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234

Winter 2014 ~ 冬





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The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

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Bulletin 234

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Publisher: The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

Office Address :

7C, V Ga Building,
532 Castle Peak Road,
Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon,
Hong Kong

Telephone: (852) 2377 4387
Facsimile: (852) 2314 3687
email: hkbws@hkbws.org.hk

Birdline :

(852) 2465 6690 (Chinese)
(852) 2667 4537 (English)

Website :

www.hkbws.org.hk

Forum :

www.hkbws.org.hk/BBS

Co-ordinator: Ronley Lee (bulletin@hkbws.org.hk)

English Editor: John Holmes

Chinese Editor: Henry Lui

Photo Editor: Cherry Wong

Contributors to this issue:

John Allcock, Samson So, James Lambert, Leung Hau Kin,
Richard Lewthwaite, HKBWS Staff

Translator: Amy Li, Anita Lee

Photo:

Kennix Lam, Kinni Ho Kin Yip, Andy Li, kfmak, passerby-b,
Tam Sik Pang, Ractis John, Allen Chan

Front cover : Slaty-breasted Rail - oLDcar Lee (Mai Po),
07/08/2014, DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x
teleconverter

Design & Printing:

Contemporary Development Company

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Society News and Projects

2015 Membership Renewal & Membership Card

- Membership stood at around 1933 as at early December. Membership renewal under the new membership criteria is in progress. Renewal letters will be posted about two months before membership expiry dates.
- New membership cards for 2015 feature images of Speckled Piculet. This new card was sent to all 5-year members at the end of December. Many thanks to the following volunteers for their design work and photos:

Designer: Puk Yuk Yin

Photographer: Kinni Ho

2015 Membership card - front & back



Bird Watching Course

- The 17th Elementary Bird Watching Course for Beginners, jointly organized with Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union for the first time, was completed in mid-December and gave basic training in bird watching to 36 members & birders.
- The 4th Raptor Identification Workshop will be held in mid-January 2015.

12th Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held in the evening on Oct 30 at HK Scout Association. The Society would like to express gratitude to the 42 members who attended the meeting and gave valuable comments on our work. One major resolution made in the meeting was to increase the membership fee of full rate individual member to \$380-. For other reports by the Chairman, please refer to our discussion forum at this link : <http://www.hkbws.org.hk/BBS/viewthread.php?tid=21707>

Chairman's report by Mr. Apache Lau



Society News and Projects ~ (cont.)

Oversea Bird Fair

- The 2nd Borneo Bird Race was held from Sep 24 to Oct 3. The HKBWS team was formed by 3 members: Bond Shum, (a volunteer outing leader), with Ivan Tse & Walkman Wong, both HKBWS staff).



- The Taipei International Birdwatching Fair 2014, with a theme of “Natural Balance in Wetlands”, was held on Oct 25 & 26 at Guandu Nature Park, Taipei. Three delegates from the Society, Hung Wai Ming (EXCO member), Haley Yeung (staff) and Peter Chan (outing leader) attended the fair to introduce our work and HK birding information to the visitors.



- Gary Chow attended the 5th Asian Bird Fair held in Langkawi from Nov 29 to 30.

Crested Bulbul Club

1. Early Morning Bird Watchers

No. of participants in Hong Kong Park from Aug to Oct 2014: 199

No. of participants in Kowloon Park from Aug to Oct: 376

2. Bird watching interpretation in Hong Kong Wetland Park

A total of 39 participants in Oct 2014.

Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley 2012-2015

This autumn, Long Valley is full of buntings: Little, Black-faced, Yellow-breasted, Chestnut-eared, Chestnut, Rustic, Yellow-browed, Black-headed, as well as Japanese Yellow Bunting. In addition to these, a scarce autumn migrant, Crested Bunting has been recorded for the 5th consecutive year, Pallas's Reed Bunting made a 2nd appearance in Long Valley and Pine Bunting became a “Long Valley first for HK”. These 12 species attracted many birders. Besides the diversity, over 68 Yellow-breasted Buntings were recorded which is the highest count since our management began in 2005. This is exciting news for the project team! We are looking forward to having more species in Long Valley. Please submit your birding reports to BBS.



Pine Bunting

© Kinni Ho

- * Pine Bunting is now listed in Category III. The Long Valley record is waiting for confirmation by the Records Committee.



Hong Kong Fishpond Conservation Scheme



Education Kiosk in Nam Sang Wai

One of our fishpond volunteers has designed and drawn a picture on a cargo container in our Education Kiosk at Nam Sang Wai. There are three elements involved in the design, including fishermen, fish and waterbirds. It symbolizes that all these can live together in harmony. The aim of this Education Kiosk is to promote fishpond and wetland conservation. Our fisherman partner Mr Fok helped us by setting up regular exhibition boards, displaying fishing equipment and photos next to his fishpond. You are welcome to visit.



“On The Bunds of Fishponds”- a fishpond family experience day

On 5th October 2014, 23 parents and children gathered around the fishponds in Tai Sang Wai. Under the guidance of the fish farmer, they experienced the daily work of a fish farmer such as grass cutting, fish feeding with different feeds, and casting nets to catch fish. They also prepared their lunch at the bund and had fun teaching their children how to cook outside the kitchen. Then, they made their own preserved fish with the guidance of the fish farmer. After birding along the fishpond bunds, everyone got a DIY salty fish to take back home.



Future Land Use of Po Toi Island

The future land use of Po Toi Island, under the Town Planning Ordinance, will be finalized in early 2015. The Society, along with six other concerned green groups met with the Planning Department and AFCD back in November to remind them once again the importance of Po Toi in terms of ecology, landscape and geology. Since the publication of the Society's proposal for Po Toi to be designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Country Park back in 2012, Po Toi continues to prove itself as an important stopover for migratory birds. As of November 2014, we have recorded 326 bird species on the island, which is about 60% of the Hong Kong total. In 2014 alone, two Hong Kong first records were found on Po Toi, Rosy Minivet (*Pericrocotus roseus*) in April and Crow-billed Drongo (*Dicrurus annectans*) in October. The mature trees near Tai Wan Village provide important foraging and roosting grounds for migrating birds that have just traveled great distances. Given the significance and uniqueness of Po Toi Island to migrating birds, its future land use should focus on nature conservation. The Society strongly hopes the Planning Department will take action by providing land use zoning that will protect the ecology of the site to discourage “destroy first, build later” practices at the columbarium site where illegal vegetation clearance took place back in 2011.

The draft Outline Zoning Plan which determines future land use will be gazetted for public inspection before March 2015. Members of the public are welcome to make comments during this time, and the Society will keep you updated.



Conservation

Tung Chung

The stage 3 public engagement for the Tung Chung New Town Extension Study ended on 31 October 2014. The Society, along with other green groups, is concerned about the future of Tung Chung River, located in the center of the Tung Chung West Extension. Although a buffer will be provided around Tung Chung River, the change in the overall surrounding landscape and land use will have an ecological impact on the river in terms of water quality. There is also concern about the planning process of the area. The green groups are also urging the Planning Department to implement a Development Permission Area (DPA) plan before implementing an Outline Zoning Plan, which would give the Planning Department the authority to take enforcement actions for any potential illegal ecological destruction.

CEPF programme kick-off to tackle poaching problem in southern China

To help solving the serious problem of poaching and trading of birds in southern China, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society successfully secured a grant from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) this July, to build up the capacity of local conservation groups in in Southern China, which will help address the problem of illegal shorebird trapping in long term basis.

The project will be carried out in coastal areas of Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces, where bird poaching is rampant, yet this area is very important for migratory shorebirds, including Spoon-billed Sandpiper (CR) and Nordmann's Greenshank (EN). There is an urgent need to carry out monitoring and enhance law enforcement against poaching because wild animal consumption has a long history in the southern coastal provinces. Birds such as Yellow-breasted Bunting have been widely trapped, driving the population of this species into steep decline. Local civil society organizations and volunteers are the main force for monitoring poaching and raising public awareness. To build the capacity of these new groups, a local long-term force will be developed to help tackle the problem of poaching and illegal trading of wild birds.

The first activity of the project – a training workshop on environmental education was held between 13th and 14th September in at Zhanjiang Mangrove National Nature Reserve in Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province. A total of 29 participants from local civil societies in Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces joined the training workshop. Mr. Barrie Cooper from Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Ms. Kang Yun from Beijing Brooks Education Center and Mr. Kevin Guo from Swarovski's Feather Voluntary Group were invited as trainers of the workshop. The trainees were inspired by the concepts on environmental education and games, as well as the practical session of interpretation in an urban park. Plans of possible environmental activities were made and we hope that they will be implemented in the future. After the training workshop, Barrie Cooper gave a talk about the importance of environmental education to conservation to about 100 teachers and students at Lingnan Normal University.



Lecture on the importance of educating young people for nature conservation by Barrie Cooper from RSPB.



Group photo of the environmental education training workshop in Zhanjiang.

Surveyors doing survey and recording habitat characteristics of Jankowski's Bunting's breeding ground




Students in Tumuji working on a poster to promote protection of Jankowski's Bunting.



Updates of conservation work for Jankowski's Bunting

After three years of surveys on distribution of the endangered Jankowski's Bunting in northeast China, the research team is now more experienced. This year, nine more new breeding sites of Jankowski's Bunting were discovered in the region by the research team lead by Beijing Bird Watching Society with surveyors from the HKBWS, and at least 148 individuals were detected, the highest count in the past five years.

During the surveys, we also found the main threat to Jankowski's Bunting is habitat loss and degradation. The bird's breeding habitat - grassland associated with Siberian apricot shrub – has been turned into farmland, or damaged by cattle husbandry. Awareness-raising to public and government is thus essential to help saving the species. This year, we collaborated with Beijing Brooks Education Centre and local government authorities to hold promotional and school education activities during a "Bird-Loving Week" in May. We visited two schools at Xiergen of Keerqin and Tumuji National Nature Reserve respectively. We showed the students a documentary of Jankowski's Bunting and a talk was given. After that, the students were divided into groups to create hand-made posters to raise awareness of Jankowski's Bunting, which can be found near their home, to the other schoolmates. The students also went visit local community to help promoting Jankowski's Bunting and other protected species and their conservation.

If you are interested to support this project, BirdLife International has set up a [JustGiving](https://www.justgiving.com/Jankowskis-Bunting) page to encourage donations for conservation work on Jankowski's Bunting: <https://www.justgiving.com/Jankowskis-Bunting> 

Mai Po Update

Text: John Allcock
(WWF HK)

Levelling of ground alongside the AFCD path

Over time, the ground alongside the AFCD path (the main path into the reserve) has been eroding, so that there is now a drop to the side of the path in most places. This provides a risk to visitors into the reserve if they are unaware of this drop. In order to ensure visitor safety, we will be raising the level of soil alongside the AFCD path so that this is level with the concrete path. This will be done in phases in order to minimise the disturbance caused to visitors and to wildlife on the reserve, with the first sections scheduled to be done this winter. We apologise in advance if this essential work causes any disruption during the works period.



(Credit: John Allcock / WWF-Hong Kong) –
Caption “Drop in soil level along the AFCD path.”

Reedbed cutting at Gei wai #10

In early 2015 we will be cutting some of the reedbed area in Gei wai #10. This work is part of a long-term plan to enhance the reedbeds on the reserve, which have been aging over recent years. Over time it is a natural process for reedbeds to become drier and for other vegetation to become established and spread, eventually leading to a reduction in the area of reeds and finally the loss of the reedbed habitat. Reedbeds at Mai Po are important for several bird species (including globally-threatened Manchurian Reed Warbler), and the loss of this habitat would affect these species.

Reedbed cutting at Gei wai #10 aims to reverse this succession by removing the non-reed species (mostly climbers and grasses), allowing the reeds to regrow and restoring the health of the reedbed. This should provide good quality reedbed for a few years before the area needs cutting again. Depending upon resource availability, we may also extend the cutting into other reedbeds on the reserve.



(Credit: Katherine Leung / WWF-Hong Kong) –
Caption “Two-wheel tractor in operation for grass cutting on the reserve.”

Two-wheel tractor

We have recently received some new equipment at Mai Po. This is a two-wheel tractor, a machine that should have many different uses around the reserve. Changing the attachment on the machine allows us to change the job that it can be used for, giving us flexibility in the work that we do and saving time.

- Cutting grasses. The main use of the tractor will be to cut grass around the reserve. There are two attachments suitable for this purpose: one to cut taller grasses and reeds, and the other to mow shorter grasses.
- Chipping wood. A wood chipper will allow us to break branches into small pieces, which should allow them to decompose more rapidly on site (so saving space for composting) or the chips may be used along paths.
- Creating bare ground. The fourth attachment allows us to turn over the soil to remove vegetation and create bare ground. We hope that this will be useful to create the open conditions favoured by some roosting shorebirds.

We have already started using the machine for cutting grass around the reserve, and estimate that it cuts the time required for grass cutting to as little as one quarter the time required using backpack trimmers. Because of the time saved, we hope to be able to cut the grass more often, creating better conditions for waterbirds. We also hope to use the same equipment for cutting the reedbeds (see above).

The purchase of the tractor was made possible using a very generous donation from one of the long-time supporters of Mai Po, for which we are very grateful. 🐦



Birding in Kenya

Text/Photo: Samson So



Grey-headed Kingfisher



Spotted Eagle Owl

My career requires me to work as a tour guide and tutor, leading field trips and photography tours. Among all places, the biodiversity of Kenya's great plain located at the East African Great Rift Valley impresses me a lot. I have been there 12 times since 2001, learning different species of birds.

Kenya's great plain and the lakes spread over East African Great Rift Valley are a heaven of wild animals and nature photographers. There are lions, elephants, buffalos, rhinoceros and leopards. These 'Big Five' are the stars of safari. Apart from the set, there are cheetah, giraffe, hippo and wildebeest. Other than mammals, the unique environment provides unique habitat to birds. Doing bird photography in Kenya allowed me to understand more about the interaction of among different creatures, and made each tour a wonderful learning trip.



There is an old saying that “The early bird gets the worm “. However, worms are not the only food for birds. Birds living in grass plains and lakes have adapted to the local environment and have a wide range of diets. Their body structures have also changed according to their ways of foraging. Plant-eaters includes finches, sunbirds, mouse birds and bulbuls, while carnivores include the shrikes, birds of prey, owls, egrets and herons, pelicans, waders, cormorants, kingfishers and flamingoes.

During my field trips in Kenya, I will normally choose to live in remote areas, where I can spend more time observing and taking photos. The most common species near where I stay have been pigeons and doves. These birds can be readily identified among other species with their long wings and stronger breast. Pigeons and doves are seed-eaters, and will store the seeds in their crops before digestion.

Kori Bustard is the heaviest bird that can fly.
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Common Bulbul



Woodland Kingfisher



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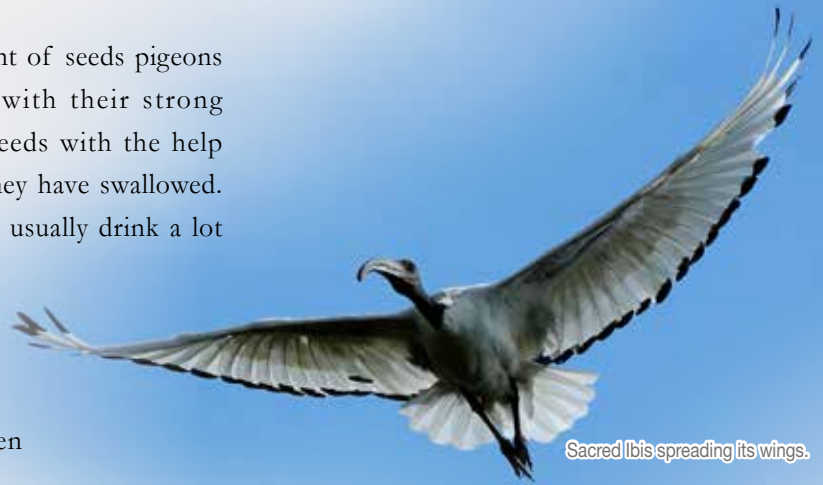


Secretary Bird foraging

After swallowing a good amount of seeds pigeons and doves will digest the seed with their strong stomach, often grinding up the seeds with the help of sand grains and gravel which they have swallowed. To digest the seed effectively, they usually drink a lot of water by putting most of their beak into the water. Their population is large and widely spread over the region, which has become an important link between producer (plant) and predators.

The world of birds is beautiful, and nature tours give us a way to appreciate the biodiversity of life. To observe and take photographs of birds lets us learn more about the harmony of nature. To both freshmen and experienced naturalists, observation and photographing birds in Kenya can be an eye-opening experience. Apart from the diversified birdlife one can also appreciate the fearlessness of the birds. With less disturbance and hunting threats from human beings the birds are easier to approach. This is a direct proof of the good intentions of local people towards wildlife. Each tour is a unique learning experience and I am looking forward to my next meeting with nature.

To learn more about Samson So's articles and photos, please visit his facebook page at Eco Institute and Samson So Photography. 🐦



Sacred Ibis spreading its wings.



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Assisted Migration of a Lanceolated Warbler

Text/Photo: James Lambert

Early on Sunday morning 12 October 2014 I was walking down the tunnel area of Exit A at Tai Wai MTR station when I noticed a small bird on the floor. From a distance I thought it must be a Tree Sparrow, *Passer montanus*, but on closer approach it turned out to be a Lanceolated Warbler, *Locustellalanceolata*, a scarce autumn passage migrant through Hong Kong.

The bird appeared to me to be slightly dazed and confused as it was moving slowly and kept falling over as its feet slipped on the shiny marble floors. I got to within about two metres of it before it moved away from me. It was about 7.30 am and the station concourse was not particularly busy, although passenger numbers were increasing every minute. Concerned about the safety of the bird in such an environment, I decided to try to take it into care and transport it to a more suitable habitat. I could perhaps have left it to fend for itself, but the danger seemed very high that some calamity would befall the bird in such a crowded and busy place, without the natural cover suited for its normal skulking behaviour.

My birding buddy, Abdel Bizid, was approaching Tai Wai station on the train, where I was to join him to travel to Mai Po Nature Reserve, so I called him and asked him to alight at Tai Wai and assist me in trying to capture the bird.

On closer inspection, while photographing the bird and staying near it in order to fend off commuters strolling along not paying attention to stray birds at their feet, the warbler appeared to have some plumage damage on its crown. From this, and the bird's behaviour, I speculated that the bird may have flown into a window at high speed and was slightly concussed. My previous experience of birds that have collided with windows has been that, so long as they have not incurred any serious injuries, they usually start out quite sluggish and quiet and then as time passes become increasingly active and alert and eventually recover enough to fly off. But it seemed likely that this individual might get trodden on before it could come to its senses.

By the time Abdel arrived, the warbler was against a wall of Add Value Machines. At our first attempt at capture the bird flew about 20 metres and landed right in front of the station entrance gates where it was at the feet of entering commuters. It moved uncertainly to a closed-in passageway that provides access to the station toilets. At least now we had a good chance to get the bird as the passage is a dead end. Being novices at catching Lanceolated Warblers inside MTR stations, our first attempts to take it in hand were a complete failure. I then lighted upon the idea of taking off my shirt and throwing it over the bird. This worked like a charm, and I was able to pick the bird up, wrapped in the shirt, without causing physical damage to it.

With bird safely in shirt, now we had to decide what to do with it. Since there really isn't any suitable habitat near Tai Wai MTR, Abdel suggested that we take the bird to Mai Po as we were heading there anyhow. I agreed. The downside to this plan was that I was now shirtless, and although Hong Kong people will tolerate some unusual behaviour from foreigners, I knew that the chances of me travelling topless from Tai Wai to Sheung Shui without triggering an investigation by MTR security staff were next to zero, notwithstanding the merit of our "mission".

So, then we tried to transfer the warbler from my shirt to Abdel's cap, at which point it escaped. Fluttering straight back out into the concourse, it landed again amongst the feet of the ever-increasing numbers of commuters, many of whom were keeping their eyes 'only on their mobile phones' in flagrant disregard of the piped announcements advising them not to. While I put my shirt back on, Abdel, fleet of foot, chased after the warbler with the French expletive 'Merde!' echoing loudly down the passage. Happily, his lightning reflexes and accurate cap-work were enough to recapture our quarry. We then emptied my backpack of camera and lens so that we could place Abdel's cap-and-bird, as a single package, inside it for safe transport.

From this point on our troubles were essentially over. By the time we got to Mai Po, this particular Lanceolated Warbler, in addition to flying from its breeding grounds some unimaginable distance to the north, had travelled some 19 km by train and 8 km by taxicab, a somewhat minor but definitely unique detour in its overall migration journey. When I opened my bag to release the warbler, it was fully active, alert, and seemingly unharmed. It shot up and out and directly flew to the closest reed beds where it promptly disappeared from view, never to be seen again.

Considerately, the warbler had seen fit not to befoul the inside of my bag, and had left as the only reminder of its stay one small pooplet on the outside of Abdel's cap, which he was able to wear as a badge of honour as bird rescuer extraordinaire, at least until we reached the nearest washing facilities.

Lanceolated Warblers are known for their peculiar behaviour. Firstly, unlike most other warblers, they frequently forage on the ground, running around amongst tangled roots and stems, moving more like a mouse than a bird. Secondly, they seem completely unafraid of human approach, even though to them we must appear as clumsy lumbering giants. A bare, neon-lit, station concourse must be the total opposite of the Lanceolated Warbler's normal, natural grassland habitat.

Strange to say, anecdotal reports from other Hong Kong birders reveal that finding a Lanceolated Warbler in the MTR was not as singular an experience as we first thought. They have been seen on the floor of the Cheung Chau ferry ticket office, at the Disney MTR, and even inside a minibus in Pok Fu Lam. Why the public transport system should be so attractive to Lanceolated Warblers is a mystery that no doubt bears further investigation. 🐦



The Smart Phone - A Good Partner for Bird Watching Guides

Text/Photo: Leung Hau Kin (Crested Bulbul Club)

The Smartphone is fast becoming a daily necessity, with its powerful multi-functions. Have you ever thought about turning it into your partner when guiding birdwatching trips? The design and production of the device shown in the picture was inspired by two veteran birders, David Choi and Lo Wing Bun, who showed me how to use a mobile phone for photographing birds through a telescope.

After completing the Crested Bulbul Training Course for Bird Watching Guides in early 2012, I went on duty at Wetland Park and discovered several commonly-faced difficult situations. For example; a colourful Kingfisher poses while eager visitors queue at the telescope to view it. But before everyone can have a glimpse of its beauty, it flies away. Those who missed it can only sigh with disappointment. Often as well, visitors do not know how to look through the telescope (especially the elderly and children) and they see nothing but darkness. Many are embarrassed when they fail to get the technique despite repeated attempts. It is also quite frustrating when visitors are unable to find the target species when peering through the telescope when it is amongst a flock of birds, no matter how hard we guides try to describe the bird and the location.

In order to alleviate these situations, I began to look for solutions after seeing the demonstration by our veterans. Luckily the net is full of information. I did some research on the subject of digiscoping (photographing through the

telescope with a digital camera) and related products available on the market, and decided on a DIY approach. Last year, I finally exchanged my 6-year old mobile with a smart phone. The new phone has a 5-inch screen, 1920x1280 display resolution and a 1300 pixel rear lens; it is a Chinese brand, only half the price of the Korean, Japanese and American ones. I made a connector for the eyepiece and a holding plate to secure the smartphone. I joined the two pieces together, fixing the rear lens of the phone onto the eyepiece, creating a live-display screen as seen in the photo.

After a few test practices and actual runs, the problems we had before are all gone. Further to that, I made one more plate that can hold any mobile phone so visitors can take their own pictures through the scope of birds that they rarely see. Hearing praise from the visitors and seeing their happy faces is the biggest reward I get for this DIY creation, and my work as a bird guide is filled with joy.

There are so many other functions on the smartphone, taking photos, videos, blue-tooth file transfer. All of these tools might take your guiding work to the next level. How can these be used? Allow me to hold back for the time being so you can discover for yourself!

If you share the same feeling and are willing to use the smart phone as your bird guide partner, there are endless possibilities! 🐦



Text: Richard Lewthwaite

(Please note that this account in your bulletin is not the society's "official" record, the Annual Report for 2014 will be the final, records committee approved list of bird sightings – Ed.)

July

- ▶ The highlight of the hottest July since records began in 1884, following on from the hottest June, was a record count of 173 **Collared Crows** going to the roost at Mai Po on 9th (WWF). In addition, a fairly large late summer roost of **Barn Swallows** was found at Sai Kung.
- ▶ At Mai Po, which was regularly covered through the month (WWF), there was a return to breeding success for **Black-winged Stilts**, with two chicks noted on the scrape on 18th, and a family party of **Slaty-breasted Rails** (two adults and six fluffy chicks) was seen on the scrape on 28th. Up to four **Chinese Blackbirds** were noted in the car park area on 8th and 23rd, possibly breeding, and there were reports of a **Eurasian Eagle Owl** on 2nd (along the access road), a Chestnut-winged Cuckoo on 10th-11th, a **Black-winged Kite** on 15th and a **Savanna Nightjar** on 23rd. In addition to six **Black-faced Spoonbills** seen on 2nd, non-breeding summer visitors included a **Eurasian Coot** on 6th, a **Great Crested Grebe** on 27th and an adult **Black-headed Gull** on 30th. Shorebird passage was rather weak, the best bird being an **Asian Dowitcher** on 23rd, and the only tern reported was a single **Common Tern** on 31st.
- ▶ Elsewhere, one or two adult **Brown-breasted Flycatchers** and up to four juveniles were seen again at Tai Po Kau on 1st, 13th and 20th (leo212, P&MW) and a juvenile **Orange-bellied Leafbird** was photographed being fed by an adult there on 20th (inca). A family party of **Black Bazas**, (two adults and three juveniles) were present at Hang Tau Tsuen on 14th-15th (JGH). A **Lesser Cuckoo** vocalising at Ng Tung Chai on 19th was on the latest ever summer date for the species (JAA), and other birds present there on the same day included a vocalising **Large Hawk Cuckoo** (AB) and a **Speckled Piculet** (JAA).
- ▶ Visits to waters near Tap Mun brought reports of a **Lesser Frigatebird** on 19th (Vivian) and an immature **Black-tailed Gull** on 21st (IT).
- ▶ A summer roost of **Barn Swallows** gathering on wires in a well-lit street in Sai Kung was found on 3rd (VC, ssrg). Following a count of 700 on 24th (PJJ), numbers peaked at 1,010 on 26th, then dropped to 487 on 27th (PC, ssrg).

August

- ▶ In another very hot month, two out-of-season waterbirds generated most discussion - a drake **Ferruginous Duck** on the ponds beside the Mai Po access road from 18th to 24th (JAA) and a **Greylag Goose** at Mai Po NR on 23rd (P&MW). Photographs posted on HKBWS website showed that the birds were in very good condition and did not have the kind of feather damage that is consistent with capture and long-distance shipment. As a result, the discussion centred on whether the birds were indeed of natural occurrence or some other factor was involved, such as a local wildfowl breeding farm. The arrival of six **Chinese Spotbills** at Mai Po on 27th (WWF), a few days after the goose, was not thought unusual.



- ▶ Two species were reported on earliest ever autumn dates in this month - a **Himalayan Swiftlet** at Palm Springs on 1st (DJS), the earliest by 4 weeks, and a **Daurian Jackdaw** at Mai Po also on 1st (per GW), the earliest by 8 weeks. The latter may possibly have been the individual seen at Penfold Park in late May.
- ▶ At Mai Po, which was again well covered, a male **Watercock** was found on 6th (DAD, CT) and fairly good numbers of waders for the time of year were present, including 830 **Common Redshanks**, 710 **Common Greenshanks** and 92 **Whimbrels** on 8th and two “atrifrons-group” **Lesser Sand Plovers**, a **Far Eastern Curlew**, 15 **Asian Dowitchers** and nine **Long-toed Stints** on 14th (WWF). Away from the Deep Bay area, the only waders reported were a **Pacific Golden Plover** and a **Black-winged Stilt** at Chek Lap Kok on 20th and 28th (EMSK), respectively, and a **Lesser Sand Plover** at Po Toi on 31st (jsk).
- ▶ Passage of landbirds was light. Following a **Yellow-rumped Flycatcher** at Chek Lap Kok on 7th (EMSK), quite an early date, and an **Asian Paradise Flycatcher** at Tai Po Kau on 16th (inca, IT), a small number of migrant passerines were reported in the last week of the month, including three **Asian Paradise Flycatchers** and an **Eastern Crowned Warbler** at Shing Mun (SLT) on 25th, a **Pallas’s Grasshopper Warbler** at Mai Po on 26th (WWF), single **Brown Shrikes** at Chek Lap Kok, Po Toi and Discovery Bay on 26th-31st (EMSK, GW) and an **Arctic Warbler** at Po Toi on 28th (GW).
- ▶ The most notable breeding-season report of the month was an adult **Purple Heron** with two fledged young at Mai Po on 23rd (JAA), possibly involving the same pair that bred in summer 2013. Amongst other young birds reported were a **Hodgson’s Hawk Cuckoo** at Tai Po Kau on 15th (Ken), an **Orange-headed Thrush** at Leadmine Pass on 18th (SLT), a **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo** apparently associating with a flock about 60 **Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes** at Sai Kung on 24th (MT) and a **Mountain Bulbul** at Shing Mun on 25th (SLT).
- ▶ A **Brown Fish Owl** was vocalising at Shing Mun on 23rd (MDW), possibly a new site for this local rarity.
- ▶ Numbers of **Barn Swallows** at the roost in Sai Kung gradually declined throughout the month from 190 on 3rd to 145 on 16th, 108 on 22nd and 33 on 29th (PC, ssrc).
- ▶ In coastal waters, 137 **Roseate Terns** were on the rock near Po Toi on 5th, one of which bore a ring from Swains Reef, Australia (NF, GW), and there were sightings of a **Common Tern** off Hei Ling Chau on 17th (jsk) and a **Greater Crested Tern** off Tap Mun on 18th (LL).

September

- ▶ Highlights of a memorable month were a first-winter **Crow-billed Drongo** at Po Toi between 7th and 18th (LYM, GW et al), the first record for Hong Kong if accepted, a **White-browed Crake** found at Long Valley on 26th (AC) and then seen intermittently there into early October, only the second Hong Kong record following one at Mai Po in April 1991, a **Northern Hawk Cuckoo** at Ma On Shan on 9th (GKLC), only the 4th for Hong Kong and the first since 1996. Single **Brahminy Kites**, a juvenile at Mai Po on 19th (WJ) and an adult over Hong Kong Island on 27th (DJS), were the first sightings of this raptor since 1990.



- ▶ In addition, a **Blyth's Pipit** at Nam Sang Wai on 24th (PJJ) was only the 4th or 5th record and the earliest in autumn by at least 9 days. An **Alstrom's Warbler** at Tai Po Kau on 27th (KPK) was the 6th record and the earliest by 3 days, and 950 **White-shouldered Starlings** counted going to a roost at Mai Po on 2nd (JAA) constitute the largest number recorded in Hong Kong by a factor of about eight.
- ▶ A report of nine **Gadwall** at Mai Po on 5th (WWF), the earliest autumn record by 6 weeks, is a further example of a waterfowl species turning up at Mai Po this autumn on an unusually early date, following the Ferruginous Duck and Greylag Goose at the end of August. Other earliest ever autumn dates set in September were a **Baikal Bush Warbler** at Mai Po on 5th (DJS) and single **Sulphur-breasted Warblers** at Ng Tung Chai on 27th (TML, KJ) and Shing Mun on 29th (act130). These are the earliest dates by 1 day and 2 months, respectively.
- ▶ It was again a hot month, with the temperature exceeding 36 C at Po Toi on 19th. Mai Po, Long Valley, Tai Po Kau and Po Toi were all well covered as usual, and regular reports were also received from Chek Lap Kok (EMSK) and Yung Shue O (DI). Reports from these and other places suggest that passage of typical autumn migrants was generally rather weak for **Black-naped Oriole**, **Brown Shrike**, **Daurian Starling**, **Arctic**, **Yellow-browed** and **Dusky Warblers**, moderate for **Dollarbird**, **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler**, the commoner flycatchers and **Forest Wagtail**, and better than usual for **Siberian Blue Robin**.
- ▶ In addition to birds already mentioned, notable reports from Mai Po included single **Manchurian Reed Warblers** on 5th and 18th (DJS, JAA), an **Oriental Plover** on 16th (MH), a **Bay Woodpecker** on 18th (JAA), a **Styan's Grasshopper Warbler** on 19th (WWF) and a **Spoon-billed Sandpiper** from 21st to 25th (II). Waterbirds were generally not found in anything other than moderate numbers, one exception being **Great Knot**, for which a count of 84 at Mai Po on 21st (WWF) is one of the highest autumn counts on record.
- ▶ Notable birds at Po Toi included a **Fairy Pitta** on 13th-14th (HDM, JW), a **Himalayan Swiftlet** and a **Lesser Cuckoo** on 14th (KH, AC), and a **Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher** on 30th (GW). The approachable **Lesser Sand Plover** found on the beach at the end of August remained until at least 9th (WD).
- ▶ Reports from the Tai Mo Shan massif included a **Brown-breasted Flycatcher** at Shing Mun on 15th (act130), single **Orange-headed Thrushes** at Leadmine Pass on 26th (SLI) and Tai Po Kau on 28th (KPK) and five **Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrushes** at Tai Po Kau on the latter date (KPK).
- ▶ The only typhoon of the year to come near Hong Kong was Kalmagi, which caused the No. 8 signal to be raised as it tracked south of Hong Kong in the direction of Hainan on the night of 15th, bringing mixed flocks of up to 150 **terns**, including **Aleutian**, **Bridled**, **Common**, **White-winged** and **Whiskered**, to Ap Lei Chau (GW) and inner Tolo Harbour (RWL) early the next morning. Flocks of up to 200 **Red-necked Phalaropes** were also found at Yung Shue O (DI) and in the Mai Po-San Tin area (JGH, JAA). It is possible that the **Brahminy Kites** and the **White-browed Crake** mentioned above were carried from the Philippines to Hong Kong by this typhoon, though they might equally have arrived from somewhere in the southwest of China or in Southeast Asia. 🦅

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Bird Watching Tours Jan - Jun 2015

Outings				
Date	Duration	Time and site	Difficulties (1...3)	Target species
3/1/2015 (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
4/1/2015 (Sun)	0800 - 1300	Long Valley (14:30 Pavilion beside public toilet at Yin Kong Village)	★★	Farmland birds & waterbirds
10/1/2015 (Sat)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark)	★★★	Forest birds
18/1/2015 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Shek Kong (08:00 Exit C, Kam Sheung Road West Rail Station)	★★	Forest & farmland birds
25/1/2015 (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
1/2/2015 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Shing Mun (08:00 Kiosk at Pineapple Dam, Shing Mun Reservoir)	★★	Forest birds
7/2/2015 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Nam Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 V Cuisine Restaurant, Exit G2, Yuen Long West Rail Station)	★	Waterbirds
8/2/2015 (Sun)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on Feb 6 on Discussion Forum)		
15/2/2015 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Nam Chung and Luk Keng (08:00 Pavilion at junction of Nam Chung Rd & Luk Keng Rd)	★★	Forest birds & Waterbirds
22/2/2015 (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
7/3/2015 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tai Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Bus Stop outside Café de Coral near Hang Heung Cake Shop, Yuen Long)	★	Waterbirds
8/3/2015 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark)	★★★	Forest birds
14/3/2015 (Sat)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on Mar 12 on Discussion Forum)		
21-22/3/2015 (Sat-Sun)	24 hrs	Hong Kong Bird Watching Day 2015 Cum Bird Race Fundraising Event (Details to be announced on Discussion Forum)		
29/3/2015 (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
4/4/2015 (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
11/4/2015 (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.	★★★	Seabirds and migrants
19/4/2015 (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
26/4/2015 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Po Toi and HK South Waters (08:00 Hang Seng Bank, Sai Wan Ho MTR Station) 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

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Bird Watching Tours Jan - Jun 2015

Outings				
Date	Duration	Time and site	Difficulties (1...3)	Target species
2/5/2015 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Aberdeen Reservoir (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Bus #7 Bus-stop at Connaught Road Central outside Hang Seng Bank Head Office)	★	Forest birds
3/5/2015 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Mo Shan (08:00 Exit B near Hang Seng Bank, Tsuen Wan MTR Station)	★★★	Grassland birds
10/5/201 (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
16/5/2015 (Sat)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on May 14 on Discussion Forum)		
24/5/2015 (Sun)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on May 22 on Discussion Forum)		
6/6/2015 (Sat)	0830 - 1300	Shing Mun (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:30 Kiosk at Pineapple Dam, Shing Mun Reservoir)	★	Forest birds
7/6/2015 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Nam Chung and Luk Keng (08:00 Pavilion at junction of Nam Chung Rd & Luk Keng Rd)	★★	Forest birds & 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)

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Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Outing Booking Slip

I would like to register the following HKBWS outings:

** 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.

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 KIn Tong or MP

** Activity payment are processed individually, please use separate cheques for different outings.

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 for Mai Po Outing:

- Participants below age of 12 yrs 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.

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-	

Other 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 on our Discussion Forum: <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 7:00am on the event day, the activity will be cancelled. If Thunderstorm Warning is announced during the activity, Team Leader will decide whether the activity should be continued or cancelled. You can contact the outing 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.



彩鷓
譚錫朋
塋原

Greater Painted Snipe
Tam Sik Pang
Long Valley

12/04/2014

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



灰頭麥雞
余伯全
米埔

Grey-headed Lapwing
Ractis John
Mai Po

05/10/2014

DSLR Camera, 400mm f/2.8 lens + 2x teleconverter



鳳頭麥雞
余伯全
米埔

Northern Lapwing
Ractis John
Mai Po

26/10/2014
DSLR Camera, 400mm f/2.8 lens + 2x teleconverter



白眉田雞
Allen Chan
壟原

White-browed Crake
Allen Chan
Long Valley

27/09/2014
DSLR Camera, 800mm *f*/5.6 lens + 1.4x teleconverter