



The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited

(Approved Charitable Institution of a Public Character)

Bulletin 206

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In Bulletin 204 Clive Viney presented short biographical notes on several of our Honorary Members. We are very fortunate to have items by three Honorary Members in this Bulletin.

Lieutenant Colonel **A M (Maxwell) Macfarlane** has written a brief account of his birdwatching memories of Hong Kong, particularly during the early days of the Society in the 1950s.

Former HKBWS Chairman **Brian Webster** looks back at the Society's campaigning over Mai Po in the 1970s and other birdwatching developments in Hong Kong.

And another former Chairman, **Richard Stott**, provides his perspective on a more recent period, 1981-1999. As can be seen in "Society News" Mr. Stott has recently been made an Honorary Member of the Society, as has CY LAM. Congratulations to both of them.

Clive Viney's history of the Society, as reflected in his collection of old Bulletins, continues here with Part 2.

And for an account of the past thirty years by someone who is *still here*, CY LAM, -former Chairman and now Honorary President – has written **his** perspective of the growth of birdwatching in Hong Kong. But you'll have to wait until Bulletin 207 for that !

▲ Acquisition of Office Property

The Society has been using leased property for the office. The current contract is expiring this April and there is a lack of working space. To save the effort in moving office time and again, and to make better use of the resources in hand, the Executive Committee has decided to acquire a property for the new office. A unit in a commercial building on Nathan Road, Yau Ma Tei, has been identified after months of proposals and inspections. The move will be made around middle of the year after the necessary procedures. Fund for the purchase comes mainly from cash accumulated over the years, plus a generous donation of \$300,000 from the Honorary President Mr. CY Lam. The balanced of \$300,000 would be obtained through donations and borrowing.

▲ Behind the Scene □ Bulletin Stuff

Have you ever wondered who packs your Bulletin and fix the stamps? Well, we do not have access to an automatic envelope inserting machine — all stuffing work is handled by an assembly line of volunteers, the majority of which come from the Crested Bulbul Club. While it sounds a very repetitive and mechanical process, but time flies as the team exchange news about the latest birds and hot spots, and it only takes about 3 hours. We would like to thank the stuffing team for their hard work. If you are interested to join and share the fun, please contact the bulletin coordinator Ms Ronley Lee at bulletin@hkbws.org.hk.

▲ New Honorary Members

In recognition of their contributions to the Society, the Board of Directors have elected Mr. CY Lam, Honorary President, and Mr. Richard Stott, our representative in UK, as Honorary Members. Congratulations to CY and Richard!

▲ Bird Survey Committee

A new Bird Survey Committee chaired by Mr. John Allcock has been established to coordinate surveys carried out by the Society. John has been interested in wildlife, especially birds and bats, all his life. He is a trained ecologist with a research-based Masters degree in ecology, and has been organizing and conducting bird surveys in a professional capacity for almost 10 years, including more than five years based in Hong Kong. Much of his current work relates to the ecology of Greater Painted-snipe at Kam Tin. John has also become a member of the Executive Committee.

▲ Swarovski Special Offer Scheme

The following members are offered a special price for buying a pair of Swarovski binoculars (EL 10x42 WB) after confirmation of qualification and the lucky draw. We would like to thank all members who have contributed a lot to promote bird watching and to the Society work. We would also like to thank Swarovski Hong Kong Ltd for her generosity and look forward to more cooperation in future. The members are: J A Cheung Mok, Billy Hau, Michael Turnbull, Eling Lee, Gary Chow and Richard Lewthwaite.

▲ Avifauna of Hong Kong □ a Free Gift to Members

In order to acknowledge the continuous support of our members, a free gift of the "Avifauna of Hong Kong" (listed price HK\$250) will be given to those who have renewed their membership in 2008 and have already been our member for at least 1 year. Qualified members are required to pick up the book in our office directly. Availability is on a "First come, First Served" basis. Please contact our office at 2377 4387 first to make the arrangement.



Photographer: Mr. Lam Chiu Ying

Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley (2008–2010) - Vicky Yeung

After the two-year of wetland management, Birds and Humans in Harmony – A Sustainable Management Scheme in Long Valley funded by the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) was completed in Jan 2008. For bird conservation, the number of birds recorded in the 2nd project-year is about 20% higher than that recorded in the 1st year. A Hong Kong first and 12 Long Valley first were also recorded throughout the two years including those records submitted by members. In the past two years, we have organized public education activities as well as volunteer activities. To sum up, this management agreement pilot scheme is a success. We have also published a leaflet introducing Long Valley as well as the project for members' collection.

At the end of 2007, HKBWS and The Conservancy Association (CA) cooperated and applied for funding from ECF again in order to extend the habitat management practices. The new 2-year project namely "Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley" started in March 2008. Besides those managed fields, we planned to extend the managed area of shallow water habitat and wet agricultural land. Moreover, fish ponds and Fung Shui Wood in Ho Sheung Heung are the newly added habitat type of the project. If you are interested in the conservation of Long Valley or know more about the new project, please feel free to contact Miss Yeung (yvicky@hkbws.org.hk).



Seminar on Long Valley Project

Crested Bulbul Club

1. Early Morning Bird Watchers at Kowloon Park & HK Park
No. of participants in Hong Kong Park from Sept 2007 to Feb 2008: 307
No. of participants in Kowloon Park from August 2007 to Feb 2008: 806
2. Bird watching interpretation in Hong Kong Wetland Park
A total of 334 person-time have been participated in this service from Sept 2007 to Feb 2008.
3. Bird watching services and activities
10/11/2007 Bird watching tour in the Kowloon Park Fun Fair
24-25/11/2007 Attending the Star Lark Bird Watching Fair in Zhaoqing, Guangdong Province. Members including: Wong Chiu Shu (Leader), Dominic Yip, Chow Hung Fai and Ho Pak Sum
25/11 & 23/12 Bird Watching tour in the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence, about 60 people attend
9/3/2008 Being invited to attend the "Ninth Shenzhen Futian Bird Watching Race for Secondary and Primary Student"



Bird Race for Primary and Secondary students in Shenzhen
-Photographer: Bill Man

2008 International Black-faced Spoonbill Census

The global population of Black-faced Spoonbill (BFS), an endangered bird species, has reached a record high population of 2,065 individuals. An obvious increase in number of birds has been recorded in many regions. Mr. YU Yat-tung, census coordinator for the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, recently announced the good results from the 2008 census carried out between 11th and 13th of January. The healthy increase of the species throughout its' range suggests that the living conditions of the Black-faced Spoonbill have been improving.

Black-faced Spoonbill has become well-known to ordinary members of the public since environmental campaigning

began its' behalf. This "Flagship Species" remains a focus of effort by bird conservationists. Governments and conservation organizations over the East Asia region, including Mainland China and Hong Kong, have co-operated effectively to protect the BFS and its' habitats and to carry out research.

Since 2003, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society has been responsible for carrying out Hong Kong's part in the International Black-faced Spoonbill census and more about them is continually being learned. (BFS breeds near politically-sensitive areas, such as the Demilitarized Zone on the Korean peninsula, so a survey of wintering birds is believed to be easier and more accurate — Ed.)

Those Black-faced Spoonbill figures:

- 2,065 have been recorded, an increase of 370 from 2007's record total, which was itself 22% higher than 2006. In the past 5 years, the known population of BFS has increased from 1,000 to 2,000. (Only 294 birds were recorded in 1980.)
- Increasing numbers noted every year, except 1997 and 1999.
- January 2008 brought new high counts in many places, including 1,030 in Taiwan alone.
- In coastal mainland China, 247 recorded in 2007 increased to 313 recorded in 2008. Hainan and Haifeng counted 93 and 98 respectively. 10 Black-faced Spoonbills have been found in winter 2007/8 in Shantou (a new BFS site). Xinhua Bay in Fujian Province held 112 BFS, the highest number noted at a single mainland Chinese site. 369 birds were recorded in Hong Kong and Shenzhen, 13 more birds than last year.
- 224 birds were recorded in Japan, 35 birds more than last year.
- The International BFS Census was carried out in South Korea, Japan, Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Shenzhen, Macau, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines.



Photographer: Kenny Lee

The increasing number of Black-faced Spoonbills counted over the eastern and southern coasts of China suggests that there, as well as elsewhere, the habitats required by the BFS are being valued and protected, as are the birds themselves.

Acknowledgements are due to all participating organizations and volunteers, and to the co-ordinating efforts of Mr. YU Yat-tung himself. Black-faced Spoonbill, which was teetering on the brink of extinction, has been downgraded from "Critically Endangered" to "Endangered" by Birdlife International. In the face of developmental pressures throughout the range of Black-faced Spoonbill, the present status of the bird cannot be taken for granted and these monitoring and conservation efforts will continue.

* The printing and distribution of this report is kindly sponsored by "Schmidt Marketing (H.K.) Ltd."

Waterbird Count Training Workshop

The Waterbird Monitoring Programme is an integrated professional programme coordinated and reported by HKBWS. The Waterbird counts began at 1979. Since 2000, this project was supported by AFCD. About 15 participants attended this workshop.

The 8th Inter-school Bird Watching Race

The Bird Watching Race was co-organized by AFCD's Weland Park and HKBWS. Seminar and outdoor trainings have been provided to participants between 1 to 22 December. Final competition was also held on 30 Dec. As usual, the Society provided assistance in the training session. A total of 36 teams attended this year. We would like to express our gratitude to all volunteers who have involved in this event.



Students practicing birdwatching

Green Orienteering in Hong Kong Park

The cooperation between Hong Kong Park and HKBWS continued this year to organize this event for primary students. A total of 16 teams of about 80 primary 4 to 6 students attended the half-day training and half-day competition on 16 and 23 December. Participants were required to record wild birds as well as answer some questions on the flora and fauna in the park. We would like to thank about 30 Crested Bulbul Club members to help this activity. The winning team come from St. Charles School.



Students practicing birdwatching



Making a bird hat



Cheonsuman Intewrnational Bird Watching Fair

Cheonsuman International Bird Watching Fair 2007

During 26-28 Oct 2007, we have participated in Cheonsuman International Bird Watching Fair 2007 held in Seosan, S. Korea. This is the first time for the organizer to invite bird watching organizations from overseas to join the Fair. Besides Hong Kong, representatives also come from Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, The Philippines and Texas of America.

The 9th Taipei International Birdwatching Fair

Being invited by the organiser "Wild Bird Society of Taipei", the Society has attended this bird watching fair again in the Guandu Nature Park on 3 and 4 November 2007. Our Executive Committee member Samson So and staff George Ho have managed a booth during the Fair.



Guandu Nature Park, Taiwan

Egretry Research Group Report — Captain Wong

- (1) The 2007 summer report of egretty count was nearly completed at the time of writing. A total of 820 nests were found which was 20% less than 2006. Not a good year for egrets and herons this year.
- (2) After the Guizhou survey in 2006, ERG is looking for an opportunity to visit a nesting colony of White-eared Night Heron in Anhui in 2008. If possible, quick studies on their habitat use pattern during nesting will be conducted.



1. New boardwalk and floating hide

By the time you read this, the new boardwalk and hide will have been opened for use and I hope that you enjoy the new view across Deep Bay from here.

This project would not have been possible if not for the generous support from an anonymous donor who provided the bulk of the money for the project, whilst generous contributions also came from Cheung Kong (Holdings) Ltd., and from the teams who joined WWF's annual Big Bird Race in recent years.

Hong Kong Towage and Salvage kindly volunteered their service to tow the hide free of charge from Shau Kei Wan to Deep Bay, the Hong Kong Marine Police (West Division) who then towed the hide from Deep Bay to Mai Po, and the Government Flying Service who lifted the eight concrete anchors from the southern part of Mai Po to the mudflat to moor the hide.

2. De-silting works

Two main de-silting projects have been carried out at Mai Po over the summer. One was the de-silting of the perimeter and cross-channels of gei wai 23 at the southern end of the reserve, and the other was to de-silt the floor of Pond 17b close to the Education Centre. The latter will be reflooded and managed as a shallow freshwater pond.

3. Mangrove Management

As with the gei wai inside the Closed Area Fence, the mangroves outside the fence especially on either side of the floating boardwalk is slowly silting up and are being covered by climbers, such as *Derris trifoliata*. These climbers will slowly cover the trees and kill them if nothing is done. As a result, WWF hires out contractors every few years to pull up the roots of these climbers but the climber will remain on the trees. Therefore over this winter, you may see what appears to be dead mangrove trees on either side of the boardwalk but actually, these are the dead climbers but the mangroves are still alive.

As ever, if you have any comments anything about the management of Mai Po, then please do not hesitate to contact WWF's staff at the reserve.

50th Anniversary

The Bulletin 50 Years On (Part II) □ Clive Viney



Metamorphosis

The newly-elected officers at the 1982 AGM included a businessman, Mr E. D. Tweddell as Honorary Secretary. Ed Tweddell kindly offered full secretarial support to the Society from his office. The duplicated Bulletin became a thing of the past. Once again I took over as editor and helped institute a dramatic overhaul. Bulletin No. 104 (June 1982) appeared properly printed and laid out in neat A4 format with a truly professional look for the first time. This 8-page edition contained detailed Society News, the usual Report on the Birds, two proposals for breeding bird surveys and articles on summer birds, birding on Sunset Peak and the field identification of house martins. Bulletin No. 105 (September 1982) was much taken up with the outgoing Chairman's address but also included line drawings of birds for the first time. Mike Webster urged that the Society take on worthwhile scientific studies and be less expatriate orientated. Gavin Cooper, a fluent Cantonese speaker became the new chairman. The big bird news was the rediscovery of the Crested Ibis in China. The next Bulletin included a useful fact sheet on birdwatching in Hong Kong.

Bulletin No. 107 (March 1983) contained the first formal Society outing report - *New Year 100* (they managed 94). Outings now had designated leaders and it became the lot of the leader to write an outing report, which was published in the subsequent Bulletin. For the next few years the Bulletins were full of these reports and in retrospect they make fascinating reading. Some leaders wrote factual accounts of birds seen and routes taken but others tried hard to be witty and sometimes the humour was lost on all except acquaintances of the writer. For many of us old hands a compendium of these reports would make happy bedtime reading and recall an era when a tight cadre of birders ruled the waves and very often waived the rules!

A new and important feature of Bulletins was an update on what was happening at Mai Po. Our burgeoning sister organisation WWF/HK was solely involved with the development of the protected area and liaised

directly with AFD and other government bodies. Apart from being represented on the management committee, HKBWS did not have the resources to participate in the direct management of the reserve. Nevertheless, its membership wanted to know what was going on. From the outset, I sat on various WWF/HK committees and was in a position to write these early reports. In due course, professional employees of WWF/HK (David Melville, Michael Lau & Lew Young) involved with the hands-on management of Mai Po took over the writing of these reports.

After the Fairview Park debacle of the seventies, the environment and especially Mai Po now had a friend in the highest office. Bulletin No. 109 (October 1983) noted the enthusiasm of HE the Governor Sir Edward Youde for birdwatching. Mai Po was hitting the headlines and a succession of celebrities with an environmental agenda paid their respects including Professor Cheng Tso-Hsing and Sir Peter Scott. Even HRH the Duke of Edinburgh spent a couple of hours trudging round Mai Po and surprised his guide and minders with an unanticipated change of plan and presumptuous comments - but that's another story.

Unfortunately after a bright start the new era of Bulletins hit the doldrums and the content became repetitive. But as ever, avid birders went straight to the back pages to check what birds they had missed or to chuckle at what others claimed.

Middle eighties

Tweddell was posted out of Hong Kong and by June 1984 the format of the Bulletin had returned to copying a typed document. The good news was that once again content was picking up and Bob Ferguson's *Urban Birdwatching in China* had positive things to say about Shanghai and his *Wild Goose Chase*, 2nd January 1984 broke a dull sequence of outing reports.

Bill Oddie and David Tomlinson co-authored *The Big Bird Race*, which amusingly told the tale of the Country Life Record Birdwatch on 14th May 1983 that raised £5,500 for wildlife charities. The highly competitive teams, each comprising four of Britain's top birders embarked on a frantic scramble over marsh and shore, through fen and forest, in Land Rovers and fast cars, and even on foot. Their goal was to win the race by recording more species of birds in 24 hours than their opponents. The sport of bird racing had arrived. Inspired and stimulated and with three cronies wearing WWF/HK vests, I threw down the gauntlet. The challenge was quickly accepted by Mike Chalmers, the Honorary Recorder of HKBWS. Binoculars were drawn and Saturday 7th April, 1985 was agreed as the best date. Nobody had seen more than 110 species in a day but given good weather it was felt that this record would fall. Both teams sought sponsorship and it was hoped that the funds raised would pay for a new hide at Mai Po. The battle cry was "Bucks for Mai Po". Bulletin No. 111 (March 1984) contained this announcement and a pledge form for a dollar or more for each species seen by the chosen team.

Bulletin No. 112 (June 1984) was a landmark issue. Although production standards had gone down (it was a 26-page typed document) the content was most interesting. Following their earlier visit, Professor Cheng Tso-Hsin and Dr Zhou Fu-Zhang from Academia Sinica wrote a paper *On the Importance of the Mai Po Marshes*, which HKBWS was honoured to publish. Peter Kennerley, a newly arrived and skilled young birder from the United Kingdom wrote an assessment of the ICPB endorsed Interwader Project. I reported on the WWF/HK and HKBWS joint participation in Love Birds Week in Guangzhou, which included a ground breaking ornithological survey of the Mount Nankun Nature Reserve. The reported discovery of a Black-naped Tern colony off Tap Mun caused great excitement and was also mentioned in the journal British Birds. Hong Kong's first Big Bird Race had been an unqualified success and over HK\$26,000 was raised for the new hide. The result was immaterial but for the record WWF/HK won 124 to 118.

This was an exciting time for the few of us enjoying birdwatching in Hong Kong. The Mai Po project was up and running and now had its own project manager, the indomitable David Melville. The Bamboo Curtain was parting and for the first time since the pre-war specimen collectors, favoured birdwatchers were being invited to enter. Unfortunately there was a downside. It was all becoming very clubby. If you were part of the in crowd then you knew what was going on, saw the rare birds and, perhaps, asked to join a team in the ever growing Big Bird Race but if you were a newcomer or a beginner, HKBWS must have looked like a private domain. Parts of the Bulletin were becoming frivolous and aimed only at bringing a smile to the faces of those in the know.

A report of an official visit to the new Fu Tien reserve across the border but contiguous with Mai Po was included in Bulletin No. 114 (December

1984). Firm assurances were given by the Guangdong Forestry Bureau and the Shenzhen Municipal Authority that the area would be fully protected and free from encroachment. The Oriental Bird Club announced its formation and invited founder members to sign up.

The Society was receiving a number of weighty trip reports from groups and expeditions visiting the region and these were now incorporated into the library and announcements made in the Bulletin. At the 1985 AGM, a chummy group of officers was elected but among the new committee members without a portfolio was a certain Lam Chui Ying. An interesting item of Society news was that at the 1985 World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition held at Ocean City, Maryland, member Ma Hai Feng was awarded 2nd Best in the World for his carving of a Great Horned Owl taking a Northern Pintail. In all, Ma collected ten awards. The HKBWS team walked away with the 1985 Big Bird Race with a record 143 species. In a carnival atmosphere Sir Edward and Lady Youde and former prime minister Edward Heath greeted the teams. A new feature of the birding calendar was the Christmas Count. Interestingly, whatever the weather and however many people took part the species totals were usually around 170. Following a feisty exchange of correspondence in the South China Morning Post on the future of the colony's introduced cockatoos, members were invited to vote on whether or not the birds should be exterminated, culled or left alone. As they are still with us, presumably the left alones won the day.

A Bulletin format emerged: Society news, reports on various projects, outing reports, forthcoming outings notification and the report on the birds. Articles were a thing of the past. Bulletins were now produced by a triumvirate - Clive Viney (Vice Chairman), Steve Smith (Honorary Secretary) and Janet Stott (typing slave) - volunteers with busy full-time jobs. Interestingly, the Chinese membership was increasing and becoming organised. A Chinese speaking meeting was arranged at the Royal Observatory Conference Hall, at which the Chairman gave a long and thoughtful opening speech about birdwatching in general and the Chinese government's expressed view on wildlife conservation. Other speeches followed including one by CY on the relationship between birds and weather.

The infamous Bulletin No. 120 (June 1986) contained my obituary! The report of my death was an exaggeration (Mark Twain). Due to my heavy commitments to WWF/HK I stood down from the HKBWS committee. My principal duties as Editor and Librarian were taken on by Verity Picken and Peter Kennerley respectively.

to be continued □



Remembering Hong Kong, 1957-1960 □ Maxwell Macfarlane

REMEMBERING HONG KONG, 1957 - 1960

BY MAXWELL MACFARLANE

Although I had paused briefly in Hong Kong in 1953 and 1954, on my way to and from South Korea, it was not until 5 December 1957 that my wife and I landed from a troopship at Kowloon at the start of three very happy years living and working in the New Territories. The first birds I recorded that day were Black Kites and Tree Sparrows. Perhaps they would be the same today.

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society had been formed on 7 August 1957 and so, though I joined as soon as I could, I cannot claim to have been a founder member. However, I was soon roped-in as the first Honorary Recorder, and so began my connection with the Society which I am proud to continue to this day.

Of some 40 members in 1958, one was already an Honorary Member (Frank Walker), most of the rest were Europeans or Americans and only one was Chinese (David H. Liu, of Causeway Bay). No more than 15 were very active. What a contrast to today's membership. How wonderful that so many Hong Kong residents are now so active as bird watchers and as brilliant photographers of birds.

We early members laboured under several difficulties, not the least being that few of us had much, if any, experience of the birds of South China. Apart from 'Hong Kong Birds' by Geoffrey Herklots, there were no field guides as such, although I had two slim volumes (written in Japanese, with English and Latin bird names) which illustrated the birds of Japan. Peterson's 'Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe' was also very useful for non-passerines, but we relied very heavily on La Touche, when we could borrow a copy, even though it was very stodgy stuff.

Binoculars were cheap, it is true, but were generally rather heavy. After about a year, my wife had saved up enough to buy me a Japanese-made pair (10 x 50) for about £5 (a lot of money to us in those days) but they could not compare with the quality of modern equipment. The Society apparently owned a telescope, but I never saw it and it was probably better suited to astronomy than to birding. In late 1959 I bought a Grundig TK1 portable tape recorder, reel-to-reel, and managed to record a good number of Hong Kong birds, but editing tapes was a nightmare as the tape did not run at a constant speed.

We managed to arrange several field meetings in the early years but coordination was not easy as not all members were on the telephone then. Most of our birding was done alone or, if lucky, with one or two others. During 1958, for example, I made observations of some sort on 151 days of the year, including no fewer than 40 visits to the Deep Bay marshes (west of Mai Po or north of Yuen Long). In those days we felt lucky if we saw more than 40 species in a day.

From the beginning we laid down guidance for Sight Records of Rare Birds, and these were called for particularly when there was only one observer. Of course, for most of us newcomers to Hong Kong even a Chinese Bulbul would have been a rarity, though I doubt anyone submitted a description of that! At the same time, few if any

descriptions of birds found commonly in Western Europe were made. We may not have known Oriental species but we did know our own. . . At the end of three years in Hong Kong I had shoe-boxes full of record slips, and these were left to my successor. I do not know what happened to them but I guess no-one thought that our records would be queried 40 years later - they had after all been published for public scrutiny - and so no doubt they were quietly dumped, as were later a number of perfectly good observations (not all of them mine!).

As Honorary Recorder I was determined that we would publish an annual report and in June 1959 we were able to distribute our first, for 1958. It was, of course, very amateurish, and the photographs were badly reproduced, but it was no worse than many British county reports of the period and it did include elementary field studies. Our modest beginnings have long been eclipsed by the splendid modern reports, but at least we had made a start.

Early in 1960 I began to draft 'An Annotated Check-List' of the Birds of Hong Kong' in collaboration with Flight Sergeant A.D. MacDonald. He was more expert than I on systematics and I left that side to him, but I compiled the rest and it was a great feeling to hold the finished product in my hand. It does not bear comparison with the magnificent 'Avifauna' but again, we had made a start.

Of course, for various reasons, we neglected areas of Hong Kong which have since proved to be really good for birds. We could not go near to the border fence except on military duty. The Pat Sin Leng and Sai Kung peninsulas were inaccessible except by long marches. One or two villages on Lan Tau could be visited, but only briefly, by a once-a-day ferry to Tai O. Sailing outside the sheltered bays south of Hong Kong Island was frowned on, if not actually forbidden, in case your boat drifted outside territorial waters and created a diplomatic incident. And most frustrating of all, travel to and around Mainland China was impossible, so we could not broaden our experience of Oriental birds. In fact, I saw a number of rare passerine species for the first time in the cages of bird-sellers' shops and stalls.

By the end of 1960, when my wife and I had to leave Hong Kong, it was still rare to see people from the towns visiting the open countryside of the New Territories. When we returned in late 1965, for only nine months that time, it was quite usual at weekends to see family parties having a picnic or groups of children playing and exploring the valleys, especially the Lam Tsuen valley, not birding but at least getting closer to nature. What a change.

It is most unlikely that I shall ever return to Hong Kong, and might not recognize it even if I did, but I shall always remember my days there, exploring the countryside and watching birds, with pleasure and gratitude for my good fortune.



(The record notes and cards before 1971 have been donated to the History Museum for permanent custody. They now form part of Hong Kong's history.)

Maxwell Macfarlane
Original with July 2006
note sent 20 August 2006.
Not yet published. May not
have arrived. Re-submitted
29 March 2007.

HKBWS Chairman, 1974-1982 looks back



The British Ornithologists' Union

First, a correction. I must have impressed Brian Wilson more than I realised. . . M.B.O.U. (Member of the British Ornithologists' Union) simply indicates membership of the BOU, the world's leading ornithological society. Anyone can join; - all you need is someone to propose you, and an annual cheque for the subscription. The main benefit is its quarterly journal *Ibis*, much of which is way above my head. Perhaps the most interesting part of *Ibis* is the book review section. There should be some old copies in the Society's library. The "qualification" Fred Hechtel and I had which did require the passing of an informal test was the Bird Ringing Permit; I forget exactly how we got our Permits, but certainly someone experienced had to be satisfied that we were fit to be trusted with bird rings.

Mai Po.

I first went to Mai Po on May 30, 1965. . . and was rewarded by a sighting of a Spoon-billed Sandpiper (not new to me, as I had the first sighting for Singapore a year or two before). Fred Hechtel was delighted; - I was not yet a member of the Society, and he wanted me to take over as Recorder from Maura Benham. The Society in those days was tiny, about 30-40 members, of whom only a few were active birders. The Society was, almost literally, held together by Commander Edgar Webb, who was Chairman, Treasurer, Bulletin Editor, convenor of outings, and almost everything else.

In the mid-sixties, we were mainly "simple birdwatchers", as Edgar Webb liked to describe himself. We were still finding out what birds could occur in Hong Kong, and many of the rarer species which are now seen every year were first recorded during this period. I can remember our first Asiatic Dowitcher, American Dowitcher (Long-billed or Short-billed; I forget which) and Spotted Greenshank among the Mai Po waders. Our first Yellow-bellied Tits and Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes as well as several others were also seen in that period. Identification was a problem. For the Yellow-bellied Tit I actually carried my copy of La Touche's *Handbook of the Birds of Eastern China* to Tai Po Kau, and sat down to compare it feather by feather!

In 1966, the Cultural Revolution erupted in China. We did not know what was going to happen to Hong Kong, and understandably the Government here became preoccupied with relations with our giant neighbour. Conservation was not forgotten, though it had nothing like the priority which it has nowadays, and in 1968, Fred Hechtel produced the first detailed report on the Mai Po Marshes for a Government committee. From this early date, Fred, Dave Robertson and I, together with our fellow committee members of the HKBWS, already realised that Mai Po could only be conserved if we could get a lot of Chinese people involved, and if it could be presented as an educational facility. Clive Briffett developed this theme enthusiastically, initiating a number of schemes aimed at schools, but he was, as far as I remember, not in Hong Kong for very long. The first attempt to provide Chinese names for each species was made by Lawrence Tam, after discussion with me, in the 1972 edition of the Checklist, and most of Lawrence's names remain in use (*unless CY changed them when he wrote the Chinese version of Viney's Field Guide*).¹

Michael Webster

It so happened that the South China Morning Post asked me to write a weekly article on birds, and this appeared regularly for almost four years. At the same time, I was Executive Secretary of the Conservancy Association. I lost no opportunity to publicise Mai Po and other conservation concerns in the papers and on radio, making me well-known (or notorious?) among expatriates. . . but not amongst the Chinese.

I also gave a series of lecture courses on birdwatching at the Hong Kong University Extra Mural Department, which attracted the first Chinese birders, one being C.Y.Lam. The Fairview Park project, which sliced off a large area of excellent birding marshland (where Pheasant-tailed Jacanas bred), was probably, in hindsight, a blessing in disguise. It enabled us to make vigorous protests, and to gain much-needed publicity. About this time General John Chapple became Commander British Forces, and was able to push for conservation of the marshes at a very high level. David Melville, in the Agricultural and Fisheries Department, was doing what he could to help.

In the late seventies, I became less active, and the development of Mai Po as an educational facility was carried through by World Wildlife Fund, with Clive Viney and David Melville. The number of Chinese birders gradually increased, largely because of CY, Albert Cheung and the Conservancy Association.

Parallel with this development was the increasingly scientific approach to identification, aided by good field guides illustrated in colour, and later by ringing schemes. My version of the Checklist was further improved by Mike Chalmers in about 1984, and again by the recent much more extensive *Avifauna of Hong Kong* by Geoff Carey and others.

I would hardly recognise the Society as it is now, nor would I recognise many of the species added to the Hong Kong list in the last 15-20 years! It is interesting to see the shift in emphasis towards ringing data and photography in recent reports. A living Society will continue to change, as it should, and in another fifty years it will be quite different from what it is now. This is how it should be.

The regular Reports and bulletins indicate that there are far more birds, and far more species, on the Mai Po Marshes than there were in the sixties and seventies. This has been brought about by the management of the core area by the World Wildlife Fund. . . and probably even more by the destruction of alternative habitats in China. This suggests that Mai Po is even more important now than when we started working for its conservation in the late sixties and early seventies.

¹ Actually, both Lawrence Tam and CY Lam followed the Chinese bird names of Prof. CHENG Tso-hsin (ZHENG Zuo-Xin), - so few changes — Ed.

HKBWS Chairman, *Reminiscences* 1981-1999



—Richard Stott

Early Days

When I first applied to join the HKBWS, Dr Francis Batson was secretary and Mike Webster was Chairman. The membership was quite small and was comprised mostly of expatriates.

I went on a number of Society outings for then, as now, it was a simple way to get round Mai Po avoiding the need for special permits. My first Mai Po outing in the autumn of 1981 was under the leadership of Gavin Cooper, who was to be elected Chairman in 1982. Birdwatchers fall into two groups, the quiet contemplative types that walk slowly taking in everything to be seen and dynamic types who walk briskly on looking for the next new bird which is always just a little bit ahead. Gavin definitely fell into the latter category. His identification skills were acute and I remember being impressed at his being able to identify a "little brown job" from the merest glimpse. Occasionally it all fell apart as on one occasion Gavin confidently called out "Black Stork!" but moved onto another bird as a Grey Heron came into land!

It was Mike Webster, on another outing to Mai Po, who identified an Oriental Turtle Dove in the distance. Having recently arrived from England, separating this brown dove from the similar Spotted Dove at distance was impressive and seemingly impossible. However Mike kindly explained that all you had to do is look for the colour of the back and it was easy. Thereafter I too was able to impress people new to Hong Kong with my ability to distinguish Hong Kong's two common doves at a distance.

I had noticed from reading Herklots' *Hong Kong Birds* that Hong Kong was a much changed place from the early 50's when he was searching the New Territories. So it is during the 26 years since I first landed there. San Tin was a really good site for waders and particularly Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, although the local people were a bit suspicious of gweilos wandering about their fish farms. Au Tau, good in Herklot's day was a non-starter in the 80's. Mai Po was still rather basic. The border fence was impassable and the only access was the main road along the fence. There were no hides and the "Rocky Outcrop" was visited by all coming to Mai Po as it was the only way of looking out over Deep Bay. This

billied Sandpipers, Nordmann's Greenshank and even Saunder's Gull were simply not known. The lack of hides meant that careful skulking along reed beds was necessary even to get decent views of Common Greenshank.

At certain times of year the gei wei operators scraped dark grey mud from the bottom of the pools up onto the bunds. This turned a reasonably easy dry walk along the top of the bunds into a slippery nightmare. I remember a very nice young Chinese lady coming to Mai Po for the first time in such conditions. She slipped on a bund and fell up to her armpits in this mud. She managed to keep most of her clothes clean but sadly we never saw her again.

On the other hand the fence along the road at Tsim Bei Tsui was not there and neither were there any mangroves so it was possible easily see out over that part of the bay from the road. Gull counts were carried out from there but then, as now, the rare waders did not use that part of the bay often and were rarely recorded from there.

Having scoured my bookshelves I find that the earliest bird notes I have from Hong Kong record a visit I made to the egretary and Yim Tso Ha on 20 February 1983. At that time Little Green Herons were nesting there. Later in the same day I went on to San Tin and recorded Grey Plover, Wood Sandpiper and Ruff. San Tin was also good for Long-toed Stint, and there used to be a small pool on the way into the village that often held this species in winter, I recorded a flock of 30 from that spot on 5 March 1983.

WWFHK Years

It was about this time that Mary Hotung Ketterer took over WWFHK and her drive, energy and contacts made it a force to be reckoned with. They soon moved from rather cramped offices in Western to the ground floor of the French Mission building near St John's Cathedral.

As far as bird watchers were concerned Mary's impact was two fold; the preservation of what is now the Mai Po Nature Reserve which was to be WWFHK's priority project and the provision of facilities for bird watching at Mai Po (*gei wei* hides and the first boardwalk hide) for the first time.

Fund raising was the name of the game and Mary drove us all in that direction. We all became members of WWFHK and paid our subscriptions but that was not nearly enough and Mary together with Clive Viney and Dr Ken Searle introduced the Big Bird Race as the major fund raising event. The first race in 1984 was a rather modest affair though with only two teams, the WWK-HK team led by Clive Viney (who won!) and the HKBWS team led by Gavin Cooper. Funds raised were a modest HK\$30,000. In subsequent years to the numbers of teams increased and annual figures of HK\$1 million were raised. This money not only supported WWFHK and its team of people but funded the hides and paths we now enjoy when visiting Mai Po. The Governor during part of this period was the late Sir Edward Youde who was himself a keen bird watcher. He and Mary Ketterer between them were able to arrange for HRH Prince Philip to visit Mai Po on several occasions. This was good for the rest of us because on many occasions paved pathways seemed to appear overnight so that the Royal shoes would not be soiled during the visit the following day. The path beside the casuarinas was one such.

Another benefit of being a WWFHK member in those early days was that through its contacts with the Guangdong Forestry Bureau small groups could be taken into woodland areas in Guangdong Province to look for birds. At this time much of the PRC countryside was off limits to foreigners and so it was a rare privilege to be able to gain access. My first visit was to Nan Kun Shan (now sadly desecrated) which was very exciting and species such as Chestnut Bulbul (then rare in Hong Kong) were common. This was followed in subsequent years by visits to Fung Kai on the Guangxi/Guangdong border and Ba Bao Shan (now the Nan Ling National Nature Reserve) on the Hunan/Guangdong border. Fung Kai gave Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Slaty-backed Forktail, Plain Flowerpecker and Asian House Martin and Ba Bao Shan is still regarded as a good site for Silver Oriole and Cabot's Tragopan which were really exciting sightings for us in the summer of 1988.

The Stott family became more involved with the administration of the Society during this period; I took over as Secretary from Steve Smith in 1987 and my wife, Janet, as Treasurer from John Edge in 1988. Personal computers were becoming more widespread during this period and so for the first time the Society membership records were put onto a database and the accounts onto a spreadsheet (Microsoft Dbase3 and Lotus 1-2-3 for those who can remember). This made mail shots and

the correlation of the accounts for the AGM immensely easier than before. My work was taking me out of Hong Kong for much of the time and over the period 1988-1993 Janet was working as Secretary or Treasurer or both!

Chairman

In 1993 Gavin Cooper decided to resign as Chairman and I was elected in his place, a position I held until 1997 when I too resigned and passed the Chairmanship of the Society over into the very capable hands of C Y Lam.

I regarded my position as that of custodian until 1997 when if at all possible local people would take over the running of the Society. I was most fortunate in having some excellent help on the Committee during that time, particularly from C Y Lam and Cheung Ho Fai and others too numerous to mention.

I have always believed that the publication of the Hong Kong Bird Report was one of the more important objectives of the Society because the recording efforts of the membership are set down permanently and then can be circulated to appropriate international ornithological organizations. It is the Society's contact with international ornithology. At this time issues involved the production of the Bird Report whose standard and presentation was immensely improved by the very considerable efforts first of Verity Picken and subsequently those of Geoff Carey. This involved the Society buying its first piece of office equipment, an Apple PC to run the desk top publishing system for the Bird Report. This meant we could enter, edit and proof-read everything and simply hand a diskette to the printer who by this time preferred his material to be handed over in this way.

Liaison with WWFHK was always an important issue and occasional misunderstandings at Mai Po had to be resolved by both parties. It was important that both organisations cooperated fully as we were heading in the same direction with similar goals. Practical help too was necessary and I can recall working with David Melville and others, wading waist deep in the turbid waters of Deep Bay to manoeuvre the first floating hide into position.

Thus my Chairmanship heralded the end of an era and the Society has moved with confidence into the 21st Century and grown in membership and influence as it should. I take great pride in the Society growing from strength to strength over the last 10 years.

A Photographic Guide to the
BIRDS
 OF JAPAN
 AND NORTH-EAST ASIA

Tadao Shimba



*A Photographic Guide to the Birds
 of Japan and North-East Asia*
 By Tadao Shimba

Photographic guide books are becoming more and more popular among birdwatchers, especially during the era when bird photography is getting more wide spread. Japan's photographic bird guides are among the very best among the similar publications. Readers should be familiar with the previous photographic guide books. In 2007, Tadao Shimba's «A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Japan and North East Asia» is the latest photographic guide book.

The book has included residential, migratory and vagrant birds in Japan and northeastern Asia. Identification is facilitated by using pictures showing differences of sexes, ages, subspecies, seasonality and behavior. Among the some 600 species listed in the book, most of them are illustrated more than one picture.

The guide book uses maps to show the distribution of each species. In the appendices, there are also checklists

for birds in Japan, South Korea, Northeastern China and Northeastern Russia. Readers can cross check with the maps in accordance. Apart from these areas, many of the birds listed in the book are migrants to China (including Hong Kong). Therefore the guide book is also usable for readers in other areas.

«A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Japan and North East Asia» is written in English which allows for more international readership and easier reading. Bird names in Japanese pronunciations are also provided.

«A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Japan and North East Asia» is published by Christopher Helm, with 504 pages, £24.99, ISBN 978-0-7136-7439-2.



These are unofficial records and members are reminded of the importance of submitting all records on cards or electronically

▲ June

The first half of the month brought reports of up to 14 **Black-faced Spoonbills**, rare over-summering wildfowl in three **Common Teal**, a **Northern Shoveler**, a **Tufted Duck**, up to 11 nesting pairs of **Black-winged Stilts** and a singing **Oriental Reed Warbler**, all at Mai Po (BS). Also there were two **Red Turtle Doves** at Po Toi (GW), several **White-shouldered Starlings** at Mui Wo (PS) and Shuen Wan (breeding) (RWL) and single **Black-naped Orioles** at Cheung Chau, Lamma and Mai Po (MDW, GS, KL), the latter quite rare in summer now.

Notable reports in the second half of the month included a **Watercock** at Mai Po (BS), a juvenile **Orange-headed Thrush** at Kap Lung (BM, HKBWS web-site photo), an unusually late **White-winged Tern** beside the Mai Po access road on 20th (KJ), an adult **Black-throated Laughingthrush** feeding two young at Pok Fu Lam (HI, HKBWS web-site photo) and up to six **Silky Starlings** including a dependent juvenile at Tai Mei Tuk (RWL), the first breeding record for Hong Kong.

▲ July

The only sightings of interest received were of an adult and dependent juvenile **Yellow-billed Grosbeak** at Mai Po on 1st (WT, HKBWS web-site photo) and a **Greater Crested Tern** in southern waters on 29th (CT, HKBWS web-site photo).

▲ August

In an otherwise unexceptional month, highlights were single **Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoos** at Mui Tze Lam, Ma On Shan (juvenile) on 13th (TH) and Tai Po Kau on 18th (DL), a juvenile **Brown Booby** at Stanley Beach on 25th and near Po Toi the next day (GW) and the reappearance of a **Speckled Piculet** at Ng Tung Chai from 29th (EMSK). In addition, up to six **Asian Dowitchers** were at the Wetland Park, Tin Shui Wai (NF) and at Mai Po (EMSK). 120 **White-shouldered Starlings** were at Lok Ma Chau on 29th (PJL) and the peak count of **Eastern Crowned Warblers**, which were noted at Tai Po Kau throughout the month, was six (KPK).

▲ September

This was the poorest September in many years, with few rarities found and the usual migrants reported only in small numbers, though the opening week was promising.

A juvenile **Brown-chested Flycatcher** was trapped at Tai Po Kau on 1st (GC) and another seen there four days later (KPK). The early part of the month also brought reports of one or two **Grey-headed Flycatchers** at Tai Po Kau on 2nd (per MT) and 7th (KPK), these being the earliest autumn records by 5 weeks, a **Black Bittern** at Mai Po and a **Drongo Cuckoo** at Po Toi, both on 3rd, and 112 **Aleutian Terns** in eastern waters on 6th.

The only significant report of the second week concerned a **Bay Woodpecker** at Tai Po Kau and nearby at Tai Po Kau Headland during 8th-13th (CHF, K&RB, KPK).

Highlights of the third week were a **Japanese Sparrowhawk** at Po Toi (GW) on 16th, the earliest yet in autumn, a **Manchurian Reed Warbler** at Long Valley the same day, 15 **Dollarbirds**, the highest ever autumn count, at Ng Tung Chai on 18th (EMSK) and a **Ruddy-breasted Crake** at Long Valley on 20th.



The month concluded with a **Large Hawk Cuckoo** at Po Toi on 25th (WT), a rare autumn record, a **Fairy Pitta** at Shing Mun on the same day (GH), a **Blyth's Pipit** at Lok Ma Chau (P JL) on 27th, a **Crested Honey Buzzard**, a **Himalayan Swiftlet** and a **Common Rosefinch**, all at Po Toi on 27th-28th (GW), the latter an exceptionally early autumn record, two further **Crested Honey Buzzards** at Fung Yuen (GH) and also two **Black Bazas** at Tsim Bei Tsui (KJ) the next day and three **Blue-tailed Bee-eaters** at Mai Po on 30th.

▲ **October**

As in the previous month there were few rarities and passage was generally light, except in the first week when record numbers of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, Black Drongos and Hair-crested Drongos were found.

A **Speckled Piculet** at Ng Tung Chai on 1st was followed by a **Ferruginous Flycatcher**, a rare autumn record, at Tai Po Kau the next day (MH) and the first **Siberian Blue Robin** of the season (at Ng Tung Chai) two days later. Sightings the same day included an unidentified **Frigatebird** at Lamma (JAA), a **Pechora Pipit** at Sam Tin (GJC), a **Baillon's Crake**, a **Swinhoe's Minivet** and a **Manchurian Reed Warbler** at Lok Ma Chau (P JL), and 100+ **Red Turtle Doves**, 44 **Blue-tailed Bee-eaters**, three **Chestnut-cheeked Starlings** and 100 **White-shouldered Starlings**, all at Fung Lok Wai (EMSK).

A record count of 121 **Blue-tailed Bee-eaters** was made at Mai Po on 5th when flocks of 81 and then 40 were seen going to roost in the mangroves (BS). Subsequently there were counts of up to 66 at Mai Po on 12th-13th and a large number were heard flying overhead on 16th. A strong passage of drongos was noted on 7th in the form of 237 **Black Drongos** near Mui Wo, Lantau (PA) and 67 **Hair-crested Drongos** flying north over Tai Po Kau Headland (K&RB), the highest counts on record for both species; also a mixed flock of 50 **Black** and **Hair-crested Drongos** was seen the same day at Nim Wan (MH).

Other notable reports in the first half of the month included a **Sulphur-breasted Warbler** at Tai Po Kau on 6th (KPK), a **White-throated Fantail** at Ng Tung Chai from 7th (EMSK), this for the third of fourth successive winter, a **Bay Woodpecker** intermittently in Tai Po Kau, the first **Citrine Wagtail** of the autumn at Long Valley on 11th (SYH), seven **Amur Falcons** at Mai Po on 13th (KJ), two **Chinese Goshawks** at Po Toi on 14th (GW) and an **Orange-headed Thrush** at Tai Po Kau Headland the same day (JAA).

The second half of the month was less eventful. Two **Grey-faced Buzzards** were seen from the Po Toi ferry on 19th and a **Swinhoe's Egret** was at Shui Hau, Lantau two days later (PS), both species being rare in autumn. Shui Hau also hosted a **Bright-capped Cisticola** on 19th (MDW). A **Baillon's Crake** and **Ruddy-breasted Crake** were at Long Valley from 21st-22nd (CHF, SYH) and a **Mountain Tailorbird** was found at Po Toi on 24th (GW).

▲ **November**

Undoubted highlights were a **Brown Wood Owl**, a **Japanese Marsh Warbler** and a **Bean Goose**, all potential first records for Hong Kong found in the first half of the month.

The first week of the month brought reports of a **Ruddy Crake**, a **Baillon's Crake** and up to three **Citrine Wagtails** at Long Valley, a **Chinese Goshawk** and **Mountain Tailorbird** at Dong Ping Chau (MDW), a **Black Stork** at Mai Po,



the **Bay Woodpecker** again at Tai Po Kau, two **Bright-capped Cisticolas** (heralding a good winter for this species) at Kam Tin, and a **Bianchi's Warbler**, a male **Narcissus Flycatcher** (major autumn rarity), a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** (potential Hong Kong second record) and two **Eurasian Siskins** at Po Toi.

On 6th, a **Brown Wood Owl** was photographed above Shing Mun (WCO), the first for Hong Kong. This was followed by two other potential first records, a **Japanese Marsh Warbler** trapped at Mai Po on 10th (PJL) and a **Bean Goose** seen briefly on the Mai Po scrape just before dark on 12th (JAA).

Two **Grey Nightjars** were heard and seen at Tai Po Kau on the evening of 12th (K&RB), a **Bull-headed Shrike** was at Sha Po the next day (JAA) and a **Brambling** and a **Japanese Yellow Bunting** were found at Po Toi on 15th (GW). The latter, which was possibly the first autumn record, was followed by four at the same locality on 21st and one there on 28th.

Following the discovery of a female **White-bellied Green Pigeon** at Tai Po Kau Headland on 20th (per RB), there were reports of single **Japanese Robins** at Po Toi (GW) and Mui Wo (PA), a **Black-headed Bunting** at Ma Tso Lung (GH), a **Ferruginous Duck** at Mai Po and a **Fujian Niltava** at Cheung Chau (per MDW), all during 20th-24th.

Lai Chi Kok Park, located in the House Crow heartlands of West Kowloon and previously unknown to birders, leapt to prominence from about 21st with the discovery of an amazing array of photogenic birds foraging on lawns or resting on fence-posts. These included **Slaty-legged Crake**, **Eurasian Woodcock**, **Eurasian Eagle Owl**, **Northern/Brown Boobok**, **Grey Nightjar**, **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** and **Lanceolated Warbler**.

The month came to an end with reports of a **Common Starling** at Shek O Golf Course on 25th (DB), three **Mandarin Ducks** at Sha Po (JAA), two **White-spectacled Warblers** and a **Fujian Niltava** at Tai Po Kau on 28th (GH), a **Brown-headed Thrush** and 130 **Silky Starlings** at Po Toi on 29th (GW), and two **Carrion Crows** at Lut Chau on 30th (PJL).

▲ *December*

The highlight of the month and for many birders the highlight of the year was a **Black Scoter** at Mai Po on 9th (GJC, MLC). Also on the same date another potential (and long-expected) first, a **Pelagic Cormorant**, was photographed off Basalt Island (LKS).

Following the bird at Shek O in November, a **Common Starling** was found at Pui O on 9th (PS), another rare record away from Deep Bay. Notable records from Po Toi included a **Bianchi's Warbler** throughout the month, a **Black Redstart** photographed on 11th (GW), only the second Hong Kong record, and a **Red-breasted Flycatcher**, possibly a different individual from the November bird, from 18th (GW). Meanwhile, a **Bull-headed Shrike**, which was to remain into the new year, was found at Ng Tung Chai on 14th (EMSK).

In the final week of the year, there were reports of a **Brown Bush Warbler** at Fung Yuen (GH), a **Pere David's Bush Warbler** at Long Valley (RWL, EMSK, LJ), an **Oriental Greenfinch** at Wang Tong, Lantau (PS), a **Japanese Robin** and **Small Niltava** at Tai Po Kau (KPK), and a **Speckled Piculet** (SLT), four **Siberian Thrushes**, a possible **Pale Blue Flycatcher** and a **Fujian Niltava** (EMSK), all at Ng Tung Chai.

HKBWS coming activities July - December 2008

Outings

Date	Duration	Time and site	Difficulties (1...3)	Target species
05/7/2008 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Shing Mun (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Hang Seng Bank, Tsuen Wan MTR station)	★★	Forest birds
06/7/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tap Mun (08:00 Ma Liu Shiu pier, end 12:00 Tap Mun)	★★	Terns
02/8/2008 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Aberdeen Reservoir (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (0800 Exit B, Hang Seng Bank, Central MTR station)	★★	Forest birds
17/8/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Mai Po (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road exit), OR 09:00 Mai Po carpark, end 15:00 Mai Po, 16:00 Kowloon Tong)	★★	Early migrants
06/9/2008 (Sat)	1300 0800 -	Nam Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Hang Heung Cake Shop, Yuen Long)	★	Waterbirds
14/9/2008 (Sun)	1600 0800 - 1200	Mai Po (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road exit), OR 09:00 Mai Po carpark, end 15:00 Mai Po, 16:00 Kowloon Tong)	★★	Early migrants
21/9/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark) Po Toi and HK South Waters	★★	Migratory forest birds
28/9/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	(08:00 Aberdeen public pier, near Ocean Court) <i>Note: This will be a long trip on open waters. The ride could be quite rough and some people may be seasick.</i>	★★★	Seabirds
12/10/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Kadoorie Farm & Botanical Garden (08:00 Entrance, Kadoorie Farm)	★★	Raptors
19/10/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Mai Po (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road exit), OR 09:00 Mai Po carpark, end 15:00 Mai Po, 16:00 Kowloon Tong)	★★	Migrants
26/10/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Hok Tau (08:00 Fanling Town Center access, Fanling MTR station)	★★	Migrants
09/11/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Kam Tin (15:00 Exit B, Kam Sheung Road West Rail station)	★★	Farmland birds
16/11/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Shing Mun (08:00 Hang Seng Bank, Tsuen Wan MTR station)	★★	Forest birds
23/11/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Mui Tse Lam (08:00 Exit B, Tai Shui Hang Ma On Shan Rail station)	★★	Forest birds
14/12/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Pui O (08:00 Exit B, Tung Chung MTR station)	★★	Wintering forest & farmland birds
21/12/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Sha Lo Tung and Fung Yuen (08:00 Taxi station, Tai Po Market MTR station)	★★	Wintering forest & farmland birds
28/12/2008 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark, end 12:30)	★★	Wintering forest birds

Indoor Meetings

Date	Duration	Topic	Speaker(s)	Venue	Remarks
18/6/2008 (Wed)	1900 - 2100	(1) Xishuangbanna (Yunnan) Biodiversity Corridors Conservation Initiative (2) Birding in Yunnan, Mainland China	Dong Jiangtian John & Jemi Holmes	Room 1113, Scout Association of HK	No need for prior registration. First come first served
23/7/2008 (Wed)	1900 - 2100	Birds in Winter and Spring	Dr. HF Cheung	Room 1113, Scout Association of HK	No need for prior registration. First come first served
20/8/2008 (Wed)	1900 - 2100	Identification of Raptors	Dr. HF Cheung	Room 1113, Scout Association of HK	No need for prior registration. First come first served

Code of Conduct for Birdwatching and Bird Photography

The objective of HKBWS is to promote the study, appreciation and conservation of birds in Hong Kong. In addition, the Society also facilitates the exchange of experience and information related to birdwatching. In recent years, more and more people in Hong Kong become interested in birdwatching and bird photography. Since birds are sensitive to disturbance, special care is required to avoid bringing disturbance to their lives. In order to provide a model for good practices in birdwatching and bird photography, the Society's Executive Committee has drawn up the following code. It is intended to be a reference and guide to both HKBWS members and the general public.

1. The Welfare of Birds Comes First

Birdwatching and bird photography should be carried out with minimum interference to the birds. Disturbance must be avoided as far as possible.

- Stop if the birds appear disturbed begin to move away or exhibit other abnormal reaction
- Exercise additional precautions when the activity is undertaken with a large group of people
- Do not attempt to influence the behaviour of birds, e.g. by flushing, chasing or baiting
- Use flash only sparingly
- Do not damage the natural environment

2. Protect Sensitive Sites

The roost of rarities are particularly vulnerable. Take extra care to minimize disturbance.

- Keep a suitable distance to avoid stressing the birds
- Do not land on islands with breeding colonies
- Do not disturb nests and their surrounding vegetation, or the nest could be abandoned or become exposed to predators
- Share information about the sites with discretion and do not reveal it casually in public. Explain clearly to those who may not understand the Code, to avoid bringing disturbance to the site
- Beware that your actions may attract unwanted attention and hence disturbance to the site

3. Report Disturbances

If you find people disturbing or causing harm to birds, advise against the act when it is safe to do so. If they cannot be stopped, take photos and report to the AFCD as soon as possible. Post a report at the Society's online Forum.

4. Respect Others

- Share the fun-avoid disturbing other birdwatchers or photographers on site.
- Take care not to damage facilities or crops at the site.

HKBWS Activity Booking Slip

I would like to register the following HKBWS activities: (Please as appropriate)

▲ Mai Po Outings

- 17 Aug 2008 (Sun) (___ member(s), ___ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) using the coach is _____)
- 14 Sep 2008 (Sun) (___ member(s), ___ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) using the coach is _____)
- 19 Oct 2008 (Sun) (___ member(s), ___ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) using the coach is _____)

▲ Po Toi and Hong Kong South waters

- 28 Sep 2008 (Sun) (___ member(s), ___ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) is _____)

* We will confirm the participants whether their application is accepted or not about 2 weeks before the outing. Once confirmed, no refund will be made no matter they can attend the outing or not. If we cancel the outing due to inclement weather or special reason, all participants will be refunded.

According to the requirement of the Hong Kong Police and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, participants entering Mai Po should provide their full name and Hong Kong ID Number (passport number for oversea visitors) in order to access to the Frontier Closed Area and Mai Po Marshes.

▲ Mai Po Outings

(Members not using the coach do not need to pay. Non-members will have to pay the coach fare of HK\$60 disregard of whether they make use of the coach.)

[Coach Fare: Member: HK\$40 Student Member: HK\$20 Non-member: HK\$60]

▲ Po Toi and Hong Kong South waters

[Boat Fare: Member: HK\$160 Non-member: HK\$200]

Date	Destination	Name	Membership No.	HK ID No. (for entering Maipo)	Mobile Phone	Email Address	Coach Fare

Enclosed please find a Cheque of HK\$ _____ (Payable to **The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited**)

Name : _____ Membership no: _____ E-mail: _____

Mobile Phone No. : _____ Date : _____ Signature : _____

Please send this slip together with a crossed cheque to:

14/F., Ruby Commercial Building, 480 Nathan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Notes :

- Application should be made at least two weeks before the date of the outing and on the first come first served basis. HKBWS Members have a high priority to participate the activities.
- Any changes of the activities will be announced in our Website: (www.hkbws.org.hk/phpBB2/all_activity.php).
- Arrangement during bad weather: When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No.3 or above or Rainstorm Warnings Red or Black are hoisted by the Hong Kong Observatory at 7:00 am on the event day, the activity will be cancelled. If Thunderstorm Warning is announced during the activity, Team Leader will decide if the activity should be continued or cancelled. You can call the team leader at 9457 3196 during the event day if you have any query about the weather.

Disclaimer: The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society shall have no responsibility, financial or otherwise, for expenditure or other liabilities arising from the activities. Participants are recommended to purchase relevant insurance.