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四聲杜鵑
陳土飛
塋原

Indian Cuckoo
Thomas Chan
Long Valley

01/05/2010
DSLR Camera, 800mm f/5.6 lens

鷹鵑
何建業
塋原

Large Hawk Cuckoo
Kinni Ho Kin Yip
Long Valley

09/05/2010
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter

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Editor's Note

On a Saturday morning in February it was great to see several parties of well-behaved students and other groups in Long Valley, led by some of the eco-guides mentioned by Vicky YEUNG in this edition's Long Valley news.

Spring can be the most fascinating season for birding, and in Po Toi – Spring, Geoff Welch describes the highlights of the last five springs in this fascinating microcosm of Hong Kong birding.

Thanks again to all the contributors to this edition, writers and photographers alike. 

John Holmes

Members Affairs

Crested Bulbul Club

1. Early Morning Bird Watchers

No. of participants in Hong Kong Park
from Dec 2010 – Feb 2011: 167

No. of participants in Kowloon Park
from Dec 2010 – Feb 2011: 420

2. Bird watching interpretation in Hong Kong Wetland Park

A total of 109 participants from Dec 2010 – Feb 2011

3. Bird watching services and activities

23-28 Dec 2010

Flower, birds, insects and fish Exhibition, North District

8-9 Jan 2011

Ocean Park Conservation Day 2011



Education

Urban Oasis Elderly Eco-Ambassador Scheme

Date: Mar – Dec 2011

With funding approved by the Government's Environmental Campaign Committee, this programme contains various ecological and social elements. The plan aims to attract elderly people and residents of ten local communities.

The principle is to train-the-trainer and help others help themselves. The aim is to promote community awareness towards ecological conservation and utilise the time and capability of retirees. Through activities such as bird watching, studying plants and other animals, it is hoped to enhance the development of a sustainable ecological environment.

The first step will be to recruit a group of more capable retirees, using the local parks as training and service bases, and train them to become urban bird and ecology tour guides. They will then lead bird watching and ecological tours for local elderly and residents.

Long Valley news ~ Vicky YEUNG

Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley 2010-2012

36 newly trained eco-guides have started guiding tours of secondary school students around Long Valley during weekends since December last year. If you see the eco-guides in Long Valley working hard explaining to young students, please feel free to give them a little encouragement!

"Harvest Festival 2011" was held on 16 & 23 Jan. About 480 participants in total joined the activity. This year, we devoted more time and more activities like simple food making (farm products are mostly from Long Valley), straw art workshop (create your own piece of art using straw), farmland oven (making an oven in the traditional way and stewing food), guided eco-tours etc. We hope participants have learned more about conservation in Long Valley and about local agriculture through these different activities.

"Harvest Festival 2012" is planned for early next year – see you there!



Eco-guide is interpreting agriculture in HK to participants



Heating up the "oven"



Straw art

Nature Conservation

~ Beetle CHENG

As the newly-appointed Conservation Officer of the HKBWS I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to all of you. It is my great pleasure to join the society as a full-time staff member and to contribute my efforts to nature conservation in Hong Kong.

Here is a summary of conservation issues in the past few months:

Nam Sang Wai

Nam Sang Wai has remained "HOT" since the end of last year; the destructive fire captured the headlines in local newspapers, while new leaders have emerged take over the development proposals.

Apart from this, the wetlands are still facing pressure from illegal dumping, small house developments and low-density housing applications nearby (e.g. Tung Shing Lei).

We have been actively involved in all these issues and will oppose to any development causing harm to Nam Sang Wai.

EIA reports of large-scale infrastructure projects

We have submitted our comments expressing our concerns on the EIA reports regarding:

- i) the Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Crossing Point,
- ii) Shenzhen River Regulation and
- iii) the Shek Kwu Chau/Tsang Tsui Waste Incinerator

Civic Exchange project on Local Conservation Policy

Earlier this year Civic Exchange launched a programme to formulate a Nature Conservation Policy (that could be recommended to the Government). The HKBWS was commissioned to carry out a monitoring project on Nature Conservation in Hong Kong and we are now collecting data for it. The results will be announced later this year with the intention that the public shall be better informed of nature conservation issues in Hong Kong.

The HKBWS will keep watching out for habitat destruction, unfavourable developments and other activities affecting the welfare of wild birds in Hong Kong. We will update these issue topics on the HKBWS forum.

Meanwhile, I would like to invite members to report any activities harming birds and their habitats.

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

~ George HO Wai-chun, HKBWS



Figure 1: Location of six studying sites
Legend: 1) Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve; 2) Shing Mun Country Park; 3) Ng Tung Chai; 4) Summit of Tai Mo Shan; 5) Kam Tin; 6) Mai Po Nature Reserve and surrounding areas.

A total of six important bird habitats including Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve, Shing Mun Country Park, Ng Tung Chai, the summit of Tai Mo Shan, Kam Tin and Mai Po Nature Reserve (south-eastern part only) and surrounding areas (Tam Kon Chau Road, Lut Chau and Tai Sang Wai) were surveyed weekly between November 2008 and October 2010. [Figure 1]. Apart from Kam Tin, the other sites are within the boundaries of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) identified by BirdLife International. A line transect technique was used to survey the species (diversity) and number of birds (population). Each survey took around three to four hours.

A total of 203 landbird species (excluding all waterbird species, for example, Cormorants, Egret and Herons, Ducks, Gulls and waders) were recorded during the two-year project period (Table

1). The cumulative number of species recorded in three woodland sites was quite similar. Ng Tung Chai showed the highest woodland bird diversity. Mai Po Nature Reserve and surrounding areas showed the highest landbirds diversity among the six studying sites. A total of 155 species in “Tai Po Kau, Shing Mun and Tai Mo Shan” and 125 species in “Inner Deep Bay and Shenzhen River catchment area” were recorded in these two IBA areas during the project period (Table 2). Hence, a total of 200 landbird species (60% out of 323 Hong Kong landbird species) were recorded at five study sites within the IBAs.

Overall trends of bird species and population in the six study sites varied between different sites and fluctuated in different seasons. The peak in terms of both species and population was in November/ late autumn at all the sites. 50 to 55 species at woodland sites and 60 to 70 species at farmland/wetland sites were recorded during the peak period. At the other end of the scale, summer was the season of lowest bird diversity.

Bird flocking was also preliminarily studied while conducting surveys. Bird flocks were often quite small. Woodland bird flocks preferred to forage and feed near riparian vegetation. The structure and composition of bird flocks, especially woodland bird flocks, can be used as an indicator of bird habitat quality. The benefit to birds of flocking and foraging together is believed to be lower predation due to “more friends, more eyes”.

This landbird study also contributed to the baseline information of species of conservation concern. 7 globally-threatened species (Greater Spotted Eagle, Imperial Eagle, Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Bunting, Chinese Grassbird/Large Grass Warbler [Figure 2], Japanese Paradise Flycatcher [Figure 3] and Collared Crow), 12 China conservation concern species (such as Black-winged Kite, White-bellied Sea Eagle and Emerald Dove) and 46 local conservation concern species (such as Speckled Piculet, Bay Woodpecker [Figure 4], Orange-headed Thrush [Figure 5] and Red-billed Starling) were recorded in this study. The detailed list of birds can be found in the survey final report, to be posted on the HKBWS website in due course.

The data collected in this project has allowed us to monitor or gauge the general health of the habitat for birds, the seasonal changes of the bird population, the annual variation or fluctuation of the bird population and the effects of occasional severe weather.

Acknowledgment

Many Thanks are due to the HK Government’s Environment and Conservation Fund for funding this two-year survey.



Table 1: Number of landbird species recorded from Nov 2008 to Oct 2010.

Sites	11.2008 – 10. 2009	11.2009 – 10.2010	11.2008 – 10.2010
Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve	97	102 (+5.2%)	112
Shing Mun Country Park	96	105 (+9.4%)	113
Ng Tung Chai	106	109 (+2.8%)	122
Tai Mo Shan	61	77 (+26.2%)	84
Kam Tin	81	92 (+13.6%)	99
Mai Po Nature Reserve and surrounding areas	104	113 (+8.7%)	124
Total:	183	187 (+2.2%)	203

Table 2: Number of landbirds species recorded at IBAs from Nov 2008 to Oct 2010.

IBA areas	11.2008 – 10.2009	11.2009 – 10.2010	11.2008 – 10.2010
Tai Po Kau, Shing Mun and Tai Mo Shan	140	140	155
Inner Deep Bay and Shenzhen River catchment area	104	113	125
Total:	179	179	200



Figure 2: Chinese Grassbird/Large Grass Warbler [Global rank: Near Threatened] / Photo by Michelle and Peter Wong



Figure 3: Japanese Paradise Flycatcher [Global rank: Near Threatened] / Photo by Michelle and Peter Wong



Figure 4: Bay Woodpecker [Local Conservation Concern Species] / Photo by Michelle and Peter Wong



Figure 5: Orange-headed Thrush [Local Conservation Concern Species] / Photo by Michelle and Peter Wong

Mai Po Update

~ Bena Smith

Flooded grassland

At the beginning of November a dilemma confronted the management team. Wintering waterbirds were due imminently and both Gei wai 16/17 and Pond 8a, two important high-tide roosts, were parched grassland, a scene more akin to the Gobi Desert than an internationally important wetland.

The 'grassland' had established over the summer when both water bodies had to be drained down for several months to facilitate ecological enhancement works. Being an unusual habitat type at Mai Po both became quite a novelty for birdwatchers and photographers in early autumn. They brought in some interesting birds too; Eurasian Skylark (20+), Buff-bellied Pipit (16), Japanese Quail (17), Oriental Skylark, Mongolian Skylark, and a range of buntings and small warblers.

The dominant grass was identified as Barnyard Grass, a species shown through research study at Mai Po to attract ducks. So we flooded up the water bodies as normal but decided to retain the grasses to see if duck used them for roosting and/or foraging.

In Pond #8a the response was immediate. Good numbers of Eurasian Teal and Eurasian Wigeon started munching their way through grasses in deeper water areas. Four Bean Geese (2 Taiga, 2 Tundra) also joined them. However by mid-December duck stopped using the roost despite large tracts of grass remaining. However in Gei wai 16/17 duck usage was more sustained, continuing through to early February. Similarly it was Eurasian Teal and Eurasian Wigeon who found the flooded grasses most attractive.

In consideration of these observations, and factoring in management resources, we will try to create similar flooded grassland habitat in Gei wai 16/17 next winter, but not in Pond 8a.

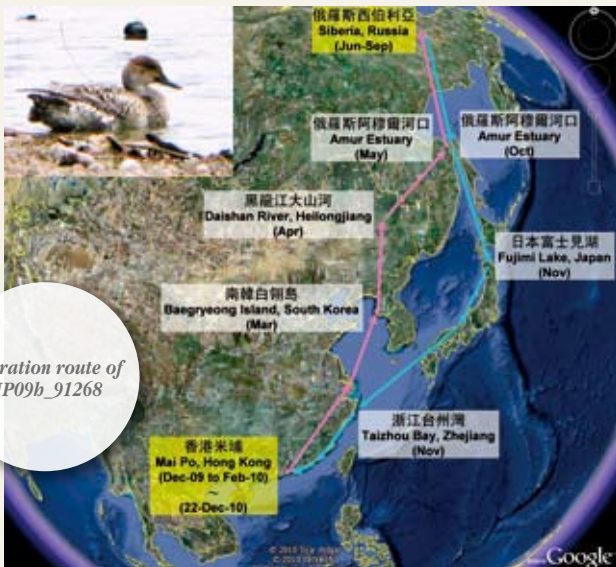


Credit : Bena Smith
Flooded grassland at Gei wai #16/17

Return of "NP09h_91268"

Despite overwhelming odds, one of the 47 satellite tagged ducks made it back to Mai Po after an amazing 10,000 km journey. A female Northern Pintail, a.k.a. NP09h_91268, left Mai Po in February 2010. She stopped off in China, North Korea and Eastern Russia before reaching the Arctic Circle 5 months later. After staying there for 3 months, presumably to breed, she then headed southward in September following a coastal route through Japan and Eastern China, to eventually arrive at Mai Po in late December 2010.

Her journey reveals for the first time the full migration route of a Hong Kong duck. To the project team this duck is the equivalent of the famous "E7" Bar-tailed Godwit which made a remarkable return journey from New Zealand to the Arctic Circle in 2007. In the coming year or so a detailed analysis of the duck project data set is likely to generate a range of new information about migration strategies, preference of wetland habitats at stopover sites, effect of weather systems, and even breeding site selection. The data will also enable local movements in and around Deep Bay to be better understood.



Po Toi Spring

~ Geoff Welch

Po Toi only really comes alive during the migration seasons of spring and autumn, as you can see from my daily counts of the number of non-resident land bird species (Fig 1).

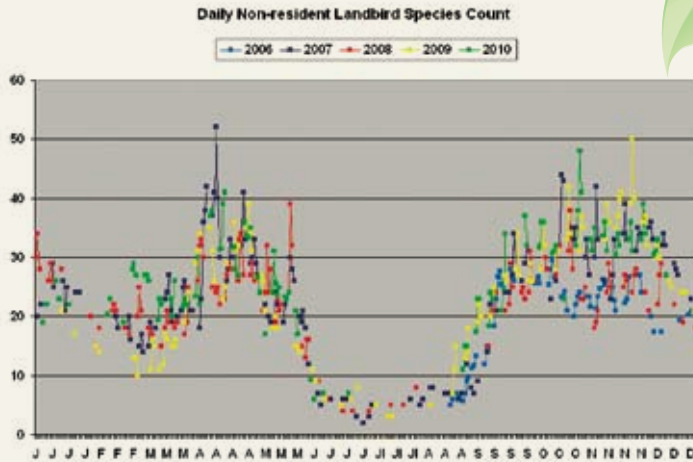


Figure 1. Daily Non-resident Land Bird Species Count – Po Toi 2006-2010

Autumn is long with quite slow changes in weather and species. By contrast, spring is short, fast and furious. Spring migration really starts in the last week of March when the first flycatchers arrive and is all over by the third week of May when the last of the small bitterns leaves. In between are a pulsating series of bursts and slack periods as birds arrive with weather systems and leave when the weather improves.

Why does weather have such a significant effect on land birds in spring? - because many migrants are arriving from the south having crossed the South China Sea (Fig 2). These birds start their journey from north Borneo and the Philippines with the wind behind them. If they are lucky and the weather remains good, they will arrive on the coast of south and east China after 30 hours or more flying over the sea. In good conditions, they may overfly the coast altogether and come down in suitable habitat inland. If they are unlucky and meet a weather system such as a cold front or depression over the sea (Fig 3), they are drifted west by the opposing winds and end up exhausted on the coastline of south China



Figure 2 and 3. Spring Land Bird Migration Routes and Weather Effects

Some don't make it, ditching into the sea, sometimes within sight of land (photo 1). These birds have exhausted all sources of fuel in their bodies and are unable to keep their wings moving. Darwin's Evolutionary Principle rules – only the fittest (or maybe the luckiest) make it to land to survive and breed. Islands off the coastline such as Po Toi and the Dangan Islands act as a catching net for these tired migrants which can result in large numbers or 'falls' of species occurring.

Certain species are prone to falls either because they migrate in flocks (Grey-faced Buzzard and Chinese Goshawk) or in large numbers (Brown Shrike). Sometimes unexpected species occur in falls, such as Common Sandpipers (more than 50 in Po Toi harbour on 24th April 2006). But such falls are always weather-related events.

Two of the most exciting falls involved Chinese Goshawks, 1080 on 15th and 16th April 2006 and 1440 on the morning of 15th April 2010. Both were caused by cold fronts but were very different in nature. In 2006, the birds arrived directly on to Po Toi and could only be seen from the hilltops as they dropped down from their migration height of several thousand feet where they were invisible even using binoculars. They appeared out of the sky from nowhere as if by magic, forming wheeling groups of up to 200 birds before heading off north towards the Hong Kong mainland. Even my wife, who is not a bird-watcher but came with me that day, thought this was spectacular.

In 2010, they had already arrived on the Dangan Islands the previous day and were re-starting their migration northwards directly through Po Toi. More than 1000 passed in one hour as I was standing on the bridge next to the restaurant, mostly flying below 100 feet in a continuous stream. Both events were spectacular sights.

Species are very regular in their timing in spring. Early April is the time to see 'colourful' flycatchers such as Narcissus and Ferruginous. Late April is the time for Brown Shrikes and Arctic Warblers and on some fall days the island seems to be covered with Brown Shrikes. Mid-May is the time for small bitterns, Yellow, Schrenck's and Black, and big falls can occur if a weather system passes at this time – 21st May 2008 was a memorable fall day with 44 Yellow, 29 Schrenck's, 8 Black and 2 Cinnamon Bitterns together with 7 Striated Herons and a Malayan Night Heron all crowded together in the small space which is Po Toi. These are the days which makes Po Toi so special.



Common Sandpipers, from a group of over 50 – 24th April 2006

Kwok Jai with two Brown Shrikes recovered from the sea – 29th April 2006 by Bill Man



*Chinese Goshawks, a flock of 100+ over Po Toi – 16th April 2006**



Schrenck's Bittern, part of a flock of 24 – 21st May 2008



Blue-winged Pitta – 1st May 2008



Waves over my sea-watching point during Typhoon Chanchu – 17th May 2006



Short-tailed Shearwater, as close as they come for a seabird on Po Toi – 12th May 2009



Masked Booby – 18th March 2008

Another weather system which can produce unexpected results in spring is a typhoon. Spring typhoons are quite rare in Hong Kong but I have had two, Typhoon Chanchu on 17th May 2006 and Typhoon Neoguri on 19th April 2008. Typhoons don't seem to produce falls of regular species but both produced rarities – a Ruddy Kingfisher with Chanchu and a Blue-winged Pitta with Neoguri.

Spring is also the time for seabirds as you can see from my daily counts of the number of seabird species (Fig 4). I usually spend the first and the last two hours of each day watching for seabirds from the southern-most point of Po Toi.

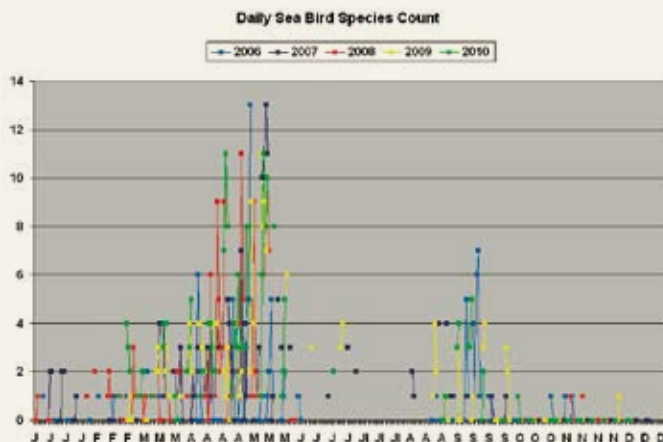


Figure 4. Daily Sea Bird Species Chart – Po Toi 2006-2010

Seabirds have a longer spring season than land birds, from late February through to the end of May. Seabirds which have wintered off-shore in the surrounding area pass Po Toi in March on their northerly migration. These are primarily Heuglin's Gulls with the occasional other gull species and Ancient Murrelet. Terns, skuas and Red-necked Phalaropes arrive from the beginning of April and the last week of April marks the start of the four-week passage of Short-tailed Shearwaters. Up to 100 of these birds pass through Hong Kong waters each year, and the discovery of their passage in 2006 was one of the most exciting events of my time on Po Toi. The Hong Kong birds are a very small part of the annual migration of 23 million Short-tailed Shearwaters from their breeding grounds in southern Australia to their wintering grounds in the seas off Japan.

Not surprisingly, weather does not have the same effect on seabirds as on land birds although large numbers of individual species occasionally occur, sometimes for no apparent reason. A sighting of more than 80 Streaked Shearwaters in the waters around Po Toi during Typhoon Chanchu was clearly weather-related but other events have not been. Over 900 Red-necked Phalarope passed in a continuous stream in two hours on 26th March 2007 with more than 600 Heuglin's Gulls over a three day period just two weeks before. 82 Greater Crested Terns over a three day period from 20th to 22nd April 2010 was a record count and early May is usually a good time to see very large flocks of smaller terns such as Common, White-winged and Whiskered migrating northwards.

Watching for seabirds in spring gives me a terrific buzz – you just never know what might appear. You get one chance with a migrating seabird, they never stop or come back but pass by quickly and you have to take instant decisions – binoculars, telescope or camera. As I am on my own, I always choose the camera to get a permanent record which is better and more accurate than your eye (well, my eye at least). So far I've failed to satisfy the Records Committee with Brown Noddy and Bulwer's Petrel although Masked Booby did make it. This spring I will be making a special effort on seabirds, spending the whole day sea-watching when I think it could be worthwhile. I may well be out there on the rocks as you read this, waiting for that once-in-a-lifetime bird to come by. I can't wait for spring to come!



黃頭鶺鴒
馮漢城
壟原

Citrine Wagtail
Ken Fung
Long Valley

16/04/2010
DSLR Camera, 400mm f/5.6 lens



藍喉歌鶯
施文漢
壟原

Bluethroat
Sze Man Hon
Long Valley

25/04/2010
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蛇鵟
李偉仁
壟原

Crested Serpent Eagle
Andy Li
Long Valley

12/10/2010
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Rustic Bunting
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Long Valley

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褐頭鷀
路人乙
塋原

Red-headed Bunting
passerby-b
Long Valley

23/12/2010
DSLR Camera, 800mm f/5.6 lens



小鷀
陳士飛
塋原

Little Bunting
Thomas Chan
Long Valley

28/04/2010
DSLR Camera, 800mm f/5.6 lens



黃眉鵯
馮漢城
塋原

Yellow-browed Bunting
Ken Fung
Long Valley

13/11/2010
DSLR Camera, 400mm f/5.6 lens



黑頭鵯
黃理沛 江敏兒
塋原

Black-headed Bunting
Michelle & Peter Wong
Long Valley

17/10/2010
DSLR Camera, 800mm f/5.6 lens



栗耳鵯
黃理沛 江敏兒
塋原

Chestnut-eared Bunting
Michelle & Peter Wong
Long Valley

21/04/2010
DSLR Camera, 800mm f/5.6 lens



鳳頭鶉
陳巨輝
望原

Crested Bunting
Sam Chan
Long Valley

14/11/2010
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



黃胸鶉
陳家強
望原

Yellow-breasted Bunting
Issac Chan
Long Valley

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黃腹鸚
施文漢
塋原

Buff-bellied Pipit
Sze Man Hon
Long Valley

30/01/2010
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



鶉鶉
何建業
塋原

Japanese Quail
Kinni Ho Kin Yip
Long Valley

18/10/2009
Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter





普通燕鴒
葉紀江
塋原

Oriental Pratincole
Herman Ip Kee Kong
Long Valley

17/03/2010
DSLR Camera, 300mm f/2.8 lens+ 2x teleconverter

扇尾沙錐
Vivian Cheung
塋原

Common Snipe
Vivian Cheung
Long Valley

25/9/2010
DSLR Camera, 400mm f/5.6 lens



蟻鴛
陳巨輝
塋原

Eurasian Wryneck
Sam Chan
Long Valley

17/11/2010
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



Dalmatian Pelican is one of the heaviest birds capable of flying



DALMATIAN PELICANS IN DEEP BAY

~ Samson SO

People who love nature and birds are always thrilled at an encounter with large birds, and in Hong Kong, the largest bird one can meet is the Dalmatian Pelican, no doubt. It is the largest in size amongst the eight Pelican species worldwide, with body length up to 1.7m, and wingspan up to 3m. Weighing up to 15 kgs, it is probably the heaviest flying animal now in existence.

I well recall a day in the Winter of 1993, when I was in training as a professional Mai Po guide under the tutelage of Simba Chan. It was a cold windy day, and even though I was all wrapped up in a thick coat, my hands were shaking uncontrollably while holding on to the old-fashioned East German metal-cased binoculars supplied by the reserve office. Through them, a view of Deep Bay extended to the horizon where the sky and the water met, and before it, a panorama with thousands of shorebirds busy probing and feeding. Standing out in this commotion were 18 huge figures that dwarfed even the biggest seagulls. They belonged to Dalmatian Pelicans, some of which winter in South China. Watching these prominent winter visitors, I felt myself a witness to the long journey taken by these migratory birds as seasons change.

Those were the times before the internet became a part of daily life, and before the advent of general science educational DVDs and digital photography. Before I saw the Dalmatian Pelicans in Deep Bay, my impressions of these huge birds were gathered from ecological documentaries aired on English TV channels and pictures in foreign reference books from the library. While we were observing, Simba Chan took out a camera and adapter from his backpack, and took some photos of the pelicans through the telescope as a record. Although I haven't had a chance to see the photos taken on that day, a thought came to my mind at that moment: in future, I will also take photos of birds, and to share them with a lot of people. Simba Chan might not have realized that his small act years ago could have such lasting inspirational effect on a young ecology student.

Dalmatian Pelican taken in 1998 using slide film



On a cold afternoon in the Winter of 1998 I was once again in Mai Po watching the Dalmatian Pelicans on the mudflat. By then, I was already a graduate student in ornithology, and with my savings from working part-time at Mai Po Reserve for a number of years, I bought a pair of binoculars and some basic photographic equipment. Looking through the binoculars, I saw 24 huge figures resting less than 100 meters off the mudflat lookout. Some would preen their feathers, others just stretched their wings. At that time, bird photography was not as popular as it is now.

Apart from myself, there were only two other persons in the lookout, including SUN Kai Yuan, a wildlife photography enthusiast, and Geoff Carey, who was performing a waterfowl count. We watched the big birds on the mudflat through our own scopes, and I felt my fingers stiffen in the cold. The body might have felt cold, but the hearts of birding enthusiasts remained warm, our time spent waiting and observing having finally paid off. I was using slide film, and there weren't many shots left on the roll. Not wanting to miss a spectacular moment just when I ran out of film, I valued each

In 2004, the opposite side of Deep Bay have already become a concrete jungle



A Magnificent scene of Dalmatian Pelicans gathering in Deep Bay

shutter chance. When the camera displayed shot number 32, the moment came. The peace of the resting flock was disturbed when a landing Dalmatian Pelican stirred up a fight with another one that was originally resting. Four huge wings spread and waved in powerful display, the excitement heightened as excitement radiated across the mudflat. With the whirr of the camera's motor drive, my last 4 shots were spent. When the film was developed, the 34th slide transformed one moment into a lasting picture, of two Dalmatian Pelicans fighting. The photo became the front cover of one issue of HKBWS Bulletin, and featured in both old and new editions of *A Photographic Guide to the Birds of HK*. It remains one of my own favorite bird shots.

By February 2005 I was a trainer of would-be guides at Mai Po Reserve (the same position held by my mentor Simba Chan years before). While leading a group I saw the Dalmatian Pelicans again from the boardwalk hide. Members of the tour that day were mainland officials from the PRC State Forest Administration, none of whom had ever seen a Dalmatian Pelican before. They were surprised to see such gigantic birds appearing in a metropolitan city like Hong Kong. At that time, other overseas birders were also present in the hide, some had worked and lived here for years, and some were first-time visitors who had come to Hong Kong because of Deep Bay's reputation for birding. There were many expressions of amazement at the spectacle in front of us. Being the only local present, I felt honoured to be a part of Hong Kong, and proud that we have made commitments to the preservation of Deep Bay.

In December 2009 the mangrove forest was growing healthily around the edge of Mai Po's mudflats, but the concrete jungle behind it was also growing at a scary speed. I was there preparing for a birding and photography course. Although it was already December, in mid-afternoon heat haze blurred the image of birds seen through my telephoto lens. As dusk approached, a single, lonely Dalmatian Pelican became apparent, outlined against the golden light. Amid a host of ducks, gulls and tiny shorebirds, this solitary figure faded with the setting sun, and the memory of large parties of these huge birds in earlier years seemed like a dream.

I started as a bird watcher, and went on to study ornithology. After graduation, I dedicated myself to the work of conservation and education. This former ecology student has now gained more chance to share his ecological knowledge with students, and to share the joy of bird watching and some thoughts on appreciating nature. Dalmatian Pelicans may not come to Hong Kong in flocks anymore, but the inspiration from mentors and friends, and time spent with birders watching and talking about birds, have all been valuable moments that contributed to an important page in my life.




A wintering Dalmatian Pelican in 2009



My Bird Watching Diary

~ Text and Illustrations: Wendy Yu

18 May 2009 (Mon)

The weather is hot and wet, and the call of Cicadas is making me feel dizzy. Not far away, I see a young Barn Swallow on a wire, mouth wide open, waiting for its' parents to feed it. Actually, in recent days, there are many juvenile Barn Swallows flying around the fields. I recall that when I was small, Barn Swallows built a nest under the eaves of a neighbour' s house. The babies were always stretching their necks, opening their yellowish beaks and begging for food. 



~ Richard Lewthwaite

(These are unchecked records and members are reminded of the importance of submitting their records on cards or electronically)

October

- ▶ This was an excellent month, with two potential first records in the first week (a **European Roller** and a **Siberian Stonechat** of the taxon *maurus*), unprecedented numbers of **Black Drongos** in mid month, and three **Bean Geese** and five **Black Storks** at the month's end.
- ▶ The month burst into life with the discovery of a first-winter **European Roller** on wires over an open hillside at Black Point, Tuen Mun on 5th (DS). It remained at the site for just the one day. There are no known China records of this roller outside of Xinjiang. It breeds from southern Europe and northwest Africa east through the Middle East to southern Kazakhstan and western Xinjiang and is said to winter exclusively in Africa.
- ▶ A first-winter **Siberian Stonechat** *S. maurus*, a recently split species which in the eastern part of its range winters in Burma and India (see below), was found at Lok Ma Chau on the same day (PJL). If accepted, this will be a Hong Kong first record.
- ▶ Two other long-distance migrants, both of which usually winter in India, turned up at this time - a **Blyth's Reed Warbler** at Mai Po on 5th (PJL) and a **Rosy Starling** at San Tin on 6th (GJC).
- ▶ These four species belong to a growing list of long-distance migrants whose breeding ranges lie well to the northwest of Hong Kong and which normally winter in India, the Middle East or Africa, but have turned up in Hong Kong, mainly in autumn or winter. Other examples are **Western Water Rail**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Paddyfield Warbler**, **Sykes's Warbler**, **Red-breasted Flycatcher**, **Black-headed Bunting** and **Ortolan Bunting**.
- ▶ The IOC World Bird List (latest version 2.6, <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/index.html>), which is the main taxonomic guide followed by HKBWS, now recognises the splitting of the former "**Common Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata*" complex into a number of separate species, the two easternmost being **Stejneger's Stonechat** *S. stejnegeri*, which breeds in East Siberia, Northeast China, Korea and Japan and winters in South China (including Hong Kong) and Southeast Asia, and **Siberian Stonechat** *S. maurus*, which is stated to breed from the Caucasus and southeast Turkey to West and Central China and to winter in Northeast Africa and South Asia. Whilst *S. stejnegeri* appears to be monotypic, the range of *S. maurus* is such that it must encompass subspecies *armenicus*, *indicus*, *maurus* and *przewalskii*.
- ▶ Among other notable reports in the first ten days of October were a **Crested Honey Buzzard** at Lam Tsuen (DT) and 600 **Garganey** at Mai Po on 2nd (PJL), a **Himalayan Swiftlet** at Mai Po and a total of 21 **Black-naped Orioles** at Mai Po and at Lok Ma Chau (PJL) on 5th, a **Horsfield's Cuckoo** at Mai Po (KJ), a **Barred Buttonquail** at Lok Ma Chau (PJL) and single **Yellow-legged Buttonquails** at Cheung Chau and Po Toi (MDW, GW) on 6th and another **Barred Buttonquail** at Po Toi on 7th (GW).
- ▶ In the mid part of the month, a very heavy passage of **Black Drongos** was observed at Mai Po, with successive loose flocks of up to 150 birds passing steadily over and heading southwest on the morning of 12th, and a minimum of 974 birds counted (PJL, KL). Such numbers are unprecedented. The previous highest count is 237 at Mui Wo on 7 October 2007.
- ▶ A male **White-throated Rock Thrush** photographed at Po Toi on 17th (PTH) is by 25 days the earliest to occur in Hong Kong in autumn and brought the Po Toi list within four species of the 300 mark.
- ▶ Other reports at this time included a strange minivet, possibly a "**Stanford's Minivet**" (a hybrid of Rosy and Swinhoe's), at Po Toi on 10th (LYM, HK), a **Black-winged Stilt** at Mai Po on 11th which bore a Taiwan leg flag (JAA), a **Black-headed Bunting** at Kai Tak on the same day (DS), a **Brown Wood Owl** calling at Lam Tsuen on 12th (DT), 61 **Blue-tailed Bee-eaters** at Mai Po on 13th (PJL), four **Eurasian Skylarks**, the first of a very good autumn, at San Tin on 16th, two **Black-headed Buntings** at Long Valley, a **Pied Harrier** and 30 **Oriental Greenfinches** at Kuk Po on 17th (JAA), 11 **Black-throated Tits** at Leadmine Pass on 18th (SLT) and an **Orange-headed Thrush** at Tai Po Kau on 20th (FC).

- ▶ An arrival of waterbirds occurred in the last 10 days of the month. **Black Storks** were reported on three dates – single birds at Pui O on 21st (KK) and over Lam Tsuen on 30th (DT) and five, the largest number in over 20 years, at Nam Sang Wai on 31st (MKF). Three **Greater Scaups** in front of the Mai Po boardwalk on 23rd (EMSK, RWL) were by 2 days the earliest ever in autumn. Most excitingly, three **Bean Geese** flew over the Mai Po scrape and landed on the Deep Bay mudflats on 31st (KJ, CWC). Unfortunately, they could not be identified at the time, and it was not until early November that clinching photographs of these (or possibly other birds) were obtained.
- ▶ Notable sightings at Po Toi at this time included a flock of 20 **Eurasian Siskins** on 26th (GW), the earliest in autumn by 19 days, a **Chestnut-flanked White-eye** on 28th (GW), species number 297 for the island, and a **Brambling** on 30th (MHS), whilst there were reports elsewhere of a **Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler** at Mai Po on 26th (PJL), a **Siberian Thrush** at Tai Po Kau on 29th (MDW), three **Bright-capped Cisticolas** at Mai Po on 30th (EMSK), single **Radde's Warblers** at North Lantau and Lam Tsuen (JAA, EMSK) and a **Brown Fish Owl** at Cheung Chau (MDW), all on 31st.
- ▶ Following large-scale habitat management work in the summer, the Mai Po scrape was almost bone dry in late October, and therefore attractive to larks and pipits. Numbers of **Eurasian Skylarks** peaked at 20 on 26th (KJ), a new high count (the previous highest count was eight at Mai Po on 1 November 2003). Also present there at this time were up to seven **Japanese Quail**, a single **Oriental Skylark** and up to three **Mongolian Larks** (JAA, KJ, PJL). There have been suggestions that the latter may be wild, but based on past records, this seems most unlikely. Large flocks have been recorded reaching Beijing and the coast of Hebei, but the absence of records from Shandong, Shanghai, the Yangtse Valley and other parts of East China (south of Hebei), which were well covered in the past, leads to the inescapable conclusion that Mongolian Larks are not occurring as wild birds in Hong Kong.



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November

- ▶ Following an excellent October, this was another high quality month, the highlight being a group of four grey geese at Mai Po from 3rd (KK, KJ), these comprising two **Taiga Bean Geese** of the taxon *middendorffii* (also known as **Middendorff's Bean Goose**) and at least one and possibly two **Tundra Bean Geese**. The two **Middendorff's Bean Geese** are the first for Hong Kong and remained throughout the month and into December, whilst the **Tundra Bean Geese**, potentially the first or second for Hong Kong, were not seen again after 11th. Superb photographs of all four birds plus a discussion of taxonomy and ID features can be viewed on the HKBWS website.
- ▶ Two other major rarities were found in the month - a first-winter **Naumann's Thrush** at Lok Ma Chau on 12th (PJL), the first since 1990, and a first-winter **Smew** at Mai Po on 26th (AL), the 3rd Hong Kong record.
- ▶ It was a fine month for rarer buntings and small finches, with reports of single **Pallas's Reed Buntings** trapped at Mai Po on 1st and 24th (PJL), single **Rustic Buntings** at Nim Wan on 1st (PJL), Po Toi on 21st (CTM) and Long Valley on 27th (MK), up to four **Chestnut-eared Buntings** at Long Valley during 7th-11th (BK, FC), a **Japanese Yellow Bunting** (an autumn rarity) at Kam Tin on 11th (JAA), two **Crested Buntings** (possibly the first since 2005 when one was seen at Cape d'Aguilar in the aftermath of a typhoon) at Long Valley on 13th-14th (PW, MK), up to two **Yellow-browed Buntings** at Long Valley during 13th-28th (PW, MK, GT, LCF), up to two **Bramblings** at Mai Po, Po Toi, Long Valley and Lam Tsuen during 1st-7th (YWH, FC et al), a flock of 50 **Eurasian Siskins** at Shek Kong Catchment on 23rd (JGH) and up to 12 **Oriental Greenfinches** at Mai Po and Long Valley during 1st-24th (PJL, FC). In addition, five **Chinese Grosbeaks** were at Braemar Hill on 15th, a very rare record from Hong Kong Island.



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- 
- ▶ The latest autumn date for **Blue-tailed Bee-eater** was equalled by a report of seven at Mai Po on 1st (PJL) and then extended by 6 days with a sighting of five at Long Valley on 7th (CNM). Two Amur Falcons at Mai Po on 4th (YYT) and one at Long Valley on 7th (BK) were also the latest ever in autumn, the previous latest date being 1 November.
 - ▶ The Po Toi list moved from 297 species to 300 with the addition of **Scarlet Minivet** on 9th, **Pygmy Wren Babbler** on 18th (GW) and **Rustic Bunting** on 21st (CTM).
 - ▶ These apart, other notable reports in the month included a **Thick-billed Warbler** at Mai Po on 1st (PJL), single **Pheasant-tailed Jacanas** at Mai Po and Lok Ma Chau on 2nd (DS, WWF), a **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo** at Mai Po on 3rd (WWF), five flycatcher species (**Dark-sided**, **Grey-streaked**, **Asian Brown**, **Mugimaki** and **Verditer**) in the Shing Mun-Leadmire Pass area on 5th (SLT), a series of chats, warblers and flycatchers at Po Shan Road (Lung Fu Shan) including a rather late **Japanese Paradise Flycatcher** on 12th (FC) and a **Lesser Shortwing** on 29th (BK), single **Red-breasted Flycatchers** at Po Toi on 14th (GW) and Sai Kung on 21st (PJL), 80 **Chinese Penduline Tits** (close to the record count of 90) at Mai Po on 16th (PJL), single **Dusky Thrushes** at Po Toi on 17th (GW) and Lamma on 29th (CKK), a **Blyth's Reed Warbler** at Mai Po on 19th (PJL), a **Bianchi's Warbler** at Po Toi on 19th (AK), a **Speckled Piculet** at Shek Kong Catchment on 20th (JGH,WAP), and a **White-spectacled Warbler** at Po Toi on 28th (CW).
 - ▶ Finally, signalling a possible irruption, **Chestnut Bulbuls** were noted from widespread areas in the month, including at least 25 at Dong Ping Chau on 20th (DS).

December

- ▶ This was another good and varied month, the major rarity being a **Japanese Swamp Warbler** (Hong Kong 3rd record) trapped at Mai Po on 2nd and retrapped on 6th and 14th. In addition, two different male **Red-headed Buntings** were photographed: one at Long Valley on 23rd (adjudged to be showing feather damage consistent with captive origins, as was the first record of a male photographed at Mai Po on 10 January 2008) and the other (an individual in immaculate condition) at Lam Tsuen on 27th (EMSK).
- ▶ Amongst birds remaining from the previous month were the two **Middendorff's Bean Geese** at Mai Po, which were regularly reported throughout December, the **White-spectacled Warbler** at Po Toi (seen again on 1st) and the **Red-breasted Flycatcher** at Sai Kung (still present on 2nd). A **Smew**, thought likely to be the individual photographed at the end of November and seen by only two people then, was found at Mai Po on 18th (EMSK) and the news relayed quickly enough for over 100 people to see it the same morning. It then showed rather intermittently at Mai Po throughout the month and into 2011.
- ▶ These apart, notable reports in the first week of the month included an adult male **Red-breasted Flycatcher** photographed at Lamma on 2nd (GM), the third individual since mid November, a male **Small Niltava** at Lung Fu Shan from 2nd (BK), a **Chestnut-crowned Warbler** and **Chestnut-flanked White-eye** at Tai Po Kau on 4th (KPK), four **Citrine Wagtails** at Long Valley on 4th (JAA), a **Rustic Bunting** at Po Toi on the same day (EH), a **Grey-faced Buzzard** at Mai Po on 7th (PJL), the latest record by 26 days, a **Blunt-winged Warbler** there on the same day (PJL) and a **Dusky Thrush** at Po Toi, also on 7th (GW).
- ▶ An influx of thrushes was noted at Po Toi on 9th (GW). Two days later, a **Forest Wagtail** was seen at Shing Mun (SLT).
- ▶ The mid month period was enlivened by two **Japanese Grosbeaks** at Mai Po on 14th (PJL) and a male **Fujian Niltava** at Tai Po Kau on 17th-18th (KPK).
- ▶ During the third week of the month, 17 **Brown-flanked Bush Warblers** were counted at Dong Ping Chau on 19th (BK), a flock of 44 **Chinese Grosbeaks** was found at Ma Tso Lung on 21st (SYH) and a drake **Baikal Teal** was seen at Mai Po on 23rd (PJL).
- ▶ A **Northern Pintail** which had been fitted with a satellite tracker at Mai Po the previous December was found back at Mai Po on 24th (KL), having spent part of the summer in the Arctic.
- ▶ The last week of the month and year brought reports of an **Orange-headed Thrush** at Tai Po Kau Headland on 26th (RB), a female **Grey Bushchat** at Lam Tsuen on 27th-28th (EMSK), a **Himalayan Swiftlet** at Tin Shui Wai on 29th (KJ), 575 **Pacific Golden Plovers** in front of the Mai Po boardwalk on 30th (RWL), the highest winter count on record (later eclipsed by a higher count in January), and a **White-tailed Robin** at Shing Mun on 31st (SYH).



The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Bird Watching Tours Jul - Sep 2011

Outings

Date	Duration	Time and site	Difficulties (1...3)	Target species
2/7/2011 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tai Po Kau (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark)	☆☆☆	Forest birds
17/7/2011 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Mirs Bay and Eastern Waters (Details will be announced later) Note: This will be a long trip on open waters. The ride could be quite rough and some people may be seasick. Those who want to leave at lunchtime may take the ferry (departing hourly) at Tap Mun for Wong Shek Pier. The fare is non-refundable irrespective of early departure at Tap Mun.	☆☆☆	Seabirds (Terns)
6/8/2011 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Shing Mun (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Exit B near Hang Seng Bank, Tsuen Wan MTR Station)	☆☆	Forest birds
14/8/2011 (Sun)	0800 - 1400	Mai Po Nature Reserve (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road exit), OR 09:00 Mai Po carpark, end 13:00 Mai Po, 14:00 Kowloon Tong)	☆☆	Waterbirds
3/9/2011 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tai Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 outside Hang Heung Cake Shop, Yuen Long)	☆	Waterbirds
4/9/2011 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Shing Mun (08:00 Exit B near Hang Seng Bank, Tsuen Wan MTR Station)	☆☆	Forest birds
11/9/2011 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Mai Po Nature Reserve (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
18/9/2011 (Sun)	0730 - 1600	Po Toi and HK South Waters (07:30 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 and migrants
25/9/2011 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Long Valley (08:00 Taxi Station, Exit C, Sheung Shui MTR Station)	☆☆	Farmland and water birds

- Member: Free of Charge Non-member: Free of Charge (registration not required)
 Member: Free of Charge Non-member: HK\$30 (HK\$10 for age under 19 student) (registration not 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	Time	Topic	Speakers	Venue
26/5/2011 (Thur)	1900 - 2100	Experience Sharing: Digital Photography and Post-processing Workflow (Cantonese)	Mr. Phippen Ho	Rm. 924, Scout Asso of HK, Austin Road, Kowloon
12/7/2011 (Tue)	1900 - 2100	Sharing on Bird Drawing (Cantonese)	Miss Wendy Yu	Rm. 1101, Scout Asso of HK, Austin Road, Kowloon
16/7/2011 (Tue)	1900 - 2100	Raptors in HK and Basic Identification (Cantonese)	Mr. Gary Chow	Rm. 924, Scout Asso of HK, Austin Road, Kowloon

Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Activity Booking Slip

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

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

(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.)

- 14 Aug 2011 (Sun) (____ member(s), ____ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) using the coach is _____)
 11 Sep 2011 (Sun) (____ member(s), ____ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) using the coach is _____)

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) that day in order to access to the Frontier Closed Area and Mai Po Marshes.

Mirs Bay and Eastern Water [Boat Fare: Member: HK\$160 Non-member: HK\$200]

- 17 Jul 2011 (Sun) (____ member(s), ____ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) is _____)

Po Toi and Hong Kong South waters [Boat Fare: Member: HK\$160 Non-member: HK\$200]

- 18 Sep 2011 (Sun) (____ member(s), ____ non-member(s)) No. of person(s) is _____)

** We will confirm the participants whether their application is accepted or not about 5 days before the outing. Once confirmed, no refund will be made no matter they can attend the outing or not. Refund will be made only if the outing is cancelled officially due to inclement weather or special reason.

Information of Participant(s)

Date	Destination	Name	Membership No.	Mobile Phone	Email Address	Fare*

* Activities are processed individually, please use separate cheque.

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 Bldg, 480 Nathan Road, Kln**

Notes :

- HKBWS members have a high priority to join four weeks before the activity. Thereafter, application will be made on first come first serve basis.
- Any changes of the activities will be announced in our website: (<http://www.hkbws.org.hk/BBS>).
- 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.



Nikon D700 + EDG 單筒望遠鏡 + FSA-L2
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數碼觀測攝獵完美動靜

藝康 EDG 單筒望遠鏡系列，除讓你進行一般觀察外，更能接連數碼相機作數碼觀測，完美捕捉遠距影像。嶄新尖端的光學技術，配以設計精巧的鏡筒及無瑕對焦準繩度，締造每個絲毫畢現的銳利畫面。如此絕倫，唯有藝康，唯獨 EDG。

數碼單鏡反光相機連接器
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EDG
THE CUTTING EDGE IN SPORT OPTICS

牛頭伯勞
葉紀江
塋原

Bull-headed Shrike
Herman Ip Kee Kong
Long Valley

09/11/2010
DSLR Camera, 300mm f/2.8 lens+ 2x teleconverter



黑翅鳶
洪國偉
塋原

Black-winged Kite
Hoon Kwok Wai
Long Valley

19.11.2010
DSLR Camera, 500mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter