**AN ANNOTATED CHECKLIST OF HONG KONG BIRDS 2020.1 –**

**JANUARY 2020 UPDATE**

**Notes on the new update**

I first published **An Annotated Checklist of Hong Kong Birds** in early 2019; this dealt with the birds that had occurred in Hong Kong up until the end of 2018, although omitting a number of records that had not yet been assessed for 2018. This update covers records until the end of 2019, including a number from 2018 that have now been assessed and accepted. First records accepted in 2018 are Hen Harrier, Silver Oriole, Buff-throated Warbler and Lapland Longspur, bringing the total number of birds in Category I & II that have occurred in Hong Kong to 555.

A number of 2018 records (not firsts) are still under consideration and most 2019 rarities are still to be reviewed. I have included the unassessed records I am aware of in this latest update. These include five more potential first records for the territory: Collared Owlet, Chinese Grey Shrike, Fire-capped Tit, Wood Warbler and Western Yellow Wagtail. In the **Annotated Checklist**, these five records are blocked in pale blue; they are not yet part of the ‘official’ record. I have indicated additional unassessed rarities by typing them in a bold dark blue font; these too are unofficial records – indeed some of them are contentious and may end up being ‘not proven’.

I confess to not being entirely consistent here, as I have included certain rare reports in the official record. These are species which have been well-documented and conform to past patterns of occurrence. Two examples are the Black-necked Grebe at San Tin from 19 November to 15 December 2019, and the Japanese Night Heron at Pak Tam Chung from 28 November to 24 December 2019.

Finally, in this section, I repeat the following from the introduction to the first **Annotated Checklist**: ‘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.’

I should, however, add special thanks to Carrie Ma, the Recorder of the HKBWS, for responding so promptly to my requests for information about certain records in the 2017-2019 period.

**Format**

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

It follows the last updated checklist issued by the HKBWS in March 2019 – this can be found at <http://www.hkbws.org.hk/BBS/viewthread.php?tid=28249&extra=page%3D1> .

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 latest IOC World List (prepared after the updated HKBWS list) is labelled 2019.2. This IOC World List makes a number of taxonomic changes, particularly in the order of families.

I have chosen to wait until the HKBWS makes an official update to its list before adopting the order in IOC 19.2. but have made a couple of changes to the English and Latin names to conform to IOC 19.2.

**English Name**

This is the name currently in use on the latest Hong Kong List available from the HKBWS website. For the most part, it follows the English names in IOC World List 2019.2, 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 2019.2. 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 2016) 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.

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 | 1st-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**

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David Diskin

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