

Hi all.

Well, it's now been 2 weeks for us in the field and there sure have been some changes in that time.

As planned, we were to be in the field before lots of the Red Knots arrived to try and identify early arrivals of individual birds and again record percentages of *rogersi* and *piersmai* subspecies in the flocks. Red knot numbers have risen sharply from 189 birds on our first day to currently well over 7000. In the last couple of days we have seen our first Broome colour banded Red Knots, more should arrive over the next week or so. We do have several Great Knot and Bar-tailed Godwits from Broome and New Zealand that we saw last season and even a few that we have now seen here 3 years in a row.

The arrivals of Shorebirds seem to be a little earlier this year and that seems to be consistent with recordings of migrants departing Roebuck Bay and also arrivals in Hong Kong. Not surprising it is, so far, a lot warmer this year and leaves on what trees we can find are emerging early.

One of the highlights of the colour band re-sightings was a Great Knot seen in Roebuck bay on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April and we observed it in what is left of Bohai Bay on the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup>. As well as the colour banded individuals we have seen a selection of Engraved lag flags and plenty of plain flags from throughout the flyway. Interesting combinations have included a Blue over Orange flagged Grey Plover from Kyushu, Japan and a Dunlin originally banded in Sakhalin. We have also recorded 2 individually marked Red Knots from Chukotka. Another individually recognisable shorebird we have seen a few times is a leucistic Grey Plover. The bird is predominantly white with a few pale brown markings on the wings and dusky brown armpits. It has been nicknamed 'albo-plover'.

Destruction of the habitats has not slowed down at all and has even sped up in places. Zuidong, one of our survey areas that was being destroyed last year still has a small amount of habitat at one end of the construction site. It is not known for how long as mud pumping boats are still busy pumping mud. The areas where shorebirds previously roosted are now desert-like after having been filled with the mud from the mudflats and are now drying out waiting for industry to start building. With most of the offshore work at Zuidong complete where would the now redundant mud sucking boats go? Beipu of course!!!! Beipu is yet another of our sites 4km long and so far we have not been able to access the site due to the many trucks erecting pipes and walls.

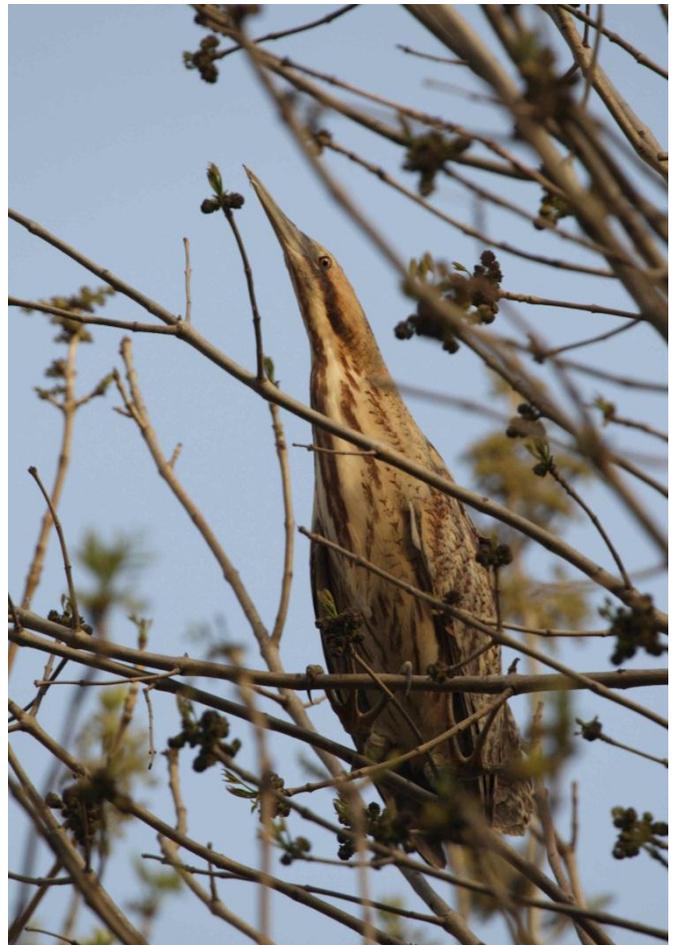
Away from the mud flats birding has been good and we have recorded a few species not seen in the whole 2 months last year. A single Baer's Pochard was picked out amongst the ducks at Caofei Lake and Goldcrest and Eurasian Woodcock have been seen along the sea wall at Nanpu. The local park in Nanpu town (where Adrian got told off for taking photos last year) has been good for migrants and we have visited it briefly most days. Pallas's Warbler and Red-flanked Bluetail have been recorded everyday as well as a couple of surprises. On the 16<sup>th</sup> April we walked in and Matt looked up and exclaimed 'check it out, that plastic bag looks like a bittern ... oh, wait a minute!' and sure enough it was a Eurasian Bittern perched high in a tree looking rather confused and annoyed it had chosen this small concrete area with a few trees and loads of people.



Bar-tailed Godwit, 1YYLY, this female bird has been seen at both Zuidong and Nampu. This individual was also seen here in 2010.



Like last year it is still very difficult to predict where the tide will get to on the mudflats.



Since the plastic bag had been discovered it was twice as shy.