



香港海洋公園保育基金  
Ocean Park  
Conservation Foundation  
Hong Kong



**【Press for Immediate Release】**

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

**A NEW PAGE FOR THE BIRD OF LEGEND: THE WINTERING SITE CONFIRMED**

*Hong Kong and Indonesia conservation groups joined hands to protect the world's rarest bird*

**(February 18, 2016 – Hong Kong)** A wintering site of the “Critically Endangered” Chinese Crested Terns near Seram Island in eastern Indonesia has been confirmed by a survey team led by Burung Indonesia and BirdLife International Asia Division, together with local conservationists and 3 Hong Kong students who joined the University Student Sponsorship Programme in Wildlife Conservation sponsored by Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong (OPCFHK), during a one-week survey conducted in mid-January 2016. At least 1 adult crested tern, and 1 possibly first-year Chinese Crested Tern were seen among a flock of up to 250 Greater Crested Terns. The potential threats to the seabird and the site itself were assessed in details while the team also visited local universities and government institutions to raise awareness in the conservation of the species.

Unlike its name suggests, the Chinese Crested Tern was first discovered not in China but near Halmehera, an island in eastern Indonesia. However, it has not been positively recorded in Indonesia again after its discovery in 1861 (apart from an unverified record in Bali). In fact, it had not been positively recorded in the entire world for more than 60 years before its re-discovery in Matsu Islands off the shore of Fujian Province, China in 2000. The population as well as successful breeding were very low: only a few birds were fledged and the global population was estimated (with a high accuracy) to be less than 50 adults. With the introduction of the “social attraction method” invented by Dr. Steve Kress of National Audubon Society, coupled with close monitoring by researchers at the restoration site of Tiedun Dao, Zhejiang Province, China, the population of Chinese Crested Terns had significantly increased with a total of at least 29 young birds fledging in Tiedun Dao in 2014 and 2015, and a global population of around 70 – 100 adults. On August 4, 2015, 31 crested tern chicks were banded with red colour band in serial order in Tiedun Dao as the first step of a systematic means of studying the migration pattern of the species.

OPCFHK Foundation Director Ms. Suzanne Gendron said, “The Foundation has been supporting the conservation efforts on Chinese Crested Terns since 2008. We are excited to



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know that after years of efforts, there is a higher hope for the recovery of this critically endangered species. I believe our sponsored students have all benefited from and are inspired by the passion and experience of Mr. Simba Chan, Senior Conservation Officer of BirdLife Asia Division. ”

In December 2010, a lone Chinese Crested Tern was sighted near Seram while subsequent records of a number of individuals were also recorded in the area in winter from 2014 to 2015. As the area was suspected to be a regular wintering site to the species, the survey team was formed to conduct a comprehensive survey.

Mr. Simba Chan said, “Although the number of Chinese crested tern found in this survey is not exceptionally high, it is now confirmed that the species is one of the regular wintering birds to the sea of Seram, and it is very likely that Eastern Indonesia is its main wintering area. With the growing awareness and the sense of pride of the local authority and community of its presence, it is a matter of time when more discoveries would be reported from the region.”

Mr. Chan added, “Studies of seabirds are relatively new in Asia and we hope that Chinese crested terns and other threatened seabirds will help spread the message of conservation to countries along their migratory route - Indonesia and China in particular, as well as the Philippines, Malaysia, Australia, Japan and the USA, while raising awareness in the related migratory research and marine conservation efforts in the East Asian- Australasian Flyway.”

The survey is sponsored by OPCFHK and BirdLife’s Preventing Extinction Programme. The team would also like to thank Mr. Craig Robson, for his valuable advice on the survey, which the team decided not to reveal the details of locality for the time being to avoid disturbance to both the birds and the site.

-End-



### 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](http://www.hkbws.org.hk) and [www.chinabirdnet.org](http://www.chinabirdnet.org).

### 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 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"> <li>● <i>International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)</i> – Critically Endangered (CR)</li> <li>● Appendix I of the Convention of Migratory Species</li> <li>● Category II of National Key Protected Animal in China</li> </ul>



Appendix 2.

Photos and videos for download

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File Name	Description	Credit
1	Chinese Crested Tern in a flock of Greater Crested Terns (bird with black bill-tip)	© Ken Fung / OPCFHK
2	Students joined University Student Sponsorship Programme in Wildlife Conservation sponsored by Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong (OPCFHK)	© Ken Fung / OPCFHK
3	Students conducting field survey	© Ken Fung / OPCFHK