



# HKBWS

香港觀鳥會  
The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society





栗喉蜂虎  
何建業  
米埔

Blue-tailed Bee-eater  
Kinni Ho Kin Yip  
Mai Po

28/04/2017  
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens



栗喉蜂虎  
陳志華  
米埔

Blue-tailed Bee-eater  
Chan Chi Wah  
Mai Po

29/04/2018  
DSLR Camera, 500mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter

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# The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

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## Meeting Yellow-breasted Bunting in Mongolia

Conservation brooks no delay! Another bird species has been listed as Critically Endangered.

Black-faced Spoonbill was once on the edge of extinction 24 years ago. With a series of conservation actions taken by many East Asian countries, its numbers rose to 3,941 in 2018. It shows that we actually can save a bird species from extinction.

There has never been an easy way to save birds in all these past years, but success has given us an incentive to do more and do better for birds.

In 2017, the status of Yellow-breasted Bunting (YBB) was upgraded to Critically Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. HKBWS set the year 2018 as “the Year of Yellow-breasted Bunting”. Apart from a series of conservation and awareness activities in Hong Kong, our Research Manager YU Yat-tung (Tung) set off to the Khurhk Valley of Mongolia, the “home” of YBB, to conduct research. The research aimed to increase our understanding on the breeding condition, abundance and distribution of YBB as well as to track the bird’s migration path.

This is Tung’s first overseas research on terrestrial birds. With reference to the successful experience of Russian researchers, he opted for starting the research in the breeding site of YBB. He started his 14-day trip to Mongolia on 5th June 2018. There 4 days in transit leaving 10 days for his research in Mongolia.

In these 10 days, Tung began his day at six and travelled an hour on a rugged road to get to the breeding site of YBB every day. The work was done in a shrubland with willow (*Salicaceae*) plants, a favoured habitat for YBB to nest and breed. Tung paid extra attention to YBB’s calls. It was an important hint to search for the bird. Once a YBB was roughly located, Tung and other researchers set up a mist net quickly

and played the bird's song to attract the YBB. All they needed to do then was to wait. When a YBB was caught, Tung quickly untangled the bird and recorded the necessary information. After putting on a tracker or a colour ring on the bird, it was released.

The first 5 days of research were a success. Despite YBB there becoming more and more cautious seeing mist nets set up in their nesting ground, Tung still managed to catch them as the birds would not abandon their nests built in the site. Even they spotted something "odd" there, they would still come back. Tung managed to put Geolocators on 8 male YBB. Only the males were fitted with Geolocators while females were given a ring only because the solar driven Geolocator would not function properly if the female shaded it during incubation. Therefore, more accurate data would be collected by putting the Geolocators on males rather than on females.

A Geolocator is not the same as the "GPS tracker" that we put on Black-faced Spoonbill. It is a locator that records time exposed to sunlight. From the length of exposure, we can estimate the bird's location with respect to latitude and longitude. With that, we can collect data about the bird's migration route or pattern when we retrieve the Geolocator.

Things didn't go on as smoothly as earlier for the last 3 days. With 2 Geolocators remaining, no YBB was caught. Tung observed that the males stood high up on tree tops but showed no courtship behaviour towards the playback calls. He suggested that the short courtship period of YBB lasted only for a week within a year. For those males that have successfully found their mates, they would be nesting already. Those that were not paired up were the "losers" in this breeding season. Of course weather would be another crucial

reason accounting for this. It was really windy on the last 3 days and birds were not even willing to fly around. These all added up making Tung worried with the 2 Geolocators in his hand. Luckily, all 10 Geolocators were put on birds successfully with patience in the last hours of the trip. There were total 10 males carrying the Geolocators and 5 females with rings.

We do not have much knowledge about the migration of YBB. We do have records for their places of occurrence. However, we do not know their exact migration route, how long they stay in between stops and the group size of them migrating together. Answers to these questions would help us to protect YBB from extinction by coming up with conservation plans and actions in places that are important to YBB.

Last year, the research team of HKBWS started ringing YBB in Long Valley of Sheung Shui. According to last year's information, YBB stay in Hong Kong for about 12 days during their migration. Currently, only Japan has started research on YBB. We are still contacting other countries to take part in the conservation of the bird to gather more information about its migration.

Past researches reveal that breeding birds return to the same location to breed in subsequent years. This tells us that we might find those same YBB individuals tagged if we go to Mongolia next year. By retrieving the Geolocators, we can find out where those individuals have been travelling during the past year.

Yellow-breasted Buntings, see you next year in Mongolia in the breeding season!





## We need your help!

Conserving Yellow-breasted Buntings is not solely a researchers' job. Every one of us can get involved! You may take part in local farming activities or help with planting rice in Long Valley. You can also protect Yellow-breasted Buntings with your power of consumption by buying local food. There are also many local products worth supporting, like Mooncakes made with Long Valley lotus seeds.

There was a very famous local product in Hong Kong in the 1950s, the Yuen Long Jasmine Rice. It was so popular that it was even exported to the U.S. However, many paddy fields are now abandoned or changed to other land uses, such as open storage. With the continuous decrease of rice production in Hong Kong, today we can only buy rice from supermarkets which is imported from places like Thailand, Vietnam and Mainland China.

Apart from just conserving Yellow-breasted Buntings, it is even more important for us to conserve their habitats. What we can do is to SUPPORT LOCAL AGRICULTURE. Let's grow our own food together, love this piece of land and the living creatures that share it with us!



## Rice growing growing

This summer, not many typhoons affected Hong Kong which was good for rice growing. However, thunderstorms and heavy rain continued during the rice harvesting period. Weekend rice harvesting activities were cancelled and rice harvesting was arranged urgently during weekdays. We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to more than 40 volunteers, staff of HKBWS and The Conservancy Association who worked in the muddy fields under hot and humid conditions. We were able to complete the harvesting work on time and let farmers prepare the farmland for the next planting season.

This year is the International Yellow-breasted Bunting Awareness Year. In the coming Autumn, research and promotion on Yellow-breasted Bunting (YBB) will be continued. During 22-28 October, an exhibition on YBB and wetland conservation of Long Valley will be held at 1/F, Pier 7, Central Terminal Building. Please come and visit us. In addition, in order to collect more data on the migration of buntings, our research



*These are ringed Yellow breasted buntings at Long Valley last year. Please let us know if you see them again.*

team will continue bird ringing work at paddy fields in Long Valley from October to December. To avoid disturbance on research work, some of the farmlands and paths will be blocked. Bird watchers and photographers may need to use other paths. We apologise for the inconvenience caused.



*Rice harvesting is harsh but all of us enjoyed it so much*





## Eco-fish on the market

Eco-fish has been established since last year, many of us have tasted the succulent mullet we have raised in Eco-fishponds.

We are proud to announce that “Eco-fish can be found on the market” again!

For those who were lucky enough to taste it last year, you have got to have it again because this is going to be fuller, fresher, healthier than ever, because we have raised them with extra love and care in the past few months. Keep watching HKBWS’ website and forum for the latest retail information.

## “Eco-fish for all”

As you know, Eco-fish was established for birds, and for humans as well as the planet. Everyone tries our very best to protect the environment because we love it, and we are a part of the planet, we have to love it and share the resource it is providing to everyone. Thus Eco-fish is for everyone. Share the love, donate Eco-fish and bless the under-privileged, more blessing will come to you.

Join “Eco-fish for all” and donate \$300, we will send 10 catties of Eco-fish to under-privileged social service users through our supporting organisation network.

Donate now! Spread the love!

For more details, please visit <https://cms.hkbws.org.hk/cms/index.php/ecofish-donation>

## School Painting Competition “Fishpond Biodiversity on Old Banner

In Hong Kong, 10,000 tonnes of solid waste are deposited to landfill every day. 20% are plastic waste. Some reports reveal that many wild animals have ingested plastic waste, sometimes leading to death. In order to encourage school to upcycle used plastic material into new artwork, we have organised a School Painting Competition. The theme is fishpond biodiversity. It aims at promoting abundant wetland natural resources and beautiful fishpond scenery to students and Hong Kong people. Wetland wildlife such as waterbirds, herpetofauna, insects and mammals will be introduced in the painting. Besides, Waste reduction and environmental conservation will be promoted through the competition.

For more details, please visit our website. Primary and secondary students are welcome to join the competition. All winning artwork will be displayed during the Fishpond Art Festival (in Jan 2019) and Fishpond Festival (in Feb 2019).

## “Hong Kong Headline Indicators for Biodiversity and Conservation 2015-2017” highlights systemic failures in conserving HK’s biodiversity Weakening planning controls and poor enforcement threaten key habitats

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) released “*Hong Kong Headline Indicators for Biodiversity and Conservation 2015-2017*”, which demonstrates how a weakening of planning protection for green zones and years of poor enforcement are undermining significant recent progress in other areas of biodiversity conservation in Hong Kong.

Now in its fourth edition this report uses data from Government departments and other authoritative sources to provide the only systematic review of the state of Hong Kong’s biodiversity and the effectiveness of conservation action to protect it.

Mr. Apache Lau, Chairman of HKBWS said, “Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and Environment Bureau have made progress in launching their Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) as a broad framework for conservation under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). However their good intentions are being compromised by the Government’s persistent failure to effectively enforce against trashing of ecologically-important sites and the disgraceful undermining of the zoning that protects our biodiversity<sup>i</sup>.”

The data presented in this year’s report again shows that weaknesses both in the laws themselves and in their enforcement are limiting the Government’s ability to prevent the trashing<sup>ii</sup> of habitat. It also shows that the approval rate by the Town Planning Board of large numbers of developments in Agriculture (61%) and Green Belt (48%) zones - despite the fact that both zonings carry a presumption against development<sup>iii</sup>.

During the preparation of this report HKBWS noted an associated trend for the Government to rezone Green Belt sites for development purposes. This process was initiated under former Chief Executive CY Leung, along with assurances that only degraded sites of “*insignificant buffering effect and relatively low conservation value*”. The reality is very different, with several well-wooded sites that host important species and have significant buffering value being targeted<sup>iv</sup>. This issue has become more significant as the Government is now actively seeking to develop land inside Country Parks, with the same hollow assurances that only land of low ecological value will be developed<sup>v</sup>.





*Kam Tin buffalo field in 2000 (left) & Kam Tin buffalo field in 2018 (right)*

So the Government has not only failed to initiate the necessary changes in policies and legislation to halt ecological degradation of important habitats, it is actively pursuing the development of sites that will inevitably accelerate the rate of ecological loss. This runs directly contrary to the intent of Hong Kong's own planning laws and conservation policies, but also the national direction under the Greater Bay Area initiative for a "green and healthy living environment" and the Ecological Protection Red Line system for conservation and the CBD at the international scale."

Ms. Woo Ming Chuan, Senior Conservation Officer of HKBWS added, "The Government's track record of rezoning GBs give the public no cause for trust and confidence that its stated intention to develop the Country Parks would be limited to areas with '*relatively low*' ecological and public enjoyment value. Indeed the failures of process already emerging in relation to the Country Parks further undermine the appearance of the Government's sincerity. We urge the public not to select the Country Park option in the land supply consultation, as this would only lead to even more destruction and disturbance to protected areas, and at the same time undermining and challenging the Country Parks Ordinance."

The Report also highlights how ongoing habitat destruction continues to threaten native species, leading to a loss in Hong Kong's biodiversity<sup>vi</sup>. The peak count of waterbirds in the Deep Bay area continues to follow a declining trend, while some nesting colonies of breeding egrets and herons have been damaged, including the infamous incident at Tai Po Market egretty. Reclamation work of various approved development projects in North Lantau waters has driven the number of Chinese White Dolphin sightings in the area around the Brothers Islands to zero.

On the plus side, new conservation actions were proposed under the BSAP<sup>vii</sup>. These include commitments, supported by funding to:

- i. prepare and implement biodiversity management plans in Country Parks, Special Areas, Marine Parks and Marine Reserves,
- ii. compile a list of threatened species for Hong Kong to guide conservation actions,
- iii. formulate and review species action plans, and
- iv. increase the capacity for management of invasive alien species.

These are important steps to effectively manage and protect the biodiversity of Hong Kong. Progress was also made in the control of invasive species<sup>viii</sup>, the protection of globally endangered species such as combatting the illegal trade in ivory<sup>ix</sup>, and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into drainage and river revitalisation works<sup>x</sup>.

The HKBWS encourages members of the public who value Hong Kong's natural heritage to make written submissions to the Government (deadline: 26 September 2018) to object to the land supply options which would lead to irreversible environmental changes in Hong Kong. It is important to stop the current environmental degradation and consider other developed or formed land options first to ensure effective protection and conservation of Hong Kong's biodiversity.

The headline indicators in this report were developed based on the report "Nature Conservation: A new policy framework for Hong Kong" published by Civic Exchange in 2011, and were selected through discussions with environmental NGOs, academics, consultants, government officials and other stakeholders. The data used in the report was collected from Government departments, environmental NGOs and academics.

<sup>i</sup> p.39-40 of the Headline Indicator Report 2015-2017

<sup>ii</sup> p.5-9 of the Headline Indicator Report 2015-2017

<sup>iii</sup> p.18-22 of the Headline Indicator Report 2015-2017

<sup>iv</sup> p.19-20 of the Headline Indicator Report 2015-2017

<sup>v</sup> p.14-15 of the Headline Indicator Report 2015-2017

<sup>vi</sup> p.29-32 of the Headline Indicator Report 2015-2017

<sup>vii</sup> p.37-39 of the Headline Indicator Report 2015-2017

<sup>viii</sup> p.25-26 of the Headline Indicator Report 2015-2017

<sup>ix</sup> p.10-11 and p.35 of the Headline Indicator Report 2015-2017

<sup>x</sup> p.23-24 of the Headline Indicator Report 2015-2017

## Attractive volunteer activities from Volunteer Scheme

We have organised a series of volunteer gatherings since May 2018. We went birdwatching at Mai Po to learn about operation of fishponds and gei wais; we went to another Management Agreement project site- Fung Yuen Nature and Culture Education Centre to have wonderful time with butterflies and plants in nature. And we went to “Lamma Fisherfolk’s Village” to learn about the fishing industry and

fishermen’s lives. Most of us had bought some big ocean fishes as souvenirs and we had a great time there.

Coming is the Mid-summer night activity to catch the season of amphibians and reptiles, we together with our volunteers will search for amphibians and reptiles at Luk Keng, stay connected to HKBWS’ website: [www.hkbws.org.hk](http://www.hkbws.org.hk).

### Date & Activities

May	June	July	August	September
Mai Po visit	Fung Yuen Nature and Culture Education Centre	Lamma Fisher Folk	Fung Lok Wai fishpond nightwalk	Luk Keng visit
				



### Hong Kong Bird Report 2016

Hong Kong Bird Report 2016 will soon be finalised and is expected to be sent out by the end of October. An official announcement will be made in our Discussion Forum once the Report is ready. Preparation working of the Report is a tough task that requires a lot of input

and professionalism from the team of voluntary editors, translators and record submitters. The Society would like to express gratitude to all the volunteers who made this Report possible.

## Birdwatching without borders- Special needs Birdwatching training

The first ever movie with Pre-recorded Audio Description was released in August 2018, namely “Men on the Dragon”. Visually impaired people could enjoy the movie. And they could enjoy “birdwatching” too. Everyone has the right to enjoy the nature, and could be able to enjoy birdwatching, no matter hearing impaired, mentally impaired or anyone with any disabilities, we all have ability to enjoy nature through birdwatching. The Crested Bulbul Club will launch a birdwatching training programme with support of Environment and Conservation Fund and Environmental Campaign Committee in the coming two years. We will give free birdwatching training for special needs groups, activate their sense of birdwatching, to share the beauty of nature.

## Education Activities

### Nature Education

Funded by the Environment and Conservation Fund, an education program named “Nature Education Diversity in Schools” was launched in 2016. We introduce knowledge about and importance of Hong Kong biodiversity to local students, from kindergarten- to secondary-school students. By means of different activities, we would like to raise

students’ interest in nature. In 2018, we have already carried out 45 activities in kindergartens and 70 talks in primary and secondary schools. From the responsive school and student participation, we can see that both students and teachers are very interested in the natural topics.



Promotion leaflet for kindergarten activity



Promotion leaflet for school talk





## Education Activities



*Kids being more excited when taking a good look at animals they found*



*Some wildlife can only be seen by kids*



*Fruit bats are found right outside school*

### Kids Nature Education Activity

Our activities for kids are especially popular among kindergartens. We give a an interactive talk to kids and go out with them to explore the surroundings of their own kindergarten. We go “treasure hunting” with them to find out their “neighbours” nearby.

Never underestimate the biodiversity around kindergartens! In fact, many kindergartens are have a great wildlife diversity around (including birds). When kids pay a little bit more attention every day, sometimes they see more than we do! (Our staff’s comment: Try seeing things around you at kids’ height and angle, you’ll see something really different)



*Season limited! See that Spotted Dove nest above you*

### School talks for Primary and Secondary schools

Besides, we continue giving talks in different schools. With the use of daily examples, we introduce Hong Kong biodiversity to students from different grades and backgrounds of study. Besides giving general content for students from all levels in school assemblies, we were also invited by interest groups. Sometimes students know more than we expected! Thus we need to prepare better to inspire students with information they seldom get a touch of. (Our staff’s comment: The surprised faces of students when first seeing the “real” Rice Bird, Yellow-breasted Bunting, was really unforgettable)



*More in-depth sharing can be done with small interest group*

*Students participate actively in answering questions*



## China Projects



Our China Programme and Development Manager Vivian Fu finally left us after working in the society for almost 8 years. We wish her well. But she has not given up bird conservation. Instead she will move to the “East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership” to protect the birds in a broader area. Her successor Lai Nga Yee, Senior China Programme Officer, joined us in early September. Your support to her work is very important. Support China Conservation Fund:





# Mary Hotung Ketterer

IT'S YOUR DOLLARS  
I WANT - MILLIONS  
OF THEM!

With great sadness I must report that Mary Hotung Ketterer passed away on 9th April 2018. The world must say farewell to one of the great saviours of our environment.

Only due to her tireless efforts does the Mai Po Nature Reserve exist today. Mary had the vision to see how vitally important this green lung was, not only to Hong Kong and China but to the world. So easily Mai Po and Deep Bay could have been swallowed up in the frenetic development of the Pearl River Estuary. She spared no energy in drawing the powerful and influential to her mission. We have so much to thank her for.

Mary joined the fledgling Hong Kong branch of the World Wildlife Fund in 1982 as a full-time voluntary education co-ordinator and held that post for three years. In 1985 she became the Honorary Executive Director until 1992. Mary soon took the inexperienced administration by the scruff of the neck and transformed it into a powerful and influential organisation. WWF/HK became unafraid to tackle anybody that stood in the way of honest environmental concerns.

Until Mary's appointment there had been little attempt to educate the public, in particular schoolchildren, about the understanding and value of Hong Kong's countryside. Soon WWF/HK were employing education officers to spread the word. She attracted to her various committees and management bodies learned academics, professionals and hardworking volunteers that just wanted to see a greener and better Hong Kong. Mary was generous and charismatic. She encouraged many to offer their services and was a wonderful fundraiser – witness the Big Bird Races that literally raised millions for Mai Po and even made an entry into the Guinness Book of Records. She was instrumental in spreading the environmental message into China and in response new areas were opened up to invitees from WWF/HK. China listened and, for example, the Fu Tien Reserve, contiguous with Mai Po, was created. And all of this, Mary Hotung Ketterer did voluntarily. Not one penny did she take and if she travelled for WWF/HK, Mary purchased the ticket.

In November 1987, to honour her special services rendered to the flora and fauna of the world, Mary was awarded The Order of the Golden Ark by Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. Sadly, she did not receive any similar recognition from the Hong Kong Government for her outstanding contribution to conserving the territory's natural heritage.

When I reported Mary's passing to those that knew and worked with her, the tributes flowed in. There will never be another Mary Hotung Ketterer.



Fundraising For Mai Po  
Cartoon by Bob Ferguson in  
*Hong Kong's Own Big Bird Race 1987*



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Clive Viney  
14th June 2018



# Bird Ringing in Hong Kong

Text/Photo: Gary Chow

Bird Ringing, that is attaching a ring/tag onto a bird's legs, is a very specialised bird research activity, which involves capturing, ringing and re-capturing. If the bird is re-captured, researchers can get the information relating to bird's movement and its life history, like longevity, territoriality and moulting pattern. In Europe more than 4 million birds are ringed each year, but in Asia, bird ringing is still limited in scale.

Hong Kong is one of the few Asian places that has a long history of bird ringing activity. Bird ringing began here in the 1960s. Continuous but infrequent bird ringing activities brought bird watchers many new insights. In the 1980's and 90's, many "new for HK" bird species were found while bird ringing, such as Russet Bush Warbler, Brown Bush Warbler and Paddyfield Warbler. Owing to the skulking behaviour of these species, they were not possible to identify except in the hand.

Other than being used for amateur study, bird ringing has also been used for conducting PhD research in Hong Kong. Feathers and dropping samples collected from trapped birds have been used for bird ecology studies. But the most prominent use of local bird ringing and trapping techniques has been tracking of bird migration routes. In a classic example, endangered Black-faced Spoonbills were captured at Mai Po and fitted with satellite transmitters to trace their migratory route and preferred habitat.

Nonetheless, the most rewarding part of bird ringing activities is the recapturing or re-sighting of ringed birds, through which useful information can be retrieved. But for enhancing the recapture or re-sighting rate, we need to strengthen connections with other ringing stations in other countries. Whilst sightings of flagged waterbirds are regularly reported along the East Asia Australasian Flyway, the recapture of ringed land birds is relatively rare.

Along with the experience accumulated, bird ringing in Hong Kong has become more sophisticated. Since 2009, Hong Kong has used its own metal ring imprinted with Chinese characters "China Hong Kong". So if recaptured in other countries bird ringers can know the origin of the bird immediately. Besides, if there is any species where we want to learn more about its taxonomy, we can now collect feather samples for DNA analysis.

There are a few bird ringing teams conducting bird ringing concurrently in Hong Kong, mostly in Mai Po Nature Reserve but sometimes also in other places like Tai Po Kau. Bird ringing has been practiced in Hong Kong for a few decades, and we keep gaining useful knowledge and information from it.



*In 2016, we captured a juvenile Oriental Reed Warbler from Japan on 12th September. This individual has a ring imprinted "KANKYOSHO TOKYO, JAPAN 3F95886", thus we immediately contacted Yamashina Institute for Ornithology to search for relevant information. According to their reply, the juvenile was ringed a few days earlier on 5th September at river mouth of Tenryu River, Iwata, Sizuoka Prefecture in Japan, which is 2,700 km away from Mai Po Nature Reserve in Hong Kong. As this bird has spent only 7 days for this journey, it means the average speed is at least 385km per day!*

# Development of birdwatching activities in Mainland China and the input of Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

Text/Photo: Vivian Fu

Former Manager

(China Programme and Development)

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society



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Connections between the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) and mainland China go back more than thirty years. As early as the mid-1980s, members of the HKBWS had learned about birds in the mainland China via bird watching trips. Among the Hong Kong Chinese bird watchers, Mr. Lam Chiu Ying, Dr. Cheung Ho Fai and Dr. Ng Cho Nam visited Caohai ("Sea of Grass"), Guizhou in 1988. In the 1990s, they led some Hong Kong birders to watch birds in many other places in mainland China, such as Nankunshan and Chebaling in Guangdong, and various sites in Yunnan. Ever since the Chinese economic reform, bird watching reports and propaganda of mainland China have attracted more Hong Kong and overseas bird watchers to watch birds in mainland China, thus increasing communication with mainland bird practitioners.

Because of the high bird species diversity as well as the concern and support towards nature conservation in the mainland, two former Chairman of HKBWS Mr. Lam Chiu Ying Lam and Dr. Cheung Ho Fai, set up the China Conservation Fund (CCF) in 1999 to provide small grants for bird watching, conservation and research activities in China. Examples of CCF support include the construction and management of the China Bird Database of the China Ornithological Society since 2002, which is an important data source for the China Bird Report; setting up of "China Wild Bird Gallery" website by the Shenzhen Bird Watching Society and China Ornithological Society in 2004/05; setting up of the "Birdtalker" website (currently known as 'Chinese Wild Bird Quick Check' App) in 2005/06; surveys of China Coastal Waterbird Census in 2006/07; and the setting up of the Scaly-sided Merganser Conservation fund in 2010/11. CCF provided seed funding for a number of newly established birdwatching organisations to promote their development, to raise public awareness and knowledge towards birds and nature. These facilitated the protection of birds and their habitats in due course.



① 2006 Field Survey session, National Waterbird Survey Training, Beidaihe

② 2006 Conference on China Bird Watching organisation and development

③ 2006 National Waterbird Survey Training, Beidaihe

④ 2006 Group photo of participants in the National Waterbird Survey Training, Beidaihe



④



The HKBWS China programme has been a milestone in the development of Chinese bird watching. The programme was jointly founded by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society and BirdLife International, with the support of the Darwin Initiative. This programme has aimed to promote the establishment and development of bird watching societies in the Mainland, to strengthen the communication and information exchange between those bird watching societies, and to encourage, promote and support their conservation work on bird and important bird areas protection. In the first three years, the China programme focused on capacity building: six training courses on bird (waterbird and land bird) monitoring, environmental education, and bird watching society development were held in different regions in China; these courses also provided opportunities for volunteers of different bird watching societies to share their experiences and exchange ideas. More than 150 participants joined these training courses, and then applied what they learned in these courses in the bird watching societies they belonged to. In 2006, the China programme supported a "China Bird Watching Organisation Development Seminar" in Chengdu, which was organised by the Bird Watching Professional Group of the China Ornithological Society and Chengdu Bird Watching Society. In the seminar, representatives from various bird watching societies discussed and shared their experiences on setting up and development of bird watching organisations, which promoted the establishment of "China Bird Watching Organisation Network Joint Conference" for the information exchange of bird watchers nation-wide.

In response to the BirdLife International's "World Bird Watching Festival", the China programme also held a "China Bird Watching Festival" in 2006 and 2007 to encourage bird watching societies of all regions to organise different bird-related activities such as lectures, bird watching competitions and bird photo exhibitions to promote bird watching activities and bird conservation. In 2006, 26 events were held during the festival and more than 43,000 people participated; in 2007, more than 44,000 people had participated in the 39 events organised in that year's festival. The great variety of activities in past bird watching festivals has become an important reference for similar events in the future, and it has also provided experience for the participants.

HKBWS's China programme was established at the time when bird watching activity was rapidly growing in mainland China. In 2005, a group of bird watchers proposed to conduct monthly coordinated coastal waterbird surveys at several sites along the China coast and later formed the China Coastal Waterbird Census Group. Over the past 13 years, the China programme has continued to support the China Coastal Waterbird Census.

HKBWS has also been the coordinator of sites in mainland China in other important regional surveys, such as the International Black-faced Spoonbill and International Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force Census.



- ⑤ 2006 Training on educational activities for committee members of bird watching societies, Kunming
- ⑥ 2007 China Bird Watching Festival, Shanghai
- ⑦ 2007 National Forest Bird Survey training, Sichuan
- ⑧ 2008 Training on bird watching organisation development, Wuhan



In addition to training, publicity and educational activities and field surveys, the China programme has produced some practical manuals for bird watching societies in the Mainland China, such as the "Methods for Bird Surveys- a practical handbook", "Bird Conservation Project Management - a practical handbook" and "Environmental Education Handbook - Experience from BirdLife " with subsidy from HKBWS. In 2007, the China programme assisted BirdLife International to organise the "Mainland China Important Bird Areas (IBAs) Conference" to update the "Directory of Important Bird Areas in China (Mainland): Key Sites for Conservation".

After that, the China programme shifted the focus to the conservation of threatened bird species. Since 2008, the programme collaborated with the Zhejiang Wildbird Society and the Fujian Bird Watching Society to carry out a project on Chinese Crested Tern conservation. Together with the China Bird Watching Society, the programme started a four-year field survey on Jankowski's Bunting in Inner Mongolia in 2011. In 2011-12, conservation activities on Spoon-billed Sandpiper were held with the Wild Bird Society of Shanghai and Fujian Bird Watching Society. From 2013, due to concerns about illegal bird trapping, the programme organised conservation activities in South China, aiming to increase the capacity and participation of volunteers towards the protection of wintering Spoon-billed Sandpiper and other waterbirds in the region.

Nowadays, bird watching activity is growing rapidly in mainland China. There are many newly established bird watching societies every year, bird photography is getting more popular in China, and some bird watching societies have become more mature. In the future, HKBWS hopes to strengthen connections with bird watching societies around the country and continue to contribute towards the bird watching activity and bird conservation in China.



⑨ 2009 Cooperating with the Fujian Bird Watching Society to protect Chinese Crested Tern

⑩ 2011 Promotion of wild bird protection to the public, Wuyuan, Jiangxi

⑪ Nature Education Activities in the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Project, Rudong, Jiangsu

⑫ 2013 Jankowski's bunting Conservation Seminar, Inner Mongolia

⑬ 2016 Environmental Education Activity, Zhanjiang





## Major Habitat work in summer 2018

To help maintain water quality, the water inside the “*Gei Wais*” needs to be exchanged with the water in Deep Bay about twice each month. Each time that water exchange occurs, the incoming water brings in silt which is deposited in the water channels. The water channels then become shallow gradually. As a result, the shrimps and fish inside will become more prone to heat stress in the summer because of the shallow water and high temperatures. There is thus a need to carry out dredging of the *Gei Wai* channels as a regular management practice in order to ensure there are deeper areas of water for shrimp and fish.

This silt also settles in the central portion of the *Gei Wai*, at the base of the mangrove and reedbeds. As the floor of these areas becomes higher, invasion by grasses, climbers and trees occurs and so the original wetland habitat is gradually lost over time. Therefore, de-silting operations also need to be conducted in the central portion of the affected *Gei Wais* when the channels are dredged.

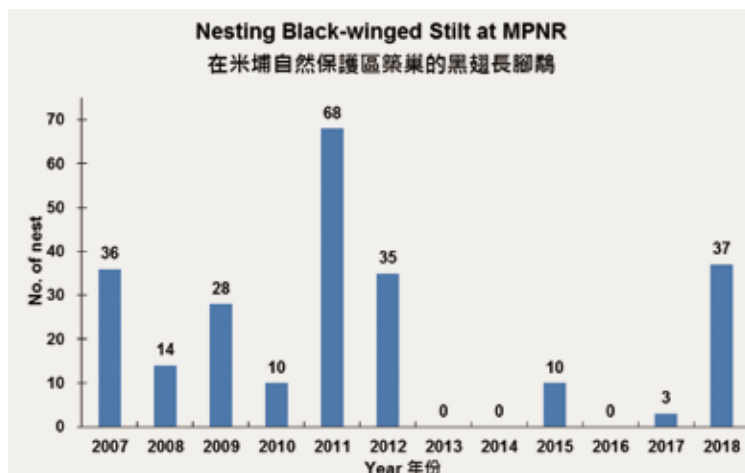


According to our work plan, the water channels of *Gei Wai* #3, #4 and #10 will be de-silted between July and October 2018. A gap will also be created in the seaward bund between *Gei Wai* #3 and #4 to facilitate the water exchange in *Gei Wai* #4 since there is no water sluice gate in *Gei Wai* #4 and its water exchange has to be done through the sluice gate in *Gei Wai* #3. Vegetation on the landward side of *Gei Wai* #10 will also be cleared and pond floor will be lowered to restore the area to wet reedbeds.

## Breeding of Black-winged Stilt in Mai Po

Nesting Black-winged Stilts were first recorded in the Mai Po Nature Reserve in 2003. 2018 has been a good year for stilts nesting in the Reserve. The total number of nests reached 37 which is the second highest in the last 11 years. The nesting period was similar to previous records, starting in the first week of April, and the last clutch hatched in the third week of July. After the earthmoving work in *Gei Wai* #16/17 last year, Black-winged Stilts came back to nest in the *Gei Wai*.

*Gei wai* #16/17 has been the major site for nesting Black-winged Stilts but the number had dropped in recent years and reached zero in last two years. This year, the number bounced back to 20. The other 17 nests were in *Gei Wai* #6 and #11, - the first breeding records for those *Gei Wai*.





黃喉鵯  
聶惠強  
蒲台

Yellow-throated Bunting  
Nip Wai Keung  
Po Toi

29/03/2018  
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens





黑頭鵪  
路人乙  
塋原

Black-headed Bunting  
passerby-b  
Long Valley

21/10/2017  
DSLR Camera, 800mm f/5.6 lens

灰頭鵪  
陳兆源  
米埔

Black-faced Bunting  
S. Y. Chan  
Mai Po

02/04/2018  
DSLR Camera, 800mm f/5.6 lens + 1.25x teleconverter





田鴉  
路人乙  
塋原

Rustic Bunting  
passerby-b  
Long Valley

26/11/2017  
DSLR Camera, 800mm f/5.6 lens



小鴉  
韓德明  
塋原

Little Bunting  
Derek Hon  
Long Valley

07/04/2017  
DSLR Camera, 150-600mm f/5-6.3 lens





硫磺鵒  
何文顯  
蒲台

Japanese Yellow Bunting  
Ho Man Hin Peter  
Po Toi

19/04/2018  
DSLR Camera, 300mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter

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## Nature's treasure chest in southern Africa

Text/Photo: Samson So

*Stargazing in the Okavango Delta*

Africa is well known for its rich habitat and species diversity. This is also a wonderful continent for nature lovers who enjoy watching and photographing wildlife. For many people, the first impression of nature tours in Africa would include savannas, lakes and the famous great migration of mammals in east Africa. In fact, there are many other interesting places worth visiting in southern Africa, such as Botswana, where I visit again and again.



*Encountering the elusive leopard during a riverine excursion*

Botswana is a land-locked country in southern Africa located north of the Republic of South Africa. It has a total area of 600,370km<sup>2</sup>, but with a total population of only 2.2 million, one of the lowest population densities in the world. A vast diversity of habitats can be found, including

desert, saltpan, freshwater marsh, savanna, river and woodland. Each of these habitats has its own ecology. Therefore, you have to visit each of them if you want to encounter more wildlife. The middle and southern part of Botswana is mainly covered by the Kalahari Desert and salt pans; the river running through the northern and western part is the world's largest inland freshwater delta: the Okavango Delta.



*Pale Chanting Goshawk*



*Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill*



*Southern Red-billed Hornbill*



There are various ways to reach Botswana from other countries in southern Africa. If you are travelling from Hong Kong, the most convenient would be flying to South Africa and boarding a connecting flight from there. Land transportation is time consuming and geographically restricted by the desert and marshes, some places are even not accessible by vehicle. The best way for nature lovers to travel though Botswana is by small aircraft and then travel in an all-terrain vehicle, a boat or by foot, dependent on the environment around the area.

Small aircraft have strict restrictions on baggage weight so you'll have to precisely calculate the amount of gear and equipment as you plan the trip. The usual weight limit is a total of 15kg, including check-in and carry-on luggage. It is important to travel light with only the essentials.

A pair of binoculars is "a must" for nature observations. I usually prefer to travel with 8x30 or 8x32 model as they are lighter in weight and smaller in size but still have good image quality. Binoculars are useful for watching birds, mammals and also ideal for star gazing at night. I strongly recommend you to take your binoculars to Botswana.

For birdwatching photographers lenses over 300mm are preferable, with teleconverters when necessary. If you wish to photograph both birds and large mammals, a zoom lens could be very useful. Light, compact cameras with high-power zooms can also be suitable.

It is vital to pick the right place and season for your nature tour. Botswana is in the southern hemisphere and hence its seasons are "opposite" to Hong Kong. From November to March, in order to avoid cold weather and to find food, birds from Europe and Asia will migrate to southern Africa. It is summer and the rainy season







*Watching and photographing birds at hotel lobby*



*African Darter*



*Brown-hooded Kingfisher*

in Botswana during those months. May to October is the southern winter dry season. If you wish to see the migratory birds from the northern hemisphere, December to February is the best time to visit, but May to July is also feasible when the northern birds are absent but there is plenty of local wildlife on marshes and rivers still filled with water.

Transportation options in Botswana: on foot, using a jeep or in a boat. Around the campsites and special areas in the concessions where it is safe (without predatory mammals), it is ideal to follow trails to search for birds and small mammals, to learn their footprints and droppings and appreciate the relationship between plants and the environment. These are the valuable moments to experience nature up close in Africa. Within national park boundaries, it is a requirement to travel and observe in vehicles to avoid impact and ensure safety for both humans and wildlife. In the marshes or rivers, boats can reach areas which are not accessible via land.

Africa is famous for large mammals so birds are not the only wildlife you can observe in Botswana. The country is home to a number of iconic mammals, including big cats such as lions, leopards and cheetahs, also antelopes, giraffes, elephants and African Wild Dog. There are almost unlimited things to observe and photograph from dawn until dark.

The annual average rainfall in Botswana is only 250-650mm so the sky is often clear with no clouds. After a day observing wildlife, I would usually be gazing at the stars and photographing at night around the campsite. Light pollution in wild Africa is very low. Even



*Observing Wattled Cranes from a jeep*



*Red-billed Spurfowl*





though there are some artificial lights around the campsites, magnificent views of the galaxy can often be seen. Moreover, the southern hemisphere night sky is very different to ours in Hong Kong. Many of the constellations, nebulae and star clusters which are impossible to see in the northern hemisphere can be seen, including both Large and Small Magellanic Clouds. Among the 88 constellations you can find in the night sky, many are named after wildlife. After observing the birds and mammals during daytime, you can enjoy searching the sky at night for the star patterns named after them.

Nature tours allow us to see the world from different angles, widen our horizons and deepen our interest in travelling. I spend 3-4 months annually in various places in Africa. I wouldn't explain its attractiveness to you as those can be readily seen in photographs and documentaries. If you want to understand the allure of nature touring in Africa, you'll have to come and experience it yourself. If the great animal migration is still the only impression of Africa on your mind, then it is time for you to open your map of Africa and learn about its rich landscape and ecology. I hope to see you in Africa next time!



*Red-faced Mousebird*



*Bateleur Eagle*



*Stargazing at the camp*



*Common Ostrich and Springbok*



*African Skimmer*



*Bennett's woodpecker*



# Birds at Gutian, Huidong County, Guangdong

Text: Captain Wong, Ho Ching Yuen & Matthew Kwan

Photo: Captain Wong & Matthew Kwan



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*Dark-sided Flycatcher*

In recent years, two of my enthusiastic birding friends and I began this interest with birds found in neighbouring forest reserves near Hong Kong. We started visiting various forest reserves within 100km of Hong Kong in 2015. Up to 2017 we already had a pretty good idea about what forest birds species are found near Dongguan (東莞) and western Huizhou (惠州), although we wanted to explore a few areas east of the Dong River (東江). By looking at maps as well as from earlier reports by Kadoorie Farm and pioneer birder Tim Woodward's website "Birding South-East China" ([southchinabirder.com](http://southchinabirder.com)), we know that there is a provincial nature reserve named Gutian (古田) near Huidong (around 90km from Hong Kong, two hours by car from Shenzhen). The bird list for Gutian looked nothing out of the ordinary, but



*Gutian Provincial Nature Reserve (red box)*







*Black Baza*



*White-bellied Epornis*

we decided to pay a visit to the reserve out of curiosity in August 2017. After a few more visits, it was like finding a pearl in a hay stack! Just like many other forest reserves in China, Gutian contains several different “units” within its forests, including the Lianghua Forest Farm (梁化林場), the Lianghua National Forest Reserve (梁化國家森林公園) and the Pingtianzhang Municipal Level Nature Reserve (坪天嶂市級自然保護區). The Gutian we mention in this article is near Lianghua Forest Farm.

We first visited Gutian in August 2017, the location was that labelled as Gutian Provincial Nature Reserve on the map. Unfortunately, the reserve beyond their front gate was closed off to public, we could only follow route M83 to another nature reserve, but found mostly farmed Eucalyptus or plantations, better habitats were all higher up out of our reach. Birding was disappointing, the only bird worthy of mention was the White-browed Laughingthrush.

We figured that we probably went to the wrong place after we got back to Hong Kong, as what Tim Woodward referred to as Gutian should in fact be Lianghua Forest Farm or the other side of Lianghua National Forest Reserve. So, we set out to Lianghua Forest Farm again in October 2017, following the 008-country road we managed to get right to the top (there’s an army barrack there so we didn’t stay long). There were some plum plantations and planted forests along the way but otherwise the forest looked to be in pretty good shape. As we drove along a stretch of road next to a mountain stream, a male Red-headed Trogon appeared (we saw the female at the same location later in the afternoon), a species mostly associated with primary or mature secondary forests. As the most southerly known range of this species in Guangdong was at Nankun Shan (南昆山), this record at Gutian pushed its known range in Guangdong 50km southwards. We did not expect this species to be found at Gutian, as it was not found in any past expeditions from 1990 to 2010, therefore we believe they are most likely recent colonisers and are probably extending their range southwards (it is quite possible we may get one at Tai Po Kau in the near future!). Other than the Trogons, we recorded Dark-sided Flycatcher, Eurasian Woodcock, Orange-headed Thrush, Bay Woodpecker and heard Mountain Scops Owl. All these species are good indicators that the forest of Gutian is in very good condition. Therefore, we soon got



*Mountain Bulbul*



*Orange-headed Thrush*



planning for another visit.

It wasn't until January 2018 that we visited Gutian again. The reserve was packed with tourists visiting the blossoming plum trees; it was also very misty which made birding difficult, although we still managed a few good sightings, including a quick glimpse of a White-crowned Forktail along the top section of the stream. This was yet another surprise for us, as the most southerly range of this species was also at Nankun Shan, same as the Trogon. We heard the call of Brown Wood Owls at dusk, although we could not locate the bird despite some efforts.

We visited the site again three months later, in April. It was breeding season and Chinese Barbets were calling everywhere. Near the summit we heard the song of Russet Bush Warblers as well as Collared Owlets. We found a Brown-breasted Flycatcher right near where we last saw the pair of Red-headed Trogons. We also found a Hill Prinia and Speckled Piculet around the plum plantations. The Hill Prinia at Gutian is likely to be the closest known record to Hong Kong. We found a Black Baza during our descent while we scanned the swallows, a species that had become increasingly rare in Hong Kong, although it's inconclusive whether it was breeding here or simply passing through.

We were rewarded with surprises on nearly every expedition to Gutian (Red-headed Trogon, White-crowned Forktail, Hill Prinia). A total of 92 species had been recorded on our four visits, which really isn't bad. To be able to find so many surprises at a location so close to Hong Kong was out of our expectation. We will continue exploring the southerly parts of Gutian as well as the Pingtianzhang Municipal Level Nature Reserve. Perhaps the society can even lead outings to Gutian similar to the Haifeng tours looking for Swampheens in 2013, so birders can catch a glimpse of many south eastern China species we don't have or are difficult in Hong Kong.

We would like to thank Tim Woodward and Richard Lewthwaite for sharing with us their bird lists and experiences of their past expeditions in Guangdong, as well as our friend Mr. TK Huen for his involvement and being our driver.



*Chestnut Bulbul*



*Slaty-backed Forktail*



*female Red-headed Trogon*



*male Red-headed Trogon*



*Brown Breasted Flycatcher*

## April

- ▶ The month was even drier than April 2017, which itself was unusually dry, and again showed that fine and dry weather in spring leads to migrants being found in only very small numbers, especially seabirds, raptors and passerines. The weather conditions, however, were very good for summer atlas work.
- ▶ The only true rarity of the month was **Chinese Barbet**, a forest-dependent species that is expanding its range in southeast China. Singles in song reported at Tai Mo Shan on 6<sup>th</sup> (per TML), Kap Lung on 11<sup>th</sup> (GJC) and Tai Po Kau on 30<sup>th</sup> (DT) were the first since May 2016.
- ▶ Sub-rarities found were a **Malayan Night Heron** on Po Toi on 7<sup>th</sup> (GW), the earliest spring record by 12 days, with another at Tong Fuk on 30<sup>th</sup> (YM), single **Brown-breasted Flycatchers** on Po Toi on 15<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> (DAD, LS) and at Tai Po Kau on 29<sup>th</sup> (KPK) and a **Northern Boobok** at Ho Man Tin on 26<sup>th</sup> (per MK), whilst an **Amur Falcon** at Wu Kau Tang on 14 April (RWL), only the third spring record, is a seasonal rarity.
- ▶ Among the rarer shorebirds found at Mai Po or in front of the Mai Po boardwalk were one or two **Oriental Plovers** on 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> (M&PW), at least three different **Spoon-billed Sandpipers** between 9<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> (IT, RB, M&PW, CFL), a **Pectoral Sandpiper** on 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> (RP, MLT, KCWL), and single **Little Curlews** on 16<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> (HKY, IT, M&PW).
- ▶ Larger counts included 3,000 **Curlew Sandpipers** on 9<sup>th</sup> (IT), and 2,000 **Red-necked Stints** on 26<sup>th</sup> (JAA). Elsewhere, an **Oriental Plover** was at Tseng Tau (opposite Yung Shue O) on 6<sup>th</sup> (JAA) and 72 **Long-toed Stints** were on a drained pond at San Tin on 11<sup>th</sup> (RB, RWL).
- ▶ Summer atlas work during the month led to three breeding species being found in record numbers, all singing birds – 51 **Brown-flanked Bush Warblers** on the approach to and beside the main Pat Sin Leng ridge (squares 21G, 21H) on 3<sup>rd</sup> (RWL), and 26 **Hainan Blue Flycatchers** and five **Plain Flowerpeckers** in the Bride's Pool-Wu Kau Tang area (squares 11 R, 11W) on 30<sup>th</sup> (RWL), with a count of 17 **Hainan Blue Flycatchers** in the Wang Shan Keuk area, Pat Sin Leng CP (square 21B) on 23<sup>rd</sup> (RWL) also exceeding the previous highest count for the species. Record spring numbers of **Red Turtle Doves** were also reported, with 70 at San Tin on 29<sup>th</sup> (EMSK).
- ▶ In addition to the **Malayan Night Heron** on the earliest date in spring, which is mentioned above, five **Roseate Terns** off southwest Lantau on 29<sup>th</sup> (JAA) equalled the earliest spring date.
- ▶ There were also reports of four species on latest spring dates - a **Bull headed Shrike** at Ping Kong on 20<sup>th</sup> (per GJC), the long-staying **Greater White-fronted Goose** at Mai Po on 21<sup>st</sup> (MK), two **Eurasian Siskins** on Po Toi on 21<sup>st</sup> (AK) and a singing **Baikal Bush Warbler** at Mai Po on 18<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> (JAA), the latest by 20, 32, 17 and 65 days, respectively.





- ▶ Apart from single **Ancient Murrelets** from the Mui Wo ferry on 7<sup>th</sup> and off Wang Chau (Sai Kung) on 13<sup>th</sup> (per CM), the month was very poor for seabirds up until 28<sup>th</sup>. Boat trips into southern waters on 7<sup>th</sup> (CM *et al.*) and 15<sup>th</sup> (HKBWS) recorded in total just five **Greater Crested Terns** and 45 **Red-necked Phalaropes**. Boat trips into the same area on 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> were more successful, with a good variety of terns and all three skua species found, including 83 **Aleutian Terns**, six **Long-tailed**, four **Pomarine** and three **Arctic Skuas** on 28<sup>th</sup>, and also five **Streaked Shearwaters** on 30<sup>th</sup> (CM *et al.*).

## May

- ▶ In a month described by the HK Observatory as “exceptionally hot and dry”, the most intriguing record was a raptor photographed in Tai Po Kau on 2<sup>nd</sup> (LS), which appears to be a **Mountain Hawk Eagle**, thus potentially only the 5<sup>th</sup> for Hong Kong and the first since 1995.
- ▶ There were also further reports of **Chinese Barbets** with single birds in Tai Po Kau on 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> (YTY, MLT).
- ▶ Good numbers of **White-winged Terns** were reported, including 515 at Mai Po on 8<sup>th</sup> (DAD), 600 off Cheung Chau on 11<sup>th</sup> (MDW) and 212 in southern waters on 12<sup>th</sup> (CM *et al.*).
- ▶ Boat trips into southern waters also recorded six **Streaked Shearwaters** on 5<sup>th</sup> and up to four Short-tailed Shearwaters on 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> (CM *et al.*), whilst surveys of breeding terns on 20<sup>th</sup> recorded 416 **Bridled Terns**, nearly all at Shek Ngau Chau, 153 **Black-naped Terns** between Ma Liu Shui and Wong Shek (FA, RWL), and 16 **Roseate Terns** off the Soko Islands (IT). A **Lesser Frigatebird** was photographed off Sai Kung on 13<sup>th</sup> (per WD).
- ▶ Other birds found at Mai Po included a **Spoon-billed Sandpiper** on 5<sup>th</sup> (JAA), 83 **Red Knots** on 7<sup>th</sup> (DAD), a **Swinhoe's Egret**, two **Grey-headed Lapwings**, an **Asian Dowitcher**, a **Nordmann's Greenshank** and 53 **Whiskered Terns** on 8<sup>th</sup> (DAD), a **Lesser Whistling Duck** on 25<sup>th</sup> (JAA) and nine **Oriental Pratincoles** on 27<sup>th</sup> (DAD), whilst a **Tufted Duck** was found at the Wetland Park (Tin Shui Wai) on 28<sup>th</sup> (CFL).
- ▶ Of the rarer cuckoo species that occur in summer, **Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo** and **Lesser Cuckoos** were both widespread, the latter exceptionally so, with single singing birds Ng Tung Chai on 1<sup>st</sup> (JAA), Tai Po Kau on 4<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> (MK, KPK, KB), Ma Wo (Tai Po) on 9<sup>th</sup> (MLT), Chung Pui (Pat Sin Leng CP) on 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> (RWL, GT), Ma On Shan on 16<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> (IT, DH), Tai Lam CP on 18<sup>th</sup> (KB), near Tai Po Kau Headland on 20<sup>th</sup> (RB) and Tai Mo Shan on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> (PH, ML).
- ▶ Also, one of the host species of **Large Hawk Cuckoo**, a common over-summering cuckoo, may have finally been identified, with a juvenile observed being fed by a **Masked Laughingthrush** at the Wetland Park on 31<sup>st</sup> (CFL).



Other reports of rarer resident or breeding species included a **Brown-breasted Flycatcher** in Tai Po Kau on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> (LS, DAD), a **Grey Nightjar** at Wonderland Villas on 5<sup>th</sup> (TJW), a juvenile **Mountain Bulbul** at Tai Po Kau Headland on 6<sup>th</sup> (RB), one or two **Malayan Night Herons** at Lam Tsuen on 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> (JAA, DT) and Po Toi on 10<sup>th</sup> (JC), up to nine singing **Russet Bush Warblers** on Tai Mo Shan between 7<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> (LS, DT, ML), a **Eurasian Jay** at the Wetland Park on 9<sup>th</sup> (per CFL), an **(Oriental) Grey-capped Greenfinch** at Shuen Wan on 16<sup>th</sup> (RWL), eight **Black-throated Tits** at Shing Mun on 21<sup>st</sup> (per MK), up to 22 **Vinous-throated Parrotbills** on Tai Mo Shan between 8<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> (DT, MLT, ML), and single **Chinese Grassbirds** on Tai Mo Shan from 28<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> (MLT, ML, PH).

Except for 52 **Brown Shrikes** on Po Toi on 10<sup>th</sup> (JC), quite a large number, the only migrant passerines reported were a single **Japanese Paradise Flycatcher** on Peng Chau on 2<sup>nd</sup> (TJL) and a handful of **Arctic Warblers** and **Grey-streaked Flycatchers** on Cheung Chau and Po Toi up to 10<sup>th</sup> (MDW, PH, JC).

## June

The prolonged dry spell which had affected Hong Kong since the beginning of the year finally came to an end when Tropical Storm Ewinia made landfall to the west of Hong Kong on 7<sup>th</sup>, bringing heavy rain. The weather for the rest of the month then alternated between being very hot or very wet.

The rarest bird found in the month was a male **Swinhoe's Plover** which was photographed at Mai Po on 14<sup>th</sup> (DH), only the 5<sup>th</sup> for Hong Kong.

An **Oriental Dollarbird** at Tai Po Kau on 4<sup>th</sup> (MK) and a **Brown Shrike** beside the Mai Po access road on 18<sup>th</sup> (JAA) were the last spring migrants reported. The latter was by 11 days the latest spring date for the species.

At Mai Po, which was well covered during the month, up to 21 **Oriental Pratincoles** including well-grown juveniles were present between 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> (DAD, JAA), equalling the highest summer count of recent years.

One bird on 4<sup>th</sup>, when conditions were still dry, was observed sitting on a nest on the Mai Po scrape (DAD), leading to hopes of a first confirmed breeding record, but the nest was inundated by 9<sup>th</sup>.

Other waterbirds there included 10 **Black-faced Spoonbills**, two **Nordmann's Greenshanks**, a (*mongolicus*) **Vega Gull**, five **Gull-billed Terns**, 37 **White-winged Terns** and 16 **Little Terns**, all on 4<sup>th</sup> (DAD), 64 **Whiskered Terns** on 6<sup>th</sup> (DH), a **Green Sandpiper** on 21<sup>st</sup> (JAA), a rare June record, and a **Lesser Whistling Duck** on 29<sup>th</sup> (JAA). Also of note were 28 **Pacific Swifts** and two **Chestnut Bulbuls** on 10<sup>th</sup> (JAA), both unusual there at this time of year, and a **Eurasian Hobby** on 12<sup>th</sup> (DH).

Coverage of the Wetland Park led to reports of a **Lesser Frigatebird** on 1<sup>st</sup> (CFL), a **Cinnamon Bittern** on 9<sup>th</sup> (AK) and a very pale swiftlet on 27<sup>th</sup> (CFL), possibly a **Germain's Swiftlet**, which is not previously recorded in Hong Kong. Elsewhere in the Deep Bay area, there one or two **Cinnamon Bitterns** at Lok Ma Chau and Yi O between 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> (AK, PJL, JAA) and two **Black-headed Gulls**, including a summer-plumaged adult, at Tsim Bei Tsui on 17<sup>th</sup> (RWL).



▶ A **Lesser Frigatebird**, the second of the month, was seen off Tap Mun on 12<sup>th</sup> (PH).

▶ Reports at Tai Po Kau included a **Brown-breasted Flycatcher** on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> (AK, MK), a **Lesser Cuckoo** on 4<sup>th</sup> (MK) and five **Plain Flowerpeckers** on 21<sup>st</sup> (MK), the latter equalling the high count for the species, and a **Eurasian Hoopoe** was found at Discovery Bay on 23<sup>rd</sup> (ML).

## List of observers & initials 2018

*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), Fion Au (FA), Abdel Bizid (AB), Karen Barretto (KB), Ruy Barretto (RB), Chris Campion (CC), Geoff Carey (GJC), Alan Chan (AC), Isaac Chan (IC), K.F. Chan (KFC), S.Y. Chan (SYC), Thomas Chan (TC), K.K. Chang (KKC), 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), David Diskin (DAD), Wilson Dring (WD), Y.W. Fong (YWF), Ken Fung (KF), Martin Hale (MH), Andrew Hardacre (AH), Carla van Hasselt (CvH), C.Y. Ho (CYH), Kinni Ho (KH), Peter Ho (PH), Tiffany Ho (TH), Jemi Holmes (JH), John Holmes (JGH), Derek Hon (DH), unknown Hong Kong Bird Watching Society members (HKBWS), Herman Ip (HI), Kadoorie Farm and Botanical Garden staff (KFBG), E. Hui (EH), Samuel Hung (SH), Mike Kilburn (EMSK), Ashkat Khirwal (AK), Koel Ko (KK), K.C. Kong (KCK), Matthew Kwan (MK), P.K. Kwan (PKK), C.T. Kwok (CTK), T.K. Kwok (TKK), Kenneth Lam (KCL), Paul Leader (PJL), H.L. Lee (HLL), Kenny Lee (KHL), Louis Lee (LL), S.Y. Lee (SYL), Thomas Legg (TJL), Jennifer Leung (JL), Katherine Leung (KL), Mike Leven (MRL), Richard Lewthwaite (RWL), Benjiman Li (BLi), Tom Li (TL), T.C. Li (TCL), Morten Lisse (ML), Yang Liu (YL), Aaron Lo (AL), C.F. Lo (CFL), Brenda Lo (BLo), Kevin Lok (KCWL), Henry Lui (HL), Carrie Ma (CM), Jonathan Martinez (JM), Guy Miller (GM), Harry Miller (HM), Roger Muscroft (RM), Yann Muzika (YM), Austin Ng (AN), Benjamin Ng (BN), L.Y. Ng (LYN), W.K. Nip (WKN), Roger Ping (RP), 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), Kenneth Wong (KWMW), L.C. Wong (LCW), Michelle & Peter Wong (M&PW), Ondy Wong (OW), Chuan Woo (CW), Thelma Woodward (TW), Tim Woodward (TJW), World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong staff (WWF), W.Y. Yam (WYY), James Yau (JY), Sherman Yeung (SY), H.K. Ying (HKY), W.H. Yip (WHY), John Yu (JY), Y.T. Yu (YTY).



## Outings

Date	Duration	Time and site	Fee (HK\$)	Difficulties (1...3)	Target species
6/10/2018 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	<b>Tsim Bei Tsui</b> (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Tin Chak Estate Shopping Centre, the Exit near Tin Yat Light Rail Station at Tin Shui Wai))	Registration not required Free	★	Waterbirds
14/10/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	<b>Po Toi Island</b> (08:00 Aberdeen Pier - Public Ferry Pier to Po Toi Island) <i>Note: The group will take the 08:15 ferry to Poi To &amp; returning time is open. Participants have to take care of their own ferry tickets.</i>	Registration not required Member: free Non-member: \$30 (Aged <18yrs: \$10)	★★	Migrants
20/10/2018 (Sat)	TBC	<b>Wild Card Day</b> (Details will be announced online on Oct 18 on HKBWS Forum)			
28/10/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	<b>Mai Po Nature Reserve</b> (12yrs old & above only) (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road Exit F), OR 09:00 Mai Po Carpark, ends 15:00 Mai Po, 16:00 Kowloon Tong)	<Registration required> Member meeting at Mai Po: \$30 Kln Tong: \$60 Non-member: \$120	★★	Waterbirds
3/11/2018 (Sat)	0900 - 1300	<b>Luk Keng</b> (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (09:00 Pavilion at entrance to Nam Chung Road)	Registration not required Free	★	Forest & water birds
4/11/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	<b>Tai Po Kau</b> (08:00 Tai Po Kau Carpark)	Registration not required Member: free Non-member: \$30 (Aged <18yrs: \$10)	★★★	Forest birds
11/11/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	<b>Long Valley</b> (08:00 Pavilion by the public toilet at Yin Kong Village)		★★	Farmland & water birds
18/11/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	<b>Po Toi Island</b> (08:00 Aberdeen Pier - Public Ferry Pier to Po Toi Island) <i>Note: The group will take the 08:15 ferry to Poi To &amp; returning time is open. Participants have to take care of their own ferry tickets.</i>		★★	Migrants
25/11/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	<b>Mai Po Nature Reserve</b> (12yrs old & above only) (08:00 Kowloon Tong MTR Station (Kent Road Exit F), OR 09:00 Mai Po Carpark, ends 15:00 Mai Po, 16:00 Kowloon Tong)	<Registration required> Member meeting at Mai Po: \$30 Kln Tong: \$60 Non-member: \$120	★★	Waterbirds
1/12/2018 (Sat)	0800 - 1300	<b>Long Valley</b> (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Outside Maxim's MX, Sheng Shui Rail Station)	Registration not required Free	★	Farmland & water birds
9/12/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	<b>Pui O</b> (08:00 Exit B, Tung Chung MTR Station)	Registration not required Member: free Non-member: \$30 (Aged <18yrs: \$10)	★★	Wintering forest & farmland birds
15/12/2018 (Sat)	TBC	<b>Wild Card Day</b> (Details will be announced online on Dec 13 on HKBWS Forum)			
23/12/2018 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	<b>Tai Po Kau</b> (08:00 Tai Po Kau Carpark)		★★★	Forest birds





# Outing Booking Slip

I would like to register the following HKBWS outings:

\*\* HKBWS will re-confirm with contact person of their attendance 2 weeks before the outing by email or by phone. 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 overseas 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 Amber, Red or Black are hoisted by the Hong Kong Observatory at 7:00am on the event day, the activity will be cancelled. If Thunderstorm Warning is announced during the activity, Team Leader will decide whether the activity should be continued or cancelled. You can contact the outing leader at **9457 3196 3.** during the event day if you have any query about the weather.

### Disclaimer

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栗腹磯鶇  
潘士強  
嘉道理農場暨植物園

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush  
Jason Pun  
Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden

25/02/2018  
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens + 1.4x teleconverter



藍磯鶇  
潘士強  
蒲台

Blue Rock Thrush  
Jason Pun  
Po Toi

17/12/2017  
DSLR Camera, 600mm f/4 lens





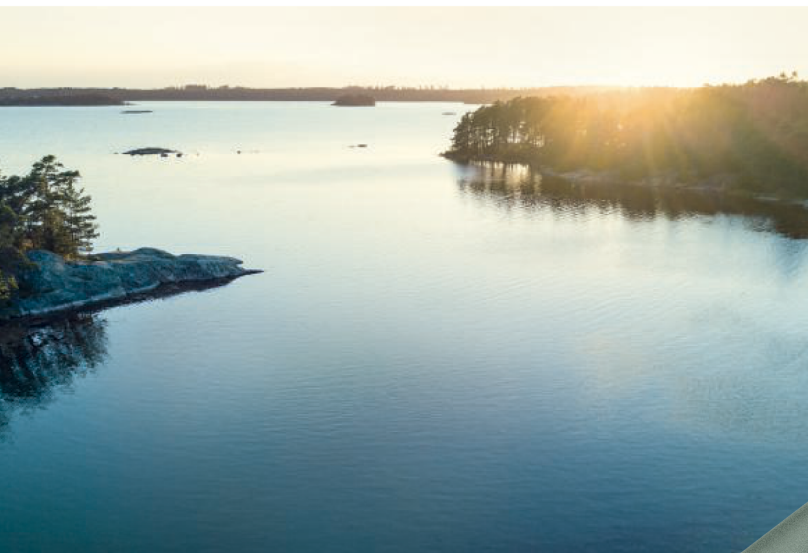
灰樹鵲  
薛國華  
雷公田

Grey Treepie  
Sit Kwok Wa Leo  
Lui Kung Tin

03/12/2017  
DSLR Camera, 100-400mm f4.5-5.6 lens

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Lesser Shortwing  
Sit Kwok Wa Leo  
Tai Po Kau

23/05/2018  
DSLR Camera, 100-400mm f4.5-5.6 lens