

bulletin  
會員通訊

246

Winter 2017 ~ 冬



# HKBWS

香港觀鳥會  
The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society





銅藍鶇  
陳昕穎  
龍虎山

Verditer Flycatcher  
Chan Yan Wing  
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20/02/2017  
DSLR Camera, 300mm f/4 lens

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# The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

A charitable organization incorporated in Hong Kong with limited liability by guarantee.

## bulletin 246

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## A big thank you from HKBWS in all these 60 years of bird protection



The society has organised a celebration reception for its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We were honoured to have Dr. Leung Siu Fai, JP, Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation warmly presiding over the event. Dr. Leung presented his appreciation of HKBWS' development from an interest group to a conservation organisation. He encouraged HKBWS to work more on bird protection in the future.

Over 100 partners in the community, members as well as honoured guests attended and shared stories behind bird conservation. Our first mini fundraising charity sale was setup in the reception where we raised \$16,588 - all proceeds go directly to bird conservation.



## Tracking the losing Yellow-breasted Bunting: Ringing programme in Long Valley

*The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, an influential book written by Elizabeth Kolbert, notes with alarm that we are now experiencing Anthropocene extinction: mass extinction of many species due to human activity. We, humans, have an unarguable role in flora and fauna loss, and we continuously diversify our impact. The rapid loss of wildlife is not a distant issue to citizens like us in Hong Kong. In a degrading environment marine wildlife is impacted by intensive trawling, and habitat loss due to reclamation projects. On land, there is illegal logging and harvesting of organisms with high economic value such as Incense trees and endangered animals.

Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*) is one of the most threatened species in Hong Kong. It's a small migratory passerine which breeds in large parts of Russia, Ukraine, Mongolia and northern China, and winters in South and Southeast Asia. Every year, Yellow-breasted Buntings pass through agricultural land in mainland China and Hong Kong. Since Yellow-breasted Buntings migrate in large flocks, they have been hunted extensively for food in China. This intensive and unsustainable exploitation has pushed the species to the edge of extinction. Recently, BirdLife's Globally Threatened Birds Forum urged an immediate need of conservation action, and uplisted the species to Critically Endangered.

In November 2016 a joint-party workshop was co-organised by the BirdLife International, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society and the Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, China. The workshop aimed



Individuals of Yellow-breasted Bunting in various ages were captured throughout the study. A male individual born this year was captured on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

at conceiving an International Conservation Action Plan under the The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) for the very threatened Yellow-breasted Bunting. The Action Plan would hopefully benefit other small migratory landbirds as well. One key decision in the workshop was to identify migration pattern of the species, using ringing and colour banding.

Long Valley, situated in the northern district of Hong Kong, constitutes the largest area of continuous agricultural land (ca. 37 ha) within the territory. It has been identified as one of the most important habitats for migratory birds locally, especially to farmland specialists. Yellow-breasted Bunting has regularly been recorded at Long Valley in migration seasons, especially after the re-introduction of paddy rice culture under the Nature Conservation Management Project of Long Valley since 2006. This autumn, we have initiated a bird-ringing programme in Long Valley in order to survey and capture Yellow-breasted Buntings and other farmland birds in a systematic way.

We performed eight banding sessions in Long Valley from October to November this year. A total of 21 Yellow-breasted Buntings were captured. We have mounted a metal ring and an engraved colour band on their legs for each individual, which serves like an identity card in order to trace their movement or migration in future.



Mounting of colour ring on a Yellow-breasted Bunting.

Yellow-breasted Bunting is facing the risk of extinction  
caused by illegal human consumption

Immediate rescue action is needed

Press Release 6 Dec 2017

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) announced their most updated Red List of Threatened Species yesterday (5 December) and the status of Yellow-breasted Bunting (YBB) was uplisted from "Endangered" to "Critically Endangered". Mr. Yu Yat-tung, Research Manager of HKBWS, noted sadly that, "Within 14 years, the status of YBB has been uplisted 4 times and it is facing the risk of extinction. A species population decline at such a speed is rare. If there is no immediate action to stop illegal hunting and to conserve the species, this bird will eventually become extinct in the wild". In response to the extinction threat, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) has set the year of 2018 as the "International YBB Awareness Year". The society will continue their efforts in local, regional and global conservation work to protect the YBB. At the same time, we will encourage the general public to participate in the campaign and promise not to eat YBB. Dr. Ko Wing-man, former Secretary for Food and Health, strongly supports this conservation action and acts as the Ambassador to help promote the conservation of YBB in Hong Kong. He also urges, "Support local agriculture and stop eating YBB".

Conservation works on Yellow-breasted Bunting

Birdlife International, HKBWS and Sun Yat-sen University co-organised a conference on the conservation of YBB in November 2016 at Guangzhou. It aimed to formulate the conservation framework and actions for the conservation of YBB and to reduce the human threats to this endangered species. An important recommendation was about strengthening the bird ringing works, so as to collect more data of the migration routes of YBB for the formulation of its conservation strategies.

Mr. Yu Yat-tung continued today, "In order to carry out the promised actions, HKBWS has started bird ringing works in Long Valley this autumn (2017). We aim to systematically collect data of YBB and other farmland birds, such as their migration routes, stopover time, populations and their wintering grounds. During October and November this year, we ringed 21 YBB with metal and coloured rings. Each ring has a unique code, just like their identity cards, for tracking their movements and migrations patterns. YBB was constantly recorded during the whole study period and we believe YBB has a longer migration period than other buntings. Meanwhile, we come across only several ringed YBB, which means their period of stay at Long Valley could be very short and other YBB constantly pass through Long Valley. The Society together with other bird watching societies and conservation groups in China and Asia countries are currently promoting the conservation of YBB and encouraging bird watchers to report sightings of ringed birds."

Ms. Vicky Yeung, Project Manager of HKBWS, explained, "Long Valley is located in the North District of Hong Kong, a flood plain of about 37 hectares between River Beas and

Shek Sheung River. It is also the largest piece of active farmland remaining in Hong Kong. HKBWS and the Conservancy Association has started wetland conservation projects in Long Valley since 2005, and introduced rice paddies since 2009. The number of YBB recorded in Long Valley since then has risen slowly, this is a proof that rice paddy is important to YBB which stops, rests and recharges before continuing their long migration journeys. To conserve YBB in Hong Kong, "Stop eating YBB" is not enough to converse it, we are also required to promote local agriculture so as to provide more suitable habitats for YBB."

Yellow-breasted Bunting situation in China

Ms. Vivian Fu, Manager of Development and China Programme of HKBWS, said "In the 60s and 70s, YBB was very abundant in China and even considered as pests. The Chinese Government even encouraged the public to kill them. Such massive killing became more vigorous as YBB was thought to be nourishing like "ginseng in heaven" and turned to be status symbol. Sanshui municipality in Guangdong province even organised "The YBB Festival" in which millions of birds were consumed each year. Although protection of this species was stepped up by law in recent years, there is still illegal trading of YBB happening in the country. It is still not hard to find restaurants serving YBB secretly. According to a recent paper published in Conservation Biology in 2015, the illegal hunting of YBB in China was the main reason for its road to extinction."

To tackle the problem of illegal hunting, HKBWS started a conservation project along the coast of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces in 2014. We helped to build the capacity of awareness-raising and monitoring works of local conservation groups, and encourage public to report illegal hunting or trading to the government in order to stop the illegal hunting and consumption of wild animals. In 2017, HKBWS started to collaborate with NGOs in mainland China to carry out monitoring and education programmes, so as to educate the public about the threats YBB is currently facing and to encourage the public to participate in the conservation activities.

Future Actions

HKBWS will continue to work with other environmental NGOs in the future to promote the conservation of YBB. We are also going to set the year of 2018 as the "International YBB Awareness Year". HKBWS will continue to plant rice paddies in Long Valley to support local agriculture and to provide a stable and ideal habitat for YBB. We will conduct research in cooperation with other conservation organisations from where YBB migrates, so that more information about the ecology and distribution of YBB can be collected. These data is also important in the formulation of conservation measures for YBB.

Lastly, we would like to urge the Hong Kong Government actively supports local agriculture, and the relevant departments applies to CITES (Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species) to include YBB to their Appendix of the convention, in order to have legal control of the trading of this threatened species.



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A metal ring with unique number and an engraved color ring "A65" were mounted on the legs of a male Yellow-breasted Bunting for future identification

Yellow-breasted Bunting was regularly captured throughout the study period and we expect a longer passage period for the species based on our previous observation. We had no recapture of Yellow-breasted Buntings, which may indicate that there is a continuous influx of migratory buntings and each individual only had a brief stay in Long Valley along their journey.

Buntings (*Emberiza* spp.) formed a major component in the bird assemblage utilizing the paddy rice in Long Valley: we have captured 24 Chestnut-eared Buntings, 3 Black-faced Buntings, 3 Little Buntings, 2 Black-headed Buntings and 1 Yellow-browed Bunting. Abundance and diversity of buntings were highest in the first week of November. Chestnut-eared Bunting was unexpectedly the most abundant species whereas no more than six individuals were present in Long Valley in each previous autumn. Other seed-eating birds were also dominant in the paddy fields, including 59 Scaly-breasted Munia s and 53 Eurasian Tree Sparrows. Insectivores were the second largest



Chestnut-eared Bunting was unexpectedly abundant in the rice paddy. Difficulty on individual identification was one of the reasons for low counts in previous surveys.

component in the assembly, whilst other bird guilds constitute a minor proportion utilising the rice paddy.

We are keeping an eye on any re-sighting of the banded birds. Bird-ringing is only the very first step of our entire study, engagement of birdwatchers in this joint-country collaboration is the key element leading to success. Re-sighting of birds would facilitate our understanding of the migratory pattern of the birds, for instance, timing or duration of migration, population estimate, and wintering grounds of the birds.

We welcome any report of re-sighting of banded birds when you come across in the wild. Even a single observation could advance our knowledge on this poorly studied group of birds, and help evaluating our effort of the Conservation Action Plan. Please email us any sighting or photographic reports to [yvicky@hkbws.org.hk](mailto:yvicky@hkbws.org.hk).



A Besra was captured on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017.



Birds other than seed predator were occasionally captured in our study. A White-throated Kingfisher was captured on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

## HKBWS and The Conservancy Association joint response to the investigation report of the Tai Po Market egret tree trimming incident



(1 December 2017) The tree trimming incident at Tai Po Market egret tree back in June this year has killed and injured 30 birds and destroyed many more nests. After six months, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) finally released the findings on the incident.

We are disappointed that the Tree Team of LCSD, being a government department specialise in tree management, failed to follow existing guidelines and performed poorly on tree pruning. At the same time, supervisors and front-line staff took no notice of breeding birds on the trees. This investigation report clearly reflects the seriousness of this incident. We urge the LCSD and related bureaux/departments look into the matter seriously and take immediate actions to improve.

1. Regarding the substandard performance of staff, the report described more on the wrong-doings of the frontline staff, but the inappropriate decisions made and responsibility bore by supervisors or other decision-making staff were not clearly explained. The report stated that actions were taken in accordance with the established departmental guidelines, yet without mentioning the specific disciplinary action taken. We are concerned LCSD would handle the case in a slipshod manner and thus do not have any deterrent effect. The deaths and injury of birds caused by the incident leads to the suspicion that the "Wild Animals Protection Ordinance" (Cap. 170) was breached. The Government should explain whether any prosecution actions would be taken.
2. The report clearly pointed out that the causes of the incident included lack of knowledge on wildlife protection and improper tree pruning practices. We consider that some of the short, medium and long term should not remain at the review stage but should implement the changes required. HKBWS published the "Guidelines for planning and carrying out construction works at egretries" in August 2016, and we strongly urge that related Government departments should adopt it as an internal guideline, to avoid the impacts of tree pruning or other works on breeding birds and nests.
3. We would like to reiterate that wildlife protection elements should be included into the assessment procedure before carrying out tree works, such as active search for wildlife or nests on trees. To avoid similar incidents occurring again, a notification mechanism should be established, such that works should be suspended if frontline workers discover any wildlife or nests on trees, and advice and assistance from AFCD should then be sought. Training to strengthen civil servants' awareness on wildlife protection should also be provided.
4. It is known that the tree trimming action at Tai Po Market egret tree resulted from a complaint about bird droppings, however, the report did not investigate in this. In fact, there are various bird-friendly ways to deal with the "inconvenience" caused by birds to the public, such as provision of education panels and notice boards which reminds the public not to disturb the birds, and construction of covered walkways. Communication between government departments, district councils, environmental NGOs and local community should be strengthened, so as to achieve a win-win situation where birds and people can live in harmony in the community.

## Education Team | Society News & Projects

An Education Team was formed in the year of our 60th Anniversary. We will focus on two aspects of our work, one is Art in nature education, and the second is kids nature education.

### Art in nature education

The education project "Hong Kong Biodiversity Sound Map" was kicked off in September this year. This education project focuses on "sound". The volunteer training was completed by November with 15 participants. We went to Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve for "Listening Birds and Nature Environment", and it was our first time to hold "Sound Walk and Sound Art Sharing" session with an artist group "Sound Pocket" in Tai Tam Reservoir. In the coming months, "Sound and Art" activities and events will be held for the general public and primary school students.

Please stay tuned with us by following the latest information in the bulletin and the HKBWS website online forum.

## Kids nature education

### "Nature Education Diversity in Schools"

Launched in November 2016, this project is now entering the second phase. We have visited 11 kindergartens to



Promotion for Kids Nature Education Activity

carry out 15 nature education activities between September and November 2017. In this phase, we also came up with providing outreach biodiversity seminars to primary and secondary schools. From September to November 2017, we gave 13 seminars in different schools. We also provided exhibition boards to enhance students' knowledge of Hong Kong biodiversity after the seminar.



Seminar on Hong Kong Biodiversity



Display of exhibition board in local secondary school

### "HKBWS x BMAB x Choi EE" The joy of Birding

Cooperating with Bring Me A Book™ Hong Kong and Choi EE, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society organised a series of reading and birding activities.

### "Talk – from birding to embracing nature"

A picture book is simple yet it provides an opportunity for people of all ages to enjoy and imagine. Mr. Liu Bor-leh, winner of the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award for his book "I See a Bird" together with Mr. Lam Chiu Ying, Hon. President, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society shared their points of view about nature observation in the talk.



Choi EE, Mr. Liu Bor-leh, Mr. Lam Chiu Ying



Talk – from birding to embracing nature

### "Book tour – finding birds"

After a story telling session given by Choi EE, we went out to Shing Mun River for birdwatching. Children were very enthusiastic to record their findings on the map. We hope that they can do more such observation in their daily life.



Bird Watching along Shing Mun River



Mr. Liu Bor-leh shared his drawings with the children



Little girl recorded her findings on the map



Bird Watching along Shing Mun River



## HK Fishpond Conservation Scheme

### Eco-tour guide training

The 4<sup>th</sup> Eco-tour guide training round finished in September. In terms of experience and age, the trainees were from very different backgrounds. Secondary students and retired teachers also engaged in the training. 25

applicants, including couples and a father and son, were selected coincidentally to join the training. The trainees are doing the practical training now. They will participate in some eco-tours and exhibitions to promote the ecological value of fishponds to the public. Our team would like to express our appreciation to all trainers and volunteers involved.



Mud dyeing workshop

### Study of local movement of waterbirds in Deep Bay



We initiated a new project to aim at collecting more data about utilisation of fishponds, wetlands or other habitats in the Deep Bay area. GPS tracking devices were setup on Chinese Pond Heron and Little Egret in order to investigate their use of, and time in

different habitats. Our researchers will trace the waterbirds regularly with the receiver. If you find any birds with trackers or rings during bird watching, please kindly inform us by email or Facebook.

Many people know that pond mud can be utilised for planting. However, it can also be used as dyeing raw material. A Mud dyeing workshop was organised in November where parents and children came together in a dry fishpond in Tai Sang Wai. They collected dry mud for dyeing in towel, scarf and T-shirt with creative pattern. During the process, participants understand more about the environment and operation of fishpond, as well as creating useful artworks.



## Hong Kong Wetland Park bird-ringing programme

We have collaborated with the Hong Kong Wetland Park to conduct regular bird-ringing sessions in the Park since last March (2017). A total of 401 birds caught included a handful of uncommon species in the Park, e.g. an Eastern Water Rail captured in late March and a Chinese Francolin captured in late October. We plan to extend the bird ringing programme, in order to improve our understanding on the ecology of the wetland birds.



Ringed Chinese Francolin in Hong Kong Wetland Park



### The 9<sup>th</sup> Bird Watching Guide Training Programme of the Crested Bulbul Club

The captioned training programme commenced in October 2017 with 42 elderly bird watchers enrolled in the course. The participants attended seven lectures and took part in seven outings in two months. Lectures covered an introduction to Hong Kong's nature conservation, bird watching dos and don'ts, safety tips for outdoor activities, identification of common birds in parks, farmland birds, forest birds and water birds, as well as birding and guiding skills. The new birders also practised watching birding outdoors at key bird watching spots. They were excited and enjoyed themselves while observing birds. Some took the initiative in asking questions and diligently practised bird watching with telescopes. Others observed quietly and gradually became active under the influence of their counterparts. They understood that it is crucial for bird watching guides to play an active role in a guided tour. Upon completion of the training, the new birders still had to undergo an assessment and practise outdoors. They filled a classroom when sitting for a written examination, bringing back memories of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination.

## 2018 Membership Card

Membership cards for 2018 feature images of Chinese Barbet. This new card was sent to all 5-year members in early December. Many thanks to the following volunteers & members for their design work and photos:

Designer: Ms. Puk Yuk Yin

Photographer:

Mr. Kwan Long Hei, Matthew (Front) &

Mr. Chan Kang Ming, James (Back)



2018 Membership card ~ front & back

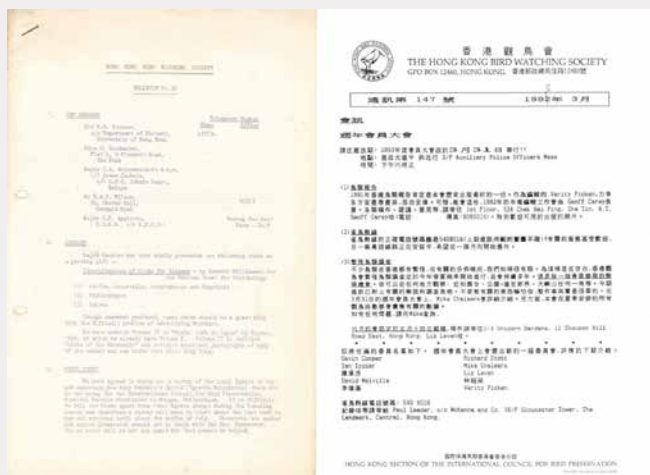
## Bird Watching Course

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Elementary Bird Watching Course for Beginners was completed in early December and gave training to 37 members and birders. The next course will be held at the end of February and includes 5 indoor lectures and 4 outdoor outings and covers various topics on bird ecology, bird watching & bird identification skills. Please visit the HKBWS website Discussion Forum for details and registration.

## New Arrangement for Bulletin

Since the initial issue of our Bulletin, 246 issues have been published in the past 6 decades. This Bulletin has changed a lot since the beginning, ie from an irregular publication to a regular quarter issue, from black & white text only to coloured pages, from a letter of a few pages to a magazine of 30 to 40 pages, from English only to bilingual English and Chinese. We have used recycled paper for printing and have provided electronic copies in recent years. These changes were made not only as a result of rapid development of the Society, but also change of people's reading habits and values, and advancement of technology. Our Bulletin will make a further step in 2019 to become a pure electronic one so that consumption of resources can be minimised, e.g. paper, energy and finance, to promote green life style. Those resources saved from this will be used for other issues and conservation work.

For those members who have subscribed for printed version of Bulletin will still receive their hardcopies until end of 2018. However, those who renew or newly apply their membership after November 2017 will only receive the electronic version, which is bilingual and applies to all member types.



Past Bulletins in different years

## EU-China NGO Twinning Programme – Learning wetland conservation from the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site

HKWBS, together with WWF Germany Wadden Sea Office has joined the EU-China NGO Twinning Programme this year. This Programme is an exchange programme for the staffs of European and Chinese NGOs. There were 12 teams to participate this year, and HKBWS is the first NGO from Hong Kong to join the programme. of HKBWS, I was twinned with Miss Anja Szczesinski, Programme Officer of WWF Germany - Wadden Sea Office. The main objective of this exchange was to promote the protection of coastal wetlands by sharing ideas, approaches and practices on bird-related education and awareness activities. I had a study trip for four weeks in the Wadden Sea between June and July. Afterwards, Anja stayed with HKBWS and visited mainland China between September and October.

The European Wadden Sea and the Asian Yellow Sea regions have a lot in common. As the protection of the Wadden Sea has a history of over 50 years, there are lots of precedents to learn from. During my stay, I had a lot of opportunities of experiencing. For examples, I participated in a National Park Ranger-guided “World Heritage Discovery Cruise”, visited at least 13 Wadden Sea visitor Centres in Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands, and joined one of the popular activities, the mudflat walk, as well as their waterbird surveys. In addition, with my well-networked partner, I have a chance to meet people from the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, learning about the Trilateral Cooperation of the Wadden Sea and the trans-boundary coordination in this UNESCO World Heritage Site. I also met many staff of other NGOs and institutes which involve in the Wadden Sea conservation and management. It was a very fruitful and inspiring trip, and what I learnt can be shared with colleagues.



*Vivian and Anja from WWF Germany Wadden Sea Office*

As Anja's work focuses Environmental Education and Ecotourism, when she visited Hong Kong, we brought her to see our Long Valley and Fishpond Management Agreement Programmes, visited other NGOs like Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden and Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong. Anja also gave a talk to other environmental education workers in Hong Kong to share her work. In addition, we had a trip to mainland China to meet relevant people and organisations related to wetland conservation as well as nature reserves in the Yellow Sea Region.

The exchange programme has come to an end, but it will not be the end of our exchange, as there are still lots in common between the Asia flyways and the European flyways to consider for future joint activities.

About EU-China NGO Twinning Programme: <http://www.eu-china-twinning.org/>

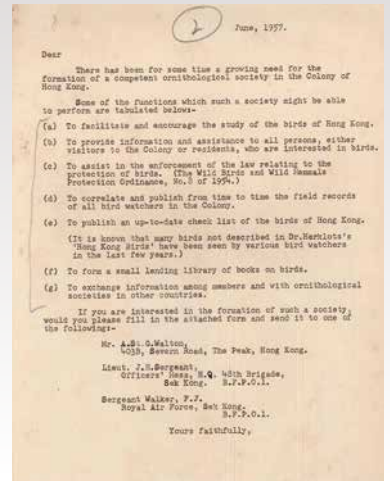






# The 60-year journey of the HKBWS

CY Lam (Honorary President of HKBWS)



Before the establishment of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS), there was an organisation named “Biological Circle” in Hong Kong. It was found in 1949 by the famous biologist J.D. Romer, after whom the Romer’s Tree Frog was named. Most bird watchers in Hong Kong got to know one other through J.D. Romer. Among them Arthur St. George Walton was the most experienced, having started bird watching in Hong Kong around 1946. At that time, there were not many reference books so that it was difficult for bird watchers to make progress. In 1953, The Biological Circle published the “Field Notes on Hong Kong Birds” and the South China Morning Post published Herklots’ “Hong Kong Birds”, which helped to improve the situation.

In 1956, Walton, a government official who lived at Severn Road on the Peak, befriended J.H. Sergeant and F.J. Walker of the British Forces Overseas in Hong Kong and they often went bird watching together. They found that the reference books on Hong Kong birds were not comprehensive enough and that bird records in Hong Kong should urgently be collected and archived systematically, to serve as the basis to advance the knowledge of Hong Kong birds. Hence, in June 1957, they proposed setting up Hong Kong’s own “Ornithological Society”. The Society would systematically study Hong Kong birds as well as attract more people to take up bird watching. The team sent out invitation letters to people potentially interested in birds. A meeting was convened in August. Fifteen persons came and apart from the only Chinese, Mr. Yip Wing Hong, all were expatriates. The Biological Circle proposed that a bird sub-group be set up. However, after much discussion, the feeling was that it would be more effective to have a separate organisation focussing on birds. Hence, it was decided to establish the “Hong Kong Bird Watching Society”. Perhaps our founders thought that the name “Ornithological Society” was too high-minded sounding such that it would hinder promotion work while “Bird Watching Society” was more down to earth.

Looking back after 60 years, the two guiding thoughts at the inception of HKBWS, namely: research and popularisation, were indeed a wise choice. They mutually enhanced each other. Popularisation of bird watching leads to more bird watchers, and as a result has increased number of bird records. Records accumulated over the years have facilitated research. Apart from increasing the number of species on the Hong Kong bird list, we also better understand the seasonal changes and long-term trends of the bird communities in Hong Kong. This is an excellent demonstration of “citizen science”. The choice of the name “Bird Watching Society” over “Ornithological Society” was such an act of deep meaning.





members of the HKBWS were the key people of the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong (WWF) at its inception in the 1980's. HKBWS members also raised some one million dollars each year, by participation in WWF's innovative Big Bird Race, to raise funds for the purchase of gei wais at Mai Po.

Mike Webster was the HKBWS Chairman in 1974-1981. He worked as the Head of English teaching at the British Council and was highly passionate about nature conservation. He was also a founding member of the Conservancy Association. Mike believed that conservation in Hong Kong should not be solely led by expatriates and that it ultimately depended on the participation of local people. Thus he emphasised promotion among the Chinese communities. He taught the "Birds of Hong Kong" course at the department of extramural studies (now known as SPACE) of the University of Hong Kong. I joined the HKBWS after attending his course. Under his encouragement, the HKBWS started organising Cantonese-speaking outings in 1977, and introduced coach transportation to bird watching sites. The outing group typically assembled in Kowloon Tong at 8:00am, a rather late hour of the day compared with 6:30am assembly at Mai Po in the past. This was against the traditional wisdom of "early start for good birding". It was however unavoidable as most members did not own cars. Eventually, it was found that the late start did not affect the pleasure of bird watching. Around 1990, I started to deliver bird watching courses in Cantonese at WWF, which added a few local Chinese members to the Society. They turned out to be the new generation of birders and agents to promote bird watching in Hong Kong.

After years of continuous effort, the HKBWS grew in both member numbers and the proportion of Chinese members. In Hong Kong's handover year of 1997, there were about 300 members and more than half of them were Chinese. Compatible with the arrival of the new era, I also became the first Chinese chairman until 2004. During my time, I made it a point to strengthen the work on nature conservation. In 1999, the government announced the east rail spur line project with an overhead railway cutting through Long Valley wetland. This would cause a grave impact on the wetland. The HKBWS initiated a campaign to oppose the proposal, and it received broad community support. As a result, the railway was re-designed and built with an underground tunnel under Long Valley. The incident raised the profile of the HKBWS significantly and resulted in the formation of the Conservation Committee charged with the responsibility of monitoring the conservation agenda in long-term.

The repercussions of the Long Valley campaign in 2000 included the appointment of super proficient Carrie Ma as the Society's first full time staff member. It laid a solid foundation for the staff team later on. The HKBWS also had an office for the first time and volunteers had a place to gather. As the business of the Society expanded and diversified, more committees were established, including the Membership Affairs Committee, Conservation Committee, Education and Publicity Committee, the Crested Bulbul Club Committee and the China Conservation Fund Committee. In response to the interests of individual members, several volunteer-led research groups were set up, covering Black Kite, Black-faced Spoonbill, Terns, Egrets, Swallow and White-bellied Sea-eagle. In the past decade, our staff and volunteers have organised numerous projects as opportunities arose. They have done great work to conserve birds; their contributions are highly treasured. The HKBWS has also disseminated information to the media from time to time, to inform the public, thus raising the profile and enhancing the credentials of the Society. This results in more projects and members to the Society. In 2017, the number of members was some 2,000.

Looking back over six decades, other organisations like the "Biological Circle" (mentioned above: later renamed as the "Hong Kong Natural History Society") did not prepare for the Hong Kong 1997 Handover as the HKBWS did. As a result, they remained tiny groups dominated by expatriates, without significant growth in membership. In the case of the HKBWS, we have held on to our philosophy of the past 60 years, carrying out research, promotion and conservation simultaneously. We create knowledge for science, value for the Hong Kong society and energy for our own organisation. The key to our success has been the foresight and pioneering spirit of our senior members in promoting bird watching to the local Chinese community in the early days and providing suitable conditions for local Chinese members to gradually take over the running of the Society. It enabled the Society to absorb the impact of expatriates leaving Hong Kong around the time of the Handover and to sustain the long-term development of the HKBWS with strength gained from its engagement with the local community.

While the charm of birds contributes significantly to the strength of the HKBWS, it is also dependent on the synergy of our persistent efforts in research, promotion and conservation, the foresight of our seniors, the persistent efforts of countless people and an organisational structure which favours both division of labour and cooperation. In the absence of any of these factors, we would be doomed. I sincerely hope that we will all remember this as we journey into the future.



## Major Habitat Restoration at Gei wai #16/17

WWF-Hong Kong started a major habitat restoration at gei wai #16/17 in July 2017. The main aims of the restoration project were to desilt the perimeter water channel, rebuild the artificial islands, create new small islands in front of bird hides and restore the open water areas by clearing invasive vegetation. Due to the impact of Typhoon Hato, the work was delayed and was only completed in mid-October 2017.

Before the restoration, there were three big artificial islands in the middle of gei wai #16/17. One was located in front of the eastern bird hide, one in front of western bird hide, and one between of these two islands. These islands were gradually washed away by strong winds and water currents in past years, and thus reduced the area which can be used by waterbirds. After more than three months restoration work, the islands are now linked up and are finger-shaped, which increases the area with different water depth for waterbirds to forage along the island edges as well as reducing the area for terrestrial vegetation to grow. New small islands were also built in front of bird hide #5. Visitors can watch the waterbirds at a short distance now.



Satellite image of GW#16/17 before the habitat restoration work  
(Source: Google Earth)



Satellite image of GW#16/17 after the habitat restoration work  
(Source: Google Earth)

## Reconstruction of sluice gate at Gei wai # 22

A sluice gate is an important facility to control the water level of a Gei Wai. By opening the sluice gate during high tide or low tide, the water level of the Gei Wai can be adjusted to provide favourable habitat for different wildlife. Due to soil erosion by seawater, the structure of Gei wai #22 sluice gate was damaged and thus it could not be used for water level management. Reconstruction was started in mid-September 2017.

Sluice gate reconstruction is a new challenge for WWF-Hong Kong as we have not carried out any similar work before. Under the coordination of colleagues with contractor, the work was successfully completed before November 2017. The sluice gate of Gei wai # 22 has now returned to normal. WWF Hong Kong has also gained precious experience in reconstruction of sluice gates from this project.

Sluice gates of Gei Wai in the Mai Po Nature Reserve have a history of more than seventy years, and most of them have various problems due to soil erosion. In the future, we will continue to study how to properly repair and maintain them.



Gei wai #22 sluice gate after the completion of reconstruction

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07/10/2017

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紫綬帶  
何文顯  
何文田

Japanese Paradise-Flycatcher  
Ho Man Hin Peter  
Ho Man Tin


10/10/2017  
DSLR Camera, 300mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



淡腳柳鶯  
何建業  
米埔

Pale-legged Leaf Warbler  
Kinni Ho Kin Yip  
Mai Po

17/09/2017  
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



白喉林鶯  
何建業  
何文田

Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher  
Kinni Ho Kin Yip  
Ho Man Tin

08/09/2017  
DSLR Camera, 300mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



橙頭地鸲  
薛國華  
大埔滘

Orange-headed Thrush  
Sit Kwok Wa Leo  
Tai Po Kau

15/09/2017  
DSLR Camera, 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 lens



褐翅鴉鵂  
余伯全  
米埔

Greater Coucal  
Ractis John  
Mai Po

30/07/2017  
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 2x teleconverter



# African raptor viewing, the 3rd episode: Scavengers in the Savannah

Text/Photo: Samson So



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*Size can be of significant variation among different vulture species, left is Lappet-faced Vulture, Hooded Vulture is on the right.*

Africa has diverse habitats compared with other continents, which makes it an ideal place for raptor lovers. The Mara-Seregeti Ecosystem is located between Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa. Besides the natural wonder of animal migration, savannah here provides a foraging ground for herbivores, of which then support lots of predators. Carcasses, no matter left behind by predators or died of injury or diseases, are the staple food of scavengers and also offer important energy sources to the food chain. Vultures flocking to gobble down a corpse is often broadcast in documentaries. When we see vultures circling up in the sky, we might come up with an impression that they are the most common birds of any type in Africa.

Documentary clips usually show pictures of vultures with blood all over their faces, heads and necks probing in and out of dead bodies, and living scavenging lives. Vulture may not be a favourite of birdwatchers or nature lovers. In fact these birds are usually neglected, and furthermore suffered from misunderstanding and prejudice. Their body structures and living habits are the result of natural selection over the millennia. Their extremely specialised diet makes them the scavengers of the environment, maintaining the ecological balance.



*African White-backed Vultures juvenile has similar feather colour with young Ruppell's Griffon Vulture. It can be very difficult to distinguish them in the wild. The one in the photo shows rather round-shaped wings and a less visible seventh slotting. It may be an African White-backed Vulture.*

*Hooded Vultures wingspan is relatively short and the slotting is less visible.*



*Hooded Vulture's (Necrosyrtes monachus) pointed and small beak is suitable for pecking meaty bones on carcasses.*



*Lappet-faced Vulture (Torgos tracheliotos) is the largest vulture in the Eastern Africa.*

Among Family Accipitridae, 15 species of vulture depend on carrion (excluding Palm Nut Vulture with staple food of palm nut) and they have acquired very similar basic body structures. They have long and broad wingspans, are able to make use of uprising air currents to cover long distances searching for food, the slotting on the edge of primaries helps to reduce turbulence. The feet of vultures are specially adapted. Their blunt and short talons no longer suitable for hunting live prey, instead the thicker soft footpads are more suitable for walking. Visual acuity is their key sensation to locate food. While they are searching for prey or carcasses up in the air, they are also paying attention to other vultures in the air. Once they observe another vulture descending for food, they go instantly to the spot.

In the Mara-Seregeti Ecosystem, Lappet-faced Vulture is the largest among all vultures. Its wingspan can reach 2.6 meters, apart from its wedge-shaped tail which is readily identifiable in flight, its huge beak (to tear open animal skin) and the adult bird's purple red coloured head are standout features. Posting an interesting contrast with it is Hooded Vulture, lightly built with about 1.6 meters wingspan and with small beak which enables it to clean up all the meat on and between bones.

Two other types of vultures with highly similar outlook often encountered in savannah are Ruppell's Griffon Vulture and the African White-backed Vulture. To differentiate these two adults, pay attention to both the colours of the bills and the inner side of the wings. Ruppell's Griffon Vulture's beak is light fresh colour whereas African White-backed Vulture's beak is black. However, their juveniles are with similar colours and it is difficult to tell the differences in the field. Wing shapes and slottings can help to identify flying individuals. African White-backed Vulture has rather round-shaped wings and a less obviously visible seventh slotting. Ruppell's Griffon Vulture has longer wings and seven obvious slottings.



*Lappet-faced Vulture's wedge-shaped tail and huge beak differentiate the species from others.*





A flying Ruppell's Griffon Vulture reveals scaly markings underneath the wings.



White-backed Vulture  
(Gyps africanus)



A flying African White-backed Vulture adult shows remarkable white color underneath wings.



Vultures are definitely the "silent contributors" of the ecosystem. They take up the role of nature scavengers, efficiently cleaning up animal carcasses, reducing chances of disease transmission, maintaining a healthy ecological balance. Yet human beings are their biggest threat. In fact vultures are one of the most threatened bird groups in the world. There are twenty two species of carnivorous vultures, but sixteen of them are globally threatened with substantial drops in number. The India and African continents are the most affected areas. Among the four species of vultures we introduce here, Lappet-faced Vulture is listed as

Endangered by International Union for Conservation of Nature. Hooded Vulture, Ruppell's Griffon Vulture and African White-backed Vulture are even categorised as "Critically Endangered". Should vultures vanish from the ecosystem, the chain reaction can be destructive. Just like human habitation without cleaning workers, our environmental hygiene will suffer, with all types of infectious diseases getting out of hand.

Amongst all factors, human poisoning is the main reason causing dramatic drop in vulture populations. Vultures actively search for carcasses for food. This may also disclose the location of the poached animals as well as the poachers. In certain parts of Africa poachers will poison the carcasses and thus kill many vultures flock to the place. At the same time, vegetation of the nesting sites are affected by slash-and-burn as well as grazing activities. Lack of public concern on vulture conservation makes the situation even worse.



The wildebeests that lost their lives while crossing the Mara River become an important source of food for vultures.





*Vultures inter-species confronting behaviour.*



*Vultures intra-species confronting behaviour.*

Every natural creature has its niche in the ecosystem. No matter what is the impression of vultures in the mind of the public, their importance remains unchanged. Diversity and numbers are the indicators of a healthy ecosystem. Birdwatching is the process to know life, experience life and respect life. Learning to appreciate these things brings fulfilment.

Raptors are a significant indicator in an ecosystem. The joy of observation and the challenge of species identification, make raptors the favourite targets of lots of nature lovers. Samson So spends roughly three months' time a year in African countries, leading trips and taking pictures. Samson sincerely hopes that this series of three anecdotes can arouse people's interest in birds in this area. For more photos and articles shared by Samson So, please browse "Samson So Photography" and "Eco Institute Ecology" on Facebook.



*Staying next to a large animal carcass is the best tactic to see different vultures.*

# Three Crested Bulbuls Birding in Malaysia

## April 8-21, 2017

Text/photo: Bill Man



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### Day 1 – Apr 8

We arrived Kuala Lumpur in the afternoon and checked into Corus Hotel so we could go visit the neighbouring landmark, the Petronas Twin Towers. Entering the park in front of the towers, the first bird we saw was Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Then we saw some Large-billed Crows circling around the fountain, with others standing on the coralbean trees. House Swifts were flying high in the sky, Barn Swallows flying low; and a Black-naped Oriole flew past just above our heads. After dinner, we went to the park again to photograph the night scene of the Towers and the Music Fountain, but we were met with rain. We waited until after 21:00 when the park was about to close, and security guards began asking people to leave. The fountain was still flowing and music playing, and we continued to take pictures on our way out.

### Day 2 - Apr 9

Setting off at 06:45 we arrived at the mangrove area in Kuala Selangor Nature Park after about an hour's drive. The sun was already high in the sky, several Large-billed Crows greeted us from a tree in the distance. The bird guide told us to sit down by the roadside where there was a trail that led to a small wood, and wait for the Mangrove Pitta. First to appear was a squirrel, followed by an Ashy Tailorbird, jumping here and there; then an Oriental Magpie Robin and a Fantail. We waited for over half an hour before our target, the shy Mangrove Pitta, finally appeared.

We left the wood and walked to a deserted lawn. We found a Blue-throated Bee-eater on a small branch, and several Oriental Pratincoles sunbathing on the lawn. After I had enough shots of the bee-eater, I tried to get nearer to the pratincoles, but they were scared by my move and took off, I grabbed the opportunity for some shots of them in flight. With the help of the guide, we also saw Savanna Nightjar and Red-wattled Lapwing. As we moved towards the coast, we encountered Brown Shrike, Long-tailed Shrike, Zebra Dove, Black-naped Oriole and over a dozen Barn Swallows standing on dead mangrove branches. We heard the pecking sound of a Pygmy Woodpecker.







In the afternoon we drove to Pulau Indah, it began to thunder after 14:00 and everyone was sweating heavily. When we reached the Hooded Pitta's favourite spot, we found it standing in the dark under the thick grove about twenty feet away from us, cool and still. We waited for more than an hour, it came out only three times, showing its face for less than a minute in total. In contrast, a pair of Oriental Magpie Robins appeared from time to time to show us that they were very much in love. On our way out we encountered Banded Woodpecker and White-rumped Shama.



When we got close to the Park office, we saw on the canopy of a dead tree several Pink-necked Green Pigeons, Little Green Pigeon, Javan Myna and a Blue-throated Bee-eater. Suddenly the guide of another birding group pointed to a tree in a distance. An Oriental Pied Hornbill was there, but it only stayed for less than a minute and was gone. Another Black Hornbill took its place, but soon took off and flew to the forest far ahead, we watched until our eyes became dry. There's no sign of the rain stopping, and we decided to call it a day.

### Day 3 – Apr 10 Jalan Cerdas

In order to see the broadbills, we arrived at Jalan Cerdas at 07:30 (we departed from hotel and drove for about an hour on the highway, then walked uphill for another hour). We saw five or six nests on our way but mostly construction was still in progress, that meant we might be able to see a broadbill returning with nest materials. Further up the hill by car we finally met a Silver-breasted Broadbill returning with nest material. After we had lunch at Bandar Seremban, we went to a hillside in Titi in search of Scaly-breasted Bulbuls. Unfortunately, the bulbul didn't appear, only four Whiskered Treeswifts stood on very high branches, there were no clear pictures for us.

### Day 4 - Apr 11 Japanese Garden, Bukit Tinggi

The bird guide led us deep into the garden where there was a camouflage bird hide. We sat and waited for the Chestnut-headed Partridge and the Mountain Peacock Pheasant. There was also a White-rumped Shama, Buff-rumped Woodpecker, Siberian Blue Robin, Orange-bellied Trogon and Tiger Shrike. In the afternoon we saw Black-throated Babbler, Yellow-bellied Bulbul, and White-bellied Woodpecker. On this day we had breakfast and lunch at Bentong, and it was late when we checked into the hotel at Fraser's Hill.







## Day 5 – Apr 12 Fraser’s Hill

We stayed at the Silver Park Resort. This was a good location, we harvested 18 species of forest birds, including Red-headed Trogon, White-tailed Robin, Fire Tufted Barbet, Grey-throated Babbler, Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush, Large Niltava, Long-tailed Sibia, Black-throated Sunbird, Streaked Spiderhunter, Hill Partridge, Emerald Dove, Streaked Wren Babbler, Orange-Bellied Leafbird, and Greater Yellownappe.

## Day 6 – Apr 13 Lipis

We arrived early at the park. There was a pool of dead water hardly flowing, it was covered with dead leaves and moss, no sign of life, no dragonflies. On our return, we saw a column of army of ants near this pool. We left the pool and went back to main road, when the guide suddenly said he heard calls of the Banded Kingfisher, we were full of hope. While searching for the kingfisher, I saw a raptor standing on the canopy of a large tree on the highest hilltop far away, and turned immediately to the guide for identification. He replied teasingly “it’s

a Blyth’s Hawk Eagle 99 miles away.”. In three hours endless searching and waiting, both the female and male Banded Kingfisher appeared but not together. Although they appeared a few times, we were unable to have a clear good view because of their small sizes and the obstruction of large branches and big leaves. On our way out, a Black Hornbill flew by high above our heads.

We entered Gua Musang National Park in the morning looking for a pitta, four hours passed with no result, we gave up and left for lunch. Returning in the afternoon, we saw a Black Starling, Short-tailed Babbler, Yellow-bellied Bulbul and a White-rumped Shama male with chicks. We waited for three hours and still the Garnet Pitta didn’t come, instead heavy rain came. Luckily we were hiding in tents. At dinner time, rain was still pouring, we made a hard decision to return to the park betting on the chance of seeing a frogmouth. Luckily the rain stopped around 20:30 when we arrived at the park to join another group of fellow birders. The other team’s bird guide had us rounded up in front of a tree and shone a light on it, and, as if he had placed it there himself, the bird appeared. There were fourteen of us in total, there’s not much room to move around and we had to keep a distance, so I only managed to see it’s back. Apparently disturbed by our noises and lights, the frogmouth flew away. I didn’t think we’d see it again that night, but 10 minutes later, the guide went to the other side of the wood and said the bird might be on one of those trees. Just when we’re about to move, the guide said it’s back again, on the same tree. We moved again and it was there, same place. My guide took me to another spot for a better view, but the frogmouth was standing quite high on the tree, so we could only see part of it. We watched until it flew away again, this time it didn’t return, and our night birding session was over.



## Day 7 – Apr 14

We went several rounds on the street before a breakfast shop opened at 06:00. We went to Gua Musang National Park again, and saw Ferruginous Babbler, Buff-throated Bulbul, Yellow-bellied Bulbul, and Short-tailed Babbler. There was another fruitless search for the Garnet Pitta. After lunch we went to another spot by a lakeside in bright sunshine. We saw fourteen bird species in the grove by the shore, including Grey Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, two Purple Herons, Blue-throated Bee-eater, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, and Spotted Dove. While both the White-throated Kingfisher and Blue-eared Kingfisher just stood on power lines, the Crested Myna and Baya Weaver were busy building nests. As we went further, we found a Pink-necked Green Pigeon, Little Green Dove, and Scaly-bellied Green Woodpecker. Later on, we got a phone message saying that the Garnet Pitta had appeared at Gua Musang in mid-afternoon, but we were already in another city, Ipoh.



## Day 8 – Apr 15 Ipoh

We went to a cave called Sam Poh Tong, where the locals pay respect to their ancestors near its entrance. Opposite to the entrance there were many hanging nests, which the Baya Weavers were building busily. On a large tree by the entrance, groups of Asian Glossy Starlings stood on the canopy, male, female and juvenile. Suddenly a larger sized bird flew past, it was a barbet. The bird guide went crazily after it and saw it went into a tree hole not far from us to the left. We moved quickly under the tree looking for a spot which would produce a good shot of the barbet getting in and out of the hole. I didn't get many clear shots though, it moved too fast and getting clean focus was difficult.

We returned to the main entrance of Sam Poh Tong and saw four Java Sparrows resting on the outside wall. This is another cave with limestone formations and Buddhist statues. We went past a stall that sold drinks and came to a place called Kek Lok Tong, another park on the other side of the hill.

A Blue Rock Thrush stood on the rock decorations and at times flew around above visitors' heads. Then we played hide and seek with a Blue-eared Kingfisher for a while and later encountered a Common Iora. We were attracted from afar by its bright yellow, but it kept a distance standing on a large tree and we were unable to get any closer. We went to the other side of the park and heard the calls of a Plaintive Cuckoo. Then a male Crimson Sunbird drew us to the flowerbed.

After lunch we went to a small garden inside a Guanyin temple. The guide showed us a family of three Collared Scops Owls in a bamboo grove. Later we found a male Crimson Sunbird around the flower trees, and spent much time decreasing battery power but increasing CF card storage. A Zebra Dove on the ground attracted zero attention.

At night we stayed in a fishing village in Kuala Gula. After dinner the guide took us to see owls, they stood on power lines along the road, there were two within a kilometre. We had a count of three in total for the night, but all were Barn Owls. This place had little light pollution







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and the sky was clear with stars, unfortunately the clouds began to gather not long after we had our cameras ready. We went home after 15 minutes.

### Day 9 – Apr 16 Kuala Gula, Brahminy Kite by the sea

We were up early but the boat we booked wasn't ready, so we went searching for birds near the swamp. Found the usual guests: Plain Prinia, White-collared Kingfisher, Jungle Crow, and Common Myna. Then we

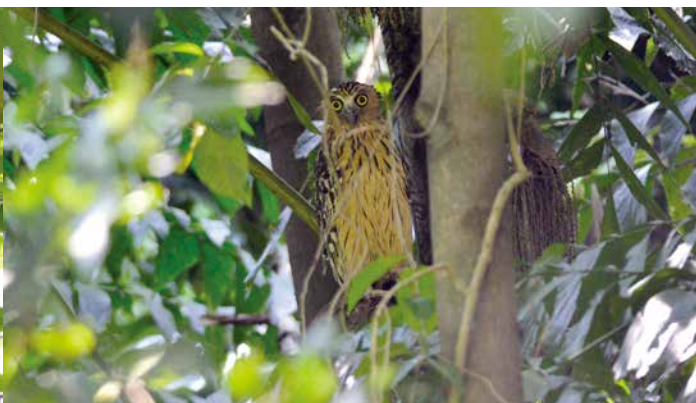
got lucky, a Crested Serpent Eagle with a snake in its claws stood on top of the mangrove not far from us. We had the luxury of recording its feeding time with a blue sky background. We couldn't move away until the eagle had finished eating breakfast. The next birds to appear at the mangrove were a female Crimson Sunbird and a Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker. Finally it was time for us to get on the boat.

The boat sped off and took us to a swampy area, where we saw Osprey, Brahminy Kite, Black-capped Kingfisher, all perched among the mangrove. Further away on a mudflat, there were two foraging Lesser Adjutants. After we had enough shots of the two giants, we moved forward to the more open waters (Air Hitam Dalam Educational Forest). Many Brahminy Kites gathered in this area, some resting on treetops, some flying in the air. Our target was to film their hunting action over water, of course by offering bait. As soon as the boatsman threw out some small fish, the sky was covered with kites, some dived swiftly close to the water surface, grabbed the fish and put into their mouths. In about half an hour, the baits were all gone, and the kites started resting on treetops for a good digestion. We also moved on to our next stop.

In the afternoon we went to Bukit Mertajam, saw the Barred Eagle Owl, Buffy Fish Owl and Mangrove Blue Flycatcher. Then we moved on towards Butterworth town, here we found Spotted Wood Owl, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, and Black Thighed Falconet.

### Day 10 – Apr 17 Butterworth

We drove through a small road with many winds and turns and finally arrived at the reserve. Inside the forest area, few species were found, only the Mangrove Blue Flycatcher, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher and Olive-Winged Bulbul. When the guide heard calls of the Ruddy Kingfisher near the mangrove, we had to run from end to end to catch a glimpse of the bird. Later while we were waiting for the Ruddy Kingfisher, we got some shots of the Black-naped Oriole and the Greater Coucal in flight. The guide also found us a Spotted Owl and a Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, not bad for one morning.





In the afternoon in the other side of the reserve, we saw a young photographer with a couple taking wedding pictures. Luckily we were going on different tracks and didn't get in the way of each other. We saw the Greater Flameback, Scaly-bellied Green Woodpecker, Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker, White-collared Kingfisher, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Malkoha, and Copper-throated Sunbird.

We then went to a park near our hotel by Taiping Lake, although it was drizzling, we still found the Long-tailed Parakeet, Lineated Barbet and Eurasian Siskin. There were ten Milky Storks living inside this park.

### Day 11 – Apr 18 Taiping

In the morning, our guide stopped the car on a common looking small road, where we saw a Lineated Barbet, followed by a Golden-whiskered Barbet. It became quiet and we left. While our car was heading towards a forest, we heard a new call, we followed it and found two Black and Yellow Broadbills.

In the afternoon, we went back to the river we had visited four days earlier, Sungai Balang, around Ipoh. This time we targeted another tree hole. While we're waiting for the Black-thighed Falconet by the river, a Green-billed Malkoha suddenly appeared. Despite its coucal-like large size, it jumped quickly from one spot to another on the tree, and it was difficult to see its full appearance. The falconet also showed its face, literally, only peeping out from the tree hole.

### Day 12 - Apr 19 Kuala Lumpur

Our trip was near to its end, we returned to KL and visited the Eco Forest Reserve. We saw Rhinoceros Hornbill, White-crowned Hornbill, Banded Broadbill, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Pin-striped Tit Babbler, and Orange-backed Barbet. After lunch we went to see the Black-thighed Falconets again, but they continued to show just the faces and we were unable to see them flying in and out of the tree hole. On the same tree, though, a Dollarbird kept flying in and out another hole, and at times stood on the tree top. Naturally, we changed our target to shoot the Dollarbird in flight. And the Golden-whiskered Barbet.

In the afternoon we went to a pond in the forest to try our luck with the Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher. Unfortunately the sky turned dark with the smell of heavy rain, so we packed up at 17:00, the earliest time to wind up so far.



### Day 13 – Apr 20

We arrived at a village area with fish ponds and a small stream. A few birds were moving around in the trees: Orange-bellied Flowerpecker, Yellow-vented Flowerpecker, and Mrs. Gould's Sunbird. Then we went after a Blue-eared Kingfisher near a stream. Later the guide took us to buy Raja Kunyit durian, and each of us ate one kilogram of it.

In the afternoon, we went to a park in search of the Asian Pied Starling, then to a pond inside a park to see White Pelican, Egyptian Goose, Painted Stork, White-headed Munia and Crested Serpent Eagle. A thunderstorm came at 16:30, it became very dark and we ended early again.

The rain stopped after we returned to the hotel, and we had a local seafood dinner with the guide at Food Street to bid farewell. Our hotel tariff included dinner and breakfast, so we went to the restaurant just for dessert to get our money's worth. The waiters thought we were strange.

### Day 14 – Apr 21

We had a 'lazy' morning getting up at 07:00. We checked our luggage one more time before the car that we booked arrived to take us to the airport.

## July

- ▶ A stormy and wet month brought reports of a male **Russet Sparrow** at Long Valley on 15<sup>th</sup> (JAA), the first to be found in summer if adjudged wild, and a **Malayan Night Heron** at Sam A Tsuen on 21<sup>st</sup> (KS per LW), a new locality for this rare and local summer visitor.

- ▶ Waterbirds reported at Mai Po included six **Little Terns** on 6<sup>th</sup> (JAA), a **Gull-billed Tern** on 10<sup>th</sup> (JAA), 287 **Greater Sand Plovers** and 39 **Terek Sandpipers** on 12<sup>th</sup> (DAD) and, at the month's end, a **Northern Pintail**, an **Asian Dowitcher** and a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** on 29<sup>th</sup> (JAA).

Visits to San Tin fishponds in late month recorded a **Common Teal** and two **Whiskered Terns** on 27<sup>th</sup> (DAD), the latter by 12 days the earliest autumn date, and 58 **Little Ringed Plovers**, 132 **Common Redshanks**, 120 **Wood Sandpipers**, 25 **Curlew Sandpipers**, seven **Red-necked Stints** and eight **Long-toed Stints** on 28<sup>th</sup> (DAD).

- ▶ Over-summering bird still present from June were the **Black-headed Gull** and **Mongolian (Caspian) Gull** at Tsim Bei Tsui on 9<sup>th</sup> (RWL) and the **Temminck's (Japanese) Cormorant** on the Ninepins on 24<sup>th</sup> (KS per LW).

- ▶ About 100 **Roseate Terns**, all apparently adult except for one juvenile, were photographed congregating on a concrete jetty at Mui Wo on 30<sup>th</sup> (KW).

## August

- ▶ This was a hot and stormy month, with temperatures on 22<sup>nd</sup> reaching 36.6 C at the Hong Kong Observatory in Kowloon and 39 C at Tin Shui Wai and successive tropical cyclones passing close to the territory on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

As detailed below, the storms generated some interesting reports. In addition, there was a record count of 223 **Collared Crows** going to the roost at Mai Po on 30<sup>th</sup> (KL), 50 more than the previous highest count.

- ▶ Coverage of Shuen Wan Landfill the previous day recorded 116 individuals at a pre-roost (RWL, CW). It would be interesting to know if other roost-sites exist, perhaps somewhere in Sai Kung or Clearwater Bay, or on an offshore island.

A recent Forktail paper has put the total global population of this species at under 2,000 individuals and recommended that its threat status be uplifted from Near-Threatened to Vulnerable (Leader et al. 2016).

- ▶ The month brought earliest ever autumn dates for two species – a **Black-winged Cuckooshrike** at Tai Po Kau on 22<sup>nd</sup> (MK), the earliest by 22 days, and an **Oriental Plover** at Lam Tsuen on 27<sup>th</sup> (JAA, DT), the earliest by 5 days.

- ▶ A high-speed boat trip into southern waters in search of rare seabirds on 9<sup>th</sup> led to sightings of a mystery bird, possibly a storm-petrel, and also two **Aleutian**, two **Common**, three **Little** and a **Bridled Tern** (PJJL).

Severe Typhoon Hato, the most powerful storm to affect the territory since the late 1990s, tracked northwest from the Philippines to come within 60 km of Hong Kong on 23rd before making landfall near Macau.

- ▶ Storm-driven birds included two **Streaked Shearwaters** at Cape d'Aguilar (GT) and 20 **Aleutian Terns** at Pui O (YM), but the major surprise was a flock of over 100 robust, sea-faring terns, mostly **Bridled** with one **Sooty** and one **Aleutian Tern**, which were flying around the Lam Tsuen Valley, some 4-5 km inland of the coast (JAA, DT).

- ▶ Severe Tropical Storm Pakhar passed Hong Kong on 27<sup>th</sup>, following a similar track to Hato. weaker but much wetter storm, it brought a different suite of birds, with **Black-winged Stilts** being particularly prominent.

- ▶ Birds reported on the coast during its passage included a **Red-footed Booby**, 75 **Black-winged Stilts**, 20 **Pacific Golden Plovers**, 20 **Black-tailed Godwits**, and a **Great Knot** at Cape d'Aguilar (GT), and a **Greater Crested Tern** at Cheung Chau (MDW).







- ▶ Inland, 65 **Bridled Terns** roosted with waders, including the early **Oriental Plover**, 177 **Black-winged Stilts**, 28 **Wood Sandpipers**, a **Marsh Sandpiper** and two **Long-toed Stints**, all gathered on grassland at the She Shan end of the Lam Tsuen Valley (JAA, DT).

A **Common Redshank** was also heard flying over the valley (DT), and seven **Bridled Terns** were found at Shek Kong Catchwater, fully 8 km from the nearest coast (JC).

- ▶ In addition to the **Black-winged Stilts** at Cape d'Aguilar and Lam Tsuen, there were also 40 at Tso Wo Hang (PJJ) and 38 at Discovery Bay (EMSK), bringing the total for the day to 330, all at unusual sites.

- ▶ Among very few migrant passerines reported during the month were a **Grey Wagtail** at Lai Chi Chong on 19<sup>th</sup> (RWL, AN), an **Arctic Warbler** at Tai Po Kau (JAA) and single **Amur Paradise Flycatchers** at Sai Kung (AB) and Pak Sha O (GJC) on 20<sup>th</sup>, and a **Yellow-rumped Flycatcher** at Ho Man Tin on 25<sup>th</sup> (KPC), all the first of the autumn.

- ▶ With regard to rarer summer visitors and residents, an adult **Eurasian Hobby** and three fledglings were found at Man Kam To on 9<sup>th</sup> (SY), the adult was photographed performing a successful aerial food pass with one of the young on 13<sup>th</sup> (KH), and single **Bay Woodpeckers** were noted at Pak Sha O, a new site, on 21<sup>st</sup> (GJC) and Tai Po Kau Headland on 25<sup>th</sup> (RB).

## September

- ▶ This was a good month for **Tiger Shrikes**, with at least six reported, all singly: at Tai Po Kau on 1st and 15<sup>th</sup> (MK, per MLT), Ho Man Tin on 7<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> (M&PW, KPC, CFL), and Mai Po on 9<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> (CM, PJJ). Passage of **Siberian Blue Robins** was also good following the arrival of the northeast monsoon in mid-month, with singles at Mai Po, Ho Man Tin and Po Toi (CM, CFL, GW), two at Lau Shui Heung (DAD), and four at Tai Po Kau (CC), all on 16<sup>th</sup>, one at Ng Tung Chai on 17<sup>th</sup> (EMSK), and two at Mai Po on 18<sup>th</sup> (PJJ).

- ▶ Other birds reported at Mai Po NR or in front of the boardwalk during the month included a **Swinhoe's Egret** from 2<sup>nd</sup> (KCWL), the earliest autumn record by 32 days, a **Thick-billed Warbler** and a **Styan's Grasshopper Warbler** on 9<sup>th</sup> (CM, DJS), a **Nordmann's Greenshank** from 10<sup>th</sup> (KCWL), a **Manchurian Reed Warbler** and a **Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler** on 12<sup>th</sup> (JAA), the latter only the 6<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong record, a **Baikal Bush Warbler** on 18<sup>th</sup> (PJJ), 490 **Garganey** on 22<sup>nd</sup> (DAD), a **Mongolian Gull** on 23<sup>rd</sup> (DAD), possibly an individual which over-summered, and six rather early **Blue-tailed Bee-eaters** on 26<sup>th</sup> (JAA).

- ▶ Elsewhere in the Deep Bay area, the over-summering adult **Black-headed Gull** was seen again at Tsim Bei Tsui on 10<sup>th</sup> (RWL) and there were reports of 107 **Intermediate Egrets** at Lok Ma Chau on 15<sup>th</sup> (PJJ), a record count for Hong Kong, five **Himalayan Swiftlets** at Tin Shui Wai on 19<sup>th</sup> (CFL), also a record count for Hong Kong, and a **Malayan Night Heron** at Tin Shui Wai on 29<sup>th</sup> (CFL), the first for the Deep Bay area.

- ▶ Ho Man Tin attracted a variety of migrants. In addition to those already mentioned, sightings included a **Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher** and a **Blue-and-white Flycatcher** on 7<sup>th</sup> (KH, PKK), a **Thick-billed Warbler**, two **Pale-legged Leaf Warblers** and a **Grey-streaked Flycatcher** on 9<sup>th</sup> (SY, M&PW), an **Oriental Cuckoo** on 16<sup>th</sup> (CFL), two rather early **Black-naped Monarchs** on 18<sup>th</sup> (KPC), an **Orange-headed Thrush** on 19<sup>th</sup> (KPC), and a **Pechora Pipit** on 22<sup>nd</sup> (PH).

- ▶ Among migrants reported at other sites were single **Brown-breasted Flycatchers** at Shek Kong Catchwater on 5<sup>th</sup> (DAD) and Lamma on 30<sup>th</sup> (JAA), an **Eastern Crowned Warbler** inside a shopping mall at Mei Foo on 10<sup>th</sup> (M&PW), an **Ashy Minivet** near Hong Kong University on 12<sup>th</sup> (HT), the only report of the month, a **Slaty-legged Crane** on an urban Kowloon patio on 20<sup>th</sup> (SY), 12 **Dollarbirds** at Lam Tsuen the same day (JAA), a **Lesser Cuckoo** at Po Toi on 21<sup>st</sup> (PH), a **Forest Wagtail** on southwest Lantau on 28<sup>th</sup> (YM), the only report of the month, and two flocks of unidentified raptors totalling 60 birds which were seen distantly over the Soko Islands the same day (YM). Except for Amur Falcons, which come through in flocks much later in the season, sightings of flocks of 20 or more raptors in autumn are very rare.

- ▶ A **Brown Fish Owl** regularly appeared near the Cheung Chau waterfront from 1<sup>st</sup> (MDW)



## Outings

Date	Duration	Time and site	Difficulties (1...3)	Target species
6/1/2018 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	<b>Long Valley</b> (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Outside Maxim's MX, Sheng Shui Rail Station)	☆☆	Farmland and water birds
14/1/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	<b>Shek Kong</b> (08:00 Exit C, Kam Sheung Road West Rail Station)	☆☆	Forest & farmland birds
21/1/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	<b>Long Valley</b> (08:00 Pavilion beside public toilet at Yin Kong Village)	☆☆	Farmland and water birds
27/1/2018 (Sat)	TBC	<b>Wild Card Day</b> (Details will be announced on Jan 25 on Discussion Forum)		
3/2/2018 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	<b>Tai Po Kau</b> (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Tai Po Kau Carpark)	☆☆	Forest birds
4/2/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	<b>Mai Po Nature Reserve</b> (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	<b>Wild Card Day</b> (Details will be announced on Feb 9 on Discussion Forum)		
24-25/2/2018 (Sat-Sun)	24 hrs	<b>Hong Kong Bird Watching Day 2018 Cum Bird Race Fundraising Event</b> (Details to be announced on Discussion Forum)		
3/3/2018 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	<b>Shing Mun</b> (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:30 Kiosk at Pineapple Dam, Shing Mun Reservoir)	☆☆	Forest birds
4/3/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	<b>Mai Po Nature Reserve</b> (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	<b>Tai Po Kau</b> (08:00 Tai Po Kau Carpark)	☆☆☆	Forest birds
18/3/2018 (Sun)	TBC	<b>Wild Card Day</b> (Details will be announced on Feb 9 on Discussion Forum)		
25/3/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	<b>Po Toi Island</b> (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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綠鷺  
駱正華  
米埔

Striated Heron  
Lok Ching Wa Kevin  
Mai Po

10/09/2017  
DSLR Camera, 400mm f/2.8 lens + 2x teleconverter





三趾濱鷸  
房遠榮  
南丫島

Sanderling  
Fong Yuen Wing  
Lamma Island

22/03/2016  
DSLR Camera, 120-300mm f/2.8 lens + 2x teleconverter



流蘇鷸  
潘士強  
米埔

Ruff  
Jason Pun  
Mai Po

03/04/2016  
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