

CHINA

BIRDS AND CULTURE

April 16 – May 1, 2011

©2010

Our trip begins in Beijing where we will visit such sites as Tiananmen Square, Ming Tombs, the Summer Palace and the Great Wall. We should also see a variety of birds ranging from Azure-winged Magpie to Smew and scarce endemics like the White-browed Hill Warbler. At Wild Duck Lake we will have the chance to see such unusual species as Great Bustard, White-naped Crane and Swan Goose.

A journey west to Xi'an will place us in the precinct of the Terracotta Warriors and we will spend most of a day exploring this World Heritage site. This also enables us to connect with one of the world's rarest birds, the unique Oriental Crested Ibis, which is managing a carefully staged comeback from the brink of extinction. In nearby protected forests we will try to see the rare endemic Brown Eared-Pheasant with Koklass Pheasant, Siberian Accentor and Chinese Nuthatch amongst other possibilities.

Our final four days will be spent exploring Xianghai Nature Reserve and the Baicheng grasslands in southern Manchuria where we hope to find, among many possibilities Red-crowned Crane, Baikal Teal, Mandarin Duck, Eurasian Bittern, Jankowski's Bunting and Pallas's Reed Bunting.

This comfortable tour will combine some of the best cultural sites in China with some very interesting early spring birding, with a focus on several globally threatened endemics.

April 16-17, Days 1-2: Arrive Beijing. There are many choices for flights from the United States to Beijing, China. Depending on your route, flights generally will depart the USA on April 16 arriving Beijing International Airport (airport code PEK) the following day. Those person arriving Beijing on April 17, upon clearing customs and immigration you will be met by our ground agents and escorted to your hotel. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 2:00 P.M. for a pre-arranged tour to visit Tiananmen Square.

Tiananmen Square is one of Beijing's most famous landmarks and been witness to many of the most tumultuous events in the country's history. The square is bordered by the National Museum, Mao's Mausoleum and the impressive Great Hall of the People. After exploring the square we will walk to the nearby Forbidden City. This is the site of a complex of imperial palaces, home to the best preserved buildings of the Ming and Qing dynasty. This includes not only grand palaces and halls but the living chambers of the emperors and their multitude of attendants. Beijing recently celebrated its 850th anniversary.

NIGHT (April 17): Beijing Qianmen Jianguo Hotel, Beijing

April 18, Day 3: the Summer Palace. We will spend the morning birding the Summer Palace where we can expect to see quite a few interesting species ranging from Great Spotted Woodpecker and Azure-winged Magpie. The lakes and reed beds can support Yellow Bittern, Ruddy-breasted Crake and a good variety of reed-warblers. In the afternoon we will go sight-seeing at the Ming Tombs where we will have the chance to also spot a few birds.

NIGHT: Beijing Qianmen Jianguo Hotel, Beijing

April 19, Day 4: Bird and sight see Great Wall and Wild Duck Lake. Yeyahu or Wild Duck Lake has become one of the premier birding sites on the outskirts of greater Beijing. At this migration time we may expect a cross-section of different wetland species with chances for Black Stork, Hooded and White-naped Crane, Bean and Swan Goose, Baikal Teal and Ferruginous Duck. Grassland and scrub may hold Great Bustard and Little Bunting.

No visit to China would be complete without a visit to the Great Wall. The Great Wall was built during the “Warring States” period (475-221 BC). It began as a series of defensive walls built by individual kingdoms as a defence against each other as well as invasions from the north. Stretching almost 4500 miles from the Bohai Sea to central China, the Great Wall is a wonder of the world. Although a unique monument to China’s magnificent past, for the birder the Great Wall holds a range of breeding birds. We will hope to see Pere David’s Laughingthrush, White-browed Hill Warbler and Vinous-throated Parrotbill. At this time migration will be underway and we may be lucky to pick up species like Oriental Honey Buzzard, Yellow-rumped Flycatcher and Tristram’s Bunting. After enjoying our visit to the Great Wall we will continue to journey west to Wild Duck Lake. If time permits we will spend one final time tracking down any birds we hope to see before retracing our steps to Beijing and flying onto Xi’an in the morning.

NIGHT: Beijing Qianmen Jianguo Hotel, Beijing

April 20, Day 5: Fly to Xi’an. This morning we will make the flight from Beijing to Xi’an where upon arrival we will visit Qin Museum of Terracotta Warriors and Horses. This is perhaps one of China’s most famous archaeological sites where an army of 8000 terracotta soldiers and horses guard the tomb of Emperor Qin Shihuang. After exploring this stunning exhibition and enjoying lunch we will head south across the spectacular Qinling Mountains to Yangxian Reserve.

NIGHT: Yangxian Hotel, Yangxian

April 21, Day 6: Yangxian Reserve. An early start will see us at Yangxian Reserve about one hour away from our hotel. This village defied the odds by protecting the last population of Chinese Crested Ibis in their local woodlands when many tree plots were razed to produce steel in Mao’s era. It is quite a miracle this bird has survived and now the population is carefully nurtured and on the increase. We should be able to get great views of this critically endangered species. Other birds we should have a chance of seeing include Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Chinese Sparrowhawk, Cinnamon Bittern, Brown-breasted Bulbul, Collared Finchbill, Swinhoe’s Minivet and Red-billed Starling.

NIGHT: Yangxian Hotel, Yangxian

April 22, Day 7: Travel from Yangxian to Tangjiahe (Sichuan Province). After breakfast we will depart Yangxian on a good road through rich agricultural areas. Soon after reaching the town of Jinzishan, we abruptly leave the plains and enter another world—one of towering rock-faces, spectacular crags, and beautiful, cloud-wreathed temperate woodlands. After about an hour’s drive we should begin to see some of the characteristic birds of this habitat. Typically, along the streams and rivers we should encounter the lovely White-capped Water Redstart, alongside the smaller Plumbeous Water Redstart and much shyer Blue Whistling-Thrush; higher up we should find Brown Dippers ouzeling in midstream. Woodlands clinging to the near-vertical rock faces occasionally support such species as Brown-breasted and Black Bulbul, Collared Finchbill, Blue Rock-Thrush, and Long-tailed Minivet.

NIGHT: Tangjiahe Panda Reserve Hotel

April 23-24, Days 8-9: Tangjiahe Panda Reserve. Tangjiahe is a 400 square kilometre Giant Panda Reserve that offers excellent roadside birding and a diverse array of habitats based on a valley 4500 feet above sea level surrounded by mountains exceeding 16000 feet. It has become quite famous for mammal watching offering chances to encounter such rare species as Chinese Serow, Long-tailed Goral, Golden Takin, Tufted Deer, Reeve’s Muntjac and Golden Snub-nosed Monkey. Tangjiahe is home to one of the largest remaining populations of Giant Pandas in the world. While we have little chance of seeing the Giant Panda in the wild, we

will seize the opportunity to see some rare and some truly spectacular birds. From our base in a very comfortable hotel, we will explore Tangjiahe's wonderland of moss- and lichen-draped fir woods, lit by flowering rhododendrons and shrubby, and early spring-colored mixed deciduous woodlands, which resound with the barking calls of Golden Pheasants just behind our accommodations.

In Tangjiahe we will be hoping to encounter a great cross-section of central China's most spectacular birds including Golden Pheasant and the incredible Temminck's Tragopan. A good road bisects the entire reserve. Most of the birding will be conducted along this road, in addition to forays along adjacent trails.

Amongst the numerous other interesting species that inhabit this fabulous reserve we may see Verreaux's Monal-Partridge; Blood Pheasant; Crimson-breasted, Darjeeling and White-backed woodpeckers; Large Hawk; Lesser and Oriental cuckoos; White-throated Needletail; Fork-tailed Swift; Long-tailed Minivet; Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike; Citrine—sensational in breeding plumage; Gray and White wagtails; Olive-backed and Rosy pipits—superb in breeding plumage; Gray-backed Shrike; Spotted Nutcracker; White-tailed Rubythroat; Firethroat—a gorgeous skulker at lower elevations; Indian Blue Robin; Blue-fronted, White-throated and Daurian redstarts; Orange-flanked Bush-Robin; Kessler's, Chestnut, Scaly, Chinese and Plain-backed thrushes; the diminutive Pygmy and Scaly-breasted wren-babblers; Great, Three-toed and Spectacled parrotbills; Chinese Babax; Elliot's, Barred and Giant laughingthrushes; Chinese, Streak-throated and White-browed fulvettas; Green Shrike-Babbler; White-collared and Stripe-throated yuhinas; Chestnut-headed Tesia; Spotted, Yellowish-bellied and Gray-sided bush-warblers; possibly the poorly known Chestnut-crowned Bush-Warbler; Buff-throated, Yellow-streaked, Buff-barred, Lemon-rumped, Large-billed, Blyth's, and the recently described Chinese leaf-warblers—most of these *Phylloscopus* warblers will be in fresh breeding plumage and at their songful best, an exciting prospect compared to their drab appearance on their wintering grounds; Rufous-gorgeted, Snowy-browed, Slaty-backed and Slaty-blue flycatchers; Rufous-vented, Gray-crested, Sooty and Green-backed tits; Gould's Sunbird; Dark-breasted, White-browed, Beautiful and Dark-rumped rosefinches; Gray-headed Bullfinch; Tibetan Siskin; and Slaty Bunting. Birding will be at an interesting time of year although most species will be at a low density especially the arriving insectivores.

NIGHTS: Tangjiahe Panda Reserve Hotel

April 25, Day 9: Tangjiahe to Beijing. We will drive to Chengdu and then fly to Beijing. Depending on the flight times, we may be able to do some birding in the morning enroute to the airport as well as when we arrive Beijing.

NIGHT: Sino Swiss Hotel, Beijing Airport

April 26, Day 10: Fly Beijing to Wulanhaote (Inner Mongolia). An early morning flight should have us arriving at Wulanhaote mid morning. If time permits we will commence our exploration of the nature reserves within striking distance of our hotel in Baicheng, our home for the next three nights.

NIGHT: Hotel TBA, Baicheng

April 27, Day 11: Xianghai Nature Reserve. In the morning we will leave Baicheng and drive to Xianghai Nature Reserve. This enormous reserve of shallow wetlands, grassland, woodlands and agricultural areas on the border of Jilin Province and Inner Mongolia is home to a multitude of north Asia's most threatened species. We will focus on trying to see Swan Goose, Baer's Pochard, Falcated Duck, Red-crowned, White-naped and Demoiselle Crane and the Oriental White Stork.

NIGHT: Hotel TBA, Baicheng

April 28, Day 12: Tumuge. We will have a full day to continue our explorations of this mosaic of wetlands and grasslands this time visiting the wetland reserve at Tumuge. With luck the Siberian Crane may be staging here on migration. It would be tremendous if we can connect with this critically endangered bird. There is also a chance for Hooded Crane. Among other birds we will hope to see are Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Great

China: Birds and Culture, Page 4

Cormorant, Grey Heron, Great Bittern, Common Shelduck, Mandarin Duck, Gadwall, Garganey, Mallard, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Baikal Teal, Eastern Marsh Harrier, Pied Harrier, Amur Falcon, Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, Little Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, Northern Lapwing, Grey-headed Lapwing, Oriental Pratincole, Eurasian Curlew, Spotted Redshank, Common Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Asian Dowitcher, Black-headed Gull, Mongolian Gull, Common Tern, Little Tern, White-winged Black Tern, Oriental Turtle Dove, Common Cuckoo, Little Owl, Hoopoe, Asian Short-toed Lark, Eurasian Skylark, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Red-rumped Swallow, Oriental Reed-Warbler, Chinese Penduline-Tit, Black-naped Oriole, Brown Shrike, Chinese Gray Shrike, Daurian Jackdaw, White-cheeked Starling, Tree Sparrow, Meadow Bunting and Chestnut-eared Bunting.

NIGHT: Hotel TBA, Baicheng

April 29, Day 13: Momoge. We will make an early start to head to the grasslands of Momoge. This is now the only site for the critically endangered Jankowski's Bunting. With local expert help we will hope to see this species before it becomes the next Ivory-billed Woodpecker-literally! While searching the grasslands for the bunting we may come across Great Bustard, Japanese Quail, Yellow-legged Button-quail, Mongolian Lark, Richard's Pipit and Pallas's Reed Bunting.

NIGHT: Hotel TBA, Baicheng

April 30, Day 15: Wulanhaote to Beijing. We will return to Wulan Hot and fly to Beijing. If time permits we will schedule an afternoon activity. We will enjoy our final night here before heading homeward the next day.

NIGHT: Sino Swiss Hotel, Beijing Airport

May 1, Day 16: International Flights Home. Participants may schedule departing flights at any time today. Hotel check-out time is 12:00 noon and the hotel provides free shuttle service to the Beijing International Airport (PEK).

Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: All participants will be required to purchase a medical evacuation policy for this tour and will be asked to sign and return to the VENT office a waiver stating that this has been done. Such a policy should be available from any insurance company which provides trip cancellation coverage.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Dion Hobcroft and Susan Myers

Dion Hobcroft has been working for VENT since 2001. He has led tours to Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Bhutan, India, Southwest Pacific, Cambodia, Thailand, China, Japan, Russia, Alaska, and the Antarctic. In 2007 alone Dion showed more than 2,000 species of birds to VENT clients. His informative, relaxed, and educational nature, combined with sharp eyes and ears, has established Dion as a favorite of many tour participants. His fieldwork for over 30 years on birds and other terrestrial vertebrates has allowed him to amass an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region. Born in Tasmania and based in Sydney, Dion has traveled widely throughout Australia listing over 760 species, placing him in the top echelons of Australian birders. He is very tuned-in to the songs of bird species in the Asia-Pacific region, and specializes in rare and elusive species. He is delighted to show these skulking rarities to his travel companions. Dion has published several papers on field ornithology, served on national and state rare bird committees, managed *Birdline NSW*, run introduction to ornithology courses for Sydney University, and, before he traveled so

continuously, was a popular speaker with various natural history societies. Dion has worked for many research and government agencies ranging from the Antarctic Division, Department of Environment NSW, Agriculture Protection WA, Taronga Zoo, Australian Museum, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry. Dion lives in Sydney with his wife Lise, and two young children, Grace (age 9), and Daniel (age 5).

Susan Myers absolutely loves birding and traveling in Asia. As she says, “The combination of incredible and diverse wildlife, ancient and fascinating cultures, and the best food in the world is unique to this amazing continent.” For more than 15 years Susan has led tours throughout Asia, including at least a dozen tours to Vietnam, countless trips to the Malay Peninsula and Borneo, plus many other tours in India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, Taiwan, Cambodia, and the Philippines, as well as Madagascar, Irian Jaya, the Pacific islands and, of course, Australia. Susan was born in Melbourne of convict ancestry dating back to the establishment of the city, when her shoe-stealing forebear was released from Port Arthur in Tasmania and came to Melbourne to start a new life. She has been a birder and passionate naturalist since early childhood, running around barefoot in the bush chasing birds, lizards, and aquatic insects. Her experiences in Asia started at an early age when a short trip to Singapore cast a spell on her, never to be broken. That first sighting of a sunbird in the tropical rainforest led to the purchase of the first edition of *The Birds of South East Asia*, which she memorized before the age of thirteen! After her university studies in biological sciences, she moved to Japan where she lived for four years, learning the language and studying the natural history and culture; she has traveled there regularly ever since. A few years in Japan and extended travel and birding all over the region further strengthened her deep love of the wildlife and culture of Asia. Susan has also worked as a scuba dive instructor on Australia’s Great Barrier Reef in Queensland, showing international visitors this marine marvel. She loves to explore new areas, and has recently undertaken scouting trips to Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Taiwan, Sumatra, and Halmahera. She has published many papers and articles on ornithology and general ecology in a variety of respected magazines and scientific journals. Susan’s deep affection for and appreciation of Asia and its wildlife, her special language skills, and her understanding of the different cultures of this region ensure an extra dimension to your tour. Susan is the author of a new field guide to the birds of Borneo, published in 2009.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for this tour is **\$7175** in double occupancy from Beijing, China. This includes all meals from Dinner on Day 2 through dinner on Day 15, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, internal air transportation in economy class (Beijing to Xi’an; Xi’an to Changchun; Changchun to Beijing), park entrance fees, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader and local guides. It does not include airfare from your home to Beijing and return, airport departure taxes, visa fees, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may be charged.

The single supplement fee for this tour is **\$600**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodation, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is \$500 per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. *We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.*

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$250*
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person.

TRIP INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness.** VENT recommends *Travel Insured International* as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. Contact *Travel Insured International* prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than *Travel Insured International*, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip is required for this tour. This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by *Travel Insured International*. If you do not choose to purchase the insurance through *Travel Insured International*, you will need to do so through another insurance provider. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

ACCOMMODATION: In Beijing and Xi’an we will stay in very comfortable hotels generally 4-5 star rated. In Yangxian, Tangjiahe and Baicheng the hotels will be more basic but still of a comfortable nature. Water is solar-heated in some locations and typically fine but we may need to roster showers so not to exhaust the hot water.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. All internal flights will be booked through our local operator on Air China Limited and the type of aircraft will be either an Airbus 320 or Boeing 737.

BAGGAGE: Participants are encouraged to take whatever they think they will reasonably need for this tour, including telescope and tripod, camera and video equipment. Please check with your international airline carrier for allowances and restrictions. Air China, your internal China airline, allows two checked bags with combined weight of no more than 50 pounds/23kg (per person) and your carry-on baggage no more than 11 pounds/5kg. This is generally sufficient for most needs on this tour.

CLOTHING: Plenty of winter clothing will be required as we may well encounter snow and subzero temperatures. Any wind will make it bitterly cold on occasions as well as in the mountains and far north of our tour. Humidity will be low and hopefully temperatures will warm as the tour progresses although it may be cold in the mountains and far north of our tour. Dress will be largely informal as long as you are comfortable and wearing relatively muted colours (important for pheasant spotting). Good comfortable foot wear is essential.

CURRENCY: Participants are advised to carry sufficient funds in low denomination American Express U.S. dollar traveler's checks and/or U.S. dollar cash. The latter can be very useful in an emergency. Dollars can be changed at the Beijing airport, larger hotels or automatic teller machines. You will only need a nominal amount to cover laundry, souvenirs and other items of a personal nature.

DIFFICULTY: This will be a relatively easy tour with the a couple of exceptions involving (perhaps) some uphill trail walking involving looking for the Brown Eared-Pheasant and the Great Wall (plenty of steps here). Otherwise it will be largely level grade, roadside birding and exploring.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from China is required for United States citizens to enter the country. An entry visa is required for United States citizens to enter China and **should be obtained prior to arrival**. For further information, you may wish to contact the Chinese consulate nearest you or *Pinnacle Travel Document Systems* (www.traveldocs.com on the web or 888-838-4867 by phone), a company which handles visa procurement. Non United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

EQUIPMENT: You should have a quality pair of binoculars in good repair (please check before departure!). Your tour leader will be carrying a Questar spotting scope; however, you are urged to bring your own spotting scope if you so wish. It will be useful on many occasions as we will be looking at waterbirds, shorebirds and scanning ridges looking for pheasants.

You should bring all the camera equipment, spare batteries, and film or digital supplies that you will need. Film will be almost impossible to obtain once we depart Beijing. **Nearly everyone brings too little film or digital storage which causes some distress; PLEASE bring plenty.** UV and polarizing filters are recommended, especially at higher elevations where glare can be a problem. Plastic bags are very useful to protect equipment from rain and dust. A really good flashlight or headlamp is essential, so please ensure that yours is in good working order and that you have spare bulbs and batteries. A spare flashlight or headlamp is ideal. Couples should bring one flashlight or headlamp each.

A small daypack (either waterproofed or with a strong plastic bag inside) is essential for carrying excess clothing, camera equipment, toiletries, food, and water. However, in many of the areas where we will be birding, we will have regular access to our transport, which will be attended by a driver and his mate. Water bottles are important if you like to carry a regular supply of water.

Other useful items include:

- **Snacks:** It is advisable to bring granola-type bars, dried fruit or other snacks, as western-style snacks will not be available in China, and Chinese food may not include the roughage we have grown accustomed to in our Western diets.
- **Flashlights or Headlamps:** We will be out at night on a few occasions; a small flashlight or headlamp is essential to find your way around the panda research center at night.

China: Birds and Culture, Page 8

- **Handywipes:** These are very important and paper tissues are especially useful. All participants should carry sufficient for their personal needs for the entire tour.
- Spare glasses or contact lenses.
- **Sunscreen:** Strongly recommended especially for higher elevations where the UV is much greater; lip balm is also essential.
- **Umbrella:** The collapsible type is easy to carry and useful both against rain and sun.

HEALTH: If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B. No vaccinations are required; however, cholera and yellow fever inoculations are required only if you arrive within five days from an infected area. We recommend participants contact their doctor for advice prior to departure.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

Participants are advised NOT to drink tap water or unboiled water placed at the table unless advised by your tour leader. Bottled drinks (including uncarbonated bottled mineral water) will be available at all times. You should not eat uncooked foods such as meat or vegetables, or food that has cooled and/or been sitting in the open, permitting flies to settle. Unpeeled fruit is fine, provided you wash the exterior first in clean water.

MEALS / TRANSPORTATION: In China we will travel in comfortable, well appointed, modern, heated, Japanese buses with large, airy windows that are ideal for birdwatching and photography. Possibly a secondary luggage van will follow depending on group size. We will have a local guide and driver throughout to ensure we can enjoy the birds, culture and scenery. All internal flights will be on Air China Limited and the type of aircraft will be either an Airbus 320 or Boeing 737.

Dinners are taken at the various lodges and guesthouses. Food is typically Chinese banquet style-hot, fresh and tasty with a multitude of dishes to appeal to any ones palate. Chopsticks are the norm and it may be best to bring your own cutlery if you cannot master these implements. Drinks and snacks will be available at all times in the vehicle as will bottled water. You may wish to bring your own special snacks.

MISC:

Electricity – China is 220 volts; Two-pin and three-pin sockets are in use. Do not rely on an electric razor, or having electricity available for charging your video batteries (although all participants have managed well enough on previous trips).

Language – Mandarin Chinese is the most widely spoken; English is spoken at most tourist areas.

Time – 12 hours plus 1 day ahead of Eastern Daylight Savings Time

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books.

Brazil, Mark. *Birds of East Asia: China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and Russia*. Princeton University Press. 2009. This is the bird field guide recommended for this tour.

Insight Guides. *China Insight Guide*. Langenscheidt Publishers. 2008. A superbly illustrated guide to China packed with lots of useful and interesting information.

Smith A. T. and Xie Y. *A Guide to the Mammals of China*. Princeton University Press 2008. A solid reference text your leader will bring along to try and identify any mammals we encounter.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect June 22, 2010 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.