



For Immediate Release

Joint Press release by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, BirdLife International
and Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong

Hong Kong and Mainland China conservation groups joined hands to protect the world's rarest bird:

Chinese Crested Tern numbers broke records

*Hong Kong experts guarded on deserted island and initiated study on the bird's migratory
route*

(13th August, 2015 – Hong Kong) The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, together with BirdLife International and Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong (OPCFHK) proudly announced the success of the first colour banding project at the Jiushan Islands, Zhejiang Province, which aims to aid conservation of the critically endangered Chinese Crested Terns. The Jiushan Islands have undergone a third and even more successful breeding season than the last two years: at least 52 Chinese crested terns arrived and stayed on one of the Jiushan Islands, Tiedun Dao during this breeding season. These birds were attracted by the decoys and sound playback system as in 2013 and 2014. At least 25 breeding pairs have formed. In addition, 2015 is also the first year where all three known breeding sites: the Jiushan Islands and the Wuzhishan Islands of Zhejiang, and the Mazu Islands along the coast of Fujian Province have successful breeding records, as compared to only the Jiushan Islands in 2014.

Chinese crested terns, a "Critically Endangered" bird species listed in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, were assumed extinct for six decades. This legendary bird was rediscovered at the Mazu Islands along the coast of Fujian Province in 2000, and one new colony was discovered in 2004 at the Jiushan Islands, Xiangshan County of Zhejiang Province. It remains one of the most threatened seabirds in the world, with an estimated population of less than 100 individuals (raised from less than 50 in 2014) and at only three known breeding sites.

2015 is the second year that breeding birds on Tiedun Dao were being monitored throughout the season. Mr. Simba Chan, Senior Conservation Officer of BirdLife Asia Division stayed from early May to early August to monitor the population and record the behaviour of the breeding birds, even when Typhoon Chan-hom nearly hit Tiedun Dao directly in mid-July. The vegetation acted as shelters at the breeding colony, thus enabling a 95% tern chick survival rate during the typhoon. Together with the continuous monitoring and vigilance effort, this resulted in a growing number of young Chinese crested tern fledged: from just one individual



in 2013, to no less than 13 and 16 young terns in 2014 and 2015 respectively. On August 4, about 20 experts from China and the USA banded 31 crested terns with numbered colour bands. This will enable identification of individuals if the terns are seen again in their wintering grounds.

“The restoration project aims not only to conserve Chinese crested tern, but also restore the depleted seabird population along the coasts of China. At the same time, we aim to encourage cooperation between China and other countries in Asia for joint actions in seabird study and conservation,” added Mr. Simba Chan. “Thanks to OPCFHK’s funding, we will work with Burung Indonesia (BirdLife in Indonesia) on promoting awareness at potential wintering sites for recovery records of these birds in late 2015. Suitable transmitters are being considered for tracking the migration of the Chinese and greater crested terns in the coming years to reveal their migratory route.”

OPCFHK Foundation Director Ms. Suzanne Gendron said, “The Foundation has been supporting the conservation works on Chinese crested tern since 2008. We are excited to know that after years of efforts, there is a higher hope for the recovery of this critically endangered species. In 2015/16 financial year, we are providing three years of support to BirdLife International, to enable continuous monitoring of the breeding grounds in the Jiushan Islands, and starting a new study on the migration of Chinese crested terns and surveys of potential wintering sites in eastern Indonesia. We also sponsored three university students in 2014 and 2015 to join Mr. Simba Chan in the field for two weeks, which has proved to be a once-in-a-life-time experience to witness this significant milestone of seabird conservation in China, and will hopefully lead to new young scientists to join this important work.”

This project was only made possible with the generous support of the Xiangshan Ocean and Fishery Bureau, the Zhejiang Museum of Natural History, Endangered Species Fund from the State Forestry Administration of China, the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong, the Japan Fund for Global Environment, Pacific Seabird Group and BirdLife International Preventing Extinctions Programme supporter - Mark Constantine. Xiangshan Ocean and Fishery Bureau and the Zhejiang Museum of Natural History also provided significant logistical support which helped make the project such a resounding success. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (Wildlife Without Borders) supported the project by providing decoys and playback equipment needed for social attraction.



About Hong Kong Bird Watching Society

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society was founded in 1957. It is one of the oldest membership-based non-governmental organizations concerned about the appreciation, study and the conservation of birds and their habitat in Hong Kong with over 1,900 members.



About BirdLife International

BirdLife International, established in 1922, is a global Partnership of national, membership-based environmental organizations in over 115 countries and territories in the world that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society became a partner of BirdLife International in 2013.



In 2005, HKBWS collaborated with BirdLife International to launch the China Programme to promote bird conservation in mainland China. The China Programme, has supported the development of 15 emerging bird watching societies in mainland China. The programme is also leading conservation of globally threatened bird species, such as Chinese Crested Tern (CR), Spoon-billed Sandpiper (CR), Blue-crowned Laughingthrush (CR) and Jankowski's Bunting (EN) in mainland China. For more details and news, please visit Hong Kong Bird Watching Society webpage at www.hkbws.org.hk and www.chinabirdnet.org.

About Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong (OPCFHK)

OPCFHK is committed to advocating, facilitating and participating in effective conservation of Asian wildlife, with an emphasis on Chinese white dolphins and giant pandas as well as their habitats through partnerships, fundraising, research and education. It envisions a world where Asian wildlife remains biologically diverse under the stewardship of humans, corporations and governments.



Since its expansion in 2005, OPCFHK has allocated over \$58 million to fund over 400 research projects on cetaceans, giant pandas and many other species. It also operates the marine mammal stranding response team, inspires university students to engage in field work as part of its University Student Sponsorship Programme in Wildlife Conservation, and connects secondary school students as well as corporations to horseshoe crab conservation efforts in Hong Kong through the rearing and fostering programme.



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Appendix 1.

Fact sheet of Chinese Crested Tern

English Common Name	Chinese Crested Tern
Chinese Name	中華鳳頭燕鷗、黑嘴端鳳頭燕鷗
Scientific name	<i>Thalasseus bernsteini</i>
Distribution range	Breeding ground – Zhoushan and Jiushan islands, Zhejiang Province; Mazu, Taiwan Non-breeding ground – Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines
Conservation status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)</i> – Critically Endangered (CR)● Appendix I of the Convention of Migratory Species● Category II of National Key Protected Animal in China



Appendix 2.

Photos and videos for download

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File name	Caption	Credit
1	Chinese Crested Tern	© Lo Chun Fai / OPCFHK
2	Chinese Crested Tern	© Lo Chun Fai / OPCFHK
3	Chinese Crested Tern and Greater Crested Tern	© Lo Chun Fai / OPCFHK
4	Tiedun Dao - project site of Chinese crested tern population recovery	© Lo Chun Fai / OPCFHK
5	Three crested terns - Chinese Crested Tern, Greater Crested Tern and Lesser Crested Tern	© Simba Chan/BirdLife
6	Chinese Crested Tern nesting in the colony	© Simba Chan/BirdLife
7	crested tern chicks on coastal rock in late July	© Simba Chan/BirdLife
8	Crested Tern flock on Tiedun Dao	© Simba Chan/BirdLife
9	Banded crested tern chick	© Simba Chan/BirdLife
10	Release of banded chicks on Tiedun Dao	© Simba Chan/BirdLife
11	Photo of Simba Chan	© Simba Chan/BirdLife
CCT_2015_footage	Short video of observation of Chinese Crested Tern	© Simba Chan/BirdLife