



Red-backed
Shrike

Chan Chi Tat
Long Valley

29/9/2019

蔡司望遠鏡

捕捉怦然心動的一刻



蔡司單筒望遠鏡系列



Victory Harpia 85 22-65x
Victory Harpia 95 23-70x



CONQUEST Gavia 85
30-60x

蔡司雙筒望遠鏡系列



蔡司VICTORY系列



蔡司TERRA ED系列



蔡司CONQUEST HD系列

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Bird Watching Outings –
April - June 2020



Publisher: The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

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English Editor / John Holmes
Chinese Editor / Henry Lui
Photo Editor / Cherry Wong
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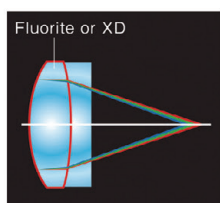
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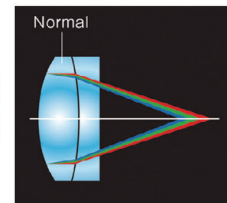
CHROMATIC ABERRATION - SEE THE DIFFERENCE



Fluorite crystal or XD lenses



Normal lens



Society News and Projects

Paddy fields in Long Valley supporting previously-underestimated population of Yellow-breasted Bunting

Recreating a favourable feeding habitat along its migratory route: paddy fields

International cooperation has been undertaken in order to recover the rapid declining population of the Critically Endangered Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*), including identification of their breeding grounds in Mongolia and Russia, and in search of their wintering grounds and prohibition of illegal hunting in the East and Southeast Asian regions. In Hong Kong, illegal hunting is not regarded as a major threat to them, given all wild birds are legally protected. They are more likely to be affected by the loss of their favoured habitat – rice paddy fields. Despite that rice cultivation had once been very widespread in Hong Kong, with over 8,000 hectares of rice paddy fields in 1960s, these had almost entirely disappeared by the 1980s due to their declining economic value and intense competition with rice imported from other places (Figure 1).

In order to recover the lost habitat for supporting the passing Yellow-breasted Bunting, rice cultivation had been reintroduced in Long Valley under the Nature Conservation Management Project of Long Valley since 2006. Each autumn we have recorded the number of birds that were attracted to and benefited from the reintroduction of rice cultivation, relying on the autumn peak count of Yellow-breasted Bunting. However, this technique almost certainly underestimates the actual number of birds that have benefited because they are passage migrants, and identification of individuals in the field is extremely hard. Nonetheless, a slow increase of their autumn population was noticed with two strong influxes recorded in 2012 and 2014 (Figure 2).

Bird-ringing programme

Since autumn 2017, we initiated a bird-ringing programme at the rice paddy fields in Long Valley, which was regarded as a main task identified by the BirdLife International for better understanding the migratory pattern of this endangered species. Bird ringing is a common practice in avifaunal research, which gives a uniquely-numbered metal ring, i.e. an identity, to each captured bird. This allows us to have a better estimate on the number of birds that are actually present in the field. Our result is encouraging, we confirmed that Yellow-breasted Bunting are more than what we previously expected. Our peak count in 2018 was 22, but a total of 54 different individuals were captured, meaning a minimum of ca. 60% of the population was omitted by our conventional survey method. The deviation was even greater in 2019 – ca. 73% of the population was missed by visual surveys! This provides us with a very positive result on the habitat management in Long Valley, and more importantly, there are probably more and more Yellow-breasted Bunting coming to visit this rejuvenating site.

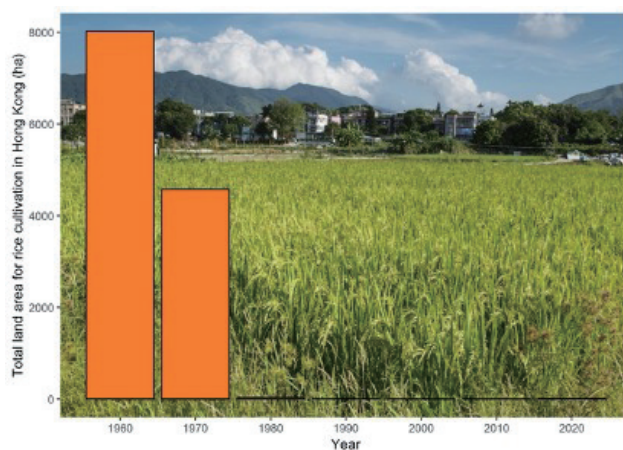


Figure 1 Total land area for rice cultivation in Hong Kong over the past 60 years.

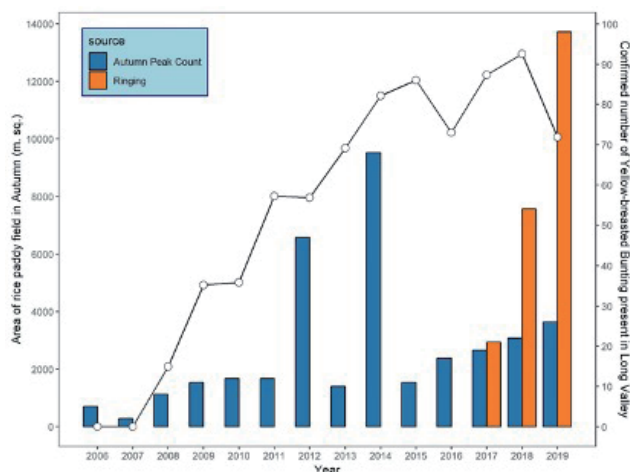


Figure 2 Area of rice paddy field and number of Yellow-breasted Bunting recorded in Long Valley since the reintroduction of rice cultivation since 2006.

A good diversity of other birds in paddy fields

Autumn 2019 was a highly productive season even apart from the encouraging result from the Yellow-breasted Bunting. We controlled a total of 954 birds in the paddy field in Long Valley including 42 species from 19 families (350 birds in 2017; 399 in 2018). The paddy field serves as a food source for many different species, ranging from seed-eaters (e.g. munias, buntings and doves), insectivores (e.g. leaf warblers and chats), omnivores (e.g. mynas) and carnivores (e.g. shrikes and raptors). Seed-eating birds are unsurprisingly the most abundant group where Scaly-breasted Munia was the commonest species in the field, with a total of 321 individuals captured. The only two species with conservation importance were from this group as well, namely Yellow-breasted Bunting (CR) (98 birds), and the Rustic Bunting (V) (4 birds). This sheds light on the importance of grain crops among the variety of food sources in this area.

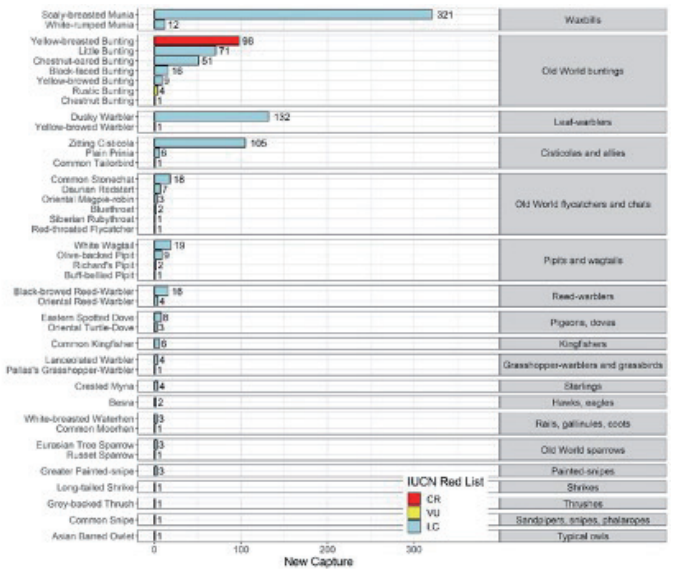


Figure 3 Number of birds capture by species in the rice paddy field in Long Valley in Autumn 2019.

Sustainable management practice to encourage survival along migration

Nowadays grain crops are no longer popular among the local farmers. The economic output generated per unit area is lower compared to other fast-growing and more expensive crops such as Choy-sum, lettuce and watercress. However, we have learnt that, for the sake of bird conservation, rice cultivation should be maintained continuously regardless of its lower economic value and more sophisticated agricultural procedures. In order to secure a long-term conservation programme, perhaps the biggest difficulty is to make it sustainable, especially for the financial side. Revenue generated from this conservation-focused agriculture has been demonstrated sufficient to cover the production cost and also the portion for bird consumption. Successful examples include the rice production in the conservation programme of Oriental Stork in Toyoka, Japan. We have to admit that, although difficult, it is not impossible to fulfill our human need, while not compromising the environment.

Further, assisting the recovery of a migratory species like Yellow-breasted Bunting requires conservation efforts in their breeding range, wintering ground and along their migratory route. Failure in any one part would be critical for reaching our goal. Hong Kong is an important stop-over site for this fragile species and we are looking for any opportunity to conserve them, together with their highly vulnerable habitat.

Spoon-billed Sandpiper Wintering Census

In response to the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Wintering Census coordinated by Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force of East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), we visited Zhanjiang in Guangdong Province this winter. With the support from International Conservation Fund of Canada (ICFC), we conducted a joint survey in Leizhou, Zhanjiang during 17th to 19th January this year. A survey team of up to 33 people came from different groups, including Zhanjiang Bird Watching Society, Guangdong Zhanjiang Mangrove National Nature Reserve Authority, Chinese Academy of Forestry, Center for EAAF Studies of Beijing Forestry University and Mangrove Wetlands Conservation Foundation. Within just a few days, a total of 48 Spoon-billed Sandpipers were recorded along the coast of China ranged from Hangzhou Bay to Beibu Gulf, and there were 28 individuals in Leizhou, Zhanjiang alone. This indicates that this place is a very important wintering site for these lovely spoonies.

Later, we continued to visit the coastal areas of Guangxi, including Sanniangwan in Qinzhou, Zhulin mudflat, Fengjiajiang in Beihai etc. On 22nd January, we finally recorded 1 spoon-billed sandpiper at the lower village of Fengjiajiang.



Compared to Zhanjiang, the coastal development in Guangxi is very rapid. Many fish ponds and fish farms, which could be originally used by the waterbirds are now turned into residential and commercial areas. In terms of human activities, many fishermen still use high-pressure water guns to catch peanut worms and other benthic organisms. It is surely worth paying attention to this activity as it imposes disturbance to waterbirds as well as lower their food availability.

Spoon-billed Sandpiper is now critically endangered with less than 700 individuals in the whole planet. Please continue to support HKBWS's conservation work on this precious species!



Spoon-billed Sandpiper is foraging
(Photo credit: Tom Li)

【Deep Bay in a Minute】 9. Pond bunds: an ecological fabric or a development tactic?



Pond bunds are an integral part of the fishpond operation and the Deep Bay wetland ecosystem. For example, fish farmers use the grass grown at the pond bunds to feed the Grass Carp in the fishponds. Besides, the vegetated bunds serve as a shelter for water birds and provide alternative food sources to insect- and seed-feeding birds such as warbler, buntings and pipits. A preliminary investigation was conducted for terrestrial invertebrates in four vegetation types on pond bunds under the “Study on the Ecological Value of Fishponds in the Deep Bay Area (1997)”. It was found that scrub has the highest taxa richness, reed held the greatest density of individuals, grass has the highest biomass, while bare ground held the lowest in count and biomass of invertebrates among them all. However, from our observation, un-vegetated fishpond bunds also provide roosting habitat for ardeids such as Little Egrets, Great Egrets, and Black-faced Spoonbills. Therefore, both vegetated and un-vegetated fishpond bunds have their own ecological functions in the Deep Bay wetland ecosystem.

In order to meet the Deep Bay planning principle of “no-net-loss in wetland”, developers have tried to remove pond bunds so as to increase the “wetland” area (i.e. water surface of fishponds) to compensate the wetland loss caused by the development. AFCD commented on the previous Nam Sang Wai development (planning application no. A/YL-NSW/218), saying that so-called “no-net-loss in wetland” claimed by the developer “only calculated the difference in area of ‘water surfaces’ before and after development without considering the extensive development area and its ecological impact...omission of the pond bunds in the calculation of the existing wetland area would underestimate the area of wetland loss.” Similar tactic was used in Fung Lok Wai wetland, leading to an environmental NGO to launch a judicial review against the Town Planning Board’s approval of the residential development in the locality. HKBWS considers that such “no-net-loss in wetland” calculation method is unacceptable and misleading.

*Know more about 【Deep Bay in a Minute】 : <https://cms.hkbws.org.hk/cms/join-us-tw/zh-tw/project-tw/monitor-tw/other-monitor-tw/knowning-deep-bay>

Hong Kong Park Green Hunt

The biodiversity of Hong Kong urban environment has always been neglected by us. Yet, with the continuous greening campaign and a more eco-friendly management of our urban parks, these areas do attract more and more wildlife, in particular birds. That is why we always persuade the people of Hong Kong to start bird watching in our city where they spend most of their time there.

To stimulate and inspire the interest towards nature for the primary students, the “Hong Kong Park Green Hunt” has integrated competition and games where their power of observation will be sharpened and will discover nature is just next to us. A total of 27 teams over 110 students from 16 primary schools have joined the event this year. The activity included searching wild birds around the park, bird hat designing competition, searching answers or responding to questions or requests related to different flora and fauna, talk, etc. We hope the students and the nature could mingle together through a broader view and under an interesting and exciting atmosphere.



Bird Academy

In order to raise up the students' interests on birds, we have organized Bird Academy for teaching bird watching for primary and secondary students with the supported by AFCD during October to December 2019. 52 students joined Bird Academy and they were led by experienced instructors for learning birding knowledge in different habitats including Lai Chi Kok Park, Wetland Park, Long Valley and Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve. Through the on-site visit, students learnt about bird biodiversity, bird identification skills, bird migratory patterns and the conservation of endangered bird species. Students were actively participated in the program and were showed strong interest. After the event, they were happy to express that they will do more bird watching in the future.



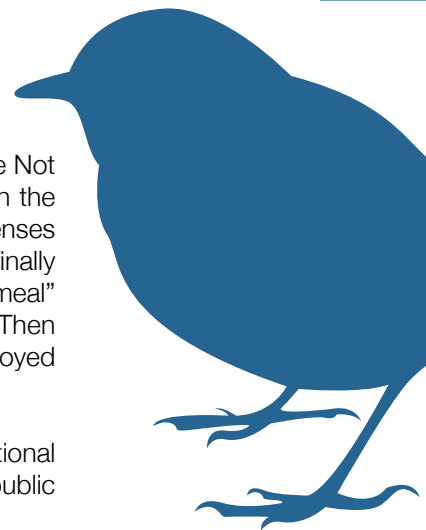
Farmland bird conservation and education scheme

Farmland eco-art volunteer training are scheduled to be recruited in December 2019 and the training was started in January 2020. After two training sessions, 17 volunteers have recognized the concepts of land art and eco art. They then applied what they learnt and created collectively “The most impressive Long Valley”. Is this the end of the course? Not yet! There will be more interesting training sessions and they will create more art work in the coming sessions. What will they create? Do stay tuned!

Fruitful Workshop

Before the Fishpond Sweet Sustainable Art Festival started, two workshops named "We Are Not Dead Fish" and "Let's have a meal" were held to engage artists and public in the festival. In the former workshop, the eyes of the participants were covered in order to evoke their five senses by listening to the sound of nature, breathing the smell of fishes, birds and fruit trees, and finally putting all the feelings and thoughts into a poetry or a drawing. During the "Let's have a meal" workshop, participants walked along the pond bund to collect plants in different colour. Then mixed the plants with waste paper to become upcycled paper. They also prepared and enjoyed the meal with local villagers which help them to create their own recipe.

Although the captioned festival was cancelled due to the outbreak of the epidemic, promotional leaflets and video are ready to introduce the artworks. Both the artworks of artists and the public will be displayed at Cattle Depot Artist Village and the exact date will be announced later.



"We Are Not Dead Fish" Writing Class at Fishponds - five senses utilised to understand the fishpond, and poetry and drawing created



"Let's have a meal" Workshop - wilted leaves collected to create fishpond recipes and have fish meal together!

Mai Po Update

Text/Photo: WWF Hong Kong

Freshwater ponds such as #15a-c, #16a-b and #17a-b in the Mai Po Nature Reserve play important roles in educating visitors. To enrich the biodiversity and increase educational value of the freshwater ponds, we have been conducting a trial to attract more ducks to use Pond #15b since November 2019. The trial includes installing an automatic feeding device on the bund to disperse floating duck feed to the pond and placing duck decoys in the middle of the pond. The result shows that Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Wigeon and Tufted Duck are using the pond, with the peak number near 250 individuals.

The feeding device, powered by a solar panel system, is set to disperse duck feed twice a day at 7:00 am and 5:00 pm, with 4 seconds for each dispersal. We will continue to monitor the impact of automatic feeding device and duck decoys on waterbirds, and use the information to take appropriate measures in the future.

Duck attraction trial in Pond #15b



Water Duck Decoy



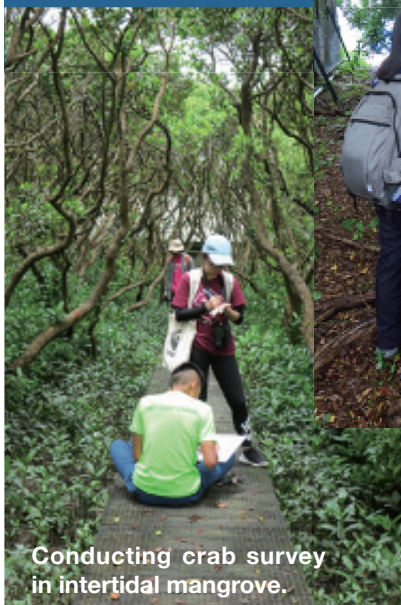
Automatic Feeding Device



Water duck decoys and automatic feeding device in Pond#15b

Citizen science in Mai Po

Citizen scientists are checking the Infra-red camera trap of mammal survey.




Conducting crab survey in intertidal mangrove.

Mai Po Nature Reserve is not only providing food and habitat for more than 400 bird species each year, but also various types of local wildlife such as insects, aquatic fauna, mammals etc. Conserving the high biodiversity at the Reserve requires a comprehensive ecological database to implement effective wetland management, therefore, WWF launched "One Planet Youth Action - Biodiversity Check@ Mai Po" in 2017 to invite young people becoming citizen scientists to conduct long-term ecological monitoring in the Reserve with us. In the past years, our citizen scientists participated in various ecological surveys including mammals, mangrove crabs, Mai Po bent-winged fireflies and Black-faced Spoonbills etc. Besides long-term ecological monitoring, WWF and our citizen scientists are going to co-develop a comprehensive survey on the distribution of invasive species in Mai Po. The data collected will contribute to providing an important reference for developing a management strategy for controlling invasive species in the Reserve.



In memoriam

Karen Phillipps 1948 - 2020

It is with great sadness that I must report that after a long and brave fight against cancer, Karen Phillipps passed away on 6th February 2020. Although Karen lived in Hong Kong for many years, it is her paintings of wildlife that she will be most remembered for. Happily, her artwork will remain with us forever.

She was a pioneer illustrator of Hong Kong's wildlife. Her paintings opened the eyes of many to the natural treasures of Hong Kong.

Karen first came to my notice when she co-authored with Michael Webster the original field guide to Hong Kong's birds *A New Guide to the Birds of Hong Kong*. The book was a revelation but unfortunately it was produced on a low budget and few illustrations were in colour. We met at a cocktail party given by Fred Hechtel, a former Chairman of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, and in no time produced *A Colour Guide to Hong Kong Birds*. Through eight editions the book evolved into *The Birds of Hong Kong and South China* and, in due course, was translated into Chinese by Lam Chiu Ying, which greatly widened public interest in Hong Kong's birds. Although no longer printed by the Information Services Department, the book is now published in Mainland China, where it is widely available. I still cherish my first edition published in 1977, as unlike most modern field guides Karen illustrated the birds in their natural Hong Kong setting. In those days she lived on Cheung Chau and several of the paintings are vignettes of the New Territories forty-five years ago.

Karen's work covered other aspects of Hong Kong's wildlife and her books included *A Colour Guide to Hong Kong Animals* and Brian Morton's *Sea Shore Ecology*. She produced many illustrations and paintings for WWF/HK, especially relating to information for the then-developing Mai Po Nature Reserve. She also prepared noticeboard illustrations that helped visitors identify birds in the Zoological and Botanical Gardens.

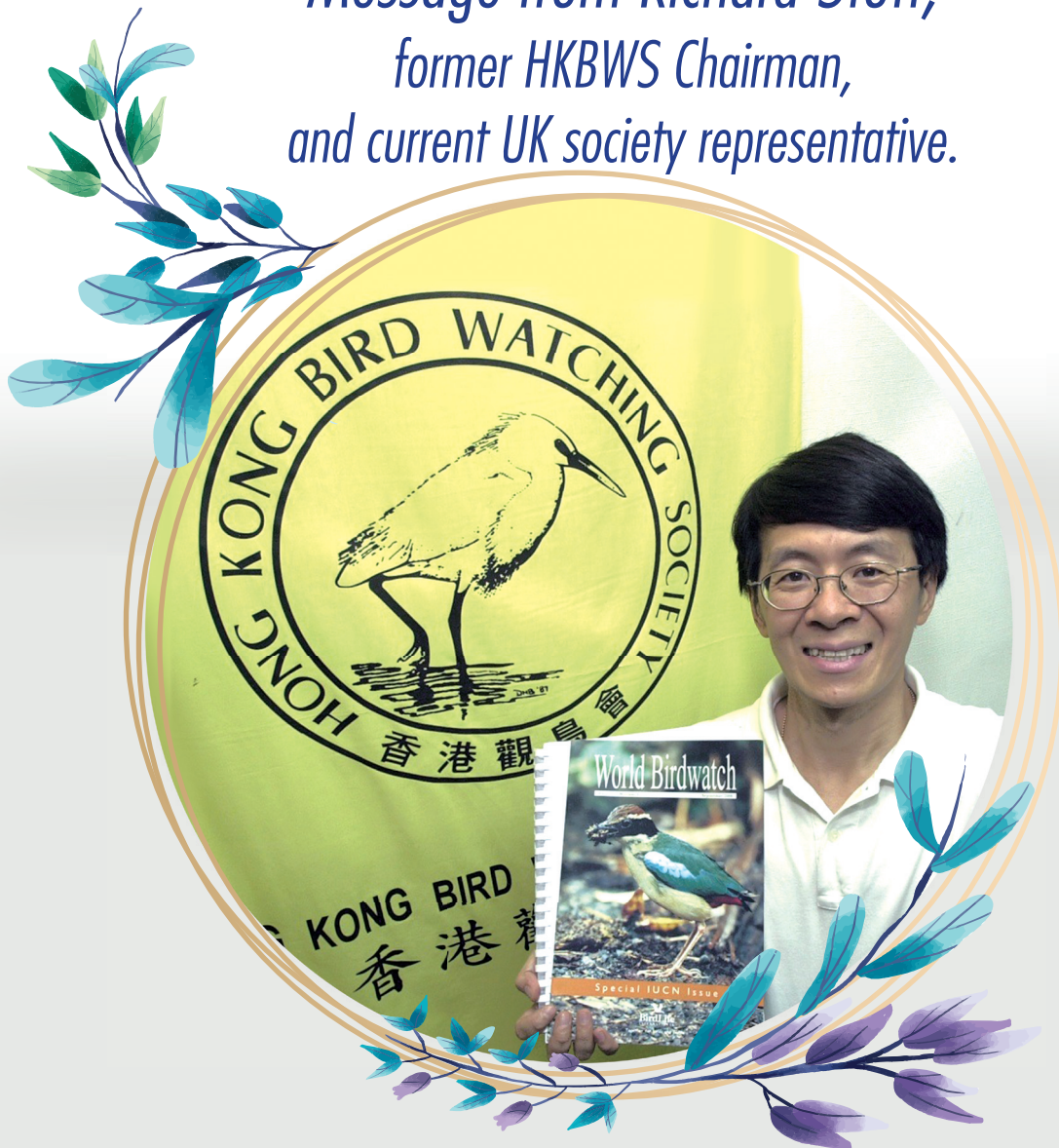
With John MacKinnon, Karen co-authored the ground breaking *A Field Guide to the Birds of China* published by Oxford University Press.

Karen also illustrated numerous books covering the wildlife of Southeast Asia, where she also acted as a popular nature guide, often to remote and barely explored areas. Many of her paintings of little known mammals were the direct result of working alongside loggers in Borneo. Likewise, Karen worked with bird ringing teams at Mai Po by sketching birds before they were released. In more recent times Karen produced with her brother Quentin the highly acclaimed *Phillipps's Guides to the Birds of Borneo and Mammals of Borneo and their Ecology*. To me, these two books are the zenith to which all field guides should aspire.

Karen was born in Sandakan, Sabah and was one of six children. She was educated at Bedales School in the village of Steep, near Petersfield, Hampshire before studying graphic design at Camberwell College of Arts and Technology. Karen is survived by her husband Dr Kenneth Searle to whom I extend my heartfelt condolences.

Clive Viney
5th March 2020

*Message from Richard Stott,
former HKBWS Chairman,
and current UK society representative.*



"Dear Friends

I was shocked and saddened to learn of the recent passing of Dr Ng. I had the pleasure of working with him on the HKBWS Committee for several years. He was very professional and helpful and for me it was an honour to have known him. My sympathy goes to his family and friends who will miss him hugely. He will be a great loss to the world of conservation.

Kind regards

Richard and Janet Stott"

Obituary - Ng Cho Nam (1960-2019)

Lam Chiu Ying

Dr Ng Cho Nam, long-time vice chairman of the Society and a champion of nature conservation in Hong Kong, passed away on 13 December 2019 after a brief illness. It was a great loss to the Society as well as to the Hong Kong community.

Interested in Nature from a young age, Cho Nam made a choice unusual for Hong Kong students in those days: to study environmental science at Lancaster University. He graduated with a doctorate degree in the subject in 1987, probably a Hong Kong first. On return to Hong Kong, he started his distinguished career as university teacher that eventually spanned three decades, first at City University and then University of Hong Kong. His passion, insight and fascinating story-telling inspired generations of students and turned them into knowledgeable, responsible citizens of the world.

Cho Nam took up bird-watching as a life-time hobby alongside his teaching. He was a member of the Locals Team in the annual WWF Big Bird Race for numerous years, helping to raise funds for purchasing gei wais at Mai Po for conservation. His scientific training was an asset as he always took up the role of team recorder, making sure that the reported number of species was no more and no less.

He travelled far and wide in China with birding friends to study diverse habitats. His perspective eyes kept

scanning the landscape, the ecology and the people while his intellectual mind was always busy integrating those observations into a holistic understanding of how Man lives in harmony with Nature. Cho Nam distilled from this treasure of intimate first-hand experience his distinctive, pragmatic "Nature & Man" approach to conservation. This approach was applied with great success in Hong Kong. He took his son Jason to his last birding trip in China, travelling from Chengdu to Lhasa through the hills in 2018. Travel mates were moved by how this loving father showed his son the way to live a fulfilling life.

That Cho Nam was a keen conservationist as well as a skilful manager and organiser did not escape being noticed by the Society. Soon after the Society decided to take up the conservation of birds and their habitats as an explicit objective, Cho Nam was invited in 1993 to join the Executive Committee with the specific designation of "Conservation Officer". He was a founding member of the Conservation Committee set up in 1997 and became the Society's Vice Chairman in 2004.

Through the years, he contributed innumerable innovative ideas that enabled the Society to strengthen its capacity to promote conservation and to venture into new development areas. He was a core member in the Long Valley campaign in 2000: building an alliance of green

Fanjingshan, Guizhou 1992



Yunnan 2016



Yunnan 1995



groups, mounting the publicity campaign, and faulting the environmental impact assessment report of the planned railway. The scrapping of the overhead KCR railway viaduct was a rare success in the history of conservation in Hong Kong. Since 2005, he oversaw the Society's sustained effort, in collaboration with Conservancy Association (of which he was a council member for many years), in managing the habitats for conservation at Long Valley through the engagement of local farmers, under the Management Agreement arrangement of the Environment and Conservation Fund. The now decade-old project was in full alignment with Cho Nam's "Nature & Man" approach. It is a significant Hong Kong first, demonstrating how community involvement benefits conservation, not just of nature but also of culture and heritage.

Cho Nam was the architect of the Society's Fish Pond Conservation Programme which began in 2012, as another Management Agreement project. His foresight and immense personal energy were the key factors that enabled the Society to win the hearts of fish pond operators who had traditionally seen bird-watchers as enemies. But after years of engagement, they now realise that being bird-friendly is beneficial, and see the Society as their best friends, gaining for them recognition and respect by the Hong Kong community. For birds, more than 600 hectares of privately owned fish ponds are now managed with their well-being in mind. These incredible changes would not have happened without Cho Nam. They serve as a legacy of his "Nature & Man" approach.

Cho Nam's latest foray into conservation of the countryside was the revitalisation of Lai Chi Wo Village. It was an extremely complex enterprise requiring inputs from many disciplines and involvement of numerous partners and stakeholders. Cho Nam provided the sincerity and charisma that motivated and glued together the people involved. He even flew to UK at his own

expense, to explain the project to villagers resident overseas, some of whom were initially suspicious. The project is now recognised as a pioneer in rural rejuvenation and has led to government establishing rural conservation as a policy objective. Cho Nam could be proud of his contribution in making it happen.

Cho Nam was an active citizen going well beyond bird-watching and habitat conservation. He applied himself selflessly and totally, to contribute towards the building of a better Hong Kong. He had represented the voice of conservation on government boards and committees: Advisory Council on the Environment, Town Planning Board, Council for Sustainable Development, Energy Advisory Council and others. He had also served on boards and committees of NGOs such as Conservancy Association, Hong Kong Countryside Foundation, WWF, Hong Kong Geography Association, Hong Kong Meteorological Society and Hong Kong Boy Scout Association. To acknowledge his commitment in promoting nature conservation and sustainable development, he was awarded by the Government the Bronze Bauhinia Star in 2004 and the Silver Bauhinia Star in 2014.

Cho Nam was an academic with his feet on the ground who solved real-life problems. He was a genuine conservationist motivated by the love of Nature and guided by a holistic understanding of the real world. Three decades of dedicated service to Hong Kong won him respect from all sectors. Cho Nam will be long remembered by friends as a positive-thinking man, always bubbling with energy and ideas and telling stories with a broad smile. He was a deceptively persuasive person and Nature was lucky to have him as its ambassador. We who have been convinced by him to spend time and energy on conservation are thankful to him for his introduction to those projects.

Cho Nam is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.

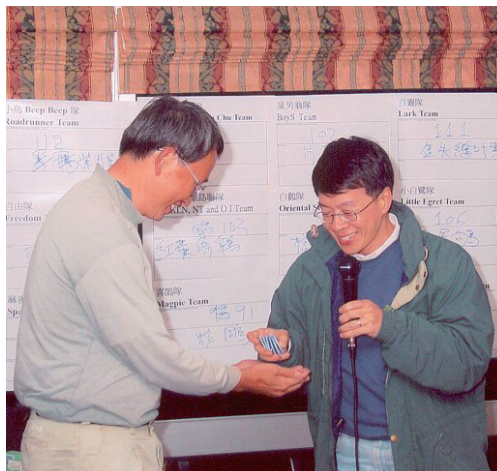


Some old memories of Dr Cho-Nam Ng in Hong Kong City University

Cheung Ho Fai



1993 birding trip to Nujiang (Upper Salween) River, western Yunnan



Prize-giving ceremony, HKBWS "Bird Recording Competition 202" in 2004



Press Conference about HK First Bird records, June 2006

When I started working in the Hong Kong City Polytechnic in August 1989, Dr. Ng also came to City-Poly at the same time. We were in the same department. At that time many staff members shared a large room with open office space. Staff members often went out for lunch together, with he and I being regular members.

At that time we were in the Department of Applied Science. Staff members came with highly diverse research background, including Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, etc. Dr. Ng got his PhD from an Earth Science department. This sounded very special to me and kept me interested. Soon I learned from him a lot in course design. He introduced and explained to us many new knowledge and concepts, terms like sustainable development, renewable energy, ecological assessment, etc. He designed a course called "Hong Kong Environment" for students. At that time it was a totally unheard-of course that held great insight. Think of it briefly, one can easily appreciate its practical importance to Hong Kong.

After a while, City Polytechnic became City University, and we had our own private office. CityU also had its staff restaurant. Staff members of our department still got together for lunch almost daily. Dr. Ng and I were still regular members. We had chance to chat briefly every day. By spring 1990, Dr. Ng recently graduated from a bird-watching class that CY Lam was the chief lecturer. He invited other staff members to join a bird-watching outing to Mai Po Nature Reserve. I was the only one to join him. This is my first bird watching. The outing led by Wai-Kee Lee left me with a deep impression.

In one year, Dr. Ng got nasopharyngeal cancer. By the time it was diagnosed, it was already in the 3rd to 4th stage, really late and seriously dangerous. He was optimistic, and invited staff members of the department to a "farewell" dinner party. It was a fresh experience to me. After that, we heard him detailing his cancer-fighting experiences during lunch time. He adopted a western medical approach and supplemented that with Chinese medical treatment. We also learned from him concepts and various treatments of cancer. After several months his cancer was miraculously under control, and he gradually recovered completely. He even had his hair back in better shape than before.

Several years later, Dr. Ng left CityU and moved to the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In roughly two to three years, he moved back to my department in CityU. Once again, after several years he moved to the Department of Geography of the University of Hong Kong. I thought only those competent and popular experts could move around like this. Even after his move, he still came back to CityU to lunch with us roughly once or twice a week. He said that his department in HKU did not have lunch-chat opportunities like the ones in CityU. Dr. Ng was at his most inspiring during these exchanges.

Dr. Ng served on many government boards, including the Antiquities Advisory Board. During our lunch chats I learned a lot from him about these aspects of his expertise. He was highly enthusiastic about working with the government to shape and improve society.

Dr. Ng was a true academic, being an expert in a broad variety of different fields, and he cared greatly for Hong Kong and development issues. He was a highly distinct and outstanding person even by the standards of my colleagues in CityU. I will miss him forever.

In Memory of Dr. Ng Cho Nam

Carrie Ma

Dr. Ng Cho Nam had been a good teacher and friend to many of us. Every time I met him, I could feel an endless field in his heart, and himself was like a farmer who continuously expounded and sowed seeds of environmental protection in people's consciousness.

I first met Dr. Ng back in 1995 when he was a member of the Conservation Committee of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) who sometimes participated in society outings. He was also the chairman of the Conservancy Association (CA). Often after outings or meetings, he would elaborate the related ecological facts, social-environmental issues and development directions, also answering questions from all aspects. At such, every participant took part in a valuable lecture and practical lesson. Dr. Ng had very good memory, every so often he would mention or ask about certain person or things happened in the past.

The first time I worked with Dr. Ng was on "community development". I received his phone call one day in 1998 when he would like to help CA^[1] to promote community development around Deep Bay. Dr. Ng remembered that I studied subject related to wetland, so I agreed to help. Later on, I learnt that although he was suffering from cancer in the nasal cavity, he was still actively battling with environmental issues at the frontline. CA was very good at this area under his direction. In a short period of time, they had already organised various activities, such as school outreach education, community activities, wetland carnival, eco-trail booklet and Deep Bay waterbird monitoring^[2]. All of these formed a foundation of wetland conservation. Dr. Ng also facilitated the data collection and submission for two Important Bird Area (IBA)^[3] in Hong Kong.



"Start birding from Deep Bay" booklet was produced in 1999. This booklet introduced birding route in Tsim Bei Tsui and was re-printed many times as gift to citizens, secondary and primary school students and public libraries.



Group photo of Guests of the "Fairview Park Wetland Carnival" (Dr. Ng is the 4th person from left in front).

[1] Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay was designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. In 1998, the Conservancy Association was supported by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department (AFD, now Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)) to carry out a project on "Ramsar Wetland Conservation Programme" which included school education and community development around the Deep Bay area.

[2] Members of HKBWS irregularly carried out waterbird count since 1978, which was named "Mid-winter Waterfowl Count". With the AFD subvention, the Conservancy Association (CA) organised the larger-scaled "Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Waterbird Count" from late 1997 to 2000, in which CA was responsible for administration, while HKBWS members carried out the field survey and data analysis. HKBWS took charge of the execution and operation of the waterbird count since mid-2000 when the office started.

[3] The two IBAs are "Inner Deep Bay and Shenzhen River Catchment Area (HK001)" [http://datazone.birdlife.org/index.php/site/factsheet/inner-deep-bay-and-shenzhen-river-catchment-area-iba-hong-kong-\(china\)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/index.php/site/factsheet/inner-deep-bay-and-shenzhen-river-catchment-area-iba-hong-kong-(china)) and "Tai Po Kau, Shing Mun and Tai Mo Shan Area (HK002)" [http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/tai-po-kau-shing-mun-and-tai-mo-shan-area-iba-hong-kong-\(china\)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/tai-po-kau-shing-mun-and-tai-mo-shan-area-iba-hong-kong-(china))

The second time I worked with Dr. Ng was on the “Save Long Valley Campaign” after the East Rail “Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Project” was gazetted in 1999^[4]. With the encouragement of the HKBWS Chairman Mr. Lam Chiu Ying, Dr. Ng shouldered the leadership role in the HKBWS “Conservation Committee”^[5] with support from the HKBWS office. After each meeting or press conference, Dr. Ng contributed his time to conduct debriefing or interpret environmental and conservation regulations in detail, which benefitted most of the participating members, committee members, organisations and reporters a lot.



HKBWS proposed alternative alignments for the Spur Line in April 2000.



HKBWS was joined by nine environmental NGOs to form an alliance on “Long Valley Campaign” in June 2000.



The Conservancy Association organised a “green ribbon action” in October 2000 at Hung Hom Railway Station. Dr. Ng was there to answer questions from media.



In October 2000, Dr. Ng explained the issues at Long Valley wetland to Richard Grimmett, representative from BirdLife International.

Dr. Ng considered everyone as a team who trusted each other to perform at their best position. HKBWS, started as a small voice calling objection to the project in 1999, was joined by various environmental NGOs in April to June 2000 forming an alliance on the “Save Long Valley Campaign”. Later in July to October 2000, it was stepped up to international conservation issue. Finally, in October 2000, the Director of the Environmental Protection rejected the environmental impact assessment report. The railway company appealed in 2001 was unsuccessful, the Spur Line project had to build underground. Long Valley wetland was saved from habitat fragmentation.

I conducted a rough survey and found that Dr. Ng had held or attended up to 21 press conferences and was interviewed by 46 local and overseas media groups, resulting in 473 news reports within 18 months (December 1999 to July 2001). I remembered friends who worked as reporter mentioned how they valued the “environmental lectures” offered by Dr. Ng after each press conferences. Some of them even studied related subject and eventually joined work in environmental matters.



Dr. Ng reviewed the Long Valley issues with HKBWS members at the Annual General Meeting in 2000.

[4] Please refer to Page 14 on Bulletin #250 (http://www.hkbws.org.hk/cms/phocadownload/Bulletin/bulletin_eng/250_eng.pdf) and Bulletin #174 and 177 (www.hkbws.org.hk/web/eng/bulletin_eng.htm) about issues related to wetland in Long Valley.

[5] Setting up of the “Conservation Committee” was suggested by Dr. Mike Leven in 1999. Members included Dr. Ng Cho Nam, Mr. Mike Kilburn, Mr. Fong Kin Wa, Forrest, Dr. Yip Chi Lap, Beta, Ms. Judith Fruin-ball and Mr. Lawrence Johnstone.

The more I got to know Dr. Ng, the more I found out that he was an on-the-ground conservationist. HKBWS began to gather experiences from various birdwatching organisations in Asia in mid-2002. In mid-2005, BirdLife International commissioned HKBWS to carry out the “BirdLife-HKBWS China Programme” funded by the United Kingdom Government’s Darwin Initiative. Dr. Ng was one of the Steering Committee^[6] members to manage and monitor the programme. He continuously reminded everyone that the project should respect and work together with local livelihood and culture. Besides, in 2004, Dr. Ng participated in discussion with AFCD and China National Bird Banding Center (NBBC) for Hong Kong to use their own metal rings for bird ringing research^[7].

I had less chance to encounter Dr. Ng once I ceased working at the HKBWS. We irregularly met at several occasions or Chinese New Year gatherings at some birding friend’s home. Every time we met, he still shared his views on different environmental issues -- wetland mitigation at Hong Kong Wetland Park, management agreement projects for farmland in Long Valley, or fishponds in Deep Bay area, how to merge biodiversity conservation with channel restoration works and water footprint assessment^[8] etc. I was delighted every time for the chance to attend his “environmental lectures” again.

The last time I met him was during the HKBWS bird race in April 2019. I didn’t expect that he would leave us in December.

I am deeply sorry about Dr. Ng’s passing. I hope the seeds he sowed for environmental protection continue to germinate, grow and eventually flourish in more people’s hearts.



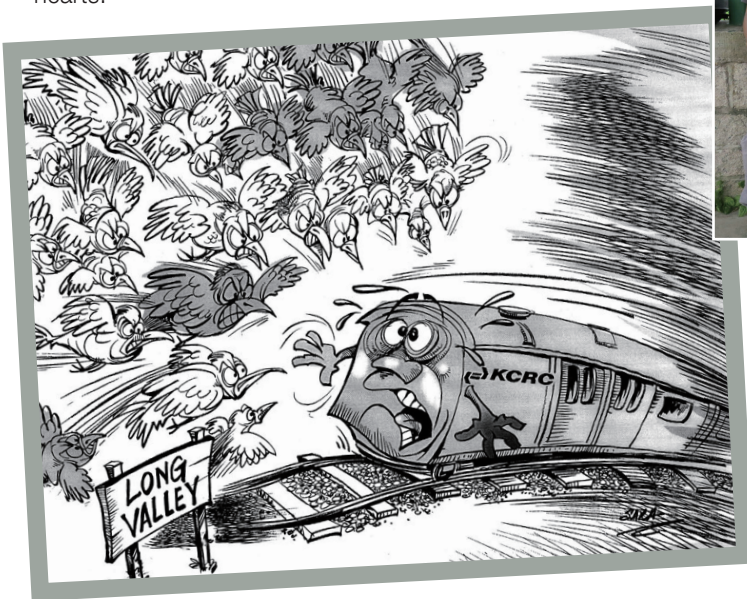
In July 2002, HKBWS held a meeting with representatives from BirdLife Asia Office and birdwatching organisations in Singapore, the Philippines, Japan, Taiwan to discuss opportunities to organise birdwatching and conservation activities in China. (Dr. Ng is the 1st person from left at the back)



In March 2004, HKBWS, AFCD and NBBC discussed the use of metal rings in Hong Kong. (Dr. Ng is the 1st person from left at the back)



HKBWS bird race. (Dr. Ng is the 3rd person from the right)



Last but not least, I found this comic in 2000, which the author (South China Morning Post) agreed HKBWS to use freely, in memory of Dr. Ng worked together with everyone.

^[6] Steering Committee was set up to manage and monitor resource utilization and evaluate the project. Committee members included Mr. Lam Chiu Ying, Dr. Ng Cho Nam, Dr. Cheung Ho Fai and, from BirdLife International, Mr. Simba Chan, Richard Grimmett and Mike Crosby.

^[7] Bird ringing researchers in Hong Kong had always been using metal rings and database system from UK’s British Trust of Ornithology in the past. After some time and discussion, Dr. Cheung Ho Fai suggested to find manufacturers to produce Hong Kong’s bird rings. Mr. Tam Yip Shing coordinated the design and production. Since 2010, all bird ringing researchers in Hong Kong adopted the Hong Kong rings in their ringing activities.

^[8] Hong Kong Jockey Club’s Water Initiative on Sustainability and Engagement Project (<https://www.socsc.hku.hk/jcwise/?lang=zh-hant>)

A Long Valley Tribute to Dr. Ng Cho Nam (1960-2019)

George C.K. Jor

I have known Cho Nam for about five years and have immensely benefitted from his selfless devotion to environmental education and his insight and knowledge of Hong Kong's natural environment. He was a great storyteller, an interesting and respectable teacher, a passionate environmentalist and courageous conservationist. Under his leadership, I have taken part time and again as a volunteer helper and invited tour guide in the Jockey Club Water Initiative on Sustainability and Engagement Project (JC-WISE). I am fortunate to have had a chance to work with him the Executive Committee of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. I have seen how he handled tough challenges of environmental issues with great compassion, commitment, and courage.

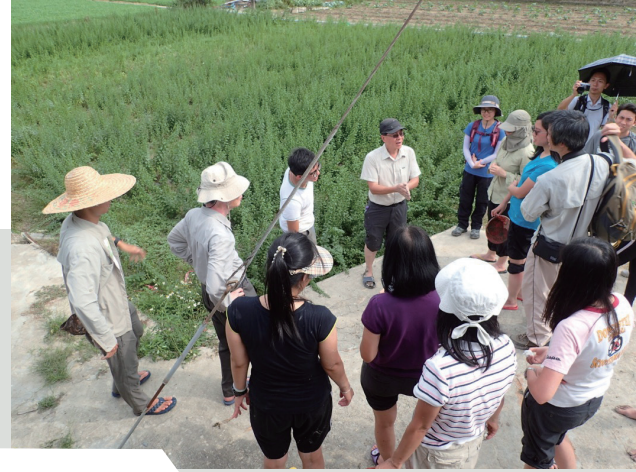
I was impressed by the ways he gave his time and energy to conservation works in Hong Kong so "selflessly, gladly and strategically" in the words of Prof. K.C. Lam. When I read Cho Nam's Letter to Hong Kong (Chinese original attached), something touched me deep inside and inspired me, so much so that I took the time to translate it from Chinese into English for young people in Hong Kong, who include my students from South Korea, India, and Indonesia studying at Lee Woo Sing College (LWS), The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Many of them do not speak Chinese. I took them, mixed and mingled with local Hong Kong students, totally 28, to Long Valley for a guided bird watching tour. With the help of an experienced bird guide, Mr. Kenny Yip, four telescopes and 28 pairs of binoculars, I let them experience for themselves what birding was like in Long Valley on 21st January 2020.

Most of them are graduating students in their final year of studies and have never been to Long Valley. They came from different countries with different backgrounds, 18 academic disciplines from six different faculties, including life sciences, social sciences, humanities, education, engineering, and business faculties. With the students' informed consent, I would like to share with you some of their feedback to Cho Nam's Letter to Hong Kong about Long Valley and his view of conservation in Hong Kong. Though there is a significant time gap of 20 years between the first time the Letter was broadcast by RTHK in 2000, and their visit in 2020, there are still rippling effects in the hearts and minds of young people as shown by their writings. The following examples will speak for themselves.

I recall Cho Nam's compassion for birds and his commitment to the protection of wildlife when I reflect on the 2020 crisis of Wuhan corona virus outbreak and the threats to global public health brought by the game-meat-induced plague. Sadly, wildlife trade is now the largest organised crime next to drug trafficking. How can man live with nature without trashing it? Insightful pioneers, like Cho Nam, have shown us their wisdom, compassion and care, and put in perspective for us sustainable ways in which humans and wildlife might live in peace.



Students' Feedback on Cho Nam's Letter to Hong Kong After Visiting Long Valley



1. Nori Chan (*Insurance, Financial and Actuarial Analysis Major, Year 4*)

"The birding experience in Long Valley has left me in awe. It was an eye-opening experience to witness the wonders of nature, despite heavy academic burden inside campus as a final year student.

As I have mentioned during my sharing on the coach on our way back to campus, I was astonished by the number of bird species found in Hong Kong, and our fortunate stroke of serendipity to be able to witness so many of them within slightly more than an hour. Just as George has mentioned, all birds looked the same to me before the semester started. I would sometimes point to colourful birds and draw my friends' attention to how beautiful they are, but never had I stopped and looked closely at them. This course was my first encounter with birding, which was super impressive!

I could only identify [the size of] small birds and big birds, or maybe differentiate them by their colour before this course, but now, after two consecutive weeks of birding, inside the campus and at Long Valley, I am sometimes able to name a few bird species finally! When we are mindful of details, it is stunning how small details, like the colour of bills or a white dot on its body, characterise different species.

It took me some time to sink in and reflect on Dr. Ng's letter. I had so much in mind especially during the current social unrest in Hong Kong. It was intimidating how many birds were killed, trees destroyed and the cost [inflicted] on the environment. It was also alarming how long the bush fires have lasted in Australia. During my recent visit to Sydney, the on-the-scene experience of poor air quality and traumatic news everyday was definitely heart breaking. I can't imagine how many koalas and kangaroos are killed, not to mention birds that were supposed to fly freely in the sky.

After all, as active members of society, we are obliged to protect nature. As Dr. Ng has said "All lives are equal and all creation should be saved". We enjoy the benefits of the nature every day, and yet we tend to take it for granted. We destroy the environment without realising because we weren't willing to spend a single day out to actually look at nature. How pitiful is it that we chose to ignore the beauty of planet earth for our own monetary success? How foolish are we to think that somebody else would "do something" for nature, so we could all just sit there cross-legged and pretend everything is okay?

Dr. Ng brought his children to Long Valley, and it was not after my own visit to Long Valley along with the rest of the class that I understand how little did I know about wildlife and nature. We talked about "sustainable development" without knowing what it really means. We stopped using plastic straws and imagined that's the most we can do for our environment. We turned a blind eye simply for "convenience" or "money". How I wish I hadn't been so foolish!

The dilemma between preserving the nature and a city's economic development has sparked controversial discussions in the entire globe. Long Valley is yet just another example of how human beings sacrifice nature in return for possible economic returns. If only every one of us could spend a minute to reflect, to appreciate the planet, to stop taking things for granted, our nature might be saved. The journey to sustainable development is never easy, but together we're stronger. If every one of us tries to influence our friends and families, I believe we could all make positive impacts and a difference in the future of our society."

"Birds and humans together share the Planet Earth", and we have no rights take away other species' right to survive. As a final note, we are just part of the living community, enjoying nature's benefits. And now, it is time for us to do something for this precious gift."

2. Hansen Cugito (*from Indonesia, SEEM major, Year 4*)

"I want to thank Dr. Ng Cho Nam and the NGOs for providing us another opportunity to visit Long Valley. I recalled watching a large colony of Scaly-breasted Munia flocking together in harmony and peace. That moment reminded me about Twitter, a social media where humans tend to interact with each other in the virtual world. However, in reality humans seem so busy and increasingly self-centred. I sincerely hope humans can value each other in reality and live together [in peace and harmony]."

3. Eun Yeo (from Korea, Psychology major, Year 2)

"I also appreciate my experience in Long Valley and had important realisation after this trip. In Dr. Ng Cho Nam's letter, there was this one statement that made me realise how much I, we, and the world were careless about the environment around us: "You don't know the value of life unless you have had a close encounter with death. After a close encounter with death, you inevitably wonder what the meaning of life is and for what you are living." This would be same for nature too. Nature is around us providing us with what we need. Most of the people think it is unlimited, so we harm nature for profit. However, nature is being [over-]consumed; it is being destroyed and one day, it will be gone. After it is gone, we will then realise the importance of nature, which cannot be replaced or recovered by any other things. When we realise this, however, it will be too late. Just as Dr. Ng Cho Nam has experienced, although we can't recover what has been destroyed already, we can save and treasure nature for our future. This realisation was very valuable for me during this trip thanks to Dr. Ng Cho Nam, Mr. Kenny Yip, as well as this course [Nature's Classroom]."

4. Jordan Randall Sudradiat (from Indonesia, Architecture major, Year 4)

Reflections on "Letter to Hong Kong" by Dr. Ng Cho Nam after visiting Long Valley

"It is quite amazing how, only when you have seen Long Valley with your own eyes and felt its true glory, that the depth and weight of Dr. Ng's letter could be felt. This was how I felt, but I am quite sure that my feelings are in harmony with everyone else's.

He talks about Long Valley with such a passion that his love for it oozes out of his words - I had realised that upon first reading his letter but I did not understand it until I visited Long Valley in person. As any 19 year old would do in today's generation, I googled this place called "Long Valley", without any expectations whatsoever. When I saw pictures of the vast farmlands, I was quite amazed that such a place existed in Hong Kong. Hong Kong has always been pictured as a dense concrete jungle in my head. A pleasant surprise, it truly was, to see that farmlands actually exist in this vast city that never bothers to stop in its fast-paced tracks. This pleasant surprise turned out to be a far more tremendous one as I immersed myself in the farmlands of Long Valley. With the air blowing ever so gently, the sound of birds chirping ever so mysteriously all around and the limitless shades of green on the ground mingling with the majestic shades of blue on the sky, I found myself finally understanding what Dr. Ng was trying to say. This is why he brought his children to Long Valley. This is why he fought with his life to protect it. Everything made sense - and it wasn't at all difficult to understand as before. All I had to do was take one glance at the beautiful horizon, feel the air and immerse my senses in this hidden sanctuary.

How presumptuous was I to underrate this place when I first saw it on the Internet. Sadly, this would be the case for most of the people in my generation. As Dr. Ng had mentioned in his letter, it is without a doubt that we truly have been disconnected with nature. We have become so comfortable living in concrete boxes that we forget there is a much more spacious and colourful world outside of it. Without the passion of people like Dr. Ng, this spacious world would most definitely be reduced to simple concrete boxes and truthfully; everyone would be fine with it.

To be frank, people like Dr. Ng shouldn't even have to fight to protect these lands in the first place. Shouldn't it be common sense to protect what gave us life in the first place? I often think about Paul Hawken's description of our bodies as a 'community'. If this 'community' were destroying our body, how would we feel? That must be what the earth is feeling right now.

"We often take things for granted," Dr. Ng mentioned in his letter. I have come to realise that this would be a massive understatement. From my studies [Food and Nutrition Science major] I have discovered that one third of the food produced in this world gets wasted. This is no small number. We turn a blind eye on this earth because we have become too comfortable with it. This is no small problem. As I gazed into the horizon at Long Valley, I could see the towering buildings symbolic to Hong Kong at the far back. Somehow, it wasn't an eyesore. It felt perfect blending in with the greenery. I stopped and wondered why this was so, and suddenly remembered Dr. Ng's stories about his struggle with cancer. He showed no remorse whatsoever and continued to fight on even though there was practically an alien invading the community that was his body. That was why the tall concrete towering over these farmlands didn't feel very unfitting. It was because hope was there, and hope will always be there. There should be a middle ground where we can protect both concrete and natural jungles - and when we find that middle ground is when the earth will begin to heal. Dr. Ng's letter does not explain the beauty of Long Valley but explains its importance instead, and that is fine because all we need is a trigger for people to actually try and experience nature. Once everyone has actually done that, I believe Dr. Ng's dreams of a sustainable future can finally bear fruit."

5. Warren, Kin Yip Tang (BBA major, Year 4, on exchange to U.S. last year)

“Are urbanisation and environmental protection mutually exclusive? After reading Dr. Ng Cho Nam’s “Letter to Hong Kong”, I believe the answer is a NO.

The protection of the hinterland is never easy. Long Valley is surrounded by skyscrapers in Sheung Shui and Shenzhen across the border. I am amazed how we have preserved Long Valley by keeping its primitive form and protecting the habitats of various native species. From the success of Long Valley, we see that interests of urban economic activities and environmental protection are compatible with each other. All we need is more activists, like Dr. Ng, who advocate balancing both interests, and strive to raise social awareness on conservation topics. They are role models of how we can put pressure on the government and businesses, when the administration and tycoons attempt to develop relentlessly.

In Hong Kong, it seems that economic value transcends everything else. But as a business major, I am happy to share with you that every cloud has a silver lining. As required by the Hong Kong Exchange and Clearing (HKEx), which operates the city’s stock market, listed companies have to report their environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance annually. MTRC (the acquiring company of KCRC) has no exemption from that and the conglomerate has started to take environmental issues seriously. Despite railway construction, 260 bird species have been observed at the wetland at Lok Ma Chau since 2007 and five different bird species were spotted breeding on site, including White-shouldered Starling and Common Moorhen. We can see the concept of conservation is gaining momentum in the business field, and I am optimistic with how business can drive environmental impact in the near future...

As Dr. Ng said in his letter, “All lives are equal and all creation should be saved.” Dr. Ng and this field trip have enlightened us that we should care for wildlife as we care for [future] human generations. We should never consume and develop at the expense of other species and our future generations. Dr. Ng has undoubtedly laid a solid foundation and left his legacy in confronting urban sprawl for the sake of conservation of biodiversity. It is time for society to reap his fruits, take action and spread his will in conserving the beautiful city and planet that we all share.”

6. Della Anzela (from Indonesia, SEEM, Year 2)

“From Dr. Ng’s letter, we can feel a sense of how passionate he was about nature and all the lives within it. I have to admit that I wasn’t really an environmentalist and have been taking nature for granted. Just like the majority of people in the world, I am aware of what is happening to our nature but never take any action. Hence, when I first read the letter, I couldn’t seem to understand the cause of such passion and feelings.

The trip to Long Valley, however, was an eye-and-mind-opening experience for me. It might sound weird but I never expected ‘the wetlands of Long Valley’ being literally wetlands next to all those high-rise buildings of Hong Kong. It was fascinating, something I never got to experience even back in Indonesia. Throughout the trip, I was constantly amused by the biodiversity and noticed all the life settling there. It reminded us once again that we, humans, are not the only residents of the Earth. As Mr. Ng said in the letter, “All lives are equal and all creation should be saved.” All those lives matter, not only ours. It is selfish and ignorant to think otherwise. Therefore, we share the same responsibility of taking care of the Earth instead of ruining it and making things difficult for one another. It was very upsetting to see the small signs left by the government alerting the day Long Valley will be gone. I remember seeing the dried lands looking sadly abandoned and asking Mr. Kenny Yip, “Why are they so dried?” His response was short, that there is no point. Why water it when it will be destroyed anyway?

The trip has left me with mixed feelings. I finally understood what Dr. Ng meant in his letter to Hong Kong and his urge to protect Long Valley. Even if nothing could be done any further for Long Valley, I hope more people get to experience its beauty before it’s gone and learn the importance of our nature. Of course economic development is something we couldn’t let go. However, like what Warren and Jordan have said, there has to be a happy medium. A compromise concerns both nature and economic needs with equal relevance. And that is what we have to look for, for the future of our homes.



7. Antonius Devin (from Indonesia BBA major, Year 4)

"I am very glad that I can get this wonderful experience to visit the other parts of Hong Kong which I never expected before. In the beginning I thought that long valley is a place that made by human for birds so [that] they can live there as well as a recreational place. But my view totally changed when I arrived there. Long valley is a natural habitat for birds.

I would like to say thank Dr. Ng Cho Nam and the other people who fight for the existence of this beautiful place. I totally agree with Dr. Ng Cho Nam that Birds and humans together share the Planet Earth. We humans have no rights to take away their right to survive on Earth. In my opinion birds and human have mutually [beneficial] relationship that's the main reason why we need to take care of each other.

Talking about Mr. Kenny Yip, I am very amazed that he could spot target birds sprightly, which I couldn't see even with my pair of binoculars. He also gave us a clear explanation of different types of birds. But there is one thing that made me sad when he said that Long Valley would be closed soon. Thankfully a foreigner like me can visit this place before it is [developed].

Overall, I also would like to thank Lee Woo Sing College, especially to George, so I can take the opportunity to join this field trip."



8. Amy Kwong (Social Work major, Year 4)

"To be honest, before the field trip, I didn't even know where is Long Valley and what had happened to this precious place. The field trip gave me a precious chance to see the beautiful farmland and wetland in Hong Kong. I could not believe that Long Valley could still be biologically so rich and diverse, even with all the surrounding buildings. The quality time spending in Long Valley was very relaxing and detoxifying.

More importantly, after reading Dr. Ng Cho Nam's Letter to Hong Kong, I found that I didn't really take my responsibility to protect the environment and treasure the rich diversity of life. As I said before, I took birds for granted in the past because birds were too common to see everywhere. But Dr. Ng reminded us, "Until one day, we will discover there is nothing left except humans, rats, cockroaches, flies and mosquitoes." We need to treasure the bird diversity in Hong Kong because birds will go extinct if we continue to destroy their natural habitat. When I was appreciating different types of birds in Long Valley, I felt very sorry that they don't have an equal chance to survive in the planet. They are trying so hard to find a suitable habitat [and to stay away from the urban sprawl].

I am very much grateful to Dr. Ng and other parties' contributions to the conservation of this precious "birds' paradise". They also helped arouse my awareness of the nature conservation for which everyone has a responsibility. The story of Long Valley is a significant example showing that environmental protection and economic pursuit can co-exist if we really value the importance of sustainable development."

9. Janice Widjaja (from Indonesia, BBA Year3)

"I never knew that such a place like Long Valley still exists in Hong Kong. Honestly, before joining this field trip, I have no interest in birds or nature at all. However, after reading the letter by Dr. Ng Cho Nam, and then visiting the Long Valley, I could say that my point of view towards nature has changed.

After reading the "Letter to Hong Kong", I realise that human beings, including myself, have not appreciated nature enough. Even though nature has provided us such wonderful resources that are essential to our life, we never feel satisfied and even take advantage for ourselves by exploiting the resources. We didn't realise that our actions are having negative impacts and destroying our ecosystem. I can't believe that such place like Long Valley was nearly destroyed in the past. I want to thank Dr. Ng Cho Nam and the NGOs who fought for Long Valley and nature. Dr. Ng Cho Nam's passion for nature has raised awareness of young people like us to appreciate nature more and encouraged us to follow in his steps to protect and fight for Mother Nature.

This is my first bird watching experience and it was such an unforgettable and precious trip that I will cherish forever. I was surprised and amazed to see so many bird species that I haven't seen before. Lastly, I would like to thank Lee Woo Sing College, Mr. George Jor, and Mr. Kenny Yip for making this field trip possible."

10. Stanley Wai Chak Lau (Journalism and Communication Major, Year 4)

"To be honest, the only valley that comes to my mind is Happy Valley. I have no idea where Long Valley is located. Therefore, it's my first time there and I have a really good time. Especially, I love how those birds can fly freely there. I know it's a bit awkward of saying so, but the fact is urbanisation really takes their homeland away. Human is also a part of nature. I do agree that we have no right to exploit the livelihood of other species.

For my first bird watching experience, it is really fresh for me. I have never used those tools like the binoculars [and telescopes] to observe the environment in that way. It shows the fine details of the birds. With the great guidance by George and Kenny, I did find it fun to learn about birds this way.

After reading the letter written by Dr. Ng, I realised we, human beings, put ourselves too high compared with nature. Nature provides us with all the resources that we need. However, I don't think humans cherish nature that much. The over-exploitation of natural reserves, the over-cultivation on a single piece of farmland and so on are clear evidences that how bad we treat nature. I'm glad that Long Valley still exists because of Dr. Ng's great efforts. This reminds me to do more for the environment on individual basis [and collectively].

Thanks George and Kenny for letting us having some a great experience to get connected with nature."

11. Varian-Wijaja (from Indonesia, Engineering, Year 3)

"All lives are equal and all creations should be saved". As human beings, we have the responsibility to take care of the Earth. We have to be grateful for what the Creator gave us. I can't believe that this place is would be destroyed by the building of a railway spur line. I am really thankful for Dr. Ng Cho Nam and his NGO friends to fight for Long Valley's existence.

It was my first time to see a real natural park in Hong Kong. I visited one human-made bird park on Hong Kong Island, but never realised that there is a natural park here. I started to learn that watching birds could relax our mind after hours and days of hard work and studies.

I would like to say 'thank you' to Lee Woo Sing College, George, and Kenny Yip for this opportunity.'



12. Dennis Lee (*Integrated BBA, Year 4*)

"I didn't know much about the importance of biodiversity. Though I had heard it many times, I didn't really understand how the destruction of the ecosystem influences people. In fact, I was one of those who would argue that man has a right to conquer and even destroy the environment, if needed. Therefore, whenever I read an article supporting biodiversity, I thought only a small number of people were extreme enough to abandon their right to utilise the planet for their own sake.

However, this trip to Long Valley, together with Letter to Hong Kong by Dr. Ng Cho Nam, has completely changed my mind. Now I believe that it's not even a choice but a must for us to keep the ecosystem intact [and healthy]. I realise there are more benefits gained than lost if we preserve the environment. We should also pass this precious gift to our next generation because the planet is not a place where only the current generation owns.

Looking at different types of birds in Long Valley, I imagined what would have happened to us if the place were destructed by the plan to construct a railway across this area. Perhaps, we might have not been able to see the trees and crops growing there. Perhaps, we might have not been able to take pictures of various creatures living there. Perhaps, we might have not been able to find a place to refresh for leisure. Then, perhaps, we might have lived our lives in an unhappy manner.

I appreciate Dr. Ng's effort to change the absolutely impossible to the absolutely possible, knowing that it was one of the few cases that made the government withdraw its plan. Even though he has already passed away, his spirit and passion for loving the biodiversity of the ecosystem will never disappear. Just as his short letter made impacts on my mind, this will continue to influence people. One day when all people realise the need for the preserved environment, the world will turn into a place where all creations, without discrimination, coexist happily."

13. Katie Ng (*from Hong Kong, Law major, Year 4*)

"I was deeply stirred by reading this calm yet emotional piece of work. It didn't say anything I don't already know, but these are things that I always forget. And it's not just me many of us haven't been paying enough attention.

The first idea that came up to my mind was - never take one single breath for granted. As we are inundated with work and school we often forget living itself is already a miracle. Things happened without one even knows so we should treasure every moment.

Having said that other lives are no less precious than humans'. "All lives are equal and all creation should be saved", says Dr. Ng. Cho Nam. Hong Kong is revered for its prosperity and legendary development. Yet, it seems that HK government has not been doing its best job in preserving the gift by nature. A prime example is the one mentioned in the letter to HK - KCRC building railway on Long Valley and not even willing to communicate, let alone to compromise. And this is only one incident. It's not the first, and definitely won't be the last time the government or other businesses turn a blind eye to conservation. A good case in point is the development plan of building luxurious housings in Nam Sang Wai, proposed by Henderson Land. It left the society in an uproar and luckily this didn't happen. Otherwise, this "internationally important" wetland and home to countless species would be gone.

To be honest I've never been a big fan or expert in conservation. I watched news and donate from time to time, but I never actually feel anything for it because there's always something that looks more "important" to care about. But I have to admit the field trip to Long Valley left me in awe. For a second I can't believe this is in Hong Kong, the concrete forest. And having witnessed with my own eyes, I totally understand Dr. Ng's love and affection for this place. It's nothing wrong that economic development remains a critical concern, but what is equally essential is to minimise our disruption to nature. Analogous to human lives, we can't take the nature for granted. It won't always exist unless we take positive steps to protect it before it's too late. We should all spare no effort to do so.

Can't wait to also see Mai Po, and its residents!"



14. Summer Ng (*Exercise Science and Health Education major, Year 2*)

"Before going to Long Valley, I thought bird watching was just a simple appreciation of birds in a place with trees. But actually, it could be difficult yet fun to observe deeply by ourselves. I would say the difficulty of bird watching in CU campus was a beginner level comparing to Long Valley. It was really a great opportunity to visit such a beautiful place along with informative bird guides.

Resources on earth are not supposed to be used up by human. Many living things other than humans help create better living environment. However, while humans, known as the most intelligent living beings, are destroying the most on earth. All of us are sharing the earth, and we have the responsibility to sustain it too. It is like the exchanging concept in economy. We must pay if we are taking something away.

Birds are so tiny and they look vulnerable. They remind me of a word--"home". Their home could not be easily seen but could be destroyed in a second. All lives are equal and humans do not have more rights to ruin the environment, not to mention demolishing their home. They gave us beautiful and relaxing natural places to visit but we are harming them non-stop which is really selfish.

Dr. Ng's message is sagacious and deeply written in my mind. Long Valley should be a place that allows people to recall the great contributions made by Dr. Ng. Meanwhile, the heart-breaking bushfires in Australia did raise a lot of awareness [of environmental protection] from the whole world. Unfortunately, the sacrifice and victims paid are too heavy to bear. It is hoped that this disastrous bushfire crisis will not be wasted but can make one remember [the importance of conservation and] historical heritage and natural issue.

Besides, I am grateful to learn to differentiate a few species of birds and to name them for my friends. It was a great way to get to know nature and stay connected. I believe we can do much more [for our natural environment] than only stop using plastic straws and bags!"

15. Tiffany Halim (*Integrated BBA Programme, Year 4*)

"After reading Dr. Ng's letter, I really admire how much he still cared for the environment (i.e. Long Valley) despite having nasopharyngeal carcinoma. This just goes to show how ignorant we could be, caring only for our wellbeing, health and wealth and not fully realising that the importance of the well being of the environment and other living creatures (especially birds!) around us. I could only imagine how hard it must be for Dr. Ng, fighting for the illness he had and for the Long Valley at the same time.

Sometimes when we're faced with our own problems, we get so focused on those that we miss seeing the bigger picture. I'm so focused thinking of my own problems: grades, relationships, and exams. The trip opened my eyes on how insignificant my problems are compared to those who depend on the Long Valley's ecosystem just to survive: birds, farmers, vegetables, and other animals. I miss seeing the bigger picture because I was too focused on myself, when Long Valley is right there in front of my eyes, hidden behind the skyline of Hong Kong. I would say Dr. Ng was lucky, lucky that he still had the opportunity to enjoy and fight for his passion (i.e. nature observation) despite having the illness. His words still linger on my mind, "You don't know the value of life if you haven't had a close encounter with death. After a close encounter with death, you would inevitably wonder what the meaning of life is and for what you are living?"

The trip to Long Valley made me realise how often I take things for granted, not appreciating enough of what I have. It's true what Dr. Ng said, "Long Valley is indeed a paradise for birds". I'm very grateful for the opportunity to experience the other side of Hong Kong, being able to see many different birds and hear their stories from George and Kenny. It's not every day that anyone can have this wonderful opportunity, especially since Long Valley might be gone in the next few years. I just realised that for a moment during our trip, I felt something that I haven't really felt in a long time: peace. The only thing that worried me at that time was getting my binoculars in time to spot the beautiful birds before they flew away while enjoying the sound of black-collared starlings. It's really sad seeing how all this may be gone by 2023.

Going forward, I hope that I can start being more aware and appreciating more of my surroundings: birds, plants, animals, and the well being of the environment. Like what Dr. Ng said, "if we take things for granted and do not stop the wanton destruction, perpetrators would go on to destroy more and more and there is no end to it. Until one day, we'll discover there is nothing left except humans, rats, cockroaches, flies and mosquitoes. When we realise how important it is to protect nature then, it would be too late."

16. Rachel Lam (Biology Major, Year 4)

"This is my first time to long valley and I was impressed by the environment there. It is so rare to find a place like that in Hong Kong.

During the 2 hours trip in Long Valley, I saw different kind of birds such as Black-collared Starling, Scaly-breasted Munia, White Wagtail and Grey Heron. And I even saw a rare bird Black-faced Bunting. After going to such as wonderful habitat, I had a reflection on myself and the behaviour on people living in the urban cities. There were a lot of beautiful and rich habitats for different animals and plants to live in. But with the development and selfishness of human beings, those habitats lost and the climate changed a lot. Many animals and plants suffered from global warming the climate changes and hence there are facing serious lost of habitats and food resources. It is so glad to have Dr Ng, fighting for Long Valley. Without his efforts, Long Valley might have been long gone and the animals would surely suffer.

I have been trying so hard to promote the sense of eco-friendly and environment conservation in my internship and part time job. However, the public are still ignoring the serious problem that the earth is facing. The government did little to save the community but spent even more on development and infrastructure. Only when there are serious problem such as the bushfires in Australia can the public pay attention and effort in conserving and helping the environment. But then the will soon forget the problem and go back to their normal lifestyle, such as wasting plastic products and keep using different electronic products. These activities benefit our life in short term but harm the environment for a much longer period.

I sincerely hope those message can be spread to the public in a more efficient ways and the public will soon take part in protecting our environment, restore and conserve the habitats for the animals."

17. Luke, Chun Kit Chan (Bachelor of Law Programme, Year 4)

"When one visits Long Valley, one may not realise the vulnerability of this natural habitat for wildlife. In particular, without the fight [or championship] of Dr Ng and the NGOs about 20 years ago, it would have been damaged by the KCRC project. In his "Letter to Hong Kong", Dr Ng fantastically [and strategically] shows how a person can live with passion and care, despite living in the age of capitalism and modernity.

We can be passionate about life and treasure the environment. Modern technology and capitalism allow us to go to the most exotic places and seek the most gratifying experiences. It is easy to take things for granted because what is accessible seems less valuable. Dr Ng shows us a different perspective. "Every blade of grass, every tree, every bird, every animal is a form of life". Every being has a story to tell. A Little Egret is different from a Great Egret. A Scaly-breasted Munia is different from a Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Instead of looking for new ways to satisfy our growing desires, Dr. Ng urges us to look around ourselves and appreciate the wonderful stories of nature. There is something fundamentally interesting about them.

We can also genuinely care about others. When Dr. Ng objected to the KCRC project two decades ago, governmental officials ignored their objections for their love of bird watching. But that was not quite the reason motivating Dr. Ng's cause. Birds are important not because he happened to like birds. He cared about them because they are intrinsically valuable, just like human beings. We care about birds or our future generations. They may not reciprocate and return the favour. But Dr. Ng shows us that genuine care need not depend on mutual benefit. We can be guardians for the environment and our future generations because we care about them. Genuine care goes beyond the egoistic self.

Dr. Ng displayed how one can live with passion and care. The stories in Long Valley will be his lasting legacies."

Postings collected with informed consent of course participants by
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GEWS2061 Nature's Classroom: Field Studies of Nature's Genius in
Biodiversity

Lee Woo Sing College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

25th January 2020



APPENDIX I

*“Letter to Hong Kong” by Dr. Ng Cho Nam (1960-2019)
Broadcast on RTHK 3rd June, 2000*

Dear TM,

How are you? We haven't kept in touch for some time since 1997. You probably thought I had already passed away. Yes, I nearly did.

Ever since my return from the United States, I was diagnosed with nasopharyngeal carcinoma. It was bad. My doctor said I only had 30% chance of recovery. Even if I survive, there could well be serious medical after-effects including blindness in the right eye, early degeneration of the left eye, and damage of the sense of hearing and of the saliva glands and so on.

I remember that day when I received the news all of a sudden I was devastated. I could not take it. I was gripped by tremendous fear and anxiety. Feeling so helpless and lost, I could not understand why me, a healthy guy who never smokes or drinks, who often advises others to treasure life and to protect Nature as a dedicated environmentalist and conservationist. How did I ever come to this? It was so depressing.

But, dear brother, I did not give up. I'm not the kind of man who gives up so easily without a fight. I swear I would fight the cancer until the end.

That night my wife and I cried the whole night in each other's arms. The next morning, we made up our minds. No matter how long and complicated the series of radiotherapy and chemotherapy, we were determined to live our normal lives. I would go to work as usual and carry on with my conservation works. There was a period of time when I underwent chemotherapy treatment on the one hand and negotiated with the Drainage Services Department officials on the other. I was trying to persuade them to change the course of their drainage project for a river in order to protect a piece of woodland and the fruit bats that live on it. At the end of the day, fortune smiled on us. Soon after my sequence of therapy was over, the Government finally decided to change the course of their river project and the fruit bats could stay and raise their family where they were.

Strange enough, my therapy went pretty well without a hitch and I was getting better and better with no serious after-effects. It turned out that my sense of sight and hearing could function normally and my hair grew darker and thicker than before. It was quite a miracle.

You don't know the value of life unless you have had a close encounter with death.

After a close encounter with death, you inevitably wonder what the meaning of life is and for what you are living.

To me, living is meant for “joy” and “happiness”. To be joyful and happy, apart from health of the body, I believe life has to be passionately interesting. If not, there is no difference between life and death.

My passion for life comes from my interest in nature observation. Nature is full of life --- every blade of grass, every tree, every bird, every animal is a unique form of life. I would like to see how they adapt to their environment, how they survive and thrive, how they find mates and reproduce. Every one of them has to deal with challenges all the time. Each has a story to tell. Life is full of legends and fun. How could I miss this wonderful world of living things?

Dear brother, do you still remember the wetlands of Long Valley? Remember the last time we took part in the Big Bird Race. We spent hours birding in Long Valley, taking records of numerous species of birds. We dubbed Long Valley “the second Mai Po”. In fact, until now, there have been records of 210 species of birds in Long Valley. Greater Painted Snipes were found to be nesting there. Long Valley is indeed a Paradise for Birds.



Recently I have brought my son, Jason, and my daughter, Vivienne, to Long Valley, not just for bird watching. They are too young to identify the variety of birds except the Chinese Pond Heron and the Little Egret. I would like to let them see the farmlands of Hong Kong, the water buffaloes, and let my kids get a feeling of the farms there. I would like them to see how hard farmers work to produce the vegetables we eat. My kids had a good time and strong affection for the place. Urban children grow up in the city and have been disconnected with nature. Gradually and slowly, they have forgotten how to appreciate life or treasure their environment. Long Valley is one of the last few bases for the environmental education of our younger generation. There are fewer and fewer places like Long Valley in Hong Kong.

I brought my children to Long Valley for one more special reason. It's because the largest piece of fresh water farmland will soon disappear. The Government is planning to build a railway with flyover right on top of Long Valley cutting it into two halves. The railway spur line would fall exactly on the habitats of the Greater Painted Snipe. I guess you will never understand why people would build a railway across Long Valley. If such rare birds and their habitats were found in the United States and Europe, people would certainly protect them and conserve the place, let alone destroying it with urban development. But in Hong Kong, the government is ready to allow building of a railway on top of it. How sad and laughable it is!

I believe the day they start the railway project, it will be the day the Greater Painted Snipe goes extinct. The ecology and the landscape of Long Valley will never be the same again. Hong Kong will lose a birds' paradise and the world will lose a Chinese cultural heritage.

In order to protect Long Valley, several NGOs have joined hands to form a united front to petition to Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) to change its plan and to go around Long Valley instead of cutting right through it. Unfortunately, KCRC gave us the cold shoulder and a senior government official went so far as to say on a radio programme: The Government and KCRC would not budge just because of the objection of a few bird watchers. Such patronising words make you feel angry and that reflects the ignorance of the senior government officials.

We understand the importance of reducing motor vehicle pollution and for the sake of better air quality we support the building of more railways as a means of cleaner mass transport. Unfortunately when mass transport policies fall into the hands of callous bureaucrats and irresponsible business organisations, the policies turn out to be tools of destruction of the environment. That's a tragedy for Hong Kong.

When a piece of wetland is destroyed, or when a species of life form is driven to extinction, it may sound trivial and insignificant. But if we take things for granted and do not care about the wanton destruction, perpetrators would go on and on destroying more and more with no end.

Until one day, we'll discover there is nothing left except humans, rats, cockroaches, flies and mosquitoes. By then we'll realise how important it is to protect nature. But it's already too late.

All lives are equal and all creation should be saved.

Like humans, birds and other creatures share the Planet Earth. We humans have no rights to take away their rights to survive on Earth. Neither do we have the right to deprive our future generations of their rights to appreciate and treasure such richness of biodiversity. That is the fundamental idea of what we often talk about, that is, "sustainable development."

Finally, my brother, there is no need to worry about my health. I am leading a life far happier, far more joyful, and far more positive for the protection of the environment. I take every minute, every second as a present, a precious gift. If you come back to Hong Kong this summer, let's get together, visit Long Valley and take a good look at it for the last time.

Happy World Environmental Day.

Yours,

Cho Nam

3rd June 2000.

Translated from Chinese into English by George C.K. Jor for young people in Hong Kong (20th Jan., 2020)

Hong Kong Bird News

October-December 2019

Richard Lewthwaite

(As usual, would observers please remember to submit their 2019 bird records to the Records Committee in a timely fashion; - these quarterly accounts are not the "official" record. - Ed.)

October

Though exceptionally hot, the month brought reports of a wide variety of landbirds, the rarest being a **Collared Owlet** in Tai Po Kau on 9th (YTY), presumably the same individual as the one first found there in late April. Three other rarities were reported - a **Green-backed Flycatcher** at Ho Man Tin on 4th (KPC), the third of the autumn and potentially a 4th-6th record for Hong Kong, a **White Wagtail** of the subspecies *personata* at Mai Po on 13th (M&PW), the 4th record of this taxon, and an **Alstrom's Warbler** at Po Toi on 29th and 31st (M&PW, PH), a 9th record.

Coverage of the well-wooded north-eastern part of Tai Lam CP between the top of Kap Lung Forest Trail and Ho Pui Reservoir led to series of migrant passerines being found (JC et al), including a **Fairy Pitta** on 2nd, the latest on record by 3 days, up to three **Siberian Thrushes** between 8th and 30th, one or two **White-throated Rock Thrushes** from 20th, a **Hume's Leaf Warbler** from 25th and six **White's Thrushes** on 30th, an unusually large number for the time of year. Among a suite of resident forest birds and new colonisers found in the area were 11 **Pygmy Wren Babblers** on 8th (JC), equalling the highest count of the species, and a **Brown Wood Owl** from 24th (JC).

One or two **Siberian Thrushes** were also reported at Tai Po Kau, Leadmine Pass and Ng Tung Chai between 10th and 19th (YTY, DT, JAA), making this an unusually good month for the species. Other birds which were more widespread than usual were **Eurasian Woodcock**, **Two-barred Warbler** and **Orange-headed Thrush**, with reports of **Two-barred Warbler** including six at Lam Tsuen on 12th (JAA), a new high count.

Ho Man Tin hosted these four species and also a **Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher** on 11th, a **Grey Nightjar** on 15th, one or two **White-throated Rock Thrushes** from 16th, a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** on 21st, a **Slaty-legged Crake** on 27th, a **Japanese Yellow Bunting** on 28th, and a **Pale Thrush** on 30th (KPC et al), the latter by 5 days the earliest in autumn.

On Po Toi, a **Brambling** on 8th (PH) and a **Eurasian Chiffchaff** on 10th (JY) set new earliest autumn dates by 4 and 9 days, respectively, whilst a **Grey-backed Thrush** on Lamma on 31st (GM) is the earliest by 1 day.

Best birds at San Tin, which was well covered at weekends, were a juvenile **Rosy Starling** on 6th (CC), a **Yellow-legged Buttonquail** on 12th (CC) and 150 **Red Turtle Doves** on 26th (EMSK), a record count. Reports from Long Valley, which was rather dry, included an unidentified swan flying over on 21st (TL), five **Russet Sparrows** on 23rd (DH), and 13 **Chestnut-eared Buntings** on 31st (YTY), the highest count of recent years.

Pheasant-tailed Jacanas were fairly widespread throughout the month (PJL, RS, DJS, JAA, EMSK) with a peak count of eight at the Wetland Park on 29th (CM) and also, unusually, two at Tai O, Lantau on 27th (TL). Among other waterbirds of interest were a rather late **Asian Dowitcher** and **Ruddy Turnstone** in front of the Mai Po boardwalk on 1st (JAA), a **Baillon's Crake** at Lok Ma Chau on 2nd (PJL), a **Ferruginous Duck** at Mai Po on 13th (M&PW), the earliest in autumn by 27 day, a **Ruff** and two **Little Curlews** there on the same day

(M&PW), a **Nordmann's Greenshank** in front of the boardwalk on 15th (RWL, JNP), a **Cotton Pygmy Goose** at Lok Ma Chau on 22nd (PJL), a **Little Stint** at Mai Po on 29th (DAD), the latest in autumn by 28 day, and a **Ruddy-breasted Crake** at Long Valley on 30th (MK).

November

A warm, dry and sunny month brought a number of rarities to Hong Kong, notably including a **Chinese Grey Shrike** which was found on the edge of fishponds at Tam Kon Chau on 5th (KH) and subsequently seen there and nearby at Mai Po by many observers to the year's end. The only previous record concerns one with damaged plumage at Lok Ma Chau on 14 November 2018, which was thought to be ex-captive.

Other rarities were a **Water Pipit** at Long Valley from 10th to 12th (RLo), the 6th Hong Kong record and the earliest by 10 days, a **Black-necked Grebe** at San Tin from 19th to 25th (GJC), the 7th record and earliest by 7 days, a **Bianchi's Warbler** at Tai Lam CP on 24th-26th (RLo, JC), the 8th record, a **Japanese Night Heron** at Pak Tam Chung from 28th (per M&PW), the 7th record, and a **Japanese Waxwing** at Tai Tam CP on 28th-29th (per DW), the 5th record and the first in autumn. In addition, a possible **Chinese Leaf Warbler** was intermittently noted at Tai Lam CP from 27th (JC), a 4th record if proven.

Up to the end of 2017, there were only seven records of **Rufous-faced Warbler**, but the month marked the beginning of an invasion of the species, with singles at Po Toi on 10th (per GW), Tai Lam CP on 11th (JC), Pak Sha O on 16th and 30th (GJC, AB) and Lau Shui Heung on 22nd (DAD) followed by record numbers in December, as detailed below. The Po Toi bird set a new earliest autumn date by 12 days. Reports of **Small Niltavas** at three sites on 23rd-25th marked an unusual influx, with singles at Ho Man Tin and Tai Lam CP and two at Wu Kau Tang (KPC, JC MK).

Among other reports of scarcer species were two male **Siberian Thrushes** and two female **White-throated Rock Thrushes** at Tai Lam CP on 3rd (JC), a **Cotton Pygmy Goose** at Lok Ma Chau on 4th (PJL), up to three **Bramblings** at Mount Austin and Po Toi on 6th-7th (RS, AH, PH), single **Hume's Leaf Warblers** at Tai Po Kau on 10th (DAD) and Tai Lam CP again on 27th (JC), a **Ferruginous Duck** at Tam Kon Chau on 12th (GT), a **Naumann's Thrush** at Ting Kok on 19th (RWL), a **Japanese Yellow Bunting** at Po Toi on 19th (PH), single **Fujian Niltavas** at Ho Man Tin on 19th and Pak Sha O on 30th (AB), a **White-tailed Robins** at Tai Lam CP on 21st (JC), a **Rosy Starling** at San Tin on 24th (JAA), and a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** at Ho Man Tin on 27th (KPC). The **Cotton Pygmy Goose** set a new latest autumn date by 4 days.

Chestnut Bulbuls were noted in good numbers at various forest/shrubland sites from 8th and also at Mai Po (JAA, CFL) and flocks of **Chestnut-crowned Yuhinas** were suddenly conspicuous at widespread forest and shrubland sites from mid-month, including at Braemar Hill on HK Island (DJS). **Daurian Redstarts** were more common and widespread than usual and sightings of **Radde's Warblers** included six at Tai Lam CP on 5th (JC), equalling the previous highest count.

December

The last month of the year and of the decade saw the invasion of **Rufous-faced Warblers** continue from the previous month, with at least 25 individuals reported from eight widespread sites between 1st and 30th. The total included seven above Tai Mong Tsai on 12th (PJL), the highest count on record, and peak counts of five at Tai Lam CP on 8th (CFL), four at Tai Po Kau on 15th (CFL), three at Shing Mun on 12th (RLo) and three at A Ma Wat on 21st (JAA), with singles on various dates at Ho Man Tin, Pak Sha O and Lung Fu Shan (KPC, GJC, per JC). The monthly total, peak counts and number of sites are all unprecedented. No month in any previous year has accounted for more than two individuals of the species.

Three rarities were found during the month - a **Bianchi's Warbler** at Pak Sha O on 7th (GJC), the 9th for Hong Kong, a **Thick-billed Green Pigeon** at Tai Lam CP on 11th (JC), the 8th record, and a **Slaty-backed Flycatcher** also at Tai Lam CP from 29th (CFL), the 4th or 5th record – and there were further reports of the **Black-necked Grebe** at San Tin on 1st (AB), the **Japanese Night Heron** at Pak Tam Chung up to 24th (BdS), the **Collared Owlet** in Tai Po Kau between 11th and 21st (DAD, MK, CFL) and the **Chinese Grey Shrike** at Mai Po intermittently through the month (JAA, DAD et al).

Regular coverage of the well forested north-eastern corner of Tai Lam CP led to a series of highly sought-after birds being found there (all JC except as indicated): a male **Fujian Niltava** on 3rd, up to four **Japanese Robins** between 10th and 30th, a female **Small Niltava** between 10th and 25th with a male also there on the last date (AK), one or two **Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrushes** between 10th and 25th, a **White-spectacled Warbler** on 18th, a **Pale-footed Bush Warbler** on 23rd (MK), and a **Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher** from 28th (CFL). Visits to the area also brought reports of 26 **Tristram's Buntings** on 11th (JC), one of the highest counts of recent years, and a **Grey Nightjar** on 23rd (MK), a new latest autumn date by 17 days, as well as further sightings of the possible **Chinese Leaf Warbler**, the **Brown Wood Owl**, **Hume's Leaf Warbler**, **Eastern Crowned Warbler**, **Goodson's Leaf Warblers** and flocks of **Black Bulbuls** and **Chestnut-crowned Yuhinas** (JC et al), all found in previous months.

Other notable reports from forest/shrubland sites included a **Small Niltava** at Wu Kau Tang on 3rd-4th (MK) with another at Brides Pool on 18th (PH), a Barred **Cuckoo Dove** at Pak Sha O on 11th (RLo), a **Bay Woodpecker** above Tai Mong Tsai on 12th (PJL), a new site for the species, an **Ashy Minivet** at Mount Davis on 12th (CC), only the 4th winter record, a **White-throated Rock Thrush** also there on 12th (CC), a **Sakhalin Leaf Warbler** at Robins Nest on 14th (JAA), the latest by 18 days and the first in winter, one or two **White-spectacled Warblers** at Tai Po Kau on 17th and 21st (BC, CFL), a **Fujian Niltava** at Pak Sha O on 21st (GJC), a **Japanese Robin** at Tai Po Kau on 21st (RLo), a male **White-tailed Robin** at Ng Tung Chai on 21st (EMSK), an **Eastern Crowned Warbler** at Cheung Chau on 27th (MDW), three **Black-throated Tits** at Wun Yiu on 27th (MLT), and single **Chestnut-crowned Warblers** at localities in Sai Kung on 27th-30th (RLo, MRL, PH). At least 45 **Silver-eared Mesias** came to bathe in a bird bath at Tai Po Kau Headland on 22nd (RB), one of the highest counts on record. Also of note was a small influx of **Black-naped Orioles**, which are rare in December, with single birds at Chung Mei, Ho Man Tin, Lamma and Po Toi on 4th-5th (RWL, KPC, MDW, PH).

An injured **Short-eared Owl** was found at Lut Chau on 17th (RLo) and taken into care by the SPCA. Other birds reported at wetland or open-country sites included single **Black Storks** at Mai Po on 4th-5th (per SY) and Nam Sang Wai on 16th (per RLo), a **Himalayan Swiftlet** and a **Northern House Martin** at Nam Sang Wai on 5th (PJL), an **Eastern Water Rail** at Long Valley on 12th and 22nd (MK, AK), a **Ferruginous Duck**, three **Northern Lapwings** and a late **Whiskered Tern** at San Tin on 14th (CC), these among 111 species logged there on that day, two **Ferruginous Ducks** at Mai Po on 15th (RWL) and a **Eurasian Skylark** at San Tin also on 15th (EMSK).

List of observers & initials 2019

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), Brian Chan (BC), gtlisaac Chan (IC), K.F. Chan (KFC), S.Y. Chan (SYC), Thomas Chan (TC), K.K. Chang (KKC), Esther Chau (EC), K.C. Cheung (KCC), 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), John 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), Andrew Hardacre (AH), 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), Hermann Ip (HI), Kadoorie Farm and Botanical Garden staff (KFBG), E. Hui (EH), Mike Kilburn (EMSK), Ashkat Khirwal (AK), Koel Ko (KK), Y.W. Ko (YWK), K.C. Kong (KCK), Matthew Kwan (MK), P.K. Kwan (PKK), C.T. Kwok (CTK), T.K. Kwok (TKK), Kenneth Lam (KCL), Eva Lau (ESFL), Paul Leader (PJL), H.L. Lee (HLL), Kenny Lee (KKHL), Louis Lee (LL), S.Y. Lee (SYL), Thomas Legg (TJL), Jennifer Leung (JL), Katherine Leung (KL), Mike Leven (MRL), Richard Lewthwaite (RWL), Benjamin Li (BLI), Tom Li (TL), T.C. Li (TCL), Morten Lisse (ML), Aaron Lo (AL), C.F. Lo (CFL), Brenda Lo (BLo), Roman Lo (RLo), Kevin Lok (KCWL), Henry Lui (HL), Kent Luo (KLuo), Carrie Ma (CM), Walter Ma (WM), Guy Miller (GM), Harry Miller (HM), Roger Muscroft (RM), Yann Muzika (YM), Aaron S.O. Ng (SON), Austin Ng (AN), Benjamin Ng (BN), Jack Ng (JN), L.Y. Ng (LYN), W.K. Nip (WKN), Roger Ping (RP), Alan Pong (AP), Jason Pun (JP), Bart de Schutter (BdS), Leo Sit (LS), Roy Smith (RS), 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), Wallace Tse (WT), 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 (MCW), 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), Edward Yip (EY), K.Y. Yip (KYY), W.H. Yip (WHY), John Yu (JY), Y.T. Yu (YTY).

Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

Bird Watching Outings – April to July 2020

Date	Duration	Site, Meeting Time & Place	Fee (HK\$) & Registration	Difficulties (1<2<3)	Target species
19/4/2020 (Sun)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced online on Mar 22 on HKBWS Forum)	Member meeting at Mai Po: \$30 Kln Tong: \$60 Non-member: \$120 Registration Required	TBC	TBC
26/4/2020 (Sun)	0800 - 1600	Po Toi Island (08:00 Aberdeen Pier - Public Ferry Pier to Po Toi Island) Note: The group will take the 08:15 ferry to Poi To & returning time is open. Participants have to take care of their own ferry tickets.	Member meeting at Mai Po: \$30 Kln Tong: \$60 Non-member: \$120 Registration Required	2	migrants
2/5/2020 (Sat)	0900-1300	Nam Chung and Luk Keng (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (09:00 Pavilion at junction of Nam Chung Rd & Luk Keng Rd)	Free Registration NOT required	2	Forest & water birds
3/5/2020 (Sun)	0900 - 1300	Lui Kung Tin (09:00 Entrance to Lui Kung Tin (#72 Green mini bus terminus))	Member meeting at Mai Po: \$30 Kln Tong: \$60 Non-member: \$120 Registration Required	2	Forest birds
10/5/2020 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Tai Mo Shan (08:00 Exit B near Hang Seng Bank, Tsuen Wan MTR Station)	Member meeting at Mai Po: \$30 Kln Tong: \$60 Non-member: \$120 Registration Required	3	Grassland birds
17/5/2020 (Sun)	TBC	Wild Card Day (Details will be announced on May 17 on Discussion Forum)		TBC	TBC
24/5/2020 (Sun)	0800 - 1200	Nam Chung and Luk Keng (08:00 Pavilion at junction of Nam Chung Rd & Luk Keng Rd)		2	Forest & water birds
6/6/2020 (Sat)	0800 - 1200	Tai Po Kau (Crested Bulbul Club Activity) (08:00 Tai Po Kau Carpark)	Free Registration NOT required	3	Forest birds
26/7/2020 (Sun)	1445 – 1900	Tolo Harbour & Sai Kung (14:45 Ma Liu Shui Ferry Pier, ends 19:00 at Sai Kung) Note: 1500-1700 Terns watching on public ferry from Ma Liu Shui to Tap Mun & then Wong Shek Pier. 1700-1900 Bus from Wong Shek Pier to Sai Kung for Black Kite Watching. Participants have to take care of their own ferry & bus fare.	Member: free Non-member: \$30 (Aged <18yrs: \$10) Registration NOT required	3	Breeding Terns & Black Kite

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

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 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\$40-	HK\$80-
Student Member	HK\$20-	HK\$40-
Non-Member	HK\$200-	

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 during the event day if you have any query about the weather.

Disclaimer

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



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BULLETIN
2020
spring



Mrs. Gould's
Sunbird

kfmak
Tai Po Kau

3/2/2020