

# Editor's Letter

No year in recent human memory has produced developments as disruptive and unexpected as 2020 has. Our world is in constant change, and we have to adapt and change with it. The Oriental Bird Club is no exception. As part of its long-term strategic 'pivot to Asia', exciting changes are taking hold that are designed to continue the Club's longstanding provision of quality ornithological services to its traditional member base while re-positioning our organisation to be part of the breathtaking awakening of home-grown Asian ornithological movements, whether led by professionals or amateurs. A variety of academic, recreational and commercial indices and databases demonstrate that local Asian birdwatchers—and no longer the foreign visitors of past decades—now account for the bulk of ornithological activity in most Asian countries. This watershed moment comes with great opportunities for Asian ornithology and—ultimately—Asia's birds.

One of the Club's re-alignments has entailed a shift in editorial teams over the last 12 months towards a new *Forktail* crew that is now almost entirely based in Asia. This hand-over has come with an expected volume of logistic challenges, leading to delays in the publication schedule of the *Forktail* in 2019, for which we apologise to our readers. The present 2019 issue, published in May 2020, marks the new editorial team's first edition. With this issue and a subsequent one later this year, we are committed to bringing *Forktail* back to its regular once-annual publication schedule. At the same time, we would like to thank our distinguished editorial predecessors, Nigel Collar and Brian Sykes, for their indefatigable work over the years. The consistently high academic quality and attractive visual standard of *Forktail* over the past years bear testimony to Nigel and Brian's dedication. It must have been a labour of love.

At this point, it seems opportune to introduce our readers to the new editorial structure of the *Forktail*, which differs markedly from the previous one. The handling editors of each manuscript submission will be drawn from a pool of 17 subject experts, ten of whom are leading Asian researchers based in their home countries (Australasian in one case), whereas four are foreign-born researchers who have been based in Asian countries for many years. Only three of our subject editors are currently based outside Asia, but bring with them many years of experience in the Asian field. For a full list of the 17 subject editors, please see the inside front cover of this issue. Subject editors commission reviews from the ornithological community, and decisions are taken in close consultation with the two coordinators at the editorial helm, which has been my pleasure to steer with the crucial help of Ding Li Yong. Our production editor Simon Roddis has over 12 years' experience as a member of the Club's publications team and continues to fulfil his indispensable role in ensuring continuity in the journal's evolutionary pathway.

With this new structure, *Forktail* seeks to establish itself as the world's premier journal of Asian ornithology, if it has not already been for many years. We solicit submission of the fruits of high-quality research endeavours from throughout the continent. Increasingly, going into the future, we will ask our contributors to think of ways in which they can showcase the Asia-wide or

worldwide relevance of their results. Whether it is the studies of Asia's well-established ornithological research groups, high-quality output of early-career scientists, such as graduate students' thesis work, or critical new insights from amateurs' long-time research efforts, we would like *Forktail* to be the journal that communicates the most exciting ornithological papers in Asia.

*Forktail*'s boundaries with our attractive partner journal *BirdingASIA* have generally been obvious, although fuzzy at times. *BirdingASIA* places special emphasis on a visually stunning appearance and appealing photographic content, whilst at the same time being a document of scientific record, for recreational birders and ornithologists alike. Going forward, we attempt to make the separation of content even more intuitive. We encourage authors to consider *BirdingASIA* first when submitting short notes on concise issues, especially those that rely on photographic evidence, such as new nest descriptions, new records of single species etc., although we may—on occasion—consider such content for *Forktail* if deemed of special relevance.

We encourage continued submission of manuscripts spanning the whole breadth of ornithological disciplines with an Asian relevance, including but not limited to behavioural biology (e.g. feeding, reproduction, migration etc.), physiology, anatomy, ecology, taxonomy and systematics. We will also continue to consider avifaunal surveys on a case-by-case basis, but acceptance will strongly hinge on their level of novelty and comprehensiveness. On the other hand, we do welcome comprehensive inventories of well-defined Asian geographic entities whose avifauna is insufficiently well understood, even if such contributions may be slightly more voluminous.

Last but not least, there is one topic we would particularly like to promote: conservation. It is old news to our readership that the planet is on a rapid downward spiral in an ecological disaster unfolding particularly rapidly in Asia. The birdwatchers now coming of age are the first generation in Asia to operate in an environment where most coastal and freshwater wetlands have been destroyed, where the majority of lowland forests have been converted, where a spike in aridification, warming and extreme weather patterns is disrupting lives, and where species can slip from 'common' to 'extinct in the wild' over just one decade because of the fear-inspiring market forces of modern human demands on wildlife.

We want *Forktail* to be a positive force in the fight against extinction and environmental degradation. We will give full consideration to manuscripts with high conservation relevance, hoping that the communication of properly-vetted and peer-reviewed insights on significant observations of species decline, habitat degradation, trade developments or the taxonomic neglect of endangered entities may assist conservationists, law-enforcement officers, lawmakers and managers in acting fast and effectively.

We hope to count on the support and contributions by many of you in *Forktail*'s onward journey.

**Frank E. Rheindt**  
Singapore, April 2020