

Beginners' Waders Workshop conducted by Kenneth Kee

The first ever Beginners' Waders Workshop was held on the 27th November 2010 at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR). 27 people attended including 4 staffs from SBWR. The response was beyond our expectation and what was most heartening was the attendance of four young boys, ranging from 3 to 11 years old together with their father.



The first part of the session focus on the general introduction of waders or shorebirds, migration patterns, flyway, navigation, topography, behaviour, feeding techniques and their identification features. Tips on the best time to do wader watch and the importance of checking the tide table was shared.

The second part of the session focus on 9 of the most common waders found in SBWR. Slides/Photos/Videos were shown to illustrate the characteristic of each individual wader and how to differentiate them from others similar species. This was followed by a well-deserved break at the canteen where freshly brewed coffee/tea was served together with delicious curry puff/samosa.

After the break, participants proceeded to the main hide and were put to their test at the outdoor field session. Despite a sudden downpour, most of them were able to ID the Pacific Golden Plover, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper and Whimbrel. Surprisingly the Mongolian Plover was nowhere to be found. However the bonus was a pair of Great Knots which came close to the main hide for everyone to admire.

This workshop would not be possible without the generous support of Sharon Chan, who kindly allowed us to use their excellent facility at Sungei Buloh. Thanks also go to Alan Owyong and Alfred Chia for helping out in the field session.

Let's hear some of the feedback from the participants:

Ian & Freda Rickword - A quick note to thank you and Alan for the workshop yesterday - it was very interesting and informative. You have obviously put a lot of work into it, with very successful results. We put it to the test today by going back to Sungei Buloh after the Kranji walk, and found it a lot easier than before to identify the difference

between the Marsh Sandpiper and the Greenshank, and to spot the Curlew Sandpiper and the Knot.

Doreen Ang - I picked up some very useful pointers from this workshop. There was connection between the organisers and participants, info in handbook were useful and well thought out. In particular, Kenneth's on-the-spot class participation and quizzes were wonderful. Even the mosquitoes stayed away.

Jeanne Ong - Thank you for the enlightening workshop. It was a great idea to have Alan and Alfred to help you with the practical training. The slides were excellent as it is most difficult to get such clear views of distinctive features that enable us to know the species we are looking at. And the video showed us the behaviour that was described in the notes which were so well done. It is hard to imagine without the video.

Ken Ng (father of 4 boys) - Thanks for organizing the workshop. The fact that my boys sat through the whole workshop shows that it is a good and appropriate program for beginners. The outdoor was also a very useful practical session for us to spot the birds as they are. Yesterday evening, my boys went to the library and borrowed a book on Migratory Birds published by NParks. They have definitely broadened their bird knowledge as they are now flipping to the pages with info on sandpipers, plovers, dowitcher, turnstone etc. Thanks once again for a very enlightening workshop.

Caleb Ng (11 years old) - The lecture about waders during the first part of the workshop was difficult for me probably because I couldn't fully understand the talk. Only when we emerged from the auditorium into the fresh air and began the hike to the Main Hide did my spirits begin to lift. Through the scopes provided for us, I could spot the waders for real and their different features, rather than looking at the picture. I was amazed that all those birds that looked alike were actually a variety of species! I especially like the Common Sandpiper, whose head and tail kept bobbing up and down when they look for food. I enjoyed this Waders Workshop.

Jabez Ng (10 years old) - At the waders' workshop, I learnt that waders are also known as shorebirds. I was taught how to tell the difference between the different types of shorebirds. It was quite confusing at first but soon I got the hang of it. After the lecture, we went to the cafeteria to have a break, and then we went bird watching! We managed to spot different types of waders. As a bonus, I spotted my favourite raptor, a Black Baza, in the air. I had good experience learning about waders and also a great time bird watching. I would like to go there again.

Samuel Ng (7 years old): I enjoyed the waders' workshop because I learnt how to identify the birds by looking at the colour of their legs such as the Redshank and Greenshank. I also learnt that the Great Egret has yellow bill and the Little Egret has black bill. I had a fun time.