

NE Tibet, 2-23 June 2012:

An at-a-glance list of 229 species of birds & 21 species of mammals.

By Jesper Hornskov ***this draft 20 July 2012*** ALL RIGHTS RESERVED®

Please note that the following list is best considered a work in progress. It should not be quoted without consulting the author.

Based on my own field notes, this brief write-up covers the birds & mammals noted by M Ilett, S James, A Lewis, A Marshall, B Reed, P Shepherd & myself during a long planned, eagerly anticipated visit to China's Qinghai province.

The birds, the mammals, the unbeatable scenery, the plants, a stimulating mix of local cultures, wonderful food & comfortable accommodations all came together to produce a trip so much more memorable for the region being under-visited by bird- & mammal-watchers.

Prior to flying Xining A Lewis, A Marshall, B Reed & P Shepherd 'did' Brown Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon mantchuricum* & the soon-to-be-split *lepidus* Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus* in Shanxi: what with late May / early June being a key time of the year for birdwatching in China visitors with one or more days to spare are simply spoilt for choice!

Plan A had been to finish in the area around Lhasa, in China's 'Tibet Autonomous Region', where we would have been expecting to see amongst others the endemic Elwe's Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon harmani*, Giant Babax *Babax waddelli* & Prince Henri's Laughingthrush *Garrulax henrici*. We had gone through the unavoidable trouble of obtaining additional permits & had made all logistical arrangements only to discover a few days into the trip that unrest had broken out again, and as has happened with some regularity since major incidents in 2008 China lost no time in making 'Tibet Autonomous Region' a no-go area for foreigners.

Fortunately we had been aware of the risk, and it was possible to switch to Plan B mode without breaking stride.

We will all be keeping our fingers crossed that things settle down, allowing us to consider having another try in connection with a future visit.

I suggest readers turn to http://www.netfugl.dk/trip_reports/asia/China_TAR_April2010_JH.pdf for more about birdwatching in SE Tibet & around Lhasa.

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Enquiries concerning future **Oriental Bird Club Fundraisers** - to NE Tibet, by and large following the itinerary used on the trip dealt with here, or Yunnan (our trips to China's biologically most diverse province have been very popular) - can be made to Michael Edgecombe, OBC's Promotion Officer, at [mail\(at\)orientalbirdclub.org](mailto:mail(at)orientalbirdclub.org) or directly to this author.

In the species list the concept "bird-days" is used - it is the avian equivalent of man-hours, the day totals added up – it indicates relative abundance but does not consider the "problem" of lingering birds or, important in a non-scientific context such as a birding holiday abroad, how satisfying the encounters were. 25 bird-days for e.g. Spoon-billed Sandpiper could be one distant

flock of migrating birds, gone in a flash, or one bird lingering for 25 days, offering the observers point-blank views anytime in that period...

The sequence of the bird list follows *The Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World – 3rd Edition* (Dickinson 2003), in my opinion by far the most useful one-volume checklist to date.

Initials in brackets after a few single-observer sightings does not imply that I have doubts as to the correctness of the ID.

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**Species list:**

Severtzov's Hazel Grouse *Tetrastes sewerzowi*

Two [SJ] on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## Verreaux's Monal Partridge *Tetraophasis obscurus*

10+ bird-days. Three pairs / groups were noted over 20-22<sup>nd</sup> – despite much time (& battery power!) devoted to 'em only SJ got decent views...

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

9+ bird-days. Noted on two dates - memorable views of a pair with a tiny chick on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Tibetan Snowcock** *Tetraogallus tibetanus*

Six bird-days. Noted on three dates – on 11<sup>th</sup> two close-up, 'scoped briefly during a one minute interlude between fog and the onset of a snow shower, was as good as it got for some of us.

## Przevalski's Partridge *Alectoris magna*

11 bird-days. Noted on no less than five dates.

## Daurian Partridge *Perdix dauurica*

12+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

## Tibetan Partridge *Perdix hodgsoniae*

22 bird-days. Noted on five dates – two on 10<sup>th</sup> engaged in serious cockfighting across the river from where we'd taken up position, one pulling feathers from the other...

**Blood Pheasant** *Ithaginis cruentus*

12 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

\*\*\*ssp *beicki* of 'Xining, Menyuan, Datong River & S part of Datong Mts' (Cheng 1987) is an exceptionally wild-looking creature: 'male AND female w/ rounded ear tufts, and the male w/ white iris, dark eye-surrounds, and a pale grey crown coming to a point between tufts'.

## White Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

63+ bird-days. Noted on five dates – daily max counts of 25+ seen on both 12+14<sup>th</sup>!

### Blue Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon auritum*

14+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

### Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

65+ bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

\*\*\*Cheng (1987) listed no fewer than 18 races for mainland China. Of these he listed just three for Qinghai: *vlangalii*, *strauchi* (for 'NE part') & *suehschanensis* as an accidental to Zekog in SE.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*

85+ bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on two dates.

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

945+ bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*

A nesting pair at Koko Nor seen on both 4+19<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

One at Koko Nor on 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*

160+ bird-days. Noted on 12 dates.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera*

Two loafing on a Mekong shingle bar next to a pair of Goosander on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*

Half a dozen at Koko Nor on 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

140 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 120 (of which >110 were males) at Koko Nor on 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Chinese Spotbill** *Anas zonorhyncha*

One en route on 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

Ten bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on two dates.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*

Six bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on two dates.

**Common Teal** *Anas crecca*

1+ [AM] at Koko Nor on 4<sup>th</sup>.

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

222+ bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on two dates.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*

98 bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on both visits.

**Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*

24+ bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

60 at Koko Nor on 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*

Four at Koko Nor on 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

13+ bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*

255+ bird-days. Noted on four dates – on 19<sup>th</sup> 20 pairs (>50% of which had chicks) at Koko Nor.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*

Noted only at Koko Nor: 41 nests ('only mounds with birds on were counted; work possibly in progress on 5+ others') on 4<sup>th</sup> & 56 nests on 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*

Three in flight low overhead on 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Two at Koko Nor on 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Chinese Pond Heron** *Ardeola bacchus*

Four bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on two dates.

**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus*

93 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

One at Koko Nor on 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*

One at Koko Nor on 19<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Cheng (1987) did not list the species for Qinghai or Xizang – but there are now at least four other 'modern' records (JH pers obs).

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

One on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Just five birds in total: noted at Koko Nor on two dates.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

Seven bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

Five bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Saker** *Falco cherrug*

18 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

An adult male was seen well NE of Xining on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Oriental Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

One on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*

Ten bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus*

19 bird-days. Noted on nine dates – seeing an adult landing at nest w/ one fully grown juvenile visible on ledge on 4<sup>th</sup> was a trip highlight.

**Himalayan Griffon** *Gyps himalayensis*

168 bird-days. Noted on 14 dates.

**Black Vulture** *Aegypius monachus*

One imm on 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

Eight bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*

Four bird-days. Noted on three dates – a fair bit of microadjusting of the tripod was required in order to obtain digiphotos of a perched bird on 20<sup>th</sup>...

**Himalayan Buzzard** *Buteo burmanicus*

Seven bird-days. Noted on five dates.

\*\*\*On 13<sup>th</sup> 'a very dark individual on patrol. Came back carrying a Glover's Pika; landed a couple of times, pecked at the pika a couple of times but then flew off around the corner upstream...we watched it through the 'scope as it sat beautifully, the pika slung over a branch'.

**Upland Buzzard** *Buteo hemilasius*

141+ bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

**Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*

Two 2<sup>nd</sup> c-y birds at a yak carcass on 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*

A 2<sup>nd</sup> c-y was seen soaring on 15<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Possibly the 1<sup>st</sup> (modern) summer record for Qinghai.

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*

14 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

One at Koko Nor on 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Coot** *Fulica atra*

69+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

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

54 bird-days. Noted on five dates.... this hardy yet vulnerable (and 'Vulnerable':

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/143783/0> ) Tibetan Plateau endemic breeder was one of the most hoped-for species, and it was cheering to see at least two pairs accompanied by thriving chicks.

**Ibisbill** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

Eight bird-days. Noted on four dates.

\*\*\*Somehow, Ibisbills seen in Tibet 'frozen' against a rushing stream - yaks snorting in the background - are *better* than the sad one or two which may still cling on along the last stretch of barely acceptable water close to Beijing in competition with sickly-looking domestic ducks!

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*

14 bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on two dates.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

Six bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on two dates.

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Six bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on two dates.

**'Spot-fronted' Sand Plover** *Charadrius atrifrons*<sup>^</sup>

75 bird-days. Noted on five dates - main event 63 ('mostly adults in summer plumage, but c5 were in winter-type plumage' on 8<sup>th</sup>

\*\*\*<sup>^</sup>formerly consider conspecific with Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

98+ bird-days. Noted on ten dates.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

One on 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Singletons on two dates...

**Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus*

16 were seen well at Koko Nor on 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Brown-headed Gull** *Larus brunnicephalus*

39 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*

Four bird-days. 2<sup>nd</sup> c-y birds were seen on two dates at Koko Nor.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

146+ bird-days. The distinctive *tibetana* was noted on eight dates.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida*

28 bird-days. Summer plumage adults were seen well at Koko Nor on two dates.

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

Six bird-days. Noted at two dates.

**Tibetan Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes tibetana*

Ten bird-days. Superb encounters on two dates.

**Pallas' Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

21+ bird-days. Noted W of Koko Nor on two dates – outstanding encounters... we even found a nest containing three eggs!

**Blue Hill Pigeon** *Columba rupestris*

801+ bird-days. Noted on 19 dates.

**Snow Pigeon** *Columba leuconota*

One on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis*

7+ bird-days. Noted on just two dates.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

96+ bird-days. Noted on 12 dates.

**Red Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

One adult in one of the poplar groves visited on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

114+ bird-days. Noted on 21 dates – many, incl 2-3 hepatic morph birds, were seen well.

**Lesser Cuckoo** *Cuculus poliocephalus*

One in flight 'after being attacked by Grey-backed Shrike' at poplar grove W of Koko Nor on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*

Nine bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event four recently fledged juveniles, still not flying well, right next to the vehicles on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Swift** *Apus apus*

850+ bird-days. Noted on eight dates – main event c800 at Koko Nor on 4<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*It was pleasing to obtain superb views of the distinctive *pekinensis*.

**Salim Ali's Swift** *Apus salimali*

66+ bird-days. This 'new' species was noted on ten dates, incl N of Xining where it was considered to 'almost certainly breed'.

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

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

21 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*

11 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Three-toed Woodpecker** *Picoides tridactylus*

We enjoyed a superb session w/ a feeding & nest excavating pair on 13<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Taxonomy: needs re-evaluation. Nearctic and Palearctic races recently split into two species, *P. dorsalis* and *P. tridactylus*, without discussion of status of the very distinct *funnebris*." : Rasmussen & Anderton (2005). The latter is listed by Zheng (ed., 2005) for Gansu, NE Qinghai, E Xizang, NW Yunnan & Sichuan. The 'N Palearctic' species is represented in China by *tianshanicus* (Tian Shan & Altai: Cheng 1987), *tridactylus* (NE Inner Mongolia & N Manchuria: Cheng 1987) & *kurodai* (SE Manchuria: Dickinson 2003 – Cheng (1987) did not list *kurodai*, including birds in this area with *tridactylus*).

**Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius*

One heard on 13<sup>th</sup>.

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

Seven bird-days. This vocal but sometimes hard-to-see species was noted on six dates.

**Long-tailed Minivet** *Pericrocotus ethologus*

One heard on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus*

Three W of Koko Nor over 5-6<sup>th</sup>... two were ssp *luconensis*.

**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus*

Nine bird-days. Noted on four dates.

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

44 bird-days. Noted on 14 dates.

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

Singles were noted on two dates. A low-density species, wide-ranging and often inconspicuous even when present (and thus easily missed), we were fortunate to see it well.

**Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus*

Five bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

Three bird-days. Noted N of Xining on two dates.

\*\*\**vide* Zheng (2005) the distinctive ssp *kansuensis* is restricted to NW & SW Gansu and 'Qinghai', though the only Qinghai locality for which it was listed by Cheng (1987) was Zekog. Dickinson (2003) listed it also for NW Sichuan.

**'Eastern' Azure-winged Magpie** *Cyanopica cyanus*

Nine bird-days. Noted on five dates.

\*\*\*Apparently (G Pettersson pers com) the Iberian taxon, *C. (c.) cooki*, has been shown to be sufficiently differentiated genetically to merit elevation to full species status. In addition to the ones we saw, *kansuensis* in NE Tibet & *interposita* at Beijing, the eastern species includes a further five taxa (Dickinson 2003)...

**Common Magpie** *Pica pica*

61 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Tibetan Magpie** *Pica (pica) bottanensis*

42 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

\*\*\*The two *Pica* taxa occupy mutually exclusive ranges and display a number of vocal, morphological & habitat differences.

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

Six bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Hume's Groundpecker** *Pseudopodoces humilis*

114 bird-days. This squabblesome, highly adapted altitude specialist was noted on 14 dates.

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

165 bird-days. Noted on 18 dates.

**Daurian Jackdaw** *Corvus dauuricus*

82 bird-days. Noted on eight dates – particularly good photo ops were offered by ten birds which came down to devour some past-the-peel-by-date eggs.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

88 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

\*\*\*ssp *pastinator* differs from the nominate in lacking 'bare chalky white facial skin [...] and has a more sharply pointed bill': Brazil (2009).

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

3+ on 3<sup>rd</sup>.



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

13 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

\*\*\*According to Zheng (2005) ssp *tibetosinensis* is restricted to E Qinghai, SW Xizang, NW & W Yunnan, and N & W Sichuan.

**Common Raven** *Corvus corax*

59 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**Eastern Great Tit** *Parus minor*

11 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

\*\*\*Kindly keep your fingers crossed that the inappropriate name 'Japanese Tit' doesn't stick!

**Rufous-vented Tit** *Parus rubidiventris*

16 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Songar Tit** *Parus songarus*

46 bird-days. Noted on seven dates N of Xining (ssp *affinis*) & S of Yushu (ssp *weigoldicus*).

\*\*\*Note that of the several Songar Tit spp maybe only *weigoldicus* merits full species status (the rest are now lumped back in with Willow Tit *Parus montanus* by e.g. IOC).

\*\*\*Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) noted that "the case for treating *weigoldicus* as a full species appears particularly strong on the basis of its unusually high genetic distances from other taxa, despite weak morphological differentiation". Actually – as we couldn't help noticing (& see Collar & Pilgrim 2007) - *weigoldicus* does differ 'conspicuously' in many respects, incl vocalizations, from even *affinis*.

**White-browed Tit** *Parus superciliosus*

11 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

**Grey Crested Tit** *Parus dichrous*

11 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Pale Sand Martin** *Riparia diluta*

58+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Eight bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Eurasian Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

43 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**Asian House Martin** *Delichon dasypus*

342+ bird-days. Noted on nine dates – main event 160 flying downstream to avoid a thunderstorm on 13<sup>th</sup>.

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

15 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Stoliczka's (=White-browed) Tit-Warbler** *Leptopoecile sophiae*

40 bird-days. Noted on six dates... on 10<sup>th</sup>, 'a male at <10m in yellow-flowering bush was fantastic way to see the 1<sup>st</sup> of the trip!

**Crested Tit-Warbler** *Leptopoecile elegans*

Eight bird-days. Noted on two dates.

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

**Mongolian Lark** *Melanocorypha mongolica*

19 bird-days. Noted on three dates – on the morning of 4<sup>th</sup> we devoted a fair bit of time to getting perfect shots of this superb species...

**Long-billed Calandra (= Tibetan) Lark** *Melanocorypha maxima*

32 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

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

30 bird-days. This subtly distinctive species was noted on no less than ten dates.

**Asian Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella cheleensis*

33+ bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*

One on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

**Horned Lark** *Eremophila alpestris*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

**Spotted Bush Warbler** *Bradypterus thoracicus*

Seven bird-days. Noted on three dates, with exceptionally satisfying views of one on 20<sup>th</sup>.

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

**Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus weigoldicus*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

\*\*\*Martens (2008) unconvincingly aligns this reasonably distinctive but oddly localized taxon with Smoky Warbler *P. fuligiventer*

[http://globiz.sachsen.de/snsd/publikationen/vertebrate-zoology/vz58-2/06\\_Martens.pdf](http://globiz.sachsen.de/snsd/publikationen/vertebrate-zoology/vz58-2/06_Martens.pdf)

**'Eastern' Tickell's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus (affinis) occisinensis*

157+ bird-days. Noted on 16 dates.

\*\*\*Martens (2008) elevates part of this species to full species status as *P. occisinensis*

[http://globiz.sachsen.de/snsd/publikationen/vertebrate-zoology/vz58-2/06\\_Martens.pdf](http://globiz.sachsen.de/snsd/publikationen/vertebrate-zoology/vz58-2/06_Martens.pdf)

**Yellow-streaked Warbler** *Phylloscopus armandii*

62 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

**Buff-barred Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus pulcher*

37 bird-days. Noted on four dates - main event 15 on 21<sup>st</sup>, 'incl two song-fighting! Very agitated, chasing around'...

**Gansu Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

87 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 67 N of Xining on 3<sup>rd</sup>!

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

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

Four bird-days. Stray migrants were noted on two dates in poplar groves W of Koko Nor.

**'Eastern' Lemon-rumped Warbler** *Phylloscopus (chloronotus) forresti*

60 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

\*\*\*Martens *et al.* 2004 (*vide* Rheindt 2006) elevated *forresti*, considered a synonym of *chloronotus* by Cheng (1987), to full species status, splitting it from *chloronotus* (of Nepal) which, with *simlaensis*, becomes Western Lemon-rumped Warbler. The two differ “dramatically in song and mitochondrial DNA (4.2% cytochrome-b divergence)”: Rheindt (2006). Given that the type locality for *forresti* is Lijiang, in Yunnan (Cheng 1987) it is not obvious that “Sichuan Leaf Warbler” is preferable to ‘Eastern Lemon-rumped Warbler’. “Presumably the hitherto unknown border between both species lies somewhere in Yunnan, Burma or north-eastern India.”: Rheindt (2006). *Ahem?*

**Hume's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei mandellii*

179 bird-days. Noted on eight dates – main event 96 N of Xining on 3<sup>rd</sup>!

\*\*\*Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) treats both sspp as full species, noting that “although the call of *mandellii* is markedly different from [nominate] *humei*, the whistled songs of both taxa are variable and often inseparable. While *mandellii* is genetically closer to *humei* than to *inornatus*, it is long-separated from either according to mtDNA (Irwin *et al.* 2001); its status as a full species thus remains equivocal.”

**Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis ssp*

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

\*\*\*Both had two wingbars, yellow belly stripe & hint of yellow in undertail coverts’.

**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

153+ bird-days. Noted on 12 dates, incl one possibly *plumbeitarsus* in poplars on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Large-billed Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus magnirostris*

Eight bird-days, Noted on two dates, with especially memorable views of this distinctive long-distance migrant on 20<sup>th</sup>.

**'Margelanic' Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia (minula) margelanica*

11 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis*

One - ‘called, sat out rather nicely (if not for long), crossed road & disappeared up slope’: JH - on 13<sup>th</sup>

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

17+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*One of our main ‘pretexts’ for visiting an unbeatably pretty area on the remote Xizang border, this restricted-range species proved comparatively easy to get views of.

**Pere David's Laughingthrush** *Garrulax davidi*

31 bird-days. Noted N of Xining on six dates.

**Giant Laughingthrush** *Garrulax maximus*

29 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

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

**Elliot's Laughingthrush** *Garrulax elliotii*

84 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

**Chinese Fulvetta** *Alcippe striaticollis*

Four on 14<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Knowing the call AND where to listen out for it is - even more so than in the case of the skulking Kozlov's Babax – the key to finding this subtly attractive endemic.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

13 bird-days. Noted on just two dates.

**Northern Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Seven bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Chinese Nuthatch** *Sitta villosa*

14 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

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

Seven bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*

Singles were noted on three dates.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*

11 bird-days. Noted N of Xining on two dates.

**Hodgson's Treecreeper** *Certhia hodgsoni*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

\*\*\*This newly elevated species “embraces the Sino-Himalayan [taxa] *hodgsoni* Brooks, 1874 (W Himalayas), *mandellii* Brooks, 1874 (E Himalayas) and *khamensis* Bianchi 1903 (SW & W China [N as far as the road between Jiuzhaigou & Sungpan in N Sichuan]”: D T Tietze *et al* 2006. Birds in SE Qinghai & E Xizang are this taxon: Cheng (1987).

**Daurian Starling** *Sturnus sturninus*

A stray female / 2<sup>nd</sup> c-y in a poplar grove W of Koko Nor on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus*

One photographed [AL *et al.*] on 17<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*A scarce but regular visitor to NE Tibet, with most records in Aug/Sep (JH pers. obs).

**White-cheeked Starling** *Sturnus cineraceus*

One [AL *et al.*] on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Long-tailed Thrush** *Zoothera dixonii*

One [AL, BR] on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Chinese Blackbird** *Turdus mandarinus*

Two in poplar grove W of Koko Nor on 5<sup>th</sup> (but gone when looked for the following day).

**Chestnut Thrush** *Turdus rubrocanus*

19 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Kessler's Thrush** *Turdus kessleri*

87+ bird-days. This emblematic species was noted on no less than 14 dates.

**Chinese Song Thrush** *Turdus mupinensis*

Six bird-days. Noted on four dates – seen extremely well...

\*\*\*Interestingly, one heard on both 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> did mimicry of Large Hawk Cuckoo as a regular part of its repertoire.

**Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia calliope*

28 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

\*\*\*Hearing one by the toll booth on 3<sup>rd</sup> seemed to promise a good day's birding... and so it turned out!

**Himalayan Rubythroat** *Luscinia pectoralis*

20 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Himalayan Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger rufilatus*

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

**Northern Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus*

34 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

\*\*\*Apparently (L Svensson pers com) birds breeding in NE Qinghai – with a white brow in adult males – are *albocoeruleus*, a long neglected taxon hitherto considered of doubtful validity, but with a song distinct from both *cyanurus*' & *rufilatus*'. It is genetically closer to *cyanurus*, but has legs as long as *rufilatus*'.

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

12+ bird-days. This localized endemic was noted on two dates.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

141 bird-days. Noted on 15 dates.

**Hodgson's Redstart** *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

37 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

**White-throated Redstart** *Phoenicurus schisticeps*

45 bird-days. Noted on ten dates – hard-to-beat views (and photo ops!) of a spectacular male at close range, returning to a twig covered in yellow lichen on 3<sup>rd</sup>...

**Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus aureus*

Five bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Guldenstadt's Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus*

23 bird-days. Noted on five dates, incl a male on 7<sup>th</sup> which flew over to say Hello! to the Tibetan Sandgrouse – sheer magic!

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

36 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

\*\*\*A male on 11<sup>th</sup> was doing mimicry of Olive-backed Pipit & Songar Tit.

**White-bellied Redstart** *Hodgsonius phaenicuroides*

20 bird-days. Noted on five dates - incl two together on 3<sup>rd</sup>: a singing female-type bird & an adult male not singing!

**Plumbeous Redstart** *Rhyacornis fuliginosa*

Four on 13<sup>th</sup> – excellent views of a pair below eye level...

**River Chat** *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

18+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**'Siberian' Stonechat** *Saxicola 'torquatus'*

Five bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*Spp *maurus*, *przewalskii* & *stejnegeri* occur in China / Tibet. Dickinson (2003): "proposed splits of this complex species seem unsatisfactory if only in how the forms are ascribed to species".

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina*

48 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka*

Four bird-days. Noted near Xining on two dates – especially fine views of a breeding pair on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti*

Nine bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Common Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis*

One male singing & display-fighting W of Koko Nor on 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa dauurica*

One [AL *et al.*] along line of poplars W of Koko Nor on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Slaty-backed Flycatcher** *Ficedula hodgsonii*

52 bird-days. Noted on six dates - main event 24 on 13<sup>th</sup>... one was a fairly confiding male flycatching from underneath trackside willows.

**White-throated Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus*

Nine bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

A pair w/ 125 Tree Sparrows in a field w/ 19+ Pine Buntings etc on 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

**Rock Sparrow** *Petronia petronia*

60 bird-days. Noted on ten dates.

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

55 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

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

**Tibetan Snowfinch** *Montifringilla adamsi*

15 bird-days. Noted on six dates – the 1<sup>st</sup> we encountered remained unbeaten for sheer viewing & photo op value: a male which flew in and started feeding on the track.

\*\*\*Rather unspectacular on the ground but truly striking in flight, this species is blessed with no less than four English names...

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

68+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

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

11 bird-days. Noted on just two dates.

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

90 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

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

Four bird-days. Noted on just three dates... but WHAT VIEWS!!

**Alpine Accentor** *Prunella collaris*

One 'scoped singing on 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Robin Accentor** *Prunella rubeculoides*

31 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**Rufous-browed Accentor** *Prunella strophliata*

16 bird-days. Noted on six dates

**Brown Accentor** *Prunella fulvescens*

35 bird-days. Noted on seven dates – main event 17 on 18<sup>th</sup>, several of which proved very obliging.

**Western Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*

A male most similar to ssp *thunbergi* on 6<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*The species is only a rare breeder in Tibet...

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*

19 bird-days. Noted on eight dates – of the males, seven were identified as *calcarata* and just one (a 2<sup>nd</sup> c-y bird on 6<sup>th</sup>) as *citreola*.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

Three bird-days. Noted N of Xining on two dates.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

89 bird-days. Noted on 18 dates.

\*\*\*Ssp involved were *leucopsis* in the N, and *alboides* in the Yushu/Nangqian area.

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

19 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

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

52 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

**Rosy Pipit** *Anthus roseus*

Ten bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

Four bird-days. Noted on just two dates.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

One male in a field w/ Pine Buntings on 5<sup>th</sup> was a surprise...

**Oriental Greenfinch** *Carduelis sinica*

12 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Eurasian Siskin** *Carduelis spinus*

Two N of Xining on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Twite** *Carduelis flavirostris*

301+ bird-days. Noted on 16 dates.

**Plain Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte nemoricola*

45 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

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

43 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Mongolian Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes mongolicus*

27 bird-days. Noted on four dates – superb views of 18 birds up on wires 'below the Moorhen Pool' on 6<sup>th</sup>: TINGALING!

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

Five on 4<sup>th</sup> – prolonged encounters with males!

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

**Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

43 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

\*\*\*Local breeders are ssp *roseatus* (Dickinson 2003) which differs markedly from at least the nominate...

**Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch** *Carpodacus davidianus*

59+ bird-days. Noted on 11 dates.

**Pink-rumped Rosefinch** *Carpodacus eos*

114 bird-days. Noted on four dates S of Yushu.

**Sinai Rosefinch** *Carpodacus synoicus*

12 near Xining on 23<sup>rd</sup> – 'superb views of both sexes was a nice reward for devoting a morning to this...'

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

Two – incl an adult male seen very well (& digiscoped by AM) – on 13<sup>th</sup>.

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

82 bird-days. Noted on no less than 11 dates.

\*\*\*Getting repeated 'scope views of this beauty was *please tick as appropriate*  
[ ] great. [ ] fantastic. [ ] nothing to brag about.



**Eastern Great Rosefinch** *Carpodacus rubicilloides*

27 bird-days. Noted on ten dates.

**Spotted Great Rosefinch** *Carpodacus severtzovi*

Seven bird-days. Encountered on three dates, with repeated views that allowed us to become well acquainted with this somewhat erratic species.

**Red-fronted Rosefinch** *Pyrrhospiza punicea*

11 bird-days. Noted on three dates – it was a real pleasure to watch males out in the sun, singing...

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

Five bird-days. Noted on two dates - our team photographers nearly got memory-carded out when a full adult male presented itself at <10m: TINGALING!!

**Red Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*

11 on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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

22 bird-days. Noted on five bird-days.

**White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carinceps*

38 bird-days. Noted on 11 dates.

**Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos*

40 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Eastern Rock Bunting** *Emberiza godlewskii*

57 bird-days. Noted on ten dates.

**Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides*

28 bird-days. Noted only at Xining - 23 on 23<sup>rd</sup> was a high count...

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

Two pairs and a single male on 11<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Only when this highly localised endemic is 'in the bag' does anyone allow themselves a sigh of relief and a pleasant 1<sup>st</sup> taste of 'we've done it!'.

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

Eight bird-days. Noted on three dates – several males were seen very well...

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Mammals:**

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

### **Assam Macaque** *Macaca assamensis*

One seen quite well on 13<sup>th</sup> as it stopped to check us out...

### **Himalayan Marmot** *Marmota himalayana*

Recorded on 12 dates – fairly common in places, with as many as 13 together.

### **Tibetan Dwarf Hamster** *Cricetulus tibetanus*

Oddly, just one on 7<sup>th</sup>...

### **Black-lipped (= Plateau) Pika** *Ochotona curzoniae*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

### **Glover's Pika** *Ochotona gloveri*

At least three singles were seen (in addition to the one that fell victim to a Himalayan Buzzard – see above).

### **\*\*\*Moupin Pika** *Ochotona thibetana*

A pika seen well in alpine scrub on 12<sup>th</sup> was probably this species.

### **Woolly Hare** *Lepus oiostolus*

27+ animal days. Noted on at least ten dates.

### **Tolai Hare** *Lepus tolai*

Three animal days – seen near Xining on both 2<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Wolf** *Canis lupus*

Four animal days - one female 'at c1km, sitting down repeatedly to scratch herself before disappearing over ridge' on 15<sup>th</sup> & three along the Roof of the World section the next day (in the same spot where four were seen in 2011!).

### **Tibetan Fox** *Vulpes ferrilata*

20 animal-days. Noted on no less than six dates!

### **Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*

12 animal-days. Noted on six dates, incl at Koko Nor on both 4+19<sup>th</sup>.

### **Mountain (= Alpine) Weasel** *Mustela altaica*

One seen very well on 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Kiang** *Equus kiang*

523 animal-days. Noted on three dates. It was a real pleasure to watch these dignified 'donkeys' - in the absence of hunters they (and other large mammals on the Plateau) are fairly confiding, and in a couple of cases we were able to get good-to-decent photos even without the help of long lenses!

### **Siberian Roe** *Capreolus pygargus*

Singles were seen well through 'scopes N of Xining on 21+22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Gansu Red Deer** *Cervus (elaphus) kansuensis*

Three females on 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Macneil's Deer** *Cervus macneilli*

19 – a herd of 18 females + a solitary stag w/ antlers still in velvet - seen very well on 10<sup>th</sup> along the Mekong tributary...

\*\*\**macneilli* is 'the pale red-grey deer of the eastern margins of the Tibetan plateau': Groves (2005).

**White-lipped Deer** *Przewalskium albirostris*

11 animal-days. Noted on no less than three dates – on 9<sup>th</sup> a prolonged 'scoping session allowed us to note that 'white of lips extends to jaw & underside of lower jaw; rump orangey w/ no hint of black surround'.

**Goitred Gazelle** *Gazella subgutturosa*

49 animals were seen on 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Tibetan Gazelle** *Procapra picticaudata*

469 animal-days. Noted on five dates.

**Tibetan Antelope** *Panthalops hodgsonii*

84 were counted on 16<sup>th</sup> – we enjoyed 'scope views of this emblematic animal only along the remotest Roof of the World stretch of road... and even got decent photos!

\*\*\*See <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/15967/0>

**Blue Sheep** *Pseudois nayaur*

135+ animal-days. Noted on five dates – seeing a herd of no less than 50 across the river at midday, resting after a morning's grazing, was a heartening sight!