

## EARLY DAYS

My posting to Hong Kong in 1955 was my first real overseas tour. I had a fair amount of experience of U.K. birds and, after purchasing a copy of Herklots' "Birds of Hong Kong", felt fit to do battle with the fauna of the area.

Once at Sek Kong, in June, I ventured forth with notebook in hand, glasses strung round my neck and plunged literally into the surrounding padi to try my luck. It was a great awakening—I knew nothing about birds! Bulbuls were fairly easy; small warblers falling off their tails difficult, and the minute birds flitting about in the canopy of the "fung shui" woods impossible. In the autumn a typhoon left a debris of birds on the Ping Shan marshes, but numbers and variety confused me. I decided I needed help.

My initial introduction to J.D. Romer opened to me the beginning of a wonderful period of bird watching. I made several trips with him whilst he collected snakes and various reptiles, and after a while he introduced me to Miss Maura Benham. Later that autumn I met Jeremy Sergeant, and we teamed up to cover the Mong Tseng peninsula and the Mai Po marshes. We started discovering birds that Herklots had not mentioned, nor Dove and Goodhart for that matter, but group expeditions with Maura Benham, Toby Woodhams and others started to pay off, and with the arrival of Roland de la Moussaye, we all began to understand just how much could be done to improve ornithology in the Colony.

Many pleasant days were spent together in the Mai Po marshes and Lam Tsuen valley and slowly I began to identify birds with the help of the resident bird watchers. Mutual interest between the bird watchers of the Colony began to take a firmer shape, and in the steaming quiet of parts of the New Territories it was agreed that the time had come to co-ordinate all our activities and publish annual reports—in short to form a bird watching society.

After further discussion, a letter was drafted and despatched to all known interested parties in Hong Kong, and a meeting called. It was a most pleasant surprise to see the numbers

who turned up at the inaugural meeting, and after preliminary introductions, we got down to business, with Mr. Walton in the chair. I nervously suggested "Hong Kong Ornithological Society" as the title for the proposed society, but after further discussion we settled for the "Hong Kong Bird Watching Society" and then we were in business.

No individual can really claim credit for the formation of the Society. It was an amalgamation of ideas, many of which had been simmering in the minds of bird watchers of Hong Kong for years. The final result was the joint hard work and co-operation of many people. In my time, 1955 to 1957, many names come to mind—Maura Benham, Roland de la Moussaye, Jeremy Sergeant, Arthur Walton, Edgar Webb and Toby Woodhams are but a few. The results of their hard work, and the efforts of the members who followed have shown the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society to be a serious, hard-working ornithological organisation that can claim parity with many such societies overseas.

On this tenth anniversary may I thank friends and members of the Society for their unstinting help and guidance during my short visits to the Colony and express my best wishes for the future.

F. Walker