

HKBWS

香港觀鳥會 The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

週年紀念
50th Anniversary
1957-2007
香港觀鳥會 The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society



bulletin
會員通訊

209 & 210

Autumn & Winter 2008 ~ 秋·冬



蛇鵰
陳燕明
石崗

Crested Serpent Eagle
Christina Y.M. Chan
Shek Kong

07.10.2007
DSLR Camera, 300mm lens + 1.4x teleconverter





鳳頭鷹
Owen Chiang
葵涌

Crested Goshawk
Owen Chiang
Kwai Chung

09.07.2007
DSLR Camera, 300mm f/2.8 lens + 2x teleconverter



鳳頭鷹
陳土飛
葵涌

Crested Goshawk
Thomas Chan
Kwai Chung

08.07.2007
DSLR Camera, 800mm f/5.6 lens



白腹山鵬
森美
飛鵝山

Bonelli's Eagle
Sammy Sam
Kowloon Peak

16.08.2008
DSLR Camera, 500mm f/4 lens +
1.4x teleconverter



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Together for birds and people

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BirdLife International Affiliate

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Editor's note

In order to “catch up” with the bulletin publishing schedule, this bumper edition combines the bulletins of Autumn and Winter 2008. The editorial committee apologises in advance to anyone who might feel they have missed out.

Our “50th Anniversary” features conclude here with two articles...

Jeremy Sergeant gives a history of discovering Mai Po, birds and bird watching sites in Hong Kong in the 1950s. He also describes the difficulties of identification in an era before the field guides that we now take for granted.

Mike Chalmers, who was our “Hon. Recorder” for more than twenty years, also discusses the solving of some of these identification puzzles.

Even though we've drawn a line under “50th Anniversary” material, we'd still be pleased to consider any contributions to the bulletin, nostalgic or otherwise!



~ John Holmes

Society News & Projects ~ Lo Wai Yan

Members

Affairs

2009 Membership Renewal

Dear members, please remember to renew your subscription. Thank you for your continuous support. You may send the completed subscription form with crossed cheque to the society. Alternatively, you may directly credit ‘The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited’ account (HSBC account no. 534-361423-838) and return the pay-in slip and the completed subscription form to the society.



會籍 2009
Membership

香港觀鳥會有限公司
Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited

認可公共性質慈善機構
Approved Charitable Institution of a Public Character





WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD – photo by Cherry Wong

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Acknowledgements: Membership card designed by Ms Puk Yuk Yin with a photo by Cherry Wong.

Major resolutions from the 6th AGM

The AGM was held on 21 Oct 2008. Below are some of the major resolutions:

-  To increase the individual membership fee from HK\$250 to \$270. This is a mild increase in line with inflation in the last two years.
-  It was agreed to apply to join Birdlife International as a “Partner”. Right now, we are an “Affiliate Member”. Photo – AGM



Members E-mail address

HKBWS has long been publishing Society news through the Bulletin and by E-mail, but the E-mail addresses for many members are non-existent or out-of-date. To keep in touch, please provide your latest email address to us at (hkbws@hkbws.org.hk) or fax (2314 3678 during office hours), writing “Members Updating Email” on the subject line. If you did not receive our “Member’s Express” recently, that means we don’t have an accurate E-mail address for you.

“The Avifauna of Hong Kong” - a Free Gift to Members

In order to acknowledge the ongoing support of our members, a free gift of the “Avifauna of Hong Kong” will be given to all members. Members are required to pick up the book in our office (address on the title page of this bulletin) during office hours.



Bird Shop of HKBWS

Books and AV material (special offer for member)

- ▶ **Insecta Hongkongica** (B0008) HK\$160
(only Chinese version)
- ▶ **Butterflies & Moths of Hong Kong (B0009)** HK\$160



Bird Shop of HKBWS

Books and AV material (special offer for member)

- ▲ Birdwatching in Forests (B0001)
(Bilingual)
HK\$30



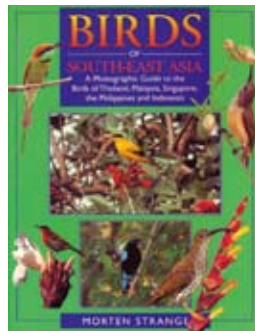
- ▲ Birdwatching in Farmlands & Open Fields (B0002)
(Bilingual) HK\$30



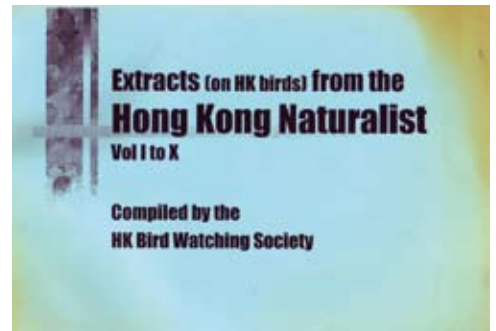
- ▲ Birdwatching in Wetlands (B0003)
(Bilingual)
HK\$30



- ▼ A Photographic Guide to Birds of Thailand (B0005)
HK\$90



- ▼ Birds of South-east Asia (B0006)
HK\$100



- ▼ Extracts (on HK birds) from the Hong Kong Naturalist Vol I to X (1930) (B0007)
HK\$100

Calling for second-hand supply

The office would like to request the following material for our own use: Plenty of single-sided A4 paper. We will be pleased to arrange to collect donated paper if a big enough quantity is offered! Please contact Mr. Lo at 2377 4387.

Invitation of articles for bulletin

Contributions to the bulletin will be most welcome, deadlines for the coming issues are as follows:

No. 211 Spring 2009 Issue - Jan 15, 2009

No. 212 Summer 2009 Issue - April 15, 2009

No. 213 Autumn 2009 Issue - July 15, 2009

No. 214 Winter 2009 Issue - Oct 15, 2009

Please send your article to the following e-mail address: bulletin@hkbws.org.hk or send a hard copy to our office.

(The Editorial Board reserves the right of accepting or rejecting all submitted articles)

Publications for free distribution

HKBWS have a large number of HKBWS publications and back issues of bulletins for free distribution. Members are always welcome to visit the new office and take away free copies of these publications.



Electronic version of Bulletin

An electronic version of this bulletin will be launched in 2009. Please inform the Society if you want to receive an electronic version. We can forward a PDF file to you through e-mail, or you can download the file from the "Member's Zone" of our forum. We will keep sending you the hard copy if we do not receive the below notice.

(Please send the below information through fax, e-mail or by post)

(please ✓):

- please do not send me the bulletin by mail
- I will download the bulletin from the forum (we will inform members of the publishing day of the bulletin)
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Address: 14/F., Ruby Commercial Building, 480 Nathan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Hong Kong Bird Race 2009

Date: 25-26 April 2009 (Sat & Sun)

More details to follow – mark your diaries!
(*The WWF-HK Big Bird Race has been consigned to history!* – Ed.)

Adjustment of charging for bird watching outings

In the past, non-members have not been charged for joining most of our bird watching activities, especially those which required no registration. A small fee will be charged for non-members starting from 1 Jan 2009. For members, charging scheme remains unchanged. (HK\$30 will be charged to non-member for the outings that require no registration. Mai Po outings will charge HK\$70. For boat trips, please refer to the bulletin for each trip. There is still no charge for joining the outings led by the Crested Bulbul Club.)

The 10th Taipei International Birdwatching Fair

Invited by the “Wild Bird Society of Taipei”, the Society attended this bird watching fair again in the Guandu Nature Park on 8-9 Nov 2008. Our Hon. Treasurer Ada Chow and volunteer Maggie Li managed a booth during the Fair, which was received enthusiastically.



Elementary Bird Watching Course for Beginners (5th class)

~ Gary Chow

The Fifth Elementary Bird Watching Course for Beginners has been completed in December. Forty-four members have joined the course, majority of them are very enthusiastic and high in bird watching ability. Since from last course, we've invited the graduated students for being assistance to our outing session. In this time, more than 10 previous students have joined and helped us leading team. The outcome is favorable, particularly for a few graduated students whom have already became outstanding leaders.

Start from 2005, we have carried out five such birdwatching courses from which more than two hundred students had graduated and more than twenty birdwatching assistant had emerged. In coming year, we will continue our project to carry out more elementary birdwatching courses and even in-depth training course, when time and resource allow.

The 8th Thailand Bird Festival

The festival was organized from 21 to 23 Nov 2008 in Rot Fai Park, Bangkok

by the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand. The theme of this year's festival is “Free the birds”. Activities in the first day include painting, collage, matching, identification and games of bird migration. Bird watching tour to bird watchers and nature lovers were mainly held on Saturday and Sunday. The climax was the broadcasting of the bird identification competition joined by secondary school students. Dong Jiangtian,



China Project Officer (Yunnan) of HKBWS has attended the festival and managed a booth during that period.

Crested Bulbul Club

<p>1. Early Morning Bird Watchers at Kowloon Park & HK Park</p> <p>No. of participants in Hong Kong Park from Aug to Nov 2008: 158</p> <p>No. of participants in Kowloon Park from Aug to Nov 2008: 522</p>	<p>2. Bird watching interpretation in Hong Kong Wetland Park</p> <p>A total of 129 participants in this service from March to May 2008.</p>												
<p>3. Bird watching services and activities</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="207 550 491 654"> <p>25-26/10/2008</p> </td> <td data-bbox="491 550 769 746">  </td> <td data-bbox="769 550 1297 654"> <p>managed a booth in the opening of World Wetlands Day 2009 in Wetland Park Photo – Wetland Park</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="207 654 491 728"> <p>15/11/2008</p> </td> <td data-bbox="491 654 769 728"></td> <td data-bbox="769 654 1297 728"> <p>Bird watching tour during the Fun Day in Kowloon Park</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="207 728 491 765"> <p>30/11/2008</p> </td> <td data-bbox="491 728 769 765"></td> <td data-bbox="769 728 1297 765"> <p>Green Family Day in Hong Kong Park</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="207 765 491 838"> <p>23/11 & 14/12/2008</p> </td> <td data-bbox="491 765 769 838"></td> <td data-bbox="769 765 1297 838"> <p>Bird watching tour in the Museum of Coastal Defense</p> </td> </tr> </table>		<p>25-26/10/2008</p>		<p>managed a booth in the opening of World Wetlands Day 2009 in Wetland Park Photo – Wetland Park</p>	<p>15/11/2008</p>		<p>Bird watching tour during the Fun Day in Kowloon Park</p>	<p>30/11/2008</p>		<p>Green Family Day in Hong Kong Park</p>	<p>23/11 & 14/12/2008</p>		<p>Bird watching tour in the Museum of Coastal Defense</p>
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<p>23/11 & 14/12/2008</p>		<p>Bird watching tour in the Museum of Coastal Defense</p>											

Survey,

Research and Training

Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley (Mar 2008 - Feb 2010)

~ Vicky Yeung

Express News: Two Black-faced Spoonbill were recorded for the first time in Long Valley!!!



Shallow water habitat created after the bulldozing work.



Students of the eco-guide basic training



Many egrets were attracted to the drained fishpond. © James Fung



Small Asian Mongoose LV ©Stanley Wong

The management agreement project has been implemented for more than half a year. There are 22 local farmers participating and the managed area has increased to 921,600 sq. ft.

In July 08, large-scale bulldozing work was carried out in long valley to remove weed and re-organize farmlands. After the construction, fields were flooded and turned into shallow water habitat, and successfully attracted large flocks of waterbirds and migrating ducks. Since this area is flat and open, if bird watchers and photographers go to this area,

please try to minimize disturbance to birds.

The Long Valley Eco-guide basic and advanced training courses were held during Sep to Nov 08. 30 and 19 participants finished the course and they started leading eco-tours in December.

In late November 08, we started to drain the fishpond managed under the project in order to attract egrets as well as to prepare for the construction works at the beginning of 2009 so as to maintain the good condition of the fishponds.

Research Association of other waterbird species with wintering Black-faced Spoonbills in Hong Kong



Photo by Yu Yat Tung

We would like to thank the Environment and Conservation Fund for sponsoring the captioned research. Mr YU Yat-tung was in-charge of the research for 4 months. You can download the report PDF from the society website.

Research Studying landbirds in important bird habitats of Hong Kong, especially in the IBAs

We would like to thank the Environment and Conservation Fund for sponsoring the captioned research. Survey has been started from Nov this year and will last for 2 years. Survey sites include Tai Mo Shan, Tai Po Kau, Kam Tin, Shing Mun Country Park, Ng Tung Chai and partly Maipo. An committee of several senior bird watchers including John Allcock, HF Cheung, YT Yu and Gary Chow advises on the



Photo by George Ho

project. Most of the survey will be conducted by our Bird Surveyor, George Ho.

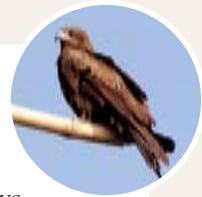
Egret Research Group Report

- Josephine Wong

The Egret Research Group has conducted two studies this summer, an Egretty Count and the feeding habitat use pattern by breeding ardeids (the flight line study). 664 nests and 19 nesting colonies were recorded in Hong Kong in 2008. Compared with the 822 nests in 2007, a 20% decrease in the number of nests was noted. Also, three nesting colonies were found abandoned in this year. The decline may associate with the prolonged cold spell early this year. The cold weather resulted in substantial mortality of fish in fishponds and fish farming rafts, causing a decline in food supply and thus limiting the number of breeding ardeids. The flight line study compared the habitat use pattern of four colonies (A Chau, Yeung Chau, Ho Sheung Heung and Mai Po Lung) during high and low tides. The two reports will be finished in the upcoming months. Members of the ERG would like to express our gratitude to TAM Yip Shing for his kind contribution in assisting in the field works of these two studies.

Kite Research Group Report

Photo by Henry Lui



The monthly counts results are as follows:

	Stonecutter Island	Magazine Gap
Nov 2007	129	430
Dec 2007	328	350
Jan 2008	170	310
Feb 2008	154	69
Mar 2008	36	64
Apr 2008	43	19
May 2008	23	69
Jun 2008	66	29
Jul 2008	8	105
Aug 2008	31	148
Sep 2008	85	172
Oct 2008	157	225
Nov 2008	340	634
Dec 2008	178	830

~ Fion Cheung

Fundraising for protecting the endangered Scaly-sided Merganser

Being a migratory species, Scaly-sided Merganser migrates through the Korean peninsula and northeast China each year, and the wintering birds concentrate in central and southern China (Jiangxi and Fujian). At present, Scaly-sided Merganser is an endangered species (EN) on the IUCN Red List and the remaining 1,000 – 2,500 individuals are now facing the threats of habitat loss, illegal hunting and human disturbance. In the last 40 years, their number has decreased dramatically.



HKBWS members Mr and Mrs Alex Choi have produced some ties with a striking Scaly-breasted Merganser pattern and are selling them via HKBWS. All the income earned will be donated to the HKBWS China Conservation Fund – Scaly-breasted Merganser Conservation.



300 ties in each colour are produced and the selling price for members is HK\$200 for 1 and HK\$300 for 2 while that for non-members is HK\$300 for 1 and HK\$500 for 2. An extra charge will be made for mail orders. We have stock in the HKBWS office.

China Bird Watch

China Bird Watch is a bimonthly magazine published by active birdwatchers who are also fond of literature. It not only provides up-to-date news about bird watching societies in China mainland, but also interesting birding information in both China mainland and worldwide, bird conservation news in China mainland as well as bird sighting records.

To subscribe to the magazine, please contact the HKBWS office. Whole year (6 issues): RMB100 (including postage fee) – a bargain! Each issue: RMB20 (including postage fee)

If you want to read the previous issues, you may visit:
www.chinabirdnet.org/newslett.html



Mai Po Update

~ Bena Smith

Preliminary Findings from the Reedbed Bird Study in Gei wai #8

Back in the summer of 2006, a 2ha area inside gei wai #8 was converted into wet reedbed habitat by lowering the floor by some 18 cm. Now that Reed Grass (*Phragmites australis*) has grown back, the Hong Kong Bird Ringing Group commenced ringing activities in August 2008 to investigate avian usage of the wet reedbed area against that in a dry reedbed. An analysis of the initial 3 months trapping data set has thrown up some interesting findings.

Species such as Black-browed Reed Warbler, Dusky Warbler and Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler are notably more abundant in the wet reedbed compared to the dry reedbed, but Oriental Reed Warbler less abundant. Trapping data also suggests the overall bird abundance is greater in the wet reedbed and anecdotal observations suggest larger waterbirds such as Yellow Bittern and Purple Heron are more commonly encountered in the wet reedbed. Although these are only preliminary findings, potentially they might provide valuable information for the future management of reedbeds in Hong Kong.

Habitat Management Trial at Gei wai #23

The long-term objective for the southern portion of Mai Po is to convert a number of gei wai and ponds into freshwater areas. There are a number of reasons for this, the more important being to diversify habitat types, and to reduce dependence upon water from the Bay which, as shown by the latest EPD water quality report, is extremely poor.

Gei wai #23 has been under conservation management as a brackish water gei wai since 1995, but this winter it will operate as freshwater on a trial basis. To do this we blocked the sluice gate in mid-summer and allowed rainwater to collect inside; the two October typhoons helped a lot with this! We will monitor bird usage over the winter period and then make comparison to previous years' data to assess the trial. An uncertain at this stage is whether or not the quantity of rainwater is sufficient to last throughout the winter period.

Duck Satellite Tracking Project


This winter, the Food and Agriculture Authority (FAO) is funding an exciting project to track the migration of duck from MPNR. The main purpose of the project is to investigate duck migration routes through East Asian countries to better understand the relationship between wild birds and avian diseases. Other than revealing migration routes taken by Mai Po ducks (which are largely unknown), important information such as their choice of stopover sites and breeding grounds should be identified.

If all goes according to plan, ten Eurasian Wigeon and ten Northern Pintail will be captured from the Education Centre duck ponds (formerly known as the Waterfowl Collection) in mid-December and fitted with light weight satellite receivers. These tagged birds are expected to remain in Deep Bay for a few months before leaving Hong Kong on their northward migration in early spring. A special web area will be set up within the WWF-HK website where visitors can see the latest positions of each duck using Google Earth software.

Update on Gei wai #21 conversion

Over the summer, we made significant progress on the conversion of gei wai #21 from an inter-tidal gei wai to a high-tide roost. By the end of October all interior vegetation had been removed and the gei wai floor surface skimmed to remove dead roots and Reed Grass rhizomes. The gei wai was re-flooded in early November and we intend to maintain a high water-level throughout the winter to attract duck. Phase II of the earthmoving work will continue next summer to create a number of small islands.

Also, as I'm sure many of you have noticed, the oldest WWF floating bird hide overlooking the Deep Bay mudflat continues to be closed off. Given that the winter bird season is upon us, repairs will be carried out in summer 2009, so we expect the hide to be operational for the coming autumn migration.

For comments about the Mai Po works being carried out, please contact us by telephone (2471-6212) or by e-mail (bsmith@wwf.org.hk). 

DISCOVERING

MAI PO - 50 YEARS AGO

Jeremy Sargeant recalls some challenging times on the marshes - and in other HK hotspots

Imagine, for a moment, that you, a keen birdwatcher, have been transported to a far away country, and want to follow your hobby in this strange new location. You do the obvious things like visiting the local bookshop to buy a field guide – and discover that the only one available has hardly any illustrations, and is certainly not what you would want in a field guide. You try another tack: you see if there's a bird club or similar. You draw a blank. As a last resort, armed with rather primitive binoculars (and without scopes in those days) on your own you go out on field walks to see if there are other birders to meet, but no one else seems to share your interest.

This rather accurately describes the situation when I first arrived in Hong Kong over fifty years ago.

But of course I went on trying, and bit by bit gained, through trial and error, a knowledge of the more common birds. Bear in mind that there is a positive side to all this: practically all the birds I saw were new to me, new and exotic and exciting. I well remember the thrill of identifying (for example) Scarlet-backed Flowerpeckers, Black Kites, Blue Magpies, and Hwameis, and this in the very heart of the urban part of the island. (My remarks here mirror Arthur Walton's earlier experiences of his first HK days as recorded in HKBWS bulletin 204).

Moving on a few months, I had broadened my horizons and had discovered several prime locations, particularly on the mainland, including Tai Mo Shan, Deep Bay, and the Yuen Long Valley. In particular, I started to get to know the Mai Po marshes: for me, this was a magical experience because, ever since I had taken up birdwatching at the age of fourteen I had developed a special liking for shore and marsh birds, having spent many days on the east coast of England, especially in north Norfolk. So Mai Po was my kind of place! To this day I have discovered few other places in the world where wader-watching is so rewarding.

But my Hong Kong birdwatching was transformed, not by any particular sighting but by meeting another birdwatcher. Well, that's not entirely true – not just any birdwatcher but the pioneering Frank Walker, from whose knowledge and experience I gained immeasurably.

The Mai Po marshes were an ideal environment for waders, and for watching them, with shallow pools and large expanses of exposed damp mud and silt. And, as if designed to make bird watching easier, the area was regularly intersected with low dry earth paths. Above all was the fact that there was hardly anyone else to be seen: perhaps a few local fishermen and their families and, more rarely, a very few other birdwatchers.

The success or failure of each visit was to a large extent dependent on the state of the tide (too low and the birds would be dispersed over acres of exposed mud in Deep Bay)

and, very significant, the season. It took some time to dawn on us that this site was of vital importance to the region's avifauna, being so crucially situated on what must be one of the main coastal migration routes to and from eastern Siberia and the more southerly wintering grounds.

Reviewing my records, in which I usually gave estimates of bird counts, it is obvious that the autumn migration was a major event starting a full month earlier than in northerly Europe, which meant that you had to be prepared to be out on the shadeless marshes despite the often suffocating heat of August. And in spring too the heat was often intense. But whatever the time of year there was enough of interest to keep me sufficiently motivated to get out onto the marshes, whatever the weather.

Both Frank and I were located in the Sek Kong valley and were therefore ideally placed for easy access to Mai Po, and to several other fruitful birding spots. I quickly gained experience of the birds of the area, and especially learned the more common songs and calls. (It has been my lifetime experience that many more birds can be quickly and certainly identified by sound rather than by sight).

I have retained all my original bird notes, and records of field trips, from the three years that, on and off, I spent in Hong Kong. Reviewing these I see that I visited Mai Po at least sixty five times during the period October 1955 to February 1958. My first visit in Frank's company was on 27 November 1955, and my field notes read: "I was accompanied by [Frank] Walker" and then added (rather an understatement, this) that he "has a good knowledge of Hong Kong birds and was able to clarify many points about which I was doubtful". During my most active period in the area, (September 1956 to October 1957) Frank Walker and I made most of our trips together.

It is difficult to isolate the highlights of our Mai Po experience during this very fruitful time: there were so many memorable moments. But one occasion stands out: I still vividly recall our excitement in identifying our first Spoon-billed Sandpipers on 23 May 1957. This was, I believe, the first record for Hong Kong.

Many of the waders we identified were doubly interesting to me, a British wader enthusiast, since they were not unknown, though often very rare, in Europe. Examples are Terek, Broad-billed, Marsh and Pectoral Sandpipers; Little Ringed and Kentish Plovers. Of course it was very helpful that many of the waders, such as Redshank, Red Knot, Dunlin, Curlew and Sanderling, were already well known to me from European experience. And then, of course, there were the birds of which I had no previous knowledge, such as Grey-headed Lapwing, Great Knot, Far Eastern Curlew, and so on. My overall tally of waders seen numbered just over forty species.


In addition to the waders there was much else of interest to be seen, including Black-faced Spoonbills, various Terns, Pratincoles, Bitterns and Herons, as well as many passerines. I kept very full records of the trips and on many occasions logged from fifty to over seventy species in a day. But not all trips were successful: I particularly recall visiting the marshes on the day before we were due to be hit by Typhoon Gloria in late September 1957, and enduring the frustration of not being able to use my binoculars because of the wind-whipped rain; nor could

I, a spectacle wearer, see anything much at all because my glasses were streaming with water. But I could still at least use my ears: many calls were familiar, but there were also many which were completely strange to me. Who knows what rarities I missed?

All bird watchers experience, from time to time, the frustration of taking exhaustive notes of a sighting, and then still being unable to identify the bird despite every effort. One particular instance springs to mind when, on two days running in the Lam Tsun valley, I saw what I confidently expected to be able to identify as a species of Crow-Tit (now called a Parrotbill). On returning to England in 1958 I even took the trouble to visit London's Natural History Museum where the ornithological curator was kind enough to let me compare my notes with actual specimens collected over the years and now housed in the Museum. But all to no avail: I still don't know what the bird was.

Frequently, especially at weekends, other birdwatchers joined us: names that I recall included Arthur Walton, Humphreys, Macfarlane, Ian Young, Maura Benham, Woodhams, Webb, Romer, de la Moussaye; and, following Frank Walker's initiative, it was from amongst several of these that the idea was born that we should form a Birdwatching Society. At an inaugural meeting on 7 April 1957 the HKBWS was formed with Arthur Walton as chairman, and myself as secretary. (Frank Walker would have been the obvious choice for this position but declined in view of the fact that he would be returning to the UK rather shortly at the end of his tour of duty).

Fairly often I like to review my old bird records. In doing so I come up against the difficulties of nomenclature and this can be frustrating and irritating. Many birds, thank goodness, still hold onto the same common and scientific names as fifty years ago; thus the Common Magpie *Pica pica* creates no confusion then or now; but when there have been changes these cause some serious puzzles. For example the Lesser Black-tailed Hawfinch *Eophona migratoria* now has the common name Yellow-billed Grosbeak – but at least linked by the same scientific name. In the case of several species it is now clear that we misidentified them: we thought we were seeing Spot-billed Pelicans, but these must have been Dalmatians; and the White-eyes we saw were not *Zosterops simplex* but *Zosterops japonica*. Instances of this kind are fairly common. And then we come to the most difficult category of all where neither the common nor the scientific names are the same as now. For example Frank Walker and I, climbing Tai Mo Shan on 7 July 1957 in search of Upland Pipits, came upon a bird which we identified as David's Hill-Warbler, shown in Herklots as *Suya crinigera parumstriata*. Until very recently this has remained a conundrum since no bird with either of these common or scientific names appear to have been recorded in Hong Kong, though *The Birds of HK and South China* gives Striated *Prinia Prinia crinigera (parumstriata)* and my field notes seemed to indicate that this was the species. But correspondence with Richard Lewthwaite in the past few weeks provides the clues which now enable me to identify the bird as a Large Grass Warbler *Graminicola (bengalensis) sinica*.

Since the time of my stay in Hong Kong, I have not had the opportunity to revisit the area. I certainly feel a powerful sense of nostalgia when I recall the experience of Mai Po, in particular. So it is only natural that I should now wonder what changes have occurred. I don't know whether I would be pleased or disappointed by them. But one change I am sure would delight me: that the area has been fully protected thanks to the efforts of the many dedicated pioneers of nature conservation and of Hong Kong birding. 

HKBWS: A 30 Year Perspective

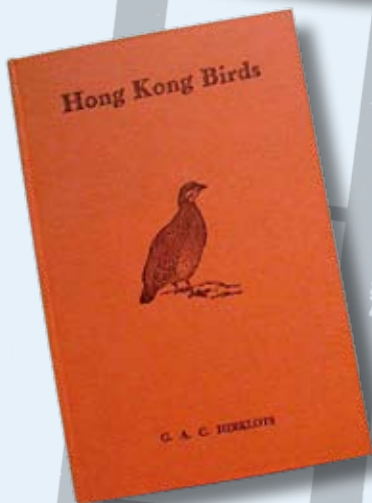
~ By Mike Chalmers

I first came to Hong Kong in 1975 and rented a house with a garden in the New Territories between Ting Kau and Sham Tseng overlooking the turbulent waters around Ma Wan Island. Mainland sailing junks with their patched dark red sails would occasionally anchor below us waiting for the tide. This is where I first became acquainted with Hong Kong's birds. I remember being struck by the cheerfulness and colour of the Crested Bulbul [now Red-whiskered], which for me is still Hong Kong's most characteristic bird. Greater Coucals and Blue Whistling Thrushes would make dramatic visits. Over the sea a dolphin would occasionally leap out of the water and flocks of Cattle Egrets and Garganey added interest in spring and autumn.

The only book available to sort out all the local birds was Herklots' "Hong Kong birds". It was strong on anecdotes but weak on bird pictures. Fortunately, within a year, Mike Webster's "A New Guide to the Birds of Hong Kong" was to lead the way with a field guide format, followed in 1977 by the first of Clive Viney's "A Colour Guide to Hong Kong Birds", then priced at HK\$20!

My first encounter with HKBWS was when I joined a field outing at Tai Po Kau led by an affable fellow sporting a 10 gallon Stetson. Any guesses? Encounters with such exotic species as Scarlet Minivet added to the magic of the forest, and Gavin Cooper went on to become Chairman of the Society.

Mike Webster was both Chairman and Hon. Treasurer when I joined and Clive Viney was the Hon. Recorder. I started to submit written records, and soon was invited on to the Records Committee [perhaps because I was the only person then to submit written descriptions more than two lines long!]. By 1977, Mike Webster, who was then also Chairman of the Conservancy Association, stood down in favour of Fred Hechtel as Chairman, and Gavin Cooper and I were appointed Hon. Co-recorders to handle the increase in records. For the next 20 years I remained a member, later Chairman, of the



黑鳶
陳澤榮
尖鼻咀

Black Kite
CW Chan
Tsim Bei Tsui

30.09.2007
Digiscoping



赤腹鷹
James Lam
蒲台

Chinese Goshawk
James Lam
Po Toi

06.05.2008
DSLR Camera, 300mm lens
+ 1.4x teleconverter



紅隼
鄭兆文
錦田

Common Kestrel
Raymond Cheng
Kam Tin

28.10.2007
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens +
1.4x teleconverter





普通鵟
鄭兆文
錦田

Common Buzzard
Raymond Cheng
Kam Tin

04.11.2007
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter

澤鶴
森美與雲泥
米埔

Eastern Marsh Harrier
Winnie Wong and Sammy Sam
Mai Po

11.10.2008
DSLR Camera, 800mm f/5.6 lens





澤鵞
陳家強
米埔

Eastern Marsh Harrier
Isaac Chan
Mai Po

26.10.2007
DSLR Camera, 300mm lens + 1.4x teleconverter



鵞鵝
麥江帆
米埔

Pied Harrier
Mak Kong Fan
Mai Po


27.10.2007
DSLR Camera, 400mm *f*/4 lens +
1.4x teleconverter

燕隼
陳佳瑋
蒲台

Eurasian Hobby
Chan Kai Wai
Po Toi

28.09.2008
DSLR Camera, 300mm lens +
1.4x teleconverter



A Japanese Sparrowhawk is perched on a dark brown tree branch. The bird has a brown head with a yellowish beak and large, yellow eyes. Its body is covered in brown and white mottled patterns. The background is a dense thicket of green leaves, creating a bokeh effect.

日本松雀鷹
吳璉宥
九龍公園

Japanese Sparrowhawk
Ng Lin Yau
Kowloon Park

05.09.2008
DSLR Camera, 500mm f/4 lens

Records Committee and a member of the HKBWS Committee during this period of great change. Long before the days of Excel spreadsheets, the Recorder's job then involved storing the ever increasing number of record cards and slips, sorted by species, which slowly displaced my socks and underwear in every available drawer space. Some of the slips made fascinating reading written in copperplate on the back of military signal forms.

Mike Webster had also just published the third edition of the Annotated Checklist of Hong Kong Birds in 1975, which tidied up quite a few of the earlier records. He created a new Category F for previously published but now doubtful records, but anomalies from the past remained. Many were as a result of English birdwatchers assuming unusual birds were either species they knew from Europe or India or, in the absence of local field guides, misidentifying unfamiliar Asian birds. The Hong Kong list at the time still included Spotted-billed Pelican, Golden Eagle, Steppe Eagle and Merlin, and David's Hill Warblers was considered to live on Tai Mo Shan. Within a couple of years, we had established that the only Aquila eagles wintering in Deep Bay were either Imperial or Greater Spotted and that by trapping, the prinia-like birds on top of Tai Mo Shan were Large Grass Warblers. (Now also known as "Rufous-rumped Grassbird" *Gramnicola bengalensis* – Ed.)

Apart from validating the list, it was also important to make the Society's records more valuable as conservation tools and to expand our knowledge of local birds in a more methodical way. In 1979, David Melville organized the first co-ordinated waterfowl count in Deep Bay. David then left for a period [before returning as Mai Po Manager and subsequently Director of WWF-HK], and from 1981 I took over the organization of the annual mid-winter waterfowl

counts until handing over to Geoff Carey in the 1990s. Deep Bay and Mai Po are Hong Kong's ornithological jewels and it was essential to have reliable and continuous records to argue the case for protection, which eventually led to the area's designation as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Treaty in 1995.

By the mid 1980s, the third edition of the Annotated Checklist was becoming out of date and sufficient records had accumulated to allow a more systematic analysis by histogram etc. I undertook to produce an updated fourth edition which was published in 1986. This took over 2 years to complete but was worth it because it clarified status and for the first time clearly showed passage periods and times of arrival and departure of summer and winter visitors.



The First Group to visit Nankunshan in Guangdong in 1984

[From top left: Clive Viney, Gavin Cooper, Don Weidemann, John Edge, Bob Ferguson, Ken Searle, Mike Chalmers, Mary Ketterer and staff of Guangdong Forestry Bureau].

世界自然基金會（香港）隊伍

[Bob Ferguson, Don Weidemann, John Edge, Clive Viney]



香港觀鳥會隊伍

[Mike Chalmers, Gavin Cooper, Steve Smith, Richard Stott]



VS

**The First Big Bird Race Teams in April 1984;
 WWF-HK vs HKBWS**

The 1980s were also a period of great exploration in the mainland. The country was opening up to outsiders and remote areas, which had previously been restricted, were becoming accessible. I enjoyed many visits at that time. Each had a spirit of adventure and exploration, and all were in good company. The first was memorable as we waited in Guangzhou's White Cloud airport for 3 days to fly to Hainan, but each day were told there were weather delays. We never got to Hainan [later we heard the real reason was that the runway was being repaired] but our Forestry Bureau hosts took us instead to Nankunshan, where for the first time we encountered the now familiar range of south china babblers.

Another memorable trip was to Jilin in March, where temperatures dropped to freezing each night. After long days seeking out Red-crowned Cranes and Great Bustards, we would return to base where our hosts had rigged up a hot

shower using a bucket chain from the kitchen stove to the roof top, where scalding hot water was poured down a funnel and rubber hose to our shower below.

In addition, the 1980s marked the start of the Big Bird Race which has over the years raised more than HK\$20million for Mai Po. The idea was cribbed from Bill Oddie in the UK. Clive Viney challenged me to raise a team and race against him in April 1984. Clive's team won that first race with 124 species seen or heard [I won the following year with 145 and then retired to become Adjudicator], and the modest amount raised was used for the first hide on the south side of the scrape [you can still see the plaque on the door today].

Seabirds have always been my passion and, in the days before we dared venture out to Cape D'Aguiar, I used to maintain typhoon watches from our bedroom windows at Ting Kau through a carefully arranged gap in the storm-boards. I saw the first Sooty/Bridled Terns that way and what was subsequently accepted as the first Black-naped Tern. I also remember vividly the day

in June 1985 when we went with Angus Lamont in his boat to investigate the possible Common Tern among the breeding Black-naped Terns in Mirs Bay and added Roseate and Bridled Tern to the Hong Kong list.

Other riddles which I enjoyed helping to solve were the identity of the elusive “zeebit” warbler, which turned out to be Russet Bush Warbler after trapping at Sha Lo Tung, and the mystery of the large white-headed Gulls. It was clear that our pink-legged and yellow-legged “Herring Gulls” had not been correctly identified in the past, but it took several years of careful observations and research to sort them out and publish the results with Peter Kennerley and Ted Hoogendoorn. Another very satisfying project was the Breeding Birds Survey between 1993 and 1996, which was published in the Avifauna in 2001. This started off well with lots of enthusiastic help, but towards the end I had to rush around filling in all the blanks that others had left in addition to completing my own squares. That was hard work, but the resulting breeding atlas maps for the first time defined the distribution of Hong Kong’s breeding birds in each of the Territory’s 1,220 kilometre squares.

But it is not just the birds and people which have changed so much. It’s the habitats too. In the 1970s, Deep Bay was a mystery. Mai Po’s gei wais were in private hands and there were no established paths. A struggle along a cross-bund would often result in finding it cut by dredging or covered by soft mud, and having to retreat. If you were lucky to reach the outer end, you then faced the mad dogs kept by the pond fishermen. You could not reach Deep Bay itself but could only glimpse it from the top of the Rocky Outcrop at Mai Po or peer from Tsim Bei Tsui.

I remember the revelation when Fred Hechtel brought a Questar telescope to Tsim Bei Tsui. With its monster magnification we were able to identify for the first time Shoveler and Pintail in Deep Bay in front of Mai Po [before then the myth was that all the duck in Deep Bay were Falcated Teal!]. The ease with which first the Deep Bay Fence gave access in the early 1980s, especially at Tsim Bei Tsui, and then the Boardwalk and Floating Hide at Mai Po a few years later, revolutionized bird-watching in Deep Bay.

Another dramatic, but more gradual change, has been the reforestation of Hong Kong Island and the New Territories. Old photographs show barren grass-covered hillsides, even as late as the 1950s at Tai Po Kau headland. Now, extensive natural and secondary forest exists, and the birds have responded accordingly.

It has been very rewarding and satisfying to see the Society grow over the last 30 years from a group of casual bird watchers to a well-organised corporate entity with a strong broad base of local support, a respected and influential voice in local conservation, and an authoritative source of information on the birds of the region. I congratulate all concerned and wish the Society continued success in the future.

Fulfillment & Frustration

~ Wong Tin Wa

50 years could be a man's span of life but it is just a flicker for the perpetual movement of this eternal world. There is an old saying: "know your destiny in 50 years". Anyone privileged to live in this world for 50 years should have some thoughtful understanding of what life is about. At this juncture, I recall that I have read a book called "Classic Birds" written by Eric Hosking years ago. It depicted the author's personal photography experience dating from 1929 to 1970. The subtitle of this book is known as 60 years (60 years of bird photography) as the author had intermingled wildlife photography with his life for 60 years. This book is still in my personal collection.

The early days of nature photography in the field were much more difficult than we can imagine. It was a great challenge just to handle the cumbersome low-performance photographic equipment. Having said that, where there is a will there is a way. With

the limitation of the equipment the pictures shown in Eric Hosking's book were by no mean easy to achieve. Even with modern equipment the photos would rate as a success. At that time, sensitivity of colour film was quite slow and lenses with shorter focal length and small aperture were commonly used. In order to resolve these problems the author had to use black and white films (as the ISO of monochrome was faster). Hosking also pioneered the use of high speed flash and camouflage in his field photography. In the 50's, using high speed flash was a real challenge though it is not a problem at all nowadays. Now what we lack is the natural habitat that the author had but not the equipments.

Advance technology makes photography unduly easy nowadays. Modern photographic equipment is easy to operate, lighter and generally affordable. The progress from large format camera that Eric Hosking used, to the popularity of 35mm single lens reflex (SLR) camera is said to be an era. Though the development of SLR camera aids much to wild bird photography, it was also retarded by the use of less sensitive speed (low ISO) films and other physical constraints. It was not until this decade that a great technical leap was made - digital SLR cameras that have heralded another era of bird photography. The previous problems of low ISO films and slow speed processors have been resolved, which has led to an influx of birds in flight pictures in both publication and the internet, a development which was certainly unimaginable in the past. Actually, before the maturity of the DSLR camera the development of compact digital cameras inspired the development of "digiscoping". Digiscoping allows photographers to picture the subjects at a great distance, which is a great contrast to the traditional method of photography with camouflage at close range. Digiscoping as practised



photo Wong Tin Wa

photo Wong Tin Wa



by some wild bird photographers has still not received the same status as DSLR photography as it is disadvantaged by its problems of small pixel count, slow response and less flexibility.

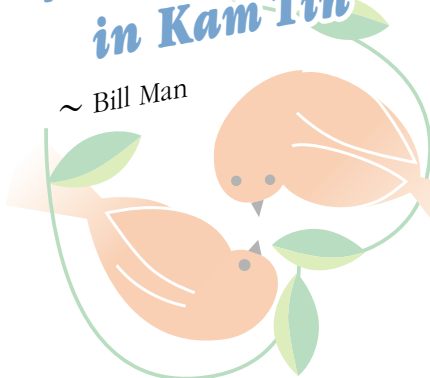
Digital photography is improving by leaps and bounds. As higher storage with efficient processors in compact size appeared in the market, I would expect another era to come that is to say people could take video as if they were taking pictures today. At that time, no matter how far and how fast is the subject, it would be easy for us to record its image. Don't you think it would be great if anyone is able to take pictures by using a small palm machine? Actually, the latest development of digital camera has the function of recording high-definition (HD) video and its resolution is as good as the medium format camera. On the other hand, the quality of using HD camcorder to photograph has also improved greatly.

Time is running fast. My interest in bird photography has over a span of two decades. Regrettably much natural habitat in the countryside has gone even though many enthusiasts have made tremendous efforts in conservation. Nonetheless I am not optimistic about the protection of wildlife habitat and conservation of wildlife in the future. Even the photographic team of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has the same feeling after shooting the world-renowned program "Planet Earth". Indeed, the advance of digital photographic equipments makes the professional photographers even more powerful and any amateur photographer like me is able to get pictures which are beyond the reach by traditional equipments. For instance, pictures like a soaring nightjar at night and the action sequence of a little bird in flight. But for me, the frustration of losing natural habitat cannot be compensated for by the fulfillment of having the most advanced camera gear on the market.



Watching romantic birds in Kam-Tin

~ Bill Man



I first participated in the Red-whiskered Bulbul Club's bird watching two years ago in autumn. The bird watching activity was held in Kam Tin, Yuen Long. Near Mong Yeung Primary School we saw a male Common Koel sitting in a mulberry tree eating the berries. A female koel soon joined him at the top of the tree. The male clearly noticed the beautiful female and presented her with her a bouquet of berries. They perched side-by-side with their heads at an angle as he

passed the food. At the time they were sharing the mulberries, I thought they were just like humans, loving each other and kissing.

We saw that the female Koel wanted to have more berries, and therefore the male had to bring her more. Luckily there were a lot of berries in the tree that they could share.

The two koels soon flew away, but I felt blessed to have witnessed their tender moments together.



Tai Po Kau

~ Yau Wing Ho

I've been bird watching for 10 years, I still think Tai Po Kau is the best spot.

Woodland birds are hard to see, rookies who come here looking for birds will usually return home disappointed. Birds calling everywhere but none is to be seen.

But this place is also where the 'masters' like to visit, as far as I can remember, there is Michael Kwan, Wong Choi On, Peter and Michelle, Mr & Mrs TP Luk, Lam Chiu Ying, Cheung Ho Fai, etc. If you happen to run into them, get some tips,

you're bound to have a rewarding experience. In particular Mr. Wong Choi On, his legs just follow his ears and eyes. With just the point of a finger, mated right in front of you a rare bird of your dreams appears on cue, more magical than David Copperfield.

Sometimes, luck gives you more than you ask for. If you happen to hit on a bird wave, you can be surrounded by over a hundred birds, on the ground, on the branches, everywhere. Your dream, your idol, the love of your life, all in front of you, the joy is greater than first love or newly wed, there is simply no word for such bliss. Sometimes you can be so lucky to hit 2 or 3 such waves in a

My Acquaintance with the White-bellied Sea Eagles

~ Tsim Siu Tai

Between 2002 and 3, I went all over Hong Kong in search of their breeding sites, and observed their feeding and breeding behaviour on site.

I watched a pair of White-bellied Sea Eagles on Sai Kung Yeung Chau. For 7a.m. To 7p.m., I sat by the seaside with my eyes fixed on them, although the wind chilled me to my bones. I carefully recorded their every move, and waited anxiously for the moment when the chick broke the shell. Sometimes the curious sea eagles flew by to check me out, put simply, it's me watching sea eagles, sea eagles watching me. One morning, the sea eagle couple were acting stangely, they search here and there in their nest, seemingly unsettled. Suddenly the sea eagle put its head down and flicked a white oval

object out of the nest (presumably their egg), on my god, poor thing! My heart dropped like it had fallen off a cliff, and my mind went blank. The female sea eagle had found a new partner and they even mated right in front of the male. The male sea eagle raged into action and chased the rival leaving the nest behind....


Another time I was tracking two sea eagles with radio, there were a few days when I lost their signals, and became suspicious that they had met some misfortune. I searched on the sea in a speed boat around the islands of Sai Kung. When I found them feeding healthily at a well hidden site on the east shore of Tai Tau Chau, the weight on my heart was finally lifted.



day, the joy of the experience will live with you for days without fading!

In recent years, the number of visitors has increased, with more people bringing dogs too, it's getting more difficult to see birds there. Also, the trees have grown much taller, so it's even harder to get a glimpse of the flocks stopping briefly on the canopy. On Sundays, I still bring my better half to the mountain, continuing

with my search despite repeated disappointment. Tai Po Kau offers different scenery for each of the four seasons, and the air is fresh and clean. Even when there are no birds around, you are still surrounded with wild flowers, grass, bamboos, and trees. Watching colourful butterflies dancing around in the air; feeling the breeze on your face; looking at the clouds drift by, and the fish swimming in the stream; humming an old tune to yourself, it's all so enjoyable! Once in a while on the red-blue trails, you stop to catch up with an old friend whom you haven't seen for ages, or have an interesting conversation with a new acquaintance, and time just flies by.

I love Tai Po Kau, my favourite of all time! 

Book Review

« Photographic Guide of Raptors in Flight »

~ Samson So



Old Edition




New Edition

It is always exciting to encounter birds of prey in the wild. It is even more enjoyable if we can identify the birds. Apart from various illustrated field guides, photographic guide books are also frequently used by birdwatchers. Norio Yamagata's new edition of 'Photographic Guide of Raptors in Flight' has incorporated wonderful pictures from many bird photographers, and is an updated version of the 1996 and 2003 editions. Many of the record pictures in the previous editions are now updated and replaced by better quality pictures. The new edition also shows pictures for birds with different morphs, ages, sexes and moults. These make the guide book an excellent reference to birds of different appearances. Although this book is mainly a photographic guide, it also has adequate texts to have readers in

the bird identification, especially for the Accipiters.

Whilst 'Photographic Guide of Raptors in Flight' is written for Japanese birds, some species can also be found in Hong Kong. Its 'pocket-size' design allows birdwatchers to carry it everywhere they go. Apart from being a versatile quick reference for raptor-lovers, the excellence of the bird pictures also makes the book a collectable item for bird photographers.

'Photographic Guide of Raptors in Flight' is published by Bun-ichi Co. Ltd <<http://www.bun-ichi.co.jp/>>, B40 size, with 80 colour pages, 1,400 Yen. ISBN978-4-8299-1015-3. 

~ Richard Lewthwaite

Observers initialled below have taken the first step in sharing their sightings with the telephone birdlines, but these are “unchecked” records. Members are reminded that their chance to be footnotes in ornithological history depend on **proper submission of a written record** to the Records Committee. Come on folks, posterity beckons – Ed.

June

- ▶ In the wettest June in Hong Kong since records began, highlights were four **Swinhoe’s Egrets** and an adult **Black-tailed Gull** at Tap Mun on 9th (IC), a **Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike** at Aberdeen Reservoir the same day (NLY) and two **Sooty Terns** from the Po Toi ferry on 19th (GW).
- ▶ 11th A **Saunders’s Gull** at Mai Po on 11th was by 12 days the latest ever spring record (BS, KL). Among other reports of interest at Mai Po were up to nine **Black-faced Spoonbills**, a **Eurasian Wigeon** and two **Northern Shovelers** throughout the month, a rather late **Eastern Curlew** on 6th, a **Watercock** on 8th, up to three **Oriental Pratincoles** from 9th, 11 **Great Knot** on 13th, two **Chinese Blackbirds** near the car park on 22nd and 19 **Chinese Starlings** on 26th (BS, KL). In addition, a pinioned **Red-crested Pochard** was photographed on the scrape on 15th (KH).
- ▶ Following the influx at the end of the previous month, small bitterns continued to be reported into early June, including a **Schrenck’s Bittern** and six **Yellow Bitterns** at Po Toi on 5th (GW). Also, one or two **Chestnut Bitterns**, now rare in summer, were noted at Ho Sheung Heung on 11th (PCC) and Long Valley on 21st. Up to five **Silky Starlings** were present at Cheung Chau on 2nd and 15th (MDW) and at Tai Mei Tuk from 13th to the end of the month (RWL), with pairs observed placing nesting material underneath air-conditioner units on the outside walls of two village houses there on 29th (RWL). Two Lesser **Necklaced Laughingthrushes** were found at Tai Po Kau Headland on 28th (JAA).
- ▶ No birds of note were reported in the wake of Typhoon Fengshen, which made landfall close to Hong Kong on 25th.

July

- ▶ A **Chinese Blackbird** was observed carrying food near the Mai Po car park on 1st and a pair were seen there throughout the month (BS, KL). Two unusual sightings in the first week were a **Dollarbird** at Po Toi on 3rd (GW), the first ever record in this month, and a **Black Bittern** at Hung Hom on 4th (GW), a rare summer record and at an urban locality.
- ▶ Highlights at Mai Po were up to four **Black-faced Spoonbills**, a **Black-winged Kite**, a **Pheasant-tailed Jacana** and an **Oriental Turtle Dove**, all during 8-10th, a **Chinese Grosbeak** on 15th, two **Asian Dowitchers** on 16th, a **Grey-headed Lapwing**, a **Black-headed Gull** and a **Black-tailed Gull**, all on 20-21st, and 100 **Collared Crows** going to roost on 23rd (BS, KL).
- ▶ Other noteworthy sightings in Deep Bay were a **Schrenck’s Bittern** and **Grey-headed Lapwing** at Kam Tin and four **Oriental Pratincoles**, a **Long-toed Stint**, five **Silky Starlings** and three **White-cheeked Starlings** at San Tin fishponds, all on 16-17th (JAA).



- ▶ Elsewhere, a **Roseate Tern** with a Japanese ring was photographed in eastern waters on 20th (PW, MK) and a **Forest Wagtail** was found at Tai Po Kau Headland on 29th (KB), an unusually early date.

August

- ▶ 5th Two **Whiskered Terns** were at Mai Po on 5th (BS), the earliest yet in autumn by three days.
- ▶ 9th The only noteworthy reports during the passage of Severe Tropical Storm Kammuri, which made landfall west of Macao on 6th, were 80 **Bridled Terns** and 25 **Roseate Terns** sheltering at Yung Shue O (PJJ) and an unidentified **skua** at sea off Cape d'Aguilar (CC).
- ▶ 12th A large raptor, probably a **Bonelli's Eagle**, was observed carrying off a young monkey at Tai Po Kau Headland on 9th (per RB) and two **Mountain Tailorbirds**, a **Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush** and a **Grey Treepie** were present there on 10th (RB).
- ▶ 20th A **Eurasian Eagle Owl** was noted at Fei Ngo Shan on 12th, and there were clear signs of autumn passage at this time with a **Eurasian Hobby** at Kam Tin, a **Black Bittern**, two **Black-winged Kites**, at least 600 **shorebirds** of 25 species, a **Black-tailed Gull** and a **Caspian Tern** at Mai Po, an **Eastern Crowned Warbler** at Tai Po Kau and an **Asian Paradise Flycatcher** and **Forest Wagtail** in the Wong Chuk Yeung area, all during 12-17th (JAA, BS, KL, EMSK, KPK, MT).
- ▶ A **Ruff** and 20 **Asian Dowitchers** were at Mai Po on 20th (YYT) and a **Siberian Stonechat** at Lok Ma Chau on 21st (PJJ) was the earliest yet in autumn by five days.
- ▶ Birds reported during the passage of Typhoon Nuri, which scored a direct hit on Hong Kong on 22nd, fortunately without being especially destructive, were a **Streaked Shearwater**, an unidentified dark **shearwater**, a **Black Bittern**, 60 **Black-winged Stilt**, a **Whimbrel**, two **Wood Sandpipers**, 30 **Common/Aleutian Terns**, 10 **Black-naped Terns** and a **Bridled Tern**, all at Cape d'Aguilar (CC), and 15 **Whiskered Terns** at Cheung Chau (MDW).
- ▶ Subsequent reports at Tai Po Kau, none of which were obviously typhoon-related, included an unidentified **spectacled warbler** on 23rd (KPK), a remarkably early date, a **Blue-and-white Flycatcher** on 24th (KPK), the earliest autumn date by three days, a juvenile **Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo** with a female **Hainan Blue Flycatcher**, a potential host, nearby on 24th (KPK), a juvenile **Orange-headed Thrush** on 25th (KK) and a **Chinese Blue** or **Hill Blue Flycatcher** on 26th and 29th (KPK).
- ▶ As the month drew to an end, reports included four **White-cheeked Starlings** including two juveniles at Mai Po (BS) and 70 **Common Terns** in eastern waters (YYT), all on 27th, a **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo** at Po Toi on 28th (PW, MK), a **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** at Long Valley (DAD) and, unexpectedly, 17 **Bright-capped Cisticolas** including two juveniles at Ping Che on 29th (PJJ) with two others at Chau Tau (JAA) and one at Sunset Peak (PCC) the same day.
- ▶ 30th A boat trip into southern waters on 30th led to sightings of nine **Great Crested Terns**, all apparently on migration, 12 **Aleutian Terns** and 15 **Common Terns** (GJC).

- ▶ 30th Continuing the run of unseasonal warblers, a **Goodson's Leaf Warbler** was reported in the Lead Mine Pass area also on 30th (SLT).
- ▶ 31st A **Yellow-rumped Flycatcher** at Po Toi on 31st (HKBWS web-site) was the last significant report of the month.

September

- ▶ Equalling the hottest September on record, September 2008 was poor for birds, perhaps even more so than September 2007, with very few rarities and the usual migrants coming through only in small numbers.
- ▶ Reports in the first week included **Bright-capped Cisticolas** at Ping Yeung, a juvenile **White-cheeked Starling** at San Tin fishponds, two **Chinese Grosbeaks** at Ho Sheung Heung, seven **Silky Starlings** at Mai Po and four **Mountain Bulbuls** at Tai Po Kau (JAA, PCC, PJJ, GJC), all potentially derived from local breeding populations, and a smattering of migrants such as the occasional **Dollarbird**, **Forest Wagtail**, **Pechora Pipit** and **Brown Shrike**, a few **Arctic Warblers** and **Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers** and one or two **Asian Brown**, **Dark-sided**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Asian Paradise Flycatchers**, mainly in Deep Bay or at Po Toi.
- ▶ Also reported during this period were five **Daurian Starlings** and a mystery warbler, possibly a **Goodson's Leaf Warbler** of the subspecies *fokiensis*, at Po Toi, 27 **Aleutian**, three **Common**, one **Black-naped** and two **Whiskered Terns** in southern waters.
- ▶ 7th A **Mugimaki Flycatcher** at Tai Po Kau on 7th (GJC) was the earliest ever in autumn by 6-7 weeks.
- ▶ In the second week, up to two **Bay Woodpeckers** and one or two **Siberian Blue Robins**, **Eastern Crowned Warblers**, **Pale-legged Leaf Warblers** and **Black-naped Orioles** were found at Tai Po Kau. A **Sulphur-breasted Warbler** there on 14th (KPK) was surprisingly early.
- ▶ 19th A **Ferruginous Flycatcher**, a rare autumn migrant, was found at Po Toi on 19th (GW) and three **Siberian Blue Robins** the next day. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** at Dong Ping Chau on 21st was the first of the autumn, but this species was unusually scarce for the rest of the month and into October.
- ▶ 23rd An unusual pipit, thought to be a **Tree Pipit**, a potential first for Hong Kong, was heard as it flew over Mai Po on 23rd (PJJ).
- ▶ Typhoon Hagupit, the most destructive typhoon to affect Guangdong in recent years, passed 200 km south of Hong Kong on the night of 23rd, bringing powerful storm surges to some coastal areas. Birds noted in its wake up to 28th included a dark-phase **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** in eastern waters (YYT), a **Black Bittern** at Po Toi, up to 77 **Whiskered Terns** at San Tin and Mai Po, 20 **White-winged Terns** and 11 **Gull-billed Terns** at Mai Po, 60 **Bridled Terns** in southern waters, a "**Blyth's Leaf Warbler**"-type at Lead Mine Pass, and a **Chinese Goshawk** and an early **Black Bulbul** at Tai Po Kau.
- ▶ On 30th, a record 2500 **Marsh Sandpipers** were counted at Mai Po (YYT).

October

- ▶ This was another hot month and, strange to say, despite the discovery of two potential new species (**Red-backed Shrike** and **Willow Warbler**), rather disappointing for birds, with expected migrants and winter visitors arriving later than usual and in smaller numbers.
- ▶ The month opened promisingly with two **Orange-headed Thrushes** at Kap Lung on 1st (NG) and another **Orange-headed Thrush** (a juvenile) and a **Brown Hawk Owl** at Tai Po Kau on 2nd-3rd (SYH).
- ▶ On 7th, a **Red-backed Shrike**, a new record for Hong Kong, was found at a service reservoir at Ho Man Tin (TWY). It remained until at least 10th and was for many birders the highlight of the month. Also reported on 7th were a **Plumbeous Redstart** at Fo Tan (KenB), six **Black Bazas** at Fanling Golf Course (DB) and a male **Narcissus Flycatcher** at Po Toi. A major rarity in autumn, this flycatcher remained on the island throughout the month.
- ▶ Passage peaked for about a week from 10th, when 15 **Pale Martins**, 60 **Black-browed Reed Warblers**, a **Chestnut-cheeked Starling**, 50 **Black Drongos** and five **Black-naped Orioles** were noted at Mai Po (PJL). These were good numbers for the time of year, but not exceptional. Also reported on 10th were two **Bay Woodpeckers** at Tai Po Kau and a **Black-headed Bunting** at Fung Lok Wai (GC). A **Green-backed Flycatcher** was found at Tai Po Kau the next day (KPK), whilst birds reported at Mai Po during 13th-17th included ten **Purple Herons**, a **Japanese Sparrowhawk**, a **Eurasian Sparrowhawk**, four **Amur Falcons** (the peak count of the autumn), a **Yellow-legged Buttonquail**, four **Pheasant-tailed Jacanas**, up to 30 **Blue-tailed Bee-eaters**, a **Manchurian Reed Warbler** and a **Blunt-winged Warbler** (JGH, MDW, SLT, BS, PJL). A visit to Po Toi on 16th brought reports of an **Osprey**, a **Japanese Sparrowhawk**, ten **Asian Brown Flycatchers**, three **Blue-and-white Flycatchers**, a **Mugimaki Flycatcher** and an unidentified **Spectacled Warbler** (GW).
- ▶ Noteworthy reports on 22nd-23rd included a **White-throated Rock Thrush** at Kap Lung (NG), a **Ruddy Crake** at Mai Po (per BS), a **Pheasant-tailed Jacana** at Nam Chung (LC) and an Eagle Owl at Tai Lam Chung.
- ▶ On 25th, a **Willow Warbler**, a potential first for Hong Kong and China, was photographed at Long Valley (FC). It was not seen after this. The next day, a **Red-breasted Flycatcher**, the third or fourth individual of the past couple of years, was found at Po Toi. This was the eleventh flycatcher species found at Po Toi in the latter half of the month, the others being **Grey-streaked**, **Sooty**, **Asian Brown**, **Verditer**, **Red-throated**, **Red-breasted**, **Mugimaki**, **Narcissus**, **Blue-and-white**, **Grey-headed** and **Japanese Paradise**, quite a variety in autumn.
- ▶ Reports in the last few days of the month included two **Citrine Wagtails**, 20 **Bright-capped Cisticolas** and a **Chestnut-eared Bunting** at Ping Yeung (PJL), a **Grey-capped Greenfinch** at Pui O (PA), a **Brown Hawk Owl**, a **Red-flanked Bluetail**, a **Japanese Thrush**, three **Bramblings** and a **Japanese Yellow Bunting** at Po Toi (GW, IC), a **Eurasian Skylark** at Mai Po and a **Citrine Wagtail** at Long Valley (SYH).

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society →

<< Coming activities Jan - Apr 2009 <<

Outings				
Date	Duration	Time and site	Difficulties (1...3)	Target species
03/1/2009 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tsim Bei Tsui (Crested Bulbul Club Activity)(08:00 Tin Shui Wai, Tin Chak Estate Shopping Centre, exit near Tin Yat LT)	☆	Waterbirds
04/1/2009 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Long Valley (08:00 Exit D, Sheung Shui MTR Station)	☆☆	Farmland birds
11/1/2009 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark)	☆☆	Forest birds
18/1/2009 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Lam Chung Reservoir (08:00 Intersection of Siu Lam Road)	☆☆	Forest birds
25/1/2009 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Shek Kong (08:00 Exit C, Kam Sheung Road West Rail Station)	☆☆	Wintering forest & farmland birds
01/2/2009 (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)	☆☆	Waterbirds
07/2/2009 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Nam Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Happiness Restaurant, Yuen Long MTR West Rail station)	☆☆	Waterbirds
08/2/2009 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Shing Mun (08:00 Exit C, Hang Seng Bank, Tsuen Wan MTR station)	☆☆	Forest birds
15/2/2009 (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)	☆☆	Waterbirds
22/2/2009 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Wun Yiu (08:00 Taxi terminal access, Tai Po Market MTR Station)	☆☆	Forest birds
01/3/2009 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark)	☆☆	Forest birds
07/3/2009 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tai Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity)(08:00 Hang Heung Cake Shop, Yuen Long)	☆☆	Waterbirds
15/3/2009 (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)	☆☆	Waterbirds

Outings

Date	Duration	Time and site	Difficulties (1...3)	Target species
22/3/2009(Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Mo Shan (08:00 Exit C, Hang Seng Bank, Tsuen Wan MTR Station)	☆☆	Grassland species
29/3/2009(Sun)	0800 - 1600	Po Toi and HK South Waters (08:00 Aberdeen public pier, near Ocean Court)Note: This will be a long trip on open waters. The ride could be quite rough and some people may be seasick.	☆☆☆	Seabirds
04/4/2009 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tsim Bei Tsui (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Tin Shui Wai, Tin Chak Estate Shopping Centre, exit near Tin Yat LT)	☆☆	Waterbirds
05/4/2009(Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark, end 12:30)	☆☆	Forest birds
12/4/2009(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)	☆☆	Waterbirds
19/4/2009(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)	☆☆	Waterbirds
25/4/2009(Sat)	0900 - 1800	Po Toi and HK South Waters (09:00 Aberdeen public pier, near Ocean Court)Note: This will be a long trip on open waters. The ride could be quite rough and some people may be seasick.	☆☆☆	Seabirds

- Member: Free of Charge Non-member: Free of Charge (no registration required)
- Member: Free of Charge Non-member: HK\$30 (no registration required)
- Member: HK\$40 (Student Member: HK\$20) Non-member: HK\$70 (registration required)
- Member: HK\$160 Non-member: HK\$200 (registration required)

Indoor Meetings

Date	Duration	Topic	Speaker(s)	Venue	Remarks
24/2/2009 (Tue)	1900 - 2100	Identification of Ducks (in Cantonese)	Mr Gary Chow	Rm 901, Scout Asso. of HK, Austin Road	Member: \$10 Non-member: \$30
25/3/2009 (Wed)	1900 - 2100	Identification of Waders (in Cantonese)	Dr. HF Cheung	Rm 1107, Scout Asso. of HK, Austin Road	Member: \$10 Non-member: \$30

Hong Kong Bird Watching Society → Activity Booking Slip

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

Mai Po Outings

- 1 Feb 2009 (Sun) (____ member(s), ____ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) using the coach is _____)
- 15 Feb 2009 (Sun) (____ member(s), ____ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) using the coach is _____)
- 15 Mar 2009 (Sun) (____ member(s), ____ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) using the coach is _____)
- 12 Apr 2009 (Sun) (____ member(s), ____ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) using the coach is _____)
- 19 Apr 2009 (Sun) (____ member(s), ____ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) using the coach is _____)

Po Toi and Hong Kong South waters

- 29 Mar 2009 (Sun) (____ member(s), ____ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) is _____)
- 25 Apr 2009 (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\$70 disregard of whether they make use of the coach.)

[Coach Fare: Member: HK\$40 Student Member: HK\$20 Non-member: HK\$70]

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:

Floor 14, Ruby Commercial Building, 480 Nathan Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

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.

松雀鷹
鄭諾銘
米埔

Besra
Cheng Nok Ming Beetle
Mai Po

13.11.2008
DSLR Camera, 300mm f/4 lens +
1.4x teleconverter





烏鵂
陳志光
米埔

Greater Spotted Eagle
Daniel CK Chan
Mai Po

Dec 2006
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter

白肩鵬
陳志光
米埔

Imperial Eagle
Daniel CK Chan
Mai Po

Dec 2006
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



魚鷹
孔思義、黃亞萍
米埔

Osprey
John and Jemi Holmes
Mai Po

09.01.2009
DSLR Camera, 800mm lens

