

Habitat and bird composition in winter in Sanjiang Nature Reserve, China

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Sanjiang Plain is the largest wetland in China, being served by three rivers; the Heilongjiang, the Ussuri and the Songhua rivers. These rivers assemble in the extreme northeast of China, forming the plain. The plain area is home to vast numbers of wildlife, and is the most important breeding area for some rare species such as Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Red-crowned Crane *Grus japonensis* and Oriental Stork *Ciconia boyciana*. In order to conserve this habitat and its associated species, the government of China has declared several nature reserves in this area; Xingkaihu, Changlindao, Honghe, Laodangshan and Sanjiang Nature Reserves. Of these reserves, Sanjiang (Harris 1994) is the most recent to be declared, in 1994, by Heilongjiang Province. It is located in the extreme north-eastern part of the Sanjiang Plain, along the

Ussuri River, close to the border with Russia. In spring and summer, in excess of 130 species of birds use the area for migration or breeding. In winter however, far fewer species are present owing to the harsh habitat and climatic conditions.

Sanjiang Nature Reserve is covered by heavy snow from November through March, with average temperatures of below -30°C in January/February. The land within the reserve can be classified as follows;

- i. Villages: more than 20 villages are distributed irregularly within the reserve. Most are protected by trees, and have populations up to several hundreds of people.
- ii. Agricultural land: this land is located around the villages, and is used to cultivate crops such as

Table 1. Bird species recorded in Sanjiang Nature Reserve

Nomenclature as Inskipp *et al.* (1996)

Species	Habitat	Status	Abundance
COMMON PHEASANT <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	C/F	R	C
BLACK GROUSE <i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	F	WV	C
HAZEL GROUSE <i>Tetrastes bonasia</i>	F	R	R
LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER <i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	F	R	R
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER <i>Dendrocopos major</i>	F	R	R
GREY-HEADED WOODPECKER <i>Picus canus</i>	F	R	R
SNOWY OWL <i>Nyctea scandiaca</i>	C	WV	R
URAL OWL <i>Strix uralensis</i>	C	R	R
SHORT-EARED OWL <i>Asio flammeus</i>	C	R	R
ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD <i>Buteo lagopus</i>	V/C/M/F	R/WV	C
GOLDEN EAGLE <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	F	R	R
COMMON KESTREL <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	C/M/F	R	R
MERLIN <i>Falco columbarius</i>	C/M/F	WV	R
GREAT GREY SHRIKE <i>Lanius excubitor</i>	C/F	WV	R
EURASIAN JAY <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	F	R	R
AZURE-WINGED MAGPIE <i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>	F	R	R
BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE <i>Pica pica</i>	V/C/F	R	C
CARRION CROW <i>Corvus corone</i>	V/C/D	R	C
LARGE-BILLED CROW <i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	V/C/D	R	C
BOHEMIAN WAXWING <i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	F	WV	A
EURASIAN NUTHATCH <i>Sitta europaea</i>	F	R	R
MARSH TIT <i>Parus palustris</i>	V/C	R	R
GREAT TIT <i>Parus major</i>	V/C	R	R
AZURE TIT <i>Parus cyanus</i>	V/C	R	R
LONG-TAILED TIT <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	V/C	R	R
EURASIAN TREE SPARROW <i>Passer montanus</i>	V	R	A
COMMON REDPOLL <i>Carduelis flammea</i>	C	WV	A
LONG-TAILED ROSEFINCH <i>Uragus sibiricus</i>	C	R	R
PALLAS'S ROSEFINCH <i>Carpodacus roseus</i>	C	WV	R
PALLAS'S BUNTING <i>Emberiza pallasii</i>	C	WV	A
SNOW BUNTING <i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	C	WV	A

Habitat: V = village; C = crop land; M = marshland; F = forest

Status: R = resident; WV = winter visitor

Abundance: A = abundant; C = common; R = rare

soybean, corn, wheat and rice. These areas provide feeding areas for some species during the winter months.

- iii. Marshland: this habitat occupies the largest area of the reserve, and is comprised primarily of reeds and nutgrass. The thin stems of the reeds has meant that the reeds are not harvested by the local people as they are in other nature reserves such as Zhalong Nature Reserve. Consequently, even in the winter months this area is a good habitat for wildlife, especially large mammals.
- iv. Forest: areas of forest occur on higher ground, and along the rivers, and include oaks, poplar, birch, amongst other species

In the winter months of January and February 1998, the authors carried out a survey for 42 days of the birds of Sanjiang Nature Reserve, covering some 280 km on foot. Thirty-one bird species were identified, of which only 10 are known to be winter visitors (Table 1).

Most species were found in agricultural and forested areas, with only a few species occurring in villages or marshlands. This is almost certainly dictated by food supply, for example the occurrence of finches and

buntings in crop areas, woodpeckers, Bohemian Waxwing and grouse in forests, whilst raptors ranged across the marshes, agricultural land and forest. Clearly, the results indicate the importance of agricultural land and forest in the Sanjiang Nature Reserve. In the winter months, no species observed appeared to rely solely on the areas of marsh. However, this would not be the case in the summer months with the return of breeding marshland species.

Most species were relatively rare, with the exception of Bohemian Waxwing *Bombicilla garrulus*, Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*, Pallas's Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* and Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*. The large groups of grouse and ptarmigan, which were apparently present some 20 years ago, have largely disappeared.

REFERENCES

- Harris, J. (1994) Sanjiang: end of a wetland frontier. *The ICF Bugle* 20: 4-5.
- Inskipp, T., Lindsey, N. and Duckworth, W. (1996) *An annotated checklist of the birds of the Oriental region*. Sandy: Oriental Bird Club.

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Nomenclature of the 'Hypsipetes' Bulbuls (Pycnonotidae)

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The 'Hypsipetes' complex of bulbuls is confined to the Oriental region (with the exception of outliers in the Malagasy subfauna, where they form a distinct Asian element along with *Ninox* (Strigidae) and *Copsychus* (Saxicolini); and three Palearctic species).

The issue of the correct generic names for the species within this complex has, apparently, been long avoided by those who have had to deal with it. The expedient solution has been to fall back on traditional treatment, with the excuse that it would take a detailed generic revision to resolve.

Most of the present confusion would appear to be the ambiguity caused by the presence of three potential homonyms: *Iole virescens* Blyth, 1845, *Ixos virescens* Temminck, 1825, and *Ixocincla virescens* Blyth, 1845. Rand and Deignan (1960) placed all three in an expanded *Hypsipetes*, leaving only *Hypsipetes virescens* (Temminck, 1825), the type of *Ixos*, with its name intact, and curiously predating the type of *Hypsipetes*, *Hypsipetes psaroides* Vigors, 1832, by seven years.

Subsequently *Iole*, *Ixos*, *Hemixos* and *Hypsipetes* have become generally re-established as accepted genera; however, the inclusion of *Ixos virescens* Temminck, 1825, along with *Hypsipetes mccllellandii* Horsfield, 1840, in

Hypsipetes by Sibley and Monroe (1990), followed by Inskipp *et al.* (1996), would logically require the disappearance of *Hypsipetes* as a junior synonym of *Ixos*, and seventeen new name combinations.

However, an alternative solution, already adopted by Wolters (1975-1982), would be to include *Ixos virescens* Temminck, 1825 and *Hypsipetes mccllellandii* Horsfield, 1840 in *Ixos*, along with the seven morphologically similar species listed in that genus by Sibley and Monroe (1990). This would leave eight closely related species in *Hypsipetes* and allow the scientific name of the Nicobar Bulbul to revert to *Hypsipetes virescens* (Blyth, 1845).

Synonymy:

Ixos Temminck, 1825, *Planches coloriées d'oiseaux*, livr. 64, text to pl. 382. Type, by monotypy, *Ixos virescens* Temminck.

Galgulus Kittlitz, 1832, *Kupfert. Nat. Vögel*, fasc. 1, p. 7. Type, by original designation, *Turdus amaurotis* Temminck. Not *Galgulus* Brisson, 1760. [Cuculiformes]

Hypsipetes Vigors, 1832, *Proc. Comm. Zool. Soc. London*, pt. 1 (1830-1831), p. 43. Type, by monotypy,