

THE HONG KONG  
BIRD REPORT 1969



*Published by*

**THE HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY**

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Records compiled by M. A. Webster, M.B.O.U.

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*Published in 1970 by the*

**HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY**

c/o THE CHARTERED BANK, HONG KONG.

(A registered Society under the Hong Kong Societies Ordinance)

### **OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY:**

<i>Chairman</i> .....	Commander E. D. Webb, R.N.
<i>Hon. Secretary</i> .....	J. C. Payne
<i>Hon. Treasurer</i> .....	Commander Webb
<i>Hon. Recorder</i> .....	M. A. Webster, M.B.O.U.
<i>Hon. Editors</i> .....	Commander Webb M. A. Webster.

## SOCIETY NEWS

*Membership* is steady, both in total numbers at about 70 and in Overseas Members, about 20.

We suffered a great loss in the autumn in Tony Wilson who was on the Committee for four years and acted as sales manager for the Check List. He will perhaps be remembered best on the Outings where he was a constant help to beginners and newcomers. He has landed a congenial job as conservation officer to the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation and will be based on Canterbury. Sonia Davidson has kindly taken on the sales of the Check List.

It was a shock to learn that Dr. Ron Murton would not after all be returning to Hong Kong for a further spell. His illustrated talks on "Economic Ornithology" at the annual general meeting, and on bird photography in August were enough to show what an asset his knowledge and experience would have been to the Society, and indeed to the Colony.

As a consolation for these losses, we have gained some really active new members.

We congratulate long-standing member Mrs. Gloria Barretto on her award of an M.B.E.

*Outings* during the year were as follows:—

1st January	Tai Mong Tsai/Pak Tam
19th January	Mai Po
2nd February	Sek Kong woods/Lam Tsuen valley
18th February	Long Valley/Taipo Kau
2nd March	Mai Po
16th March	Ho Chung valley
7th April	Mai Po
21st April	Mong Tseng/Ping Shan
4th May	Ping Shan/Luen Tak
18th May	Shataukok egrettry/Mai Po
1st June	Mai Po—evening meeting

*Summer recess for birds and watchers*

14th September	Mai Po
27th September	Ping Shan
12th October	Mai Po/Lok Ma Chau
9th November	Mai Po
14th December	Silvermine Bay
26th December	Sha Kong/Mong Tseng

In addition, three shorter outings were held on the Island, partly for people who cannot get away for the longer outings and partly to introduce beginners to some of the commoner birds.

This year we have embarked on a quarterly Kite count and also hope to keep a regular watch on the activities of the egrettries during the nesting season.

*Library.* Partly because our bookcase in the British Council reading room was overloaded and there was no room there for expansion and partly to protect our rarer books, we have installed a bookcase in the Hon. Recorder's flat. We must also thank him for presenting Volumes I, V and VI of "Birds of the Soviet Union" by Dement'ev and Gladkou. These are English translations with black and white drawings and maps.

E. D. W.

*Chairman.*



## REPORT ON THE BIRDS, 1969

*Weather.* The first four months of the year were rather cold, and in January and February seven cold fronts passed through the Colony. This cold weather persisted until 12 April. The summer weather was normal, with the usual heavy rain in June and July. However, no major storms affected the Colony. November and December were cooler than usual, and very dry indeed. In fact, between 18 October and the end of the year, only 0.5mm of rain was recorded. In consequence, most of the countryside was tinder-dry, and there was a general scarcity of open-country species as a result.

*New species.* Four species were added to the Colony List during the year, the Cotton Teal, Saunders' Gull, Greater Necklaced Laughing-Thrush, and Yellow-bellied Tit. Of these, the first two were known to be likely to occur sooner or later, whereas the last two were involved in the irruption of woodland birds in November and December, the causes of which are completely unknown. This brings to 11 the number of species added since the 1966 Checklist.

*The records.* During the year, 247 species were recorded, compared with 237 the previous year.

In the Deep Bay area, the wintering flocks of Shelduck and Pelicans were sighted regularly, and there were also records of the Red-breasted Merganser, which is now a regular visitor. Eleven Tufted Duck and 14 Avocets were seen on 9 February. A Grey-headed Lapwing wintered in the area, and Ibis, Spoonbills, and Black Storks were seen during this period.

In Tai Po Kau, the Tristram's Buntings remained from the previous year, and the usual winter visitors were in good supply; the only unusual species there was a female Scarlet Minivet. Two White's Thrushes spent the winter at Bethanie, Pokfulam.

The Saunders' Gulls at Mai Po on 14 March were the forerunners of a spring passage which was full of surprises. 13 Spoonbills on 23 March and 15 on 3 April were the largest flocks ever seen here, except for a flock of 30, also on passage, in 1966. A Ruddy Crane, and a Caspian Plover, on 7 April, and four Australian Curlew on 20 April were the highlights on the marshes, while in Tai Po Kau there were two Himalayan Cuckoos. In general, the wader passage was rather poor, probably because of the flooded condition of the fishponds, and 19 species seen on 20 April was an exceptional record.

During the breeding season, close watch was kept on the egretty at Sha Tau Kok, although no attempt was made to count the numbers of nesting pairs. A new egretty was discovered near Yuen Long,

and this contained about 65 nests, including one pair of Swinhoe's. The 'nursery' at Chuk Yuen continued to flourish, and this forms the subject of a separate article in this Report. It is very pleasant to record far more nests this year than our members usually find; this is due entirely to Dr. R. K. Murton. His records of the Chestnut Munia breeding at Mai Po are the first definite breeding records of this species.

The autumn migration started dramatically with a white Ibis on 23 August. September and the first half of October were as normal as any migration here can be, with a few rarities as usual, notably a Water Pipit, another Australian Curlew, and a Black-winged Stilt. The first sign of anything unusual was a Japanese Paradise Flycatcher on 19 October.

On 25 and 26 October, there were large numbers of flycatchers in all suitable locations. The Brown Flycatcher was particularly numerous, six or more being seen in Mai Po wood, and in the outer part of Sek Kong wood; one Grey-spotted was at Stanley, and two at Sek Kong; two Red-breasted were at Stanley, and one at Sek Kong; a Blue-and-White was at Bethanie. All these records come from one observer only. This group of Flycatchers did not stay very long.

On 16 November, two Robin Flycatchers, and the Colony's first Yellow-bellied Tit were seen in Tai Po Kau. From this point on, several woodland species appeared in unprecedented numbers. Numbers of Robin Flycatchers in Tai Po Kau alone rose to at least 30, and probably nearer 100; the Yellow-bellied Tits spread throughout the Lam Tsuen Valley, and a minimum of 75 birds seems to have been involved. Minima of ten Treepies, 27 Scarlet Minivets, six White-cheeked Drongos, two Jays, a Black-winged Cuckoo-Shrike, five Chestnut Bulbuls, a Black Bulbul, two Black-naped Monarch Flycatchers, seven Verditer Flycatchers, ten Blackbirds, 15 Common Rosefinches, and finally ten Greater Necklaced Laughing-Thrushes, were also involved in the irruption, and practically all of these were seen in Tai Po Kau, and the Lam Tsuen Valley. It must be emphasised that all these are minimum figures. Almost all these birds apparently arrived in the last two weeks of November, and most stayed into 1970. There is no known reason for this irruption, which produced two species new to the Colony, and record numbers of four more.

*Observers.* This Report would not have been possible without the records submitted by the following observers:— Dr. R. J. Barnes, Lt.-Col. J. F. S. Batson, S. Carvalho, F. Chow, Mrs. S. Davidson, D. J. Galloway, T. P. Garland, I. W. Harris, Mr. and Mrs. F. O. P. Hechtel, R. R. Mason, Dr. R. K. Murton, J. A. Ozorio, Dr. D. G. Robertson, H. D. Stead, Cdr. E. D. Webb, M. A. Webster, R. P. Weeks, F. A. W. Whitford, B. D. Wilson, and R. A. I. Wilson.



*Presentation of the Report.* An attempt has been made to improve the Report in various ways involving layout and presentation. It is intended that the standardisation introduced here should be maintained in the future; the following are the main features:—

- 1) All dates are written in the form '16 January', not 16 Jan, 16th Jan, etc.
- 2) All Chinese placenames are written with one English word representing each character, e.g. Sha Tin, not Shatin. There are a few exceptions, such as Kowloon, where usage dictates otherwise, but these are fewer than we expected.
- 3) The area near the border between Lok Ma Chau and Sheung Shui is referred to as Long Valley, though many members use the names Lo Wu and Dill's Corner for this area.
- 4) Where possible, more precise indications of locality on the Deep Bay Marshes have been given, e.g. Chuk Yuen, Pak Hop Chau. Where vaguer terms are used, this is due to the lack of precise information submitted to the Hon. Recorder.
- 5) Observers' initials have only been shown where rarities are involved, where difficult species are reported, and for nest records. This is intended to make the Report easier reading without detracting from its scientific value.
- 6) Numbers up to ten are always written in full; for numbers over ten, figures are always used.
- 7) Capitalisation of both English and scientific names is intended to follow standard English usage.

It is appreciated that this has necessitated some changes, and it is not suggested that no mistakes have been made. Constructive comments and criticism would be welcomed, so that the standard of this Report can be improved. Do not forget that this is the only Annual Report published for any part of the coast of East Asia between South Korea and Malaya, and it does therefore have a rather artificial scientific importance for this reason.

*Information needed.* Further information is needed on the following subjects:—

- 1) Any unusual behaviour of Kites (this information is to complement the Kite count.).
- 2) All records of Lesser Crow-Pheasants, Rose-ringed Parakeets, and Chinese Greenfinches.
- 3) All breeding records, particularly from Long Valley.
- 4) All records of summer visitors, which are insufficiently documented.
- 5) Breeding population of Ardeidae; 1969 estimates vary considerably.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST 1969

### 2. Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

Up to 20 in Deep Bay until 17 February, and two there on 26 December. c20 in Starling Inlet on 23 February, and three at Plover Cove on 14 March.

### 4. Little Grebe (*Podiceps ruficollis*)

Apart from a few winter records at Tai Lam Chung, and one at Plover Cove on 14 March, all records come from Mai Po marshes, particularly the Chuk Yuen area. Two were seen on 19 February, and there were frequent sightings from 20 April onwards, the largest number being 40+ on 4 August. The first young birds were seen on 13 June, and it is estimated that six to eight pairs bred. The last sighting in this area was 16 November; however, the species was recorded from a different part of the marsh in the following January, and it is likely that a few are now resident there.

### 7. Spotted-billed Pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*)

Recorded from Deep Bay between 25 January and 2 March (maximum 67+ on 9 February), and from 21 December onwards (up to 18). One on 8 February and three on 9 February were seen on the marsh itself, well inside the sea wall.

### 8. Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Apart from a gathering in Deep Bay on 2 March, estimated at c600 birds, small numbers, never more than six together, observed fairly frequently in Deep Bay, between Hong Kong and Lantau, and occasionally in other places along the coast, up to 7 April, on which date there were also two at Tai Lam Chung Reservoir; similar numbers in the same areas from 4 November. More information is needed from Hay Ling Chau, where there used to be a roost of this species.

### 10. Great Frigate-bird (*Fregata minor*)

Apart from an unconfirmed report from the Ninepins on 11 May, there is one sight record of two frigate-birds, not specifically identified, over Deep Bay on 24 May (FOPH, RRM).

### 12. Yellow Bittern (*Ixobrychus sinensis*)

Single birds were seen on the Deep Bay Marshes on 6 and 8 January and 2 March; from 7 April onwards, the species became extremely common in this area, and as many as 100 birds were seen in a day by a single observer. A number of young were seen from August onwards. The majority of birds left before the end of September, although a few remained up to the end of the year.



**13. Chestnut Bittern** (*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*)

At least three on the Mai Po marshes from 18 May to 5 October. At least three in Long Valley on 29 July is an unusual sighting.

**14. Black Bittern** (*Ixobrychus flavicollis*)

All records are of single birds flushed in the Mai Po marshes between 18 August and 21 September, although descriptions suggest that at least two different birds were involved. It is believed that this species may breed in the area, but there is insufficient evidence of this, as the area is not adequately watched in summer.

**15. Bittern** (*Botaurus stellaris*)

One flushed behind Chuk Yuen on 2 November (DJG).

**17. Chinese Pond Heron** (*Ardeola bacchus*)

Although this species was recorded on the Deep Bay marshes and sometimes elsewhere throughout the year, numbers were much higher during and just after the breeding season. An estimated 150 pairs bred at Sha Tau Kok, a few of these being in a 'satellite' colony in a neighbouring wood; approximately 30 pairs bred at the newly-discovered Yuen Long egretty (MAW). RKM estimates total breeding population at 50-100 pairs.

**18. Cattle Egret** (*Ardeola ibis*)

Recorded from the Northern parts of the New Territories between 23 March and 4 September. Two at Stanley on 4 April. An estimated 100 pairs bred at Sha Tau Kok, and at least five pairs at the newly-discovered Yuen Long egretty (MAW). RKM estimates total breeding population at 40-80 pairs.

**19. Little Green Heron** (*Boturides striatus*)

Up to six on the Mai Po marshes from 26 July to 4 October. One at Tai Lam Chung on 2 November.

**20. Little Egret** (*Egretta garzetta*)

Common throughout the year on the Deep Bay Marshes. Probably as many as 150 pairs bred at Sha Tau Kok, and 30 pairs at the newly-discovered Yuen Long egretty (MAW). RKM estimates total breeding population at 40-80 pairs.

**21. Lesser Egret** (*Egretta intermedia*)

One at Mai Po on 26 October (MAW, RPW). Identified by size comparison with *garzetta* and *alba*, and by stubby yellow bill with black tip.

**22. Swinhoe's Egret** (*Egretta eulophotes*)

Two pairs nested at Sha Tau Kok, and one at the newly-discovered Yuen Long egretty (RKM, MAW). Single birds were identified at Mai Po on 27 April and 11 May (EDW).

**23. Reef Egret** (*Egretta sacra*)

Eight records, all from different areas, of single birds, except pairs at Tsing Yi and Siu Au Chau, and three at Little Sai Wan on 12 July.

**24. Great Egret** (*Egretta alba*)

All records received are outside the breeding season, up to 27 April, and from 25 August onwards. Common in winter on the Deep Bay Marshes only.

**25. Grey Heron** (*Ardea cinerea*)

As usual, a flock of c100 birds wintered at the mouth of the Shum Chun River in 1968-69 and 1969-70. All records are from this general area, up to 20 April, and from 4 October onwards. Normal daytime roosts were the far bank of the Shum Chun River, and the entrance to Ping Shan Creek opposite Tsim Bei Tsui.

**26. Purple Heron** (*Ardea purpurea*)

Up to four on spring migration between 31 March and 7 April, and seven autumn records of single birds between 25 August and 16 November, all at Mai Po.

**28. Black Stork** (*Ciconia nigra*)

One at Mai Po on 2 March, and again on 21 December.

**29. White Ibis** (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*)

Three at Mai Po on 2 March, and one on 23 March. Apart from one on 23 August, all other records, of up to three birds, were between 9 November and the end of the year; all records are from Mai Po.

**31. Lesser Spoonbill** (*Platalea minor*)

Single birds over the Deep Bay Marshes on 12 January, 9 February, and 17 February; 13 there on 23 March and 15 on 3 April were probably parties on passage. The only subsequent records were two near Mong Tseng on 18 November, and one there the following day.

**32. Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

A male over Mai Po marshes on 20 October (EDW).



- 33. Yellow-nib Duck** (*Anas poecilorhyncha*)  
Very small numbers were over the Deep Bay Marshes in the early part of the year, but the main numbers (200-300) were reported from Chuk Yuen in August and September. Smaller numbers (flocks of 5 or 10) remained later in the winter.
- 34. Gadwall** (*Anas strepera*)  
One sighted on the Deep Bay Marshes in September (SC).
- 35. Falcated Teal** (*Anas falcata*)  
Present in the Mong Tseng area in January/February, probably over 150 birds. A few were also present in October and November (SC).
- 36. Teal** (*Anas crecca*)  
Probably the most commonly recorded duck, being seen on the Deep Bay Marshes, at Long Valley, and at Tai Lam Chung, up to 21 April, and from 14 September onwards. The largest flock was 96 at Tai Lam Chung on 17 February, and generally the majority of reports are in the period February to April.
- 38. Garganey** (*Anas querquedula*)  
About 200 were in the Chuk Yuen area in April, and it was common in the same area in September/October. Apart from these records, there were several sightings between 20 May and the end of August; the records suggest that at least three birds, of which two were males, remained throughout the summer.
- 39. Wigeon** (*Anas penelope*)  
Three near Mong Tseng on 1 and 4 January; two near Mai Po on 23 March.
- 40. Pintail** (*Anas acuta*)  
Four shot near Mong Tseng in January, and two near Chuk Yuen in October. Two males at Mai Po on 16 November.
- 41. Shoveler** (*Anas clypeata*)  
A few reported from the Deep Bay Marshes January to April (SC).
- 43. Scaup** (*Aythya marila*)  
A few in the Mong Tseng area in the early part of the year (SC).
- 44. Tufted Duck** (*Aythya fuligula*)  
Fairly frequent in the Mong Tseng area in the early part of the year (SC). 11 seen at Chuk Yuen on 9 February, and three on 16 February (MAW).
- 46. Red-breasted Merganser** (*Mergus serrator*)  
20+ in Deep Bay on 9 February, and three males there on 17 February (MAW).
- 47. Shelduck** (*Tadorna tadorna*)  
Up to 74 were seen at the mouth of the Shum Chun River in January, and up to 16 February. One on 9 March and three in April are the only subsequent records.
- 48. Lesser Whistling Teal** (*Dendrocygna javanica*)  
Five were seen at Mai Po on 1 June (MAW, RAIW).
- 48x. Cotton Teal** (*Nettapus coromandelianus*)  
A female shot near Chuk Yuen in late September (SC). Although this is the first time any Colony record of this species has been published, the same observer states that one was shot about ten years previously. The 1969 specimen is now in the possession of the Agriculture and Fisheries Dept., and the skin has been examined and identification confirmed by the Hon. Recorder. The species is known to be a summer visitor to Kwangtung province.
- 49. Greylag Goose** (*Anser anser*)  
Two were seen in flight at close range at Mai Po on 8 November (MSD, JFSB).
- 52. Black-eared Kite** (*Milvus migrans*)  
Common. Apart from the usual roosts on the Peak and Stonecutters' Island (which badly need up-to-date study), concentrations of 60+ were noted over Lai Chi Kok Bay in November, in both morning and evening. At least seven pairs nested on Stonecutters' Island (RKM); one clutch of three noted.
- 54. Buzzard** (*Buteo buteo*)  
Winter records from almost all parts of the Colony, including Hong Kong Island. Usually seen singly, but occasionally two or three birds together. Apart from one on 21 August, all records are before 3 April or after 4 October.
- 56. Sparrow-hawk** (*Accipiter nisus*)  
Single birds were seen at Tai Mong Tsai on 1 January, Tai Po Kau on 16 February, Tai Lam Chung on 17 February, Long Valley on 18 February, Mai Po on 9 November, Hok Tau in November, and Tai Om on 7 December.



**60. Golden Eagle** (*Aquila chrysaetos*)

An immature at Ping Shan on 17 February, and an adult over Aberdeen on 31 March (MAW). In view of the difficulty of identifying this species, these records should both be considered probables only.

**61. Imperial Eagle** (*Aquila heliaca*)

Two reported from Long Valley up to 7 April; both these birds showed the white scapulars of the adult, and can therefore be regarded as certain. A young bird, almost certainly first-winter, was picked up exhausted at Lei Yue Mun on 6 November; after recuperation, this bird was ringed and released on 22 November.

**63. Spotted Eagle** (*Aquila clanga*)

One on 19 January, two on 9 February, and one on 16 February, all at Mai Po, and all first- or second-winter birds heavily marked with white (MAW).

**66. White-bellied Sea-Eagle** (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*)

Two adults and one immature, the latter first reported on 21 July, were seen regularly along the southern coast of Hong Kong Island, Cheung Chau, and Lantau. There are two records from Hong Kong Harbour, one from Sai Kung, and one from Tai Mo Shan, the last being the only inland record.

**68. Serpent Eagle** (*Spilornis cheela*)

An adult over She Shan wood on 30 November. A juvenile seen several times over Pokfulam in November and December is known to have been an escape.

**69. Marsh Harrier** (*Circus aeruginosus*)

At least two females/immatures and two males wintered on the Deep Bay Marshes, the last seen being one of the males on 20 April. A female/immature on 4 August is the only summer record for the Colony. From 27 September onwards, at least two males and two females/immatures were seen regularly on the Deep Bay Marshes.

**70. Pied Harrier** (*Circus melanoleucos*)

A male over Mai Po marshes on 12 January (EDW).

**71. Hen Harrier** (*Circus cyaneus*)

Females, probably of this species, seen singly on 4 April, 20 and 26 October, and 23 November.

**74. Osprey** (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Most reports, as usual, are from Deep Bay and the adjacent marshes, up to three being seen in the early part of the year, and up to three from 24 August onwards. Two at Plover Cove on 14 March, and one there on 23 November. An unusual sighting was one off Chung Hom Kok on 19 May.

**77. Peregrine Falcon** (*Falco peregrinus*)

One pair bred in the Tolo Harbour area (three eggs on 7 March). One bird, possibly two, sighted on both sides of the Harbour at various places between Pokfulam and Happy Valley from 12 July onwards. One at Aberdeen on 24 February and 24 August. A male at Mai Po on many dates throughout the year. One at Shatin on 23 November. One at Stanley on 29 December. One at Shouson Hill on 23 September.

**79. Merlin** (*Falco columbarius*)

One on Tai Mo Shan on 7 April (DGR).

**81. Kestrel** (*Falco tinnunculus*)

Commonly seen throughout the Colony during the winter months, the latest spring date being 4 April, and the earliest autumn date 12 October. Usually seen singly, occasionally two together.

**82. Chinese Francolin** (*Francolinus pintadeanus*)

Records of this species are few, though this need not necessarily give a true indication of its status. It was heard several times on Lantau in June and July, on Tai Mo Shan in April, July, and November, at Sek Kong from September to November, and single birds were seen at Mong Tseng on 19 November, the Lam Tsuen Valley on 27 December, and Big Wave Bay on 13 July. As this is believed to be much scarcer now than formerly, and as it is still a game bird, it is important that our records should be more accurate. The 1968-69 season was considered a fair one by hunters.

**83. Quail** (*Coturnix coturnix*)

Four shot out of eight flushed at Sek Kong on 17 April (JAO).

**88. Water Rail** (*Rallus aquaticus*)

Single birds on the Mai Po marshes on 23 March, 20 April, and 31 December.

**89. Banded Rail** (*Rallus striatus*)

Recorded throughout the year on the Mai Po marshes. Numbers are impossible to estimate, but at least 15 birds were seen in an hour on 1 June.



**91. Ruddy Crake** (*Porzana fusca*)

One at Mai Po on 7 April (RJB).

**92. Crimson-legged Crake** (*Amaurornis akool*)

Three at Tsing Lung Tau on 23 May (DJG).

**93. White-breasted Waterhen** (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*)

Widely distributed throughout the New Territories in all low-lying areas visited, throughout the year. Single birds at Aberdeen on 11 February and 23 April. One at the watersplash on Route Twisk on 2 November. A pair was seen with four chicks at Sha Tau Kok on 18 May.

**94. Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Apart from one at Long Valley on 26 January, and an adult with a young bird there on 29 July, all records are from the Mai Po marshes. Birds were present from 30 March to at least 17 November, and a maximum of 30 was counted on 31 August. From the families of young birds seen, it is estimated that a minimum of six pairs bred, and possibly as many as 15.

**95. Watercock** (*Gallicrex cinerea*)

Apart from two at Long Valley on 19 June, all records are from Chuk Yuen between 20 April and 12 October. At least five males and four females were present, and single young birds were seen on 13 and 20 July.

**96. Coot** (*Fulica atra*)

Three at Plover Cove on 14 March. All other records are from the Mai Po marshes, where up to nine were present throughout January, one on 17 May, 2 June, and 7 July, and two between 18 October and 30 November; four were seen on the latter date, of which three had been shot.

**97. Pheasant-tailed Jacana** (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*)

All records are from the Deep Bay Marshes; three on 2 January, two on 19 January and 19 February, and one on 5 April. The main body of summer visitors arrived from 17 May onwards, and at least 15 adults were present from June onwards. Coition was observed on 14 June; the first juvenile was a newly-hatched bird on 20 July. At least three broods were fledged successfully. Birds were seen regularly until 20 October; after this date, one was seen on 8 November, and two on 21 December.

**101. Grey-headed Lapwing** (*Microsarcops cinereus*)

Two on the Mai Po marshes on 26 January, and single birds there on 19 February, 2 and 22 March, and 3 April. Four there on 11 and 12 October, two on 16 November, and five on 30 November.

**103. Little Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius dubius*)

Recorded rather spasmodically in the early part of the year, mainly on the Deep Bay Marshes; the largest flock was 200+ on 12 January, and the latest spring date 7 April. There was no well-marked spring passage. In autumn, this species was seen regularly from 4 August onwards, usually in parties of not more than 20 birds. 50 on 18 October, and 75 on 15 November were the exceptions. A pure white bird, presumably of this species (identified by habits, and by association with eight birds of this species), was seen on 2 November.

**104. Kentish Plover** (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

All records are from the Deep Bay Marshes, where maxima of c60 birds were seen in both spring and autumn. Apart from one record of six birds on 19 January, all records fall between 9 March and 25 May, and 4 September and 7 December.

**105. Greater Sand-Plover** (*Charadrius leschenaultii*)

**106. Mongolian Sand-Plover** (*Charadrius mongolus*)

These two species were recorded on the Mai Po marshes, in numbers up to 100 in total, between 23 March and 25 May, and very small numbers from 30 July to 9 November. 22 at Sha Tau Kok on 13 April.

**107. Caspian Plover** (*Charadrius asiaticus*)

One at Mai Po on 7 April (RJB).

**108. Grey Plover** (*Charadrius squatarola*)

Up to 12 in the early part of the year, last seen on 7 April; up to 30 from 5 October onwards. All records are from the Deep Bay Marshes.

**109. Asiatic Golden Plover** (*Charadrius dominicus*)

One at Mai Po on 23 March, and two on 27 April. Flocks of up to 30 were seen at Mai Po many times on the autumn passage, between 23 August and 30 November. On 20 and 26 October, a flock of 31 birds was seen resting in a field near the Sek Kong airstrip.



**110. Turnstone** (*Arenaria interpres*)  
At Mai Po, one on 20 April, and four on 7 September.

**111. Fantail Snipe** (*Gallinago gallinago*)

**112. Pintail Snipe** (*Gallinago stenura*)

**113. Swinhoe's Snipe** (*Gallinago megala*)

Numerous reports from the Deep Bay Marshes, Long Valley, and one from Lantau, up to 20 April, and from 25 August onwards. Numbers reported on a single outing range up to 20, though these estimates are probably far too low. The only specific identification reported was on 14 September, when one hunter obtained two of each of the three species.

**116. Woodcock** (*Scolopax rusticola*)

Single birds at Tai Po Kau on 12 January, Sek Kong on 19 January, and in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 14, 20, and 27 December. 13 flushed on Lantau in one day in December. The 1968-69 season was considered a good year by hunters (JAO).

**117. Curlew** (*Numenius arquata*)

Up to 100 on the mudflats round the mouth of the Shum Chun River until 11 May. Small numbers, presumably part of this flock, were seen on the marsh itself during this period. This species was unusually scarce in the latter part of the year, up to seven being reported between 1 and 14 September.

**118. Australian Curlew** (*Numenius madagascariensis*)

Four at Mai Po on 20 April (MAW, DGR), and one on 14 September.

**119. Whimbrel** (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Five at Mai Po on 7 April, and two on 11 May. Up to 15 in various parts of the Deep Bay Marshes between 24 August and 27 September.

**121. Black-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa limosa*)

All records are from Mai Po. One on 31 August; up to six seen several times between 4 and 26 October.

**122. Bar-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa lapponica*)

Eight at Mai Po on 7 April, and five on 20 April.

**123. Green Sandpiper** (*Tringa ochropus*)

Reported in ones and twos from most lowlying areas in the north of the New Territories, with concentrations of 10+ at Long Valley and 7+ at Mai Po. The last spring record was 7 April, and the first autumn record 23 August. Two at Silvermine Bay on 14 December.

**124. Wood Sandpiper** (*Tringa glareola*)

Up to 100 on the Deep Bay Marshes in spring from 31 March to 27 April. One at Sha Tau Kok on 13 April. The first autumn record was 23 August, and from then on, flocks of up to 100 were seen regularly until the end of October, with a few stragglers until 28 November.

**125. Common Sandpiper** (*Tringa hypoleucos*)

Up to 27 April, and from 18 August onwards, small numbers were seen regularly over the whole of the Deep Bay Marshes, round the sandy coast, and on a few inland streams. One at Sha Tau Kok on 18 May. The largest number reported on one day was ten at Ping Shan on 6 September.

**126. Redshank** (*Tringa totanus*)

All records are from the Deep Bay Marshes. In spring, up to 60 were reported between 23 March and 18 May. In autumn, up to 35 between 23 August and 15 November.

**127. Spotted Redshank** (*Tringa erythropus*)

Up to 40 until 27 April, and up to 25 from 4 October onwards, all on the Deep Bay Marshes. Two members of the Society arrested a hunter on 20 April for shooting a bird of this species (in full summer plumage). Another shot bird was seen on 26 October, but no arrest was made.

**128. Greenshank** (*Tringa nebularia*)

Up to 50 were seen regularly on the Deep Bay Marshes until 11 May. Numbers in the latter half of the year, from 25 August onwards, were smaller, the maximum being 25 on 26 October. After 16 November, the only record was of two birds on 16 December.

**129. Marsh Sandpiper** (*Tringa stagnatilis*)

Apart from one on 20 April and three on 27 April, all records are between 25 August and 16 November, all from the Deep Bay Marshes. This species was much commoner than usual on the autumn passage, and parties of up to 25 birds were seen on no fewer than twelve occasions.

**130. Grey-rumped Sandpiper** (*Tringa brevipes*)

Three at Mai Po on 27 April and 25 May.

**131. Terek Sandpiper** (*Tringa terek*)

Up to 30 on the Mai Po marshes between 4 April and 7 May. Five at Chuk Yuen on 2 November.



- 132. Knot** (*Calidris canutus*)  
One at Mai Po on 20 April.
- 133. Great Knot** (*Calidris tenuirostris*)  
c30 at Mai Po on 20 April.
- 134. Eastern Little Stint** (*Calidris ruficollis*)  
Up to 50 in the Deep Bay Marshes between 3 April and 25 May, and up to 30 there in autumn between 23 August and 15 November.
- 136. Temminck's Stint** (*Calidris temminckii*)  
One at Mai Po on 21 April (MSD).
- 137. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** (*Calidris acuminata*)  
Three at Mai Po on 3 May (RKM), and one on 7 September (MAW).
- 138. Dunlin** (*Calidris alpina*)  
Present on the Deep Bay Marshes until 7 April, and from 7 September to 9 November. Numbers are somewhat erratic, maxima of c100 birds being recorded on 9 February, 7 April, and 9 November.
- 139. Curlew-Sandpiper** (*Calidris ferruginea*)  
Numbers were very small; three at Mai Po from 7 to 27 April, and two on 23 August. One on 9 November is a month later than the previous latest date.
- 140. Sanderling** (*Crocethia alba*)  
One at Chuk Yuen on 17 May, and 11 at Mai Po on 20 May (DJG).
- 142. Broad-billed Sandpiper** (*Limicola falcinellus*)  
Up to 15 on the Deep Bay Marshes from 7 to 21 April, 10+ on 7 September, and one on 4 October.
- 144. Red-necked Phalarope** (*Phalaropus lobatus*)  
Five on the marsh at Mai Po on 7 September.
- 145. Black-winged Stilt** (*Himantopus himantopus*)  
Single birds at Mai Po on 31 August, 2 and 9 September, and 18 October.
- 146. Avocet** (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)  
14 at Mai Po on 9 February.

- 147. Collared Pratincole** (*Glareola pratincola*)  
Apart from one over Deepwater Bay on 19 April (HDS), all records are from Mai Po, of up to seven birds seen between 9 March and 7 April.
- 148. Herring Gull** (*Larus argentatus*)  
Up to about 30 birds were seen on many occasions in Hong Kong Harbour, particularly at the western end, and in Deep Bay, up to 23 March. The first winter report was a flock of c200 birds near Hay Ling Chau on 27 November; c15 were seen at the western end of the Harbour on 14 December.
- 152. Black-headed Gull** (*Larus ridibundus*)  
This species was by far the commonest gull in January and February; flocks estimated at 600 were seen in the Harbour, and 400 over the Mai Po marshes. Large numbers continued to be seen until 23 March, and small numbers until 7 April. From 9 November onwards, parties of up to 12 were seen again in the Deep Bay area, and the Harbour, but no large parties were seen before the end of the year.
- 152x. Saunders' Gull** (*Larus saundersi*)  
Two at Mai Po on 14 March (EDW, RAIW), with a large flock of Black-headed Gulls. This is a new record for the Colony. Both birds were in summer plumage, showing the following characteristics:— head, down to throat and nape, deep black (cf. European Little Gull); white eye-ring; black bill; wings and back pearly-grey, with white leading-edge to wing, and some black on primaries; white rump, tail, and underparts; dark red legs. Behaviour described as ternlike; seemed a little smaller than Black-headed Gull.
- 154. White-winged Black Tern** (*Chlidonias leucoptera*)  
All records are from Mai Po; one on 2 March, 50+ on 11 May, about five on 20 and 26 October.
- 155. Whiskered Tern** (*Chlidonias hybrida*)  
Single birds seen at Mai Po on 19 January, 13 and 14 June, and 20 and 26 October.
- 156. Gull-billed Tern** (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)  
Up to 30 seen on the Mai Po marshes at various dates between 14 March and 20 April, and one or two birds there between 25 August and 20 October. 30-40 seen outside the western end of Hong Kong Harbour on 28 August, on which day about 40 were seen in Repulse Bay. 20 in Repulse Bay on 30 August.



**157. Caspian Tern** (*Hydroprogne caspia*)

One at Mai Po on 23 March and 20 April, and four on 27 July.

**160. Little Tern** (*Sterna albifrons*)

Up to ten at Mai Po between 20 and 27 April, and one there on 25 August and 13 September.

**164. Rufous Turtle-dove** (*Streptopelia orientalis*)

Two at Stanley on 1 February, one on 9 March, and up to five between 31 March and 12 April. One at Headland Road on 4 and 12 April. The species was reported by hunters to be unusually common in the autumn, but we have records of only small parties, the maximum being nine, between 7 September and 29 December. These records come from Stanley, Mong Tseng, Mai Po, and Lantau.

**165. Spotted Dove** (*Streptopelia chinensis*)

Common and widespread.

**166. Red Turtle Dove** (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*)

Reported that a flock of about 200 was at Mong Tseng during September (SC).

**166x. Emerald Dove** (*Chalcophaps indica*)

All records are from Tai Po Kau, where one was seen on 16 July, and up to two between 16 November and 28 December.

**167. Rose-ringed Parakeet** (*Psittacula krameri*)

The spread of this species continues, and further new localities have been reported. As last year, the following is a complete list of reports sent in:—

Government House and Central:— one on 29 January, 15 March; one or two several times from 27 March to 17 May. One on 3 September; up to four from 8 November to 20 December.

Victoria Barracks:— four on 26 October, two on 4 December, one on 10 December.

Happy Valley:— up to five commonly until end of March, but less commonly over the next three months; one on 6 July; six on 21 December.

Waterfront:— five flying NW over Wanchai on 27 February; one over Central on 18 September.

Stanley:— one on 5 January and 27 December; 12 on 26 December.

Headland Road:— five on 26 March, two on 28 March, ten on 30 August.

Shouson Hill:— nine daily from 3 September onwards.

Turtle Cove:— one on 28 September.

Ping Shan/Mong Tseng:— one on 17 February, one on 13 October, three on 18 November, and another party of ten on the same day.

Yuen Long Creek:— 14 on 18 May (over the egretty).

Mai Po:— from 23 August to 5 October, parties of two or three were seen on several occasions, with 16 on 12 September, and 32 on 5 October.

Kowloon Reservoir:— ten on 20 November.

Silvermine Bay, Lantau:— one on 14 December.

Sek Kong:— one on 7 December.

Kowloon Tong:— from numerous reports throughout the year, it appears that 10-15 birds are resident in or around this area.

Kadoorie Hill, Lam Tsuen Valley:— eight on 25 March.

Sha Tin Valley:— two on 28 September.

Route Twisk, near Gun Club:— two on 31 December.

Analysis of these records suggests a total population in excess of 70 birds.

**169. Himalayan Cuckoo** (*Cuculus saturatus*)

Two at Tai Po Kau on 13 April, and one on 27 April (MAW, DGR).

**170. Indian Cuckoo** (*Cuculus micropterus*)

Two heard at Sha Kong on 21 April. All other records are of single birds as follows:— Shouson Hill, 10 and 30 April; Yuen Long Creek, 18 May; Mai Po, 21 April, 19 June, 31 August, 14 September; Sheung Shui, 27 May, 18 June; Sek Kong, 3 July; Silvermine Bay, 29 June; Beas Hill, 28 April.

**172. Plaintive Cuckoo** (*Cacomantis merulinus*)

Heard, and occasionally seen, in widespread localities between 20 March and 30 July. It is thought that this bird is less common than it was formerly, and the number of records submitted would seem to support this view; however, there is insufficient data to give any satisfactory conclusions.

**175. Koel** (*Eudynamis scolopacea*)

At least two pairs in Tai Po Kau, and two in Little Hong Kong Woods. Others reported from Sha Kong, Sha Tau Kok, Tai Po, Ty Tam, Sek Kong, Beas Hill, and Mai Po. Pair seen copulating at Beas Hill on 28 April.

**176. Crow-Pheasant** (*Centropus sinensis*)

Common and widespread. A nest with two or three young in the Pokfulam Reservoir area on 2 June (RKM, FC).



**177. Lesser Crow-Pheasant** (*Centropus bengalensis*)

All records are between 13 April and 23 August, except for one at She Shan on 27 December. Single birds seen on three occasions at Tai Po Kau, three occasions at Headland Road, three occasions in different parts of Route Twisk (two birds on 29 July), once at Tai Tam, and once on Cheung Chau.

**178. Barred Owlet** (*Glaucidium cuculoides*)

One on the Mong Tseng Peninsula on 19 November (JFSB).

**179. Scops Owl** (*Otus scops*)

An injured bird (red form) picked up near Fanling on 3 December.

**180. Collared Scops Owl** (*Otus bakkamoena*)

One heard at Sek Kong many times between 12 September and 17 December (MSD). Heard at Pokfulam on 25 February (RKM). Heard at Ty Tam on 8 January, and Headland Road on 24 March and 23 April (DGR).

**187. Large White-rumped Swift** (*Apus pacificus*)

Recorded throughout the year in many areas. All reports are of small numbers, except that, on 22 March, very large numbers were seen at Mai Po.

**188. House Swift** (*Apus affinis*)

Fairly common and widespread, though status is inadequately documented.

**189. Pied Kingfisher** (*Ceryle rudis*)

Reported frequently from many parts of the Deep Bay Marshes; two birds were seen together on many occasions up to 27 September, when three were reported at Ping Shan; three were also seen at Mai Po on many occasions thereafter. Single birds at Long Valley on 27 May and 19 June.

**190. Crested Kingfisher** (*Ceryle lugubris*)

One at Sha Tau Kok on 15 April (RKM).

**191. Common Kingfisher** (*Alcedo atthis*)

Common on the Deep Bay Marshes up to 7 April; one at Tai Mong Tsai on 1 January; one in Little Hong Kong Woods on 22 June. A nest with young was found above Pokfulam Reservoir on 9 June (RKM, FC). From 18 August onwards, common at Mai Po, where up to 30 were seen in a day in August and September, and also recorded from streams and reservoirs in many parts of the Colony.

**192. White-breasted Kingfisher** (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)

Numbers and distribution in the winter months are almost identical with the Common Kingfisher. However, there are many more summer records, as follows:— one at Little Hong Kong Woods on 22 June, and Shouson Hill on 9 July, four in different areas on Lantau on 29 June, one at Sek Kong on 13 July, one at Tai Po on 1 July, two at Sha Tau Kok on 8 July. A pair nested at Pokfulam Reservoir, and there were three occupied nest sites on Stonecutters I. (RKM).

**193. Black-capped Kingfisher** (*Halcyon pileata*)

Single birds at Mai Po on 16 February and 3 April; one in Little Hong Kong Woods on 10 May. Single birds on the Sek Kong Catchment Road on 7 March and 9 June. From 11 October onwards, there were regular reports of one, and occasionally up to three, birds at Mai Po. The species was also reported twice from Mong Tseng, and once each from Long Valley, She Shan (two birds), and Silvermine Bay.

**195. Broad-billed Roller** (*Eurystomus orientalis*)

Single birds at Kowloon Reservoir on 22 September, and Stanley on 28 September.

**197. Great Barbet** (*Megalaima virens*)

Reported regularly from Tai Po Kau, where a minimum of three pairs remained throughout the year, one nest with young being found on 13 August. Single birds were seen at She Shan and Tai Om on 30 November, and above Tai Om on 20 December.

**200. Wryneck** (*Jynx torquilla*)

Single birds as follows:— Long Valley, 18 February; Government House Garden, 17 March; King's Park, 23 March; Mai Po, 16 December; Stanley, 20 December.

**202. Small Skylark** (*Alauda gulgula*)

Single birds at Mai Po on 2 March, 17 and 20 October, and 7 December.

**203. Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*)

Several at Mai Po on 6 January. Common from 27 March onwards; large flocks were reported from Mai Po from August to October. A nest with six well-grown young at Silvermine Bay on 29 June.



**204. Red-rumped Swallow** (*Hirundo daurica*)

One at Mai Po on 19 January, and two on 26 January. Three on Tai Mo Shan on 15 August. Two at Mai Po on 21 September and 17 November. One at Ping Shan on 27 September; one at Kowloon Reservoir on 22 September. 40+ at Mong Tseng on 18 November.

**205. House Martin** (*Delichon urbica*)

One in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 12 April (MSD). One at Mai Po on 17 November (JFSB).

**206. Sand Martin** (*Riparia riparia*)

Five at Mai Po on 20 April. One at Plover Cove on 1 July. From 13 September to 15 November, up to six were seen at Mai Po.

**208. Rufous-backed Shrike** (*Lanius schach*)

Common and widespread. A nest with four eggs found on 4 June (RKM, FC).

**210. Brown Shrike** (*Lanius cristatus*)

One at Stanley up to 6 April; one at Ping Shan on 5 January and 17 February; one at Long Valley on 18 February; three at So Kwun Wat on 9 January; one in the Botanical Gardens on 9 February. One in Little Hong Kong Woods on 11 May. One in Little Hong Kong Woods on 24 August; two near Aberdeen on 15 September, and one on 10 October; one at Ping Shan on 27 September; one at King's Park on 1 November. Records are unusually few in both the winters concerned.

**211. Black-naped Oriole** (*Oriolus chinensis*)

Not common, but fairly widespread in the summer months. Extreme dates are 12 April to 9 November.

**212. Black Drongo** (*Dicrurus macrocercus*)

Widespread, and quite common, in summer, most records being from April to October. Extreme dates are 2 February to 7 December. A nest on Stonecutters' I., with four eggs, which hatched on 4 June (RKM, FC); thought to be ten to twenty pairs on the island (RKM).

**213. Ashy Drongo** (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*)

Of the subspecies *salangensis*, (Ashy), there are five records:— single birds at Stanley on 12 April, 2 and 22 December, Sek Kong on 2 November, and two on Lady Clementi's Ride on 16 November. There are also several records from Stanley for which the subspecies could not be determined, and it seems probable that single birds of this subspecies wintered there in both the winters under review.

The subspecies *leucogenis*, (White-cheeked), given in the Checklist as an occasional visitor, is much more commonly reported these days, and has certainly over-wintered in the two winters concerned. In winter 1968-69, up to 12 April, single birds were recorded from Stanley and Pokfulam. In winter 1969-70, from 14 September onwards, it was recorded from two areas in Pokfulam, Tai Om and She Shan Woods in the Lam Tsuen Valley, Sek Kong, Ping Shan, and Stanley. Out of a minimum of six birds involved, at least four (those at Tai Om, She Shan, Stanley, and one at Pokfulam) remained into 1970.

**214. Hair-crested Drongo** (*Dicrurus hottentottus*)

Quite common and widespread in summer, the main stronghold being Tai Po Kau. Extreme dates are 14 March to 28 September.

**215. Chinese Starling** (*Sturnus sinensis*)

At Stanley, two on 12 April, five on 26 August, one on 5 September. At Sek Kong, ten on 10 March; seen throughout the summer. One at Mai Po on 21 April, and c15 on 16 December. Three at Castle Peak on 25 August. One at Tai Po Kau on 12 September. One at King's Park on 13 September, and ten at Argyle Street on 25 October.

**216. Silky Starling** (*Sturnus sericeus*)

14 at Aberdeen on 14 January, and two on 10 and 11 February. 20+ at Yuen Long on 7 January. Two at Sek Kong on 2 February. Two at Long Valley on 2 March. Three on Stonecutters Island on 4 April. 100+ at Yuen Long creek on 8 November. 20+ at Sek Kong on 7 December.

**217. Grey Starling** (*Sturnus cineraceus*)

Two at Sek Kong on 2 February. Up to 12 at Mong Tseng from 18 to 30 November. Four in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 17 December. Two at Castle Peak on 31 December.

**218. Black-necked Starling** (*Sturnus nigricollis*)

Records are confined to the following areas:— one pair at Sha Tau Kok (nest found), up to 12 on the Mong Tseng Peninsula, up to three at Mai Po wood. Birds remained in these areas throughout the year. Two at Sek Kong on 7 April; two at Long Valley on 2 March.

**219. Common Mynah** (*Acridotheres tristis*)

All records are from Ping Shan, with a maximum of 15 birds.

**220. Crested Mynah** (*Acridotheres cristatellus*)

Common everywhere.



**221. Jay** (*Garrulus glandarius*)

Two at Shing Mun Reservoir on 26 October. Two or more at Tai Po Kau from 19 December onwards (suspected to have been present before this).

**222. Blue Magpie** (*Urocissa erythrorhyncha*)

Fairly common in wooded areas throughout the Colony.

**223. Magpie** (*Pica pica*)

Common and widespread.

**224. Treepie** (*Crypsirina formosae*)

From 20 November onwards, the largest irruption of this species ever recorded. At least three birds were seen regularly in Tai Po Kau. Ten or more were seen at She Shan on 30 November, and a few remained there throughout the next month; birds seen at Tai Om on 6 and 7 December may well have been part of this flock. Two on the Kowloon Reservoir Catchment Road on 20 November. Three on the Mong Tseng Peninsula on 30 November. In the early part of 1970, the species became more widespread; it was reported from three places on Hong Kong Island, as well as from the original areas in the New Territories.

**226. Jungle Crow** (*Corvus macrorhynchos*)

Widespread. Seen in pairs or small parties in all areas. Analysis of the records suggests a total population of 40-50 pairs.

**227. Collared Crow** (*Corvus torquatus*)

Confined to the Mong Tseng Peninsula and the estuary of the Shum Chun River. The maximum number of birds seen was three on the Mong Tseng Peninsula, and five at Mai Po.

**228. Black-winged Cuckoo-Shrike** (*Coracina melaschistos*)

One at Pokfulam on 21 March. One at Tai Om on 21 December.

**231. Ashy Minivet** (*Pericrocotus divaricatus*)

c30 at Mai Po on 31 March, and eight there on 3 April. Five at Sek Kong on 7 April. Two near Kennedy Road on 8 April.

**233. Scarlet Minivet** (*Pericrocotus flammeus*)

A female at Tai Po Kau on 26 January. A female (or immature) at Tai Om on 29 November was the first of an irruption of this species, which proved to be the biggest irruption of the species yet recorded in Hong Kong. Four at She Shan and 15 (including an adult male) at Tai Om on 30 November; during December, birds

were seen several times in the Lam Tsuen Valley, and it appears that the main flock ranged fairly widely during this period. The largest number seen together was 27, including two adult males, at She Shan on 26 December. Outside this area, the only records are three, including an adult male, in Tai Po Kau on 25 December, and two females/immatures at Sha Kong on 26 December.

**234. Chestnut Bulbul** (*Hypsipetes flavala*)

At least two remained in Tai Po Kau up to 27 April. From 26 November onwards, small parties again appeared in Tai Po Kau, the largest number seen together being five.

**235. Black Bulbul** (*Hypsipetes madagascariensis*)

Two at Sek Kong for three to four weeks from 2 March. One at Tai Po Kau on 29 November.

**236. Crested Bulbul** (*Pycnonotus jocosus*)

**237. Chinese Bulbul** (*Pycnonotus sinensis*)

**238. Red-vented Bulbul** (*Pycnonotus aurigaster*)

All three species were noted to be extremely common, *aurigaster* being the least common of the three. Also, *aurigaster* was normally not seen as close to villages as *jocosus* and *sinensis*. A nest of *sinensis* with four eggs on Stonecutters' I. on 13 May (RKM).

**243. Black-faced Laughing-Thrush** (*Garrulax perspicillatus*)

Common and widespread.

**244. Black-throated Laughing-Thrush** (*Garrulax chinensis*)

The only records received are two from the Peak, and at least one resident at Headland Road.

**245. Hwamei** (*Garrulax canorus*)

Common on Hong Kong Island. Occasional records from the New Territories, but insufficient data to give any indication of current status.

**246x. Greater Necklaced Laughing-Thrush** (*Garrulax pectoralis*)

A party of about ten of this species, which is new to the Colony, was seen at Tai Po Kau on 26 December (MAW, RPW, TPG). The birds were moving through the undergrowth in company with Black-faced Laughing-Thrushes and Treepies; seen at about 5.0 p.m. Slightly larger than the Black-faced; upperparts bright chestnut, with a greenish tinge to the back, and the wings darker; white superciliary; black eyestripe continued above ear-coverts, down the side of the neck, eventually joining up across the upper breast; ear-coverts black, with feathers tipped white (showing as rather scruffy white spots), separated



from pure white chin and throat by a well-defined black line. Flanks rufous; rest of underparts white. Tail tipped buff. Call similar to Black-faced, but thought to be louder, and more musical. (In view of the din created by Black-faced, Necklaced, and Treepies, it was not particularly easy to know which call belonged to which bird). This species is common in Kwangtung Province, but tends to be restricted to the more mountainous areas. A further doubtful record of two on 28 December (MAW); the only diagnostic mark seen was the pale tips to the tail-feathers..

**251. Ince's Paradise Flycatcher** (*Terpsiphone paradisi*)

A female at Tai Po Kau on 11 September. A male at Sek Kong on 12 October.

**252. Japanese Paradise Flycatcher** (*Terpsiphone atrocaudata*)

Single males at Sek Kong on 7 April, and Tai Po Kau on 19 October (MAW).

**253. Grey-headed Flycatcher** (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*)

One at Tai Po Kau on 16 November. One at Pokfulam on 14 November.

**254. Black-naped Monarch Flycatcher** (*Hypothymis azurea*)

An adult male at Tai Om on 20 and 27 December; a young male at She Shan on 28 December.

**255. Brown Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa latirostris*)

Rather few records for the early part of the year, though recorded from several areas up to 6 April. The first autumn record was 14 September, when six were seen in a very small area at Sek Kong. Subsequent to this, the species was very common in all woods until about the end of November, with two apparent peaks on 26 October and 23 November.

**256. Grey-spotted Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa griseisticta*)

Single birds at Stanley on 21 April, Little Hong Kong Woods on 10 May, Sek Kong on 19 October, Stanley on 25 October, two at Sek Kong on 26 October, one at Pokfulam on 13 December, and one in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 27 December.

**258. Verditer Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa thalassina*)

Single birds at Shouson Hill on 5 January and 31 March, Tai Po Kau on 26 January, Pokfulam on 15 February, and Ho Chung on 16 March. From 30 November onwards, there are a number of records, involving at least two birds at Tai Po Kau, two at Silvermine Bay, and one each at Tai Om, She Shan, and Mong Tseng.

**259. Red-breasted Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa parva*)

One at Sek Kong on 7 April and 26 October. Two at Stanley on 25 October, and from 4 December onwards. One at Tai Po Kau on 27 and 28 December.

**260. Robin Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa mugimaki*)

One at Sek Kong on 2 March. One at Pokfulam on 14 November. On 16 November, two at Tai Po Kau. On 22 November, two males at Pokfulam. On 23 November, at least 30 at Tai Po Kau; seen in small parties, of which one alone consisted of at least 20 birds. On 25 November, one in Tai Po Kau. On 26 November, c13 in Tai Po Kau. On 29 November, one at Pokfulam, four in Tai Po Kau, and one on the Sek Kong Catchment Road. On 30 November, two at Tai Om. On 17 December, one in the Lam Tsuen Valley. On 19 December, three, and 22 December, one, in Tai Po Kau. The peak migration, at the end of November, coincides with the irruptions of Treepies, Scarlet Minivets, etc.

**261. Narcissus Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa narcissina*)

A male at Tai Po Kau on 22 December... the first winter record for this species.

**[262x. Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa rubeculoides*)

As indicated in last year's Report, the bird at Pokfulam was seen again on 21 March (DGR).]

**263. Hainan Blue Flycatcher** (*Niltava hainana*)

A young male at Stanley on 20 and 27 December, and an adult male there on 28 December (MAW, DGR). Adult male at Tai Po Kau on 27 December (TPG).

**264. Blue and White Flycatcher** (*Cyanoptila cyanomelana*)

Single males at Stanley on 31 March, Headland Road on 4 April, Mai Po on 7 April, and Pokfulam on 25 October.

**265. Chinese Bush Warbler** (*Cettia diphone*)

Nine records in the early part of the year, up to 25 May, five of these being at Pokfulam. Three records from 20 December onwards.

**267. Short-tailed Bush Warbler** (*Cettia squameiceps*)

This species appears to be becoming commoner in winter than as shown in the Checklist. At least three at Pokfulam up to 22 March. More widespread towards the end of the year, being recorded from Stanley from 25 October, Sek Kong from 2 November, Pokfulam from 8 November, Tai Po Kau from 23 November, and She Shan and Tai Om from 30 November.



**268. Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** (*Locustella certhiola*)

One seen on Mai Po marsh on 9 September (TPG).

**269. Styan's Grasshopper Warbler** (*Locustella pleskei*)

Single birds at Mai Po marsh on 19 January (MAW), 24 May (FOPH, RRM), and 12 and 26 October (MAW).

**270. Von Schrenck's Reed-Warbler** (*Acrocephalus bistrigiceps*)

Spring passage in full swing on 20 April, when 10+ were singing on Mai Po marsh; at least two on 27 April (MAW, DGR). One there on 2 November (MAW).

**271. Great Reed Warbler** (*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*)

The only spring records are single birds at Mai Po and Ping Shan on 20 and 21 April respectively, and one at Sek Kong on 20 April, and then 10+ at Mai Po on 25 May. The species was common on the Deep Bay Marshes in autumn, numbers up to at least 30 being reported between 31 August and 9 November.

**273. Dusky Warbler** (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*)

Common in winter on the Deep Bay Marshes, with regular reports from Sek Kong, and occasional sightings elsewhere. The last spring record was 20 April, and the first autumn record was 27 September. Estimates of numbers at Mai Po range up to 20 birds, which is probably an understatement in view of the species' habits.

**274. Yellow-browed Warbler** (*Phylloscopus inornatus*)

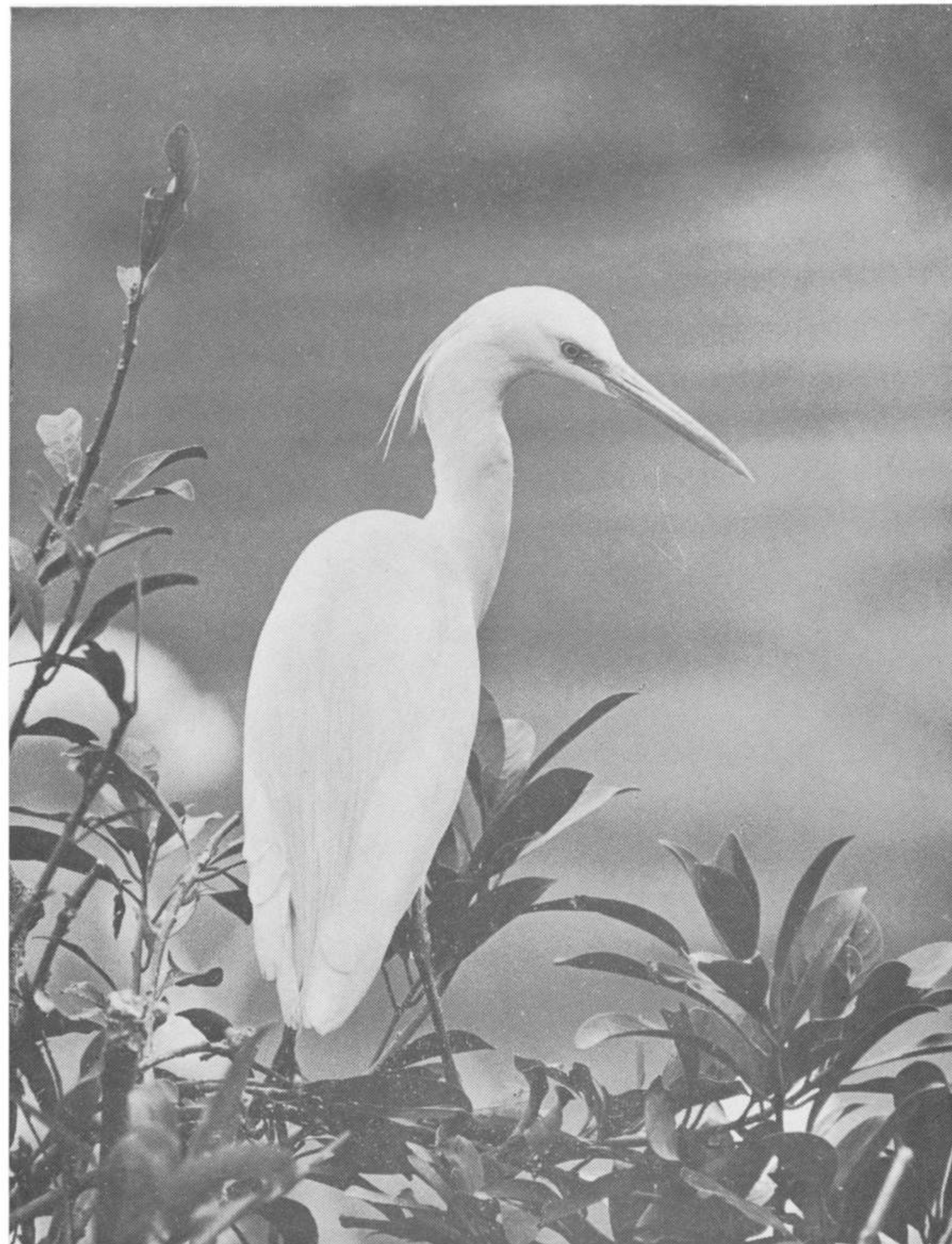
Common up to 20 April, and from 19 October onwards; although still to be seen in every suitable wood, the numbers in the latter half of the year were thought to be lower than those in the previous two winters (MAW).

**275. Pallas's Warbler** (*Phylloscopus proregulus*)

The only records for the early part of the year are from Tai Po Kau, where at least ten were present until at least 16 February (MAW). The earliest sightings in autumn were on 16 November at Tai Po Kau, where the species soon became unusually numerous, with a minimum of 50 being estimated on 28 December. Small numbers were also observed throughout the Lam Tsuen Valley, at Mong Tseng, Sek Kong, Stanley, and Silvermine Bay (MAW, RPW, JFSB, MSD, TPG).

**276. Arctic Warbler** (*Phylloscopus borealis*)

One at Tai Lam Chung on 17 February (EDW), and one at Mai Po on 3 April (MAW). Numbers up to four reported from Stanley, Pokfulam, and Sek Kong on various dates between 26 September and 20 October. (MAW, RPW).



Swinhoe's Egret (*E. eulophotes*)

Photo Copyright by Dr. R. K. Murton.





Chinese Pond-Heron  
(*A. bacchus*) on nest.  
*Photo Copyright by*  
Dr. R. K. Murton



Brown Wren-Warbler (*P. subflava*) at nest  
*Photo Copyright by Dr. R. K. Murton*





Yellow-bellied Wren-Warbler (*P. flaviventris*) at nest

*Photo Copyright by Dr. R. K. Murton*



Upland Pipit (*A. sylvanus*)

*Photo Copyright by Dr. R. K. Murton.*





Upland Pipit  
(*A. sylvanus*)  
carrying food  
Photo Copyright by  
Dr. R. K. Murton



Great Knot (*C. tenuirostris*) in summer plumage  
Little Tern (*S. albifrons*)  
Photos by A. Hibi





Brown Flycatcher (*M. latirostris*)

Photos by A. Hibi

**282. Long-tailed Tailor-bird** (*Orthotomus sutorius*)  
Common and widespread.

**285. Brown Wren-Warbler** (*Prinia subflava*)  
Common on the Deep Bay Marshes. Nest with three young found at Mai Po on 11 June (RKM, FC). Two nests with three young each near the newly-discovered egretty at Yuen Long on 18 May (RKM).

**286. Yellow-bellied Wren-Warbler** (*Prinia flaviventris*)  
Common on the Deep Bay Marshes, and occasional elsewhere. Nest records as follows:— 1) 18 June, c/2; 2) 18 June, building; 3) 2 July, c/3; 4) 8 July, 3 young; 5) 10 July, 2 young. (RKM).

**287. Fantail Warbler** (*Cisticola juncidis*)  
Common on the Deep Bay Marshes; also reported from Long Valley and Silvermine Bay.

**289. Red-tailed Robin** (*Luscinia sibilans*)  
Single birds at Stanley on 11 January, 19 February, and 6 April, at Pokfulam on 15 February, 30 March, 6 April, 22 November, and 29 November, and two at Pokfulam on 23 February.

**290. Bluethroat** (*Luscinia svecica*)  
All records are of single birds on Mai Po marsh, on 19 January, 2 February, 23 March, 5 and 30 April, and 16 November.

**291. Rubythroat** (*Luscinia calliope*)  
Only five reports. One at Sek Kong on 2 March, one at Mai Po on 23 March, one at Tai Po Kau on 23 November, one at Mong Tseng on 30 November, and one at Magazine Gap on 30 December.

**292. Red-flanked Bluetail** (*Tarsiger cyanurus*)  
Quite common both at the beginning and at the end of the year. Most records are from Tai Po Kau and the Lam Tsuen Valley, and Pokfulam, but it was also recorded from Stanley, various parts of the Peak, Pak Tam, Aberdeen, Sek Kong, and Shouson Hill. Latest spring date was 8 March; earliest autumn date was 29 November.

**293. Magpie Robin** (*Copsychus saularis*)  
Reported by most observers as common, but how common is it? A nest at University Hall with five young on 27 May.

**294. Daurian Redstart** (*Phoenicurus aureus*)  
Extremely widespread, but not as common as in some previous years. Latest spring date is 7 April, and earliest autumn date 13 October.



**295. Plumbeous Water-Redstart** (*Rhyacornis fuliginosus*)

A female at Tai Lam Chung on 16 February. A male on the Sek Kong Catchment Road on 26 November.

**296. Stonechat** (*Saxicola torquata*)

Common in the winter months, especially on the Deep Bay Marshes, up to 21 April, and from 4 September onwards.

**297. Grey Bushchat** (*Saxicola ferrea*)

A pair on the Sek Kong Catchment Road on 16 February. One in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 15 and 23 March. Two at Pokfulam on 20 April, and one on 21 April. A male at Mai Po wood on 21 December. All other records are from Tai Om in the Lam Tsuen Valley, where two males and three females were present from 25 December onwards.

**298. Blue Rock-Thrush** (*Monticola solitaria*)

Both forms of this species, together with birds which could not be attributed with certainty to either form, were fairly frequently recorded during the winter months. Latest spring date is 21 April, and earliest autumn date is 22 September.

**300. Violet Whistling-Thrush** (*Myiophonus caeruleus*)

Common near wooded streams, particularly on Hong Kong Island. A nest was found at University Hall on 23 February, when the bird was still building; hatching was estimated to have taken place about 4 April, and the only chick fledged about 20 April (RKM).

**301. Pale Thrush** (*Turdus pallidus*)

One at Pokfulam on three occasions from 25 January to 22 March; one at Tai Po Kau on 12 January and 16 February; one in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 15 March.

**302. Eyebrowed Thrush** (*Turdus obscurus*)

A female was seen at Pokfulam up to 8 February, and on 8 April and 27 December. A male and a female at Stanley on 12 April.

**304. Grey-backed Thrush** (*Turdus hortulorum*)

Apart from the now regular wintering parties at Pokfulam and Stanley, the species was recorded from Tai Om, She Shan, Silvermine Bay, Tai Po Kau, Sek Kong, and on the Peak, the latest spring date being 12 April, and the earliest autumn date being 29 November.

**306. Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*)

A pair at Happy Valley from 1 February to 9 March; one in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 2 February; one at Tai Po Kau on 7 March; six to eight in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 15 March; one at Sheung Shui on 20 March. One in Government House Garden on 4 October. Up to six were seen at She Shan from 30 November to 21 December. Three at Pokfulam on 13 December, and one on 29 December. One at Stanley on 22 December.

**307. Grey Thrush** (*Turdus cardis*)

As usual, very common at Pokfulam and Stanley up to 21 April, and from 29 November onwards, although the earliest autumn record was in fact 16 November at Lady Clementi's Ride. The species was also recorded from Sek Kong, Aberdeen, She Shan, Tai Om, Tai Po Kau, and various parts of the Peak, and mid-level areas.

**309. Orange-headed Ground-Thrush** (*Turdus citrinus*)

A male on Albert Path, Central District, on 7 October (EDW).

**310. White's Thrush** (*Turdus dauma*)

One, and later two, at Pokfulam until 9 March.

**313. Great Tit** (*Parus major*)

Common and widespread. A nest with young was found at University Hall on 27 May (RKM, FC). A nest with young about to fledge on Stonecutters' I. on 18 April.

**313x. Yellow-bellied Tit** (*Parus venustulus*)

This species was first recorded from the Colony on 16 November, when a male was briefly seen, but not identified at the time, at Tai Po Kau (MAW, RPW, FAWW). At least one more bird was also present. On 23 November, a further visit was made to Tai Po Kau for the purpose of identifying the bird, and at least 12 were seen (MAW, RPW). On 30 November, at least four, including three males, were at She Shan, and four, including two males, at Tai Om. During the remainder of 1969, one more was seen at Tai Po Kau, on 19 December, and up to 30 regularly at Tai Om and She Shan. They still remained in big parties until at least 27 December, but thereafter split up into smaller groups; they were still to be seen in March 1970, although more difficult to find. It appears that by early December at least 75 birds were in Tai Po Kau and the Lam Tsuen Valley combined, and the real figure may well be much higher, as only parts of these areas were properly watched, and the parties of Tits were moving about a great deal.

Adult males are highly distinctive; head and throat black, with white patch through eye and ear, and white nuchal patch; upperparts



largely grey, with black primaries; two white wingbars composed of white spots, which are in fact the tips of the tertiaries and the primary coverts; underparts bright yellow. Young male has olive upperparts, and paler underparts; the head markings are poorly defined, and there is no black on the throat; the wingbars are pale yellow, and not very conspicuous. Females are largely olive-green, with no black on head; face whitish, but no nuchal patch; otherwise general pattern similar to male. Juveniles like females, but markings even less well-defined. Behaviour typical for any tit; travels in small parties, generally keeping about 15ft. up in the trees; shows preference for conifers, but also likes large, old deciduous trees; highly acrobatic; a high-pitched rapid trill, reminiscent of European Goldcrest, usually betrays their presence, and this is kept up almost constantly. Size about 5", which means they can easily be missed in flocks of White-eyes, *Phylloscopi*, and Great Tits, with which they readily associate. In flight, show one wingbar.

**315. Richard's Pipit** (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*)

This species was common everywhere during the winter months, up to 27 April, and from 8 October onwards. The only summer records are four from Big Wave Bay on 13 July, and one there on 24 August; two near Shek Pik on 29 June; one on Cheung Chau on 9 August.

**316. Indian Tree-Pipit** (*Anthus hodgsoni*)

Common and widespread in winter, the latest spring date being 12 April, and the earliest autumn date 11 October.

**317. Red-throated Pipit** (*Anthus cervinus*)

One at Ping Shan on 17 February. Up to ten at Chuk Yuen from 23 March to 27 April. One at Sha Tin on 23 March. One at Sek Kong on 31 March.

**318. Water-Pipit** (*Anthus spinoletta*)

One at Chuk Yuen on 20 October (MAW, FAWW).

**319. Upland Pipit** (*Anthus sylvanus*)

A pair at nest, with three young, on Tai Mo Shan on 24 June (RKM, FC). All sight records are also from this area, and Ngong Ping, Lantau.

**321. White Wagtail** (*Motacilla alba*)

Common and widespread in winter, the latest spring date being 27 April, and the earliest autumn date 9 September. Main autumn passage was in the second half of October, the largest number estimated being 200+ at Chuk Yuen on 20 October.

**322. Grey Wagtail** (*Motacilla cinerea*)

Small numbers to be seen on and near streams throughout the Colony up to 7 April, and from 27 August onwards.

**323. Yellow Wagtail** (*Motacilla flava*)

The majority of records are of birds on passage, although a few remained at Mai Po marsh during the winter. The last spring date was 27 April, apart from one at Sek Kong on 18 May, and the first autumn date 23 August. Apart from the record from Sek Kong, one record from Long Valley, and one from Little Sai Wan, all records are from the Deep Bay Marshes.

**324. Fork-tailed Sunbird** (*Aethopyga christinae*)

Recorded from Tai Po Kau throughout the year, at least ten birds being there in April. At least two at Ho Chung on 16 March. One pair resident at Headland Road. A male at Castle Peak on 10 January. A female on Lady Clementi's Ride on 28 August. A female at Pokfulam on 4 and 10 December.

**325. White-eye** (*Zosterops japonica*)

Common and widespread, particularly large concentrations being noted in Tai Po Kau and She Shan on 28 December.

**326. Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker** (*Dicaeum cruentatum*)

A male seen feeding two fledged young at Tai Po Kau on 11 September. On 12 September, a female and one young seen there.

**327. Fire-breasted Flowerpecker** (*Dicaeum ignipectus*)

A male at Deepwater Bay on 5 January. A female in Government House Garden on 7 January. A male at Tai Lam Chung on 17 February. Two at Sek Kong on 5 October, and one on 12 October. Three or four at Tai Po Kau on 16 November.

**328. Black-tailed Hawfinch** (*Eophona migratoria*)

Very few in the early part of the year; apart from a flock of ten or more by the Ting Kok Road on 9 March, and two at Pokfulam on 15 February, there are records of single birds at Pokfulam on 2 January, Government House Garden on 29 January, Sek Kong on 2 February, Mai Po wood on 31 March and 7 April, and Stanley on 12 April. The first autumn record was from Mong Tseng on 18 November (three birds), and about six were there on 26 December. Otherwise, all records were from the Lam Tsuen Valley and Sek Kong, of up to 30 birds; although parties were seen right up to the end of the year, they do not appear to have remained in the Valley throughout, as there were many occasions during this period when they were not seen.



**329. Chinese Greenfinch** (*Chloris sinica*)

Again, all records of this species are given in full, as follows:—

Shouson Hill to Aberdeen Reservoir:— 60+ on 5 January, two on 2 May and 11 June, three on 12 and 13 June, two on 22 June.

Sek Kong Woods:— two on 19 January, about five on 2 February, one on 23 March, c15 on 7 April, one on 20 April, six on 30 April, c20 on 31 July. Nest with three young on 8 July (RKM). Adult with one fledgling on 7 May (MSD). Few daily in November and December.

Sek Kong Catchment Road:— two on 16 February, two on 29 November.

Tai Mo Shan:— 16+ on 20 July, three on 15 August.

Happy Valley:— three from 26 to 29 May.

Mai Po marsh:— one near Pak Hok Chau on 31 March.

Silvermine Bay:— six on 29 June.

Jockey Club, Sheung Shui:— about six on 14 August.

Mong Tseng:— 14 on 18 November.

Cape d'Aguilar:— three on 19 January.

**331. Common Rosefinch** (*Carpodacus erythrinus*)

Two at Sek Kong on 30 November, and 15 in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 27 December.

**332. Masked Bunting** (*Emberiza spodocephala*)

Common in the winter months, the last spring date being 20 April, and the earliest autumn date 4 October.

**335. Tristram's Bunting** (*Emberiza tristrami*)

All records are from Tai Po Kau, where up to 12 birds were seen in January, and up to 16 February, a single bird on 16 November, and about ten on 19 December.

**336. Chestnut Bunting** (*Emberiza aureola*)

At Mong Tseng, five on 19 November, two on 28 November, and one on 30 November (JFSB, MSD).

**337. Yellow-breasted Bunting** (*Emberiza aureola*)

One at Brewin Path (mid-levels) on 9 November. Up to 60 on the Deep Bay Marshes from 5 October to 16 November.

**338. Grey-headed Bunting** (*Emberiza fucata*)

One at Long Valley on 26 January; two in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 2 February; one at Sai Kung on 16 March; one at Mai Po on 2 March; three at Stanley on 14 November; one at Sek Kong on 7 December.

**339. Little Bunting** (*Emberiza pusilla*)

Not uncommon in winter; a total of four reports up to 21 April, and 15 reports from 2 November onwards. Usually only one or two birds, sometimes as many as ten together.

**340. Crested Bunting** (*Melophus lathamii*)

About 20 at Pak Tam on 1 January and again on 25 February; three at Tai Lam Chung on 17 February. Several records of up to ten birds in summer on Tai Mo Shan, where a nest containing three young was found on 3 July (RKM, FC). One at Big Wave Bay on 13 July. Four at Silvermine Bay on 14 December. About 12 in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 27 December.

**341. Tree Sparrow** (*Passer montanus*)

Abundant.

**343. Red Avadavat** (*Estrilda amandava*)

Two at Mai Po on 6 January, four on 16 November, and two on 30 November. Two at Long Valley on 7 December.

**344. Java Sparrow** (*Padda oryzivora*)

One in Happy Valley (undated), and one at King's Park on 9 July, were very likely escapes.

**345. Chestnut Munia** (*Lonchura malacca*)

Present on the Mai Po marshes from 21 April to 14 September; up to 30 birds seen, including two pairs building nests on 8 July. Two on the Sek Kong Catchment Road on 7 April; one in Little Hong Kong Woods on 10 May.

**346. Spotted Munia** (*Lonchura punctulata*)

Fairly common and widespread; observed nest-building in Tai Po Kau on 2 July, and Beas Hill on 15 July.

**347. White-backed Munia** (*Lonchura striata*)

One at Tai Po Kau on 10 January, and at least 12 there on 12 January. In various parts of the mid-levels, two on 23 July and 7 December, four on 21 December, and ten on 28 December. Five at She Shan on 20 and 27 December.

**348. White-headed Munia** (*Lonchura maja*)

One at Mai Po on 8 July (RKM).



## Addendum

The following records were received too late for inclusion in the Systematic List. They are, however, important in that, for several species, the information increases our knowledge of the unusual aspects of the 1969 autumn migration. All records are from Severn Road; observer, J. M. Rowlands.

168. Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*). One seen on 27, 28, 29 and 30 April.
172. Plaintive Cuckoo (*Cacomantis merulinus*). One seen on 2 May.
213. White-cheeked Drongo (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*). One on 7 September.
214. Hair-crested Drongo (*Dicrurus hottentottus*). Two from 29 April onwards.
228. Black-winged Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina melaschistos*). One on 7 September.
251. Ince's Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*). A female on 23 September.
255. Brown Flycatcher (*Muscicapa latirostris*). One from 16 September onwards.
256. Grey-spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa griseisticta*). Four on 4 May.
259. Red-breasted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa parva*). One on 11 October.
276. Arctic Warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*). One on 11 October.
299. Chestnut-breasted Rock-Thrush (*Monticola rufiventris*). A male and a female on many dates between 25 January and 8 March.
320. Forest Wagtail (*Dendronanthus indicus*). One on 13 September.

## Short Notes

"Upland Buzzard". A photograph of a large raptor was published in the 1959 Report over the caption 'A "probable" Upland Buzzard'. Although of course no change can be made in the records at this stage, it can now be almost positively identified as a juvenile Imperial Eagle, on description, appearance, and size. This identification has been made possible due to the arrival of several young birds of this species in the Colony bird-shops over the winter 1969-70; many of these birds were examined by FOPH and MAW.

M. A. W.

*Chinese Greenfinches*. The following belated, but nevertheless very welcome, records have been received from Sir Michael Gass:—

1967... three at Fanling on 1 January, ten to twelve at Victoria House on 11 February, and two there on 10 June. Two at Fanling on 26 August.

1968... at Fanling, 40-50 on 19 October, and ten to twelve on 26 October. Several flocks of 12+ on 30 November, and 2 or 3 on 8 December.

M. A. W.

*1968 Report*. Our member, Ben King, has pointed out some further complications arising on identification of some of the new species for the Colony published in last year's Report. These are listed below; it should be pointed out this kind of problem cannot be solved in Hong Kong until we have a proper skin collection here, and a rather more comprehensive library than this Society can afford.

1) *M. davidi* and *M. sundara* are still considered separate species, on the grounds that they were both collected in the same locality in Yunnan in the breeding season. They are indistinguishable in the field, and almost so in the hand. The 1968 records could therefore have been either.

2) *M. rubeculoides* is only one of a group of closely-related species, which again are hard to distinguish in the field. The descriptions on the 1968 bird, as pointed out in the 1968 Report, do not eliminate *M. tickelliae*, nor do they eliminate *M. banyumas*.

3) *S. dougallii* is a regular passage migrant down the China coast, but the description of the tail-feathers points rather strongly to *S. paradisaea* (Arctic Tern). This species, being a notorious wanderer, cannot be eliminated from consideration.



The situation regarding the first two records is considerably more complicated than I thought from the limited information available here. I shall be looking forward to the new Field Guide to the Birds of Continental South East Asia, in which Ben King is collaborating, and which covers all species occurring in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, I thank him for his help so far.

M. A. W.

*Sulphur-crested Cockatoo*: The birds in the general area of Government House/Victoria Barracks have again been seen throughout the year. A maximum of ten in March and April is the highest number recorded for some years.

*Pale-legged Willow-Warbler (Phylloscopus tenellipes)*: RKM and Sir Hugh Elliott watched a *Phylloscopus* warbler apparently of this species on Stonecutters' I. on 25 March. Most striking feature was a pale rump, which seems to be a good field character of this species. However, I am unable to find sufficient details of this species in the field to be able to be certain of the identification.

*Grackle (Gracula religiosa)*: Two in Government House Garden from 3 to 10 August, and at least five in the Pokfulam area throughout most of the year.

*1963 and 1965 Reports. Notes on the Plates.* Doubts have been cast on the authenticity of two plates by Mr. J. Cairns, 'Little Egret at Nest' in our 1963 Report, and 'Purple Heron approaching Nest: Penang' in our 1965 Report. For a full discussion of this question, please refer to the Malayan Nature Journal Vol. 21(1):48, and 23(2 & 3):74

## PEREGRINE FALCON BREEDING IN HONG KONG IN 1969

by R. K. Murton

At the start of Chinese New Year in 1969 (17 February) Dr. C. J. Grant of Hong Kong University visited a small uninhabited island in the New Territories, which held interest for him as a geologist and soil scientist. On climbing to a high part of the island, where a steep cliff fell to a small inlet of the sea, he encountered a pair of hawks, which at the time were also obviously involved in display. Good views were obtained and it was quite evident that the birds had dark facial moustaches. At the time Mr. John Llewellyn had in his possession a pair of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* which Dr. Grant was able to examine closely and he was reasonably certain that they agreed in characters with the birds he had been watching. The only known breeding record for Hong Kong depends on G.A.C. Herklots (*Hong Kong Birds*) and refers to a pair with young in a nest situated near Lion Rock, Kowloon on 24 April, 1936.

The prospect of another breeding record was intriguing and we determined to visit the locality again. However, before this could be arranged I saw another Peregrine in the Colony. On 25 February I travelled by speed boat from near Sai Kung to Tai Mong Tsai and saw from the boat a Peregrine hunting over the hills to the north-east of Sai Kung. It could have been one of the pair mentioned above but if so it would have been over ten miles from its territory. One wonders whether this was another potential breeding area.

On 7 March, in company with Capt. Tony Farrell, Mr. Robin Mason of the Dept. of Agriculture, and some of his staff we set off by jet-boat for an outlying part of the Colony which had to be visited for official reasons. It was intended that Farrell and I should be set down on the island, which was close by, and we duly arrived and toiled uphill to find a good vantage place. We were soon rewarded, for, as we approached the hill-top—perspiring profusely—a Peregrine flushed off what seemed to be a regular look-out perch and disappeared. Only a few pieces of down were in evidence and no castings. We retrieved an odd feather or two, which seemed to come from a pipit or possibly a bunting, but we could not be certain about identification except to be sure that a passerine was involved. There was no sign of the supposed nesting site which we had been led to expect, but it soon transpired that we had walked the longest and hardest way round. We walked on and flushed a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, a good bird to see, but it made us wonder if the Peregrine had been a dream. The cliff face we wanted was soon located and presently the tiercel arrived and perched on a knoll on the face. We lunched and watched him and then walked round to get a view down from the cliff top. By now the tiercel had



## SOME BIRD SKETCHES FROM HONG KONG

by R. K. Murton

vanished, all was quiet and the cliff apparently empty. We looked hard for any eyasses when suddenly out banged the falcon and we could look straight down into a nest of three eggs. Now we were treated to a superb display of aerial acrobatics as the female mobbed and flew round calling, often only a few feet above our heads. The flying ability of the bird was absolutely magnificent, though we didn't keep her off the nest for too long and retired well content with our discovery.

On 7 April Tony Farrell and I returned to the site, this time with Mr. J. Llewellyn and a falconry friend Mr. Joe Turner (a bird of passage bound for New Zealand, but not long since having left England where he works with Philip Glazier the falconer) and we were taken out by Dr. Lamarr Trott from the Chinese University and his wife. The birds were still in residence now having two young not long hatched. We could just discern an unhatched egg. The young were still covered with white down with no sign of feathers and were judged to be about one week old, making the date of first egg-laying about 5 March. Again we were mobbed, this time by both birds, and once more all present were impressed by the superb flying display put on by the birds. Later Farrell returned to the site and found two young not long out of the nest. He had hoped to ring the birds and, although equipped with climbing equipment, and accompanied by an army mountain rescue expert, they were unable to catch the young. Some debris was collected from below the nest which established that the birds had certainly fed on pipits—whether *Anthus sylvanus* or *Anthus novaeseelandiae* could not be established. Other feathers came from the Chinese Francolin *Francolinus pintadeanus*. There seemed to be a paucity of birds in the area so it is not clear what the staple prey comprised; there are no sea-birds to exploit. Peregrines do feed extensively on various species of game-bird depending on locality (grouse for example are much eaten in Scotland) so it would not be surprising if Francolins feature prominently in the diet.

Are these the only breeding Peregrines in Hong Kong? I guess not for I disturbed a bird on Lantau Island which flew round for a while calling. It had appeared from a scree face high up on Lantau Peak on 12 March. Although my companion and I tried to flush a second bird we were unsuccessful, but the nature of the terrain is such that it would not be easy if any possible mate was sitting as tight on its nest as the one considered above. I can only speculate but someone else might be able to follow up this possible site. Then again a pair of Peregrines were in residence in an area to the south of the Island overlooking Tai Tam Bay during the spring and summer of 1969. Though documented as a non-breeding visitor recorded in every month of the year from widespread localities it would seem worthwhile checking some of the localities more carefully. It is extremely easy to overlook nesting birds unless one is right in the centre of the territory and the birds are induced to mob.

Three members of the genus *Prinia*, the Long-tail Warblers or Wren-Warblers, breed in Hong Kong. This is a sub-tropical and tropical group belonging to the family Sylviidae. David's Hill Warbler *Prinia polychroa*, first reported in 1957, is said to be resident on Tai Mo Shan above the 2,500 ft. altitude, but so far no nest has been found. The remaining two species are more familiar to most bird watchers: the Yellow-bellied Wren-Warbler *Prinia flaviventris* is widely distributed in grassy areas, but the Brown Wren-Warbler *Prinia subflava* is confined to wet-land habitats in Hong Kong, its stronghold being the Deep Bay Marshes. In this area the two species occur side by side and pose interesting problems so far as their ecological relationships are concerned.

In the Deep Bay area the Brown Wren-Warbler is essentially confined to the reed beds for feeding and nesting. The nest is beautifully constructed of frayed dead reed leaves and is woven into the top of the living plants, the leaves of which are pulled round to give support and protection to the nest (see Plate 3). No lining is used and 3 eggs seem to comprise the normal clutch, though I found nests with one and two eggs which appeared the full complement. The eggs of this species are immediately distinguishable from its congener, being white to pale blue in ground colour with brown blotches and scrawls—they resemble the eggs of the Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* but are very variable. Many nests fail and I found several empty and deserted ones that had not held big young. Some were clearly blown from their reed supports during strong winds, others I suspect were removed by the local children. The nests are easy to find and the fishermen must come across many during their daily routines. I enquired of one village boy why a nest he showed me should have been left alone, but he pointed out that the locals would prefer to come back at night and catch the old bird on the nest. Nevertheless, the most important predators are probably snakes, which can often be surprised hunting in the area.

Many first broods had left the nest and were being escorted by their parents on 7 May 1969—I had been busy with other things and so missed the start of the breeding season. On 18 May two nests were found on the marshes which lay behind the Soya Sauce factory near Pok Wai. The first contained three newly hatched young and the other three young about three-quarters grown; these chicks left the nest on the 22 May, but the first nest was destroyed by predation just before this date. On the 24 May two other nests were being built, one being ready for eggs. This last nest came to nothing but the other had three small chicks on 18 June and it is the one featured in Plate 3.



It was difficult to identify the food brought back to the nestlings, but certainly small spiders, pupae and cocoons and larvae of marsh insects, small dipterous flies resembling *Chironomids* and *Tipulids* were the most frequent items. In virtually all cases the prey was small enough to be half hidden by the bird's beak—this indicates that only small animals were collected. Breeding certainly continued until early August but once I had watched the birds at close hand I turned my attention to other species.

The Yellow-bellied Wren-Warbler is clearly a more successful species in Hong Kong than *subflava* judging by its tolerance of a wider range of habitats—I located one pair not far from the summit of Tai Mo Shan when hunting for David's Hill Warbler. It is a more dynamic species and I saw it drive off *subflava* on several occasions. It appears that *flaviventris* has first choice on most habitats, but that it cannot do so well as *subflava* in the actual reed beds; it is to this stronghold that *subflava* has to retire in the face of competition from its relative. It is doubtless significant that *subflava*, which has a very wide range from Africa east to China and S.E. Asia, does occupy scrub, and grassland (i.e. the *flaviventris* habitat) throughout most of its range, which means that it is quite capable of living outside marshland. However, *flaviventris* is an Oriental species extending eastwards from Nepal and it is presumably a better adapted and longer established species in the east. The obvious question is what prevents *flaviventris* from also invading the reed beds and part of the answer can perhaps be guessed from Plate 4.

The text-books describe both species as building purse-shaped nests, but such a vague description obscures some obvious dissimilarities. Reference to Plate 4 shows that the Yellow-bellied Wren-Warbler builds an oval shaped nest, which is not at all well suited to anchorage in flimsy vegetation. Because the nest is not suited to weaving into a flimsy substrate it appears that the birds must select a reasonably firm support. This is probably why the birds stake-out their territories along the bunds and drier areas, where the prickly *Acanthus ilicifolius* and small bushes grow and provide nest sites and from these places the Brown Wren-Warbler is apparently banished. I found one pair of *flaviventris* which had selected a territory where they were forced to build a nest in reeds growing on the side of a bund. But this nest was blown out before the female could produce more than one egg.

The eggs of *flaviventris* are readily distinguishable from those of *subflava* in being erythristic. They range from deep brownish-chestnut to brick red and are liberally blotched with reddish-brown markings. They are usually readily visible through the nest entrance, as the nest is but a shallow affair. I suspect that their colouration serves for camouflage. On the other hand, the eggs of *subflava* rest at the bottom of a deep purse and are not visible without poking around the nest entrance. Camouflage is unnecessary and their pale

colour is doubtless a secondary adaptation which helps make them more easily seen by the incubating bird (c.f. the white eggs of hole nesting species). This lends support to the view that *flaviventris* is an older, more established species, assuming that the intricate nest of *subflava* has been evolved from a simpler type of construction.

The breeding season of *flaviventris* appears to be similar to that of its relative; in the marshes nests were found throughout the same season. In addition, I located a pair with young just out of the nest in a grassy area near the conduit path above Aberdeen on 12 May 1969. The diet appears to be similar, allowing that different insect species must be found in dry habitats.

Two herons are featured in Plates 1 & 2. The Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus* is the characteristic heron of the paddy. In India its place is taken by the Indian Pond Heron *A. grayi* often called the Paddy Bird, which is replaced in Europe and Africa by the Squacco Heron *A. ralloides*, these three herons being very closely related and comprising one super-species. Whereas the Cattle Egret *Ardeola ibis* and Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* have remained reasonably stable in numbers in the Colony since the census counts made in 1958 and 1959, the Pond Heron has declined by about 25%. It seems reasonable to suppose that this has followed a steady reduction in the acreage of paddy which has to a large extent been replaced by vegetable farming. The acreage of tembak and fishponds has increased so feeding sites for Little Egrets have not decreased, nor have the locations favoured by Cattle Egrets. Aquatic insects as well as amphibians and fish seem to be the important food item of this species, but it would be valuable to make a full study of the bird's diet; the collection and analysis of castings from the egretty would be well worthwhile. They do nest alongside Cattle Egrets and Little Egrets at Sha Tau Kok, but choose lower sites than their larger relatives, often in thick cover, they also concentrate by themselves at one end of the colony. Their nest site preferences in Hong Kong parallel those of the Squacco Heron in Europe, as do their relationships with Cattle and Little Egrets.

Swinhoe's Egret *Egretta eulophotes* has also declined since the 1950's when up to ten pairs nested. In 1969, two pairs were known to nest and another pair, which was located at a newly discovered egretty in the Deep Bay Marshes, was also probably breeding. Also known as the Chinese Egret, this is one of the bird treasures of Hong Kong, for the species is on the verge of extinction. Following its discovery by Swinhoe in 1860 its known range was established as Kwangtung and the neighbouring maritime provinces of China, Tai Wan and Korea with the possibility of a few summering in Ussuriland. Since the plume purge at the turn of the century, any possible recovery in numbers in China has not been documented; nor is the position in Korea known. Some are suspected to nest in Ussuriland on the Amur River, but its status there is not really



known. The S. China coastal region must now be the main stronghold and it seems almost certain that this bird will soon be lost unless some very positive but unlikely conservation measures can be introduced in China. Protection of the nesting population would probably not be enough because the ecological requirements of the bird seem to be highly specialised, yet liable to partition by the closely related Little Egret.

I watched Swinhoe's Egret feeding on several occasions and its actions are very characteristic. Instead of the "wade slowly" or "stand and wait in deepish water" technique adopted by the Little Egret, this species rushes back and forth in the shallows at the edge of the tide-line in the estuaries. It constantly raises and flicks its wings, making rapid stabbing movements into the water. This is precisely the feeding action adopted by the Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* of America, and termed 'parasolling'. Small water animals, particularly shrimps, are frightened out from their places of concealment and are eagerly pounced upon. In America, the Snowy Egret is the nearest ecological replacement of the Little Egret of the Old World, (and is certainly very closely related) but is free from competition. We observe in Swinhoe's Egret another very closely related member of the group, in this instance liable to be in competition with the Little Egret. Indeed, it is highly probable that the present day distribution of Swinhoe's Egret, which is characteristic of a relic species, has resulted from competition with the Little Egret. Only in shallow estuarine or marine waters, such as inlets and bays, can Swinhoe's Egret find its ideal feeding grounds, where it is better adapted to living than the Little Egret. These conditions are ideally provided in the numerous delta regions of the China coast. Hope for this species would seem to reside in guaranteeing the maintenance of such conditions, with large areas kept free from pollution or excessive disturbance.

The Upland Pipit *Anthus sylvanus* (Plates 5 and 6) is not endangered as it frequents high mountain country from the Himalayas to S.E. China. Nonetheless, its distribution is restricted in Hong Kong and efforts should be made to safeguard some of its breeding locations, such as the summit area of Tai Mo Shan, for the benefits of education and enjoyment for local students and residents. The bird is distinguishable in the hand by virtue of the oddly pointed feathers of the upper tail coverts and at one time this led to its appointment to a separate genus. But, it is probably fairly closely related to the widespread Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* being a montane derivative. The bird much resembles Richard's Pipit and at times is very reminiscent of a lark. Its flight is very like that of a lark and it often hovers before settling. As a general rule pipits are birds of fairly thick ground vegetation, larks of more open grassland and barren terrain. Here we have a pipit living like a lark in montane grassland and the convergent resemblances are not surprising. The heavy bill of this species is very noticeable, and is coloured yellowish

shading to dull horn on top. In structure and colour the bill is quite unlike the picture featured in Herklots (*Hong Kong Birds*, South China Morning Post 1967) which must have been based on a dried-up museum specimen. There is no suggestion of purple in the living bird. Indeed, the bird is so unlike the text-book description that for a while I was uncertain in my identification and felt sure I was dealing with Richard's Pipit (the pointed tail feathers persuaded me otherwise when the bird returned to the nest). Hong Kong specimens are nowhere near so dark as the races emanating from further west in the range, though the feathers on the back and upper wings do have dark centres.

The song of this pipit is very distinctive. In company with Mrs. F. Hechtel and Sir Hugh Elliot, two singing males were located perched on large boulders, on Tai Mo Shan on 23 March, 1969. The song was a very un-pipit-like weeeeeeee tch weeeeeee tch sound possessing qualities much more often associated with the buntings (*Emberiza*). Song in late March is in accord with a breeding season in Hong Kong said to begin in April (and last till August).

The whole of the 24 June was spent on Tai Mo Shan with Mr. Frankie Chow in trying to locate a pair of these birds and we were rewarded at the end of the day with a glimpse of a 'small brown job' slipping over a knoll. We trekked up the hill side and met an agitated pipit and soon traced it to a nest. This was of typical pipit construction, somewhat bulky, of roots and grass stems sited under a tussock of rough grass. Two young (and no addled eggs) were present, with no feathers, and eyes just open. It doesn't pay to leave nests too long in Hong Kong—the toll from predators being high—so a hide went up at dusk on the 25th and was occupied on the 26th. The birds were very confiding—much more so than a pair of Crested Buntings *Melophus lathamii* whose nest we later found not far away—and fed the young every 5 to 10 minutes. The food objects were large, befitting a pipit with such a heavy bill, and comprised large lepidopterous larvae, and many small grasshoppers. On the ground the long legs were noticeable and the walk and tail bobbing not unlike the movements of a wagtail. The alarm note was a sparrow-like *chirp*, quite unlike the usual high pitched pipit note. The eye-stripe was not speckled with black (*c.f.* Herklots), the legs were yellowish in the female, more pink in the male, who was slightly bigger and more brightly marked and coloured. The chicks had very orange gapes demarcated with yellow flanges.



## BIRDWATCHING AROUND OSAKA AND KOBE

Birdwatchers who visit Japan for sightseeing would be surprised to find all places they go almost devoid of bird life. Woods in most temples and castles in cities usually contain nothing. But if you turn your eyes from temples and castles to the surrounding countryside, you will find that there are birds in Japan. Here are some easy but good birdwatching areas within easy reach of Osaka and Kobe where many visitors get off.

### 1. *Koya-ike area.*

This area, consisting of two ponds and the land in between, is a nice place for those who like to watch duck. Best time to visit this place is from October to March as most of the duck are winter visitors, but in summer there are Moorhens and grebes nesting in the vegetation.

The main pond is the eastern one, and is called Koya-ike. It is a big pond thickly covered with reeds and lotus on the north side. In spite of the size of the pond, duck can be identified with 8X binoculars (of course, it is better to have a telescope and a tripod).

On the water:—

*Duck:*— Mallard, Yellow-nib, Teal, Falcated Teal, Pintail, Wigeon, Gadwall, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Pochard, and, if you are lucky, Garganey and Scaup.

Moorhen, Little Grebe.

In and around the reeds:—

Egrets and herons, Pheasant, Reed Bunting, wagtails and pipits, shrikes, thrushes etc.

The other pond is called Zuga-ike. This is a reservoir about a quarter of a mile due west of Koya-ike. When the reservoir is full, there will be duck and grebe on the surface. When it is empty, there will be birds on the mud:— wagtails and pipits, plover, sandpipers, and snipe.

The area in between is inhabited by Meadow Bunting, shrikes, Skylarks, Swallows in summer, Stonechats at migration time.

On an average day a total of around thirty-five species can be seen in this area.

### 2. *Mino-o Valley.*

This valley stretches along the Mino-o River, and is about ten miles north of Osaka. Take Hankyu Railways Takarazuka Line from

Osaka, change at Ishibashi Station, and get off at Mino-o Station. Walk up the road at the head of the station. First, you will be walking between rows of shops where souvenirs are sold, then you come to a cable-car station which leads up to a big hotel where you can spend the night. Pass this station and walk up along the road for a hundred yards or so till you come to a small bridge. This is where you should take out your binoculars and be ready to watch birds.

Walk up the road along the river slowly. After you have walked three hundred yards or so, there is a temple on your left. Valley slopes above this temple are always a good place for tits and buntings in winter. There are a lot of paths on the slope, and you can watch birds without going into the undergrowth. If you follow the road along the river you will presently come to a place where there is a small tunnel on the left side of the road branching into a valley. From here you can either follow the main road up to a big waterfall, or you can go through the tunnel into the valley. This valley climbs for about a mile into the hills and ends up in a golf course. It is a good place for birds, but is not recommended for those people who wear shoes with hard slippery bottoms, for there are a lot of log bridges laid like ladders across the streams! Birds are plentiful all through the year, but you can see more in winter. Seen here are:—

Copper Pheasant, Green Pigeon, woodpeckers, Brown-eared Bulbul, Bull-headed Shrike, Brown Dipper along the river, Wren, flycatchers, Japanese Accentor, warblers, smaller and bigger thrushes, tits, white-eyes, hawfinches, other finches, buntings, crows, and Jays.

Mino-o is one of the few places which are good for birds and sightseeing (this place is famous for autumn scenery). Around thirty species can be seen in a day.

### 3. *Myoken-Zan, Hatsutani Valley.*

This valley is about fourteen miles north of Osaka. It is particularly good from late autumn to early spring for winter visitors. The path follows a stream in the bottom of the valley.

It is best to take a bus from Hankyu Ikeda Station to the top of Mt. Myoken, follow the valley down to Nose-Railways Myoken-Guchi Station, and return from there.

On getting off the bus at the top of the mountain, follow down the bus road for some time until you come to the place where another road comes in to join the main road from the right. At the corner of this junction there is a wide path going down the valley. This valley is the Hatsutani, and is about five kilometres long. The vegetation is planted coniferous at the top changing into mixed woods and grassland at the lower end.



On the upper slopes of the valley Japanese Hawk Eagles and Great Spotted Woodpeckers can be seen. Dark wet nullahs at the upper end of the valley are inhabited by Copper Pheasants. The stream at the lower end is inhabited by Brown Dippers. Other birds include:—

Green Pheasant, Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker, wagtails, bulbuls, shrikes, Wren, warblers, Goldcrest, smaller and bigger thrushes, tits, White-eyes, finches and buntings, crows and Jays.

At the lower end of the valley you will come to a road. Turn right and follow the road. The station is about two hundred yards away.

For those birdwatchers who visit Japan specially to watch birds, there are some very good places both for winter and summer. But most are in very complicated places to reach, and visitors are asked to contact birdwatching societies in Japan for best results.

A. H.

*Note by the Editors:*— It is suggested that members of the Society visiting this area should contact Mr. Hibi, who will be pleased to help where he can. In future reports, it is hoped to include similar articles on other areas which our members may visit, as it is always difficult to find good birdwatching areas in a foreign country without this kind of information.

## MAI PO NURSERY, 1969

The following notes stem from personal observations made at Mai Po during the summer of 1969. They are not intended to represent the Society's records for this area during the summer.

By mid-May both Moorhens and Pheasant-tailed Jacanas were much in evidence in the area. By the end of the month they had been joined by several pairs of Little Grebes and Watercock. Viewing was best accomplished at the southern end of the marsh, it being often possible to see all four species from a car parked close to the wooden footbridge leading out to the marsh.

The jacanas appeared to "rule the roost", so to speak, and were in late May and early June extremely noisy and aggressive. Their most common call at this period seemed to be a piercing "eeow—eeow—eeow". I estimate that there were well over 20 adult birds in the area by early June.

The first successful breeders were noticed on 13 June—a pair of Moorhens with a family of four half-grown young and a pair of Little Grebe with a similar number of almost half-grown offspring. Both families were very close to the eastern end of the footbridge. The young grebes were diving well with their parents and the white vertical markings on either side of their heads were very obvious.

One week later, the young grebes appeared to be almost independent of their parents. A second pair of adult grebes were seen at a nest very close to the shack used to house the large water pump. The Moorhen family were still together at this stage. The jacanas had quietened down considerably and their call, when heard, was a far more subdued "eeow—curr—curr".

By 3 July, the jacanas were very quiet and very still—when they did move they did so quietly and covered only very short distances. A second family of very small grebes had appeared near the site of the nest. Two additional families of Moorhens were also present, one comprising four fairly large youngsters while the second group consisted of one adult and two very small young birds—in all probability only two or three days old. When trying to attract the young birds' attention the parent uttered a repetitive "chup—chup" and flashed her tail up and down. The tail was splayed and appeared as a white circle with a broad black vertical stripe; this was very easy to see.

On 17 July there were four pairs of Watercock in the area and a further two families of Little Grebe with young were to be seen. Some of the adult grebes, which were still in good plumage, appeared to be attempting to drive off their offspring. The jacanas remained very quiet and still.



One week later, a further family of very small grebes was present. The parent bird with them appeared to indicate her position by a weak "spik" which was repeated every five seconds. The young birds were darkish brown with light yellowish patches and with several vertical white stripes all round their necks—far more distinct at the sides of the neck.

A visit to the area on 29 July was completely unrewarding as the whole area was covered to a depth of several feet with flood water—the direct result of a typhoon. However on 4 August a further two very small Moorhens were seen with a parent bird close to the footbridge.

By mid-August I had despaired of any further young birds appearing in the nursery area. The floods had obviously wrought havoc on the breeding birds and families born before the floods had been split up. However on 31 August three young jacanas, approximately one third size, were seen feeding with an adult bird on top of floating vegetation. One week later these young jacanas had grown considerably and a further three very small birds were in evidence very close to the concrete path. The latter three appeared to be only a few days old but were walking confidently on the weed. On 11 October there were a total of twelve young jacanas, practically fully grown, with speckled plumage and without long tail feathers, feeding on the bed of a dried-up pond in this area.

In review it would appear that despite the depredations of the floods several families of Moorhen, Little Grebe and Pheasant-tailed Jacanas bred successfully. I did not, however, at any stage of the summer see any sign of young Watercock. Finally, for those interested in watching progress in this area during the summer I would suggest that visits be made early in the morning. Benefits from visits so timed are two-fold—prevention of severe sunburn and far more likelihood of seeing young birds.

D. J. G.

## YOU CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL

At about 2.30 on the morning of 13 February, I heard from my bedroom (which is over the garage in Government House grounds and facing north-east) a loud two-note call "Whoo-hoo". It was so clear and sonorous that at first I thought it must be man-made, or more likely boy-made. When the two notes were repeated at intervals over the next two hours, the culprit took shape as a bird and the bird as a possible owl. Some snoring and Barn Owl imitations near the end of the performance added to the owl theory.

The only owl I had heard in the urban area, or anywhere else in Hong Kong, was the Collared Scops, whose mournful "peep" every few seconds made it an unlikely candidate for such a musical performance. A visit to our Library next morning and a browse through the books on birds of Hong Kong, Malaya, Burma and Borneo suggested a Brown Hawk-owl (*Ninox scutula*) which was very exciting.

The following night, I was wakened from a light sleep by the two-note call, this time at about 4.30. I dressed hurriedly and went into the garden, which of course I should have done the night before. Alas, the bird made no sound from the moment I started dressing, and after waiting for half an hour I gave up the vigil. From the bedroom, the call sounded very close and yet hard to get a bearing on. It seemed to originate in Government House garden or just across the road in the Botanical Gardens, certainly not so far off as the cages. But now read on.

A few days later, I heard a dweller in the "Albany" relating last year's story of the Argus Pheasant in the Botanical Gardens and how its nightly calling had created some brisk correspondence in the press. At that time I was out of the Colony. A subsequent conversation with Dr. K. C. Searle confirmed that the disturber of my sleep was no owl but a love-sick Argus Pheasant, and I heard it many times later that Spring, and it has been again in the correspondence column. Which only goes to show that you can't be too careful.

E. D. W.



## RECORDING COMMON BIRDS

In Hong Kong most work is done in particular areas where the most interesting rarities are found, such as Mai Po and Tai Po Kau. But this sort of record, plus scanty distribution records of common species, should not, surely, provide the main basis of our knowledge of Hong Kong birds. We need a thorough knowledge of common residents, winter and summer visitors.

Even in England there is still a remarkable lack of information on common nesters, even starlings and sparrows. However, a 10 km. breeding survey is now being carried out in Britain to gather records for each breeding species for each 10 km. square on the map.

There are many ways of collecting useful information, and many of these are quite easy to do. In the summer a walk around your local district can provide several nesting records of common birds like bulbuls and mynahs. Breeding records could be gathered by someone on a special map. It is surprising what can turn up behind a mid-level block of flats, such as the one I live in. Last winter, when I went to put some food out on the bird-table which I've erected on the hillside, I identified without binoculars a Bluetail, Rufous Turtle-Dove, and Pallas's Warbler. It is also worth while to put up nest boxes (Robert Allison had a Great Tit nesting in his the first summer he put it up).

Not much is known about Lantau. Most of the island is bare and hilly (even this can produce its share of Upland Pipits, Francolins etc.), but the most interesting areas would be the small flat areas round the coast. The first Society Outing to Lantau took place last December, to Silvermine Bay, and over 40 species, including a pair of Verditer Flycatchers, Green Sandpipers, 30 Spotted Munias, and lots of Fantail Warblers, turned up. If every little area like this can produce its share of 'good birds', how much are we missing on the whole of Lantau? Whether you want a long walk, or just a day out, a walk almost anywhere on Lantau could be very rewarding.

Besides breeding records, general distribution details of 'common and widespread' species are needed. For example, Fantail Warblers are down in the Checklist as resident, yet surely they are far commoner in winter? To form a proper idea of their distribution, we need lots of records for all seasons and places; the more observers, the better.

What sort of distribution does the Rufous-backed Shrike have? It is listed as resident and winter visitor. It seems to be commoner in summer, yet we need detailed records to confirm this, and also records to provide a knowledge of its distribution. Where is this

bird commonest? What habitat does it prefer? Where does it occur on the Island and on Lantau? I'm trying here to demonstrate that a little effort in this direction could give us a much better idea of Hong Kong birds. Then, at the end of the year, send the Hon. Recorder a list of all the records you have...of the common species as well as the rare ones. Where you can see the basic pattern, summarise the records yourself, e.g. 'much commoner from May to August'. This is just one easy way for everyone to contribute to our knowledge of Hong Kong birds.

T. P. Garland.

(*Note by Hon. Rec.:*— I have had to make a few alterations to this article because of lack of space... however, I have added nothing! I hope that, by the time you read this Report, you will be taking part in some of the schemes which are being worked out to give more members a chance to participate actively in the Society's activities).



## CONSERVATION

During the year 1969, little progress was made towards persuading Government to form a realistic Conservation policy, in spite of the considerable time and effort spent on this by our Conservation representative, Mr. D. G. Robertson, and other members of the Society.

*Enforcement of existing legislation.* There were eleven prosecutions for breaches of the Wild Birds and Wild Mammals Protection Ordinance, and four seizures of bird netting under the Ordinance. In March 1970, two Orang-utans were seized, and Hong Kong residents will remember that even the normally apathetic general public was shocked at the absurdly low 'penalties' imposed (one defendant was fined \$50, and the other, although convicted, was given an absolute discharge!). All holders of Game Licences have been informed by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department that conviction under the Ordinance will involve automatic revocation of the licence. The Education Department has warned schools that hunting and bird netting are illegal.

Government has stated that it is not prepared to implement the law concerning possession of Francolin and scheduled mammals. This raises interesting questions of the function of Government in relation to the law, but does not help our threatened wild life.

*Education.* Wall charts for schools are being designed, the illustrations being done free of charge by Mr. Roger Pedler.

The newly-formed Conservancy Association is getting under way, and will be able to press for Conservation from a broader base than our Society. Members are encouraged to contact the Association through either Mr. D. G. Robertson or Mr. M. A. Webster.

*Legislation.* Animals and Birds (Restriction of Importation and Possession) Ordinance 58 of 69 prohibits trafficking in a number of rare birds and mammals. Amendments to the Wild Birds and Wild Mammals Protection Ordinance are under discussion at the time of writing. The Society's opinion, as shown at the joint General Meeting with the Natural History Society, has been communicated to Government, who courteously asked for our comments. It is not possible here to give full details, but the more important points are as follows:—

- 1) Hunting is to be prohibited over a wider area, including the Plover Cove catchment area, but apparently excluding the Lam Tsuen Valley.
- 2) Full protection is to be given to the egretty at Sha Tau Kok.
- 3) The present complete protection given to Francolin and the scheduled mammals is to be restricted to those 'taken in the Colony'. As this is in practice impossible to prove, this means that protection is being withdrawn from these species. No reason is given for this retrograde step.

M. A. W.

## ANOTHER FIRST

"Where are all the seagulls?"

The newcomer to Hong Kong, particularly anyone familiar with the impudent behaviour of gulls at English seaside resorts, often asks this question. Perhaps a harder one to answer is *why* are there no seagulls, for although the short answer is "There are—in winter", it is difficult to say why there are not more, and in greater variety throughout the year; why, too, they are for the most part silent and retiring... so different from the clamorous multitudes of Europe.

This is particularly true of the Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) which may be present in flocks of 500 or more in the harbour area, but these go largely unnoticed as they wing silently above the shipping or rest on the breakwaters. How different from the eager seekers after scraps of the town or refuse from the trawler in British waters... our commonest gull the year round.

I suppose it is our commonest gull in Hong Kong also, but we see it nearly always in winter plumage, so that the chocolate head from which it gets its name is rarely seen, being reduced to a few dark spots. Its close relative, however, called variously the Chinese Black-headed Gull or Saunders' Gull (*Larus saundersi* (Swinhoe)) has never been recorded.

Herklots says briefly "No records", and then gives a fairly detailed description based, no doubt, on skins and other observers' notes. Comparing this description with that of *ridibundus*, two field marks should prove distinctive. In Saunders' Gull the head in summer is black, not chocolate, and the bill black, not red. The black of the head extends well down the nape, whereas in *ridibundus* the chocolate only reaches the top of the nape.

On 14 March 1969 the writer, accompanied by our worthy chairman, set off for Mai Po, where the omens had recently been favourable for birdwatchers. My records for the day include 60 Curlew, Greenshank, Marsh Harrier, a Grey-headed Wagtail, and "many gulls". Now we are often being told that one should not dismiss a flock of familiar birds, all apparently of the same uninteresting species, without a careful look to see that there are no strangers among them. Now I come to think of it, it is the Hon. Recorder who is always saying this, and some of his advice must have taken root, because we did have a careful look at what seemed to be a large collection of Black-headed Gulls. The first interesting fact which emerged was that two of them were undoubtedly in summer



dress, with black heads—the first time I had seen this in Hong Kong. I don't know what it is that makes one think that a bird is different—shape, flight, attitude, often something very small. There *was* something different about these birds, apart from their heads.

Here are the field notes recorded by my companion as a result of our combined observations:—

“Two ‘black-headed gulls’, medium size, *all black* head (black extending well down the nape) *and beak*, white tail and rump, reddish legs, pale grey back and wings, white leading edge, black on ends of primaries, grey under wing, white eyering.”

There followed some speculation as we pursued our way over the marsh, but as the only book we had brought was the European Field guide, we eventually returned home well satisfied with the day's work, but none the wiser as to what our birds were. Once home, with other reference books to hand, I suppose the probable solution must have struck us at about the same time. I am not sure now who actually rang up and said “What about Saunders' Gull then?” But if Herklots is to be believed, the recorded description we had made fits the gull very well, and the two diagnostic marks we had noted in the field convinced us. The slightly smaller size we had not recorded, and we did feel that our two birds were not noticeably smaller than the *ridibundus* with which they were associating. It will be remembered that the latter were all still in winter plumage, so that the *saundersi* stood out clearly.

Subsequent visits to the marshes did not afford a second view and the birds had probably moved on. Now came the great question: Would the Hon. Recorder accept our “first”? Yes, we must have caught him at a good moment (also gulls are one of his weaknesses!), “Why not? I have been expecting to see them myself. Your description fits well enough.”

So another bird goes into the records. Fascinating place, Hong Kong. You never know what you are going to see next!

R. A. I. Wilson.

*Footnote:*— On 14 March 1970, Saunders' Gull was seen by DGR in the same place, and subsequently by MAW, RPW, and others.

M. A. W.

## SIGHT-RECORDS OF RARE BIRDS

(Extracted from the editorial in “British Birds”,  
Vol. XLV, No. 1, January 1952)

Accurate sight-records of rare birds are important because they add to knowledge without causing the destruction involved in the alternative method of collecting specimens. However, sight-records are of very little use if not above suspicion.

Do not record a rare bird as seen for certain unless you have taken down on the spot its characteristics before consulting a work on ornithology. It is entirely unsatisfactory to view a bird in the field, taking insufficient notes, and then, finding its supposed portrait or description in a book, even a short time afterwards, to proceed to work out an account or sketch of what was seen.

Ideally field-notes of a rarity should cover the following points:—

1. Distance of bird from you, whether you were using glasses or not, and nature and direction of light.
2. Nature of ground it was on and what other birds (if any) it was associating with.
3. Whether you saw it from different angles; whether at rest or in flight; whether from above or below. (The more varied the conditions of observation the better).
4. What were its actions and what was the character of its flight compared with other birds.
5. Its general form as compared with other birds, and how it differed from other birds at all like it which are known to you.
6. Particular points in structure as compared with other birds, such as size and shape of bill, length of legs, shape of wing, length of tail.
7. Colour of bill, legs and feet; any distinctive white or coloured patches or markings and their exact position. A rough sketch or diagram is a great help. (Some general anatomy should be learnt so that you can give the colour of wing coverts, under tail-coverts, nape, throat, chin or other parts of the plumage accurately.
8. So far as possible, an exact description of the whole plumage of the bird, not only the parts which you think may help in identifying it.
9. Any calls or notes, indicating especially the quality of the sound (harsh, rattling, shrill, hoarse, liquid, etc.) and comparison with notes of other species if this assists the description.



# HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

## Application for Membership

(To be sent to the Hon. Secretary, c/o The Chartered Bank, Des Voeux Road C., Hong Kong)

Introduced by .....  
(if applicable)

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I/We support the objects of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (as given overleaf) and wish to become (a) member(s). I/We enclose \$20.00 (\$30.00 for husband and wife combination), or half these fees if joining after 30th June, as my/our subscription for the current year. (Children aged from 7 to 16, and one of whose parents is already a member, need pay no subscription. Otherwise children in this age group may become members on payment of \$5.00 per annum provided that they are accompanied on Society Outings by a responsible adult, and that one or other of the parents signs below absolving the Society from any responsibility in case of accident or mishap on Outings).

Date ..... Signature .....

Name & Address (block letters) .....

.....

Telephone No. .... (home) ..... (Office)

The objects of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society are:—

- (a) To facilitate and encourage the study of birds in Hong Kong;
- (b) To provide information and assistance to all persons, either visitors to the Colony or residents, who are interested in Birds;
- (c) To correlate and publish from time to time the field records of all bird watchers in the Colony;
- (d) To publish and keep up-to-date a check-list of the birds of Hong Kong;
- (e) To assist in the enforcement of the law relating to the protection of birds (The Wild Birds and Wild Mammals Protection Ordinance, Cap. 170);
- (f) To operate a lending library of books on birds;
- (g) To exchange information among members and with ornithological societies in other countries.

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## OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

- Chairman: Commander E. D. Webb, R.N. (Ret.)  
Government House Lodge, Hong Kong
- Hon. Secretary: Mr. J. C. Payne,  
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- Hon. Recorder: Mr. M. A. Webster,  
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