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The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society



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228

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The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

Bulletin 228

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Editor's Note

It's tempting to stay indoors during the year's hottest weather, but don't forget the fine birds that have appeared in recent high summers such as the Great Stone-curlew (June 2009), the Red-footed Booby (June 2010), the Bulwer's Petrel (June) and Oriental Stork (July) of last year.

Asian Openbill has already spread eastwards to Guangxi in good numbers this year – who is going to find Hong Kong's first one? 

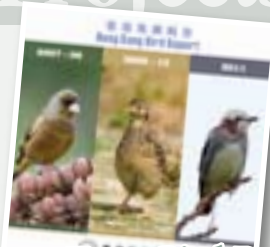
John Holmes

Society News and Projects

Members Affairs

2013 Membership Renewal

Membership stood at around 1900 as at the end of May, including 250 new members who joined us in 2013. Membership renewal under the new membership criteria is in progress. Renewal letters will be posted about two months before your membership expiry date.



Hong-Kong-Bird Report 2011

This latest Annual Report and digital copy in CD-Rom format were posted to members in mid-June. We would like to express our gratitude to the Records Committee, and all volunteers involved in the translation, editing, publishing and the mailing work, for the timely production and distribution of these items.

Sales Item

《Birds of HK Stickers》

A new set of stickers is now available in our new office at Lai Chi Kok. The sticker set includes 5 bird types; - kingfishers, raptors, waterbirds, woodland birds & urban birds. A special "Thank You" to all photographers who contributed their photos.

《Warbler ID Water-resistant Pamphlet》

This pamphlet is now available in the new office. For convenience of use outdoors, it is made of water-resistant material. Special thanks to Mr. Luk Wei who sponsored the production cost of this pamphlet. All sales income from this pamphlet will be used to support the aims and objectives of the society.

Sales Item	Member's Price	Non-Member's Price
《Birds of HK Stickers》 ~Set of 5 Series	HK\$20-	HK\$25-
《Warbler ID Water-resistant pamphlet》	HK\$20-	HK\$30-



“Records 232” - HK Bird Watching Competition 2013

The Competition was held from 4pm on April 6th to 4pm April 7th. Results table below.

We would like to express our gratitude to our two prize sponsors. Schmidt Marketing Asia Ltd donated 6 sets of Minox binoculars and 6 LensPen Sidekick products as prizes for the Best Record Award and lucky draw respectively. Swarovski Hong Kong Ltd sponsored production of race polo shirts for all participants.

In addition, special thanks are due for support from the following organizations and government departments which helped make the event a success.

- Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
- Hong Kong Police Force, Lok Ma Chau Division
- WWF – HK
- Mr. Lee Kwok Shing (Online bird record system)



Results

Records 232 - President's Cup

Records 232 – Best Bird Record

The Lark : Oriental Plover

Outstanding Awards

Team Name	# of Birds Accepted by the Judge
1 Wild Bird 2013	129
2 Phoenix	53
3 Little Gull	127
4 Great Tits	82
5 Heart For Charity	134
6 Fat So Gull	133
7 Or's prey	139
8 Happy Bird	111
9 Ibisbill	144 (Winner)
10 Agent Scott	140 (2nd Runner-up)
11 Run Rice Chickee	141 (1st Runner-up)
12 Happy Birding	120
13 Luk Shiu Fung	78
14 Wader Team	137
15 The Lark	108
16 Pratincole	72

Outstanding Awards**	Team	# of Birds
Best Location Team - Mai Po	Wild Bird 2013	79
Best Location Team - Long Valley	Luk Shiu Fung	37
Best Location Team - Tai Po Kau	Agent Scott	31
Seen Record Team	Run Rice Chickee	126
Heard Record Team	Happy Bird	24

**based on no. of birds entered to the online record system on or before 5pm April 7.



Society News and Projects - (cont.)

Team members & photos	Team name	Team member	
	Phoenix	Ho Kin Wa Ho Wan Ching Poon Mei Fung	
	Little Gull	Lee Tak Lun Du Zhen Nan Cheung Ka Hang	
	Heart for Charity	Lau Sin Pang Law Man Suet, Michelle Yeung Chee Yu	Mak Chi Fung Chau Ngai Lung Luk In
	Happy Bird	Wu King Hung, Kevin Chan Wai Shan Lai Sze Nga	
	Agent Scott	Katherine Leung Eva Cheuk Meiling Lau	Henry Lui Polly Chik Tobi Lau
	Fat So Gull	Chung Yun Tak So Yin Kin Lo Pik Ling	
	Great Tits	Chan Ka Ho Ip Tsz Ying Ho Pui Lam, Jocelyn	Kong Chun Yan Chiu Ming Ho
	Or'sprey	Or Ka Man Mui Ka Wai Cheung Ka Chun	Lo Pei Lai, Janice Fong Hoi Ning Xing Shuang
			

Society News and Projects - (cont.)

Team name **Team member**



Run Rice Chickee
Lam Ngo Lun, Alan
Chow Ming Him
Yam Wing Yiu
Cheung kwok Leung

Ibisbill
Ho Siu Kit
Lau Yuen Yung
So Lok Hin
Tse Wai Lun
Shum Ting Wing
Wong Chuk Kwan



Happy Birding
Tony Hung
Vivian Fu
Yuen Pui Yu
Ma Chui Ying

Wader Team
Cheung Ho Fai
Angela Wong
Ng Ka Yan
Irene Wong
Tang Mei Ling
Natalie Chan



Luk Siu Fung
Lam Pak Kai
Lai Yau Man, Philip
Cu Lai Sheung
Cheng Nga Ming
Leung Yuen Ching
Mak Yau Man

The Lark
Lam Chiu Ying
Chan Ming Ming
Ng Cho Nam
Li Wai Ki



Pratincole
Ho Ying Ho
Leung Chung Yin
Chu Kwan Ling
Ho Chi Kwong
Wong Lai Yin
So Wai Lam, William

Wild Bird 2013
Fong Kin Wa, Forrest
Au Chun Yan, Joanne
Carrie Ma
Chung Chun Kit
Ho Man Fai





Black-faced Spoonbill census on the west coast of the Korean Peninsula



In cooperation with Professor Chong Jong-Ryol of Korea University, Japan, HKBWS conducted a Black-faced Spoonbill census in August and September 2012 along the west coast of the Korean Peninsula. Two surveys covered 32 census points within North Korea, including BFS breeding sites. During the three-week census, 292 Black-faced Spoonbills were recorded at 17 sites, which was 35% fewer than the 449 birds counted in 2011. The cause may be due to local changes in habitat, but more research is required. The HKBWS role in this census was to sponsor the expenditure of the research, including accommodation and travel expenses of the researchers. In addition, this research enhanced the cooperation between HKBWS and BFS researchers in North Korea. We hope for further opportunities to work together to save this endangered species.

We would like to express our gratitude to HKTraveler.com Ltd for sponsoring this meaningful programme.

Hong Kong Fishpond Conservation Scheme

More than 130 fishpond operators support and are engaged in this the 2013 follow-on programme which covers more than 90% of the fishpond area in Inner Deep Bay. This summer, a second round of Fishpond Eco-tour Guide Training will be organized. The training will be composed of fishery culture, wetland ecology and conservation, fishpond field trips, training of interpretation skills and so on. The details will be announced on the BBS.

We will produce some educational materials and display boards about Hong Kong's fishery culture. We are looking for old photos of fishpond and Northwest New Territories landscapes. If you are able to provide any old photos, please contact Johnson (Email: cjohnson@hkbws.org.hk). Thank you.

2012-2015 Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley

Every morning, you will see two old men working in the water flea and bloodworm pond. Do you know what they are doing?

An old statistical document about agricultural produce in Hong Kong surfaced recently. In 1957-58, 490 thousand piculs of paddy rice¹, 1.23 million piculs of vegetables, 830 thousand catties of lychee, 400 thousand catties of orange, 200 thousand catties of “wongpei”, 110 thousand catties of pineapple, a million chickens, 100 thousand pigs, 30 thousand pigeons and many more kinds of crops, fish and livestock were produced. Hong Kong was a rich and diversely productive place in those days. Today farmland in Hong Kong is facing various threats. Abandonment, illegal dumping of construction waste and development, are all issues. Farmland area dropped from 14,000 hectares in 1960 to 6,000 hectares in 2010, of which two-thirds is already abandoned. Does Hong Kong need farmland today? If there is not a commercial need, can preservation of farmland be justified when considering social, aesthetic and conservation issues?



Bloodworms collected from the pond. The collector has to wash them many times before suitable for fish.

Long Valley is an active area of farmland that survives with conservation management input by the Conservancy Association and HKBWS. The number and variety of species of birds is steadily increasing. It sounds like Long Valley is fortunate, yet, there are still worrying issues for conservation. Recently, due to low market demand, the water flea and bloodworm farm operator decided to cease operating and shift to growing other kinds of crops with potentially higher profit. Proposed Government land resumption as set out in the proposed Kwu Tung North New Development Area plan is another factor. And the two tropical fish breeders who have been collecting water fleas and bloodworms from the pond as fish feed every morning for the past three decades are being forced to stop their fish aquaculture. The water flea and bloodworm farm operation and the unique collection technique are becoming history.

Loss of this kind of farming process steadily diminishes Long Valley's biological diversity.



Water flea and bloodworm collection technique is going to be lost.

Note¹: 1 picul = 100 catties; 1kg = about 2 catties

Projects of

Hong Kong Bird Watching Society China Conservation Fund 2013/14

Three projects were selected. The results are as follows:

Province	Project title	Project leader	Organization
Yunnan	Study of distribution and population of Purple Swamphen in Dali, Yunnan	Han Lian-xian	Southwest Forestry University
Liaoning	Survey and conservation work for Saunders' Gull in Panjing	Zhang Ming	Panjing Bird Watching Society
Jiangsu	Bird Conservation- Art Programme 2013 for schools in Jiangsu	Li Jing	

Successful applications for the China Conservation Fund – Scaly-sided Merganser 2013/14*:

Province	Project title	Project leader	Organization
Chongqing	Monitoring and conservation promotion of Wintering SSM in Qijiang 2013-14	Wei Qian	Chongqing Bird Watching Society

*This funding was supported by the sale of Scaly-sided Merganser ties

Training workshop for restoration of Chinese Crested Tern in Xiangshan, Zhejiang



Training workshop for restoration of Chinese Crested Tern
(Photo: Simba Chan)



Site visit on Tiledun Dao
(Photo credit: Simba Chan)

On 4-6 March 2013, I attended a training workshop on the restoration of Chinese Crested Tern held at Xiangshan, Zhejiang province, China. (Xiangshan County is only 25km away from a known breeding island of Chinese Crested Tern.) The theme of this workshop was to discuss how to improve the quality of breeding colonies of the Critically Endangered Chinese Crested Tern through habitat restoration work in order to increase their breeding success. The focus of the workshop was on collecting basic information of breeding biology and ecology of the tern species in Zhejiang and providing recommendations on how to start the habitat restoration on islands in the East Sea based on the sharing of successful experience of tern restoration in the United States. After that, we visited the selected project site for the restoration of Chinese Crested Tern.

The workshop was led by Prof. Chen Shui-hua from Zhejiang Museum of Natural History, Prof. Dan Roby from Oregon State University and Simba Chan from BirdLife International. Participants in this workshop included officers from the National Bird Banding Center, Environmental Protection Bureau, the Oceanic and Fisheries Department of Ningbo City and Xiangshan County, Jiushan Islands National Nature Reserve, the Forestry Department of Zhejiang province, Xiangshan Agriculture and Forestry Department, representatives from Zhejiang Bird Watching Society, Fujian Bird Watching Society, Xiamen Bird Watching Society, Wild Bird Society of Taipei and Japan's Yamashina Institute for Ornithology.

A work plan for tern restoration this year was successfully drawn up. In addition, government representatives showed interest in and support for conservation activities relating to this, the world's rarest tern. In the work plan, trial of the restoration work will be conducted in June and July 2013. Actions will include using tern decoys and audio playback systems to attract terns to nest at the site, and there will be breeding site improvement work such as reducing vegetation and rat eradication. The site will also be monitored regularly by researchers throughout the whole breeding season.

This workshop was organized by Xiangshan Jiushan National Nature Reserve administration office, Zhejiang Museum of Natural History and Oregon State University. The work is funded by the Japan Fund for Global Environment and the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation (Hong Kong), supported by BirdLife International Asia Division, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, Zhejiang Wild Bird Society, Xiangshan Agriculture and Forestry Bureau and Xiangshan Communist Youth League.

Society News and Projects - (cont.)



Mist nets set in intertidal areas in Fucheng, Leizhou, Guangdong Province. (Photo credit: Jonathan Martinez)

Update of Survey of non-breeding Spoon-billed Sandpiper in southern China

Recent studies have proven that the intertidal mudflats in Rudong, Jiangsu are a key stop-over site for Spoon-billed Sandpiper. However, very little Spoon-billed Sandpiper data is available in southern China. With support from Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong, the society coordinated a survey of southern China including Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan Provinces between September 2012 and May 2013, in order to further identify important Spoon-billed Sandpiper sites.

In the study, we have identified two new sites for Spoon-billed Sandpiper. A minimum of four Spoon-billed Sandpipers were found by our members Richard Lewthwaite and Jonathan Martinez at Fucheng, Leizhou on 17th and 18th December, 2012. Another Spoon-billed Sandpiper was sighted by Yu Yat Tung, Helen Fong and Vivian Fu at Beihai, Guangxi on 24th January, 2013.

The survey also revealed that trapping in some of the survey areas, especially in Guangdong Province, poses a massive threat to Spoon-billed Sandpipers and other shorebirds and small waterbirds. Just to take west Guangdong as an example, during the survey the team counted a total of 460 mist nets, which equates to a length of about 11.5 km. Soon after the survey team was back, detailed information of mist netting was submitted to the Guangdong Forestry Department and the problem has been alleviated by their action at the moment. Yet the threat of mist netting still needs long-term monitoring.

The project was implemented in partnership with Fujian Bird Watching Society, Xiamen Bird Watching Society, Beilun Estuary National Nature Reserve and Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden's China Conservation Section. In addition, we would like to express our great gratitude to Richard Lewthwaite, Jonathan Martinez, John and Jemi Holmes, for their help in conducting surveys in Guangdong Province. 

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Mai Po Update

~ John Allcock

Desilting of channels at Gei wai #16/17 and Pond #16b

Sedimentation has always been a significant problem at Mai Po Nature Reserve. The water of Deep Bay contains a lot of sediment, as is typical for water in an estuary such as this. When this water is brought into the Mai Po gei wai the sediment settles on the base of the gei wai and gradually blocks the channels. This summer we will be carrying out work to remove excess sediment from the perimeter channel of Gei wai #16/17. This will deepen the channel, thus improving the flow of water and stopping the spread of reeds and grasses into this important roosting site.

Similar work will also be carried out over the course of the summer in Pond #16b. Although this pond is freshwater and so does not have the same problem with sedimentation from the water in Deep Bay, it is being invaded from the fringes by terrestrial grasses and the perimeter needs widening/deepening to stop the spread of grass.

Summer opening of Pond #15 to visitors

Pond #15 (next to the Education Centre) has not been accessible to visitors for the last few years. It is planned to open the pond to visitors again starting from Summer 2013. Hopefully we can also improve the wildlife value of the public area, particularly by planting some tree and shrub species suitable for butterflies and birds. The pond will be open during the summer but will close for the winter, to minimise disturbance to ducks visiting the pond.



(Credit: John Allcock/WWF-Hong Kong)
Pond #15, scheduled for reopening to visitors in Summer 2013


Update to the Mai Po Habitat Management, Monitoring and Research Plan

An update to the Mai Po Management Plan will come into action in 2013. This plan will look at the actions over the next five years in terms of habitat management, monitoring and research. This is the first time that the monitoring and research aspects have been incorporated with the management plan. Monitoring and research provide important information to help decide on habitat management techniques, so combining these three aspects into one plan should help with site management.

Preparation of the five-year plan has given us the opportunity to think about what we want to achieve over the next five years. On top of the regular management works of water level management, grass cutting and tree management, we have ambitious plans for certain parts of the site in the coming five years, with a view to maximising the ecological potential of the site. Major plans for the coming five-year period include:

- Continued enhancement of reedbeds across the entire site (this enhancement work has started in 2013).
- Conversion of a part of Gei wai #18 and #19 to freshwater, to connect the freshwater areas in the south of the site and facilitate movements of freshwater species.
- Improvements to islands in the roost sites of Gei wai #16/17 and #21, which are gradually being eroded by wave action.
- Desilting of channels of certain gei wai where these are affected by sedimentation.
- Enhancement of the grazed freshwater marsh at Pond #24.

Of course, all of this work costs money. Management of the reserve (habitats, hides and boardwalks) currently costs around \$6 million each year. Many of the large-scale projects are expected to be funded by the Big Bird Race, which has managed to raise around \$1 million per year in recent years. AFCD provides funding for other aspects of the works, including regular management and some larger projects, and we are grateful to our various existing donors for their continued support.


Management of the Centres and the site infrastructure (hides and boardwalks) is not included in this plan, but planning for the management of these is under consideration. We welcome comments on any of these aspects of the site, especially the birdwatching hides and boardwalks. 

My Bird Watching Diary

~ Text and Illustrations: Wendy Yu

Eurasian Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

28th August 2012

Eurasian Hobby is a small and elegant bird of prey. The grey-and-orange coloured body make it look old-fashioned but unique among others member of the same family. When spring turns to summer, bird lovers can expect to observe the charm of the Eurasian Hobby. 



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My first owl sighting

~ Samson So

A Barn Owl family hiding inside a building in day time (in Kenya)

Some birds can be instantly identified, with just one look, and it doesn't even matter how much you know about birds. Every time you see such a bird, it always leaves you with a lasting impression. Although owls may be easily distinguished by their unique appearance, some of the species are difficult to spot.

Through different times and cultures, there are all kinds of stories surrounding the owl, and the owl's nocturnal habits have helped to heighten its mystical nature. In Greek mythology, Athena is often represented or accompanied by an owl; and in fairy tales the owl personifies wisdom. The owl even plays a role in the hottest magic wizard series of recent years, the Harry Potter adventures.

My first owl in the field was seen on Aug 20th 1995, a memorable day for me. I was working at Mai Po Nature Reserve, leading a guided tour on a Sunday with various visitors.

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, the largest owl in the world, taken in Kenya



An Asian Barred Owlet caught in Mai Po during bird ringing, perhaps a relative of my first owl



That day, I got out of bed at 6 am as usual on a Sunday morning, and after changing transport 3 times from Kowloon, assembled my group of thirty at 9 am. After confirming attendees and a short brief, I picked up the telescope provided by the Reserve (back then, some guides like me were willing to carry 'scopes on tripods in the summer heat in Mai Po). Back then, birding and nature photography wasn't as common as it is today. There were a few outdoor lovers in the tour group but most had very little knowledge of birds.

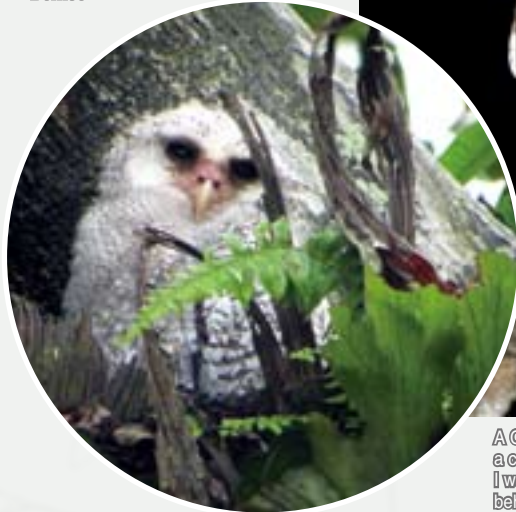
We set off. By 10 am we had reached the popular spot for viewing Baya Weavers. This foreign species built a community in Mai Po in the 90's although they have become rare in HK since then. Their bottle-shaped nests could be seen in trees overhanging the fishponds around Mai Po car park. Weaved with long grass, the Baya Weaver's nest is characterized by its elongated tunnel leading to an opening at the bottom of the nest. As usual, I set up the telescope on the roadside at the fishpond, and began my introduction to the weaver's habits, the structure of the nest and the potential environmental impact of foreign species.

When we had finished, I had another look in the telescope as usual, just to check if there might be something else. And there it was, in the viewfinder! I turned a new page in my life as a birder – I had found an owl in the field.

A small body and a round head - I had looked at it so many times in the field guide - an Asian Barred Owlet. I was surprised to see an owl with its big round eyes wide open in broad daylight. My heart still pounds with excitement every time I recall the awesome feeling when looking into the eyes of an owl through a telescope.

Most people are familiar with the image of an owl, but not many have actually seen one in the field. In recent years, some people have turned an owl's nesting site into a paparazzi spot. Armed with today's telecommunications, a troop of photographers forms within hours of an owl being spotted. It's not an everyday thing to be able to see the mysterious owl, a chance that few would like to miss. It's a dream come true for a photographer to be able to capture the owl at close range with sufficient light.


Owl chicks, digi-scoped in Borneo

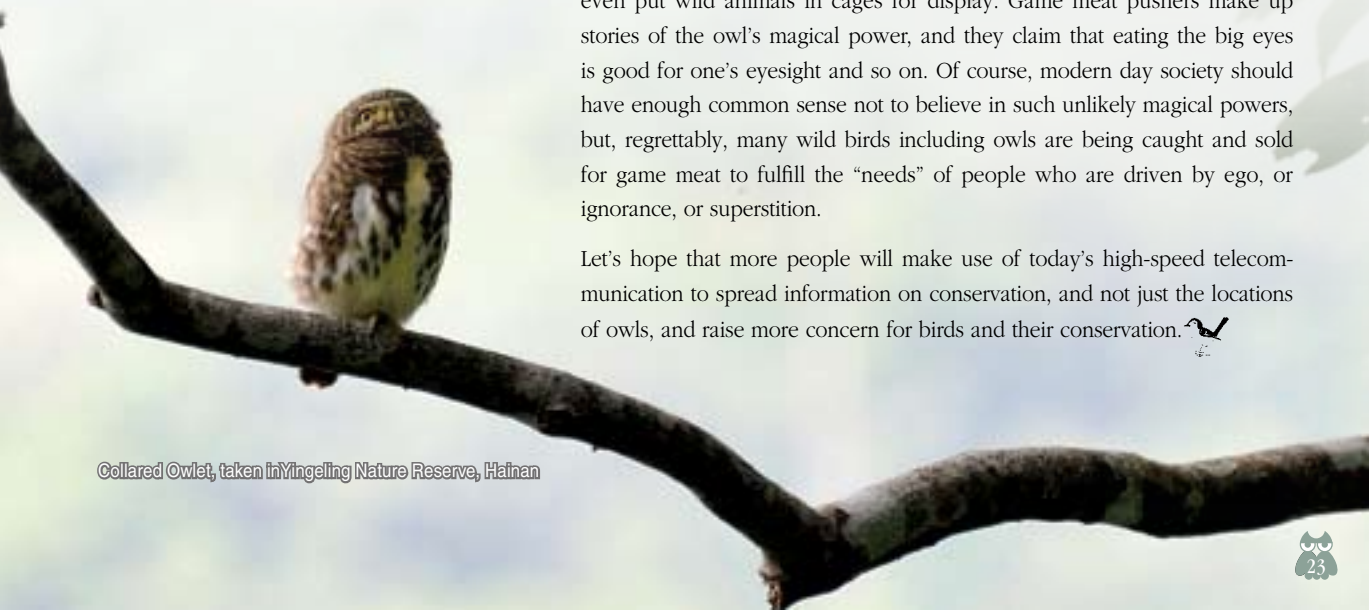


A Collared Scops Owl seen at a cemetery in Singapore while I was researching nocturnal behavior of wildlife

Now after years of observation in the field, I have had many opportunities spotting and observing owls in Hong Kong and overseas, but it still moves me on all occasions and every encounter is noted as a special day in my birding history. Photographing an owl has become much easier in Hong Kong now, but I prefer the surprise and awed excitement of an unexpected sighting.

The mystique and elusiveness of the owl makes it a popular acquisition target for zoos and the caged birds market. Some reserves and forest parks even put wild animals in cages for display. Game meat pushers make up stories of the owl's magical power, and they claim that eating the big eyes is good for one's eyesight and so on. Of course, modern day society should have enough common sense not to believe in such unlikely magical powers, but, regrettably, many wild birds including owls are being caught and sold for game meat to fulfill the "needs" of people who are driven by ego, or ignorance, or superstition.

Let's hope that more people will make use of today's high-speed telecommunication to spread information on conservation, and not just the locations of owls, and raise more concern for birds and their conservation. 



Collared Owlet, taken in Yingeling Nature Reserve, Hainan

A different Christmas - Birding Yunnan

from 22nd - 27th Dec 2012

~ Text/ Jones Ho Photo/Lego Ho



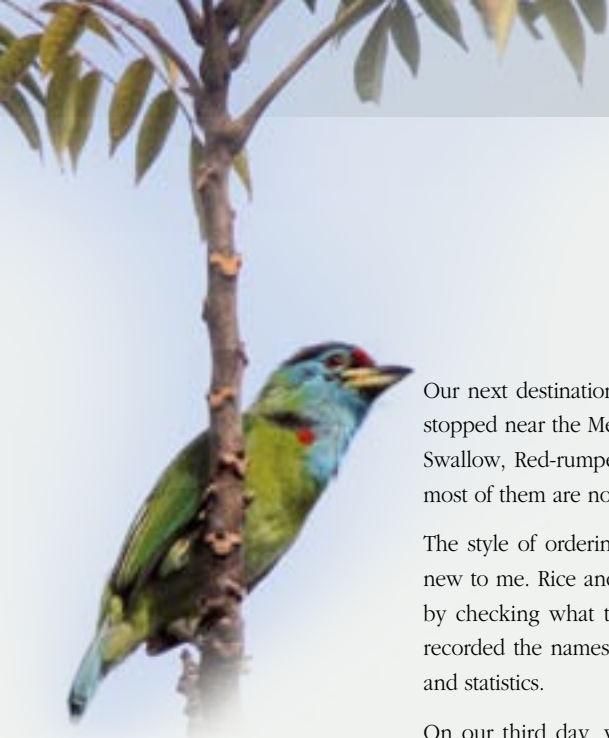
On this, my eleventh Christmas, I could neither see any tall buildings decorated with seasonal greetings and sparkling lighting, nor the big shopping malls and shops flooded with people, nor a variety of beautiful and attractively wrapped gifts nor the broadcasting of lively Christmas music and songs. Neither were there unlimited dishes of different kinds of food at a Christmas buffet dinner in front of me. Instead, I was out of Hong Kong, having flown straight to Yunnan. I had started my first journey birdwatching in China.

On Dec 22nd, our group of nine people met at HK airport and flew to Kunming, then transferred to Jinghong (Xishangbanna) to meet the other two guys. With the tour drivers, there were thirteen people on the trip.

We arrived at Jinghong in the evening. The sky was clear but it was warmer than we expected. Having settled into the hotel, we dined at a local restaurant. Most of the dishes were a bit too spicy. Even their local specialty - they called it "Sticky rice with pineapple" - was too sweet and sticky for me. I was disappointed as I only had had Thai-style fried rice before.

Next morning, we rose at 6:00 am and had a Chinese-style morning meal - congee, fried rice with eggs and fried dough. Of course it was not my favorite but there was no choice.

After driving for an hour, we arrived at our first destination - Wild Elephant Valley. It was the habitat of wild elephants, but we didn't see any. Instead we met some kinds of birds we could rarely see in Hong Kong. We saw Pied Falconet, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Scarlet Minivet and Speckled Piculet. I could only say "Hi" to them through my binoculars while the others were busy shooting them with their long-lens cameras.



Our next destination was the Sky Tree Scenic Area near Mengla. In the afternoon we stopped near the Mekong River to find some more birds. We were pleased to see Barn Swallow, Red-rumped Swallow, Striated Swallow and Common Buzzard, even though most of them are not rare in Hong Kong.

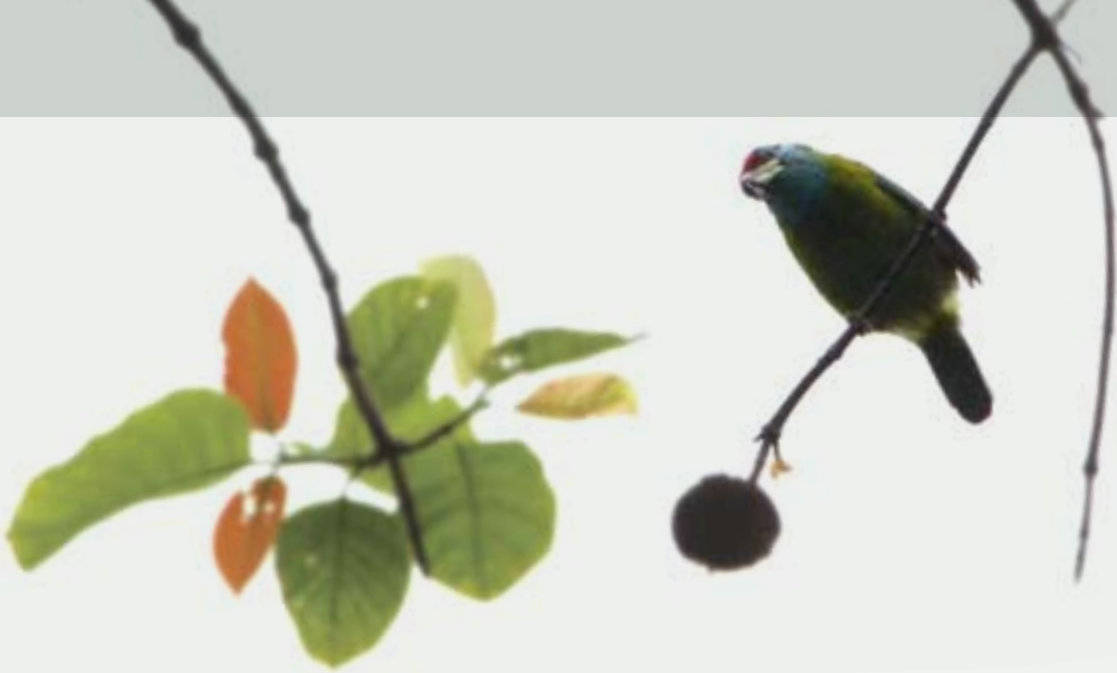
The style of ordering food in the village restaurant near our Mengla Guesthouse was new to me. Rice and vegetables were the main food but we had to choose our dishes by checking what they had in the fridge instead of from a menu. After dinner we recorded the names and the number of the birds seen on that day for data collection and statistics.

On our third day, we arrived at the Sky Tree Scenic Area. It was a rainforest. The biggest trees were as high as a three or four storey building. There was a rope walkway among the trees. We could climb up to the top if we dared to stand near the top of a tree and experience the height. We could even walk on the rope walkway and show we had no fear of heights or shaky hearts. When I stopped in the middle of the walkway, I felt like a giant with everything under my feet. In the rainforest, we could see Blue-throated Barbet and Blue-winged Leafbird.

On the fourth day, we met some more new friends such as flycatchers, babblers, and sunbirds near our lodging place. Then we moved on to Xishangbanna Tropical and Botanical Garden (XTBG) which is divided into eastern and western parts. The former is an area of rainforest while the latter is an artificial developed garden.

We went to the western side as we were told that Asian Openbills were to be found there and that they would appear at a certain time at a certain place! We were so lucky that they did show up at the place and time we were told. We saw a total of six on a big tree. They are a new species in China and were first seen at XTBG from 2007. Their mouth is like a pair of pliers, but it never closes properly. As they were the first I had seen, I was very excited.





In addition, we also saw such rare birds as Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker and Wryneck. Our nightly bird call-over lasted longer than usual as we had a lot of new species to consider.

On the fifth day, we explored the eastern part of XTBG. We found Little Spiderhunter and Black-naped Monarch. We noticed that the weather suddenly became more humid than usual in the afternoon. Everyone continued their birding. While we were heading to the west, a huge black cloud was just above all of us and threatened to burst. We sprinted to a pavilion for shelter. The pouring of rains suddenly became a roar around us, oh, it was hailing indeed. Unbelievable! For almost half an hour, we were really surprised and shocked. With an air temperature of higher than 20 degrees at ground level, no one could believe that it was hailing. Some hailstones were quite large and we were worried that our teammates would be hurt or hit in areas where there was no place for shelter.

After the deluge, the temperature difference worked a magical effect. All of a sudden, when the sun came out again, we were in a dream of heaven, surrounded by lots of rising mist. We were told that such a scenic wonder had not been seen for thirty years. All our teammates and the drivers were very impressed by this phenomenon. I was totally satisfied with this extra “White Christmas” gift.

On the final morning, no one wanted to miss the last few minutes of birding in XTBG before driving to the airport in the morning.

On this trip, I got a valuable Christmas “gift” and experienced a fantastic trip. I eye witnessed more than 110 kinds of birds and a wonderful scene of hailing in such a hot climate. It became an important and impressive part of my life experience!



~ Richard Lewthwaite

*(This is an unofficial account of the seasonal highlights.
Observers are still encouraged to submit formal records of their sightings – Ed.)*

January

- ▶ Highlights of another excellent month were single **Martens's Warblers** *Seicercus omeiensis* at Pak Sha O from 14th (GJC) and Aberdeen Reservoir on 22nd-23rd (BK), potentially the first for Hong Kong. A **Slaty-backed Flycatcher** at Tsuen Wan on 5th (AC), a potential 2nd record, found coincidentally by the same observer at the same place as the first record in 2008, and three different **Red-headed Buntings** at Long Valley from 15th (MLC, AB). Based on these and records in previous winters dating back to Jan 2008, **Red-headed Bunting** has been promoted to Category I of the Hong Kong list. Meanwhile, the number of **Varied Tits** at Tai Lam CP (near Yuen Long) increased to four by 13th (per GW).
- ▶ As thrushes and chats continued to be widespread, a fine series of birds was reported from forest and shrubland sites in the month, including these in the first week alone: two **Fujian Niltavas** at Tai Po Kau on 1st and 7th (CNM, MK), a male **Brown-headed Thrush** and six **Eurasian Siskins** at Tai Po Kau Headland on 1st (RB), a female **Japanese Robin** at Tai Po Kau on 2nd-3rd and a male there on 5th (KPK, BK), a **Chestnut-crowned Warbler** there from 3rd (CNM), a male **Fujian Niltava** at Shing Mun on 3rd (JAA) and at least 100 **Chestnut-collared Yuhinas** in the Shing Mun-Leadmine Pass-Tai Po Kau area the same day (JAA), a record count.
- ▶ A **Yellow-streaked Warbler** and a **Pale-legged Leaf Warbler** at Aberdeen Reservoir (BK), a **Sulphur-breasted Warbler** at Tai Po Kau (KPK) and a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** at Lam Tsuen (DT), all on 4th, two more **Red-breasted Flycatchers** at Mount Davis the next day (BK), a **Brown Wood Owl** and a **Bay Woodpecker** at Tai Po Kau on 6th (AB, FC) and a male **White-tailed Robin** at Shing Mun on 7th (SLT). Most of these birds were still present later in the month, when the following were also reported at Tai Po Kau: a **Speckled Piculet** from 9th (KPK), an **Osprey** (rare over Tai Po Kau) on 23rd (SLT) and up to 30 **Eurasian Siskins** on 23rd-24th (SLT, JGH).
- ▶ The discovery of the **Martens's Warbler** led to Pak Sha O receiving a lot of coverage. Among a wide range of wintering birds found there during 15th-19th (GJC, PMW, BK, PJL, RWL, SLT, GT, KK) were **Grey-backed Thrush**, **Red-flanked Bluetail**, **Rufous-tailed Robin**, **Daurian Redstart**, **Pallas's Leaf and Yellow-browed Warblers**, all plentifully, and **Japanese**, **Pale and White's Thrushes**, **Goodson's Leaf Warbler**, **Two-barred Warbler**, **Verditer**, **Mugimaki Flycatcher**, **Fujian Niltava** and **Small Niltava**, all singly or in small numbers. Also present were one or two **Hainan Blue Flycatchers** and flocks of **Blue-winged Minlas** and **Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes**.
- ▶ Reports from Mai Po (mainly WWF, JAA, MDW, YYT) included the long-staying **Oriental Stork** throughout the month, a **Cinnamon Bittern** (rare in winter), seven **Terek Sandpipers** (possibly the highest ever winter count), a **Himalayan Swiftlet** and a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** (one of four found in Hong Kong in the month and the first for the reserve), all on 2nd, one or two **Baer's Pochards** (Pond 20) from 8th, and a **Yellow-browed Bunting** on 14th-15th. Best birds from the Mai Po boardwalk were two **Nordmann's Greenshank** and a **Vega Gull** on 15th and 22 **Great Knot** and five **Red Knot** on 28th.



- ▶ Elsewhere, there were reports of a female **Grey Bushchat** at Cheung Chau from 1st (MDW), the two **Black-throated Tits** again at Po Toi on 3rd (GW) – raising the possibility of a category upgrade - a **Dusky Thrush** at Beas River on 15th (MLC), a **White-throated Rock Thrush** at Sha Lo Wan on 17th (CKW), two **Mountain Bulbuls** and three male **Common Rosefinches** at Wu Kau Tang on 25th, a **Citrine Wagtail**, up to four **Chestnut-eared Buntings** and a male **Crested Bunting** at Long Valley during the second half of the month (MLC, MRL), and a **Kamchatka Gull** and an Ancient Murrelet in north Lantau waters on 29th (KJ).

February

- ▶ The undoubted highlight of the month was a female **Slaty Bunting**, the first for Hong Kong, which was photographed at Tai Po Kau on 8th (WT) and again on 10th and 17th (GC, KPK). A possible **European Golden Plover** in front of the Mai Po boardwalk on 12th (JAA, JGH) led to plover flocks being scrutinised in subsequent days, but to no avail.
- ▶ Following the initial discovery of one at Po Toi last September and reports of up to four at Tai Lam CP in December and January, **Varied Tits** of the nominate subspecies were again recorded, with one at Quarry Bay on 9th (CYT) and up to four at Tai Tong Barbeque Site (Tai Lam CP) through the month (9wi, WD, MRL et al). It is now clear that a major irruption has taken place, reaching as far as Hong Kong. Observations of large numbers moving west over South Korea and Japan in the autumn were followed by reports of single birds and flocks on the coasts of Shandong, Jiangsu, Shanghai and Zhejiang (BirdForum, China Birding, per GW), all far from the usual range of the species. One was also reported at Shenzhen on 23 January this year. In view of this, the birds found in Hong Kong are regarded as having occurred naturally and the species has been accepted to Category I of the Hong Kong list, an addition that could not have been predicted a year ago.
- ▶ Though not as common as they had been in January, thrushes and chats were fairly widespread in shrubland and forest until about the middle of the month when a big clear-out took place. At Tai Po Kau, which was well covered, the **Bay Woodpecker**, **Speckled Piculet** and **Chestnut-crowned Warbler** continued to be reported through the month and the male **Fujian Niltava** remained until at least 12th (IT). Notable birds at Tai Po Kau Headland included a **White-throated Rock Thrush** on 4th and 19 **Black Bulbuls** on 8th (RB), the latter the largest flock of the winter. A **Radde's Warbler** and a **Brown Bush Warbler** were found at Wong Lung Hang, Lantau on 10th (JAA) and the over-wintering **Martens's Warbler** seen again at Pak Sha O on 19th (GJC). Single **Brown Wood Owls** were calling at Tai Po Kau from 12th (IT) and Lam Tsuen from 17th (DT) and flocks of 20-40 **Eurasian Siskins** were noted at these two sites up to 17th (website, DT). A **Crested Honey Buzzard** at Tai Po Kau on 26th (BK) was only the second of the winter.
- ▶ At Mai Po, a **Pied Harrier** was found on 2nd, the **Oriental Stork** remained throughout the month and the two **Baer's Pochards** until at least 10th (WWF). Although a **Terek Sandpiper** and 28 **Whimbrel** were noted at Tsim Bei Tsui on 11th (BK) and there were occasional sightings of **Vega Gulls** and single first-winter **Kamchatka** and **Slaty-backed Gulls** (BK, MLC, YYT), it was not a classic month in Deep Bay.



- ▶ Elsewhere in the Deep Bay area, one of the over-wintering **Red-headed Buntings** remained at Long Valley until at least 2nd (MK), the male **Crested Bunting** was again photographed there on 10th (CT) and a female **Bull-headed Shrike**, one of very few in the winter, was at Nam Sang Wai on 11th (WKC).

March

- ▶ In a flat month, notable reports in the first ten days were 16 **Oriental Pratincoles** at Mai Po on 2nd (JAA), up to three **Varied Tits** at Tai Tong on 2nd-3rd (KB, RB, RWL), a **Rosy Starling** at Cyber Port from 2nd to 10th (BK), a first for Hong Kong Island, 30 **Black-faced Spoonbills** at Long Valley on 3rd (HKBWS), a significant count at this locality, an **Eastern Water Rail** and a **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** at Mai Po on 7th (WWF) and a male **Mrs Gould's Sunbird** in a garden at Sha Tin on 9th. Woodpeckers continued to be seen, with a **Bay Woodpecker** at Tai Po Kau Headland on 7th (RB) and a **Speckled Piculet** at Tai Po Kau on 10th (KPK) and passage of seabirds and waterbirds past Po Toi was evident with sightings of 187 **Black-tailed Gulls** and two **Vega Gulls** on 2nd, 194 **Heuglin's Gulls** on 6th, up to three **Ancient Murrelets** on 6th-9th, and one or two **Black-legged Kittiwakes** on 6th and 10th (BK, GW).
- ▶ The middle ten days of the month were very quiet, with the exception of three reports from Mai Po. The **Oriental Stork**, which had remained there since July of the previous year, was last seen on 11th when it appears to have joined another individual and flown off. At least 100 **Chinese Penduline Tits**, record numbers for the time of year, were noted on 13th (WWF) and **Curlew Sandpipers** were present in good numbers, including 1100 on 17th (YYT).
- ▶ Photographs of a male niltava present at King's Park from 2nd to at least 14th (SW) generated a lot of discussion, with experienced birders identifying it variously as **Fujian Niltava** and **Rufous-bellied Niltava**. Based on a new understanding of identification features, it is now firmly considered to be a **Fujian Niltava** (PJJ). (See photo on page 5 - Ed.)
- ▶ On 21st, as the month moved into its the final third, a **Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo** was heard at Pak Sha O (GJC), the earliest ever spring date, and a **Ferruginous Flycatcher**, the first flycatcher of the spring, was seen at Po Toi (GW). No fewer than 16 **Eurasian Bitterns** were at Mai Po on 22nd (JAA) and a **Blunt-winged Warbler** was trapped there the next day (JAA). On 27th, 21 **Grey-faced Buzzards** and a migrating **Western Osprey** were seen at Po Toi (GW) and two days later a **Little Stint** was found at Mai Po (WWF) and a **Blue-and-white Flycatcher** at Pui O (EMSK).
- ▶ Spring passage was well underway at Po Toi in the last three days of the month, with sightings of a **Chinese Sparrowhawk** on 30th (LCF), the earliest ever spring date, up to three **Swinhoe's** and up to 14 **Ashy Minivets**, an **Eastern Crowned Warbler**, a **Red-flanked Bluetail**, two **Daurian Redstarts** and a **Narcissus Flycatcher** on 29th-30th (LCF, CNM et al), and two **Bramblings** on 31st (WD). The penultimate day of the month also brought reports of a **Pheasant-tailed Jacana**, an **Asian Dowitcher** and an **Arctic Warbler** at Mai Po (JAA), these being followed on the last day of the month by, an **Orange-headed Thrush** at Nam Sang Wai (CF) and a **Purple Swamphen** at Mai Po (JAA), the first in about 15 years. 

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Bird Watching Tours Jul - Dec 2013

Outings

Date	Duration	Time and site	Difficulties (1...3)	Target species
20/7/2013 (Sat)	0830 - 1630	Mirs Bay and Eastern Waters (Meeting Point Revised) (08:30 Ma Liu Shui New Pier, end 16:30 Sai Kung Old Pier) 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)
25/8/2013 (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
7/9/2013 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Long Valley (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Maxim's MX, Sheng Shui Rail Station)	☆☆	Farmland and water birds
15/9/2013 (Sun)	0830 - 1200	Shing Mun (08:30 Kiosk at Pineapple Dam, Shing Mun Reservoir)	☆☆	Forest birds
22/9/2013 (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
28/9/2013 (Sat)	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.	☆☆☆	Migrants
5/10/2013 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Nam Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 V Cuisine Restaurant, Exit G2, Yuen Long West Rail Station)	☆	Waterbirds
6/10/2013 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Long Valley (08:00 Pavilion beside public toilet at Yin Kong Village)	☆☆	Farmland and water birds
13/10/2013 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Po Toi Island (08:00 Aberdeen Pier (Ferry pier to Po Toi Island)) Note: Participants have to pay for their own ferry fee. The returning time is not fixed, so participants may decide their own returning time.	☆☆	Migrants
20/10/2013 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Mai Po Nature Reserve (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road / F Exit), OR 09:00 Mai Po carpark, end 15:00 Mai Po, 16:00 Kowloon Tong)	☆☆	Waterbirds
2/11/2013 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tai Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Bus stop in front of Café de Coral near Hang Heung Cake Shop, Yuen Long)	☆	Waterbirds

Member: Free of Charge

Member: Free of Charge

Member: HK\$60 (Student Member: HK\$30)

Member: HK\$160

Non-member: Free of Charge

Non-member: HK\$30 (HK\$10 for age under 19 student)

Non-member: HK\$120

Non-member: HK\$200

(registration not required)

(registration not required)

(registration required)

(registration required)

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Bird Watching Tours Jul - Dec 2013

Outings

Date	Duration	Time and site	Difficulties (1...3)	Target species
3/11/2013 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Mai Po Nature Reserve (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road /F Exit), OR 09:00 Mai Po carpark, end 15:00 Mai Po, 16:00 Kowloon Tong)	☆☆	Waterbirds
10/11/2013 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Po Toi Island (08:00 Aberdeen Pier (Ferry pier to Po Toi Island)) Note: Participants have to pay for their own ferry fee. The returning time is not fixed, participants can decide their own returning time.	☆☆	Migrants
17/11/2013 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark)	☆☆☆	Forest birds
24/11/2013 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on 22 Nov on Discussion Forum)		
7/12/2013 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tsim Bei Tsui (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Tin Chak Estate Shopping Centre, Exit near Tin Yat Light Rail Station, Tin Shui Wai)	☆	Waterbirds
14/12/2013 (Sat)	0800 - 1200	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on 12 Dec on Discussion Forum)		
22/12/2013 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Pui O (08:00 Exit B, Tung Chung MTR Station)	☆☆	Wintering forest & farmland birds
29/12/2013 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark)	☆☆☆	Forest birds

 Member: Free of Charge
 Member: Free of Charge
 Member: HK\$60 (Student Member: HK\$30)
 Member: HK\$160

Non-member: Free of Charge
 Non-member: HK\$30 (HK\$10 for age under 19 student)
 Non-member: HK\$120
 Non-member: HK\$200

(registration not required)
 (registration not required)
 (registration required)
 (registration required)

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Indoor Meetings Jul - Aug 2013

Indoor Meetings

Date	Time	Topic	Speakers	Venue
20/8/2013 (Tue)	1915-2115	Bird Survey in Deep Bay & Mai Po cum Reports from HKBWS Research (Cantonese with Chinese/English powerpoint)	Mr. Yu Yat Tung & Representatives of Bird Research Groups	HKBWS LCK office 7C, V Ga Building, 532 Castle Peak Road, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon

Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Outing Booking Slip

Mai Po Outing Fee	Meeting Point at Mai Po	Meeting Point at Kowloon Tong
Member	HK\$30-	HK\$60-
Student Member	HK\$15-	HK\$30-
Non-Member	HK\$120-	

Participants below age of 12yrs will not be accepted for Mai Po Outing visiting floating boardwalks.

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.

** We will confirm 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.

I would like to register the following HKBWS outings:

Information of Participant(s)

Date	Outing	Name (First one will be considered contact person)	Membership No.	Mobile Phone	Outing Fee*	Mai Po Outing Meeting Place <small>Kln Tong MTR or MP</small>

* Activities are processed individually, please use separate cheque.

Enclosed please find a Cheque of HK\$_____ Contact person's email : _____

(Payable to The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society)

Applicant : _____ Date : _____ Signature : _____

Please send this slip together with a crossed cheque to: 7C, V Ga Building, 532 Castle Peak Road, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon

Notes :

- HKBWS members have a high priority to join four weeks before the activity. Thereafter, registration 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 ("the HKBWS") assumes no responsibility, liability or obligations, whether financial or otherwise, for losses, injuries, death, damages, whether to the person or property, arising or occurring in the course or as a result from the activities, outings or training courses ("the Activities") organized by the HKBWS. Persons who participate in the Activities must ensure that they are medically fit to do so. If in doubt, they should consult qualified medical practitioners before participating. Participants are recommended to purchase relevant insurance for their own protection. By participating in the Activities, the participants impliedly agree that they will not hold the HKBWS, its Executive Committee members, other committee members, its officers, employees, volunteers, agents or subcontractors responsible or liable for any losses, injuries, death damages arising or occurring in the course or as a result from the Activities.



紅頭長尾山雀
陳錫能
蒲台

Black-throated Tit
Godwin Chan
Po Toi

05/01/2013
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



烏鵲
葉紀江
龍虎山

Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoo
Ip Kee Kong, Herman
Lung Fu Shan

23/04/2013
DSLR Camera, 300mm lens + 1.4x teleconverter



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

尼康 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確度，締造每個絲毫畢現的銳利畫面。如此絕倫，唯有尼康，唯獨 EDG。

數碼單鏡反光相機連接器
FSA-L2



EDG
THE CUTTING EDGE IN SPORT OPTICS



東方中杜鵑
李逸明
蒲台

Oriental Cuckoo
Lee Yat Ming
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07/04/2013

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