



Red and Great Knots feeding at Nanpu

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The weather this season has been amazing, as it was last year. We have only had a small amount of rain one evening and the temperature has been very warm. In previous years we have had a fair bit of rain and many foggy, smoggy mornings. However maybe we shouldn't talk too soon. This fine weather has allowed us some great scanning from the sea wall, where we do most of our resighting work either on incoming or outgoing tides while the birds are close enough to read colourband combinations, engraved leg flags (ELF) and score breeding plumage and abdominal profiles. Mornings are by far the best for observations as the sun is behind us.

Last year we mentioned that a "resort" was being built along the sea wall at our Beipu survey site. We had some concerns about this. Would the operators stop us visiting this area? Would they charge us to visit as the road had been upgraded and a boom gate installed? Would the resort attract many people causing yet more disturbance to the shorebirds? Or would the whole thing fall into the sea! This was our considered opinion. But surely the company putting money into the project would have considered this possibility? Maybe not. It was of little surprise (to us) when we saw the resort this season. As you will see from the images we don't have to worry about hordes of people visiting just yet.



The positive for us, is that part of the track to the sea wall has been upgraded to a concrete road and it now saves us some time to get to our site and is less bumpy and accessible even after heavy rain. However, we're not sure how long it will last!

Water levels are still high in the salt/shrimp ponds and we are not sure why this is the case. In previous years excluding last year, the water seemed to 'flow through' the salt pond complex. Ponds would be deep then shallow then deep again over the course of the season when we were here. The shallow ponds provided excellent feeding opportunities for a wide range of shorebirds. Species that primarily use freshwater habitats and the mudflat specialists would flock to these shallow ponds. They may only have been available for a day or two but when they were good they could be an amazing sight, see Appendix 3 here <http://globalflywaynetwork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/GFN-Bohai-Report-2013.pdf>

The deep water throughout the vast majority of the ponds complex has severely restricted foraging areas and opportunities. We would normally expect to see thousands of Stints, Curlew Sandpipers, Marsh Sandpipers and a wide range of other species but this is not the case this so far season.

As expected the birding has continued to be great.

Recently we received a message from Beijing birder Terry Townshend that he had made a quick visit to a site we call The Magic Wood. It's a small group of trees surrounded by buildings and fishponds. It has been amazing over the past few years, but one thing we have quickly learned here in China, is that you shouldn't get attached to a place as it most likely won't be around very long. The Magic Wood has been largely destroyed to make way for a large fish pond and now only has about ten standing trees left. Despite this, the birds still pour in there which is not surprising as even this tiny spot is a beacon of green in the vast, grey salt pond habitat. Terry mentioned that he had seen a Fujian Niltava there. This would be a new bird for both of our lists (not that we're listers of course!) and also new for our Luannan birding area. It was difficult to drive past the wood on the way to scan the knots the following morning, but as ever, time was of the essence. We hoped the Niltava had stayed overnight and would wait for us until the afternoon. Well luck was on our side and we were able to find it and it ended up staying four more days. While photographing the Niltava we discovered yet another Seicercus Warbler. This is now our fifth record of this type of warbler that is well out of its known range. This group of warblers are notoriously difficult to identify and all our records still remain in our bird log as 'Seicercus sp'.

Other non-shorebird highlights have been Northern Boobook Owl and Siberian Rubythroat at the Town Zoo. A few Amur Falcons and beautiful Pied Harriers have cruised over the mudflats and disturbed the knots and our scanning. But it's hard to get too annoyed as both species are stunning birds of prey.



Fujian Niltava (male)

© Adrian Boyle



Yet another unidentified Seicercus Warbler

© Adrian Boyle



Siberian Rubythroat (male)

©Adrian Boyle



Red Knots, Asian Dowitchers and a Broad-billed Sandpiper at Nanpu.

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Northern Boobook

© Adrian Boyle

So far we have recorded 1,200 colourbanded and flagged birds from 21 sites throughout this flyway on 13 different species. 275 of these are from the GFN colourbanding study.

Our total bird species seen so far this season is 169.

Chris and Adrian

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