



bulletin

會員通訊

192

Summer 2004 ~ 夏



鶴鵲與澤鵲（米埔）

— 陳志光

Spotted Redshank and Marsh Sandpiper (Mai Po)

— Daniel C K Chan

長趾濱鵲（尖鼻咀）

— 陳士飛

Long-toed Stint (Tsim Bei Tsui)

— Thomas Chan





# The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited

(Approved Charitable Institution of a Public Character)

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### Elderly Birdwatching Committee

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### Webmaster

Mr. Lee Kwok Shing

### Staff

Manager (Administration and Projects)	Ms. Carrie Ma
Assistant Project Officer	Ms. Li Hei
General and Account Clerk	Ms. Carol Chan

## From the Chairman

Hwameis sing gaily from among the bamboos in the courtyard. A magpie strolls leisurely on the nearby lawn.

Though stuck in busy city life, all through the years, I have always been connected to the pleasant world of nature through the watching of birds.

I shall forever remember my first bird-watching trip. The Hong Kong Cemetery was calm and peaceful. At this very place where death prevailed, I saw Life. The reverberations of that encounter have persisted till now.

A magpie robin comes to the banyan tree outside the window. It observes the surroundings for a while and then flies off. But the wood never stops teeming with life. A pair of red-whiskered bulbuls come to perch on a dead tree further away. They stay close to each other and obviously enjoy being together.


Ever since I got the bird-watching bug, I have always wanted to let more people know about the joy of watching birds. But at the beginning, I was not sure how to go about it, and indeed it was not easy at all. There was even a lecture with only one person in the audience. I met that lonely soul again recently and we reminisced together about that funny but frustrating moment of history. Fortunately, with the passage of time and a combination of various favourable factors, Hong Kong people gradually came to understand bird watching better. By 1997, more than half of the membership of the HKBWS was local Chinese. I also became the first local Chinese to serve as chairman. It reflects that bird watching has truly come of age in the local community.

A koel keeps on calling “koel koel” in search of his companion. Whiskered bulbuls join in the chorus with their bright “gra grid ga gra grid”. A pair of spotted doves fly to the rooftop of the nearby annex building. The male nods and begs with “coo coo- coo”. The female remains aloof and ambivalent.

I joined the Society more than a quarter of a century ago and have been chairman for more than six years. I am immensely grateful for the blessing of growing up among caring and forgiving bird-watching friends. The HKBWS is increasingly being embraced by the local community. The links with bird-watchers in China mainland are growing healthily. The range of research work is also expanding. The Society is ready for a new era of development.

Evening is slowly approaching. Next to the verandah, the red flowers of *Callistemon viminalis* are at their prime. White-eyes are joined by a tailorbird foraging among the flowers. The tall *Albizia* tree by the house has lost all its leaves recently. Its bare branches thus become excellent vantage points with good views. Chinese bulbuls, red-whiskered bulbuls, magpies, magpie robins, spotted doves, great tits, tree sparrows, black-necked starlings, koels, blue magpies etc., come one after another to survey the surrounding scene. And I know the faithful brown shrike will come in a month's time, as it has done for two decades.

People watching birds on the move are also themselves on the move. Society business has kept me glued to the computer screen and piles of paper work for years. My telescope has been idle for too long. It is time for me to return to the hills to look for my drifting clouds and my wandering avian friends.

The Society has a proud tradition of rigour in science and happiness in life among its members. May this continue in the hands of the new generation of bird-watchers. 

CY Lam

## Bequest of Mr A StG Walton, Founding Chairman, to HKBWS

The Society has received from the estate of Mr A StG Walton, a collection of old correspondence related to the founding of the society in 1957, his personal bird notes 1953-1960, a collection of early publications on Hong Kong natural history, several of the oldest Society annual reports and others. (See bulletin no. 190 for obituary.)

We are most grateful to Mr Walton and his family for their kindness in donating this precious collection to the Society. It is a significant contribution to the study of the history of the Society in its formative years. We would also like to thank ex-chairman Mr Richard Stott, now our representative in UK, for helping transfer the material back to Hong Kong.

## New HKBWS Office

HKBWS is pleased to announce we have moved to new office premises as of 1st May, 2004.

The premise at Room 625, Beverley Commercial Centre, where we have been for 4 years, was no longer large enough to meet the needs of our current operation. Therefore, the HKBWS Executive Committee decided to move the office to bigger premises. The new office is located at Room 1612 in the same building. Although it is still a small office, it will allow us to handle projects and membership affairs more efficiently in the future.

The new address is : HKBWS, Room 1612, Beverley Commercial Building, 87-105 Chatham Road South, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong - please make an appointment prior to visiting the office.

The telephone/fax numbers and e-mail address remained unchanged, i.e. Tel: 2377 4387 (voice box), Fax: 2314 3687, E-mail: [hkbws@hkbws.org.hk](mailto:hkbws@hkbws.org.hk).

## Please submit your bird watching records

Submitting bird watching records is the responsibility of every member of HKBWS. The Records Committee has produced a sampled and

updated version of record submission form, which is available for members to download. In addition, the Committee has a set of guidelines for rare species, which can be found in the recent "Hong Kong Bird Report".

Please submit your 2003 bird watching records, completed data forms can be submitted to the Records Committee at [recorder@hkbws.org.hk](mailto:recorder@hkbws.org.hk). Members who wish to submit records in Chinese can submit their record to [hkbws@hkbws.org.hk](mailto:hkbws@hkbws.org.hk).

Your submitted records will be published in the "Hong Kong Bird Report", so please remember to send in your forms.

## Annual Report (1999/2000)

"Hong Kong Bird Report 1999/2000" has published. In order to resume a normal schedule as soon as possible (i.e. publication within 15 months after the previous year), annual reports of the coming 2 years will be in form of a combined volume.


Members who wish to contribute articles and pictures to the report are welcome to contact the report editors. Pictures can be sent to HKBWS Project Office by mail (5R size), or by e-mail at [hkbws@hkbws.org.hk](mailto:hkbws@hkbws.org.hk) (JPG format).

## 2004 membership badge

The production of the membership badge for 2004 has been completed and you should receive it together with this issue. Please wear this badge when joining the society's activities. We thank Bad Egg No.1 for sharing us the photo and Miss Puk Yuk Yin for helping to do the design work.



## New staff

The society has recruited a General and Account Clerk, Ms Carol Chan to help to ease the workload of the project office and help in the accounting and membership matters. 

– Carrie Ma

## A. Research Projects

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

Year 2003-2004

#### 1.1 Research Report

The Winter Count Report, Monthly Waterbird Count Data and the report on Black-faced Spoonbill International Census have been produced and uploaded onto HKBWS website for public access.

#### 1.2 Public Lecture

A public lecture on "Overview of Water-birds in Hong Kong: From Globally Threatened Species to Breeding Residents" was organized on 30 March 2004. About 80 participants including teachers and students, environmental journalist, representative from local green groups, government departments, environmental consultants and tour companies attended the event. We thank Yu Yat Tung, Captain Wong and Eric Liu for offering presentation and various support.



#### 1.3 Leaflet



A leaflet on common waterbirds in Hong Kong was produced in March. It provided comparison of count data in January of the last 20 years. The leaflet is a useful tool for education and field interpretation. It has been sent to schools, Hong Kong International Wetland Park, Tsuen Wan Environmental Centre, the Education Centre of the

Mai Po Nature Reserve for distribution. There is also a small amount available for collection in the HKBWS Office.

#### 1.4 Visitors from National Bird Banding Centre

We invited Professor Chu Guozhong, Director of National Bird Banding and Professor Hou Yunqiu to visit Hong Kong from 28 February to 2 March. We arranged sites visits to various ringing sites including KFBG, KARC, and area near Mai Po Marshes Nature Reserve, etc. Meetings were also conducted with HKBWS representative, local ringers and AFCD. The meeting facilitated information exchange and understand the future need of the use of local rings. Prof. Chu and Prof. Hau would provide HKBWS professional advice on bird ringing in the future.



### Year 2004-2005

AFCD has changed the way of cooperation from subvention (2000-2004) to a tender project (2004). HKBWS will organize this project in 2004-2005, to continue the tradition of waterbird monitoring since 1979, and to obtain necessary baseline information that indicates the health of the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site. Updated information will be posted onto HKBWS Waterbird Count website for members' reference.

## 2. Research Groups Update

#### 2.1 Tern Research Group

The Tern Research Group is coordinating effort to monitor the breeding population during summer 2004. Members who wish to participate in the survey could contact H F Cheung at

apcheung@cityu.edu.hk. Members are also welcome to provide information on their field records, observed human disturbance and risk, etc. Please make use of the Tern special section on the HKBWS bulletin board.

## 2.2 Black-faced Spoonbill Research Group

- 2.2.1 The Black-faced Spoonbill Research Group has completed a field survey on the age structure of Black-faced Spoonbill.



- 2.2.2 A report has been uploaded onto HKBWS Black-faced Spoonbill website for members' reference.
- 2.2.3 The Research Group is producing a mathematical model to estimate the world population of Black-faced Spoonbill.
- 2.2.4 The Research Group is preparing an online ringing record submission database, this would facilitate local and international observers to exchange information. Please pay attention to this bulletin and the HKBWS bulletin board for updated information. Members are encouraged to provide observation records, sighting of ringed spoonbills, bird pictures (please state if you welcome the Research Group to use for publish in the future). This information could be posted onto the bulletin board.

## 2.3 Egret and Heron Research Group

- 2.3.1 The Egret Research Group has conducted surveys on breeding egrets in April. Information will be uploaded onto HKBWS website for public access. There was a drastic decrease of a Chinese Pond Heron colony at Mai Po Lung Village from over 40 nests in 2003 to about 10 in this year due to illegal open storage expansion.
- 2.3.2 The group is coordinating efforts to analyse results of wiring fishponds to ardeids and other waterbird populations.
- 2.3.3 Some members of the Research Group visited Hainan Island from 26 to 30 May to conduct an egretty count.
- 2.3.4 Josephine Wong is now a new member of ERG. Luke Woo is stepped down due to personal reasons.

## 2.4 Kite Research Group

- 2.4.1 Etta Hui offered a presentation for a secondary school in Lantau Island (PLK Mrs Ma Kam Ming Cheung Fuk Sin Secondary School) on 23 and 24 March. We thank her for her coordination efforts and taking care of the needs of students.



- 2.4.2 Kite counts were conducted as usual; there are interesting records at the Stonecutters and Magazine Gap site to share with you:

	Stonecutters	Magazine Gap
11 Apr 2004	– 83 individuals	– 180 individuals
7 Mar 2004	– 94 individuals	– 616 individuals
15 Feb 2004	– 112 individuals	– 975 individuals
25 Jan 2004	– 275 individuals	– 1039 individuals

### 2.4.3 Amendment

There is a missing information in last Bulletin, issue 191. The Group photo of Kite Research Group attending the 3rd Symposium of Asia Raptors in Taiwan was supplied by the Raptor Research Group of Taiwan and taken by Ms Mei-Hua Tsou. Thank you very much for their support. We are sorry for the missing.

## 2.5 Swift and Swallow Research Group

- 2.5.1 The establishment of Swift and Swallow Group was endorsed by HKBWS ExCo on 10 January 2004. The Group is coordinated by S T Tsim, Apache Lau is the spokesman, group members include William Wong, C Y Wong and Captain Wong, volunteers include Bill Man and Elisa Hui.
- 2.5.2 The goal of "Swift and Swallow Research Group" is to focus on conservation of these birds especially the local breeding species – Little Swift and Barn Swallow (also known as the target species), in Hong Kong.
- 2.5.3 The specific objectives of this Research Group have at least 5 as follows:
- Conduct surveys and research in relation to the target species;

- ii. Make connection to other NGOs which have shown their concerns in the conservation of swifts and swallows in local/overseas (for and on behalf of HKBWS);
- iii. Draw public concern to the need of conservation of the target species;
- iv. Conduct desktop reviews on any literature and written material related to the target species; and
- v. Produce education materials and publications

2.5.4 Some members are coordinating information collection through various channels, including collection of raw data from the past, conducting preliminary surveys, information searches on websites of urban development, and characterizing nesting sites of Little Swift this summer.

2.5.5 Apache Lau joined a press event organized by Tai Po Environmental Association on artificial nests for Little Swift. The story was reported by 6 newspapers on 28 March.



2.5.6 Members are welcome to provide information on Swifts and Swallows at the special section on HKBWS bulletin board. If you wish to join surveys on the bird species, please contact S T Tsim (sttsim@netvigator.com) and Apache Lau (apachelau@netvigator.com)



## B. Education and Publicity

### 1. The elderly leading the elderly to watch birds and nature

From October 2003 to March 2004, the elderly nature interpreters team "Crested Bulbul Club" served 53 organizations and 3,982 elderly, of which 22.3% required intensive care. We continue received positive feedback regarding their coordination skills and knowledge.

To increase the pool of elderly nature interpreters, The 3rd Elderly Nature Interpreter Training Course was

organized from 23 March to 17 April 2004. A total of 40 elderly participants joined the event. The training comprised talks on urban and wetland birds, outdoor practices, group assignments and a test. We organized a small-scale bird race on 24 April at Hong Kong Park. This was an opportunity to put what they had learned into practice.

Apart from the scheduled talks and bird watching outing, some of them were also involved actively in various publicity events. These included servicing physically handicapped children and their families, young nature interpreters, radio audience and retired civil servants. They have also participated in experience exchange with representatives of an association on elderly service from Shanghai, and a workshop on "increase value and life-long learning" organized by the Health and Welfare Bureau.

Some members of the Crested Bulbul Club offered a presentation during the "Healthy Ageing Conference" was held on 5 June. In addition, Chen Chi Po, Chairman of Elderly Birdwatching Committee accepted invitation from the Bureau to share experience during a LegCo meeting was held on 10 May.

### 2. Morning Bird Watching Activity at Kowloon Park

The "Meeting Point for Morning Bird Watchers" which has been running since March 2004 is very successful. The event is jointly organized by HKBWS and LCSD, led by representatives of Crested Bulbul Club, Apache Lau of HKBWS Education and Publicity Committee coordinate effort of technical support including English and Putongua language, posting activity result on web bulletin board, press liaison, etc. The event attracts around 10 to 20 participants each time including park visitors, visitors from mainland China and overseas, as well as bird watchers.



The event has attracted press attention, and there was also a full page report in Apple Daily on 29 April. We have recently received confirmation from Kowloon Park that the event will be extend to September 2005.

Members who wish to watch morning birds, visit this "Oasis in the City". Don't miss this chance! See you at 7:30 am on Fridays at the entrance of Kowloon Park Swimming Pool.

If you wish to help sharing the workload of Apache on technical support, please get in touch with him at [apachelau@netvigator.com](mailto:apachelau@netvigator.com).

### 3. Press conference: 465 bird species

On 16 April, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society announced the addition of ten new species of wild birds to the avifauna of Hong Kong, bringing the total to 465 species. It was widely reported in 12 local newspapers.

The ten new species have been added to Category A [3] of the Hong Kong List, which represents species that have been recorded in an apparently wild state in Hong Kong:

Red-throated Loon



Malayan Night Heron  
(photo by Chiang Ming-liang)



Whooper Swan  
(photo by Cheung Ho Fai)



Siberian Crane  
(photo by Lo Ka Man)



Blyth's Pipit  
(photo by Chiang Ming-liang)



Mountain Bulbul  
(photo by Cheung Ho Fai)



Mountain Tailorbird  
(photo by Michelle Kong and Peter Wong)



White-spectacled Warbler  
(photo by Michelle Kong and Peter Wong)



Lesser Whitethroat  
(photo by Yu Yat Tung)



Brown-breasted Flycatcher  
(photo by Lo Ka Man)

Geoff Carey and H F Cheung met with media and offer introduction: Each of these birds has a story to tell – whether its of a lost vagrant far from its normal territory, an expansion of range brought about by improving habitat in Hong Kong, or advances in identification and taxonomy which reveal one species is really a group of several very similar species

Before any record is approved it must be rigorously checked to ensure that the bird in question has been correctly identified and that the likelihood that it is not a truly wild bird has been eliminated. Owing to the heavy bird trade and the large numbers of birds freed for religious purposes, many supposedly wild birds have been brought to Hong Kong by people, and cannot be considered truly wild in Hong Kong.

HKBWS has kept the official record of the birds of Hong Kong since its foundation in 1957, and it remains the sole authority on birds in Hong Kong. This authority stems from the fact that HKBWS has compiled records of birds stretching back to 1860 and

has accumulated 47 years of continual systematic records since the Society's establishment. Bird watchers in Hong Kong have built a good network for sharing news about such exciting discoveries, so that up-to-date bird watching information is readily available by telephone hotline and through the Website BBS [4]. Hong Kong is among the best-monitored places in South-east Asia.

The HKBWS Records Committee is responsible for compiling, assessing, reviewing and publishing all bird records submitted to the Society. These publications include the annual "Hong Kong Bird Report" and "The Avifauna of Hong Kong" the standard work on the birds of Hong Kong, published by HKBWS in 2001.

This committee is comprised of five of Hong Kong's knowledgeable, and experienced bird watchers. The peer-review of records ensures that all information on birds published by HKBWS is of a uniformly high standard, which is respected by ornithologists around the world.

## 4 "Photographic Guide to the Birds of Hong Kong"

A coordination team on book production has been formed. The team would help publish liaison, proof-reading and relevant publicity. The book is expected to be published in July for the coming book exhibition.

Photographic Guide to the Birds of Hong Kong is the combination of much effort by around 80 members of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS). They have donated amazing photographs derived from many years of hard work in the field. They have also prepared the text and helped design the graphics. This book includes 340 bird species and over 600 photos taken in Hong Kong. It is truly "made in Hong Kong".

In the production of the book, all the bird watchers contributed as unpaid volunteers, in the hope that the work would let Hong Kong people see the beautiful birds of Hong Kong and add some colour to our lives. Members who wish to buy this book, don't miss the bulletin in the coming issues.

## 5 "My Favourite Hong Kong Bird"

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust sponsored "My Favourite Hong Kong Bird" election has been completed. A completion report has been submitted to HK JCCT.



The event has attracted 48 items of media coverage including newspaper and radio. From the response of the public, the project has obviously raised the community's awareness of the rich biological diversity of Hong Kong, especially in terms of birds.

A book "My Favourite Hong Kong Bird" was produced in February to further generate positive publicity. It was very well received – 3,500 copies have already been distributed to schools, youth centers, elderly centers, public libraries, green groups, government departments and a large number of individuals writing into ask for copies. It shows that there is a great demand from the public for information related to birds and their environment. This project has met this need in a timely and effectively manner.

Members who wish to obtain a copy, please send a return envelope (larger than A5 size, with postage HK\$4.40) and send it to HKBWS Office at Room 1612,

Beverley Commercial Centre, 87-105 Chatham Road South, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

## 6. Reprint of "Bird Watching" Starting from the City

Since the Quality Education Fund project "Promoting bird watching as extra-curricular activities in Secondary Schools" was completed in 2001, we have noted the growth in demand of bird watching in the education sectors. This includes an increase in the number of bird watching clubs, some schools incorporating bird watching into school curriculum, a government coordinated annual bird race in the education sector, and an increase in number of request for the education material and relevant bird watching activities.

In order to meet this demand, we have re-printed the existing bird watching guide "Bird Watching – Starting from the City" HKBWS will contribute to the printing cost and sell it to teachers and students at the price near the cost price at HK\$20. After subtraction of income by cost and expenditure, we will donate 50% of the amount to the QEF to support high quality education. The rest will be used for future education and research work of the Society. Members who wish to offer help with ideas, schools contact lists, pack and post, etc., are welcome to contact Carrie Ma at [hkbws@hkbws.org.hk](mailto:hkbws@hkbws.org.hk).

## 7. Support from HKU

Final year project namely "Integrated Information System for HKBWS" is being conducted by students of Department of Computer Science and Information Systems, The University of Hong Kong. The project has been conducted in 2003/04 includes:

- Generic Web-based Voting System (for My Favourite HK Bird election)
- Bird Record Submission and Review System
- IT Plan



We wish to express our sincere thanks Heidi Chan, Clement Lee, Hugo Wong and Harris Sun for their support during the project period.

## 8. World Wetland Day – the 4th Junior Bird Race

HKBWS supported AFCD to conducted bird watching training and bird race from December 2003 to January

2004, as a part of the celebration of World Wetland Day. A presentation ceremony was organized on 17 April. Thanks for Mr C Y Lam attend the event to present souvenirs to participants and gave them encouragement.

## 9. Support to other organizations

### 9.1 The Conservancy Association "Dance with the Birds"

Robin Fung and Apache Lau offered help as adjudicators in March 2004

### 9.2 Tai Po Environmental Association

- "The Most Beautiful Rivers and Streams in Hong Kong" photo contest 2004 – HKBWS as supporting organization
- A project on artificial nest boxes for Little Swift HKBWS offer technical support

### 9.3 Hong Kong Discovery

Henry Lui and Carrie Ma accepted invitation as one of the advisor on birds

### 9.4 World Wide Fund For Nature Hong Kong: Big Bird Race 2004

HKBWS as supporting organization

## C. China and Overseas Activities

### 1.1 Yellow-throated Laughthing Thrush in Wuyuan, Jiangxi

H F Cheung and Yu Yat Tung will co-ordinate radio tracking of Yellow-throated Laughthing Thrush, in collaboration with an ornithologist in China, Professor Ho Fenqi. It is planned to conduct the ringing activity in July. Participant of the project is mainly on voluntary basis, with an aim to find out information gap in particular location of their activities and if possible, migration route.

Some members of the Society will join and continue surveys at another trip in July. If you wish to join and offer support, please contact Yu Yat Tung (ytyu@hkstar.com) and Apache Lau (apachelau@netvigator.com).

Thanks for the donation and various technical advice from H F Cheung on the project.



### 1.2 Book donation to bird watchers in mainland China

In order to facilitate information exchange, and share with bird watchers in mainland China experience of organizing the event on "My Favorite Hong Kong Bird" a message on provision of free copies of the book has been posted onto WWF China, bird watching forum. Over 100 e-mail messages were received requesting for the book.

Thanks for Apache Lau, Forrest Fong, Yu Yat Tung and Carrie Ma for contributing postage for surface mail. The books have been sent on 29 April.

### 1.3 World Conference and Global Partnership Meeting March 2004

CY Lam, Chairman and Carrie Ma, Project Officer attended the BirdLife International World Conservation Conference and Global Partnership



Meeting at Durban, South Africa, from 7 to 13 March 2004.

Prior to the conference, they also participated in a bird eco-tourism study tour organized by BirdLife Asia during 4-6 March. They visited a number of sites and learnt what were being done to initiate bird tours. A proposal on "Kite watching" in Hong Kong was submitted during the World Conference.

At the conference, C Y delivered a presentation on the "Save Long Valley" campaign. It won wide applause and many complimentary messages from many delegates. C Y also chaired a workshop on "Site Supporting Group and Caretakers Networks".



At the Asia Council meeting, Carrie reported on the results of International Black-faced Spoonbill Census coordinated by the HKBWS.

They also offered comments on the draft work plan of BirdLife Asia. The work of HKBWS related to BirdLife's operational objectives under the headings viz. "species", "habitat", "conservation" and "people" was also reported and incorporated into the plan.

We thank BirdLife International for funding Carrie's attendance. C Y paid for his own attendance on behalf of HKBWS.

# Bird ringing activities in 2004

— Hong Kong Ringing Group

A total of 763 birds, of 45 species, have been ringed in the first four months of this year at Mai Po Nature Reserve, Kam Tin and at Lok Ma Chau. Of all the ringed records, the following are of particular interest:

- The commonest species ringed were: Curlew Sandpiper (130), Chinese Penduline Tit (94), Japanese White-Eye (75), Yellow-bellied Prinia (52) and Dusky Warbler (52).


- Spotted Bush Warbler

A single bird was ringed on 30th January 2004 in Mai Po reed bed. This is the first record for this species in Hong Kong. The bird was trapped again on 28th April at the same site in heavy moult, indicating that the bird wintered in Hong Kong.

- Curlew Sandpiper

A retrap Curlew Sandpiper was caught during a wader ringing session on 6th April, 2004. This bird was an adult when ringed 12 years ago (13th April 1992), so it is at least 13 years old and has flown over 250,000km!

- 276 waders of 15 species were caught and fitted with leg flags (white/yellow).

Other interesting birds trapped include Azure-winged Magpie, Ruddy Crake and two Common Reed Buntings. 


*Reed Bunting by Mike Leven*

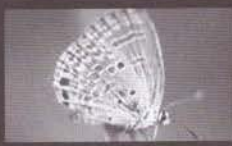


*Ruddy Crake by Yng Hak King*



## Establishment of Swifts and Swallows Research Group — Tsim Siu Tai

Swifts and swallows have had a close relationship with humans throughout recorded history. In order to conserve these lovely species living around us, a "Swifts and Swallows Research Group" was established by HKBWS in December, 2003. The Group has 5 members including Tsim Siu Tai (convenor), Apache Lau (spokesman), William Wong, Sophia Wong and Captain Wong, along with 2 volunteers, Ms. Eliza Hui and Mr. Bill Man. Noting that the breeding populations of Little Swift and Barn Swallow are decreasing, and their nesting sites may under threat, the group is primarily focusing on counting the breeding populations of these species. Following up the nest survey carried out by Captain Wong in summer 2002, members and volunteers of the group are working on the swift nest survey in some old towns in the New Territories and renovation zones in urban areas. In addition to the survey, the group will institute publicity and conservation education programmes on swifts and swallows. Members' support will be very important and helpful in this area. Please share your swift photos and nest site information by posting them at the new column of "swifts and swallows" in the BBS of HKBWS's website. Thank you! 



# Conservation News

## Summer 2004

– Mike Kilburn,  
Chairman, Conservation Committee

### Shenzhen Government consults on controversial sewage treatment project

In late March, the Shenzhen Municipal Government introduced a plan to pump seawater from Mirs Bay to flush untreated sewage into Deep Bay (and into the Ramsar site) from the Shenzhen River. This is a cause of great concern because it threatens to radically change the hydrology of the entire Deep Bay catchment, and as a result to affect the entire ecosystem.

The issue is the amount of salt (or salinity) in the seawater in different parts of Hong Kong. In simple terms, water on the east of Hong Kong (which includes Mirs Bay) is ocean water, which has a high degree of salinity. Water on the west (which includes Deep Bay and Mai Po) is much less saline because the seawater there is diluted by the fresh water from the Pearl River Delta.

At a consultation organised by Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, representatives of the Shenzhen Government revealed that they intend to build a 17km pipeline to bring the water overland and pump it into the Shenzhen River somewhere near Lowu border crossing. They stated that the pumping would only occur when the flow of the Shenzhen River was not dispersing the pollution adequately.

This scheme is being introduced because Shenzhen has a serious problem – it has not developed sewage treatment works at the same rate as its economy and population have expanded. As result, the city of 7 million people is pumping raw untreated sewage into the Shenzhen River, and this eventually flows in Deep Bay. It is understood that the World Bank will provide a portion of the funding for this project, which is likely to cost several billion dollars.

The Shenzhen Municipal Government is to be congratulated for being willing to discuss the project at this preliminary stage. In their presentation they announced plans to conduct a six-month ecological impact assessment on the mangroves and Black-faced Spoonbills in Deep Bay.

However the consultation raised a number of concerns:

- The scope and scale of the project were not revealed.
- The volume of untreated sewage was not revealed.
- Plans for increasing Shenzhen's sewage treatment capacity were not presented.
- The amount salt water to be pumped into the Shenzhen River was not revealed.
- No alternative options were presented.
- The study would only be conducted at Futian, on the north side of the Shenzhen River, under the assumption that the effects on the Futian reserve will be the same as at Mai Po.
- Six months is clearly insufficient time to understand how changing the salinity will affect the ecosystem of the Ramsar site and the Inner Deep Bay and Shenzhen River Catchment Important Bird Area.
- There are no plans to study the benthic invertebrate populations of the mudflats which provide food for so many of our wintering and migrant waterbirds, including Black-faced Spoonbill, Nordmann's Greenshank, Great Knot, Australasian Curlew and Asiatic Dowitcher.
- There are no plans to study the impact on crabs (food for Saunders' Gull) or fish (food for many species including Dalmatian Pelican, Swinhoe's Egret, Black-faced Spoonbill, egrets and herons).
- There are no plans to assess how altering the salinity will affect the rate of siltation in Deep Bay.
- There are no plans to assess the impact on the oyster beds at Lau Fau Shan.

At the meeting, HKBWS, other environmental groups and some Hong Kong Government departments raised the following concerns:

- China has national, regional and international responsibilities to protect the Ramsar site and its wildlife.
- Bearing this in mind it is appropriate to adopt the "precautionary principle" in devising a way forward. (The precautionary principle roughly says that if you don't know how a project will impact an area or species of high ecological/conservation value then you should not go ahead until you know what the impact will be)
- There is a need to conduct a comprehensive environmental impact assessment to determine if the impact could be acceptable. This should include a comprehensive study of the elements outlined above
- What alternatives have been considered? (e.g. using fresh water from the East River or even water from Deep Bay?)
- What plans are there to increase the amount of sewage treated before it is discharged? As Karen Woo of Green Power points out, "Dilution is not the solution to pollution"
- What will be the impact on the water table at Long Valley from more saline water in the Shenzhen River?
- the Shenzhen Government should seek to co-operate with international experts in wetlands such as the Ramsar Bureau and Wetlands International.

### Too much effluent – Not a new problem

It is worth noting that the populations of waterbirds

have been declining for the last few years. We have tracked this change through the comprehensive waterbird monitoring HKBWS has been conducted since 1979.

It is thought that this decline is a direct result of the high amount of untreated human and livestock waste entering Deep Bay – mostly from Shenzhen. This waste provides food for plankton, which flourishes in the warm summer months. Unfortunately the plankton uses up all the oxygen in the water causing the death of larger animals living in the mud, including mudskippers, crabs and other invertebrates.


During the summer months major die-off of crabs and mudskippers have been noted and we can only guess at the impact to the benthic invertebrates. The concern is that when the migrant and wintering birds return, there will be less or even perhaps no food for them, and Mai Po will support fewer and fewer birds.

HKBWS must take this issue seriously as the future of Mai Po, Long Valley and their wildlife is at stake.

### Sham Chung Pier project – Monitoring of White-bellied Sea Eagle in progress

While the objections and concerns of various environmental groups have not stopped this project going ahead, the Civil Engineering Department, who are responsible for building the pier, have begun monitoring the nest. It has also reviewed the impact of construction at Penny's Bay (for the Disney project) on a White-bellied Sea Eagle nest a similar distance from that project. It is reassuring to note that the Penny's Bay birds have continued to nest successfully despite the ongoing works.

An ecological consultant will continue to monitor both nest during the duration of the pier construction works. This is as a direct result of the concerns raised by HKBWS, Kadoorie Farm, WWF, Green Power and other groups. We also recognize the willingness of the government to respond to the concerns raised on this occasion.

It is also important to note that CED acknowledged that it was unaware of the White-bellied Sea Eagle nest just a few hundred metres away from the site for the new pier. During the internal government consultation no other department made reference to the eagles. This once again shows the important role HKBWS and other groups play in monitoring government projects, and the importance of close co-operation between the groups 

# Mai Po update


– Tobi Lau

## Draining of Waterfowl Collection Ponds

Every winter thousands of wild ducks are attracted to the Mai Po Nature Reserve as their wintering ground. The Waterfowl Collection (Ponds 15a and 15b) and Pond 20 (Pond 20 a-f) of the Reserve are managed as a rain-fed freshwater habitat that supports large numbers of waterfowl to feed and to roost in winter. This May when waterfowl left the Reserve for their journey north, these ponds were drained to oxidize any non-decomposed organic material accumulated on the mud floor. This was done to maintain the water quality of the ponds and to carry out any repairs to the bunds and other features of the pond. In particular, fish specifically the Cat fish *Clarias fuscus* in Pond 20 were removed since they may predate the aquatic wildlife, such as odonates and amphibians, or deplete the freshwater plants where the waterfowl grazed and roosted. The ponds will be refilled

with rainwater that falls from August to September and maintained at a high water level from October to April, in order for the site to attract waterfowl from the north again.

## Planting of Water Spinach in Pond 24

Pond 24 consists of seven ponds with a primary objective to create rain-fed habitats for freshwater fauna and flora. In Spring, staff from Mai Po planned to plant some Water Spinach *Ipomoea aquatica* in Ponds 24f and 24g on-trial basis. It is hoped that the Water Spinach will act as food or cover for wintering waterbirds. Last winter, it was observed that some Chinese Pond Herons *Ardeola bacchus* and Moorhens *Gallinula striatus* had been roosting and foraging around some Water Spinach growing along one side of a fishpond next to the Mai Po Nature Reserve. 

## Healthy Homes

Researchers from Ohio Wesleyan University suggest that some birds may select nesting material with antimicrobial agents to protect their young from harmful bacteria. "If the fresh herbs and plant materials that parent birds bring into the nest have a sufficient concentration of antimicrobial compounds, they could protect the nestlings from harmful bacteria," says researcher Jann Ichida.

To find out if plants brought into the nest might prevent disease, Ichida and colleagues tested twelve different volatile plant materials against feather-degrading bacteria. Results showed that several types of plant materials and extracts including usnic acid, ascorbic acid, yarrow, and two oak species inhibited the growth of a number of harmful bacteria. "By practicing medical botany, parent birds exercise effective home nest security and protect their offspring from select biodegrading microbes that affect the health of their young," said Ichida.

## Captive-Bred Philippine Eagle Released

The first Philippine Eagle born in captivity was released into the wild in April, raising hopes for the future of one of the world's most endangered birds.



The bird, a 15-month-old male eagle named Kabayan, was released from his cage at the Mount Apo Nature Reserve on the southern Philippines island of Mindanao. Kabayan is one of 14 Philippine eagles which have been successfully bred in captivity at the Philippine Eagle Center just outside the island's Davao City.


## The Storks of Yorks

White storks are trying to nest in Britain for the first time in nearly 600 years. Two birds have been mating and gathering sticks in a tree and on a telegraph pole between housing estates



and a Yorkshire motorway. It is the first-known British nesting attempt since 1416, when storks successfully fledged chicks on St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh, a few months after Henry V's victory at the Battle of Agincourt.

An informal "guard" has been placed near the storks' potential nesting sites by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Graham Madge of the RSPB said, "We'll do whatever is necessary to ensure the birds' protection. But as this is a highly populated area, it could also turn out to be an opportunity to encourage large numbers of people to find out more about birds."

White storks are rare visitors to Britain, seldom notching up more than a handful of sightings every decade. The Yorkshire pair, which have settled in the Calder valley near Wakefield, have rings which indicate that they come from Europe, where the presence of breeding storks is considered a sign of good luck. 


Take a closer look :

# Pied Kingfisher

— Text : Cheung Ho Fai, illustration : Lee Yuk Ying

The Pied Kingfisher is an uncommon resident in Hong Kong, though it can be seen regularly in all months. It has been recorded almost everywhere except on Hong Kong Island (see *The Avifauna of Hong Kong* by G.J. Carey et. al.). Breeding has been confirmed at several large reservoirs in the New Territories.

The black pattern on the breast is a good field mark to sex birds. The male has two complete black bands across the breast, and female has one broken breast band (appearing as one large black spot on each side).

Confusion is possible with the Crested Kingfisher, but there are several notable differences between the species. The Pied Kingfisher is about 30% smaller than the Crested Kingfisher, and has stronger black and white contrast on the head. The Pied Kingfisher's call is also much harsher. Finally, Pied Kingfishers often hover over the water, which Crested Kingfishers do not. 



## Report on “Records 202

— Aukie Au

### Records 202 Bird Watching Competition

After the encouraging responses received from members in our first Bird Watching Competition last year, we held our second annual competition among local and overseas birdwatchers. This year, the 24-hour competition “Records 202–Bird Watching Competition 2004” was held on 31 January (Sat) & 1 February (Sun).

The event attracted a total of 108 participants, and we were very pleased to find that one-third of them were new faces. This shows that more and more people are pursuing birdwatching as a hobby. Participants formed 21 teams with the aim of spotting as many bird species as they could in 24 hours to compete for the top title in the competition.

### What is “202”?

Many people may wonder about the significance of the number “202”. In fact, it represents the total number of bird species spotted during last year's event. With the event held in a good birding season (February) this year, each team tried to visit as many places as they could in the hope of breaking the record this year.

Teams varied greatly in age and experience. A group of young birders aged below 16 formed the “Freedom Team”, while our respected Chairman C.Y. Lam formed the “Lark Team” with other experienced birders including Boss Lee and Mr. Chan Ming Ming. Birders from mainland China and Macau formed the “EWNS Team”. They particularly enjoyed exploring the various bird-watching places in Hong Kong and exchanging their birdwatching skills with local birders.

# Bird Watching Competition"

## Contingency Plan for Mai Po Closure

On 30 January 2004, the eve of the birdwatching competition, we were suddenly shocked by the news that the government had announced that Mai Po Nature Reserve had to be closed temporarily as a precautionary measure against avian flu outbreak, with immediate effect! As keen birdwatcher Tung stated, "Trying to hold a birdwatching competition without Mai Po is like trying to eat rice with one chopstick!" However, the closure of Mai Po did not stop us from going birdwatching and our event went ahead as planned.

## Paradise for waterbirds

In response to the closure, each team has to work on new strategies. As a good place for waterbirds, Tsim Bei Tsui became a hot starting point. At 4:30pm. on the first day, sixteen teams assembled there and started searching for birds. Other teams started at Kam Tin, Long Valley and Luk Keng.

All transportation without an entry permit is prohibited from entering Tsim Bei Tsui on weekends as a measure to minimize the disturbance to wildlife. Entry permits were prepared for those teams with advance notice, but teams without permits could only enter the zone on foot. With regrets for not having obtained permits beforehand, the latter still got good results on the first day with their fruitful experience and patience.

## Go! Go! Go and Find!

When the sun went down, the teams visited different places over the territory targeted at spotting and listening for the calls of nocturnal birds such as the Nightjars, Owlets and Scops Owls.

The next day, they woke up in early morning and set off to the Peak, Kowloon Park and the Zoological and Botanical Gardens for urban birds. With the Formula One Style driving of their team-mates, some teams even reached Tai Po Kau by 6:30am!

The day was sunny with a gentle breeze, good for sun tans but apparently not for birding. The teams traveled between Long Valley, Kam Tin, Luk Keng and Kowloon Hill catchment area. Many teams ended their journey on the path of Tan Kon Chau, due to closure of Mai Po, making it a bustling market for birders.

## Treasure the last minute

With the finishing time of 4:30 p.m. fast approaching, crowds of participants rushed towards the paths and fishponds on the edge of Mai Po Nature Reserve. While the participants were all exhausted, their spirits were



## Report on "Records 202 Bird Watching Competition" (con't)

not dampened. They treasured every minute to look round with binoculars and telescopes, hoping to see more new birds and put them on the list.

The competition finished at 4:30p.m, but the mark deduction scheme was not needed because all teams reached the helipad finishing site on time. Afterward, all teams were rewarded with a very relaxing, enjoyable dinner and free-flowing beverages at the Guest House, Chinese University. But while we were enjoying the appetizing dinner, our adjudicator Mr. Richard Lewthwaite was sitting next door checking the logbooks. Eventually the winners were revealed. They were as follows:



### The HKBWS Record Award

- Freedom Team  
(records 124 bird species in 24 hours)



### The Best Record Award (voted by all participants)

- Wildbird 2004 Team and  
Nightjar Team (recorded the  
Orange-headed Thrush)



- souvenir for  
all participants

## Special Prize for Special Teams!

Some more special prizes were set up as an encouragement and appreciation for the participants, they are:



- Greater Spotted Eagle Prize**  
(team with most  
experienced birders)  
Lark Team



- Rufous-faced Warbler Prize**  
(most determined team)  
Verditer Flycatcher Team



- Common Buzzard Prize**  
(most active team)  
Little Egret Team



- Plumbeous Redstart Prize**  
(most adventurous team)  
Dippers Team



- Peregrine Prize**  
(the most energetic team)  
Crested Bulbul Team A & B



- Lesser Whitethroat Prize**  
(most absent team)  
White Stork Team



- Little-ringed Plover Prize**  
(most talented team)  
Freedom team



- Yellow-browed Warbler Prize**  
(most attractive team)  
Terns Team



- Black-faced Spoonbill Prize**  
(the most international team)  
EWNS Team



- Black-faced Laughing Thrush Prize**  
(most co-operative team)  
Nightjar Team & Kestrel Team



- Kentish Plover Prize**  
(lookalike team)  
Tree Sparrow Team



- Nordmann's Greenshank Prize**  
(closest guess on the total number  
of birds recorded)  
(C Y Lam, Aukie Au, Apache Lau,  
Yam Wing Yiu, Shum Tin Wing)

## Break the record "202"?


In spite of the closure of Mai Po, a total of 198 bird species are recorded in this "Records 202 Birdwatching Competition". We failed to break the record this time, however, the competition offered us an opportunity to explore more new bird watching sites other than Mai Po. We need to put more effort in the conservation and protection of these valuable and wonderful places from further destruction. All participants, especially the new members, also found the event a most rewarding experience.

## Acknowledgements to all

Thanks are due to the following members who had spared their valuable time and put active involvement in preparing the race:

- Chairman Mr. C Y Lam and members of the EXCO for their support and contribution in making this event happen.
- Mr. Richard Lewthwaite for his kind assistance in taking up the adjudicator role and arranging a nice dining place for us
- Carrie Ma for her kindness assistance and provision of constructive advice
- Mr Lee Wai Ki for his generous sponsorship and support to the Elderly Teams
- Mr. Man Cha Ming, Ms Ho Yuen Ying and Mr. Lee Kwok Fai for their helpful assistance to the Elderly Teams.
- Mr. Alan Chan and Sophia Wong for taking lively snapshots for our members throughout the event and updating the latest results of event on bulletin board respectively;
- Ms Connie Chan and Michelle Li for their comprehensive assistance in registration
- Mr. Lee Hok Fai, Daniel Chan, Marcus Ho, Dr. H F Cheung, Ms Cherry Wong, Michelle Kong and Peter Wong for providing the photos for the badges
- Mr. Ho Man Fai and Apache Lau for production of the memorable badges
- Ms Winnie Kwan for donating the prizes
- Ms Joanne Au and Mr. Apache Lau for sharing the co-ordination and preparation of the event and
- The Transport Department, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the World Wide Fund For Nature Hong Kong (WWF HK) for their co-operation and assistance in preparing the permits for us.

**Thank you for all of your support making this event a resounding success.**

**See you all in 2005!**  
**Let us break the record.** 



## “Record 202 Bird watching Competition 2004”

– Freedom Team / Kwok Jai

The 31st of January was a big day, as it was the “Record 202” Bird Watching Competition 2004 held by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Ltd.

The name of our team – “Freedom team” was decided by myself and Matthew Kwan. We chose the name “Freedom team”, as this year we became independent, and did not need adult guardians. Team members included Matthew Kwan, Lau Sin Pan (Pan pan), Leung Zi Hang and Leung Zi Lok, I was the captain, and Mr Lau Kam Yuen was our honorary chauffeur.

Our first stop was near Tsim Bei Tsui, where we arrived at around 15:45. We scanned Deep Bay and found a flock of Tufted Ducks. Among them we also found a few Greater Scaups. Suddenly, we heard Samson So announce a White Bellied Sea Eagle flying over Mai Po. We followed the bird until it disappeared in the sky. At 4:30, we started the bird race. The first birds we saw were Greater Scaup and Great Crested Grebe. After finding several waders at Mai Po, we went to Fung Lok Wai, where we saw a soaring Spotted Eagle. At dusk, we waited at the pagoda at Tsim Bei Tsui to see if an Eagle Owl would come flying out from the cliff. While I was waiting at the one side, I saw a Scaly Thrush flying out from fallen leaves. Unfortunately, all the others missed it.

Mong Cheng Temple was the first location to search for night birds, where we heard Barred Owl. The second location was Chau Tau. Though we



## “Record 202 Bird watching Competition 2004” (con’t)

got nothing there, at our third location, Nam Chung, we heard Collared Scops Owl. At the next stop, Wu Kau Tang, we didn't hear or see any birds. The final stop for night birds was Sha Lo Tung, where on the last section of the road we saw Woodcock.

It was still dark when we arrived at Kowloon water catchment the next morning. We heard two Collared Scops calling near the pagoda, one of them sounded as if it was just above us. As the dawn broke we saw a black kite, then when we moved on, we had Short-tailed Bush Warbler on the ground and several other species.

On our way back to the vehicle a special call drew our attention – it was a Black-naped Monarch chasing a Yellow-cheeked Tit. It was a pity that other teams did not get it. When we were near the drainage channel, the youngest twin members found a Forest Wagtail standing among the dry leaves. Good camouflaged plumage!

Breakfast at Chinese University was a time to search for Blue Magpie, but we only saw one or two Violet Whistling Thrushes flying around. At a small garden near Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve all members saw Scaly Thrush, which they had missed yesterday. Further on we got Haired Crested Drongo.

On the steep road approaching the warden's hut at Tai Po Kau, we saw an Ashy Drongo, pointed out by the Sparrow Team. After that, we saw a flock of Grey-throated Minivets. On the Blue walk we were looking for Japanese Robin but got Tristram's Bunting instead. On the road we saw Grey-backed Thrushes and with good luck in the orchard we found Verditer Flycatcher and Black-throated Laughing Thrush. Before we left, we also saw three Spotted Doves.


The next stop was Wunyu, where our target bird was Plumbeous Redstart. There we saw Carrie, Ada

and their team members searching for something in the stream. From our position we could see a Plumbeous Redstart perching just under their feet inside the drainage channel. Tough luck to them, as they told us later they dipped the bird there. The following stop was Ho Sheung Heung. We moved ahead to a field with long grass, where we found Rubythroat and several Painted Snipe.

After that, we visited several secret locations, which were provided by our Chauffeur. The first on was a smelly drainage channel with two umbrella shaped trees, where the main feature was a Red-throated Flycatcher. The second location was very close to the border, at a large area of grassland, with some bamboo trees and a small river. We saw a Common Kestrel take a catch from the river and fly away. On a wire, we spotted a Sand Martin among the Barn Swallows. Just when we were wondering where to find a Daurian Redstart, one was nice enough to fly across in front of our vehicle.

We got onto a wrong road – Route 3 – and had to make a u-turn and pay the toll twice. To make the second HK\$22 more worthwhile we tried our best to search for a raptor there. However, we only found three Feral Pigeons. They were too expensive, but leaving Route 3 towards Kam Tin, we had Common Starling and Grey headed Lapwing.

Arriving at the outskirts of Mai Po, in a grassland next to a fish pond we found Intermediate Egret, Black-faced Spoonbill, and a Marsh Harrier gliding in the distance. The last good bird we saw before we got back to the Helipad was Temminck's Stint, but before we submitted the logbook, we saw several Azure-winged Magpie and a Northern Sparrowhawk.

Finally, we have to thank Mr Lau Kam Yuen, our honorary chauffeur, who provided several secret locations without which we could not have won the race. 



# East Dongting Hu Waterbird Survey and Bird Race, 3-11 December 2003

– Text : Richard Lewthwaite, Photos : Carrie Ma, John Holmes

A group of seven Hong Kong birders (Cheung Ho-fai, John & Jemi Holmes, Apache Lau, Carrie Ma, Yu Yat Tung and Richard Lewthwaite), plus Silvia Choi from Macau, travelled up to East Dongting, where we met about 60 birdwatchers from all over China who had gathered to take part in the Swarovski-sponsored Dongting Bird Race. Our group was there to conduct a waterbird survey funded by HKBWS and also to take part in the bird race. Joining us in the survey were Du Ke, Li Qang, Liu Yang, Wang Jiye, Zhang Zhaohui and also Phil Heath, a wetland-specialist from the Norfolk Broads in the UK.



Dongting Hu lies in the Yangtse flood-plain in northeast Hunan about 400 km west of Poyang Lake and is the largest freshwater

lake in China. As at Poyang, enormous seasonal fluctuations in water levels brought on by summer flooding are essential for the creation of suitable habitat for waterbirds each winter, including more than half of the world population of Lesser White-fronted Goose. The lakeshore is bordered by extensive areas of short grass and also reeds up to 3-4 metres tall, which are harvested for paper-making. Disturbance from fishermen is considerable- their



nets and fish-trapping devices can be seen almost everywhere – and vast areas of apparently suitable habitat can be almost birdless. Except in the core area near Jun Shan, where waterbirds were far more approachable than elsewhere, our experience was that waterbird flocks were very shy and readily took to the air if approached within a kilometre.

We split into four teams with the aim of surveying all major water-bird sites at the lake. This was more difficult than expected due

## East Dongting Hu waterbird counts

		Jan 2003	Dec 2003
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	2	1409
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		86
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	380	1044
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	435	673
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	211	108
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		82
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		1
Great Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	2	2
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	2	
Oriental Stork	<i>Ciconia boyciana</i>	66	47
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	440	979
Bewick's Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>	59	14
Swan Goose	<i>Anser cygnoides</i>	4	234
Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>	17840	5977
Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	4417	260
Lesser White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser erythropus</i>	16550	11771
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	80	231
unidentified grey geese	<i>Anser sp</i>		10685
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>		978
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	210	458
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>		30
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	20	200
Falcated Duck	<i>Anas falcata</i>	1140	2956
Gadwal	<i>Anas strepera</i>	63	180
Baikal Teal	<i>Anas formosa</i>		35
Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	3390	189
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	606	1454
Yellow-nib Duck	<i>A. poecilorhyncha zonorhyncha</i>	574	223





to the inadequate maps we had and the poor light conditions which prevailed, heavily overcast skies and mists

being the norm at this time of year. Also, the water levels were believed to be unusually low this winter, thus possibly disrupting the normal distribution of waterbirds at the lake. The table shows waterbird totals logged in surveys of the area in two consecutive winters, by Mark Barter in January 2003 and our group in December 2003.

On a boat journey upriver from Yueyang, we had fairly frequent sightings of Finless Porpoises and also noted 30 or 40 domestic cormorants being used by fishermen.



During the visit, we found Hen Harrier, Common Buzzard and Peregrine Falcon to be the commonest raptors over the lake and its edges, with up to six of each species logged daily. We also saw up to three each of Eastern Marsh Harrier, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Common Kestrel, as well as a Merlin, an Eastern Grass Owl, a Short-eared Owl and eight Long-eared Owls (roosting together in a tree at Jun Shan).



The commonest landbirds on the lake edge were Eurasian Skylark and Buff-bellied Pipits. Also logged were small

numbers of Oriental Skylarks, Water Pipits and Dusky Warblers as well as a Chinese Grey Shrike, three Japanese Marsh Warblers, 30 Chinese Penduline Tits and two Lapland Buntings. Birds found near villages included up to four Common Pheasants, five Eurasian Hoopoes, 50 Little Buntings, 20 Black-faced Buntings, 65 Eurasian Tree Sparrows, 45 Crested Mynas, 80 White-cheeked Starlings and four Common Magpies. Apart from a single fly-by Rook/Carrion Crow,

### East Dongting Hu waterbird counts (con't)

		Jan 2003	Dec 2003
Common Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	144	215
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	67	52
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	46	20
Baer's Pochard	<i>Aythya baeri</i>	4	6
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	122	90
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>		5
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>		108
Smew	<i>Mergus albellus</i>	3	222
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	10	19
unidentified duck			6323
Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	38	116
Hooded Crane	<i>Grus monacha</i>	27	2
White-naped Crane	<i>Grus vipio</i>	1	
Siberian Crane	<i>Grus leucogeranus</i>	3	15
Brown Crake	<i>Amauromis akool</i>		1
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		2
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		58
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	5297	3780
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	375	478
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	3233	6
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	20	
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	3356	76
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	31	1
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	2	
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	225	6
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	6832	2984
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>		1
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	31	73
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	5	11
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	1	2
Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>		1
Pintail Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>	1	
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	49	87
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	10	
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	16117	2849
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	1	
unidentified shorebirds		70	
Heuglin's Gull	<i>Larus heuglini</i> ( <i>taimyrensis</i> )		3
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus (cachinnans)</i> <i>mongolicus</i>	97	118
Great Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>	1	
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	20	2637
<b>Total waterbirds</b>		<b>82730</b>	<b>60673</b>



(constantly calling and occasionally singing in the tea gardens), 120 Yellow-bellied Tits, 50 Bramblings, 300 Grey-capped Greenfinches, 350 Chinese Grosbeaks and 44 Azure-winged Magpies. Among other species found here were Oriental Turtle and Spotted Doves, Eurasian Hoopoe, Great Spotted and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, Grey Wagtail, White Wagtail (*leucopsis* and *ocularis*), Olive-backed Pipit, Collared Finchbill, Long-tailed Shrike, Red-flanked Bluetail, Daurian Redstart, Blue Whistling Thrush, White's, Grey-backed and Pale Thrushes, Masked Laughingthrush, Hwamei, Red-billed Leiothrix, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Plain Prinia, Common Tailorbird,



we saw no crows or jackdaws. The reserve staff reported that a stand of poplars which once held large numbers of crows and jackdaws had been felled.

Our enjoyment of the visit was greatly enhanced by the time spent at Jun Shan around the time of the bird race. Jun Shan is a fairly extensive island on the edge of the lake, well-wooded, with tea gardens and some parkland. Many of the woodland trees were fruiting abundantly, and parts of the island were very birdy indeed. In addition to the eight Long-eared Owls mentioned above, surprising discoveries included two Rufous-bellied Woodpeckers, a male Blue-fronted Redstart, a Chinese Thrush, a Pygmy Wren Babbler, 10 Black-chinned Yuhinas and two Rufous-faced Warblers. Some species were present in good numbers. We recorded day-counts of 150 Chinese Bulbuls, 100 Chinese Blackbirds, 170 Dusky Thrushes (pre-dominantly *naumanni*, but also some *enunomus*), 50 Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler




Pallas's Leaf and Yellow-browed Warblers, Black-throated and Great Tits, Japanese White-eye, Yellow-browed, Rustic and Yellow-throated Buntings, and Eurasian Jay.

The Dongting Bird Race itself was hotly contested by seventeen teams and won by a team from Beijing, with Tung and Silvia's team second. Coverage was restricted to the core area of the reserve and its immediate environs including Jun Shan, but otherwise the rules were less stringent than in Hong Kong, with a species counting even if noted by only two of the four team members. I was favourably impressed by the equipment most participants carried (predominantly top-end Leica and Swarovski binoculars and telescopes) and also by the overall birdwatching standards.

The experience of seeing flocks of Lesser White-fronted Geese and birding in the core area and at Jun Shan makes a winter visit to East Dongting very worthwhile. Getting there is fairly easy from Hong Kong, either by rail (direct trains Shenzhen-

Yueyang or Guangzhou-Yueyang) or plane (Hong Kong-Changsha or Shenzhen-Changsha). We travelled up in soft-sleeper berths on an overnight train and were met by reserve staff at Yueyang and driven to Jun Shan. On the way back, we drove from Yueyang to Changsha and then flew to Shenzhen. During the survey, Apache and I were very capably looked after by Mr Zhou Yong who acted as driver/local guide for us.

Our rooms were warm and comfortable at Jun Shan and Yueyang. And they needed to be! The weather, as is apparently normal for the time of year, was cold and windy with rainy periods and occasional snow and sleet. The mud on the lakeshore was soft and deep, and we found that Wellington boots were essential even for walking on the drier edges.

Anyone who is thinking of going to Dongting Hu is welcome to contact me <[rwlewthwaite@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:rwlewthwaite@cuhk.edu.hk)> for a triplist and the HKBWS office <[hkbws@hkbws.org.hk](mailto:hkbws@hkbws.org.hk)> for contact details of the reserve. 

At the invitation of Hainan Forestry Bureau, Jemi Wong (JW) and Mike Kilburn (MK) from HKBWS and Lee Kwok Shing (LKS) from Kadoorie Farm (KFBG) joined the Hainan provincial water bird survey. The intention was to survey all the major wetlands in Hainan Province.

The key target species of the survey were Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* and Saunders' Gull *Larus saundersi* which winter both northeast of Hainan (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) and to the southwest at Xuan Thuy in Vietnam. It seemed likely that these two globally threatened species should occur, especially as Hainan has numerous areas of seemingly suitable habitat. In addition we were looking for Swinhoe's Egret *Egretta eulophotes*, which was reported breeding at Fangcheng County in neighbouring Guangxi Province in 2002.

After spending the first two days at Hainan's premier wetland, Dongzhaigang (DZG), close to Haikou at the northern tip of the island, we were to split into three teams to cover the west coast, the east coast and the central wetlands.

DZG is a huge tidal wetland that is surrounded by mangroves, fishponds and salt pans. However, unlike Deep Bay where human disturbance is relatively controlled, the mudflats there are criss-crossed with all manner of fishing nets, served of course by hundreds of fishermen. As a result, the composition of species was rather similar to Deep Bay, but the numbers were far fewer – with Great and Little Egrets numbering hundreds rather than thousands of birds, almost no gulls, and waders totalling a few hundred. Highlights included a Black-faced Spoonbill and the first record of Ruff for Hainan.

I joined the western group and over the next five days covered some 20 sites ranging from commercial ports and wonderful mangrove-lined estuaries to huge reservoirs, salt pans and shrimp ponds. We were fortunate to find two groups of Black-faced Spoonbills – ten birds at Xingying, where they had been discovered earlier in the winter by Dr Zhang Guogang, and forty eight at Sigeng, a previously unknown site a little further to the southwest.

For the Hainan Forestry Bureau this discovery was the major highlight of the survey. A group of almost fifty Black-faced Spoonbills increases by 4% the known global population of around 1,300 birds! This has particular significance because any site that regularly hosts more than 1% of the population of any species qualifies as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. It is hoped this discovery may

lead to the establishment of a new Ramsar reserve to protect the site.

Other important discoveries of the trip were a Lesser Fish Eagle soaring over Song Tao Reservoir by LKS – the first record in Hainan for about 40 years. LKS also made the second sighting of more than 1,100 Lesser Tree Ducks on a single small reservoir, just a few months after they were first noted there by a KFBG survey team. On his way back to Haikou, LKS stopped at Sigeng and found a single Eurasian Spoonbill among the Black-faced Spoonbills. This was another first record for Hainan, though it did reduce the number of Black-faced Spoonbills to 47.

Also of conservation significance were reports of up to 10,000 Red-billed Starlings coming in to roost in mangroves at Dongzhaigang. During the survey a minimum of 2,150 birds arrived at a roost site in Xingying County Nature Reserve in just 15 minutes. These numbers are significant because it was formerly believed that Hong Kong was the only site where large numbers (up to 3,000) were known to winter.

We were also told that there were no previous records of Shoveler from Hainan, and noted very low numbers of wild duck everywhere except for on two inland reservoirs. However, during the survey Shoveler were noted at both Dongzhaigang and a reservoir near Fuluo.

Gull numbers were also very low. No Saunders' Gulls were noted and the peak count of Black-headed Gulls, though a new high count for Hainan, was only 222. This compares to a regular winter peak in Hong Kong of some 15,000 - 20,000 birds. Heuglin's Gulls numbered less than 100 in total. However terns were more plentiful – Gull-billed and Caspian were widespread in small numbers and JW recorded a flock of 895 White-winged Terns in Qinglan Harbour.

The diversity of waders was high. Perhaps most interesting were a flock of 32 Sanderling on a beach near Qiaotou. There are just three winter records from Hong Kong. Dunlin and Turnstone were also present at most sites, but no more than 150 and 10 respectively were recorded at any site. The best sites for waders were salt pans, a habitat which has long been absent in Hong Kong. Like the shrimp ponds and inter-tidal mudflats, the salt pans were subject to varying degrees of human disturbance. One saltworker told us of his


success at using mist nets to catch birds at the beginning of every winter.

Other birds of interest seen around the wetlands included good numbers of Olive-backed Sunbird and local races of Chinese Bulbul and Black-throated Laughing Thrush. The latter two are very distinctive and may well be full species. The bulbul has an almost completely black head and was seen only in small groups (usually less than five). The white-headed race that is common in large numbers in Hong Kong is also present (in low numbers) in Hainan, mostly in the north. The Black-throated laughing Thrush is very different. It is illustrated on Plate 101 of MacKinnon and Phillips (*A Field Guide to the Birds of China*), but labelled as Rufous-collared Laughingthrush (no. 1021). We first saw these birds in scrub near Dongzhaigang HQ and noted the striking difference from the Hong Kong race (no1022 on plate 101). The greatest differences were the lack of a white cheek patch and the overall dark brown colour of the Hainan race. However the calls are rather similar.

In total X,000 birds of 170 species were noted during the survey. The undoubted success of the survey can be attributed to the careful planning and preparation by the Hainan Forestry Bureau, Engineer Mr Su Wenba

of Hainan Wildlife and Plant Protection Centre, Spoonbill Researcher Dr Zhang Guogang and Professor LiangWei of Hainan Normal University, and to the willingness of the Hainan Forestry Bureau to commit resources to the study.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the survey was the large numbers of seemingly suitable habitat which held so few birds in comparison to Deep Bay. Human disturbance was clearly the most important factor in keeping bird numbers low. It is no coincidence that the Black-faced Spoonbills were found at sites with the lowest degrees of human disturbance. It is understood that bird numbers in Deep Bay began to rise significantly only after hunting was banned and Mai Po was declared a reserve.

It seems likely that many of these sites could hold higher wintering populations if the degree of human disturbance could be reduced or contained. At present, none of the reserves or sites have areas that are free from human disturbance. If these were established – perhaps by purchasing the land or retraining fishermen as reserve wardens – it may be that Hainan's wetlands would more closely reflect the carrying capacity suggested by these areas of available habitat. 

## Forest Birding in Hainan, Jianfengling and Bawanling National Nature Reserves,

5–8 January, 2004 – Mike Kilburn

Following the winter waterbird survey, Mike Kilburn and Jemi Wong spent a morning birding at Jianfengling and two days at Bawangling, two lowland forest reserves in western Hainan Island. Hainan, which is China's newest province (it was part of Guangdong until 1988), is the southernmost part of China, sticking out some 200km south into the South China Sea, like a giant teardrop. It is at roughly the same latitude as northern Thailand, and the avifauna has a strong resemblance to Thailand and Vietnam, with a sprinkling of endemics and unique subspecies, several of which appear excellent candidates for splitting.

Having arrived at Jianfengling in the dark, the new day gave us our first view of the reserve – a circle of well-forested hills centred around a small reservoir. At first light we entered the core area of the reserve and headed up a broad path through the jungle to the “Trembling Tower”, of which you will hear more later . . .

The forest looked to be of good quality, although, as with most places in China, it was not truly primary forest. However it was full of birds and our “one-hour to the tower” walk turned into almost three as we kept stopping along the winding streamside trail to take in some wonderful birds.

For me the best of these were the endemic Hainan Leaf Warbler – a bright yellow bundle of stripes with a bright yellow bill, and several very confiding flocks of Silver-breasted Broadbills. Other quality birds included, two or three of the shy but beautiful Red-headed Trogon, several spectacularly yellow-crowned Sultan Tits, and hyperactive White-throated Fantails (nice to see them where they belong, unlike the escape at Ng Tung Chai this winter!), a Large Woodshrike and Rufous-tailed Robin. As we neared the tower, I caught a fleeting glimpse of a male Silver Pheasant, which lived up to its name of “White Spirit” by swiftly and silently disappearing into the darkness of the forest.





More familiar birds included the top noisemakers – Puff-throated Bulbuls peered out of the foliage at us, shrieking, cackling and whistling like old ladies in a mahjong parlour. They were outdone only by a majestically bitchy Racquet-tailed Drongo, hurling itself at any bird that came near – a swooping, screaming drag-queen clad from

top to toe in glittering black – its racquet tails streaming and bouncing like a pair of giant dangly earrings.

And then there was the tower. I had been assured me it was essential to climb the tower to see Ratchet-tailed Treepie, Barred Cuckoo Dove and other high canopy specialists. It was built back in the 1980s for spotting forest fires and, from the ground, looked strong enough – solid steel girders bolted together in a firm concrete foundation. The first few flights of the metal staircase that wound around the outside were OK.

But as I came through the canopy at around 10 metres I felt the tower swaying under our weight and the gap between the top step and each landing seemed to yawn wider and wider. Increasingly nervous, I gripped the railing tighter and tighter and my confident first steps lapsed into jerkier and jerkier movements until I finally arrived on the observation platform some 42 metres from the forest floor – my heart pounding and my stomach churning like an unpleasantly churny thing!

Once up there, the view was spectacular, big tropical trees stretching away in all directions, punctured by the odd mountain peak and ridgeline – it just took a big effort of will to enjoy it while we swayed gently to and fro in the light morning breeze!

The first birds we saw were a pair of Blue-bearded Bee-eaters, big, green and stocky as a barbet, with a bright splash of blue running down their fronts below their long, curved bills. We also saw several Mountain Imperial Pigeons, Grey Treepies and Scarlet and Grey-chinned Minivets and a distant Oriental Honey Buzzard. There was, *naturellement*, no sign of a £@\$^&£\$ Ratchet-tailed Treepie (excuse my French).

Perhaps the most interesting birds were the Black-browed Barbets. This species occurs across southern China (notably at Chebaling and Babao Shan in Guangdong) and in Taiwan. Here it showed an all-black cap – in contrast to the birds elsewhere (yellow fading to blue in Taiwan). The call also sounded a little softer than in Guangdong.

Climbing down the tower was definitely worse than the ascent, and the thought of doing that again left

me wondering how badly I needed to see the Treepie! Mr Jiang the Jianfengling reserve manager was kind enough to give us a lift to Bawangling. We heard that in the old days there had been no staircase on the tower, and he had simply climbed the girders! I definitely don't need to see it that badly!

Bawangling is about an hour north of Jianfengling. When we arrived at the town outside the reserve we discovered that the reserve vehicle had broken down to make matters worse it was 5:30 – just before dinner. However Mr Zhang, the deputy reserve manager, and his staff showed wonderful kindness and flexibility in agreeing to take us into the reserve on motorbikes. So after a quick sprint into the market for noodles we and our bags were driven the 20+ km to the Dong Er ranger station in the heart of the reserve on four motorbikes.

It was well worth staying overnight to be in the forest for dawn. And that evening we heard a curious call which, by elimination, we believe must have been Oriental Bay Owl. The call corresponded closely with the “oo hli hoo” description in Robson's “Field Guide to the Birds of South East Asia”. It made this call every 45 seconds or so. We would welcome hearing from anyone who may be able to help us confirm the identification. We also heard two different Collared Owlets.

Next morning, accompanied by reserve warden Mr Chen we quickly failed to see one of our key target species – the endemic Hainan Hill Partridge. A pair flushed several times from a gully above the road, but was far too smart to let us get close enough for a reasonable view – I am sure there is a silent “aarrgh!” of frustration in *Arborophila* (as in *A(aarrgh!)borophila*) – the genus to which all these difficult hill partridges belong! We flushed a couple more during our stay but never had anything like a tickable view. Other good birds we missed included Blue-rumped Pitta and Large Scimitar Babbler.

The other endemic game bird, the recently split Hainan Peacock Pheasant (formerly Grey Peacock Pheasant) also eluded us despite being within a few feet of one on two separate occasions! However Mike and Zhang Yu, a research student from Beijing Normal University studying the Hainan Hill Partridge did see a fine male Silver Pheasant, and brief views of a genuinely wild female Red Jungle Fowl – the mother of all chickens!

Despite this we did see a number of good birds inside the forest. These included Lesser Yellownappe, a couple of Eye-browed Wren-Babblers, no bigger than the leaves they were rooting through, two different Japanese Robins and a Black-browed Barbet which we found

by the noise of the fruit it dropped from the canopy to the forest floor!


Typical birds which we saw more easily along the road included White-crowned Forktail, Rufous-capped Babbler, Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, White-bellied Yuhina, Blue-winged Minla, Rufous-faced Warbler, Hainan Leaf Warbler, Grey Treepie and the huge Mountain Imperial Pigeon.

More specialist birds included Yellow-billed Nuthatch – a close relative of the Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, and the Hainan race of Rufous-cheeked Laughingthrush. Although the birds in Hainan share the same prominent orange cheek patch, birds in the field show no sign of any white border at the rear edge – another full species perhaps?

On our second morning we hit a very good bird wave near the entrance to the core area. This included Grey-capped Woodpecker, Grey-headed Parrotbill, Chestnut-fronted Shrike-Babbler, White-browed Shrike-Babbler, Black-winged Cuckoo Shrike and Bronzed Drongo.

However the most striking of all was a Greater Yellowname being molested by “Mr Bad Attitude” – none other than a Greater Racquet-tailed Drongo! We had previously found Spot-necked Babbler and heard a Lesser Shortwing and an Emerald Dove in the same area.

Our final birding in the reserve was the car ride back down to the town in the dark. Jemi performed her usual nightbird magic in conjuring up an impressive 4 Collared Scops Owls and 2 Barred Owlets in roadside trees. The next day we drove straight to the airport and the final bird of our trip was an adult White-bellied Sea Eagle that flew over the highway between Shenzhen Airport and the border crossing back into Hong Kong.

In closing we would like to thank the many staff of both Bawangling and Jianfengling Nature Reserves who made sure we were well taken care of and went to great lengths to allow us to enjoy the best possible birding. 


## Hangzhou and Ningpo, December 2003 – Richard Lewthwaite

Following a trip to Nanjing in Christmas 2002, Mo-yung Yuk Lin and I were keen to visit other places in East China which offered the combination of good winter birding and interesting cultural attractions. We decided upon Zhejiang this last Christmas, and together with Deneb Cheung spent a few days first at Hangzhou and then Ningpo.

At Hangzhou the main focus of our visit was the West Lake (Xihu), a large shallow man-made lake whose splendid scenery enthused a succession of Chinese poets to give evocative names to picturesque spots. Thus, it was near “Three Pools Mirroring the Moon” that we saw Goosanders and beside “Melting Snow at Broken Bridge” that we found roosting Night Herons and a flock of Common Teal. Other more prosaically named parts of the lake held Little Grebe, Great Cormorant, Chinese Spotbill and Yellow-legged Gull. All were in small numbers apart from the Teal, which numbered over a hundred. Though it did not snow during our visit, it was cold, with temperatures not much above zero.

The area around the lake is dotted with temples and pagodas, with extensive woodland and some groves of ancient trees. Best birds here were two Japanese Waxwings and at least three Chestnut Bulbuls, the latter possibly the first for northern Zhejiang. The most numerous species, all with day counts of 30-60 individuals, were Chinese Bulbul, Black Bulbul, Chinese Blackbird, Dusky Thrush (mainly *naumanni*), Black-throated Tit, Vinous-throated Parrotbill and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Also fairly common were Spotted Dove, Great Tit and Yellow-billed Grosbeak, while White Wagtail (subspecies *leucopsis*), Long-tailed Shrike, Daurian Redstart, Red-flanked Bluetail, Magpie Robin, Pallas's Leaf Warbler and Japanese White-eye were all noted in small numbers. A single Red-whiskered Bulbul, well to the north of its published range, was probably an escape.

Ningbo today is a bustling and prosperous city with skyscrapers, the fashion centre of East China. It's hard to imagine it as a place where Robert Swinhoe had found Crested Ibis breeding. We found no birds of that quality, but did see a flock of 80 Dusky Thrushes (70% *naumanni*, 30% *eunomus*), a Pale Thrush, four Brownish-flanked Bush Warblers, two Yellow-browed Warblers, a Brambling and a Yellow-throated Bunting, all in the grounds and adjacent woodland of the Baguo temple.

I prepared a Zhejiang checklist for the trip. If anyone is interested in seeing it, feel free to contact me at [rwlethwaite@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:rwlethwaite@cuhk.edu.hk). 

# Tsim Bei Tsui


– Stanley Ng



On Sunday 22 February 2004, 15 members joined an outing at Tsim Bei Tsui, but decided against looking for water birds owing to the unsatisfactory tidal situation. Instead, we made our way to the pig farm along the Deep Bay Road, during which we had good sightings of various species including Chinese Bulbul, Crested Bulbul, Magpie Robin, White Wagtail and Crested Myna, together with a pair of fleeing Koels, and a very generous Buzzard who offered some good photo-taking opportunities before flying off slowly. At the uphill junction, we were greeted by a hopping bird in fabulous plumage, a Daurian Redstart.

On route to the hilltop, a Collared Crow was busy attempting to force a Black Kite and a Buzzard out of the shrubs. A pair of Red Turtle Doves sat comfortably under the shadow near the pig farm, while a Green Sandpiper foraged in the distance.

Lunchtime at Mong Tseng Wai was made even nicer by the sight of moorhen chicks with their mother, and barn swallows tirelessly feeding their lovely fledglings. After a break, it was time to return to the car park. As we patiently looked for birds along our journey, a bird with red beak and green wings flew up in front of us. It was an Emerald Dove, a new species for my personal list.

At around 2:00 p.m. when we were about to return to our starting point, our young but outstanding Kwok Jai (a nickname of our classmate Cheung) shouted "Eagle Owl". We found it resting comfortably on the cliff. The bird napped leisurely and slightly stretched its neck with no regard to the birders, who were busy photographing it. We watched the bird for a long time and finally, reluctantly, concluded a very good birding trip. 

## Records :

1	Little Egret	25	White-breasted Kingfisher
2	Great Egret	26	Black-capped Kingfisher
3	Grey Heron	27	Common Kingfisher
4	Chinese Pond Heron	28	Barn Swallow
5	Cormorant	29	House Swift
6	Black-faced Spoonbill	30	Olive-backed Pipit
7	Teal	31	Tree Sparrow
8	Wigeon	32	White Wagtail
9	Shoveler	33	Chinese Bulbul
10	Pintail	34	Crested Bulbul
11	Black-eared Kite	35	Magpie Robin
12	Buzzard	36	Daurian Redstart
13	Moorhen	37	Yellow-bellied Prinia
14	White-breasted Waterhen	38	Common Tailorbird
15	Curllew	39	Black-faced Laughing Thrush
16	Terek Sandpiper	40	Japanese White-eye
17	Green Sandpiper	41	Magpie
18	Common Sandpiper	42	Collared Crow
19	Spotted Dove	43	Jungle Crow
20	Red-turtle Dove	44	Crested Myna
21	Emerald Dove	45	Silky Starling
22	Koel	46	Black-necked Starling
23	Great Coucal		
24	Eurasian Eagle Owl		

These are unchecked records. Members are reminded of the importance of submitting all records on cards or electronically.

## February (second half)

Though the weather remained cool throughout the late winter and into the first part of spring, an unusually early large-scale clear-out of waterbirds occurred in the Inner Deep Bay Ramsar site, very likely as a result of disturbances caused by illegal fishermen. With Mai Po still closed to birders (as part of the government response to the avian flu scare), the fishermen appear to have had the place to themselves and were able to do as they liked. Only five Black-headed Gulls and very small numbers of large gulls were logged in the February waterfowl count on 22nd (YYT), despite it being the time when passage of large gulls normally peaks.

On 19th, there were reports of a Plumbeous Redstart at Mui Wo and 33 Oriental Skylarks at Chek Lap Kok (GJC), as well as a Fujian Niltava at Hatton Road (JSRE) and the long-staying Mountain Tailorbird at Tai Po Kau Headland (KB). Two days later, a Mountain Bush Warbler was heard singing at Tai Tam reservoir (JH) and a Slaty-legged Crake was found at Kowloon Park (GC). These were followed by a Brown-headed Thrush at Ho Chung on 24th (JW) and the fourth Small Niltava of the winter, a male at Lai King on 25th (TJW).

Big Bird Race participants were allowed into Mai Po for one day only, on 28th, but with the exception of an Oriental Stork, few birds of interest were found there. Elsewhere, race highlights were a Ferruginous Duck, Baer's Pochard and Falcated Duck at the KCRC ponds at Lok Ma Chau, a Eurasian Eagle Owl, Carrion Crow and Daurian Jackdaw at Tsim Bei Tsui and three Mountain Bulbuls, a Mountain Tailorbird and a Hainan Blue Flycatcher at Tai Po Kau.

On 29th, a Bohemian Waxwing and still five Common Starlings were reported at Kam Tin (JW).

## March

The first noteworthy report of the month concerned a Greater Painted Snipe at Mo Tak, Lamma Island (JW). Other reports of interest in the first week were a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler at Lok Ma Chau on 3rd (GJC), a male Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush at Kadoorie FBG on 4th (EMSK), seven Black Bulbuls in Tai Po Kau (KB) and 30 Greater Scaup in Deep Bay on 6th (GT), these following the record numbers in early February, and a Japanese Robin photographed by an infrared camera at Hong Kong

University on 7th.

A quiet period then ensued until 12th when an Ancient Auklet was found at Stanley. Reports the next day included up to 10 Black Bulbuls at Tai Po Kau and Mount Austin (JSRE), a Common Rosefinch at Tai Po Kau Headland (RB) and yet another Mountain Tailorbird, this time at Ma On Shan CP (TJW). Up to four of this species were also reported around this time at Ng Tung Chai (EMSK), while a Chestnut-tailed Starling was found at Mui Wo (GT).

March 18th was a red letter day as the government finally reopened Mai Po.

Passage of Grey-faced Buzzards was first noted from 20th when two were at Mai Po (PJL). Subsequent reports in March concerned 22 at Sha Lo Tung (GJC) and 14 at Mui Wo (PA) on 22nd, at least 60 at Tai Long Wan on 28th (LWK), six the same day at Lamma (GS), and two at Kowloon Park on 29th (JoH).

Other reports in this period included a Common Reed Bunting at Mai Po on 20th (PJL), two unusually late Bright-capped Cisticolas at Ma Tso Lung on 21st (JA) and an early Japanese Yellow Bunting at Penfold Park on 23rd (GT).

Passage was unusually strong in the final week of the month. At Chek Lap Kok, 32 Oriental Plovers, a new high count, were present on 26th (GJC) and on the same day no fewer than 35 shorebird species, surely a record for March, were logged at Mai Po, including a Spoon-billed Sandpiper, five Ruffs, two Long-billed Dowitchers, a Nordmann's Greenshank and a Little Stint (EMSK, RWL, YYT). The following day, single Blue-and-white and Ferruginous Flycatchers were noted at Tai Po Kau (PKK) and a Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler was observed carrying nesting material there (KHK). On 28th, there were reports of 34 Intermediate Egrets, the highest ever spring count, at Mai Po (GJC), five Silver-backed Needletails at Tsim Bei Tsui (JA), 30 Silky Starlings at Lamma (GS) and an Ashy Minivet at Tai Po Kau Headland (RB).

In the last days of the month gull passage finally got under way, with over 170 Heuglin's Gulls in Deep Bay and also a first-winter Vega Gull, potentially only the third Hong Kong record, from 28th (GJC), up to five Slaty-backed and two Pallas's Gulls on 29th and 30th (MDW, PJL) and a Kamchatka Gull on 31st (RWL).

On 30th, a Daurian Jackdaw was seen near Mai Po (EMSK). The month closed with five Spoon-billed

Sandpipers, the highest ever count in March, seen from the Mai Po boardwalk (RWL), two Chestnut-tailed Starlings at Mui Wo (PA) and a Chestnut-eared Bunting beside the Mai Po access road (GT).

### April (first half)

Following a promising first day of the month when there were nine Ashy Minivets at Lamma (GS) and one at Cheung Chau, an Eastern Crowned Warbler at the latter island (MDW), five Silver-backed Needletails at Kadoorie FBG (EMSK) and two Blue-and-white Flycatchers at Mai Po (GT), what was to be the strongest passage of the first half of the month occurred during 2nd-3rd.

On 2nd, an orchard behind Mong Tseng village attracted two Swinhoe's Minivets and a flock of 50 Ashy Minivets, equalling the previous highest count of this species, whilst a grassy hill nearby formed part of a flight line used by 27 Grey-faced Buzzards in late morning. Among the large numbers of Little Swifts and Barn Swallows using the airspace in the area were two Oriental Pratincoles and two Silver-backed Needletails (EMSK, RWL). Other reports of the latter species on the same day concerned 12 at Tai Mo Shan and 60 at Shek Kong Catchment (RWL). Other rarities reported on this day included the first Chestnut-winged and Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoos of the year beside Route Twisk and at Ng Tung Chai (EMSK, RWL), a Citrine Wagtail at Long Valley (MDW), a Japanese Yellow Bunting at Ho Chung (MT) and a Pale-footed Bush Warbler at Ng Tung Chai (EMSK).


Flycatchers were much in evidence on 3rd, the most productive sites being Dong Ping Chau, Sha Tin Pass and Ng Tung Chai. Migrants noted at Dong Ping Chau included six Blue-and-white, two Narcissus and one Japanese Paradise Flycatcher, nine singing Red-tailed Robins and single Eastern Crowned and Greenish Warblers (JA). Highlights at Sha Tin Pass were an Orange-headed Thrush, three Blue-and-white and three Narcissus Flycatchers (GH), whilst at Ng Tung Chai there were single Blue-and-white, Narcissus, Mugimaki, Ferruginous and Hainan Blue Flycatchers as well as a Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo, Japanese and Grey-backed Thrushes and three singing Mountain Bush Warblers (EMSK). There were also reports of Ferruginous, Narcissus, Blue-and-white and Japanese Paradise Flycatchers from Tai Po Kau and Mai Po (PKK, GC, GJC), and an unusually large gathering of 111 Chestnut Bulbuls was noted at Tai Po Kau Headland (KB).

Though flycatchers continued to be reported in small







numbers from widespread localities over the next few days, a clear-out appears to have taken place on the night of 3rd. Significant reports on 4th and 5th concerned 20 Siberian Rubythroats and a Common Reed Bunting at Mai Po (PJJ), a singing Rufous-faced Warbler at Ho Chung (MT), 11 Nordmann's Greenshank at Mai Po (YYT) and the first Indian Cuckoo of the year at Cheung Chau (MDW). On 6th, a Mountain Scops Owl, a potential addition to the Hong Kong list, and a Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo were reported from the Starling Inlet area (LKS), a Citrine Wagtail was present at Fung Lok Wai (JA) and 59 Hair-crested Drongos were counted flying to a roost at Shek Kong Catchment (RWL). The latter site held a singing Lesser Shortwing two days later (GJC).

At Mai Po, the first Pectoral Sandpiper, Asiatic Dowitcher and Swinhoe's Egret of the year were sighted on 7th, 8th and 9th, respectively, and there were also reports on the latter date of a Chinese Goshawk, two Long-billed Dowitchers, a Spoon-billed Sandpiper and two Ashy Minivets (GJC, YYT, SLT). This spring's peak count of Nordmann's Greenshank, 16, was made on 10th (YYT).

Flycatchers were again reported from widespread areas on 10th, including Narcissus and Ferruginous at Shing Mun, Blue-and-white at Dong Ping Chau, Yellow-rumped at Tai Po Kau and Japanese Paradise at Aberdeen reservoir (AC, YYT, GJC, MDW). Also at Shing Mun were eight Grey-faced Buzzards and a White's Thrush, whilst there were sightings of a male Pied Harrier and a Blue-tailed Bee-eater at Mai Po, and swarms of Chinese Bulbuls, totalling over 3,000 individuals, were noted near Tap Mun and along Tolo Channel (MDW). The following day, another swarm containing at least a thousand individuals thought very likely to be of this species, was seen over the sea several kilometres south of Po Toi. Among other birds seen at sea on this visit were a summer-plumaged Greater Crested Tern and 140 Red-necked Phalaropes. The island of Po Toi itself, however, held very few migrants apart from an Ashy Minivet, two Red-tailed Robins, two Japanese Thrushes and a Blue-and-white Flycatcher. On the same day, there were reports of four Mountain Bush Warblers and two Lesser Shortwings, all singing, on the upper slopes of Tai Mo Shan (GJC) and single Narcissus and Blue-and-white Flycatchers at Mai Po.

Sightings on 15th included three Swinhoe's Egrets at Tung Chung Bay (PJJ), a Narcissus Flycatcher and an Eastern Crowned Warbler at Cheung Chau (MDW) and a Japanese Yellow Bunting at Long Valley (CHF). 

# Coming Activities

Date	Leader / Speaker	Activity / Gathering location	Time	Difficulty
7 July (Wed)	Mike Leven	<b>Indoor meeting &lt;House Crow in HK&gt;</b> Room 1113, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Scout Path, Austin Rd, Kowloon (Member \$10, Non-member \$30)	19:00 – 20:30	
21 July (Wed)	Cheung Ho Fai	<b>Indoor meeting &lt;China/Overseas Trip Report&gt;</b> Room 1113, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Scout Path, Austin Rd, Kowloon (Member \$10, Non-member \$30)	19:00 – 20:30	
25 July (Sun)	Cheung Ho Fai Alan Chan	<b>Tern Survey : Mirs Bay and Eastern Waters</b> 08:15 start at Ma Liu Shiu Pier One hour at Tap Mun for lunch 16:00 back to Aberdeen Public Pier   17:00 finish at Sai Kung Pier (Member \$150, Non-member \$200) <i>Note: this will be a long trip on open waters. The ride could be quite rough and some people may get seasick. Those who want to leave at lunchtime may take the ferry (departing hourly) at Tap Mun for Wong Shek Pier. The fare is non-refundable irrespective of early departure from Tap Mun.</i>	08:15 – 17:00	XXX
18 Aug (Wed)	Cheung Ho Fai	<b>Indoor meeting &lt;Autumn Migrants&gt;</b> Room 1113, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Scout Path, Austin Rd, Kowloon (Member \$10, Non-member \$30)	19:00 – 20:30	
22 Aug (Sun)	Wong Chiu Shiu Ho Hon Pong (Crested Bulbul Club Leader)	<b>Tsim Bei Tsui</b> ** 08:00 #968 bus stop (HongkongBank Headquarter, Central)	08:00 – 16:00	XX
29 Aug (Sun)	Samson So Matthew Kwan Jose Alberto Cheung	<b>Mai Po</b> 08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (KCR Kent Road exit) or 09:00 Mai Po carpark   coach leaves at 15:00 and back to Kowloon Tong at 16:00	08:00 – 16:00	XX
5 Sept (Sun)	Cheung Ho Fai	<b>Digitscoping and photo contest in Long Valley</b> 08:00 Yin Kong carpark	08:00 – 13:00	X
11 Sept (Sat)	Choy C.P. Lau Shing Kwan (Crested Bulbul Club Leader)	<b>Hong Kong Park</b> ** 08:30 Museum of Tea Ware, Hong Kong Park	08:30 – 11:00	X
12 Sept (Sun)	Mike Turnbull Alan Chan	<b>Boat Trip: Po Toi, Lamma Channel</b> 08:00 Aberdeen Public Pier   (near Ocean Court) 16:00 back to Aberdeen Public Pier (Member \$150, Non-member \$200)	08:00 – 16:00	XXX
15 Sept (Wed)	Man Chup Ming K K Hui	<b>Indoor meeting &lt;Experience sharing on bird photography&gt;</b> Room 1113, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Scout Path, Austin Rd, Kowloon (Member \$10, Non-member \$30)	19:00 – 20:30	

\*\* **Crested Bulbul Club Activity** –  
These activities are led by elderly nature interpreters, members  
are welcome to join with elderly members of their families.



Transportation  
arrangement



Please fill in the booking slip  
and return

Date	Leader / Speaker	Activity / Gathering location	Time	Difficulty
19 Sep (Sun)	Li Wai Ki Tai Sheung Lai	<b>Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve</b> 08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark (Tsung Tsai Yuen)	08:00 – 13:00	XX
26 Sep (Sun)	Leung Kwok Wa Wong Lai Yee  Crested Bulbul Club Leader	<b>Shing Uk Tsuen</b> ** 08:00 #968 bus stop (HongkongBank Headquarter, Central)	08:00 – 16:00	XX
	Mike Leven William Wong CC Wong	<b>Mai Po</b> 08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (KCR Kent Road exit) or 09:00 Mai Po carpark coach leaves at 15:00 and back to Kowloon Tong at 16:00	08:00 – 16:00	XX
3 Oct (Sun)	Louis Cheung Shirley Lam	<b>Kadoorie Farm</b> 08:00 Tai Wo KCR station Taxi station	08:00 – 12:00	XX
10 Oct (Sun)	Luk Tsun Pun Kwan Po Kuen	<b>Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve</b> 08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark (Tsung Tsai Yuen)	08:00 – 13:00	XX
17 Oct (Sun)	Hon So  Tong King Lai  Crested Bulbul Club Leader	<b>Aberdeen Reservoir</b> ** 08:00 MTR Admiralty Station (Hang Seng Bank)	08:00 – 12:00	XX
	Tam Yiu Leung Chan Yung	<b>Kap Lung Trail</b> 07:30 Tsuen Wan MTR Station Hang Seng Bank	07:30 – 13:00	XX
20 Oct (Wed)	Dr. Derek Spielman Chief Veterinarian, (Ocean Park)	<b>Indoor meeting</b> <b>&lt;Caring of Sick &amp; Juvenile Birds&gt;</b> Room 1113, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Scout Path, Austin Rd, Kowloon (Member \$10, Non-member \$30)	19:00 – 20:30	
24 Oct (Sun)	Mike Chalmers Dickson Wong CC Wong	<b>Mai Po</b> 08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (KCR Kent Road exit) or 09:00 Mai Po carpark coach leaves at 15:00 and back to Kowloon Tong at 16:00	08:00 – 16:00	XX
31 Oct (Sun)	Wong Ming Chan Kam Wai, Stanley	<b>Yung Shue O/Sham Chung</b> 08:30 Terminal of mini bus No. 1A at Sai Kung town centre 14:30 Ferry from Sham Chung back to Ma Liu Shiu	08:30 – 15:00	XX

**\*\* Crested Bulbul Club Activity –**

These activities are led by elderly nature interpreters, members are welcome to join with elderly members of their families.



Transportation arrangement



Please fill in the booking slip and return

## DOs & DON'Ts for Bird Watching

1. Walk lightly and talk softly while moving around in the forest so as not to disturb the birds.
2. When encountering birds, note carefully their shape, colour, behaviour and calls first. Check field guides afterwards. This would strengthen the visual image in your mind and improve identification skills.
3. Don't chase birds around simply because you want to see them. Birds do deserve a peaceful life.
4. Don't throw stones or take other improper actions to force birds to move and show themselves.
5. Don't get too close if you find bird nests. Frightened birds will abandon their nests even if there are eggs.
6. Don't hunt birds nor pick up eggs. Both are illegal and you would be liable to prosecution.
7. Don't worry if you don't record many species. Seeing a few common birds is already the joy of life.

**Note! Priority is given to members of the Society.** Please contact the leader several days before the meeting to confirm attendance, otherwise you may miss out on changes in timing. The 'X' rating conveys the degree of difficulty in each outing in terms of seeing the birds; Members are of course more than welcome to attend any event. **Please wear your membership badge when joining the activities.**

- \* Members who use the Society coach to Mai Po must confirm their attendance by returning the booking slip with payment. Those using their own transport please also send in their booking slips, the Mai Po tour coordinator – this is important because the maximum number of members who can attend the outing is 50, as set by the AFCD permit. Failure to do so may result in being refused access to the reserve.
- + According to the requirement of the Hong Kong Police and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, participants for the Mai Po activities should provide their full name and Hong Kong ID No. to register for the access to the frontier close area and Mai Po Marches.
- \* If their applications for joining Mai Po/boat trips are not accepted, applicants will be notified by phone or by e-mail at least one week before the outing.

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

Payment to the Society may be made in two ways:

- (1) by returning the attendance slip with a cheque in English made out to the "Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Ltd" OR
- (2) by depositing the fee into the A/C no. 534-361423-838 of Hongkong Bank in favour of "Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Ltd". Please send the booking slip in as well to confirm your payment and attendance.

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

## Activity Booking Slip

### ► Mai Po Trip

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

- \* ☐ 29 Aug (Sun)                      ☐ 26 Sep (Sun)                      ☐ 24 Oct (Sun)

The number of person(s) using the coach is \_\_\_\_\_.

- \* Coach fare: ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ x HK\$40/Member                      ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ x HK\$20/Student member  
                          ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ x HK\$60/Guest #

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

- + Attendance full name \_\_\_\_\_ HK I.D. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
*(If more than one attendance, please add paper to fill in the information of the other attendances)*

### ► Boat Trip

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

- \* ☐ 25 Jul (Sun) : Mirs Bay and Eastern Waters (HK\$150/member, HK\$200/non-members)  
☐ 12 Sept (Sun) : Po Toi, Lamma Channel (HK\$150/member, HK\$200/non-members)

Cheque for HK\$ \_\_\_\_\_ (In English. Payable to The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Ltd)

Name : \_\_\_\_\_ Contact No. : \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_ Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: Please send this application together with crossed cheque by mail to The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Ltd, G.P.O. Box 12460, Hong Kong (member activity)*

*Application should be made at least 10 days before the date of the outing. Late application will only be accepted if places are available.*

\* Please ☒ as appropriate

傳說中有一種鳥叫作火鳳凰

經過烈火的洗禮後獲得重生

雖然我沒有見過這種火之鳥

天上飛羽已唱誦著生命之歌

The phoenix, a mythical bird

reborn in a bath of fire.

None is ever seen, but

life I find in winged choirs.

— 蘇毅雄 Samson So



黑尾蠟嘴雀 (石崗)

— 黃亞萍

Yellow-billed Grosbeak (Shek Kong)

— Jemi Wong

髮冠卷尾 (西貢市)

— 梁國榮

Hair-Crested Drongo

(Sai Kung Town)

— Percy Leung



白喉短翅鵙 (大埔滘)

— 江敏兒、黃理沛

Lesser Shortwing (Tai Po Kau)

— Michelle Kong and Peter Wong