**AN ANNOTATED CHECKLIST OF HONG KONG BIRDS**

**Introduction**

While writing the Latest Sightings section on my Birding Hong Kong website, I decided that a checklist containing all the data that I needed would be very useful. Such information is available but is spread out between various publications, both online and offline. What I needed, I felt, was a kind of one-stop-shop with all the information available in one place. So I began compiling this annotated checklist.

Soon after I started, I decided to make the checklist publicly available on my website as a reference for others who might also find the information useful. I have therefore tried to make the checklist as succinct as possible without sacrificing clarity.

I should stress that there is little that is original here. My main task over the several months that it has taken me to compile the checklist, has been to bring together available information from various sources. As such, I am indebted to a number of different bodies, and these are specified below.

**Format**

The checklist is in the form of an Excel file containing seven columns: English names; Latin names; Principal Status; Occurrence; Distribution; Notes.

The taxonomy and scientific nomenclature used follows that of the International Ornithological Congress (IOC). This is the taxonomy adopted (for the most part) by the HKBWS Records Committee, which in turn is that used by the compilers of the annual HK Bird Reports. The species list in the checklist follows the taxonomy in IOC World List 2018.2. (Although IOC World List 2019.1 has recently become available, it may be some time before the changes are officially adopted by the HKBWS).

**English Name**

This is the name currently in use on the latest Hong Kong List available from the HKBWS website and in the latest HK Bird Report (2016) and HK Bird Report 2017 which is in preparation. For the most part, it follows the English names in IOC World List 2018.2, but there may be some differences based upon regional preferences. In some cases, other taxonomies have adopted different names, some of which are in popular use e.g. Light-vented Bulbul for Chinese Bulbul. These are mentioned in the Notes section.

**Latin Name**

This follows IOC World List 2018.2. If a species has different subspecies, I have used the Latin name of the race (or races) that occur in Hong Kong. If the nominate race occurs in Hong Kong, I have abbreviated the specific name e.g. *Anser a. albifrons* for Greater White-fronted Goose.

**Principal Status**

Key as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| R | Resident |
| W | Winter |
| M | Migrant (spring & autumn) |
| SpM | Spring migrant |
| AM | Autumn migrant |
| Su | Breeding summer visitor |
| Vagrant | Vagrant/Rare visitor |
| O | Occasional |

Note that the species on the Hong Kong list are placed in five categories, as follows:

**Category I**: species that have been recorded in an apparently wild state in HK.

**Category IIA**: southeast China breeding species, the currently established HK  
breeding population of which is considered to derive from captive stock, but which  
probably occurred in HK prior to habitat changes.

**Category IIB**: extralimital species that, although originally introduced to HK by  
man, maintain a regular feral breeding stock without necessary recourse to further  
introduction.

**Category IIC**: previously established feral species.

**Category III**: species for which all published HK records are considered likely to relate  
to birds that have escaped or have been released from captivity.

In the Checklist, all species in the Principal Status column are in Category I unless otherwise delineated as Category II species. (Category III species are on a different page of the Excel file – accessed at the bottom left of the Excel page).

**Occurrence**

This is the heart of the checklist. My main concern here is the current status of the species in question, and I have drawn extensively on the information available in recent bird reports. I am indebted to all those involved in their compilation, especially from 2007 onwards. I am also interested in the current status of species c.f. their status in the past and make extensive reference to the records in The Avifauna of Hong Kong. This was published in 2001 and details the status of birds in Hong Kong up to and including 1998.

In line with recent HK Bird Reports, this column gives details of seasonal occurrence, extreme dates of migrants, and high counts. It also aims to summarise changes in the status of species since the Avifauna. Those requiring more detailed information are referred to the Avifauna and to Hong Kong Bird Reports after 1998. The latter are available as free downloads (up to 2014) from the HKBWS website.

A qualification: first and last dates of migrants are of interest, but you are, for example, unlikely to see a Dusky Warbler in Hong Kong on 6th September (the earliest date on record). I have therefore, on occasion, referred to general peak periods for some migrants to give the prospective visitor a more realistic idea of when they are likely to encounter certain species.

To be as up-to-date as possible, I have included records up to the end of 2018. However, the latest published HKBR is for the year 2016. Many records of scarce/rare birds in 2018 (and some in 2017) are not yet “official”. Except where I am confident of their validity, I have entered such records in square brackets and not included them in the accumulated record totals.

I have used a number of abbreviations in this column, as well as in the following Distribution column. These are defined in the table below:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| CP | Country Park | MPNR | Mai Po Nature Reserve |
| HK | Hong Kong | NT | New Territories |
| HKBR | Hong Kong Bird Report | TPK | Tai Po Kau |
| KARC | Kadoorie Agricultural Research Centre | SK | Shek Kong (e.g. SK catchwater, SK Airfield Road) |
| HKWP | Hong Kong Wetland Park | WC | Waterbird Count |
| KFBG | Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden | Ist-w | First-winter |
| LMC | Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Wetland Mitigation Area | 1st-s | First-summer |
| LNEC | Lions Nature Education Centre, Sai Kung |  |  |

Locations referred to follow those in Hong Kong Bird Reports:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Deep Bay area | the Deep Bay inter-tidal area and the area of marshes and fishponds from Tsim Bei Tsui to Hoo Hok Wai including Hong Kong Wetland Park (HKWP), Nam Sang Wai, Kam Tin, Mai Po (MPNR), San Tin, Lok Ma Chau (LMC) and Ma Tso Lung |
| northwest New Territories  (nw NT) | Tuen Mun to Yuen Long, the Deep Bay and Long Valley (LV) areas, Kam Tin valley and hills north of the Lam Tsuen Valley |
| northeast New Territories (ne NT) | the region to the northeast of the Fanling Highway including Starling Inlet and Pat Sin Leng and Plover Cove CPs |
| north New Territories  (n NT) | both northwest and northeast NT |
| central New Territories  (c NT) | Tai Lam, Tai Mo Shan, Shing Mun and Kam Shan CPs, the Lam Tsuen Valley and Tai Po Kau (TPK) |
| Southeast New Territories  (se NT) | Lion Rock, Ma On Shan and Clearwater Bay CPs, Kowloon Peak, the Ho Chung Valley and Sai Kung town |
| Lam Tsuen | the whole Lam Tsuen valley |
| Kowloon | the built-up areas of Kowloon west, north, south and east from Lai Chi Kok to Wong Tai Sin and to Kwun Tong, and the Kowloon peninsula. |
| Hong Kong Island  (HK Island) | the whole of Hong Kong Island |
| Outlying Islands | Lantau, Lamma and Cheung Chau, plus Tung Ping Chau and Po Toi. |

The use of the word ***widespread*** indicates that the species occurs in suitable habitat in most of the aforementioned regions, including HK Island and the outlying islands.

**Distribution**

This column puts the birds that occur in Hong Kong into a wider global perspective. Firstly, I delineate the zoogeographical zones of the species, followed by the number of races of the species involved, with particular reference to China, and beyond that to east and southeast Asia. In this, I have followed the IOC list.

In writing this column, I have drawn not only on the IOC checklist, but on the relevant sections in HBW online. This subscription-only site is a very important, and very accessible reference. It is more detailed than the IOC and has the advantage of including maps for all the species it covers.

Its taxonomy differs from the IOC in many respects, and where I think the differences are worth mentioning, I have made an entry in the fifth column “Notes”.

With regard to checklists , there are two other taxonomies in wide use internationally. These are Clements and Howard & Moore. Clements is influential as it is used by Cornell in its increasingly popular e-bird programme. A comparative table of the different taxonomies can be found at the IOC website: <https://www.worldbirdnames.org> .

In this column, I have also included the conservation status of species, based on the IUCN Red List. A status other than ‘Least Concern’ is indicated by the use of the abbreviations below:

|  |
| --- |
| **IUCN Red List** |
| CR | Critically Endangered |
| EN | Endangered |
| VU | Vulnerable |
| NT | Near-threatened |

**Notes**

Basically, this is a column where I have included anything I consider to be of relevant interest.

It includes:

alternative English names for the species involved if these are in common usage elsewhere;

taxonomic points of note, especially with regard to recent splits in the Oriental region;

taxonomic differences between HBW and the IOC;

reference to important papers concerning the species involved ( note that most papers of first records for Hong Kong are included in the relevant Hong Kong Bird Reports. I have not referenced them in the Notes column except where there are details of particular interest);

points with regard to the status of certain species (especially Cat. IIA species);

errata in previous published records.

**Citation**

Diskin, D. A. 2019. *An Annotated Checklist of Hong Kong Birds*. Birding Hong Kong.

https://www.birdinghongkong.com

David Diskin

March 2019