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:

#### 2.2 Research methods

1. **Research overview**

   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.

2. **Survey location: Shilihe Bird Market**

   | 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        |       |         |

(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 3. Tongzhou Shangying Bird Market

**Survey location:** Tongzhou Shangying Bird Market  
**Survey time:** 2019.07.16 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                     | Beijing Second Class | 3        | 1200  | Special color |

## Table 4. Caihuyingqiao Bird Market

**Location:** Caihuyingqiao Bird Market  
**Survey time:** 2019.07.18 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                     | Beijing Second Class | 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         |                        |                  |          |       |               |
### Table 5. Tongzhou Shangying Bird Market

| 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+      |       |                                                                         |
| Goldfinch         | LC                      | Beijing Second Class | 4        |       | There was a cage that has been collected and not counted, about five or six |
| 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                      | Beijing Grade II , CITES Appendix II | 14 | 150 | Hainan Family starling , Lin Biao, Hainan Starling |
| Dark green eye-dit| LC                      | Beijing Grade II, CITES Appendix II | 28 |       |                                                                         |
| Hill mynah        | LC                      | Beijing Grade II , CITES Appendix II | 13 |       |                                                                         |
| Yellow eyebrow    | LC                      | Beijing Second Class | 2        |       |                                                                         |
| Black wax mouth bird| LC                      | Beijing Second Class | 9        |       |                                                                         |
| Chestnut          | LC                      | Beijing Grade II , CITES Appendix II | 3 |       |                                                                         |
| A certain willow  | LC                      | Beijing Second Class | 1        |       |                                                                         |
| thrush            | LC                      | Beijing Second Class | 5        |       |                                                                         |
| White crown noise | LC                      | Beijing Second Class | 1        |       |                                                                         |

### Table 6. Shahe Daji Bird Market

| 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-checked 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        |       |                                                                         |
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.

References

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