

THE HONG KONG BIRD REPORT 1986



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THE HONG KONG BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The finding of species new to Hong Kong is always exciting. This year, as a penance, those fortunate enough to discover new birds were asked to write a paper on their sightings for inclusion in this Report. 1986 was such an excellent year ornithologically speaking, that this request resulted in seven papers detailing nine new species.

In addition to these papers and the regular reports, there is a major paper on Nordmann's Greenshank which provides much new information on this rare bird, as well as a note on the commoner Chinese Pond Heron. It is hoped to expand this 'Notes' section in future years and members are asked to contribute any item of interest.

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society's new logo, which appeared for the first time on the front cover of last year's Report, has been well received. We now have a logo which is both appropriate and up-to-date and I should like to thank Dave Bakewell for his attractive illustration of a Swinhoe's Egret. A Report such as this cannot be produced without incident and I am grateful to Peter Kennerley and Mike Chalmers for their advice and support and to Janet Stott, Margaret Chan and Janet Ng for their typing services. Members of the Society have always proved generous with their help, even when called upon at the eleventh hour.

VERITY PICKEN

Published in 1987 by the
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(A registered society under the Hong Kong Societies Ordinance)

Records compiled by M.L. Chalmers
Report edited by V.B. Picken

Officers of the Society
(1986)

Chairman	G.C.H. Cooper
Secretary	S. Smith
Treasurer	J.S.R. Edge
Recorder	M.L. Chalmers

REPORT ON THE BIRDS 1986

M. L. Chalmers

All attempts at balancing this report with references to the greater body of records for the regular or commoner species are unashamedly abandoned. 1986 will be remembered as the year of rarities.

A record-breaking nine new species were added to Category A of the Hong Kong List, compared to an average of about three per year over the last ten years. Added to this was the first record of a distinctive vagrant race to Category A, and a further two new species to Category D, the half-way house for birds which are probably wild but for which the possibility of escape cannot be satisfactorily excluded.

The new species in chronological order were as follows:

1. The first was a most unexpected Chiffchaff (of the eastern race *tristis*) netted at Mai Po on 16 March and released the same day. This is a regular winter visitor from central Siberia to the Indian subcontinent and, to our knowledge, has never before been recorded in eastern China.
2. The second new species was another warbler also netted at Mai Po — a Blyth's Reed Warbler caught on 30 March and released the next day. Again this species normally winters in India and a record so far east is exceptional.
3. Next was a Pectoral Sandpiper netted on the WWF gei-wai 16/17 on 25 April. The breeding range of this North American species is known to extend across from Alaska to eastern Siberia, and there are regular non-breeding records in Japan and Australia. Although there have been one or two previous claims of this species in Hong Kong, none was considered sufficient for acceptance.
4. The fourth new species was another wader, which occurred the day after the Pectoral Sandpiper. The bird concerned was a Little Stint which was watched at close quarters over the high tide period at Tsim Bei Tsui Fence. Fortunately, its breeding plumage provided sufficient evidence for separation from the closely related Red-necked Stint. This was one of the occasions where, because of the difficulties involved, advice was also sought from outside Hong Kong. In this case Peter Grant, Chairman of the British Birds Rarities Committee and author of an authoritative paper on stint identification, was consulted and agreed with the identification.
5. The quieter summer months then passed before the next 'first', yet another wader, turned up in the late autumn. This was a Lesser Yellowlegs which was initially seen at Tsim Bei Tsui on 19 October and then found again at Mai Po on 2 November. This is an Alaskan and Canadian breeding bird for which the bulk of the population migrates southeast to winter in South America.
6. Next a Bull-headed Shrike was found at Mai Po on 23 October, the day when the new WWF HK Education Centre was officially opened by Prince Philip. This species had formerly been relegated to Category F as none of the early records was conclusive.
7. This was followed by an adult male Thick-billed Pigeon found dead at Kadoorie Farm on 8 November. Because of the immaculate condition of the bird, the locality and the known wandering habits of fruit doves, this was accepted to Category A.
8. Later from 26 to 30 November a Black-necked Grebe was found off Tsim Bei Tsui jetty. This species is reported to winter on the coast of eastern China.
9. Lastly, on 30 November a Daurian Jackdaw was identified at Tsim Bei Tsui Fence. There are two colour phases of this North China bird, one black and white, the other virtually all-black. The Hong Kong record was for the all-black phase, which is the most likely to occur here.

The new distinctive vagrant subspecies was the American race of the Teal, the Green-winged Teal. A drake was observed at Tsim Bei Tsui on 23 February and Mai Po on 23 March.

In Category D the two additions were a Rock Bunting at Chung Hom Kok on 3 March and a Small Niltava at Pokfulam on 27 December.

Continuing the wealth of rarities, second records for Hong Kong were accepted for White-vented Needletail, Streaked Shearwater, Glaucous Gull and Yellow-browed Bunting.

Major events in the year included the January waterfowl count in Deep Bay, the Big Bird Race in April and the Christmas Count. A monthly summary of notable records is given below, followed by the Report of the Records Committee, the Report on Breeding Birds and updates for the Annotated Checklist.

Thanks are due to the other members of the Records Committee, Peter Kennerley, David Melville, Clive Viney and Mike Webster, and to the following observers who submitted written records:

D.R. Bradshaw, C. Brewster, J.E. Burton, M. L. Chalmers, A. Cheung, G.C.H. Cooper, T.R. Costin, J.S.R. Edge, D.N. & K.A. Jones, P.R. Kennerley, C.Y. Lam, A.R. Lamont, N. & J. Latham, W.K. Li, D. Mannix, D.S. Melville, V.B. Picken, S.P. Smith, R.M. Spowage, D. Stephens, G.E. Stevens, R.P. Tipper, C.A. Viney, W. Young.

January

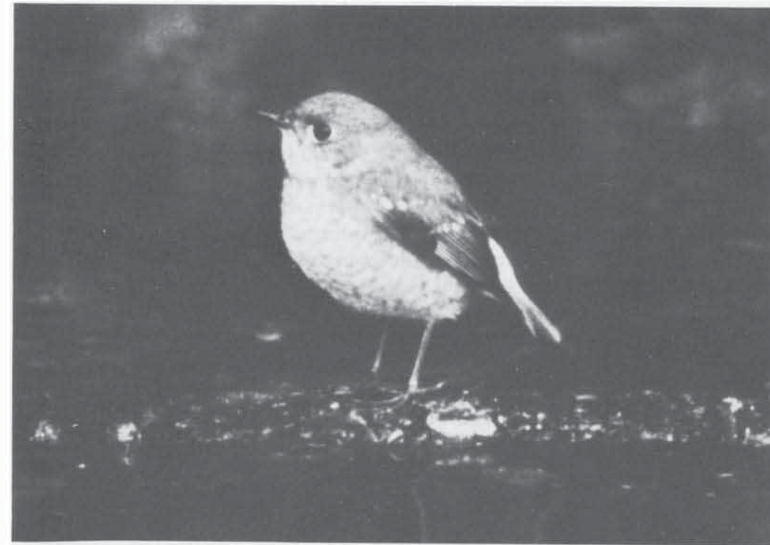
On 1st a Japanese Quail was flushed at Ha Tsuen and an Orange-bellied Leafbird was seen near Magazine Gap. The released Swan Goose was still present at Mai Po on 3rd. Up to two Ruddy Shelduck were occasionally seen throughout the month at Tsim Bei Tsui where on 4th yet

another Hoopoe was found in the trees bordering the coastal fields. A Great Spotted Woodpecker was seen in the ZBG on 8th and 21st and another Orange-bellied Leafbird was recorded, this time at Mount Cameron. A Siberian Blue Robin was found at Tai Po Kau on 9th. On 11th Baer's Pochards reached a new peak at Mai Po with 11. The waterfowl count (see separate report) was held in the Deep Bay area on 12th and recorded over 38,000 birds of 63 species including 2,600+ Shelduck, 18,190 Black-headed Gulls and over 5,000 Kentish Plovers. One Saunders' Gull was noted at Mai Po on 11th, after which numbers continued to grow to about 40 at the end of February. The widespread leafbird records continued with another at King's Park, Kowloon on 18th. On 23rd a flock of seven Red Avadavats was reported at Chi Fu Fa Yuen and on 26th 16 Hair-crested Drongos were counted together at Lady Clementi's Ride. By 26th Dalmatian Pelicans had increased to 27 in Deep Bay, a grey-phase Little Egret was seen twice at Mai Po and three Baikal Teal were also found there. On 27th a wintering Asian Paradise Flycatcher was found at Stanley and Lady Clementi's Ride produced a Hainan Blue Flycatcher on 28th.

February

On 1st there was at least one Baikal Teal, over 40 Gadwall and four Mallard at Mai Po. Also on 2nd the two Ruddy Shelduck were still present at the Fence, a Red-tailed Robin was found at Tai Long Wan and over 15 Reef Egrets were seen at Lamma. A flock of 32 Blackbirds was noted at Lady Clementi's Ride on 4th. On 8th another wintering Asian Paradise Flycatcher (female) was seen, this time in the Lam Tsuen Valley and another Red-Tailed Robin in the ZBG. At Mai Po over 25 Saunders' Gulls, one Bittern and a Peregrine stooping unsuccessfully at a White-breasted Kingfisher were noted. On 10th three Serpent Eagles were displaying over the Lam Tsuen Valley and a Grey-headed Flycatcher was observed at Lady Clementi's Ride on 13th. On 15th good numbers of Red Turtle Doves were observed at Tsim Bei Tsui in bad weather, a Bonelli's Eagle was seen there and also at Mai Po, and pairs of Orange-bellied Leafbirds were seen at Aberdeen Country Park and Wanchai Gap. On 22nd Pelican numbers had risen to 32 at Tsim Bei Tsui and the two Ruddy Shelduck were again recorded. At Tai Po Kau the same day two Chestnut Bulbuls, three White-bellied Yuhinas, one Orange-bellied Leafbird, one Sulphur-breasted and one Blyth's/White-tailed Leaf Warbler were reported. Yellow-bellied Tits were still present at Tai Mei Tuk and Lam Tsuen Valley, with one Plumbeous Water Redstart at the latter location. On 23rd a Verditer Flycatcher was seen at Lam Tsuen, a female Baikal Teal and a drake Teal showing the characters of the American race *carolinensis* (first for Hong Kong and China) were observed at the Fence and two Rosefinches were seen at Ha Tsuen. The Mai Po boardwalk produced a surprise on 27th in the form of an adult Great Black-headed Gull in full breeding plumage, which was seen intermittently up to mid-March. Up to 40 Saunders' Gulls were also present in Deep Bay around this time with good numbers of all duck species at Mai Po including two female Baikal Teal, six Baer's Pochards and several European Spoonbills as well as the more numerous Black-faced. The cold weather at the end of the month (when temperatures fell to close to zero in many parts of the New Territories with the fresh northerly wind) produced a remarkable influx of thrushes, chats and warblers. All the regular

species were seen at Tai Po Kau and on parts of Hong Kong Island. Well over 50 Red-flanked Bluetails were noted in Tai Po Kau and Red-tailed Robins and Short-tailed Bush Warblers were common. A similar pattern occurred at Chung Hom Kok.



Plumbeous Water Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*
Lam Tsuen Valley, November 1987

(R.P. Tipper)

March

On 1st five Baer's Pochards, three Baikal Teal, three Common Pochard, 40 Saunders' Gulls and the Great Black-headed Gull (again) were seen at Mai Po. The next day at Tai Po Kau many Red-flanked Bluetails were recorded as well as a female Siberian Thrush, one Robin Flycatcher and one Japanese Robin, the latter having first been seen on 25 January. A Rock Bunting (first for Hong Kong) was found at Chung Hom Kok on 3rd. On 8th a Ferruginous Flycatcher, a pair of Orange-bellied Leafbirds and a Sulphur-breasted Warbler were seen at Tai Po Kau and next day several Chestnut Bulbuls were also recorded there. Other flycatchers included a Black-naped Monarch at Ho Sheung Heung on 8th and a Verditer at Fanling on 9th. The adult male Great Spotted Woodpecker was seen regularly at the ZBG and Victoria Barracks in both March and April and Yellow-bellied Tits remained widespread. The Great Black-headed Gull was seen again at Mai Po on 15th. There, the next day, David Melville began his hat-trick of rarities (all new to Hong Kong) with an eastern Chiffchaff (race *tristis*) caught in a mist-net, ringed, examined and photographed before release. A heavy passage of Masked Buntings occurred the same day. Another Ferruginous Flycatcher was seen at Tai Po Kau on 22nd

and the first of several Blue and White Flycatchers was reported the next day (from Pak Nai). Also on 23rd the male Green-winged Teal was recorded at Mai Po. On 25th two needletails seen at Mai Po turned out to be White-vented — only the second for Hong Kong. A Hoopoe was identified at Lai King (near Kwai Chung) the same day. A flock of 20 needletails (not specifically identified) was seen over Mount Davis on 29th and the next day five more were seen, this time at Tai Po Kau, where the Japanese Robin was again found. Another flock of swifts observed closely at Mai Po on 29th turned out to contain 13 White-vented and two White-throated Needle-tails. A female Mandarin was found on the marshes on 31st, where continued netting had produced a Blyth's Reed Warbler the day before — again a first for Hong Kong.

April

The wader passage was, as usual, well under way by the beginning of the month. Flycatchers were also widespread and included Blue and White, Ferruginous, Japanese Paradise, Robin and Narcissus. The Ruddy Shelduck remained at the Fence all month. The lead-up to the Big Bird Race produced a vast amount of information from the hundreds of birding hours invested. Reports during this period included several reports of Ashy Minivets, all the usual waders including up to 50 Great Knot, several records of single Swinhoe's Egrets at Tsim Bei Tsui and a Black-shouldered Kite at Mai Po on 8th. The day of the Big Bird Race (12th) produced one Narcissus Flycatcher at Sek Kong Woods, one Brambling at Ha Tsuen and the Ruddy Shelduck and a late Tufted Duck at the Fence. The same day a Rufous-necked Scimitar Babbler was seen at Pokfulam Reservoir. On 14th an Oriental Plover was seen at Kai Tak. At least one Little Whimbrel was seen next at the Fence with two Chestnut-cheeked Starlings there on 16th. On 20th a flock of eight Blue-tailed Bee-eaters was found at Mong Tseng. An adult Pectoral Sandpiper, a first for Hong Kong, was caught at Mai Po on 25th. A Spoon-billed Sandpiper turned up (at last) at the Fence on 26th together with the first Little Stint for Hong Kong.

May

A flock of seven Blue-tailed Bee-eaters was seen at Mai Po on 2nd. The next day an immature frigatebird was seen at Mai Po, a Chestnut Bulbul at Tai Po Kau and a Red-headed Tit at Mount Nicholson. Two Crimson-legged Crakes were seen in the usual breeding area near Wu Kau Tang on 4th. On 10th at the Fence two Spoon-billed Sandpipers were reported. Wader numbers and variety remained high and included over 200 Broad-billed Sandpipers (a new high) on 12th. The same day about 3,000 White-winged Black Terns (another new high) were counted passing west over Starling Inlet and about 400 were seen in Deep Bay. On 17th a recently fledged juvenile Crested Goshawk was found in Tai Po Kau and a White Ibis carrying a stick was observed at Mai Po egrettry. A Pechora Pipit was found near the Fence on 24th. Other exciting news came from Mirs Bay where 100 Black-naped Terns, ten Bridled Terns and two Roseate Terns were seen at the breeding site and a pair of small petrels, possibly Swinhoe's, was reported off Tai Long Wan. On 25th a Black Baza and a Jay were seen at Sek Kong, a late Herring Gull and two Black-tailed Gulls were observed in Deep Bay.

June

A Streaked Shearwater was seen in flight in Mirs Bay on the first of the month. Quality waders continued to turn up with one Australian Curlew at Mai Po on 5th and three Nordmann's Greenshank at the Fence on 7th together with one Swinhoe's Egret. In Port Shelter on the same day there was an unusual summer report of a juvenile Black-tailed Gull. On 8th there were four species of tern in Deep Bay, i.e. 120 White-winged Black with small numbers of Whiskered, Gull-billed and Caspian. About 50 Terek and 50 Grey-rumped Sandpipers were still present and new late dates were set for Turnstone, Yellow Wagtail and Black-headed Gull, single birds of these three species being seen. Waders were seen regularly throughout the month in small numbers and Pied Kingfishers and Purple Herons were regular at Mai Po (both probably breeding). On 11th a Treepie was seen at Tai Mong Tsai and on 14th a late Blue Rock Thrush was reported at Tap Mun. The next day a Pheasant-tailed Jacana was found at Mai Po. Exploratory visits to the Mirs Bay breeding areas revealed over 25 Bridled Terns, about 60 Black-naped Terns and at least three Roseate Terns at the end of the month. Numbers of Bridled were up but Roseates down on last year. However, it was a relief to know that the terns had returned despite last year's disturbance.

July

Bad weather prevented return trips to the tern colonies, including the visit organised by the Society. There was at least one Hoopoe, possibly up to three, at Shek O Golf Course on 19th, one of which may have been caught by a village dog. On 20th there were four black/yellow weavers (possibly Golden Bishops), two red/black weavers (possibly Red Bishops) and a Java Sparrow (all escapes) in a large flock of Tree Sparrows and Spotted Munias at Mai Po. A Black Bittern was seen from the Mai Po boardwalk on 24th. A further count of the Mirs Bay terns on 27th revealed 50 Black-naped (including 15 young) at the entrance to Tolo Harbour, while at Gau Tau there were 18 Bridled, 50 Black-naped and six Roseate. Also on 27th an Orange-headed Ground Thrush was reported from Middle Island.

August

By mid-month the return wader passage was well under way with 13 wader species at Mai Po including 12 Asiatic Dowitchers on 16th. Two Asiatic Dowitchers were also seen there on 23rd and eight on 24th. Several Caspian Terns, up to three White Ibis and at least one Osprey were also present. On 25th a Red-necked Phalarope was noted at the end of the boardwalk and the first Forest Wagtail of the autumn was sighted at Wan-chai Gap. One Asian Paradise Flycatcher was seen at the Peak Tower on 26th. On 31st there were Pintail, Swinhoe's and Fantail Snipe at Ha Tsuen together with two Long-toed Stints and over 40 Wood Sandpipers.

September

As usual this month contained a mixture of autumn passage migrants and early winter visitors. A Hoopoe turned up at Shek O on 14th and a Forest Wagtail was seen at Tai Po Kau the same day. On 18th the first two of several Tricolour Flycatchers appeared, this time at Fanling Golf

Course, while an early Imperial Eagle was seen at Mai Po. On 20th at Ha Tsuen a Baillon's Crake and several Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers were flushed. Over the same weekend Arctic Warblers were exceptionally numerous and Brown Flycatchers were widespread following a blast of cooler north winds. Another Tricolour Flycatcher was found at Clearwater Bay. An early pelican was seen at Deep Bay on 19th. On 21st at Mong Tseng two Lanceolated Warblers, about 30 Black-naped Orioles and a Spotted Eagle (new early date) were recorded. A Hobby was seen at Ha Tsuen and a Horsfield's Goshawk at Mount Davis. Treepies were reported regularly at Mount Davis and up to ten were seen at Ho Chung on 21st. A Forest Wagtail was noted at Mai Po on 22nd (the first for the marsh). Waders were widespread during the month, particularly Wood Sandpipers, Whimbrel, Redshank and Greenshank. On 26th at least 30 Purple-backed Starlings were found at Mai Po. Tai Po Kau also produced a range of migrants on 27th with at least four Sooty Flycatchers, two Asian Paradise Flycatchers and two Pale-legged Leaf Warblers. A further two Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers were seen at Ha Tsuen on 28th followed by a single Roller, Asian Paradise and Tricolour Flycatcher at Mong Tseng and another Tricolour Flycatcher at Pak Nai. A Grackle was found at Peng Chau (Mirs Bay) on 28th.

October

On 2nd a flock of 20 Black-winged Stilts was present on the WWF area at Mai Po; other records there the same day included 15 Purple-backed Starlings, one Avocet and two Whiskered Terns. Cormorants had also returned to the marshes. The next day a Yellow-legged Button Quail was found dead under overhead wires at Mai Po. Further species seen at the beginning of the month included one Oriental Pratincole, two Australian



Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*
Tsim Bei Tsui, March 1987

(R.P. Tipper)

Curlews and 200 Whimbrel/Curlew. Adrenalin flowed on 19th at Tsim Bei Tsui when in the aftermath of a tropical storm a single raptor overhead turned out to be a Crested Honey Buzzard. This was followed by brief views of an unfamiliar wader which left no option other than the nearctic vagrant Lesser Yellowlegs, the first for Hong Kong and China. Fortunately the Yellowlegs was found again two weeks later at Mai Po where it surrendered to detailed observation and photography. Also recorded on 19th were a Hoopoe at the Fence and a Wryneck at Mai Po. An assortment of migrants at Po Toi on 22nd included two Rollers, three Grey-streaked Flycatchers, two Brown Flycatchers and a flock of Yellow-breasted Buntings. There was also one Asian Pied Starling there. On 23rd some of those who turned up for the opening of the Wildlife Education Centre (WEC) at Mai Po by the Duke of Edinburgh managed to fit some birding in as well and were rewarded with a Bull-headed Shrike. Several reports of Ashy Drongos were received during the month. On 26th another first for Hong Kong was achieved with the sighting of a white-phase Asian Paradise Flycatcher in the Lam Tsuen Valley. On 31st a dead Lanceolated Warbler was found on the roof of the Education Centre at Mai Po.

November

On 1st a splendid Blue-tailed Bee-eater appeared at Mai Po and a female Siberian Thrush at Tai Po Kau. On 2nd the Lesser Yellowlegs put in its second appearance, this time at Mai Po, and was seen by many observers that day including HE The Governor. Several Robin Flycatchers, two Sooty Flycatchers and one Blue and White Flycatcher were found at Tai Po Kau on 8th. The same day a most exciting discovery was made at Kadoorie Farm when a green pigeon was found dead after flying into the wall of one of the greenhouses. This bird, which was in immaculate condition, turned out to be a male Thick-billed Pigeon, a new species for Hong Kong. Rarities continued with an Oriental Scops Owl (red form) watched at close range at Sea Ranch, Lantau on 9th. A search of Kadoorie Farm on 12th produced a male Siberian Thrush but no more green pigeons. The white Asian Paradise Flycatcher was seen again in the Lam Tsuen Valley at the same location on 14th. Diving duck returned to Mai Po and 15 Tufted Duck and two Pochard were seen on 16th. Also there on 22nd were six Black-faced Spoonbills and 20 spoonbill sp., two Saunders' Gulls, 50+ Falcated Teal, 40+ Tufted Duck and one Scaup. Good numbers of Chestnut Bulbuls were seen at Tai Po Kau the same day as the cold wet weather continued, together with Red-tailed Robins, Robin Flycatchers and Tristram's Buntings. The ever-increasing list of 1986 rarities and firsts was added to once again on 26th when a Black-necked Grebe was found amongst thousands of duck now present in the Yuen Long Creek area off Tsim Bei Tsui. These included over 3,500 Shoveler, 2,000 Pintail, six Scaup and one Tufted Duck. The grebe was still there the next day. Meanwhile at Mai Po a Baer's Pochard and a male Marsh Harrier were seen regularly. The month ended with a sparkle on 30th with a Crested Kingfisher at Nam Chung, Starling Inlet and yet another new species — a dark-phase Daurian Jackdaw at the Fence.

December

The Crested Kingfisher was seen again at Nam Chung on 5th and intermittently after this over the following two months. On 6th a flock of

Yellow-bellied Tits and a Verditer Flycatcher were found in the Lam Tsuen Valley. The same day a Yellow-browed Bunting (third for Hong Kong) was reported at Nam Chung and an Ancient Auk was watched and photographed near Crooked Harbour on 7th. A first-winter Glaucous Gull (second satisfactory record for Hong Kong) was found at the beach roost south of Lau Fau Shan on 14th. Wader and duck numbers increased by mid-month in Deep Bay. On 18th at Mai Po there were 155 Tufted Duck (a new maximum), 250 Falcated Teal, two Pochard, five Baer's Pochard, 145 Black-winged Stilt and 100 Avocet. The previous day there had been 25 Saunders' Gulls and the day before that an unusual winter record of a Great Knot. Other unusual winter records of waders around this time included a flock of 30 Asiatic Golden Plover and an Australian Curlew at Mai Po. Up to two male Marsh Harriers and one probable female Pied Harrier were also present on the marshes. The Christmas Count on 28th is reported elsewhere in this Report. Highlights included a Small Niltava at Pokfulam — the first satisfactory record, but probably an escape — four Painted Snipe at Ha Tsuen, a Japanese Sparrowhawk at Tuen Mun, a Yellow-eyed Flycatcher Warbler at Tung Chung on Lantau and two unidentified frigatebirds at Cheung Chau.

RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT 1986

M.L. Chalmers

CATEGORY A. SPECIES WHICH HAVE BEEN RECORDED IN AN APPARENTLY WILD STATE IN HONG KONG WITHIN THE LAST FIFTY YEARS.

3.1 Black-necked Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

One in winter plumage off Tsim Bei Tsui jetty on 26 November remained in the same area until 30 November.

This is the first record for Hong Kong. See separate paper in this Report.

4. Streaked Shearwater

Calonectris leucomelas

One seen in flight from a launch in Mirs Bay on 1 June. The following description was submitted:

"On Sunday (1 June) at about 4.30 pm, between South Gau Island and Kung Chau we saw a Streaked Shearwater which crossed in front of the boat about 40 yards away. It was gliding close to the water and moving quickly. It was a large bird, about the size of a Herring Gull, with long narrow pointed wings. The mantle and upper wing surface was darkish brown. The head and underparts were white. It seemed very bright around the head. The underwings showed white on them. As the bird was between us and the shore, we followed it. Despite three people watching it, it became lost to sight and I strongly suspect that it settled on the water. Viewing conditions were good and the state of sea was calm." (ARL).

This is only the second satisfactory record for a wild bird within Hong Kong coastal waters, the first being a single bird near the Ninepins on 3 May 1985 by the same observer.

[Petrel

Bulweria/Oceanodroma sp.

Two birds seen in flight low over the sea about two miles off Tai Long Wan, Mirs Bay on 24 May.

Although the Records Committee did not consider the description sufficient for acceptance as Swinhoe's Storm Petrel *O. monorhis*, this interesting record is published for reference as the birds concerned were clearly one of the small all-dark petrels.]

7. Dalmatian Pelican

Pelecanus crispus

Recorded in Deep Bay between 4 January and 19 April and from 30 December. Numbers rose to 27 in the last week of January and remained at about this level until the end of March with a maximum of 32 on 22 February. One immature remained until 19 April.

Pelicans not specifically identified included one on 19 September, a new early date, and 7 on 28 December.

[8/9. Frigatebird

Fregata minor/ariel

An immature soaring over the rocky outcrop at Mai Po on 3 May showed white axillaries, which according to Harrison's *Seabirds* is diagnostic of Lesser Frigatebird *F. ariel*. This record is still under review. Also two

unidentified frigatebirds over Cheung Chau on the unusual winter date of 28 December.]

- 14. Black Bittern** *Ixobrychus flavicollis*
One standing on the railing of the Mai Po boardwalk on 24 July.

- 20. Swinhoe's Egret** *Egretta eulophotes*
Single birds recorded at Tsim Bei Tsui on 6, 12 and 13 April and 7 June.

- 31. European Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*
All reports are from Mai Po with four on 3 January, three on 12 April and one on 3 and 18 May and 26 October.

- 32. Black-faced Spoonbill** *Platalea minor*
Recorded at Mai Po and in Deep Bay up to 3 May and from 23 October with a maximum of 20 on 3 January and 16 March, and 16 on 17 December.

- 36. Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*
A single bird in Deep Bay near Tsim Bei Tsui Fence between 3 January and 11 May and two there on 4 January, 2 and 22 February.
This is the fifth record for Hong Kong.

- 39. Mandarin** *Aix gatericulata*
A female seen resting at the edge of mangroves in a gei-wai at Mai Po on 31 March.
This is the seventh record for Hong Kong.

- 41. Falcated Teal** *Anas falcata*
Reported at Mai Po and in Deep Bay up to 17 April and from 26 September, a new early date, with a maximum of 124 in January and 100 in November.

- 43. Baikal Teal** *Anas formosa*
One male and two females at Mai Po on 26 January, one female at Tsim Bei Tsui on 23 February and three females at Mai Po on 1 March. Also one drake at Mai Po on 1 February accompanied by four ducks probably of this species.

- 44. Teal** *Anas crecca carolinensis*
A drake showing the characters of the distinctive North American race *carolinensis* was seen at Tsim Bei Tsui on 23 February and Mai Po on 23 March. The following description was noted:

"As drake Teal but showing a white vertical line at the side of the breast in front of the closed wing. The white horizontal stripe visible on Teal was reduced to a very thin white line towards the front of the closed wing on 23 February and was not visible at all on 23 March. This variability in the white horizontal line was also seen in birds in Alaska in June 1986 and seems to be an inconsistent feature. Seen at c 300m on 23 February at Tsim Bei Tsui and c 40m at Mai Po on 23 March." (PRK).

This is the first record of this distinctive race in Hong Kong. It is an occasional visitor to Japan (*Checklist of Japanese Birds, 1974*. The Ornitho-

logical Society of Japan. Gakken, Tokyo) but, to our knowledge, has not previously been recorded in China.

- 50. Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*
Two drakes and a duck at Mai Po on 1 March, four (three drakes and a duck) there on 2 March and up to four (two pairs) there from 16 November to 18 December.

- 51. Baer's Pochard** *Aythya baeri*
All records are from Mai Po. Eleven on 11 January, three on 19 January, six on 22 February and five on 1 March. In autumn, up to two from 22 October, a new early date, and at least five on 18 December.

- 53. Scaup** *Aythya marila*
Single birds at Mai Po on 22, 26 (a drake) and 30 November (a duck), up to six at Tsim Bei Tsui between 26 and 30 November, one or two drakes at Mai Po on 14 and 20 December and one drake and two ducks there on 18 December.

- 58. Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*
An immature in flight over the Tsim Bei Tsui car park on 19 October. The following description was submitted:

"An immature initially seen when it flew fairly low from behind the hill at the Tsim Bei Tsui car park. The initial impression was of an immature Imperial Eagle, largely because of the flat wings and pale fawn colour of the underparts usually associated with immature Imperial. However, when it came directly overhead it became apparent that it was too small to be an Imperial Eagle and the proportions of the bird were not correct for that species. The wing/tail ratio and long, thin, pigeon-like head and neck were not correct for Imperial or any other typical eagle or buzzard. The wings were quite broad with bulging secondaries which cut into the body producing a notched effect where the body met the wing. The primaries were not as wide as the secondaries except when they expanded when soaring. Under these conditions, the wing was parallel, i.e. the front and rear edges were parallel. The tail was long, about the same length as the width of the secondaries. The neck was also very long and quite thin, producing the 'pigeon' effect. The bird was low enough to be able to see the bill shape quite clearly. This was very small, not deep-based as in an eagle but more like a Buzzard or Marsh Harrier. When flying away and gliding, the wings were held flat except the primaries which noticeably dipped down.

The overall colour of the underparts was pale fawn. The body and underwing coverts were noticeably darker than the flight feathers. There were no obvious bars, streaks or other markings on the body or underwing coverts and the bird thus showed a fairly uniform appearance. The underside of the primaries and secondaries showed at least three distinct rows of spots along their entire length from the inner secondaries to the outer primaries, appearing as lines. It was only because of the closeness of the bird that the actual spots could be seen. As it drifted away the spots were no longer apparent and only the lines on the underwing could be seen. The tips of the primaries were dark." (PRK).

This is the second record for Hong Kong, the first being a single pale

phase bird at Sek Kong on 7 September 1981.

- 59. Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*
One perched on the overhead power lines and then hovering at Mai Po on 8 April. A sketch was submitted and accepted by the Records Committee.
This is the third record for Hong Kong.

- [66. Pied Harrier** *Circus melanoleucos*
Small female "ringtail" harriers clearly not *aeruginosus* were seen at Tsim Bei Tsui/Mai Po on 7 September and 18 December and were probably *melanoleucos*.]

- 68. Japanese Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter gularis*
A male at Mai Po on 8 March, a male and female there on 16 October and an immature at Castle Peak AFD Model Plantation on the unusual winter date of 28 December.
Single small accipiters at Mai Po on 8 March, Chek Keng on 26 April, Repulse Bay on 13 October, Ha Tsuen on 19 October and Tsim Bei Tsui on 27 November, were probably this species.

- 70. Crested Goshawk** *Accipiter trivirgatus*
Recorded throughout the year in ones and twos from Hong Kong Island (Mount Kellett to Happy Valley including Victoria Barracks), Tai Po Kau Lam Tsuen Valley, Sek Kong Catchwater and Route Twisk. Four noted at She Shan on 23 February and Tai Po Kau on 27 September.

- 71. Horsfield's Goshawk** *Accipiter soloensis*
One, apparently immature, at Mount Davis on 21 September.

- 72. Grey-faced Buzzard Eagle** *Butastur indicus*
One at Tsim Bei Tsui on 6 April. There were also several unconfirmed reports of up to four in early April.

- 74. Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*
Up to two at Mai Po until 23 March and from 1 November. Also one at Tsim Bei Tsui Fence on 21 September, a new early autumn date.

- 75. Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*
Between one and three in the Deep Bay area up to 5 April and from 18 September, the latter being a new early date.

- 86. Yellow-legged Button Quail** *Turnix tanki*
One found dead under electricity wires at Mai Po on 3 October.

- 91. Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla*
One flushed at Ha Tsuen on 20 September was the sixth record for Hong Kong.

- 94. Crimson-legged Crake** *Amaurornis akool*
Two at Wu Kau Tang on 4 May.

- 100. Pheasant-tailed Jacana** *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*
Single birds at Mai Po on 11 May, 15 June and 2 November.

- 101. Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis*
One at Ha Tsuen on 10 April. Reported regularly there from 6 September, a new early date, with a maximum of four on 28 December.

- 111. Oriental Plover** *Charadrius veredus*
One at Kai Tak airport on 14 April.

- 116. Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris*
Recorded at Mai Po and Tsim Bei Tsui between 12 April and 11 May and between 14 and 28 September. Maximum counts were at least 50 on 12 April and at least 13 on 28 September.

The wintering bird at Siu Lam remained until 12 January. One at Mai Po on 16 December was another unusual winter record.

- 119.1 Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*
One in breeding plumage at Tsim Bei Tsui Fence on 26 April.
This is the first record for Hong Kong. See separate paper in this Report.

In view of the rarity of this species in eastern Asia and the need to eliminate Red-necked Stint, the main confusion species, the description was sent to Peter Grant, Chairman of the 'British Birds' Records Committee and author of an authoritative paper on stint identification. He replied that "For such a rarity, one would have ideally liked to have several observers involved, or good photographs, but on the basis of this written evidence above, I find the record totally convincing and acceptable".

- 121.1 Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos*
An adult mist-netted at Mai Po on 25 April and subsequently released. See separate paper in this Report.

This is the first definite record for Hong Kong. Although there have been several previous records claiming this species, none was considered adequate for acceptance.

- 125. Spoon-billed Sandpiper** *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*
One at Tsim Bei Tsui on 26 April in non-breeding plumage and two there on 10 May and 17 May.

- 127. Ruff** *Philomachus pugmex*
A male at Mai Po on 19 September.

- 131. Swinhoe's Snipe** *Gallinago megala*
All records are from Ha Tsuen. One on 17 April, at least six on 31 August, one on 2 September, at least two on 28 September and one on 19 October.

- 134. Asiatic Dowitcher** *Limnodromus semipalmatus*
One in Deep Bay on 20 April. All other records are from Mai Po with six on 2 May, four on 3 May, at least four on 10 May, 12 juveniles on 16 August, two on 23 August, eight on 24 August, and one on 14 and 19

September.

138. Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus*
One in an excavated pond behind Tsim Bei Tsui Fence on 16, 17 and 20 April, and three there on 25 May. Also five at Kai Tak on 29 April.

141. Australian Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*
One in Deep Bay on 12 April, two at Mai Po on 2 May, two at Tsim Bei Tsui Fence on 14 May, one at Mai Po on 25 May and 5 June, two there on 5 October and one there on 16 November, 11 and 29 December.

146. Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*
Three seen at rest and in flight at a high tide roost at Tsim Bei Tsui Fence on 7 June.

146.1 Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*
One first seen briefly at Tsim Bei Tsui Fence on 19 October and found again at Mai Po on 2 November, where it was observed closely and photographed.

This is the first record for Hong Kong. See separate paper in this Report.

It appears to have not been recorded from China although there are vagrant sightings from Japan and Australia. Lesser Yellowlegs breed in Alaska and the northwest of Canada and migrate south to Mexico and South America.

156. Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyæus*
An adult in full breeding plumage seen at rest in Deep Bay from the Mai Po boardwalk between 27 February and 15 March.

157. Saunders' Gull *Larus saundersi*
Recorded in Deep Bay at Tsim Bei Tsui and Mai Po from 11 January to 8 March and from 2 November until the end of the year. Maximum counts were about 40 on 13 and 14 February and 1 March and at least 25 on 29 November and 17 December.

165. Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*
A first-winter bird at the beach roost between Lau Fau Shan and Pak Nai on 14 December. The following description was noted:

"One in first-winter plumage seen in a large group of roosting gulls including both races of Herring, Black-headed and Black-tailed. The bird was in all aspects identical to Glaucous Gulls in first-winter plumage seen in Japan, UK, Alaska, etc. It was not a leucistic individual or a hybrid since both these possibilities would have shown vestigial traces of secondary bars or tail bands. A leucistic individual would also show signs of excessive feather wear, particularly on wings and tail, which this bird did not.

It was initially located by its overall pale appearance and large size. In size it was distinctly larger than both races of Herring Gull. The bill was long and deep. The basal three-quarters were pink but from the gonyes to the tip was black, the division being clearly demarcated. The forehead rising up from the bill was typically shallow and angled on the forehead to produce a flatter crown. The body size was obviously heavier than that of a Herring

Gull highlighted by its deep-breasted appearance. This gave the bird a short-legged appearance although the legs were actually as long as those of a Herring Gull when seen side by side. At rest, the primaries extended beyond the tip of the tail but not enough to give the bird the appearance of an Iceland Gull.

A white eye-ring was visible but the eye itself was dark.

The plumage was the typical pale coffee colour. The feathers on the mantle were tipped slightly darker around the edge while the scapulars were edged darker along the rear edge of each feather. The primaries were very pale, in fact the whitest part of the plumage, and showed no markings on them. The head was pale coffee coloured and showed no obvious markings. The breast was a similar colour to the head but the lower belly was slightly darker. The undertail coverts were clearly and distinctly barred. In flight it was extremely pale, this being highlighted by the extremely pale primaries and secondaries. The mantle was very slightly darker. There was no sign of a darker trailing edge to the wing or tail. The wings appeared broader-based than those of a Herring Gull.

The bird was seen at a distance of about 80m using a 20x telescope." (PRK, SH)

This is the second record for Hong Kong, the first being a first-winter bird seen at Kai Tak on 15 March 1974.

170. Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*
Four at the entrance to Tolo Harbour on 26 April. Regularly seen at Gau Tau and other breeding sites in Mirs Bay between 24 May and 27 July with a total of over 120 present on the first date. At least 20 nest sites were occupied at Gau Tau and 17 at the other site. Fifteen juveniles noted on 27 July in the Tolo Channel.

171. Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*
Up to six at Gau Tau between 24 May and 27 July. At least one pair had a nest on 28 June.

173. Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*
Recorded in Mirs Bay at Gau Tau between 24 May and 27 July, with a maximum of 25 on 22 June, and at Kung Chau with one on 22 June.

178. Ancient Auk *Synthliboramphus antiquus*
One watched at close quarters and photographed from a boat in Mirs Bay near Wong Chuk Kok Hoi, just north of the entrance to Tolo Channel, on 7 December.

This is the fifth record for Hong Kong.

184.1 Thick-billed Pigeon *Treron curvirostra*
An adult male found freshly dead at Kadoorie Farm on 8 November after flying into a greenhouse window. The specimen was photographed and painted. A museum skin was subsequently prepared and it is intended to send it to the British Museum.

See separate paper in this Report.

This is the first record for Hong Kong. Because of the freshness of the plumage and the locality, the species has been accepted into Category A, although apparently beyond its known range in southwest China and

Hainan.

The occurrence of this species led the observer of the previous record of White-bellied Green Pigeon at Shuen Wan on 10 April 1985 to withdraw that record and resubmit it as a Thick-billed Pigeon. The resubmitted record is still under review by the Records Committee.

[191/192. **Common/Oriental Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus/saturatus*
One at Hong Kong University on 24 April.]

197. **Oriental Scops Owl** *Otus sunia*
One red-phase bird flushed at Sea Ranch, Lantau on 9 November, the day after the passage of a cold front. The description mentioned the very small size (7 to 8 in), ear tufts, bright yellow eyes and reddish-brown plumage. This is the sixth record for Hong Kong.

198. **Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo*
A weak bedraggled bird found in Tai Po Kau on 15 November died on 17/18 November. Possibly released from captivity.

200. **Barred Owlet** *Glaucidium cuculoides*
One at Sek Kong on 14 February and one at Beas River on 12 April.

[Owl sp.]

A large pale owl was seen flying over the outer mangroves at Mai Po at 2330h on 19 April and another large owl was seen there, perched on the border fence and flying, on 25 September at 2100h.]

206. **White-throated Needletail** *Hirundapus caudacutus*
Two at Mai Po on 29 March.

207. **White-vented Needletail** *Hirundapus cochinchinensis*
Reported at Mai Po at the end of March with at least two on 25, at least ten on 28, 13 on 29 and eight on 31 March.

The following description was noted on 29 March:

"The birds were coming down to hawk insects over a fish pond and excellent views were obtained, and White-throated Needletails were also present for direct comparison. Apart from the throat colour, which was an ill-defined greyish-white, less distinct than that of a Large White-rumped Swift, the birds were apparently identical to White-throated Needletails. Plumage showed no other obvious differences with the same amount of white on the undertail coverts and sides of flanks. Size as White-throated and also showed the pale brown patch on the mantle, again with no apparent size or colour differences from White-throated Needletail. Wing shape also the same." (PRK).

This record and the others above have thus been accepted solely on the basis of the throat colour, which was well seen. Other reports of needletail swifts with about 20 at Mount Davis, six at Tai Po Kau on 29 March and five at Tai Po Kau on 30 March were accepted as White-throated/White-vented *H. caudacutus/cochinchinensis*.

214. **Crested Kingfisher** *Ceryle lugubris*
One at Nam Chung, Starling Inlet on 30 November was also seen in-

termittently over the following two months.

215. **Blue-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops philippinus*
A flock of seven at Mai Po on 2 May and one there on 1 November.

222. **Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*
An adult male seen in the Zoological and Botanical Gardens (ZBG) or Victoria Barracks in January, March and April was probably the same bird seen in previous years.

[225. **Skylark sp.** *Alauda gulgula/arvensis*
One heard flying over Mai Po on 1 November and ten at Lok Ma Chau on 10 November.]

233. **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi*
One seen along the bund between the Fence and Yuen Long sewage works on 24 May.
This is the fourth record for Hong Kong.

235. **Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*
One at Ha Tsuen on 26 January was the only acceptable record submitted.

254. **Japanese Robin** *Erithacus akahige*
A female seen in Tai Po Kau on 25 January, 2 and 29 March. The following description was noted:

"A quick look revealed a bright red head and no eye-ring – very different from the Red-tailed Robin which had an obvious eye-ring and a brown head. It then appeared in full and gave good but brief views. The whole head had appeared red, similar in colour to that of a European Robin, i.e. not as bright as a male Japanese Robin previously seen in Japan. The chin and throat were also red but this did not extend far onto the breast. The head showed no markings at all, i.e. no eye-ring, loreal line, supercilium etc. The back was brown, quite warm and this contrasted with the red tail, similar in colour to that of a Red-tailed Robin, and the even brighter head. The breast was mottled dark grey, more heavily than the flanks of a Red-tailed Robin, and showed no crescents. No dark breast band beneath the red throat/upper breast. Undertail coverts and leg colour not seen. Bill longer than Red-tailed Robin's and black in colour. The call was heard." (PRK).

This is the fourth record for Hong Kong.

258. **Siberian Blue Robin** *Luscinia cyane*
A female/immature seen in Tai Po Kau on 9 January was the sixth record for Hong Kong.

269. **Orange-headed Ground Thrush** *Zoothera citrina*
A male at Middle Island on 27 July and a female at Tai Po Kau on 1 November.

271. **Siberian Thrush** *Zoothera sibirica*
A female in Tai Po Kau on 2 March, a female/immature there on 1 November, and a male at Kadoorie Farm on 12 November. The first two records are the only reports of female/immatures in Hong Kong, all other re-

cords referring to males.

- 274. Brown Thrush** *Turdus chrysolaus*
One at Luk Keng on 8 March.

- 286. Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola*
All records are from Ha Tsuen with at least three on 20 September, two on 28 September and two on 5 October.

- 288. Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata*
Two flushed from a grassy bund near Mong Tseng on 21 September and a juvenile found dead on the roof of the Education Centre at Mai Po on 31 October.

These are the fourth and fifth records for Hong Kong.

- 289.1 Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
One caught (mist-netted) at Mai Po on 30 March and released the next day.

This is the first record for Hong Kong. See separate paper in this Report.

- 292. Yellow-eyed Flycatcher Warbler** *Seicercus burkii*
One at Tung Chung on 28 December was the eighth record for Hong Kong.

- 297. Sulphur-breasted Warbler** *Phylloscopus ricketti*
Single birds in Tai Po Kau on 22 February, 8 and 9 March and 22 November.

- [298. Blyth's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus reguloides*
Single birds in Tai Po Kau on 22 February, 8 and 9 March and two there on 27 December were either Blyth's or White-tailed Leaf Warblers *Ph. reguloides/davisoni*. All exhibited the familiar nuthatch-like behaviour which is thought to be a feature of *reguloides* but remains to be proved.]

- 300. Pale-legged Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus tenellipes*
A single bird in Tai Po Kau on 5 April and two there on 27 September.

- 305.1 Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*
A bird of the eastern race *tristis* was mist-netted at Mai Po on 16 March and subsequently released.

This is the first record for Hong Kong. See separate paper in this Report.

- 311. Sooty Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sibirica*
At least four in Tai Po Kau on 27 September and at least two there on 8 November.

- 331. Red-headed Tit** *Aegithalos concinnus*
One at Mount Nicholson on 3 May may have been an escape.

- 341.1 Bull-headed Shrike** *Lanius bucephalus*
A male at Mai Po on 23 October was the first satisfactory record for

this species. Formerly 920 of Category F.

- 351.1 Daurian Jackdaw** *Corvus dauuricus*
A dark-phase bird was seen perched on the Fence at Tsim Bei Tsui on 30 November.

This is the first record for Hong Kong. See separate paper in this Report.

- 355. Purple-backed Starling** *Sturnus sturninus*
A flock of over 30 at Mai Po on 26 September, at least 15 still there on 2 October and one there on 5 October. A small starling at Luk Keng on 21 September was probably this species.

- 356. Chestnut-cheeked Starling** *Sturnus philippensis*
A male and a probable female at Tsim Bei Tsui Fence on 16 April with a flock of Chinese Starlings.
This is the fourth record for Hong Kong.

CATEGORY D. SPECIES WHICH HAVE OCCURRED IN AN APPARENTLY WILD STATE BUT FOR WHICH THE POSSIBILITY OF ESCAPE OR RELEASE FROM CAPTIVITY CANNOT BE SATISFACTORILY EXCLUDED.

- 704. Red-breasted Parakeet** *Psittacula alexandri*
One at Central Government Offices on 7 March.

- 706. Orange-bellied Leafbird** *Chloropsis hardwickii*
Many more records than ever before both in the urban area and in Tai Po Kau. Urban records include single birds at Coombe Road, The Peak on 1 January, Mount Cameron on 10 January, King's Park, Kowloon from 18 to 26 January, two at Wanchai Gap on 15 February and one at Coombe Road on 10 March. Note that at least two pairs were deliberately released from the ZBG in February/March. Tai Po Kau records were of one on 22 February and 1 March and two on 8 March and 12 April. Birds in song were noted on the first and last Tai Po Kau dates.

- 707. Rufous-necked Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*
One seen and heard at Pokfulam Reservoir on 12 April. The record was accepted on the basis of the sketch submitted.
This is the third record for Hong Kong, the previous two also having been on Hong Kong Island in 1949 and 1980.

- 712.1 Small Niltava** *Niltava macgregoriae*
A male at Bisney Road, Pokfulam on 27 and 28 December. The following description was submitted:

"Bright iridescent blue fore crown, neck mark and rump. Dark blue upperparts. Black face. Call single "tsick", like hoarse, quiet Dusky Warbler. Flycatching by hovering after fashion of Pallas's Warbler. Underparts grey — no noticeable white. Below bushes, c2-3 feet off ground and under

canopy. High pitched churring call in short bursts of 2 and 3 calls. Lores black and through eye black. Chin and upper breast dark blue separated by fairly clear line to dirty grey belly leading to off-white on under-tail coverts only. Legs pale off-white/grey. Bill paler by comparison with lores but still darkish grey. Tame — with care within 5 yards. Neck mark very prominent c¼ inch long and often seems more turquoise than forecrown and rump. Primaries darkish brown. Bright on rump extends to much of tail. Rump much brighter — near turquoise — than tail. Dark tip to tail. Bill looks dark or light according to how it catches the light.” (SPS).

This is the first definite record for Hong Kong.

The bird’s tameness and locality suggests an escape but because of one or two previous unsubstantiated reports in the New Territories and the bird’s presence in Guangdong and Fujian provinces, it has been decided to accept this species to Category D.

713. Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*
Seven at Chi Fu Fa Yuen on 23 January, three at Mai Po on 13 October, one there on 18 October, four there on 17 and 29 December, and three at Ha Tsuen on 20 December.

714. Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*
One at Ha Tsuen on 12 April.

715.2 Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*
A male at Chung Hom Kok on 3 March. The following description was submitted:

“Pale grey head and upper breast clearly demarcated. Rest of breast and underparts clear vinous-pink. Head strikingly marked black/pale grey. Black eyebrow, eye-streak and moustachial stripe with parts above eye-streak and moustache almost white in appearance. On an attempt to encourage bird to change position by ‘spishing’, it rose up in alert and dived off the rock into the scrub below when a conspicuously white wing bar and outer tail feathers were evident.” (RF).

Although accepted as Rock Bunting, the origins of this bird are suspect as the eastern races of this species have chestnut crown and eye stripes and this was not noted in the description.

717. Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*
One at Nam Chung on 6 December. The following extracts are taken from the submitted description:

“Head pattern distinctive. Not so reminiscent of Tristram’s as the books would have you believe in that the pale and dark parts are not so great. The pale crown stripe was buffy-white and the cheek-patch was overall a little washed-out, suggesting perhaps that my bird was a female. Towards the nape, however, the cheek patch was uniformly darker, contrasting strongly with the very noticeable white patch immediately in front. The eyebrow was pale yellow to behind the eye, where it turned to the off-white of the other white parts (e.g. malar stripe).” (SPS).

This is the third record for Hong Kong.

CATEGORY E. SPECIES FOR WHICH ALL PUBLISHED RECORDS ARE SUSPECTED OF BEING BIRDS WHICH HAVE ESCAPED OR HAVE BEEN RELEASED FROM CAPTIVITY.

800.1 Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides*
One at Mai Po on 3 January, presumably the same bird released there by AFD in 1985.

805. Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*
One at the Government Secretariat on 12 April and one at Mai Po on 26 October.

808. Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*
One at Tsim Bei Tsui on 8 June.

813. Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*
A male at Shatin Race Course on 2 November.

816. Asian Pied Starling *Sturnus contra*
One at Pui O between February and December, one at Telegraph Bay on 22 September and one at Po Toi Island on 22 October.

821. White-vented Mynah *Acridotheres javanicus*
Three in the Aberdeen Country Park on 22 February.

[Weaver *Euplectes sp.*
Up to four yellow/black and red/black weavers at Mai Po in May, June, July and September may have been Golden and Red Bishops *E. afer* and *orix*, but identification was not confirmed.]

829. White-headed Munia *Lonchura maja*
One at Mai Po on 31 August.

THE FOLLOWING RECORDS WERE SUBMITTED BUT NOT ACCEPTED BY THE RECORDS COMMITTEE:

34. Bean Goose *Anser fabalis* One at Mai Po on 12 January.

65. Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* A female at Mai Po on 26 October.

66. Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos* A male at Mai Po on 25 December.

81. Merlin *Falco columbarius* One at Tsim Bei Tsui on 29 November.

134. Asiatic Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* Four at Mai Po on 3 May.

146. **Nordmann's Greenshank** Two in Deep Bay on 20 April.
Tringa guttifer
157. **Saunders' Gull** Over ten at Pak Nai Road on 1 March
Larus saundersi and one at Mai Po on 21 and 22 November.
172. **Common Tern** Unspecified number at Peng Chau on 30
Sterna hirundo August.
192. **Oriental Cuckoo** One at Hong Kong University on 24
Cuculus saturatus April.
235. **Water Pipit** Two near Lok Ma Chau on 16 February.
Anthus spinoletta
241. **Greater Cuckoo Shrike** Two at High West, Pokfulam on 6 May.
Coracina novaehollandiae
274. **Brown Thrush** One at Hebe Haven on 1 March and 15
Turdus chrysolaus at Tai Po Kau on 2 March.
287. **Styan's Grasshopper Warbler** One at Mai Po on 28 September.
Locustella pleskei
300. **Pale-legged Leaf Warbler** One at Tai Po Kau on 2 March.
Phylloscopus tenellipes
311. **Sooty Flycatcher** Two at Tai Po Kau on 17 November.
Muscicapa sibirica
372. **Japanese Yellow Bunting** One at Tai Po Kau on 12 April.
Emberiza sulphurata
814. **Hill Blue Flycatcher** A male at Tai Po Kau on 9 January.
Cyornis banyumas
- **Lesser Crested Tern** One at Tsim Bei Tsui on 3 May.
Sterna bengalensis

SIGNIFICANT BREEDING RECORDS 1986

M.L. Chalmers

16. **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*
Appeared to be breeding in small numbers at Shuen Wan. Now well established in Hebe Haven.
22. **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*
About 600 birds were noted at the recently established Tsim Bei Tsui egretty on 24 May together with small numbers of Cattle Egrets, Great Egrets and Night Herons.
30. **White Ibis** *Threskiornis melanocephalus*
One carrying a stick at Mai Po egretty on 17 May suggested a possible breeding attempt although the species was not subsequently seen there.
46. **Yellow-nib Duck** *Anas poecilorhyncha*
An adult with seven ducklings at Mai Po on 6 May confirmed successful breeding again.
70. **Crested Goshawk** *Accipiter trivirgatus*
A recently fledged juvenile in Tai Po Kau on 17 May suggested probable breeding.
90. **Banded Rail** *Rallus striatus*
A half-grown juvenile at Tsim Bei Tsui on 1 June is one of the few breeding records of this elusive species.
106. **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*
A chick found with two agitated parents at Tsim Bei Tsui Fence on 27 April.



Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*
Tsim Bei Tsui, May 1986

(R.P. Tipper)

170. **Black-naped Tern** *Sterna sumatrana*
See Records Committee Report.
171. **Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii*
See Records Committee Report.
173. **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus*
See Records Committee Report.
340. **Black-naped Oriole** *Oriolus chinensis*
One recently fledged young at Island House in September.
357. **Chinese Starling** *Sturnus chinensis*
At least one pair nested again in May at Sek Kong on Route Twisk.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS TO THE ANNOTATED CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF HONG KONG, 4TH EDITION 1986

CATEGORY A

- 3.1 **Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* Brehm
Holarctic
Vagrant. One at Tsim Bei Tsui between 26 and 30 November 1986.
(LaT 746, C5, W —)
4. **Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas*
Two records. One in Mirs Bay on 1 June 1986.
6. **Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*
An adult at Mai Po on 3 May and 15 June 1986 and an immature there
on 6 July.
13. **Chestnut Bittern** *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*
Another December record in 1986.
31. **European Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*
New late date of 18 May.
36. **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*
Five records. One or two in Deep Bay between 3 January and 11 May
1986.
37. **Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*
New high count of over 2,600 in January 1986.
39. **Mandarin** *Aix galericulata*
Seven records. A female at Mai Po on 31 March 1986.
40. **Wigeon** *Anas penelope*
New maximum of over 600 at Mai Po in January 1986.
41. **Falcated Teal** *Anas falcata*
New early date of 26 September.
42. **Gadwall** *Anas strepera*
New maximum count of over 40.
43. **Baikal Teal** *Anas formosa*
Revise text to read up to three seen in the Deep Bay area between ex-
treme dates of 10 October and 18 March. Also at least one at Pokfulam on
27 December 1985.
44. **Teal** *Anas crecca*
A male Green-winged Teal of N. American race *A. c. carolinensis* at
Tsim Bei Tsui on 23 February and Mai Po on 23 March 1986.

49. **Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*
New high count of 3,500.
50. **Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*
Delete last sentence and subsequent addition and add: "There were no further reports up to 1979 but since then up to five have been recorded at Mai Po and San Tin between 10 November and 2 March."
51. **Baer's Pochard** *Aythya baeri*
New high count of 11 and new early date of 22 October.
52. **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*
New maximum count of 155.
53. **Scaup** *Aythya marila*
Change status from vagrant to scarce winter visitor. Since 1959 up to six recorded between extreme dates of 18 November and 22 January.
58. **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*
Two records. An immature at Tsim Bei Tsui on 19 October 1986.
59. **Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*
Three records. One at Mai Po on 8 April 1986.
74. **Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*
New early date of 21 September.
75. **Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*
New early date of 18 September.
86. **Yellow-legged Button Quail** *Turnix tanki*
One found dead at Mai Po on 3 October.
91. **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla*
Six records. One at Ha Tsuen on 20 September.
101. **Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis*
New early date of 13 September.
104. **Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*
New maximum count of 220.
108. **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*
New maximum winter count of 5,000 in Deep Bay.
112. **Asiatic Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica (= fulva)*
50 at Mai Po in December 1986.
114. **Grey-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus cinereus*
One at Mai Po on late date of 17 May 1986.
116. **Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris*
New maximum count of at least 50. Also one at Siu Lam on 12 January

1986 and one at Mai Po on 16 December 1986.

- 119.1 **Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* (Leisler)
N Palaearctic
Vagrant. One record of a single bird at Tsim Bei Tsui on 26 April 1986.
(LaT—, C—, W—)
- 121.1 **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* (Vieillot)
N America and NE Siberia
Vagrant. One record of an adult trpped at Mai Po on 25 April 1986.
(LaT—, C—, W—)
126. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Calidris falcinellus*
New high count of 200.
136. **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*
New high count of 42 in autumn.
138. **Little Whimbrel** *Numenius minutus*
Early date should be 16 April.
140. **Curlew** *Numenius arquata*
New maximum count of 285.
141. **Australian Curlew** *Numenius madagascariensis*
New late spring date of 5 June. Also one in December 1986.
146. **Nordmann's Greenshank** *Tringa guttifer*
Three at Tsim Bei Tsui on 7 June 1986.
- 146.1 **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* (Gmelin)
Canada & Alaska
Vagrant. One at Tsim Bei Tsui on 19 October 1986 and Mai Po on 2 November 1986.
(LaT—, C—, W—)
156. **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus*
Seven records. An adult at Mai Po between 27 February and 15 March.
158. **Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*
New late date of 8 June. Mid-winter maximum in Deep Bay of over 18,000 (1986).
160. **Black-tailed Gull** *Larus crassirostris*
Unusual summer records of two first-year birds at Mai Po on 25 May 1986 and one immature at Shelter Cove on 8 June 1986.
162. **Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*
An adult in Deep Bay on 25 May 1986.
165. **Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*
Two records. A first-winter near Lau Fau Shan on 14 December 1986.

- 177. White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus*
New maximum count of 3,000 at Starling Inlet on 12 May 1986.
- 178. Ancient Auk** *Synthliboramphus antiquus*
Five records. One in Mirs Bay on 7 December.
- 179. Red Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia tranquebarica*
New maximum count of 60 in November.
- 184.1 Thick-billed Pigeon** *Treron curvirostra* (Gmelin)
SE Asia
Vagrant. One record of an adult male found dead at Kadoorie Farm on 8 November 1986.
(LaT—, C261, W—)
- 187. Large Hawk Cuckoo** *Hierococcyx sparveriioides*
New early date of 9 March.
- 190. Indian Cuckoo** *Cuculus micropterus*
New early date of 16 March.
- 197. Oriental Scops Owl** *Otus sunia*
Six records. One (red-phase) at Sea Ranch, Lantau on 9 November.
- 207. White-vented Needletail** *Hirundapus cochinchinensis*
Five records. Two at Mai Po on 25 March, at least ten on 28 March, 13 on 29 March and eight on 31 March 1986.
- 214. Crested Kingfisher** *Ceryle lugubris*
One seen intermittently at Nam Chung between 30 November 1986 and 3 February 1987.
- 215. Blue-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops philippinus*
One at Mai Po on 1 November 1986.
- 222. Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*
An adult male at ZBG and Victoria Barracks between January and April 1986 was probably the same bird as seen in previous years.
- 233. Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi*
Four records. One near Yuen Long Creek on 24 May 1986.
- 237. Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*
New late date of 8 June.
- 245. Grey-throated Minivet** *Pericrocotus solaris*
New high count of over 40 at Tai Po Kau.
- 254. Japanese Robin** *Erithacus akahige*
Four records. A female at Tai Po Kau on 25 January, 2 and 29 March 1986.

- 258. Siberian Blue Robin** *Luscinia cyane*
Six records. A female/immature at Tai Po Kau on 9 January 1986.
- 267. Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius*
One at Tap Mun on unusual summer date of 14 June 1986.
- 271. Siberian Thrush** *Zoothera sibirica*
Delete "Nine records." A female at Tai Po Kau on 2 March 1986, a female/immature there on 1 November 1986 and a male at Kadoorie Farm on 12 November 1986.
- 273. Blackbird** *Turdus merula*
New early date for recent records of 9 October.
- 286. Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola*
In second line delete "late" before October and add "Ha Tsuen" after "San Tin."
- 288. Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata*
Five records. Two at Mong Tseng on 21 September 1986 and one found dead at Mai Po on 31 October 1986.
- 289.1 Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Blyth
Central Palaearctic east to NW Mongolia
Vagrant. One record of a single bird trapped at Mai Po on 30 March 1986 and released the next day.
(LaT —, C—, W—)
- 290. Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*
Up to three at Mai Po on 15 June 1986.
- 292. Yellow-eyed Flycatcher Warbler** *Seicercus burkii*
Eight records. One at Tung Chung on 28 December.
- 297. Sulphur-breasted Warbler** *Phylloscopus ricketti*
Delete "Eight records". Change status from vagrant to scarce winter visitor. Recorded in ones and twos from Tai Po Kau and other wooded parts of the New Territories between 22 November and 11 March.
- 298. Blyth's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus reguloides*
New late date of 9 March for birds which were either *reguloides* or *davisoni*.
- 303. Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus*
On second line insert "most" before "records."
- 305.1 Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* (Vieillot)
Palaearctic east to NW Mongolia
Vagrant. One record of a single bird of the eastern race *tristis* trapped at Mai Po on 16 March 1986.
(LaT—, C744, W—)

- 310. Ferruginous Flycatcher** *Muscicapa rufilata*
New early spring date of 8 March.
- 311. Sooty Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sibirica*
Five records. At least four in Tai Po Kau on 27 September 1986 and two there on 8 November 1986.
- 319. Asian Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone paradisi*
A white-phase adult male wintered in the Lam Tsuen Valley from October 1986 to April 1987.
- 323. Greater Necklaced Laughing Thrush** *Garrulax pectoralis*
Birds showing characters of the race *picticollis* were also observed at Kadoorie Farm.
- 331. Red-headed Tit** *Aegithalos concinnus*
Three records. One at Mount Nicholson on 3 May.
- 341. Bull-headed Shrike** *Lanius bucephalus* Temminck & Schlegel
Japan, Korea and NE Asia
Vagrant. One at Mai Po on 23 October 1986. Formerly Checklist no. 920, Category F.
(LaT 174, C461, W211)
- 350. Treepie** *Dendrocitta formosae*
One at Tai Mong Tsai in June 1986.
- 351.1 Daurian Jackdaw** *Corvus dauuricus* Pallas
NE Asia
Vagrant. One record of a single dark-phase bird at Tsim Bei Tsui Fence on 30 November 1986.
(LaT 7, C514, W—)
- 356. Chestnut-cheeked Starling** *Sturnus philippensis*
Four records. Two at Tsim Bei Tsui on 16 April 1986.
- 370. Black-tailed Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes migratorius*
At least one at Mong Tseng on 28 September 1986.

CATEGORY D

- 706. Orange-bellied Leafbird** *Chloropsis hardwickii*
Recorded in ones and twos at Tai Po Kau and in several urban areas between 18 January and 12 April 1986.
- 707. Rufous-necked Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*
One at Pokfulam Reservoir on 12 April 1986.

- 712.1 Small Niltava** *Niltava macgregoriae* (Burton)
Himalayas to S China
A male at Pokfulam on 27 and 28 December 1986.
(LaT 161, C799, W—)
- 714. Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*
One at Ha Tsuen on 12 April 1986.
- 715.2 Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia* Linnaeus
Mediterranean to N and W China.
A male at Chung Hom Kok on 3 March 1986.
(LaT 314, C951, W—)
- 717. Yellow-browed Bunting** *Emberiza chrysophrys*
Three records. One at Nam Chung on 6 December 1986.

CATEGORY E

- 805. Alexandrine Parakeet** *Psittacula eupatria*
One at the Government Secretariat in April 1986 and at Mai Po in October 1986.
- 818. Asian Pied Starling** *Sturnus contra*
Single birds at Pui O, Lantau between February and December 1986, Telegraph Bay in September 1986 and Po Toi Island in October 1986.
- 821. White-vented Mynah** *Acridotheres javanicus*
Three at Aberdeen Country Park in February 1986.

INTERNATIONAL WATERFOWL COUNT IN DEEP BAY 11 and 12 JANUARY 1986

M.L. Chalmers

The seventh co-ordinated mid-winter waterfowl count in the Deep Bay area was held on Sunday 12 January 1986. As last year, observations were also made from the north side of Deep Bay at the Fu Tien Reserve, Shenzhen. Supplementary counts were carried out in some areas on the previous day and the higher number for each species on either day was used in the total.

The results are tabulated in Table 1. Counts at Ha Tsuen are included under Deep Bay. A new record of 38,766 birds was achieved, the previous maximum being 27,633 in 1985. This increase was mainly due to the very large numbers of Black-headed Gulls, up from about 10,000 to 18,000, and the finding of a roost of nearly 5,500 small waders (mainly Kentish Plovers) at Fu Tien. Overall duck numbers declined. Totals for Shoveler, Pintail and Teal were each considerably lower than recent years but were partly compensated for by the remarkable number of Shelduck, up from 1,400 last year to over 2,600. Sub-totals by major groups were as follows:

Group	Number	Species
Cormorants	1,288	1
Heron, egrets etc.	2,011	12
Duck	6,286	15
Rails, Coots, Moorhens and others	2,481	8
Waders	7,745	21
Gulls and terns	18,955	5
TOTAL	38,766	62

New maxima were set for Little Grebe (352), Shelduck (2,600+), Wigeon (600+), Tufted Duck (132), Avocet (220), Kentish Plover (5,000+), Curlew (285) and Black-headed Gull (18,190).

The mild weather led to several wintering records of birds more usually recorded as passage migrants. These included Yellow Bittern, Garganey, Watercock, Whimbrel and Redshank. The previous month there had also been an Australian Curlew and Great Knot. The local rarity of the day was the single Ruddy Shelduck seen in Yuen Long Creek.

The co-operation and assistance of the Guangdong Forestry Bureau, the Royal Hong Kong Police and the following observers is gratefully acknowledged:— J.F.S. Batson, H.M.A. Bristow, Cheng Wo-wing, G.C.H. Cooper, J.S.R. Edge, R. Ferguson, P.R. Kennerley, A.R. Lamont, D.S. & V.J. Melville, V.B. Picken, S. Smith, C.A. Viney, Wan Yip-fat.

TABLE 1

RESULTS OF WATERFOWL COUNT IN DEEP BAY: 11 & 12 JANUARY 1986

Species	11.1.86						12.1.86						11/12.1.86	
	Fu Tien	San Tin	Mai Po	Deep Bay	Sub-Total	Fu Tien	Ma Tso Lung	San Tin	Mai Po	Deep Bay	Nim Wan Tsim Bei Tsui	Sub-Total	Total	
Little Grebe	309	2	41	-	352	-	4	30	30	-	-	64	352	
Great Crested Grebe	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	1	-	6	6	
Cormorant	8	2	350	50	410	18	7	54	500	89	620	1,288	1,288	
Dalmatian Pelican	-	-	-	13	13	*	-	-	*	17	-	17	17	
Bittern	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	2	2	
Yellow Bittern	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	
Chinese Pond Heron	99	8	113	-	220	48	42	57	72	34	87	340	340	
Cattle Egret	-	13	-	-	13	-	3	32	-	14	8	57	57	
Little Egret	129	120	250	-	499	83	11	203	180	152	65	694	694	
Intermediate Egret	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	
Great Egret	28	-	224	-	252	31	-	4	155	105	2	297	297	
Grey Heron	8	-	375	-	383	12	-	3	244	317	-	576	576	
Purple Heron	-	-	3	-	3	2	-	-	6	-	-	8	8	
White Ibis	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	2	
European Spoonbill	-	-	3+	-	3+	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	3+	
Black-faced Spoonbill	-	-	9+	-	9+	-	-	-	12	2	-	14	14	
Spoonbill sp.	-	-	16	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	
Ruddy Shelduck	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	
Shelduck	-	-	448	1,000+	1,448+	*	-	-	*	2,600+	-	2,600+	2,600+	

Continued ...

TABLE 1 continued

Species	11.1.86					12.1.86						11/12.1.86	
	Fu Tien	San Tin	Mai Po	Deep Bay	Sub-Total	Fu Tien	Ma Tso Lung	San Tin	Mai Po	Deep Bay	Nim Wan-Tsim Bei Tsui	Sub-Total	Total
Wigeon	-	-	600+	-	600+	-	2	1	300	1	-	303	600+
Falcated Teal	-	-	124+	-	124+	-	-	-	50	-	-	124+	124+
Gadwall	-	6	10	-	16	-	-	38	4	-	-	42	42
Teal	3	2	242	705	952	184	48	26	90	926	-	1,274	1,274
Mallard	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
Yellow-nib Duck	1	-	205	-	206	5	-	7	50	-	-	62	206
Pintail	8	-	74	302	384	35	-	3	20	774	-	832	832
Garganey	-	19	8	-	27	-	-	15	-	-	-	15	27
Shoveler	-	-	8	125	133	67	-	1	20	336	-	424	424
Common Pochard	3	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Baer's Pochard	-	-	11	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
Tufted Duck	-	-	132	-	132	-	-	-	45	-	-	45	132
Red-breasted Merganser	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	4
Banded Rail	1	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	3	3
White-breasted Waterhen	3	2	6	-	11	3	6	6	12	1	1	29	29
Moorhen	13	4	76	-	93	-	53	24	41	4	18	140	140
Watercock	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Coot	777	88	543	-	1,408	-	97	580	1,250	6	-	1,933	1,933
Black-winged Stilt	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	90	-	-	-	90	90
Avocet	-	-	-	164	164	-	-	-	-	220	-	220	220

Continued ...

TABLE 1 continued

Species	11.1.86					12.1.86						11/12.1.86	
	Fu Tien	San Tin	Mai Po	Deep Bay	Sub-Total	Fu Tien	Ma Tso Lung	San Tin	Mai Po	Deep Bay	Nim Wan-Tsim Bei Tsui	Sub-Total	Total
Little Ringed Plover	27	-	1	-	28	4	20	-	7	7	8	46	46
Kentish Plover	2	-	285	-	287	271	3	-	-	50	154	478	478
Grey Plover	-	-	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	110	2	112	112
Grey-headed Lapwing	1	-	1	-	2	-	-	8	-	5	-	13	13
Lapwing	-	-	5	-	5	-	-	-	3	-	-	3	5
Long-toed Stint	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	8	8
Dunlin	-	-	15	-	15	25	-	-	-	-	-	25	25
Fantail Snipe	6	-	10	-	16	6	12	11	20	120	-	169	169
Pintail Snipe	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1+	2	4+	4+
Black-tailed Godwit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
Whimbrel	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	*	-	-	-	1	1
Curlew	-	-	-	-	-	*	-	-	*	285	-	285	285
Spotted Redshank	-	-	125	-	125	-	-	326	165	-	-	491	491
Redshank	-	-	1	-	1	-	*	1	-	-	-	1	1
Marsh Sandpiper	37	-	16	-	53	2	1	-	3	-	-	6	53
Greenshank	3	-	53	-	56	25	1	-	3	17	-	46	56
Green Sandpiper	8	3	8	-	19	3	10	14	10	5	1	43	43
Wood Sandpiper	119	8	1	-	128	39	9	11	12	40	-	111	128
Common Sandpiper	10	2	11	-	23	12	8	16	14	2	5	57	57
Saunders' Gull	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	2

Continued ...

TABLE 1 continued

Species	11.1.86					12.1.86					11/12.1.86	
	Fu Tien	San Tin	Mai Po	Deep Bay	Sub-Total	Fu Tien	Ma Tso Lung	San Tin	Mai Po	Deep Bay	Nim Wan-Tsim Bei Tsui	Total
Black-headed Gull	495	150	*	4,000+	4,649+	* 2,600	1,300+	-	-	11,220	3,070	18,190
Black-tailed Gull	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Herring Gull	-	-	380	-	380	*	34	-	-	246	473	753
Caspian Tern	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	8	9
Small wader sp.	35	-	2,000+	-	2,035+	a) 5,450	-	-	-	-	-	a) 5,450
Medium wader sp.	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-
Large duck sp.	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-

a) Kentish Plover/Dunlin including 5,000+ Kentish Plover

* Total deleted to avoid possible overlap

HONG KONG CHRISTMAS COUNT 28 DECEMBER 1986

C. Y. Lam

INTRODUCTION

The first Christmas Count in Hong Kong was organised by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society on 29 December 1985. A total of 184 species was recorded on that day (Viney, 1987). This report describes the results of the second Christmas Count which took place on 28 December 1986.

The objectives of the count were:

- to survey all species occurring within Hong Kong on the selected day.
- to estimate the abundance of the species recorded.

With the accumulation of similar data over a number of years, it should then be possible to build up a picture of the birds occurring in Hong Kong around this time of year, in terms of both species and numbers.

METHOD

In this second Christmas Count, Hong Kong was divided into 15 areas. Each area was assigned a co-ordinator, who organised a group survey on 28 December 1986 and submitted a return on the counts made. Individual returns were also received. Observers were requested to submit the estimated number of birds seen.

The returns were analysed and the numbers merged in eight regions with boundaries as defined in Viney (1987). The boundaries of these regions are shown in fig.1. In this report, these regions are referred to as:

Region	Name
1	— Hong Kong Island
2	— Kowloon
3	— Offshore Islands
4	— Lantau
5	— Central New Territories
6	— Eastern New Territories
7	— Western New Territories
8	— Northern New Territories

The boundaries of these regions largely conform with those used by Chalmers (1986) with the following exceptions:

- a) The Lam Tsuen Valley is included in the Central New Territories (5)
- b) Tolo Harbour is included in the Eastern New Territories (6)
- c) Hong Kong Harbour is included in Kowloon (2)
- d) The islands of Port Shelter and Rocky Harbour (excluding the Ninepin group) are included in the Eastern New Territories (6)

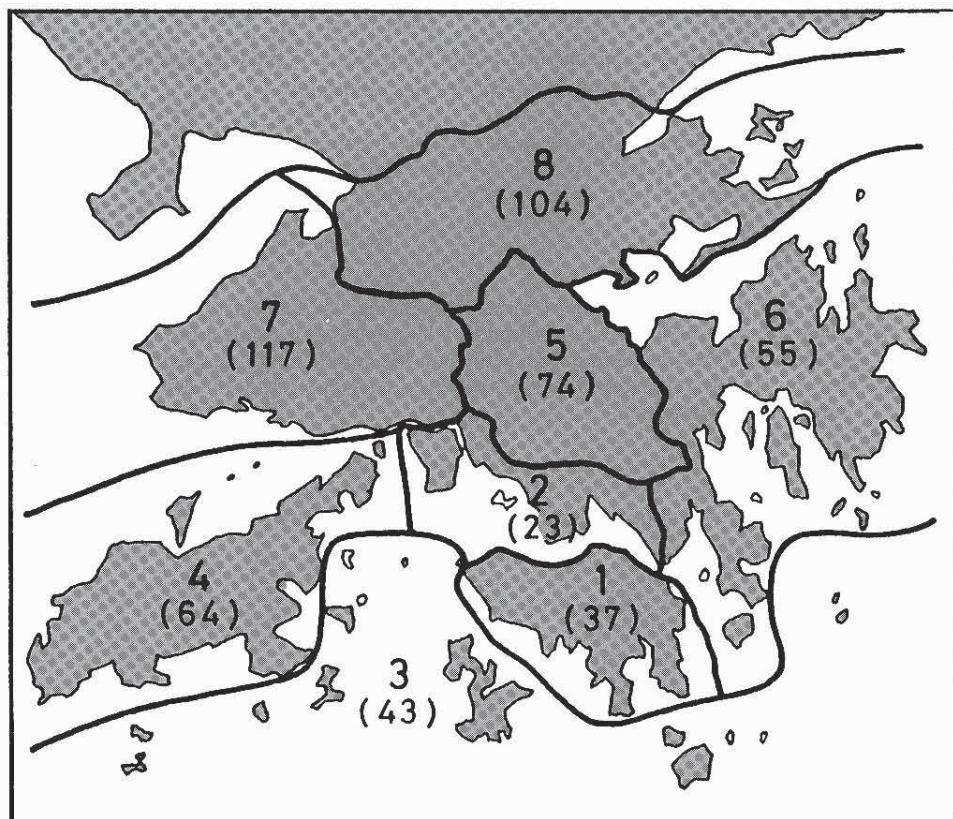


Fig. 1. Christmas Count Regions. The number of bird species seen in each region is indicated in brackets.

Some returns used the 'order of magnitude' method. To facilitate the merging of returns, whenever three returns of the same order of magnitude were received within a region, the sum was taken to be one order of magnitude higher than that of the individual numbers. These estimates have been summarized on the table below as follows:

1-9	order 1
10 - 99	order 2
100 - 999	order 3
1,000 - 9,999	order 4
10,000+	order 5

WEATHER

It was a fine sunny day with 7% cloud cover and 9.8 hours of bright sunshine. Temperatures ranged from 13.8 to 19.8°C. Mean relative humidity was only 59%. Winds were moderate from the east.

COVERAGE

More than 40 people were in the field on 28 December 1986. All major birdwatching sites were visited, including Tai Po Kau and the areas round Deep Bay. Most regions were probably as well covered as possible with normal vehicular transport and a reasonable amount of footwork. Cheung Chau and Lamma Island were separately surveyed. Coverage of Kowloon and Hong Kong Island was somewhat on the low side.

RESULTS

The results of the count are shown in Table 1, which follows the format of Viney (1987). Names and numbers correspond to those used by Chalmers (1986). A total of 177 species was recorded, which was seven less than the number for 1985. The number of species for the respective regions were:

Region	29.12.85	28.12.86
1 Hong Kong Island	61	37
2 Kowloon	35	23
3 Offshore Islands	34	43
4 Lantau	76	64
5 Central NT	74	74
6 Eastern NT	68	55
7 Western NT	109	117
8 Northern NT	125	104

TABLE 1

<div> 1 - 9 order 1 10 - 99 order 2 100 - 999 order 3 1,000 - 9,999 order 4 10,000 + order 5 </div>		Hong Kong Island	Kowloon	Offshore Islands	Lantau	Central NT	Eastern NT	Western NT	Northern NT
1	Little Grebe	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
6	Cormorant	-	-	2	-	-	-	4	3
7	Dalmatian Pelican	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
[8,9]	Frigatebird sp.	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
10	Bittern	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
13	Chestnut Bittern	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
16	Night Heron	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
17	Little Green Heron	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
18	Chinese Pond Heron	-	-	-	1	2	1	3	3
19	Cattle Egret	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
21	Reef Egret	-	-	2	-	-	1	1	-
22	Little Egret	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	3
23	Intermediate Egret	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
24	Great Egret	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
25	Grey Heron	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
26	Purple Heron	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
30	White Ibis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
32	Black-faced Spoonbill	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
37	Shelduck	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4
40	Wigeon	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
41	Falcated Teal	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
42	Gadwall	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
44	Teal	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3

Continued ...

TABLE 1 continued

<div> 1 - 9 order 1 10 - 99 order 2 100 - 999 order 3 1,000 - 9,999 order 4 10,000 + order 5 </div>		Hong Kong Island	Kowloon	Offshore Islands	Lantau	Central NT	Eastern NT	Western NT	Northern NT
45	Mallard	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
46	Yellow-nib Duck	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
47	Pintail	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2
49	Shoveler	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2
50	Common Pochard	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
51	Baer's Pochard	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
52	Tufted Duck	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
53	Scaup	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
60	Black Kite	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2
61	White-bellied Sea Eagle	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-
63	Serpent Eagle	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
64	Marsh Harrier	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
68	Japanese Sparrowhawk	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
69	Sparrowhawk	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
70	Crested Goshawk	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
73	Buzzard	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
74	Spotted Eagle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
75	Imperial Eagle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
76	Bonelli's Eagle	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
77	Osprey	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
79	Kestrel	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	1
83	Peregrine Falcon	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
84	Chinese Francolin	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-

Continued ...

TABLE 1 continued

<div> <div>1 - 9</div> <div>order 1</div> </div> <div> <div>10 - 99</div> <div>order 2</div> </div> <div> <div>100 - 999</div> <div>order 3</div> </div> <div> <div>1,000 - 9,999</div> <div>order 4</div> </div> <div> <div>10,000 +</div> <div>order 5</div> </div>		Hong Kong Island	Kowloon	Offshore Islands	Lantau	Central NT	Eastern NT	Western NT	Northern NT
90	Banded Rail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
95	White-breasted Waterhen	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	2
96	Moorhen	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
98	Coot	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
101	Painted Snipe	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
104	Avocet	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
106	Little Ringed Plover	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	2
108	Kentish Plover	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	3
110	Greater Sand Plover	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
112	Asiatic Golden Plover	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
113	Grey Plover	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
114	Grey-headed Lapwing	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
119	Red-necked Stint	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
124	Dunlin	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
129	Fantail Snipe	-	-	-	2	-	1	3	1
130	Pintail Snipe	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
135	Woodcock	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
136	Black-tailed Godwit	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
140	Curlew	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
142	Spotted Redshank	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
144	Marsh Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
145	Greenshank	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
147	Green Sandpiper	-	-	-	2	1	-	2	1

Continued ...

TABLE 1 continued

<div> <div>1 - 9</div> <div>order 1</div> </div> <div> <div>10 - 99</div> <div>order 2</div> </div> <div> <div>100 - 999</div> <div>order 3</div> </div> <div> <div>1,000 - 9,999</div> <div>order 4</div> </div> <div> <div>10,000 +</div> <div>order 5</div> </div>		Hong Kong Island	Kowloon	Offshore Islands	Lantau	Central NT	Eastern NT	Western NT	Northern NT
148	Wood Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2
150	Common Sandpiper	1	-	1	2	1	1	2	2
157	Saunders' Gull	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
158	Black-headed Gull	-	-	5	3	-	4	4	4
160	Black-tailed Gull	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
162	Herring Gull	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	2
168	Caspian Tern	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
179	Red Turtle Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
180	Rufous Turtle Dove	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
181	Spotted Dove	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	3
189	Plaintive Cuckoo	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
193	Koel	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
194	Greater Coucal	1	-	2	1	-	1	1	1
195	Lesser Coucal	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
196	Collared Scops Owl	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
209	House Swift	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
210	White-breasted Kingfisher	-	-	2	1	1	1	2	2
211	Black-capped Kingfisher	1	-	-	1	-	-	2	1
212	Common Kingfisher	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	2
213	Pied Kingfisher	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
218	Great Barbet	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
219	Wryneck	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
227	Swallow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

Continued ...

TABLE 1 continued

<div> <div>1 - 9</div> <div>order 1</div> </div> <div> <div>10 - 99</div> <div>order 2</div> </div> <div> <div>100 - 999</div> <div>order 3</div> </div> <div> <div>1,000 - 9,999</div> <div>order 4</div> </div> <div> <div>10,000 +</div> <div>order 5</div> </div>		Hong Kong Island	Kowloon	Offshore Islands	Lantau	Central NT	Eastern NT	Western NT	Northern NT
230	Richard's Pipit	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	1
232	Olive-backed Pipit	-	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
234	Red-throated Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
237	Yellow Wagtail	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	1
239	Grey Wagtail	1	-	1	1	2	1	1	2
240	White Wagtail	-	1	2	2	2	1	2	2
242	Black-winged Cuckoo Shrike	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
245	Grey-throated Minivet	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
246	Scarlet Minivet	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
247	Crested Bulbul	2	1	2	3	3	2	2	2
248	Chinese Bulbul	2	1	2	3	4	4	3	3
249	Red-vented Bulbul	-	-	-	2	-	2	2	2
250	Chestnut Bulbul	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
251	Black Bulbul	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
256	Rubythroat	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	1
257	Bluethroat	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
259	Red-flanked Bluetail	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	-
260	Daurian Redstart	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
261	Plumbeous Water Redstart	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
262	Magpie Robin	-	1	2	2	2	1	2	2
263	Stonechat	-	-	1	2	1	1	2	2
264	Grey Bushchat	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-

Continued ...

TABLE 1 continued

<div> <div>1 - 9</div> <div>order 1</div> </div> <div> <div>10 - 99</div> <div>order 2</div> </div> <div> <div>100 - 999</div> <div>order 3</div> </div> <div> <div>1,000 - 9,999</div> <div>order 4</div> </div> <div> <div>10,000 +</div> <div>order 5</div> </div>		Hong Kong Island	Kowloon	Offshore Islands	Lantau	Central NT	Eastern NT	Western NT	Northern NT
267	Blue Rock Thrush	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
268	Violet Whistling Thrush	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	1
270	White's Thrush	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
272	Grey Thrush	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
273	Blackbird	-	-	-	2	2	1	2	-
275	Grey-backed Thrush	-	-	1	1	2	1	1	-
276	Pale Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
277	Eye-browed Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
278	Dusky Thrush	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
280	Short-tailed Bush Warbler	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
281	Chinese Bush Warbler	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
283	Fantail Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	1	2	2
284	Brown Wren-warbler	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
285	Yellow-bellied Wren-warbler	1	-	1	2	1	1	2	2
292	Yellow-eyed Flycatcher Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
296	Long-tailed Tailorbird	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
302	Pallas's Warbler	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	-
303	Yellow-browed Warbler	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	2
305	Dusky Warbler	-	-	1	2	1	1	1	2
309	Verditer Flycatcher	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
313	Brown Flycatcher	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
324	Black-throated Laughing Thrush	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
325	Hwamei	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	1

Continued ...

TABLE 1 continued

<div> <div>1 - 9</div> <div>order 1</div> </div> <div> <div>10 - 99</div> <div>order 2</div> </div> <div> <div>100 - 999</div> <div>order 3</div> </div> <div> <div>1,000 - 9,999</div> <div>order 4</div> </div> <div> <div>10,000 +</div> <div>order 5</div> </div>		Hong Kong Island	Kowloon	Offshore Islands	Lantau	Central NT	Eastern NT	Western NT	Northern NT
326	White-cheeked Laughing Thrush	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
327	Black-faced Laughing Thrush	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
328	Pekin Robin	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
332	Yellow-bellied Tit	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
333	Great Tit	2	1	1	-	3	2	2	1
335	Fork-tailed Sunbird	1	-	-	1	2	1	-	-
336	Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	1	-	-	1	2	-	-	-
337	Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-
339	White-eye	2	1	2	2	4	3	3	3
340	Black-naped Oriole	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
342	Brown Shrike	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
343	Rufous-backed Shrike	1	-	2	2	1	2	2	2
345	Black Drongo	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
346	Ashy Drongo	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
347	Hair-crested Drongo	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
349	Blue Magpie	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	-
350	Treepie	-	-	-	1	2	-	1	1
351	Magpie	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
352	Jungle Crow	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	1
353	Collared Crow	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	1
354	Silky Starling	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
357	Chinese Starling	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
360	Grey Starling	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1

Continued ...

TABLE 1 continued

<div> <div>1 - 9</div> <div>order 1</div> </div> <div> <div>10 - 99</div> <div>order 2</div> </div> <div> <div>100 - 999</div> <div>order 3</div> </div> <div> <div>1,000 - 9,999</div> <div>order 4</div> </div> <div> <div>10,000 +</div> <div>order 5</div> </div>		Hong Kong Island	Kowloon	Offshore Islands	Lantau	Central NT	Eastern NT	Western NT	Northern NT
361	Black-necked Starling	-	1	-	1	1	2	2	-
362	Crested Mynah	2	1	2	3	2	3	3	2
363	Tree Sparrow	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	3
364	White-backed Munia	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1
365	Spotted Munia	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	2
367	Chinese Greenfinch	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
369	Common Rosefinch	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
370	Black-tailed Hawfinch	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	-
371	Masked Bunting	-	-	1	1	2	2	2	2
374	Tristram's Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
376	Little Bunting	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-
601	Feral Pigeon	-	2	-	2	2	1	2	1
602	Rainbow Lorikeet	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
603	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
604	Rose-ringed Parakeet	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
813.1	Small Niltava	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
818	Asian Pied Starling	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-

Total no. of species seen in each area:	37	23	43	64	74	55	117	104
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Grand total of species seen throughout Hong Kong: 177

Birds which were recorded this time but not during the previous Christmas Count included:

[8,9]	Frigatebird sp.	
10	Bittern	
23	Intermediate Egret	
74	Spotted Eagle	
90	Banded Rail	
101	Painted Snipe	
112	Asiatic Golden Plover	
157	Saunders' Gull	
179	Red Turtle Dove	
219	Wryneck	
251	Black Bulbul	
272	Grey Thrush	
276	Pale Thrush	
292	Yellow-eyed Flycatcher Warbler	
336	Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	
340	Black-naped Oriole	
357	Chinese Starling	
369	Common Rosefinch	
603	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	
813.1	Small Niltava	20 species

Only eleven species were recorded in all eight regions and so could be labelled as "common and widespread" following the practice of Viney (1987). They were:

60	Black Kite	
181	Spotted Dove	
247	Crested Bulbul	
248	Chinese Bulbul	
296	Long-tailed Tailorbird	
303	Yellow-browed Warbler	
327	Black-faced Laughing Thrush	
339	White-eye	
351	Magpie	
362	Crested Mynah	
363	Tree Sparrow	11 species

The following species were "common and widespread" in the 1985 count but not this time:

232	Olive-backed Pipit	
239	Grey Wagtail	
240	White Wagtail	
262	Magpie Robin	
273	Blackbird	
285	Yellow-bellied Wren-warbler	
305	Dusky Warbler	
371	Masked Bunting	8 species

Apart from Blackbird, the other seven species lost the status this time because of the absence of records from the urban areas (Kowloon and/or Hong Kong Island). The widespread occurrence of Blackbird in 1985 was a surprise at that time. The deletion of the bird from the "common and widespread" list is in fact a return to normal.

A list of species recorded in the 1985 count but not in the 1986 count is given below. Taking the two counts together, the total number of species recorded was 204.

2	Great Crested Grebe	
31	European Spoonbill	
48	Garganey	
56	Red-breasted Merganser	
85	Japanese Quail	
89	Water Rail	
97	Watercock	
103	Black-winged Stilt	
116	Great Knot	
120	Temminck's Stint	
121	Long-toed Stint	
153	Red-necked Phalarope	
183	Emerald Dove	
225	Oriental Skylark	
231	Upland Pipit	
235	Oriental Skylark	
255	Red-tailed Robin	
269	Orange-headed Ground Thrush	
297	Sulphur-breasted Warbler	
314	Red-breasted Flycatcher	
315	Robin Flycatcher	
318	Grey-headed Flycatcher	
321	Black-naped Monarch Flycatcher	
348	Jay	
380	Crested Bunting	
605	Common Mynah	
606	Azure-winged Magpie	27 species

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks must go to all those who participated in the count. They included:

Nick and Viv Archer, Mike Chalmers, Albert Cheung, Gavin Cooper, Roger Costin, John Edge, Val Edwards, C.M. Fong, Margaret and Malcolm Goude, Richard Harding, John Holmes, C.Y. Lam and family, Li Wai Ki and friends, Mr. & Mrs. A.C. van der Linden, Vicky and David Melville, Mark Nunn, Mrs Elizabeth Ostring and sons, Lt. Colonel F.R. Pearce, Steven Smith, Stewart Smith, Peter and Peggy Stevens, Pamela Stuart-Pearson, Christine and Tom Tracey, Clive

Viney, David, Walker, Simon and Amanda Wilks, John and Pat Yaxley and Wendy and Andrew Young.

Apologies to anyone inadvertently overlooked.

The advice of Mike Chalmers, the Society's Recorder, regarding the handling of the records of the rarer species is gratefully acknowledged.

REFERENCES

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Viney, Clive, 1987. Hong Kong Christmas Count 29 December 1985. *The Hong Kong Bird Report* 1984-85: 65-78.



Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*
She Shan, January 1987

(R.P. Tipper)

REPORT ON BIRD RINGING 1985 AND 1986

David S. Melville

F.O.P. Hechtel started bird ringing in Hong Kong in 1965 as part of the Migratory Animals Pathological Survey (MAPS). He continued ringing until 1968 by which time he had ringed about 3,000 birds of 96 species (F.O.P. Hechtel records, McClure and Leelavit 1972). I did a limited amount of ringing between 1975 and 1980. A total of 449 birds of 29 species was ringed using British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) rings (Melville 1981).

Ringing, using BTO rings, started again in 1985, at the WWF Hong Kong Mai Po Marshes Nature Reserve. Time constraints have limited the amount of ringing undertaken but valuable information is being obtained. A three week ringing training course was held in April/May 1986 for two Chinese scientists.

Ringing totals for 1985 and 1986 are given in Table 1. During 1986 three species new to Hong Kong were caught at Mai Po — Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and 'eastern' Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis* (Melville 1987).

There were five following-season recaptures of known migrants (Table 2), all of which were caught within a few hundred metres of the initial ringing site, indicating a considerable level of philopatry.

I wish to thank the Ringing Committee of the British Trust for Ornithology for permission to use their rings in Hong Kong. Trapping of birds is carried out under a permit issued by the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries.

REFERENCES

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Melville, D. 1981. Bird ringing in Hong Kong. *Hong Kong Bird Report* 1979: 44-46.

Melville, D.S. 1987. Three species new to Hong Kong and (eastern) China. *Hong Kong Bird Report* 1986: 58-68

TABLE 1. LIST OF BIRDS RINGED AT MAI PO, HONG KONG

		1985	1986
Yellow Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus sinensis</i>		1
Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		1
Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	9	22
Mongolian Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	3	
Asiatic Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica fulva</i>		2
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	1	
Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	3	3
Long-toed Stint	<i>Calidris subminuta</i>		6
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>	1	6
Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>		1
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	43	22
Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>	3	
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	8	53
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	2	
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	3	
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	4	12
Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	6	23
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		15
Grey-rumped Sandpiper	<i>Heteroscelus brevipes</i>		1
Rufous Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>		1
Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>		2
Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	1	1
White-breasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>		1
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	7	10
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>		1
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	1	18
Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	1	1
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		1
Crested Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>		5
Chinese Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus sinensis</i>	12	95
Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus aurigaster</i>		1
Rubythroat	<i>Luscinia calliope</i>	4	1
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	2	2
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	6	11
Grey-backed Thrush	<i>Turdus hortulorum</i>		3
Chinese Bush Warbler	<i>Cettia diphone</i>	8	15
Fantail Warbler	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		1
Brown Wren-warbler	<i>Prinia subflava</i>	39	13
Yellow-bellied Wren-warbler	<i>Prinia flaviventris</i>	31	48
Von Schrenck's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus bistrigiceps</i>	18	37
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus orientalis</i>	39	132
Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>		1
Dusky Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>	45	53
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita tristis</i>		1
White-eye	<i>Zosterops japonica</i>	39	33
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus lucionensis</i>		1
Rufous-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	1	
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	1	3
Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippensis</i>	2	
Spotted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	19	10
Masked Bunting	<i>Emberiza spodocephala</i>	19	109
Grey-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza fucata</i>	1	
Little Bunting	<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>	1	6
Yellow-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza aureola</i>		2
		383	787

TABLE 2. FOLLOWING-SEASON RECAPTURES OF KNOWN MIGRANTS 1985/86

Bluethroat <i>Luscinia svecica</i> 1K2727 ringed 15 February 1985/recaptured 9 March 1986
Chinese Bush Warbler <i>Cettia diphone</i> 1K2762 ringed 15 February 1985/recaptured 15 March 1986
Great Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus orientalis</i> VA23235 ringed 12 October 1985/recaptured 13 October 1986
Dusky Warbler <i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i> 1K2754 ringed 15 February 1985/recaptured 16 March 1986
Masked Bunting <i>Emberiza spodocephala</i> C405004 ringed 15 February 1985/recaptured 9 March 1986

BIRDS NEW TO HONG KONG

THREE SPECIES NEW TO HONG KONG AND (EASTERN) CHINA

David S. Melville

The Mai Po Marshes lie in the northwest of the New Territories, approx. 22°29'N, 114°02'E. Part of the area is currently managed as a nature reserve by WWF Hong Kong and bird ringing is carried out as part of the reserve's research programme. During the course of catching birds for ringing in the spring of 1986 three species new to Hong Kong were found. Details are given below.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*

On 16 March 1986 A.C. Galsworthy, A.H.N. Roberts and DSM were mist-netting birds at Mai Po. At 1230h AHNH returned from the nets saying that he had a 'different' *Phylloscopus* warbler — we had been catching a considerable number of Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus* during the day. When the bird was taken from the keeping bag DSM's immediate reaction was 'eastern' Chiffchaff — a species with which he had experience ringing at Bharatpur, Rajasthan, India — although he was well aware that this species was most unlikely to occur so far east. ACG and AHNH have extensive experience with 'western' Chiffchaffs in Britain.

Examination of the bird in the hand gave the following details:

wing (maximum chord)	59 mm
bill (to skull)	12 mm
tail	42 mm
weight	7.4 g
wing point primary 4	
emarginated primary 6	
primary 1 = longest primary covert + 5mm	
primary 2 = primary 7/8	

The primaries were moderately to very worn, the tertials old and the centre pair of rectrices new but the remainder old. No body moult.

The bird was smaller than a Dusky Warbler, generally grey above with a buffish supercilium and no obvious wing bar. Immediately noticeable was the bright yellow at the bend of the wing and the dark alula which contrasted with the rest of the upper wing. The primaries were edged greenish on the outer webs. Lesser coverts greenish. Axillaries and underwing coverts bright pale yellow. Greenish on outer webs of rectrices. Underparts greyish with buff on undertail coverts. No other yellow in plumage. The bill was dark and noticeably finer than that of the Dusky Warbler. Legs blackish with ochre soles to the feet.



Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*
Mai Po, March 1986

(D.S. Melville)



Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*
Mai Po, March 1986

(D.S. Melville)

Reference was made to Williamson (1967) and Svensson (1984). Plumage details, measurements and wing formula all confirmed that the bird was an 'eastern' Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*. A good illustration of the race *tristis* is given in Dean (1985). The bird was ringed, photographed and released.

Cheng (1976) records two races of Chiffchaff from China, viz. *sindianus*, which he shows breeding in the Kashi area and southern Tian Shan mountains of Xinjiang, and *tristis* which is noted as a passage bird from Fuyun, Kashi, Aksu and Tian Shan in Xinjiang. Etchécopar and Hüe (1983) and de Schauensee (1984) record both *sindianus* and *tristis* and additionally *fulvescens*. Williamson (1967) follows Ticehurst (1930) in regarding *fulvescens* as a synonym of *tristis* stating that "There is no doubt that over the wide geographical range of '*fulvescens*' the species is unstable as regards the tone of the upperparts and the amount of buff suffusion and yellow streaking beneath, and the name is best synonymized with *tristis* as recommended by Ticehurst (1938: 56)". Cheng (1976) also regards *fulvescens* as synonymous with *tristis*.

Ticehurst (1938) regarded *sindianus* as a race of *collybita* but Williamson (1967) elevated it to species status with *lorenzii* being a race of *sindianus*. The wing formula of *sindianus* differs from that of *tristis* in having a longer first primary and a shorter second primary, the wing apparently having a more rounded appearance. Also *sindianus* is generally greyer above with very little olive green in the plumage. The underwing of *sindianus* is white, yellowish-white or pale yellow.

The breeding range of *tristis* is 'From Pechora River and Ural Mountains across Siberia to Kolyma River, north to the tree limit, south to central and south Russian Altai, West Sanyan Mountains, upper reaches of Lena River, Tannu Ola Mountains and Northwest Mongolia' (Williamson 1967). It winters in the Himalayas southward through Pakistan, western Bangladesh and the plains of India to the central Provinces (Ticehurst 1938, Williamson 1967, Ripley 1982). Apparently it is unknown in East and Southeast Asia (King *et al.* 1975) and this appears to be the first record of this race in China away from the northwest.

BLYTH'S REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Among the 50 birds caught on 30 March 1986 by C.R. Huxley and DSM was a small nondescript *Acrocephalus* warbler. Examination in the hand gave the following details:

wing (maximum chord)	63 mm
bill (to skull)	17.3 mm
bill (to feathering)	12 mm
tail	52 mm
tarsus	22 mm
weight	10.9 g
wing point primary 3=4, 5, 6, 7, 2, 8	
distance from tip of outermost secondary S1 to wing tip	10.5mm
distance from tip of primary 2 to wing tip	4mm

primary 1 = longest primary covert + 2mm
length of notch on primary 2 c12.5mm
notch on primary 2 c6mm less than secondaries

The primaries were slightly worn, the tertials old. The forehead and chin were moulting. The general colouring of the upperparts was grey-brown with an olive wash, there being no rufous on the rump. The supercilium was quite well marked in front of and above the eye but only extended a very short way behind it. Underparts pale greyish. Bill dark horn above, dull orange-yellow below, pale horn towards the tip. Legs grey-brown. Iris grey-brown.

In the field, reference was made to Williamson (1968) and Svensson (1984). Initial identification was Blyth's Reed Warbler, this agreeing with DSM's suspicions when first seeing the bird based on his experience with the species in south India. In view of the lack of notable features other than structure the bird was kept to allow further reference to the literature. It was ringed, photographed and released on the morning of 31 March 1986 at the capture site, having been examined by several other observers including P.R. Kennerley, S.Smith and V.B. Picken.



Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
Mai Po, March 1986 (P.R. Kennerley)



Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
 Mai Po, March 1986 (P.R. Kennerley)

The bird was confirmed as a Blyth's Reed Warbler. The wing formula of this species is quite variable (Williamson 1968, Svensson 1984, D.S. Melville unpublished data) and the details of the Mai Po bird fall within the known ranges as do the body measurements, the only exception being the distance from the outermost secondary (S1) to the wing tip. Svensson (1984) gives the range as 11.5-16, and 24 birds from Tamil Nadu, south India ranged from 11.0-14.5 mean 12.58, S.D. ± 0.85 (D.S. Melville unpublished). The Tamil Nadu birds were all in fresh plumage having recently completed moult and the slightly shorter measurement of the Mai Po bird could be accounted for by wear of the primaries — the longest primaries being subject to more wear than the outer secondaries.

Williamson (1968) notes the iris colour as 'dark brown' but in 24 birds examined in south India all had grey-brown irides (D.S. Melville unpublished.) Witherby *et al.* (1938) give the iris colour as pale brown and Busse (1984) notes that the iris is 'dirty greyish-brown' in juveniles and 'pale brown' in adults.

Blyth's Reed Warbler is most likely to be confused with Marsh Warbler *A. palustris*, the eastern race of the Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus fuscus*, the Paddyfield Warbler *A. agricola* and the Blunt-winged Warbler *A. concinens* (regarded by some authors, e.g. Dementiev and Gladkov (1954) and Cheng (1976) as a race of Paddyfield). The status of *tangorum* is still

disputed, being regarded as a race of Paddyfield by Vaurie (1959) and Cheng (1976), but placed with Black-browed Reed Warbler *A. bistrigiceps* by Williamson (1968).

The Paddyfield Warbler has a 'long pale supercilium, often broadening behind the eye, and bordered above by a dark lateral crown stripe' (Harvey and Porter 1984). This is well shown in the photograph of a bird caught in the UK (Flumm and Lord 1978). Blunt-winged Warbler appears very similar to Paddyfield (King *et al.* 1975) but many lack the dark line above the supercilium (Inskipp and Inskipp 1985). As the name suggests, the wing is generally more blunt in appearance than that of Paddyfield, with the wing point usually primary 4=5 (Williamson 1968).

Apparently in breeding dress *tangorum* is similar to Black-browed Reed Warbler (Williamson 1968). The eastern race of the Reed Warbler is paler and less rufous above than nominate (western) *scirpaceus*, appearing more similar to Marsh Warbler. Both species appear similar to Blyth's Reed Warbler in colouration but are distinguished on wing formula (Williamson 1968, Pearson 1981, Svensson 1984). In Marsh Warbler the third primary is the longest, primary 1 does not extend more than 0.5mm beyond the primary coverts and the second primary falls between the third and fifth. In the Reed Warbler the third primary is the longest, primary 1 can be up to 2mm longer than the primary coverts, primary 2 falls between the third and fifth, and the outermost secondary is 15-19mm less than the wing tip (Svensson 1984).

Ageing of Blyth's Reed Warbler in spring apparently is not possible as both adults and young birds have a complete moult in the winter quarters (Williamson 1968) or during the autumn migration (Gaston 1976).

Blyth's Reed Warbler breeds from northern Europe eastwards across Siberia to the Yenesei River, the Aral-Caspian region, Altai Mountains eastwards to northwest Mongolia, Turkestan, western Tian Shan range, Tadzhikistan and northern Afghanistan (Williamson 1968, Vaurie 1964, Piechocki *et al.* 1982). It has been recorded from the southwest part of the Tibetan plateau on migration (Vaurie 1972) but not from Xizang (Vaurie 1972, Cheng *et al.* 1983).

It winters throughout India from Baluchistan and Nepal south to Sri Lanka and east to Assam (Ripley 1982). In Burma it has been recorded from Arakan, the Sittang Plain near Pegu, and Karenni (Smythies 1953). It is not listed for China by Cheng (1976) or de Schauensee (1984) and this appears to be the first record of the species for China as well as for Hong Kong.

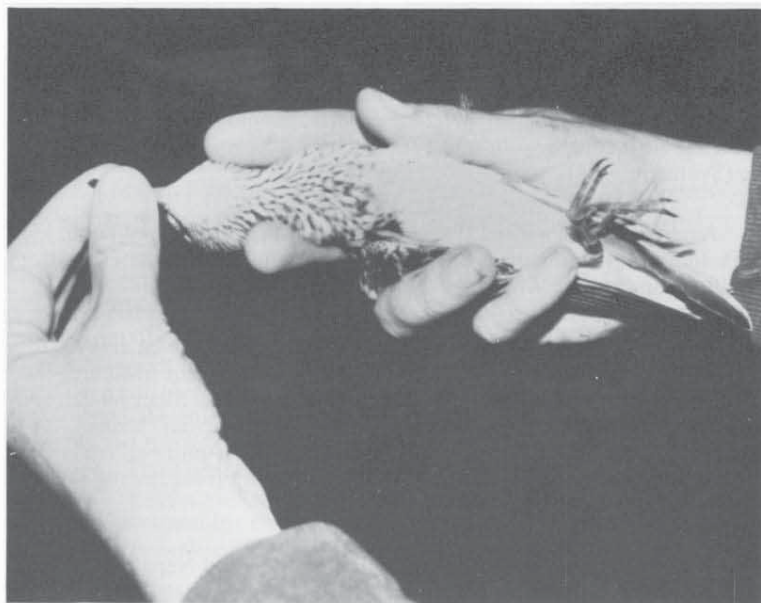
PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos*

On the night of 25 April 1986, a Pectoral Sandpiper was caught by Yu Guohai, Madam Yong Ruoli, Vicky J. Melville, T. Leung Koon-wing and DSM.

Examination in the hand gave the following details:

wing (maximum chord)	146 mm
bill (to feathering)	29 mm
tarsus	28.5 mm
mid toe + claw	31 mm
weight	56.5 g

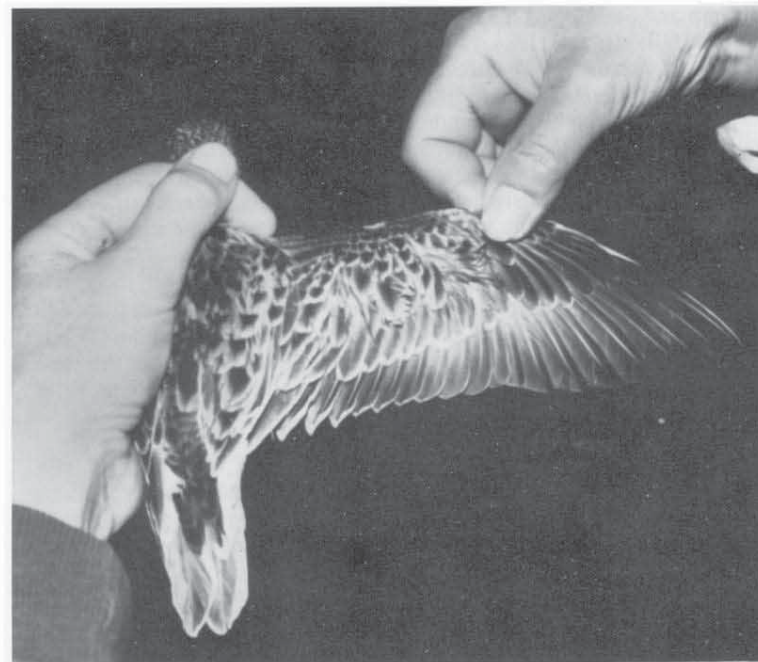
The centre pair of rectrices was missing but the remaining rectrices were broad, and rounded at the tip — different from the normal tail of a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*. The white tips to the inner primary coverts were less than 1mm wide. The bird had a well defined brown streaked pectoral band. The supercilium was indistinct and streaked and the crown and ear coverts rufous brown, but not as rich as usual for a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in spring. The legs and feet were olive green. The primaries were more or less fresh. The bird was ringed, photographed and released.



Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*
Mai Po, April 1986

(D.S. Melville)

Identification in the field was confirmed by reference to Prater *et al.* (1977). Subsequently reference was made to Cramp and Simmons (1983) and Hayman *et al.* (1986). No Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were caught that night but one had been caught the previous night and DSM is familiar with this species in the hand.



Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*
Mai Po, April 1986

(D.S. Melville)

Based on the new primaries the bird was an adult — first-winter birds are not known to moult their primaries and thus they are heavily worn in the spring (Cramp and Simmons 1983, Prater *et al.* 1977). The plumage characters were typical of a female in breeding plumage, but the wing was very long. Cramp and Simmons (1983) give adult wing lengths as 139-148 (mean 144) for males and 126-136 (mean 131) for females (sample sizes 10 and 11 respectively). Prater *et al.* (1977), with larger samples (30 and 20 respectively), give 138-149 (mean 144.2) for males, and 126-135 (mean 129.6) for females, noting that there is almost no overlap in wing length, birds with wings smaller or equal to 135mm being females and those greater or equal to 137mm being males. Even allowing for the fact that these measurements were taken from museum skins and that some shrinkage had occurred it is likely to have reduced the wing length by only 1-2mm (Engelmoer *et al.* 1983). It is possible that the wing length was wrongly recorded at the time of capture.

The Pectoral Sandpiper breeds in northern Siberia east from the Taymyr Peninsula, across northern Alaska and Canada and on the western shore of Hudson Bay. The Siberian breeding population is thought to migrate to South America together with North American breeding birds

(Cramp and Simmons 1983). Small numbers winter in Australia and New Zealand (Blakers *et al.* 1984, Falla *et al.* 1979, Lane 1987). The Ornithological Society of Japan (1975) notes that 'occasional solitary birds' occur on autumn migration in Japan (South Kuriles, Hokkaido, Honshu). However recent records from Okinawa indicate that the species may have been overlooked or may have become more numerous (McWhirter 1985). Although the species is omitted by Gore and Won (1971) it is a straggler to North Korea (Austin 1948, Austin and Kuroda 1951). There are records of small numbers from the Pacific islands, e.g. Phoenix and Line islands (Clapp 1968) and Micronesia (Owen 1977).

This appears to be the first record of Pectoral Sandpiper from China since it is not listed by Cheng (1976) or Hachisuka and Udagawa (1951). In view of its known distribution and migrations the appearance of this species in Hong Kong is not surprising and follows several unconfirmed field sightings (Chalmers 1986).

DISCUSSION

The occurrence of the Pectoral Sandpiper in Hong Kong is not surprising and has been long expected, but the discovery of Blyth's Reed Warbler and Chiffchaff are unexpected since, as noted above, both of these species usually winter in the Indian subcontinent. There were no obviously unusual meteorological events in the autumn of 1985 or the spring of 1986 which might account for the presence of these two species in Hong Kong and there were no unusual records of 'Indian' birds in either Malaysia or Thailand during the 1985/86 winter (D.R. Wells *in litt.*, P.D. Round *in litt.*).

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**LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta* AT
TSIM BEI TSUI.
A NEW SPECIES FOR HONG KONG**

Peter R. Kennerley

During a count of waders in the high tide roost at the end of the Fence at Tsim Bei Tsui on 0830h on 26 April 1986, my attention was drawn to a stint which was both striking in appearance and quite different from the numerous Red-necked Stints *C. ruficollis* which were also present within the roost. As soon as the count of Red-necked Stints had been completed I returned to look at the unusually plumaged stint and I was immediately struck by its overall similarity to that of a Little Stint in breeding plumage, a species with which I am very familiar.

The bird was seen at a range of about 35-40 metres in good light with the sun directly behind me and was watched until 1130h when the flock took flight and the bird was lost. It was relocated at 1400h at the same site and finally, at 1530h, the flock again took flight and landed on the seaward side of the Fence where again the bird was readily located.

Throughout the day, there were up to 200 Red-necked Stints present in the roost although approximately 100 of these arrived at 1100h. They were in all plumages from fresh breeding plumage to quite heavily worn breeding plumage — i.e. showing considerable amounts of red on the scapulars, about the head and on the throat and breast. Other similar species present for direct comparison included Long-toed Stint *C. sub-minuta*, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata*, Sanderling *C. alba*, Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*, Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* and Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*. Unfortunately, no other observers were present and the bird was not located on subsequent days.

The following details were noted:

STRUCTURE

When initially located, the bird was on its own and inactive. It appeared to be slightly smaller and less heavy-breasted than the Red-necked Stints and this was confirmed a few minutes later when a feeding flock of Red-necked Stints passed it. At this stage the bird moved and it became apparent that it had lost its left foot although the leg was still present.

The bill was narrower at the base than a Red-necked Stint's and therefore appeared finer. When seen head on, the bill was not as broad as a Red-necked Stint's and was finer at the tip.

PLUMAGE DETAILS

The centre of the crown was strikingly darker and more heavily streaked than the remainder of the head. The relatively narrow dark centre

was bordered by a paler orange/rust band and this effect was quite different from the crown pattern of all Red-necked Stints present. The bird did not show a supercilium above the eye but a pale line bordered the dark centre to the crown. This was much less distinct and more diffuse than the forked supercilium of a Broad-billed Sandpiper or Long-toed Stint.

The nape, ear coverts and sides of the neck were a strong orange/rust colour — not the rufous/red exhibited by Red-necked Stints and appeared similar in colour to those of Little Stint in breeding plumage. The strength of this colour was probably the reason why the bird lacked the supercilium above the eye which Red-necked Stints also lack when the red on the head is fully developed. The overall effect was to give the bird a very plain and featureless facial appearance marked only by the dark eye.

The area around the base of the lower mandible was white and this extended down the chin, throat and centre of the breast. The breast itself was marked by a very obvious gorget of fine streaks on an orangish ground colour at the sides of the breast but white down the centre. The underparts below the gorget were pure white and no streaking or spotting was visible on the flanks below the gorget. The bird did not show the white 'finger' extending between the bend of the closed wing and the red/rufous throat patch which the majority of Red-necked Stints show. The clean-cut gorget was much sharper and more clearly defined than the breast band exhibited by any Red-necked Stints present.

The upperparts appeared to be blotched and distinctly untidy when compared to those of a Red-necked Stint in all stages of wear into full breeding plumage. This effect was primarily due to the black centres to the scapulars being larger than those on the corresponding feathers on a Red-necked Stint and therefore the paler fringes to the scapulars were narrower. The upper and lower scapulars were edged orangish except for the outermost edge which was cream in colour. However, the outermost scapulars on the lower two rows were wholly edged creamy white — a very striking feature as these feathers were very large. The inner edges to the upper row of scapulars were also paler and this produced a 'V' on the edge of the mantle although this was not particularly striking and many Red-necked Stints showed an equally strong 'V' on the edge of the mantle. The mantle itself was neatly composed of small black centres and rusty orange fringes, stronger and darker in colour than those on the scapulars. The edges to all the visible tertials were fringed orangish with striking black centres and the primaries projected beyond these at rest. The bird did not show the grey lower scapulars, wing coverts and the tertials which almost all Red-necked Stints exhibited.

OTHER FEATURES AND POINTS OF INTEREST

The legs and bill appeared black.

The bird did not show an eye-ring, — a feature which Red-necked shows in all stages of breeding plumage.

As Red-necked Stints wear into breeding plumage, it is invariably the

ear coverts which first start to become red followed shortly afterwards by the breast. These features commence as a pale pink colour and gradually become a brighter red as wear takes place. At this stage, the fringes to the upper scapulars become red followed by the mantle. When in full (i.e. worn) breeding plumage the fringes to the scapulars are as red as the head and breast.

On the stint under discussion, all the scapulars were showing the orange/rust fringes while the nape, ear coverts, sides of neck etc. were a similar colour. The bird did not approach the depth of colour of a Red-necked Stint on the mantle, head or breast. For the stint to show such strength of colour on the scapulars it should have been showing a conspicuous amount of red on the ear coverts, head and breast rather than orangish-rust with a white chin, throat and centre to the breast.

OTHER SIMILAR SPECIES

Several similar species of *Calidris* wader breed on the tundras of Alaska and northern Canada. Of these, the only species likely to present an identification problem are Semi-palmated Sandpiper *C. pusilla* and Western Sandpiper *C. mauri*. However, both of these species exhibit very distinctive breeding plumages and reduced palmations between all toes which are readily visible in the field given good views.

A detailed review of the identification of these species is beyond the scope of this note but readers may refer to the excellent paper by Peter Grant and Lars Jonsson in *British Birds* (Vol. 77: 293-315) for further details.

RANGE AND DISTRIBUTION

The breeding distribution lies largely to the west of that of the Red-necked Stint. It breeds from the Varanger Fjord region of northern Norway eastwards to the delta of the Yana river, southern Novaya Zemlya and the New Siberian Archipelago in the USSR. It is a common migrant through Europe and western Asia to its wintering grounds in Africa south of the Sahara, the Middle East, India and Sri Lanka. Small numbers also winter in western Europe.

This species has been recorded as a vagrant several times in Australia during the winter months and Alaska in the breeding season. Elsewhere in the region, there are single records from Japan, Papua New Guinea and Sabah.

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa flavipes* AT TSIM BEI TSUI AND
MAI PO. THE FIRST RECORD FOR HONG KONG AND CHINA**

Peter R. Kennerley

While leading a Hong Kong Bird Watching Society field trip to Tsim Bei Tsui on 19 October 1986 I noticed a wader flying over the rapidly filling tidal pool on the inside of the Fence. By its actions I believed the bird to be a Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis* and I directed the attention of the group to the bird. However as the bird flew past us, it was obvious that the bird did not show the prominent white wedge up the back which is a feature of Marsh Sandpiper. Instead, only a white rump patch was visible.

Fortunately the bird landed on the pool about 250 metres away and during the course of the next five minutes we were able to approach the bird to within 100 metres until, for no apparent reason, it took flight and disappeared over the Fence into Deep Bay in the direction of Mai Po.

During this brief period we were able to note that the bird had a very elegant structure, rather reminiscent of a Marsh Sandpiper, but the upper-parts were greyish-brown finely speckled with white in a similar manner to that of a Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*. The most striking feature however was the long yellow legs which were apparent even at a distance of 250 metres. In flight, the bird appeared similar in plumage to a Wood Sandpiper with dark wings, mantle and tail but offset by a striking white rump patch. The legs extended well beyond the tip of the tail in flight.

We subsequently went to Mai Po to look for the bird and later returned to Tsim Bei Tsui when the tide was falling but were unsuccessful in relocating it.

At 1230h on 2 November 1986, while leading a party from the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society to Mai Po, I noticed a wader feeding on the mud in the partially drained gei-wei 13 about 35 metres from the road. I quickly set my telescope up and was surprised to find the bird was the Lesser Yellowlegs. This time the bird presented none of the problems which it had done two weeks previously and apart from a brief flight, it remained settled on the pool for the remainder of the afternoon where it was seen by M.L. Chalmers, D.S. Melville, R.P. Tipper, A.R. Lamont, M. Nunns, V.B. Picken plus several other observers including a surprise appearance by His Excellency The Governor and Lady Youde.

The following details were noted on 2 November:

STRUCTURE

In body size, it was slightly larger than a Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus* but obviously smaller than a Spotted Redshank *T. erythropus* both of which were present for direct comparison. The bird was more elongated than a Green Sandpiper presumably because the closed wings extended well beyond the tip of the tail.

The legs were very long, in particular the tibia visible was much longer than on a Wood Sandpiper and was more reminiscent of a Marsh Sandpiper. The bill was fine and about 1.2 times the length of the head. It showed a very slight upsweep but the tip was just noticeably turned down.

Normally, the bird kept its neck retracted but when alarmed, particularly by Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus*, it would extend its neck and vigorously bob its body up and down. When walking, the body would be gently bobbed in a similar manner to that of a Wood Sandpiper.

In flight, the wings were longer than those of a Wood Sandpiper and the legs projected well beyond the tip of the tail. The bird's flight was very reminiscent of a Marsh Sandpiper with an almost leisurely but jerky wing action.



Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*
Mai Po, November 1986

(R.P. Tipper)

PLUMAGE DETAILS

The crown was greyish-brown and appeared to be finely streaked with

dark lines but in the late afternoon this effect was lost and the crown feathers then appeared to have whitish tips. The supercilium was white but was only apparent between the eye and the base of the bill. There was no supercilium or eye-stripe behind the eye and this gave a uniform greyish-brown appearance to the head. The lores were dark and a dark spur cut up from these into the supercilium about two-thirds the distance between the base of the bill and the eye. The supercilia did not meet over the base of the bill where they were separated by a narrow vertical line.

The chin was white but the throat and breast were very finely streaked greyish-brown. At the sides of the breast, the markings became smudged and browner. The remainder of the lower breast, belly, flanks and undertail coverts were white and unmarked. The demarcation between the breast streaking and the white underparts was quite distinct.

The nape and mantle were pale greyish-brown and unpatterned. The lesser, median and greater coverts were brown and notched with white which produced a speckled effect similar to that of a Wood Sandpiper. The tertials were also notched with white and these were quite long and extended almost to the tip of the visible primaries. The visible primaries appeared darker than the closed wing and extended well beyond the tip of the tail. The tail itself was white, regularly barred dark brown but the rump was white and unmarked.

In flight, the white rump contrasted with the darker mantle, wings and tail. The wings showed no patterning or bars.

The leg colour varied considerably with the lighting conditions. In overcast conditions the legs appeared pale yellow but when viewed in good afternoon sunlight they were bright orangish-yellow. The bird showed a striking white eye-ring and the bill was entirely dark. In some lights, a slightly paler base was apparent but this could not be assigned to a specific colour.

No call was heard. The bird remained on the pool until dusk but was not seen the following day.

RANGE AND DISTRIBUTION

The Lesser Yellowlegs is found during the breeding season in the muskeg swamps of Alaska and northern Canada where it is a common bird. On migration it occurs regularly on both seaboard of the USA as well as inland. The wintering range extends from the southern USA through central America to South America.

As a vagrant, it occurs regularly in western Europe, in particular in the British Isles where there have been over 170 records of this species. Elsewhere it has occurred in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Indonesia, Nigeria and South Africa.

This record is the first for Hong Kong and China.

BULL-HEADED SHRIKE *Lanius bucephalus* AT MAI PO

C.Y. Lam

On 23 October 1986, three of us (Anthony Tse, Jeffrey Lee and myself) were to attend the formal opening ceremony of the WWF Wildlife Education Centre at Mai Po. We arrived early to do some birding before the event. The sky was nearly overcast and winds were light.

We were walking beside the perimeter Fence between the rocky outcrop and the boardwalk when a bird having the distinctive look of a shrike flew in from outside the Fence and stopped on top of a lamp-post slightly more than 10 metres away. The bird was well seen for several minutes before it flew away further inland.

The size of the bird was too small for Rufous-backed Shrike. The length of the bird was estimated by Jeffrey as about 8 inches. His estimate was based on a comparison of the length of the bird with that of the top part of the lamp-post. My intuitive estimate at that time was somewhat more than 7 inches. The following features were noted: brown crown, broad black eyestripe, white line above the black eyestripe, white spot on the black edge of the folded wing, edge of the bend of the folded wing of lighter colour apparently grey, brown flanks, rather closer to orange than red, buff-brown scales on breast (faint and fine), grey back and dark coloured tail. The bird was identified as a Bull-headed Shrike *Lanius bucephalus*.

Prior to 1975, this species was considered to be an occasional visitor, but on review none of the old records could be satisfactorily separated from Brown Shrike *L. cristatus* and the species was relegated to Category F. On this occasion, the white spot on the wing, indicating a male, safely distinguished it from both Brown Shrike *L. cristatus* and Tiger Shrike *L. tigrinus*.

The breeding range of Bull-headed Shrike includes Sakhalin, Japan, Korea and NE China as far south as Shandong. It winters in SE China and is an occasional vagrant in Taiwan (Cheng, 1976 and Wild Bird Society of Japan, 1982). As a matter of interest, one of us, Anthony Tse, actually saw this species in Guangdong only one week before this sighting.

This Mai Po sight record restored the species to Category A, and was a fitting way to celebrate the official opening of the Wildlife Education Centre there.

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SPECIMEN RECORD OF THICK-BILLED PIGEON
Treron curvirostra
FROM THE TERRITORY OF HONG KONG

Clive Viney

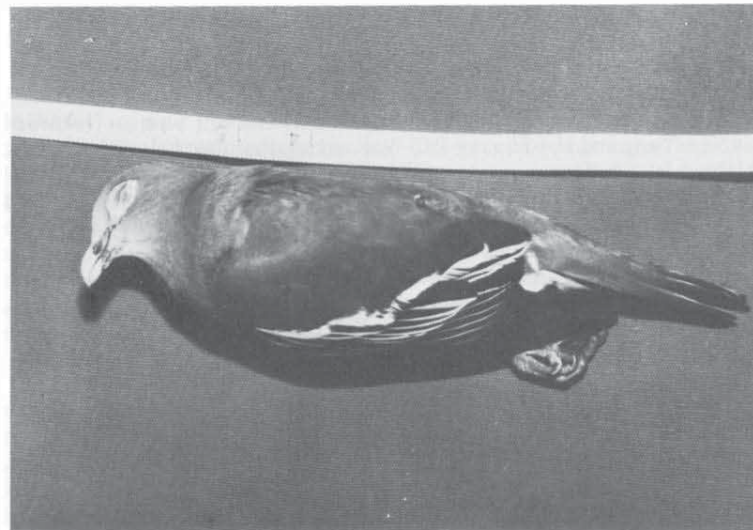
DISCOVERY

On 8 November 1986 at 0900h a freshly dead dove (still warm) was found by an employee (Mr. Leung, foreman of the Greenhouse Area) on the ground by a greenhouse situated at c150m above sea level at the Kadoorie Experimental and Extension Farm (Paak Ngau Shek), Lam Kam Road, New Territories, Hong Kong. Signs of bleeding from the bill and a slightly damaged shoulder suggested that the cause of death was an in-flight collision with a greenhouse window.

DESCRIPTION

A strikingly coloured small thick-set green pigeon with a rather thick bill. Forehead and crown bluish-grey, paler on forehead. Face, throat, neck, underparts, rump and central tail feathers olive green; yellower on throat, lower breast and belly. Rump tinged golden. Green graduated to light grey on the hind neck and the lower abdomen flecked with grey. Flanks, tibial feathers (shanks) and shorter undertail feathers dark green broadly tipped with white giving a spotted effect. Long undertail feathers pale cinnamon with grey V bar across centre of feathers. Mantle and inner wing coverts dark purplish-maroon with greyish edge to bend of wing. Rest of wings dark green or black with broad yellow edges to most feathers, forming conspicuous yellow stripes on the closed wing. Examination of the open wing: slightly pointed all-black primaries, widely scalloped on the inner web of the third from outermost primary; secondaries black with thin lemon yellow edge to outer web; first tertiary as secondaries but broadly edged lemon yellow; inner tertiaries olive green; lesser wing coverts olive green broadly edged with lemon yellow; underwing uniform bluish-grey. Outer tail feathers dark grey at base, pale grey at tips with a black central band and outer webs tinged olive green. Iris bright golden yellow, dark pupil and grey eye-lids. Prominent orbital skin vivid blue-green. Deep red gape. Bill ivory with crimson patch either side of base. Feet and legs coral red but soles of feet brown.

On dissection it was found to have heavy fat deposits and a few *Ficus* seeds in the crop.



Thick-billed Pigeon *Treron curvirostra*
Kadoorie Farm, November 1986.

(C.A. Viney)

MEASUREMENTS

Measurements taken are those recommended by King but with extra emphasis on the bill:

total length	240mm
wing length	143mm
tail length	80mm
tarsus length	20mm
bill: culmen	15mm
gape	21mm
depth at base	7mm
max. width	7mm

IDENTIFICATION

Initial reference to King by Gloria Barretto, Ruy and Karen Barretto led to the identification of the bird as a Thick-billed Pigeon *Treron curvirostra*. This diagnosis was later confirmed as a male *Treron curvirostra* by reference to the detailed descriptions in Goodwin and Ali & Ripley.

Howard & Moore list ten races of *Treron curvirostra* but Goodwin says most of them differ only on size or very minor details of colouration.

The Kadoorie Farm artist prepared a watercolour of the freshly dead bird (now with Gloria Barretto) and a further painting was made by Karen Phillipp before preparation of the specimen skin.

RANGE AND STATUS

Treron curvirostra occurs in Nepal, NE India, Burma, Thailand, Indochina, the Philippines, Greater Sunda Islands and SW China. Schauensee says the race *nipalensis* is resident in south Yunnan (recorded at Nen-Yang and Hsi-Shuang-Pan-Na) and another race *hainana* occurs on Hainan Island. There are no published records for mainland China east of Yunnan but a record of a female green pigeon seen at Shuen Wan (near Plover Cove), New Territories, Hong Kong on 10 April 1986 by CAV, then identified as a White-bellied Green Pigeon *Treron sieboldii* (see Chalmers), is under review in the light of this discovery. However, the original record of *sieboldii*, published by Chalmers (Sek Kong, 25 January 1983), safely stands review and two or three earlier unpublished reports of 'green pigeons' in Hong Kong are apparently attributable to either species.

In view of the extensive trade in wild birds through Hong Kong and the Buddhist practice of deliberately releasing birds, the possibility of an escaped bird must be considered. The bird, apart from a minor wing injury, appeared to be in perfect condition with absolutely no signs of feather abrasion. Melville in his thorough study of the bird trade did not list this species as being traded in or through Hong Kong between 1965 and 1980. However, Dr. K.C. Searle, Honorary Curator of the Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens, advised verbally that green pigeons are now occasionally seen in the bird shops. On balance, in view of the bird's fine condition, the locality and the possible earlier record of a female only 12 km to the east, it is considered that this was a wild bird. In a subsequent discussion Ben King considered this a reasonable assumption as this species is, in his experience, a known wanderer.

DISCUSSION

The *Treron* pigeons are collectively known as Green Pigeons; most have yellowish-green plumage, contrastingly coloured mantle and one or two bright yellow wing bars. Twenty-three species have been listed by Howard & Moore. They are specialized fruit pigeons which are highly arboreal, only rarely descending to the ground, and feed largely on wild figs *Ficus*. Specialization is provided by a long narrow gut and grinding gizzard which permits the seeds of fruits to be digested. In Borneo, Thick-billed Pigeons have been seen to feed on hard fruits.

Thick-billed Pigeons usually occur in flocks 10-40 strong in or near forest in both hilly and level country up to 1500m above sea level; sometimes in open country with groups of trees. A search of Kadoorie Farm on 12 November 1986 failed to locate further birds but green pigeons are notoriously erratic in their appearance and large flocks can all but vanish in the canopy of a fruiting tree. This species is non-migratory but local movements are governed by food supply. Whilst its appearance in Hong Kong was unexpected, it does correspond to the unexplained eastern range extension into south China of several other forest species in recent years, notably Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus* (see Viney 1986), Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes* and Large Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparveroides*.

Much remains to be discovered about the Thick-billed Pigeon. Its flight has been described as swift and strong. Its call is a series of mellow whistled notes (rather than coos) typical of green pigeon but it also utters harsher notes when feeding. The nest is a flimsy pad of twigs usually situated in the forking leafy branch of a small tree or on a horizontal bamboo, at moderate height. Two white eggs are laid. The breeding season has been recorded from late March to August in India.

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**BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*
AT TSIM BEI TSUI. A NEW SPECIES FOR HONG KONG**

Peter R. Kennerley

While scanning through the large numbers of duck present at Tsim Bei Tsui on 26 November 1986, I noticed a small grebe swimming off the end of the jetty. It was initially on its own but eventually joined up with a group of six Scaup *Aythya marila* and a single drake Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*.

The bird was obviously a grebe and due to its small size and dark neck, Great Crested Grebe *P. cristatus* could immediately be discounted as could Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* on overall structure and size. This only left the possibility of one of the rarer grebes and my thoughts immediately went to Red-necked Grebe *P. grisegena* as this species had previously been recorded twice in Hong Kong. However, the bird was clearly smaller than a Scaup and lacked an obviously large bill which eliminated Red-necked Grebe. The remaining possibilities could be either Slavonian *P. auritus* or Black-necked Grebe *P. nigricollis*. It was identified as the latter species on size, neck colour, bill size, and head shape.

The bird was seen at a distance of between 100 and 300 metres from the end of the jetty where it was observed for a period of approximately two hours before it swam past the end of the jetty on the falling tide and went into Deep Bay where it was lost to view.

The most striking feature of this relatively nondescript bird was its dark neck which immediately identified it as one of the rarer grebes. This feature was very obvious and when seen at 100 metres the colour was clearly dark grey rather than black. The colour became lighter on the breast where it met the water line. The chin, throat and sides of the upper neck were white and this contrasted sharply with the dark stripe up the centre of the nape. The crown was black and this area extended down the sides of the head well below the eye. Here it was rather diffusely defined from the upper cheeks but seemed to come down farthest just behind the eye.

The upperparts were dull greyish-brown as were the flanks although they were not quite as dark as the upperparts.

The forehead was quite steep and sharply angled from the bill. The bill itself was wholly dark, quite short and fine and the lower mandible was distinctly angled upwards towards the tip. The eye was red.

The bird remained in the area until 29 November and was seen by many observers during this period.

This is the first record of this species for Hong Kong although its occurrence is not particularly surprising. It is a regular winter visitor along the coast of China where it is common on the Fujian coast. This species has a very wide breeding distribution across Europe and Asia as well as the USA.

**DAURIAN JACKDAW *Corvus dauuricus* AT TSIM BEI TSUI.
A SPECIES NEW TO HONG KONG**

R. P. Tipper

At approximately 0830h on 30 November 1986 I was at the Fence at Tsim Bei Tsui searching for a possible Merlin *Falco columbarius* which had been present there briefly towards dusk the day before. Predictably the falcon could not be found but amongst the Black Kites *Milvus migrans*, Collared Crows *Corvus torquatus* and Magpies *Pica pica* which frequent the area in a loose flock, I noticed a small crow perched on the Fence. As soon as I raised my binoculars it became clear the bird was a jackdaw. I watched the bird at distances down to 30 metres for approximately ten minutes until it accompanied several Magpies inland to a distant tree where it remained for a few minutes before disappearing from view. A search of the area failed to relocate the bird.

DESCRIPTION

A small crow only slightly bigger than a Black-necked Starling *Sturnus nigricollis* and approximately two-thirds the size of a Collared Crow. Apart from these species, the bird was also seen with Magpies and its body size was much the same as theirs. The plumage was entirely black (not glossy) with the closed wing appearing to be tinged brownish; at certain angles there was just a hint of a darker black crown (or paler face) but this was hardly discernible. Legs black; bill black, pointed and relatively short and fine; iris brown. The only call heard was a subdued but high-pitched 'chack' seemingly the same as is uttered by the Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* in Europe. In flight its small size was again apparent and its wing action was noticeably faster than the more leisurely flight of Jungle Crows *Corvus macrorhynchos* and Collared Crows.

Although I was confused by the fact that it displayed no white in its plumage — I was unaware at this time there was an all-dark phase of the species — I concluded the bird was a Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*. I was most doubtful that it could be a Jackdaw so far east and was aware from photographing them in England (and focusing on the eye) that adults, at least, have white irides.

IDENTIFICATION, AGEING AND TAXONOMY

The Daurian Jackdaw has two colour phases — a pied form, with the head, throat, centre of breast, mantle, wings and tail black, variously tinged purple, blue, bluish-green and green, the hind neck and underparts white and the ear coverts streaked silvery grey, and a dark form which is entirely glossy blue-black except for paler ear coverts. Juveniles of the pied form resemble adults but are less strongly glossed and their plumage is fawnish-grey where the adult is white. At all ages the irides are brown.

The only likely confusion species is the Jackdaw which is essentially a glossy black bird with the cheeks, nape and neck light grey. Adults have white irides but in juveniles they are bluish, changing to dull brown and

then dull white when the birds are about one year old (Goodwin 1976). In the eastern race *C.m. soemmerringii* the grey area on the head is bordered by a white bar across the neck.

The lack of any sheen to the Hong Kong bird's plumage and the brown tinge to the wing indicate it was in its first winter. Goodwin (1976) states that the black-phase Daurian Jackdaw is probably not distinguishable from the Jackdaw in the field unless the iris colour is visible. This is an unhelpful comment as the head pattern of the adult Jackdaw should normally enable specific identification. However, juvenile Jackdaws might be more difficult even if the irides are seen as they resemble the colour of the Daurian Jackdaw. First-winter Jackdaws are similar to adults although less glossy and browner (Witherby 1938). Juveniles undergo a partial moult between June and September (Dementiev and Gladkov 1957) when the body-plumage and majority (often all) of the lesser and median and usually the innermost greater coverts are moulted (Witherby 1938). By November then, specific identification of Jackdaw and dark-phase Daurian Jackdaw should be straightforward on plumage details. The dark-phase Daurian Jackdaw was, at one time in the past, given specific status, *C. neglectus* (Goodwin 1976), yet Goodwin suggests it is merely a first-year plumage of some birds which eventually acquire pied adult dress. On the other hand *dauuricus* has been treated as a race of *C. monedula* (Goodwin 1976). Arguments have been made for the jackdaws being placed in their own genus, *Coloeus* (Goodwin 1976), the most readily understandable reason being their distinctive feature of hole-nesting.

RANGE

Breeds in the area bordered by eastern Siberia west to eastern Sinkiang and south to Yunnan and southeast Tibet. In winter it retreats from the more northerly points of its range and spreads into Russian Turkestan, Fujian, northern Guangdong, Korea and sparingly in Japan, with stragglers reaching Taiwan. There is a single record for the Western Palearctic from Finland (Wallace 1984).

The species has long been regarded as a likely candidate for addition to the Hong Kong List.

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NORDMANN'S GREENSHANK IN HONG KONG: A REVIEW OF THE IDENTIFICATION AND STATUS

Peter R. Kennerley and David N. Bakewell

Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* is one of the world's most elusive shorebirds. Its breeding grounds remain inaccessible to westerners and it is highly sought after by birdwatchers on visits to Southeast Asia outside the breeding season. It is a rare species throughout its known range and its total population is considered to number less than 1,000 individuals (Howes and Lambert 1987).

In Hong Kong we are fortunate to lie on what appears to be a migration route between the breeding grounds in the USSR and wintering areas in Southeast Asia. However, prior to 1983 the species remained a vagrant with only two accepted records. Since that date, improved access to the intertidal areas, discovery of new roosting areas and the development of shallow wetland habitat at Mai Po has transformed the status of the species to that of a rare passage migrant during April and May with a minimum of 33 individuals being reported during spring migration 1987.

Despite this upsurge in records, the species retains its charismatic status in Hong Kong. Nordmann's Greenshank are sufficiently similar to Greenshank *T. nebularia* to be overlooked amongst the large numbers of the commoner species while, conversely, Greenshank exhibit a wide range of plumage and bare part colour variations which can lead to confusion.

This paper reviews the known occurrences of Nordmann's Greenshank in Hong Kong, examines its world status and highlights those characteristics which appear to be diagnostic of the species while bringing attention to the pitfalls which confront the observer when faced with anything other than a classic Greenshank.

SEPARATION FROM GREENSHANK

Both species share features including similar body size, a long slightly upturned bill, greyish upperparts, largely white underparts, and white uppertail coverts and lower back producing a distinctive white wedge up the centre of the back, a character also shared with Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis*. Thus, the observer is faced with two remarkably similar species and it is therefore important that the field characters of Nordmann's Greenshank are fully understood if an observer finds himself confronted with an odd greenshank.

SHAPE

One of the striking features of Nordmann's Greenshank is its distinctive shape which, when fully appreciated, serves as a useful identification feature. While sharing many common features with Greenshank, the differences become significant when the species are seen together, and once learnt, they can be applied to individuals of either species seen in isolation.

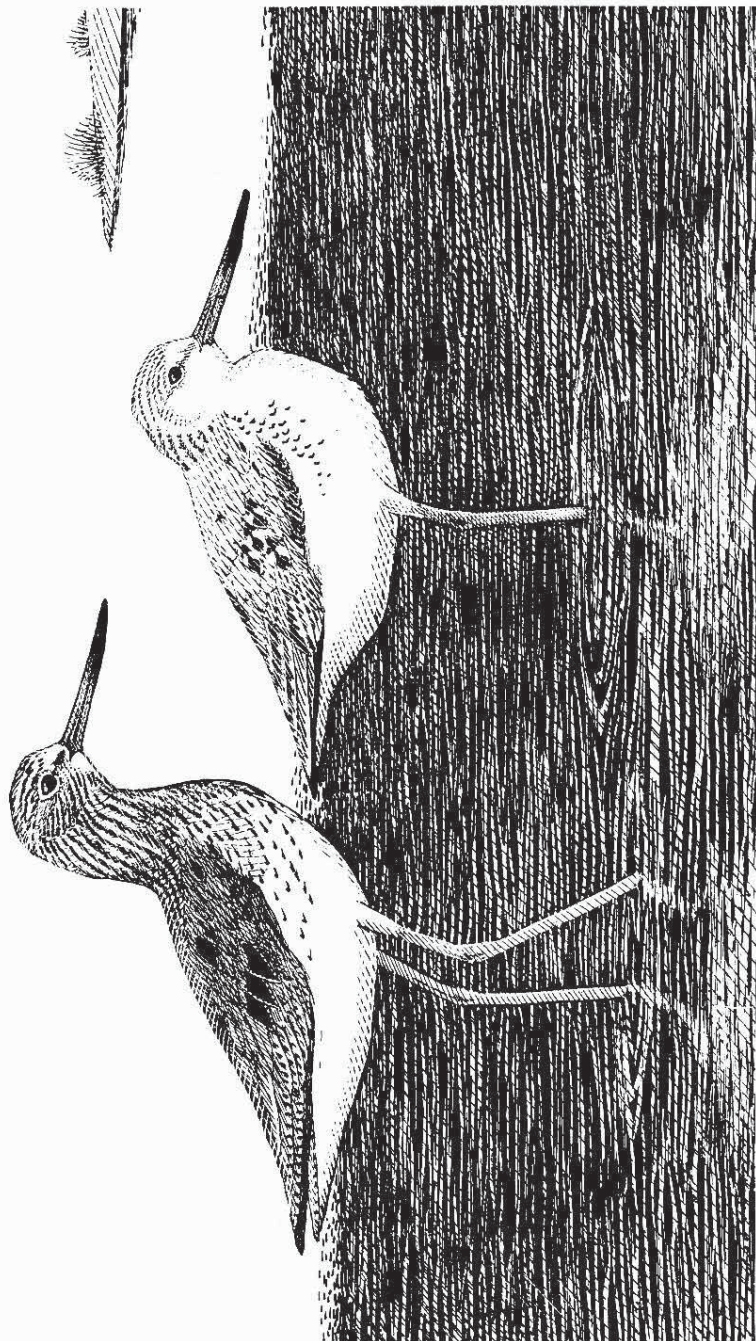


Fig.1 Adult Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* and Nordmann's Greenshank *T. guttifer* in the first week of May, Mai Po.

As illustrated in figure 1, Greenshank is an elegant bird with a long neck and a slender body which, in profile, tapers smoothly to a point at the tail. By contrast Nordmann's Greenshank has a deep and full-breasted structure which gives it a front-heavy appearance rather similar to that of a Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*. This is further exaggerated by the flat belly and pronounced angle where it meets the vent behind the legs. This shape is well illustrated in Viney and Phillipps (1983), and, within the genus, is unique to Nordmann's Greenshank. The neck is shorter than a Greenshank's and is normally held into the body to produce a hunched appearance. The shorter, thicker legs of Nordmann's Greenshank, only 60% of the length of a Greenshank's legs, enhances the stocky character of the species and further differentiates the species from Greenshank.

Juveniles tend to be slimmer than adults but still retain the character of the adult bird. The only caveat to mention is that when Nordmann's Greenshank, either adult or juvenile, flattens its belly feathering to retain heat in cold or wet weather, the exposed tibia length increases and changes the leg and body proportions of the species. However, if appreciated, this should not be a source of confusion.

HEAD

In non-breeding plumage, the head of Nordmann's Greenshank is extremely pale with ash grey feathering confined to the crown, upper ear coverts, lores and nape. The forehead, chin, lower ear coverts and throat are white as is the supercilium which sometimes only extends as far as the rear edge of the eye but often can be discerned behind it. On some non-breeding birds in April and May, it extends over the end of the ear coverts to meet the white sides of the neck and isolates the pale grey ear covert patch.

The supercilium shape is noticeably different from that exhibited by a Greenshank. It is much thicker in front of the eye, and if visible behind it, tapers towards the rear of the ear coverts. This bulge in front of the eye appears to be a consistent and diagnostic feature of Nordmann's Greenshank in all plumages.

As moult progresses into breeding plumage the supercilium becomes less obvious although it is invariably present as a bulge in front of the eye on all birds when they are migrating northwards through Hong Kong. Since this feature is absent from the photograph in Knystautas (1987) of a bird in full breeding plumage, it is considered that, as the effects of wear continue, the head becomes darker and these features are lost. The streaking on the rear crown and ear coverts is fine but on the nape it is quite heavy, particularly towards the base of the neck.

A juvenile bird, seen at Beidaihe, Hebei Province, PRC, on September 4 1986, showed a head pattern quite different to that of an adult. The crown was plain, unstreaked medium ash grey. The nape and sides of neck were diffusely streaked paler grey-brown at the top, slightly darker at the base. It had a broad, well defined off-white supercilium, similar in shape, in front

of the eye, to an adult's, but broader and more prominent behind it, with a rather square-ended, slightly upswept appearance. The lores were dark grey, and the upper ear coverts were indistinctly streaked pale grey. The chin, throat, lower ear coverts and foreneck were white. The darker feathering on the crown also gave it a slightly capped appearance.

The differences in these head patterns are shown in figure 2.

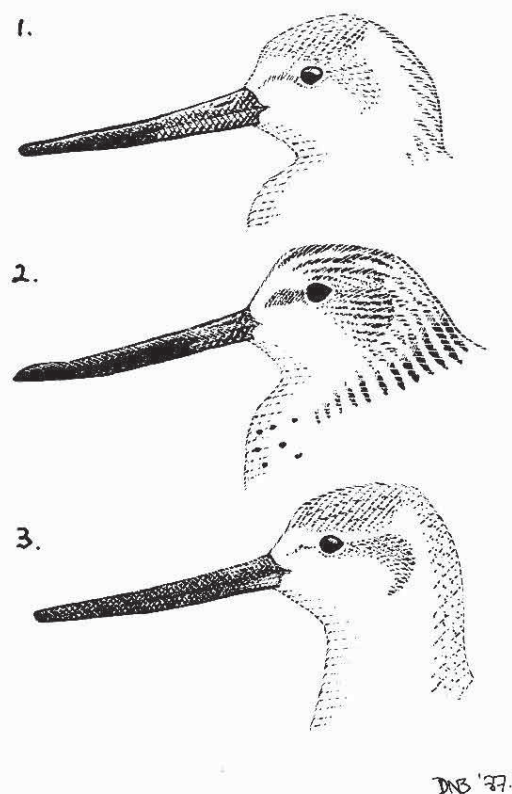


Fig. 2 Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*

1. Adult non-breeding, 28 April.
2. Adult breeding, 26 May. Note odd bill shape.
3. First-year non-breeding, 20 May.

UPPERPARTS

In non-breeding plumage, the scapulars, wing coverts and tertials of Nordmann's Greenshank present a rather uniform pale ash grey appearance, paler and more uniform than a Greenshank would normally show. The scapulars and coverts are narrowly fringed white and lack the dark sub-terminal crescents which a Greenshank in similar plumage exhibits. The mantle feathering is similar but does show very narrow dark subterminal crescents. The tertials are again pale grey, fringed white and lack the numerous regular notches along the outer fringe which a Greenshank shows in all plumages. This description largely agrees with that of wintering birds recorded by Howes and Lambert (1987) at Ko Libong, Thailand in December 1985.

As Nordmann's Greenshank undergoes a body moult into breeding plumage, new scapulars, wing coverts and tertials appear among the plain non-breeding feathers. These new feathers are unique in pattern to Nordmann's Greenshank and can be readily used to separate the species from Greenshank.

The scapulars are white with a black sub-terminal spot and heart-shaped basal spot joined together by a prominent black shaft streak. By contrast, the scapular pattern of Greenshank in breeding plumage is much plainer, consisting of a large blackish centre bordered by a narrow white fringe which is lightly notched. This fringe largely disappears through wear by July to make these feathers appear all-black. Frequently, Greenshank retain their non-breeding plumage scapulars when they are passing through Hong Kong in spring. These are plain brown and thus quite different from those of a Nordmann's Greenshank.

The lesser and median coverts are normally obscured by the scapulars in adult birds and are difficult to see but, being of similar pattern they are of little use in the separation of the two species. The greater coverts do differ significantly and are diagnostic in breeding plumage. On Nordmann's Greenshank, these are white with a series of black arrows centred on the black shaft streak pointing to the base of the feather and a large black subterminal spot at the tip. Greenshank's greater coverts in similar plumage are grey, edged white and noticeably notched along the fringe.

When in breeding plumage, the tertials of Nordmann's Greenshank are notched but again the pattern differs from that of Greenshank. Instead of showing a series of fine and rather tightly packed dark notches along the outer edge of the feather, Nordmann's Greenshank exhibits large but well spaced black notches along the white feather edge. One or two new tertial feathers showing this pattern can often be found on migrating adult birds in April and May.

Figure 3 illustrates the scapular, tertial and greater covert patterns described above.

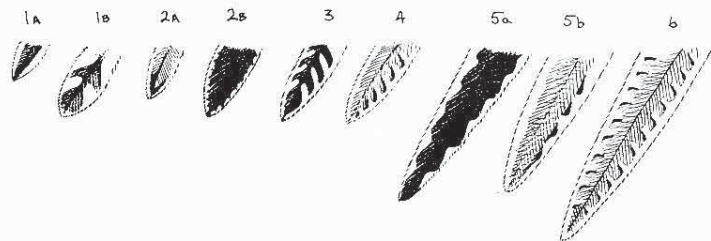


Fig. 3

- 1a Nordmann's Greenshank *T. guttifer* scapular from upper two rows, breeding plumage.
- 1b Nordmann's Greenshank scapular from lower three rows, breeding plumage.
- 2a Greenshank *T. nebularia* scapular from upper two rows, breeding plumage.
- 2b Greenshank scapular from lower three rows, breeding plumage.
- 3 Nordmann's Greenshank greater covert, breeding plumage.
- 4 Greenshank greater covert, breeding plumage.
- 5a Nordmann's Greenshank tertial (worn), breeding plumage.
- 5b Nordmann's Greenshank tertial (fresh), breeding plumage.
- 6 Greenshank tertial, breeding plumage.

In juvenile plumage, illustrated in figure 4, the mantle and scapulars are noticeably darker than the wing coverts and browner than the non-breeding feathering. The exception are the lesser coverts which are darker brown and produce a dark patch at the bend of the wing, rather similar to but less obvious than that found on a Sanderling *Calidris alba* outside the breeding season. The occasional non-breeding scapular may be present among the juvenile feathers and appears pale grey. The scapulars, coverts and tertials are noticeably notched with white, producing a spangled effect similar in pattern to those of juvenile Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola* or Redshank *T. totanus*.

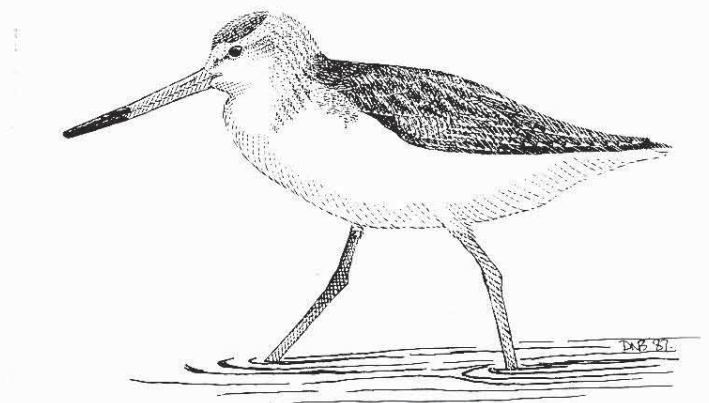


Fig. 4 Juvenile Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*, 4 September, Beidahe, China.

UNDERPARTS

In adult non-breeding plumage the entire underparts of Nordmann's Greenshank, from the chin to the undertail coverts, are white and unmarked. This is in contrast to Greenshank, which almost invariably shows some dark grey streaking across the breast. As they undertake a body moult into breeding plumage, small black spots begin to appear on the sides of the breast and progressively increase in extent until there is a random scattering of small spots across the breast. We have never seen birds with spotting approaching the size and intensity as the bird illustrated in Hayman, Marchant & Prater (1986) or photographed in Knystautas (1987). It is therefore assumed that the freshly moulted breast and belly feathers wear rapidly during migration and courtship on the breeding grounds. This would be expected from such feathers which lack pigment and are exposed to a salt water environment.

Adult Greenshank in spring are always streaked on the throat and breast and this increases in intensity as the season progresses until the neck and breast are as dark as the upperparts. On some birds, spots rather than streaks appear along the lower breast and this feature can be particularly obvious in July when the birds are heavily worn and starting a body moult. They then appear blotchy and can bear great similarity to adult Nordmann's Greenshank in full breeding plumage. As Greenshank continue to moult into non-breeding plumage in late July and early August, they become progressively whiter on the breast until the underparts are entirely white with light streaking restricted to the sides of the breast. In rare cases, this streaking may be entirely lacking and can then appear very similar to Nordmann's Greenshank. We believe that utmost caution must be used when identifying Nordmann's Greenshank in late summer or early

autumn.

The underparts of juveniles are very similar to those of adults in non-breeding plumage but exhibit indistinct streaking on the sides of the upper breast and a brownish smudge on the fore-flanks.

BARE PARTS

Legs

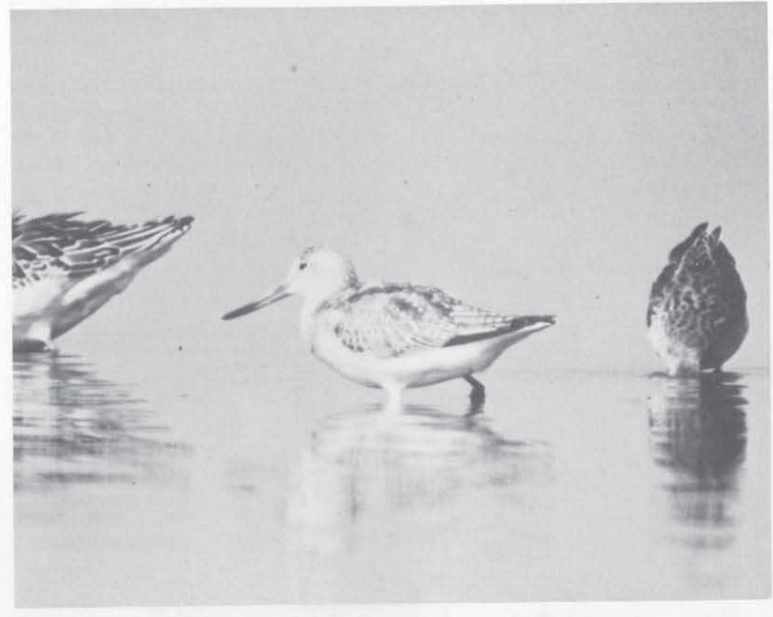
As already mentioned, Nordmann's Greenshank exhibits a much shorter- and thicker-legged appearance than Greenshank, particularly between the knee and the belly feathering and this feature is a reliable characteristic of the species. When seen well, the partial webbing between all three forward pointing toes on the feet of Nordmann's Greenshank is absolutely diagnostic but it is essential to appreciate that Greenshank does show a single reduced palmation on each foot between the outermost toe and the central one. These palmations can be easily seen when the foot is exposed, particularly when the bird is facing the observer and stretching its leg.

The leg colour of Nordmann's Greenshank is yellow, becoming brighter from the tibia, with the feet being the brightest and highlighting the foot webbing. The illustrations in Hayman, Marchant & Prater (1986) fail to emphasize this colour, which is an extremely useful field character. However, it is important to be aware that Greenshank does show a variation in leg colour from grey to pale olive and can on occasions also exhibit distinctly orange/yellow legs. One such bird was present at Mai Po in April 1987. However, this feature is more likely to cause confusion with its Nearctic counterpart, the Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca* since the overall shape and plumage features should preclude confusion with Nordmann's Greenshank if seen well.

Bill

There has been a great deal written, e.g. King *et al.* (1979), about the 'two-toned' appearance of the bill of Nordmann's Greenshank. In Hong Kong we have not found this feature to be useful and strongly recommend that it is not used as the basis of identification of a suspected Nordmann's Greenshank. While it is true that a large percentage of Nordmann's Greenshank do exhibit a pale basal half and dark terminal half to the bill, the contrast is not always as obvious as the popular literature implies, although this feature may be more pronounced in juvenile birds as illustrated in the photograph below. However, we have seen Nordmann's Greenshank in the spring with wholly dark bills, and, on one occasion, an entirely dull green bill. Furthermore, Greenshank in the eastern part of their range are more inclined to exhibit a similar 'two-toned' bill than their western counterparts and thus cause confusion to the unwary.

The profile of the bill cannot always be relied upon to separate the two species. While it is generally possible to say that Nordmann's Greenshank has a slightly deeper base to the bill, the upper and lower mandibles are parallel up to the gonys, the distinctly kinked lower mandible at the gonys gives a more striking chisel effect, and the bill is noticeably blunt-tipped,



Juvenile Nordmann's Greenshank *Tinga guttifer*
Japan, September.

(Takashi Kawata)



Juvenile Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*
Japan, September.

(Takashi Kawata)



Juvenile Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*
Japan. (Takashi Kawata)



Juvenile Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*
Japan, October. (Takashi Kawata)

there is a sufficient degree of overlap in the bill proportions of both species to prevent any firm conclusions being drawn from these features.

Rather than stressing the colour and profile of the bill, we have found the cross-sectional shape of the bill to be diagnostic. When seen head on, the bill of a Greenshank is laterally compressed, i.e. its cross-sectional depth is greater than its width. By comparison, when a Nordmann's Greenshank is seen in a similar position, the bill appears to have a circular cross-section giving a tubular effect similar to that exhibited by an Asiatic Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*. This feature, illustrated in figure 5, has been present on all the birds we have seen in Hong Kong and we consider it to be diagnostic of Nordmann's Greenshank.

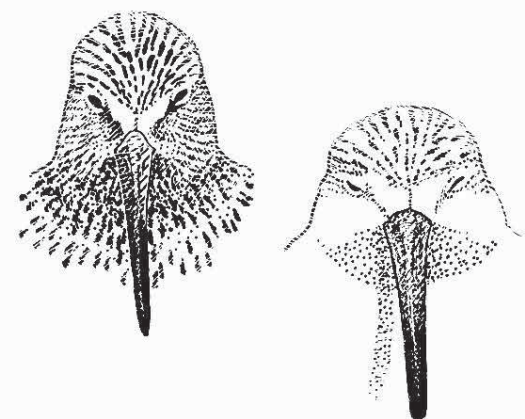


Fig. 5 Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (adult) and Nordmann's Greenshank *T. guttifer* (adult) showing relative bill structure head-on.

Eye-ring

The white eye-ring of a Greenshank usually contrasts with the dark feathering of the head and is a very noticeable feature in all plumages. By comparison, the eye-ring exhibited by a Nordmann's Greenshank is much less conspicuous, particularly so when the bird is in non-breeding plumage and there is little or no contrast between the eye-ring and the white feathering around the eye.

IN FLIGHT

In flight, Greenshank and Nordmann's Greenshank are extremely similar. Both species show dark unmarked wings and mantle, white upper-tail coverts, rump and lower back, producing the distinctive white wedge up

the back. On closer examination, differences do become apparent, particularly in structure and the leg projection beyond the tail tip.

The visible leg projection beyond the tip of the tail is generally diagnostic — unless of course one of the other species is flying with its legs retracted! Of the group, Nordmann's Greenshank has the shortest legs and, in flight, the legs and feet are usually not visible beyond the tip of the tail. This has the effect of giving Nordmann's Greenshank proportionately broader-based wings, further enhancing its stocky appearance and resemblance to an outsize Terek Sandpiper. This is illustrated in figure 6. By comparison, Greenshank shows a noticeable foot projection beyond the tail while Marsh Sandpiper has proportionately the longest legs of the three species, the foot plus a considerable length of tarsus being visible in flight.

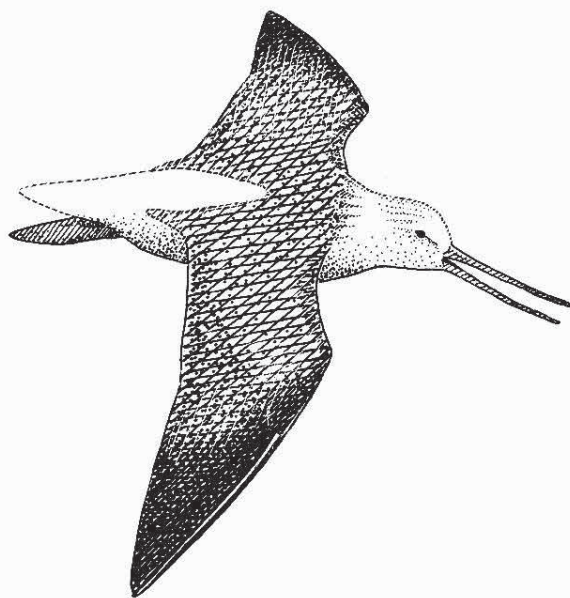


Fig. 6 Adult Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* in flight, 6 May, Mai Po.

The tail of a Nordmann's Greenshank is not as heavily barred as that of the Greenshank and when seen in flight, it can appear entirely white which enhances the white wedge up the back. Also visible in flight are the unmarked, white underwing coverts which are diagnostic of Nordmann's Greenshank. This colour can however be difficult to judge accurately due to the shading effect of the wing and care should always be taken when looking for this feature.

CALL

Nordmann's Greenshank are rarely vocal but the occasional "kwork", reminiscent of a Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*, is sometimes heard. On one occasion, a group of birds at the roost started a frantic yapping call similar to that given by a Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*. In the Yangtze Delta, the species is known to the local bird trappers who name it "gwaak bird", a rather apt name based upon its distinctive call (D.S. Melville, pers. comm.).

AGE, MOULT AND THE EFFECTS OF WEAR

When tackling wader identification, it is important to appreciate the changes in appearance which are attributable to the effects of age, moult and wear. These factors create differences within a single species and similarities between different species during the course of a year. Once the observer has determined the age of the bird under consideration, a knowledge of the effects of moult and wear are most useful in eliminating unnecessary confusion.

Greenshank and Nordmann's Greenshank, in common with most waders, undergo a body and head moult during spring migration and a complete body, wing and tail moult after the breeding season. Greenshank are present throughout the year in Hong Kong so a thorough appreciation of the variety of plumages which they can exhibit can be fully understood. This experience is invaluable in preventing unnecessary confusion with Nordmann's Greenshank.

In March and early April, Greenshank are present for some time in pale winter or non-breeding plumage. During April, increasing numbers are moulting into breeding dress, a gradual process which, as fresh blackish or brownish feathers replace grey ones, causes them to look less pale. Moult speed and timing varies from bird to bird and some Greenshank, especially one-year-old birds, may be slow to shed the worn grey plumage. However, by early May, pale Greenshank become increasingly scarce but are more likely to be confused with Nordmann's Greenshank due to their pallid appearance.

The moult of Nordmann's Greenshank into breeding plumage appears to be a protracted process, starting later in the spring than the commoner species and never being completed while they are passing through Hong Kong. Large numbers of non-breeding upperpart feathers are retained even on the latest spring birds seen in Hong Kong, so their overall appearance never loses the paleness of the earlier individuals.

Aside from the actual replacement of feathers, the effects of feather wear should also be born in mind. Wear occurs quickly on the white parts of feathers due to lack of pigment, so the effect on fresh plumage is to make it become darker and this process occurs rapidly in migrating waders. On Nordmann's Greenshank, fresh breeding plumage feathers generally have broad pale edges with darker centres so even birds moulting to breeding dress retain their pale appearance. Wear on the thin, fresh fringes of breed-

ing plumage feathers of Greenshank causes their appearance to become progressively darker and browner, and thus resemble Nordmann's Greenshank less and less. Only in late spring, when wear affects the plumage of adult Nordmann's Greenshank, does it start to darken and resemble the densely marked breeding plumage of Greenshank.

Late spring is the likely time for a one-year-old bird of either species to occur. These birds undertake a leisurely northward migration, many not travelling as far as the breeding grounds and some first-year Greenshank overwinter in Hong Kong. These birds never fully attain breeding dress, and may retain many of their non-breeding feathers, which, being one year old, are extremely worn. The effect is to present a strikingly different bird which stands out in a flock of adults. These grey greenshank, of either species, can occur at any time during the spring and may present additional problems for the observer.

During return migration, which is underway for Greenshank by mid-July, breeding feathers are quickly exchanged for fresh non-breeding ones as a full body, wing and tail moult occurs. Thus, Greenshank at the start of autumn migration exhibit a bewildering variety of plumage features: a mixture of very worn, dark breeding, and very fresh, pale non-breeding feathers. Those birds in full non-breeding dress are fully as pale as some Nordmann's Greenshank seen in spring. Although the pattern for autumn migration for Nordmann's Greenshank is not yet established, any that do occur would presumably show a similar variation in appearance and plumage.

BEHAVIOUR

When feeding, Nordmann's Greenshank prefer the intertidal mudflats where they search erratically for crabs, frequently making a final dash to capture them. In this respect, their behaviour is similar to that of a Terek Sandpiper. Small crabs are usually swallowed whole but larger ones are shaken until the legs fall off. We have also seen one individual make hesitant stabs at a large dead crab with a carapace length estimated at 60mm. These observations are consistent with those made in Thailand during the winter months by Bijlsma & de Roder, (1986). Unlike Greenshank, we have not recorded this species catching fish in Hong Kong.

On one occasion, a Nordmann's Greenshank was seen to run towards a Gull-billed Tern which had just caught a large crab and was removing its legs. The Nordmann's Greenshank stood alongside the tern but made no attempt to take the crab. The tern then swallowed the crab and flew off leaving the Nordmann's Greenshank to resume its foraging.

At rest, Nordmann's Greenshank are remarkable for their inactivity. Upon arrival at the roost, Nordmann's Greenshank almost immediately assume a sleeping posture and they can remain in this position for several hours. A favoured roosting site is one in which the birds stand in the water up to the knee, leaving the observer with no view of either the bill shape or leg length! On the rare occasions when the birds are active in the roost they prefer to keep to deeper water whenever possible, but will occasionally walk out onto open mud, when their structural differences from Green-

shank can be fully appreciated.

RANGE AND DISTRIBUTION

Nordmann's Greenshank is an extremely rare species, and its status is listed in the ICBP Red Data Book (King 1981) as indeterminate. The only known breeding records are from Sakhalin Island off the east coast of the USSR (Nechaev 1982), but it is possible that undiscovered breeding areas lie on the adjacent mainland as well as the Kamchatka peninsula. An old breeding record exists for Tibet (Baker 1929), but this is well outside the known regular breeding range and its authenticity has been questioned (Dementiev and Gladkov 1951).

The wintering grounds remain equally elusive. To date, the only site where birds are recorded regularly is the island of Ko Libong off the west coast of Peninsula Thailand, with occasional records from Khao Sam Roi Yot on the east coast of the Peninsula (Howes and Lambert 1987). It is therefore possible that the main wintering areas for this species lie on the largely ornithologically unexplored west coasts of Malaysia, Thailand and Burma. This theory is further supported by the record of a flock of 29 birds seen in west Malaysia in March 1978 (Wells 1984).

Recent research work by Interwader in Southeast Asia has revealed few additional clues to the whereabouts of the wintering grounds with the exception of a group of eight birds seen in southeast Sumatra in 1986 (Silvius 1986). However, their efforts have concentrated on the regions where extensive mudflats predominate. Little research has been conducted into sandy mudflats similar to those which exist at Ko Libong and further searches in this habitat may reveal more substantial numbers (Howes and Lambert 1987). Indeed, the juvenile bird recorded at Beidaihe was found in precisely this habitat.

As a migrant, the only recent sight records are from China and Japan. Old records exist for most countries in the region and a summary of these can be found in Howes and Lambert (1987).

OCCURRENCES IN HONG KONG

Prior to 1983, there had been only two reported occurrences of Nordmann's Greenshank in Hong Kong as detailed in Chalmers (1986), who records its status as uncertain, formerly a vagrant but now considered to be a scarce passage migrant based on the 1984 and 1985 records.

The recent upsurge of records began in September 1983 when a single bird was identified along the Fence at Tsim Bei Tsui on the south shore of Deep Bay. The species was recorded at the same site in May 1984 but it was April 1985 which was the turning point. A period of unsettled weather on 13-14 April produced two birds at the Fence on 13th followed by five there and seven at Mai Po the next day. Many observers were able to gain valuable field experience of the species during this period which led to occasional sightings throughout the spring, culminating in a further three birds along the Fence on 19 May. By comparison 1986 was a quiet year with only a

single record in June plus an unconfirmed report in April.

The records for 1987 have been exceptional. This is the result of access by boardwalk to the intertidal mud beyond the mangroves at Mai Po where birds have been seen feeding, and the creation of the managed scrape habitat on gei-wais 16 and 17 at Mai Po, which has resulted in a secure high tide roosting area for shorebirds. Strategically positioned hides have produced ideal viewing conditions and almost daily coverage has resulted in an unprecedented upsurge in records.

The table below details all reported occurrences in Hong Kong up to June 1987.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
8.9.68	Mai Po	1	
2.5.71	Mai Po	2	
22.9.83	The Fence	1	
20.5.84	The Fence	3	
13.4.85	The Fence	2	Considered to be 12 birds in total
14.4.85	The Fence	5	
14.4.85	Mai Po	7	
7.5.85	Mai Po	2	
19.5.85	The Fence	3	
7.6.86	The Fence	3	
6.4.87	Mai Po	7	Considered to be eight birds in total
6.4.87	The Fence	1	
8.4.87	The Fence	1	
19.4.87	Mai Po	2	Considered to be six birds in total
23.4.87	Mai Po	1	
28.4.87	Mai Po	3	
30.4.87	Mai Po	2	
2.5.87	Mai Po	4	
3.5.87	Mai Po	2	
6.5.87	Mai Po	6	Considered to be 14 birds as at least four of the eight recorded on 20.5 were different from those on 17.5
15.5.87	Mai Po	7	
16.5.87	Mai Po	8	
17.5.87	Mai Po	10	
20.5.87	Mai Po	8	
23.5.87	Mai Po	5	Considered to be a new bird
24.5.87	Mai Po	6	
26.5.87	Mai Po	1	
16.6.87	Mai Po	1	

The Fence refers to the length of the frontier security fence along the shores of Deep Bay between Tsim Bei Tsui and Yuen Long Creek in the northwest New Territories.

Thus, in 1987, after consideration of the variation in plumage, bare part colour and pattern, a minimum of 33 individuals were recorded between 6 April and 16 June, these dates also being the earliest and latest recorded occurrences in spring.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks go to Mike Chalmers and David Melville for their constructive comments on the first draft of this paper. We would also like to thank Verity Picken, without whose constant support we would have failed to meet our deadlines. Finally, we would like to thank Susanna Li and Janet Ng who painstakingly drafted the text onto the word-processor and made numerous alterations without complaint.

SUMMARY

As increasing numbers of observers have gained familiarity with Nordmann's Greenshank in recent years, the clouds of confusion surrounding its separation from Greenshank have slowly dispersed. While still remaining superficially similar to the commoner species, many apparently diagnostic field characters have emerged which can be used to separate the two species. Those features which can be safely used throughout the year include:

- shorter legs, particularly the visible length of tibia
- yellow leg colour
- partial webbing between all forward pointing toes
- the cross-sectional shape of the bill
- a deep-breasted, flat-bellied structure, noticeably angled where it meets the vent behind the legs
- white underwing coverts

Outside the breeding season, the species exhibits

- plain grey tertials, fringed by a white border
- paler and more uniform upperparts than Greenshank

When moulting into breeding plumage, additional diagnostic features include

- uniquely patterned scapulars, greater coverts and tertials
- a bulging supercilium in front of the eye

Previously accepted field characters which we have found to be unreliable in some instances are

- the 'two-toned' appearance of the bill
- bill profile shape

The recent upsurge in sightings in Hong Kong is probably due to increased awareness of the species plus improved access and viewing conditions in the areas where it is likely to occur.

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OBSERVATIONS ON THE BIRDS OF HEI SHI DING NATURE RESERVE, FENG KAI COUNTY, GUANGDONG, P.R.C.

Clive Viney

[The species names in this paper have been maintained in accordance with the author's wishes and may not accord with those used in the *Annotated Checklist to the Birds of Hong Kong*. — Ed.]

Hei Shi Ding Nature Reserve is situated about 350 km NW of Hong Kong (100 km NNE of Wu Zhou and 200 km NW of Guangzhou) at 110° 52' E and 23° 31' N. The reserve has an area of 27,200 ha and is an upland area (average height above sea-level is 150-200m) with peaks rising to 927m (Hei Shi Ding) and 848m (Feng Huo Ding). Several fast flowing rivers intersect the reserve.

The habitat in and around the reserve is variable and comprises open cultivation, scrubland, secondary growth, logged forest and climax forest (mostly on steep ground). There is a small reservoir near Reserve Headquarters and good riverine habitat. A vehicular road follows the northern edge of the reserve for 13km, otherwise access is by footpath. Commercial logging is still conducted on a large scale in peripheral areas but hunting within the reserve appears to be effectively controlled.

Chinese research teams visited the reserve in 1980 and 1981 and catalogued plants (1,339 species identified). The forest is mainly sub-tropical monsoon evergreen broadleaf containing a great variety of plants.

The geological structure of the reserve belongs to the Yun Kai Mountain System which consists mainly of pot-red granite and shale.

According to the Forestry Bureau, the fauna has not yet been fully investigated but large mammal species evidently include wild pig, wild ox (virtually extinct), barking deer, fox, squirrel and pangolin. Several species of snake have been identified plus two amphibians. The group which visited the reserve 22-26 January 1986 noted three distinct squirrel species (*Ratufa sp.*, *Callosciurus sp.* and *Tamiops sp.* and small bats (*Pipistrellus spp.*).

Two visits have been made by Hong Kong based birdwatchers through the good offices of WWF HK and the Guangdong Forestry Bureau, viz.:

- (i) 22-26 January 1986 (Clive Viney, Gavin Cooper, John Edge and Mary Ketterer). This group concentrated on the following areas of the reserve:
 - a) Reserve Headquarters. The immediate environs up to 2 km eastwards were visited daily; open woodland, riverine and cultivation.
 - b) 'Middle Road Walk'. A path that bisects the reserve through the villages of Lam Fo Soh, Mau Ping and Hak Shek Ho—a 6-8 hour walk. Secondary forest, open cultivation and climax forest. Followed on 22 and 25 January.

- c) Walk to Black Stone Peak via Hok Sat Chung (old headquarters) and Shek Mun Tong (abandoned). Stiff climbs through primary forest; remote and the real core of the reserve. Followed on 23 and 24 January.
 - d) Upland logging area on eastern boundary of reserve. Spectacular river valley leading to a large area of upland cultivation. Visited on 24 and 26 January.
 - e) Vehicular road along northern edge of the reserve — about 13km following river valley. Followed on foot 26 January.
- (ii) 28-31 March 1986 (Gavin Cooper, Peter and Peggy Stevens, John Boughey, Richard Stott, Mary Ketterer *et al.*).
- This group concentrated on the following areas of the reserve:
- a) Reserve Headquarters. Efforts were focused on the immediate environs (up to 5km in all directions).
 - b) One trek was made to the Black Stone Peak area (c) above.
 - c) The upland logging area (d) above) was well explored.

Both visits (especially 22-26 January) were hampered by poor weather and visibility.

A detailed systematic list of birds recorded has been prepared but full publication would be premature as the area has not been surveyed during the main migration periods or the summer months. The two visits logged over 90 species, many of which are typical of those found in south China during the early months of the year.

Two records of special interest are a sub-adult male flycatcher, which was originally identified as a Hill Blue Flycatcher *Niltava banyumas* but after later discussions with Ben King is likely to be the Chinese Flycatcher *Cyornis glaucicomans*. This species probably accounts for most of the records of blue and orange flycatchers wintering in south China; it was previously considered a race of the Blue-throated Flycatcher *C. rubeculoides*. The other record of note was a small flock of Grey-breasted Prinias *Prinia hodgsonii* well seen on 23 and 24 January. This represents a considerable easterly range extension to that given by Cheng (1976).

Another passerine record of note was a congregation of over 100 Siberian Water Pipits *Anthus rubescens* on an area of abandoned cultivation between 28 and 31 March. Passerine species that have not been recorded by Chalmers (1986) in Category A of the Hong Kong List included: Mountain Bulbul *Hypsipetes mccllellandii*, Rufous-necked Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*, Brown-capped Babbler *Alcippe brunnea*, Grey-cheeked Fulvetta *A. morrisonia*, Hill Prinia *P. atrogularis*, Yellow-cheeked Tit *Parus spilonotus* and Plain Flowerpecker *Dicaeum concolor*. All were reasonably common and widespread and can be found illustrated

in Viney and Phillipps (in prep.). On both visits bird waves included 'crowned warblers' *Phylloscopus* spp.) which on current knowledge defied positive identification.

The river and small reservoir attracted a number of interesting species including a small party of Goosander *Mergus merganser*, which has long been anticipated in Hong Kong in winter but has yet not been recorded. Three Mandarin *Aix galericulata* were on the reservoir from 28 to 31 March. Other riverine species included Crested Kingfisher *Ceryle lugubris*, three species of forktail — Little, Slaty-backed and White-crowned *Enicurus scouleri*, *E. schistaceus* and *E. leschenaulti* and good numbers of Plumbeous Water Redstarts *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*.

The raptor population was rather disappointing and similar to that found elsewhere in upland forest in south China in winter. During the January visit a Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica* called throughout the night.

Perhaps one of the main attractions of the area is the comparative ease with which Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera* can be seen. Woodpeckers were not particularly evident but the Bay Woodpecker *Blythipicus pyrrhotis* is quite common and the Speckled Piculet *Picumnus innominatus* was recorded.

The area is easily accessible and much of it, especially in the central core area, has not yet been visited by local ornithologists. Further visits would be rewarding and an interesting alternative to the better known Nan Kun Shan Nature Reserve — see Viney (1986).

SUMMARY

This paper briefly describes Hei Shi Ding Nature Reserve based on two visits in January and March 1986.

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NOTES

CHINESE POND HERONS *Ardeola bacchus* EATING FLIES.

David S. Melville

At 0750h on 6 December 1986 I saw seven Chinese Pond Herons *Ardeola bacchus* in a mixed group with 20 Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* and 17 Crested Mynahs *Acridotheres cristatellus* feeding on flies. The birds were on the bank of a partly drained fish pond near Mai Po village, where thousands of small c100mm long tilapia *Sarotherodon mossambicus* had been dumped. All of the birds were walking over the fish carcasses pecking at flies.

At the time of observation the air temperature was about 19°C and there was light rain. The fish carcasses had been almost wholly consumed by the fly larvae and many flies (possibly recently hatched) were sheltering among the dried fish skins and skeletons. When disturbed with a stick the flies made no attempt to take off but merely crawled lethargically under the fish remains. Samples of flies were collected and subsequently identified by Dr D. Dudgeon, Department of Zoology, University of Hong Kong, as *Chrysomya megacephala* (Fabricius) and *C. rufifacies* (Macquart) (Diptera, Cyclorrhapha, Calliphoridae).

The feeding behaviour of the Chinese Pond Herons and Cattle Egrets was different. The Cattle Egrets walked slowly over the fish bodies looking intently, often with the head to one side, and would then make a quick stab at a fly — catching a fly at every peck or every other peck. The Chinese Pond Herons tended to peck at the dead fish and to turn over fish bodies looking for flies.

Unfortunately I did not have time to measure feeding rates but it was clear that the Chinese Pond Herons were pecking less frequently than the Cattle Egrets and that the ratio of successful to unsuccessful pecks was lower than for the Cattle Egrets, thus overall feeding success was lower in the Chinese Pond Herons.

On 10 December there were 42 Cattle Egrets and one Chinese Pond Heron at the site and on 12 December at 0850h 42 Cattle Egrets but no Chinese Pond Herons on the mud bank and a further 22 Cattle Egrets in tall grass at the top of the bank. On the latter date only four Cattle Egrets were feeding on flies among the fish bodies, the rest were feeding on fly larvae at the edge of the water — the pond was being flooded and apparently larvae were being forced out of the fish remains.

The apparently inefficient feeding of Chinese Pond Herons on flies and the reduction of numbers of this species feeding at the site when compared with Cattle Egrets suggests that this was not a profitable food source for the birds.

Cattle Egrets feed largely on insects including Diptera (Cramp and Simmons 1977), and have also been recorded scavenging fish remains

(Feare 1975). Little is known of the feeding habits of the Chinese Pond Heron. Caldwell and Caldwell (1931) noted the food as 'frogs, small fish etc., taken in paddy fields or in the edge of small ponds' and at Yichang, Hubei Li and Liu (1962) recorded small fish and mud eels being fed to nestlings. La Touche (1931-1934) rather surprisingly noted that the food was probably mostly molluscs. Etchécopar and Hüc (1978) recorded the food as small amphibians, worms and insects and Murton (1972) considered that 'water invertebrates are probably a more important food for it than fish'. Baker (1929) noted that its habits were 'exactly the same' as those of the closely related Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*. In a detailed study of the diet of the Indian Pond Heron in the Sundarbans, Mukherjee (1971) noted aquatic and terrestrial insects accounting for 7.5% of the total weight of the stomach contents of 105 adults. Among the terrestrial insects were several locust species which are known pests of paddy, and thus are likely to have been taken in a wet rather than a dry habitat. Mukherjee did not record flies in the birds he examined.

Hancock and Elliot (1978), based on observations of habitat use in Thailand and Hong Kong, suggest that terrestrial insects may be of some importance in the diet. The only bird which I have examined in Hong Kong (a juvenile male found with a broken wing under an electricity wire at Mai Po on 12 September 1986) had grasshoppers and mosquito fish (*Gambusia affinis*) in the stomach.

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GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF RECORDS

Recording

One of the most important functions of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society is the publication of the Hong Kong Bird Report. The value of this publication depends on members submitting records and all are encouraged to submit records at the end of each year.

The Society provides 152 × 106mm record cards to facilitate analysis and storage and these are available from the Recorder. Completed cards are stored in a species-indexed filing system and members wishing to look at past records are asked to contact the Recorder. It is hoped that the ease with which records can be retrieved will result in interested people analysing migration patterns and population trends and undertaking other studies.

Nest Record Cards are also available from the Recorder for reporting breeding data.

The Society also maintains a collection of reports of birds recorded during members' visits to other parts of Southeast Asia and China to assist others in planning overseas trips.

Rarities

While the birds of Hong Kong are better known than those of many other areas of the Far East, new species are continually being added to the Hong Kong List and the status of many other species is uncertain.

Field identification techniques for species in the area still need refining and the Society has a Records Committee to assist the Recorder in the unenviable task of assessing records and ensuring that a high standard of observation is maintained. A list of species considered by the Committee is given below. The list may seem dauntingly long and to include some unmistakable species such as Oystercatcher. However, all members are requested to submit field descriptions of the birds listed.

Ideally field notes of a rarity should cover the following points:

- a) Date, time and location of sighting.
- b) Power of binoculars (telescope) used, distance of bird from observer, weather and light conditions.
- c) Description of habitat and what other birds (if any) it was associating with.
- d) Whether you saw it from different angles; at rest, in light, swimming etc.; from above or below. (The more varied the conditions the better).
- e) Its actions and the character of its flight compared with other birds.

- f) Its general shape and structure as compared with other birds e.g. size and shape of bill, length of legs, shape of wing, length of tail.
- g) Colour of bill, legs, feet and iris.
- h) So far as possible, an exact description of the whole plumage of the bird, not only those parts which you think may help in identifying it. A rough sketch or diagram is a great help.
- i) Any calls, indicating especially the quality of the sound (harsh, rattling, shrill, hoarse, liquid etc.) and comparison with calls of other species.
- j) Notes on previous experience with the species or species with which it may be confused.

If possible try and get someone else to see the bird as two descriptions are better than one. *Make sure that you take full field notes on the spot* — it is all too easy to imagine field marks after consulting a book!

Even if you do not know what the bird is please send in the description as it may be possible for the Committee to identify it for you. It should be remembered that many species of cage birds have been recorded as escapes in Hong Kong and they may not be included in any of the local books.

The increasing number of field guides on the market often make positive identification appear all too easy, but it must be remembered that there are still many difficult species and groups of birds and it is only by careful painstaking observation that such species can be identified.

Species for which written descriptions of all sightings must be submitted to the Recorder for consideration by the Records Committee.

The following list is based on the *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Hong Kong*, Chalmers, 1986. In many cases brief notes added to the record cards describing the salient features, ranges and viewing conditions will suffice. However, full descriptions are required for the rarer or more difficult species, or any new species not yet on the Hong Kong List. In addition the Recorder may request descriptions of other species under unusual circumstances. Records submitted without descriptions may not be considered.

CATEGORY A

Red-necked Grebe	Solitary Snipe
Black-necked Grebe	Long-billed Dowitcher
Streaked Shearwater	Asiatic Dowitcher
Swinhoe's Storm Petrel	Little Whimbrel
Dalmatian Pelican	Australian Curlew
all frigatebirds	Nordmann's Greenshank
Von Schrenck's Little Bittern	Lesser Yellowlegs
Black Bittern	all skuas
Japanese Night Heron	Great Black-headed Gull
Swinhoe's Egret	Saunders' Gull
Black Stork	Brown-headed Gull
White Stork	Common Gull
Glossy Ibis	Slaty-backed Gull
European Spoonbill	Glaucous-winged Gull
Black-faced Spoonbill	Glaucous Gull
Lesser Treeduck	Kittiwake
all geese	Greater Crested Tern
Ruddy Shelduck	Black-naped Tern
Cotton Teal	Roseate Tern
Mandarin	Common Tern
Falcated Teal	Bridled Tern
Baikal Teal	Sooty Tern
Common Pochard	Ancient Auk
Baer's Pochard	Bar-tailed Cuckoo Dove
Scaup	White-bellied Green Pigeon
Velvet Scoter	Thick-billed Pigeon
Goldeneye	Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo
Crested Honey Buzzard	Emerald Cuckoo
Black-shouldered Kite	Common Cuckoo
Hen Harrier	Oriental Cuckoo
Pied Harrier	all owls except Collared Scops Owl
Northern Goshawk	Japanese Nightjar
Japanese Sparrowhawk	White-throated Needletail
Horsfield's Goshawk	White-vented Needletail
Grey-faced Buzzard Eagle	Crested Kingfisher
Spotted Eagle	Blue-tailed Bee-eater
Imperial Eagle	all woodpeckers
White-legged Falconet	Chinese Pitta
Amur Falcon	all larks
Merlin	Pechora Pipit
all button quails	Water Pipit
all crakes	Citrine Wagtail
Common Crane	White Wagtail (all races other than <i>leucopsis</i> and <i>ocularis</i>)
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	Greater Cuckoo Shrike
Painted Snipe	Rosy Minivet
Oystercatcher	Brown Dipper
Ringed Plover	Wren
Oriental Plover	Japanese Robin
Great Knot	Siberian Blue Robin
Little Stint	White-capped Redstart
Pectoral Sandpiper	Chestnut-breasted Rock Thrush
Spoon-billed Sandpiper	Orange-headed Ground Thrush
Ruff	Siberian Thrush
Jack Snipe	Brown Thrush
Swinhoe's Snipe	

Slaty-backed Forktail
 Mountain Bush Warbler
 Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler
 Styan's Grasshopper Warbler
 Lanceolated Warbler
 Blyth's Reed Warbler
 Thick-billed Warbler
 Yellow-eyed Flycatcher Warbler
 Chestnut-crowned Warbler
 Fulvous-faced Flycatcher Warbler
 Large Grass Warbler
 Sulphur-breasted Warbler
 Blyth's Leaf Warbler
 Eastern Crowned Warbler
 Pale-legged Leaf Warbler
 Radde's Warbler
 Chiffchaff
 Fukien Niltava

Sooty Flycatcher
 Chinese Babax
 Chestnut-flanked White-eye
 Red-headed Tit
 Penduline Tit
 Tiger Shrike
 Bull-headed Shrike
 Chinese Great Grey Shrike
 Daurian Jackdaw
 Purple-backed Starling
 Chestnut-cheeked Starling
 European Starling
 Rosy Starling
 Siskin
 Japanese Yellow Bunting
 Rustic Bunting
 Reed Bunting

CATEGORY B

all (one!)

CATEGORY D

all

CATEGORY F

all

CATEGORY C

none

CATEGORY E

all, other than most obvious escapes