

## **HKNHS FEBRUARY 2007 OUTING TO MAI PO NATURE RESERVE**

After a week or more of lovely blue-sky weather, the day before our trip to Mai Po turned misty and humid with a slight drop in temperature, and the Sunday of our outing was pretty much the same. Notwithstanding, the full contingent of 24 members and guests left Central shortly after midday for the long and winding road to Mai Po. Unlike previous outings to this destination, our bus driver Mr Ho knew the way, so we arrived on schedule around 1.15pm and were soon joined by 3 more of our party who had made their own way there.

Then it was time for the good news and the not-so-good news. I was relieved to find that our permit was in order with everyone's names included, but was advised that Mr Lew Young, the Reserve Manager who was to accept our cheque and guide our birdwatching, had carelessly, I mean unfortunately, broken his ankle less than one hour earlier whilst enjoying a morning game of softball!! However, WWF had managed to get one of their part-time guides at very short notice to stand in for Mr Young, for which we were thankful.

After many members had taken the opportunity to eat their lunch sitting around the car park outside the Visitor Centre, they were asked to gather round for the small donation ceremony. On behalf of Dave, who was unfortunately absent in even mistier, colder Blighty, I presented our cheque for \$9,000 to the Visitor Marketing Manager, Josephine Wong, representing WWF Mai Po in Mr Young's absence. Josephine gratefully accepted the cheque and informed us that the maps should be ready around the end of February. I also gave Josephine a letter with a little information about the NHS and asked that it be kept on file somewhere as a record of our donation. She assured me that it would be. Since some members, especially newer ones, may know little themselves about the Society, I have included the letter with this mailing for those that are interested.

Formalities over, our guide Chris gave a short introductory talk about Mai Po and explained that he would lead us first past the gei wais to Tower Hide, then across the mangroves on the floating boardwalk, an adventure in itself, into the restricted area to the Inner Deep Bay Ramsar site and hide. And that is what he did, returning by the road along the border of the reserve to make a circular route of our walk.

Chris was a friendly and knowledgeable guide and his high powered telescope enabled us to see some of the birds in an unforgettable way. The only downside to this is that I now feel disappointed with my high quality Bushnell binoculars! Whilst we did see a lot of birds from the Deep Bay hide, the promised incoming tide just didn't materialize – a very odd phenomenon which is still puzzling us - so the sightings were rather distant. However, on the return part of the walk we finally saw what for me was the highlight and one of the objectives of the day: the black-faced spoonbill. Mai Po is an important wintering site for this endangered species. In fact, the European cousin was there too. In all, we saw 30 species which I have listed on the following page.

This was a significant occasion for the Society, being the first time [that the current Officers know of] that we have made such a donation, and we look forward to seeing the public guide maps with our Society logo on them. Thank you to those members who supported the occasion and I trust you had an enjoyable outing to boot.

Jan Campbell  
Hon Sec

**30 BIRD SPECIES SEEN AT MAI PO NATURE RESERVE ON 11 FEBRUARY 2007  
ON THE OCCASION OF OUR SOCIETY'S DONATION**

1,384 cormorants  
872 little egrets  
495 great egrets  
several grey herons  
white breasted waterhen  
common moorhen  
coot

little grebe  
shelduck  
shoveler  
wigeon  
garganey  
pintail

white throated [breasted] kingfisher – magnificent through the telescope!  
spotted dove  
azure-winged magpie  
white wagtail  
Chinese bulbul

herring gull  
black headed gull  
pied avocet  
curlew  
grey plover  
common sandpiper  
Chinese pond heron  
black-faced spoonbill – yes! the highlight of the day for some  
European spoonbill – a bonus!  
Caspian tern – wonderful bright red bill visible through the telescope

1 buzzard  
1 osprey  
1 partridge in a pear tree – just checking if you're still reading

and a multitude of mud skippers.