

Hi all

Undoubted highlight of the week was the arrival of Chris to add a splash of maturity to the team. Unfortunately tho we have to say goodbye to Jan who left on Friday. We look forward to seeing the photos in due course.

Red Knots continue to arrive in small numbers with just over 25 000 now present. The majority of these are at Nanpu with smaller numbers at both Zuidong and Beipu. Broome birds are still notable for their absence. A few new colour-banded and leg-flagged individuals have been found in the last few days and we are hoping for an influx over the next few days as we enter a series of tides perfect for scanning in the morning light. Word from Roebuck Bay suggests that many of them have left so we wish them well on their journey.

Curlew Sandpiper numbers have further increased recently as have numbers of other small species such as Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Broad-billed Sandpiper. Little Stints are being recorded on a daily basis and up to 4 Nordmann's Greenshanks are now present at Nanpu, often roosting alongside 'Albo-plover'. 200 Asian Dowitchers were counted at Zuidong and the Long-billed Dowitcher continues to feed alongside Snipe at the freshwater wetland. Early this week strong winds during one afternoon revealed an expanse of mud in one of the shallow saltpans. For this one afternoon only it was host to the impressive sight of around 5000 feeding Black-tailed Godwit!

Although the majority of Broome birds are yet to arrive we are still seeing plenty of flags and bands to look at, particularly on Red Knot and mostly from New Zealand. 3 more Chukotka individuals have been seen this week bringing the season total to a minimum of 10 different birds. This is great data for a region that bands relatively few birds and just continues to highlight the huge importance that this site is to the majority of the flyway population of Red Knots. Several Curlew Sandpipers have been recorded with engraved flags from Hong Kong as well as birds from Victoria, Broome, South Australia and Queensland. Flags have now been recorded on 13 species and we have passed the 1500 flag sightings mark.

Early May is one of the best times for in the area for passerine migrants. Bluethroats and Siberian Rubythroats are regularly seen along the sea wall and Brown Shrikes have finally arrived. Numbers of Pallas's Warblers have dropped off a little but these have been replaced by Yellow-browed Warblers with over 100 present in the park one morning. Flycatchers are now regular with 6 species recorded so far. According to the books we have, Chinese (aka. Light-vented) Bulbul doesn't occur in this area. However, we see them daily around town and in the last few days flocks of up to 30 at various sites including groups migrating along the seawall at Nanpu. Another example of how under watched this area is. An unusual record in the park recently concerned a hedgehog! Unfortunately for the hedgehog it had fallen into a steep sided pond but luckily a) there was no water in the pond and b) Matt was on hand to jump the fence and lift it to freedom.

Look at that ... we managed to do an update without mentioning the hugely depressing habitat destruction and the disastrous outlook for the flyways birds! It can be easy to forget about when back home but when in the field seeing it all happen first-hand it is hard to see a future for this site. Oops, there goes the mildly positive update ... more next week!

We have written a limerick but can't seem to make the last line rhyme ... any suggestions?

**When the Knots reach Bohai they're in Luck
So much food into which they can tuck
With the industrial boom
It'll all be gone soon
Then all the Red Knots will be [in trouble?]**



'Lucky' the Hedgehog



'7H' one of several engraved Curlew Sandpipers seen from Broome.



Just like their name suggests, Common Stonechat have been numerous recently



Often found with Grey Plovers here is one of the 4 endangered Nordmann's Greenshanks.



Shellfishermen at Nanpu, there was another pile of sacks to the left and more to sort ... over 200 sacks in total!



Red Knots roosting in the salt ponds. This great roost site was made when the salt ponds were created by reclaiming mudflats back in 1974. Ironically, this was the first major habitat loss for Red Knots ... if only it was the last.