



香港觀鳥會 The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society



bulletin

會員通訊

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Looking beyond 2001

This special issue of the bulletin is intended to cast a look on what the Society achieved in 2001. But it is also the time to reflect on where we are and to look ahead.

While most people would think of "Long Valley" on mentioning HKBWS, the Society has also stayed faithful to its core business viz. bird watching. The programme of some thirty outings and more than ten talks and lectures was as full as it could possibly be for a society run by volunteers. Increasingly, we saw families coming to our functions. I am particularly pleased that bird watching enables children to appreciate the joy of life and allows families to grow as cohesive units. It may be that we will have to re-orientate our approach towards the organization of Society activities to suit these new circumstances.

The Long Valley campaign consumed much of the Society's energy in 2001. By firmly sticking to a rational approach, based on sound scientific arguments, the Society is now a respected body, contributing in a responsible manner to the government's declared trend towards sustainable development in Hong Kong. Indeed, in the KCRC appeal case, we were EPD's partner throughout the proceedings. The Spur Line eventually went underground, leaving Long Valley alone. I prefer not to see it as HKBWS winning any particular battle. Instead, it was more like a step forward in re-kindling the kind heart of the Hong Kong community, caring not just about humans but also about other sentient beings. To secure the long-term future of Long Valley as well as the overall natural environment of Hong Kong, we have much to do to sustain the kind heart, to ensure that it will continue to beat strongly and constantly in the future.

In this direction, the Quality Education Fund (QEF) project for secondary schools, which ended in mid 2001, succeeded in establishing bird watching as a respectable hobby among students. The second QEF project, which followed immediately, spread the message further to primary school students. It was

particularly gratifying to see secondary schools taking the initiative of organizing bird watching activities for primary schools in parallel with the Society's efforts. There is however still a long way to go and the Society must continue to support schools, giving young children the opportunity to enjoy watching nature and to appreciate the value of life.

The end of 2001 was marked by an exciting development with the support of the Elderly Commission viz. a new programme to introduce bird watching to the elderly. The commission sees our project as a spearhead project, bringing a completely new concept to the services for the elderly. The guiding philosophy is respect for the elderly, the focus is on active life, and the product is joy. The response from the elderly has been overwhelming. It warms my heart to think that many people the age of my parents are becoming happier after joining our activities. We are going to set up a corps of elderly volunteers to support the Society in its outreach work. If we succeed, we will be creating a new perspective in Hong Kong. That is, seeing the elderly as a resource rather than as a burden.

The publication of The Avifauna of Hong Kong was an event to be remembered. The monumental work reflects our long tradition of meticulous observation and rigorous record keeping. It provides a baseline to which further studies of the birds in Hong Kong may refer. It is also an essential scientific source for conservation actions in Hong Kong. To maintain the Society's position as the authority on the birds of Hong Kong, members are strongly encouraged to submit their bird records. This will be one concrete way of contributing to the well being of nature.

2002 is the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Society. However, no extravagant functions will be organized. The best way for us to celebrate will be to excel in our outreach activities and in our bird monitoring. Let us work together to bring the joy of bird watching to all, and to further highlight the plight of Hong Kong's birds. This will be the only way to ensure that humans and nature will both be here to stay, together and forever.

C.Y. Lam, *Chairman*

2001 was a year of great challenge to HKBWS. The Society actively participated in bird and habitat conservation work and educational activities. In addition to recurrent baseline activities, we initiated projects and promotions among schools and communities on a greater scale than in previous years. These activities were in line with the objectives of the Society, namely promoting ornithology by encouraging the study of birds so as to understand their biology and ecology, promoting education in respect of appreciating and understanding birds, and aiding conservation of birds, wildlife and their habitats.

HKBWS recurrent baseline activities are

- 1 Collect and analyze Hong Kong bird observation cards
- 2 Collect and publish field records of birds
- 3 Publish HKBWS Bulletin: a quarterly magazine featuring Society announcements, news and feature articles on birds and the environment and information on ongoing and coming activities
- 4 Publish the Hong Kong Bird Report: an annual report on the status of birds in Hong Kong, together with papers on identification and reviews of ornithological and conservation issues
- 5 Maintain the HKBWS hotline: providing the most updated information on birds
- 6 Maintain a website www.hkbws.org.hk: to provide the most up-to-date information on birds and habitats, and offer a forum for discussion and reporting of incidents
- 7 Hold regular indoor educational meetings
- 8 Organize guided field trips to watch birds all over Hong Kong
- 9 Conduct surveys and research projects on birds and their habitats
- 10 Provide an education resource and professional assistance to government, community organizations, schools and the mass media, with particular emphasis on the conservation of birds and their habitat
- 11 Compile and submit information for the Red Data Book and Important Bird Area projects of BirdLife International
- 12 Participate in international conferences and exchange information with overseas organizations

List of Specific Activities in 2001

1 Projects, Surveys and Research		
Period	Sponsor/Funding	Title/content
3/2000 to 5/2001	Organized by HKBWS members	Night Bird Survey
Whole Year	Organized by HKBWS members	Save Long Valley Campaign
4/2001 to 3/2002	Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	Waterbird Monitoring at Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site
7/2000 to 6/2001	Quality Education Fund	Promoting bird watching as an extra-curricular activity in secondary schools
4-5/ 2001	Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	Bird surveys in 6 selected Country Parks
6-9/2001	Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	Tern Survey in the Tolo Harbour and Shek Ngau areas

Projects List

Period	Sponsor/Funding	Title/content
7/2001 to 6/2002	Quality Education Fund	"Be a Young Naturalist" – Promoting bird watching and awareness of Hong Kong's natural environment in primary schools
10/2001 to 4/2002	Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	Age Structure of Wintering Black-faced Spoonbill Population
11/2001 to 3/2002	Hong Kong Bird Watching Society	Winter Atlas Survey
11/2001 –	Organized by HKBWS Kite Survey Group	Kite Survey
12/2001 to 5/2003	Health and Welfare Bureau (Healthy Ageing Programme & Jockey Club Charitable Fund)	Healthy Ageing: Learn about nature by watching birds

2 Publications

List of publications in 2001

- Carey, G. J. 2001. **Winter 2000-2001 Report: Waterbird Monitoring at the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong.
- Carey, G. J. and Yu Y. T. 2001. **Report on Shorebird Monitoring at the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site 2000-2001.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong.
- Carey G.J., Chalmers, M.L., Diskin, D.A., Kennerley, P.R., Leader, P.J., Leven, M.R., Lewthwaite, R.W., Melville, D.S., Turnbull, M., and Young, L. 2001. **The Avifauna of Hong Kong.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong.
- Cheung H.F. and Yu Y. T. 2001. **Tern Survey in the Tolo Harbour and Shek Ngau Chau Areas.** Report by Hong Kong Bird Watching Society to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. HKSAR Government.
- HKBWS. 2001. **HKBWS Bulletin No. 180.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong
- HKBWS. 2001. **HKBWS Bulletin No. 179.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong
- HKBWS. 2001. **HKBWS Bulletin No. 177 Special issue: Save Long Valley II.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong
- HKBWS. 2001. **Monthly Waterbird Counts Data April 2000-March 2001: Waterbird Monitoring at the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong.
- Kwok, H. K. 2001. **Bird Surveys in Six Country Parks.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong.
- Kwok, H.K., Wong, L.C. and Carey, G. J. 2001. **Egretty Counts in Hong Kong, with particular reference to the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site. Summer 2000 Report.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong.
- Lock, N.Y. 2001. **Nest Box Survey 2000.** Report by Hong Kong Bird Watching Society to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, HKSAR Government.
- Watkins, D. 2001. **Review of the Waterbird Monitoring Programme at the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong.

HKBWS Projects List

Books, Brochures and leaflets

- **HKBWS 2001. Nature: A Bird's-eye View.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong.
- **Ma K.W., Fung, P.K. So N.H. 2001. Introduction to Urban Birds.** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. Hong Kong.
- **Waterbird Monitoring at Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site** (Bilingual, supported by Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, HKSAR Government)
- **Woodland Birds Around Us** (Bilingual, supported by Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, HKSAR Government)
- **Birds Around Us in the City** (Chinese only, supported by Quality Education Fund, Education and Manpower Bureau, HKSAR Government)
- **Take a Look at Urban Birds** (Chinese only, supported by Quality Education Fund, Education and Manpower Bureau, HKSAR Government)
- **Bird Watching and Nature Watching** (Chinese only, funded by Hongkong Post)

Regular articles for newspaper

Ming Teens' (Ming Pao Daily)

3 Outreach: Talks and field study trips for schools

Period	Organizer	Title/content
10/10/2001	Q.E.S.O.S.A Sec School	Trainer for eco-tours, bird watching and sustainable development
23/10/2001 and 21/11/2001	Christian Alliance SW Chan Memorial College	Talk on bird watching (S1– S2 and S3 – S7)
7/12/2001	Stewards, Ma Kam Ming Charitable Foundation, Ma Ko Pan Memorial College	Bird watching field trips (S3)
5, 8 and 15/12/2001	Q.E.S.O.S.A. Sec School	Joint-school bird watching and nature awareness activity
10/12/2001	Ying Wa Girls' School	Talk on bird watching

4 Outreach: Talks, training and field study trips for schools

Period	Organizer	Title/content
5/5/2001 and 12/5/2001	Cheung Sha Wan Church	Teach children how to relate their religious belief to nature appreciation + field visit
7/2001	Commercial Press	Talk on bird watching, Hong Kong Book Fair 2001
31/7/2001	Hong Kong Award for Young People	Training of field guides / interpreter

Projects List

Period	Organizer	Title/content
18-20/8/2001	The Salvation Army Tuen Mun East Integrated Service for Young People	Training for young tour leader
31/8/2001	Gold Coast (Sino Estates Management Limited)	Talk on bird watching
10-11/2001	World Wide Fund For Nature Hong Kong	Bird Watching Class 2001
10/2001 to 1/2002	Hong Kong Award Holders' Association	Bird watching training for 'Skills Section' 11 for medal candidates
14/11 to 12/12/2001	School of Professional and Continuing Education	Course on 'Watching Birds in the Wild'
6-13/12/2001, 5-12/1/2002	Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	World Wetland Day Bird Watching Training and Bird Race for Secondary School Students
29/12/2001	Scout Association of Hong Kong	Bird watching at Deep Bay

5 Exhibitions

Period	Organizer	Title/content
2/2001	Hongkong Post	Hong Kong 2001 Exhibition
3/2001	Quality Education Fund	Quality Education Fund Exposition
21-22/4/2001	Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	Fun fair of 'Earth Day' 2001
9/2001	Quality Education Fund	Exhibition at MTR Hong Kong Station
17/10/2001 to 16/3/2002	Hong Kong Heritage Museum	'Nature Imprint'
12/2001	North District Flower Bird Insect & Fish Show Committee	North District (2001): "Flower-Birds-Insect- Fish" Show

6 International assistance, meeting/ training

Period	Title/content
2/2001	Facilitated representative of Wild Bird Society of Japan conducting survey on wild bird trade in Hong Kong
8/2001	BirdLife Workshop: Building Broader Support for BirdLife Partners in Asia (Singapore)
8/2001 to 5/2002	BirdLife Training: Building on Experience Training
5/6/2001	Participation in Global Launch of BirdLife International Asia Red Data Book
10/2001	Taipei International Birdwatching Fair
11/2001	BirdLife: Asia Council Meeting (Nepal)

Projects 2001

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society is the only organization in Hong Kong which focuses specifically on birds and habitat conservation. The Society provides proven professional service and contributes to the education of the students and general public in respect of human interactions with nature, and the appreciation of the value of birds and the environment. In 2001, through various projects including field studies, bird watching classes, school visits, education seminars and the provision of reference material, the Society facilitated participants gaining a deeper appreciation of birds and biodiversity of Hong Kong.

In order to give more support to the outreach programme and bird surveys, we would like to seek your donation to the HKBWS Project Fund. Your generous support could enable the projects to be carried out in a more extensive and professional way.

1 Outreach and Education Projects

1.1 Quality Education Fund Project (No. 1999/1142)



Promoting Bird Watching as an Extra-curricular Activity in Secondary Schools

Beginning in June 2000, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society conducted the one-year project 'Promoting bird watching as an extra-curricular activity in secondary schools'. The primary objective of the project was to establish



'bird watching' as an extra-curricular activity in secondary schools in Hong Kong. Service provided by HKBWS to schools included talks and organized field trips for 25 schools, and close guidance for the establishment and initial running of bird watching clubs in 5 selected schools.

HKBWS also delivered

leaflets and bird watching guide-books to all secondary schools in Hong Kong. In addition, it has created a web site as an ongoing resource for teachers and students, made exhibition materials available to schools on loan and organized two

training seminars for teachers and two exhibitions for students.



The project has provided guidance material and supporting services to reduce the workload of teachers in organizing such activities in schools. In

addition to promoting it as a hobby *per se*, the project has also developed educational material to help teachers use 'bird watching' as a vehicle to create an awareness among students of the 'biodiversity' concept and its relationship with sustainable development in Hong Kong. The emphasis of the project has been placed on guided experience in seeing birds in the urban environment near the students' schools and homes.

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Targets and number of beneficiaries:

	Expected number	Actual number
1. Bird watching clubs (5 schools)	150 students	150 students
A. Talks and closely guided activities + education kit		320 teachers and students
B. Activity center		200 students and teachers
2. School Visits and Field Studies (25 schools)	up to 20,000 students	
– School Visits and Field Studies + education kit		9,264 students + 25 teachers under direct guidance
3. Teaching seminar for teachers	100 teachers	
'Take a Closer Look at the Birds Around Us'		
Education Seminar		
A. How to organize school bird watching activities		59 teachers
B. Take a closer look at the birds of Hong Kong		90 teachers
4. Exhibitions	1000 students	
A. 14th North District "Flower- Bird-Insect-Fish" Show		> 60,000 visitors
B. MTR Hong Kong Station exhibition		> 2,000 visitors
5. Education material Leaflets	up to 20,000 students	
A. 'Birds around us in the city' (Chinese only)		over 34,000
B. 'Take a closer look at urban bird' (Chinese only)		
Guide book 'Introduction to Urban Birds'	---	over 4,000
Exhibition boards		
A. 'Common Birds of Hong Kong'		
B. 'How to start bird watching in the City'		
6. Website (www.hkbws.org.hk/edu)	All students and teachers with access to internet	not assessed



The 30 schools which received direct service from the project have allowed the project to reach out to 9,809 students, out of which

about 320 will receive close guidance. The guidebooks, leaflets and training seminars have benefited 34,000 teachers and students in other schools to organize bird watching activity at their own initiative. The seminars have provided training to about 149 teachers. The exhibitions enabled the project a high degree of visibility and reached over 62,000 people, including teaching

professionals, students and the general public. The web site has provided the opportunity to benefit all students and teachers. The project gained significant coverage and was widely reported by the press, achieving full-page coverage on a couple of occasions.

The QEF project has been very successful in



stimulating schools to organize bird watching activities for students. A highlight of the project is that there are reports from various schools that

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they would organize bird watching activities in the coming school year to introduce their students to Hong Kong's birds and the natural environment. There was also report from one of the schools which organized their own bird watching course (QESOSA Secondary School) on 8 and 15 December 2001. The Society has also accepted an invitation from



Hong Kong Tang King Po College to extend the existing programme for one semester. We believe this was further sustained, through their

own bird watching activities, beyond the project period. They are now more confident in passing their understanding of the subject on to their students.



This showed that there was a great demand for 'birds and biodiversity' education. This project met this need in a timely and effective

manner, and the topic is an emerging trend in environmental education nowadays.

1.2 Quality Education Fund Project (No. 2000/1198)

The project 'Be a Young Naturalist' – promoting bird watching and awareness of Hong Kong's natural environment in primary schools, was begun in July 2001. The target audience of the project is primary school students and their teachers.



and school exhibitions (road shows). The Project Officer met students and teachers and provided talks and demonstrations to teachers on the use



of the education kit and education material. School visits included lectures and field study days. In order to make the best use of education material, exhibition boards produced were made available to the 22 selected schools on loan for their exhibitions. Up to the end of December 2001, a total of 3,500 teachers and students had participated in the events and a very positive response was observed.



Highlights of the activities included a drawing competition, namely 'The Colour of Life', which was

organized in Winter, 2001. The purpose was to stimulate student's creativity and promote understanding of the life of birds. We received over 600 paintings for the competition. A panel



of judges was invited to select the design on 22 December 2001. A presentation ceremony and exhibition of all drawings was organized on 20 January 2002.

(ED: Awarded pictures shown at the inside-back cover of this issue.)

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1.3 Healthy Ageing 'Bird Watching – Learning from Nature'



The 'Bird Watching – Learning from Nature' programme, funded by the Elderly Commission and Hong Kong Jockey Club

Charitable Fund, was started in December 2001. The project aims to reach the elderly, to provide chances for nature appreciation through bird watching. The project is divided into two sections. The first section aims to promote bird watching



among the elderly, through a series of seminars, outdoor bird watching and the production of education material. Outstanding participants of the first section will be invited to join the second section for advanced training as an 'Elderly Nature Interpreter'. The aim of this is to encourage them to participate in public education, share experience with other elderly and young people, and to raise their self-esteem.

1.4 Bird Watching Classes



During the year, the Society organized 4 bird watching classes and seminars, to actively promote bird watching activities. The courses included:

- Watching Birds in the Wild for HKU SPACE
- Bird Watching Class 2001 for WWFHK
- Watching Birds, Watching Nature medal course for Hong Kong Award Holders' Association

- World Wetland Day: Bird Watching Training and Bird Race for Secondary School Students' for AFCD



In addition, the Society started promoting bird watching among secondary schools last year. We have received a number of invitations from schools and organizations to organize

lectures and outdoor activities

1.5 Exhibitions

HKBWS activity participated in a number of exhibition (see table), which generated a high degree of visibility for projects on bird and habitat conservation.



The highlight of the exhibitions was the 'Hongkong Post 2001', sponsored by Hongkong Post. Members of

HKBWS actively participated in booth design, various contacts and organization, and production of a special leaflet on common birds of Hong Kong. Members of the Society also generously lent their photographic 'masterpieces'



to a number of organizations for exhibition. These exhibitions included the QEF Exposition, AFCD (for their fun fair on Earth

Day), and the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, for its 'Nature Imprint' exhibition.

1.6 Publicity and Publication

In order to give young people more information on bird watching, we produced regular articles for Ming Teens' from September 2001 to January



2002. We also organized field trips and provided pictures and information for journalists. This further facilitated the public recognition of birds and habitat conservation. Highlights of the press reports included the 'Discovery of Tern Paradise at Sai Kung' by Ming Pao on 12 August. The environmental journalist has obtained a press award for the report.

1.7 Education Website



We have produced an educational website, to promote bird watching on line in an active way. The URL is www.hkbworg.hk/edu.

2 Research Projects

2.1 Night Bird Survey

From March 2000 to May 2001, Richard Lewthwaite and Yu Yat Tung coordinated a 15-month Night Bird Survey. The survey involved regular contributions from about 30 HKBWS members, with the further help of 20 people from

time to time. The survey involved 21 sites being surveyed each month for two hours after dusk. The survey included sites in northern, northeast, southeast and central New Territories, two on Hong Kong Island (Mount Austin and Tai Tam), one in the northwest New Territories (Mong Tseng), and one on an offshore island (Kau Si Chau). A full report will be published later.

2.2 Winter Atlas Project

Starting from November 2001, the Society has organized a three-year 'HKBWS Hong Kong Winter Atlas Project'. This is a large-scale project which aims to produce a map of the distribution of wintering birds in Hong Kong and an assessment of relative numbers in different areas/habitats. This information will provide the Society a very useful conservation tool, as it will give an indication of the ornithological importance of different areas of Hong Kong at this time. If members who are skilled in bird watching would like to participate in this survey, please contact the project coordinator Geoff Carey (geoffcarey@netvigator.com) and Cheung Ho Fai (apcheung@cit.edu.hk)

2.3 HKBWS China Conservation Fund

In order to support bird surveys in mainland China, the Society has set up an 'HKBWS China Conservation Fund', with an amount of HK\$10,000 per year. There were 21 application to the fund this year. The Society has funded Ma Ming of Xingjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, Chinese Academy of Science for the survey on 'Distribution and Ecology of Xinjiang Ground-Jay in Taklimakan Desert' in 1999-2001. The 60 day-surveys were carried out in South Xinjiang Province and the interior of the Taklimakan Desert. Xinjiang Ground-Jay *Podoces biddulphi* is endemic to China and only found in the Taklimakan Desert. From the

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survey's results, the estimated density of Xinjiang Ground Jay was 0.03-0.05 bird/km², and the total population is about 4100-6700 birds. The survey recommended the addition of Xinjiang Ground-jay onto the 'List of Important Wildlife Protected in China'.

2.4 Annotated Checklist: The Avifauna of Hong Kong



In November 2001, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society published *The Avifauna of Hong Kong* (ISBN No. 962-7508-02-0). This is the first complete record of the status and distribution of the 500+ birds that have occurred in Hong Kong. It is the

culmination of a huge voluntary effort of gathering, collating and analysis of Hong Kong's birds by the members of HKBWS since its founding in 1957. It also incorporates the records of early ornithologists who visited Hong Kong from 1861 onwards.



A press conference was organized on 29 January 2002. The society has donated its bird records collected before 1970s' to the

Hong Kong Museum of History. *The Avifauna*, edited by G.J. Carey, D.A. Diskin, P.R. Kennerley, P.J. Leader, M.R. Leven, R.W. Lewthwaite, D.S. Melville, M. Turnbull and L. Young, includes data from a range of surveys, making it an essential reference for the status and distribution of the birds of south China. Included are:

- Results of the first comprehensive breeding bird survey carried out in Hong Kong
- A review of 20 years of waterbird count data,

much of it from Deep Bay and Mai Po

- An assessment of the effect of the wild bird trade on birds in Hong Kong
- A summary of data collected by the Society's ringing programme.

2.5 Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department Projects

2.5.1 Waterbird Monitoring Programme at the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been subventing the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) to conduct a long-term Waterbird Monitoring Programme (WMP) at the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site since 2000. The predecessor of the programme was a volunteer-led annual waterbird counting programme which started in 1979. It eventually became part of an internationally coordinated survey in Asia. The subvention has enabled the application of professional coordination and greater rigour to the surveys and ensured that the data collected would be relevant to the conservation and management of the Ramsar Site.

The WMP in 2001-2001 constituted the following components:

- (a) Waterbird Monitoring,
- (b) Publications,
- (c) Training and Programme Development.

(a) Waterbird Monitoring,

This component comprises monthly counts of waterbirds, surveys of egrets and herons (ardeids) nesting colonies and intensified surveys of migrant shorebirds.

Monthly Waterbird Counts

Monthly surveys of waterbirds covering the

whole Ramsar Site were conducted throughout the year from March 2001 to April 2002. The January count coincided with the annual Asia Waterfowl Census organized by Wetland International Asia-Pacific. Above-average numbers were recorded in summer 2001 but spring 2002 figures were on the low side.

Egrettry Counts

Counts were carried out at egrettries during the breeding season in 2001. The number of ardeid nests was counted, and the number returning to or leaving egrettries at dawn or dusk was also recorded. The egrettries in the Ramsar site were found to hold about 35% of the nests in the whole of Hong Kong.

A one-off survey was conducted in the summer of 2001 on the feeding habitat use patterns of egrets and herons nesting in the Ramsar Site. The study showed that fishponds were the most important feeding habitat of ardeids nesting in the Ramsar Site. Intertidal mudflats were also found to play an important role in the selection of feeding habitats by nesting ardeids.

Shorebird Counts

The shorebird counts were carried out throughout the year, with observations made, down to the species level where possible, of significance to conservation, especially for endangered species. The frequency of counts was adjusted for the different seasons of the year, reflecting the level of activity of migrants passing through Hong Kong.

The aggregate number of wintering waterbirds in the winter of 2001-2002 was 54,720. It is the lowest since the peak number of 77,227 recorded in the winter of 1995-1996. There is some sign of the figure stabilizing in the last five years, but to what

extent the low figure was part of natural fluctuation remains to be seen. The 'aggregate number' refers to the sum of peak species counts for the December to February period.

One striking observation was the complete absence of Falcated Duck in the winter of 2001-2002, the second consecutive winter that this has occurred. Average peak winter counts have been declining since the winter of 1990-91 when 237 were recorded. This observed decline reflects similar trends elsewhere in the region, and is of growing international conservation concern.

Of equal concern was the decline in the number of the vulnerable species, Saunder's Gull. Only 60 birds were recorded this winter, compared with the peak figure of 172 in 1993-94.

On a more positive note, the peak number of the endangered species Black-faced Spoonbills this winter was 183. It was recorded in December 2001 and constituted about 20% of the known world population.

(b) Publications

The second edition of the Waterbird Count Handbook was produced and issued in January 2002. The bilingual handbook is the technical basis of the counting activity. The maps of the count sites in the Ramsar Site were updated to reflect changes taking place on the ground. Feedback from surveyors was also incorporated into the new edition. The handbook serves both as a reference for current surveyors as well as a training reference for newly recruited volunteer bird surveyors.

The results of the surveys and studies were published in the following reports:

Projects 2001

- a) Monthly waterbird count data, April 2001 – March 2002
- b) Summer 2001 report on the WMP
- c) Winter 2001-02 report on the WMP
- d) Egretty counts in Hong Kong, with particular reference to the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay area: summer 2001 report
- e) Feeding habitat use and foraging flights of Ardeids nesting in the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site
- f) Shorebird count 2000-2001 report

A bilingual leaflet 'Wetlands and Migratory Birds' was produced. It serves as general publicity material for the WMP as well as an education resource for schools and other outreach activities. It describes the importance of the Ramsar Site to migratory birds and for the first time makes information of seasonal variations of waterbirds in Hong Kong known to the public. The leaflet has been distributed to schools, AFCD, potential bird surveyors, bird watchers, participants at outreach events, etc.

(c) Training and Programme Development.

Waterbird Count Training



In order to strengthen the local ability to do waterbird monitoring, a training course on waterbird counting was run on 5 November, 2001. The intensive course included a site visit and field practice sessions. It was intended to help guarantee the uniformity, accuracy and scientific validity in data collection by volunteers. 15 potential counters attended the course.

A separate workshop for experienced



counters was organized on 18 November 2001, to review progress so far and to consolidate feed-back from the bird surveyors. The results of the workshop were incorporated into the 2nd edition of the Waterbird Count Handbook.



Public Forum

A public forum 'Waterbird Monitoring in Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site: their significance, long-term trends and monitoring' took place on 28 March 2002. About 130 persons attended the forum. The audience included teachers and students, bird watchers, environmental consultants, and representatives of NGOs, as well as government officers from a number of departments. The presentations were well received, and the response of the audience was enthusiastic, as shown by the very active question and answer period.



Website

The website on the WMP programme was maintained and operated throughout the year. Its contents include an introduction to the WMP in Hong Kong and on-line annual reports and summaries arising from the counts. It is hosted on the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society website (www.hkbws.org.hk).

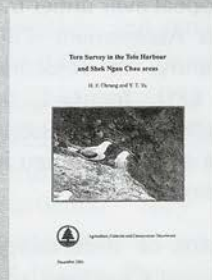
2.5.2 Bird Survey in Six Country Parks

The Society carried out bird surveys in six



selected country parks from April to May 2001, under a service contract from the AFCD. Counting sites included Shing Mun, Aberdeen, Lung Fu Shan, Shuen Wan, Sha Lo Tung and Sai Kung, and information on bird abundance and species, food and nesting behavior was recorded. A report has been produced and is available at the HKBWS Office.

2.5.3 Tern Survey



Dr. Cheung Ho Fai has coordinated the Tern Survey to monitor their breeding population since 1998. This breeding season, the Society received funding from AFCD to coordinate the survey.

Reports in both hard copy and CD-ROM have been produced and are available at the HKBWS Office.

2.5.4 Black-faced Spoonbill Age Structure

The Society conducted a survey on wintering Black-faced Spoonbill age structure from November 2001 to April 2002. The survey was organized by Society



photographers Forrest Fong, Lo Kar Man, Dickson Wong, Louis Cheung, and headed by Dr. Cheung Ho Fai. The

surveyors took turns to photograph in Mai Po and Lok Ma Chau.

2.5.5 Nest Box Survey

The Society was supported by AFCD to design

and carry out a survey on the usage of nest boxes in country parks. The survey, coordinated by Dr. Fiona Lock, Dr. Kwok Hon Kai, Henry Lui, Samson So and Captain, included 253 nest boxes in 22 country parks. A report, in form of a CD ROM, has been produced. The results of the survey indicated that 18% of the nest boxes were being used by birds. The most frequent occupants were Great Tits (47%), followed by Collared Scops Owls (40%) and Magpie Robins (13%).

2.5.6 International Wetland Day: Student Bird Race

To celebrate annual World Wetland Day, the Society assisted AFCD in organizing bird watching training and a Bird Race for 200 secondary school students. We received a warm response from teachers, who said that the event provided their students with an opportunity to test their ability and to understand each other. The Race was organized on 17 February 2001. Most of the students recorded 30~40 species within 30 hours. The following schools obtained the best results: Hong Kong Tang King Po College, Fanling Rhenish Church College, Baptist Wing Lung College, Hong Kong True Light College, Ying Wa Girls' School, St. Stephen's College, Tang King Po College and Holy Family Canossian College.

3 International Cooperation

3.1 Global Launch of BirdLife Red Data Book

HKBWS has participated in the compilation work for the Asian Red Data Book project since 1996, on both local and Chinese threatened species. BirdLife International has spent six years on the Red Data Book and more than 1,300 people were involved in the work of collecting information. On June 5, the World Environment Day, HKBWS participated in the BirdLife



Spur Line 2001 : An Appeal, a Decision, a Tunnel . . . and business as usual

International global launch of 'Threatened Birds of Asia: The BirdLife International Red Data Book.' The event was well covered by the press, including Ming Pao Daily, The Sun, Tai Kung Pao, BBC News, The Times, etc. Ming Pao has also featured individual reports on threatened birds which made a valuable contribution to raising public awareness of local threatened species and nature conservation.

3.2 Workshop: Building Broader Support for BirdLife Partners in Asia

Robin Fung and Carrie Ma attended a BirdLife International workshop on membership development and building partners support in Singapore. The workshop, which ran from 16th to 20th August, was hosted by Singapore Nature Society. The aim of the workshop was to learn, through experience-sharing, membership development strategies, and to identify requirements for building membership and public support. After the workshop, Robin and Carrie drafted an action plan on membership development and passed it on to the committee for consideration.

3.3 BirdLife Training: Building on Experience

In July, Mike Kilburn and Carrie Ma joined the one-year training programme 'Building on Experience' organized by BirdLife Partners, the

Royal Society for Protection of Birds. The programme aims to facilitate and maximize the sharing of experience between BirdLife partners, and to train participants in the implementation of Society management, fundraising and conservation programmes.



When the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) first rejected the Sheung Shui – Lok Ma Chau Spur Line in October 2000, KCRC, to no-one's surprise, almost immediately announced that they would appeal the decision. This was another landmark – the first appeal ever under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Ordinance. Significantly, in rejecting KCRC's EIA, the EPD focused its objections on Long Valley and completely ignored the problems at Lok Ma Chau in the Wetland Compensation Area.

Following several months of uncertainty, when both the appeal board Chairman and the deputy stepped down due to conflicts of interest, the Appeal Board was named: with retired Supreme Court judge Justice Barry Mortimer acting as Chairman, and Stanley Yip and Professor Joseph Lee as members. The hearing began on 10 April and lasted over 6 weeks. The Environmental Protection Department and AFCD committed to a vigorous defence of their original decision.

Having played such a direct role in directing the campaign up to that point, the role of HKBWS changed significantly as EPD's barristers decided the tactics for fighting the appeal. However, several members were invited to act as expert witnesses on birds and the importance of Long Valley.

During the course of the appeal, KCRC presented a mass of new information that significantly strengthened the proposals laid out in the original EIA. The Appeal Board





took note of the quality of the new proposal . . . But the KCRC have fallen short of demonstrating on evidence put forward on appeal that the mitigation proposed is feasible and effective and therefore likely to be successful.

However the appeal panel decided that they were not ultimately the correct body to assess the new information presented by KCRC:

The [original EIA] report cannot be approved without it being amended to include new and significant proposals of this kind.

These new matters are radical additions or variations and should all be confirmed as a part of the study and the report.

New proposals of this nature at the appeal stage circumvent the assessment process laid down in the Ordinance and Technical Memorandum. In particular they circumvent proper public participation and the participation of ACE (Advisory Council on the Environment). If the process is to be successful its integrity must be maintained.

This final statement has long-lasting implications. In effect, KCRC were arguing for the right to submit an incomplete EIA for review by the public and the Advisory Council on the Environment, and then to seek the final approval from the Appeal Board. By rejecting KCRC's appeal, the Appeal board has set a standard that requires developers to submit a complete EIA for public comment, as the EIA Ordinance originally intended.

In his comments to the public on the verdict, the Director of Environmental Protection, Rob Law, appeared almost apologetic in saying that EPD would do everything it could to expedite any further proposals for the Spur Line. These ominous words prompted several members of green groups to wonder what political pressure was being exerted on EPD to assure the Spur Line went ahead.

KCRC responded to the decision by swiftly

preparing a new alignment. Instead of bisecting Long Valley with a viaduct, they put forward a new proposal, which would avoid Long Valley with a tunnel (one of the options previously dismissed by KCRC as impossible in the original EIA), at an additional cost of around HK\$2 billion. KCRC proudly advertised this new proposal in all their stations with a large and beautiful poster showing their proposed tunnel running under Long Valley.

Sadly, this proposal split the former unity of the green groups, with some in favour and some (particularly Conservancy Association and WWF) opposed. In the wake of a very damaging media report which suggested the green groups had changed their minds, HKBWS unsuccessfully tried to restore some consensus.

However, serious problems remained with the other end of the Spur Line at Lok Ma Chau. HKBWS initiated a low-key letter-writing campaign to object to KCRC's failure to meet the criteria for 'no net loss of area and ecological function'. Despite these objections, AFCD and EPD approved the new EIA in March 2002, condoning the loss of 9.5 hectares of fishponds in the Wetland Conservation Area (also the buffer zone for Mai Po and the inside the Deep Bay Shenzhen River Important Bird Area designated by BirdLife International.)

EPD and AFCD gave no adequate explanation why the Spur Line was not required to comply with the same standard it imposes on private developers seeking to build inside this ecologically sensitive area. One wonders why.

It seems extraordinary that despite the huge effort and expense committed to prevent harm coming to Long Valley, the Government has made no effort to ensure its future as a viable and valuable habitat for birds. Long Valley still has no legal protection and is as vulnerable as ever to the risks of changing agricultural practices and filling of land by construction waste tipping.



Breeding Terns in Hong Kong

from 1998-2000

– Cheung Ho Fai, Yu Yat Tung

From 1998 to 2000, we have surveyed the Tap Mun & Shek Ngau Chau area for Terns. The objective is to monitor the breeding Terns in the area. We now present the data, together with some simple interpretation and thoughts.

The survey was carried out roughly once every two weeks. We found that the data can be best presented by considering in two different areas. The Tap Mun area included Tap Mun Island, Kung Chau and Hoi Ha. The Shek Ngau Chau area included Shek Ngau Chau and the neighboring sea. Other areas are relatively unimportant and counts from them are included in either one of the above two areas. The data were presented in the following figures.

Figure 1 shows the number of Black-naped Tern in the Tap Mun area from 1998 to 2000. Two features are apparent.

- (1) The high counts of Black-naped Tern in the Tap Mun area are more or less stable, being at roughly 110 in that three years.
- (2) The number of Black-naped Tern varies greatly from week to week. Part of that could be due to poor weather, and part of that may be ascribed to the insufficient/inaccurate coverage of the areas for this species.

Figure 1: Black-naped Tern at Tap Mun in 1998-2000.

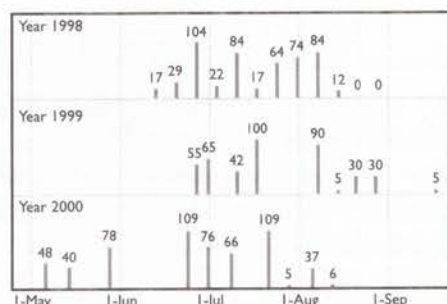


Figure 2 shows the number of Black-naped Tern in the Shek Ngau Chau area from 1998 to 2000. We note the followings.

- (1) The high counts are roughly 100 in 1998, 140 in 1999 and 45 in 2000. There was a significant decline of Black-naped Terns in the Shek Ngau Chau area.
- (2) There are some indications that Black-naped Terns move from the Shek Ngau Chau area to the Tap Mun area in the 1999 data. For example, in 1999 the peak counts in Shek Ngau Chau occurred on 1st July and 15th August, but the peak counts in Tap Mun occurred on 18th July and 8th August. It is highly probable that some Black-naped Tern at Shek Ngau Chau on 1st July moved to the Tap Mun area on 18th July and 8th August, and moved back to Shek Ngau Chau on 15th August. In view of the proximity of the two areas, it would not be surprising that such local movement happens.

Figure 2: Black-naped Tern at Shek Ngau Chau in 1998-2000.

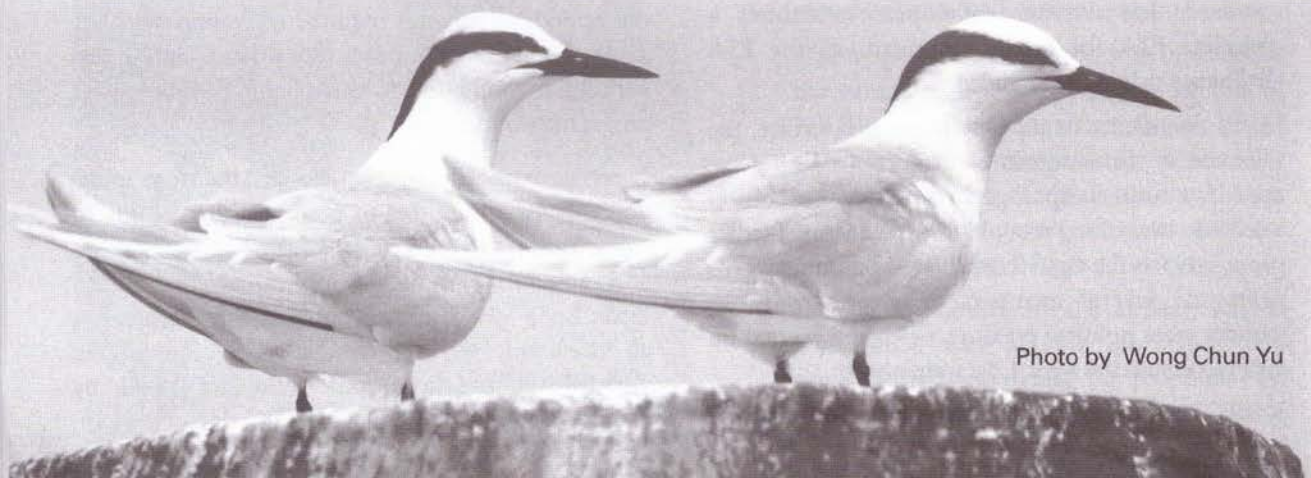
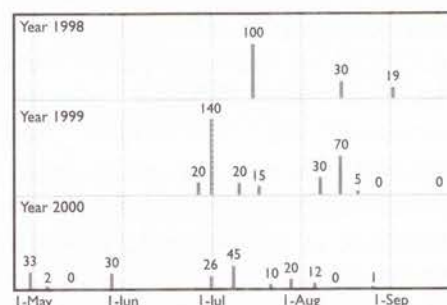


Photo by Wong Chun Yu

Figure 3 shows the number of Bridled Tern in the Tap Mun area from 1998 to 2000. The number of Bridled Tern in the Tap Mun area varied greatly from week to week. In 1998, there was a sharp increase of Bridled Tern on 18th July. Since the date is deep inside the main breeding period, this abnormal high count is probably due to poor weather. But in 1999 and 2000, the peak count occurred at an early date, and was at a time when there was a very significant increase in the number of Bridled Tern. Our interpretation is that when the bulk of the Bridled Tern arrived at Mirs Bay, many spent some time surveying the area thoroughly. After the initial survey, most of them settled down at the eventual breeding site (Shek Ngau Chau), and in the remaining period the number of Bridle Tern at the Tap Mun area remained at a very low level.

Figure 3: Bridled Tern at Tap Mun in 1998-2000.

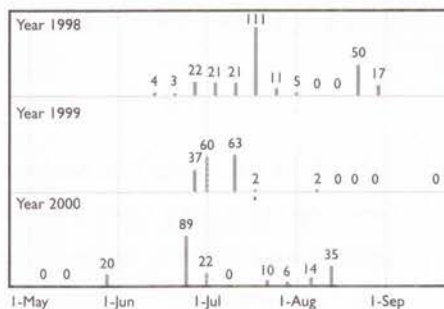


Figure 4 shows the number of Bridled Tern in the Shek Ngau Chau area from 1998 to 2000. The numbers of Bridled Tern in the Shek Ngau Chau area are roughly the same in these years. In fact, there was a gradual increase in the last three years. The number of Bridled Tern also increased towards the end of the breeding season. That can be accounted partly by the number of newly born of the year, and possibly partly by the passage of Bridled Tern from other breeding sites in the north. In 2000, the survey was started much earlier. The result shows that the bulk of the Bridle Tern arrived in late May in that year.

Figure 4: Bridled Tern at Shek Ngau Chau in 1998-2000.

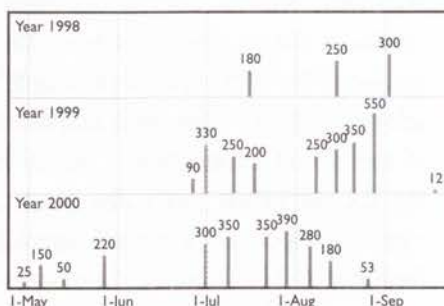


Figure 5 shows the number of Roseate Tern in the Tap Mun area from 1998 to 2000. The high counts of Roseate Tern in the Tap Mun area were slightly over 100 in 1998 and 1999, but only up to about 70 in 2000. The number dropped significantly in 2000, to roughly 70 only. Also, in 2000, the number of Roseate Tern in the main breeding period (July to mid August) is very low compared to the previous two years. That suggests that most Roseate Tern coming to this area to breed had decided to move to another site instead.

Figure 5: Roseate Tern at Tap Mun in 1998-2000.

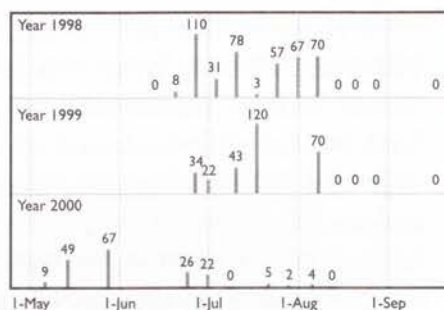
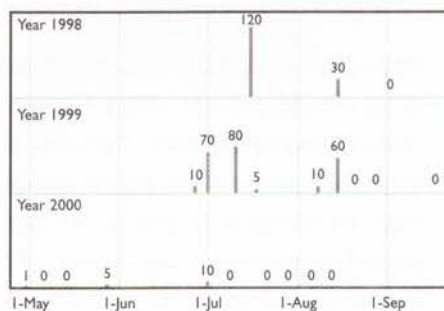


Figure 6 shows the number of Roseate Tern in the Shek Ngau Chau area from 1998 to 2000. In 1998 and 1999, the data strongly suggests Roseate Tern were moving around between the Tap Mun area and the Shek Ngau Chau area. The totals from the two areas together were actually roughly constant (at 120 in 1998 and 1999) during the main breeding period. The data for 2000 shows a clear decline in the number of Roseate Tern. The number was only 70 at the beginning of the breeding season in 2000, and dropped to almost zero after that. One possible reason is that they are displaced by the increase of Bridled Tern in the Shek Ngau Chau area. Although they wandered around, sometimes into the Tap Mun area looking for suitable sites to breed, they did not like the sites and decided to leave the area totally in 2000.

Figure 6: Roseate Tern at Shek Ngau Chau in 1998-2000.



After analyzing all the data, we noted that Terns in Hong Kong were still undergoing phases of rapid changes. While there was gradual increase of Bridle Tern in the Tap Mun & Shek Ngau Chau area, the numbers of Black-naped and Roseate Tern were declining. Roseate Tern did not breed in significant number in the area in 2000. Black-nape Tern was still breeding but their number was significantly down from the 1998 and 1999. It is possible that further decline would encourage them to desert the area totally in the next few years.

Acknowledgement: we wish to thank Ying Hak King, Wong Chun Yu, and Au Chun Yan for carrying out part of the survey.



Northern Sichuan: 12th-26th May, 2001

– Mike Kilburn

This report covers the first two weeks of a seven-week trip I took with Judith Fruin-Ball to Sichuan, Qinghai and Xinjiang provinces in western and north-western China.

Having arrived in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan, we met up with our guide Joshua, and made a late afternoon visit to one of the most pleasant and birdiest urban parks in China Du Fu Cottage. Although the park was full of people, the birds were left very much to themselves and had made the most of the lack of persecution, – we saw many normally shy species within just a few yards of other park users. Big flocks of Vinous-throated Parrotbills and Red-headed Tits fed in overhead trees, the enormous local race of Chinese Blackbird, White-browed Laughingthrush and Yellow-streaked Warbler scrabbled in the undergrowth, and Rufous-capped Babblers and Magpie Robins sang loudly in several areas of the park. Our highlights here were a pair of Black-tailed Hawfinch, a singing Tiger Shrike, Collared Finchbill nesting in one of the formal gardens, and a pair of Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babblers poking about at the base of a bamboo clump. Best of all was a scope-filling pristine male Yellow-rumped Flycatcher singing its heart out no more than ten metres away from us.

Next morning we headed north out of Chengdu along the Min River valley towards Wolong. The river is currently being dammed to create some immense hydro-electric power stations, and several times we waited in queues of traffic as the engineers gouged huge swathes out of the sides of the valley. One of these stops came up trumps as we again saw Collared Finchbill, Tiger Shrike, and Forest Wagtail (and on our return a White-crowned Forktail at the same spot).

Turning out of the Min River valley into the approaches to the reserve, the road continued

alongside a clear and boulder-strewn stream. We began to see our first montane species a family party of Plumbeous Redstarts, a Blue Whistling Thrush, and a stunning claret and black Riverchat, which flashed its luminous white cap at us from a boulder in mid-stream. We also heard the loud, melodious song of Large-billed Leaf Warbler for the first time.

Arriving at Sha Wan, our base for the next few days, we headed up the slope behind the hotel and collected a mix of farmland and forest birds. The cast was topped by a male Golden Pheasant, which good-naturedly allowed us to scrabble through near impenetrable undergrowth for twenty minutes before allowing Judith good but brief views as it nipped out of sight behind the next tangle of scrub. Other good birds here included single Chinese Babax, and Elliot Laughingthrush, a pair of Grey Bushchats, 4 Long-tailed Minivets and our first serious investigations into the phylloscopus warbler mystery we saw and heard Greenish, Blyth, and Chinese Leaf Warblers. We also added 20 odd Black-browed Tits, Green-backed Tits feeding fledged youngsters, a couple of Yellow-bellied Tits, Chestnut-flanked White-eye, six Grey-headed Bullfinches and a round dozen of White-collared Yuhinas.

Next morning we were up painfully early to the bleak juniper scrub slopes above the tree line where Wood Snipe allegedly breeds. We heard them calling close to the road but in two visits Joshua and Judith had brief views and I didn't. Bad, bad dip. White-eared Pheasants calling tantalisingly out of sight did nothing to ease my disappointment. A Eurasian Badger rumbling along between the bushes was a surprise. Fortunately, there was some compensation in the shape of a pair of dark phase Steppe Buzzards, 10 Himalayan Griffons, five Lammergeyers and a solitary Black Vulture. They emerged on the first thermals and soared around in front of an appropriately stunning backdrop of

Northern Sichuan: 12th-26th May, 2001 (con't)

astoundingly beautiful rhododendron forest with a thick carpet of moss covering the ground underneath the blooms. Although it was lovely it seemed pretty well bird free for the bulk of our climb until we reached Er Dao Ping, an area of dwarf bamboo amongst huge relict conifers at 2,800m. Annoying small things called invisibly from the bamboo but an Eagle Owl had the grace to fly out from a tree as we passed underneath it. As we turned round we finally found some birds some tiny and highly vocal Grey-sided Bush Warblers, Eurasian Treecreeper, a Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, a small flock of Red-mantled Rosefinches, and a small gang of Fulvous Parrotbills. Blood Pheasant declined to appear, or even call, despite the excellence of the habitat.

A dusk stroll along the water bucket trail produced one calling Blood Pheasant, a dark blob of a wren-babbler we didn't get enough on and a single Golden-breasted Fulvetta. We saw what must have been the same bird as we once again crept unsuccessfully along the heavily foggy trail for Pheasants early the next morning. However, we did find a bird wave, which held Yellow-browed, Coal, Grey Crested and Fire-capped Tits as well as Rufous-bellied Niltava. We again heard Temminck Tragopan, but again it was far away in the mist. We returned somewhat dejected to the station but a scrabbling in the grasses above the path gave us good views of three Great Parrotbills as compensation.

After breakfast we tried the much easier and more open access trail and within fifty yards of the station flushed an immature male Temminck Tragopan, which flew into a pine tree and tried to hide by lying along one of the branches like a nightjar. It didn't work, and we had protracted eye-level views something I never expected of a tragopan.

Another 100 metres further on we came over a rise in

the path and stopped dead; an enormous male Tragopan and three hens were standing ten metres away on the path. As it saw us the cock bird tensed and my heart sank as it stretched its neck forward as if about to flee and . . . pecked and ate a leaf! For the next twenty minutes we watched the birds feeding unconcernedly on leaves and fallen rhododendron blooms along the path. The cock was a superb bird bright scarlet dappled with an elegant spattering of round white spots, bright deep blue facial skin. But it was the rest of the head that really surprised me a black crown and neck with a coronet of longer golden-orange feathers tapering onto the nape, which shook as it moved its head. A stunning sighting that ranks as one of my best birding moments. Where do you go from there? It didn't much matter what happened for the rest of the day. I certainly can't remember.

The next day was quieter I dipped again on Wood Snipe and had untickable views of White-eared Pheasant above Beimuping, but bizarrely saw the same Badger! We did find an immature Golden Eagle, a Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush singing from the top of a tree, and enjoyed wonderful views of a Black-bellied Dipper. A pair of Lammergeyers wheeled beneath the cloud cover along the San Shen Valley. Sadly the day was spoiled by the discovery of a dead cat which had been poisoned and laid out as bait to catch raptors.

The next day we followed a local yakherd 2000m uphill in search of White-eared Pheasant and Chinese Monal. We failed, but at least we did it spectacularly, taking so long to come down that night fell and we had to get rescued by the hotel kitchen staff with torches. We did, however, add Golden Bush Robin, Brown and Chestnut-crowned Bush Warblers, Three-toed Parrotbill, Collared and

White-winged Grosbeak in the same tree, White-throated Needletail and a Mountain Hawk Eagle. Coming down we heard a distant Grey Nightjar.

We spent a day recovering at Sha Wan before heading on from Wolong by driving up to the Balangshan Pass and over the other side to Mar Kang. This time we struck gold at Joshua regular spot for White-eared Pheasants just above Beimuping, seeing nine of these fantastic birds feeding out in the open shortly after dawn. This was a huge personal milestone, as I first read about White-eared Pheasants as a child in one of Gerald Durrell books about Jersey Zoo. He had portrayed them as near-mythical in their rarity and beauty, so to see several birds up here on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau was the fulfilment of a lifelong childhood fantasy. And the birds certainly lived up to their billing: they were almost a metre long, covered with a powder-white plumage, except for red facial skin, black crown, a strongly curved bill and its long brownish grey tail feathers. They stomped aristocratically across the hillside until two of the birds started a fight, which only ended when one glided away down the slope on its short, stubby and faintly ridiculous wings.

Elated with our success we headed for the top. It was here we found our breeding Grandalas and finally discovered the necessary ornithological alchemy to transform one of the endless processions of nowrocks into a windblown Tibetan Snowcock, which gave neck-breaking views as it surveyed us from a snow-covered crag - a wonderful farewell to Wolong.

As we crossed the pass the contrast could not have been more dramatic. Wolong well vegetated slopes and meadows gave way to a much more arid habitat, indicating that we had left the lush edge of the Red Basin and were now birding in the dryer, harsher environment of the Tibetan Plateau. The birding

continued to be good. Stopping for petrol at Xiao Jin we found Blue Rock Thrush breeding next to the storage tanks. We also bagged Russet Sparrow in the town centre, picked up a bedraggled and rather out-of place Cattle Egret on the river, and also added Red-rumped and Barn Swallows to the Crag Martins nesting further up the valley.

After lunch we drove along a steep and beautiful gorge where we found a Golden Eagle soaring protectively around its nest while a well-seen flock of Snow Pigeons hopped about on the same cliffs. While we were watching the Eagle, two old ladies came over from their fields to check us out and asked what we were up to. On hearing we were looking at the eagle, one sternly admonished us not to shoot them, but when offered a view of the eagle through the scope refused, saying it would give her hypertension; definitely the bizarrest comment of the trip.

We stayed overnight at Mar Kang before heading off for the high pastures around Hongyuan. On the way we stopped in the gorge outside Mar Kang and enjoyed a number of Hodgson Redstarts and fabulous close-up views of a Wallcreeper on some overhanging cliffs. Further on, a well-wooded hillside yielded a single male Koklass Pheasant, which had the bad manners to flush and fly behind Judith.

The closer we got to Hongyuan the more open the habitat became, and we began seeing herds of yaks and the tents of their Tibetan herders and some of the high plains specialists. We found our first Citrine Wagtails, Redshanks and Horned Larks on some boggy meadows, while the rolling hills between concealed our first Severtzov Tit Warbler, Chinese Grey Shrike, the sichuanensis race of Common Pheasant, Hodgson White-throated and Black

Redstarts, and a day total of eight species of phyllosc. Close to Hongyaun that evening we also added the first of many Ruddy Shelducks, a drake Goosander, a migrant Pacific Golden Plover, and most importantly, a stately family of four Black-necked Cranes, which breed only on the Tibetan Plateau.

We spent the next day in similar habitat, adding more Himagrifs, and Golden Eagles, and our first Upland Buzzard. Other local specialties included another Black-necked Crane, several monstrous Tibetan Larks, Rosy Pipit, the elegant White-browed Tit, half a dozen hobbit-like HumeGround Jays, ten Daurian Jackdaws, and the Chinese endemic Pere David Laughing Thrush. We also bulked up the list with a gang of very large Black billed Mapies, ten Azure-winged Mapies and three Ravens.

Next morning we were up painfully early to be at the road menders hut at the pass above Jiuzhaigou before dawn. As we headed up the slope into the trees we heard the first harsh gutturing screeches with which Blue-eared Pheasants welcome the day. As we climbed, we heard another close by and stopped to search the tops of the nearest pines. Blue-eared Pheasants roost in these trees overnight and call at dawn before flying down onto the ground to begin feeding. After ten stressful minutes I made out a head in one of the trees and, in between unfogging my bins, managed good views before the bird spread its wings and glided down to the nearest slope, where it disappeared from view.

For the next couple of hours we worked the cut forest area and the steeper snow-covered rhododendron slopes. Agonisingly, we heard the unsettling screaming of Severtzov Grouse as close as thirty metres away, but it might just as well have been in Alaska for all we saw of it. Coming down the hill

our luck improved slightly as we had very brief and untickable views of a Blood Pheasant and our first fleeting views of Grey-crested and Rufous-vented Tits, Goldcrest and the restricted range Crested Tit Warbler.

As we emerged into the clearing, a wave of seven migrating Crested Honey Buzzards drifted overhead, and a couple of sooty grey-black Sichuan Grey Jays flew across the clearing and landed in good view. These birds are seen almost nowhere else but here and were one of our key targets for the area. A Blood Pheasant called close by and as we edged forward it broke cover and ran across the snow for thirty metres before stopping in full view on the trunk of a fallen tree to look at us with its tail spread.

Jiuzhaigou itself was beautiful but rainy, so after unpacking we didn't bother trying to go a long way, but instead just crossed the road from the hotel and sat under the trees on the edge of a ditch. This worked brilliantly, as a male Indian Blue Robin sang a couple of times before hopping into view, and we watched Slaty-Blue Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Tit and Elliot Laughing thrush at close range.

The next day started well; two Grey Nightjars and a large owl, which was almost certainly Père David's, flew off the road in the predawn light as we headed up to the Primeval Forest. As we entered we found another male Blood Pheasant, which wins the prize for the most confiding pheasant of all time it stood on a tree stump no more than ten metres away from us for a good ten minutes, one red leg raised. The forest was again wonderful primary growth pines over a thick carpet of moss. We saw another pair of Blood Pheasant, but prospered little thereafter, although we did add White-Bellied Redstart, Maroon-backed Accentor, Chinese Song Thrush, a

good total of ten White-winged Grosbeak and Three-banded Rosefinch over the rest of the day.

We left our search for Rufous-headed Robin for the last day of our stay and had our worst day in Sichuan; no Robin and not much else except frustration and rain. The Pearl Shoal Waterfall we walked across to reach the Robin valley was the best sight of the day but is almost undescrivable so go and see it for yourself. We added Jay, Great Spotted Woodpecker and a good flock of 250 Tibetan Siskins. In addition to the Robin we missed several good birds here David Tit, Sukachev Laughingthrush, Verreaux Monal Partridge, and were perhaps guilty of not allowing it long enough on our schedule.


Having arrived in Songpan, we decided to have one more crack at the high pass to get better views of Blue-eared Pheasant and once again we were there before dawn. There had been a substantial snowfall overnight and the site was only just below a heavy bank of cloud. As we waited for the pheasants to call a couple of David Owls began a dialogue, their hoots carrying clearly across the snow-covered slopes. Judith heard a change in the timbre of the call and one of the birds floated slowly across the clearing, giving us the most wonderfully atmospheric views of a top quality bird.

Yet again our good birds refused to come singly and as we struggled up the slope through the snow we crested a rise and found a Severtzov Grouse surveying the scene from the top of a very spindly branch. A huge bonus after our failure here a couple of days previously. As we warmed ourselves with some porridge cooked by Joshua's friends the road menders we heard that pheasants in Sichuan were doing much better as a result of a shooting ban

followed by a rifle round-up conducted a couple of years ago. We also heard that both White-eared and Blue-eared Pheasants had never been considered particularly tasty and as a result were hunted less than the grouse, Tibetan Snowcock and Snow Partridge.

We stopped one final time to search the juniper scrub at the top of the pass for Przewalski Rosefinch, but did not worry unduly about dipping as we had other sites lined up for it in Qinghai. However we did see five separate singing Siberian Rubythroats, thirty or more Pink-rumped Rosefinches, a couple of Rufous-breasted Accentors and a migrant Isabelline Shrike before beginning the long drive back to Chengdu.

On the way we passed a convoy of twenty coaches. We learned that they were environmentally friendly LPG-powered coaches intended for transporting tourists around Jiuzhaigou. In a piece of outstandingly obtuse Communist bureaucracy they were making a 700km round trip to Wenchuan to register. Mindful of the risks to other drivers, the Wenchuan authorities sent a police car to escort the buses there and back. It turned out that the appropriate official had decided it was beneath his dignity to make the trip to Jiuzhaigou himself to inspect the buses. As a result, the buses and escort travelled a combined distance of over 1500km, posing a serious danger to other road users; quite astounding!

We finished the Sichuan portion of the trip well satisfied with 198 species. As always thanks go to Joshua for his superb logistics and good company. Thanks also to Mark Beaman, Peter Hopkin, Jesper Hornskov and Richard Lewthwaite for paving the way and providing gen. in various forms. 

Bird Surveys in Six Country Parks – Kwok Hon Kai


From March to June 2000, our society was commissioned to do a short-term project by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD). The main purpose was to carry out quantitative surveys in six local country parks. The report also included a literature review on the bird species recorded in these country parks by our members and local naturalists.

There are 23 country parks in Hong Kong, which cover more than 40% of the total area of Hong Kong and contain large areas of forests and shrublands. Land birds play important roles such as seed dispersal and control of insects in terrestrial habitats. However, we know very little about our local land bird communities. In the past, much of the society's energy has been focussed on wetland bird communities in the Deep Bay area. This is at least partly due to the higher threat local wetland birds are facing. Although our society has accumulated many ornithological records submitted by enthusiastic members, this information is far from sufficient in helping us understand our land bird communities.

The annual report of our society, Hong Kong Bird Report, focuses mainly on reporting records of rare or uncommon species. In addition, the frequency of visits and size of the area covered both vary considerably. To achieve a better understanding, surveys using systematic sampling methods with standardized sampling efforts (area covered and time spent) are needed. The transect count method is a widely used bird survey method in which the birds detected, either aurally or visually, or both, along a predetermined route, are identified and recorded. The length and width of sample transects are usually fixed to achieve consistency of sampling intensity and comparability of results over time and/or space. It is commonly known that the "detectability" of birds varies between habitats and times of the year. With certain modifications of the sampling method, it is possible to use the transect count method to estimate the proportion of birds missed or undetected in the study area, but this is beyond the scope of this article. The most important point here is that good ecological studies can be achieved with simple but well-designed methodology.

The results of both field surveys and literature reviews indicated that the diversity of bird fauna in some country parks (e.g., Shing Mun and Lung Fu Shan Country Parks) is indeed very high (>100 species). Readers can refer to "Bird Surveys in Six Country Parks", published by our society, for the detailed results of the study. It should be noticed that surveys were only carried out early in the breeding season, therefore the diversity of bird fauna was likely to be underestimated. More survey effort will be needed in the future to improve estimates of diversity and abundance. Based on the observations made so far, we have recommended that "flagship" species might be identified as a vehicle to publicize the respective country parks viz.

- Shing Mun Country Park	Chestnut Bulbul
- Lung Fu Shan Country Park	Black-throated Laughing-thrush
- Bride's Pool (Plover Cove Country Park)	Crested Goshawk
- Hok Tau Reservoir (Pak Sin Leng Country Park)	Chinese Francolin
- Aberdeen Country Park	Night Heron
- Sai Kung (East & West) Country Park	Greater Coucal

Country parks cover 41,582 ha in Hong Kong and visitor rate of these country parks is high (11.1 million in 2000/01). Owing to the large area, easy accessibility and the high diversity of bird fauna, country parks are in fact excellent "field centres" for public education about bird ecology. The objectives of our society include the promoting of conservation of birds and their habitats in Hong Kong, and provision of information and assistance to all persons interested in birds. In the project report prepared for AFCD, we recommended setting up exhibition boards, booklets or leaflets on birds in country park visitor centres to promote wildlife watching to picnickers. Another objective of our society is to facilitate and encourage the study of birds in Hong Kong. Therefore, we also recommended long-term studies on population trends of land birds, similar to the Common Bird Census in North America. In addition, the relationship between birds and habitat characteristics could also be studied. The information gathered could be applied to country park management. 

The main task of the egretty survey is to compile statistics of the number of egret (including heron) nests in the year. The work has been carried out sporadically by the Society since as early as 1958. At that time members reported the number of egret nests they found at a particular site. The results were published in the annual Bird Report. A more systematic survey was carried out in 1970 by D.J. Bovey on the egretty at Yim Tso Ha in Sha Tau Kok. Following this, surveys on some local egrettries marked the beginning of egret breeding statistics in Hong Kong.

Why do we count the number of nests? Egrets are water birds that nest in colonies. The number of breeding birds depends on the type and size of the foraging ground and the quantity of prey available. The number of nests in an egretty can therefore tell us about the quality of the surrounding wetland.

Since 1998, the Society has been organizing nest surveys at all major and minor egrettries in Hong Kong during the height of summer. From records in the last four years (1998 to 2001), we know that there are 18 egrettries in the territory. These are mainly distributed over the Deep Bay area, Starling Inlet, Victoria Harbour, Tolo Harbour and Lantau Island. Although one third of the nests are located around Deep Bay, the largest egretty in Hong Kong lies at A Chau in the Starling Inlet (257 nests in 2001). The smallest egretty is at Ma On Kong near Ho Pui (only 5 nests in 2001). So how many egret nests are there totally in Hong Kong? In 2001, there were about 830. Nests of the Little Egret were the most numerous, followed by those of the Night Heron, the Chinese Pond Heron and the Great Egret. The Cattle Egret, which once thrived, had the fewest nests. The Deep Bay area is the main breeding ground for Little Egrets, while that for Night Herons, Great Egrets and Cattle Egrets is A Chau. Chinese Pond Herons breed mostly at Ho Sheung Heung and Mai Po village.

Egrettries around Deep Bay have declined considerably from the 1990s. There were about 500 nests in 1975 in the area but only 292 were counted in 2001. This may indicate deterioration in the ecological environment. However, some recent reports on egrettries in Shenzhen lead us to believe that some birds may have gone north to breed. We look forward to an opportunity to conduct a survey across the border in the coming year, so that we can obtain more accurate statistics of nests around the whole Deep Bay area.



**Junior Division
Winners :**

1 First Place – Tsui Tze Kit

Title : No Title
School : Sun Fong Chung Primary
School (AM)
Level : P.3

2 1st runner-up – Chiu Chi Pui

Title : Bird in the Forest
School : YLPMSA ASSN
Primary School (AM)
Level : P.1

3 2nd runner-up – Lee Cheong Hang

Title : Small Bird
School : Dr. Catherine F. Woo Memorial
School (AM)
Level : P.1

4 3rd runner-up – Lee Yan Lam

Title : My Little Bird
School : Alliance Primary School
Kowloon Tong
Level : P.2

1 First Place – Lee Hok Yin

Title : No Title
School : Sun Fong Chung Primary
School (AM)
Level : P.6

2 1st runner-up – Lai Hoi Yan

Title : No Title
School : Taoist Ching Chung Primary
School (PM)
Level : P.6

3 2nd runner-up – Lau Yuk Hiu

Title : Colour of Nature
(Yellow Wagtail)
School : Sin To School (PM)
Level : P.6

4 3rd runner-up – Lau Wai Yee

Title : Home of birds
School : Ap Lei Chau St. Peter's
Catholic Primary School (AM)
Level : P.6

**Young Naturalist
“Living Colours”
Painting Competition**

**5 The Most Innovation Painting award –
Lee Yee Lai**

Title : Bird
School : PLK Chan Yat Primary School
(AM)
Level : P.3

**6 Best use of colour award –
Ng Sin Ying**

Title : Colour of Life
School : St. Antonius Primary School
(PM)
Level : P.2

**7 The Most Life-like Painting award –
Lee Chung Ka**

Title : Bird in Water
School : Sun Fong Chung Primary
School (PM)
Level : P.1

**Senior Division
Winners :**

**5 The Most Innovation Painting award –
Ho Tze On**

Title : Colour
School : Hong Kong Pui Ching
Primary School (AM)
Level : P.5

**6 Best use of colour award –
Jacquelynn**

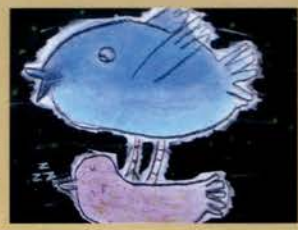
Title : Mandarin Duck
School : Sir Ellis Kadoorie Primary
School
Level : P.5

**7 The Most Life-like Painting award –
Chan Chon Yin**

Title : Bird
School : PLK Chan Yat Primary School
(AM)
Level : P.6

小小自然科學家 「畫出生命色彩」 繪畫比賽

Young Naturalist
"Living Colours"
Painting Competition



初級組
得獎作品
Junior Division
Winning Works

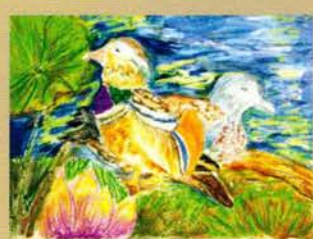
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3	4	5	6
		7	



高級組
得獎作品
Senior Division
Winning Works



1	2	5	
3	4	6	7





Blue-winged Minla (Tai Po Kau) – Peter Wong

藍翅希鵒 (大埔滘) — 黃理沛



Orange-bellied Leafbird (Tai Po Kau) – John Holmes

橙腹葉鵲 (大埔滘) — 孔思義

