

CHINA-BIRDS AND CULTURE

April 16-May 1, 2011



Crested Ibis at Yangxian

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TOUR REPORT
CHINA: BIRDS AND CULTURE
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By Dion Hobcroft

Our inaugural China Birds and Culture tour was very successful in showcasing several of the amazing historical and archaeological sites of this complex country. We were also successful in seeing a good variety of birds including some of the rarest and most spectacular in the world. Amongst the great birds we encountered were Swan Goose; Tundra and Taiga bean-goose; Mandarin Duck; Golden Pheasant; Amur Falcon; Crested Ibis; Great Bustard; Siberian, White-naped, Hooded, and Red-crowned cranes; Long-billed Plover; Chinese Gray Shrike; Japanese Waxwing; Chinese Penduline-Tit; and the endemic Slaty, Yellow-browed, and the critically endangered Jankowski's buntings.

We began our tour in Beijing with a visit to Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. Between taking many "happy snaps" of different statues, bronzes, and palaces, and learning about three boiled bricks and armies of eunuch servants and concubines, we viewed some of the exquisite garments of the royal family on display in a small museum wing. We even managed a couple of interesting birds including our first Great Spotted Woodpecker and a couple of surprise Red-billed Starlings.

The next morning at the Summer Palace, a beautiful pair of Mandarin Ducks gave us great views, as did some obliging Gray-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers, while an Osprey was a good record. We continued on to the Ming Tombs where, on the walkway of giant rock-sculpted animals, we found a flock of passage migrant Naumann's Thrush and enjoyed a couple of raptors, including a female Northern Harrier and a Gray-faced Buzzard.

On our last full day in Beijing we spent the morning at Yeyahu (translated as Wild Duck Lake). We enjoyed some excellent birding here with Swan Goose, Bewick's Swan, Falcated Duck, Red-crested Pochard, Ring-necked Pheasant, Pied Harrier, Eastern Marsh Harrier, Merlin, Pallas's Leaf-Warbler, and Little, Yellow-throated, and Pallas's Reed buntings amongst the birds sighted well.

The afternoon was spent at the Badaling section of the Great Wall. Walking away from the "great crowd," we enjoyed a few good birds like Godlewski's Bunting while people stretched their legs and walked as far as they wished in the allotted time. Just as we were leaving, we enjoyed a great stroke of fortune when a small flock of six Japanese Waxwings perched for us and we had a great view of this scarce and elusive species.

Our flight to Xian the next morning went smoothly and we made our visit to the Terracotta Warriors in the afternoon. It was a major highlight to see the enormous detail in the life-size army of thousands of warriors and horses fired in a kiln more than two thousand years ago to accompany the emperor Qin Shi Huang into the afterlife. Local farmers discovered this site by chance in 1974. It is well-protected and displayed for the many nationalities from around the globe that visit this World Heritage Site.

We made the drive to Yangxian and were ensconced into our three-star hotel, a typical accommodation set up in rural China. The next day, under beautiful conditions, we hiked into the remote villages where the world's only population of the Crested Ibis survives and nests. We were shown three active nests, and the Crested Ibis in breeding plumage looked quite dinosaur-like. We enjoyed a wonderful lunch in the home of a local lady before hiring a local taxi driver to ferry our

group back to the bus. The surrounding woods were alive with birds, including nesting Gray-faced Woodpecker, Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler, Black-throated Tit, Collared Finchbill, Brown-breasted Bulbul, Daurian Redstart, Olive-backed Pipit, Dusky Thrush, and Common Rosefinch. In the afternoon we birded the nearby river and this was very productive. We had great views of more Crested Ibis, a Eurasian Spoonbill, an excellent Crested Kingfisher, dapper Gray-headed Lapwings, and the scarce Long-billed Plover amongst a bunch of shorebirds.

The next day was taken up with the long drive to the remote Tangjiahe Reserve. Highlight birds included Brown Dipper, and Plumbeous and White-capped Redstarts, while Ben was lucky enough to see the rare Collared Crow. Tangjiahe proved to be a beautiful, remote location where we could enjoy roadside birding in some delightful woodlands and gorge habitats. We were lucky with mammals here and had fabulous views of the bizarre takin—a musk-ox-like goat antelope with golden fur that looks like a “bee-stung moose.”

Undoubtedly, the avian highlight was watching two male Golden Pheasants displaying to a female, running around her and blocking her path while having dropped their golden capes. We watched this performance for several minutes—truly sensational and very fortuitous. Amongst the other great sightings were Golden Eagle, a Besra eating a Collared Finchbill, Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Asian Barred Owl, Long-tailed Minivet, Gray-backed Shrike, Yellow-bellied Tit, Chinese Leaf-Warbler, Yellow-streaked Warbler, Rufous-faced Warbler, White-crowned Forktail, Elliot’s Laughingthrush, Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, Red-billed Leiothrix, Mrs. Gould’s Sunbird, Citrine Wagtail, and Slaty Bunting. A Reeve’s muntjac was another fortuitous mammal sighting.

Concern about catching our early afternoon flight from Chengdu impelled me to change the itinerary to leave Tangjiahe early and make the drive through to Chengdu in the afternoon prior to our flight. This gave us the chance to visit the Chengdu Panda Breeding Centre. Watching five giant panda cubs rumbling in the morning was another highlight for many folks on the tour (many a zoo director’s dream, I’m sure!). We also had a great view of a pair of Chinese Grosbeaks.

So it was back to Beijing and then on to Wulan Hot and Baicheng for our final leg of the tour. We enjoyed excellent weather here for our four-night stay in Inner Mongolia and Jilin provinces. We made a visit to wetlands at Momoge. We were in luck with the migration and enjoyed Taiga Bean-Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Siberian Crane, White-naped Crane, Common Crane, Hooded Crane, Northern Lapwing, Marsh Sandpiper, Daurian Jackdaw, and Western Yellow Wagtail all in fine plumage and giving excellent views.

The next day we visited Tumuge—a reserve that protects a rare remnant of native grassland and steppe habitats. While bird diversity is low here, it holds some fantastic species. We had excellent scope views of two male and a female Jankowski’s Bunting—a bird that is struggling to survive. The spectacular Mongolian Lark was another highlight, and several pairs of Eurasian Curlew were holding breeding territories. After a walk we found a party of more than 18 Great Bustards and enjoyed a great scope session with this enormous bird. A Little Owl was a good sighting while we filled the bus with fuel!

Xianghai Reserve is a wetland reserve of international importance. This year it suffered from reduced water levels, but the birding was still excellent. Amongst the 15 species of waterfowl we found Taiga and Tundra bean-goose, Swan Goose, Whooper and Bewick’s swans, and Garganey. Steppe Eagle was new for the list, and Red-crowned Crane and White-naped Crane gave amazing views, the former species nesting. Oriental Pratincole, Eurasian Hoopoe, Mongolian Gull, the scarce Chinese Gray Shrike, Red-flanked Bluetail, and Meadow and Common Reed buntings were all seen well.

On our last full day we decided to revisit Momoge. The spectacle of a thousand Siberian Cranes was amazing, with cranes stretched as far as the eye could see. We also hit a migration passage in a narrow band of trees with dozens of buntings of five species, including many of the scarce Yellow-browed Bunting, plus some dapper Brambling. A dashing male Amur Falcon was well-appreciated. We finished our tour with wonderful views of Spotted Redshank and Pied Avocet.

This wonderful inaugural tour combined great sites of historical importance with remote and splendid nature reserves. Our Chinese guides, including Joe, Derek, and Sally, and excellent drivers, plus staff from the wildlife reserves including Ma in Tangjiahe and Li in Xianghai, made our tour a great success.

Tai Hola!

Dion Hobcroft



Siberian Cranes at Momoge on 26 Apr 11

(Dion Hobcroft)

DAILY ITINERARY

- 17 APR: Tiananmen Square-Forbidden City**
- 18 APR: Summer Palace (SP); Ming Tombs (MT)**
- 19 APR: Wild Duck Lake (WDL); Great Wall (Badaling)**
- 20 APR: Fly Beijing to Xian; Terracotta Warriors; drive to Yangxian.**
- 21 APR: Yangxian including Hanjiang River.**
- 22 APR: Drive Yangxian to Tangjiahe**
- 23 APR: Tangjiahe Nature Reserve (TNR)**
- 24 APR: Tangjiahe Nature Reserve then drive to Chengdu.**
- 25 APR: Chengdu Panda Breeding Centre (CDPBC) then fly to Beijing.**
- 26 APR: Fly Beijing to Wulan Hot then visit Momoge in afternoon.**
- 27 APR: Tumuge Nature Reserve**
- 28 APR: Xianghai Nature Reserve**
- 29 APR: Momoge**
- 30 APR: Fly Wulan Hot to Beijing. Tour concludes.**

BIRD LIST

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*: (10) at WDL.

Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*: (8-20) at Momoge on both visits and (10) at Xianghai.

Tundra Bean Goose *Anser serrirostris*: (20) at Xianghai gave good comparison views with the Taiga Bean Goose showing the shorter bill with the thicker base.

Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides*: (2) at WDL and (20) at Xianghai.

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*: (500) at Momoge and (20) at Xianghai.

Tundra (Bewick's) Swan *Cygnus columbianus*: (20) at WDL and (50) at Xianghai.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*: (5) at Xianghai.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*: (30) at WDL.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*: (4) at WDL and (10) at Xianghai.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*: (1 male and 2 females) at SP.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*: (10) at Xianghai AND (1) at Momoge on 29 Apr.

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*: (30) at WDL and (50) at Xianghai.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*: (1) at WDL and (10) at Xianghai.

Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca*: (6) at SP, (20) at Momoge on both visits.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*: (10-100) seen on four days.

Eastern Spot-billed Duck *Anas zonorhyncha*: (4) at WDL and (10) at Xianghai.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*: (20) at Momoge and (5) at Xianghai.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*: (4) at Xianghai.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*: (20) at Xianghai

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*: (10) at SP and (20) at Xianghai.

Common Pochard *Aythya*: (1 male) at WDL and (2) at Xianghai.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*: (2) at WDL.

Daurian Partridge *Perdix dauurica*: Regine was lucky enough to see a pair from the bus between Wulan Hot and Baicheng on 26 Apr.

Chinese Bamboo Partridge *Bambusicola thoracicus*: Heard only at Yangxian, TNR and CDPBC.

Ring-necked Pheasant *Phasianinus colchicus*: (6) at WDL, (2) at Yangxian, heard at TNR with singles on two further days at Momoge and Tumuge.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*: (2 males and 1 female) gave an incredible display at TNR on 23 Apr. Heard frequently at Yangxian also.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: (1-10) seen on four days with high count at SP.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: (4-40) seen on four days with high count at Xianghai.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: (4) at SP and (1) at Xianghai.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*: Heard only at WDL and Xianghai.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: (1-100) seen on four days with high count at Yangxian.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: (1-2) seen on three days with high count at Momoge.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: (10-50) seen on four days with high count at Yangxian.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*: (10) at CDPBC.

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*: (1) at Yangxian.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: (3-50) seen on three days with high count at Yangxian.

Crested Ibis *Nipponia nippon*: (16) at Yangxian on 21 Apr including three pairs at active nests-spectacular in breeding plumage. This bird came extremely close to extinction when seven birds were rediscovered in a cemetery of ancient oak trees in Yangxian in 1981. With strict protection the population has increased remarkably.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: (1) at Yangxian and at least (10) at Xianghai.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*: (1) at the SP was a good sighting of the nominate subspecies.

Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*: (1) at TNR on 22 Apr.

Black-eared Kite *Milvus lineatus*: Singles on both 18-19 Apr and 26 Apr.

Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos*: (1) adult male at WDL on 19 Apr.

Northern (Hen) Harrier *Circus cyaneus*: (1) female at MT and (1) female seen by Frank at TNR on 23 Apr.

Eastern Marsh-Harrier *Circus spilonotus*: (2) at WDL, (3-4) at Xianghai and (1) at Momoge on 29 Apr.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: (1-4) seen on four days with high count at WDL.

Grey-faced Buzzard *Butastur indicus*: (1) adult seen in flight at MT on 18 Apr.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*: (1) dark morph adult at Wulan Hot airport on 26 Apr.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*: (1) immature on 28 Apr at Xianghai.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*: (1) adult at TNR on 23 Apr.

Mountain Hawk-Eagle *Nisaetus nipalensis*: (2) adults at TNR seen perched in the scope at distance showing the crest.

Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: (1-2) seen well on five days.

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*: (1) male gave great views at Momoge on 29 Apr.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*: (1) made a dashing flight across WDL on 19 Apr.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*: (4-10) seen on three days at WDL, Xianghai and Momoge.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*: (18) gave great scope views at Tumuge on 27 Apr.

Siberian Crane *Grus leucogeranus*: (50) at Momoge on 26 Apr and an estimated (1000) at the same site on 29 Apr.

White-naped Crane *Grus vipio*: (1) at Momoge on both 26 and 29 Apr mixed in with the Siberians; also (2) at Xianghai on 28 Apr.

Common Crane *Grus grus*: (30) at Momoge on 26 Apr.

Hooded Crane *Grus monacha*: (5) at Momoge on 26 Apr and (4) near here on 29 Apr.

Red-crowned Crane *Grus japonensis*: (2) nesting at Xianghai on 28 Apr.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*: (1-10) seen on three days at Momoge and Xianghai.

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*: (3) on 21 Apr at Yangxian with (1-20) seen on three days at Momoge and Xianghai.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: (2) at both Momoge and Xianghai.

Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus*: (1) at Yangxian on 21 Apr was well spotted by Ben.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*: (2-10) seen on three days at Momoge and Xianghai.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: (2) at WDL and (10-30) on three days at Momoge and Xianghai.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*: (1) at Xianghai and (20) at Momoge on 29 Apr.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: (1-2) seen well on three days.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*: (6) at Momoge on 29 Apr were in breeding plumage.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: (2) at Yangxian.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: (4-30) at Momoge on both visits most in full breeding plumage.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: (2) at Yangxian.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*: (3) at Yangxian.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*: (1) at Yangxian and (10) at Xianghai.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*: (6) at Tumuge and (6) at Xianghai.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*: (50) at Momoge on 29 Apr.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*: (1) at Xianghai.

Swinhoe's Snipe *Gallinago megala*: (1) at Xianghai.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*: (3) at Yangxian, (3) at Xianghai and a flock of (30) at Momoge on 29 Apr.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*: (4) at Xianghai.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*: (10) at Momoge on 26 Apr and (20) at Xianghai.

Mongolian Gull *Larus cachinnans mongolicus*: (5) at Xianghai.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: (2) at Yangxian.

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*: (20-100) seen on eight days.

Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*: (1) at WDL, (5-20) at Yangxian and (10) at Xianghai.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: (4) near Xian.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*: (2-6) seen on five days.

Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus sparverioides*: Heard only at TNR at night on 23-24 Apr.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*: (1) seen well near Baicheng while the bus was refuelled!

Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides*: (1) at TNR on 24 Apr gave a good view,

Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus*: (50) on 22 Apr and (10) on 24 Apr.

Common Swift *Apus apus*: (4-50) seen on four days in Beijing.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: (1) at SP and (2) WDL.

Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*: Singles seen on 20-22 Apr.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*: (1) seen by Ben at TNR on 23 Apr and (3) showing well for all at Xianghai on 28 Apr.

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*: (2) at SP gave good views.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*: (1-3) seen well on five days.

Grey-faced Woodpecker *Picus canus*: (1) at MT and (4) at Yangxian including an active nest; also heard at WDL.

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*: (1) female at TNR on 23 Apr.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*: (1-3) seen well on three days.

Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*: (1) at TNR on 24 Apr.

Chinese Grey Shrike *Lanius sphenocercus*: (3) at Xianghai on 28 Apr.

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*: (1) near Chengdu on 24 Apr.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: (4) on 21 Apr at Yangxian.

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus*: (2-20) on four days in Beijing.

Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*: (1-10) seen on five days.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*: (2-50) seen on ten days.

Eurasian Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*: (1) in the gardens surrounding the Terracotta Warriors in Xian on 20 Apr was our only sighting.

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*: (5-10) seen on three days at Momoge and Xianghai.

Rook Corvus frugilegus: (1-2) seen on three days at Momoge and Xianghai.

Carrion Crow Corvus corone: (2-4) seen on three days at Momoge and Xianghai.

Large-billed Crow Corvus macrorhynchos: (1-20) seen on seven days.

Collared Crow Corvus torquatus: (1) seen by Ben on drive between Yangxian and TNR on 22 Apr was a good sighting of this rare and declining corvid.

Common Raven Corvus corax: (1) at TNR on 23 Apr.

Asian Short-toed Lark Calandrella cheleensis: (20) at Tumuge.

Mongolian Lark Melanocorypha mongolica: (6) at Tumuge.

Eurasian Skylark Alauda arvensis: (20) at Tumuge.

Barn Swallow Hirundo rustica: (1-30) seen on ten days.

Red-rumped Swallow Cecropis daurica: (2-30) seen on six days.

Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher Culicicapa ceylonensis: (1-4) seen on two days at TNR.

Marsh Tit Parus palustris: (1) at WDL.

Yellow-bellied Tit Pardaliparus venustulus: (4) at WDL with (4) on both 23-24 Apr at TNR.

(Eastern) Great Tit Parus major minor: (2-6) seen on four days at WDL, Great Wall, Yangxian, TNR and Chengdu.

Green-backed Tit Parus monticolus: (2-6) at TNR on 23-24 Apr.

Chinese Penduline Tit Remiz consobrinus: (4) at WDL on 19 Apr gave good views.

Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler Cettia fortipes: Singles seen on four days at Yangxian and TNR.

Rufous-faced Warbler Abroscopus fulvifacies: (1) at TNR on 23 Apr and heard the next day here.

Long-tailed Tit Aegithalos caudatus: (1) at Yangxian on 21 Apr.

Black-throated Tit *Aegithalos concinnus*: (2-4) seen on four days at Yangxian, TNR and CDPBC.

Japanese Waxwing *Bombycilla japonica*: (6) gave a great perched view at the Badaling section of the Great Wall on 19 Apr.

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*: (2) seen on three days at TNR.

Collared Finchbill *Spizixos semitorques*: (10) at Yangxian and (4) on two days at TNR.

Brown-breasted Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthorrhous*: (3) at the Terracotta Warriors, (10) at Yangxian and (4) at TNR.

Chinese Bulbul *Pycnonotus sinensis*: (2-10) seen on four days at SP, Yangxian and CDPBC.

Tickell's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*: (1) at TNR on 23 Apr. This population is now split from the Himalayan population as Alpine Leaf-Warbler *P. occisinesis*.

Yellow-streaked Warbler *Phylloscopus armandii*: (1) at TNR on 24 Apr came into playback and gave an excellent view.

Pallas's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*: (4) at WDL on 19 Apr were early returning migrants.

Chinese Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus yunnanensis*: (1) at TNR on 23 Apr responded well to playback and gave a good view; heard here the next day.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*: (1) at Xianghai on 28 Apr and at least (2) at Momoge the next day.

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*: (1) at TNR on 23 Apr.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*: Singles seen on two days.

Large-billed Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*: (2) at TNR on 23 Apr and heard here the next day.

Blyth's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*: (4-10) at TNR on 23-24 Apr. This population is now split as Claudia's Leaf-Warbler *P. claudiae*.

Bianchi's Warbler *Seicercus valentini*: Singles seen on two days at TNR on 23-24 Apr.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*: (1) at WDL on 19 Apr.

Vinous-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis webbianus*: (4-50) seen well on five days with high count at WDL where they were in winter flocking mode.

Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*: (1) seen by Susan at TNR on 24 Apr.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*: (4) at WDL and (1-3) at Xianghai and Momoge on 28-29 Apr.

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*: (1-4) seen on six days.

White-capped Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*: (1-4) seen on 22-24 Apr at TNR.

Plumbeous Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosa*: (4-10) seen on 22-24 Apr at TNR.

White-crowned Forktail *Enicurus leschenaulti*: (1) on both 23-24 Apr at TNR.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*: (1) at Yangxian and (2-4) at Xianghai and Momoge on 28-29 Apr.

Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferreus*: (1-4) seen on three days at TNR.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*: (1) on 22 Apr.

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*: (1-2) at Yangxian and CDPBC. This population is sometimes split as Chinese Blackbird *Turdus mandarinus*.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus*: (10) at SP and MT all looked like Naumann's Thrush which is sometimes split and given the scientific name *Turdus naumanni*. A single bird at Yangxian looked like a typical Dusky.

Hwamei *Garrulax canorus*: Heard only at TNR on 23-24 Apr.

White-browed Laughingthrush *Garrulax sannio*: (1-20) seen on three days with high count at CDPBC.

Elliott's Laughingthrush *Garrulax elliotii*: (2) at TNR on 24 Apr.

Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis*: Heard only at Yangxian and TNR. This population is split as Black-streaked Scimitar-Babbler *P. gravivox*.

Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*: (1) showed well at TNR on 23 Apr.

Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*: (2-4) seen on three days at TNR.

Grey-cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe morrisonia*: (3) at TNR on 24 Apr. This population is split as David's Fulvetta *Alcippe davidi*.

Chestnut-flanked White-eye *Zosterops erythropleurus*: (2) at TNR on 24 Apr.

Japanese White-eye *Zosterops japonicus*: (2-10) on 22-23 Apr.

Crested Myna *Acridotheres cristatellus*: (2-4) on 17 and 19 Apr in Beijing area.

Red-billed Starling *Sturnus sericeus*: (2) at the Forbidden City, Beijing on 17 Apr was my first sighting in Beijing area. A further (10) seen well in Yangxian on 21 Apr.

White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus*: (2-10) seen well on five days.

Gould's Sunbird *Aethopyga gouldiae*: (1-3) seen well on 23-24 Apr at TNR.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*: (2-10) seen well on six days including the subspecies *alboides* (Himalayan), *leucopsis* (Amur) and *ocularis* (East Siberian).

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: (1-5) of the subspecies *thunbergi* seen at Momoge on 26 Apr and Xianghai on 28 Apr.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*: (2) at TNR on 22 Apr gave good views.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: (1-3) seen on four days on 21-24 Apr.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*: (2) on 27 Apr at Tumuge.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*: (1-5) seen well on three days.

Slaty Bunting *Latoucheornis siemsseni*: (1) male gave a good view at TNR on 24 Apr.

Godlewski's Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*: (2) on 19 Apr at Great Wall and (1) on 22 Apr.

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*: Single males on 28-29 Apr at Xianghai and Momoge.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*: (2-20) seen well on five days with high count at Momoge.

Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*: (20) at Momoge on 29 Apr was a major highlight.

Yellow-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans*: (1-20) seen on six days; lots of great views of this beautiful bunting.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*: (1) at TNR on 23 Apr and (20) at Momoge on 29 Apr.

Jankowski's Bunting *Emberiza jankowskii*: (2 males and 1 female) at Tumuge on 27 Apr gave great scope views of this critically endangered bird.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*: (20) at WDL, (6) at Xianghai and (1) at Momoge.

Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*: (3) at WDL on 19 Apr.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*: (2) including a smart male at Yangxian on 21 Apr.

Oriental Greenfinch *Chloris sinica*: (1-10) seen well on six days.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*: (10) at the MT, (4) at WDL and (2) at Momoge on 29 Apr.

Yellow-billed Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria*: (2) gave good views at CDPBC.

Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans*: (2-6) seen on three days between 21-23 Apr.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: (10-50) seen on nine days.

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*: (1-2) on 23-24 Apr at TNR.

MAMMALS

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*: (2) gave good views in the scope at Momoge on 26 Apr.

Reeve's Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*: (1) female gave a good scope view at TNR on 23 Apr.

Siberian Roe Deer *Capreolus pygargus*: (20) in a herd in a fenced off part of Xianghai Reserve on 28 Apr.

Takin *Budorcas taxicolor*: (10) on 23 Apr at TNR included a beautiful young grey calf with (1) seen on 24 Apr.

Pere David's Rock Squirrel *Sciurotamias davidianus*: (1-2) seen on 23-24 Apr at TNR.

Daurian Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus dauricus*: (4-6) seen on 27-29 Apr at Tumuge, Momoge and Xianghai.

Reed Vole *Microtus fortis*: (2) seen in the day at Xianghai on 28 Apr chasing each other around.

Tolai Hare *Lepus tolai*: Maggie spotted this one for the group at WDL on 19 Apr.



Taken at Tangjiahe Nature Reserve on 23 Apr 2011

(Dion Hobcroft)