

bulletin
會員通訊

245

Autumn 2017 ~ 秋



HKBWS

香港觀鳥會
The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society





黃嘴白鷺
余伯全
米埔

Swinhoe's Egret
Ractis John
Mai Po

29/04/2017
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter

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The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

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Tree trimming at the Tai Po Market egretty during breeding season

23 May LCSD received a public complaint referred by another Government department that some tree branches were overgrowing at the junction of Kwong Fuk Road and Wan Tau Kok Lane in Tai Po and requested for a trimming.

2 June Site inspection by LCSD found that some branches of the trees were too long and too dense, with a few dieback twigs. Since the typhoon season is imminent, the overgrown branches may pose danger to the passersby. In order to ensure public safety, tree pruning work was therefore considered necessary.

6 June The LCSD's tree team staff carried out tree pruning work. The same day, HKBWS received a public complaint about tree trimming at the Tai Po Market egretty. The Society contacted AFCD, but LCSD said the work was completed by the time they received the call from AFCD. Due to the seriousness of the incident, HKBWS notified the media.

(Photo credit: Tai Po resident and Kimchi)



7 June LCSD issued a press release and apologised for the tree pruning incident. LCSD stressed that they are investigating the case. They said their tree team staff have received professional tree care training and had been following the standing mechanisms and guidelines on tree maintenance and management works. At the same time, HKBWS continued to answer a lot of media enquiry, and the Society wrote a letter to the Government to express our concerns on the incident.

<http://www.hkbws.org.hk/BBS/viewthread.php?tid=26496>

8 June Some young birds were seen wandering around dangerously at the concrete slope and on the road near the egretty.

9 June HKBWS and the Conservancy Association made a joint statement saying there are still a lot of things unclear and questionable. There was no explanation by LCSD on why the tree trimming work continued even when it was damaging bird nests and affecting breeding birds. The tree pruning was also done very poorly and did not following the existing guidelines, thus threatening the health and stability of the trees.

<http://www.hkbws.org.hk/BBS/viewthread.php?tid=26499>



The cut was made right next to a nest

**10
11
June** HKBWS arranged staff and experienced volunteers to patrol near the egretty and to educate the public about protection of egretty and knowledge on wild birds.

**12
June** Typhoon Merbok hit Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Observatory issued Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8.

**13
June** After the typhoon, 1 young bird was found injured and 2 died at the egretty.

**16
June** HKBWS arranged a joint green groups protest to urge AFCD to fully investigate and follow-up, and to carry out enforcement actions and prosecution for any offence against the Wild Animal Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170).

<http://www.hkbws.org.hk/BBS/viewthread.php?tid=26505>



**17
18
June** HKBWS continued to arrange staff and experienced volunteers to patrol near the egretty and to educate the public about protection of egretty and knowledge on wild birds.

**21
June** In response to the enquiry lodged by LegCo member Tanya Chan, LCSD stated that they did not apply to AFCD for the permits required for handling the nests and eggs of wild birds to carry out tree pruning operations.

<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201706/21/P2017062100393.htm>

**23
June** AFCD replied to the joint green groups letter saying they are conducting an investigation and follow-up actions would be determined based on the information gathered.

**29
June** KFBG invited the Society to attend a bird release event, which 2 of the 3 Little Egrets released were injured during the tree trimming incident. They were at least 2 months old and had suffered from air sac rupture, but could fly and self-feed after intensive care and rehabilitation. They were ringed with yellow tags (no.: HA36 and HA37).



KFBG press release: www.kfbg.org/eng/news/egret_release.aspx

HKBWS video of the release: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87C0aMs2tFw>

**6
July** At the Tai Po District Council meeting, LCSD finally said the investigation is expected to be completed and will inform the public about the findings before the end of the third quarter (i.e. September 2017).

**14
July** Another Little Egret was fully recovered and released by KFBG. It was ringed with a yellow tag no. HA35.



Tree trimming at the Tai Po Market egretty during breeding season (cont'd)



The Tai Po Market egretty in June 2015 (before the incident) and in June 2017 (after the incident)

The Tai Po Market egretty is a nesting colony of egrets and herons with a history of more than 20 years. According to the egretty count survey conducted in 2016, it is the second largest egretty in Hong Kong with a total of 151 nests recorded. Breeding species include Little Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, Great Egret, Chinese Pond Heron and Eastern Cattle Egret, of which the first two species form the majority. In general, the birds start breeding in March and continue till August. The conservation importance of the egretty is well recognised by the Government as it was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest back in 1994. Even though the location of the egretty has gradually shifted outside the SSSI zoning, this does not reduce its ecological value and conservation importance.

As an organisation dedicated to bird conservation, the Society is shocked and disappointed that such an incident could occur when there is a long-established ordinance and clear guidelines to prevent such occurrences, and even more so following the supposed mainstreaming of biodiversity into the work of all branches of government since the introduction of the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in 2016.

All wild birds are protected under Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170). Section 4 and 5 of the ordinance state “No person shall, except in accordance with a special permit, hunt or wilfully disturb any protected wild animal” and “No person shall, except in accordance with a special permit, take, remove, injure, destroy or wilfully disturb a nest or egg of any protected wild animal”.

The Society considers that the tree works of LCSD amount to a serious and unprecedented breach of the above ordinance. According to the information provided by KFBG to the Society, their Wild Animal Rescue Centre received a total of 30 birds from the Tai Po Market egretty because of the tree trimming incident. Among them, 3 were released back to the wild, 1 are still under observation while 26 have died.

Given the significant adverse impacts on the breeding birds caused by the tree cutting works, the Society is expecting a complete explanation on the incident from LCSD by the end of September, particularly on why the tree cutting was conducted during the breeding season, and why LCSD staff continued with the work when it was evident that there were birds, chicks and nests on the trees and that they were being harmed by their actions. AFCD is investigating the case and follow-up actions would be determined based on the investigation result. We are also waiting for reply from AFCD on the findings of their investigation and whether or not they will proceed to prosecution.

Besides prosecution, the Society considers that AFCD and corresponding departments/ bureaux (including Development Bureau, Environment Bureau, Home Affairs Bureau and related works departments) should develop new internal government guideline(s) so as to avoid future destruction threats to bird species and their nests caused by tree trimming or other construction works. Reference can be made to the “Guidelines for Planning and Carrying out Construction Works at Egrettries” published by the Society last year which were developed following extensive consultation with representatives of the relevant Government departments (including LCSD), ecological consultants and the private sector.



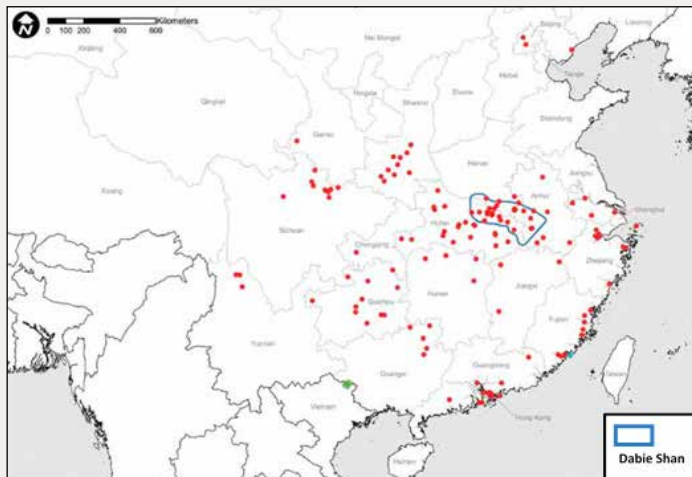
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The Collared Crow: vanishing in China, common in Hong Kong

A review of the current distribution and population in South China of Collared Crow (*Corvus torquatus*), written by society members Paul Leader, David Stanton and Richard Lewthwaite (together with Jonathan Martinez) was recently published in the Oriental Bird Club journal Forktail. This pied crow, once described as widely distributed in China, is found to be suffering from a population crash in most of its distribution range but is still thriving in Hong Kong.

Different from the other two resident crows, Large-billed Crow and House Crow, the Collared Crow has distinctive white feathers on its neck making it easily identifiable in the field. The literature states that it was a common resident in large parts of South China and northern Vietnam but about 10 years ago ornithologists became aware that this had changed. After consulting many ornithologists and conservationists in the region, this species has been found becoming scarcer in many areas, and thus BirdLife International and IUCN decided to uplist this species as globally Near-threatened in 2004 owing to a recently moderately rapid population reduction. The story has continued as researchers based in Hong Kong and China paid extra attention to this pied bird on two aspects: one is current distribution and population and another is ecology and habitat utilisation in its regular site(s).

The study collected current distribution and population data in South China, and compared the results with historical literature. The study revealed that the largest population was in the Dabie Shan area, at the conjunction of three provinces: Hubei, Hunan and Anhui, with a total of 450 individuals recorded. Hong Kong was found to be the second most important area for this species with a peak count of 362 individuals. Though this species could still be found in other provinces, it was absent in some historical areas and crucially the total population was estimated at fewer than 2,000 individuals. According to the field surveys of the study in Guangdong during 2003–2014, no individual was recorded from vast areas of suitable habitat. The revised population estimate was substantially lower than



The distribution of Collared Crow records 2003–2014 (the main stronghold in the Dabie Shan is outlined).

(Source: Leader, P.J., Stanton, D.J., Lewthwaite, R.W. & Martinez, J. (2016) A review of the distribution and population of the Collared Crow *Corvus torquatus*. Forktail 32: pages 41–53.)

the previous estimate of 15,000–30,000 individuals. Such findings provide clear evidence of the population decline in South China and hence the team proposed to uplist the threatened category for this species from the Near Threatened to Vulnerable.

In Hong Kong, the Collared Crow is believed to be wetland-dependent as many individuals are recorded along the coast. Two big flocks were regularly reported at the Mai Po Nature Reserve and at Ting Kok near Tai Po, where the highest counts were 173 and 117 respectively. At both sites, the birds were frequently found feeding in the fishponds, gei wais, tidal flats and roosting in mangroves and other tall trees free from disturbance. Therefore, their long-term survival in the territory relies on conservation of these habitats.

Despite the threatened status of the Collared Crow, this species has not been fully understood. Information from China has not been well updated, life history of this species has not been studied in details and many aspects, e.g. breeding biology and home range, are virtually unknown. In Hong Kong, most of the Collared Crows live in the wetland areas that are facing high pressure through habitat changes and degradation. Furthermore, this species is less attractive and popular than other 'star' birds, such as Black-faced

Spoonbill and it draws less attention to its threats and conservation status. As a result, in order to prevent further declines of this special crow, more research must be conducted and conservation of the existing fishponds and the habitat must be strengthened.



Waterbirds keep declining in recent years

In the winter of 2016-17, a total of 57,225 waterbirds of 65 different species were recorded in the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay area. However, the record of wintering waterbirds in recent years showed a declining trend, a drop of 37% compared with the record of 90,132 individuals in the winter of 2007-2008

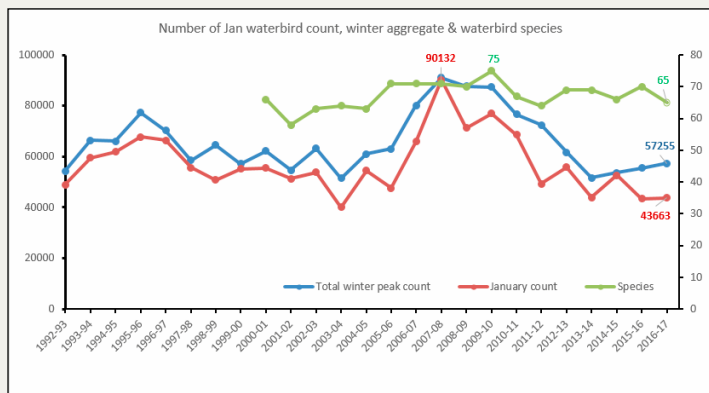


Mai Po as a stopover site of northward migration of shorebird in spring.

and the situation is still worrying. From April 2016 to March 2017, a total of 86 species of waterbird were recorded in the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site. In addition, a Waterbird Count and the Egretty Count Training Workshop were held in February and April 2017 respectively. HKBWS has conducted a systematic survey of wintering waterbirds at Mai Po area since 1979. Since then, the survey has been extended to all year round and on a monthly basis, with the support of the AFCD and under the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site Waterbird Monitoring Programme.



The annual Waterbird Count Workshop is a platform to recruit new volunteers.



Bird species totals increase in Long Valley

There were five bird species first recorded in Long Valley during March 2016 to February 2017: Short-eared Owl, Grey Nightjar, Eurasian Jay, Yellow-throated Bunting and Common Reed Bunting. The cumulative number of bird species recorded in Long Valley has increased to 310.

2017-2019 Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley

Please "Like" Yellow-breasted Bunting

"The Big Bunting" is back again this September to November. This year, we have extended the activity to China in order to raise public awareness on conservation of Yellow-breasted Bunting. Besides reporting the number of Yellow-breasted Bunting and number of bunting species, information such as first record of Yellow-breasted Bunting and number of individuals recorded throughout the migration period will be collected as well so that more information will be available for understanding the migration pattern of Yellow-breasted Bunting. Please visit our BBS for more detail of "The Big Bunting".

This summer, bird ringing of Yellow-breasted Bunting continued in Russia and Mongolia. If bird watchers and photographers saw any Yellow-breasted Bunting with colour ring, please mark down the colours of the rings on both legs (it would be good to have photos) and send to yvicky@hkbws.org.hk. Let's conserve Yellow-breasted Bunting together!



黄胸鸫(俗称禾花雀)曾是华南地区常见的候鸟,但因为被当作是佳肴美食而数量锐减。现在黄胸鸫已被列为濒危物种,比国宝大熊猫更危险。

现邀请各地区鸟友一起在秋季迁徙期(9-11月)内纪录所见的黄胸鸫!

活动目的: 了解黄胸鸫和其他鸫类于秋季迁徙期在中国的状况

数据提交方法
1. 中国观鸟记录中心

活动日期: 2017年秋季迁徙(9-11月)

如何参与: 在活动期内纪录黄胸鸫的数据,包括:

1. 黄胸鸫到达不同地区的最早日期
2. 各地黄胸鸫的单次最高数量
3. 鸫类种类最多的地区
4. 黄胸鸫于秋季迁徙期在华南地区的分布
5. 环志的黄胸鸫纪录 (有照片者可得小礼物!)



请于2017年11月30日前把纪录电邮到: info@chinabirdnet.org





Hong Kong Birds Eco-art

“Go Bird watching by MTR” Photography education

In recent decades, many art enthusiasts from Europe, America and Taiwan have been inspired by nature and the environment. They created artwork based on ecological themes to raise public awareness on the importance of nature conservation

Since the 1990s, conservationists and artists in the west have infused knowledge on the ecosystem into artistic creation. “Eco-art” combines art and the conservation of our natural environment. Through different art media, including visual arts, installation arts, music, performing arts such as dance and drama, messages on conservation are disseminated to a broad range of audiences at many different levels.

Bird ecology is colourful and rich in variety. The beautiful plumage and fascinating movements of birds have inspired many artists in their creative work—in painting, dance, drama, literature and music. Infusing the element of art into ecological conservation, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society has initiated a programme named “Hong Kong Bird Eco-Arts”. Through observing nature, it is hoped that people will express their care for the environment with creative art—hence “linking people and nature with art”.

“Go Bird Watching by MTR” photographic art exhibition, with sponsorship from the MTR Corporation, was the first activity launched under the Hong Kong Bird Eco-art initiative. A series of education activities were organised around the theme of photography, the most accessible art medium, in collaboration with Kaitak – the Centre for Research and Development in Visual Arts of the Academy of Visual Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University. These included bird photography classes, workshops on the installation of artistic floating platforms in fishponds for wetland migratory birds, production of flipbooks using continuous shooting and time lapse photography to record bird movements and to recreate images of migratory birds that have not been seen in Hong Kong for a long time using light stencil.

Places for all the activities were rapidly filled within one week of the enrollment start date. The creative outputs of participants were collected and exhibited in the “Go Bird Watching by MTR” photographic art exhibition from 1 June 2017 to 9 June 2017 at the PopCorn MTR Mall in Tseung Kwan O.

At the opening ceremony of the exhibition, the officiating guest, Ms Christine Loh, JP, Under Secretary for the Environment said, “The SAR Government formulated the first city-level Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) in 2016 to conserve biodiversity within and outside Hong Kong and to support sustainable development. In addition to government support, the conservation of biodiversity also needs community participation. I note that Hong Kong Bird Watching Society has been sparing no efforts in promoting biodiversity through a wide range of educational activities and research work. The Government will continue to work with non-governmental organisations to promote the importance of biodiversity.”

Dr Ng Cho-nam, Vice-chairman of HKBWS said, “Art creation has a unique power to inspire people to express their emotions and obtain satisfaction. By making artistic creation a part of the community’s ecological education through our ‘Hong Kong Bird Eco-Art’ initiative, we hope that information on conservation can be extended to a broader level.”



HK Fishpond Conservation Scheme

Discover the natural world of Lut Chau fishpond in the dark

Children enjoyed summer holiday in July while fishermen were harvesting Gei wai shrimp at the same time. Night safari tours were organised for the general public to explore Gei wai and fishponds in Lut Chau, Yuen Long. Fisherman Mr. Chan demonstrated how to harvest in the

Gei wai. Fresh Gei wai shrimps were caught and shared by us. Hospitable fisherman also prepared homemade honey for the visitors. Under the dark environment, participants experienced the fisherman lifestyle and food culture.



Cooked Gei wai shrimps and homemade honey



Children tasted their first local Gei Wai shrimps



《Dong Dong the Sparrow – Today's Surprise!》 Children Storybook

Crossover with illustrator Lam Pei, the Society has published a first storybook named “Dong Dong the Sparrow – Today’s Surprise!”. This storybook is targeting a 3 to 6 year-old audience. Children will join the adventure with Dong Dong and come across many different kinds of animals and plants. We hope to encourage the children to do more observations in their daily life. The storybook is published under the programme “Discover Hong Kong Urban Nature cum City Sparrow Census” funded by ECF and ECC.

Bringing 'Nature Education' to rural areas – 'San Xia Xiang' activity by university students



Children attending nature class



Leaf creative work by children

'San Xia Xiang' is an activity commonly joined by university students in Mainland China. Originally, the activity was about young people bringing the three ('san' in Putonghua) types of knowledge –technology, culture and sanitation – from city areas to people in less developed regions. Nowadays, it is mainly about university students giving classes to children in rural areas. This year, with the support from CEPF, university students in Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province and Beihai, Guangxi Province have introduced elements of nature education into their 'San Xia Xiang' activities.

In Zhanjiang, there were a total of 16 teams, each of 3 to 4 students, while in Beihai, it was a big team of 34 participants. Before starting off, the Zhanjiang Bird Watching Society organized a training session, which included introduction of nature education, and nature education activities and games. During June to August, the students had put into practice what they have learnt from the training session into their service sites in Zhanjiang and Beihai. The activity content was designed by student teams with guidance from their advice teachers.

The service sites were mainly primary schools in rural areas. Student "teachers" did not use traditional mode of teaching. Instead, diversified methods such as games, observation and drawing were adopted, so as to raise the learning interest of children in nature. In addition, not only do the university students need to guide the children to understand nature, but also nurture their awareness in nature protection. Through guiding them to get in love with nature, the children will take the initiative to protect the nature because of their love. We hope the introduction of elements of 'nature education' into 'San Xia Xiang' activities can make it become the key feature of the activities, so that the awareness of nature protection can be continuously spread into more and more regions.

60th anniversary souvenir

HKBWS is marking its 60th anniversary. As a token of appreciation of the support from all our members, a handkerchief featuring Swinhoe's Egret has been produced as an anniversary souvenir. Many thanks to Mao Morning, the designer, for the vivid illustration.

The 23rd Elementary Bird Watching Course

The 23rd Elementary Bird Watching Course for Beginners will be held from 7 November to 5 December. This beginner's course includes five indoor lectures and four outdoor outings and covers various aspects of bird ecology, bird watching & bird identification skills. Please visit the HKBWS website Discussion Forum for details and registration.

Obituary

More sad news after Michael Webster passed away in March. We regret to inform you that another former Chairman, Gavin Cooper, passed away at Princess Margaret Hospital, Hong Kong on 17th July 2017 at the age of 84. We would like to extend our heartfelt sympathy to members of Gavin's family. He was one of the Hon. Recorders from 1977 to 1981 and Chairman of the Society from 1981 to 1993. His tremendous contribution to the development of the Society will be remembered. A memorial by Clive Viney appears elsewhere in this bulletin.

A Remembrance of Gavin Cooper

1933-2017

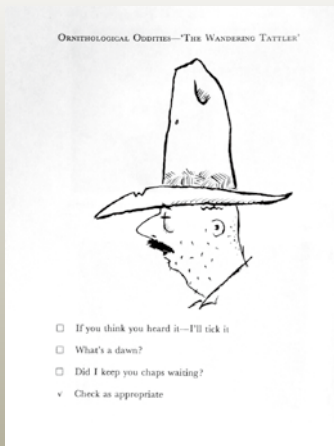


Before joining an afternoon Hong Kong Bird Watching Society outing to the summit of Tai Mo Shan in June 1975, Dave Bradford and I were supping a couple of ales outside a bar in Sek Kong village when in front of us, a car forced another off the road. Out of the hostile car a tall gweilo in a stetson and riding boots emerged and proceeded to remonstrate with the cowering driver in seemingly perfect Cantonese. An hour or so later we joined the outing at the road barrier on the summit road. There were far too many people and to our surprise, among them the tall gweilo was heartily greeting all and sundry. "I'm Gavin Cooper," he said crushing my hand. "Yes and I'm Clive Viney, we spoke on the telephone about an Emerald Dove in your garden", I responded. Mike Webster had put him on to me some weeks before but we had never met. I thought with a name like that and idling his time away in a large house and garden during the week he must be a well-known writer or actor. In fact, he was one of the managers of the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club's Beas River Country Club. Soon afterwards, we became close friends and Gavin accompanied me on many many birdwatching excursions. Together, as the bamboo curtain parted, we pioneered birdwatching into China and competed sharply at the birth of the legendary Big Bird Races. The night before my departure in 1996 we really sank a few too many in Wanchai - recovery did not come quickly. In truth, we had loved each other's company and parting would be sad.

Gavin's introduction to birdwatching via the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society soon blossomed. He was joint Honorary Recorder with Mike Chalmers from 1977 to 1981 and in 1981 was unanimously elected Chairman. This was a post he held with great pride and he worked diligently until he stepped down in the spring of 1993. During his tenure as Chairman, the Society grew rapidly in membership, especially locally born members so that by the time of his retirement about half of the members were local. Gavin's support was key to the strong foundation that HKBWS has today. In recognition of his services, Gavin was elected an Honorary Life Member in 2012.

Gavin was no slouch as a field observer and during his era was likely responsible for more Hong Kong firsts than anybody else. Individually, he recorded the first Asian Emerald Cuckoo (Ho Sheung Heung 1978), Crested Honey Buzzard (Shek Kong Catchwater 1981), White-bellied Green Pigeon (Shek Kong Catchwater 1983) and Plain Flowerpecker (pair nest-building at Ho Sheung Heung 1988). Additionally, he was present at the first Hong Kong sightings of White-throated Needletail (Beas River 1977), Purple-backed Starling (Mai Po 1977), Common Ringed Plover (San Tin 1979), Ruddy Shelduck (San Tin 1979), Thick-billed Warbler (Chau Tau 1982) and Black-winged Kite (Ha Tsuen 1984).

Gavin Colvin Hugh Cooper was born in Sheffield on the 25th August 1933. He was the seventh of eight children, four boys and four girls. Unsurprisingly, he came from quite a theatrical family, his mother Lurline was on the stage and a number of his siblings had connections with the theatre. He was proud to be a Yorkshireman and at one time was President



Big Bird Race booklet 1984



Big Bird Race booklet 1985



Big Bird Race booklet 1986

of the Hong Kong Yorkshire Society. Unbeknown to many of his birdwatching friends (myself included for many years) Gavin was an enthusiastic and much respected freemason. Another passion was military history, of which he had an encyclopaedic knowledge.

At the start of the Second World War Gavin was evacuated to the village of Car Colston in Nottinghamshire. After the war he returned to Sheffield and was educated at Sheffield Grammar School. At the tender age of 15 he enlisted in the Royal Navy and spent his first year at the HMS Ganges training establishment near Ipswich. On 1st August 1951 he sailed from Liverpool on a troopship that arrived in Hong Kong on 5th September. Within hours, he left Hong Kong on the destroyer HMS Cockade to fight in the Korean War. He was just 18 and when on the Yalu River his ship was hit and his best friend killed.

Gavin served in the Royal Navy for ten years, often visiting Hong Kong, which he loved. So much so, he was demobilised there and joined the Hong Kong Police. According to a report in the South China Morning Post, shortly after joining, he took charge of Cheung Chau Division as a sub-inspector. The article includes a typical quote from Gavin, "If you want a really good wife, you marry a Cheung Chau girl."

Two years later Gavin married Carole, an English rose and they had two lovely daughters Corinne and Stephanie.

Despite being described by a contemporary police officer as a rising star, Gavin moved on from the police in 1969 but continued part-time by joining the Auxiliary Marine Police. He joined IATA, the International Air Transport Association and travelled the world investigating airline ticket fraud. Gavin's career path was varied, to say the least. Most of the time that I knew him, he managed a major car parking business in Hong Kong but when we first met he was one of the managers of the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club's Beas River Country Club. Much of his early birdwatching was done on horseback. Horses don't scare birds.

Gavin met Magdalena in Hong Kong in 1990 and they had two sons, William and Colvin. Gavin chose his final resting place as Pangasinan in the Philippines, Magdalena's hometown.

As any birdwatcher will confirm he had an incredible memory. Invariably, he would tell anyone that was interested exactly what birds and when he saw in any one tree, bush or puddle. He treated everyone as equals and had an amazing mastery of the Chinese language, in a number of dialects, which surprised and delighted locals throughout his life.





Gavin birding in Guangdong, 1986
(Credit: John Holmes)



Big Bird Race booklet 1987

In the first Big Bird Race in 1984, Gavin was a member of Mike Chalmers' HKBWS team that took on my successful WWF/HK team. The following year Gavin formed the Wandering Tattlers, which he captained until his retirement in 2012 at the age of 77. In my time, there were only two dead heats and they were between my team and the Wandering Tattlers. Such was our rivalry. He established the 'Cooper's Crippler' award where the best bird of the race was to be inscribed on a silver plate. Gavin's unmistakable features appeared in several of Bob Ferguson's epic cartoons in the race booklets and they are reproduced below.

As China slowly opened her doors in the seventies and eighties, so east met west in Hong Kong. This enclave on the south coast of China became the crossroads of the world. Many famous names sported binoculars and found time to visit Mai Po, especially as it was then the place to see (among other rare eastern waders) a Spoon-billed Sandpiper. The long list of celebrities included royalty, Prince Philip and Crown Prince Frederick come to mind, famous naturalists, Sir Peter Scott and Dr George Schaller, renowned ornithologists, Professor Cheng Tso-Tsin (ZHENG Zuo-xin) from the PRC and Ben King among others, reserve architects such as Bert Axell and almost all of the top listers of the world's birds. Gavin met them all and led most on the famous Mai Po circuit. Gavin was 'the' PR man for Hong Kong's birds.

Earlier this year I returned to Hong Kong and top of my agenda was to see Gavin, whom I knew had been very ill. Bravely, Gavin agreed to meet Barbara and I for lunch close to his home at Mui Wo on Lantau. John Holmes, a great friend of Gavin's for many years, met us on the ferry and true to his word Gavin was waiting for us on arrival. I was shocked to see that my beloved friend had become frail and used a walking stick. Although I knew he was very ill, I had forgotten that he would soon be 84. It had been 15 years since we had last met and I found his deterioration difficult to take. But he still had that twinkle in his eye and the real Gavin was there - just tucked away. I was so pleased that he had made the effort to meet and once Tim Woodward joined us we had a splendid Chinese lunch in the cooked food stalls. Of course, we managed a few beers with plenty of laughs and the resurrected memories flowed. It was an occasion that I will never forget.

After a long and courageous fight against cancer, Gavin passed away during the early hours of 17th July 2017. He was one of the world's great characters and will be sorely missed.

Clive Viney

4th August 2017

Tavira, Portugal



*Big Bird Race 1988 (Credit: John Holmes)
(L to R) Mike Chalmers, Mary Ho Tung Ketterer
(WWF), Lady Jane Akers-Jones, Sir David Akers-
Jones (rear), Clive Viney and Gavin Cooper*



Big Bird Race booklet 1990

In writing this I have used much material kindly provided by Corrine & Stephanie and Tim Woodward. Below are a few responses from Gavin's friends.



Tim Woodward (an extract from his eulogy) - On behalf of the birding and birdwatching community here in Hong Kong and elsewhere around the world (particularly from Portugal and the UK) let me pass on our sincere condolences to Corinne, Stephanie, Carole, Magdalena, William, Colvin and all of Gavin's family. It is difficult for us to imagine what you have been through over the last few months and weeks but we know that it has been difficult for us to come to terms with and we can be sure how much more difficult it has been for all of you. Our thoughts are with you now and for the future.



Photo: Tim Woodward



Richard Stott - I always think of Gavin as irrepissible as he strode forth across Mai Po wearing his broad-brimmed hat. Many fond memories.



John Edge - Very sad news indeed. I will not forget my first HKBWS field trip to Mai Po in late 1978 - Gavin was leading and the first thing he taught me was that birdwatching could be real fun. He had the ladies on the trip eating out of his hand. He was an excellent, amusing, convivial and knowledgeable companion on several trips to China in the 80s. I shall miss him greatly.



Ray Tipper – Sad news of a memorable character.



John Burton – He was very good company on the Society's weekend field trips and helped me a lot.



Angus Lamont - Saddened to learn of the death of Gavin. He was the sort of character that will always be remembered and he certainly helped to promote the HKBWS.



G.C.H.

BY GOONESBERRY



Big Bird Race booklet 1989

Big Bird Race Booklet cartoons - credit: Bob Ferguson



Verity Picken - There will be many birders all over the world who will be remembering Gavin. I don't think I ever left his presence without having laughed or at least smiled.



Stewart Smith - He is one of the few people I have known who could be called larger than life. Previously I had thought this necessarily a description of the deeply moral! The instantaneous snoring when his head hit the pillow on a Pearl River ferry; the surely apocryphal exclamation on a Shek Kong outing - "Verditer! That branch there ... 1976" !



Clive Holgate - Obviously, over the years we met very often at Zetland Hall, as we enjoyed being active in various degrees of Masonry. In this respect Gavin was a senior officer in very many degrees, far more than I, at which he brought a great deal of enthusiasm and sincerity. I do know that he will be sadly missed by the Masonic fraternity of Hong Kong.



Mike Chalmers – Hong Kong will be a much duller place without him.

We all have our Gavin stories. I remember going to my first Tai Po Kau outing with him leading with his trademark stetson and quickly realising that all his outings were strategically planned to end with cold beer and noodles. His stetson and leadership style were later brilliantly captured by Bob Ferguson in his sketches for the Big Bird Race Booklets. Gavin's ability to break into fluent colloquial Cantonese, honed in police messes and who knows where else, also endeared him to many.



Peggy-Ann Berry (formerly Stevens) - I have many fond memories of birding trips with him in Hong Kong and China. I was there the day we simultaneously spotted a Baikal Teal at Mai Po in amongst hundreds of ordinary teal!



Bob Ferguson - Gavin's demise, while not unexpected, as with these things, came as a shock. His presence gone, I realise that it impacted in my life more than I would have thought, despite distance and time.

He was a convivial person and widely known, apart from his renown in his birdwatching annals. Speaking fluent Cantonese, and proficient in Shanghainese, he made friends easily both with expats and locals, from the Better 'Ole to the Peak. It can truly be said that he is unforgettable, and will be sorely missed. His two boys must now be fine young men, and should bear the Cooper name with pride.





紫翅椋鳥
何錦榮
塋原

Common Starling
Ho Kam Wing
Long Valley

05/11/2016
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



綠頭鴨
陳兆源
米埔

Mallard
Chan Siu Yuen
Mai Po

14/04/2017
DSLR Camera, 800mm f/5.6 lens + 1.25x teleconverter

鴛鴦
潘士強
沙田

Mandarin Duck
Jason Pun
Shatin

07/01/2017
Mirrorless Digital Camera, 70-300mm f/4.5-5.6 lens





魚鷗
余伯全
米埔

Pallas's Gull
Ractis John
Mai Po

14/03/2017

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



大麻鵞
駱正華
米埔

Eurasian Bittern
Lok Ching Wa Kevin
Mai Po

05/11/2016
DSLR Camera, 400mm f/2.8 lens + 2x teleconverter

Pond #15b restoration and Breeding Black-winged Stilt

WWF-HK has carried out habitat restoration on freshwater Pond #15b outside the Education Centre this summer. Starting from May, the main aims of the restoration project were to repair the pond bund and restore the artificial island in the middle of the pond. After two months of earthmoving work, the middle island is now restored with a gentler slope on the edge, which enables waterbirds to access the island easily and provides area with different water depth for waterbirds to forage along the island edge. Vegetation along the pond edge has also been removed to restore open water habitats. In late June, the earthmoving work was completed and the pond was refilled with rainwater.

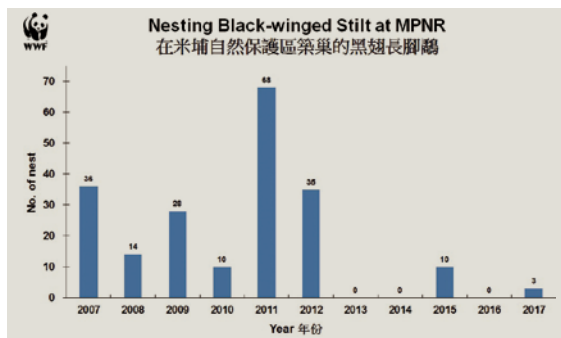


Restoring the island (Credit: WWF-HK)

Since the draining of the pond before restoration work started in mid-April, there have been two pairs of Black-winged Stilt feeding in the shallow water and prospecting for a nest-building location. Luckily, the restoration work was completed before the end of the breeding season. After the digger retreated, two pairs of Black-winged Stilt immediately built nests on the newly restored island, and another pair on the “vegetation-free” pond bund. Four weeks later, four chicks were hatched from one of the nests and young birds were observed foraging in the pond under protection from their parents. It was indeed a delight for we Mai Po staff to see the impact of our work immediately.



Black-winged Stilt chick hatched at Pond #15b (Credit: NY Lai)



Changes in nesting Black-winged Stilt number at MPNR (Credit: WWF-HK)

Black-winged Stilt first bred in Hong Kong at Mai Po Nature Reserve in 2003. In the last few years, the number of nesting pairs has reduced significantly from the peak of 68 nests in 2011 to lower than 10 nests recently. One of the reasons could be the ageing of the artificial islands. Continuous management is needed to maintain the artificial islands in MPNR, especially vegetation control. Vegetation cutting is needed regularly to keep the opened, “vegetation free” condition which is most suitable for roosting waterbirds. After several years, when vegetation management could not attract waterbirds to use the islands anymore, larger scale earthmoving work will be considered to restore the islands to the optimal height and slope. The habitat restoration works at MPNR this summer have been targeted to restore artificial islands on Pond #15b and Gei wai #16/17. We hope to see a positive impact in the coming autumn and winter.



Pond #15b before restoration (Credit: WWF-HK)



Pond #15b after restoration (Credit: WWF-HK)

Bhutan's cheerful journey

Text/Photo: Samson So

024



Yellow billed Blue Magpie (*Urocissa flavirostris*) is one of the five *Urocissa* species in the world.



Himalayan Cutia (*Cutia nipalensis*)

Extended peaks and valleys in Bhutan are ideal breeding places for wildlife.

Bhutan is a country I have been longing to explore. It is the rich biodiversity and local customs that attract me. Bhutan is well-known for its highest global happiness index. Located on the eastern fringe of the Himalayas, the country has a huge elevation range from 150 meters to 7500 meters above sea level. Different altitudes and climates have contributed to fertile ecology and biodiversity. Over 70% of Bhutan is covered with forest and one-fourth of the country is designated as national parks for the protection of precious and unique wildlife.



Himalayan Monal (*Lophophorus impejanus*) – During a nature walk at dusk we were fortunate to meet the star of the Himalayan birds at about 3500 meters above sea level.



Bird watching in the highlands can offer mountainous scenery enjoyment at the same time.

To many birdwatchers the glamorous look of exotic birds and the encounters with rarities and endemics are definitely the reasons to travel to different places. Bhutan has 670 species of bird on its list. Besides Himalayan birds found in different elevations, there are opportunities to come across seasonal migrants from the north or the south at different times of the year. All of these make Bhutan a wonderful destination for nature lovers.

Forest birding there can be superb. Babblers, pheasants, sunbirds, woodpeckers, pigeons and doves, cuckoos and hornbills are resident birds in Bhutan. Some of them will perform vertical migration and descend from the highlands in winter. During the breeding season in spring and summer, they occupy favoured places and sing to declare their territories. At the same time, migrants come to breed in the Himalayan range. Warblers, flycatchers and cuckoos arrive when monsoon winds bring warmer and wetter conditions. They add colours and symphonies to the woodland. No matter whether riding on vehicle or walking on foot, from tropical broadleaf forest in the lowlands to coniferous woodland in the hills, each type of wood echoes with the chorus of different birds. Although one might not be able to identify every call, being encircled by trees, breathing fresh mountain air and bathed in the bird songs, all comforts in the wild brings me unforgettable nature experience



A tree canopy is nature's aerial garden.



Himalayan range's snow mountain



Rufous bellied Woodpeckers (*Dendrocopos hyperythrus*). The one on top is female, down below is her young.

Cuckoos are usually heard rather than seen. These mysterious and renowned birds are brood parasites. The female lays eggs in the nest of the host (or hosts), to be hatched and fed by them. This breeding strategy is unique among birds. Yet this tactic is usually misunderstood as laziness (that the host feeds the young) and cunning (the hatched cuckoo will push the host's own chicks or eggs out of nest). Actually adult cuckoos mainly consume various insects and protect the plants from foliage-hungry caterpillars. On the other hand, brood parasites can delicately maintain the group size of host species and effectively keep biodiversity of the region in balance.

In a one-week trip to Bhutan, I recorded nine species of cuckoo, including the gaily-coloured Asian Emerald Cuckoo and sonorous Hodgson's Hawk cuckoo. The heavily-built Eurasian Cuckoo, with the appearance of an accipiter, is among the most impressive birds I met. Eurasian Cuckoo can be found in Eurasian and African regions. Its typical call "cuc-koo" is used as the English name of the birds in the family Cuculidae. Eurasian Cuckoo is



A female Kalij Pheasant (*Lophura leucomelanos*) is seen during a ride.

summer visitor to Bhutan, mainly recorded in altitude ranges between 800 meters and 4100 meters from April to July every year. There are around 300 species of known hosts for Eurasian Cuckoo in the world, including warblers, flycatchers, wagtails, robins, thrushes, shrikes, and bulbuls. Therefore the distribution of the cuckoo also reveals regional biodiversity. When we understand the ecology of cuckoos we can truly appreciate their unique way of breeding.

Though forest bird observation is the core of Bhutan trip, species living in the river and wetland cannot be overlooked. Plumbeous Water-Redstart, White-capped Water-redstart, wagtails and various kinds of wader are the birds to be seen at the water edge. If I have to name some highlights for my Bhutan trip, Ibis-bill (*Ibidorhyncha struthersii*) is definitely on the list.



Eurasian Cuckoo (Cuculus canorus) is distributed in Eurasian and African regions. It is a summer visitor to Bhutan.



The Green-tailed Sunbird (Aethopyga nipalensis) is always a highlight in the forest.

Ibisbill is the only member in the family Ibidorhynchidae. This is a monotypic species, representing the whole family, and does not have geographical sub-species. In biological terms it means uniqueness in its evolutionary path. Ibisbill is mainly distributed between 1700 meters and 4400 meters in the Himalayas with slow-flowing shallow rivers with abundant oval-shaped stones. Even though IUCN does not put it into the endangered list, the habitat of Ibisbill is rapidly affected by human quarrying and channelisation of rivers. In some parts of its range the population turns scarce and even disappears. Luckily in Bhutan the riverine habitat is relatively intact and this unique and rare bird can thrive.

Nature trips give me many chances to understand a place from multiple perspectives. Beyond birds and animals, I certainly do not let go the chance to comprehend insects in my Bhutan trip. Forest



The brightly coloured Ultramarine Flycatcher (Ficedula superciliaris) is a summer visitor in the Himalayan region mainly from March to June in Bhutan.



Ward's Trogon (*Harpactes wardi*) is a rare species, listed by IUCN as "Near Threatened". This is a juvenile male with red forehead and tail, while the abdomen still shows bright yellow.



Himalayan Wagtail (*Motacilla albaoides*)



White-naped Yuhina (*Yuhina bakeri*).

streams and wetlands in the lowland are the ideal environments to find dragonflies and damselflies. Different elevations and vegetation also offer chances to look for butterflies. I noted a brightly- coloured swam of damselfly located 1000 meters above sea level. According to my previous observation records it should be *Calicnemia eximia* which is distributed in the Himalayan Belt. Nevertheless there is a little bit of variance between the group (sub-species?) in Bhutan and the one I saw in Yunnan. The Bhutan version has a remarkable black spot in the lower abdomen. Not all insects encountered in the trip can be identified to species level. I had also encountered a gomphid in a forest stream at around 1700m but still failed to identify it after going through all the books in my possession. Geographical separation in Bhutan is the engine for speciation. Many unique species are derived in many areas through tens of million years of geographical isolation and adaption. At the moment Bhutan does not yet have a comprehensive insect database. A lot of observation records must



Pika having a funny outlook is a keystone species in mountainous areas. They are the main diet of many predators.



Ibisbill (Ibidorhyncha struthersii)




Calicnemia eximia

refer to the literature from India, Yunnan or Tibet. There are still many unnamed species. This means observation records compiled by nature lovers may provide important scientific value for the region.

The Himalayan area is mountainous with windy roads passing through different elevations. It is therefore essential to reserve time to travel between various nature reserves and scenic spots. Forest coverage rate is very high in Bhutan. There are good chances to encounter many interesting species on the road while travelling around. No matter whether you want to go off the track looking for rarities, or just stop by the road and admire the wonderful mountainous scenery, there are plenty of possibilities. Sometimes birds may visit your place when you are having a cup of tea, visiting a temple or while interacting with local people in the villages. All of these experiences add lots of flavours to a trip and hook nature lovers.

Each nature trip extends our outreach to the world and expands our horizons. No matter which country we are in, we can savour every moment. And those travellers who understand and admire nature with heart definitely are the lucky ones. I sincerely hope you can also devote both the body and heart to feel the fun and inspiration of Bhutan, the joyful country in the Himalayas.

Note: Samson So spends nearly six months every year leading nature-based activities around the world and actively introduces to everyone the beauty of nature in different parts of the globe through words and photos. For more pictures and articles please browse "Samson So Photography" and "Eco Institute Ecology" on Facebook. 



Member of bright-colored Heliophorini species



An unknown Gomphid encountered at medium elevations.



The ringing station is a chalet in which we did the measuring, data collection and photo taking of the birds.

A Bird Ringing Trip at Lake Baikal

Photo/Text: Gary Chow

When we plan an overseas birding trip, apart from visiting famous nature reserves and popular birding places armed with binoculars and cameras, what other options are there? Here is one for consideration: visit the bird ringing station at Lake Baikal in Siberia, Russia, and participate in their ringing activity. It appealed to me as a very interesting and meaningful activity, so shortly after I learnt of this project, my mind was set and I emailed my application for participation. Without much thinking and preparation, Ah Sing, a fellow birder, and I departed for Baikal, an area close to the borders of Russia and Mongolia.

This was my first ever visit to Eastern Siberia, it is foreign to me. Its de facto capital Irkutsk is a place I have hardly ever heard of (in fact it took me quite some time to remember this name), and of course I have never been to Lake Baikal. Baikal, however, should sound familiar to birders, because of the winter migrant Baikal Teal, which is crowned with the name of the lake, although I found out later that this species is uncommon in this area.

We took a train from Irkutsk city to Musikha, a town at the southeastern shore of Lake Baikal closest to the ringing station. This is a small town with only dozens of families residing, and no restaurant or supermarket can be found. When our train arrived, Yuri was already waiting for us at the station. Yuri is a researcher of the local forest reserve responsible for ringing studies and bird surveys. He had been in Hong Kong at a conference and met with Ah Sing before. Yuri was a tall guy in field study outfit with a pair of binoculars hanging down his neck, ready to record the migrating birds at any time.

Yuri took us in his car and we reached the ringing station in less than 10 minutes drive. There was a 2-storey chalet by the lakeside for storing ringing equipment, and there is also one bedroom inside. A wagon was parked outside the chalet, it has one bedroom, a study, and a kitchen. That's where we stayed for the next few days.

Yuri's family also lives at the station, including his wife, one daughter and one son. Even Yuri's mother showed up later to help. The children were energetic and outgoing, the elder sister was about 10 and always keen to teach us Russian vocabulary; the younger brother was 4 and always chatting to us, unfortunately we were never able to understand what he was saying.



Children also helped in bird ringing.

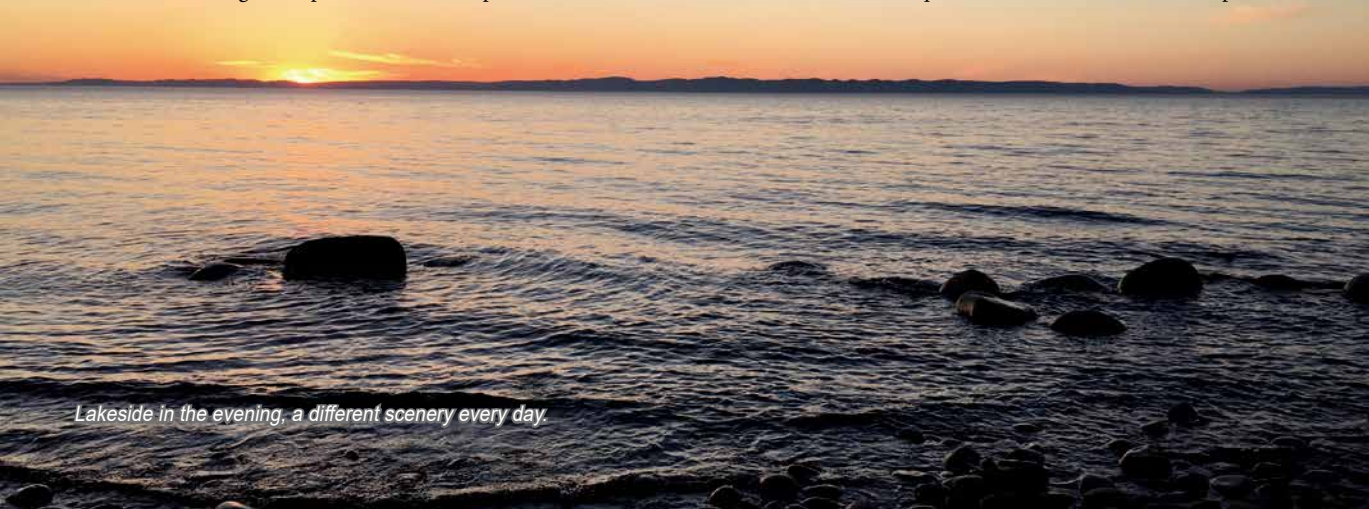
Life at the station was simple and natural, there was no piped water, we had to get it from the lake. Food had to be bought from a store in a nearby town, they would usually stock up with a few days' provisions, but there was no fresh meat. There was a toilet, which is a dry toilet, but no bathroom. Instead, there was a traditional Russian sauna cabin, banya, by the lake. The banya is a local tradition with over a thousand years history. The lakeside banya was a small wooden cabin with a stove inside for burning firewood, stones from the lakeside were placed on top to transfer heat. Traditionally people use oak tree branches to smack their bodies, and there were also several bunches in there.

It was already past 5 in the afternoon the first day we arrived, but sunset was not until 10 at night, so we still had time to catch some birds. The mist nets were set not far from the station. There were 4 rows in total and the operation is similar with that of Hong Kong. We went out once every hour to bring back netted birds, ring them and record data. From the moment we arrived, our work was to go and collect birds at regular intervals, every day from 6 in the morning to 11 at night, except when the nets were retrieved because of rain.

Apart from mist nets, there's also a gigantic net the size of three basketball courts, it was funnel shaped and laid horizontally on the ground. It was about 20 meters tall with a wide entrance narrowing down gradually leading into a cage, there were several valves in between to prevent the birds from escaping backward, so we would collect birds caught in the end of the funnel, the cage. At first, I was doubtful of the effectiveness of this net because only a few birds were caught during our visit, but when we looked at old photos, we found that during peak seasons, trapped birds could fill up the entire cage, which showed the net was especially efficient in catching birds in flight.

The time of migration for birds in that area is quite regular, the beginning of June is already towards the end of the season; the species that could be caught were predictable. Migratory birds were the main component of our catch, especially Thick-billed Warbler, Radde's Warbler, Dusky Warbler, and Brown Shrike, these are species similar to those seen in Hong Kong. Other locally common birds which are uncommon in Hong Kong included Siberian Blue Robin and Eurasian Siskin, there were also quite a number of Arctic Warblers and Two-barred Warblers.

Based on my observation during those few days, I personally think that although the bird species in Baikal are similar to Hong Kong, the relative population of each species is quite different. The winter migratory birds found in Hong Kong mostly breed in the Russian Far East or Siberia. But Siberia is vast region that not all birds from this region migrate via Hong Kong. Lake Baikal is quite far from the sea, it's possible that the birds do not need to migrate along the coast line and therefore Hong Kong is not on their migration path. A further inspection of the bird list will show that there are quite a few differences. For example,



Lakeside in the evening, a different scenery every day.



the Oriental Reed Warbler is common in Hong Kong in autumn but rare in Baikal; instead the similar species Thick-billed Warbler which is rare in Hong Kong but is very common there. The case with Dusky Warbler and Radde's Warbler is similar, the Radde's Warbler, which is common in Baikal, is a rare migrant in Hong Kong.

Moreover, the reappearance of some migratory birds does not match the time when those birds disappear from Hong Kong. For example: the Pallas's Leaf Warblers, which disappear from Hong Kong by the end of March, are not seen in Baikal until May. We are almost certain that warblers don't need more than a month to fly back to Siberia. Various signs show that forest birds in Lake Baikal district are not so closely related to those of Hong Kong, meaning that migratory birds in Lake Baikal might not be using the route that passes Hong Kong.

During our stay at the ringing station, weather was rough, there were even occasional rain storms. The weather was cold during cloudy periods, temperatures falling to below 10 degrees even though it was June. This had no doubt affected our catch.

A surprise visit came on our last day together with a bright sunny sky. After netting common species repeatedly for a few days, we finally caught a large woodpecker, the Black Woodpecker, on our last day! This is a local resident species, very shy, and we had not been able to see it if had not been mist-netted. It was certainly the biggest catch of our stay. Apart from this, there's not much to mention, we left a day earlier than planned and followed Yury to the forest reserve for a bird survey and ended by bird ringing in Baikal. In the forest we saw quite a number of local breeding birds, which we had not encountered during bird ringing.



Black Woodpecker, the biggest catch of this trip.

My deepest impression of working at the ringing station was not just the birds that I saw, but also the lifestyle of Yury and his family. They hadn't much materially, but they are happy with what they have. The two brother and sister spend their day in nature, play on the lawn when the weather is fine, even though the lawn is infested with blood sucking ticks. When winter comes, the whole family will move to stay in town, but when asked which place she preferred, the little girl chose the station, she loved the simple life in nature. Looking at the two children playing on the lawn, I felt an inexplicable sense of peacefulness and pleasure.

The lakeside scenery is another impressive memory, the shore stretches so far it looks like there's no end to it. I felt my own insignificance in this natural wonder, and was in awe of its infinite vastness. Every evening, I would take a walk by the lake to admire the sunset, even in cloudy weather. The sky would exhibit different levels of grey or purple, everyday a different amazement, never the same. In the evening, we'd also go to the lakeside banya. When feeling scorched, the locals like to take a dip in the freezing water in the lake and enjoy the excitement of a dramatic cool off. However, for me, being alone in the wide open nature and immersed in cold water, I felt a sense of serenity and of being one with nature, this is the feeling that I remember best.



Gigantic bird cage, the size of 3 basketball courts.

April

- ▶ The general dryness which was a feature of March continued through this month until 21st when the arrival of the NE monsoon brought squally thunderstorms. Dry weather conditions in April usually mean that spring migrants will come through in smaller numbers than usual, and this was indeed the case this year. Nevertheless, the month had its moments, most memorably the discovery of a **Small Pratincole** at San Tin fishponds on 4th (KHL), a new shorebird species for Hong Kong. This is essentially a bird of large inland river systems from the Indian sub-continent east through Burma to the southern and western fringes of Yunnan, and the occurrence of one in Hong Kong, over 1000 km east of the known range, came as a total surprise, on a par with the Mai Po Great Thick-knee of June 2009.
- ▶ Other rarities found in the month were a **Bar-tailed Dove** at Hong Kong University campus on 18th (per JAA), about the 9th for Hong Kong, a **Mongolian Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella dukhunensis* (recently split from Greater Short-toed Lark *C. brachyactylla*) at San Tin fishponds on 23rd-24th (per CM), only the 3rd for Hong Kong, and an **Amur Falcon** there on 24th (PJL), only the 2nd spring record. In addition, two mystery warblers which resembled Arctic Warbler but had very dark legs were found at Po Toi on 27th-28th (PH, LS).
- ▶ The long-staying adult **Siberian Crane**, the star bird of the winter, was last seen at Mai Po at about 9 a.m. on 1st (per SY), having already shown signs of its readiness to depart on several dates in March. The Po Toi **Maroon Oriole** also remained until 1st (JGH). Strangely, the same date also accounted for two unusual species at Mai Po – an **Emerald Dove** (HKBWS) and a **Chestnut-collared Yuhina** (DAD), the latter a rare spring record in atypical habitat.
- ▶ Among rarer species reported were two **Oriental Plovers** at San Tin on 6th and 10th (JGH, DAD), a **Black Baza** at Long Valley on 17th (JGH) and a **Fairy Pitta** at Ho Man Tin from 24th (KPC), while a **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** singing in a bullrush patch on a Tsim Bei Tsui fishpond on 4th (EMSK) was an unusual spring record.
- ▶ A count of six **Japanese Sparrowhawks** at Mai Po on 5th (JAA) is the highest on record, and at least 100 **Chinese Goshawks** were near Crest Hill, Lo Wu, on 29th (LCW), the first three-figure count since 2010.
- ▶ Boat trips to southern waters recorded totals of 78 **Long-tailed**, three **Arctic** and nine **Pomarine Skuas** on 9th (HKBWS, CM). Other seabirds seen in southern waters during the month included nine **Streaked Shearwaters** on 1st (JH), a **Lesser Frigatebird** on 2nd and 29th (AP, CM), five **Greater Crested** and six **Aleutian Terns** on 8th (CFL), an **Ancient Murrelet** also on 8th (JGH) and eight **Short-tailed Shearwaters** on 29th (HKBWS, CM).
- ▶ Amongst potential breeding reports, an **Orange-headed Thrush** was noted in song at Tai Po Kau Headland on 17th (RB).

May

- ▶ The only rarity of the month was a stunning **Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher** at Po Toi on 1st-2nd (LS), only the second for Hong Kong.
- ▶ A count of six **Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoos** at Tai Lam Chung on 1st (JAA) is the highest on record. Two species were reported on earliest or latest spring dates - a **Lesser Cuckoo** at Ng Tung Chaion 2nd (JAA), the earliest by 8 days, and a **Blue-tailed Bee-eater** at Mai Po on 27th (DAD), the latest by 4 days. Among birds reported at Ho Man Tin were a **Forest Wagtail** on 4th, one of the latest spring records, and a **Tiger Shrike** on 23rd (KPC), the first spring record of the species.
- ▶ Long Valley held a **Schrenck's Bittern** and a **Baillon's Crake** on 2nd (DH). Single **Black Bitterns** were reported Mai Po on 17th and Happy Valley on 18th (JAA). Also present at Mai Po on 17th were a **Spoon-billed Sandpiper** (AC), the only record of the spring, and two **Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers** plus a Pechora Pipit (JAA).
- ▶ Sea watching from land or boats led to sightings of up to seven **Short-tailed Shearwaters** in southern waters on four dates between 3rd and 21st (JW, KW, CM) and also 42 **Streaked Shearwaters** in HK waters from the cruise-ship "Star Pisces" on 28th (CC). An AFCD/HKBWS summer tern survey recorded 445 **Bridled**, 70 **Black-naped** and two **Roseate Terns** between Ma Liu Shui and Wong Shek on 13th, with largest numbers at Shek Ngau Chau.



▶ Among reports of possible or definite breeding were up two **Chinese Grosbeaks** at Cheung Chau on 4th and 8th (MDW), including one in song, an **Orange-headed Thrush** in song at Ha Tong Hai, Sai Kung on 6th (GJC) and a juvenile **Plain Flowerpecker** which, in an instance of cross-feeding, was filmed being fed first by an adult of its own species and then by a male **Fork-tailed Sunbird** at Tai Po Kau on 13th (SY). The food items brought by both birds have been identified as spiders of the family Araneidae (DW). Singing **Plain Flowerpeckers** were also again noted at Brides Pool and near Wu Kau Tang during the month (RWL).

June

▶ A hot and rainy month brought some big surprises. A **Chestnut-capped Babbler** found at Kam Tin on 2nd (JAA) is a Hong Kong first record. It will be interesting to see if there are further sightings from other parts of Hong Kong of this grassland skulker, which is known to occur in SW Guangdong. A **Black Noddy** on Kung Chau island off Tap Mun on 18th (RWL, LW, CW) is also a Hong Kong first record. It was found after Tropical Storm Merbok formed off the Philippines on 11th and tracked north to make landfall very close to Tap Mun on 13th, bringing torrential rain to Hong Kong in the days that followed (HK Observatory website). Also found in its aftermath were seven **Lesser Frigatebirds** at Sai Kung on 18th (per YTY) and again near Kung Chau on 20th (PJJ), the first ever sightings of more than two individuals in Hong Kong, and a **Temminck's (Japanese) Cormorant** on the Ninepins on 24th (IT), the 6th for Hong Kong and the first in summer. A **Dollarbird** at Wonderland Villas on 18th (TJW) was by 13 days the latest ever in the season, whilst a **Himalayan Swiftlet** seen near Kung Chau on 20th (PJJ) was another summer rarity.

▶ Among non-breeding waterbirds reported at Mai Po were 11 **Little Terns** on 2nd, two **Far Eastern Curlews** on 6th, two **Nordmann's Greenshanks**, 126 **Terek Sandpipers**, 22 **Grey-tailed Tattlers** and 63 **White-winged Terns** on 14th (DAD), all good numbers for summer. Non-breeding gulls and terns found away from Mai Po included a first-summer **Black-tailed Gull** in Tolo Harbour on 4th and 18th (LW), an adult summer **Black-headed** and a third-summer **Mongolian (Caspian) Gull** at Tsim Bei Tsui on 11th (RWL), and a **Caspian Tern** at Sam Mun Tsai on 21st (JAA).

▶ Two **Brown Fish Owls** were found at Lam Tsuen, a new site, on 6th (JAA), and two adult **Brown Wood Owls** with two fledged juveniles were seen at a traditional site in the central NT on 11th (EMSK). At least 110 **Collared Crows** and 58 **Black Kites** gathered on and around the golf-driving ranges prior to roosting in adjacent trees at Shuen Wan Landfill on 30th (RWL).

(Please note that decisions by the Records Committee are pending for some of the birds mentioned above: the society's official record will be as set out in the Hong Kong Bird Report 2017 - Ed.)

List of observers & initials 2017

Initials of observers whose reports/messages/photographs helped in preparation of HK Bird News for the period are as follows:

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department staff (AFCD), John Allcock (JAA), Paul Aston (PA), Abdel Bizid (AB), Karen Barretto (KB), Ruy Barretto (RB), Allen Chan (AC), Chris Campion (CC), Geoff Carey (GJC), K.F. Chan (KFC), S.Y. Chan (SYC), Thomas Chan (TC), K.K. Chang (KCC), Esther Chau (EC), J.A.M. "Kwok-Jai" Cheung (JAMC), Louis Cheung (LC), T.M. Cheung (TMC), Vivian Cheung (VC), Owen Chiang (OC), Kenneth Chiu (KC), Gary Chow (GKLC), K.P. Chow (KPC), Francis Chu (FC), W.K. Chung (WKC), Y.T. Chung (YTC), John Clough (JC), Fritz Davis (FD), David Diskin (DAD), Wilson Dring (WD), Y.W. Fong (YWF), Ken Fung (KF), Martin Hale (MH), Carla van Hasselt (CvH), C.Y. Ho (CYH), Kinni Ho (KH), Peter Ho (PH), Tiffany Ho (TH), unknown Hong Kong Bird Watching Society members (HKBWS), Jemi Holmes (JH), John Holmes (JGH), Derek Hon (DH), Hermann Ip (HI), Kadoorie Farm and Botanical Garden staff (KFBG), E. Hui (EH), Samuel Hung (SH), Mike Kilburn (EMSK), Koel Ko (KK), K.C. Kong (KCK), Matthew Kwan (MK), P.K. Kwan (PKK), T.K. Kwok (TKK), Paul Leader (PJJ), H.L. Lee (HLL), Kenny Lee (KHL), Louis Lee (LL), S.Y. Lee (SYL), Jennifer Leung (JL), Katherine Leung (KL), Mike Leven (MRL), Richard Lewthwaite (RWL), Benjiman Li (BLi), T.C. Li (TCL), Morten Lisse (ML), Yang Liu (YL), Aaron Lo (AL), C.F. "Fai-jai" Lo (CFL), Brenda Lo (BLo), Kevin Lok (KCWL), Carrie Ma (CM), Jonathan Martinez (JM), Guy Miller (GM), Harry Miller (HM), Roger Muscroft (RM), Yann Muzika (YM), Benjamin Ng (BN), L.Y. Ng (LYN), W.K. Nip (WKN), Alan Pong (AP), Jason Pun (JP), Bart de Schutter (BdS), Leo Sit (LS), Ken So (KS), Dave Stanton (DJS), Y.H. Sun (YHS), Swallows and Swifts Research Group members (SSRG), Graham Talbot (GT), C.S. Tam (CST), Meiling Tang (MLT), Wing-sze Tang (WST), Dylan Thomas (DT), Hugo To (HT), Ivan Tse (IT), Mike Turnbull (MT), Lag Wan (LW), Geoff Welch (GW), Martin Williams (MDW), C.Y. Wong (CYW), Dickson Wong (DW), H.S. Wong (HSW), K. Wong (KW), L.C. Wong (LCW), Michelle & Peter Wong (M&PW), Ondy Wong (OW), Chuan Woo (CW), Thelma Woodward (TJW), Tim Woodward (TJW), World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong staff (WWF), W.Y. Yam (WYY), H.K. Yip (HKY), W.H. Yip (WHY), Sherman Yeung (SY), John Yu (JY), Y.T. Yu (YTY).



Outings				
Date	Duration	Time and site	Difficulties (1...3)	Target species
7/10/2017 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Long Valley (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Outside Maxim's MX, Sheng Shui Rail Station)	☆☆	Farmland and water birds
15/10/2017 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Po Toi Island (08:00 Aberdeen Pier (Public 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
22/10/2017 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Mai Po Nature Reserve (12yrs old & above only / Registration Required) (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
29/10/2017 (Sun)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on Oct 27 on Discussion Forum)		
4/11/2017 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Nam Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 V Cuisine Restaurant, near Exit G2, Yuen Long West Rail Station)	☆☆	Waterbirds
5/11/2017 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Long Valley (08:00 Pavilion beside public toilet at Yin Kong Village)	☆☆	Farmland and water birds
12/11/2017 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Po Toi Island (08:00 Aberdeen Ferry 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
18/11/2017 (Sat)	0800 - 1600	Mai Po Nature Reserve (12yrs old & above only / Registration Required) (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
26/11/2017 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark)	☆☆☆	Forest birds
2/12/2017 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tai Sang Wai (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 V Cuisine Restaurant, near Exit G2, Yuen Long West Rail Station)	☆	Waterbirds
10/12/2017 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Pui O (08:00 Exit B, Tung Chung MTR Station)	☆	Wintering forest & farmland birds
17/12/2017 (Sun)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on Dec 15 on Discussion Forum)		
31/12/2017 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau carpark)	☆☆☆	Forest birds
6/1/2018 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Long Valley (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Outside Maxim's MX, Sheng Shui Rail Station)	☆☆	Farmland and water birds
14/1/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Shek Kong (08:00 Exit C, Kam Sheung Road West Rail Station)	☆☆	Forest & farmland birds
21/1/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Long Valley (08:00 Pavilion beside public toilet at Yin Kong Village)	☆☆	Farmland and water birds
27/1/2018 (Sat)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on Jan 25 on Discussion Forum)		
3/2/2018 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Tai Po Kau (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Tai Po Kau Carpark)	☆☆	Forest birds
4/2/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Mai Po Nature Reserve (12yrs old & above only / Registration Required) (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
11/2/2018 (Sun)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on Feb 9 on Discussion Forum)		
25/2/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Nam Chung and Luk Keng (08:00 Pavilion at junction of Nam Chung Rd & Luk Keng Rd)	☆☆	Forest birds & Waterbirds
3/3/2018 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	Shing Mun (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:30 Kiosk at Pineapple Dam, Shing Mun Reservoir)	☆☆	Forest birds
4/3/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Mai Po Nature Reserve (12yrs old & above only / Registration Required) (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
11/3/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (08:00 Tai Po Kau Carpark)	☆☆☆	Forest birds
18/3/2018 (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

Outing Type	Outing Fee for HKBWS Member	Outing Fee for Non-Member	Registration
	Free of Charge	Free of Charge	Not required
	Free of Charge	HK\$30 (\$10 for student 18yrs old or below)	Not required
	HK\$60 (Student Member: HK\$30)	HK\$120	Registration required

Outing Booking Slip

I would like to register the following HKBWS outings:

** HKBWS will re-confirm with contact person of their attendance 1 week 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*	Required information for Mai Po Outing only	
						Meeting Point (Kln Tong/MP)	Age Group (✓ where appropriate)
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs
							<input type="checkbox"/> 12 yrs & above <input type="checkbox"/> Below 12 yrs

** 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 Yellow, Red or Black is hoisted (or is expected to be hoisted) by the Hong Kong Observatory 1 hour before outing, 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

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仙八色鸊
何建業
何文田

Fairy Pitta
Kinni Ho Kin Yip
Ho Man Tin

25/04/2017
DSLR Camera, 200-500mm f/5.6 lens



三寶鳥
潘士強
蒲台

Oriental Dollarbird
Jason Pun
Po Toi

01/10/2016
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens

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Short-tailed Shearwater
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