

A Survey of Wild Birds Trading in the Beijing Bird Markets

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Abstract: Birds are an indispensable part of nature and they play an important role in maintaining an ecological balance. The existence of bird markets undoubtedly poses a threat to the population of wild birds. The geographical location of Beijing is paramount to the migratory birds. The species of birds are rich in variety and its quantity is large in scale. In addition, the bird market in old town Beijing has a long history - since the Qing Dynasty, it has been the main bird market in the city. Therefore, a survey of the major bird markets in the city is highly representative. This study investigated the types, quantities, and prices of wild birds traded in several major bird markets in Beijing from July 16 to July 18, 2019. Data analysis and collation were also conducted in this study. The results of the survey presented 26 kinds of wild birds, with a total trading volume of an estimated 253. They are mainly birds of the order of the passerine, 18 of which are under Beijing's second-class protection, and one of them is under first-class protection.

Keywords: Beijing Bird's Market, Wild Birds, Bird Trade Survey

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1 Purpose and meaning

Birds are an indispensable part of nature and they play an important role in maintaining an ecological balance of the planet. The illegal trade of wild birds in the bird market undoubtedly poses a threat to their population. The geographical location of Beijing is paramount to the migratory birds. The species of birds are rich in variety and its quantity is large in scale. In addition, the bird market in old town Beijing has a long history

- since the Qing Dynasty, it has been the main bird market in the city. Therefore, a survey of the major bird markets in the city is highly representative.

1.1 The significance of protecting birds

Birds play the role of doctors in nature. A recent study has shown that birds can eat between 400 and 500 million tons of insects a year, keeping the individual population of pests low and controlling the population of insects, which in return, also protects other variants of insects. The birds are a natural control mechanism that reduces the damages caused by pests, thereby inhibiting the reproduction of pests, protecting agricultural production and ecological balance^[1]. Birds also contribute greatly to plant pollination, especially in places of high altitudes or hot climates. Scavengers such as vultures play an important role in the cleansing of nature, while some symbiotic birds can remove parasites from other animals. Birds are also nature's porters, where 70% of seeds rely on birds to pollinate. Birds, especially seabirds, play a key role in nutrient cycling and in helping to enrich marine ecosystems such as coral reefs. Humans have been drawing inspiration from birds for centuries - from flying technology to references of bird feathers in zippers. Pet birds have also enriched people's lives and have established meaningful relationships with humans, and so on^[2].

According to Bird Life International, millions of birds are affected by domestic or international trade each year - with finch songbirds, parrots and raptors being the most affected groups. The trapping of the bird trade has been identified as a contributing factor to the threat of 20 endangered and critically-endangered bird species.

1.2 The significance of conducting wild bird surveys in the bird market

Conducting a survey of wild birds in Beijing Bird's

Market provides information on the types, quantities, and endangered levels of wild birds in trade, as well as a shred of relevant evidence to call for urgent protection of these wild birds.

2 Research overview and method

2.1 Research overview

There are about 20 bird markets of various sizes in

Beijing. This survey selected six large-scale bird markets in Beijing, namely, Caihuying Bird Market, Shilihe Bird Market, Shahe Daji, Tongzhou Shangying, Xinguanyuan, and Dacheng Road Bird Market. This study investigated the types, quantities, and prices of wild birds traded in several major bird markets in Beijing from July 16 to July 18, 2019 and conducted data analysis and collation. The results are shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Overview of the Survey Area

Bird market name	Address	Shop/slot number	Remarks
Caihuyingqiao Bird Market	Beijing Caihuying Bridge East Bus Terminal (Youanmen West Street, Jinzhongdu Park Gate)		Thursday (morning)
Shilihe Bird Market	Outside the Tianjiao Folk Culture City of Shilihe, Chaoyang District, Beijing		weekend
Shahe Daji	Beijing Changping District Sha Henan large near the railroad bridge west		Wednesday, Sunday (6:00 am)
Tongzhou Shangying	Beijing Tongzhou District Shangying Flower and Bird Market		To be determined (part of the demolition)
Xinguanyuan	Beijing Haidian District, the new official Park bird fleas market (underground)		Every day (more birds during the weekend, especially during autumn)
Dacheng Road Bird Market	No.1, No.6, Dacheng Road, Fengtai District, Beijing (Zheng Chang Zhuang Station)		Tuesday morning

2.2 Research methods

(1) This survey uses observation, inquiry, and audition methods to record the type, quantity, price, and other information of birds sold in the bird market. During the investigation, the identification of birds in the bird market was carried out by investigators who were skilled in identifying wild birds. Photographs of uncertain species were taken. After the investigation, the identification process was carried out. Species that could not be identified were not included in the survey results. The types of transactions in the market outside of time were not included in the survey results.

(2) Special circumstances of some bird markets: During the period of investigation (between July 16 to July 19, 2019), the Shahe Daji Bird Market was not opened, therefore, the data presented here was derived from a later supplementary investigation.

(3) Trade bird price statistics: Due to the high competition of bird markets in Beijing, it was not always effective to ask the price of the birds. Often, the prices stated were not accurate or true to its value. The same species of wild bird traded in the bird market can be priced differently based on its demeanor or the quality of its chirp. The degree of price division is quite stark, therefore, the prices of several trade birds recorded here are for reference only.

3 Research results and analysis

The results of the survey presented 26 kinds of wild birds, with a total trading volume of an estimated 253. They are mainly birds of the order of the passerine, 18 of which are under Beijing's secondary level protection, and one of them is under first-class level protection. See Tables 2 to 6.

Table 2. Shilihe Bird Market

Survey location: Shilihe Bird Market			Survey time: 2019.07.17 am			
No.	Bird species	IUCN endangered rating	Protection level	Quantity	Price	Remarks
1	Big tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	2		
2	Coal tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	8		
3	Yellow-bellied tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	6		

4	Yellow-cheeked tit	LC	Three	1		
5	Yellow tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	4		
6	Ordinary Suzaku	LC	Three	1		
7	Goldfinch	LC	Beijing Second Class	2		
8	Red-crowned white-eye	LC	Beijing Second Class	5	60 (50)	
9	Dark green eye-dit	LC	Three	10	30	
10	Northern red-tailed owl	LC	Beijing Second Class	1	50	
11	Silver-throated long-tailed tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	1	20	
12	Starling	LC	Beijing Second Class	6	160	

Table 3. Tongzhou Shangying Bird Market

Survey location: Tongzhou Shangying Bird Market			Survey time: 2019.07.1 6 am			
No.	Bird species	IUCN endangered rating	Protection level	Quantity	price	Remarks
1	Big tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	1		
2	Starling	LC	Beijing Second Class	1		
3	Yellow tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	5	350	
4	Canary	LC		3	1200	Special color

Table 4. Caihuyingqiao Bird Market

Location: Caihuyingqiao Bird Market			Survey time: 2019.07.1 8 am			
No.	Bird species	IUCN endangered rating	Protection level	Quantity	Price	Remarks
1	Big tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	17	100	
2	Coal tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	8	150	
3	Marsh tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	9		
4	Yellow-bellied tit	LC	Beijing First Class	10	50	
5	Yellow-cheeked tit	LC	Three	2		
6	Yellow tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	4		
7	Ordinary Suzaku	LC	Three	4		
8	Tree sparrow	LC	Three	2		
9	Blackbird	LC		1	600	
10	Goldfinch	LC	Beijing Second Class	4		
11	Red throat song	LC	Beijing Second Class	3		
12	Mongolian Bailing	LC	Beijing Second Class	2		
13	Red-crowned white-eye	LC	Beijing Second Class	2		
14	Dark green eye-dit	LC	Three	5		
15	Red-tailed otter	LC	Beijing Second Class	1		
16	Yellow throat	LC	Beijing Second Class	1		
17	Chestnut	LC	Three	1		
18	a certain willow			1		

Table 5. Tongzhou Shangying Bird Market

Survey location: Tongzhou Shangying Bird Market			Survey time: 2019.07. 20 am			Booth 19	Shop 2
Bird species	IUCN endangered rating	Protection level	Quantity	Price	Remarks		
Big tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	8				
Coal tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	40				
Marsh tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	18	300			
Yellow-bellied tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	4				
Yellow-cheeked tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	3				
Yellow tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	18				
Suzaku	LC	Three	2				
Sparrow	LC	Three	12 +		There was a cage that has been collected and not counted, about five or six		
Goldfinch	LC	Beijing Second Class	4				
Red throat song	LC	Beijing Second Class	3				
Blue throat song	LC	Beijing Second Class	1				
Mongolian Bailing	LC	Beijing Second Class	5				
Starling	LC		14	Hainan 150	Family starling , Lin Biao, Hainan Starling		
Dark green eye-dit	LC	Three	28				
Hill mynah	LC	Beijing Grade II , CITES Appendix II	13				
Yellow eyebrow	LC		2				
Black wax mouth bird	LC	Beijing Second Class	9				
Chestnut	LC	Three	3				
A certain willow	LC		1				
thrush	LC	Beijing Second Grade CITES Appendix II	5				
White crown noise	LC	Three	1				

Table 6. Shahe Daji Bird Market

Survey location: Shahe Daji Bird Market			Survey time: 2019.07. 21 am			Booth 10	Shop 0
Bird species	IUCN endangered rating	Protection level	Quantity	Price	Remarks		
Big tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	7				
Coal tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	3				
Marsh tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	13				
Yellow bellied tit	LC	Beijing First Class	5				
Yellow-cheeked tit	LC	Three	2				
Yellow tit	LC	Beijing Second Class	7				
Red throat song	LC	Beijing Second Class	3				
Ordinary Suzaku	LC	Three	4				
Dark green-eye bird	LC	Three	17				
Red-crowned white-eye bird	LC	Beijing Second Class	2				
thrush	LC	Beijing Second Class	2				

Black wax mouth bird	LC	Beijing Second Class	3			
Goldfinch	LC	Beijing Second Class	~ 30+1		About 30 cages, the number of birds is unclear	
Tabby	LC		1			
Brown-headed Finch	LC	Beijing Second Class	~ 20		About 20 cages, numerous congestion	

4 Conclusion and discussion

4.1 Conclusion

(1) From July 16 to July 19, 2019: A total of 26 wild birds were recorded, with the total number of transactions approximate at 253 units.

(2) Birds in Beijing Bird Market are mainly birds of the order, and the largest number of birds in the survey is the passerine bird.

(3) Among all the recorded birds, 18 are under Beijing second-class level protection, and one is under Beijing first-class level protection.

(4) The same kind of wild birds traded in the bird market can make a huge difference in price according to the state of their appearance or the quality of its chirp.

(5) The wild birds in Beijing Bird Market are smaller in species and quantity. The number of birds for sale are also lesser for bigger birds.

4.2 Discussion

Based on the findings of this survey, I believe that bird farming exists as a hobby and is deeply rooted in the hearts of the older generations in Beijing. The people involved are not aware of the damaging consequences of these wild birds under such practices. Apart from endangering certain bird species, it also restricts the freedom of these wild birds to thrive in its natural habitat. The increasing demand for wild birds in the bird market has driven bird dealers to capture wild birds on a large scale. The numbers of birds that die during captivity and the transportation process are dozens or even a hundred times higher than the wild birds that people can see on display at the market.

Another important reason for the threat of wild birds is the general lack of legal regulations on selling wild birds and farming non-legal birds under the national laws, and the citizens believe that the handling of such trade is not that serious of an offense. In this investigation, we encountered a bird vendor who was driving to the Shilihe Bird Market to buy wild birds. Despite the presence of a dozen urban management

personnel, the efficiency was very low - a lot of bird dealers turn a blind eye and disregard efforts on stricter management. In other cases, the managing personnel are willing to leave after a few persuasions by the bird dealers. There are no disciplinary measures implemented by the city's management for bird dealers who sold wild birds at the time. One of the customers who came to buy a bird during the survey said that one of the bird dealers had been arrested for selling exotic birds but was briefly released after he had paid a bribe to the authority. Although the source of this incident is not verified but based on this dialogue, it was clear that the consequences of selling and even exploiting these wild birds are not taken seriously. The alleged punishment can also be resolved with bribery. Despite strengthening the laws and establishing severe punishments for breaking the laws, the bird dealers are still not afraid to take the risk to capture and sell wild birds in the market.

In addition, some people will buy wild birds from the bird dealers and release them out of kindness. This kind of practice has a limited impact on the protection of wild birds. There are several reasons for this:

The practice of releasing wild birds by an uninformed citizen will not ensure the protection of the species, instead, it will further encourage the bird dealers to capture and trade wild birds in bird markets, providing them with more flourishing business opportunities.

Inappropriate release, especially during an unsuitable season, is not ideal for the birds' survival. Bird dealers capture many wild birds during their migration. By releasing a wild bird after it has missed its ideal migration season and migrating without their own species makes them difficult to survive; certain species of wild birds are not native birds or are simply a pet bird that has no chance in surviving the wild. This kind of uninformed release will not only negatively affect the captured wild birds but also harm the natural growth and reproduction of other wild birds in the area.

All these phenomena indicate that the knowledge of the Wildlife Protection Law and general information on

wildlife protection has not been widely publicized and popularized to the citizens, and the public education on wildlife protection of the Chinese public has yet to be thoroughly reinforced.

In summary, in order to promote the protection of wild birds, the law regulatory agency and the wildlife management should work together to promote public awareness and educate the general public about wild bird trade. As a pet lover myself, I sincerely hope to see these birds thrive in harmony with humans. By being informed about the rules and regulations, pet bird

owners can look after the animals in a more ethical and respectful manner, rather than raising wild birds as a recreational hobby or for their personal amusement.

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