

THE TRAVELLING NATURALIST

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Tour Report

China – Sichuan's Sensational Mammals & Birds

13 – 28 October 2018

Tibetan macaque



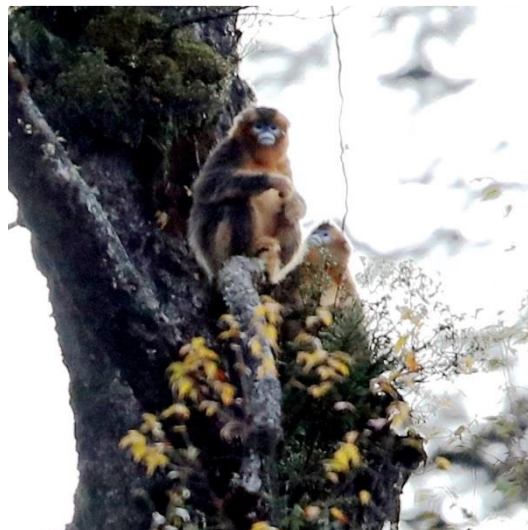
Tibetan wolf



Lady Amherst's pheasant



Golden snub-nosed monkey



Compiled by: Barrie Cooper

**Tour Leader/s: Barrie Cooper and Tang Jun with 4 participants
Mr Xia (driver)**

Summary

Sichuan is one of the scenically most attractive parts of China with some excellent and rare wildlife. It is also noted for its delicious food. This trip enabled participants to experience all these aspects of this interesting part of China. Mammals such as Pallas' cat, golden snub-nosed monkey, Tibetan fox and wolf were some of the highlights, while the rich variety of birds included blue eared pheasant, Lady Amherst's and golden pheasants, saker falcon, lammergeier, six species of redstarts, four species of accentors and several endemics. Beautiful montane forests in their autumn colours to the grasslands of the Tibetan plateau provided a contrast in scenery and wildlife. It was a wonderful sample of the nature of Sichuan. Added to this was the delicious food that was greatly appreciated by everyone; we never had one bad meal. This trip was a wonderful experience, full of great memories.

Day 1: Depart UK

Saturday 13 October 2018

The members of the group departed the UK for the flight to Hong Kong on the first leg of our trip to Sichuan.

Day 2: Hong Kong; Chengdu; Labahe

Sunday 14 October 2018

The flight to Hong Kong arrived on time. The departure gate didn't offer much chance to look for any birds, although crested mynah was noted. The flight to Chengdu went to schedule and after clearing immigration we met up with Tang Jun who was to be our local guide for the trip.

The first part of the drive to Labahe Nature Reserve was by motorway and spotted doves were occasionally seen on the hard shoulders, but a couple of white-browed laughingthrushes were more noteworthy. Little egrets were seen on the occasional marshy area or paddy field. A stop at a service station for a comfort break brought us the first flock of the attractive black-throated tits as they moved through some trees behind the toilets. After leaving the motorway, the progress was slower on the busy road where plenty of construction work was taking place. The weather also started to deteriorate as a fine drizzle eventually gave way to heavy rain. It was almost dark when we arrived at the hotel. After a short break we met up for dinner and were pleasantly surprised to find a herd of up to 40 sambar deer in full view from our table. The sambars were taking advantage of a salt lick and are a regular feature here. After all the travelling we retired for an early night to catch up on some much needed sleep.

Weather: Sunny and warm in Hong Kong, dry in Chengdu, rain at Labahe with a max of 15 degrees

Day 3: Labahe

Monday 15 October 2018

It was a clear sunny morning with just the occasional cloud over the forest. The fine weather gave us the opportunity to fully appreciate the beauty of this area in and around Labahe. The lower mountains were clad in a mix of deciduous and evergreen forest, with the autumn colours adding an extra dimension to the palate. We could also see the end of the tree line and, above that, the grey high mountaintops that were decorated by snow. It was a range of habitats to get a wildlife imagination roaming. Our pre-breakfast walk near the hotel and along the river gave us our first white-capped and plumbeous redstarts plus equally active white wagtails. Anne found a bird in 'freeze mode' in a concrete draining channel next to the road. The bird remained completely still as we admired its plumage and took photos – it was a juvenile black-crowned night heron. As we approached the hotel, two brown dippers were on the river posing and flying up and down. David found our first Swinhoe's squirrel of the day.

Immediately after breakfast we went over to the shuttle bus that was going to take us part the way up the Erlang Mountain. Our first Tibetan macaques were around the car park, no doubt waiting for the first tourists to arrive – we certainly didn't feed them. The bus dropped us off so that we could look for wildlife while slowly

walking down the road. Red-billed blue magpies were one of the first impressive birds to be seen and we had regular numbers throughout the day. A few chestnut-crowned bush warblers and grey-hooded fulvetta eventually gave decent views, as did Elliot's and black-faced laughingthrushes. However, the star of the morning was probably a splendid male Lady Amherst's pheasant that initially tried to be elusive but eventually revealed its full splendour to everybody as it walked along a dry streambed. Six females were also around, no doubt impressed by his stunning plumage and tail. The trees and bushes near the road held some good birds including golden bush-robin, rufous-breasted accentor and red-billed leiothrix. A soaring female Eurasian sparrowhawk preceded three mountain hawk-eagles that showed for several minutes. A blue-fronted redstart posed in a tree from the same place where we had watched the eagles. We left the road to climb a stepped trail through the forest and this enabled us to find some good species of birds including Himalayan bluetail, Chinese blue flycatcher and olive-backed pipit. Both Sichuan and Hodgson's treecreepers were seen together, providing a good opportunity for comparison. Two species of warblers were picked up in a hyperactive flock – Hume's and buff-barred. A yak decided to block the path and after assessing the situation the yak decided to charge. Fortunately Tang Jun was at the front and his tripod proved sufficient deterrent for the yak to decide to move on and leave us free to continue our hike. We had lunch high up on the trail where a small flock of Asian house martins flew over and an elusive woodpecker was calling. As we descended the trail, a maroon-backed accentor gave the briefest of views before flying off but further down, thankfully, a flock of at least ten flew across as they made their way through the forest and some showed reasonably well for a few seconds. We returned to the road and went back up for a few hundred metres and were rewarded with decent views of a chestnut thrush. A male daurian redstart made it four species from that family during the day. The clouds had descended to reduce visibility and brought a persistent drizzle so we took the shuttle bus back down in order to return to the hotel for a brief rest before dinner. After another fine meal at the hotel we went for a night walk near the hotel. A hog badger in the car park was a surprise sight and particularly appreciated by Gill. In addition to sambar, we had a few flying squirrels of two species – red and white giant flying squirrel and complex-toothed flying squirrel. They were a good reward for a night walk in the rain.

Weather: Sunny morning, cloud and drizzle in the afternoon, approximately 15 degrees maximum

Day 4: Labahe

Tuesday 16 October 2018

It was a cool, misty start to the day for our brief pre-breakfast walk. The usual redstarts and dippers were on the river and a few Tibetan macaques were also around. After breakfast we went to the entrance for the shuttle bus with approximately 100 Asian house martins flying low over the hillside trees, creating quite a spectacle. The bus took us up the mountain road again but visibility wasn't great as we slowly walked down. However, both laughingthrushes were showing well, as was a group of 14 olive-backed pipits. A female golden bush robin, a grey-headed bullfinch and the local subspecies of great-spotted woodpecker gave brief but decent views. A small flock of birds included Sichuan leaf warbler and Japanese tit. We returned to one of our regular spots to scan for red pandas and, although we didn't see them, we did have the attractive collared grosbeak at relatively close range. Walking back from there towards the road, we had a large mixed flock of birds that included yellow-browed tit, green-backed tit, black-throated bushtit and crimson-breasted woodpecker. It was relatively quiet as we walked along another trail until we had a forest musk deer grazing just 60 metres in front of us. We had prolonged scope views until the deer slowly walked into the forest. It certainly got Tang Jun excited as this was the first time he had seen one. Our first Siberian chipmunk was seen close to where the deer had been. A picnic lunch was taken at the end of the trail. During the afternoon, new birds for the day included rufous-breasted accentor, coal tit, chestnut-vented nuthatch and male and female Lady Amherst's pheasants. Anne and David saw two sheep-like animals that were eventually identified as takin. The drizzle was now turning to rain so we decided to stop the next shuttle bus in order to return down the mountain. After another fine dinner at the hotel, the night walk was relatively quiet with a couple of flying squirrels and the first Confucian niviventer.

Weather: Cloud, mist and drizzle, approximately nine degrees maximum



Day 5: Labahe; Drive to Wolong**Wednesday 17 October 2018**

It was an early start for our final morning in Labahe. A daurian redstart was in the hotel car park while we ate a quick breakfast before taking a shuttle bus up the mountain. An olive-backed pipit flew over soon after we got out of the bus. After walking for some 20 or 30 minutes, we heard some mammals calling up the mountain. A quick scan revealed the source of the intriguing calls. We had the remarkable sight of the endemic golden snub-nosed monkey sitting in trees approximately 500 metres away. Closer looks revealed several and it was a family group of at least eight monkeys. We watched them for at least 20 minutes as they fed on fruits in the trees with some of the youngsters showing quite well. This was an amazing piece of luck as this is a rare monkey and a difficult species to see at Labahe, seen much less frequently than red panda. Gill was absolutely delighted as this was the animal she had most wanted to see and there it was in all its glory. Scope views certainly helped to appreciate the fascinating faces of these very smart monkeys. The monkeys eventually went from view so we continued down the road to enjoy good views of two sparrowhawks. A spotted nutcracker flew over and two rufous-breasted accentors showed quite well. We searched the trees near the road and in the distance in the hope of finding a red panda, but luck had deserted us with this species. Our final attempt was a walk in a forested area that had a bamboo understory. We didn't find any pandas but a scaly-breasted wren-babbler and a couple of maroon-backed accentors were some kind of compensation. After leaving the forest, a Darjeeling woodpecker flew to the base of a thin tree and proceeded to work its way up, giving us good views in the process. It was now time to take a shuttle bus down the mountain to return to the hotel and check out.

An hour into the drive to Wolong we stopped for lunch at a small restaurant in a village. We were then entertained while the four happy ladies prepared us an excellent mini banquet. We said our goodbyes and continued our journey until stopping at a motorway service station. Birds seen here were light-vented bulbul, tree sparrow, grey wagtail and black-throated bushtit. On arrival at our hotel we had a brief break before going to a local restaurant for dinner. Once again we had an excellent meal, so good we asked for seconds of one particular dish. Fully satiated we had a night drive up the mountain. Our first creature of the night was a Himalayan owl that was perched on a power line. While we watched the owl our driver, Mr Xia, spotted something with his torch. It was a beautiful leopard cat that was lying at the base of some exposed roots of a tree. Eventually the leopard cat disappeared behind a bush so we moved on. We were descending down the mountain before our next animal – a Chinese goral lying on a rock on a roadside cliff. It was a fine sight and a couple of sambar were on the same cliff for comparison. After a successful night drive we arrived back to the hotel to catch up on some sleep.

Weather: Sunny morning, cloud, mist and drizzle in the afternoon, approximately 11 degrees maximum

Day 6: Wolong; Balang Shan**Thursday 18 October 2018**

It was an early start as we set off for the drive up Balang Shan mountain. First mammal of the day was a rat that darted across the road in front of the bus. A hog badger was trotting along the side of the road but swiftly climbed over a wire mesh fence to safety as we stopped to admire its agility. The leopard cat was still hunting on the cliff where we saw it last night. There is a zone of the mountain where several species of pheasants can be found but unfortunately there was thick fog when we arrived so we continued to higher elevations. Fortunately we did reach clear skies with the cloud below us. It's a regular feature here and is known as the Balang Cloud Ocean; it certainly makes for interesting photos with the dramatic high peaks sticking out above the cloud. The clouds ascended the mountain slopes during the morning so we had to make the most of our clear weather. We were now over 4,000 metres above sea level with another 500 to the summit. A couple of large flocks of plain mountain finches, red and yellow-billed choughs and a golden eagle sitting on a ridge were our first birds here. Alpine accentors were common and some were reasonably confiding despite having a couple of kestrels patrolling the sky. A flock of about 20 blue sheep were close enough to give us good enough views to admire their attractive markings. Two Tibetan snowcocks flew over a ridge, swiftly followed by another 15. Some Kessler's thrushes very obligingly perched up on some rocks above the road and a couple of snow pigeons flew over. We drove higher and could hear Tibetan snowcocks calling but couldn't find them, however the calls of a flock of snow partridges enabled us to get a brief view before they disappeared behind a ridge. A mountain weasel ran across the road and swiftly climbed over a wall before some of the group managed to see it. Quite



incredibly, a Hodgson's treecreeper flew right in front of us and landed on a rock just 15 metres away, did a quick wallcreeper impression and flew off. It would have been on its migration and, at an altitude of over 4,300 metres, was desperately in need of a tree at a lower elevation. From a tiny bird out of its comfort zone, we then had a large bird very much in its perfect habitat: a majestic lammergeier gliding over the summit before disappearing into the clouds. Below us were three Himalayan vultures using the mountain slopes for lift, and eventually we had close views of some overhead with a cinereous vulture joining them for comparison. After a brief visit to the summit, we started to descend in the hope of getting better views of the snow partridge, but the mist was becoming more frequent so we moved to a much lower altitude for lunch.

A flock of at least 30 long-tailed minivets put in a brief appearance while we ate lunch. We proceeded to walk down the road, with the river and adjacent forest being our focus of attention; it was an area where we had spotlighted the previous night. A new bird for the trip was white-throated dipper, with the second individual treating us to some privileged views. For 15 minutes we watched the dipper swimming underwater in the crystal clear river. It was brilliant to watch it swim under water, sometimes at a depth of approximately 60 centimetres, to find its food and then smoothly rise to the surface. It was successful in finding food in most of its dives and was a wonderful experience to witness. Another good sighting was a hog badger that moved in and out of the vegetation on the far side of the river. We also saw Alpine leaf warbler here. It was now time to return to the hotel for some free time prior to dinner. After a fine dinner in the hotel restaurant, we boarded the bus for another night drive. The highlight was a leopard cat that provided us with very good views as it posed in the fork of a tree. It was a beautiful animal and a great sight. We later had three Chinese gorals on hillsides overlooking the road.

Weather: Sunny intervals mixed with cloud and occasional mist, approximately seven degrees maximum

Day 7: Wolong to Hongyuan

Friday 19 October 2018

A pair of brown dippers were on the river in front of the hotel as we boarded the bus for our long journey to Hongyuan. We drove a few kilometres down the road before stopping at a spot where we managed to see Pere David's rock squirrel. A little further on Tang Jun saw a wallcreeper flying across the river on his side of the vehicle; we stopped and searched but couldn't find this charismatic bird. A Himalayan buzzard was perched up just a couple of hundred metres further on. Our next stop was for lunch where a couple of Godlewski's buntings showed quite well on the riverbank opposite the restaurant. As the drive continued, it was noticeable that the local people - particularly the women - were wearing traditional costume as we were now in the Tibetan area. We had been making good progress until we came up to a queue of stationary lorries. Unfortunately the road had been closed due to roadworks a few kilometres further on and we had to wait another four hours before the newly resurfaced road was due to reopen. On the positive side it gave us an opportunity to look for some wildlife and two Himalayan vultures were the first noteworthy sighting as they soared over a distant ridge. A few white-browed rosinches were in the roadside bushes and a male obligingly posed so that we could admire his beauty. Japanese tits were around but a giant laughingthrush was rather more impressive, although the view was brief. A few red deer were on the hillside including some fine stags. Some male and female white-throated redstarts were another fine piece of compensation for the unfortunate delay. Eventually we were able to continue our journey to Hongyuan with a late dinner in a noodle bar before checking into our hotel.

Weather: Sunny all day, approximately ten degrees maximum

Day 8: Hongyuan; Ruergai

Saturday 20 October 2018

There was frost on the bus when we left the hotel, but we had the bonus of seven daurian jackdaws flying over before we left. Other corvids in the shape of oriental magpie and northern raven were also seen as we approached the edge of Hongyuan. The Yellow River was often close to the road and this, with other wetlands, gave us ruddy shelduck, ferruginous duck, goosander, grey heron, great crested grebe, green sandpiper, Pallas' and brown-headed gulls. However, the prize wetland bird was black-necked crane with a family group of four found in the morning and a flock of 44 in the afternoon. The grasslands on the Tibetan plateau are a rich habitat with a good variety of wildlife and one of the typical mammals is the plateau pika, which proved to be a popular



and numerous animal. It was interesting to notice how the white-rumped and rufous-necked snowfinches were often found in proximity to the pika burrows. A small flock of white-browed tits was a welcome find in the morning as they passed through some bushes close to us. Some other special birds of the plateau included ground tit and plain laughingthrush while twite, rock sparrow, oriental skylarks and horned larks were numerous. A pair of saker falcons in a quarry posed very obligingly to enable us to full enjoy this superb raptor. Upland buzzards also gave us very good views. Other raptors seen were Himalayan vulture, hen harrier and common kestrel. Some other birds seen in the morning were azure-winged magpie, a flock of white-cheeked starlings and a black stork that was probably migrating. Following a fine lunch in the first restaurant we could find open, we explored more of the plateau before reaching our hotel in Ruorgai. A notable feature of the grasslands was the herds of yak, as well as cattle and sheep. Some of the local people here still live traditional nomadic lifestyles and their tented camps were dotted across the landscape. Stephen was the first to find a calling little owl around a permanent settlement near a quarry. Four Siberian roe deer were on a distant ridge, with the male adorning a splendid set of antlers. We arrived at our hotel in good time to allow the group to explore the town of Ruorgai.

Our night drive was productive with a woolly hare being the first mammal to be found. A couple of red foxes were also seen, as was an upland buzzard roosting in a quarry. However, the prize of the night was a Pallas' cat that was sitting on a hillside. Scope views assisted by torchlight enabled identification of this cat that was one of the stars of a recent BBC series. It was a fine way to end an excellent day.

Weather: Sunny in the morning, cloudy in the afternoon, approximately ten degrees maximum, frost early morning

Day 9: Tibetan plateau around Ruorgai

Sunday 21 October 2018

In contrast to yesterday morning's cloudless sky, we had snow as we boarded the bus at 6am. The snow became heavier as we drove to our destination to explore the grasslands on the plateau. We had our packed breakfast on the bus and, by the time we had finished, it was getting light and the snow was easing off. Two red foxes were seen walking on a nearby hillside. Before going for a walk we drove back up the road a short distance and it was a good decision because two wolves were walking close to it. One wolf stopped to look back at us from less than 100 metres to give us an excellent view before moving away onto the grasslands. The other wolf was approximately 200 metres further up the road, it then crossed to continue its journey before eventually meeting up with the other wolf. It was a tremendous start to the day, despite the weather. We returned to the place where we had parked for breakfast and began a hike across the grasslands. Fortunately the snow had finished by this time and the weather was definitely improving. The area we were to walk across is noted for good mammal sightings, however the landscape seemed to be covered by yaks and sheep as the nomadic herders had moved here two weeks ago which may have reduced our chances of seeing a few species. A Tibetan lark and some Eurasian skylarks mingled with the numerous snowfinches. Plateau pikas were everywhere and quite confiding. A saker falcon gave great views as it flew past on a mission for breakfast. We later found that or its mate on an electricity pylon. Upland buzzards were also taking advantage of the height provided by the pylons and one pylon held three of them. Himalayan vultures were dotted across the landscape sitting on the ground possibly waiting for the air to warm up. Groups of red-billed choughs were a regular sight with the occasional northern raven providing a contrast. Our walk continued with regular scanning of the landscape until we found one of our target species. On a hillside that held a herd of yaks, a Tibetan fox was rambling along occasionally scent marking and occasionally pausing to look and listen for prey. We watched it for at least 20 minutes as it made its way across the hillside. The Tibetan fox was a welcome sight but a toad with red underparts was a surprise. They must breed hardy toads up here as it clambered over the snow; we later found an equally tough frog. The weather had improved considerably and the sun was now shining allowing vultures to take advantage of the warmer air and a cinereous vulture gave us very good views. We returned to the bus and drove along the road scanning for wildlife. At one stop, four hen harriers were exploring the grassland. At another stop there were several vultures taking advantage of a thermal with at least one steppe eagle among them.



A picnic lunch was taken near a quarry where the first bird seen was a Guldenstadt's redstart sitting on the very top. After lunch we walked up the track to explore the quarry and the grasslands beyond. There must have been at least eight robin accentors in the quarry and some were very confiding, giving a perfect illustration of what could be produced if a robin bred with a dunnoek. There were also several ground tits plus a little owl amongst the quarry rocks. The top edge of the quarry was a perfect vantage point to scan the grasslands and it didn't take long to find two Tibetan foxes. The foxes were very obliging and came in our direction to eventually be on the closer hillside to give great views. Two lammergeiers soared low over the hill above the quarry to provide another fine sight. Further exploration enabled us to find three Tibetan gazelles and four more Tibetan foxes. We made our way back in the glorious sunshine with a lammergeier flying close by and low over a herd of yaks. Our drive back to the hotel was halted by two Tibetan foxes that were close to the road and obligingly posed for photos. After an early dinner we went to the area where we saw the Pallas' cat but this time we still had some daylight. A couple of red foxes were already around and a pair of black-necked cranes gave themselves away by their calls. Once it got dark we struggled to find any animals but everyone appreciated scope views of the rings of Saturn, with Mars and Jupiter providing a supporting cast. On our drive back a Siberian roe deer was our final sighting on another excellent day.

Weather: Snow in the early morning, cloud and then sunny afternoon, approximately ten degrees maximum

Day 10: Ruoergai, Baozuo Forest

Monday 22 October 2018

It was a 6.30am start as we walked around the corner for a breakfast of steamed buns. Our first destination was the Pallas' cat site but it was quiet apart from early rising vultures and northern ravens, so we moved onto Baozuo forest. It was biting cold as we stood overlooking a valley that led into the forest. Birds seen included Kessler's thrush, grey-winged blackbird, Godlewski's bunting, rufous-breasted and robin accentors. Moving down the road, common pheasants were feeding in some arable fields and white-throated, blue-fronted and Guldenstadt's redstarts were perched up in prominent positions. Exploration of the bushes between the road and forest revealed Japanese, coal and grey crested tits, white-browed rosefinch and grey-headed bullfinch. A mixed flock of birds brought some more good birds, including endemics. This flock had Chinese fulvetta, Przewalski's nuthatch, Sichuan tit, and the stunningly beautiful crested and white-browed tit warblers, with the crested taking first prize in the attractiveness stakes. It was snowing by now so we went for an early lunch to enjoy another fine meal. We returned to explore the places we had visited during the morning with a woolly hare being our first wild mammal of the day. Plain and Elliot's laughingthrushes were seen. Snowy-cheeked and giant laughingthrushes were heard but were to remain out of sight. We drove up the road to the viewpoint and were delighted to find a group of 12 blue-eared pheasants. The group appeared from the forest one by one and proceeded to feed out in the open giving us excellent views to enable us to fully appreciate their beauty. That was a great way to finish the afternoon and we returned to the hotel for to relax before dinner. A night drive in the falling snow only provided us with a woolly hare and a red fox.

Weather: Frosty with occasional light snow showers in the morning, sunny intervals pm, approximately 3 degrees maximum

Day 11: Ruoergai to Tangjiahe

Tuesday 23 October 2018

It was a snow-covered scene that greeted us this morning as we went for breakfast at Anne's favourite steamed bun restaurant. We all probably overindulged on the excellent buns to set us up for the long journey ahead. We revisited the Pallas' cat site, but it was very quiet so we hit the road to Tangjiahe along the snow-covered scene. A rest stop for Mr Xia enabled us to appreciate the scenery of the mountains and also gave us a pair of lammergeiers, a few Himalayan vultures while Stephen and David saw a Pere David's rock squirrel while enjoying the warmth of the bus. Our next stop was at a restaurant for lunch where Barrie went for a walk while waiting for the meal to be prepared. Eastern buzzard, rufous-breasted accentor, chestnut thrush and blue-fronted redstart were some of the species seen, but it was a female wallcreeper that got the adrenalin pumping. Fortunately the bird was still around after lunch so everyone saw it and the obliging young lady even caught a large moth while we watched her. Our journey continued through spectacular scenery including a spectacular gorge. The deep gorge was covered on both sides with trees in autumn colours of red, yellow and orange mixed



in with the green, crying out for photographs. Another stop for Mr Xia was productive with brown-breasted bulbul, collared finchbill and little bunting being new species for the trip. Our third stop for Mr Xia gave us russet sparrow, little egret and an unknown species of bat. We finally reached Tangjiahe Nature Reserve in the dark for a four-night stay.

Weather: Cold and cloudy morning, sunny afternoon. Approximately zero to ten degrees.

Day 12: Tangjiahe Nature Reserve

Wednesday 24 October 2018

A Pere David's rock squirrel was the highlight of a pre-breakfast walk near the hotel. After breakfast we departed in our bus to catch the shuttle bus that will take us up the mountain. A mixed flock of birds near the bus car park held species such as red-billed leiothrix, streak-breasted scimitar babbler, grey-hooded fulvetta, buff-barred and Pallas' leaf warblers. After alighting the shuttle bus at the end of the road we then walked up the trail. The first of a few flocks of white-collared yuhinas passed through before we had very good views of two attractive yellow-throated martens alongside the river. Himalayan bluetails and olive-backed pipits were a regular sight throughout the walk. Another mixed flock had some of the species seen earlier but this time with yellow-browed tit and chestnut-vented nuthatch. Two male golden pheasants walking in front of us before disappearing in some bamboo brought some appreciative comments. A small flock of sooty bushtits put on a performance to provide good views. A little forktail also showed well but a single male brambling disappeared before everyone saw it. We eventually decided to turn back and take the shuttle bus back down. Some Tibetan macaques were seen from one side of the bus before we stopped to marvel at the agility of a takin that was on the very steep slopes of the valley. The scope views gave an opportunity to appreciate the qualities of this rather strange animal. All the passengers had got off the bus to look at the takin and the Chinese tourists were keen to look through the scope. While this leader martialed the queue of tourists looking through his scope, Tang Jun scanned the forest and excitedly told the group to look in a particular direction. We soon got the message that there was an Asiatic black bear in a tree in the distance. The scope was swiftly moved away from the takin admirers to focus on the rarely seen bear. We watched it feeding on berries at the top of its tree for several minutes and with the Chinese tourists even more excited. After getting their fill of the bear it was time for us to pose for photos with the tourists. A very happy group of Chinese and English tourists eventually got back on the shuttle bus after watching this elusive species. A very productive night drive enabled us to see one masked palm civet, two Malayan porcupines, three Chinese gorals, 12 takin and approximately 25 Reeves' muntjac.

Weather: Sunny all day, approximately -two degrees maximum

Day 13: Tangjiahe Nature Reserve

Thursday 25 October 2018

A pre-breakfast drive began in the dark with a Malayan porcupine being the first mammal of the day. A white-crowned forktail showed well on a roadside stream and we also saw several muntjac and 12 takin. After breakfast we went for a walk up the road that follows the path of the river. A little forktail was near the hotel, as was a little bunting. Brown dippers seemed to be everywhere along the river. A Pere David's rock squirrel and a group of Tibetan macaques showed well on the opposite side of the river and further up there was a muntjac. After returning from the walk we had a short break before lunch followed by a longer rest period. The next activity was a drive of a few kilometres down the road, followed by a walk of a couple of kilometres. A golden snub-nosed monkey near the river was a surprise but only stayed in sight for a few seconds and wasn't seen by everybody. At the same spot some of the group saw two mountain hawk eagles and a crested goshawk. A new mammal was next on the list with a wild boar on a distant hillside. Several takins were seen, plus a Chinese goral and muntjacs. A crested kingfisher obligingly perched in a tree for scope views. After dinner, the night drive gave us one Chinese serow, one masked palm civet, three hog badgers, takins and muntjacs.

Weather: Cloud at first and then sunny, approximately ten degrees maximum

Day 14: Tangjiahe Nature Reserve**Friday 26 October 2018**

A short drive down the road and then a walk was the plan for this morning. A flock of David's fulvettas were very obliging but three slaty buntings were less so. A mixed flock had black-throated bushtits and Pallas' warblers as they moved through the trees near the river. The next species was quite a surprise. It was a group of at least 20 rhesus macaques. The group were feeding out in the open and there were plenty of young ones with at least six being carried on the backs of their mothers. It was another mammal species that can be elusive so we did very well to have such great views. We followed the direction of the troop from the road as they moved from the meadow to trees and bushes. At one stage we had rhesus macaque, brambling and little bunting in the same binocular field of view. Further down the road a lot of bird activity included mountain bulbul and vinaceous rosefinch. Our bus picked us up to take us further down the road to the shuttle bus station. The only bird of note here was a female grey-capped greenfinch in the car park. However, scanning a ridge in the distance revealed mountain hawk eagle, crested goshawk, Eurasian sparrowhawk and Northern raven. We returned to the hotel for lunch before some rest time.

The next part of the itinerary was taking the shuttle bus from the hotel to the end of the road. The walk enabled us to see the wonderful autumn colours of the trees on this part of the mountain. After dinner we went for a walk in the dark and managed to see a hog badger and a masked palm civet. Next was a night drive down the road where we had another masked palm civet and the usual muntjacs and takins. A brief glimpse of a Chinese ferret badger was all some of the group had, but the rest of the group didn't even get that. On our return drive we had a fitting end to our series of night drives when a tawny fish owl perched up in a tree on the opposite side of the river, so we all managed to see this nocturnal predator.

Weather: Sunny morning, cloudy afternoon, approximately 14 degrees maximum

Day 15: Tangjiahe nature reserve to Chengdu**Saturday 27 October 2018**

We had the long drive back to Chengdu today with very few opportunities to stop and look for wildlife. The lunch stop at a small restaurant had a river with a few trees and bushes nearby. Grey-capped greenfinch and little bunting were of note, while a flying common kingfisher was the first for the trip.

We enjoyed an excellent final dinner and expressed our thanks to Tang Jun and Mr Xia for making this an enjoyable trip with some tremendous wildlife, scenery and food.

Weather: Sunny, approximately 19 degrees in Chengdu

Day 16: Fly to the UK**Sunday 28 October 2018**

The group had an early start to take the flight to London via Hong Kong. It was the end of a memorable trip that included many interesting mammals and birds.

Weather: Clear and sunny in Chengdu

Checklist



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
	BIRDS	AVES														
1	Ruddy shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>							✓							
2	Ferruginous duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>							✓							
3	Common merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>							✓							
4	Snow partridge	<i>Lerwa lerwa</i>					✓									
5	Tibetan snowcock	<i>Tetraogallus tibetanus</i>					✓									
6	Blue eared pheasant	<i>Crossoptilon auritum</i>									✓					
7	Common pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>									✓					
8	Golden pheasant	<i>Chrysolophus pictus</i>											✓			
9	Lady Amherst's pheasant	<i>Chrysolophus amherstiae</i>		✓	✓	✓										
10	Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>							✓							
11	Black stork*	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>							✓							
12	Black-crowned night heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	✓													



13	Chinese pond heron	<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>						✓									
14	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>								✓							
15	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓										✓				✓
16	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>															✓
17	Bearded vulture	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>						✓			✓		✓				
18	Himalayan vulture	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
19	Cinereous vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>						✓			✓						
20	Mountain hawk-eagle	<i>Nisaetus nipalensis</i>		✓											✓	✓	
21	Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>						✓									
22	Hen harrier*	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>								✓	✓						
23	Crested goshawk	<i>Accipiter trivirgatus</i>													✓	✓	
24	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓		✓		✓									✓
25	Upland buzzard	<i>Buteo hemilasius</i>								✓	✓	✓					
26	Himalayan buzzard	<i>Buteo burmanicus</i>						✓				✓					
27	Eastern buzzard*	<i>Buteo japonicus</i>											✓				
28	Black-necked crane	<i>Grus nigricollis</i>								✓	✓						
29	Green sandpiper*	<i>Tring ochropus</i>								✓							
30	Pallas' gull*	<i>Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus</i>								✓							
31	Brown-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus</i>								✓							
32	Hill pigeon	<i>Columba rupestris</i>								✓							

33	Snow pigeon	<i>Columba leuconota</i>					✓									
34	Spotted dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	✓													
35	Tawny fish owl*	<i>Ketupa flavipes</i>													✓	
36	Himalayan owl	<i>Strix nivicolum</i>				✓										
37	Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>							✓	✓						
38	Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>														✓
39	Crested kingfisher*	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>												✓		
40	Crimson-breasted woodpecker	<i>Dryobates cathpharius</i>			✓											
41	Darjeeling woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos darjellensis</i>				✓										
42	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			✓						✓			✓	✓	
43	Grey-headed woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>												✓		
44	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>					✓		✓	✓						
45	Saker falcon	<i>Falco cherrug</i>							✓	✓						
46	Long-tailed minivet	<i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>		✓			✓	✓					✓			
47	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>												✓		
48	Azure-winged magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>							✓							
49	Red-billed blue magpie	<i>Urocissa erythrorhyncha</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
50	Oriental magpie	<i>Pica serica</i>							✓			✓				✓
51	Spotted nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>		✓		✓										
52	Red-billed chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>					✓			✓	✓					

53	Alpine chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>					✓									
54	Daurian jackdaw	<i>Corvus dauuricus</i>							✓							
55	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓				✓				✓
56	Large-billed crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Northern raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>							✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
58	Ground tit	<i>Pseudopodoces humilis</i>							✓	✓						
59	Yellow-browed tit	<i>Sylviparus modestus</i>			✓							✓				
60	Coal tit	<i>Pariparus ater</i>		✓	✓						✓					
61	Grey crested tit	<i>Lophophanes dichrous</i>									✓					
62	White-browed tit	<i>Poecile superciliosa</i>							✓							
63	Sichuan tit	<i>Poecile weigoldicus</i>									✓					
64	Japanese tit	<i>Parus minor</i>			✓			✓			✓	✓				✓
65	Green-backed tit	<i>Parus monticolus</i>			✓								✓	✓	✓	
66	Oriental skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>							✓	✓	✓	✓				
67	Eurasian skylark*	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>							✓	✓						
68	Horned lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>							✓	✓						
69	Tibetan lark	<i>Melanocorypha maxima</i>								✓						
70	Collared finchbill	<i>Spizixos semitorques</i>										✓				
71	Brown-breasted bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus xanthorrhous</i>										✓				
72	Light-vented bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus sinensis</i>				✓										✓

73	Mountain bulbul	<i>Ixos mcclellandii</i>														✓	
74	Asian house martin	<i>Delichon dasypus</i>		✓	✓												
75	Scaly-breasted wren-babbler	<i>Pnoepyga albiventer</i>				✓											
76	Aberrant bush warbler	<i>Horornis flavolivacea</i>			✓												
77	Chestnut-crowned bush warbler	<i>Cettia major</i>		✓													
78	Black-throated bushtit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	✓		✓	✓											✓
79	Sooty bushtit	<i>Aegithalos fuliginosus</i>										✓					
80	Black-browed bushtit*	<i>Aegithalos bonvaloti</i>			✓												
81	White-browed tit-warbler	<i>Leptopoecile sophiae</i>										✓					
82	Crested tit-warbler	<i>Leptopoecile elegans</i>										✓					
83	Alpine leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus occisinensis</i>					✓										
84	Buff-barred warbler	<i>Phylloscopus pulcher</i>		✓	✓								✓	✓			
85	Hume's leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>		✓													✓
86	Claudia's leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus claudiae</i>													✓		
87	Pallas' leaf warbler*	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>											✓	✓	✓		
88	Dusky warbler*	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>											✓				
89	Sichuan leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>			✓												
90	Bianchi's warbler	<i>Seicercus valentini</i>					✓										
91	Streak-breasted scimitar babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus ruficollis</i>		✓										✓	✓		
92	Chinese babax	<i>Babax lanceolatus</i>					✓										

93	Giant laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax maximus</i>						✓								
94	White-browed laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax sannio</i>	✓													
95	Plain laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax davidi</i>							✓		✓					
96	Elliot's laughingthrush	<i>Trohalopteron elliotii</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
97	Black-faced laughingthrush	<i>Trohalopteron affinis</i>		✓	✓	✓										
98	Red-billed leiothrix	<i>Leiothrix lutea</i>		✓								✓	✓	✓		
99	Chinese fulvetta	<i>Fulvetta striaticollis</i>									✓					
100	Grey-hooded fulvetta	<i>Fulvetta cinereiceps</i>		✓	✓							✓				
101	David's fulvetta*	<i>Alcippe davidi</i>													✓	
102	Great parrotbill	<i>Conostoma oemodium</i>			✓											
103	White-collared yuhina	<i>Yuhina diademata</i>										✓	✓	✓		
104	Japanese white-eye	<i>Zosterops japonicus</i>										✓	✓			
105	Chestnut-vented nuthatch	<i>Sitta nagaensis</i>			✓							✓				
106	Eurasian nuthatch*	<i>Sitta europaea</i>											✓			
107	Przewalski's nuthatch	<i>Sitta przewalskii</i>									✓					
108	Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>						✓				✓				
109	Hodgson's treecreeper	<i>Certhia hodgsoni</i>		✓			✓					✓				
110	Sichuan treecreeper	<i>Certhia tianquanensis</i>		✓												
111	Eurasian treecreeper*	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>													✓	
112	Crested myna	<i>Acridotheres cristatellus</i>	✓													

113	White-cheeked starling	<i>Spodiopsar cineraceus</i>								✓							
114	Grey-winged blackbird	<i>Turdus boulboul</i>										✓					
115	Chinese blackbird	<i>Turdus mandarinus</i>											✓				
116	Chestnut thrush	<i>Turdus rubrocanus</i>		✓		✓	✓					✓	✓			✓	
117	Kessler's thrush	<i>Turdus kessleri</i>					✓					✓					
118	Dark-throated thrush*	<i>Turdus ruficollis</i>			✓												
119	Chinese blue flycatcher	<i>Cyornis glaucicomans</i>		✓													
120	Himalayan bluetail	<i>Tarsiger rufilatus</i>		✓										✓	✓		
121	Golden bush robin	<i>Tarsiger chrysaeus</i>		✓	✓												
122	Little forktail	<i>Enicurus scouleri</i>												✓	✓	✓	
123	White-crowned forktail	<i>Enicurus leschenaulti</i>													✓		
124	White-throated redstart	<i>Phoenicurus schisticeps</i>						✓				✓					
125	Daurian redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
126	Guldenstadt's redstart*	<i>Phoenicurus erythrogastrus</i>								✓	✓				✓		
127	Blue-fronted redstart	<i>Phoenicurus frontalis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓			
128	Plumbeous water redstart	<i>Phoenicurus fuliginosus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
129	White-capped redstart	<i>Phoenicurus leucocephalus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
130	White-throated dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>					✓										
131	Brown dipper	<i>Cinclus pallasii</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
132	Grey-headed bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula erythaca</i>			✓	✓						✓		✓			

133	Russet sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>											✓	✓	✓	✓	
134	Eurasian tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
135	Rock sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>							✓	✓							
136	White-rumped snowfinch	<i>Onychostruthus taczanowskii</i>							✓	✓							
137	Rufous-necked snowfinch*	<i>Onychostruthus ruficollis</i>							✓	✓							
138	Alpine accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>					✓										
139	Robin accentor	<i>Prunella rubeculoides</i>							✓	✓	✓						
140	Rufous-breasted accentor	<i>Prunella strophiata</i>		✓	✓	✓					✓	✓					
141	Maroon-backed accentor	<i>Prunella immaculata</i>		✓		✓											
142	White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
143	Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>				✓											✓
144	Richard's pipit*	<i>Anthus richardi</i>							✓								
145	Olive-backed pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>		✓	✓	✓								✓	✓		
146	Collared grosbeak	<i>Mycerobas affinis</i>			✓												
147	Plain mountain finch	<i>Leucosticte nemoricola</i>					✓						✓				
148	Vinaceous rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus vinaceus</i>															✓
149	Chinese white-browed rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus dubius</i>						✓			✓						
150	Grey-capped greenfinch	<i>Carduelis sinica</i>															✓
151	Brambling*	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>												✓			✓
152	Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>							✓	✓							

153	Slaty bunting	<i>Emberiza siemsseni</i>													✓	✓	
154	Godlewski's bunting	<i>Emberiza godlewskii</i>						✓			✓						
155	Little bunting*	<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>										✓		✓	✓	✓	
	Mammals																
1	Pallas's cat	<i>Otocolobus manul</i>							✓								
2	Leopard cat	<i>Prionailurus bengalensis</i>				✓	✓										
3	Grey wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>									✓						
4	Tibetan fox	<i>Vulpes ferrilata</i>									✓						
5	Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>							✓	✓	✓						
6	Asiatic black bear	<i>Ursus thibetanus</i>											✓				
7	Yellow-throated marten	<i>Martes flavigula</i>											✓				
8	Siberian weasel	<i>Mustela sibirica</i>						✓									
9	Mountain weasel*	<i>Mustela altaica</i>						✓									
10	Masked palm civet	<i>Paguma larvata</i>											✓	✓	✓		
11	Greater hog badger	<i>Arctonyx collaris</i>		✓				✓							✓	✓	
12	Small-toothed ferret badger	<i>Melogale moschata</i>														✓	
13	Wapiti (Red deer)	<i>Cervus canadensis</i>							✓								
14	Siberian roe deer	<i>Capreolus pygargus</i>								✓	✓						
15	Sambar	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓											

16	Reeves' muntjac	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>												✓	✓	✓	
17	Forest musk deer	<i>Moschus berezovskii</i>			✓												
18	Tibetan gazelle	<i>Procapra picticaudata</i>								✓							
19	Takin	<i>Budorcas taxicolor</i>			✓									✓	✓	✓	
20	Chinese serow	<i>Capricornis milneedwardsii</i>													✓		
21	Chinese goral	<i>Naemorhedus griseus</i>		✓		✓	✓							✓	✓		
22	Blue sheep	<i>Pseudois nayaur</i>															
23	Wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>														✓	
24	Golden snub-nosed monkey	<i>Rhinopithecus roxellana</i>				✓										✓	
25	Rhesus macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>															✓
26	Tibetan macaque	<i>Macaca thibetana</i>		✓	✓	✓								✓	✓	✓	
27	Woolly hare	<i>Lepus oiostolus</i>							✓			✓					
28	Plateau pika	<i>Ochotona curzoniae</i>							✓	✓							
29	Malayan porcupine	<i>Hystrix brachyura</i>												✓	✓		
30	Pallas's squirrel	<i>Callosciurus erythraeus</i>						✓									
31	Swinhoe's striped squirrel	<i>Tamias swinhoi</i>		✓	✓												
32	Pére david's rock squirrel	<i>Sciurotamias davidianus</i>						✓					✓	✓	✓		
33	Siberian chipmunk	<i>Eutamias sibiricus</i>			✓												
34	Red and white giant flying squirrel	<i>Petaurista alborufus</i>		✓	✓												
35	Complex-toothed flying squirrel	<i>Trogopterus xanthipes</i>		✓													

36	Confucian niviventer	<i>Niviventer confucianus</i>			✓												
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* Indicates species not seen on previous trips

