

## **UPDATE 1 LUANNAN CAOST 2025**

Let's start with some thanks to people for making the 18<sup>th</sup> year of GFN scanning at Nanpu happen. As usual, Beijing Normal University via Prof. Zhengwang Zhang and Dr Weipan Lei for support and administrative work to enable our presence at Nanpu. Wetlands International's Flyway Bottleneck Yellow Sea Project for their financial support. Our colleagues Yang Liu and Junfeng Liu for help with organising the accommodation and local logistics and Yang Liu is part of our 3-person scanning team.

The first impressions we have is that 'things are the same'. Of course, there are some small differences but what we have seen so far, in our first days, is that not too much has changed. And that is a good thing for the birds.

We recorded the highest bird numbers on the Nanpu mudflat late yesterday evening, to coincide with World Migratory Birds day. We watched the spectacle of around 40,000 birds sweeping over the wall from the ponds, mostly in three huge flocks over about 15 minutes. When we roughly counted the birds on the mud there were 50,500. A considerable increase from the previous days. As ever it is difficult to pin down if this is a huge sudden increase, although that is perfectly likely, or because we were at the seawall in the evening when we are usually there very early in the morning. In the mornings the birds have been coming to the mud steadily over an hour or more, not like the spectacular setting yesterday evening. Possibly half the birds were Red Knots.



Red Knots in the early morning light 04 May 2025.  
K.Leung

In the ponds, some species are already on eggs, Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Kentish Plover, Common and Little Terns. Gull-billed Terns probably are too but we have yet to see any nests.



Common Terns nesting on an island in a pond 05 May 2025.

C. Hassell

The ponds are mostly relatively deep as has been the case for many years. But some channels that ferry water between different ponds have good numbers of Spotted Redshank, Marsh Sandpipers, and Curlew Sandpipers. We have only found one pond so far that holds good numbers. We had 8,113 birds in a pond made up of shorebirds, terns, ducks, and a few gulls on May 10 2025. The pond adjacent to it, on the evening of May 16, 2013, when it was shallow, had 96,000 birds in it!

[Colourbanding B\China 2013\Salt Ponds\Salt Ponds Bohai 2013 V3.pdf](#)

That pond has since been bisected by a 6-lane highway.



Above May 2015 below May 2025. The island with the nest terns is just to the right of the highway.

C. Hassell

Scanning has been reasonably successful with marked shorebirds recorded from 19 ringing locations already, but we have only had 5 days of suitable tides so far. We will soon be back to the ideal situation for scanning early next week. This is a high tide between 3 and 5 AM and we can start scanning in the perfect early morning light when the birds land close to the seawall and we then walk and drive the 7 km long seawall and follow the birds along. Some birds seem to favour following the tide directly out and others follow the tide 'along' the seawall. It is impractical to follow the birds on the mudflats out to the tide edge and all our energy goes in to scanning the birds that move north west so we can stay on the seawall.



Now that Yang Liu is part of our scanning team it is very efficient on the seawall. He knows when to stop for the birds and at what distance. And if he is scanning, we will drive the van so the three of us are constantly 'rolling' along the wall.

And as you all know when we are not bidding for work, we do some birding for fun. Unfortunately, some of the places we used to bird regularly are now not open to us. But Caofei Lake is open and we bird there. It is a large artificially constructed lake, Adrian, and I saw it being dug out by massive plant machinery in 2009! And it now has Long-eared Owls in the planted trees among many other species in the trees and on the open water.

We also bird the tiny park (Nanyan Park) in Nanpu Town that we always have. It seems 'quiet' so far this year. This is possibly an effect that there are now so many more trees in the wider area due to tree planting efforts. But this tiny park still turns up some great birds.



Yesterday we celebrated the World Migratory Birds Day to try and observe as many bird species as possible, migratory or not. We do this as part of the Wader Quest Team, in a joint effort with many other birders from around the world, who care about shorebirds. We saw 108 species by the end of the day: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/365559>

This is a brief introduction to GFN's scanning trip to Nanpu for 2025.

Chris Hassell, Katherine Leung, and Yang Liu.

11-05-2025



Long-eared Owl, neither a shorebird nor a migrant. But what a bird! 08 May 2025.  
K. Leung