

Discussion

The similarity in stance and feeding behaviour of Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus* and Nordmann's Greenshanks (Hayman *et al.* 1986) is indeed striking. Both species have relatively short legs and mainly prey on crabs. This type of food obliges both species to make fast runs in order to catch the crab before it disappears into its burrow. However, the feeding movements of Nordmann's Greenshanks are not nearly so fast as those of Terek Sandpipers, which must be the fastest mudflat-runner around.

Of the five Nordmann's Greenshanks observed in Thailand during November and December 1984, four were recorded on coastal mudflats and one in a saltpan. Coastal mudflats are mentioned by King *et al.* (1975) as the habitat in winter quarters, but it seems that it might also be worthwhile looking for Nordmann's Greenshanks in salt pans and fish- and shrimp-ponds.

The foraging behaviour of Nordmann's Greenshanks, as observed at Ko Li Bong, did not differ greatly from that of the Greenshanks we have observed. However, fishing was not recorded. This hunting technique is common practice among Greenshanks. At Samut Sakhon Greenshanks were hunting for fish and mudskippers along the edge of salt pans, sometimes swimming or wading through belly-deep water. The Nordmann's Greenshank observed here was not feeding when detected but there can be no doubt that this species takes fishes when the circumstances are favourable, as in the breeding area (Nechaev 1982). Given its webbed feet, it might even swim more than Greenshanks.

Our thanks go to our companion in the field, Mogens Henriksen, and to Phil Round, Jonathan Starks and Kees Roselaar for advice and information. This project was kindly grant-assisted by Interwader (East Asia/Pacific Shorebird Study Programme).

REFERENCES

- Hayman, P., Marchant, J. and Prater, T. (1986) *Shorebirds*. London: Croom Helm.
 King, B. F., Dickinson, E. C. and Woodcock, M. W. (1975) *A field guide to the birds of South-East Asia*. London: Collins.
 King, W. B. (1981) *Endangered birds of the world. The ICBP Red Data Book*. Second edition. Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
 Lekagul, B., Round, P. D. and Komolpaphin, K. (1985) Birdwatching for Palearctic migrants in Thailand. *Brit. Birds* 78: 2-39.
 Nechaev, V. A. (1982) Nesting biology of the Spotted Greenshank (*Tringa guttifer*) in the Sakhalin Island. *Ornithological Studies in the U.S.S.R.* 1: 138-147.
 Parish, D. (1986) Northward migration 1986. *Interwader Newsletter* 7: 3-4.
 Velizhanin, A. G. and Yalchontov, V. F. (1976) Brief reports on the Spotted Greenshank. (In V. Novikov, ed. *Rare, threatened and inadequately known birds of the U.S.S.R.*) *Transactions of the Oka State Reserve* 13: 138. (In Russian).

Rob G. Bijlsma, Bovenweg 36, 6721 HZ Bennekom, Netherlands.

Frank E. de Roder, Onder de linden 66, 6822 KN Arnhem, Netherlands.

Does the White-eyed River-Martin *Pseudochelidon sirintarae* breed in China?

EDWARD C. DICKINSON

Although it is almost twenty years since the discovery and description of the White-eyed River-Martin *Pseudochelidon sirintarae* (Thonglongya 1968), there has been no success in improving our knowledge of the species. All records have been from Bung Boraphet, a reservoir and marsh in central Thailand; after the initial nine specimens were collected, a further individual was taken in November 1968 (Thonglongya 1969), two birds were 'found' in 1972 (King 1978-1979), six adults were seen in February 1977 (King and Kanwanich 1978), and four immatures were seen in January 1980 (Sophasan and Dobias 1984). All records have been from November to February, the winter period.

Speculation about the species's breeding distribution has been limited. Thonglongya (1969) searched for it without success along three large rivers north of Bung Boraphet in May and June 1969. However, King and Kanwanich (1978) noted that if it nests in river sand flats in Thailand it must do so in March and April, as the monsoon rains from May onwards would render water levels too high. They also commented that the bird may nest 'somewhere in China'.

North of the 'golden triangle' opium-growing area (where Thailand, Laos and Burma meet) lie the closely parallel valleys of the Salween, Mekong and Chang Jiang. This area of south-western China is certainly a possible summer home for the White-eyed River-Martin, but the Chinese ornithological literature does not record it, although explorations there have not been very thorough.

In May 1972 the Sun Fung Art House, a Hong Kong sales outlet of some Beijing studios, had in its stock a set of four scroll paintings of which one (see front cover) bore a superficial resemblance to the River-Martin. A closer look revealed both similarities (the head and bill shape, the white eye, the coloration, and the existence of elongated tail feathers) and differences (the bill was red not yellow, the white rump was absent, and the elongated tail feathers were the outer not the central ones).

The methodology of illustration in Chinese paintings is to pass on styles and subjects. Allowing for artistic licence either over time or simply over the distance between some remote Chinese area and Beijing, and as the species is unknown to China's ornithologists, any original drawing is most likely to have been made in the field. With no inspection of a museum skin possible, it seems seriously likely that the River-Martin has been found and sketched, at some time, in China.

The handbooks on which Chinese painters draw for their subjects are full of Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica*, and the bird in this illustration is too deliberately different to be intended as a Barn Swallow. The objection that the picture might be based on the illustration (by Dr. Boonsong Lekagul) that accompanied the original description can be discounted because (a) the description had very limited circulation, (b) the proprietor of the Sun Fung Art House felt that the picture had been painted no later than 1970, (c) the bird depicted is simply too unlike Dr. Boonsong's illustration.

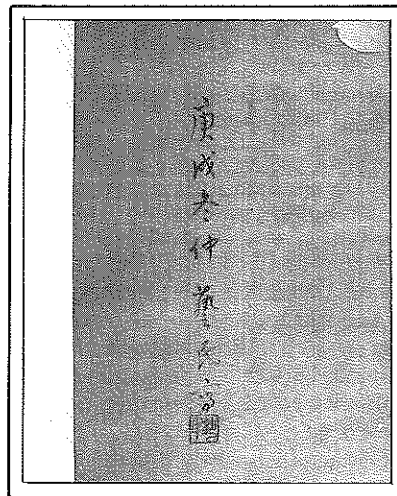
The plate shows the Chinese inscription that accompanied the picture, with the artist's signature beneath it. If a student of such paintings could assist in tracking down the artist and the date of the picture, we might possibly get a clue as to where to look in China for the nesting grounds of the White-eyed River-Martin. Until then it seems destined to remain one of the most elusive species in the world.

REFERENCES

- King, B. and Kanwanich, S. (1978) First wild sighting of the White-eyed River-Martin, *Pseudochelidon sirintarae*, *Biol. Conserv.* 13: 183-185.
- King, W. B. (1978-1979) *Red Data Book, 2. Aves*. Second edition. Morges, Switzerland: International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.
- Sophasan, S. and Dobias, R. (1984) The fate of the 'Princess Bird', or White-eyed River Martin (*Pseudochelidon sirintarae*). *Nat. Hist. Bull. Siam Soc.* 32: 1-10.
- Thonglongya, K. (1968) A new martin of the genus *Pseudochelidon* from Thailand. *Thai Nat. Sci. Pap. Fauna Ser.* no. 1.
- Thonglongya, K. (1969) Report on an expedition in northern Thailand to look for breeding sites of *Pseudochelidon sirintarae* (21 May to 27 June 1969). Unpublished.

Edward C. Dickinson, *Chemin du Chano 8, 1802 Corseaux, Switzerland.*

Plate. Incription and artist's signature on painting of a possible White-eyed River-Martin.
Photo: Didi Brandt.



The threatened White-winged Wood Duck *Cairina scutulata* in Bangladesh

MOHAMMAD ALI REZA KHAN

Of some 30 species of resident and migratory ducks and geese in Bangladesh, the White-winged Wood Duck *Cairina scutulata*, locally called *bhadi hansh* or *shetapakha balaka*, is possibly the most endangered (Khan 1981, 1982, 1983; also King 1978-1979). Reports of the species are few. Mitra (1957), based on his forestry operations of the 1940s and 1950s, and Rashid (1967) reported it to be present in the Chittagong revenue division. Ali and Ripley (1983) cited H. G. Alexander as having seen two parties of 30 ducks in the open Padma river in 1948; however, neither my own fieldwork from 1969 nor that of others, including century-old District Gazetteer reports, suggest that this duck ever occurred outside the evergreen and semi-evergreen forests of the Chittagong revenue division of eastern Bangladesh, and there exists no forest belt within a distance of 100 km all along the course of the Padma river (see Figure).

In the 1970s and 1980s all records of the White-winged Wood Duck in

Figure. Bangladesh showing White-winged Wood Duck habitat.

