



## ***Itinerary:***

**Sunday 22 May / DAY zero: arrival at hotel near Beijing airport.** *The cost of this overnight (but not e.g. dinner) IS INCLUDED in tour price. Tour participants will need to inform JH of their arrival date & time, flight # and airport of origin of flight into Beijing (e.g. 'Tokyo' if you have changed plane there) well in advance.*

**We will assemble at 20:00 in the hotel lobby for a briefing.**

*Your leader will be pleased to organize one or more night(s) in a hotel in Beijing for anyone preferring to arrive early, to rest up after the long international flight or to get a bit of extra birdwatching time in.*

**23 May / DAY 01:** We will expect to get an hour or two around our hotel to look for grounded migrants before catching an AM flight to Xining, capital of Qinghai Province, c1,600 kilometers west of Beijing. Regular birds of the season include Indian Cuckoo, Fork-tailed Swift, Brown Shrike, Thick-billed, Black-browed Reed, Yellow-browed, Arctic & Two-barred Greenish Warblers, and Grey-streaked, Sooty, Asian Brown, Yellow-rumped & Taiga Flycatchers, and among the scarcer migrants Pere David's Bush Warbler, the gorgeous Siberian Blue Robin & Elisa's (or Green-backed Narcissus) Flycatcher have all been recorded at this time of the year.

On arrival we'll press on to a hotel deep in the mountains for a two nights' stay, birding en route. The extensive forest & alpine scrub of the Datong range is home to a healthy population of the magnificent Blue Eared Pheasant as well as the harder-to-find Severtzov's Hazel Grouse & Verreaux's Monal Partridge. We have a reasonable chance of encountering the particularly fine *beicki* race of Blood Pheasant.

More widespread species such as Grey Crested Tit, White-browed Tit-warbler, Southern Spotted Bush, Buff-barred & Large-billed Leaf Warblers, and Chestnut & Chinese Song Thrushes are added attractions, and we'll try our best to get close looks at Siberian Rubythroat and Chinese White-browed Rosefinch.

**24-25 May / DAYS 02-03:** Working different sections of this attractive area of spruce and birch forest with adjoining terraced fields and buckthorn scrub we may see Daurian Partridge, but it is the warblers and redstarts which are the main attractions: with a bit of luck we should see Hodgson's, White-throated & White-bellied Redstarts, and Yellow-streaked, Hume's and Gansu Leaf Warblers. The last has only very recently been reaccepted as a valid species, and its winter quarters remain to be discovered.

Less demanding than the warblers is a fine set of other birds: Common Pheasant, Blue Hill Pigeon, Salim Ali's Swift, Olive-backed Pipit, Grey-backed Shrike, Rufous-browed Accentor, Pere David's and Elliot's Laughingthrushes, and *affinis* Songar Tit. Also-possibles include Oriental Turtle Dove, Chinese Nuthatch, and Grey-headed Bullfinch.

There is probably nowhere better in the world for the retiring, outrageously beautiful Crested Tit-warbler and the little-known Przevalski's Nuthatch (only recently with authority confirmed as a fully valid species), and a special effort to find these real star birds is likely to bear fruit.

On the way to Xining in the afternoon of **Day 3** we will detour to devote time to the eroded hills on the outskirts of town. Our chief target will be the distinctive Stoliczka's Rosefinch, a taxon now at long last formally upgraded to full species status instead of being merely 'the local race of Sinai Rosefinch'. The attractive Meadow Bunting is more widespread generally but we are unlikely to come across it anywhere else on our journey. Both Daurian & the Chukar-lookalike, endemic Przevalski's Partridges also occur, but as a somewhat misguided tree planting scheme is in the process of rendering the site unsuitable we may have a better chance of Yellow-streaked Warbler, Pere David's Laughingthrush, Daurian Redstart & Pied Wheatear.

**26 May / DAY 4:** Heading for the fabled Koko Nor we'll leave Xining early and soon gain altitude: during migration time there is just no telling what one might miss by being half an hour late leaving the hotel! Soon reaching the Plateau at c3,200m we'll be expecting to see Bar-headed Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, various ducks (amongst them Red-crested Pochard), Himalayan Griffon, Upland Buzzard, Great Black-headed and Brown-headed Gulls, *tibetana* Common Tern, Little Owl, Long-billed Calandra, Mongolian, Hume's Short-toed, Oriental Sky and Elwes' Horned Larks, Richard's Pipit, black-backed *calcarata* Citrine Wagtail, Black Redstart, Isabelline Wheatear, the entertaining Hume's Groundpecker, Rock Sparrow, and Pere David's Snowfinch.

Migrants could include waders such as Pintail Snipe, Long-toed Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper & Oriental Pratincole, and grey-backed *citreola* Citrine Wagtail, Blyth's & Rosy Pipits, and Black-faced Bunting. The enjoyment of whatever migrants are around (and numbers vary) will add to the fun, but will not be allowed to distract us from getting to grips with the local specialities!

Having hopefully bagged some migrants in addition to the more reliable breeders we'll continue south in the afternoon to again spend the night at relatively low altitude.

**27-29 May / DAYS 5-7:** In order to minimize the risk of any of us suffering altitude-induced discomfort (we are yet to quite acclimatize) we'll take our time to reach Yushu, crossing this spectacular part of NE Tibet in stages: this is the main leg of the journey towards another target area: the valleys, ridges, and passes in the vicinity of remote Nangqian, on the Mekong river.

Caucasian Great and Eastern Great Rosefinches are frequently both present in a barren-looking gully, and we're likely to see good numbers of Upland Buzzards & several Sakers where cute-looking Black-lipped Pikas - a cornerstone species in the intricate plateau ecology - are abundant. Stops at wetlands along the road over the high plateau should yield several pairs of endemic Black-necked Cranes, and summering Pallas's Fish & Steppe Eagles are occasionally present. We'll scan the tarn-dotted expanses for Kiang, the stately Tibetan Wild Ass, and wolves are encountered on most trips, frequently at relatively close range. On one trip we were even privileged to witness four particularly mean-looking individuals undertake a successful hunt, killing and ripping apart a Tibetan Gazelle!

We will explore the vicinity of the forbidding Er La pass where Roborovski's Rosefinch is usually seen. Although the species occurs in rather low density we have managed to find it on all visits since 1995, prior to which this Qinghai endemic had gone unseen by Westerners for four decades.

Other species present here at this time of year are Tibetan Snowcock, Alpine Accentor, Guldenstadt's Redstart, Henri's Snowfinch (recently confirmed by DNA studies to be not very closely related to Eurasian Snowfinch after all), and Brandt's & Plain Mountain Finches. Most importantly we would not want to pass up a chance to see the enigmatic, never guaranteed Tibetan Sandgrouse!

Blue Sheep are seen on most visits, occasionally in good numbers, while Snow Leopard, the superbly camouflaged top carnivore of these bleak uplands, is one to dream about. Mind you, dreams come true occasionally: we did see a Snow Leopard in this area in 1995!

Pushing on over the rather grim Bayankala pass (at nearly 5,000m we're here on one of the highest roads in the world) we will eventually descend to the Yangtze and, a short way up a tributary, the town of Yushu. A combination of relatively oxygen-rich air and a general sense of satisfaction deriving from encounters amid grand scenery en route with new birds and mammals ensure that most teams arrive at colourful Yushu in high spirits...

**30 May -3 June / DAYS 08-12:** A five days' foray south in the general direction of the Himalayas will allow us to thoroughly comb a region of spectacularly wild scenery – peaks covered in permanent snow, each valley a fresh gash, each sandstone ridge rising defiantly towards temperamental skies. Searching scrub, juniper thickets, spruce forest, alpine grassland, and wind-blown rocky summits we should see a range of very special birds: Szechenyi's Monal Partridge, Tibetan Snowcock, Tibetan Partridge, the stunning White Eared Pheasant, Snow Pigeon, the weird, extremely retiring, and highly localized Kozlov's Babax, Giant Laughingthrush, Chinese Fulvetta, the distinctive Tibetan Magpie, Yellow-billed Chough, Tibetan Snowfinch, Pink-rumped, Eastern Great, Red-fronted & Przevalski's Rosefinches, and the startlingly pretty Kozlov's Bunting are all expected species.

Add a bit of luck and we should see the impressive Tibetan Grey Shrike, too.

Among the less localised species occurring here are Golden Eagle, Blue Hill Pigeon, Grey-headed & Black Woodpeckers, Salim Ali's Swift, Red-rumped Swallow, Asian House Martin, Olive-backed Pipit, White-throated Dipper (we'll be looking out for the all-brown morph in addition to 'normal' ones!), Rufous-browed & Brown Accentors, the superb Himalayan Rubythroat, Himalayan Red-flanked Bluetail, Hodgson's, White-throated and White-bellied Redstarts, Greenish, Buff-barred, 'Eastern' Lemon-rumped & *mandellii* Hume's Leaf Warblers, Slaty-backed Flycatcher, Elliot's Laughingthrush, Grey Crested, Rufous-vented & isolated *weigoldicus* 'Songar' Tits, the recently split Hodgson's Treecreeper, the butterfly-ish red-grey-and-white Wallcreeper, Grey-backed Shrike, Red Crossbill, Daurian Jackdaw, the nomadic White-winged Grosbeak, and Godlewski's Rock Bunting.

With luck we might also encounter one or more of the scarcer inhabitants of these secretive forests, incl. Severtzov's Grouse, Blood Pheasant, the isolated, certain-to-be-split *funnebris* Three-toed Woodpecker, Long-tailed Minivet, Maroon-backed Accentor, Long-tailed Thrush, Sooty Flycatcher (the distinctiveness of local race *rothschildi* strongly suggests that 'further research is needed'!), the erratic Tibetan Siskin, Three-banded Rosefinch, and the impressive, Pine Grosbeak-like Crimson-browed Finch.

The supremely beautiful Grandala, in summer a bird of the highest summits, may be only a scarce breeder but we'll scan at likely spots knowing that our efforts could well be rewarded with a sighting of one of the most striking birds of the Himalayan realm.

The presence of an apparently healthy population of Blue Sheep (we have seen as many as 150 in a day) suggests that eventually we'll come across their main predator, Snow Leopard. On one trip we were encouraged – as well as amused – by the reply given by a Tibetan herb gatherer when asked if he'd 'ever seen Snow Leopard here?' ... 'No. But I saw one over there once!', he said, indicating a spot at most 300m from where we were standing!

Ibisbills are usually present along the upper Mekong at Nangqian, and we have a fair chance of getting close enough to photograph one. Dense thickets of well-developed buckthorn exist along the river, and these can hold quite a few migrants at this season, as well as the exquisite Kessler's Thrush coming in to feed, Rock Sparrow and Citrine Wagtails on the flats, *tibetana* Common Terns over the river, and Himalayan Griffons and Lammergeiers high above.

By the time we move on we will be in the privileged position of being familiar with most of the birds of this grand, truly 'end of the road' region.

**5-7 June / DAYS 13-15:** The drive to Golmud is a long one – from almost anywhere anyone of us is likely to have heard of, much less been to - but these days the road across this section of the Roof of the World is pretty good, affording us plenty of time to take in the transitions in the landscape and stop to look for birds & mammals.

Reaping the rewards of our acclimatization we have an excellent chance of enjoying an encounter with Tibetan Sandgrouse, endemic to Tibet and on the Hardest Bird in the World shortlist along with Emperor Penguin.

In this part of Asia the sought-after Saker remains hard to miss, the highly variable Upland Buzzard, the heftiest of the Asian *Buteo*, is common.

The impressive Chiru (=Tibetan Antelope), up until recently mercilessly hunted for the soft wool on its belly but now enjoying greatly improved protection, will be just one quarry on a venture onto the vast wind-blown plains of the Chang Tang. Hardly any naturalists cover this route but your leader has consistently been able to find Chirus not too far from the road. One time we were photographing Chirus using the vehicle as a mobile hide we were thrilled to notice that there were half a dozen Tibetan Sandgrouse in amongst them...

Other mammals present include Wolf, Tibetan Fox, Pallas's Cat, Kiang, Tibetan Gazelle, and Blue Sheep.

We'll be fairly flexible, allowing ourselves time to search also for Wild Yak & Argali, but shall be expecting to overnight in a patched-up inn for one night (preferable to the energy-sapping hardships of camping at high altitude with temperatures even in summer frequently dropping below zero Centigrade!) before pressing on for a morning trying for the recently re-discovered Sillem's Mountain Finch.

The approach to Golmud is through discouragingly barren country, sheer geology with virtually nothing of interest to the biologist: bleakly thrusting mountains which, slashed by icy streams, held at bay all but a tiny, determined elite amongst the early explorers and for centuries protected Tibet from military invasion from a northerly direction.

Golmud is – or aspires to be – a boom town of development connected to trade, transport & oil. It has the surreal, disjointed feeling of an out-on-thin-ice venture running out of momentum, but at least for the moment it offers travelers comfortable lodgings and surprisingly good meals.

**7-10 June / DAYS 15-19:** The details of the return journey from Golmud to Xining will be decided somewhat flexibly based on how we have done with our targets. We traverse country which is home to Goitred Gazelle, a graceful animal we fully expect to see, and a try for the recently elevated Tarim Hill Babbler is likely to be successful. Henderson's Ground-jay, the little-known Margelanian 'Lesser' Whitethroat, and Desert Wheatear breed in the same area, and we will be alert to any stray migrants.

Top priority will be a hidden valley above the desert W of Koko Nor. It offers comparatively easy access to the breeding habitat of the little-known Przevalski's Redstart, another Tibetan speciality, and arguably the loveliest of all the redstarts. Przevalski's Partridge, the taxonomically challenged Przevalski's Rosefinch, nowadays considered to represent a monotypic family (is it Rosefinch? is a Bunting? – good question, seeing that in the field it does not appear obviously close to either, with its graduated, blindingly pink tail, absurdly thin lower mandible, and a summertime habit of doing 'parachute' type songflights!), and *przevalskii* "Siberian" Stonechat are strong possibilities in the same area.

Most days birds of prey put on a good show – it is not too unusual to have a couple of Eurasian Hobbies around, up to 3-4 stately Lammergeiers, as many as 20-25 Himalayan Griffons gliding back and forth encouraging scrutiny of the full range of plumages, plus at least one pair of Golden Eagles: photographers take note!

We even have a sporting chance of locating Przevalski's Gazelle, one of the rarest mammals in the world.

Having completed our scenic walk we'll 'do' the desert in search of Henderson's Ground-jay. It is prone to initially give visitors the run-around treatment but will often then perch up nicely on a tussock for prolonged views. Asian Short-toed Lark, Desert Wheatear, Mongolian Trumpeter Finch & *tsaidamensis* Isabelline Shrike are additional species to look for, and we may even find the pretty Desert Finch, here at the very limit of its range.

One morning will be spent trying for the sought-after Pallas' Sandgrouse. Essentially a bird of the steppes of Central Asia east to Mongolia, its occasional irruptions – during which it may reach and breed in e.g. the British Isles – adds considerably to its charisma, making it a real Dreambird. It is usually reliable despite its nomadic inclinations: we will be watching for any drink-fighting groups, and it may be possible to find birds feeding warily amongst the scattered, wind-burnt clumps of grass. The burrowing Blanford's Snowfinches share this habitat – tiny birds in a vast landscape, but with a distinctive call which in the pure Tibetan air carries a surprising distance.



**Approximate tour price: cCNY38,898.-** *[at the time of writing cUS\$6,368.-]*

Tour costs are based on a group of ten people at October 2014 levels and should be accurate to within 5%. A reasonable surcharge *may* apply if there are less than ten people in the group. Important cost factors include air fares, gas price, fees for permits & ‘official paperwork’, and rate of inflation.

The tour price is inclusive, covering internal flights (Beijing - Xining, Xining - Beijing), land transport, all meals w/ tea, all accommodation, necessary permits for Restricted Area sites and other paperwork, services of tour leader and drivers, and a contribution of US\$200.- to Oriental Bird Club’s Conservation Fund.

Not included are international flights, any Beijing sightseeing expenses, travel insurance, drinks, any meals not taken with the group, and anything strictly personal (e g visa fees, laundry, phone calls, any excess luggage charges, snacks).

**Single room is available throughout:** a surcharge of **cCNY4,898.-** will apply for anyone not sharing.

**Group size:** 6-10 participants (+JH)

**Tour Start:** Day zero will be Sunday 22 May 2016 / Day 21 will be Sun 12 June 2016.

*Please enquire re alternatives if the dates above are not ideal for you – in 2014 we were able to run two NE Tibet Fundraisers...*

**Transport:** Internal flights will be economy class. Landcruiser or similar good 4WD vehicles will be used in Qinghai except around Xining.

**Accommodation:** ...considerably improved! We'll stay in comfortable hotels with private bath/toilet facilities on 18 or 19 nights. In addition we'll have 2-3 nights in back-to-basics hostels (shared ‘facilities’ in the yard; ‘shower’ = water supplied w/ wash basin, *if we are lucky*).

**Food:** All meals and tea are provided, during the day generally from roadside eating places or from our stock of provisions as appropriate to maximize time spent in the field, with the main meal of the day being in the evening at a restaurant attached to our hotel/hostel or very close by. We will make the most of what is available – and will make a point of eating well wherever possible: most people come away feeling ‘it’s not for nothing Chinese cuisine is so famous’ - but expect some meals away from Beijing and Xining to be on the simple side, if both tasty and nourishing.

The trip is suitable for vegetarians.

**Weather:** Often changeable, with blue skies alternating with overcast conditions. Some rain is likely, and we could even meet snow at the highest altitudes. Expect temperatures in the 0-25C range in Qinghai, and c30C (or maybe a bit more!) in Beijing - a windchill factor must be taken into account at high altitude.



**Photography:** We'll spend our time trying to *see* birds, but the keen photographer will find plenty of opportunity to make use of the often excellent light. Many birds rarely or never encounter human beings and can be remarkably approachable.

Note, however, that on some walks at high altitude participants are strongly discouraged from carrying "excess weight" in the form of tripod, 2<sup>nd</sup> camera, or spotting scope.

**Health:** *as much time will be spent above 3,000 m, with stops at passes at nearly 5,000 m and general birdwatching at altitudes up to c4,800 m it is of paramount importance that anyone with heart or respiratory ailment - or any other condition likely to be aggravated by altitude - seek medical advice before deciding to participate.*

*Check e.g. [http://www.netdoctor.co.uk/travel/diseases/altitude\\_sickness.htm](http://www.netdoctor.co.uk/travel/diseases/altitude_sickness.htm) for more information about health at altitude. Many tour participants have found the prescription drug Diamox helpful at altitude, and the benefits of *Rhodiola rosea* extract – available inexpensively in capsule form in China – are widely accepted: check e.g.*

*[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhodiola\\_rosea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhodiola_rosea)*

*Further, note that only the most basic medical facilities exist away from Xining and Beijing: all participants must accept the full implications of this.*

However, anyone in general good health and reasonably fit should find that acclimatization is achieved within a few days of arrival, ensuring full enjoyment of this exciting journey.

**Essential equipment:** Rainproof overcoat; thick fleece / light down jacket; windproof over-trousers; sweater; thick longjohns; roomy & genuinely waterproof hiking boots; wind-proof winter hat; gloves; sun hat; sun glasses; sunscreen lotion & ditto lip balm (protection factor 15-30 is necessary at high altitude); plenty of thick socks (dry socks are important when hiking, and there will be few opportunities to do any washing); plenty of chocolate & other favourite snacks/energy food; lozenges; large water bottle (100C resistant); size >500ml drinking mug; small torch; ear plugs (possible sources of noise @ Chinese hotels include other guests, barking dogs, roosters, snoring room mates); spoon & pocket knife.

**Recommended equipment:** Sandals (doubles as slippers); wellingtons; small towel; bar of soap.

**One to think about:** sleeping bag (most people find a sleeping bag quite useful as rooms can be chilly and the blankets/quilts while adequate can be uncomfortably heavy!).

**Dress code:** please note that any clothing worn as an outer layer (including your headwear: no white or very pale sun hats!) must be in muted colours to reduce the risk of spooking warier species.

**Visa:** in your visa application do not mention Tibet as this very likely will lead to wholly unnecessary entanglement in red tape: you need your visa only for entering the People's Republic of China – special permits relating to our itinerary are secured for us locally prior to our arrival.

Please note that your China visa will normally be valid for entry only within 90 days of issue date.



## **Species list**

*P* = possible, for harder-to-find / regularly missed species We normally see at least some of these. Please bear in mind that few species are absolutely unmissable!

*BJ* = Beijing only.

? = potential / vagrant recorded on previous trips in May/June.

Severtzov's Hazel Grouse *Tetrastes sewerzowi* *P*

Verreaux's Monal Partridge *Tetraophasis obscurus* *P*

Szechenyi's Monal Partridge *Tetraophasis szechenyi* *P*

?Himalayan Snowcock *Tetraogallus himalayensis*

Tibetan Snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus*

Przevalski's Partridge *Alectoris magna* *P*

Daurian Partridge *Perdix dauurica*

Tibetan Partridge *Perdix hodgsoniae*

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* *P*

Japanese Quail *Coturnix japonica* *P*

Blood Pheasant *Ithaginis cruentus* *P*

White Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

Blue Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon auritum* *P*

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

?Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* *P*

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* *P*

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* *P*

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* *P*

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* *P*

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Chinese Spotbill *Anas zonorhyncha*  
Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*  
Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*  
Garganey *Anas querquedula* P  
Common Teal *Anas crecca*

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*  
Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*  
Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

?White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi stejnegeri*

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* P

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*  
Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* P

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* P

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* P

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* P

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*  
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* P  
Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* BJ  
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

?Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* P

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Saker *Falco cherrug*

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* P

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* P

Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* P

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*

Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* P

?Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

?Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus* P

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* P

?Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus* P

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* P

Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* P

?Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* P

European Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* P

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* P

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* P/BJ

Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca* P/BJ

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Common Coot *Fulica atra*

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* P

Common Crane *Grus grus* P

Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis*

Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Pied Avocet *Recurvirosta avosetta* P

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* P

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* P

?Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

?Lesser (=Black-fronted) Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

'Spot-fronted' Sand Plover *Charadrius atrifrons*

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultia* P

?Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura* P

Swinhoe's Snipe *Gallinago megala* P

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* P

Western Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* P

?Eastern Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa melanuroides*

European Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* P

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* P

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* P

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* P

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*  
Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*  
Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* P

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

?Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* P

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* P

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* P

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* P

?Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* P

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* P

?Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*

Common Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

?Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* P

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

?Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

Tibetan Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes thibetana* P

Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

Blue Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris*

Snow Pigeon *Columba leuconota*

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Red Turtle Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica* P

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*

?Finsch's Parakeet *Psittacula finschii*

Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus sparverioides* P

Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus* BJ

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

?Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*

?Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus*

Oriental Scops Owl *Otus sunia* P/BJ

?Pere David's Owl *Strix davidi*

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Brown Hawk-Owl *Ninox scutulata* P/BJ

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* P

?Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Grey Nightjar *Caprimulgus jokata* P/BJ

?Himalayan Swiftlet *Aerodramus brevirostris*

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus* P

Salim Ali's Swift *Apus salimali*

Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* P

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Northern Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* P

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus* BJ

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus* P

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* P

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*

?Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina melaschistos*



Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus* P

Tiger Shrike *Lanius tigrinus* P

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* P

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*

Chinese Grey Shrike *Lanius sphenocercus* P

Tibetan Grey Shrike *Lanius (s.) giganteus* P

Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis* P

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus*

Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha* BJ

Common Magpie *Pica pica*

Tibetan Magpie *Pica (pica) bottanensis*

Henderson's Ground Jay *Podoces hendersoni*

Hume's Groundpecker *Pseudopodoces humilis*

?Eurasian Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Alpine Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* P

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

?Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

'Eastern' Great Tit *Parus minor*

Yellow-bellied Tit *Parus venustulus* BJ

Rufous-vented Tit *Parus rubidiventris*

?Coal Tit *Parus ater*

Marsh Tit *Parus palustris* BJ

Songar Tit *Parus songarus*

White-browed Tit *Parus superciliosus*  
Grey Crested Tit *Parus dichrous*

Chinese Penduline Tit *Remiz (pendulinus) consobrinus* P/BJ

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* P  
Pale Sand Martin *Riparia diluta*

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Northern House Martin *Delichon urbicum* P  
Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus*

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

‘Silver-throated’ Tit *Aegithalos glaucocularis* P

White-browed Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile sophiae*  
Crested Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile elegans* P

Mongolian Lark *Melanocorypha mongolica*  
Long-billed Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha maxima*

?Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*  
Hume’s Short-toed Lark *Calandrella acutirostris*  
Asian Short-toed Lark *Calandrella cheleensis*

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* P

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*

Elwes’ Horned Lark *Eremophila elwesi*

Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* BJ

Tarim Hill Warbler *Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris* P

Chinese Bulbul *Pycnonotus sinensis* BJ

Pere David’s Bush Warbler *Bradypterus davidi* P/BJ  
Spotted Bush Warbler *Bradypterus thoracicus* P  
Chinese Bush Warbler *Bradypterus tacsanowskii* P

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* P/BJ

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* P

Thick-billed Warbler *Phragmaticola aedon* P/BJ

?Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Oriental Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis* BJ

Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* BJ

?Blunt-winged Warbler *Acrocephalus concinens*

?Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

?Smoky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuligiventer*

'Chinese' Tickell's Warbler *Phylloscopus occisinensis*

Yellow-streaked Warbler *Phylloscopus armandii*

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* P/BJ

Buff-barred Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus pulcher*

Gansu Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

Chinese Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus yunnanensis* P

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* P

Eastern Lemon-rumped Warbler *Phylloscopus forresti*

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* BJ

Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*

?Kamchatka Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus examinandus*

?Japanese Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus xanthodryas*

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Two-barred Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*

Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*

?Claudia's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus claudiae*

'Margelanica' Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia margelanica*

Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis*

Kozlov's Babax *Babax koslowi*

Pere David's Laughingthrush *Garrulax davidi*

Giant Laughingthrush *Garrulax maximus*

Elliot's Laughingthrush *Garrulax elliotii*

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* P

Chestnut-flanked White-eye *Zosterops erythropleurus* P/BJ

Japanese White-eye *Zosterops japonicas* P/BJ

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Northern Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Chinese Nuthatch *Sitta villosa*

Przevalski's Nuthatch *Sitta przewalskii*

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Hodgson's Treecreeper *Certhia hodgsoni* P

Crested Myna *Acridotheres cristellatus* P/BJ

Daurian Starling *Sturnus sturninus* P

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* P

Red-billed Starling *Sturnus sericeus* P/BJ

White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus* P

Eurasian Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* P

Long-tailed Thrush *Zoothera dixonii* P

Chinese Blackbird *Turdus mandarinus* P

?Tibetan Blackbird *Turdus maximus*

Chestnut Thrush *Turdus rubrocanus*

Kessler's Thrush *Turdus kessleri*

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* P

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis* P

Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* P

Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni* P

Chinese Song Thrush *Turdus mupinensis* P

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*

Himalayan Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis*

?Rufous-tailed Robin *Luscinia sibilans*

Himalayan Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger rufilatus*

Northern Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*

Przevalski's Redstart *Phoenicurus alaschanicus*

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

?Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

White-throated Redstart *Phoenicurus schisticeps*

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus auroreus* P

Guldenstadt's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus*

Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*

White-bellied Redstart *Hodgsonius phaenicuroides* P

Plumbeous Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosa*

River Chat *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

Grandala *Grandala coelicolor* P

'Siberian' Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* P

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

Common Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*

Eastern Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola philippensis* P

?Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Grey-streaked Flycatcher *Muscicapa griseisticta* P/BJ

Sooty Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* P

Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia* P

?Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki*

Slaty-backed Flycatcher *Ficedula hodgsonii*

Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla* P

?Slaty-blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolor*

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* P

Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans*

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*

Henri's Snowfinch *Montifringilla henrici*

Tibetan Snowfinch *Montifringilla adamsi*

White-rumped Snowfinch *Onychostruthus taczanowskii*

Pere David's Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda davidiana*

Rufous-necked Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda ruficollis*

Blanford's Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda blanfordi*

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*  
Robin Accentor *Prunella rubeculoides*  
Rufous-browed Accentor *Prunella strophciata*  
Brown Accentor *Prunella fulvescens*  
Maroon-backed Accentor *Prunella immaculata* P

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* P

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* P  
Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis* P  
Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*  
Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*  
White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*  
Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* P  
Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*  
Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* P/BJ  
Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* P/BJ  
Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseus*  
Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* P

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* P

Tibetan Siskin *Serinus thibetanus* P

Oriental Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica*  
Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus* P  
Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

Plain Mountain Finch *Leucosticte nemoricola*  
Brandt's Mountain Finch *Leucosticte brandti*  
?Sillem's Mountain Finch *Leucosticte sillemi*

Mongolian Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes mongolicus*

Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta* P

Przevalski's Rosefinch *Urocynchramus pylzowi* P

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*  
Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrimus*  
Pink-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus waltoni*  
Stoliczka's Rosefinch *Carpodacus stoliczkae beicki*  
Three-banded Rosefinch *Carpodacus trifasciatus* P  
Chinese White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus dubius*

Eastern Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilloides*  
Caucasian Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilla severtzov* P

Red-fronted Rosefinch *Pyrrhospiza punicea*

Roborovski's Rosefinch *Kozlowia roborowskii*

Crimson-browed Finch *Pinicola subhimachala* P

Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Grey-headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythaca*

?Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Chinese Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria* P/BJ

White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carniceps*

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* P

Eastern Rock Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides* P

Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata* P/BJ

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* P

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* P/BJ

Kozlov's Bunting *Emberiza koslowi*

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*

?Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

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## **Mammals:**

Sequence and taxonomy follows "A Guide to the Mammals of China", Smith & Xie (ed.) 2008.

Rhesus Macaque *Macaca mulatta* P

Himalayan Marmot *Marmota himalayana*

Alashan Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus alashanicus* P

Northern Three-toed Jerboa *Dipus sagitta* P

?Stoliczka's Mountain Vole *Alticola stoliczkanus*

?Przewalski's Steppe Vole *Eolagurus przewalskii*

Irene's Mountain Vole *Neodon Irene* P

Tibetan Dwarf Hamster *Cricetulus tibetanus* P

Midday Gerbil *Meriones meridianus* P

Gansu Pika *Ochotona cansus* P

Plateau Pika *Ochotona curzoniae*  
?Daurian Pika *Ochotona dauurica*  
Chinese Red Pika *Ochotona erythrotis* P  
Glover's Pika *Ochotona gloveri*  
Tsing-Ling Pika *Ochotona huangensis* P  
?Moupin Pika *Ochotona thibetana*  
?Thomas' Pika *Ochotona thomasi*  
Woolly Hare *Lepus oiostolus*  
Tolai Hare *Lepus tolai* P  
?Gansu Mole *Scapanulus oweni*  
?Thick-eared Bat *Eptesicus pachyotis*  
?Grey Long-eared Bat *Plecotus australicus*  
?Nepalese Myotis *Myotis nipalensis*  
?Chinese Mountain Cat *Felis bieti*  
Pallas' Cat *Felis manul* P  
?Wildcat *Felis silvestris*  
Lynx *Lynx lynx* P  
Snow Leopard *Uncia uncia* P  
Wolf *Canis lupus* P  
Tibetan Fox *Vulpes ferrilata*  
Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*  
Brown Bear *Ursus arctos* P  
?Asian Black Bear *Ursus thibetanus*  
Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra* P  
Hog Badger *Arctonyx collaris* P  
?Yellow-throated Marten *Martes flavigula*  
?Beech Marten *Martes foina*  
Asian Badger *Meles leucurus* P  
Mountain Weasel *Mustela altaica*  
Steppe Polecat *Mustela eversmanni* P  
?Siberian Weasel *Mustela sibirica*  
?Red Panda *Ailurus fulgens*  
Kiang *Equus kiang*  
?Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*  
?Forest Musk Deer *Moschus berezovskii*  
Alpine Musk Deer *Moschus chrysogaster* P  
Siberian Roe *Capreolus pygargus* P  
MacNeill's (Red) Deer *Cervus macneilli* P  
Gansu Red Deer *Cervus (elaphus) kansuensis* P  
?Tufted Deer *Elaphodus cephalophus*  
White-lipped Deer *Przewalskium albirostris* P  
Goitred Gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa*  
Tibetan Gazelle *Procapra picticaudata*  
Przevalski's Gazelle *Procapra przewalskii* P  
Wild Yak *Bos grunniensis* P  
?Takin *Budorcas taxicolor*





One adult right overhead in a deep gorge being hotly pursued by an adult Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, presumably the rightful owner of the smallish prey item dangling from the Lammergeier's talons. We saw about 25 Lammergeiers in total.

**Tibetan Snowcock** *Tetraogallus tibetanus*

Prolonged views of several adults with chicks included one parked up on a rock in good light for close to half an hour.

**White Eared Pheasant** *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

One of several encounters involved a covey of eight adults. Initially some distance above us, the birds helpfully glided down closer to us and started walking across the hillside directly in front of us, with one bird ending up perched in a juniper, preening as we enjoyed unobscured 'scope views in soft afternoon light. In total, we recorded nine species of gamebird on the trip.

**Black-necked Crane** *Grus nigricollis*

Pairs with thriving, typically half-grown chicks were seen well in a number of places.

**Ibisbill** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

Of the 20+ birds recorded, two which allowed us to approach to <20m (our experienced drivers inching the cars-turned-hides forward so that everyone with a camera or digital video recorder got his/her chance) stood out. Also at the time, as they were feeding in a green meadow among yellow flowers exactly the shade of the head of the male Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* feeding less than a meter away, well away from the shingly river where Ibisbill's camouflage hues work so well.

**Tibetan Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes tibetanus*

A pair with a couple of still-downy chicks were seen and photographed at close range, upstaging several Pallas's Sandgrouse *S. paradoxus* seen equally well in rather different habitat a few days before.

**Pere David's Owl** *Strix (uralensis) davidi*

One found in the daytime near Nangqian was a real privilege.

**White-bellied Redstart** *Hodgsonius phoenicuroides*

Though widespread and fairly common, this species' retiring habits makes it a hard one to see (particularly in its wintering range), and everyone was pleased to eventually obtain superb views of a male perched up in the open.

**Gansu Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

To some perhaps just one of nine *Phylloscopus* species recorded on the trip (the others being Greenish, Buff-barred, Lemon-rumped, Chinese, Hume's, Yellow-streaked, Dusky & Tickell's), but special in that it isn't recorded away from the areas covered on this trip: its wintering grounds remains undiscovered.

**Crested Tit-warbler** *Leptopoeile elegans*

Seeing this tiny gem feed quietly in late-afternoon sunlight produced many a quiet sigh of ornithological satisfaction...

**Przevalski's Nuthatch** *Sitta przewalskii*

An elusive species, but familiarity with its call helped, and we in the end enjoyed superb views of a pair feeding at eye level in medium-sized spruce trees.

**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus tsaidamensis*

Less common than previously in the areas covered (possibly through competition from Grey-backed Shrike *L. tephronotus*) so we were happy to see one adult attending a full-grown juvenile.

**Henderson's Ground Jay** *Podoces hendersoni*

A charismatic species, and one which not surprisingly constituted a genus tick for almost everyone on the trip. One offered prolonged views, feeding (digging for lizzards, flipping-over a dry cowpad) whilst keeping a reasonable distance between us and it.

**Hume's Ground-pecker** *Pseudopodoces humilis*

A provider of endless fun and an overall favourite trip bird for several group members. Let's stick with the well-established and apt name for this species, shall we! – rather than something as flavour-less as Tibetan Ground Tit, or whatever the name-dreamers may be tempted to come up with in the light of DNA tests pointing to a relationship with *Paridae*...

**Pere David's Snowfinch** *Pyrgilauda davidiana*

Post-breeding family parties coming in to drink, offering nice 'scope views, were more cooperative than a pair seen early in the trip, and more appreciated now that longer sessions with the other five species possible in this part of the world were "in the bag".

**Spotted Great Rosefinch** *Carpodacus severtzovi*

Repeated close-ups – a real beauty!

**Red-fronted Rosefinch** *C. puniceus*

Memorable close-ups – with some below eye level; otherwise typically a crag-loving species responsible for many a pain in the neck.

**Roborovski's Rosefinch** *Kozlowia roborowskii*

We had to work a bit harder for this enigmatic species – but in the end even our discerning team photographers were happy with the encounters.

**Kozlov's Bunting** *Emberiza kozłowi*

Half a dozen birds seen. An isolated and hard-to-get-to Restricted Range species, well worth the efforts, and arguably the Most Special Bird of the Trip.

Good birds also seen include **Severtzov's Grouse** *Bonasia sewerzowi*, **Szechenyi's Monal Partridge** *Tetraophasis szechenyii*, **Przevalski's Partridge** *Alectoris magna*, **Tibetan Partridge** *Perdix hodgsoniae*, **Blood Pheasant** *Ithaginis cruentus*, **Snow Pigeon** *Columba leuconota*, **Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo*, **Three-toed Woodpecker** *Picoides tridactylus*, **Long-billed Calandra & Mongolian Larks** *Melanocorypha maxima* & *M. mongolica*, **Maroon-backed Accentor** *Prunella immaculata*, **Himalayan & Siberian Rubythroats** *Luscinia calliope* & *L. pectoralis*, **Przevalski's Redstart** *Phoenicurus alashanicus*, **Kessler's Thrush** *Turdus kessleri*, **Southern Spotted Bush Warbler** *Bradypterus thoracicus*, **Desert Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia minula margelanica*, **Stoliczka's Tit-warbler** *Leptopoecile sophiae*, **Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis*, **Kozlov's Babax** *Babax kosłowi*, **Chinese Fulvetta** *Alcippe striaticollis*, **White-browed Tit** *Parus superciliosus*, **Chinese Nuthatch** *Sitta villosa*, **Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*, **Tibetan Grey Shrike** *Lanius (sphenocercus) giganteus*, **Brandt's Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte brandti*, **Mongolian Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes mongolicus*, **Pink-rumped, Sinai, Three-banded, White-browed & Eastern Great Rosefinches** *Carpodacus eos*, *C. synoicus*, *C. trifasciatus*, *C. thura* & *C. rubicilloides*, **Crimson-browed Finch** *Pinicola subhimachalus*, **Przevalski's Rosefinch** *Urocynchramus pylzowi*, **Grey-headed Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula erythaca*, **White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carnipes* & **Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides*.

## **2005 Trip summary :**

The just-finished OBC fundraising trip to NE Tibet brought together enthusiastic birders representing three countries, living on two continents (three countries and two continents down from the 2003 team!).

We recorded a total of 222 species, a very respectable total given that we only spent a couple of days birding below 3,000m. It was a trip of so many highlights that everyone was hesitant to name favourite birds at the end of the trip. The scenery, the mammals (incl. a posse of four of wolves with ease hunting down a Tibetan Gazelle, plenty of Blue Sheep, 110 Kiang (= Tibetan Wild Ass), AND a superb Lynx), wildflowers of overwhelming beauty and diversity & an intriguing mix of local cultures combined with the avian wonders to produce a trip the memories of which will burn brightly for a long, long time.

Encounters which for me were particularly memorable were:

### **Pallas's Fish Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*

An adult causing a stir – among the group members as well as among the 100s of geese, duck & gulls present at a great, undoubtedly Ramsar class wetland which we visited twice.

### **Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus*

A synchronised flying display performed by an adult and a juvenile at about 200m distance. We logged 31 bird-days in total, with many individuals seen very well indeed.

### **Szechenyi's Monal Partridge** *Tetraophasis szechenyii*

One bird came in in response to play-back, doing exaggerated, pumping head-bobs as it called back, ending up at <10m from one of us.

### **White Eared Pheasant** *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

One of several encounters involved a covey of 15 adults and five chicks. Initially close but largely hidden in deep scrub, the birds helpfully started making their way across the hillside directly in front of us, intermittently calling. In total, we recorded nine species of gamebird on the trip.

### **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*

Always a good one to see. We enjoyed 20 spp of waders in a morning at Koko Nor.

### **Grey-headed Parakeet** *Psittacula finschii*

A juvenile at Nangqian represented a 1<sup>st</sup> for Qinghai Province.

### **Himalayan Rubythroat** *Luscinia pectoralis*

After a number of false starts we finally all saw a male well. Even those of us who had seen the species previously considered it a serious contender for Bird of the Trip. As often happens, once the spell was broken we saw more – a drizzly morning even had a couple come off the side of the main road in front of Car 1!

### **Gansu Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

To some perhaps just one of nine *Phylloscopus* species recorded on the trip (the others being Greenish, Buff-barred, Lemon-rumped, Chinese, Hume's, Yellow-streaked, Dusky & Tickell's), but special in that it isn't recorded away from the areas covered on this trip: its wintering grounds remain undiscovered.

**Przevalski's Nuthatch** *Sitta przewalskii*

An elusive species, but familiarity with its call helped, and we repeatedly enjoyed superb scope views. 11 in a day must be a world record?

**Hume's Ground-pecker** *Pseudopodoces humilis*

A provider of endless fun and an overall favourite trip bird for several group members. Let's stick with the well-established and apt name for this species, shall we! – rather than something as flavour-less as Tibetan Ground Tit, or whatever the name-dreamers may be tempted to come up with in the light of DNA tests pointing to a relationship with *Paridae*...

We recorded no less than c370 bird-days.

**Przevalski's Rosefinch** *Urocynchramus pylzowi*

One that some of us were getting a bit worried about... but we found a nesting pair directly we entered the target area. Standing well back from the nest we all enjoyed great scope views of both birds. While the female continued to come and go, delivering food to the nest, the male remained on his perch for long minutes trying, we initially thought, to figure us out. More likely he was concerned about alarming Tickell's Leaf Warblers further down the hill; soon, in answer to our 'wonder what's up?', a Tibetan Grey Shrike (the third of the trip but the 1<sup>st</sup> ever on an often-worked hillside) treated us to a fly-by.

**Kozlov's Bunting** *Emberiza koslowi*

21 birds seen. An isolated and hard-to-get-to Restricted Range species, well worth the efforts, and arguably the Most Special Bird of the Trip.

Good birds also seen include **Black Vulture** *Aegypius monachus*, **Saker** *Falco cherrug*, **Severtzov's Grouse** *Bonasia sewerzowi*, **Tibetan Snowcock** *Tetraogallus tibetanus*, **Przevalski's Partridge** *Alectoris magna*, **Daurian & Tibetan Partridges** *Perdix dauurica* & *P. hodgsoniae*, **Blood Pheasant** *Ithaginis cruentus*, **Black-necked Crane** *Grus nigricollis*, **Ibisbill** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii* (looking so much more at home in Tibet than on the last couple of acceptable stretches of river near Beijing!), **Mongolian & Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* & *C. leschenaultii*, **Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta*, **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *C. acuminata*, **Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stenura*, **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*, **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus*, **Pallas's Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*, **Three-toed Woodpecker** *Picoides tridactylus*, **Long-billed Calandra & Mongolian Lark** *Melanocorypha maxima* & *M. mongolica*, **Pale Sand Martin** *Riparia diluta*, **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii*, **Maroon-backed Accentor** *Prunella immaculate*, **Przevalski's Redstart** *Phoenicurus alashanicus*, **Chestnut, Kessler's & Chinese Song Thrushes** *Turdus rubrocanus*, *T. kessleri* & *T. mupinensis*, **Desert Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia (minula) margelanica* **Stoliczka's & Crested Tit-warblers** *Leptopoeile sophiae* & *L. elegans*, **Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis*, **Kozlov's Babax** *Babax koslowi*, **Giant Laughingthrush** *Garrulax maximus*, **Chinese Fulvetta** *Alcippe striaticollis*, **White-browed Tit** *Parus superciliosus*, **Chinese Nuthatch** *Sitta villosa*, **Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*, **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus*, **Tibetan Magpie** *Pica bottanensis*, **Henderson's Ground Jay** *Podoces hendersoni*, six species of **Snowfinch**, **Tibetan Siskin** *Carduelis thibetana*, **Plain & Brandt's Mountain Finches** *Leucosticte nemoricola* & *L. brandti*, **Mongolian Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes mongolicus*, **Sinai, Three-banded** *Carpodacus synoicus* & *C. trifasciatus* & **Roborovski's Rosefinches** *Kozlowia roborowskii*, **Crimson-browed Finch** *Pinicola subhimachalus*, **Grey-headed Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula erythaca*, **White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carniceps*, and **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos*.

## **2006 Trip summary**

The OBC fundraising trip to NE Tibet ended on 27 August. It brought together enthusiastic birders representing three countries living on as many continents.

Including a few picked up before breakfast on the last morning in Beijing we recorded a total of 203 species, a very respectable total given that we only spent two days and a half birding below 3,000m. It was in fact a trip of so many highlights that everyone was reluctant to name favourite birds at the end of the trip. The scenery, the mammals (incl. a couple of wolves, 250+ Blue Sheep, herds of Kiang (= Tibetan Wild Ass), four Goitred Gazelle, and several cute Stoliczka's Mountain Voles), abundant wildflowers of bewildering beauty and diversity, and an intriguing mix of local cultures combined with the avian wonders to produce a trip the memories of which will burn brightly for a long, long time.

Encounters which for me were particularly memorable were:

### **Szechenyi's Monal Partridge** *Tetraophasis szechenyi*

7+ bird-days. On 19<sup>th</sup> we spent time trying to see three vocal groups of this at times uncooperative species before flushing three birds – “nice tail-band!”, and that, we thought, was that: not ideal, but better, a lot better, than no views at all... THEN one bird was relocated up in the tree we'd concluded it had flown through, and with a bit of care the scope was placed so that we could all enjoy extended, unobscured views, feather-by-feather.

### **Tibetan Snowcock** *Tetraogallus tibetanus*

10+ bird-days. Noted on two dates. On 14<sup>th</sup> repeated calls helped us localize one bird fairly easily but somehow it evaporated from the 'scope field-of-view and it then took us an agonizingly long time, and several moves, before everyone had finally seen one properly.

### **White Eared Pheasant** *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

36+ bird-days. Noted on four dates. 16+ (= two groups of four adults w/ 3+ & 5+ chicks, respectively, in close proximity) on 17<sup>th</sup> was exactly what we'd hoped for, and their timely appearance allowed us to change the day's 'battle plan' slightly, which in turn produced a group of Blood Pheasants. Later, rounding off our visit to the Mekong watershed nicely, up to 18 adults were seen repeatedly in the course of the morning of 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Pallas's Fish Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*

A superb adult perched on a fence post S of Maduo on 24<sup>th</sup>. Tingaling!

### **Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus*

26 bird-days. Noted on 11 dates. A top Dreambird for several group members, this emblematic species was not devalued by several superb encounters... one landed on the ground <100m from our vehicle on 21<sup>st</sup>.

### **Black-necked Crane** *Grus nigricollis*

31 bird-days. Noted on four dates. Superb views on several occasions, but to our dismay just one juvenile was seen (near of Maduo on 24<sup>th</sup>).

### **Pallas's Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

A superb encounter with a pair W of Koko Nor – 'scoped at c80m. Such camouflage! Such charisma!

### **Eurasian Eagle-Owl** *Bubo bubo*

One frame-filler under a rock overhang near the Yangtze on 15<sup>th</sup>. Another long-wished-for life bird for several group members – tingaling!

**Tibetan Grey Shrike** *Lanius (sphenocercus) giganteus*

One put on a good show near Nangqian on 22<sup>nd</sup>. A low-density species, wide-ranging and often inconspicuous even when present (and thus easily missed), we were fortunate to see this individual so well and enjoyed it all the more for having drawn blanks at two other sites.

**Crested Tit-Warbler** *Leptopoeile elegans*

20 bird-days. Noted on four dates. Two males at Nangqian forest reserve sat out at <10m trying to figure us out, allowing team photographers to ‘shoot’ away. This is not often one gets a chance to check the iris colour of this species! – I leafed through the dictionary and two Birdquest brochures in search of a superlative which fully does this jewel justice, in vain...

**Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*

Eight bird-days. Noted on four dates. Prolonged views of one at <10m next to the vehicles at the Ibisbill spot on 23<sup>rd</sup> was a trip highlight... flying below us in perfect sunlight, then feeding on lichen-blotched boulders in the stream, popping in and out of view.

**Przevalski's Redstart** *Phoenicurus alaschanicus*

12 birds (= three family parties) in mountains W of Koko Nor – we'd barely caught our breath before the 1<sup>st</sup> superb male appeared, and throughout a memorable morning we were treated to close-up encounters with this sought-after, very pretty species.

**Sooty Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sibirica rothschildi* & *M. s. sibirica*

19 bird-days. 1-10 noted daily at Nangqian forest reserve, where obliging members of family parties time and again lured the team photographers away from the group... At Beijing, a juvenile ssp *sibirica* sat out nicely on a dead branch.

\*\*\*Work on vocalizations may well lead to suggestions that the distinctive *rothschildi* be elevated to full species status...

**Henri's Snowfinch** *Montifringilla henrici*

c391 bird-days. Except for two on 24<sup>th</sup> seen only at Er La, where 355 on 25<sup>th</sup> was a surprise – of these, 298 flew S (14 flocks / groups of 2-41 birds, all but three birds passed before 08h00) on what appeared to be straightforward migration. As we were not ideally positioned the whole time it is likely that we missed a number of flocks: as many as twice the number we recorded may have passed.

**Maroon-backed Accentor** *Prunella immaculata*

20 bird-days. Noted daily at Nangqian forest reserve with a daily max of 16. Often a tough bird to see well, but this year we were astonished to find a post-breeding gathering of more than a dozen associating with good numbers of other passerines (including a furtive Crimson-browed Finch) near a rare trickle of water.

**Three-banded Rosefinch** *Carpodacus trifasciatus*

12 bird-days. 2-5 daily at Nangqian forest reserve. A retiring species, but we found it well worth the trouble to track down calling birds...

Other good birds seen include **Saker** *Falco cherrug*, **Severtzov's Grouse** *Bonasia sewerzowi*, **Przevalski's Partridge** *Alectoris magna*, **Tibetan Partridge** *Perdix hodgsoniae*, **Blood Pheasant** *Ithaginis cruentus*, **Ibisbill** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii* (looking so much more at home in Tibet than on the last couple of acceptable stretches of river near Beijing!), **Mongolian Plover** *Charadrius mongolus*,

**Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stenura*, **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus*, **Three-toed Woodpecker** *Picoides tridactylus*, **Long-billed Calandra & Mongolian Lark** *Melanocorypha maxima* & *M. mongolica*, **Pale Sand Martin** *Riparia diluta*, **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii*, **Chestnut & Kessler's Thrushes** *Turdus rubrocanus* & *T. kessleri*, **Himalayan Red-flanked Bluntail** *Tarsiger rufilatus*, **Guldenstadt's Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus*, **Gansu Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus kansuensis* (as well as eight other *Phylloscopus* warblers) **'Margelanica' Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia (minula) margelanica*, **Stoliczka's Tit-warbler** *Leptopoecile sophiae*, **Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis*, **Kozlov's Babax** *Babax koslowi*, **Giant Laughingthrush** *Garrulax maximus*, **Chinese Fulvetta** *Alcippe striaticollis*, **White-browed Tit** *Parus superciliosus*, **Chinese & Przevalski's Nuthatches** *Sitta villosa* & *S. przewalskii*, **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus*, **Tibetan Magpie** *Pica bottanensis*, **Henderson's Ground Jay** *Podoces hendersoni*, **Hume's Groundpecker** *Pseudopodoces humilis*, five additional species of **Snowfinch**, **Plain & Brandt's Mountain Finches** *Leucosticte nemoricola* & *L. brandti*, **Desert Finch** *Rhodospiza obsoleta*, **Sinai Carpodacus** *synoicus* & **Roborovski's Rosefinches** *Kozlowia roborowskii*, **Crimson-browed Finch** *Pinicola subhimachalus*, **Grey-headed Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula erythaca*, **White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carniceps*, and **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos*.

## **2008 trip summary:**

The 2008 OBC Fundraiser to NE Tibet ended on 15 June. It brought together enthusiastic birders representing five countries: J Adamson, N Birch, R Birch, P French, A Kelly, J Newman, D O'Mahony, J Penhallurick, A Short, B short & myself - a good time was had by all.

We recorded 230 species of birds (counting a few picked up in the Beijing hotel gardens on the mornings of 25 May & 15 June would bring the total to c240) and 22 species of mammals. Given that we only spent a couple of days birding below 3,000m this is approximately as many as we could have hoped for. It was a trip of so many highlights that everyone was hesitant to name favourite birds at the end of the trip. The scenery, the weather, the mammals (incl. three Wolves, a number of Tibetan Foxes, 2-3 enigmatic Pallas' Cats, two Otters, 244 Kiang (= Tibetan Wild Ass), White-lipped Deer, Goitred Gazelles, up to 100+ Blue Sheep in a day, AND a superb Brown Bear with three cubs), wildflowers of overwhelming beauty and diversity & an intriguing mix of local cultures combined with the avian wonders to produce a trip the memories of which will burn brightly for a long, long time.

Encounters which for me were particularly memorable were:

### **Szechenyi's Monal Partridge** *Tetraophasis szechenyi*

24+ bird-days. Extended views of two at close range (<15m) on 8th was about as much as we could cope with - a well-earned reward for putting in the mileage in pursuit of this attractive species.

### **Tibetan Snowcock** *Tetraogallus tibetanus*

13-15+ bird-days. Noted on three dates... nothing like arriving at a high pass on a fine morning to find the pure air resounding with the in turns clucking and curlew-ey calls of this snowline specialist.

### **Przevalski's Partridge** *Alectoris magna*

A bit of motivation was needed to get them this year but we did, and what views! TINGALING...

### **White Eared Pheasant** *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

30 bird-days. Noted on four dates - we'd been out of the vehicles at the designated spot for barely 15 seconds before the first calls were heard, and then it was mostly a matter of scanning diligently.



**Saker** *Falco cherrug*

17 bird-days.

**Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus*

36 bird-days. A top Dreambird for several group members, this emblematic species was not devalued by several superb encounters...

**Himalayan Buzzard** *Buteo burmanicus*

10-11 bird-days. Formerly considered a race of COMMON BUZZARD B. buteo but genetically closer to UPLAND BUZZARD B. hemilasius (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005) from which it is ecologically separated & easily - well, fairly easily! - distinguished... Superb views on several occasions!

**Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo*

A flock of ten at a well-timed stop at Koko Nor on 28th - the birds did a bit of standing around and a bit of dancing before flying past us at <50m: very much a bonus bird as this time of the year!

**Black-necked Crane** *Grus nigricollis*

41 bird-days.

**Ibisbill** *Ibidorhycha struthersii*

Ten bird-days. Looking so much more at home in Tibet than on the last couple of acceptable stretches of river near Beijing the species posed for the cameras more than once...

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*

An adult at Koko Nor on 28th.

\*\*\*Possibly only the 2nd modern record for Tibet: three adults at the Golmud reservoirs on 5 June 1992 (JH pers obs) was the 1st.

**Tibetan Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes thibetana*

Four birds near Er La pass. The first two flew past us even before we'd reached the main target area, calling repeatedly and showing the diagnostic nearly all-black underwing 'under the sun' before dropping to become nearly impossibly to get on against a snow-flecked hillside... thus a couple of hours of agony for our top lister, but soon enough we were all watching another bird. WOW!

**Tibetan Grey Shrike** *Lanius (sphenocercus) giganteus*

One put on a good show W of Koko Nor on 29th. A low-density species, wide-ranging and often inconspicuous even when present (and thus easily missed), we were fortunate to see this individual so well.

**Crested Tit-warbler** *Leptopoecile elegans*

Eight bird-days. Noted on four dates. To say that this species does not draw attention to itself is hardly an exaggeration... our patience was, however, amply rewarded: I've leafed through the dictionary and two Birdquest brochures in search of a superlative which fully does this jewel justice, in vain...

**Chinese Bush Warbler** *Bradypterus tacsanowskii*

Two singing at edge of cultivation N of Xining on 27th was a bonus - we were able to 'scope one of them as it sat in the open giving its 'faulty high-voltage insulator' buzz.

**Gansu Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

To some perhaps just one of ten *Phylloscopus* species recorded on the trip (the others being Dusky, Tickell's, Yellow-streaked, Buff-barred, Chinese, Lemon-rumped, Hume's, Arctic & Greenish), but special in that it isn't recorded away from the areas covered on this trip: its wintering grounds remains undiscovered.

**Kozlov's Babax** *Babax koslowi*

Noted on four dates. Occupying a restricted range this was one of our main targets. Often a rather tricky one to dig out but this time the species could hardly have surrendered itself more easily: everyone got memorable views as two birds fed in the open.

**Giant Laughingthrush** *Garrulax maximus*

62 bird-days. Noted on five dates, the resounding calls of this often excitable species dominate the morning chorus in the forests of SE Qinghai and throughout the day pairs will announce their presence across the slopes by bursts of calling.

**Przevalski's Nuthatch** *Sitta przewalskii*

Noted on three dates. A pair near Xining on 26th allowed our team photographers to go to work as the rest of us stood back a couple of paces, enjoying prolonged 'scope views.

**Himalayan Rubythroat** *Luscinia pectoralis*

Although very much an expected species we initially struggled to get satisfactory views of a satisfactory individual but with the trip barely begun it was too soon to panic, and sure enough we managed no less than 26-27 singing males in a morning later on, several of which sat out to the delight of camera-wielding team members.

**Przevalski's Redstart** *Phoenicurus alashanicus*

Five males & three females. We'd barely caught our breath before the 1st superb male appeared, and throughout a fine morning we were treated to close-up encounters with this sought-after, very pretty species.

**Grandala** *Grandala coelicolor*

A nest-building pair close to the N edge of the species' known range very early in the trip. 'Grandala Blue' may not be in your dictionary but it should be - no named shade captures the glowing colour of the male of this sought-after species.

**Przevalski's Rosefinch** *Urocynchramus pylzowi*

Three bird-days. Excellent views of a couple of males... Increasingly considered to represent a monotypic family!

**Roborovski's Rosefinch** *Kozlowia roborowskii*

20 bird-days. Noted on no less than four dates.

**Kozlov's Bunting** *Emberiza koslowi*

Two pairs S of Yushu on 9th - TINGALING!

Good birds seen also seen include **Black Vulture** *Aegypius monachus*, **Severtzov's Grouse** *Bonasia sewerzowi*, **Daurian & Tibetan Partridges** *Perdix dauurica* & *P. hodgsoniae*, **Blood Pheasant** *Ithaginis cruentus*, **Mongolian Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus*, **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus*, **Pallas' Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*, **Three-toed Woodpecker** *Picoides tridactylus* (of the possibly to-be-split *funnebris* 'race'), **Long-billed Calandra & Mongolian Larks** *Melanocorypha maxima* & *M. mongolica*, **Pale Sand Martin** *Riparia diluta*, **Maroon-backed Accentor** *Prunella immaculate*,

**Chestnut & Kessler's Thrushes** *Turdus rubrocanus* & *T. kessleri*, **'Margelanic' Desert Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia (minula) margelanica*, **Stoliczka's Tit-Warbler** *Leptopoecile sophiae*, **Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis dedekeni*, **Chinese Fulvetta** *Alcippe striaticollis*, **White-browed Tit** *Parus superciliosus*, **Chinese Nuthatch** *Sitta villosa*, **Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*, **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus*, **Tibetan Magpie** *Pica bottanensis*, **Henderson's Ground Jay** *Podoces hendersoni*, six species of **Snowfinch**, **Plain & Brandt's Mountain Finches** *Leucosticte nemoricola* & *L. brandti*, **Mongolian Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes mongolicus*, **Sinai & Three-banded Rosefinches** *Carpodacus synoicus* & *C. trifasciatus*, **Crimson-browed Finch** *Pinicola subhimachalus*, **Grey-headed Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula erythaca*, **White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carniceps*, and **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos*.

## **2009 trip summary:**

The just-finished 2009 OBC Fundraiser trip to NE Tibet brought together enthusiastic birders from three continents, representing six countries: B Beers, R Hoff, K Kjellberg, P Los, D Melville, V Melville, D Myers, P Rostron, D Sargeant, G Tebb & myself. A good time was had by all!

This posting will be of particular interest to [OB] readers and Oriental Bird Club members who are considering the 2010 OBC Fundraiser trip to the same area, scheduled for the same three-week slot.

We recorded 225 species of birds in Qinghai, and mammals such as **ASSAM MACAQUE** *Macaca assamensis*, **GLOVER'S PIKA** *Ochontona gloveri*, **PALLAS' CAT** *Felis manul*, **WOLF** *Canis lupus*, **TIBETAN FOX** *Vulpes ferrilata*, **KIANG** *Equus kiang*, **GOITERED GAZELLE** *Gazella subgutturosa* & **BLUE SHEEP** *Pseudois nayaur*.

The birds, the mammals, the butterflies & dragonflies, the scenery (at this time of the year in many places blanketed in wildflowers), a stimulating mix of local cultures, enjoyable food & comfortable - from 'OK' to 'surprisingly good' - accommodations all came together to produce a trip the more memorable for the region - though in many ways an indisputable 'must' destination for anyone hooked on Palearctic and/or Asian birds - being under-visited by birdwatchers.

Among the highlights / my personal favourites / most interesting records were:

### **SEVERTZOV'S GROUSE** *Tetrastes sewerzowi*

A male absolutely performed for the group at Nangqian forest reserve!

### **TIBETAN SNOWCOCK** *Tetraogallus tibetanus*

No less than 22 in a day - an in many ways classic encounter: we were positioned (holding the proverbial cup of coffee!) well before the birds came out of roost and started calling, then watched them fly off down the hill where they were soon refound and watched for a long while as they squabbled, herded-in their chicks, and kept up constant calling.

### **COMMON QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix*

The first record - as far as I am aware - for NE Tibet for five years.

### **WHITE EARED PHEASANT** *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

Noted on three dates - main event eight on 28<sup>th</sup>: 'we were positioned (holding the proverbial cup of coffee!) well before the birds came out of roost and started calling'... maybe due to the dawn chill many

birds in Tibet are not very early risers so being in place before they appear frequently does not preclude keeping quite reasonable hours!

**YELLOW BITTERN** *Ixobrychus sinensis*

A bonus bird on any Tibet trip - we saw five when we turned a Force Majeure change of plan to our advantage. One of them was a 1<sup>st</sup> c-y, presumably hatched locally.

**AMUR FALCON** *Falco amurensis*

A 2<sup>nd</sup> c-y female on a wire - seen well, and considered a great bonus not least by some of our high-listing group members.

**SAKER** *Falco cherrug*

14 bird-days.

**LAMMERGEIER** *Gypaetus barbatus*

18 bird-days. Noted on no less than nine dates & frequently seen at close range.

**BLACK-NECKED CRANE** *Grus nigricollis*

26 bird-days. Noted on four days... WOW!

**PINTAIL SNIPE** *Gallinago stenura*

One flying over at Koko Nor on 22<sup>nd</sup> was early indeed - in previous years returning migrants have been recorded no earlier than 1 Aug.

**LONG-TOED STINT** *Calidris subminuta*

Two adults put on a good show at Koko Nor on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER** *Calidris acuminata*

One adult at Koko Nor on 7<sup>th</sup> - not seen particularly well but nonetheless a pleasing find.

**GREAT BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Larus ichthyæetus*

Noted on five dates - c50 approachable ('anyone got a spare memory card?') adults on a stream was a trip highlight.

**CASPIAN TERN** *Sterna caspia*

One adult at Koko Nor on 7<sup>th</sup> - possibly the 1st record for Tibet.

**PERE DAVID'S OWL** *Strix davidi*

Noted on two dates at Nangqian forest reserve - persistence paid off on 31<sup>st</sup> when a roosting bird was located towards the end of the day.

**TIBETAN GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius giganteus*

Three bird-days - noted on two dates.

**WHITE-BROWED TIT** *Parus superciliosus*

13+ bird-days. This attractive endemic was noted on five dates - on 22<sup>nd</sup> gentle pishing attracted a family party, allowing KK to obtain photos at <2m!

**LONG-TAILED TIT** *Aegithalos caudatus*

35+ in a day!

\*\*\*ssp *vinaceus* has been floated as a possible split but this idea was firmly booh'd by group members.

**CRESTED TIT-WARBLER** *Leptopoeile elegans*

36+ bird-days. Noted on five dates - on 2<sup>nd</sup> a group of at least six birds 'delayed' us in the most memorable way: a couple of males sitting out in perfect light at <10m, females feeding in nuthatchey fashion... TINGALING!

\*\*\*Typically not a species that draws attention to itself - however, patience and persistence can be amply rewarded... I've leafed through the dictionary and two Birdquest brochures in search of a superlative which fully does justice to this jewel, but in vain.

**CHINESE HILL WARBLER** *Rhopophilus pekinensis*

This enigmatic species made a rare appearance on a NE Tibet trip list with an active and comparatively showy group of 3+ seen.

**SPOTTED BUSH WARBLER** *Bradypterus thoracicus*

No less than six singing (incl two seen well) N of Xining on 20<sup>th</sup> was a bit of a bonus.

**GANSU LEAF WARBLER** *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

16 bird-days. This localised breeder (with as yet undiscovered wintering grounds) was seen well.

\*\*\*An additional eight *Phylloscopus* spp were recorded...

**'MARGELANIC' LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia (minula) margelanica*

One was seen well on 24<sup>th</sup> (where two were present in early June) - a somewhat obscure taxon...

**KOZLOV'S BABAX** *Babax kozłowi*

13 bird-days. Noted on four dates - we got superb views of the localised endemic on more than one occasion.

**CHINESE FULVETTA** *Alcippe striaticollis*

3+ seen well at Nangqian forest reserve - a pleasant surprise as we'd been unable to find any on our visits earlier in the season...

**PRZEVALSKI'S NUTHATCH** *Sitta przewalskii*

10 bird-days - on the hypothetical Bird of the Trip shortlist!

**KESSLER'S THRUSH** *Turdus kessleri*

79+ bird-days. This emblematic species was noted on nine dates.

**PRZEVALSKI'S REDSTART** *Phoenicurus alashanicus*

Eight bird-days W of Koko Nor... Noone argued against my only-half-in-jest assertion that this is the prettiest member of the genus: WOW!

**GULDENSTADT'S REDSTART** *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus*

23 bird-days. Noted on five dates this extremely attractive high-mountain specialist put on a good show for us.

**GRANDALA** *Grandala coelicolor*

A pair led us on on the 1<sup>st</sup> longish stroll of the trip, eventually rewarding us with nice views. Later on the trip a group of six birds disappeared around a corner, disappointingly not to reappear...

**RUFOUS-NECKED SNOWFINCH** *Pyrgilauda ruficollis*

130+ bird-days. This pretty bird was noted on the High Plateau on six dates.

\*\*\*An additional five species of Snowfinch, all those possible, were seen well on the trip...

**MAROON-BACKED ACCENTOR** *Prunella immaculate*

26 bird-days. Noted on three dates - this retiring species was seen well in above-average numbers...

**MONGOLIAN TRUMPETER FINCH** *Bucanetes mongolicus*

Eight W of Koko Nor on 24<sup>th</sup> - a rather unpredictable species but this time found without undue effort.

**PRZEVALSKI'S ROSEFINCH** *Urocynchramus pylzowi*

Four birds were found near Koko Nor - seen extremely well & even noted doing its famed parachute display flight... Now considered to represent a monotypic family this pretty bird can prove hard to find.

**RED-FRONTED ROSEFINCH** *Pyrrhospiza punicea*

15+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**ROBOROVSKI'S ROSEFINCH** *Kozlowia roborowskii*

8-9 bird-days. Noted on three dates...

\*\*\*A total of ten species of Rosefinch was recorded on the trip!

**KOZLOV'S BUNTING** *Emberiza koslowi*

14 bird-days. Only when this highly localised endemic is 'in the bag' does anyone allow themselves a sigh of relief and a pleasant 1<sup>st</sup> taste of 'we've done it!'. And did we do it!! Superb views and ditto photo opportunities of adult males, adult females & fledged juveniles.

Other good birds seen include **SZECHENYI'S MONAL PARTRIDGE** *Tetraophasis szechenyi*, **PRZEVALSKI'S PARTRIDGE** *Alectoris magna*, **DAURIAN & TIBETAN PARTRIDGES** *Perdix dauurica* & *P. hodgsoniae*, **BLOOD PHEASANT** *Ithaginis cruentus*, **HIMALAYAN GRIFFON** *Gyps himalayensis*, **BLACK VULTURE** *Aegypius monachus*, **HIMALAYAN & UPLAND BUZZARDS** *Buteo burmanicus* & *B. hemilasius*, **IBISBILL** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*, **PALLAS' SANDGROUSE** *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*, **SNOW PIGEON** *Columba leuconota*, **RED TURTLE DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*, **EURASIAN EAGLE OWL** *Bubo bubo*, **TIBETAN MAGPIE** *Pica bottanensis*, **HENDERSON'S GROUND JAY** *Podoces hendersoni*, **HUME'S GROUNDPECKER** *Pseudopodoces humilis*, **PALE SAND MARTIN** *Riparia diluta*, **'WHITE-BROWED' TIT-WARBLE** *Leptopoecile sophiae*, **MONGOLIAN & LONG-BILLED CALANDRA LARKS** *Melanocorypha mongolica* & *M. maxima*, **HUME'S SHORT-TOED LARK** *Calendrella acutirostris*, **CHINESE LEAF WARBLER** *Phylloscopus yunnanensis*, **SPOT-BREASTED SCIMITAR-BABBLER** *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis*, **GIANT LAUGHINGTHRUSH** *Garrulax maximus*, **CHINESE NUTHATCH** *Sitta villosa*, **HODGSON'S TREECREEPER** *Certhia (familiaris) hodgsoni*, **LONG-TAILED THRUSH** *Zoothera dixonii*, **CHINESE SONG THRUSH** *Turdus mupinensis*, **HIMALAYAN RUBYTHROAT** *Luscinia pectoralis*, **WHITE-BELLIED REDSTART** *Hodgsonius phaenicuroides*, **SOOTY FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa sibirica rothschildi*, **ROBIN & RUFOUS-BROWED ACCENTORS** *Prunella rubeculoides* & *P. strophiiata*, black-backed **CITRINE WAGTAIL** *Motacilla citreola calcarata*, **ROSY PIPIT** *Anthus roseus*, **PLAIN & BRANDT'S MOUNTAIN FINCHES** *Leucosticte nemoricola* & *L. brandti*, **CRIMSON-BROWED FINCH** *Pinicola subhimachala*, **WHITE-WINGED GROSBEAK** *Mycerobas carniceps*, and **PINE & MEADOW BUNTINGS** *Emberiza leucocephalos* & *E. cioides*.

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**2011 trip summary:**

M Campbell, M Chalmers, T Ford, J Holmes, I Robinson, J Scott, G Sellappan, M Watelet, D White, K White & myself visited NE Tibet, China's Qinghai province, during 8-27 August 2011. It was the 6<sup>th</sup> Oriental Bird Club Fundraiser trip in this area (another three have targeted even more seriously under-visited Yunnan province, China's biologically richest). This year we followed an updated itinerary: as in the past we had allowed plenty of time to ensure that all specialities could be properly searched for – but this year, if all went well, we'd be seeing **TIBETAN SANDGROUSE** *Syrrhaptes thibetana* whilst having coffee (or tea!) next to the cars!

We recorded 224 species of birds & mammals such as **LYNX** *Lynx lynx*, **WOLF** *Canis lupus*, **TIBETAN FOX** *Vulpes ferrilata*, **TIBETAN WILD ASS (= KIANG)** *Equus kiang*, **WILD YAK** *Bos grunniens*, **PRZEVALSKI'S GAZELLE** *Procapra przewalskii* (world population <500 individuals!), a superbly weird **CHINESE SEROW** *Capricornis milneedwardsii*, the emblematic **TIBETAN ANTELOPE** *Pantholops hodgsonii*, and plenty of rock-loving **BLUE SHEEP** *Pseudois nayaur*.

The birds, the mammals, the butterflies & dragonflies, the unbeatable scenery (at this time of the year in many places blanketed in wildflowers), a stimulating mix of local cultures, wonderful food, comfortable - from 'OK' to 'surprisingly good' - accommodations & (not least) the companionship all came together to produce a trip the more memorable for the region region - though in many ways an indisputable 'must' destination for anyone hooked on Palearctic and/or Asian birds - being so under-visited by birdwatchers.

Among the highlights / my personal favourites / most interesting records were:

**SZECHENYI'S MONAL PARTRIDGE** *Tetraophasis szechenyi*

20+ bird-days. Noted on two dates – a family of five proved very cooperative on 19<sup>th</sup>, granting our team photographers plenty of chances to get it just right.

**TIBETAN SNOWCOCK** *Tetraogallus tibetanus*

21 bird-days. Noted on three dates – a pair with three half-grown chicks allowed prolonged 'scoping as they fed unconcerned below towering cliffs at c4,500m on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**BLOOD PHEASANT** *Ithaginis cruentus*

22 bird-days. Noted on three dates – a pair w/ three very small chicks on 17<sup>th</sup> were especially memorable.

**WHITE EARED PHEASANT** *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

56+ bird-days. Noted on four dates – seeing seven adults w/ six tiny, dark brown chicks on 15<sup>th</sup> was a treat.

**SAKER** *Falco cherrug*

33 bird-days. Noted on no less than six dates – outstanding views on several occasions: we'd been feeling a bit jinxed but then came across an adult on a telegraph post. It flew off, but returned to a post further along with a pika it had caught with so little effort that we hadn't even noticed – we approached it slowly, and were able to watch from <20m away as it proceeded to pluck its prey, fluffs of wool drifting slowly to the ground, as the team photographers made the most of the superb light enhanced by a backdrop of grey cloud.

**LAMMERGEIER** *Gypaetus barbatus*

34 bird-days. Noted on ten dates – there were plenty of chances to simply enjoy this charismatic species...on 17<sup>th</sup> we were first treated to views of a bone-dropping 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> c-y bird: it landed in view at reasonable range, and we were able to 'scope it as it dealt with what anatomically competent team

members judged to be a rib - then another bird appeared as if on cue just as someone uttered the word 'Lammergeier': a fine adult which proceeded to circle directly overhead to the delight of the team photographers: a BINGO!

**HIMALAYAN BUZZARD** *Buteo burmanicus*

Five bird-days. Noted on two dates.

\*\*\*Formerly considered a race of COMMON BUZZARD *B. buteo* but genetically closer to UPLAND BUZZARD *B. hemilasius* (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005) from which it is ecologically separated & easily - well, fairly easily! - distinguished...

**BLACK-NECKED CRANE** *Grus nigricollis*

72 bird-days. Noted on seven dates – this hardy yet vulnerable (and 'Vulnerable': <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/143783/0>) Tibetan Plateau endemic breeder was one of the most hoped-for species, and it was cheering to see several pairs accompanied by thriving chicks.

**IBISBILL** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

13 bird-days. Noted on six dates... Somehow, Ibisbills seen in Tibet feeding on a flowered-over meadow or (as our 1<sup>st</sup> pair was) 'frozen' against a rushing, icy stream – with Red-billed Choughs cawing, Blue Hill Pigeons cooing, Pere David's Laughingthrushes meowing & domestic yaks snorting in the background - are more REAL than the sad one or two which still attempt to cling on along the last stretch of barely acceptable water close to Beijing in competition with sickly-looking domestic ducks!

**TIBETAN SANDGROUSE** *Syrrhaptes tibetana*

A pair w/ three week-old chicks was seen and photographed on 21<sup>st</sup>.

**SALIM ALI'S SWIFT** *Apus salimali*

159+ bird-days. This 'new' species was identified on eight dates, incl W of Koko Nor on 25<sup>th</sup>.

**COMMON KINGFISHER** *Alcedo atthis*

One at Koko Nor on 26<sup>th</sup> – Apparently there are <10 previous records from the Tibetan Plateau – the species is, however, regular along the Yellow River SSE of Xining (JH pers obs).

**THREE-TOED WOODPECKER** *Picoides tridactylus funebris*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates – memorable 'scope views of a pair on territory near the treeline...  
\*\*\*Taxonomy: needs re-evaluation. Nearctic and Palearctic races recently split into two species, *P. dorsalis* and *P. tridactylus*, without discussion of status of the very distinct *funebris*.'': Rasmussen & Anderton (2005).

**TIBETAN GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius giganteus*

Single birds were noted on four dates – on 17<sup>th</sup> the additional time granted to photograph one approachable individual proved a sound investment as camera-less group members spotted a family of Tibetan Snowcocks during the interlude!

**HUME'S GROUNDPECKER** *Pseudopodoces humilis*

249+ bird-days. This charming high-altitude specialist was noted on 16 dates.

\*\*\*Apparently most closely related to *Paridae* (Dickinson 2003) but please let us do our bit to avoid a newly concocted English name – which the risk of keyboard distress prevents me typing here \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - from slipping into common usage!

**WHITE-BROWED TIT** *Parus superciliosus*



15 bird-days. Noted on five dates - Getting repeated 'scope views of this subtly patterned beauty was great!

**GANSU LEAF WARBLER** *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

38 bird-days. Noted only N of Xining - this attractive warbler has only recently been reaccepted as a valid species, and its winter quarters remain undiscovered...

**'MARGELANIC' WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia 'margelanica'*

Three on 22<sup>nd</sup> - as so often, putting in a bit of mileage was the key...

**KOZLOV'S BABAX** *Babax koslowi*

18+ bird-days. Noted on three dates. One of our main 'pretexts' for visiting an unbeatably pretty area on the remote Xizang border, this restricted-range species proved comparatively obliging.

**GIANT LAUGHINGTHRUSH** *Garrulax maximus*

28+ bird-days. Noted on three dates - this superb-looking species has an impressive range of calls, some subdued, some anything but, yet others direct or derived mimicry - duetting birds are often a striking component in the dawn chorus, and throughout the day groups travelling through the pristine forest will mark their progress with occasional sessions of loud calling.

**CHINESE FULVETTA** *Alcippe striaticollis*

16 bird-days. Noted on three dates. Knowing the call AND where to listen out for it is - even more so than in the case of the skulking Kozlov's Babax - the key to finding this subtly attractive endemic.

**PRZEVALSKI'S NUTHATCH** *Sitta przewalskii*

Ten bird-days. Noted on four dates - on 9<sup>th</sup> a busy group of four birds was seen well, with one or two birds allowing 'scope views in soft, morning light... one even did a bit of flycatching!

**KESSLER'S THRUSH** *Turdus kessleri*

128+ bird-days. Noted on eight dates - post-breeding gatherings of up to 70 birds were logged.

**PRZEVALSKI'S REDSTART** *Phoenicurus alaschanicus*

Five on 23<sup>rd</sup> - an adult male obliged our team photographers by sitting out in a patch of sunshine... 'arguably the prettiest in the genus'? Oh yes!!

**WHITE-THROATED REDSTART** *Phoenicurus schisticeps*

58 bird-days. Noted on seven dates - no less than 16 (incl a couple of lovely adult males) on the last morning was unexpected...

**GRANDALA** *Grandala coelicolor*

Two 1<sup>st</sup> c-y birds was photographed (& generally enjoyed!) at <10m along a ridge at c3,950m.

**RED-THROATED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula albicilla*

One N of Xining on 27<sup>th</sup> - previously recorded no earlier in autumn than 30 Aug (JH pers obs).

**BLANFORD'S SNOWFINCH** *Pyrgilauda blanfordi*

36 bird-days. Noted on four dates - this high specialized species proved incredibly obliging.

**CITRINE WAGTAIL** *Motacilla citreola*

108 bird-days. Noted on 11 dates - of those seen well some were adult males: just one was ssp *calcarata* while four were ssp *citreola*.



## 2012 Trip summary

N Adlam, G Anderson, M Hale, M Jensen, L Lander, L Nemeth & myself visited NE Tibet, China's Qinghai province, during 6-25 August 2012. It was the 7<sup>th</sup> Oriental Bird Club Fundraiser trip in this area (another three have targeted even more seriously under-visited Yunnan province, China's biologically richest). This year we followed an updated itinerary: as in the past we had allowed plenty of time to ensure that all specialities could be properly searched for – but this year (as in 2011), if all went well, we'd be seeing **TIBETAN SANDGROUSE** *Syrrhaptes thibetana* whilst having coffee (or tea!) next to the cars!

We recorded 214 species of birds & mammals such as **NORTHERN THREE-TOED JERBOA** *Dipus sagitta*, **WOLF** *Canis lupus*, **TIBETAN FOX** *Vulpes ferrilata*, **TIBETAN WILD ASS (= KIANG)** *Equus kiang*, **ALPINE MUSK DEER** *Moschus chrysogaster*, **PRZEVALSKI'S GAZELLE** *Procapra przewalskii* (world population <500 individuals!), the emblematic **TIBETAN ANTELOPE** *Pantholops hodgsonii*, and plenty of rock-loving **BLUE SHEEP** *Pseudois nayaur*.

This posting will be of particular interest to [OB] readers who are considering the next OBC Fundraiser, scheduled for 24 June – 14 July 2013.

The birds, the mammals, the butterflies & dragonflies, the unbeatable scenery (at this time of the year in many places absolutely blanketed in wildflowers), an intriguing amalgam of local cultures, wonderful food, comfortable - from 'OK' to 'surprisingly good' - accommodations & (not least) the companionship all came together to produce a trip the more memorable for the region region - though in many ways an indisputable 'MUST' destination for anyone hooked on Palearctic and/or Asian birds - being so under-visited by birdwatchers.

Among the highlights / my personal favourites / most interesting records were:

### **BLOOD PHEASANT** *Ithaginis cruentus*

18+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event a group of eight males (with a Giant Laughingthrush in tow!) on 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **WHITE EARED PHEASANT** *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

73+ bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on four dates – we were amazed^ to see 43 individuals on 17<sup>th</sup>...

\*\*\*^ Please see

[http://orientalbirdimages.org/search.php?p=2&Bird\\_ID=84&Bird\\_Family\\_ID=&pagesize=1](http://orientalbirdimages.org/search.php?p=2&Bird_ID=84&Bird_Family_ID=&pagesize=1)

[http://orientalbirdimages.org/search.php?p=3&Bird\\_ID=84&Bird\\_Family\\_ID=&pagesize=1](http://orientalbirdimages.org/search.php?p=3&Bird_ID=84&Bird_Family_ID=&pagesize=1)

### **BLUE EARED PHEASANT** *Crossoptilon auritum*

8+ bird-days N of Xining over 24-25<sup>th</sup>. Only half our group obtained fleeting glimpses of two distant birds in poor light on the 1<sup>st</sup> morning devoted to seeing this other-worldly species so we were extremely pleased when a different group emerged over on our side at dawn the next day, offering prolonged 'scope views as they fed unworriedly out in the open in perfect light before disappearing up a ridge, giving honking calls intermittently.

\*\*\*We agreed to miss out on a chance of adding to the list the likes of Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Northern Pintail *A. acuta*, Common Teal *A. crecca*, Goosander *Mergus merganser*, Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* & (with luck) Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* by revisiting a site where we'd already seen all the 'important' birds. This decision freed up the time needed to try for Blue Eared Pheasant, a species which had been off the agenda since 2009.

**PURPLE HERON** *Ardea purpurea*

One 1<sup>st</sup> c-y at Koko Nor on 8<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Zheng *et al.* (2005) listed the species for ‘all [Chinese provinces] except Qinghai, Xinjiang & Xizang’, but there are at least five previous records from Qinghai – all were between 21 May – 30 June: JH *et al.* pers obs.

**AMUR FALCON** *Falco amurensis*

Five adults (two males & three females) hawking directly above us late in the afternoon of 10<sup>th</sup> – superb views against a sky darkening with thunderclouds.

\*\*\*A notable as well as hugely memorable encounter – all bar one of JH’s previous ten NE Tibet records have concerned singles (the exception being two on 15 July 2005).

**SAKER** *Falco cherrug*

27 bird-days. Noted on no fewer than six dates - for most of us a most welcome opportunity to familiarize ourselves with a species which is declining globally: not many trips allow you to graduate to full Saker Expert status in less than three weeks!

**LAMMERGEIER** *Gypaetus barbatus*

14 bird-days. Noted on ten dates - a top Dreambird this emblematic species was not at all devalued by several superb encounters... which included one 2<sup>nd</sup> c-y bird doing a bone-drop right next to where we were taking a breather on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**SHORT-TOED EAGLE** *Circaetus gallicus*

One 1<sup>st</sup> c-y seen briefly - but very satisfactorily! - as it soared overhead just as we were getting out of the vehicles at our very 1<sup>st</sup> stop on 6<sup>th</sup>...

\*\*\*The species was listed only for Beijing, NW Shaanxi, NW Gansu, NW Xinjiang & Chongqing by Zheng *et al.* (2005), but there is at least one previous record from Qinghai: one near Gonghe on 29 May 2001 (M Kilburn pers obs).

**HIMALAYAN BUZZARD** *Buteo burmanicus*

Seven bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event a family of four on 18<sup>th</sup>. Seeing one of the adults perched in a treetop at c75m across the river was a bit of a highlight.

\*\*\*Formerly considered a race of Common Buzzard *B. buteo* but genetically closer to Upland Buzzard *B. hemilasius* (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005) from which it is ecologically separated & easily - well, fairly easily! - distinguished...

**IBISBILL** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates – a juvenile ‘scoped at close range on 19<sup>th</sup> was as good as it got, what with only almost-completed road improvement work going on over long stretches making the customary stop-and-scan breaks less appealing than as recently as last year.

Nonetheless we continue to subscribe to the view that ‘somehow, Ibisbills seen in Tibet feeding on a flowered-over meadow or ‘frozen’ against a rushing, icy stream – with Red-billed Choughs cawing, Blue Hill Pigeons cooing & domestic yaks snorting in the background - are more *real* than the sad one or two which still attempt to cling on along the last stretch of barely acceptable water close to Beijing in competition with sickly-looking domestic ducks!’

**GREY-HEADED LAPWING** *Vanellus cinereus*

Three at Koko Nor on 8<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Zheng *et al.* (2005) listed the species for ‘all [Chinese provinces] except Xinjiang, Xizang, Hainan’ – probably Qinghai was included on the basis of our 2004 records (four on 20 July & two on 31 Aug: JH *et al.* pers obs.).

**‘SPOT-FRONTED’ SAND PLOVER** *Charadrius atrifrons*<sup>^</sup>

175 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 165 on 12<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*<sup>^</sup>formerly consider conspecific with LESSER SAND PLOVER *Charadrius mongolus*.

\*\*\*ssp *atrifrons* has ‘forehead and band through and below eye to ear coverts black, occasionally with some white mottling in front of eye; rufous-cinnamon of chest extends to flanks and breast, not bordered by black bar against white chin’ while *mongolus* has forehead white, often divided by narrow black line in middle, bordered from cinnamon forecrown by narrow black line; black line runs from lores to ear coverts and white line from above eye to above ear-coverts; narrow black bar between white chin and clear-cut cinnamon-rufous chest-band’. *schaeferi* ‘often has some white on forehead; intermediate between *atrifrons* and nominate *mongolus*’, ‘often closest to *mongolus*’: BWP vol III, p169.

**GREAT BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Larus ichthyaetus*

c180 bird-days. Noted on five dates – we enjoyed instructive views of birds in all plumages from mint condition juveniles to full-blown adults in summer plumage: TINGALING!

**TIBETAN SANDGROUSE** *Syrrhaptes thibetana*

16 birds were enjoyed by all on 20<sup>th</sup> – ‘1<sup>st</sup> a family of five flew by as we had our backs to some authentic Tibetan weather... we crossed to where they landed and went closer in stages until they took off probably on account of hearing the flight calls of a passing group of 11. The two groups merged and landed within 200m of our 4WDs, allowing MH to dash back and get his prefer’d lens before joining GA & MJ in a stalk that took them to within 20m of the birds, with the light behind them under a hazy-cloudy sky ensuring a minimum of distorting shimmer’.

\*\*\*Please have a look at MH’s images on [www.orientalbirdimages.org](http://www.orientalbirdimages.org) !

**PALLAS’ SANDGROUSE** *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

17 birds W of Koko Nor on 10<sup>th</sup> – incl 15 together which were most likely three pairs with their fledged young... ‘Scope views of birds on the ground – WOW!

**SALIM ALI’S SWIFT** *Apus salimali*

105 bird-days. Noted on eight days.

\*\*\*Leader (2011) concluded that the *Apus pacificus* complex should be treated as four species, at least three of which occur in China/Tibet.

\*\*\*Salim Ali’s Swift *Apus salimali* is ‘restricted to E Tibetan Plateau and adjacent high-altitude W Sichuan’ breeding at ‘very high altitudes (above 3,400m)’ – ‘Fork-tailed Swifts’ breeding near Xining, Qinghai, at c2,500m are also this form: JH *et al.* pers obs. ‘Its winter distribution is apparently unknown but, at the very least, it must be an altitudinal migrant’.

The species is longer-tailed with a proportionately shallower tail fork, has different throat pattern (‘narrow pale strip on the center of the throat and is narrowest at the base of the bill, where it tapers to a neat point’, ‘less than half the width of the other taxa’), ‘the rump patch is consistently narrow’, ‘the crown and nape are mid-brown, contrasting conspicuously’ with the glossy black mantle, and the pale tips to the underparts are much reduced compared to *pacificus* (more comparable to *leuconyx* in this character).

\*\*\*Salim Ali’s Swift was thought to possibly breed E as far as NW Hunan (J Martinez pers com) but closer scrutiny of the photos (JH, P Leader & J Martinez) reveal the birds to be *Apus pacificus*.

**BLACK WOODPECKER** *Dryocopus martius*

Five bird-days. Noted on three dates – three in a day is a notable count by most standards; getting ‘scope views was exactly was NA had hoped for...

**TIBETAN GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius (s.) giganteus*

One on 9<sup>th</sup> ‘flew across in front of Car One – LL managed to stay on it and a mad 400m dash across the erosion-scarred hillside followed; the whole group were joint winners as the bird rewarded our efforts with great ‘scope views and ditto photo opportunities!’.

\*\*\* A low-density species, wide-ranging and often inconspicuous even when present (and thus easily missed), we were fortunate to see this individual so well!

**HENDERSON’S GROUND JAY** *Podoces hendersoni*

11 bird-days. Noted on four dates – instead of the ‘run-and-dodge’ tactics often adopted when dealing with visiting birdwatchers several of the birds encountered were in look-at-me mode, sitting out allowing everyone in the group to enjoy long ‘scope views...

**WHITE-BROWED TIT-WARBLER** *Leptopoecile sophiae*

69 bird-days. Noted on seven dates – getting prolonged views of an adult male at <3m was a real treat.

**SPOTTED BUSH WARBLER** *Bradypterus thoracicus*

Two on 24<sup>th</sup> – what turned out to be a juvenile was heard calling and showed well enough to photograph... it was, however, unable to sing back properly: all that came out was a pitiful jumble of notes not especially like the ‘proper’ song.

\*\*\*Kennerley & Pearson (2010) accepts the Pere David’s (or ‘Baikal’) Bush Warbler, comprising the taxa *davidi* (breeding in ‘E Siberia from the NW Amur region south to NE China, with an isolated population in C China’) & *suschkini* (breeding in ‘Siberia from the Russian Altai east through Sayan Mountains to the region of Lake Baikal’), as a species, *B. davidi*, distinct from Spotted Bush Warbler, comprising the taxa *thoracicus* (breeding ‘C and E Himalayas to W & S China’), *przevalskii* (breeding ‘Sichuan to N Qinghai, SW Gansu and S Shaanxi’) & *kashmirensis* (breeding in ‘W Himalayas’).

**GANSU LEAF WARBLER** *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

61 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*This attractive warbler was only recently reaccepted as a valid species, and its winter quarters remain undiscovered...

**GIANT LAUGHINGTHRUSH** *Garrulax maximus*

28 bird-days. Noted on three dates – a trip highlight was seeing two with a group of three SPOT-BREASTED SCIMITAR BABBLERS *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis* by the track on 18<sup>th</sup>: WHAT A BIRD!

**PREZEVALSKI’S NUTHATCH** *Sitta przewalskii*

Four on 7<sup>th</sup> - a species which invariably makes the Bird of the Trip shortlist!

**KESSLER’S THRUSH** *Turdus kessleri*

20 bird-days. Noted on just six dates.

\*\*\*Evidently a somewhat erratic species – the 2011 OBC Fundraiser trip logged 128+ bird-days, encountering post-breeding gatherings of up to 70 birds.

**PRZEVALSKI’S REDSTART** *Phoenicurus alaschanicus*

14 bird-days. Noted on two dates - this localized endemic is 'arguably the prettiest in the genus'.

**WHITE-THROATED REDSTART** *Phoenicurus schisticeps*

73+ bird-days. Noted on nine dates - this redstart is arguably not far behind Przevalski's in terms of prettiness...

\*\*\*It seemed completely fitting that the last birds we saw when walking out of the last patch of forest covered were 8-10 very obliging individuals of this species.

**SOOTY FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa sibirica*

Ten (incl a pair of adults w/ two juveniles 'scoped) on 18<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Work on vocalizations & DNA may well lead to suggestions that the distinctive *rothschildi* be elevated to full species status...

**HENRI'S SNOWFINCH** *Montifringilla henrici*

39 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*DNA work has shown this taxon to be more closely related to Tibetan Snowfinch than to Eurasian (with which it was lumped in the past).

\*\*\*FROM THE FILES: The 2006 OBC Fundraiser yielded c391 bird-days - except for two on 24<sup>th</sup> the species was seen only at Er La, where 355 on 25 Aug was 'a surprise' - of these, 298 flew S (14 flocks / groups of 2-41 birds, all but three birds passed before 08h00) on what appeared to be straightforward migration. As we were not ideally positioned the whole time it is likely that we missed a number of flocks: as many as twice the number we recorded may have passed...

**ROBIN ACCENTOR** *Prunella rubeculoides*

52 bird-days. Noted on no fewer than six dates - main event 27 on 12<sup>th</sup>, when birds in family groups were too busy amongst themselves to pay much attention to us... or to our long lenses!

**CITRINE WAGTAIL** *Motacilla citreola*

46 bird-days. Noted on ten bird-days - as the days rolled by we started to take this Dreambird for granted, but early on seeing eight together along a fence lining a lush, flowered-over meadow made a strong impression: one was a crisply black-backed male *calcarata*, one was a female & the rest were flitty juveniles.

\*\*\*On 10<sup>th</sup> we watched a female feeding a juvenile Common Cuckoo; a nearby adult male *citreola* was presumed to be the 'father'.

**BLYTH'S PIPIT** *Anthus godlewskii*

Singles on 11+23<sup>rd</sup> - the latter flew by close, calling, continuing low over the brow of the ridge but did not land.

\*\*\*The former was six days earlier than the previous earliest autumn migrant (JH pers obs).

**MONGOLIAN TRUMPETER FINCH** *Bucanetes mongolicus*

14+ on 22<sup>nd</sup> - it was a not-so-minor trip highlight to get extended views a full-blown adult male with a juvenile. We watched the male land on a grass stem & slide down it to weigh it down to access the seeds: 'clinging on sideways is not that easy, and the bird's technique clearly needed perfecting'.

**PRZEVALSKI'S ROSEFINCH** *Urocynchramus pylzowi*

c14 bird-days. Noted on two dates - three on 12<sup>th</sup> took some finding but fortunately there were plenty of birds (and one or two mammals!) to keep us sharp while we put in the mileage: outstanding views were eventually enjoyed by all group members: TINGALING!

\*\*\*'The taxonomically challenged Przevalski's Rosefinch is nowadays considered to represent a monotypic family - is it a "Rosefinch"? or is it a "Bunting"?... good question, seeing that in the field it does not appear obviously close to either, with its graduated, blindingly pink tail, absurdly thin lower mandible, and a summertime habit of doing 'parachute' type songflights.'





As all group members turned out to be very keen on photography we recalibrated the day-to-day activities to maximise opportunities - already excellent - to photograph the special birds and mammals encountered, accepting completely that this would very likely cost us a few species overall.

We recorded 204 spp of birds - around 20 less than average for the OBC Fundraisers, but bearing in mind that the trip started after the late May / early June 'stray migrants' peak & ended before most Siberian waders had started reappearing this was not bad, and given the quality of the images obtained (do keep an eye on [www.orientalbirdimages.org](http://www.orientalbirdimages.org) !) everyone on the trip felt satisfied. In addition to the birds we saw c22 spp of mammals - and managed to photograph e g **TIBETAN FOX** *Vulpes ferrilata*, the emblematic **KIANG** (= Tibetan Wild Ass) *Equus kiang*, the critically endangered **PRZEVALSKI'S GAZELLE** *Procapra przewalskii*, **WILD YAK** *Bos grunniens*, and the superb **TIBETAN ANTELOPE** *Panthalops hodgsonii* - a host of flowers & varied scenery of the sort for which one ought to reserve the nowadays overused word 'stunning'.

Among the highlights / my personal favourites / most interesting sightings were:

**TIBETAN SNOWCOCK** *Tetraogallus tibetanus*

Seven bird-days. Noted on four dates, with a particularly satisfying encounter with two pairs at Er La pass.

**WHITE EARED PHEASANT** *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

34+ bird-days S of Yushu. Noted on four dates - close encounters as well as prolonged 'scope views of more distant birds.

**BLUE EARED PHEASANT** *C. auritum*

11 bird-days N of Xining - fairly common but patience can be required to obtain photos!

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** *Anser albifrons*

A summering immature near Yushu was highly unexpected!

**SAKER** *Falco cherrug*

25 bird-days. Noted on no fewer than eight dates.

**LAMMERGEIER** *Gypaetus barbatus*

18 bird-days. We recorded this 'flying dragon' on nine dates.

**IBISBILL** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

Ten bird-days. Noted on six dates, with a close to Best Ever encounter with a pair w/ two downy chicks en route to Yushu - more details in the trip list!

**LONG-TOED STINT** *Calidris subminuta*

A single adult showed well at Koko Nor on 5th.

\*\*\*Previously recorded no earlier than 17 July.

**TIBETAN SANDGROUSE** *Syrrhaptes tibetana*

Two pairs!

**TIBETAN GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius giganteus*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates - a probable breeding pair N of Yushu seen also in late May & in early June [JH pers obs] delighted & frustrated in almost equal measure as they kept their distance from us before finally posing...



It was the 9<sup>th</sup> Oriental Bird Club Fundraiser trip in this area (another three have targeted under-visited Yunnan province, China's biologically richest). This year we followed a slightly adjusted itinerary: as in the past we had allowed a good margin for altitude acclimatization & plenty of time to ensure that all specialities could be properly searched for – hopefully, as in 2011 & 2012, we'd be seeing **TIBETAN SANDGROUSE** *Syrrhaptes thibetana* whilst having coffee (or tea!) by the cars!

We recorded 220 spp of birds and mammals such as **PALLAS' CAT** *Felis manul*, **WOLF** *Canis lupus*, the stately **KIANG** (=TIBETAN WILD ASS) *Equus kiang*, **ALPINE MUSK DEER** *Moschus chrysogaster*, the highly endangered **PRZEVALSKI'S GAZELLE** *Procapra przewalskii* & the emblematic **TIBETAN ANTELOPE** *Panthalops hodgsonii* in Qinghai, plus a few more (even a 'new' mammal!) on early-morning walk-about in the grounds of our Beijing hotel.

The birds, the mammals, the butterflies & dragonflies, the unbeatable scenery (at this time of the year in many places absolutely blanketed in wildflowers), an intriguing amalgam of local cultures, wonderful food, comfortable - from 'OK' to 'surprisingly good' - accommodations & (not least) the companionship all came together to produce a trip the more memorable for the region - though in many ways an indisputable 'MUST' destination for anyone hooked on Palearctic and/or Asian birds - being so under-visited by birdwatchers.

Among the highlights / my personal favourites / most interesting records were:

**VERREAUX'S MONAL PARTRIDGE** *Tetraophasis obscurus*

3+ showed well if only rather briefly N of Xining on 30<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Too often a heard-only species, but this time diligence was rewarded...

**TIBETAN SNOWCOCK** *Tetraogallus thibetanus*

Four confiding birds relatively low on 5<sup>th</sup> – we were able to follow the contour to reduce the distance, getting more or less frame-filling 'scope views from across a gully.

**WHITE EARED PHEASANT** *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

48+ bird-days. Noted on two dates – at one point we had 42 adults (and one ½-sized chick) in view simultaneously!

**BLUE EARED PHEASANT** *Crossoptilon auritum*

A group of 11 found within half an hour of starting to look N of Xining on 29<sup>th</sup> – great views, so: 'EASY'!? Well, actually, that we then neither saw nor heard more during the rest of our stay at this site suggests it was just as well we'd allowed quite a bit of time...

**SAKER** *Falco cherrug*

27 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**LAMMERGEIER** *Gypaetus barbatus*

34 bird-days. Noted on no fewer than seven dates - a top Dreambird, this emblematic species was not at all devalued by one superb encounter after another... 12 in the course of an afternoon's hike, incl an adult doing repeated bone-drops with a few hundred meters of where we had taken up position!

**HIMALAYAN BUZZARD** *Buteo burmanicus*

Nine bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*Formerly considered a race of COMMON BUZZARD *B. buteo* but genetically closer to the much commoner UPLAND BUZZARD *B. hemilasius* (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005) from which it is ecologically separated & easily - well, fairly easily! - distinguished...

**BLACK-NECKED CRANE** *Grus nigricollis*

22 bird-days. Noted on four dates – this hardy yet vulnerable (and ‘Vulnerable’): <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/143783/0> ) Tibetan Plateau endemic breeder was one of the most hoped-for species, and we were repeatedly treated to great views: TINGALING!

**IBISBILL** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

Nine bird-days. Noted on two dates... Somehow, Ibisbills seen in Tibet feeding on a flowered-over meadow next to a rushing, icy stream (as our 1<sup>st</sup> five were) – with Red-billed Choughs cawing, Blue Hill Pigeons cooing, Elliot’s Laughingthrushes cheerfully whistling & domestic yaks snorting thoughtfully in the background - are more REAL than the sad one or two which still attempt to cling on in competition with sickly-looking domestic ducks along the last stretches of barely acceptable water close to Beijing!

**‘SPOT-FRONTED’ SAND PLOVER** *Charadrius atrifrons*<sup>^</sup>

Noted on three dates – main event a post-breeding gathering of 360+ on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

\*\*\*<sup>^</sup>formerly consider conspecific with LESSER SAND PLOVER *Charadrius mongolus*.

\*\*\*ssp *atrifrons* has ‘forehead and band through and below eye to ear coverts black, occasionally with some white mottling in front of eye; rufous-cinnamon of chest extends to flanks and breast, not bordered by black bar against white chin’ while *mongolus* has forehead white, often divided by narrow black line in middle, bordered from cinnamon forehead by narrow black line; black line runs from lores to ear coverts and white line from above eye to above ear-coverts; narrow black bar between white chin and clear-cut cinnamon-rufous chest-band’. *schaeferi* ‘often has some white on forehead; intermediate between *atrifrons* and nominate *mongolus*’, ‘often closest to *mongolus*’: BWP vol III, p169.

**TIBETAN SANDGROUSE** *Syrrhaptes thibetana*

It turned out that unlike on the earlier trip this year, taking up position next to the cars, drinking coffee, didn’t quite do the trick, but pretty much as soon as we started into the habitat we came upon a pair... the birds seemed reluctant to increase the distance between us and them, and sure enough: once we retreated they approached to collect their single, hard-to-spot chick.

We all agreed that so grand was the landscape that it would not have been a great loss to have ‘had’ to come back the following morning in the event none had been found 1<sup>st</sup> time around!

**THREE-TOED WOODPECKER** *Picoides tridactylus funebris*

A ‘memorable encounter’ – or put plainly: possibly the best-ever opportunity to snap away since the advent of digital photography, with two juveniles and two adults practically competing for attention - on 6<sup>th</sup>...

\*\*\*“Taxonomy: needs re-evaluation. Nearctic and Palearctic races recently split into two species, *P. dorsalis* and *P. tridactylus*, without discussion of status of the very distinct *funebris*.”: Rasmussen & Anderton (2005).

**TIBETAN GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius giganteus*

Six bird-days. Noted on five dates – we’d hoped to confirm breeding at a site where two birds had been around since May (JH pers obs) but nothing doing: no fledgings were in evidence, and even the adults left us wishing for better views. Which we all got later!

**TARIM HILL BABBLER** *Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris*

Four on 12<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*The much-loved CHINESE HILL WARBLER *Rhopophilus pekinensis* turns out to be two monotypic species (Leader *et al.* 2013: Forktail 29, pp31-36): *Rhopophilus pekinensis* & *R. albosuperciliaris*, with the proposed English names BEIJING BABBLER & TARIM BABBLER, respectively... Seeing that Beijing is only a tiny dot on the map of the former's vast range (from N Korea to NE Tibet), and that the latter is *not* endemic to Xinjiang's Tarim Basin (its range extends into Qinghai's Qaidam Basin) perhaps the best selling point for these names are that they confine the 'Chinese Bush-dweller' of Handbook of the Birds of the World (VolXII, p281: Collar & Robson 2007) to history?

The two are easily distinguished – *pekinensis* has a striking whitish iris, broad-ish streaking on the mantle & extensive orangey streaking on the flanks, while *albosuperciliaris* has a dark iris, narrower & less extensive streaking above, and much less orange markings on the flanks. Both species 'have a wide repertoire of vocalizations', but at least one song type is distinctively different.

**GANSU LEAF WARBLER** *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

32 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

\*\*\*This attractive warbler was only recently reaccepted as a valid species, and its winter quarters remain undiscovered...

**'MARGELANIC' WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia 'margelanica'*

Seven bird-days. This puzzling taxon was seen on two dates – an adult and two juveniles allowed close scrutiny on 11<sup>th</sup>.

**GIANT LAUGHINGTHRUSH** *Garrulax maximus*

38+ bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event 26 on 6<sup>th</sup>, incl several which encouraged close-up viewing.

\*\*\*This superb-looking species has an impressive range of calls, some subdued, some anything but, yet others direct or derived mimicry – duetting birds are often a striking component in the dawn chorus, and throughout the day groups travelling through the forest will mark their progress with occasional sessions of loud calling.

**BEARDED TIT** *Panurus biarmicus*

Three at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**HIMALAYAN RUBYTHROAT** *Luscinia pectoralis*

21+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – on the rather long shortlist of FANTASTIC birds seen on this trip: just to make sure everyone got great views (some group members had already headed back to HQ when the rest of us obtained 'scope views of a fine male late one afternoon) we made a special stop on 9<sup>th</sup> & saw no fewer than seven adult males.

**PRZEVALSKI'S REDSTART** *Phoenicurus alaschanicus*

Ten bird-days. Noted on two dates – all the sweeter for appearing a day ahead of plan! 'Arguably the prettiest in the genus'? Oh yes!!

**ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa dauurica*

An early migrant flycatching off a Koko Nor fence on 15<sup>th</sup> – the species is rarely recorded in Tibet...

**BLANFORD'S SNOWFINCH** *Pyrgilauda blanfordi*

Nine bird-days. Noted on three dates – we'd nearly come full circle before everyone had seen this charismatic species, one of the six species of snowfinch seen.

**BRANDT'S MOUNTAIN FINCH** *Leucosticte brandti*

13+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – it is perhaps its hardiness rather than its plumage that makes this an attractive species...

**PRZEVALSKI'S ROSEFINCH** *Urocynchramus pylzowi*

Eight birds were seen so well that we did not feel a need to try to see more – in the course of the Fundraisers we have found this species at half a dozen or so sites.

\*\*\*A not-to-be-taken-for-granted bird which has something to offer no matter what subspecies of birder you are: beauty, interesting behavior (notably its parachute type song-flight which we saw repeatedly), odd song, as well as taxonomic interest (it has for some years now been known to represent a monotypic family).

**ROBOROVSKI'S ROSEFINCH** *Kozlowia roborowskii*

13 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

\*\*\*We saw no fewer than ten species of rosefinch in addition to the not-really-a-rosefinch Przevalski's... and eight of these were seen extremely well, incl the scarce Roborovski's: our team photographers were simply blown away when a male dropped in for a sip of melt water at <10m from where we were lingering.

**PINE BUNTING** *Emberiza leucocephalos*

Three was all we could manage – but one of them was VERY obliging, sitting up on a fence post.

**KOZLOV'S BUNTING** *Emberiza koslowi*

Nine on 5<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Only when this highly localized and hard-to-get-to Restricted Range endemic species is 'in the bag' does anyone allow themselves a sigh of relief and a pleasant 1<sup>st</sup> taste of 'we've done it!'. And did we do it!? Superb views and ditto photo opportunities of adult males, adult females & fledged juveniles - well worth the efforts, and arguably the Most Special Bird of the Trip.

The supporting cast included **Daurian & Tibetan Partridges** *Perdix dauurica* & *P. hodgsoniae*, **Bar-headed Goose** *Anser indicus*, **Himalayan Griffon** *Gyps himalayensis*, **Upland Buzzard** *Buteo hemilasius*, **Great Black-headed & Brown-headed Gulls** *Larus ichthyaetus* & *L. brunnicephalus*, **Pallas' Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*, **Snow Pigeon** *Columba leuconota*, **Salim Ali's Swift** *Apus salimali*, **Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius*, **Brown & Isabelline Shrikes** *Lanius cristatus* & *L. isabellinus*, **Tibetan Magpie** *Pica (pica) bottanensis*, **Daurian Jackdaw** *Corvus dauuricus*, **White-browed Tit** *Parus superciliosus*, **White-browed & Crested Tit-Warblers** *Leptopoeile sophiae* & *L. elegans*, **Long-billed Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha maxima*, **Chinese Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus yunnanensis*, **Kozlov's Babax** *Babax koslowi*, **Chinese Fulvetta** *Alcippe striaticollis*, **Chinese & Przevalski's Nuthatches** *Sitta villosa* & *S. przewalskii*, **Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*, **Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus*, **Chestnut, Kessler's & Chinese Song Thrushes** *Turdus rubrocanus*, *T. kessleri* & *T. mupinensis*, **Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia calliope*, **Mongolian Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes mongolicus*, **Stoliczka's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus stoliczkae beicki*, and **White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carniceps*