km.169.net), (who knew the sites and calls in a way that no amount of preparation can compensate for) and visiting birders (notably Cheung Ho Fai, Jesper Hornskov, and Jon Bryant), who have pioneered this area. Tape playback was not used.

Secondly, excellent birder-friendly driving, and logistical arrangements by Mr Zheng of the Gaoligongshan Nature Reserve Travel Services allowed us to spend the maximum time birding every day, and ensured that food, water and a place to stay appeared effortlessly whenever we needed them. Finally, we birded as a team - all the Hong Kong birders had their eye in and knew each other well, having trained hard together as the Jebens Eagles team for the 2005 Big Bird Race.

Daily account

20th March An early start from Hong Kong via Shenzhen Airport (contact Rebecca at Upclassic Travel 2723 8888 for superb service on flight arrangements in China) we arrived in Kunming in time to spend the afternoon birding in the Western Hills. We got off to a great start where, in a very small area in the mixed forest environs of the Huating Temple, our first birds were a party of five White-browed Shrike Babblers, which called loudly to each other as they bounced around the treetops.

They were swiftly followed by Chestnut-vented Nuthatches, Green-backed, Yellow-bellied, Great and Black-throated Tits, Black-headed Greenfinches, a female Long-tailed Minivet, and a solitary and sad-looking Northern Skylark, which had obviously been released by Buddhists seeking spiritual merit (we also saw a couple of tatty and rather tame Little Buntings in the temple itself). We had frustratingly brief views of Scaly and Black-breasted Thrushes, several Brown-breasted Bulbuls, and our first views of Spectacled, Rusty-capped and Grey-checked Fulvetta and genuine Blue-winged Minlas.

The temple itself held a Riverchat (also released?), Great Spotted Woodpecker, a male Chestnut-bellied Rockthrush, and a memorable party of Whiskered Yuhinas in a small bush in the courtyard.

Our birds of the day, a pair of courting Grey-capped Woodpeckers, were far too interested in each other to notice that they'd landed within ten feet of us, and gave terrific views! Other good birds included Mrs Gould's Sunbird and Buff-bellied Flowerpeckers feeding on a parasitic plant with bright red flowers, but there was no



sign of the hoped-for Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker I'd seen here twice before.

21st March Next morning we met Prof. Han at Kunming Airport for our 0810 flight to Baoshan, from where we got straight on the road in two small four-door vans (good for quick exits, bad for long legs) and headed through well-ordered agricultural land towards the Nuijiang River Gorge and Baihualing Nature Reserve in the Gaoligong Shan Mountains. Roadside birds included Chestnut-tailed Starlings, Black-winged Kites, Russet Sparrows and Sooty-headed Bulbul. According to Professor Han this area is a transition zone where Sooty-headed (*P. aurigaster*) and Red-vented (*P. cafer*) intergrade, becoming progressively darker and more "cafer-like" towards the west.



We stopped for a break in the Nuijiang Gorge, finding Grey-breasted Prinia, Crested Bunting, *pandoo* Blue Rock Thrush, Riverchat (I hate the other name), Plain Martins, Yellow-eyed Babbler, Common Tailorbird,

Magpie Robin and Plumbeous Redstart on the banks, and migrating Great Cormorants and a male Goosander on the river itself. Prof. Han told us that both Ibisbill and Great Thick-knee had been seen on sandbars downriver in January (a return trip beckons).

We instead turned north, following the river upstream, stopping several times on the way to add Bonelli's Eagle, Hodgson's Redstart, our first White-browed Laughing-thrushes, Rosy Minivet, Striated Yuhina, resident Burmese and wintering Grey-backed Shrikes, and the most northerly ever record of Purple Sunbird in Yunnan.

The latter was close to a tract of surprisingly unmolested riverine forest, which surely warrants further exploration – especially as several hydro-electric dams are being planned for the Nuijiang River. It was sad to learn that the two great rivers of the Gaoligongshan – the Nuijiang and the Lancang – would be harnessed by a total of 22 dams which will totally change the face of this beautiful

area. However, most local people welcome the dams, believing they will bring greater prosperity to the area (despite widespread reports of displaced people being sold short by dam developers in other parts of the country).

Having passed through a couple of busy market towns we eventually turned west and into the foothills, climbing into mist and rain at the recently upgraded Baihualing Guesthouse at 1600m. We spent the last hours of daylight in the pollarded forest close to the village, adding three Verditeres and the first of six Little Pied Flycatchers in the orchard next to the guesthouse, as well as our first Blue-throated and Great Barbets, Daurian Redstart, Grey Bushchat, Grey-sided Bush and White-tailed Warblers.

The undisputed birds of the day were a pair of Pygmy Wren-babblers, who began calling in a tangled streambed as dusk set in. One bird initially showed pretty well in shaded cover, but the real excitement came as some invisible line was crossed and a furious territorial squabble began with both birds calling away (both two and three note calls) before switching to an angry screeching as the interloper was chased off downstream amongst the boulders. Having heard but not seen Pygmy Wren-babblers in Hong Kong for the last two years, Karen was especially delighted.

22nd March The next morning we were driven up to a landslide, which has cut the road at about 1950 metres, and began walking along old, but well preserved, logging trails through the forest. It was one of those wonderful days of forest birding when there always seems to be something within either sight or earshot. Early highlights between the patches of fog and rain included clouds of phylloscopus warblers comprised mainly of Buff-barred and dull-plumaged Pallas' /Lemon-rumped / Chinese Leaf-types which, almost without exception had the bad manners not to call!

Easier to identify were Chestnut-tailed, Blue-winged and the striking Red-tailed Minlas, a fine group of over 50 White-throated Laughingthrushes and a smaller one of 8 Red-tailed Laughingthrushes – almost the only laughing-thrushes we saw here. Golden-throated, Blue-throated and Great Barbets, Large Hawk Cuckoos, Bay Woodpeckers and Collared Owlets stayed stubbornly out of view, but added to the bird-rich atmosphere with their distinctive calls throughout the day. It was notable however that many of the larger birds were somewhat elusive, and I had a distinct impression that hunting may



be an issue here.

Other babbler families that performed well included the Fulvettas – 30 Golden-breasted were predictably enough found in a bamboo grove that also held 40-odd Black-throated Parrotbills. Apparently the same bamboos also hold Slender-billed Scimitar-Babblers, while the even rarer Wedge-billed Wren babbler has been seen in a nearby streambed. Our disappointment at failing to connect with either of these mega birds was tempered by Prof Han's discovery of a Long-tailed Wren Babbler, a fast-moving party of the floor-hugging, phyllosc-like Yellow-throated Fulvetta and several Rusty-fronted Barwings (all three are restricted to this western corner of China).

We heard from Professor Han about the "pepsi cola tree" – a shrub with nectar-rich white flowers that is known to attract up to 30 different species of birds. It will, for me, forever be associated with Beautiful Sibias (another W Yunnan speciality), lovely grey-blue minla-like birds, which revelled in the nectar and fed unconcernedly regardless of how close we got to them. Predictably enough they were also a favourite of the sunbirds, and over the next few days we also watched Black-throated, Mrs Gould's, Green-tailed and the stunning Fire-Tailed gorging themselves.



As we descended a Black Eagle showed well close overhead, a White-gorgetted Flycatcher offered frustratingly brief views and as we waited for the van to meet us, and a fine male Silver Pheasant presented itself briefly on the road before

ghosting silently into the darkening forest. A Mountain Scops Owl later called near the camp.

23rd March dawned with the same cloudy/rainy conditions, but except for a single half-hour stop we were able to bird right through the day. Our first foray up a side trail proved rather hard work, although we did add Red-billed Leiothrix, singing Chestnut-headed Tesia, a couple

of Grey Treepies and another very close Black Eagle.

However a break at an area of grass on an open saddle that had been a staging post on the Southern Silk Route opened things up as Ruy found Red-vented Yuhinas and Fire-tailed Sunbirds taking advantage of a pepsi cola tree and a range of migrants appeared between the low bushes. These included a female Golden Bush Robin, ten Yellow-throated Buntings, a pair of Blue-fronted Redstarts, the first of 6 Snowy-browed Flycatchers that day, a Large Niltava, plus fine views of Great Barbet and the Black Eagle again.

We tried again unsuccessfully for the Scimitar Babblers and Wren Babblers at the top of the path, but had tantalisingly brief glimpses of a Rufous-bellied Bush Robin which only Ruy saw well before the failing light demanded we begin our descent. On the way down Ruy again saw a male Silver Pheasant sliding elusively into the trees. I stopped to make a phone call in the only spot on the mountain with reception, and while I waited a bizarre series of whistles turned into a displaying male Red-headed Trogon – the only one of our trip – and I again had eyeblink views of White-gorgetted Flycatcher in the gloom.

The returning vehicle brought with it Mr Li, the Deputy Manager of the Gaoligongshan National Nature Reserve who joined us for the next five days of our trip. Mr Li is studying for a Masters Degree in ecotourism and is the first reserve management official I have met in 15 years of birding in China who is also a keen birdwatcher!

As we drove down the mountain Karen spotted a female pheasant disappearing over the side of the path and we ground to a halt just in time to watch the tip of its tail vanish. We were about to get going again when our driver, Mr Zhou, pointed out another bird just five yards away on the roadside – a male Mrs Hume's Pheasant! It stood in full view for a few glorious seconds, showing us its red face, blackish neck and breast, silver bars on the wings, lighter rump and long pale tail, before running away along the road and dipping over the edge to find its mate.

Professor Han has studied Mrs Hume's Pheasant. He informed us that it is very thinly distributed, very difficult to detect and that this was the first confirmed record for the Baihualing section of the Gaoligongshan Reserve.

Even without this further proof of its quality I was absolutely blown away, having dipped on it on Doi Chiang Dao in Thailand and never having heard of any birder seeing it in China – to the extent that I rather forgot myself and punched the side of the car in delight! To have such long and clear views of such a good bird, and for everyone to have seen it made it, for me, the bird of the trip.

24th March: Next morning we made an even earlier start and headed out from Baihualing to a new reserve in the southern Gaoligong Shan called Nan Kan. After a difficult foggy drive we arrived at the Nan Kan management office, seeing a Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush while we waited for breakfast. We entered the reserve, which holds gibbons, three monkey species and a terrific array of orchids on the mossy trunks of ancient rhododendron trees, at a pass at about 2,200m. It was the forest itself that was the real attraction here, stretching away along the ridgeline on both sides of the road. The arboreal orchids were so numerous that they had brought down at least one large tree down by their sheer weight!

It was here our birding was most affected by the weather, although we did add Streaked Spiderhunter, Streak-throated Yuhina, Long-tailed Thrush, more views of Snowy-browed Flycatchers (a mini-fall these last 2 days perhaps?), heard but unseen Mountain Bamboo Partridge, and a wonderfully confiding female Crimson-browed Finch, which came down to drink at the edge of one of the small natural ponds in the reserve.

After lunch we began a long, fogbound drive to Mangshi to meet Richard and Mo Yung. As we left the high mountain area we stopped for a Blue Whistling Thrush – the race here is *eugeni*, which has a yellow bill – and saw our first Oriental Turtle Doves of the trip. Shortly afterwards we dropped more steeply until the climate became distinctly warmer as we entered the Mangshi Plain. Before reaching the airport a stop to look over the river produced two Blue Whistling Thrushes, a Brown

Dipper, a Riverchat, seven Plumbeous Redstarts, including three fledged youngsters begging for food, a Grey Wagtail, a White wagtail (subs. *personata*), and a pair of Slaty-backed Forktails! Lower down we added a Common Kestrel and some

Red-rumped Swallows, and at the airport a Hoopoe. Having collected Richard and Mo Yung we drove straight to Ruili for a three-night stay.

25th March: Next morning Prof. Han suggested we visit the old road to Long Chuan. After a few kilometres the road climbs in to the ridge of hills that runs east to west across the top of Ruili. Almost immediately we stopped for a large raptor in a tree – pale uncrested, large-billed head, long primaries and short tail added up to a 3rd or 4th year Pallas' Fish Eagle, probably resting overnight on its migration north to Qinghai or Tibet. This was the first of seven species of eagle we saw in Ruili over the next three days!

We turned off the Longchuan road at Nanjingli, joining the old cobbled road that winds, almost completely free of traffic in gentle loops up to the ridgeline and then along it to the west. Despite the best efforts of the fog and occasional dribbles of rain we had a terrific morning, enjoying fine views of a Lesser Yellowthroat, a Mountain Imperial Pigeon, three Green-billed Malkohas, a pair of Burmese Shrikes and a couple of Stripe-breasted Woodpeckers (which in China is confined to this part of Yunnan) in the first hour! Other attention-grabbers included our first Striated, White-throated, Black-crested, Ashy and Flavescent Bulbuls and the closely related Crested Finchbill, many of which were gorging on a fruiting tree up on the ridge, although a group of Long-tailed Sibilias sneaked in and stole the show.

We broke for a good lunch at the rather run-down-looking holiday village, but as we sat around waiting for the rain to stop Prof. Han casually announced that the bird we could hear whistling loudly from the orchard on the other side of the wall was a Red-faced Liocichla! We all piled out to find it and all eventually got views of varying qualities. We also picked up a couple of Black-breasted Thrushes and a party of White-rumped Munias before transferring to the river for some late afternoon birding.

We drove down to the bridge that crosses into Burma and almost immediately found the first of 37 Pygmy Cormorants flying downriver towards us. A few minutes later a large dirty-looking tern showed just long enough to be identified as River Tern. After that we struggled with the weather but added Burmese Spotbills, Grey-headed Lapwings and a pair of Ruddy Shelducks before checking out the fields and adding Little and Chestnut Buntings, several Bluethroats and Rosy Pipits, and a Black-winged Kite. Best of all three Ashy Woodswallows





sat on overhead wires giving their distinctive butt-wiggle as the gloom gathered. Our total for the day was an impressive 103 species.

26th March The next morning we visited the Moli Botanical Gardens and Zhaduo Scenic Waterfall, which is accessed from the road just west of the bridge over the Ruili River. We stopped briefly in agricultural

land en route to record our first Striated Grassbird – an impressive steroid-pumped *Prinia*, which we subsequently saw on several days. Moli is an area of dry forest, while huge relict trees line the path to the waterfall. We started birding shortly after the entrance gate and immediately scored with Bay Woodpeckers, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Maroon Oriole, Black-throated Sunbird and both Banded Bay and Emerald Cuckoos. The latter was a wonderfully obliging female, which perched in good view for several minutes.

The carpark itself offered good views of the surrounding hills and we found three Mountain Hawk Eagles soaring lazily round one of the hilltops. Ignoring the Indian Peafowls displaying on the lawn we had point blank views of Black-throated Sunbirds and we heard, but could not find, a party of White-crested Laughingthrushes. Other birds in the well-tended formal gardens included Common Iora, a splendidly pink-tailed Rosy Minivet and excellent views of a Drongo Cuckoo found by Richard.

As we entered the riverside trail the run of good birds continued – Mr Li found a perched Emerald Dove, and more Maroon Orioles, Silver-breasted Broadbill, Eurasian Nuthatch, Short-billed Minivets and White-throated Bulbuls appeared. Riverchat and Slaty-backed Forktails patrolled the streambed and we had good views of two pairs of Streaked Wren-babblers on the forest floor. The mid-storey held a fine array of flycatchers and warblers which included Yellow-vented, Chestnut-headed and Yellow-bellied Warblers, but pride of place went to the flycatchers, which included Hill Blue, Grey-headed, Ferruginous, Brown-breasted, Verditer and Rufous-gorgetted, and both Large and Small Niltavas (the last two within a minute of each other!)

Having enjoyed a late lunch at an unnamed restaurant on the eastern side of the Ruili River bridge we headed for Jie Le Reservoir for a couple of hours. While the waterbirds themselves were rather disappointing with

just the usual egrets and Great Cormorant on show, along with a raft of Burmese Spotbills and Common Teal and a single Garganey, we did well for migrants.

We enjoyed superb views of a Peregrine perched on an electricity pylon in wonderful light and while we were looking at it a dark phase Booted Eagle drifted over, flashed the diagnostic “headlights” on the shoulder of the wing before drifting on. Amongst the rather unpromising looking conifers and tea bushes we found several Chestnut and Black-faced Buntings, a couple of Black-breasted Thrushes, Tickell’s, Dusky and Pale-footed Bush Warblers, Olive backed Pipits and a pair of Grey-capped Woodpeckers. As dusk fell Prof. Han pointed out the call of Chinese Babax.

On 27th March we headed to the westernmost corner of Ruili to bird the Tongbiguan Nature Reserve (this reserve is confusingly split into five fragments in three different districts!)

near the village of Banling, enjoying good views of a pair of Ruddy Shelduck on a flooded field in r o a d s i d e agriculture on the way. As we drove into the forest the first bird to grab our attention was a male Emerald Cuckoo sitting high on a tree. It’s nice when such good birds are so easy!



This preceded a difficult spell on the trail, which led west along the ridge top, during which time the birds seemed reluctant to show themselves and the forest was interspersed with clearings and piles of wood cut for firewood or timber. Despite this we added our first Puff-throated Babbler, Red-billed Scimitar Babbler, White-browed Piculet and brief views of Lesser Racquet-tailed Drongo – none of which everyone saw.

A pair of Oriental Honey Buzzards, which came out of a large tree on the ridge and circled close overhead, obviously curious, marked the turn in our fortunes. One of the birds was a very pale individual with a streaked breast, while the other was a typical dark bird. I especially enjoyed seeing the contrasting plumages as such close range and in good light. A glade on the south side of the ridge then produced a Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrike, a fine Rosy Minivet, and the first of eight Slaty-backed Flycatchers.

As the day warmed up the birds became more elusive, but we nonetheless added some real quality in the form

of a Collared Treepie, which showed well, but for just a few seconds, and another dark-phase Booted Eagle. Best of all a superb adult Rufous-bellied Eagle came coasting along the ridge, clearly showing its dark, peregrine-like cap, white throat and breast, and, as it caught the light, its rufous belly and underwings.

A little further on the quality of the forest improved and we added an Asian Paradise Flycatcher and Black-eared Shrike Babbler in a bird wave, but we were forced to turn back as time ran out. After another excellent lunch, which incorporated several dishes made of wild plants, Richard and Mo Yung returned to Mangshi for their flight home.

We spent the last few hours of light back at Nanjing Li, adding a very faded-looking Crested Serpent Eagle to our tally of eight species of eagle for the trip in a roadside tree. Our most productive patch was the oldest road over the ridge, which ran downhill from the abandoned church (which turned out to have been purpose-built for a film set). This quiet lane produced Grey-headed Parrotbills (which we had all seen at Wuyuan in Jiangxi), a pair of Rufous-backed Sibilas, another Black-eared Shrike Babbler, two Golden Babblers and a group of five Long-tailed Sibilas. This road continues north on the other side of the road, and although we found little of interest except an unseen bird giving a loud, complex 8-12 note call from the top of a large tree, it looks like it would offer excellent early morning birding for a future trip.

28th March we headed north out of Ruili to bird the ridge between Long Chuan and Ying Jiang. Our sole significant stop was at a reservoir next to a large meadow, which served as a rather ancient-looking graveyard. Best birds here were undoubtedly the flock of eight Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, although our first Little Grebes of the trip offered a measure of support.

The drive up to the pass was a depressing experience as the construction of the road has caused severe erosion from slippage and the local engineering technique of chucking any excavated spoil over the edge. However, good forest remained and we recorded Black Eagle, Hill Blue Flycatcher and Striated Bulbul along the roadside, and a flock of eight

Speckled Wood Pigeons as soon as we reached the pass.

We initially headed east along a new road cut into the ridge, which initially proved productive as we quickly found Grey Sibilas, Large Woodshrike, Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler, and a couple of Fire-tailed Sunbirds in just a few minutes. However, it turned out that the road had been created to facilitate the building of a new temple in the forest. This had been done with a minimum of sensitivity and it remains unclear whether this represents an illegal intrusion into the Longchuan section of the Tongbiguan Nature Reserve. Having documented the damage we retreated downhill adding Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch to our list. We also learned from Prof. Han that this was a known site for Green Peafowl, and that they had been heard recently by local villagers.

Determined to make the best of a site where Scarlet Finch and Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler have been recorded, we tried the path running west, finding more Grey Sibilas, and catching the briefest views of White-gorgetted Flycatcher and a Red-flanked Bluetail. Our big score here was the tiny and normally highly elusive Slaty-bellied Tesia, which craned its neck to check us out between the bracken stalks before hopping over some exposed twigs, giving Ruy excellent views of its greenish-yellow crown (lacking the supercilium of Grey-bellied).

Dropping off the ridge we entered a beautiful valley, with good woodland down to the edge of an arable plain covered in ripening crops. We failed to turn Crested Mynahs into Collared, but did see several Large-billed Crows, more Striated Grassbirds, and Karen found a lovely male Common Rosefinch on a telegraph wire. After lunch at a village famous for its swordsmiths Prof. Han found one of my personal birds of the trip – the superb local race of Eurasian Jay, which has a white face, black crown and moustachial stripe and an almost maroon back. Having watched it being chased off by a Spotted Dove we soon found several Oriental Turtle Doves – rare throughout the trip – before descending a winding gorge (plus hydropower station) to the Yingjiang River flood plain. In the fading light we saw little on the broad sandy river but roosting Great Cormorants and two fighting Pied Kingfishers, before arriving in Yingjiang town for a two-night stay.

29th March was the birdiest day of our trip. We drove southwest along the river towards the southern part of the Yingjiang section of the Tongbiguan Reserve. On the way we enjoyed a couple of Ashy Woodswallows butt-wiggling atop the radio mast at our breakfast stop



village. Back on the road Ruy found a superb male Citrine Wagtail on a marshy pond. Further exploration revealed a mini-fall with a male Siberian Rubythroat and a Red-throated Flycatcher in the same small area.

As we neared the reserve Prof. Han pointed out that where we were now passing through fields he had known to be forest just ten years before, and we noted new paddies being bulldozed alongside the newly formed road which was being built to facilitate the importation of huge logs from Myanmar (we saw over 20 trucks go past) and the construction of new hydro-electric power facilities on the river. Depressing.

Despite this the birds still performed, and we added both Blue-bearded and Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters (one of the few species to benefit from cutting new slopes for roads) to our trip list in just a few kilometres. Other good forest birds included a Green-billed Malkoha, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, four Blue-winged Leafbirds, a tape-recorded and photographed Blue-eared Barbet (possibly a new county record), a trio of Plain Flowerpeckers, 8 fabulous Long-tailed Broadbills, a couple of Common Green Magpies seen only by Karen,



a Streaked Spiderhunter exploring banana flowers, a solitary Dollarbird, a Mountain Imperial Pigeon, and a Barred Cuckoo Dove called twice.

On the way home we checked out several riverbanks, Prof. Han finding our first, and highly sought-

after, River Lapwing. Later on, following a stop to check out a flock of over 50 Yellow and White Wagtails (*alboides*, *ocularis* and *leucopsis*), and a rather tatty Wryneck, we found another, head-bobbing away on the bank next to a rickety-looking footbridge. Our other major river bird was Small Pratincole – a new county record – comprising one bird flying downriver and a flock of about 80 heading determinedly upstream at dusk. Our total for the day was 115 species.

30th March was our last day in western Yunnan, and we again headed west, this time towards Tongbiguan town itself. Once again the building of a new road had seriously damaged the habitat and we heard from Professor Han that Black-backed and other forketails used to be common along the road before its "improvement". Our best forest bird along here was a probable Kalij Pheasant that whizzed past Ruy and Karen and crossed the road as I was looking the wrong



way, and a couple of Spot-breasted Parrotbills were a nice surprise.

But the bird of the day belonged to Karen, who having diligently checked every paddy and stream for the last 10 days hit the jackpot 45 km along the road, when a black blob in a fallow paddy field turned out to be our long sought after Black-tailed Crane! There were in fact two birds picking carefully but fearlessly through the fields and for almost an hour they gave superb views, allowing us to photograph them from about 30 metres away, and at one stage chasing off a couple of "Swintail" Snipe that had the bad manners to come too close!

With time running out to catch our flight we made few stops on the road back to Mangshi, but did see two more River Terns, a couple of Crested Honey Buzzards and seven Grey-headed Lapwings along the Yingjiang River, and 3 Citrine Wagtails on a marsh on the mountain road. We said a sad farewell to Mr Zheng and our drivers before boarding the 5:45 flight for Kunming where we also said goodbye to Prof Han, mindful of the contribution each had made to making the trip such a terrific success.

31st March we spent the morning at the Western Hills, paying RMB 200 for a taxi to take us, wait and bring us back. We saw few birds, but did scope Black-headed and Brown-headed Gulls on Lake Dian from the cable car station, heard more Pallas' Warblers call in 2 hours than in the whole of the rest of the trip, and on the chairlift down (we should have taken it up as well) a pair of White-collared Yuhinas put in a brief appearance. Feral Azure-winged Magpies in the Green Lake Park was our final new bird, giving us a total of 297 species in 12 days! I very much hope to return! ♪



The BIRDS of
HONG KONG and
SOUTH CHINA



Clive Viney
Karen Phillipps
Lam Chiu Ying

The Birds of Hong Kong and South China

Authors: Clive Viney,
Karen Phillipps,
Lam Chiu Ying

The latest edition of "The Birds of Hong Kong and South China" is eventually released. This edition took the longest time to be released since 1977. The last edition was published in 1994, in these ten years time, the 1994 edition provided valuable information for many bird watchers, and also fostered lots of bird-watching professionals or experts. Based on the 1994 edition, the increase in Hong Kong bird species and information gathered from Guangdong provinces have enriched the contents and information of the new edition. Thus it is totally different from the last edition.

With a white background featuring 3 Black-faced Spoonbills in different postures, the cover of the new edited "The Birds of Hong Kong and South China" has fully demonstrated an elegant classical style. Apart from the surprise brought by the cover design, readers must find it amusing while reading through the book: over 800 species which can be found in HK and South China provinces (including Guangdong, Guangxi &

Hainan) are recorded. This is nearly 2 times more than that of the 1994 edition at which only 460 species was included!

As the new edition remains the same size and number of pages of what the old one does, both the font size and illustrations in it have become smaller. Specifically, the arrangement of texts and illustrations is better for the new edition, with related birds putting



Birdwatching in the Big City

Author: Henry Lui

Bird watchers in Hong Kong are lucky as it is not difficult to enjoy bird watching even in the city centre. Parks in urban areas, green zones and suburb areas attract many kinds of birds. If you are a junior bird watcher, birds in urban areas can certainly provide you chances to practice and increase bird identification skills. For those bird

watchers who always carry a binocular to work or to school, a small and hand-carried "bird" guide should be a convenient tool book.

Written by Henry Lui and published by Hong Kong Discovery Co. Ltd., "Birdwatching in the Big City" introduces over 40 bird species that can be found in Hong Kong urban area. Every bird is associated with bilingual descriptions and vivid pictures. Readers can identify the birds from different angles and body features, as well as observe the differences between opposite sexes, adults and juveniles. This is a very practical book featuring writer's tips on bird photography and urban bird-watching hotspots. In addition, photos of 16 urban common species are put at the last section of the book. It is believed to be a valuable reference tool to both experienced and fresh bird-watchers.

The writer Mr. Henry Lui is an experienced bird-watcher and photographer. He is also a seasoned writer. We can not only enjoy the vivacious side of the city, but also the sincerity of the author. "Birdwatching in the Big City" is in 18cm x 11.5cm, with 80 pages and cost \$38, ISBN 988-98539-1-4.

Hong Kong Bird News

May-August 2005

- Richard Lewthwaite

These are unchecked records & members are reminded of the importance of submitting all records on cards or electronically


May

With summer approaching fast, a smattering of migrants came through. In Deep Bay, the most notable migrants of the first two weeks were a Ruddy-breasted Crake and eight Blue-tailed Bee-eaters at Long Valley (KJ), a Purple-backed Starling at Kam Tin, and a late Ruddy Shelduck, 1600 Red-necked Stints, a Spoon-billed Sandpiper and an Oriental Cuckoo at Mai Po (YYT). Elsewhere, there were reports of a Silver-backed Needletail and an Ashy Minivet

together for easier references. It is believed to be more user-friendly than the old edition where some of the related birds are listed separately (E.g. Purple Swamphen, part of Minivets and Red Phalarope). In addition, the new book tries to arrange both a bird's static and in-motion illustrations on the same page. Readers can get quick reference from it, especially when observing raptors, natatorial birds and wading birds which has to depend much on their in-flight motions or characteristics upon identification. In the past, many bird watchers found it difficult to identify sea gulls and warblers, but now it will be an easy job as more information and pictures have been added for reference. Unique species such as Hainan Leaf Warbler, Hainan Partridge and other uncommon species can be found in Hainan province where it is isolated and located in the lower latitude. For this reason, the last section of the bird guide has especially introduced some of the major records collected from Hainan.

Both Clive Viney and Lam Chiu Ying are world famous

bird-watching experts with years of experience in editing illustrated bird-watching handbooks. This book is going to bring all bird watchers new knowledge on the species. The delicate pictures drawn by Karen Phillipps have definitively made the book even more appealing and enjoyable. The new "Hong Kong and South China Birds" covers half of those birds which appear within the Chinese territory, including some of those in Fujian, Jiangxi, Hunan and Hubei. Bird watchers can simply bring it along and travel each of the provinces in South China. As many species covered in this book are not recorded in Hong Kong, junior bird-watchers may find it a bit difficult to start with. It is therefore still recommended to check with the old edition when looking for the birds in Hong Kong and Guangdong.

Until now only English version has been released, the Chinese version is coming soon. The book is in A5 size, with 260 pages and cost \$158 (cheaper than the previous version!), ISBN: 962-02-0347-X. 

at Po Toi on 2nd and a White's Thrush at Ng Tung Chai on 8th (EMSK), the latest ever spring date.

All other significant reports during the month concerned actual or potential breeding species. The KCR ponds at Lok Ma Chau hosted up to six Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, a Red Turtle Dove carrying nesting material and up to three Black-naped Orioles. At Mai Po, Pied Avocets were seen copulating, and a Black-winged Stilt chick was photographed, the third successive year in which this species has produced young. At Kam Tin, a White-cheeked Starling (one of up to nine noted during the month and a species for which there are no previous Hong Kong breeding records) was seen carrying food towards a nest site, two Red-rumped Swallow nests were found, and at least 20 pairs of White-shouldered Starlings were found breeding (JA). At Cheung Chau, Black-naped Orioles were singing.

Surveys in Mirs Bay logged 200 Bridled, 96 Black-naped and four Common Terns.

June

The summer months are traditionally poor for birds.

In June this year, heavy rain was an almost daily event and the usual breeding terns appear to have been completely unsuccessful, though a Greater Crested Tern was found at the Ninepins. There were also reports of a Swinhoe's Egret, two Oriental Pratincoles and two over-summering Black-faced Spoonbills, a

Common Teal and a Garganey, all at Mai Po.

At Lok Ma Chau, there were reports of recently-fledged young of Red Turtle Dove and Black-naped Oriole.


July





Evidence of autumn passage was noted towards the end of the month at Kam Tin, where a Black Bittern and Grey-headed Lapwing were present, and at Ho Chung, where a Forest Wagtail on 28th was the earliest by about 10 days.

Two locally-bred Black Bazas were photographed near Sai Kung on 10 July, as were Greater Painted Snipe chicks at Mai Po. Meanwhile, at Lok Ma Chau, at least one juvenile Oriental Turtle Dove was found, suggesting the species may have nested locally.

August

The reworked Mai Po scrape continued to attract good numbers of roosting shorebirds, especially during 22nd-23rd when following a period of relentless heavy rain there were counts of 885 Red-necked Stint, at least 50 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 253 Terek Sandpiper and 28 Asian Dowitcher (JA, MLC, RWL, EMSK, YTT), all of which were the highest ever in autumn. At least 175 Whimbrel were also counted there, whilst at Shuen Wan 11 Black-winged Stilt was an unusual report.

A juvenile Chinese Grosbeak was seen at Kam Tim earlier in the month. 

Date	Leader / Speaker	Activity / Details	Time	Difficulty
5 Nov (Sat)	YAM Wing Yiu LUI Henry	Small Group Activity: Kap Lung Trail For members only; Limited to 8 members only; Please reserve the place by sending email to membership@hkbws.org.hk	08:00 – 14:00	XXX
6 Nov (Sun)	CHIM Jimmy TSUI William	Tai Lam Chung 08:00 962/61M Bus Stop Siu Lam (Tai Lam Chung Police Quarters)	08:00 – 13:00	XX
12 Nov (Sat)	Mike KILBURN OR Wai Hung	Small Group Activity: Ng Tung Chai For members only; Limited to 4 members only; Please reserve the place by sending email to membership@hkbws.org.hk	07:30 – 12:00	XXX
13 Nov (Sun)	WONG Jemi John HOMLES	Chung Mei 07:45 Tai Po KCR station Taxi station	08:00 – 13:00	XX
16 Nov (Wed)	Richard LEWTHWAITE	Indoor Meeting <Bird Records of Year 2004 & HK Winter Migrant> Room 1113, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Scout Path, Austin Rd, Kowloon (Member \$10, Non-member \$30)	19:00 – 20:30	
19 Nov (Sat)	WONG Onfy	Small Group Activity: Tai Po Au For members only; Limited to 8 members only; Please reserve the place by sending email to membership@hkbws.org.hk	08:00 – 13:00	XXX
20 Nov (Sun)	YING Hak King Gary CHOW	Boat Trip: Po Toi, Lamma Channel 08:00 Aberdeen Public Pier (near Ocean Court) 16:00 back to Aberdeen Public Pier   (Member \$150, Non-member \$200) <i>Note: We will not land enroute, so please bring your lunch and enough drinking water. This will be a long trip on open waters. The ride could be quite rough and some people may be seasick.</i>	08:00 – 16:00	XXX
26 Nov (Sat)	TAI Sheung Lai Beta YIP	Small Group Activity: Shing Mun Limited to 8 members only; Please reserve the place by sending email to membership@hkbws.org.hk	08:00 – 12:00	XX
27 Nov (Sun)	HUNG Wai Ming Miranda CHAN	Kadoorie Farm 07:45 Tai Wo KCR station Taxi station	08:00 – 12:00	XX
3 Dec (Sat)	HUI Betty	Small Group Activity: Mui Tsz Lam, Shatin Limited to 8 members only; Please reserve the place by sending email to membership@hkbws.org.hk	07:30 – 11:00	XX
4 Dec (Sun)	CHEUNG Jose Alberto	Small Group Activity: Ng Tung Chai Limited to 4 members only; Please reserve the place by sending email to membership@hkbws.org.hk	07:30 – 12:00	XXX
10 Dec (Sat)	FONG Forrest LEE Hok Fei	Small Group Activity: Tsim Bei Tsui Limited to 6 members only; Please reserve the place by sending email to membership@hkbws.org.hk	07:30 – 13:00	XXX
	FUNG Robin CHAN Yung LEE Nicola LAM C Y	Mai Po 08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR   Station (Kept Road exit) or 09:00 Mai Po carpark coach leaves Mai Po at 15:00 and back to Kowloon Tong at 16:00	08:00 – 16:00	XX
14 Dec (Wed)	Mike CHALMERS	Indoor Meeting <ID of Birds (2) : Gulls & Tern> Room 1113, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Scout Path, Austin Rd, Kowloon (Member \$10, Non-member \$30)	19:00 – 20:30	
17 Dec (Sat)	HO Wai Chun	Small Group Activities: Sha Tin Pass Limited to 4 members only; Please reserve the place by sending email to membership@hkbws.org.hk	07:30 – 11:00	XXX
18 Dec (Sun)	WONG Hok Sze CHAN Alan	Nam San Wai & Sha Po 08:00 West Railway Yuen Long Station (7-11 Shop)	08:00 – 13:00	XX



Booking Note

Note! Priority is given to members of the Society. 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. **Please show your membership card when joining the activities.**

- * Members who use the Society coach to Mai Po must confirm their attendance by returning the booking slip with payment. Those using their own transport please also send in their booking slips to 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 AFCF permit. Failure to do so may result in being refused access to the reserve.
- + According to the requirement of the Hong Kong Police and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, participants for the Mai Po activities should provide their full names and Hong Kong ID No. to register for access to the Frontier Close Area and Mai Po Marshes.
- * If their applications for joining Mai Po/boat trips are not accepted, applicants will be notified by phone or by e-mail at least one week before the outing.

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: by returning the Activity Booking Slip with a cheque in English made out to the "Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Ltd"

For all outdoor activities please bring food and drinks, appropriate clothing for the location, and sun cream and mosquito lotion if needed!

Activity Booking Slip

► Mai Po Trip

I wish to reserve places for _____ members and _____ non-members for the following Mai Po tour :

10 Dec (Sat) Membership no.: _____ The number of person(s) using the coach is _____

* Coach fare: _____ x HK\$40/Member _____ x HK\$20/Student member

_____ x HK\$60/Non-member[#]

Non-members joining Mai Po trips will have to pay the coach fare irrespective of whether they make use of the coach. Members not using the coach do not need to pay coach fare.

Please indicate whether the participant(s) have the following permits and bring them along with you during attending the Mai Po Outing.

Mai Po Marshes Entry Permit: Yes No Frontier Closed Area Permit: Yes No

+ Attendance full name _____ HK I.D. No. _____

(If more than one attendance, please add paper to fill in the information of the other attendances)

► Boat Trip

I wish to reserve places for _____ members and _____ non-members for the following boat trip :

* 22 Nov (Sun) : Poi and Lamma Channel (HK\$150/member, HK\$200/non-members)

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

Name : _____ Contact No. : _____ Membership No. : _____

Address: _____

Date : _____ Signature : _____

Note: Please send this application together with crossed cheque by mail to The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Ltd, GPO Box 12460, Hong Kong. Application should be made at least 10 days before the date of the outing. Late applications will only be accepted if places are available.

* Please as appropriate

<Please email this reply slip to membership@hkbws.org.hk >

Small Group Activity (For members only)

I wish to reserve _____ places for members for the Small Group Activity to be held on _____ at _____.

Name: _____ Membership Card No.: _____

Mobile phone: _____ Email: _____



褐柳鶯

Dusky Warbler

- 何萬邦 Marcus Ho
- 米埔 Mai Po
- 28 Dec 2002



巨嘴柳鶯

Radde's Warbler

- 黃理沛、江敏兒
Peter Wong and
Michelle Kong
- 大埔滘 Tai Po Kau
- (1) 1 Nov 2003
- (2) 26 Oct 2003



鳳頭鷹 - 霍棟豪 (壘原)
Crested Goshawk - Stanley Fok
(Long Valley)

- 13/4/2005
- DSLR Camera with 600mm/f5.6 lens
+ 1.4x converter



遊隼 - 葉志權 (小西灣)
Shahin Falcon - IP Chi Kuen (Siu Sai Wan)

- 2/9/2005
- Fieldscope and Digital Camera