



黑冠鵪 Malayan Night Heron

李錦輝 Benjiman Li • 元朗大棠 Tai Tong, Yuen Long • 10/05/2020

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The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

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Publisher: The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

Co-ordinator: Ronley Lee (bulletin@hkbws.org.hk)
English Editor: John Holmes
Chinese Editor: Henry Lui
Photo Editor: Cherry Wong
Contributor: WWF-Hong Kong
Cheng Ka Chun
Captain Wong
Richard Lewthwaite
HKBWS Staff

Translator: Amy Li
May Chan

Photo: Benjiman Li
Captain Wong

Design: Contemporary Development Company

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

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

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Mr. Richard Stott email: hkbwsuk@gmail.com

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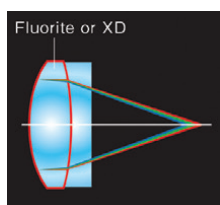
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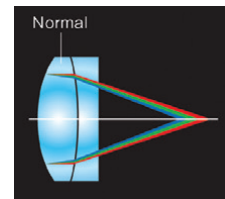
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Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley



Grassland in Long Valley

Since last December, farmland area located between Beas River and Shek Sheung River has been officially returned to government land for the creation of a Long Valley Nature Park. However, the project “Nature Conservation Management for Long Valley” continues in the farmland area near Ho Sheung Heung. We began implementing habitat management measures little by little and developing suitable education activities in that area. At the same time, we will keep monitoring the situation of the construction of Long Valley Nature Park.

Early this year, construction contractor take over the management of Long Valley. CA & HKBWS kept communicating with CEDD and the contractor, hoping for a smooth handover of farmlands

managed under the LV project and continuing to provide a stop-over site for migratory birds. Nevertheless, the handover process faced various problems and difficulties (including technical, communication and negotiation) resulting in the end of farmland management work. Farmlands have become grasslands. After a series of communication and pushing, farmland inundation work resumed in March and weed removal began in late April. The 2nd season of paddy rice is planned to be planted in July in some of the farmlands.

We failed to provide suitable stop-over site for the spring migrants this year. We hope they will not forget about Long Valley. See you next season!

Cherish Fishpond Wetland - Leave No Trace

Wide scenery and the abundant biodiversity of fishpond are attractive to bird watcher and photographer. In recent years, many people have visited fishpond areas for seasonal scenery such as flower fields in Fung Lok Wai and “Mars surface” in Tai Sang Wai.



Photographers trespassed on a dried fishpond.

Many people do not know that fishponds are private areas managed by fish farmer. Some fish farmers also live in the small house next to fishponds. A fish farmer in Tai Sang Wai shared an experience with us. One day, he found two new saplings planted on his pond bund. He was curious why two trees appeared suddenly. Then he removed the trees because they obstruct his farming work. Afterwards, he found that the saplings were planted by a photographer who wants to take shelter under a tree when visit Tai Sang Wai for shooting Barn Swallow in the future. Sometimes, fish farmers feel helpless in such circumstances.

Recently, more people visited the countryside due to the outbreak of the coronavirus. Fishponds became a hotspot again especially during the bird breeding season. Barn Swallow and Little Ringed Plover have utilised fishpond for breeding.



Unextinguished cigarette butts was the suspected cause of fire.

Adorable chicks have attracted more than a hundred bird-watchers and photographers gathered in fishponds. Visitor s leave masks, cigarette butts, drink bottles and lunch boxes. Fish farmer have to clear the rubbish after every holiday. Besides, inappropriate parking has annoyed fish farmer. Too many cars parking on pond bund blocked the road. It caused conflict between fish farmers and visitors.

Actively operated fishponds are disappearing from the Northwest New Territories. Many fish farmers become old. More and more fishponds are abandoned. The existing beautiful fishponds are valuable. Without the management of fish farmers, the amazing scenery and thousands of

waterbirds will not exist. We appeal to visitor to fishpond that we should cherish the environment and respect the culture of local people. When we go to countryside for birding, we should take our litter back home and leave no trace.





Wildlife thrives as spring is here and summer is approaching. If you notice carefully, you might spot some spring migrants passing through Hong Kong, but what's more, many birds start to breed. Luckily enough, you may even get to see the whole family with parents bringing up their chicks, which always make people's heart melt.

However, the Society recently noticed many "bird families" are being disturbed by humans during this sensitive period, including photo-shooting or observation at close distance, lingering around the active bird nest for a long time, and shining strong light towards the nest or bird at night. These activities would scare the parents away, leaving the eggs and chicks unprotected and unattended, or frightening the chicks so they run around in panic. It is possible that the chicks will starve, dehydrate, or get drowned to death.

The above human disturbance would seriously disturb the survival and breeding of the birds. According to the "Wild Animals Protection Ordinance", all wild birds are protected. Without a special permit, it is illegal to hunt or wilfully disturb any wild birds, or take, remove, injure, destroy or wilfully disturb a nest or egg of any wild birds.

To promote the principle of "Respect birds, do not disturb", the Society has designed a "Don't disturb" watermark for people to use on their photos. Below is the pledge for using the watermark:

1. declare that the work was taken with minimum interference to the birds
2. remind everyone to respect birds, not to disturb them, and not to disclose their nest location
3. demonstrate that awesome photos can also be captured at a distance from the bird

We hope everyone can appreciate the beauty of the birds in the photo, at the same time spread the message of protecting birds and conserving the nature! Let's scan the QR CODE to download the "Don't disturb" watermark and read the Code of Conduct for Birdwatching and Photography!

Download the
"Don't disturb" watermark



Code of Conduct for Birdwatching
and Photography





The team conducted survey in a fishpond area in Ulee Matang village

“HKBWS Asia Conservation Fund” – Project in Indonesia

HKBWS transformed the “China Conservation Fund” into “HKBWS Asia Conservation Fund” in 2019, hoping to further support and promote bird conservation in Asia.

One of the successful applicants in 2019/20 round completed the project “Survey of shorebirds in Eastern Coast of Aceh Province, Indonesia” in February this year. Indonesia’s first record Spoon-billed Sandpiper was reported in November 2018 in a fishpond area along the north Aceh Coast. However, information about important sites for shorebirds and their population in that area is inadequate and limited. HKBWS Asia Conservation Fund funded the Warisan Hidup Sumatera Foundation (WHiS) to carry out this project, aiming to identify possible sites which are important to congregation of shorebirds and Important Bird Areas, as well as to estimate the population sizes of shorebird species in that area.

The team conducted the survey along a 227km-long stretch of coastline at 14 locations and found out that the fishponds area in the villages of Ulee Matang, Kuala Parek and Cinta Raja



The location of Ulee Matang, Kuala Parek and Cinta Raja villages

are potential important locations for migratory shorebirds. Although no Spoon-billed Sandpiper was found, the team recorded 43 waterbird species (13,460 individuals) and 27 shorebird species (7,681 individuals), including 2 “Endangered” species, Milky Stork and Far Eastern Curlew.

Bird watching is a new thing for local green groups, universities and the government in Aceh. HKBWS is honoured to support the ornithological research in Indonesia. If you wish to learn more about “HKBWS Asia Conservation Fund” and support us, please visit: <https://www.hkbws.org.hk/cms/acf> 



An Endangered resident bird species in Indonesia: Milky Stork

Bird Watching Outing Schedule Sept-Nov 2020

NEW bird watching activities will be coming.
Stay tuned for more!
<https://bit.ly/3gAShnX>


Major habitat restoration works in the summer of 2020

Water channels in Gei wai #8b to be desilted (Shaded in purple) The water channels to be desilted (green) and open water area to be restored (blue) in gei wai #7.



Following traditional practice, water exchange is carried out twice per month in the “gei wais” at Mai Po. This helps regulate the water temperature and brings nutrients to the mangroves and aquatic fauna in the gei wai. However, water exchange also carries silt from Deep Bay into the reserve channels, which over time leads to them becoming shallow and less suitable for aquatic fauna. To reverse this problem, desilting work is carried out periodically to maintain water depth and facilitate water flow. In 2020 summer, habitat enhancement work in Gei wai #7 will be carried out. The work includes desilting its perimeter channel, removing part of the terrestrial vegetation and restoring open water areas for waterbirds. The water channel of gei wai #8b is now heavily silted too, and will also be dredged to facilitate water exchange.

Managing vegetation appropriately is one of essential actions to ensure the biodiversity in the Mai Po Nature Reserve. In addition to being managed by people, we introduced Asian buffalo to freshwater marshes in 2006 to help control vegetation, hoping to increase wildlife species and populations in the reserve and to attract Cattle Egret, Snipe and dragonflies etc. It has shown that buffalos have created far better habitat conditions for waterbirds than humans, through their normal carefree daily routine of trampling the muddy pond floor, creating puddles. Currently, the water buffalos are managing fresh-water pond #24 in the southern part of the Reserve, and freshwater Pond#17b was used to be managed by one buffalo as well.

Although it is effective to use buffalo to control vegetation growth, the grazing force of one buffalo was not enough to completely control the growth and expansion of reeds at freshwater Pond #17b. The Pond has then gradually become a piece of pure reedbed, reducing the diversity of aquatic plants. As a result, we are going to conduct the habitat enhancement work in this Summer. With reference of the experience of other countries, we will conduct a one-year reed control experiment there. Bulldozer will be used to remove the existing reeds first, and then cover the floor with waterproof canvas and transparent plastic film in different zones to prevent reeds from re-growing by high temperature and blocking the sunlight. It is hoped that reed will be controlled and the habitat will be restored to freshwater marshes. 



The satellite images of reed expansion in Pond#17b between 2013 and 2018.

The current condition of Pond#17b (Photo taken in April 2020)





Short but brilliant moments birdwatching with Beetle (Mr. Cheng Nok Ming)

Forever remembering the time
with you, and hoping you have
a better life in the next world

2019.12.25 Mai Po Nature Reserve

I believe Beetle, the name, shall not sound strange to our years-long birdwatching friends. Unfortunately, Beetle passed away after his long fight with illness in May 2020. Being his buddy since college, we grew up together, learnt together, and had worked hand-in-hand for a long period of time. As comrades, we literally “climbed up mountains and went down seas” for birdwatching, and I feel deep sorrow with his passing. Thank you so much to the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society to give me the chance to look back on the birdwatching experiences with Beetle in all those years. My deepest condolences go to Beetle’s family, and I sincerely appreciate their trust and good care of us, Beetle’s buddies, throughout all these years.



2009.04.26 Hong Kong Bird Watching Society's
bird watching competition

From ignorance to a twitcher

In 2009, I met Beetle in university and we participated in a birdwatching competition held by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. The competition day was the first day I stepped into the birdwatching world. Beetle and the team (a group of university classmates) chose to start the competition in Po Toi and it was truly an unusual trip. On the boat, Beetle spotted a flock of Long-tailed Skuas. I, on my first day of birdwatching, had no idea what a Long-tailed Skua was, but was clear about being seasick! My experience that day was truly remarkable. And since then, Beetle had become my best partner in bird watching.

In 2011, a Brown Wood Owl was found in Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve. At that time, Beetle, I and friends who were learning birdwatching were thrilled with that news. Never had I believed that this type of owl can be found in Hong Kong as it is as rare as a fairy tale character. Beetle and I, together with another friend called Ivan went to look for this fairy bird. Yet birdwatching is about luck. We got nothing at the first time, the second time, the third time...and so on, until the sixth time. Our persistence paid off on May 16, 2011. It was a bad weather day. The rain was nonstop and became heavier in the evening. Beetle, Ivan and I did not back

2011.05.16
Brown
Wood Owl
in Tai Po
Kau Nature
Reserve





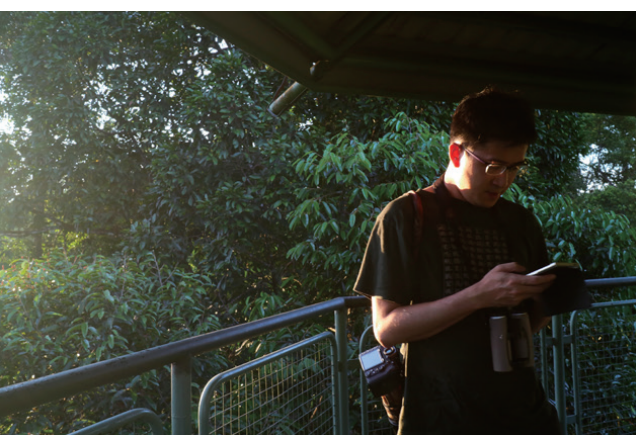
**2011.05.16 Brown Wood Owl
in Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve**

down regardless of the downpour and waited until it turned dark. As we prepared to leave, suddenly there was a very large object flying through and that stopped at the top of a dead tree next to us. That was it...a Brown Wood Owl! The fairy bird stared at us. And then the most amazing thing happened. Unexpectedly, another Brown Wood Owl flew past the front of it, perched on the top of the tree, turned its head 180 degree and they flew away together.....the scene that they flew away is still vivid in my memory today!

As years passed by, our passion of bird watching has been growing without any sign of receding. On the Hong Kong Bird Watching Day (Bird Watching Competition) in 2015, Beetle, Ivan, Bond, Nelson and I formed a team for the competition and we visited Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve, Mai Po Nature Reserve, Long Valley Wetland and other places. At the last thirty minutes on the second day of the competition, a friend drove us to Shek Kong Airfield Road. We were all tired and so was the one who was driving when the accident happened. Abruptly, the car crashed, I saw the left mirror detached and flew away, and the car stopped with a lasting hissing sound. Our heads went blank and we did not know how to react. Nevertheless it did not weaken our will to strive for the best for the competition. We divided into two groups: a friend and I stayed and waited for the tow, while Beetle led the others to Shek Kong Airfield Road to make use of the remaining fifteen minutes of the competition. At last, they saw an Alexandrine Parakeet there, just before time's up for the competition. Being fully engaged in the bird watching competition, we were just crazily devoted and won the champion of the year. This both frightening and exciting birdwatching competition definitely is an unforgettable experience.



**2015.03.22 Hong Kong Bird Watching
Society's bird watching competition**



2018.06.20 Sandakan at Borneo

Jump out of Hong Kong, in search of more and farther places

Besides bird watching in Hong Kong, we also started searching for birds overseas. In 2018, Beetle and I went birding in Sandakan and Mount Kinabalu in Sabah. Beetle was always good at doing travel itineraries and fixing hotel schedules and completing planning everything very early. During the trip, we saw many wild animals in Sandakan that we had been longing for, such as Slow Loris, Red Giant Flying Squirrel, Barred Eagle Owl and etc. After that, we went to Mount Kinabalu. Full of luck, we saw the Whitehead's trio of Borneo, which are rare but relatively easy to locate there, namely Whitehead's Trogon, Whitehead's Broadbill and Whitehead's Spiderhunter. The trip had wonderful rewards and we frequently brought it up to refresh our memory.



2018.06.21 Mount Kinabalu at Borneo

In 2019, despite Beetle's health condition turning unstable, it did not deter his will from continuing to explore nature. In February, we planned to go birdwatching in Central Taiwan, but Beetle's health kept fluctuating and he was unable to determine whether he can depart as scheduled. He told me that his family worried about him. He recognised that his doctor might not allow him to visit mountains with high altitude like Daxue Mountain and Hehuan Mountain to watch birds, as low levels of oxygen could deteriorate his health. At last, Beetle convinced his family to let him treasure his time in doing what he wanted. The trip went smoothly and Beetle could see his target birds, like Collared Bush Robin, Yellow Tit etc. Sadly, in the second half of 2019, his health deteriorated. And that trip was our last overseas birdwatching trip.



2019.02.21 Hehuan Mountain at Central Taiwan



2019.12.25 Me and Beetle watching birds in Mai Po Nature Reserve

.....
Ever since his illness began, Beetle remained positive and optimistic. His toughness and bravery will always be remembered. I hope he can continue protecting and appreciating nature in his next life as he had always done in this one. 🌈

Sales of Beetle Cheng's book

Cheng Nok Ming was passionate in bird watching and loved taking photos of birds as well. In hope of sharing the beauties of nature to the next generations, Cheng selected photos of over 350 bird species from his collection and published the book "Hey, Birds". With the support of his family, the book is self-published and the sales income from part of the books will be donated to the Society in support of our conservation work. We would like to express our deep gratitude for the support. The book can be purchased at the Society's office or e-shop.



Book dimension: About 25cm x 25.5cm

HKBWS charity price: HKD100 (All proceeds will be donated to HKBWS)

HKBWS eshop: <https://cms.hkbws.org.hk/eshop/index.php/products-tw/categories-tw/books-tw/book-hey-birds>

Telford Gardens

Since the sighting of Baikal Bush Warbler (Chinese Bush Warbler) in 2017, Telford Gardens has become a 'rising star' among urban bird-watching hotspots. This article serves to provide some background information and observation records.

I have lived in Telford for more than ten years. When I first moved in, I made a quick round in the garden on the podium to see if there's any good bird-watching spot and was soon disappointed. Apart from a few Chinese banyan trees, there were only common garden plants, it was a man-made concrete environment. I gave up. Ten years passed by, and by chance one day I saw a few birders watching the Baikal Bush Warbler. It was then I realised the common-looking garden indeed hid a treasure, it was a hotspot for autumn migration warblers and bush birds.

A small flowerbed (about 12mx12m) is really common looking, it is a square-shaped hedge (about 100-500mm high) made up of Fujian tea tree, Red Strap Flower, Golden Dewdrops and Cigar Flower, combined with some seasonal flowers and a small bamboo patch in the middle (about 3-4m high). The planters nearby are even more monotonous, a Fujian tea tree hedge. There are few ground cover plants and soil is usually exposed. Apart from these, there is also a decorative fountain.

According to my personal observations in recent years, the first batch of autumn migration warblers arrives around mid-September. Mostly seen were Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and Lanceolated Warbler (ratio roughly 3:1), about 3 Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers each time, stopping between 48 and 72 hours; Lanceolated Warblers usually stay less than 48 hours. Judging from the colour and condition of their feathers, these warblers appeared to have come in waves and just making a short stop (although some individuals might stay up to 3 weeks).



Rufous Tailed Robin



Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler

Apart from these two species, a Pale-footed Bush Warbler was also recorded in September of 2019, but only stopped for a very short time. Entering October, more species appeared, including Black-Browed Reed Warbler, Asian Stubtail, Oriental Reed Warbler and Manchurian Bush Warbler. Starting from the last week of October, some understorey birds were also seen. In 2018 it was the Rufous-tailed Robin, 2019 was the Lesser Shortwing; they would usually stay for a few weeks. The migration scene began to fade out from mid-November onwards and came to a conclusion by the end of the month. Unfortunately, Telford Gardens is not a stopover for spring migration.



1	2	3
4	5	6

- 1 Asian Stubtail
- 2 Black-Browed Reed Warbler
- 3 Pale-legged Leaf Warbler
- 4 Lanceolated Warbler
- 5 Lesser Shortwing
- 6 Oriental Reed Warbler

Why is this common flowerbed with busy human traffic an attraction for so many warblers during autumn migration? Firstly, these warblers rode on the northern air current in autumn that passes through Hong Kong, upon seeing the water fountain and greenish garden, some might have mistaken this place as somewhere like the Inner Deep Bay fishpond habitat, thereby stopping for the night. Secondly, the gardening team of this place may be more traditional, using less pesticide and allowing more soil to expose, making it more suitable for bush warblers to visit.

Most of the migrating birds that visit Telford are not in the list of rare species, but because the environment makes it easy for observation, giving birders a rare opportunity to watch closely from a short distance. Apart from birders, local neighbours in Telford are probably most expert in warblers and understorey birds amongst amateurs worldwide. Teeny yellow (Pallas's nickname) is back? Any pineapple bun (nickname for Rufous-tailed Robin) this year? The neighbours can identify a few of the annual visitors. Some elderly buddies took great shots with their phone, and a cleaning lady even shared her video of a Lanceolated Warbler lost in the refuse room. As long as the environment is preserved and managed properly, then man and birds can live happily together, it is just so simple.



January-March 2020

January

- ▶ In a month that was overall warm apart from in its last few days when a cold spell dropped temperatures locally in the NT down to about 7 C, forest/shrubland sites such as Tai Lam CP, Shek Kong Catchwater, Tai Po Kau, Hok Tau, Lau Shui Heung, Pak Sha O and Yan Yee Road (above Tai Mong Tsai, Sai Kung) were all well covered, but there were few reports of interest from Mai Po or the wider Deep Bay area.
Among the traditionally common wintering passerines (though some are becoming scarcer in recent years), **Red-flanked Bluetails** were more numerous than for many years, but **Rufous-tailed Robin**, **White's Thrush**, **Grey-backed**, **Japanese**, **Pale** and **Eye-browed Thrushes** were all hard to come by.
- ▶ Two rarities were found - a female **Fire-capped Tit** at KFBG on 22nd (PH), only the 2nd for HK, and a male **Hill Blue Flycatcher** at Lamma on 4th (GM), about the 10th for HK. Amazingly, the **Fire-capped Tit** was found on the same date and in the very same Plum Blossom (*Prunus mume*) tree at KFBG as the first record a year ago, so that everything points to the same returning individual being involved.
There were also further reports through the month of the long-staying **Chinese Grey Shrike** at Mai Po and the **Slaty-backed Flycatcher** again at Tai Lam CP.
- ▶ In what turned out to be an exceptionally good winter for **Mrs Gould's Sunbird**, a male at Tai Po Kau on 5th (MLT) was 10 days earlier than the previous earliest date.
One or two were subsequently seen there between 13th and 26th (MLT, RLo, DT), with four on 28th (EMSK) and five on 29th (DAD), the latter a new high count.
Most sightings were in the grove of flowering Erythrina trees in the Outdoor Study Centre. Elsewhere, single males were reported at Shek Kong Catchwater and Leadmine Pass between 26th and 30th (SY, CFL, JC, PH).
- ▶ The invasion of **Rufous-faced Warblers** continued, with one or two at Tai Po Kau, Hok Tau, Lau Shui Heung and Yan Yee Road, all between 1st and 31st (MK, RLo).
Other reports of rarer warblers included one or two **White Spectacled Warblers** at Tai Po Kau between 2nd and 13th (PH, KPK, DAD),
single **Chestnut-crowned Warblers** at Ng Tung Chai, Tai Lam CP, Lau Shui Heung and Yan Yee Road between 26th and 31st (JAA, CFL, RLo),
a **Martens's Warbler** at Lau Shui Heung on 30th (RLo), and a **Hume's Leaf Warbler** at Tai Lam CP on 30th (RLo), whilst the run of recent winter sightings of **Eastern Crowned Warbler** continued with one at Lau Shui Heung on 30th (RLo).
- ▶ Among other forest/shrubland birds of interest found during the month were a **Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher** at KFBG on 16th and a **Fujian Niltava** at Yan Yee Road on 28th (both PH).
Elsewhere, a **Crested Bunting** was at Lam Tsuen on 3rd (DT) and three **Pallas's Gulls** were in front of the Mai Po boardwalk on 13th and 16th (DAD, RWL).
- ▶ Owls reported in the month included single **Brown Wood Owls** at Tai Lam CP on 1st (CFL) and Tate's Cairn on 11th (JAA), the latter a new site.
A **Brown Fish Owl** was at Mui Wo on 5th (PA) and a Collared Owlet again in Tai Po Kau on 29th (RB).
- ▶ A male **Blue-fronted Redstart**, a species previously unrecorded in HK, was found at Ngong Ping on 1st (per KPC) and remained at least into early February, creating a lot of interest, but photographs showed abnormal moult patterns and it seems likely that the bird will be deemed ex-captive.

February

- ▶ With the weather much warmer than usual for the time of year, a wide variety of wintering warblers were reported, including **Kloss's Leaf Warbler** (also known as **Ogilvie-Grant's Leaf Warbler**) at three sites as follows: one at Pak Sha O on 1st-2nd (GJC), two at Lau Shui Heung on 3rd (RLo) with one or two there on at least nine further dates to the month's end (DAD, CFL, M&PW et al.), and one at Tai Po Kau on 9th (RLo) and 21st (DAD). These sightings seem likely to lead to the species being added to the HK list. An earlier record of one in Tai Po Kau on 16 March 2017 is under consideration by the Records Committee.
- ▶ The month also brought further reports of **Rufous-faced Warblers** from Pak Sha O, Lau Shui Heung, Shan Liu Road (Ting Kok), Tai Po Kau and Yan Yee Road between 2nd and 27th (GJC, RLo, MK, PJJ, et al.), all involving one or two birds except for eight at Lau Shui Heung on 9th (RLo), a new high count.
- ▶ In addition to two **White-spectacled Warblers** in Tai Po Kau on 11th (BC), other rarer warblers reported were **Chestnut-crowned Warbler** in Tai Po Kau and at Lau Shui Heung between 16th and 29th (RLo, MK, GT, MLT), **Bianchi's Warbler** in Tai Po Kau on 17th and 23rd (RLo) and **Hume's Leaf Warbler** in Tai Po Kau on 23rd (CFL), all singly.
- ▶ Sightings of **Mrs Gould's Sunbirds** coming to the flowering Erythrina trees in Tai Po Kau continued, with at least seven, a new high count, on 18th (EMSK).
- ▶ The rarest flycatcher found in the month was a male **Hill Blue Flycatcher** in Tai Po Kau from 17th to 23rd (BC, GT, EMSK, et al.), the second of the winter. There were also single **Fujian Niltavas** at Pak Sha O and Lau Shui Heung between 1st and 15th (RLo, DJS, P&MW) and single **Small Niltavas** at Tai Lam CP and Tai Po Kau between 1st and 22nd (JC, RLo, PH, et al.), whilst the over-wintering **Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher** was again regularly seen at Tai Lam CP until 17th (DAD).
- ▶ An **Oriental Stork** over Kowloon Reservoir on 23rd (per SY), the first since 2017, was totally unexpected at this locality. Other birds of interest reported at forest/shrubland sites included the **Collared Owlet** again in Tai Po Kau (RLo, MK), a **Japanese Robin** at Tai Lam CP on 3rd and 17th (PH, DAD) and a male **White-tailed Robin** at Sha Lo Wan, Lantau on 23rd (MDW).
- ▶ In the Mai Po area, the **Chinese Grey Shrike** was reported through the month and a **Common Shelduck**, the first since 2013, was found on 26th (JAA). Visits to the Mai Po boardwalk on 12th and 16th led to reports of a **Greater Scaup**, a **Kamchatka Gull**, a **Slaty-backed Gull**, one or two **Vega Gulls** and up to four **Pallas's Gulls** (DAD).
- ▶ Best birds reported at Long Valley were two **Black-headed Buntings** on 2nd (ML), a **Rustic Bunting** on 20th (HKBWS website) and a **Red-headed Bunting** on 21st-22nd (SC, DAD). Two swifts seen over S Lantau on 8th were thought to be possibly **Cook's Swifts** (JAA), a species as yet unrecorded in HK.

March

- ▶ The highlight of a month in which a wide variety of birds were reported was a **Goldcrest** on Po Toi on 31st (DAD), the 1st for Hong Kong assuming acceptance by the Records Committee.
- ▶ Sightings of **Kloss's Leaf Warbler** continued with single birds in song on Cheung Chau on 23rd (MDW) and in Tai Po Kau on 25th (DAD), bringing the number of sites with reports of the species since early February to four.
- ▶ Among other passerines reported at forest/shrubland sites were a **Rufous-faced Warbler** at Yan Yee Road on 2nd (PH), two **Small Niltavas** at Tai Lam CP also on 2nd (JC), two **White-spectacled Warblers** in Tai Po Kau on 4th (DH), a singing **Chestnut-crowned Warbler** at Pak Sha O the same day (GJC), and 110 **Indochinese Yuhinas** at Yan Yee Road on 14th (GT), the latter equalling the previous highest single-site count.
A **Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo** at Pak Sha O on 14th (GJC) was 10 days earlier than the previous earliest date by 10 days. A **Ferruginous Flycatcher** was also there the same day (GJC), marking the arrival of the first wave of migrant landbirds.
- ▶ Subsequently, visits to Po Toi brought reports of a **Blue-and-white** and a **Narcissus Flycatcher** on 17th (RLo), a **Sulphur-breasted Warbler** on 19th (PH), an **Eastern Crowned Warbler** and a **White-tailed Robin** on 22nd (EMSK), a **Northern Boobook**, **Oriental Dollarbird**, **Ashy Minivet** and **Brambling** on 25th (M&PW), and a **Swinhoe's Minivet** on 29th (M&PW). The **Oriental Dollarbird** set a new earliest spring date by 5 days.
- ▶ Away from Po Toi, a **Sakhalin Leaf Warbler** at Shan Liu Road, Ting Kok on 28th (MK) was a rare example of a spring record of the species.
Also of interest was a report of four **Speckled Piculets** at Shan King, Tuen Mun on 29th (JK), marking the first time that more than three birds have been found at a single site, whilst reports from Hong Kong Island included a flock of 120 **Chestnut Bulbuls** over Sheung Wan on 23rd (MT) and a **Mountain Bulbul** at Lugard Road on 26th (CFL).
- ▶ Passerines in open-country or wetland sites included 70 **Grey-capped Greenfinches** along Tai Mei Tuk dam on 3rd (DAD), the highest count since the 1970s, a **Yellow-breasted Bunting** at Long Valley on 6th (DAD), the first of the year, the over-wintering **Chinese Grey Shrike** at Mai Po until 8th (JAA), up to 30 **Eurasian Siskins** at Shek Kong Catchwater on 8th-9th (CFL, DAD) and a male **Black-headed Bunting** at Lut Chau on 20th (DAD).
- ▶ Waterbirds reported at Mai Po or from the Mai Po boardwalk included a **Nordmann's Greenshank** on 2nd (DAD), a **Long-billed Dowitcher** on 5th (DAD), seven **Caspian Terns** and 13 **Gull-billed Terns** on 13th (ML), and 10 **Far Eastern Curlews** on 31st (RLo).
- ▶ Numbers of **Oriental Pratincoles** at Mai Po built from 62 on 14th (KFM) to at least 200 on 22nd (KCWL), the highest count in spring since the 1980s or 1990s.
A **Blue-tailed Bee-eater** at Mai Po on 22nd (KCWL) was 9 days earlier than the previous earliest date.
- ▶ Elsewhere, an **Eastern Water Rail** was at Mui Wo between 23rd and 27th (PA, MDW).

- ▶ Boat trips in the latter part of the month were very productive. Sightings in southern waters on 21st included 95 **Streaked Shearwaters**, a new high count, three **Pomarine Skuas**, three **Arctic Skuas**, a **Common Tern**, and four **Greater Crested Terns** (CM), the latter three species being the earliest in spring by 13, 1 and 11 days respectively.

A trip to the Ninepins on 27th turned up a **Red-footed Booby** (per CM), the earliest in spring by 37 days, and a repeat trip into southern waters on 29th found three **Red-footed Boobies**, a record count, 22 **Long-tailed Skuas** and 420 **Red-necked Phalaropes** (CM).

Also, an adult **Brown Booby** was found on rocks on Lamma Island on 31st (per CFL).

It was clearly in weak condition and was taken into care but sadly did not survive.

- ▶ The month saw the launching of a new 15-month Nightbird Survey, targeting not only owls and nightjars but also various crakes, herons and cuckoos that are active and vocal at night.

Among rarer species reported in the month, many at new sites, were **Malayan Night Heron** at Sha Lo Tung, Tai Lam CP (two widely-spaced localities) and Yan Yee Road (HF, IT, KPC, JC, PJJ), **Brown Wood Owl** at Tai Po Kau, Uk Tau and Yan Yee Road (BLi, PJJ, RM),

Brown Fish Owl at Mui Wo, Pak Sha O, Shek Kong Catchwater, Shing Mun Catchwater, Tai Lam Chung Reservoir, and Wu Kau Tang (PA, GJC, JC, DW, GKLC, MK) and **Grey Nightjar** at Brides Pool, Mui Tsz Lam, Tai Lam Chung Reservoir and Wonderland Villas (RWL, GKLC, TJW).

List of observers & initials 2020

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), Isaac Chan (IC), K.F. Chan (KFC), S.Y. Chan (SYC), Thomas Chan (TC), K.K. Chang (KKC), Sam Chang (SC), 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), 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), Jay Kong (JK), 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 (PJJ), 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), K.F. Mak (KFM), 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).

Weather notes from HK Observatory website: <https://www.hko.gov.hk/en/index.html>





栗鵪 Chestnut Bunting

黃倫昌 Captain Wong • 摩星嶺 Mount Davis • 13/04/2020