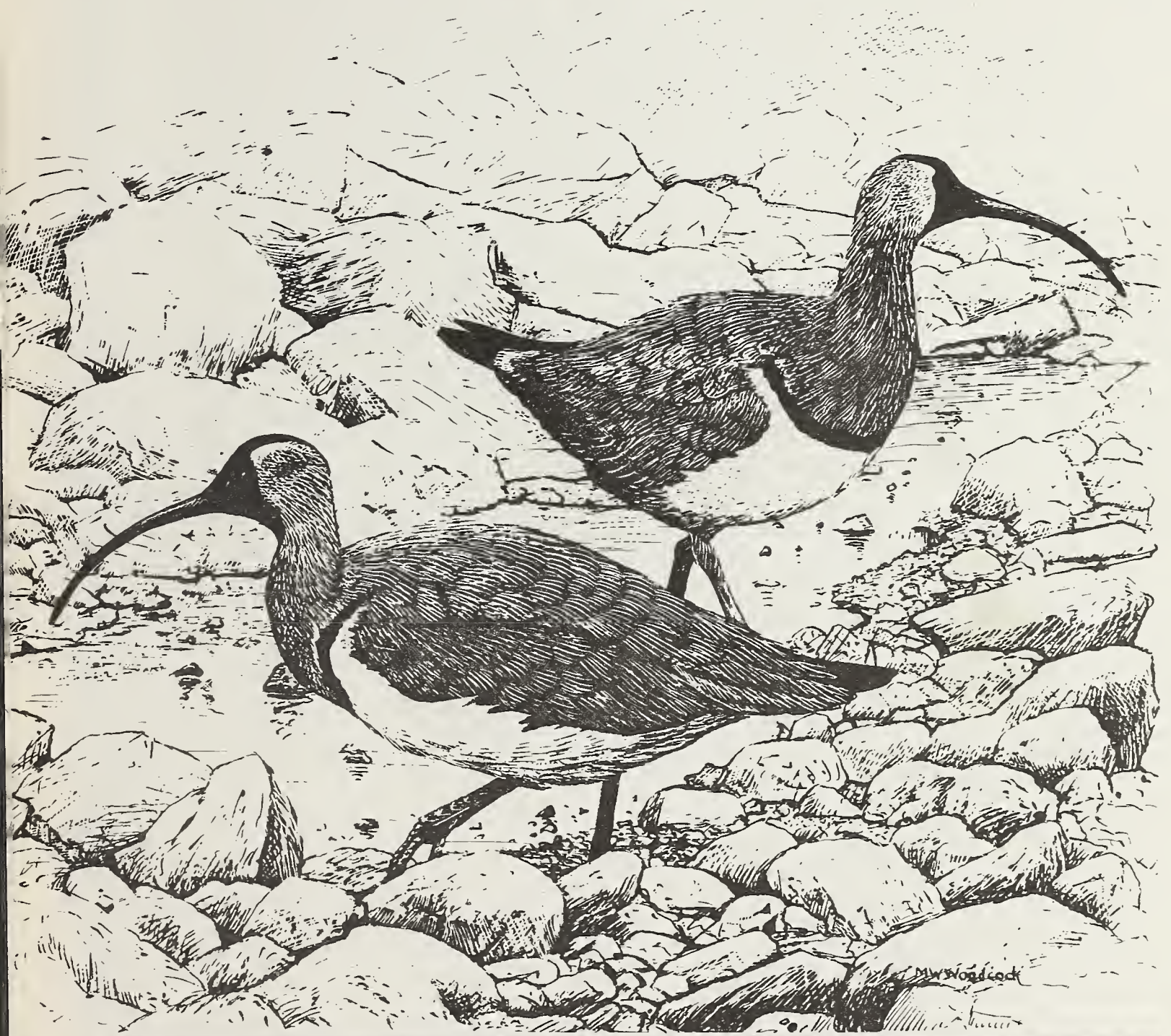



Oriental

BULLETIN No. 2
AUTUMN 1985

Bird Club



INSIDE: News...Hornbills...Ladakh...
Cheer Pheasant...Corbett...Reviews...
Recent Reports...



The Bulletin of the Oriental Bird Club
is published twice yearly

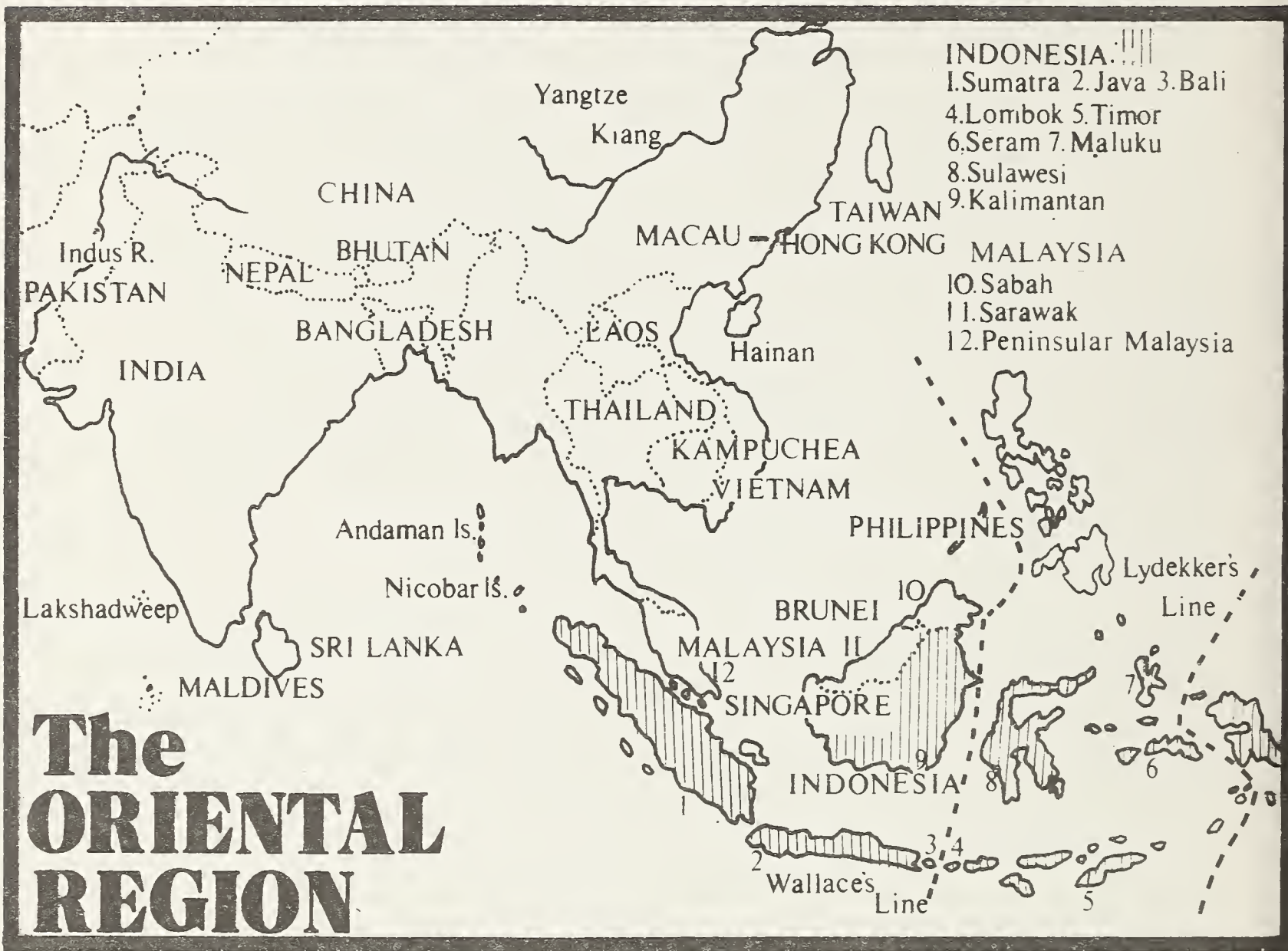
THE ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB aims to:

encourage an interest in the birds of the Oriental region and their conservation.

to liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies.

to collate and publish material on Oriental birds.

Two bulletins and a journal, The Forktail, will be published annually.



The Oriental region lies mainly between 68° and 135°E, and between 10°S and 32°N. It is bounded on the west by the Indus River in Pakistan, and in the north by the Himalaya and an imprecise line in China roughly coinciding with the basin of the Yangtze Kiang. Southwards it includes the Indian subcontinent, south-east Asia, Taiwan, the Philippines, and most of Indonesia. The eastern limit is defined by Lydekker's line, beyond which very few Oriental species extend. The area between this line and Wallace's line, which marks the westward extension of Australasian forms, contains a mixture of species from both faunal regions. It is referred to as Wallacea. Because of the imprecise boundaries with the Palearctic region in Pakistan and China, the OBC is interested in material for the whole of these two countries. However, in the Club's publications the emphasis will be on the core area of the Oriental region.

T.P. Inskipp

Editorial

This second Bulletin is much larger than initially expected. It is likely that future issues will vary in size so please don't expect so many pages every time. Future contributions are urgently needed, especially for the first Forktail, planned for spring 1986.

The Launching Committee would like to thank Chris Harbard, Lissie Wright and Kim Lochen for their help and advice, and Martin Woodcock for his excellent front cover illustration.

This Bulletin was made possible by the assistance received from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Conservation Monitoring Centre.

Club News

The Oriental Bird Club's Inaugural Meeting

The afternoon of Saturday 23rd March, 1985, saw 129 participants gathered at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, for the launching of the Oriental Bird Club. Members enjoyed a varied selection of talks and slides throughout the afternoon, many staying until late evening to talk birds and travel and to discuss the future of the club.

Nigel Redman opened the programme with a selective overview of habitats found in the Oriental region, giving us a taste of its avian diversity. Carol Inskipp followed this theme, concentrating on the problems and priorities which conservationists face in the Orient. Next was a case study by James Wolstencroft of Corbett National Park, illustrated with many slides taken by the late David Hunt, who was tragically killed by a tiger at Corbett shortly before the meeting. After refreshments, Mark Beaman rounded off a fascinating afternoon with an energetic account of a recent visit to China. He pointed out that, for the adventurous birdwatcher with time to spare, China presents an exciting opportunity to make a fundamental contribution to ornithological knowledge, as even the distribution of many species is poorly known. (Rod Martins)

Membership

Membership of the Club now stands at 392 in 31 countries. The response to the Founder Membership Scheme has been excellent

enabling the Club to plan for the future with confidence. The Scheme will close at the end of the year, so if you would like to offer your support in this important way please write to the Membership Secretary.

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 1986 are due on 1st January and a membership renewal form is enclosed with this bulletin. Members with UK bank accounts are strongly encouraged to complete the Standing Order Form on the reverse of the renewal form. This method of payment is not only convenient to members, but also saves the Club a considerable amount of administration.

Negotiations to open bank accounts in Oriental countries are still in hand. Members will be notified of any developments as soon as possible. Members in Western Europe and Japan can now pay their subscriptions by GIRO. Payments should be made to Giro Account No: 35 234 1912.

Three Year Membership Scheme

Overseas members who have difficulty in making payment to the Club and incur high bank charges in relation to their subscription, now have the opportunity to pay three years subscription together, providing it is paid in advance.

Annual General Meeting

Full details of the Oriental Bird Club AGM are enclosed with this bulletin, along with a copy of the Club's Constitution. Business conducted will include the election of OBC Council members. Nominations, with the written consent of the candidate and signed by at least two members of the Club, will be accepted up until 7th December.

OBC Manchester Meeting

The third OBC meeting will be held in Manchester, UK on 26th April starting at 3pm. The venue is the Manchester Museum, The University, Oxford Road, Manchester. The Programme will include an illustrated talk on Nepal by David Cotteridge and Tim Loseby. Other speakers are still to be arranged. There will also be the opportunity to see the Dresser Collection. This is a comparatively small but extremely interesting collection of mainly Palearctic skins, collected by, amongst others, Radde, Blyth and Brooks. Anyone wishing to take advantage of this excellent offer should arrive at the Museum at 1.30 pm. Full details will be available in the new year from : Paul Jepson, Flat 5, 2 Clyde Road, West Didsbury, Manchester M20 8WH, UK.

A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan

A special offer of this excellent guide by the Wild Bird Society of Japan is available to members of the OBC. Copies are available for £13.50 per copy, post free - a saving of £2.50 - from Scottish Ornithologists Club, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh, EH7 5BT. The offer is open until 1st January.

OBC member wins major award

OBC member Ma Hai Feng was awarded second place at the World Championship Wildfowl Woodcarving Competition held this spring in Maryland, USA. Ma believes wildlife art is the most effective medium for encouraging conservation and his work is on show this autumn at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institute, Washington.



News & Views

INDIAN FORESTS UNDER SIEGE

An alarming loss of forest cover has been revealed by data recently published by the National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA). During the eight year period 1972-75 to 1980-82, India lost one fifth (103,404 km²) of total forest cover. Most disturbing was the loss of more than 45 percent of forest in the states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Gujarat - states already denuded and suffering serious desertification. Of the Himalayan territories, Himachal Pradesh fared particularly badly losing 39 percent (5945 km²) of forest cover. Only Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh were in a position to boast positive trends. They increased their area under forest from 1761 km² to 2883 km² and from 51438 km² to 58104 km² respectively. (Source: Paryavaran Vol. 1, No. 2).

DOES THE MOUNTAIN QUAIL SURVIVE?

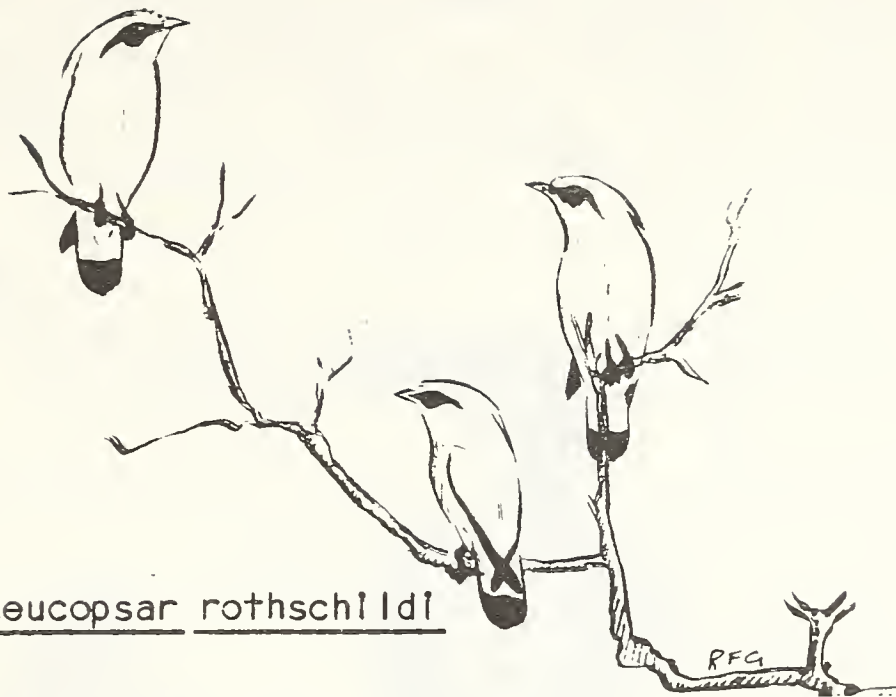
The Mountain Quail Ophrysia superciliosa was, perhaps still is, confined to the western Himalaya and is the only member of its genus. First described by J.E. Gray in 1846, the last specimen was obtained near Naini Tal thirty years later. There have been several attempts to relocate the species, but without success. Now, survey work is again planned. Led by Dr Salim Ali, the expedition is likely to take place this winter, apparently with Indian Army assistance.

A PROTECTED AREA NETWORK FOR VIETNAM

Wildlife habitat in Vietnam suffered unprecedented, deliberate destruction during the Vietnam war, particularly from the spraying of forest with vast quantities of the herbicide 'Agent Orange'. Now, 15 years on, the Government is ready to establish a system of national parks and nature reserves. The plans, announced by Professor Vo Quy at the recent session of the IUCN Commission of National Parks & Protected Areas, propose that 73 reserves should be established, building on the 14 already declared. However, these 87 protected areas are acknowledged to be insufficient for the conservation of the country's endangered birds and additional areas will need to be selected in order to protect such species as the Giant Ibis Pseudibis gigantea, Imperial Pheasant Lophura imperialis and Edwards's Pheasant Lophura edwardsi. It is important that high priority is given to the conservation of the Giant Ibis, recently found nesting in the wetlands adjacent to the Mekong River. This species is almost certainly extinct in Thailand and elsewhere possibly survives only in Laos and Kampuchea. (Source: Thorsell, J.W., eds. (1985). Proceedings of the 25th Working session of IUCN's Commission on National Parks & Protected Areas. ICBP Specialist Group on Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills, Report No. 1).

CONSERVATION PLAN FOR BALI STARLING

The Rothschild's Mynah or Bali Starling Leucopsar rothschildi is a striking, mostly white, starling highly prized by aviculturists. In 1982 the captive population was estimated to be 700 birds, considerably more than the 150 or so that remain in the wild. The species is endemic to the Indonesian island of Bali where it has been unable to adjust to the loss of its thorn-scrub habitat. Expanding cultivation, conversion to commercial plantations and collection of fuelwood are all implicated, with the lack of suitable cavity nesting sites and capture for the bird trade also considered responsible. Now biologists working for the International Council for Bird Preservation and the Indonesian Directorate General for Nature Conservation have presented a plan for the species' long-term survival. Their recommendations concentrate on habitat protection and improvement, captive breeding and education. They also include a nest box programme and suggest the planting of favoured indigenous trees. Based on these proposals follow-up action is now needed to secure the future of this unique species, of which Bali is justifiably proud.



Ball Starling Leucopsar rothschildi

MORE NEWS ON SUMATRAN WETLANDS

The coastal wetlands of south-east Sumatra have again been surveyed, this time by a Danish team, during 12 days in late July 1985. About 500 km of intertidal mudflats and sandy beaches were censused, including all key sites in Jambi and South Sumatra Province. Over 60,000 shorebirds were counted, including 42,000 Black-tailed Godwits Limosa limosa. Earlier studies by Verheugt and Silvius (see Bull. O.B.C. no.1) had not indicated that such large numbers of Godwits occurred here. Also of interest was the sighting of 16 Asian Dowitchers Limnodromus semipalmatus - possibly overwintering birds, and the discovery of a breeding colony of Milky Storks Ibis cinereus, with 74 active nests located in an area already receiving some protection. (Source: Wim Verheugt ICBP).

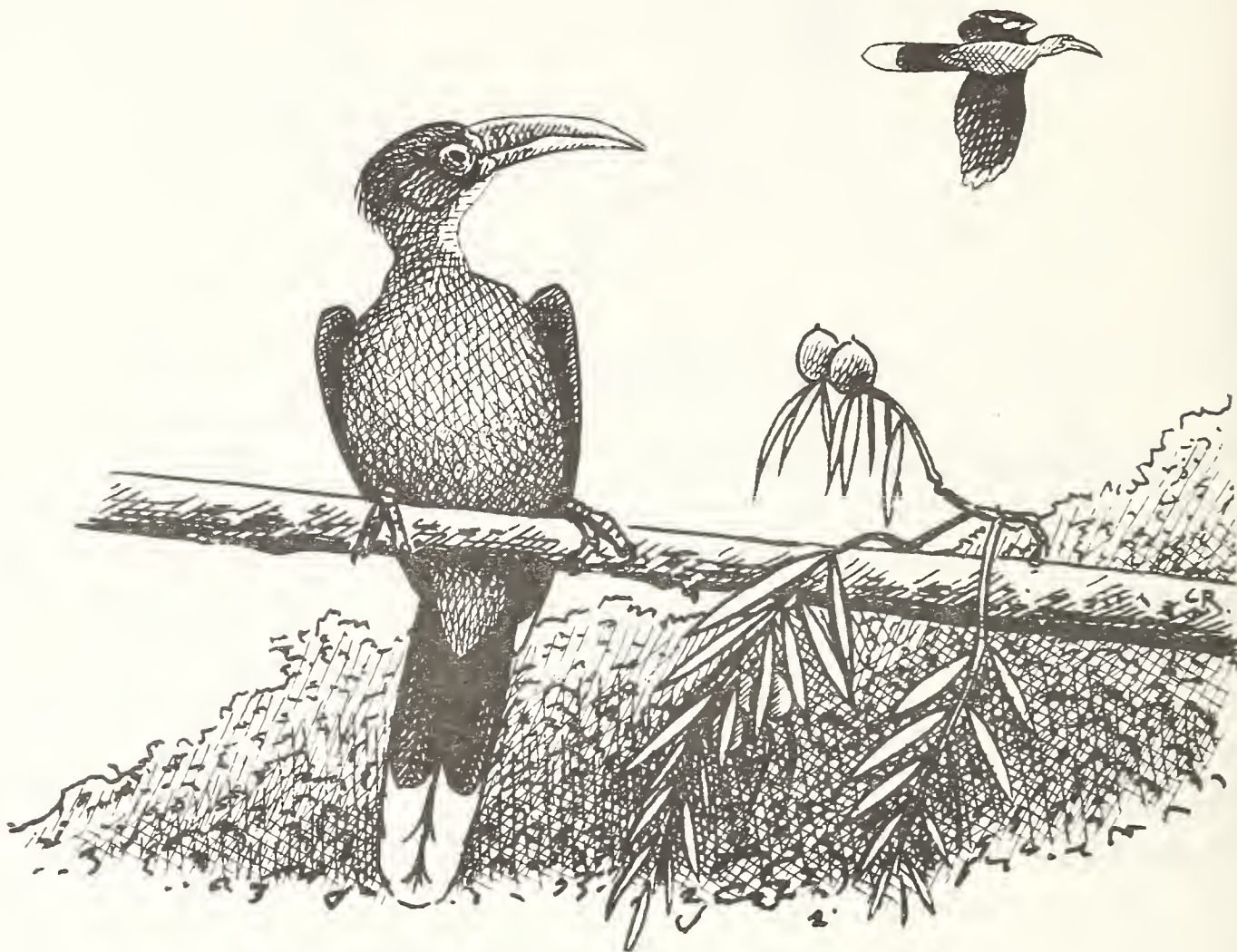
A NEW POPULATION OF WHITE-WINGED DUCKS IN SUMATRA

The very rare White-winged Duck Cairina scutulata has recently been repeatedly sighted in the Padang-Sugihan Wildlife Reserve in South Sumatra Province, Indonesia. The sightings, by Stephen and Anne Nash, emphasise the need for conservation action, on behalf of the species, at Padang-Sugihan and elsewhere in southern Sumatra.

It is thought the species is still widespread in remote swamp forest areas, and able to tolerate secondary habitat and some human disturbance. Despite this there is considerable cause for concern as suitable primary habitat in lowland Sumatra is disappearing fast. However, large areas of what remains are likely to be developed as part of the Indonesian Government's population resettlement scheme. Field work is now required to assess the habitat requirements of the species, the numbers involved and conservation measures needed to maintain a viable population in a country facing radical environmental change.

THE CURRENT STATUS OF HORNBILLS Bucerotidae IN THAILAND

Thailand supports 12 species of hornbill. Their survival is threatened by destruction and isolation of their forest habitat.



Rufous-necked Hornbill Aceros nipalensis

Thailand supports no fewer than 12 species of hornbill - more species than any Asian country other than Indonesia. Because most hornbills are dependent upon the maintenance of large, intact, tracts of forest for their survival, they may serve as useful indicators of the avifaunal health of a forest block. It may be reasonable to assume that, if sufficient nature reserve areas were to be set aside to conserve hornbills, the majority of smaller forest birds would also receive adequate protection. This paper examines the representation of all hornbill species inside Thailand's network of protected areas, which includes 47 National Parks and 25 Wildlife Sanctuaries, covering approximately 9% of the country's land area.

The present geographical distribution of protected areas in Thailand is extremely good, and 10 out of 12 hornbill species are currently known from within their boundaries (Table 1). Some species, such as the widely-distributed Wreathed Hornbill, Great Hornbill and the Pied Hornbill (the smallest and most ecologically tolerant species), are probably still found in the

Table 1

The representation of hornbill species in national parks
and wildlife sanctuaries in Thailand

Common name	Regions where present*	Number of reserves where known to occur	Estimated no. of reserves judged to support species**
White-crowned Hornbill <u>Berenicornis comatus</u>	peninsula	6	10
Brown Hornbill <u>Ptilolaemus tickelli</u>	N.W., S.W., N.E.	5	25
Bushy-crested Hornbill <u>Anorrhinus galeritus</u>	peninsula	6	10
Rufous-necked Hornbill <u>Aceros nipalensis</u>	N.W., S.W.	2	5
Wrinkled Hornbill <u>Rhyticeros corrugatus</u>	peninsula	0	0
Wreathed Hornbill <u>R. undulatus</u>	throughout	12	ca. 40
Plain-pouched Hornbill <u>R. subruficollis</u>	S.W.	2	5
Black Hornbill <u>Anthracoseros malayanus</u>	peninsula	1	3
Oriental Pied Hornbill <u>A. albirostris inc. convexus</u>	throughout	13	ca. 55
Rhinoceros Hornbill <u>Buceros rhinoceros</u>	southernmost peninsula	0	0
Great Hornbill <u>B. bicornis</u>	throughout	21	ca. 40
Helmeted Hornbill <u>Rhinoplax vigil</u>	peninsula	6	10

* Regional breakdown follows King¹ et al. (1975) p.16.

** Estimated on the basis of geographical position of reserve, habitats represented or probably represented, and likely level of human disturbance.

majority of nature reserves. Both of the species which are unrepresented are Sundaic species, whose Thai ranges are limited to the peninsula. The Wrinkled Hornbill appears to be limited to the tall forests of the level lowlands, in both Thailand and Malaysia (D.R. Wells, in litt.). Although there are huge tracts of forest on hill slopes in the nature reserves of the Malayan peninsula few areas of forested flat lowlands remain and the Wrinkled Hornbill may already be extinct in Thailand. The Rhinoceros Hornbill inhabits hill slopes as well as lowlands, but its Thai range is limited to the rainforest zone in the two or three provinces which border Malaysia, an area where nature reserves have yet to be established. The provinces still support considerable forest cover, and a National Park within the range of this, and other Malaysian, species has already been proposed.

The most immediate threat facing hornbill populations in Thailand is illegal hunting. Thai villagers penetrate all of Thailand's protected areas in order to collect forest products such as fragrant wood, the saps of various trees, rattans and Parkia beans and, while doing so, routinely hunt hornbills and other larger forest birds, as well as gibbons Hylobates spp. and monkeys Presbytis, Macaca spp. for food. This has undoubtedly led to the local extirpation or reduction of hornbill populations in many areas. The situation is most critical in the north-west of the country, where the uplands are occupied by large numbers of ethnically distinct peoples, known collectively as "hilltribes", most of whom are shifting cultivators. They clear large areas of primary forest in order to grow cash crops, and are also subsistence hunters. Even where standing forest remains, hornbills have largely disappeared from nature reserves in this region.

One of the most threatened hornbill species is the Rufous-necked Hornbill, the range of which in both Thailand and elsewhere (n.e. India, s.w. China, Burma and n. Indochina) overlaps closely with that of upland shifting cultivators. Although the Rufous-necked Hornbill may already have been extirpated from north-west Thailand, a population has been recently discovered further south, in the contiguous Thung Yai and Hual Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuaries (4,831 km²) of south-west Thailand. Even there, however, the species is far from secure as Hmong hilltribes have recently colonised areas within both sanctuaries. The lack of, or under-representation of, nature reserves within the range of the Rufous-necked Hornbill in neighbouring countries would suggest that Thailand has a special

responsibility for the conservation of this species.

Mention should also be made of the Plain-pouched Hornbill (formerly treated as conspecific with the Blyth's Hornbill Rhyticeros plicatus of the Moluccas and New Guinea). Confusion with the similar Wreathed Hornbill has impeded understanding of the true status of the Plain-pouched Hornbill, although it is clear that a population of birds which conforms to the accepted characters of this taxon is present in the mosaic of deciduous and evergreen forests in the remote river valleys and lower hills of south-west Thailand. Nothing is at present known concerning its biology or conservation status.

The long-term conservation prospects for hornbills will depend upon the maintenance of forest blocks which are large enough to support large, viable breeding populations. While some species, such as the Wreathed Hornbill, may make dispersive flights between adjacent, more or less isolated, forest patches, most other species probably do not do so. Only 13 of Thailand's nature reserves are larger than 1000km² in area. It is probable that the present richness of many smaller parks or sanctuaries (which range in size from several hundred km² to less than 50km²) is due to the continued presence of contiguous forest areas outside their boundaries, which may be scheduled for eventual commercial exploitation. An urgent requirement for hornbill conservation is a better understanding of their breeding densities and therefore of the carrying capacities of different forest patches or nature reserves. Research which could yield such information is at present being carried out by a Thai biologist, Ms. Pilai Poonswad.



Great Hornbill Buceros bicornis

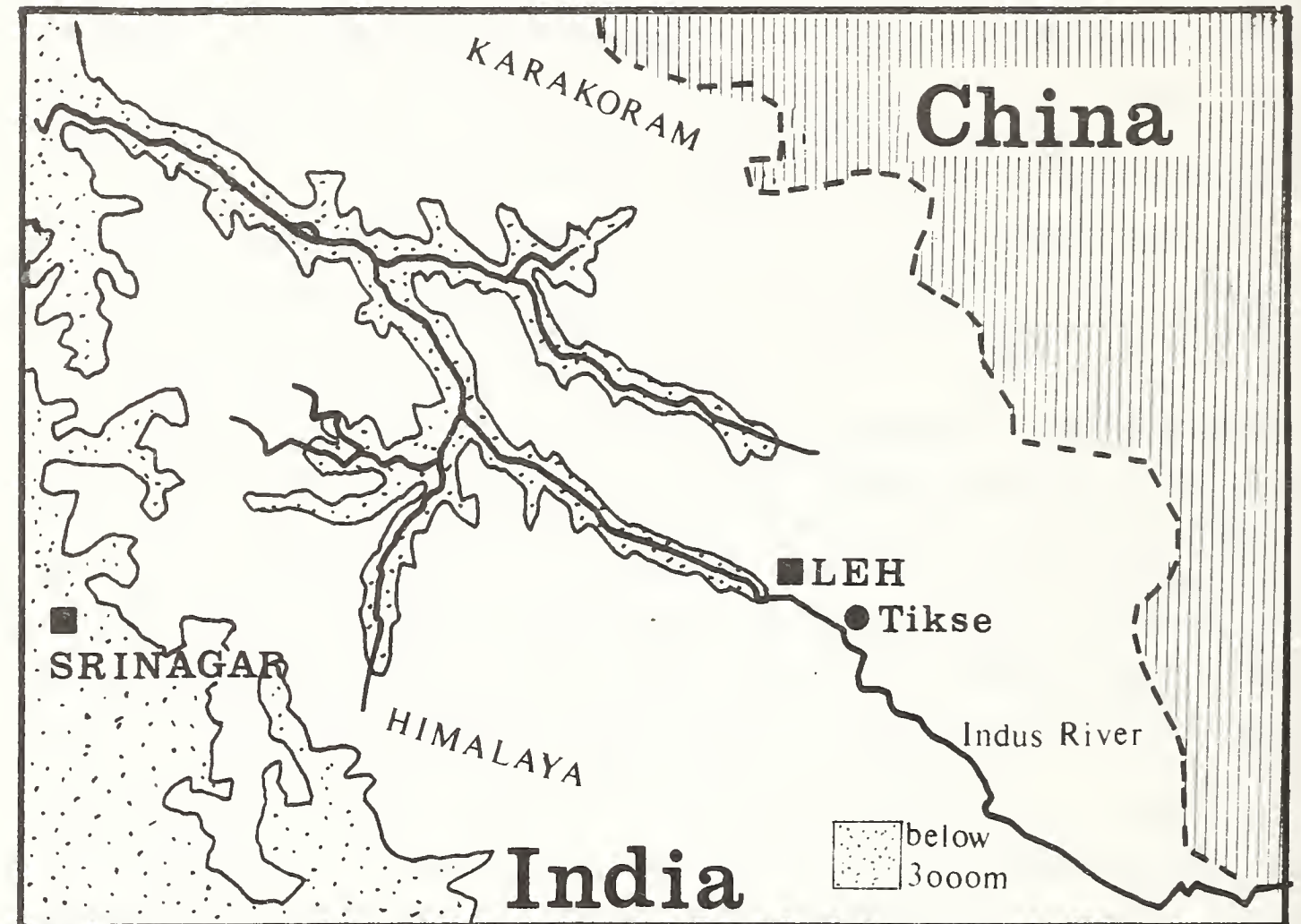
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Philip D.Round, Association for the Conservation of Wildlife,
4, Old Custom House Lane, Bangkok 10500, Thailand.

MIGRATION THROUGH THE NORTH-WEST HIMALAYA - SOME RESULTS OF THE SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY LADAKH EXPEDITIONS I

Migration observations on four Southampton University expeditions to Ladakh are summarised. 210 species were recorded, of which 60% do not breed in Ladakh. 4 species were new to the Indian subcontinent.



Since 1976 there have been four Southampton University expeditions to Ladakh, an arid mountain region in the western Himalaya (figure 1). The first three of these (in summer and autumn 1976, 1977 and 1980) were multidisciplinary, while the last was exclusively ornithological and spanned a year (from August 1981 to July 1982). The ornithology undertaken included summer work on the breeding birds but the main component was a study of migration, both of species nesting locally and of those which do not breed in Ladakh (referred to as 'non-local' species from now on). In this, and a subsequent, article we deal exclusively with the migration study, concentrating on the non-local migrants.

Though Ladakh is part of India its flora and fauna are essentially Tibetan. Altitudes range from about 2,700m up to 7,600m and the climate is harsh and dry, with hot summers and long, bitterly cold winters. There are patches of verdant irrigated land along the main valleys but the great bulk of this 100,000km.² area is a barren mountain wilderness of rock and

sand. The region is bounded by the Karakoram range to the north and the main Himalayan range to the south, with the Ladakh and Zaskar ranges running between and parallel to them. From its source on the Tibetan Plateau the River Indus flows north-east between the Zaskar and Ladakh ranges, turning southward 300km. downstream in northern Pakistan.

Migration through Ladakh is of particular interest because of the region's position within the 2,500 km. long mountain barrier formed by the Himalaya, Karakoram, and Tibetan Plateau. Though migration in this area has been little studied, the traditional view is that, faced with such a formidable obstacle, the great majority of birds migrating from Central Asia and Siberia to wintering areas in the Oriental Region skirt the mountains to the east and west. The western arm of this pincer movement is thought to avoid the Pamirs and enter the area in central Ladakh. However, scattered records of long-distance migrants from within the Himalaya and Tibet suggest that a greater number of birds than was previously supposed, migrate straight over the mountains¹. Some migrants taking this direct route should cross Ladakh, tackling the Karakoram and west Himalayan ranges in the process. An assessment of the scale of this migration was one of our main aims.

The upper Indus Valley is a barren gorge for much of its length but near Leh, Ladakh's only sizeable town, it widens to about 6km. across, with strips of irrigated land a kilometre or so wide either side of the river. This stretch contains a good variety of habitats - cereal fields, plantations of willow Salix and poplar Populus, extensive patches of Sea Buckthorn Hippophae rhamnoides and some marshy grazing land, particularly near the village of Shey. This range of habitats and the area's central position in Ladakh made it an ideal migration study area.

For the migration studies on the last three expeditions we were based near the village of Tikse (altitude 3,300m.). Thanks to the co-operation of the local forestry department staff we were allowed to watch and mist-net birds in the Tikse forestry plantation and live in the department's hut alongside. The plantation is a 4 km². area of Salix, Populus, Hippophae and Myricaria, with some temporary pools, which lies along the north bank of the Indus 18km. east of Leh. It is one of the largest and most diverse areas of scrub and trees in Ladakh.

While at Tikse, intensive ringing programmes formed a major part of our work, using rings supplied by the Bombay Natural History Society. Over 7,600 birds of 64 species were ringed, the great majority being passerines netted in the plantation.

The ringing not only provided a great deal of data on weights, measurements and moult patterns but also allowed us to detect even the most skulking species, enabled identification to subspecies and age/sex category, and provided a quantitative index of the numbers of birds present. In 1981 and 1982 many faecal samples were collected as part of a feeding ecology study. The ringing was combined with non-stop bird-watching, mainly in a 13km. long stretch of the valley from the Tikse plantation westwards.

Ladakh's avifauna has received a surprising amount of attention in the past compared with adjacent regions, and about 5,700 skins have been collected there². However, early ornithologists concentrated on the breeding species. Although sometimes present during parts of the migration periods, their results tended to confirm the view that migrants did not cross the Himalaya. In contrast, a substantial amount of migration by a wide variety of non-local species was monitored during the Southampton University expeditions. Of the 210 species we recorded in central Ladakh, an estimated 126 (82 non-passerines and 44 passerines) were non-local species. Of these, four were apparently new for the Indian Subcontinent, 71 new for Ladakh and many others had been recorded very few times previously. It should be remembered that, although we were in the field for part or all of four autumns, our knowledge of spring passage and the winter avifauna from late November onwards is based on a single year.

Migration was most marked from mid-August to early November and during April and May, but some non-local migrants turned up in all months and even the mid-winter avifauna was surprisingly diverse. Among the non-passerine migrants, waders were well represented. Of the 27 wader species recorded only Ibisbill Ibidorhyncha struthersii and Little Ringed Plover Charadrius dubius bred near Tikse, though four others breed elsewhere in Ladakh. The commonest non-local species on autumn migration were Temminck's Stint Calidris temminckii (a particularly early migrant), Green Sandpiper Tringa ochropus and Greenshank T. nebularia. Lesser Golden Plover Pluvialis dominica, Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus, Wood Sandpiper Tringa glareola and Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus were all regular, whilst Marsh Sandpipers T. stagnatilis and Terek Sandpipers Xenus cinereus were occasionally seen. Autumn wader passage was characterised by a fairly steady flow of small parties, with single-species flocks of more than 15 birds quite unusual. Spring passage was less protracted and less varied but included

flocks of over 40 Temminck's Stints and Wood Sandpipers, our first Red-necked Phalarope Phalaropus lobatus and a frustratingly distant Pratincole Glareola sp. Only three wader species overwintered, Green Sandpiper, Ibisbill and Solitary Snipe Gallinago solitaria.



Fork-tailed and Common Swifts Apus pacificus and A. apus

Common Terns Sterna hirundo bred by the Indus but the commonest Laridae on passage were Brown-headed Gulls Larus brunnicephalus and Great Black-headed Gulls L. ichthyaetus, probably from eastern Ladakh and the Tibetan Plateau respectively. We also recorded occasional Little Gulls L. minutus, Common Black-headed Gulls L. ridibundus, Little Terns Sterna albifrons and a single White-winged Tern Chlidonias leucopterus. On passage Whiskered Terns C. hybridus and Gull-billed Terns Gelochelidon nilotica were regular. The Rallidae were also well represented with small numbers of Baillon's Crakes Porzana pusilla and Spotted Crakes P. porzana recorded on autumn passage, along with a single Corn Crake Crex crex. Common Moorhens Gallinula chloropus and Common Coots Fulica atra were the most common Rallidae. None of these species breeds in Ladakh and the amount of suitable feeding habitat is minute.

Wildfowl passage was drawn out in spring and autumn, and small numbers overwintered. Of the three species breeding in Ladakh, Common Merganser (Goosander) Mergus merganser was common but Ruddy Shelduck Tadorna ferruginea and Bar-headed Goose Anser indicus, both of which nest in eastern Ladakh, were infrequent,

the latter only turning up in small numbers on spring passage. The only other geese seen were two Greylags A. anser in 1980 and 1982. The remaining non-local wildfowl were mainly dabbling ducks (7 species) usually in small flocks, though flocks of over 50 Garganey Anas querquedula were regular in early autumn. Diving ducks (3 species) were infrequent but included a Red-crested Pochard Netta rufina in early spring.

The Ardeidae were represented by seven non-local species. Grey Herons Ardea cinerea were by far the most common but a few immature Black-crowned Night Herons Nycticorax nycticorax were regular, especially on spring passage. During June and July 1982 we also had single records of Great Egret Egretta alba, Little Egret E. garzetta, Indian Pond Heron Ardeola grayii and Little Bittern Ixobrychus minutus. A Great Bittern Botaurus stellaris spent the 1981-82 winter on Shey marsh. Great Cormorants Phalacrocorax carbo were regular on passage and in the spring we had sightings of 10 Black Storks Ciconia nigra. Cranes were notable by their absence - only one Demoiselle Crane Anthropoides virgo in autumn 1981 and three the following spring.

Other species seen on migration and a perspective on the role of trans-Himalayan migration will be covered in an article in the next Bulletin, along with a full list of members and contributors to the expeditions 1976-1982.

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C. Williams and S. Delany, 85 St. Philips Road, Cambridge.

NEW RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE CHEER PHEASANT IN INDIA

Fresh research is planned on the Cheer Pheasant in the Nainital District of Uttar Pradesh, North-west India.

The stage is now set for the first intensive study of Himalayan pheasants in India. The Cheer Pheasant Catreus walliichii has been chosen as the key species for several reasons. A bird of climax grassland, it is currently listed as endangered by ICBP/IUCN and appears to be very vulnerable to human disturbance



Cheer Pheasant Catreus walliichii

via stock-grazing, hay-making, grass-burning and afforestation. It seems to be a resident of relatively snow-free, grassy hillsides dissected by forested ravines at 1-3,000m.; thus fieldwork can be done at relatively accessible sites, and natural vantage points in the terrain allow some direct observation, as well as the repeated radiolocation of birds carrying transmitters.

Information on how the Cheer uses its habitat for feeding, nesting and roosting is essential if some areas of climax grassland are to be set aside for its preservation. However, with the whole landscape of the Himalayan foothills now under the severest human pressure, some insight into the ability of the Cheer to thrive in unmanaged secondary scrub and early successional stages of forestry plantations is also crucial. As a bonus, the detailed natural history of this species may prove very interesting from an evolutionary viewpoint: first indications from both field and aviary studies suggest that the Cheer has a 'covey' social organisation, like that of many partridges, for much of the year. Studies of its ecology should provide some functional explanations for this apparent similarity.

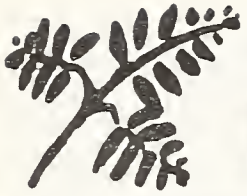
The new research initiative is to be located in the Nainital District of Uttar Pradesh, between Corbett Park and the western Nepal border. Uttar Pradesh (UP) was chosen partly because much less is known about the distribution and abundance

of its pheasants than is the case for neighbouring Himachal Pradesh and central Nepal, where Tony Gaston, Mac Hunter, Tony Lelliott and I, amongst others, have conducted extensive surveys over the past 7 years under the auspices of the World Pheasant Association (WPA). My visit to Nainital in March-April 1985 confirmed the presence of much undisturbed habitat only 30-50km. from the plains. Via local contacts I identified several localities harbouring Cheer, as well as Kalij Pheasant Lophura leucomelana and Koklas Pheasant Pucrasia macrolopha, and three species of partridge. Thus there should be opportunities for studies of niche overlap and interspecific competition between the members of this galliform community.

The project has been planned in collaboration with Dr. Suresh Singh, one of the Indian sub-continent's foremost captive-pheasant breeders and administrator of WPA-India. He hopes to obtain funds soon from the Government of India to rear Cheer in sufficient numbers at Nainital for their release at localities in which they should thrive, but are now extinct. The identification of such areas will be an important aim of the fieldwork. All results obtained should also assist the World Pheasant Association (UK and Pakistan) in their efforts to re-establish the Cheer in Pakistan; there are signs that poult hatched from eggs flown to Pakistan are surviving their first monsoon and winter in the Margalla Hills near Islamabad.

A 1984 Aberdeen University M.Sc. graduate, Lew Young, is presently overseeing the WPA project in Pakistan, but is due to transfer to U.P. this autumn to initiate the new field project. He is to be funded initially by WPA, the Linnean Society, the British Ecological Society and the British Ornithologists' Union; the project has IUCN and ICBP endorsements, and full approval from the Government of India. Lew will be assisted by two Indian Ph.D. students, for whom research fellowships worth Rs 1,000 per month have been guaranteed for two years by a commercial sponsor in Bombay. Rahul Kaul, who was already registered for a Ph.D. on pheasants at the University of Kashmir (Srinagar), has been transferred to the project; a second candidate is still being sought. Students from the new Wildlife Institute of India (Dehra Dun) may provide yet more manpower whilst receiving a few months training in research methods as part of their diploma course. I also hope to join the team in the field for the pre-breeding season periods of 1986/7.

Dr. Peter J. Garson, (Project co-ordinator), Zoology Dept.,
Newcastle University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 7RU, UK



Birdwatching areas

CORBETT NATIONAL PARK, INDIA

Corbett National Park holds a wide variety of bird species, especially in winter, plus many mammals.

Corbett National Park, in Uttar Pradesh, is a remnant of the climax forest that, until very recently, covered the Himalayan foothills. Although mainly forest, the park encloses tracts of riparian grassland, as well as several well-afforested river valleys. A relatively small unspoilt grass-covered valley remains around Dhikala which is the main tourist centre, conveniently located in the middle of the park on the south bank of the River Ramganga. Dhikala is 290 kilometres from Delhi by road, and is easily reached by catching the early morning bus for Ramnagar from the Kashmiri Gate Bus Station in Delhi. The bus into Corbett takes about two hours and leaves Ramnagar at four p.m. allowing plenty of time for registration at the park's administrative headquarters in Ramnagar. The National Park is open from mid-November to mid-June, although winter is the best time for birdwatching.

The survival of the forest is largely due to the efforts of Jim Corbett. A far-sighted conservationist, he was dedicated to the survival of India's dwindling wildlife. Established as India's first National Park in 1935, the park was enlarged with the inauguration of Project Tiger at Dhikala in 1973, and is named in his honour.

For visits to the park of a week or less, excursions from Dhikala should be sufficient. There are, however, several quieter forest rest houses in other parts of the park where a short stay is rewarding. It must always be remembered that the reserve is primarily a sanctuary for some sixty Tigers Panthera tigris, more than thirty leopards P. pardus and over one hundred and thirty elephants Elephas maximus. Visitors must exercise great caution whilst exploring the forest on foot.

Deer are plentiful with over two thousand Cheetal Cervus axis, and smaller numbers of Hog Deer C. porcinus, Sambar C. unicolor and Muntjac Muntiacus muntjak. Wild Boar Sus scrofa are also common. The Ramganga has Crocodiles, both Mugger Crocodylus palustris and Gharial Gavialis gangeticus, which are

best seen from the observation point at High Bank.

Much of the Park's forest is dominated by Sal Shorea robusta, often in pure stands. Although birding in this can be rather slow, it holds a wide variety of woodpeckers including three species of Golden-backs: Black-rumped, Himalayan and Greater Dinopium benghalense, D. shorii and Chrysocolaptes lucidus, and also Rufous and Great Slaty Woodpecker Micropternus brachyurus and Mulleripicus pulverulentus. Mixed feeding flocks of tits, warblers and Oriental White-eyes Zosterops palpebrosa are common, frequently accompanied by White-bellied and Lesser Racket-tailed Drongos Dicrurus caerulescens and D. remifer. Wintering thrushes and a number of flycatcher species also favour the Sal forest. The mix of rank annual and secondary growth, and lantana thickets amongst remaining mature sal trees support a high diversity of bird species. In particular one should notice Black-chinned Babblers Stachyris pyrrhops, Golden-spectacled and Grey-hooded Warblers Seicercus burkii, and S. xanthoschistos, Aberrant and Grey-sided Bush-Warblers Cettia flavolivaceus and C. brunnifrons and Bluethroats Erithacus svecicus. Both White-tailed and Siberian Rubythroats Erithacus pectoralis and E. calliope winter here as do Black-throated Accentors Prunella atrogularis.

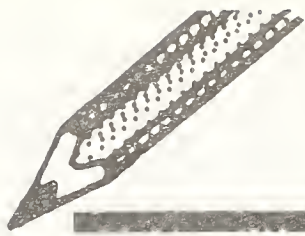
Jeep tracks radiate across the grasslands from Dhikala into the surrounding forest. Both Black Francolins Francolinus francolinus and Blue Peafowl Pavo cristatus are conspicuous in the early morning. Chestnut-eared Bunting Emberiza fucata and Red Avadavats Amandava amandava can be seen along the tracks and Chestnut-capped Babbler Timalia pileata and Bright-capped Cisticola Cisticola exilis occur here at the westernmost limit of their range. Black-shouldered Kite Elanus caeruleus, White-eyed Buzzard Butastur teesa and Changeable Hawk-Eagle Spizaetus cirrhatus are common on isolated trees. Near to Dhikala there are observation towers which provide excellent vantage points.

Flowing through the centre of the park is the Ranganga, a shallow, clear and very stony river. In winter there are many small groups of Common Merganser (Goosander) Mergus merganser, but Ibisbills Ibidorhyncha struthersii are only seen on one or two favoured stretches. River Lapwing Vanellus duvaucelii, Great Thick-knee Esacus magnirostris, Great Black-headed Gull Larus Ichthyaetus, Crested Kingfisher Ceryle lugubris, River Chat Thamnolaea leucocephala and White-browed Wagtail Motacilla maderaspatensis are plentiful. For much of its length the river is braided and several of the gravelly islands are covered with

Sheesham woodland Dalbergia sisoo. Rosy Minivets Pericrocotus roseus occur here but eagles are the most obvious birds. White-tailed Eagle Haliaeetus albicilla, Pallas's Fish Eagle H. leucoryphus and Lesser Fish Eagle Ichthyophaga nana occur together and several Aquila species can be seen here perching in the tree tops. Vultures circling over the valley often indicate the site of a kill and frequently Red-headed and Cinereous Vultures Sarcogyps calvus and Aegyptus monachus are first on the scene. Shaheen falcons Falco peregrinus peregrinator sometimes come down to the river's edge to bathe and drink and surprisingly Wallcreepers Tichodroma muraria winter here among the stones.

By moving out of the valley into the mixed forest of the ridge opposite Dhikala (maximum elevation 1200 metres) many excellent forest birds can be found. I would particularly recommend the slopes at the entrance to the narrow valley of Pulai Sot. Blue-bearded Bee-eaters Nyctyornis athertoni, Stork-billed Kingfishers Pelargopsis capensis and Giant Hornbills Buceros bicornis frequent the tall trees whilst Collared Falconets Microhierax caerulescens hunt insects from exposed perches. In summer there are Indian Pittas Pitta brachyura and Asian Paradise Flycatchers Terpsiphone paradisi in the shade. By ascending a jeep track or stream bed one enters Corbett's richest forest; a wonderful area of magnificent trees, dense bamboo thickets, open grassy areas, damp ravines and dry spurs. Red Junglefowls Gallus gallus, common in the valley thickets are replaced by Kallij Pheasants Lophura leucomelana. Both Rufous-bellied and Mountain Hawk-Eagles Hieraaetus kienerii and Spizaetus nipalensis inhabit these forest slopes. Many of the pools remaining in the dry season stream bed are watched over by pairs of Brown Fish Owls Ketupa zeylonensis, whilst Long-billed Thrush Zoothera monticola and Spotted Forktail Enicurus maculatus feed among the boulders. There is an impressive array of birds in this unspoilt foothill forest and mention must be made of Orange-bellied Leafbird Chloropsis hardwickii, Hair-crested Drongo Dicrurus hottentottus and Ashy Bulbul Hypsipetes flavala. Climbing towards the ridge at Kanda a wonderful panorama of this Ramganga valley appears. Leaving the trees one steps out into the ruins of Kanda Village, above which tower two massive silk cotton trees Bombax ceiba. Here one is obliged to rest and contemplate the scene, but, aware that there are many more exciting species to be seen, it is difficult not to continue birding along the Khinanauli road towards Dhikala.

James Wolstencroft, 15 Stavordale Road, London, UK.



'To the Editor'

SOME REMARKS ON "MILKY STORKS Ibis cinereus AND BIRDS OF THE JAVAN PLAIN"

In the first bulletin of the Oriental Bird Club, Wilson and Allport⁶ gave recent data on the distribution of Milky Storks Ibis cinereus and several other bird-species in West-Java. It was surprising that both Kingfishers Pelargopsis capensis and Halcyon cyanoventris were mentioned in this article as noteworthy species: in particular the latter is a rather common and widespread bird in West-Java¹. On the other hand Malaysian Plover Charadrius peronii, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper Calidris acuminata and Ruff Philomachus pugnax were mentioned without further notes: the Plover is a local resident, the latter two are rare stragglers in the Malay archipelago^{4,5}.

Literature and a visit to the Leyden Museum showed that Malaysian Plover has been recorded once by Kuhl & Hasselt in the last century (one specimen in the Leyden collection) and twice this century on Java (Banten in 1909; Ujung Kulon in 1940)². Sharp-tailed Sandpipers have been collected twice on Java: by Horsfield & De Vriese in 1821, and by Koolman in 1938 at the south-coast of Java³. Ruff have not been recorded previously for Java.

Furthermore, the Javan White-eye Zosterops flava is restricted to the coastal districts of Java and Borneo, the Mangrove White-eye Zosterops chloris is an inhabitant of the Islands in the Java Sea and the Moluccas⁵. The observations of Wilson and Allport of the first species on Pulau Dua and of the second along the coast of West Java would indicate an expansion of their geographical range.

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S. van Balen, Prümelaan 44, 6824 HS Arnhem, The Netherlands

SOME REMARKS ON "MILKY STORKS Ibis cinereus AND BIRDS OF THE JAVAN PLAIN": A REPLY

It is pleasing to find our article¹ in the previous Bulletin has stimulated discussion². Van Balen² was surprised at the mention of both Stork-billed and Javan Kingfishers Pelargopsis capensis and Halcyon cyanoventris as birds of interest on the Javan plain. The latter was included as it is an endemic species and a pleasing bird to see; van Balen makes no qualification of surprise at the inclusion of the former species: it is now certainly uncommon on the coastal plain (R. Milton pers. comm; Allport and Wilson pers. obs.).

Ruff Philomachus pugnax has been recorded in Bali (Mackinnon⁴, Bishop 1982⁵) and therefore it is not unlikely to occur in Java. Until recently most waders occurred on mudflats seaward of mangrove in this area. Close approach was not easy, and thus collecting and specific identification were difficult. With the development of large scale fish ponds, suitable feeding habitat has become available to waders, allowing easier viewing of birds, thereby increasing the likelihood of detection of less common species. A minimum of 19,000 waders were closely scrutinised to find the single Ruff and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper Calidris acuminata mentioned in our article.

Specimens of Javan White-eye were collected by Hoogerwerf up until 1940 on the coast near Jakarta (Museum Bogor specimens). Since Pulau Dua Reserve is no longer an island, being mainly mainland coastal mangrove, these records are not really surprising.

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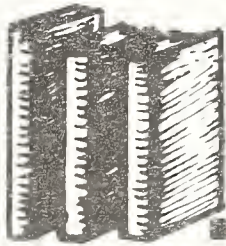
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S.A. Wilson and G. Allport, 17 Harford Manor, Ipswich Road, Norwich, NR2 2KW, UK.

Correction: Bull. No. 1 pg. 13, para. 2.

"...aerial surveys of the sort carried out in Sumatra" should have read "...of the sort carried out in Peninsular Malaysia".



Reviews

FRANCIS, C. (Ed). 1984. Pocket guide to the Birds of Borneo. Pp.124; 49 colour plates. Kuala Lumpur: Sabah Society & WWF Malaysia. £4.00.

Although it is doubtful if this book (11.5 x 17cm) would fit into many pockets, it is a very compact distillation of the plates from 'The Birds of Borneo' by B.E. Smythies. Brief captions face the illustrations by Commander A.M. Hughes, whilst succinct notes on the 135 species (mainly migrants or vagrants) not illustrated are inserted in suitable positions. Although most of the illustrations are excellent, those of the Calyptomena broadbills, leafbirds and some flycatchers are poorly reproduced.

My main criticism of the book concerns the species captions - they are too brief. Birders with little or no experience of the S.E. Asian avifauna will face great problems identifying birds such as raptors, cuckoos or Trichastoma babblers if relying solely on this book. It is a great pity that brief notes on habitat preferences and known altitudinal limits are not included. These would help with some identification problems. Even experienced oriental birders will need to refer to Smythies or other literature to identify certain species.

Despite these problems, this volume will enable the quick

identification of most species encountered without the necessity of carrying round alternative heavy volumes. As such, the 'Pocket Guide' fills an important niche and, at such a reasonable low price, must be welcomed by birders visiting Borneo, or indeed the Malay peninsula where the illustrations will complement those of King et al. 'A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia'.

Frank Lambert

WHITE, T.C. (1984). A field guide to the bird songs of south-east Asia. Two cassettes & booklet. Pp. 16. London: British Library National Sound Archive. £10.

These cassettes are intended as a companion volume to the 'Field guide to the birds of south-east Asia'¹. Of the c1200 species covered by the book, 137 are presented on these tapes. Although this seems to be only a fraction, it must be remembered that many of the remaining species have never been tape-recorded while others are migrants from the Palearctic which can be found on other records or cassettes. Most of the species heard on the present tapes are confined to south-eastern Asia but not all recordings were made within the area covered by King et al.¹ There are several recordings from Brunei, Java and Nepal. Total playing-time is nearly two hours and every species is announced with both English and scientific names. A booklet contains all relevant information on each recording. The recordings were made by 10 recordists and are of variable quality. However, it must be stressed that the tapes are primarily meant for field identification and for that purpose they are very useful. Two cassettes are easy to take along in the field together with the field guide and even a low quality recording is more useful than any written description. In tropical forest it is very important to know the vocalizations of as many species as possible as most of them are usually concealed and are only found by their calls. I especially like the 27 species of babblers Timaliidae on these tapes, because quite a few of them are, unless seen very well, only safely identified by their voice.

It is a pity that several species have been wrongly identified. This seems to be almost inevitable as several recordists have submitted recordings and the compiler has to trust on their identification. This again shows that great care must be taken when identifying sounds in rain forest. Often the bird which is actually making the sound remains

Invisible while the sound is attributed to another species nearby. The following mistakes were detected: The call of Great Argus Argusianus argus (band 5) is the song of the male and not of the female as stated in the text (cf Wayre²). The three different reels of Oriental Cuckoo Cuculus saturatus are attributed to three different species. The first (band 12) correctly to Oriental Cuckoo, the second (band 13) wrongly to Little Cuckoo C. poliocephalus, a bird not found on Java where the recording was made. The third one, heard in the background of band 46, is mentioned to be a Hoopoe Upupa epops (cf Wells & Becking³). The whistle attributed to Buff-necked Woodpecker Meiglyptes tukki is certainly not of that species but of Hairy-backed Bulbul Hypsipetes criniger. The call of Large Cuckoo-shrike Coracina novaehollandiae included actually is the call of Green Magpie Cissa chinensis which can also be found on this tape. In the background of Yellow-vented Bulbul Pycnonotus goiavier, Bar-winged Prinia Prinia familiaris can be heard and not Bar-winged Wren-babbler Spelaeornis troglodytoides, a species confined to the eastern Himalayas and not found on Java where the Yellow-vented Bulbul was recorded.

There are other recordings of which I have serious doubts concerning their identification. The call attributed to Crimson-winged Woodpecker Picus puniceus may actually belong to Banded Woodpecker P. miniacus as it is unlike the usual double "pee-bee" of Crimson-winged and it sounds identical with my own recordings of Banded Woodpecker. The drumming attributed to Banded Woodpecker is interesting as drumming is unknown for this species (cf Short⁴). The high-pitched whistle said to be of White-crowned Forktail Enicurus leschenaulti sounds very similar to the call of Pygmy Wren-babbler Pnoepyga pusilla and very unlike ordinary forktail calls.

Finally, in at least one case the text appears to be copied directly from the field guide instead of describing the sound on the tape. In the recording of Great Barbet Megalaima virens the cicada-like call is heard and not the song-duet as described. Moreover, the bird in the background is not Blue-eared Barbet M. australis but Blue-throated Barbet M. asiatica.

In conclusion, it may seem as though the cassettes are full of mistakes but this is not the case. Indeed, they remain very useful in the field providing that the corrections mentioned above are applied. As the first attempt to bring together vocalizations of Oriental bird as a series of cassettes, they are of great value. I certainly wish that more

will follow and from adjacent regions as well. However, great care should be taken when compiling them and experts on bird vocalizations of the region should scrutinize them before publication.

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Jelle Scharringa

This review first appeared in Dutch Birding 7: 28-29, 1985, and is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor. The following additional comments have been made by Tim Inskipp, partly compiled from other reviews: Band 126 attributed to the Black-headed Sibia Heterophasia melanoleuca is in fact the Rufous Sibia H. capistrata. Band 52 is the trilling call of the Golden-fronted Barbet Megalaima franklinii, not the song. The secondary species on band 117 is the Black-throated Babbler Stachyris nigricollis, not the Chestnut-winged Babbler S. erythroptera. The English name of the species on band 107 is incorrect: it should be the Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler, not the Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler. Species such as the Chestnut-backed Scimitar-Babbler Pomatorhinus montanus and the Collared Scops Owl Otus bakkamoena exhibit strong geographic variation in their calls - this sort of variation should be noted in regional compilations to avoid misleading the unwary. (Eds).

BEDI, R. & BEDI, R. 1984. Indian Wildlife. Pp. 312; numerous colour photographs. London: Collins Harvill. £25.00.

This magnificent book is sumptuously illustrated by the finest collection of photographs - all taken by Rajesh Bedi - that I have ever seen. All photographs were taken in the field. Considering that so many of the species are shy, that so few photographs should be grainy or blurred is a tribute to Bedi's talents.

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The text is divided into sections, each dealing with a particular region. Each region is covered in several short essays, concentrating on specific themes - usually an individual species or National Park. Although occasionally repetitive or disorganised, the essays are both readable and informative. Unsurprisingly, there is a strong bias towards the larger (and rarer) mammals, but the sections on Bharatpur and Point Calimere are largely devoted to birds.

The full or double-spread large format photographs will sell this book, but at £25 it is likely to be considered a luxury by most people. Those that can afford it will not regret buying the book. In my opinion it would be hard to find a better "coffee-table" book.

Nigel Redman

INSKIPP, C. and T. 1985. A guide to the Birds of Nepal. Pp. 392; 8 colour plates; 676 maps; many line drawings. London and Sydney: Croom Helm. £25.00.

Size for size the kingdom of Nepal probably contains the richest avifauna in the world. Due to the mountainous terrain and relatively few roads, most of the earlier ornithological work was done on foot by explorers and expeditions. Recently this has been continued by keen young birdwatchers in search of adventure. Carol and Tim Inskipp have been hooked on Nepal and its birds for a number of years now and made repeated visits to study the birdlife.

In this book, the Inskipp's have summarised both their own findings and data gathered from over 600 references, as well as many unpublished sources. These they have compressed clearly and lucidly in this excellent book. The first 30 or so pages contain a digest of useful information with a summary of the vegetation and habitats of the country, the history of ornithological exploration, plus details of some of the most productive birding areas, with sketch maps and information on the specialities to be found there.

The bulk of the book is a series of summaries of the 835 species known to have occurred in Nepal, arranged clearly and concisely, with distribution maps and tables for all but the most infrequently-recorded species. A short text accompanies each species, giving its status, breeding records, habitat preferences and details of its first record. The text is well cross-referenced, both to the maps and bibliography and is liberally enlivened by attractive vignettes.

Although the maps and status section forms the major part of the book, the authors are to be doubly congratulated for taking the opportunity to clarify the identification criteria of many groups of birds which are only scantily and inadequately covered in available field guides. This identification section covers several genera of birds of prey, waders, warblers, owls, pipits, tits, finches and buntings and well as a few nasty species-pairs. Only those who have been utterly frustrated by trying to sort out Prinias and Phylloscopus in the Himalayan foothills will understand the worth of buying the book for these alone.

All species groups have been well-illustrated with drawings which on the whole are excellent, although the drawings of the house martins make them look too similar: Delichon dasypus has broader and blunter wings and a duskier underwing than urbica, but this does not come across in the sketches. Similarly, the Greater Short-toed Lark Calandrella brachydactyla has too stubby a bill. However, these are minor problems. Rather more serious are a couple of caption errors which have crept in: on page 60 the Barn Owl Tyto alba and Grass Owl T. capensis have been transposed and on page 53 the captions for Lesser Black-backed Gull Larus fuscus should read "5 ad heuglini" and "6 ad fuscus" I presume. The colour plates have been carefully selected to be of the utmost use to those of us who have despaired when trying to identify tricky species when using conventional field guides. The artists, Craig Robson, Richard Grimmett and Clive Byers will have shamed many experienced field guide illustrators by their care over detail and technique. The plates cover several genera of warblers, plus rosefinches and female buntings. These are excellent, although I suspect that some of the warblers have been reproduced a little on the dark side. However, they remain far superior to any illustration that these groups have received in eastern field guides. I was a little dismayed to see both Large-billed and nominate Greenish Warbler Phylloscopus magnirostris and P. trochiloides with all-blackish bills when both show extensive fleshy-yellow lower mandibles, as bill colours are very important when identifying Phylloscopus in the field (as the text itself indicates). It seemed odd to me that the upperparts of neither Common or White-browed Rosefinch Carpodacus erythrinus and C. thura are shown, which is a little annoying for comparative purposes, especially when the rump colour of female White-browed is one of its most useful field features.

My only dislike of the book stems from trying to find the plate captions. It took me a little while to locate them on page 7. I then had to search for another 60 or so pages to find the text which refers to the plates (which are situated in the book centre); there is no cross-reference in any direction. I know I will go quite mad when trying this out in the field, but I hope that Croom Helm will rectify this in a future edition.

At £25 the price is a little high, but not for such a specialist work. The book is also a little bulky to carry in the field, although well-worth rucksack-space. The authors are to be congratulated on producing a model of how to analyse and present a wealth of data in such an attractive and useful way. It is a fitting tribute to all who have bird-trekged in Nepal. Highly recommended. (Steve Madge)

Announcements - Requests

Monitoring Protected Areas of the Indomalayan Realm

For more than two decades the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) has been collecting information on the world's conservation sites, both for use in its own programmes and to assist in its work with other conservation organisations. The Protected Areas Data Unit (PADU) was set up by IUCN's Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA) in 1981 to handle the increasing amount of information reaching the Commission. The unit forms part of the IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre (CMC) and is based in Cambridge, UK.

PADU is producing a series of volumes on protected areas in each of the eight biogeographical realms¹. The IUCN Directory of Neotropical Protected Areas was published in 1982, and the IUCN Directory of Afrotropical Protected Areas will be published this year.

In August 1984, PADU began work on the third directory which is to cover the Indomalayan realm from Pakistan, through India and South East Asia, to Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. A draft version was presented at the CNPPA meeting held in Corbett National Park in India during the first week of February 1985 and the final volume should be published towards the end of 1985.

IUCN has a worldwide network of contacts, many of whom provide information on protected areas from their respective

regions. This is supplemented by correspondence, literature research and discussions with scientists and land managers from around the world.

PADU also depends for much of its information on groups and individuals outside the official conservation agencies, especially botanists, ornithologists and other local naturalists who have first hand knowledge of the current status of protected areas in any country.

Contacts are asked to complete standard forms, one for each protected area, but the unit is also keen to receive original documentation, such as management plans, maps, scientific papers and species lists. These are useful both to extract additional facts and to provide more detailed records when required.

The information is stored on computer in two ways:

(1) Basic information on each area, including its name, country, its size, year of establishment and biogeographical province¹. In the future, we will also be able to categorise areas according to habitat type, and thereby be able to calculate and monitor the percentage area of the world's protected habitats.

(2) Additional information on individual protected areas is stored as a flexible word processing document, comprising sections on date of establishment, legal protection, area, geographical location, physical features, vegetation and fauna (including threatened and noteworthy species), cultural heritage, conservation management (including staffing and local administration), visitor facilities, scientific research and facilities, local population, disturbances, deficiencies and management problems and references. In this form, the documents can be readily checked and added to when new material arrives at the unit.

If you are interested in helping us, or would like to know more about our work, please write to: the Protected Areas Data Unit, IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre, 219c, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, UK.

Reference

1. Udvardy, M.D.F. 1975. A classification of the biogeographical provinces of the world. IUCN Occasional Paper 18.

Sally Ward, PADU, 219c, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, CB3 0DL.

Rarities Committee for Sri Lanka. The Ceylon Bird Club has recently formed a Rarities Committee with Mr Thilo W. Hoffman as

Chairman. Visitors to Sri Lanka are asked to send full details of any unusual records to: The Ceylon Bird Club, P.O.Box 11, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Checklists of Indian Birds. We have recently received three Indian checklists of birds of Maharashtra and Borivli National Park compiled by Humayun Abdulali, and of Delhi, Agra and Bharatpur by Humayun Abdulali and Jamshed D. Panday. These comprehensive checklists are accompanied by species' status and are invaluable for visiting birdwatchers. Details on how to obtain copies are given on an insert enclosed with this bulletin.

General Plea for Assistance to Vietnamese Ornithologists.

Vietnam has long been considered a biological treasure-house, being home for a spectacular diversity of large mammals, primates, and endemic avifauna. After a long period of devastating war, Vietnam is actively rebuilding its country, and is seeking international assistance in this effort. The government has given very high priority to evaluating and conserving its remnant and ever-threatened natural resources - its forests, rivers, wetlands, and wildlife.

Seven ornithologists are actively involved in doing systematic surveys throughout the country to assess the status of up to 800 bird species known to occur there. They are split into two teams - one for wetlands, the other for forests. These teams are part of a government-sponsored resource inventory, a nationwide programme with 300 scientists participating.

New data on previously unknown or rare species including pheasants and waterbirds are beginning to emerge from their early efforts. For example, seven significant waterbird colonies have been located in the country, most of which are deep in the mangrove or Melaleuca forests of the southern Minh Hai Province. Several of these colonies are the most important breeding sites for various species which have been virtually extirpated throughout south-east Asia.

During a recent visit to Vietnam, I was impressed with the enormity of the environmental problems faced by the country, but also with the zeal and dedication with which her people were beginning to rectify environmental woes. They are keenly interested in setting aside protected natural areas for rare and endangered wildlife, and beginning appropriate management of these areas.

With their ambitious effort the Vietnamese need a tremendous amount of assistance from foreign sources. Having

virtually no information exchange with the West for over 15 years, the few scientists there are working in an intellectual vacuum, lacking all specialized literature and even basic reference materials.

There is a simple and effective way that concerned individuals can help these Vietnamese scientists. They are eager to receive books, literature, and periodicals on ornithological research from throughout the world, as well as materials on resource conservation, natural areas protection and management, and endangered species preservation. I would like to ask OBC members to consider providing anything which might help, including back issues of journals and magazines (which you might even be considering throwing away), general reference books and articles, or specialized publications. These materials can be in English, German or French.

Our organization, the W.W. Brehm Fund for International Bird Conservation, based in West Germany, has agreed to serve as the "communication link" with the Vietnamese. We have established a diplomatic shipping service from Bonn, Germany, directly to the German Embassy in Hanoi, Vietnam. This service is extremely important, as materials sent directly often never arrive.

We can expect to hear more about the numerous biological treasures in that little-known land, now that communication channels have been opened. This is indeed very exciting for the future of Asian ornithology. I hope you will consider assisting our Vietnamese colleagues.

Charles S. Luthin, Conservation Director, W.W. Brehm Fund and Chairman, ICBP/IWRB Specialist Group on Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills, Vogelpark Walsrode, 3030 Walsrode, West Germany.

Any person or organisation interested in sending materials for the Vietnamese can either send them direct to Charles Luthin at the above address or to Rod Martins, 75 Stafford Street, Norwich, UK. from where items will then be forwarded to West Germany. Items will also be collected (and then forwarded) at the Club's AGM in London on 14 December. (Eds).

Wetlands in East Asia - A Preliminary Review and Inventory.

This report is the first to cover the Wetlands of the Indomalayan realm and parts of the Eastern Palearctic. In total, 488 sites are listed in 21 countries. Each country is introduced by a brief section describing, in general terms, the

conservation situation and the known status of wetlands and their birds. This is followed by specific information on each wetland site, where this is available. The reader will at once notice that for some countries the coverage is good, whilst for others, the accounts have barely scratched the surface. The report successfully shows the current state of knowledge of the wetlands in Asia and dramatically highlights the gaps. As a working inventory, its publication represents an open challenge to those with an interest in wetlands to add to the currently available information. The report is available from the International Council for Bird Preservation, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, U.K., price £4.00 inc. postage.

Asian Wetlands Inventory

Following ICBP's publication on "Wetlands in East Asia - A Preliminary Review and Inventory", IUCN, IWRB and ICBP have now joined their efforts in a two year project to develop a more detailed inventory of wetlands in southern and eastern Asia - from Pakistan to China, Japan, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. This new inventory will be developed as part of a wetland data base at IUCN's Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge, England, and will culminate in the publication of a Directory of Asian Wetlands - a summary of the information available in the data base at that time, giving full consideration to all wetland attributes. Thereafter, new information on Asian wetlands will be incorporated into the data base and will be available, in its updated form, for use by national and international agencies.

As International Co-ordinator, I would be very pleased to provide further information to anyone wishing to participate.

Derek A. Scott; I.W.R.B., Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BX, UK.

Interwader - correct P.O. Box. Please note the correct P.O. Box for the Interwader coordinator is P.O. Box 10769 not 19769. We apologise for this error and urge anyone planning to visit wetlands in Asia this winter to contact Duncan Parish and David Wells, Interwader project, P.O. Box 10769, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Full details were given in the first OBC Bulletin.

Bangkok Bird Club. The Bangkok Bird Club publishes a monthly bulletin and organises regular meetings and field trips. The bulletin includes news of recent observations and is sent airmail to members outside Thailand. If you would like to join please send your cheque or money order for US\$ 5 (or equivalent)

to M. R. Parcharjakorn Voravan, 656 Friendship Village, Sukhumvit 77, Bangkok 10260, Thailand.

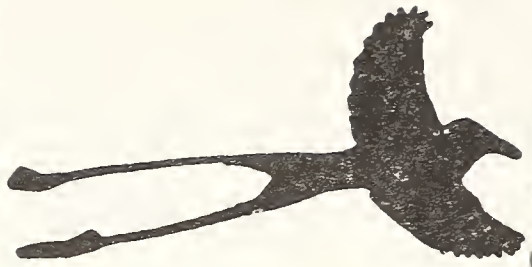
Chiang Mai Pheasant Symposium. The Third International Pheasant Symposium is being held from 25th-28th January 1986 in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand. Delegates are expected from most Asian countries including China and topics covered amongst many others will include the status of pheasants in Indonesia and the Philippines and recent work on the Western Tragopan and Cheer Pheasant. For more information, write to: Keith Howman, Symposium Convenor, Ashmere, Felix Lane, Shepperton, Middlesex, UK.

New Indonesian Bird Bulletin. With increasing ornithological activity in the country, the Ornithological Society of Indonesia is gradually becoming re-established, although it currently has neither an up-to-date membership list, nor regular meetings. However, in May 1985 the society launched a scientific bulletin (KUKILA) specific to Indonesia. Its principle objective is the publication of recent ornithological records from the region, extending from Sumatra in the west to Irian Jaya in the east.

KUKILA (an ancient Javanese word for bird) will include up-to-date annotated checklists for selected reserves, sites and islands, papers on distributional changes, descriptive features on individual endemics, notes on migration, formal notice of recent records, reviews of recent literature etc.. The first issue was 28 pages in length and included a checklist of the Cibodas Nature Reserve in Java, which is very often the first locality for birdwatchers to visit in Indonesia. Similarly, the second issue describes the birds of Pulau Dua, an island reserve in Java famous for its breeding colony of large wading birds. Future issues will venture further afield outside Java. Contributions for publication are welcomed.

The subscription rate for KUKILA is \$2.50 per issue, inclusive of surface mail (add \$1.00 if you require airmail). The minimum rate is \$10.00 for four issues, but it is recommended that, in view of the costs of overseas remittances, subscriptions are for the first 8 issues. Bank drafts should be made out to Bank Dagang Negara, Hotel Borobodur branch, Jakarta, Indonesia, in favour of "Voice of Nature" Account No. 1.1.01035, adding \$2.50 for bank charges.

However, making bank drafts is tedious. For the present (initially up to the end of 1985), it may be simpler to send a personal cheque in your own currency, crossed and made payable



Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed reports. We urge that full details be supplied to relevant regional organisations in due course.

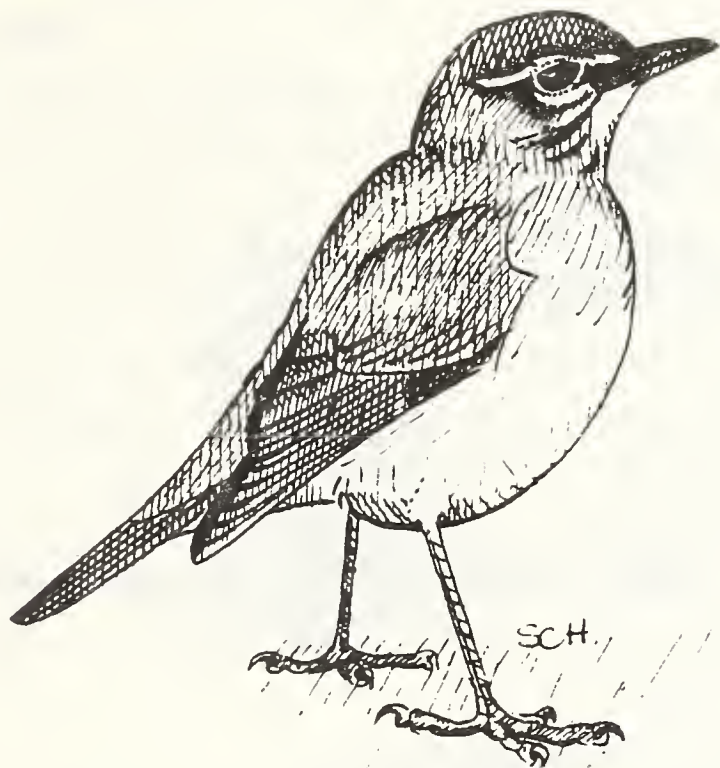
PAKISTAN

A single Mew Gull Larus canus in 1st summer plumage was recorded at Khinjur lake marshes on 4 April 1984 (CR, RG). Sightings of Western Tragopan Tragopan melanocephalus in May 1984 in the Kaghan valley and the Duber valley, Indus Kholstan confirmed that the species continues to survive in these two areas. The following resident species were all new for the Kaghan valley in June 1984: Wedge-tailed Pigeon Treron sphenura and Grey-winged Blackbird Turdus boulboul at Mahandri (CR, RG) and Speckled Wood Pigeon Columba hodgsonii and Golden-spectacled Warbler Seiurus burkii at Qaidr Gali (RG); only the Grey-winged Blackbirds were proved to be breeding. In early autumn 1984 Pakistan was the host of the first Rufous-necked Stint Calidris ruficollis for the north-west region of the Indian sub-continent. On 20 July, 2 in full breeding plumage were seen on the shore of the Habb Dam reservoir, c20 miles north of Karachi (RWP). On the 14 and 18 August, 3 in partial breeding plumage were seen at the mouth of the Habb river, c25 miles west of Karachi (NVZ). Also, a Bewick's Swan Cygnus columbianus probably of the east Siberian race (jankowskii) frequented Haleji lake, c45 miles north-east of Karachi for most of January 1985, occasionally visiting the nearby Hadierio Lake (TR).

INDIA

There were several interesting 1984/1985 winter records from South India. Four Kashmir Flycatchers Ficedula subrubra near Ootacamund on 8 February were almost certainly wintering (NR). One was also seen here in early 1984 (CR, RG). Also in the Western Ghats was a single Chestnut-winged Cuckoo Clamator coromandus near Munnar on 31 January (NR). Five Sand Martins Riparia riparia were at Ranganthitoo, near Mysore on 15 February (NR) and a single Eye-browed Thrush Turdus obscurus at Point Calimere on 23 January (SH). Further north, Bharatpur produced a Plain Leaf-Warbler Phylloscopus neglectus on 12 March (SM), and a single male Pied Harrier Circus melanoleucos between

Dudhwa and Naini Tal, Uttar Pradesh on 16 March (SM) was unusual, as was a Red-throated Pipit Anthus cervinus at Dudhwa on the same day (NJ, DB). Three Short-billed Minivets Pericrocotus brevirostris above Naini Tal on 18 March (SM) were the first recorded west of Nepal, as was a Black-faced Bunting Emberiza spodocephala at Corbett National Park on 22 March (SM). Also at Corbett was a single Smoky Warbler Phylloscopus fulgiventis on 22 March (SM) with a male White-tailed Rubythroat Erithacus pectoralis of the eastern race (tschebalewi) the previous day (RS). Both records are west of the previously published range, although the latter has been reported at least twice from this locality in January 1981 (JW) and January 1982 (CR).



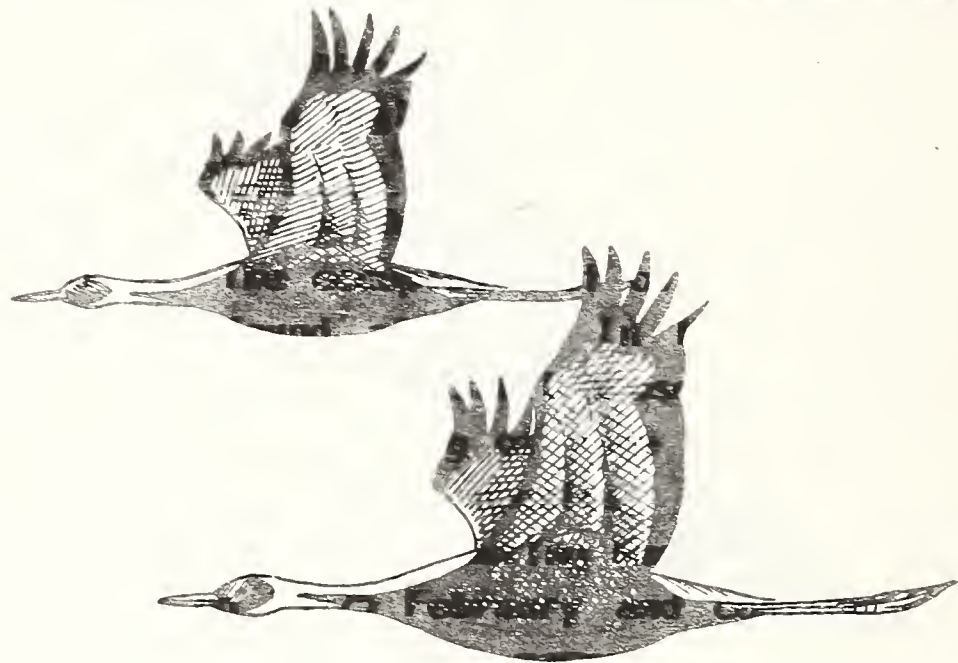
Eye-browed Thrush Turdus obscurus

CHINA

There were several good winter records from Emel Shan, Sichuan early this year, with: two Bull-headed Shrikes Lanius bucephalus and a single female Tristram's Bunting Emberiza tristrami on the 10 January, up to 10 Eurasian Siskins Carduelis spinus on 10-11 January and up to 15 Chinese Buntings Latoucheornis siemsseni on the 7-10 January. Eurasian Siskins were also recorded from Dali, Yunnan on 9 February. About 2000 Red-crested Pochards Netta rufina were on Lake Er Hai on 4 February and one, possibly two Steppe Eagles Aquila rapax nipalensis on the 1 & 4 February. A single Frigatebird sp. Fregata, possibly Lesser F. ariel was seen inland along a river near Jian Yang, N.W. Fukien on 16 December, 1984 (UO).

The Cambridge Ornithological Expedition to China based at

Beldaihe, c200 miles east of Beijing near Qinghuandao on the Bay of Bottai, made several interesting observations. Four Crane Grus species were recorded during their counts, primarily during late March and early April. Totals for each species were: Common Crane G. grus 4409, Siberian Crane G. leucogeranus 652, Hooded Crane G. monacha 309, Red-crowned Crane G. japonensis 244. The Siberian Crane count represents c50% of the total Chinese wintering population and c40% of the known world population. Also noted were 2607 Bean Geese Anser fabalis and 50 Swan Geese Anser cygnoides. Between 18 March & 16 April a single male Steller's Eider Polysticta stelleri, possibly the second for China, was seen, and 11 Eastern White Storks Ciconia c. boyciana.



CR.

Hooded Crane Grus monacha

During the last week of March 132 Great Bustards Otis tarda were counted, much lower numbers than were recorded here in the late 1940s. Other interesting records from Beldaihe included the following: one imm. male Harlequin Duck Histrionicus histrionicus from 6 April-5 June, c350 Little Curlew Numenius minutus between 18 April & 19 May, 2 Asian Dowitchers Limnodromus semipalmatus on 18 April plus one 28 April, 19+ Saunders' Gulls Larus saundersi between 2 April & 22 May, 2 Speckled Reed Warblers Acrocephalus sorgophilus on the 31 May, 15+ Yellow-bellied Tits Parus venustus between 21 April & 19 May, and large numbers of Long-tailed Rosefinch Uragus sibiricus. Pechora Pipits Anthus gustavi were seen on passage and four pairs were discovered probably breeding.

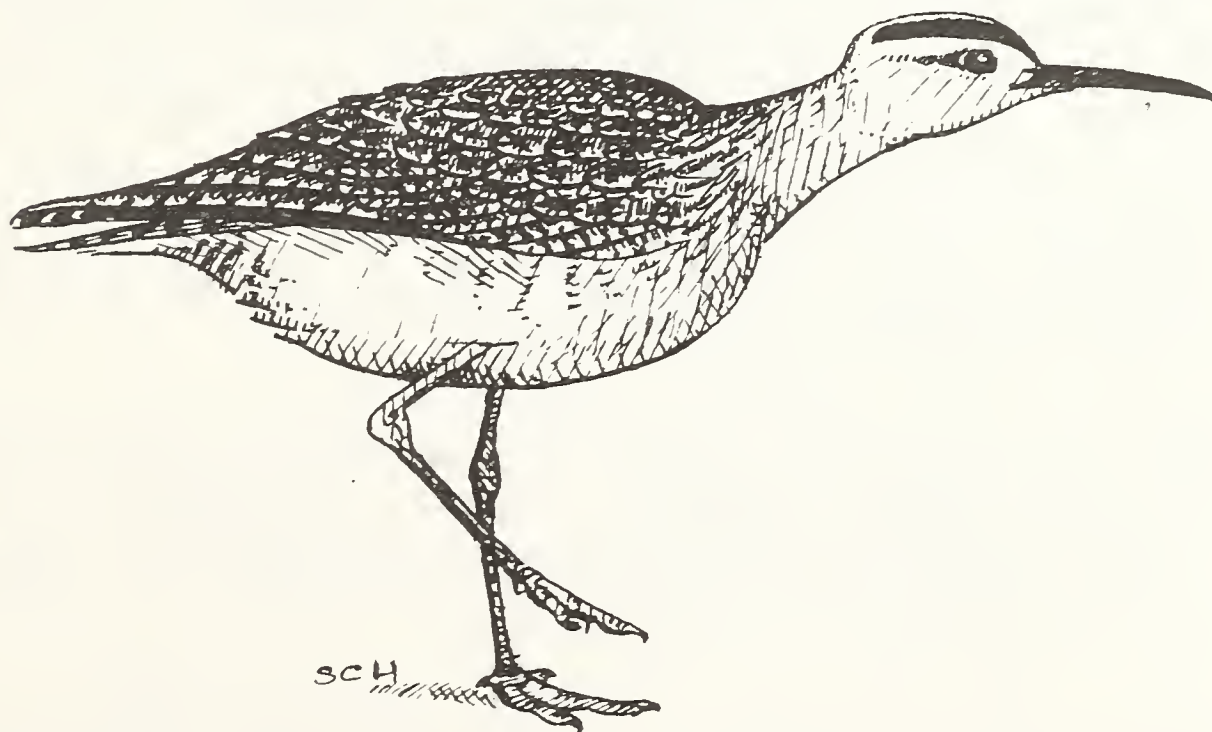
In Sichuan Snowy-cheeked Laughing Thrush Garrulax sukatschowi was recorded at Jiuzhaigou, outside its previously known range in Gansu, with 2 on 2 May (KBT), 4 on 10 June & 1 on 11 June (MB). The discovery of 3 singing males and at least

one female Rufous-headed Robin Erithacus ruficeps on 9-12 June (MB) is only the third locality from which the species has been recorded. Black-necked Cranes Grus nigricollis were twice noted near Lhasa, with 2 on 21 January and 21 on 22 January (UO), plus a first record at Qinghai Hu (Koko Nor), Qinghai, on 28 May (MB). A single singing male Speckled Reed Warbler was seen at Beijing on 2 June. If breeding, this would represent a range extension in Hebei province. (MB)

[Correction to the opening line of China Recent Reports in the last Bulletin. It should have read: "The Birdquest Tour to Qinghai, Heilongjiang and Sichuan"].

HONG KONG

1985 spring migration was excellent. Winter visitors such as Dalmatian Pelican Pelecanus crispus and Saunders' Gull stayed until mid-April and overlapped with the early spring migrants which appeared in late March. Spring wader passage was good with 50 Asian Dowitchers, 12 Nordmann's Greenshanks Tringa guttifer & 5 Spoon-billed Sandpipers Eurynorhynchus pygmeus at Mai Po Marshes on the 13 April, the day of the "Big Bird Race" (DM). A single Oriental Plover Charadrius veredus was seen at Mai Po on the 14 April (UO). The first Little Curlews for Hong Kong were seen at Mai Po Marshes on 23 April with up to 80 on 28 April. In May up to 260 Grey-tailed Tattlers Heteroscelus



Little Curlew Numenius minutus

brevipes were recorded. Chinese Goshawks Accipiter soloensis were seen in record numbers, with 600 on 28 April. Other April rarities included Japanese Yellow Buntings Emberiza sulphurata,

Rosy Minivets Pericrocotus roseus & White-bellied Pigeon Treron sieboldii. May produced the first 'good' Streaked Shearwater Calonectris leucomelas for Hong Kong & a Horned Lark Eremophila alpestris was seen on the 15th. The latter, although the first record for Hong Kong, may well have been an escape (DM). June was quiet, but July got off to a good start with Roseate Tern Sterna dougalli & Bridled Tern S. anaethetus being added to the Hong Kong list. Both species were found at a breeding colony of Black-naped Terns S. sumatrana. The Roseates were almost certainly breeding and the Bridled probably were (per DM).

MALAYSIA

There were several interesting breeding records in 1985. At Kuala Lumpur nests of Ferruginous Babbler Trichastoma bicolor and Black Magpie Platysmus leucopterus were found in early May and a nest of the Large Wren-Babbler Napothera macrodactyla in early June (FL). The occupied nest of Wallace's Hawk-Eagle Spizaetus nanus was found at Pasoh in May (RT). A Masked Finfoot Heliopais personata was still present on the River Krau in Pahang State at the beginning of June (FL). Fraser's Hill held a number of interesting species, including 4 calling Rusty-naped Pittas Pitta oatesi during March & April (FL, AL), Red-throated Pipits on 23-25 February and confirmed sightings of Marbled Wren-Babbler Napothera marmorata (DY). The latter species has also been reported recently from the Cameron Highlands (DBr). At Kuala Gula, on the 1 March there were c1300 Black-tailed Godwits Limosa limosa, 8 Asian Dowitchers and 15 Pied Imperial Pigeons Ducula bicolor (NR, FL). In East Malaysia the nest of a Jambu Fruit Dove Ptilinopus jambu was found at 5,200' in Kinabalu National Park in July (FL); previous records are from November to June.

Due to a shortage of space we have been forced to leave out several country accounts. These will appear in the next issue. Records were collated by Craig Robson from observations and contributions by the following:

R. Bijlsma, M. Beaman (Birdquest Ltd), D. Bishop, D. Bryant, A. Collins, R. Grimmett, S. Harrap, N. Jons, King Bird Tours, F. Lambert, A. Long, S. Madge, D. Melville, U. Olsson, R. Passburg, N. Redman, T. Roberts, C. Robson, R. Singh, R. Thomas, R. Toy, D. Wells, J. Wolstencroft, D. Yong, N.P. van Zalinge.

ADVICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

THE BULLETIN OF THE ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB provides a forum for news, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews, and preliminary or interim publication of studies on Oriental Birds by contributors from all parts of the world. Publication of interim results in the OBC Bulletin does not preclude or pre-empt publication of final results as journal papers either by the OBC or elsewhere. Contributions are considered by the Editor and an Editorial committee, with contributions accepted subject to editing and refereeing where appropriate. Copies of new journals, books or reports for mention or review are always welcomed. Contributions or enquiries should be sent to the Editor, Oriental Bird Club, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds., SG19 2DL, UK.

PREPARATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Whilst the Editor is always pleased to discuss possible contributions with potential authors, and to advise on preparation, it would be helpful if the following guidelines could be adhered to:

1. Articles These should be written clearly, preferably typed, on one side of the page, with all lines double-spaced, leaving wide margins. Articles for publication in the Bulletin should be no longer than 2000 words, accompanied in all cases by a concise summary. Scientific names should appear at the first mention of each species or, if all species appear in a table, they may be given there instead. Scientific names should, where possible, follow King et al. 1975 'A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia'.

Any tables to accompany articles should be prepared on separate pieces of paper, and be thoroughly checked. Titles of tables should be self-explanatory. Diagrams should be clearly drawn, in ink, with appropriate captions given on an accompanying piece of paper, ideally to fit a single column width of 11cm. References should be cited in alphabetical order at the end of the paper in the same style used in this Bulletin.

It would be helpful if two copies of each contribution could be submitted.

2. Recent reports These should follow the format in the current edition of the OBC Bulletin, and be sent to C.Robson, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG19 2DL, UK.

3. News/Information Typed or hand-written contributions should be sent to R.Grimmett, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG 19 2DL, UK.



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Illustrations: Martin Woodcock: front cover, p.13; R. Grimmett: p.5, p.9, p.15; Craig Robson: p.6, p.38; Simon Harrap: p.37, p.39. Edited by: T.M. Reed and Richard Grimmett. Editorial Committee: M.Cocker, R. Fairbank, R. Grimmett, T. Inskipp, R. Martins, N. Redman, C. Robson.

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