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241

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Mai Po

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薛國華
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Rufous-capped Babbler
Sit Kwok Wah, Leo
Tai Po Kau

25/08/2015
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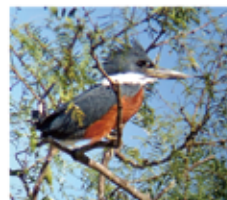
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The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

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Bulletin 241

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Society News and Projects

Members Affairs

An acknowledgement to Mr. Geoff Welch, former Secretary of the Records Committee.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Mr. Geoff Welch for his momentous and continued contribution to the Society. Due to his great efforts, the Hong Kong Bird Report has been published on time in recent years, with more and more information presented in a scientific and meaningful way. The Committee is also more efficient than before. Geoff will leave the committee from September. We wish him good health and good luck in the future.

Bird Watching Course

The 21st Elementary Bird Watching Course for Beginners will be held in November and is now open for registration. Please visit our Discussion Forum for details.

New Member Orientation

The next New Member Orientation is scheduled for December. Please visit our Discussion Forum for details and registration.

Crested Bulbul Club

Early Morning Bird Watchers

No. of participants in Hong Kong Park from May to July 2016: 223

No. of participants in Kowloon Park from May to July 2016: 362

Free talk and birding tour in Hong Kong Park

Provided a free talk and birding tour in Hong Kong Park for 35 elderlies from ELCHK, Shatin District Community Centre for the Golden-Aged.

Conservation News

Protect Nam Sang Wai from development

In May this year, the developer explained to the media that they must obtain the development permission for Nam Sang Wai and Lut Chau from the Town Planning Board, before they can manage the habitat and ecological environment and halt dumping activities in the area. The Society together with other green groups are highly concerned the recent allegations made by the developer of Nam Sang Wai project will undermine the conservation principle for Ramsar Site and jeopardise the planning measures to protect the integrity of wetland ecosystem of the Deep Bay area. The concerned groups consider that the statement made by the developer is misleading and the proposed development (A/YL-NSW/242) should be rejected by the Town Planning Board. The key points of the joint statement are as below:



1. The developer should not hold the well-being of the natural setting and environment of their land and properties to "ransom" to gain favour for the approval of their proposed development plans.
2. Landowners, including the developer and the Government, have a duty of care towards their land and are responsible to protect their land from unauthorized dumping and other eco-vandalism. They are obligated to observe the laws, guidelines and international convention related to their land and properties. Damaged sites should be properly reinstated.
3. The Government has the duty to ensure that adequate resources and regulations are in place to ensure effective enforcement against unauthorised activities.

The full text of the joint statement: <http://www.hkbws.org.hk/BBS/viewthread.php?tid=25094>

Town Planning discussion

The Society together with other green groups object to the revised Po Toi Islands Outline Zoning Plan as there is still one of the largest mature trees left within the revised residential zoning. But the land lease of the related private lots does not have any tree preservation clauses. We are concerned the site formation and excavation works under the tree canopy caused by the redevelopment of houses would lead to severe damage or even the removal of the mature tree. However, in the meeting held in June this year, the Town Planning Board decided not to uphold our

Hong Kong Fishpond Conservation Scheme



Pyrocoelia analis is the most common firefly in fishponds.



Wetland and Firefly

It is not difficult to encounter fireflies when you visit fishponds in the NW New Territories during hot summer nights. The endemic species *Pteroptyx maipo* is the highlight in Deep Bay mangroves. Besides, the terrestrial firefly *Pyrocoelia analis* is also commonly seen in this area. Our fishpond surveyors have been conducting a baseline study to investigate nocturnal animals in April, June and

August over the past four years. These two firefly species have been recorded in Fung Lok Wai, Tai Sang Wai and Nam Sang Wai. Take a glance on them when you have a night safari in the area next time.



©Henry Chan
The lifecycle of firefly is similar to butterfly. It composes of egg, larva, pupa and adult.

The Hong Kong Bird Atlas 2016-2019

Bird Atlases have long been used as effective tools worldwide to monitor the condition of bird populations. They are usually a grid-based sampling method to collect information of numbers, species and breeding status. It has been long time since the last breeding atlas survey in 1993-96 and winter atlas survey in 2001-05 in Hong Kong. The results of both surveys were subsequently used extensively for conservation purposes and treated as an important reference for distribution of wild birds in Hong Kong, and it is time to update them.



Our Society has just got some money from the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) in March 2016 to start the atlas survey as a citizen science project. The project will last for three years (2016-19), including breeding and winter atlases, and we plan to set up an open access online database to enhance sharing of results with the public. Hong Kong is divided into more than a thousand square-kilometre grids, which is quite a large number so we need a lot of surveyors. We need help from all of you to ensure the surveys can be completed.

We were glad to have around 100 keen birdwatchers to help in previous breeding surveys this year. Workshops will also be organized before the start of winter surveys in December to provide volunteers a technical briefing for taking part in the surveys. Details will be announced later. If you are interested to help, please follow the latest information in this bulletin and the HKBWS website online forum.

Board for the zonings on Po Toi



further comments and representations on the revised plan. Nevertheless, we have already fought hard in the previous TPB meeting and successfully reduced the approved residential zoning by two-thirds. The Society will continue to monitor any developments on Po Toi to protect this important site for the stopping-over of migratory birds.

*The minutes and records of the 1114th TPB meeting: http://www.info.gov.hk/tpb/en/meetings/TPB/Minutes/m1114tpb_e.pdf

Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

Discover the Urban Nature of Hong Kong Eurasian Tree Sparrow Census 2016

Press Release 18/7/2016

Eurasian Tree Sparrow is a common and well-known bird in Hong Kong. The first-ever Sparrow Census was conducted on 8th May, 2016 by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society.

“On the census day, a total of 4,503 Eurasian Tree Sparrows were recorded. Hence, the mean sparrow density in Hong Kong was calculated from this figure and extrapolated with the total area of Hong Kong. It is estimated that Hong Kong has around 320,000 Eurasian Tree Sparrows across all the territory. It would mark a higher density of sparrow population compared to that in the United Kingdom, and a lower density than that in India,” Society Research Specialist Dr. Pang Chun-chiu said.

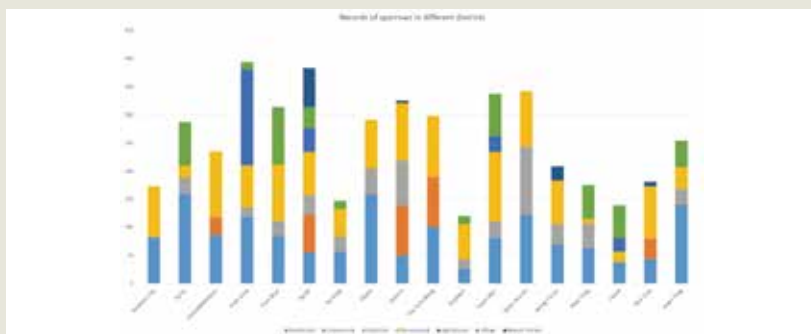
Census results suggest that there could be 2,000 sparrows per square kilometer in residential housing and urban parks, as well as 600 to 1,000 sparrows in industrial and agricultural areas on average. This reflects that Eurasian Tree Sparrows are well-adapted to living in urban areas. However, lots of foreign researches implied that sparrows prefer farmland with grain crops more. The reason might be there is not much farmland in Hong Kong and farmers prefer growing vegetables instead of grain crops. The sparrow may move out and stay in the city for searching steady food supply in the city. While most sparrows could live with humans closely, farmlands are still playing the crucial role for them. Long Valley, a managed freshwater wetland with practicing traditional rice farming, still has some paddy fields that provide food for the Eurasian Tree Sparrow and other granivorous birds when rice grains grow thus attracting lots of them to stay in Long Valley in autumn.

“This is the first time to conduct a census about Eurasian Tree Sparrow and its ecological survey in Hong Kong,” according to the Society Research Manager Yu Yat-tung. Common birds are easily neglected because they are common. It would be too late to carry out conservation measures when they become endangered. “Keeping Common Birds Common” is one of the main objectives among international bird

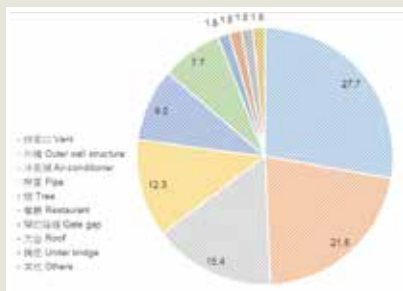
conservation groups, such as BirdLife International. We chose the sparrow as our study target mainly because they are easily seen in our communities. This census involve birders, specialists, and especially the general public, and makes a good example of Citizen Science. Mr. Yu pointed that general public who were interested but without any scientific background could also participate in the survey to collect data, which provides another approach to raise their environmental awareness and promote science education.

“The census recorded 65 sparrow nests,” Dr. Pang said. Most nesting sites (77%) were found outside buildings, such as vents, outer wall structure, air-conditioners and pipes. Some Eurasian Tree Sparrows, about 10%, actually build their nests in trees. Among all sparrows we recorded, 41 individuals were juvenile birds (1%). Juvenile birds are generally harder to identify, especially for non-experienced surveyors. Careful observation is always needed for differentiating juvenile and adult birds. Besides, the date scheduled for the census might have been a bit early that most juvenile birds were too young to leave the nests, which makes the observation even more difficult.

Behaviour of the sparrows was recorded census, such as perching, foraging, and courtship displaying. Most of the Eurasian Tree Sparrows were observed perching and foraging in the census. Recreational



Appendix 1 : Records of sparrows in different districts



Appendix 2 : Nesting sites of sparrows



Appendix 3 : Nest Distribution (by habitats)

areas have the highest mean foraging sparrow density. Areas with great concrete coverage held a lower number. The high number reflects that parks are an important ground for them. It is because of the lower disturbance and higher insect abundance in parks and other open spaces, such as soil invertebrates. Dr. Pang concluded that urban parks and other similar habitats are important foraging grounds for sparrows especially during breeding seasons when dependence on insect prey is high.

A Sparrow Census 2016 was conducted on 8th May, 2016 from 9 am to 10 am. A 1-km transect line is randomly placed within each habitat in every district. There are a total of 87 transects, including different types of habitats, such as residential housing, open area, commercial land use and natural terrain. A total of 427 citizens aged from 6 to 80

took part in the survey. Hong Kong Sparrow Census is one of the programmes under the project “Discover the Urban Nature of Hong Kong”, aiming at raising citizen conservation awareness and promoting citizen science, Society Education Officer Wong Ching-man added.

Another programme targets secondary school students, namely the Urban Eco-ambassador Scheme which is also aimed at raising the awareness of students about wildlife in urban areas. A total of 120 students from 11 secondary schools participated. 11 communities were investigated this year, including parks and estates. On average 40 species of birds, 10 species of butterflies were found in their studies. Besides, Verditer Flycatchers, which are comparatively hard to see, were found in Eastern and Tsuen Wan Districts.

The Scheme is funded by the Environment and Conservation Fund, as well as Environmental Campaign Committee; and supported by School of Biological Science, HKU, Department of Biology, HKBU, Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union and HKWildlife forum.

CEPF Environmental Education Training Workshop



Miss Wu Biyun leading on nature experience tour during the workshop



Miss Luo Peng giving lecture about Environmental Education



Vivian Fu leading an environmental game

The second phase of Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) supported project “Empowerment of Local Communities to Address Problem of Illegal Hunting in South China” kicked off with an environmental education training workshop in Lingnan Normal University, Zhanjiang, Guangdong between 9th and 10th July, 2016. A total of 29 participants completed the whole workshop. The workshop included lectures on basic concepts of environmental education, how to implement and design activities for communities and school children, various environmental education games and nature exploration demonstrations. Participants also had to work on a project design in groups during the workshop. We would like to express our thanks to Zhanjiang Bird Watching Society who were the co-organizers of this workshop. Thanks are also given to Miss Luo Peng from EcoAction and Miss Wu Biyun from Guangzhou Nature Association for sharing their experiences during the workshop.



Group photo of participants of 2016 CEPF Environmental Education Training Workshop 2016 CEPF

Mai Po Update

*Text: Katherine Leung,
Assistant Reserve
Manager, Mai Po NR*

Enhancement of Hide #1

Located at the eastern end of Gei wai #16/17, Hide #1 has always been one of the most popular bird watching hides in MPNR. On top of the joy of observing flocks of waders roosting on the islands during high tide, there were some memorable moments associated with Hide #1 in the past few years, including discovery of the Hong Kong first Great Thick-knee in 2009; arrival of the first ever over-summering Oriental Stork in 2012 and a Spoon-billed Sandpiper which continued to appear in front of the Hide for a whole week in September 2014.

We hope these excitements are to be enjoyed universally, including visitors with special needs, especially wheelchair users. Hence, Hide #1 has been renovated during the summer. The old structure has been demolished and the new structure includes some features to suit the needs of wheelchair users, with a wider, less-steep access ramp and modified windows. In addition, ventilation in the Hide will be improved by replacing doors with louvered wooden screens. An insulating layer has been added to the roof.

Looking ahead to summer 2017, enhancement work will be carried out extensively on Gei wai #16/17 to restore some of the islands and open water areas which are heavily overgrown. New small islands will also be made near the hides with the aims of getting better views of waterbirds.




Egretty at Gei wai #14, summer 2016 (Credit : NY Lai)

Summer Breeding Birds

Following the success of over 200 pairs of egrets breeding at the seaward-side mangroves in Gei wai #14, initial survey results show that more than 100 pairs of egret have been breeding again at the same location, including mainly Great Egret, but also Little Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron and Eastern Cattle Egret.

No Black-winged Stilts were recorded nesting in MPNR this year, but a few pairs of adults were observed feeding with their young when some of the northern gei wais were drained. Moreover, a flock of more than 30 immature Red-billed Starlings was observed in mid-July, which was possibly from birds breeding around Deep Bay area.

“Leave no Trash @ MPNR”

Starting from summer 2016, we are gradually reducing the number of rubbish bins within MPNR with the aim of encouraging visitors to take their own trash away from the Reserve. Eventually, rubbish bins and the aluminium can recycling bin will only be found at the Mai Po Visitor Centre Car Park. Since there is no recycling company who cooperates with us to recycle plastic bottles at the moment, we encourage visitors to reduce buying plastic bottled beverages or reuse their plastic bottles as much as possible. Thank you very much for your support! 

Birdwatching, another reason for nature lovers to visit Sri Lanka

Text / Photo: Samson So



There are only 5 Magpie Species in the world. The Sri Lanka Blue Magpie (*Urocissa ornata*) is an endemic species in Sri Lanka. It lives in the dense wet evergreen rain forest and highlands of Sri Lanka.



The Green Vine Snake (*Ahaetulla nasuta*) is one of two *Ahaetulla* species that can be found in Sri Lanka. The snake normally feeds on small mammals, birds, frogs and lizards.



The Brinck's Shadowdamsel, (*Drepanosticta brincki*) in the family Platystictidae, is an endemic species of damselfly in Sri Lanka.



The Malabar Pied Hornbill (*Anthracoceros coronatus*) is the only bird in the Hornbill Family that can be found in the Southern India and Sri Lanka. Due to the loss of its living habitat, the number of Malabar Pied Hornbill is declining and is classified as a "near threatened species" in the Red List of IUCN.

Sri Lanka, a country that produces the world's best spices and tea, numbers of ancient religious temples across the country with people wearing warmest and smiling faces, always attracts a large number of tourists. For the nature lovers, indeed, they visit Sri Lanka for another reason.

Sri Lanka is one of the smallest, but biologically diverse countries in Asia. This island sits in the Indian Ocean with a mere area of 65,000 km composed of different types of habitat. It is recognized as one of the Biodiversity hotspot in the world because of its high proportion of endemic species among its flora and fauna. This nice place offers opportunities for the nature lovers to explore themselves for stunning landscapes, diverse wildlife and dense population of endemic fauna and flora species.

About 16% of animals and 23% of flowering plants are endemic species. With more and more species being discovered and identified by the scientists in recent years, the rich species diversity in this country is believed to be the highest in Asia.

The wide variety of habitats in Sri Lanka are homes for different animals and plants. For examples, over 3500 flowering plants (about 20% are endemic species) are recorded and found widely distributed at different altitude and habitats. About 110 species of mammal (including elephant, leopard and 27 other endemic mammal species), about 433 species of birds (include one third are winter migrants flying from India and 34 endemic species); 350 species of amphibians and reptiles, more than 240 species of butterflies (10% of them are endemic species), and about 124 species of damselflies and dragonflies (with 50% are endemic species) are recorded in this small island.

Sri Lanka also is recognized as one of the birding paradises in the world and it is definitely a birding heaven for birdwatching enthusiast like me. Its rich diversity and dense population of endemic species always attract birdwatchers and bird





The Sri Lanka paradise flycatcher, (*Terpsiphone paradisi ceylonensis*), with a unique glossy black head with a black crest in adult male, and its distinguished long tail, always catch the attention of birdwatchers. This bird is a subspecies of the Indian paradise flycatcher remains in Sri Lanka throughout the year.



Chestnut-backed Owlet (*Glaucidium castanotum*)



Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyuran*), winter migratory bird in Sri Lanka

lovers from over the world to pay a visit here. This is also the reason why I am too eager to visit this place one day. Depending on the season when you visit Sri Lanka, you may able to see all endemic bird species and also other migratory birds from India and South Asia.

As a birdwatcher, no matter you are birdwatching in Hong Kong or other foreign countries, you have to be concentrated and attentive, and also your eyes and ears to trace the birds. You would be very busy in finding birds when you are walking in the forest or footpath under the canopies in Sri Lanka. You have to look up to the top canopies for colourful Trogons, or to scan the tree trunks and branches for woodpeckers, nuthatches that foraging worms, and also looking down to shrubs and leaves near the ground to find babblers and warblers.

Being a keen birdwatcher, it is always an exciting experience when bumping into a bird wave in the forest. Bird Wave, is a flock of mixed bird species that join and move together at different levels

including the lowest ground, canopy and the top tree canopy. Different birds specialize at different levels. For example, the babblers like feeding in the understorey while other birds like hunting insects and move to the ground for feeding. Bird wave is a good example of Niche Segregation. It clearly showed that different bird species, by feeding on different food and moving in different layers in the forest, use the environment differently in a way that helps them to coexist. Researchers have conducted researches on the formation of bird wave in Sinharaja Rain Forest since 1981. They revealed that the Bird Wave in the Sinharaja Rain Forest is the biggest, best viewing and longest. Up till now, about 60 different combination of bird flocks have been identified in Sinharaja Rain forest.

It is usually a fantastic experience for a birdwatcher to encounter a bird wave with flocks of bird species when walking in the forest. You may first hear the birds calling from a far distance, and gradually the noise getting closer and closer that the whole forest



Yellow-eared Bulbul (*Pycnonotus penicillatus*), Sri Lanka Endemic



Grey-headed Swamphen (*Porphyrio poliocephalus*)



Crocodile sunbathing near river bank.

became alive with birds. Flocks of birds flipping wings, moving up and down between the trunks, branches and leaves, singing and whistling around you. You find yourself surrounded by a gang of various bird species. Birdwatchers get busy in scanning and identifying the birds with their binoculars. Minutes after, the flock start to move away and the forest back to silence again.

Sri Lanka has a wide range of climate and habitat. In addition to the primary forest in lowland, the montane forest in highland is also a desirable place for watching the diverse fauna especially endemic bird species. The climate in montane forest is uncertain and changes a lot. The forest is always filled with moisture and the tree canopy is usually covered with low level cloud making birdwatching in montane forest more difficult. However, when the sun comes out and the fog slowly faded out, a scenic view of mountain range appear and the birds become more active.

Sri Lanka is not only a paradise for birds, it is also a nice place for watching mammals, amphibians and reptiles, insects or flora. Both Sri Lanka Leopard and Asian Elephants are recognized as flagship species in Sri Lanka. These species are closely related to other species in the same habitat, and hence they are also selected as umbrella species for making conservation-related decisions. This means both Sri Lanka Leopard and the Asian Elephants, work like an umbrella, indirectly protecting their living environment and many other species that make up the ecological community of its habitat.

There are total 9 sub species of leopard in Asia and among all, Sri Lanka has a relatively high leopard population density. The Sri Lankan Leopard is the native species to Sri Lanka and they could be easily found in the National Parks. To get a closer look of the leopard, the jeeps with an open top enabled the tourists to look



Sri Lankan Kangaroo Lizard (Otocryptis wiegmanni), an endemic species in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lanka Leopard (Panthera pardus kotiya) is nocturnal animal which likes hunting at night and they are seldom seen in day time. It would be an unforgettable experience if you come across with the leopard at daytime.



around and search the birds easily. Riding on an open-top jeep helps to minimize the disturbance to the animals and ensure the visitors could have a relaxed ride with close-up views of wild animals and plants.

In the national parks, you could see wild buffaloes splashing in muddy pools, crocodiles sunbathing by the bank, elephants feeding on woody shrubs. Yet, you could also see rare mammals such as gangs of sambar deer and the primates such as Loris and Langur species. Lastly, the Sri Lanka Leopard certainly caught my attention as it recalled my memory on the Big Cats that I met in Africa.

Oversea birdwatching trips or nature adventurous trips become more popular nowadays. Being a nature lover, Sri Lanka is the place that I do love to visit for one or even more times owing to its rich diversity of wildlife. I had conducted a birdwatching trip to Sri Lanka in 2015 and spent about two weeks there. We went birdwatching in different habitats, from the wetland to rain forest and arid zone shrub, from montane forest to dry evergreen forest. Finally, we have recorded more than 200 species in two weeks including all 34 endemic species and 7 owl species, and also many others endemic plants. This was a great experience for me and my team members. I have travelled to many places to explore the nature and I was deeply impressed by the cultural landscapes and nature conservation of Sri Lanka during this trip.

I will visit Sri Lanka again in the end of 2016 and I am looking forward to sharing more birdwatching experience and stunning photos with you after the trip.





Chinese Barbet

Happy Birthday to Tai Po Kau - a short review of the arrival pattern of forest birds

Text: Captain Wong

Photo: Henry Lui

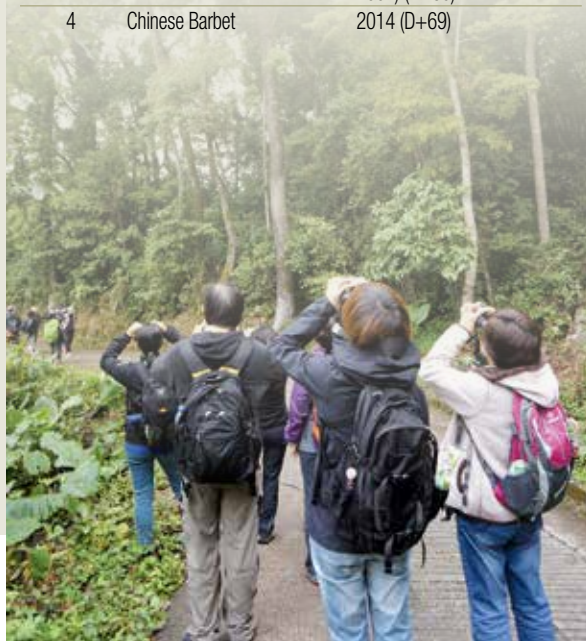
15 August 2016 is the 71st birthday of the Tai Po Kau (TPK) forest. When Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945, TPK was likely dominated by grassland and short shrubland, except a few trees left on top the TPK hill (as suggested by some aerial photos taken in Nov 1945). In fact, most “forests” in Hong Kong were cleared for fuelwood consumption during the Japanese Occupation (1942 – 1945). From 15 August 1945 onwards, trees there can feel free to grow without any fear of being felled for fuelwood. So, let’s fix that day as the birthday of TPK.

Why 71st? It is simply that I missed her 70th one last year. I hope she can forgive my carelessness. Nevertheless, after 71 years of regeneration, TPK is no longer a barren hillside. In fact, she may be one of the prime examples of a regenerated forest in Guangdong.

As we all know, trees take years to settle down and establish. The process is dynamic as the species composition and dimensions of trees changeover time. For instance, special trees replace pioneer trees, and young trees grow bigger and bigger. This process may take hundreds of years before it reaches the climax stage (that is, the end of succession).

But how about birds? TPK could be a perfect case to study succession of birds in the sub-tropical region as it has been much-birded since 1945. We know some forest birds came earlier (Minivets in the 1970s) and later (the Chinese Barbet in 2014). The following table summarizes the years of first records as resident forest birds at TPK (resident = stay all year round; some forest birds of captive origin are excluded; D is the year of birth).

Arrival wave	Birds	First Record as resident at TPK (The no of years after 1945)
1	Fork-tailed Sunbird	1959 (D+14)
1	Hainan Blue Flycatcher	1963 (D+18)
1	Greater-necklaced Laughing Thrush	1970 (D+25)
2	Scarlet Minivet	1975 (D+30)
2	White-bellied Yuhina	1980 (D+35)
2	Buff-bellied Flowerpecker	1980s (D+35)
2	Chestnut Bulbul	1982 (D+37)
2	Grey-throated Minivet	1984 (D+39)
2	Red-billed Leiothrix	1985 (D+40)
2	Orange-bellied Leafbird	1988 (D+43)
2	Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler	1988 (D+43)
2	Yellow cheeked Tit	1988 (D+43)
2	Huet's Fulvetta	1992 (D+47)
3	Lesser Shortwing	1998 (D+53)
3	Mountain Tailorbird	1999 (D+54)
3	Pygmy Wren Babbler	2000 (D+55)
3	Mountain Bulbul	2001 (D+56)
4	Brown Wood Owl	2006/07 (D+61)
4	Bay Woodpecker	2007 (D+62)
4	Speckled Piculet	2010 (probably as early as 2007) (D+65)
4	Chinese Barbet	2014 (D+69)





Slaty-backed Forktail



Chestnut Bulbul

In general, there are four waves. The first one is about generalists, and lasted between 1959 and 1970, of which three bird species colonized TPK. The Fork-tailed Sunbird is a generalist bird and is not restricted to forests. The Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush is also not restricted to forests and they can do well in tall shrublands. (The arrival year and their habitat preference may overcome any suggestions that that this bird is of captive origin. I guess very few people did large-scale religious bird releases in 1970! In fact, this bird is widespread in Guangdong). The Hainan Blue Flycatcher is a bit unexpected and probably they can do well even in very young forests and in the understorey of fast-growing exotic plantations. Please note TPK was still very young when Hainan Blue arrived (14 to 25-yrs-old). Young trees might have just settled and begun to form a forest canopy, but even at that early stage, some generalists could settle.

The second wave started in 1975 (30-yrs-old) and ended in 1992 (47-yrs-old). During that period, a lot of canopy and understorey birds arrived. The minivets, Chestnut Bulbul, and Buff-bellied Flowerpecker arrived first. Then Orange-bellied Leafbird, Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler and Yellow-cheeked Tit arrived a bit later in the late 1980s. The minivets, Chestnut Bulbul, Orange-bellied Leafbird and Yellow-cheeked Tit are actually quite widespread in central Guangdong, even in slightly degraded forests. This may indicate that their dispersal ability is high and they can adapt to young forests. Therefore, their arrival at TPK (30 to 40-yrs-old at that time) is not unexpected. It also indicates that a young forest could already support a diversity of forest birds.

The third wave is a mix of canopy/understorey birds, and forest floor birds, which arrived at the end of the last century (TPK about 50-yrs-old). The highlights have been two forest-floor

birds, Lesser Shortwing and Pygmy Wren Babbler. Unlike the previous settlers, they are active at ground level. As we know, forest clearance is removal of not only trees, but also soil (especially when it rains). Their arrival may indicate that a forest in China's subtropical regions can take 50 years to improve soil condition and the vegetation on forest floor, in order to attract forest floor birds back. On the other hand, the arrival of the Mountain Bulbul, a canopy specialist, also indicates that the canopy of TPK should have improved a bit when compared with conditions during the 2nd wave.

The fourth wave of birds arrived when TPK was about 60-yrs-old. These are forest specialists, such as Brown Wood Owl, Bay Woodpecker and Speckled Piculet, all arriving around 2006-07. In Southern Guangdong, the Bay Woodpecker and Speckled Piculet are widespread in prime secondary woodlands only (some just 50 km away from HK). Therefore, this may indicate that these two woodpeckers generally avoid young regenerated forests and prefer mature ones. The arrival of these forest specialists should not be a coincidence and indicates that the entire TPK forest at 60-yrs-old might have reached a more mature stage.

Not all forest birds that have visited TPK settled down. One classic case is the Slaty-backed Forktail. This bird has visited TPK regularly, but it is still a mystery why they do not settle down as a resident. In Guangdong, they have been seen at low-flowing streams with a lot of garbage. The watercourses at TPK are much better than such places. So, why they don't like TPK? I have no answer. Probably TPK is too close to the sea and forktails may hate sea breezes!

A possible explanation of the above-mentioned arrival pattern of forest birds at TPK is that young trees try to grow fast by growing

upward (getting more light with keen competitors nearby). Once they reach a certain height, they stop growing up and try to increase in trunk diameter (enhancing stability). So, during the growing upward phase (from D to D+40), the canopy and understorey are getting better and better, and allow settlement of a lot of forest birds. Meanwhile, the soil continues to improve and eventually allows the return of forest floor birds. After the trunk diameter increasing phase (roughly from D+40 to D+60), woodpeckers can then settle down. The process is still taking place today. Of course, the change in plant species composition, source of forest birds (their status in Guangdong), dispersal ability, global warming, stopovers (the status of forest islands between HK and other parts of Guangdong) and barriers (highly urbanized Shenzhen) all play an important role here.


While we celebrate the 71st birthday of TPK, will more forest birds arrive? The Black Bulbul, Collared Pigmy Owlet, and Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoo should be on their way. Their current distribution is quite close to Hong Kong (within 100km) and their dispersal ability should not be weak (the Black Bulbul and Drongo Cuckoo have regularly visited HK but they have not yet stayed as residents). But my greedy expectation is of Red-headed Trogon, Fairy Pitta, Silver Pheasant and White-necklaced Partridge. My personal view is these birds should have been residents in Hong Kong historically. There is a slim chance that the former two birds can achieve Hong Kong resident status naturally, but it is hopeless for the latter two shy birds of poor flying ability. Ideally, it would be perfect if the Pheasant and Partridge from central Guangdong can walk to here (again 100 km away from HK). But is it possible? Theoretically, this dream can come true if some forest management work in South Guangdong can be undertaken.



Pygmy Wren Babbler



Greater-necklaced Laughing Thrush

Nevertheless, Happy birthday to Tai Po Kau - Thank you for attracting a lot of stunning birds! 

Source:

Geoff Carey, Mike Chalmers, David Diskin, Peter Kennerley, Paul Leader, Mike Leven, Richard Lewthwaite, David Melville, Mike Turnbull and Lew Young. 2001. The Avifauna of Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society
HK Bird Reports: 1998-2014



Fork-tailed Sunbird



白腹鶺鴒
何文顯
沙田坳

Blue-and-white Flycatcher
Peter Ho
Shatin Pass

16/03/2016
DSLR Camera, 300mm f/4 lens+ 1.4x teleconverter

白翅浮鷗
何建業
米埔

White-winged Tern
Kinni Ho Kin Yip
Mai Po

07/05/2016
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



費氏鷗
潘士強
米埔

Franklin's Gull
Jason Pun
Mai Po

02/05/2016
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



鬚浮鷗
余伯全
担竿洲路

Whiskered Tern
Ractis John
Tam Kon Chau Road

14/05/2016
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens





紅喉姬鵯
何錦榮
維多利亞公園

Red-throated Flycatcher
Ho Kam Wing
Victoria Park

16/04/2016
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens+ 1.4x teleconverter

Birds of Taiwan, Please - Fly to the left!

Text/Photo: Stanley Chan



Black Bulbul

I originally planned to go to Shanghai for the week, yet worried that we, the shabby Hong Kong visitors, could not fit well into that metropolitan city. So, on second thoughts, I decided travelling in Taiwan could be more fun.

We had been previously been to Taipei, Hualien, Kaohsiung, Penghu, Kenting, but not just for bird watching. Reviewing my old photos, I found pitifully few good shots of Taiwan's endemics, so, seven days in Taiwan it was. I knew I needed to plan carefully. I could not make it just a bird watching trip, because of my wife, Puk.

From Taipei we aimed directly to Huisun Forest Area and Auwanta Forest for four days, then three days at the ancient city of Lukang for relaxation. Both Huisun and Auwanta Forest are situated near Puli in Nantou County, close to the central mountain range. Puli is famous for being the geographical centre of Taiwan, connected to the scenic points nearby, like Sun Moon Lake, Wushe and Chichi railway station.

Huisun Forestry^① was called Nenggao Forestry during the Japanese colonial period. Later the University of Chong Hsing took charge of it for forestry experiments and teaching purposes. The place stretches over 7,400 hectares and is located in a valley with altitudes ranging from 400 to 2,400 meters. It is more than 70% authentic primitive forest. In winter, there are over 100 species of birds. But I was going for Taiwan Blue Magpie this time and hoped to spot it even in May.

At Puli we caught the bus to Huisun Forest Area. Along mountain roads I fell asleep. When I awoke, I saw the signboard for "River Island" at the roadside. I felt curious being at "River Island" – a place where the Japanese forcibly relocated the indigenous Taiwanese hill tribes in 1915. The area was the site of a 1930 rebellion – the "Musha Incident".

The book "Yu Sheng" (Remains of Life) written by a Taiwan novelist called Dancing Crane (Wu He), describes this piece of history from the perspective of the grand daughter of the rebellious tribal chief, Rudao Bai. These days, an image of the chief's face serves to advertise local spicy sausages^②. We regretted that we had no opportunity to try the "leader sausage".



Grey Treepie



Taiwan Blue Magpie

When we arrived at Huisun Forest Area around 3pm it was already getting dim. Leaving my backpack and 300mm lens at the campsite, we walked down to a place with slightly undulating meadows, and spotted a pair of Malayan Night Herons busy foraging for earthworms.

After enduring five minutes of ravenous, biting mosquitoes, I abruptly took the 100mm lens, - the close-up shooting equipment, and approached the birds.

The male Malayan Night Heron obviously was not afraid of human beings. I bent and slowly slipped to within ten metres. Whereas the female was more cautious and always maintained some 20 metres

safety distance. Finally they made a swift return to the dark forest. I gave up and endured the itches on my calves walking back to the forestry area restaurant to have dinner.

According to my Taiwan Birds Field Guide, Malayan Night Heron is a scarce, secretive resident bird which usually goes foraging at dawn and dusk. I decided to wait for them at the same place if I had time the next day. Huisun Forest Area has a lot of different tracks. Since our rule is “No sweet without sweat”, naturally we chose a hilly forestry path, a four-to-five hour round trip.

After a quick breakfast we set off along our upward track. Firstly, a Grey Treepie showed itself on the right side of the wood. It did not fly to the left. A Taiwan native hunting superstition concerned whether the first bird they come across once entering the woods flew to the left or to the right. If the bird flew from left to right, success was assured.

We continued the upward track after taking a few shots. Huge *Taiwania cryptomerioides* (Taiwan Cedar) trees stood on both sides of the track. One of the tallest tree species in Asia, it can grow up to 90 feet height and 3 feet in diameter. There was frequent birdsong from the tree canopies, but the cicada noise was overwhelming.

After two hours we encountered a band of Taiwan Macaques. They seemed unduly threatening and we turned back the way we had come.

Varied Tit





Grey-capped Woodpecker

At the trail exit we discovered a big lizard enjoying itself sunbathing on a wooden fence. This was a *Japalura swinhonis*, the biggest lizard in Taiwan and of course an endemic species. The British consul Robert Swinhoe (1836-1877), was stationed at the first British Consulate at Takau (Tamshui) on Taiwan's north coast. At that time his job allowed him to collect animals and plants all around Taiwan. Over a thousand of them are named after him, including 227 types of birds, such as Swinhoe's Pheasant, Grey-cheeked Fulvetta and Mikado Pheasant. There are close to 40 species of mammals, 246 kinds of plants, 400 types of insects, 200 categories of snails, and much more like amphibians, reptiles, freshwater fish, invertebrates and so on.

After a rest at noon, in late afternoon we went and had a look at the cafe near to the Forestry Area entrance. Puk pointed to the grassy area outside. A Malayan Night Heron was foraging casually

on the lawn close to the cafe. I left behind my cup of the famous Huisun coffee in a hurry. The cafe owner knew we were there to take photos of birds and asked us if we had seen Taiwan Blue Magpie. He told us there were many to be found nearby.

Following the café owner's directions we found over a dozen Taiwan Blue Magpies waving their noses in the air, driving off all other birds from the lawn. Another Malayan Night Heron was pacing on the parking lot nearby and fought fiercely with a Macaque which had invaded its territory. The fight even attracted the attention of non-birding tourists. It is possible to believe that this bird, so elusive in HK, goes through a process, changing itself to an endemic species here in Taiwan, adapting to sunshine and human beings. They must be benefitting from the excellent mountainous air and water resources.



Sacred Ibis



White-bellied Pigeon

We originally planned to return to Puli, transit by bus to go to Auwanta Forest. Puk finds out there is no bus service for the area in May. The only way is to rent a car at Puli which costs NT\$3,000 single trip to go there. But I had already fallen to sleep while Puk was still figuring whether to stick to our original plan.

I got up at around 6am the next day and sauntered in the camp site area. Except for Black Bulbul and an endemic subspecies of Varied Tit, there were no other birds worth recording. Puk woke when I return to the room at 8am, and told me she has cancelled the trip to Auwanta Forest the previous night, and replaced it with Sun Moon Lake. The scheduled visit to Lukang remains unchanged.

I quietly made a rushed check of the birding news in Sun Moon Lake area during breakfast. “Google” suggested to explore the Hanbi Hiking Trail.



Malayan Night Heron

Once we arrived at Puli, we took a nearly-empty bus the thirty minutes to Sun Moon Lake.

I must highlight here the family-run hostel we stayed at and the heart-warming hosts. The “Sun Moon Bed and Breakfast” was close to the main street. The female owner helped us upgrade to the best room. There was a huge window overlooking a wooded hillside. In less than 30 minutes there I recorded Grey-chinned Minivet, Grey-capped Woodpecker, Black Bulbul, Chinese Bulbul and Red-bellied Squirrels.

There are few waterbirds in Sun Moon Lake in May, noisy sightseeing boats would have scared lots of them away. Next day, we cycled around Sun Moon Lake in a clockwise direction. Near Xuanzang temple, we spotted a little reddish-brown frog crossing the road. Perhaps it was Swinhoe’s Brown Frog, but the traffic was too heavy to allow us to look more closely.

Hanbi Hiking Trail was only 1.5 miles in length, enclosing the former home of Chiang Kai Shek. The trail is built for The Lalu, a luxury hotel now. It rained heavily at night and the sky lit up gradually in the morning. At 6am we were at the trail entrance, where I saw a little woodpecker standing on the left hand treetop and flying away to the right. This was the best of omens! Soon afterwards, I recorded two endemic species, Taiwan Bamboo Partridge and Taiwan Scimitar-Babbler. Others birds included White-bellied Pigeon, Gray-headed Lapwing, Black Bulbul, Japanese White-eye and Black-crowned Night-Heron.

The remaining two and a half days were spent at Lukang. Lukang is far from being just a simple ancient Qing Dynasty city with narrow alleys. South of Lukang is a wetland of 3,000 hectares. Tens of thousands of waterbirds have been recorded in the autumn and winter seasons. It is one of the four biggest wetlands in Asia, but environmental problems of illegal rubbish dumping, illegal fishponds and underground water depletion in recent years have posed serious challenges to the place.



Chinese Bamboo Partridge



Taiwan Scimitar-Babbler

In recent years the Bird Watching Society of Changhua County has actively transformed the wetland into a bird watching location. In the morning, we visited the well-known Lin family hand-made noodle cafe. A lady there told us that Fubao Wetland was only two miles away. It seemed a lot further than two miles when we cycled there.

The wetland area inside the park does not have any special facilities relating to bird watching. There is only a lengthy causeway along a creek leading to the sea. The causeway is higher than the surrounding places by 5 or 6 meters enabling visitors to overlook the surrounding pasture, ponds and wetlands.

By mid-May, a lot of waterbirds had already passed through, heading north. Luckily, there were still many Lesser Sand Plovers, Great Egret, Little Egret, Cattle Egret, and Common Mynas. Four Sacred Ibis surprised us for a while. We mistook them for the much rarer Black-headed Ibis at first. Having confirmed they had black tail feathers, we rejoiced too soon.

People say that these Sacred Ibis escaped from the zoo after the 1999 earthquake, survived, then bred in the wild. It is estimated that there are now over 1,200 in Taiwan's western coastal wetlands.

They are encroaching on the environmental resources of other egrets, even preying on their eggs and chicks and seriously tipping the balance of the local ecology.

At last, we rode to the estuary leading to the sea. Dozen of windmills lined the opposite bank, impressive before the setting sun. This is the largest wind farm in Taiwan.

The wind was strong, and the sky turned hazy. Only a few human visitors were around. More than ten Black-winged Stilts flew from left to right. I knew we would also fly back to Hong Kong around the same time the following day, though I could not be sure whether we would fly to the left or to the right.

① Huisun Forest Area is named in the memory of the Principal of National Chong Hsing University, Tang Hui-sun. He died of a heart attack while inspecting the forest area in 1963.

② In Seediq spiced sausage, the spice is from a plant called linder. Since salt was not easy to get in the early aboriginal tribal culture, people made use of seeds of linder as the main seasoning ingredient.



Lesser Sand-Plover

Creating and managing a fixed-site bird hide

Text/Photo: Guy Miller



There are different ways to find birds and there are many personal styles of photography. I have come to prefer waiting for the birds to come to me in a natural setting, albeit a setting of my own creation. So, after a four-year break from birding and photography, in October 2015 I completed a pond and hide on private property on Lamma Island.

My experiences during this project have improved my knowledge about birds in general; - where they hang out, why, and when.

Building and siting the hide

To build the hide itself, I recycled trash found on and around the property. The frame was made of old metal water pipes cut to size, with a shooting platform made from discarded 6'x3' hardboard sheets. The frame of the hide was covered by an old tarpaulin. The hide was made large enough to accommodate two photographers with plenty of elbowroom. It was set about twelve feet away from the front edge of an artificial pond.



Initially, two shooting holes, just above the level of the pond were cut into the tarpaulin approximately 3' x 1' with netting hung across the holes to reduce the chance of birds seeing lens and photographer movement.

Location

Hide location was of paramount importance. I was after forest birds. Based on previous Hong Kong experience, I knew I needed a north/north-east facing hillside, as these are generally better-wooded, damp, and likely to contain more insects than southerly slopes. I felt that a more easterly aspect would help to capture as much light as possible during the shorter winter months.

The pond

The hide and pond were built as far away as possible from any other water source or standing water to avoid being flooded out in heavy rain, and so as not to compete with any nearby natural water source.

The pond itself was about 12' x 12', with a depth of between 1-3" (birds like to have a bit of space to bathe in, with small birds needing very little water depth, and the 3" to accommodate larger birds).

The pond base was made of a cement/clay mix. It would have been easier to get a pond liner, but as I intended to be constantly in the pond making alterations and placing heavy rocks in there I needed a sturdy base. A small water pump has been necessary to aerate the water to avoid stagnation and to create the sound of running water to attract birds that might otherwise pass by without noticing the pond.

A smaller pond could just as easily suffice if you have limited space, and could be as simple as a tarpaulin laid on the ground with water being aerated by a water pump, - this could be a temporary or mobile set-up.

However much the temptation I avoid putting food out for the birds anywhere near the pond because it might attract rats, snakes or a dominant territorial bird and lose a lot of other potential visitors.

Results

All in all, the project has been quite successful, - a large variety of birds visited the pond and sometimes in large numbers. A few birds included the pond within their territory, most notably a female Grey-backed Thrush which would wander into the hide every winter day and follow me around whenever I made alterations to the pond.

On one memorable day I had over 200 thrush visits (mainly Japanese). This total includes repeat visits by some individual birds, but Red-billed Starling also became a regular visitor with a flock of about 200 being in and around the pond at the same time.

Other notables were a female White-throated Rock-thrush, immature male Japanese Paradise Flycatcher, male Blue & White Flycatcher, male and females of Siberian Blue Robin, Narcissus Flycatcher, Eye-browed Thrush, Verditer Flycatcher, Siberian Rubythroat, Ashy, Black, and Crested Drongos and various warblers. There were almost daily visits by Hwamei and Blue Whistling Thrush, and less-frequent visits by a Coucal and a White-breasted Waterhen.


An interesting aspect of watching the pond daily has been to watch the habits of the birds, in relation to weather, time of day, and how they utilise the pond area. I have photographed these visitors with a view to demonstrating how the birds behave naturally in this environment.

Photography at a fixed set-up like this has required a lot of patience during long, quiet periods, sustained by a faith that the next bird

in might be the bird that makes my day, week, month, or season. It can be a very solitary pastime, but results have been noticeably better when shooting alone. Lens movement has been a problem in such a close situation, but use of netting funnels at the front edge of the hide has worked well. Shutter noise is not such an issue if the photographer refrains from long, loud shutter bursts before newly-arrived birds settle down.

Based on the experience of the past few months I think I can make the hide even more effective. I shall move the pond about 30' to get better late afternoon light when the birds are active. The front lip of the pond will be lowered for better viewing. The shape of the pond will be changed to create better photographing places, and it will be wider to accommodate more bathing room and bring the birds closer. The hide will be more light tight, more waterproof, and with better "funnel"-type shooting ports. The new floor will not be hardboard as it is just too noisy.

I have created a Facebook page (Lamma Island Bird World), not just as a record of birds visiting my pond, but to showcase the wealth of nature on other parts of Lamma, too. Originally, only a very few islanders seemed to be interested in birds, but to date the group has gained over 360 members. With a "go-to" focus for local wildlife, interesting bird sightings have been made and reported on the Group Page. In addition, advice has been sought by the finders of sick and injured birds, and mist nests have been taken down. The general bird awareness of the community has improved and residents and non-residents alike have begun to notice Lamma's possibly under-appreciated natural history.

The pond-and-hide project is ongoing and adaptations are being made, making it a more wholesome and interesting experience, not just for me but for the community at large. 



Text: Richard Lewthwaite

(Readers are reminded that this is not the final, "official" record of the sightings of this quarter, the Hong Bird Report 2016 is usually the last word. – Ed.)

April

- ▶ Star birds of amixed month were a male **Olive-backed Sunbird** at Po Toi on 16th-17th (CFL, M&PW), only the second record for Hong Kong and one that may prompt a category review (currently Cat III), and the second-winter **Franklin's Gull** which after a 4-week absence suddenly reappeared in Deep Bay on 9th (YYT et al) and then, most unexpectedly, was joined by a second individual from 19th and into early May (IT, KCWL et al).
- ▶ The month saw a series of new high counts – 1561 **Gull-billed Terns** in front of the Mai Po boardwalk on 12th (RWL), seven **Narcissus Flycatchers** at Ho Man Tin on 15th (KPC) and 120 **White-throated Needletails** at Shek Kong Catchwater on 20th (JC), the largest number ever recorded in Hong Kong by a factor of six. In addition, 260 unidentified thrushes were at Tai Po Kau on 14th (DAD), a large number for the season.
- ▶ Five species were found on latest ever winter/spring dates, all singles – **Eurasian Skylark** beside the Mai Po access road on 12th (JAA), the latest by 9 days, **White-throated Rock Thrush** at Lamma up to 21st (GM), the first in April and the latest by 24 days, **Radde's Warbler** at Ho Man Tin up to 27th and again on 4th May (KPC), the first in spring and the latest by more than 2 months, **Plumbeous Redstart** at Mui Shue Hang on 29th (TH), the latest by 10 days, and **Mongolian Gull** (second-year) in Deep Bay on 30th (RWL) and two individuals intermittently in May, June and early July, the first ever summer records. Among other late birds in April were a first-summer **Slaty-backed Gull** in Deep Bay up to at least 12th (FC, RWL) and a **Red-flanked Bluetail** at Mount Davison 17th (LCF). The **Red-throated Diver** found at Yung Shue Wan (Lamma Island) in March was last seen at Aberdeen on 27th (GW), having crossed the East Lamma Channel despite being in poor condition.
- ▶ Except for the species already mentioned, few waterbirds of interest were reported in the Deep Bay area or in the northern New Territories generally. A **Spoonbilled Sandpiper** at Mai Po on 28th (IT) was the only one of the month and the highest count of **Nordmann's Greenshank** was just nine at Mai Po on 1st (RWL).
- ▶ Best sites for migrant landbirds were the various islands. In addition to attracting at least nine species of flycatchers in the first half of the month (GW et al), Po Toi hosted a **Fairy Pitta** from 14th to 21st (GW, TML, JAMC), a **Siberian Blue Robin** (CFL) and single **Lesser** and **Oriental Cuckoos** (AB) on 16th, one or two **Northern Boobooks** between 19th and 26th (KKC, JAMC, GW) and a **Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoo** on 28th-29th (KKC, GW).
- ▶ Lantau Island was again well covered. Birds detected between Shek Pik and Fan Lau on 2nd included Six **Rufous-tailed Robins**, a **Narcissus** and six **Blue-and-white Flycatchers** (EMSK). Numbers of **Oriental Pratincoles** at Chek Lap Kok peaked at 19 on 8th (EMSK). Other good birds found there included a **Citrine Wagtail** on 13th and a **Grey-headed Lapwing**, a **Grey Nightjar** and a **Siberian Blue Robin** on 14th (EMSK). A search for nightbirds at Discovery Bay Golf Course on 8th turned up a **Slaty-legged Crake**, three **Collared Scops Owls** and four **Savanna Nightjars** (ML). A **Blue-tailed Bee-eater** was found at Tai O on 10th (EMSK).
- ▶ Coverage of other islands led to reports of a **Siberian Blue Robin** at Lamma on 12th-13th (GM), a **Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo** and a **Pale-legged Leaf Warbler**, both in song, at Cheung Chau on 14th (MDW), and a **Brown-breasted Flycatcher** and five **Oriental Cuckoos** at Tung Ping Chau on 16th (JAA). Star birds of the month on Hong Kong Island were two **Mountain Bulbuls** at Lung Fu Shan on 1st (MLT), a **Common Rosefinch** at Mount Davis on 9th (CFL) and eight **Blue-tailed Bee-eaters** at Victoria Park on 14th (CFL).



April

- ▶ Though a number of migrants were reported from Tai Po Kau and Shek Kong Catchwater (DT, JC), most reports from the Tai Mo Shan massif were of rarer residents or summer visitors. At Tai Po Kau, these included at least one **Chinese Barbet** through the month, a **Brown Wood Owl** and a **Brown-breasted Flycatcher** on 18th (DT, LS), a singing **Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoo** on 21st (DT) and two **Plain Flowerpeckers** between 21st and 30th (MK, GT, TJW, DT). Away from Tai Po Kau, single **Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoos** were heard singing at Tai Po Kau Headland and Chek Nai Ping on 22nd, a **Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo** was also in song at the latter site on 22nd, and a **Chinese Barbet** was heard at Tai Po Kau Headland on 30th (all RB). Flocks of **Chestnut Bulbuls** were conspicuous in Tai Po Kau on 2nd (RWL), and the peak count was 250 at Tai Po Kau Headland on 16th (RB).
- ▶ It was not a great month for seabirds. An HKBWS boat trip to Po Toi and southern waters on 16th logged 71 **Red-necked Phalaropes** and little else, and best sightings from the Po Toi ferry were seven **Greater Crested Terns** on 12th (GW), an **Aleutian Tern** on 14th (GW) and 100 **Bridled Terns** on 26th (GW).

May


- ▶ Rarest birds of the month werethe two **Franklin's Gulls** which were seen again in Deep Bay on 2nd (J&JH), a **Red-footed Booby** photographed in flight at Mai Po on 3rd (TC), about the 9th record for Hong Kong, and a **Blue-throated Bee-eater** at Po Toi on 7th (JAA), the 7th for Hong Kong. In addition, a strange-looking *Phylloscopus* warbler, possibly a **Large-billed Leaf Warbler** which is as yet unrecorded in Hong Kong, was at Po Toi on 3rd-5th (PH).
- ▶ Following on from April, when five regularly recorded species were reported on latest-ever winter/spring dates, May produced latest-ever spring dates for a further three species – **Sulphur-breasted Warbler** at Po Toi on 5th (KC), the latest by 35 days, **Siberian Thrush** near Pak Sha O on 8th (GJC), the latest by 15 days, And **Red-flanked Bluetail** at Mount Davis on 13th (BLo), the latest by 25 days. In addition two species were reported on dates that equalled the previous latest spring dates – **Styan's Grasshopper Warbler** beside the Mai Po boardwalk on 12th (JAA, GT) and **Grey-streaked Flycatcher** at Po Toi on 26th (GW). As noted in the news for April, the long-staying **Radde's Warbler** remained at Ho Man Tin until 4th of May (KPC) and the **Mongolian Gull** at Mai Po was joined by another bird, with both photographed on 13th (KCWL), and both intermittently seen in June and into early July. May also brought two birds to Po Toi on later dates than usual – a **Narcissus Flycatcher** on 1st (HKBWS) and a **Siberian Rubythroat** on 7th (JGH) – as well as bringing 22 **Blue-tailed Bee-eaters** to Mai Po on 18th (JAA), – quite a large number near the end of the passage period. There may be a connection between this series of late reports and the strong El Nino event.
- ▶ Among other reports of migrants or non-breeding summer visitors were a **White-throated Needletail** and four **Chestnut-cheeked Starlings** at Po Toi on 1st (TC, KH, CFL), A **Lesser Whistling Duck** at Mai Po on 11th (SYC), the first since 2011, two **Himalayan Swiftlets** at Long Valley on 13th (DAD), a **Pechora Pipit** at Po Toi on 14th (GW), one of very few reports of the spring, a **Swinhoe's Egret**, a **Grey-headed Lapwing** and seven **Far Eastern Curlews** at Mai Po on 18th (JAA), a **Black Baza**, now rare, at Ko Lau Wan on 28th (ac130), two **Nordmann's Greenshanks** at Mai Po on 29th and 20 **Great Knot** there on 31st (JGH).



May

- ▶ With the launching of the 3-year HKBWS Summer Atlas this month, some interesting reports of birds on territory were received, including one or two **Orange-headed Thrushes** in song at Tai Po Kau Headland throughout the month (RB) and at Tai Po Kau on 14th (DT), up to four singing **Plain Flowerpeckers** in the Brides Pool area between 11th and 17th (RWL) and large totals of singing **Brown-flanked Bush Warblers**. Among these were up to 25 in the Tai Mo Shan area on 22nd and 25th (MK) and 32 (including 26 in a single 1 km square) in the hills immediately south of Wu Kau Tang on 25th (RB, RWL).
- ▶ Coverage of the Tai Mo Shan area also produced counts of 20 **Vinous-throated Parrotbills** on 22nd and seven **Russet Bush Warblers** on 25th (MK). Reports of the rarer cuckoos included one or two **Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoos** at Shek Kong Catchwater, Wu Kau Tang, Fung Yuen, Plover Cove and Tai Po Kau between 2nd and 27th (JC, MLT, AB, RWL, DT), a **Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoo** at Ng Tung Chai on 12th (JAA), and single **Lesser Cuckoos** in song at Ng Tung Chai on 12th (JAA) and at Po Toi on 24th (GW). Also of interest was a report of eight **Crested Serpent Eagles** soaring together over Lam Tsuen on 15th (DAD).
- ▶ May was better for seabirds than April had been. In addition to the **Red-footed Booby** at Mai Po, up to three **Parasitic Jaeger** were noted in southern waters on 1st (HKBWS) and off Po Toi on 15th (GW) with three **Short-tailed Shearwaters** were also off Po Toi on 15th (GW). A good variety of the regularly-occurring spring and summer terns were seen at Mai Po and off Po Toi, Sai Kung and Cheung Chau in the first and middle weeks of the month (YWF, GW, KCWL, MDW).

June

- ▶ An **Ashy Woodswallow** seen at Dolphin Island (off Tuen Mun) on 3rd (JAMC), only the second for Hong Kong following one at Lower Shing Mun on 23 April 2011, was by far the biggest surprise of the month. The month also brought another rarity, a very tired-looking **Red-footed Booby** photographed on railings beside Mount Nicolson Road on 21st (OC), the second of the year and about the 10th record for Hong Kong. Sadly the bird was found dead there the next day.
- ▶ The two over-summering **Mongolian Gulls** were photographed at Mai Po on 3rd, 12th and 18th (KCWL), with a **Nordmann's Greenshank** also there on 3rd (KCWL). Among other reports from Mai Po were a **Pheasant-tailed Jacana** and a **Himalayan Swiftlet** on 4th (JAA), a **Swinhoe's Egret**, rare in June, a **Black-winged Kite** and five **Gull-billed Terns** on 12th (KCWL), and six **Black-faced Spoonbillson** 18th (KCWL).
- ▶ As summer atlas work continued, a number of interesting records came to light. Single **Orange-headed Thrushes** were at Tai To Yan, Tai Po Kau Headland and Kap Lung between 2nd and 13th (M&PW, RB, JC) and a juvenile **Mountain Tailorbird** was noted in the Tai Mo Shan area on 4th together with 24 **Brown-flanked Bush Warblers**, a **Huet's Fulvetta** and two **Lesser Shortwings**, (DT). A further six **Huet's Fulvettas** were at Ho Chung the same day (MK) and a **Black Bulbul** was at Kap Lung on 13th (JC). **Lesser Cuckoos** were reported from three sites, with singles at Tai To Yan on 2nd (M&PW) and Kap Lung on 13th (JC) and three, a record count, at Tai Mo Shan on 9th (MK). Finally, an unidentified pale swiftlet was at Tai O on 30th (JAA). 

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Bird Watching Tours Oct 2016 - Feb 2017

Outings				
Date	Duration	Time and site	Difficulties(1...3)	Target species
1/10/2016 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Ng Tung Chai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 64K Bus-stop outside Tai Wu Station (near Exit A))	☆☆	Forest birds
2/10/2016 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Po Toi Island (08:00 Aberdeen Pier (Public Ferry Pier to Po Toi Island)) <i>Note: Participants have to pay for their own ferry fee. The returning time is not fixed, so participants may decide their own returning time.</i>	☆☆	Migrants
9/10/2016 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Long Valley (08:00 Pavilion beside public toilet at Yin Kong Village)	☆☆	Farmland and water birds
16/10/2016 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Mai Po Nature Reserve (12yrs old & above only) (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road /F Exit), OR 09:00 Mai Po carpark, end 15:00 Mai Po, 16:00 Kowloon Tong)	☆☆	Waterbirds
23/10/2016 (Sun)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on Oct 21on Discussion Forum)		
5/11/2016 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Nam Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 V Cuisine Restaurant, Exit G2, Yuen Long West Rail Station)	☆	Waterbirds
12/11/2016 (Sat)	0800 - 1400	Mai Po Nature Reserve (Not visiting boardwalk/ 4 yrs old & above only) (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road /F Exit), OR 09:00 Mai Po carpark, end 13:00 Mai Po, 14:00 Kowloon Tong)	☆☆	Waterbirds
20/11/2016 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Po Toi Island (08:00 Aberdeen Ferry Pier (Ferry pier to Po Toi Island)) <i>Note: Participants have to pay for their own ferry fee. The returning time is not fixed, participants can decide their own returning time.</i>	☆☆	Migrants
27/11/2016 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark)	☆☆☆	Forest birds
3/12/2016 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tai Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 V Cuisine Restaurant, Exit G2, Yuen Long West Rail Station)	☆	Waterbirds
11/12/2016 (Sun)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on Dec 9 on Discussion Forum)		
18/12/2016 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Pui O (08:00 Exit B, Tung Chung MTR Station)	☆	Wintering forest & farmland birds
24/12/2016 (Sat)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark)	☆☆☆	Forest birds
1/1/2017 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Shing Mun (08:00 Kiosk at Pineapple Dam, Shing Mun Reservoir)	☆☆☆	Forest birds
7/1/2017 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Long Valley (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Outside Maxim's MX, Sheng Shui Rail Station))	☆☆	Farmland and water birds
15/1/2017 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Mai Po Nature Reserve (12yrs old & above only) (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road Exit), OR 09:00 Mai Po carpark, end 15:00 Mai Po, 16:00 Kowloon Tong)	☆☆	Waterbirds
22/1/2017 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Shek Kong (08:00 Exit C, Kam Sheung Road West Rail Station)	☆☆	Forest & farmland birds
31/1/2017 (Tue)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on Jan 29 on Discussion Forum)		
4/2/2017 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tai Po Kau (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Tai Po Kau Carpark)	☆☆	Forest birds
11/2/2017 (Sat)	0800 - 1600	Mai Po Nature Reserve (12yrs old & above only) (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road Exit), OR 09:00 Mai Po carpark, end 15:00 Mai Po, 16:00 Kowloon Tong)	☆☆	Waterbirds
19/2/2017 (Sun)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on Feb 17 on Discussion Forum)		
26/2/2017 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Nam Chung and Luk Keng (08:00 Pavilion at junction of Nam Chung Rd & Luk Keng Rd)	☆☆	Forest birds & Waterbirds

Member: Free of Charge

Non-member: Free of Charge

(Registration not required)

Member: Free of Charge

Non-member: HK\$ 30 (HK\$ 10 for age under 19 student)

(Registration not required)

Member: HK\$ 60 (Student Member: HK\$ 30)

Non-member: HK\$ 120

(Registration required)

Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Outing Booking Slip

I would like to register the following HKBWS outings:

** We will confirm participants whether their application is accepted or not about 5 days before the outing. Once confirmed, no refund will be made no matter they can attend the outing or not. Refund will be made only if the outing is cancelled officially due to inclement weather or special reason.

Information of Participant(s)

Date	Outing	Name (First one will be considered contact person)	Membership No.	Mobile Phone	Outing Fee*	Required information for Mai Po Outing only	
						Meeting Point (Kln Tong / MP)	Age Group (✓ where appropriate)
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs

** Activity payment are processed individually. Please use separate cheques for different outings.

Enclosed please find a Cheque of HK\$_____ Contact person's email : _____

(Payable to **The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society**)

Applicant : _____ Date : _____ Signature : _____

Please send this slip together with a crossed cheque to: **7C, V Ga Building, 532 Castle Peak Road, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon.**

Notes for Mai Po Outing:

- **Participants below age of 12 yrs will not be accepted for Mai Po Outing visiting floating boardwalks.**
- According to the requirement of the Hong Kong Police and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, participants entering Mai Po should provide their full name and Hong Kong ID Number (passport number for oversea visitors) that day in order to access to the Frontier Closed Area and Mai Po Marshes.

Mai Po Outing Fee	Meeting Point at Mai Po	Meeting Point at Kowloon Tong
Member	HK\$30-	HK\$60-
Student Member	HK\$15-	HK\$30-
Non-Member	HK\$120-	

Other Notes:

- HKBWS members have a high priority to join four weeks before the activity. Thereafter, registration will be made on first come first serve basis.
- Any changes of the activities will be announced on our Discussion Forum: <http://www.hkbws.org.hk/BBS>
- Arrangement during bad weather: When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No.3 or above or Rainstorm Warnings Red or Black are hoisted by the Hong Kong Observatory at 7:00am on the event day, the activity will be cancelled. If Thunderstorm Warning is announced during the activity, Team Leader will decide whether the activity should be continued or cancelled. You can contact the outing leader at **9457 3196** during the event day if you have any query about the weather.

Disclaimer

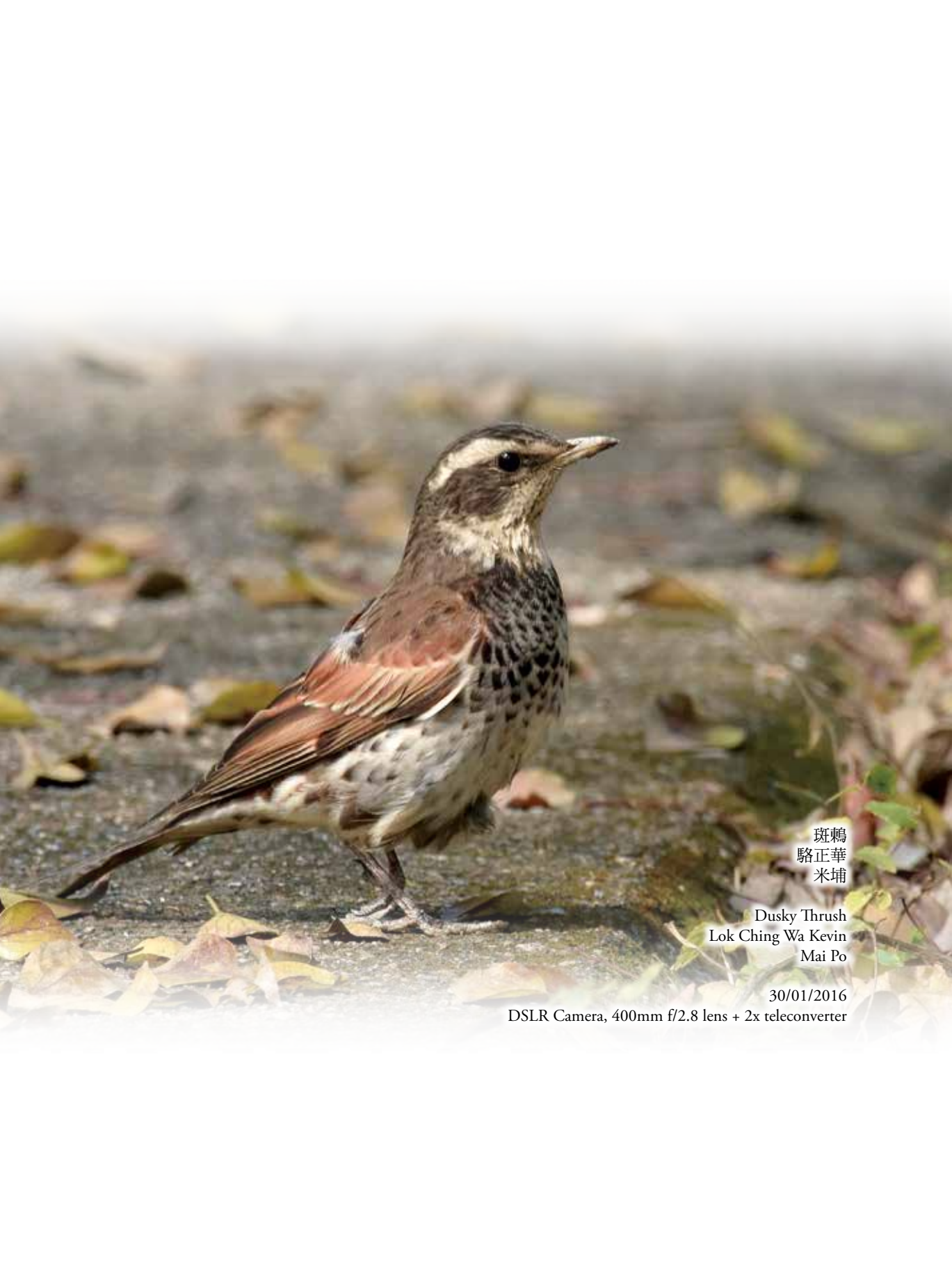
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Blue Rock Thrush
Jason Pun
Lamma Island

25/03/2016
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



斑鵲
駱正華
米埔

Dusky Thrush
Lok Ching Wa Kevin
Mai Po

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