

Appendix 5: Bird Sub-group Report

Status, Trends and Recommendations for Hong Kong Birds

1. Overview of Status and Trends

Based on the updated information (December 2015) from the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, a total of 538 species of wild bird have been recorded in the territory. Some are residents, while other species are considered to be visitors at different seasons on both a regular or irregular basis. The primary status of Hong Kong bird species is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Primary status of wild bird species in Hong Kong

| Groups | Resident | Winter visitor ¹ | Passage migrant ² | Summer visitor ³ | Vagrant ⁴ | Total ⁵ |
|----------------|-----------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| No. of species | 112 (21%) | 159 (29%) | 129 (24%) | 19 (4%) | 136 (25%) | 538 |

1: Winter visitor: majority of records in October to March.

2: Passage migrants, including both spring and autumn: majority of records in March to May and August to October

3: Summer visitor: majority of records between April to September

4: Vagrant refers to species with a handful records and usually on an irregular basis.

5: Sum of the species of all different groups is larger than the 'total' because some species could have different populations found in different seasons in Hong Kong.

Among all the bird species found in Hong Kong, a total of 56 are listed as globally threatened or near-threatened by IUCN, including a total of 5 Critically Endangered species. 39 of these are regular residents or visitors to Hong Kong. All threatened bird species are listed in the appendix of this summary.

Table 2. Bird species with global threatened categories found in Hong Kong

| Threatened category | Critically Endangered | Endangered | Vulnerable | Near-threatened | Total |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|-----------------|--------|
| No. of species [^] | 3 (2) | 6(2) | 12(4) | 18(9) | 39(17) |

[^] Figures in the brackets are numbers of vagrant species in each category.

A very small number of species (e.g. Black-headed Ibis) can be considered extinct in Hong Kong, though the causes are considered to derive from factors outside the territory. As such, their natural re-occurrence is not something that can be influenced by conservation actions in HK. Certain breeding populations of species that also have a non-breeding population in HK have disappeared (e.g. Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Black-naped Oriole) could, in theory,

re-appear as a result of management activities in Hong Kong, though much would depend on the strength of regional populations and the reasons for disappearance.

With such a large number of bird species recorded in Hong Kong, filters have been applied to concentrate Red List assessments only on those species regularly occurring in the territory in significant numbers. The assessments reveal that the majority of wetland-dependent species are threatened, largely as a result of their limited range (most species restricted to Deep Bay wetlands), but in some cases also due to small numbers and/or declining populations.

In contrast, species occurring in forest and shrubland are generally doing relatively well in Hong Kong with the maturation and spread of these habitats, although some migrant species remain threatened by factors outside the territory.

Grassland birds are threatened as the spread of shrubland onto hillside grassland results in the loss and, to a lesser extent, fragmentation of higher value grassland habitat.

Results vary for species of farmland and open country species, with some doing well and others showing declines. Development pressure in the New Territories suggests a negative trend in the future for these species.

Many larger-bodied and low-density species (for example raptors) are listed as threatened because the small size of Hong Kong inevitably results in small population sizes.

2. Major Threats Identified

Wetlands remain under threat due to loss of mudflat due to invasion by exotic mangroves, loss of smaller, usually freshwater marshes and ponds in areas of private land, intensification of commercial pond fish farming using methods that reduce foraging or roosting opportunities for waterbirds, loss of wet agricultural areas due to village expansion or large-scale development. Increased disturbance and degradation of wetlands regionally probably means that immigration of birds to Hong Kong may be of limited magnitude, and be unable to rescue wetland-dependent species from decline or disappearance

Vegetative succession in more species-rich areas of grassland constitutes a threat to a distinctive suite of grassland species (Chinese Francolin, Lesser Coucal, Sooty-headed Bulbul, Eurasian Eagle Owl, Upland Pipit, *sinensis* Richard's Pipit, Brown-flanked Bush Warbler, Golden-headed Cisticola and the globally near-threatened Chinese Grassbird). At the same time, in other areas fire prevents grassland from developing into a more species-rich habitat that would support a greater diversity and abundance of grassland birds (and other flora and

fauna). While the area of grassland habitat in Hong Kong remains large, it varies greatly in type and importance to the distinctive avifaunal community that utilizes it.

As the population of Hong Kong increases, the demand for residential and employment opportunities will impose significant pressure on lowland habitats throughout the territory. Proposed large-scale developments in the New Territories are likely to have significant impacts on the availability and quality of open-country habitat in the future, particularly in the unimproved grassland areas of the northeast New Territories. While inactive farming land is of greater ecological value than actively managed dry agriculture, it is wet agriculture that is of greatest ecological value in terms of these open-country habitats.

Woodland and shrubland support a high diversity of bird species, while having a lower proportion of threatened species and could therefore be considered a lower priority for additional bird conservation actions.

3. Major Knowledge Gaps to be filled

It was considered that the information available for assessments was relatively robust for waterbirds because the long-term Waterbird Monitoring Programme provides good data on population size and trends.

While non-passerine waterbirds are monitored effectively, wetland-associated passerines, including threatened species such as Styan's Grasshopper Warbler and Manchurian Reed Warbler for which the Deep Bay area may be of significance as a stop-over or wintering site could benefit from more detailed research into numbers and habitat preferences.

Despite the large number of observers, there is a lack of long-term, territory-wide data on breeding and non-breeding landbirds using standardized methodology, and it is recommended that survey programmes should be introduced to address this problem to facilitate future Red List assessments for birds.

In regard to grassland, the issue of the bird community and the types, locations and ecological value of different types of this habitat also require investigation to determine the degree of threat, the distribution and abundance of species and the need for conservation action.

4. Priority Species and Recommended Actions

There are two globally threatened and two globally near-threatened species breeding in Hong Kong, though two of these (Yellow-crested Cockatoo and Alexandrine Parakeet) derive

from birds of non-natural origin. The others are Chinese Grassbird and Collared Crow, both of which are Near-threatened. Arguably, as these are resident breeding species, conservation action that protects breeding and foraging areas and/or roost sites could have substantial impact.

Two 'Management Agreement' projects with birds as target species funded by Environment and Conservation Fund under the 'Nature Conservation Management Agreement' are being carried out to maintain and/or enhance ecological value of sites that are of high conservation value. It has been proven that abundance and diversity of bird community of these sites have benefited from these projects. Therefore, it is also recommended to increase the land area of wetland habitats under active management for birds (and other wildlife), in particular reed marsh, freshwater marsh and wet agriculture.

As many species found in Hong Kong are migratory, it is important that conservation of these birds does not only rely on works done in Hong Kong but also works in other parts of their distribution range. Conservation works done in Hong Kong can be of increased effectiveness if regional conservation activities are well coordinated, planned and complementary. Therefore, it is also recommended that Hong Kong should actively take part in regional and global conservation initiatives or collaborations in respect of migratory birds and actively exchange information and experience.

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Appendix. Globally threatened and near-threatened bird species found in Hong Kong (BirdLife International. 2015. IUCN Red List for birds. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 11/12/2015). Species names follow the list published by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (download available at: <http://www.hkbws.org.hk/BBS/forumdisplay.php?fid=5&page=1>).

| Common name | Scientific name | Chinese name | Resident or visitor in Hong Kong |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Critically Endangered | | | |
| Christmas Island Frigatebird | <i>Fregata andrewsi</i> | 白腹軍艦鳥 | Vagrant |
| Baer's Pochard | <i>Aythya baeri</i> | 青頭潛鴨 | Visitor |
| Siberian Crane | <i>Grus leucogeranus</i> | 白鶴 | Vagrant |
| Spoon-billed Sandpiper | <i>Eurynorhynchus pygmeus</i> | 勺嘴鷸 | Visitor |
| Yellow-crested Cockatoo* | <i>Cacatua sulphurea</i> | 小葵花鳳頭鸚鵡 | Resident, breeding species |
| | | | |
| Endangered | | | |
| Japanese Night Heron | <i>Gorsachius goisagi</i> | 栗鵞 | Vagrant |
| Oriental Stork | <i>Ciconia boyciana</i> | 東方白鸛 | Visitor |
| Black-faced Spoonbill | <i>Platalea minor</i> | 黑臉琵鷺 | Visitor |
| Steppe Eagle | <i>Aquila nipalensis</i> | 草原鵟 | Vagrant |
| Far Eastern Curlew | <i>Numenius madagascariensis</i> | 紅腰杓鷸 | Visitor |
| Nordmann's Greenshank | <i>Tringa guttifer</i> | 小青腳鷸 | Visitor |
| Great Knot | <i>Calidris tenuirostris</i> | 大濱鷸 | Visitor |
| Yellow-breasted Bunting | <i>Emberiza aureola</i> | 黃胸鵪 | Visitor |
| | | | |

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|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------|
| Vulnerable | | | |
| Horned Grebe | <i>Podiceps auritus</i> | 角鸛鷗 | Vagrant |
| Dalmatian Pelican | <i>Pelecanus crispus</i> | 卷羽鸛鷗 | Visitor |
| Swinhoe's Egret | <i>Egretta eulophotes</i> | 黃嘴白鷺 | Visitor |
| Lesser White-fronted Goose | <i>Anser erythropus</i> | 小白額雁 | Vagrant |
| Common Pochard | <i>Aythya ferina</i> | 紅頭潛鴨 | Visitor |
| Greater Spotted Eagle | <i>Clanga clanga</i> | 烏鷲 | Visitor |
| Eastern Imperial Eagle | <i>Aquila heliaca</i> | 白肩鷲 | Visitor |
| Relict Gull | <i>Ichthyaetus relictus</i> | 遺鷗 | Vagrant |
| Saunders's Gull | <i>Chroicocephalus saundersi</i> | 黑嘴鷗 | Visitor |
| Japanese Murrelet | <i>Synthliboramphus wumizusume</i> | 冠海雀 | Vagrant |
| Fairy Pitta | <i>Pitta nympha</i> | 仙八色鸚 | Visitor |
| Ijima's Leaf Warbler | <i>Phylloscopus ijimae</i> | 飯島柳鶯 | Vagrant |
| Styan's Grasshopper Warbler | <i>Locustella pleskei</i> | 史氏蝗鶯 | Visitor |
| Manchurian Reed Warbler | <i>Acrocephalus tangorum</i> | 遠東葦鶯 | Visitor |
| Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher | <i>Cyornis brunneatus</i> | 白喉林鶯 | Visitor |
| Japanese Yellow Bunting | <i>Emberiza sulphurata</i> | 硫磺鷓 | Visitor |
| | | | |
| Near-threatened | | | |
| Yellow-billed Loon | <i>Gavia adamsii</i> | 黃嘴潛鳥 | Vagrant |
| Streaked Shearwater | <i>Calonectris leucomelas</i> | 白額鸛 | Visitor |
| Black-headed Ibis | <i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i> | 黑頭白鷺 | Visitor, Regionally Extinct |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------|----------------------------|
| Falcated Duck | <i>Anas falcata</i> | 羅紋鴨 | Visitor |
| Ferruginous Duck | <i>Aythya nyroca</i> | 白眼潛鴨 | Vagrant |
| Black Scoter | <i>Melanitta americana</i> | 黑海番鴨 | Vagrant |
| Eurasian Black Vulture | <i>Aegypius monachus</i> | 禿鷲 | Visitor |
| Japanese Quail | <i>Coturnix japonica</i> | 鶉鴉 | Visitor |
| Band-bellied Crake | <i>Porzana paykullii</i> | 斑脇田雞 | Vagrant |
| Great Stone-Curlew | <i>Esacus recurvirostris</i> | 大石鴉 | Vagrant |
| Eurasian Oystercatcher | <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> | 蠣鴉 | Vagrant |
| Northern Lapwing | <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> | 鳳頭麥雞 | Visitor |
| Black-tailed Godwit | <i>Limosa limosa</i> | 黑尾塍鴉 | Visitor |
| Bar-tailed Godwit | <i>Limosa lapponica</i> | 斑尾塍鴉 | Visitor |
| Eurasian Curlew | <i>Numenius arquata</i> | 白腰杓鴉 | Visitor |
| Grey-tailed Tattler | <i>Tringa brevipes</i> | 灰尾漂鴉 | Visitor |
| Asian Dowitcher | <i>Limnodromus semipalmatus</i> | 半蹼鴉 | Visitor |
| Red Knot | <i>Calidris canutus</i> | 紅腹濱鴉 | Visitor |
| Red-necked Stint | <i>Calidris ruficollis</i> | 紅頸濱鴉 | Visitor |
| Curlew Sandpiper | <i>Calidris ferruginea</i> | 彎嘴濱鴉 | Visitor |
| Alexandrine Parakeet* | <i>Psittacula eupatria</i> | 亞歷山大鸚鵡 | Resident, breeding species |
| Japanese Waxwing | <i>Bombycilla japonica</i> | 小太平鳥 | Vagrant |
| Japanese Swamp Warbler | <i>Locustella pryeri</i> | 斑背大尾鶯 | Vagrant |
| Chinese Grassbird | <i>Graminicola striatus</i> | 大草鶯 | Resident, breeding species |
| Japanese Paradise Flycatcher | <i>Terpsiphone atrocaudata</i> | 紫綬帶 | Visitor |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|------|----------------------------|
| Collared Crow | <i>Corvus torquatus</i> | 白頸鴉 | Resident, breeding species |
| Japanese Reed Bunting | <i>Emberiza yessoensis</i> | 紅頸葦鷀 | Vagrant |

* Yellow-crested Cockatoo and Alexandrine Parakeet are not native to Hong Kong and escaped individuals have established breeding populations.