

THE BIRDS OF BEAS RIVER COUNTRY CLUB

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Location and Habitat

Beas River Country Club occupies an area of around 20ha in the low-lying part of the Central Northern New Territories adjacent to Fanling Golf Course. The grounds are laid out as paddocks and gardens with a mixture of mature exotic and native trees and two small lakes.

Hong Kong's Birds

Although Hong Kong has only a small area of around 1,000 square kilometres, it has a wide variety of habitats from sea coast and marshes to forests and wild hill tops. It is also located on the migration route along the coast of South China and near the boundary of the Oriental and Palearctic regions. As a result, nearly 500 species of wild birds have been recorded in Hong Kong, with around half at the internationally important Mai Po Marshes located about 7km west of Beas River [for information on visits and access, please contact WWF Hong Kong at 2526-1011 or 3193-7702].

Beas River's Birds

A total of 70 species has been seen within the grounds of Beas River Country Club, with a further 15 in the adjacent parts of Fanling Golf Course and the nearby hills used for trekking/hacking trails. The tabulated checklist below gives the English and scientific names and the status of each species in Hong Kong using the following key:-

R = Resident

SV = Summer visitor

WV = Winter Visitor

PM = Passage Migrant

This is followed by the frequency of occurrence at Beas River described as either:-

C = Common

F = Frequent

O = Occasional

R = Rare.

Common & Regular Birds at Beas River

Brief notes are given below for the 29 species [18 common and 11 frequent] which are most likely to be seen during the course of a full year. During summer, the combined number is reduced to the 22 common and frequent residents and summer visitors, and these are highlighted by the suffix *s* following their checklist number. Lengths in cm are given as a guide to relative size. To facilitate cross-referencing, the page numbers in Viney, Phillipps & Lam [VPL], the recommended local field guide [see References], are given at the end of each species note.

1. **Little Grebe.** 25cm. Small diving bird regularly found on the lakes, often concealed in the emergent vegetation. Has bred but more likely to be seen in winter. [VPL p36]
- 2s. **Little Egret.** 61cm. All white with black bill, black legs and yellow feet. Usually found around lake edges or perched in surrounding trees. [VPL p42]
- 3s. **Cattle Egret.** 51cm. White with yellow bill and blackish legs and feet. In summer has orange-buff head, back and breast. Often feeds in open grassy areas around grazing animals. [VPL p42]

- 4s. Chinese Pond Heron.** 46cm. Small heron with dark or brown-streaked body which contrasts with all white wings and tail in flight. Usually found in or around lakes. [VPL p40]
- 12s. White-breasted Waterhen.** 33cm. Blackish brown waterbird with white underparts and bright chestnut vent, found skulking in drain channels and around lake edges. When disturbed prefers to run rather than fly. [VPL p82]
- 16s. Spotted Dove.** 30cm. Hong Kong's commonest dove distinguished at close range by its black hind collar covered with small white spots. [VPL p128]
- 18s. Common Koel.** 43cm. Black [male] or brown [female] long-tailed cuckoo-like bird which tends to keep to dense foliage in larger trees. Distinguished in spring and summer by its repeated mournful "ko-el" call. [VPL p132]
- 22s. Common Kingfisher.** 16cm. Small blue and orange kingfisher with rapid direct flight found around lake edges. The familiar "flash-of-blue" of European streams. [VPL p148]
- 27. Grey Wagtail.** 18cm. Grey upperparts and yellow underparts differentiate from other wagtails. Invariably found in or near water in drain channels and lake edges. [VPL p158]
- 28s. White Wagtail.** 18cm. Black and white or black, grey and white wagtail found in open areas usually near water. Local resident race *leucopsis* has distinctive white face. [VPL p158]
- 29. Richard's Pipit.** 17cm. Large upright pipit found in paddocks and other open areas in winter months. [VPL p156]
- 30. Olive-backed Pipit.** 15cm. Skulking pipit usually found feeding on the ground in small groups under trees in winter months. [VPL p156]
- 32s. Red-whiskered Bulbul.** 20cm. One of Hong Kong's commonest and second most widespread birds. Its spiky black crest and cheerful calls separate it from other bulbuls. Found in higher numbers at Beas River than Chinese Bulbul. [VPL p164]
- 33s. Chinese Bulbul.** 19cm. Hong Kong's most widespread bird distinguished from other bulbuls by its white hind-crown contrasting with its black crown and nape. [VPL p164]
- 36s. Long-tailed Shrike.** 25cm. Hooked bill, grey head, black mask, chestnut back and long tail distinguish this handsome shrike. Song is strident and discordant; sounds like swearing!
- 37s. Oriental Magpie Robin.** 20cm. Distinctive black and white [male] or grey and white [female] bird seen on the ground or perching prominently along paths. Has beautiful song and hissing or scolding alarm call. [VPL p166]
- 41. Common Blackbird.** 29cm. All black [male] or dark brown [female] thrush arriving in late autumn for winter. Local race *mandarinus* differs in calls and other features from familiar bird of European gardens, and is considered by some to be a separate species. [VPL p176]
- 43s. Masked Laughingthrush.** 30cm. Noisy laughingthrush with black highway man's face mask, invariably moving through undergrowth in clumsy family groups ["seven sisters"]. [VPL p202]
- 44s. Common Tailorbird.** 12cm. Small, skulking and long-tailed. Found in undergrowth and scrub and detected readily by its monotonous "chip - chip- chip" call. Noted for sewing leaves together to form its nest. [VPL p188]
- 46. Dusky Warbler.** 12cm. Small active grey/brown warbler usually found in winter in grass and scrub near water, and detected by its harsh "chack-chack" call. [VPL p184]

- 47. Yellow-browed Warbler.** 11cm. Hong Kong's commonest wintering leaf warbler identified by its pronounced double wing bars and characteristic disyllabic "tsu-weet" call. Small and active, usually in tree tops. [VPL p186]
- 53s. Great Tit.** 14cm. Noisy, tending to keep to larger trees. Local race *commixtus* has grey back and whitish underparts compared to the green and yellow of typical European birds. [VPL p210]
- 54s. Fork-tailed Sunbird.** 9cm. Small nectar feeder with long decurved bill and tinkling call, often seen feeding on blossoming plants and trees. [VPL p212]
- 55s. Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker.** 9cm. Very small and active flying between tree tops and feeding on mistletoe. Has characteristic hard metallic "tic-tic" call often uttered in flight. [VPL p212]
- 56s. Japanese White-eye.** 11cm. Small green and yellow bird with white eye-ring. Usually found in small groups feeding rapidly through canopy. Commonly kept locally as a cage-bird. [VPL p212]
- 60s. Scaly-breasted Munia.** 11cm. Small finch-like bird usually in flocks feeding on grass heads. [VPL p232]
- 61s. Eurasian Tree Sparrow.** 15cm. As in other parts of East Asia, occupies House Sparrow's niche in Europe. Found around buildings, often nesting in gutters or air-conditioners. [VPL p154]
- 63s. Black-collared Starling.** 28cm. Large black, brown and white starling. Very noisy with characteristic "hurdy-gurdy" call. [VPL p220]
- 68s. Common Magpie.** 45cm. Black and white with long tail. Builds conspicuous domed nest of twigs in tree tops or on pylons. [VPL p218]

References

Further information on Hong Kong's birds, with descriptions and coloured plates, can be found in the following two books:-

- Viney, C., Phillipps, K. and Lam, C.Y. 2005. *The Birds of Hong Kong and South China*. Government Printer, Hong Kong.
- MacKinnon, J.R. and Phillipps, K. 2000. *A Field Guide to the Birds of China*. Oxford University Press, New York.

The status of birds in Hong Kong is described in the following publication:-

- Carey, J.G., Chalmers, M.L., Diskin, D.A., Kennerley, P.R., Leader, P.J., Leven, M.R., Lewthwaite, R.W., Melville, D.S., Turnbull, M., and Young, L. 2001. *The Avifauna of Hong Kong*. The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, Hong Kong.

Further information on Hong Kong birds can be obtained from the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Ltd website www.hkbws.org.hk.

Checklist of the Birds of Beas River Country Club

No	Species	Scientific Name	Status		1	2	3	4	5
			HK	BR					
1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	R	F					
2	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	R	C					
3	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	SV	F					
4	Chinese Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>	R	C					
5	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	WV	O					
6	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	WV	R					
7	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	R	O					
8	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	R	O					
9	Crested Goshawk	<i>Accipiter trivirgatus</i>	R	R					
10	Besra	<i>Accipiter virgatus</i>	R	O					
11	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	WV	R					
12	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>	R	F					
13	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	R	O					
14	Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	WV	O					
15	Red Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>	PM	R					
16	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	R	C					
17	Large Hawk Cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx sparverioides</i>	SV	O					
18	Common Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopacea</i>	SV/R	C					
19	Asian Barred Owlet	<i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>	R	O					
20	White-throated Needletail	<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	PM	R					
21	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	R/PM	O					
22	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	R/PM	F					
23	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	R/PM	O					
24	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	OV	R					
25	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	SV/PM	O					
26	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	PM/WV	O					
27	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	WV	F					
28	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	R/WV	C					
29	Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>	R/WV	F					
30	Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	WV	C					
31	Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	PM/WV	R					
32	Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	R	C					
33	Chinese Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus chinensis</i>	R	C					
34	Orange-bellied Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis hardwickii</i>	R	R					
35	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>	PM	R					
36	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	R	F					
37	Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	R	C					
38	Daurian Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureus</i>	WV	R					
39	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	WV/PM	R					
40	Scaly Thrush	<i>Zoothera dauma</i>	WV	R					
41	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	WV/PM	F					
42	Grey-backed Thrush	<i>Turdus hortulorum</i>	WV	O					
43	Masked Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax perspicillatus</i>	R	C					
44	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	R	C					

