

# Asian Bird Banders' Conference Kuala Lumpur, 1965

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(We welcome the opportunity of publishing the following report of an Asian Bird Banders' Conference held under the auspices of the Migratory Animal Pathological Survey near Kuala Lumpur in November, 1965. W. B. Hitchcock was the Australian representative at the Conference—Editor.)

## Introduction

The second annual bird banders' conference of MAPS was held at the Field Studies Centre of the University of Malaya, Ulu Gombak, 17 miles east of Kuala Lumpur, in November, 1965. The Centre is at an altitude of 1,000 ft., and is a specially designated reserve of 300 acres of secondary forest (naturally regenerated after milling).

The recently completed facilities at the Centre are excellent, and are a credit to Lord Medway who is in charge of the station and who was largely responsible for its design. It consists of a hostel—comprising three private rooms, a dormitory, a dining room, a kitchen, and toilet facilities—and an adjacent long narrow laboratory providing two more private rooms and laboratory facilities for 30 students. The verandah of the hostel overlooks a pleasant valley and, while dining, we could watch hornbills, barbets and a host of other birds, and hear gibbons calling.

Participants in the conference were:

**MAPS Directorate:** Lt.-Col. C. M. Barnes (Director), Dr. H. Elliott McClure (Ornithologist).

**Japan:** Mr. M. Yoshii, Mr. T. Hasuo (Yamashina Institute, Tokyo).

**Korea:** Dr. Won Pyong-Oh (Kyung Hee University, Seoul).

**Taiwan:** Dr. Paul S. Alexander, Mr. Richard R. P. Yang, Mr. S. Severinghaus (Tung Hai University, Taichung).

**Hong Kong:** Mr. F. Hechtel.

**Southern Philippines:** Dr. D. S. Rabor (Silliman University, Negros Oriental).

**Sabah:** Mr. Henry C. Tsen (Sabah Museum, Jesselton).

**Sarawak:** Mr. M. Fogden (Sarawak Museum, Kuching).

**Malaya:** Lord Medway, Mr. Bah Tillah (Zoology Department, University of Malaya); Mr. Inche Hussain, Mr. R. D. Soosay, Mr. Tan Kim San

(USAMRU); Mr. K. Scriven (Kuala Lumpur).

**Thailand:** Dr. Joe Marshall, Mr. Ben King (SEATO Medical Research Laboratory, Bangkok).

**Australia:** Mr. W. B. Hitchcock (CSIRO, Canberra).

## Programme

The programme, which kept us on our toes from dawn to dark most days, was briefly as follows:

**Nov. 23:** Reports by team leaders giving results to date of banding and recoveries in each region, and outlining future proposed work.

**Nov. 24:** Field day at Gombak Mile 13. Techniques of capturing and processing birds, and collecting parasites, were demonstrated. Films and slides were shown at the Centre in the evening.

**Nov. 25:** In the laboratory at USAMRU (U.S. Army Medical Research Unit, K.L.). This visit was by courtesy of the Commanding Officer, Major G. Rapmund and his staff, who described some of the important medical research which has been in progress there since 1953 on leptospirosis and rickettsial diseases, such as scrub typhus. We processed parasite material collected the previous day and examined slides of blood parasites and ectoparasites. In the evening, delegates attended a meeting of the Malayan Nature Society at which team leaders gave a brief account of their programmes.

**Nov. 26:** Morning—Discussion on proposed checklist of the birds of South East Asia, of which a draft had been prepared by McClure. There are some 1,800 species and subspecies involved. Each member contributed to the discussion, drawing on his regional knowledge. Afternoon—Visit to the study area of Mr. Hussain at Rantau Panjang, four miles north of Klang, Selangor, bordering the Straits of Malacca. We inspected net sites in coconut and nipah palm, and mangroves.



- *USAMRU Pathologist Dan Kundin (at right) demonstrates the technique for collecting "chiggers" (larval mites), while Messrs. Hitchcock, Barnes & King (l. to r.) watch.*

*Photo. Yong Peng Seong.*

Evening—Banquet at Chinese restaurant, Kuala Lumpur, by courtesy of Colonel Barnes.

**Nov. 27:** Morning—Visit to jungle reserve at Mile 22, where we were introduced to bird watching from an observation platform 140 ft. up in the crown of an *Anisoptera laevis* overlooking more than two square miles of primary dipterocarp rainforest. This forest is typically three-storied with the trees in the tallest storey belonging to the *Dipterocarpaceae*, a family that is chiefly Indo-Malaysian. From here we could see the canopy-feeding birds as they moved through in mixed flocks. We also saw the clear-cut "feeding paths" of the gibbons and leaf-monkeys that inhabit the forest canopy.

Evening—Barbecue at Centre where Malay aboriginal dishes were served.

**Nov. 28:** Most of the delegates went on to Bangkok for the IUCN conference on Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in Tropical South East Asia.

#### **Summary of MAPS Banding Programme, 1964-65**

The Migratory Animal Pathological Survey—a function of the Division of Geographic Pathology, U.S. Armed Forces Institute of Pathology—has made funds available to organisations in the Far

East interested in bird banding. This has been made possible through international interest in bird migration and the possible relationship between bird movements and the distribution of animal diseases transmissible to man (cf. McClure 1964).

MAPS is now operative in Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Northern and Southern Philippines, Sabah, Sarawak, Malaya, Thailand, and Nepal. There are nine team leaders (mostly graduate zoologists) and several volunteer co-operators. Emphasis is on the banding of migratory species, because of medical implications, but banding of non-migratory birds is not discouraged.

Nylon mist nets are widely used, but some banders are using clap nets (for shorebirds) and duck-decoy traps. In Taiwan a heron trap has proved fairly successful; this is simply a cage placed over a fish-pond beneath a breeding colony.

Nearly 250,000 birds have been banded in two years. Regional totals range from about 500 in Sabah, with one part-time co-operator, to about 60,000 of 114 species (mostly passerines) in 16 months in Korea, with a team leader plus two full-time assistants.

Because of the regional coverage, recoveries between one station and another are now being reported regularly. For example, 29 Grey-faced Buzzards, *Butastur indicus*, banded in the Ryukyu Islands (south of Japan), have been recovered in

Taiwan and the Philippines, thereby establishing a fairly definite migration route. Twelve Plumed Egrets, *Egretta intermedia*, banded near Tokyo, have been recovered in the central Philippines. Twenty-three Cattle Egrets, *Ardeola ibis*, banded in Japan and Taiwan, have been recovered in the Philippines. Ben King worked out a special technique for catching Swallows, *Hirundo rustica*, at roosts in the heart of Bangkok and, with helpers, caught and banded about 20,000 in five nights. Two of these birds have been recovered in Seoul by Dr. Won.

In Japan, operations have so far been confined to nine Prefectures in Kyushu, where c. 5,000 birds of 90 species have been banded. The programme includes a study of the rare Japanese Stork, *Ciconia ciconia boyciana*, which is now threatened by insecticides and by destruction of its habitat.

In Korea, there are five banding stations, extending from central Korea south to Pusan, including the breeding colonies of herons and egrets at Yojoo. These are worked seasonally in order to intercept migrating passerines, especially buntings, *Emberiza* (of which 40,000 of 11 species have been banded), Pied Wagtails, *Motacilla alba* (7,000 banded), and Swallows, *Hirundo rustica* (2,000 banded).

In Taiwan, a team of four is banding at 37 localities, mainly on the west and north sides of the island; 19,000 birds of 75 species have been banded. Efforts have so far been concentrated on heronries (of which 10 are known with about 2,000 breeders, mainly *Ardeola ibis*, *Nycticorax nycticorax*, and *Egretta garzetta*), on migrants caught in October at a lighthouse on the south-east tip, and on shorebirds on the mid-west coast, where it is estimated that up to 100,000 shorebirds are caught for sale annually by professional bird-catchers. A Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*, banded near Taichung in December, was recovered 2,000 miles north in Sakhalin six months later.

In the Northern Philippines, G. Alcasid is using a refinement of a technique evolved by the Igorots of northern Luzon for catching migrants as they stream through mountain passes. During September-December, on moonless foggy nights, the birds are easily attracted to lights. The Igorots used camp-fires and 10 ft. long hand clap-nets; Alcasid uses Coleman lamps, with tin reflectors to throw a beam, and mist nets.

In the Central and Southern Philippines, D. S. Rabor is operating about nine stations between sea level and 6,500 ft.—mainly on Negros Island but also on Mindanao. There are some 7,100 islands in the Philippines and migrating streams

tend to fan out as they approach the southern islands. Twenty operators have banded c. 15,000 birds of 177 species. Secondary forest and mixed grassland are richest in species.

In Thailand, Ben King is currently banding in north-west montane habitats near the Burmese border. With local assistants he is operating some 250 nets, each team handling 90 nets, some of which are shifted every day. Average effective catch-time per net is 5 days. The number of birds banded in 1964 was 17,000 and in 1965, 28,000. King is also collecting specimens and has already added 27 species or sub-species to the Thai list published recently by H. G. Deignan. There is some evidence already that the Mekong River is a major migration route for eastern Asiatic birds.

In Sarawak, Mike Fogden is making a general ecological and population study of the birds near Kuching in the Semengo Forestry Reserve of 120 acres of primary and secondary forest. His team consists of two Dyaks and they operate for two weeks in each month. The species are mainly resident and there are few predators in the area. Peak breeding is from December to February, and peak fruiting is in March-April, May and June. Netting problems encountered here include rain, bats, squirrels, and tarsi. An incidental problem, which prevents banding of swallows in numbers, is that many roosts are located in areas that are under curfew from dusk to dawn because of Communist communities.

In Malaysia, some 18,000 birds (including c. 15,000 Swallows) were banded in Malaya, and 1,600 in Singapore. It has been established that the Night Heron, *N. nycticorax*, disperses north and south along the west coast in its first year. At Ulu Gombak there is a well-defined passerine breeding season and moult period. In Malaya, from March onwards, the resident Swallow, *H. tahitica*, begins to predominate over the migratory *H. rustica*.

#### Acknowledgments

Grateful acknowledgment is made to MAPS, through Director Charles M. Barnes, who made it financially possible for me to attend this important conference. I would also like especially to thank Lord Medway and Dr. and Mrs. H. Elliott McClure for the hospitality and facilities extended to me at Ulu Gombak.

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