



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Best of China

**Lhasa Birding & Cultural Extension**

*26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (5 days)*

**Tibetan Plateau & Beidaihe**

*30<sup>th</sup> September to 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016 (20 days)*

## Trip Report



Tibetan Eared Pheasant by Rich Lindie

**Trip report compiled by Tour Leader: Rich Lindie**



## Tour Summary

Since everyone in the group had arranged to arrive at least a full day early, we decided not to waste the opportunity to do a little bonus birding in Chengdu. Not wanting to overdo it, however, we decided upon a late breakfast, followed by a stroll around Huan Hua Xi Park. The very well-maintained and tranquil gardens are crisscrossed by a wealth of pathways, waterways and bridges, making it the perfect place for a relaxed birding session. Indeed, we ended up spending our entire day there, seeing not only our main target - Ashy-throated Parrotbill, but also a great selection of other birds, including several we would not see again on the trip - Vinous-throated Parrotbills, Red-billed and White-cheeked Starlings, a flock of Swinhoe's Minivets, Blyth's Leaf Warblers, Oriental Magpie-Robins, countless White-browed Laughingthrushes, Taiga Flycatchers, Red-billed Leiothrix, Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, Chinese Blackbird and Rufous-capped Babbler all putting in appearances. In between our sessions in the park, we also enjoyed a scrumptious lunch and several interesting encounters with park-going locals.

On day two of our adventure, we once again enjoyed a lie in, this time due to the scheduled time of our flight to Lhasa, though the day did not pass without birding. A few stops between the Lhasa airport and our hotel produced Ruddy Shelduck, Citrine Wagtail, Japanese Tit and both Pallas's and Brown-headed Gulls, followed by a stroll around our hotel gardens which added Grey-backed Shrike, Tibetan Blackbird, Oriental Turtle Dove and a handful of Hill Pigeons to the trip list. Dinner included Yak meat in several forms.

We spent our first full day in Lhasa strolling around the various cultural sights in and around the town itself. This not only allowed us to acclimate a little further before embarking on more strenuous birding activities, it also provided us with an early introduction to Tibetan life and the significance of Lhasa within the greater region that we would be traveling through for the next couple of weeks.

We started the day with a walk around the luscious grounds of the Summer Palace, exploring the full variety of architectural and historical wonders that the fairly large complex has to offer. In addition to the colorful sights, of course, we grabbed a few new birds here and there, including our first Brown-cheeked and Plain Laughingthrushes and several Tickell's Leaf Warblers, before retiring to a busy lunch spot in the center of the market town, followed by a break at our hotel during the early part of the afternoon. We then moved on to take in the views of the very impressive Potala Palace before wandering several bustling but fascinating alleyways to the Jokhang Temple for a final delve into the region's troubled yet fascinating history.

Our Tibetan birding adventure began in earnest on our second day in Lhasa, with a full day's birding in the valleys below the Xionshe Nunnery. The day began with a little rain but that did nothing to mar our enthusiasm nor our success, and it wasn't long before we had laid eyes on such great birds as Tibetan Partridge, Tibetan Snowcock, Great Rosefinch and Streaked Rosefinch (all of which showed very well). A short while later, and a little further up the hill from our first birding stop, we then laid eyes on a group of 14 fabulous Tibetan Eared Pheasants, right beside the road. Around the nunnery itself, we rapidly got onto some confiding Giant Babax, some more Tibetan Eared Pheasants and a White-winged Grosbeak. Then it was on to a local tea house for a taste of that most famous of Tibetan drinks - Yak butter tea, followed by a spiced-up bowl of Yak and noodles. Swinging by the beautiful interior of the nunnery itself, some of the group caught up with us as we birded along the road below, finding little of interest in the relative heat of the day.

Then, back down at our first stop, we hit the jackpot with several species, including Hodgson's and White-throated Redstarts, White-browed Tit-Warbler and Pink-rumped Rosefinch! For dinner, we abandoned Tibetan dishes for a much more flavorful selection of Chinese dishes, for what was undoubtedly the best meal to date at that point!



Some of us walked around town for our final morning in Lhasa, in a vain attempt to find Derbyan Parakeets. We then gathered as a group and made the multi-step journey to Xining for the main tour, very much satisfied with our birding and cultural exploits in Lhasa but excited for the next leg.



**Ashy-throated Parrotbill by Merilyn Browne**

We began the following day with an early morning departure, followed by a brief roadside stop for noodles, and then a drive up into the cold forests of Dongxia. There, we spent the entire morning wandering a short section of track, finding all of our target birds and more. First of the main targets to fall was a Gansu Leaf Warbler that showed and sang beautifully, followed shortly by Chestnut Thrush, Chinese White-browed Rosefinch, Elliot's Laughingthrush, Rufous-vented Tit, Hodgson's Treecreeper, and then our second major target - Chinese Nuthatch. It didn't take long for us to find our final major target thereafter, with a stellar (albeit fairly brief) appearance from a Przevalski's Nuthatch.

A well-deserved lunch in town came next, before we embarked on a slow journey east, to 12 Corner Pass. Initially quite daunted with the task of tracking down our main quarry in such an expanse of steep mountainsides (and surrounded by National Day celebrators by the hundred), a call from our local guide soon calmed our fears, only to see us arrive on site too late and in a sleet storm! A few anxious moments once again ensued but it wasn't long until they were relocated for all to enjoy - all seven in one small fruiting bush! The drive down the hill to our hotel then provided us with some insight into just how far some Chinese brides will go to get that perfect shot.

Our full day in the Huzhu Beishan area had its fair share of ups and downs - seeing us traverse two steep valleys, and a few small streams, to boot. Unfortunately, our efforts were mostly unrewarded with no sight nor sound of either Chinese Grouse or Chestnut-throated Partridge. We didn't choke completely, however, grabbing a few looks at Grey-headed Bullfinch and Grey Crested Tit for good measure.





Ground Tit by Rich Lindie

Success at last - not just one but at least two Chinese Grouse! That's the story of our final morning in the Huzhu Beishan area. Unfortunately, things went a little downhill thereafter. That is, when we *were* actually able to move downhill - plagued by traffic jams, the mountain passes around Huzhu Beishan and the shore-side roads of Koko Nor were nothing short of a nightmare. Then, to top it all off, we arrived in Heimahe with no empty beds left in our hotel! Thankfully, it didn't take too long to find ourselves another, along with a place to eat, right around the corner. On the birding front, we did however manage to see more than just the grouse in the end, securing great views of three species of snowfinch (Pere David's, White-rumped and Rufous-necked), a pair of Black-necked Crane and several of that feathered little icon of the plateau, Ground Tit! Not bad for a day spent mostly inside the van!

Although traffic wasn't a major issue on our second day on the plateau, the day did end up being quite arduous. Firstly, we had to cover quite a bit of steep ground in search of Przevalski's Finch, and secondly, we found ourselves having to walk pretty far to get to the shores of Lake Koko Nor. Maybe it wasn't that far but on both occasions, the strong icy winds made every steep feel that much harder. Nevertheless, the finch we did see, and exceptionally well at that! A new family for everyone in the group, perhaps the main target for just about everyone in the group, and a great little bird to boot. On the lake shore, more than a few Tibetan Larks were reward for our effort, whilst three more Black-necked Cranes and a handful of other wetland birds were nice to see. Post our tramping sessions, we made our way directly to Chaka, where a short afternoon rest preceded a walk around some of the nearby salt plains for Mongolian Lark.

For some, our first morning in the Chaka area held more arduous treks in store, while others were able to enjoy a more leisurely day than before. All together before the split, however, we all enjoyed prolonged views of a very vocal and cooperative covey of Przevalski's Partridges and a small flock of Pine Buntings for better measure. The combined sightings list for after the split included Przevalski's Redstart, Bearded Vulture (a magnificent perched adult), Chinese Grey Shrike and Eurasian Sparrowhawk. A short lunch, followed by a well-deserved break then saw us back in the



salt plains where we finally picked up Henderson's Ground Jay but had to settle for a lone Blandford's Snowfinch instead of hoped-for Pallas's Sandgrouse. Despite high spirits that evening, we weren't tempted to join the karaoke in our hotel restaurant, instead opting for a private room for relative peace and quiet!



Przevalski's Finch by Rich Lindie

Once again we 'humped it' up another valley the following morning. Our target: another classy bird named after Przevalski - this time a redstart. In fact, with that in the bag not long after our arrival, we had secured great views of all the birds named after the Russian explorer himself, barring one - a parrotbill found primarily in Sichuan. Thereafter, we strolled further up into the juniper-clad valley, admiring a posing Himalayan Marmot, our second handsome Bearded Vulture, a couple of Red-throated Thrushes and several Himalayan Vultures. On the way back down the valley, however, the redstarts really stole the show - several very smart males were hunting actively in one small gully, often perching in the same or nearby trees, offering incredible views and photographic opportunities - a fitting performance from the morning's star bird. The drive back to Chaka produced only distant views of an unidentifiable Gazelle but that detracted none from the spectacular scenery and wonderfully traffic-less roads!

Our afternoon began as all our previous ones in the Chaka area though our long marches through the plains would come to a much more rewarding end. To tee things off, we finally tracked down some smart adult Blandford's Snowfinches that cooperated very nicely. Then, our main quarry and the source of a great deal of effort and anxiety, Pallas's Sandgrouse FINALLY put in an appearance - flying low over our heads as we were admiring yet more Blandford's Snowfinches. Unfortunately, not everyone saw the sandgrouse so celebrations were halted and we anxiously made our way back to the bus to wait until the last moments of daylight. Just as we were distracted by another catch-up - a trio of Rock Sparrows (seen coming into roost in an abandoned building nearby) - a large flock of sandgrouse were spotted cruising over the grasslands toward the Chaka Salt Lake. Urgent screaming ensued, followed by great elation by all, especially those who had missed the first sighting!



A slightly later-than-usual start and a leisurely breakfast the next morning prepared us for the long journey to Wenquan. Along the way, we made a handful of stops, beginning with an exciting roadside sighting of two Wolves and a small herd of Tibetan Gazelle. Following that, we strolled around the hills near Gonghe, turning up nothing of particular interest, before settling in for another interesting lunch. Leaving Gonghe, we passed through yet more vast plains filled with Zhos and sheep, before arriving at Er La Pass where we enjoyed two great sightings of Tibetan Fox, several sightings of Saker Falcon and Upland Buzzard, as well as our first Tibetan Snowfinches. We also had a chance to size up the walk that lay ahead the following day.



**Tibetan Lark by Rich Lindie**

Bright and early the following morning, we popped into a local feeding station once again, before bidding farewell to lackluster Wenquan and its dusty streets, for a climb to lofty heights above. Those of us that chose to do so then shortly found ourselves starting the arduous trek up the mountainside before the sun had even begun to cast its light upon the pass below, making for a pretty frigid and icy first few minutes. Halfway up, however, we broke into the sun's gaze and soon thereafter found ourselves on top of the small plateau above, in what was surely the most stunning view of the trip for all involved - snow-capped mountains for as far as the eye could see in some directions, flanked by mighty valleys and hills in others. Indeed, had it not been for the combination of great vistas and some of the wonderful bird sightings we had, the morning would have been a complete bust - in light of us dipping our main target, Tibetan Sandgrouse. Nonetheless, chief among the great bird sightings that we did have, several encounters with Saker Falcon and Bearded Vulture at eye level saw no contenders.

Back down at the pass, things were equally bleak on the target front, with strong winds dashing our chances of finding Tibetan Rosefinch before we even had the time to try. As a result, a quick roadside lunch and some good looks at a few male Guldenstadt's Redstarts sealed off the end of our day in the Er La Pass area. Not, mind you, after an excellent sighting of a Himalayan Marmot doing its best impression of a Pallas's Cat.

A brief spot of birding on the outskirts of Gonghe produced little of interest the following day, and



so it was a couple of hours before lunch when we arrived once again on the eastern shores of Koko Nor. This time, however, we weren't plagued by traffic and with plenty of time to explore the lakeside up-close. Pleased to find good numbers of waterfowl on our first stop, it wasn't long before we had added several species to the list, including Bar-headed Goose, Red-crested Pochard, Tufted Duck and Northern Pintail, while nearby a White-browed Tit-Warbler sat uncharacteristically still on a power cable nearby!



**Rufous-necked Snowfinch by Rich Lindie**

An interesting lunch and an apparently equally interesting bathroom was to follow in a nearby town, followed not long after by a rather event-less drive to Xining, where a visit to Bei Shan was thwarted by a ring of newly-manned boom gates - despite our driver's best voluminous efforts.

The journey from Xining to Beidaihe the next day began early and took almost the entire remainder of the day to complete. Blissfully, it went without hiccup and we found ourselves overlooking the bustling mudflats, in town, with enough daylight to enjoy the sight of several new species, including at least two Relict Gulls.

Another cold and breezy morning greeted us on our first day in Beidaihe. Nevertheless, eager to see what migrants might be about, we ventured into the hotel gardens for a pre-breakfast walk and our first taste of some flat terrain in a while! With little more than a few Dusky Warblers, Red-flanked Bluetails and some 415s, however, it wasn't long until we abandoned the cold for a breakfast of fried eggs, coffee, fish nuggets and a plate of French fries.

Post breakfast, we strolled the length of Beidaihe Wetland Park, finding our first Eastern Spot-billed Ducks, several Pallas's Leaf Warblers, Yellow-browed Warblers, a Two-barred Warbler, more Red-flanked Bluetails, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Red-billed Blue Magpie and Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker. Also of interest during our walk was the sighting of an obvious pairing of a Swan Goose and a Greylag, and an encounter with a local news crew.





**Przevalski's Redstart by Merilyn Browne**

An enormous and delicious lunch nearby then fueled us for another visit to the town's mudflats where little new was found. We finally headed back to Wetland Park where a large flock of Vinous-throated Parrotbill was the only sighting of much significance.

The following day, the drive from Beidaihe to Happy Island was punctuated by several stops and u-turns but nothing of much interest on the birding front. On the island itself, however, we were pleased to find a lot of activity, albeit that most birds were rather skittish. Of those that we did see well, a Little Bunting, Chinese Penduline Tit and Black-browed Warbler were highlights, making our afternoon stroll around the northern end of the island a worthwhile excursion.

Over the following four days on the island we explored well beyond the northern corner - in fact, covering just about every path and roadway throughout the island. Most birds were just as shy as those seen on our first day but time and effort paid off, and by the time we left the island on our fifth and final morning, we had all accumulated a nice selection of life-birds and great sightings. Highlights among these included Saunders's Gull, streams of Amur Falcons, Falcated Duck, several species of bunting, Japanese Quail, Dusky Thrush and Chinese Penduline Tit. Of course, one must not forget the culinary and music highlights of our time on the island.

Our time in Beijing began with a much-longer-than-expected journey from Happy Island to the nation's capital, and a short visit to the city's botanical gardens later that day. The highlight, however, was a morning exploring part of the Great Wall and our sightings of Beijing Babbler along the way. For part of the group, a second visit to the botanical gardens also provided some of the most enjoyable birding had during the entire eastern leg of the tour, and a fitting way to end one of the most enjoyable tours I have participated in - due almost entirely to the great company I had all the way through!







Robin Accentor by Rich Lindie

## Best of China - Tibetan Plateau & Lhasa Ext Annotated List of species recorded

List powered through the report generator of our partner iGoTerra.

### Birds (253 in total: 251 sighted)

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows Gill, F and D Donsker (Eds). 2016. IOC World Bird List (v 6.3).

**Status codes:** **E** = Endemic to China, **LO** = Leader only, **H** = Heard only, **BBG** = Beijing Botanical Gardens

#### Ducks and Geese Anatidae

**Bar-headed Goose** *Anser indicus*

Koko Nor only.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser anser*

One sighting on Happy Island.

**Taiga Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis middendorffii*

Also sighted only once, on Happy Island.

**Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

Sighted almost daily during the eastern leg of the tour.

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*

Sighted almost daily during the Tibetan legs of the tour.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera strepera*

Beidaihe and Happy Island.



**Falcated Duck** *Anas falcata*

A handful sighted from the observation tower on Happy Island.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*

Several noted during visits to the tower on Happy Island.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos*

A few around Lhasa and Beidaihe, large numbers on Happy Island

**Eastern Spot-billed Duck** *Anas zonorhyncha*

Almost daily sightings in the north-east.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

Beidaihe and Happy Island.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*

Beidaihe and Happy Island.

**Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca crecca*

A few in Beidaihe and on Happy Island.

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina*

A few hundred on the eastern shores of Koko Nor.

**Redhead** *Aythya americana*

Two individuals apparently belonging to this species, at a wetland east of Koko Nor.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*

Also only sighted on the eastern shores of Koko Nor.

**Ferruginous Pochard** *Aythya nyocra*

One female at a wetland near the eastern shores of Koko Nor.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya ferina*

Also only sighted on the eastern shores of Koko Nor.

**Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula clangula*

A pair at Koko Nor, 1 at Beidaihe Wetland Park.

**Common Merganser** *Mergus merganser*

Lhasa, Koko Nor and Beidaihe.

### **Pheasants, Fowls and Allies Phasianidae**

**Chinese Grouse (E)** *Tetrastes sewerzowi sewerzowi*

One unforgettable sighting near Huzhu Beishan.

**(H) Himalayan Snowcock** *Tetraogallus himalayensis*

North-west of Chaka.

**Tibetan Snowcock** *Tetraogallus tibetanus*

Great views, in the Xiongshe Valley (Lhasa).

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

One covey, north-west of Chaka

**Tibetan Partridge** *Coturnix japonica*

Several great views, in the Xiongshe Valley.

**Japanese Quail** *Lophura ignita*

Three sightings on Happy Island.

**Tibetan Eared Pheasant** *Crossoptilon harmani*

A few unforgettable sightings in the Xiongshe Valley.

**Blue Eared Pheasant** *Crossoptilon auritum*

A group of seven near Huzhu Beishan.

**Common Pheasant** *Phasianus colchius*

One near Dongxia, a handful in the Huzhu Beishan area, and several in the north-east.



**Grebes Podicipedidae****Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Chengdu and throughout the north-east.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Tachybaptus cristatus*

Almost daily sightings in the north-east.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Tachybaptus nigricollis*

Eastern Koko Nor.

**Storks Ciconidae****Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*

One sighting near Chaka.

**Ibises and Spoonbills Threskiornithidae****Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia leucorodia*

Beidaihe and Happy Island.

**Bitterns and Herons Ardeidae****Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax*

Chengdu, Beidaihe and Happy Island.

**Chinese Pond Heron** *Ardeola bacchus*

Several in Huan Hua Xi Park, Chengdu.

**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus*

One on Happy Island.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

Several sightings, mostly in the north-east.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea manilensis*

One in Beidaihe Wetland Park.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba*

First sighted in Beidaihe

**Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia*

Kota Kinabalu and Lahad Datu.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

Almost daily sightings in the north-east.

**Cormorants and Shags Phalacrocoracidae****Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*

SA handful around Koko Nor, common in the north-east.

**Ospreys Pandionidae****Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus haliaetus*

One sighting, between Beidaihe and Happy Island.

**Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae****Bearded Vulture** *Gypaetus barbatus barbatus*

Fantastic views; around Chaka and above Er La Pass.

**Himalayan Vulture** *Gyps himalayensis*

Sighted throughout the higher parts of Tibet.

**Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis nipalensis*

One near Chaka, a couple near Er La Pass.



**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*

One near Xining's 'western hills', a few to the south-west of Chaka.

**Chinese Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter soloensis*

One, on Happy Island.

**Japanese Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter gularis*

Several sightings on Happy Island.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

One near Chaka, several in the north-east.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis schvedowi*

One sighting near Chaka, a handful on Happy Island.

**Eastern Marsh Harrier** *Circus spilonotus*

Several sightings on Happy Island.

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*

Several sightings on Happy Island.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans lineatus*

One sighting, in Lhasa.

**Upland Buzzard** *Buteo hemilasius*

Particularly common around Er La Pass.

**Eastern Buzzard** *Buteo japonicus japonicus*

Several, scattered sightings.

**Rails, Crakes & Coots Rallidae****Brown-cheeked Rail** *Rallus indicus*

One flushed on Happy Island.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus chloropus*

Happy Island.

**Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra atra*

Eastern Koko Nor and Happy Island.

**Oystercatchers Haematopodidae****Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus osculans*

Two sightings at Happy Island.

**Ibisbill Ibidorhynchidae****Ibisbill** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

One, along the Lhasa River.

**Stilts and Avocets Recurvirostridae****Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Beidaihe and *en route* to Beijing from Happy Island.

**Plovers Charadriidae****Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

Near Gonghe, at Koko Nor and on Happy Island.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola squatarola*

Beidaihe and Happy Island.

**Kentish Plover** *Vcharadrius alexandrinus nihonensis*

Beidaihe and Happy Island.



**Sandpipers and Allies Scolopacidae****Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*

Beidaihe.

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata orientalis*

One sighting near Heimaihe, daily sightings in the north-east.

**Far Eastern Curlew** *Numenius madagascariensis*

A few in Beidaihe.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*

A dozen or so at a wetland to the east of Koko Nor.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

Almost daily encounters in the north-east.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

Lhasa, Beidaihe Wetland Park and Happy Island.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

One sighting, on the Lhasa River.

**Red Knot** *Calidris canutus*

Beidaihe.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba rubida*

Beidaihe.

**Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis*

Beidaihe.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

Beidaihe and Happy Island.

**Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers Laridae****Brown-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*

Around Lhasa, and near Heimaihe.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Eastern Koko Nor and the north-east.

**Saunders's Gull** *Chroicocephalus saundersi*

Sighted almost daily from Happy Island.

**Relict Gull** *Ichthyaetus relictus*

One sighting at Beidaihe.

**Pallas's Gull** *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*

Around Lhasa and Beidaihe.

**Black-tailed Gull** *Larus crassirostris*

Beidaihe and Happy Island.

**Mew Gull** *Larus canus*

Beidaihe.

**Vega Gull** *Larus vegae*

Beidaihe.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*

One sighting from Happy Island.

**White-winged Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus*

One sighting near Heimaihe.

**Sandgrouse Pteroclididae****Pallas's Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

Two memorable sightings near Chaka.



**Pigeons and Doves *Columbidae*****Rock Dove** *Columba livia***Hill Pigeon** *Columba rupestris*

First sighted around Lhasa.

**Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis***Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto decaocto*

One sighting in Chaka town.

**Spotted Dove** *Spilopelia chinensis chinensis*

Chengdu and Beidaihe.

**Swifts *Apodidae*****Common Swift** *Apus apus pekinensis*

One sighting, near Gonghe.

**Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*****Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis bengalensis*

Lhasa, Gonghe and Happy Island (daily sightings).

**Hoopoes *Upupidae*****Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

Several, scattered sightings.

**Woodpeckers *Picidae*****Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker** *Yungipicus canicapillus*

Beidaihe and Beijing Botanical Gardens.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*

First seen well in the Huzhu Beishan area.

**(H) Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopos martius*

Heard in the Huzhu Beishan area.

**Grey-headed Woodpecker** *Picus canus*

A few good looks (Beidaihe, Happy Island and Beijing Botanical Gardens).

**Falcons and Caracaras *Falconidae*****Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

Sighted on no less than 11 days.

**Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis*

Unforgettable sightings of streams of these great birds migrating over Happy Island.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius pacificus*

One sighting on Happy Island.

**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo subbuteo*

At least two seen hunting over the Beidaihe mudflats.

**Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug*

Fantastic views of several around Er La Pass.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*

At least one individual sighted on Happy Island.

**Cuckoo-shrikes *Campephagidae*****Swinhoe's Minivet** *Pericrocotus cantonensis*

Good looks at a few in Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.



**Shrikes Laniidae****Tiger Shrike** *Lanius tigrinus*

A couple of sightings in Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.

**Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus*

Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu and Lhasa (subject to confirmation).

**Grey-backed Shrike** *Lanius tephronotus tephronotus*

Several sightings around Lhasa.

**Chinese Grey Shrike** *Lanius sphenocercus*Chaka (*giganteus*) and Happy Island (*sphenocercus*).**Old World Orioles Oriolidae****Black-naped Oriole** *Oriolus chinensis diffusus*

One sighting in Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.

**Drongos Dicruridae****Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.

**Hair-crested Drongo** *Dicrurus hottentottus*

Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.

**Crows, Jays, and Magpies Corvidae****Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

A few sightings around Huzhu Beishan.

**Azure-winged Magpie** *Cyanopica cyanus cyanus*

Particularly common around Beijing.

**Red-billed Blue Magpie** *Urocissa erythroryncha*

Chengdu, Beidaihe and Beijing.

**Eurasian Magpie** *Pica pica*

Almost daily sightings.

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

Two sightings near Chaka.

**Red-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Almost daily sightings in Qinghai.

**Daurian Jackdaw** *Coloeus dauuricus*

2 flocks near the Great Wall, 1 enormous flock above BBG.

**Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Huzhu Beishan and Beijing.

**Northern Raven** *Corvus corax*

Er La Pass and Wenquan.

**Fairy Flycatchers Stenostiridae****Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher** *Culicicapa ceylonensis calochrysea*

Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.

**Chickadees and Tits Paridae****Rufous-vented Tit** *Periparus rubidiventris whistleri*

Several great looks during our morning in Dongxia.

**Yellow-bellied Tit (E)** *Pardaliparus venustulus*

Unbeatable views on Happy Island and in BBG.

**Grey Crested Tit** *Lophophanes dichrous*

A couple of sightings in the Huzhu Beishan area.

**White-browed Tit (E)** *Poecile superciliosus*

Rubber Mountain Pass and the Chaka area.

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*

The Great Wall and BBG (second visit).

**Willow Tit** *Poecile montanus*

Daily sightings around Huzhu Beishan but first sighted at Dongxia.

**Ground Tit** *Pseudopodoces humilis*

Delightfully common at several sites visited in Qinghai.

**Japanese Tit** *Parus minor*

First sighted around Lhasa.

### Penduline-Tits *Remizidae*

**Chinese Penduline Tit** *Remiz consobrinus*

Near-daily sightings on Happy Island.

### Larks *Alaudidae*

**Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula*

One, on a fence, on our first afternoon in the Koko Nor area.

**Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

Regular sightings on Happy Island.

**Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*

A couple seen well near Gonghe.

**Horned Lark** *Eremophila alpestris*

Abundant during our time on the Qinghai plateau.

**Hume's Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella acutirostris*

Several sighted in flight on the Qinghai plateau.

**Mongolian Lark** *Melanocorypha mongolica*

One, near Chaka.

**Tibetan Lark** *Melanocorypha maxima*

Several near Heimeihe, one flock on Er La Mountain.

**Asian Short-toed Lark** *Alaudala cheleensis*

A handful near Heimaihe, one flock on Happy Island.

### Bulbuls *Pycnonotidae*

**Light-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus sinensis sinensis*

First sighted in Chengdu, abundant in the north-east.

### Swallows *Hirundinidae*

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Almost daily sightings during our time in the north-east.

**Eurasian Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Lhasa and Xining (Beishan).

**Asian House Martin** *Delichon dasypus*

A few individuals sighted in the Xiongshe Valley (Lhasa).

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica*

Several seen migrating over Happy Island.





**Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalidae*****Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus caudatus*

Dongxia and BBG (both visits).

**Black-throated Bushtit** *Aegithalos concinnus*

Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.

**White-browed Tit-Warbler** *Leptopoeile sophiae*

Several sites, including Xiongshe Valley and eastern shore of Koko Nor (perched on a fence!).

**Crested Tit-Warbler (E)** *Leptopoeile elegans*

Dongxia and Huzhu Beishan.

**Leaf-Warblers *Phylloscopidae*****Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

A couple of sightings in the gardens of our hotel in Beidaihe.

**Tickell's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus affinis affinis*

In the (current) absence of convincing evidence to the contrary, we took the view that this was the abundant species around Lhasa, not the species below. Time, however, will hopefully bring definitive resolve.

**Alpine Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus occisinensis*

A few individuals at Dongxia.

**Gansu Leaf Warbler (E)** *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

Several at Dongxia and around Huzhu Beishan.

**Pallas's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Most abundant warbler in the north-east.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Second most-abundant warbler in the north-east.

**Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis*

One individual, in the grounds of the Lhasa Summer Palace.

**Two-barred Warbler** *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*

One, in Beidaihe Wetland Park.

**Blyth's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus reguloides*

At least two, Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.

**Reed-Warblers and Allies *Acrocephalidae*****Black-browed Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps*

Good views of one adult on Happy Island.

**Manchurian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus tangorum*

One positive sighting (LO?) on Happy Island.

**Babblers *Timaliidae*****Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*

Three, in Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.

**Rufous-capped Babbler** *Stachyridopsis ruficeps*

Also sighted only in Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.

**Laughingthrushes *Leiothrichidae*****Giant Babax** *Babax waddelli*

Great views of several, in the Xiongshe Valley.

**Chinese Hwamei** *Garrulax canorus canorus*

A couple of good looks, in Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.



**Plain Laughingthrush (E)** *Garrulax davidi*

Lhasa and Dongxia.

**White-browed Laughingthrush** *Garrulax sannio*

Several sightings in Chengdu.

**Elliot's Laughingthrush (E)** *Trochalopteron elliotii*

A few, in Dongxia and around Huzhu Beishan.

**Brown-cheeked Laughingthrush** *Trochalopteron henrici*

Daily sightings in and around Lhasa.

**Red-billed Leiothrix** *Leiothrix lutea*

A couple of flocks in Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu

**Old World Warblers Sylviidae****Beijing Babbler** *Rhopophilus pekinensis*

A pair seen near the Great Wall.

**Vinous-throated Parrotbill** *Sinosuthora webbiana*

Chengdu, Beidaihe and BBG (second visit).

**Ashy-throated Parrotbill** *Sinosuthora alphonsiana*

One sighting in Huanhuaxi Park, Chengdu.

**Yuhinas, White-eyes, and Allies Zosteropidae****Chestnut-flanked White-eye** *Zosterops erythropleurus*

Chengdu and throughout the north-east.

**Japanese White-eye** *Zosterops japonicus*

Chengdu and Happy Island.

**Kinglets Regulidae****Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* One sighting in Dongxia Forest.**Wrens Troglodytidae****Eurasian Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

A handful in the Huzhu Beishan area.

**Nuthatches Sittidae****Chinese Nuthatch** *Sitta villosa*

Dongxia, Huzhu Beishan and BBG (second visit).

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

Dongxia only.

**Wallcreeper Tichodromidae****Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria nepalensis*

One sighting, north-west of Chaka.

**Treecreepers Certhiidae****Hodgson's Treecreeper** *Certhia hodgsoni*

Dongxia and Huzhu Beishan.

**Starlings Sturnidae****Crested Myna** *Acridotheres cristatellus*

Chengdu and throughout the north-east.



- Red-billed Starling** *Spodiopsar sericeus*  
Chengdu and BBG (well out of range and possibly feral).
- White-cheeked Starling** *Spodiopsar cineraceus*  
Several encounters in the north-east.

### Thrushes and Allies *Turdidae*

- Grey-backed Thrush** *Turdus hortulorum*  
One, on our third morning on Happy Island.
- Chinese Blackbird** *Turdus mandarinus*  
Chengdu and BBG (second visit).
- Tibetan Blackbird** *Turdus maximus*  
Several, in and around Lhasa.
- Chestnut Thrush** *Turdus rubrocanus*  
A handful, in Dongxia Forest.
- Eyebrowed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus*  
Three or four in Chengdu, one south-west of Chaka.
- Pale Thrush** *Turdus pallidus*  
At least one flock, on Happy Island.
- Red-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis*  
Several in flight, one perched, all south-west of Chaka.
- Naumann's Thrush** *Turdus naumanni*  
One, possibly two or three, on Happy Island.
- Dusky Thrush** *Turdus eunomus*  
At least a handful on Happy Island.
- Chinese Thrush** *Turdus mupinensis*  
One, sighted only by myself and Tang, near Huzhu Beishan.

### Old World Flycatchers *Muscicapidae*

- Oriental Magpie-Robin** *Copsychus saularis*  
Chengdu only.
- Rufous-tailed Robin** *Larvivora sibilans*  
One brief sighting on Happy Island.
- Siberian Rubythroat** *Calliope calliope*  
A few brief encounters on Happy Island.
- Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus*  
Not uncommon during our time in the north-east.
- Himalayan Bluetail** *Tarsiger rufilatus rufilatus*  
Several sighted around Huzhu Beishan and Dongxia.
- Mugimaki Flycatcher** *Ficedula mugimaki*  
One sighting in Beidaihe, another on Happy Island.
- Taiga Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicilla*  
A few individuals – Chengdu, Beidaihe and Happy Island.
- Przevalski's Redstart (E)** *Phoenicurus alaschanicus*  
Great views of several males, south-west of Chaka.
- Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros rufiventris*  
One, near Lhasa.
- Hodgson's Redstart** *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*  
Xionshe Valley and Huzhu Beishan area.
- White-throated Redstart** *Phoenicurus schisticeps*  
First sighted in Xionshe Valley, most common around Huzhu Beishan.



**Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus auroreus*

Daily sightings during our time in the north-east.

**Güldenstädt's Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus grandis*

A few striking males along Er La Pass.

**Blue-fronted Redstart** *Phoenicurus frontalis*

Xionshe Valley, Dongxia Forest and Huzhu Beishan.

**White-capped Redstart** *Phoenicurus leucocephalus*

A few, all north-east of Chengdu.

**Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola maurus*

Xionshe Valley and Happy Island (two sightings in total).

**Old World Sparrows Passeridae****Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus***Rock Sparrow** *Petronia petronia brevirostris*

A trio in the Chaka salt plains.

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

One sighting, south of Koko Nor. Note: As of the time of writing, I could find no evidence to indicate that the individual we saw and photographed actually belongs to Tibetan Finch. I will however explore a few other avenues to confirm.

**Tibetan Snowfinch** *Montifringilla adamsi*

One small flock tracked down near Er La Pass.

**White-rumped Snowfinch** *Onychostruthus taczanowskii*

Several sightings on the Qinghai plateau.

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

Two near Koko Nor, another near Chaka.

**Rufous-necked Snowfinch** *Pyrgilauda ruficollis*

Several small groups on the Qinghai plateau.

**Blanford's Snowfinch** *Pyrgilauda blanfordi*

Five adults, one young, near Chaka.

**Accentors Prunellidae****Robin Accentor** *Prunella rubeculoides rubeculoides*

Lhasa, north-east of Xining and near Heimaihe.

**Rufous-breasted Accentor** *Prunella strophhiata strophhiata*

Dongxia and Huzhu Beishan.

**Brown Accentor** *Prunella fulvescens*

Lhasa and the Qinghai Plateau.

**Wagtails and Pipits Motacillidae****Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*

Around Lhasa, Heimaihe (shores of Koko Nor) and Wenquan.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

(1) Chengdu 26.9.

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi*

Happy Island only.

**Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii*

One, near Chaka.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*

Huzhu Beishan and several sites in the north-east.



**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*

One sighting on Happy Island.

**Przevalski's Finch** *Urocynchramidae***Przevalski's Finch (E)** *Urocynchramus pylzowi*

At least two males, near Rubber Mountain Pass – after a lot of work but still a major highlight!

**Finches, Euphonias** *Fringillidae***Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

One loose flock on Happy Island.

**White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carnipes*

Good looks at a few in the Xiongshe Valley, Lhasa.

**Grey-headed Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula erythaca erythaca*

A handful of flocks in the Huzhu Beishan area.

**Plain Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte nemoricola*

Several around Chaka, a couple above Er La Pass.

**Brandt's Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte brandti*

Er La Mountain (for some).

**Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrurus*

1 female on Happy Island, 2 males near the Great Wall.

**Streaked Rosefinch** *Carpodacus rubicilloides*

Great views, in the Xiongshe Valley.

**Great Rosefinch** *Carpodacus rubicilla severtzovi*

Also seen well in the Xiongshe Valley.

**Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch** *Carpodacus pulcherrimus*

One sighting in the Xiongshe Valley.

**Pink-rumped Rosefinch** *Carpodacus waltoni*

Two sightings in the Xiongshe Valley, another north-east of Chaka.

**Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch** *Carpodacus thura thura*

One sighting near the Xiongshe

Nunnery.

**Chinese White-browed Rosefinch** *Carpodacus dubius*

Great views of a handful in Dongxia Valley.

**Grey-capped Greenfinch** *Chloris sinica*

Chengdu, near the Great Wall and BBG (second visit).

**Twite** *Linaria flavirostris*

Near the Xiongshe Nunnery, and near Rubber Mountain Pass.

**Eurasian Siskin** *Spinus spinus*

One sighting below Rubber Mountain Pass.

**Buntings, Sparrows and Allies** *Emberizidae***Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos*

One small flock at a pond, north-west of Chaka.

**Godlewski's Bunting** *Emberiza godlewskii*

Several around Lhasa and on the Qinghai Plateau.

**Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides*

One sighting near Gonghe.

**Tristram's Bunting** *Emberiza tristrami*

One on Happy Island.



**Chestnut-eared Bunting** *Emberiza fucata*

A few on Happy Island.

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*

Beidaihe, Happy Island and BBG (second visit).

**Yellow-browed Bunting** *Emberiza chrysophrys*

A few (mostly adults) on Happy Island.

**Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica*

Daily sightings on Happy Island.

**Yellow-throated Bunting** *Emberiza elegans*

A pair on Happy Island and one in BBG (second visit).

**Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola*

One, possibly two, on Happy Island.

**Chestnut Bunting** *Emberiza rutila*

2 smart individuals during our final walk on Happy Island.

**Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala*

Common on Happy Island.

**Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

One brief sighting (LO?) on Happy Island

**Mammals (18 in total: 18 seen)****Rabbits, Hares *Leporidae*****Woolly Hare** *Lepus oiostolus*

Several sightings, throughout Qinghai, and near Lhasa.

**Chinese Hare** *Lepus sinensis*

Almost daily sightings on Happy Island.

**Tolai Hare** *Lepus tolai*

(1) Chengdu 26.9.

**Pikas *Ochotonidae*****Gansu Pika** *Ochotona cansus*

(1) Chengdu 26.9.

**Plateau Pika** *Ochotona curzoniae*

(1) Chengdu 26.9.

**Tsing-ling Pika** *Ochotona huangensis*

(1) Chengdu 26.9.

**Squirrels *Sciuridae*****Pallas's Squirrel** *Callosciurus erythraeus*

Chengdu.

**Red Squirrel** *Callosciurus erythraeus*

Chengdu.

**Himalayan Marmot** *Marmota himalayana*

A handful of encounters in Qinghai, including one with a rare feline-like form.

**Wolves, Coyote, Foxes, Jackals *Canidae*****Gray Wolf** *Canis lupus*

Two spotted, not long after we left Chaka for Gonghe.



**Tibetan Fox** *Vulpes ferrilata*

A few great sightings of this smart beast - all around Er La Pass

**Deer Cervidae**

**Siberian Roe Deer** *Capreolus pygargus*

(1) Chengdu 26.9.

**White-lipped Deer** *Cervus albirostris*

(1) Chengdu 26.9.

**Red Deer** *Cervus elaphus*

(1) Chengdu 26.9.

**Cattle, Antelopes, Sheep, Goats Bovidae**

**Tibetan Gazelle** *Procapra picticaudata*

A handful of sightings around Er La Pass, following our first sighting of some distant individuals near Chaka.

**Bharal** *Pseudois nayaur*

Two sizable herds north-west of Chaka, another on Er La Mountain. Note: The population sometimes referred to as Dwarf Bharal doesn't include the animals we saw, nor is it widely accepted as a separate species.

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**Rockjumper Birding Ltd**

**Labourdonnais Village**

**Mapou**

**Mauritius**

**Tel (USA & Canada) toll free: 1-888-990-5552**

**Email: [info@rockjumperbirding.com](mailto:info@rockjumperbirding.com)**

**Alternative email: [rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com](mailto:rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com)**

**Website: [www.rockjumperbirding.com](http://www.rockjumperbirding.com)**

