

Kennedy, P. and Turnbull, M. (1989) (part)

BAIKAL TEAL (*Anas formosa*) AT KOSI BARRAGE,
NEPAL ON 9 FEBRUARY 1989

At approximately 0700 hours on 9 February 1989 Mike Turnbull and I were scanning a flock of Pintail (*Anas acuta*) just to the north of the Kosi Barrage. We were standing on the eastern shore of the river, looking west with the sun directly behind us, thus giving excellent lighting conditions. The Pintail flock numbering an estimated 6000 individuals was approximately 200 meters away and very tightly packed, allowing views of the birds on the periphery of the flock only. We each had a telescope mounted on a tripod.

Almost immediately, PRK detected a bird with a vertical white line at the front of the flanks. The bird was asleep but the elongated scapulars lying across the closed wing, the pink breast, spotted black and the black nape with narrow white Vee lines meeting in the centre of the nape immediately revealed the birds identity as an adult male Baikal Teal; a species with which we are both familiar with in Hong Kong where it is an annual visitor in very small numbers (usually 1-3 individuals each winter).

The bird remained in this sleeping position for approximately 10 minutes, until a Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) started to circle over the Pintail flock. Immediately, all the Pintail plus the Baikal Teal became alert and after a few seconds of indecision, the whole flock took to the air and landed again approximately 800 meters north of the barrage. The Baikal Teal was not seen again.

During the brief period in which the bird was alert, the diagnostic head pattern was clearly seen, ie an irridescent green band around the rear of the ear coverts coming forward to the eye and down through it where it appeared as a dark vertical line through the eye. The remainder of the sides of the head were bright yellow. The crown and nape were black. The breast was pinkish orange, finely spotted with black. The flanks were grey and separated from the breast by a white vertical line. The undertail coverts were black and also separated from the grey flanks by a white vertical line which was less obvious than that separating the flanks from the breast. The mantle was brown and marked by 3 elongated scapulars which hung down the side of the body to the flanks.

In Hong Kong, we have found the white vertical flank line to be the easiest means of detecting this species when its distinctive head pattern is not visible. The only other species of duck to exhibit this feature is the North American race of Teal (*Anas crecca*) which we have found once in Hong Kong while searching for Baikal Teal.

It is interesting to note that Richard Millington's sketch of a hybrid Pintail/Teal at Titchwell, Norfolk and illustrated in Birding World Vol 1, page 426, does not exhibit the white vertical flank line.

Peter Kennerley
Flat 20, Crane Court
45 Sassoon Road
Pok Fu Lam
Hong Kong

Mike Turnbull
Room 408
The Hermitage
42, Kennedy Road
Hong Kong

Kennerley, P. and Turnbull, M. (1989) part

RUFIOUS-BELLIED PLAINTIVE CUCKOO (*Coccyzus merulinus*)
AT KOSI BARRAGE, NEPAL ON 9 FEBRUARY 1989

After spending the afternoon of 9 February at the top of the "Pink Tower", Mike Turnbull and I decided to walk back to the barrage. The road is bordered to the east by the waters of the Kosi River and to the west by an area of marshy ground. It was while looking over this marshy area that M.T. said he had a Plaintive Cuckoo. I had expected to find a Grey-bellied Plaintive Cuckoo (*C. passerinus*), but when I got onto the bird but was surprised to see it was a Rufous-bellied Plaintive Cuckoo; a common resident bird in Hong Kong with which we are both very familiar but one which is decidedly uncommon in Nepal.

The bird was perching on clumps of grass and sedge above the marsh and descending to the ground, presumably in search of food items. The birds which occur in Hong Kong are also frequently found in this habitat and spend long periods on the ground or just above it, in search of caterpillars.

The bird was in moult from first winter to adult plumage and had already lost most of its chestnut and black barred plumage. This had been replaced by adult plumage but the outer 2 pairs of tail feathers and the primaries were still those of first winter plumage.

The head, breast and mantle were pale grey, quite uniform and unmarked. The lower breast, belly undertail coverts and flanks were dull pinkish orange, again unmarked. The wings were brown as were the adult-type tail feathers. Undertail pattern not noted. Legs yellow, bill pale. At the distance of observation - approximately 40 meters, the eye appeared dark and no colour was discernable.

The bird was identical in all respects to birds of this species which we regularly observe in Hong Kong.

Peter Kennerley
Flat 2C, Crane Court
45 Sassoon Road
Fok Fu Lam
Hong Kong

Mike Turnbull
Room 408
The Hermitage
42, Kennedy Road
Hong Kong