

As you are aware due to COVID-19 the GFN-Australia/Netherlands team are not in Bohai this year.

We are, however, very lucky to have Kath Leung, 3 Beijing Forestry University students and our regular drivers (becoming scanners) Mr and Xiao Liu in situ collecting data for us.

Below are some updates from them, actual in the field looking at birds updates.

Thank you to them all for their hard work and this news.

There must be birders who wondered the same question that how many individual birds on earth now, have not been seen by a human being even with a remotest glimpse. And how many of them will remain so.

No long-distance migrators could avoid artificial encounterment let alone the airborne ones, but I on the other side, have just begun to know them.

Leg flags and rings travel at some speed as slow as letters between ancient lovers. How much eagerness dries out if they are missed? The eagerness of getting rid of burdens when they kick and rub their legs in vain.

I wished for some splendid events and interesting behaviours but seemed to have caught them in an awkward time, a part of their life-cycle with dull, repeated days. However, I know it's just there, what all birds do to "entertain" birders. How they time their landing to catch feasts at each station, how they refuel the fat tank quickly enough, how they see what we do to them...

What's going on under the feathers and the shore mud, is always new to me to think about.



Gao Chang is scanning while Xiao Guan and Entao screening off the strong wind to keep the telescope stable. A new scanning skill for the project. (Photo by Xiao Liu on 7-May)

Gao Chang

This is what Xiao Liu “tweeted” on his WeChat Moment on 20-May:

Fine weather to look at flocks of Red Knot with colour bands feeding on the mudflat. Although all of them are tinged with purple in my telescope, they still looked so happy and content, and I am very pleased.



The blue sky and the purple-tinged view through Xiao Liu’s telescope. (Photo by Xiao Liu on 20-May)

Xiao Liu getting in to the best position to scan (Photo by Guan Xianyu on 14-May)



Xiao Liu

Note from Chris; Hey Xiao Liu I’ll bring you a telescope without the purple tinge for next year.

Bird banding is like giving the bird a unique id card for us to study their migration and survival. The world is impacted by COVID-19 as 2020 kick started. Will the pandemic affect the migration of our feathered friends? Will they arrive on time? Any effect to their population? Or will they choose a different stop-over site to avoid human impact? The questions above led me to be a volunteer to help with the resighting project in Bohai Bay.

Our start time is dependent on the tide. Sometimes we are “lucky” to set off at 4am and enjoy sun rising from the salt ponds. (Photo by Wu Entao on 25-May)



Being able to read the id of an individual bird lead me to realise the big flock of birds on the mudflat is in fact composed by thousands of individual birds each being part of the chain and connection. How many of them will survive after this year migration? How do they decide when to depart from here? How does each individual relate to the bigger population? I suddenly feel thankful to the pandemic which enable myself to witness the spectacular migration of these birds. Yet, more questions aroused in my mind to be answered!

Besides working along the seawall, we also enjoyed some other wildlife around Nanpu.



Hedgehog wandering in bright daylight at Tree Lane (Photo by Wu Entao on 13-May)



Male Siberian Blue Robin at Eco Lodge (Photo by Wu Entao on 13-May)



Guan Xianyu trying to photograph the Siberian Blue Robin (Photo by Wu Entao on 13-May)



Bohai team 2020 from left to right: Xiao Liu, Guan Xianyu, Katherine Leung, Gao Chang and Wu Entao. (Photo by Wu Entao on 17-May)

Wu Entao

2020 is a memorable year for everyone. Back in late March, Jia Yifei contacted me about joining a shorebird resighting project in Nanpu. Fortunately, later in mid-April the policy on quarantine in Beijing has been easing off and I have no hesitation to say yes to the invitation. I have joined various bird surveys before but a survey to read flags and colour bands is a first for me.

We've learnt a few basic information about flags and colour bands from Katherine before the start of the work. Still when you start working in the field even telling left leg from right leg is not easy in the wind! Not to mention various other issues stopping us from reading the flags or bands such as legs in water, incorrect angle, poor light, mud on the flags and all the variations in flag colours: stained yellow looks orange, stained white looks yellow and faded red looks orange!

On 15-May, I saw a Red Knot carrying black-over-white engraved flag with a code "E?". The bird was far to start with but eventually getting closer and I was able to read the code as "EE". I took a photo of the bird and the flag and shared it on my social media and a friend reminded me that we've seen this bird back in May-2016 when I guide a bird watching tour to Nanpu. This is a touching moment to see an old friend again! Hope they have a safe journey and we'll meet again someday.



Red Knot EE from Chongming Dongtan (Photo by Guan Xianyu on 15-May)

We are amazed by the Bar-tailed Godwit JEB, now aged 21, visiting Nanpu year after year. (Photo by Guan Xianyu on 14-May)

Chris writes;

Indeed JEB is an old friend of us all.

He was banded 30-05-2000 aged 1 'in his first year of life', so born the arctic summer of 1999. He was given a metal band and a plain white band for a project initiated by Danny Rogers for his PHD. He was captured again 20-11-2006 and the white band was left in place and an engraved flag 'TN' was added. Then he was in our hands once again on 06-03-2012 the engraved flag TN was becoming faded and difficult to read so the engraved flag 'JEB' was put on in its place. So he was now JEB.

And he was seen in the field at Roebuck Bay and Nanpu – a lot. He has been recorded in Nanpu every year since 2012, 9 years year in year out. With up to 14 resightings on the Bohai mud, usually in the same area, in one season. With the Nanpu sightings and Roebuck Bay sightings combined JEB has been seen and recorded well over 100 times!

JEB will be celebrating his 21st birthday sometime in June.



Guan Xianyu: