

# Beidaihe/Happy Island, China: 6-19 May 2000.

*[This draft 18 Aug 2007]*

*by Jesper Hornskov \* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED*

This report covers a KingBird Tours birdwatching trip made by M & G Metson, B King & myself to E Asia's foremost migration hotspot.

After an overnight stay at a convenient and comfortable hotel near Beijing airport our trip got off the ground on the morning of 6 May when we travelled by express train to Beidaihe, the small town on the coast of Hebei known in birding circles as a prime site for virtually all the bird species using the E Asia Flyway, and by most Chinese as a summer get-away, used by the government (especially in pre-air con days) & diplomatic personnel based in the capital - most passengers followed our example as we got off on the breezy platform of the old station.

A short minibus ride later we were at the best hotel in town. This was to be our base for a total of six nights, and as soon as we'd sorted out our gear (and had lunch in the adjacent restaurant) we headed for the Reservoir, the most promising site on a rather windy, high pressure afternoon.

The Reservoir area became a favourite haunt: not only were the opportunities for watching freshwater shorebirds at close range outstanding, it also proved excellent for watching migrating birds of prey, with the morning of 7 May being particularly rewarding in this respect. In the afternoon we visited the well wooded Lotus Hills, clothed at this season in bright, new leaves.

We spent the morning of 8 May at the Great Wall, walking the hills in search of the endemic species. Somewhat slow birding owing, probably, to the haze & easterly winds, but we found what we came for plus a scattering of birds of prey heading N. En route back we stopped at probably the best restaurant in Qinhuangdao to sample specialities mainly from Qinghai province, the restaurateur's home in far-away NW China. Well fed we found ourselves back in the Beidaihe Reservoir area in the afternoon, enjoying good views of shorebirds & no less than three Citrine Wagtails.

The following morning we left early for Happy Island, arriving at our basic accommodation there in time for a late breakfast. From our arrival until our return to Beidaihe post-lunch on 16 May migrants kept us pleasantly busy: there were a couple of rather quiet but no birdless spells - changeable weather ensured that - and most days in fact seemed too short as we kept finding newly arrived birds. Most of our efforts were in the woods adjacent to the derelict temple near our quarters, but we also covered the high tide roost for gulls and shorebirds, and outlying scrubby areas & reedy/grassy patches for more passerines.

Back at Beidaihe we worked the reedbeds at Radar Marsh & Sandflats in the mornings, and also thoroughly covered the Reservoir & Oozy Pool, finding most of the marshland species which only pass in the second half of May. On the afternoon of 17th we climbed the Lotus Hills peak, and almost got caught in a thunderstorm walking back...

Over lunch on the 19th we added up our list: 214 species in total (plus three possibles!), a very respectable total for two weeks in this part of the world, and with a number of heavy-weights such as Schrenk's Bittern, Spotted Eagle, Long-billed Plover, Swinhoe's Snipe, Asian Dowitcher, Relict & Saunders's Gulls, White-throated Needletail, Mongolian Lark, Blyth's & Pechora Pipits, Japanese Waxwing, Siberian, Grey-sided & Chinese Song Thrushes, Manchurian Reed & Chinese Leaf Warblers, Elisa's Flycatcher, Japanese Grosbeak & Japanese Reed Bunting for hard-to-match quality.

Then our trip ended, as trips must - any local official would have approved of the tainted-glass limo which took us back to our Beijing hotel, and after a final overnight stay we went our separate ways, brimful of long-lasting memories of a very birdy fortnight in China.

KingBird Tours no longer offers a tour to this area.

However, anyone interested in visiting Beidaihe and/or Happy Island is welcome to get in touch with me:

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/Jesper Hornskov,

### **Species list:**

The concept "bird-days" is used - it is the avian equivalent of man-hours: for example, separate flocks of ten and 15 Asian Dowitchers moving through score 25 bird-days, as would the same single individual seen daily for 25 days. The sum of day totals - a handy measure of relative abundance, no more.

Numbers refer to BFK's *The Birds of China list* (January 1998 version).

**18 Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*  
c120 bird-days. Up to 35 birds were noted at Res on each visit.

**56 Schrenck's Bittern** *Ixobrychus eurhythmus*  
One in flight at Radar Marsh on 18th.

\*\*\*[**58 Black Bittern** *Dupetor flavicollis*  
Unsatisfactory views of a bird which may well have been this species at Res on 18 May. Not annual on the Hebei coast.]

**50 Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*  
One over Happy Island at 21h45 on 12th; 3-12 daily mainly in the Res area over 17-19th.

**49 Little Green Heron** *Butorides striatus*  
One at Happy Island on 9+10th (same individual on both dates?); in the Res area two on 18th & one on 19th.

**47 Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*  
One in full breeding plumage at Radar Marsh on 18th.

**48 Chinese Pond Heron** *Ardeola bacchus*  
75 bird-days. Up to c20 daily in the Res/ Radar Marsh area, and 2-3 at Happy Island on 10+13+15th.

**44 Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*  
47 bird-days. On Happy Island noted only on 10th (three birds flying SW); up to 15 noted on each visit to the Res area at Beidaihe.

**43 Intermediate Egret** *E. intermedia*

Singles in the Res area on 7+18+19th.

**42 Great Egret** *E. (/Casmerodius) alba*

1-3 noted on four dates in the Res area, and one was seen en route to Happy Island on 9th.

**40 Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

12 bird-days. 1-4 noted on four dates in the Res area; at Happy Island singles on 11+12+14th.

**41 Purple Heron** *A. purpurea*

18 bird-days in the Res/ Radar Marsh area - max seven on 19th.

**61 Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*

One migr. over the Res area on 7th. A rather rare (and apparently declining) species...

**88 Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

100-150 birds present at the Happy Island high tide roost on 10+12+14th (and three were sitting on the sea there on 15th). At Beidaihe Sandflats ten on 17th & three the next day.

**92 Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas (/Mareca) penelope*

A pair was at Res on 6th, and one briefly teamed up with Yellow-nibs at Happy Island on 12th.

**97 Common Teal** *A. crecca crecca*

12 were in the Res area on 6th.

**98 Mallard** *A. platyrhynchos*

2-20 birds were noted on each visit to the Res area.

**100 Yellow-nibbed Duck** *A. zonorhyncha*

1-5 recorded daily in the Res area; at Happy Island common (50+ was the highest bid during daily log sessions; pursuit-fighting parties sometimes exceeded a dozen birds).

**101 Northern Pintail** *A. acuta*

Two at Happy Island on 15 May.

**102 Garganey** *A. querquedula*

Ten bird-days in the Res area, max four birds on 6th.

**127 Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhyncus*

c72 bird-days: c65 migr. over the Res area on 7th, three at Great Wall the next day, and at Happy Island two on 11th & singles on 12+15th.

**128 Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*

One at Res on 6 May. Up to two birds, the first for the Beidaihe area, had been recorded since March.

**129 Black Kite** *Milvus migrans lineatus*

One at Happy Island on 15th.

**149 Eastern Marsh Harrier** *Circus (aeruginosus) spilonotus*

Nine bird-days at Happy Island - 1-2 seen daily except on 11th.

**146 Pied Harrier** *C. melanoleucos*

19 bird-days. Six migr. over the Res area on 7th were the only seen away from Happy Island (where 1-5 were seen almost daily, frequently at close range).

**156 Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis schvedowi*

One migr. at Res on 7th.

**153 Japanese Sparrowhawk** *A. gularis*

One at Great Wall on 8th, 1-2+ most days on Happy Island, and one at Res on 19th.

**155 Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *A. nisus*

Singles on 6+7+10th.

**165 Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*

One over the Res area on 7th was a treat: a scarce species hardly ever seen on May tours of the area.

**176 Eurasian Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

Two at Great Wall on 8th.

**178 Amur Falcon** *F. amurensis*

12 bird-days: one migr. at Res on 7th, five at Great Wall the following day, three en route to Happy Island on 9th, and singles migr. over Happy Island on 11+12+13th.

**180 Hobby** *F. subbuteo*

17 bird-days. Recorded on nine dates, max five at Great Wall on 8th.

**185 Peregrine** *F. peregrinus*

Singles at Happy Island on 10th (a superb female hunting Yellow-nibbed Ducks) & 11th (a migr. bird).

**208 Japanese Quail** *Coturnix japonica*

17 bird-days. Max five on 10th.

**244 Common Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

Up to four noted on most visits to the Res area, and four males heard at Great Wall on 8th.

**251 Yellow-legged Button-quail** *Turnix tanki*

Singles on 8th (Great Wall), 14th (Happy Island) & 19th (Res area).

**269 Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla*

13 bird-days. Noted in the Res area (incl. two on 6th), at Happy Island ('scope views of one which remained all day in a well vegetated ditch) & at Radar Marsh (three on 17th, seven on 18th).

**271 Ruddy-breasted Crake** *P. fusca*

One was in the Sandflats reeds on 17th.

**277 Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

Recorded daily in the Res/ Radar Marsh area, max c25 on 18th.

**276 Watercock** *Gallicrex cinerea*

One in Radar Marsh on 18th.

**286 Common Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

At Happy Island one on 12th & five on 14th.

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

69+ bird-days. Recorded on most visits to the Res/ Oozy Pool area (max 23 on 7th), and on 12+15+16th on Happy Island (2-4 birds).

**356 Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum*

Singles on 16th (Happy Island) & 18th (Res area). A poor showing this year.

**294 Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

In the Res/ Oozy Pool/ Sandflats area 5-8 daily over 6-8th, one on 17+18th & two on 19th; Happy Island yielded just one bird, on 15th.

**296 Long-billed Plover** *C. placidus*

A very tame (presumed exhausted) bird near the Res on 7th allowed superb views at very close range... A very rare bird at Beidaihe.

**295 Kentish Plover** *C. alexandrinus*

1-30 daily at Happy Island (where the species breeds).

**297 Lesser Sand Plover** *C. mongolus*

Three at Happy Island on 12th.

**292 Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*

47+ bird-days at Happy Island. Seen daily 9-15th, max 23 birds on the last date.

**291 Grey Plover** *P. squatarola*

10-80 daily at Happy Island; four at Beidaihe Sandflats on 18th.

**288 Grey-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus cinereus*

In the Res area singles on 7+17th & three on 18th.

**332 Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris*

c660 bird-days on Happy Island. Superb viewing conditions allowed us to become thoroughly familiar with this powerful flier.

**331 Red Knot** *C. canutus*

35-c200 birds noted daily over 12-14th on Happy Island.

**335 Red-necked Stint (= Rufous-necked Stint)** *C. ruficollis*

20 birds were seen at the Happy Island high tide roost on 14th.

**337 Temminck's Stint** *C. temminckii*

In the Res area one on 6th & four on 7th.

**338 Long-toed Stint** *C. subminuta*

Seven on 7th & ten on 8th near the Beidaihe Res.

**340 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *C. acuminata*

Ideal conditions for the species near the Beidaihe Res: one on 6th, five on 7th & a particularly memorable 17 on 8th. At Happy Island a group of eight flew by on 12th...

**343 Curlew Sandpiper** *C. ferruginea*

One on 7th & three the following day with freshwater waders near the Res; on Happy Island 1-50 seen most days, both at the high tide roost and engaged in vocal pursuit-flights over the island.

**342 Dunlin** *C. alpina*

5-60 noted on three dates on Happy Island were undoubtedly only a fraction of those actually present in the general area.

**328 Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

5-c10 recorded almost daily at Beidaihe. On Happy Island just one, on 14th.

**326 Pintail Snipe** *G. stenura*

11 bird-days: 1-3 noted on six dates 7-19th.

**327 Swinhoe's Snipe** *G. megala*

Single birds identified on 6+7+10th, and two on 18th. Somewhat uncharacteristically, one (on 7th) performed very well, feeding in the open, doing repeated short flights & calling.

**322 Asian Dowitcher** *Limnodromus semipalmatus*

Recorded on three dates at Happy Island: 75+ on 12th, ten on 13th & 40 on 14th. Happy Island is a prime site for this sought-after species, with peak counts in the 1,000-1,500 range. Far-carrying, growly-purring noises often betray their presence well before visual identification can be made.

**306 Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

One at Happy Island on 12th.

**307 Bar-tailed Godwit** *L. lapponica*

c810 bird-days on Happy Island - max c300 on 10+12th.

**303 Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

96+ bird-days: 1-20 recorded daily.

**304 Eurasian Curlew** *N. arquata*

1-100+ daily on Happy Island; one at Beidaihe on 17th.

**305 Far Eastern Curlew** *N. madagascariensis*

Noted only on Happy Island: one on 10th, c30 (incl. a flock of 25 heading off N as dusk approached) on 12th & two on 14th.

**308 Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*

Singles at Happy Island on 14+15th.

**309 Redshank** *T. totanus*

In the Res area five on 7th & one on 8th; at Happy Island 1-10 recorded daily, with most presumed to be local breeders.

**311 Marsh Sandpiper** *T. stagnatilis*

45 bird-days, incl. 18 on 7th & 20 on 8th in the Beidaihe Res area.

**312 Common Greenshank** *T. nebularia*

83+ bird-days. Recorded daily - best day 12th (22 migr. & several more heard over Happy Island).

**313 Green Sandpiper** *T. ochropus*

21 bird-days. 1-4 noted most days.

**314 Wood Sandpiper** *T. glareola*

c185 bird-days. Most (30-50 daily) were in the Beidaihe Res area over 6-8th...

**316 Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus (/ Tringa) cinereus*

c63 bird-days at Happy Island: 1-c25 were recorded daily.

**317 Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

16 bird-days. Most were with other freshwater waders in the Beidaihe Res area over 6-8th.

**318 Grey-tailed Tattler** *Heteroscelus brevipes*

Singles over Happy Island on 13+14th.

**370 Relict Gull** *Larus relictus*

One 2nd calendar-year bird at Happy Island on 13th was a surprisingly poor score. In a typical year, up to 15-20 birds are regularly present at the high tide roost into mid-May.

**375 Saunders's Gull** *L. saundersi*

c130 bird-days. Seen daily on Happy Island, these highly endangered creatures (world population 3000-4000 birds?) were among the absolute highlights of the trip, being rarely absent from the island's airspace, seen feeding on the mudflats & presenting themselves within easy range of a telephoto lens on a shallow freshwater pool no more than a hundred paces or so of our accommodation.

**372 Black-headed Gull** *L. ridibundus*

c410 bird-days. Recorded daily.

**361 Black-tailed Gull** *L. crassirostris*

Eight bird-days on Happy Island. A solitary, very ragged-looking 2nd calendar-year bird joined bathing Saunders's & Black-headed Gulls on the freshwater pool on 9+11th...

**364 Vega Gull** *L. vegae birulai*

Just two individuals were seen, both over Happy Island: a 2nd calendar-year on 9th & an adult on 10th.

**363 Heuglin's Gull** *L. heuglini taimyrensis*

Three bird-days: one on 12th & two on 14th. All were 2nd calendar-year birds.

**382 Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna (/Gelochelidon) nilotica*

83 bird-days. 2-50 recorded daily on Happy Island.

**385 Common Tern** *S. hirundo*

18 bird-days. 2-7 noted on four dates, mainly over Happy Island.

**392 Little Tern** *S. albifrons*

93 bird-days. Up to 30 birds were noted daily on Happy Island, and ten were seen en route back to Beidaihe on 16th.

**379 Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus*

At Beidaihe three on 7th & 55 on 8th; on 16th a flock of 135 migr. over Happy Island at 04h38, and c15 were seen over flooded paddies en route back to Beidaihe.

**380 White-winged Black Tern** *C. leucopterus*

c445 bird-days from 10th: main events 215 migr. at 04h54 on 15th (and 15 at 19h00!), and c200 migr. over Eagle Rock early in the morning of 18th.

**\*\*\*408 Rock Dove** *Columba livia* [feral]

Not systematically recorded. Present on Happy Island only on one or two days - regular on the mainland.

**420 Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

At Beidaihe singles on 6+17+18th & four on 7th.

**419 Oriental Turtle Dove** *S. orientalis*

c67 bird-days: 2-20 daily at Beidaihe, 2-9 almost daily at Happy Island.

**422 Spotted Dove** *S. chinensis*

One near the Lotus Hills aviary on 17th, and two flying south over Oozy Pool the next morning.

**447 Large Hawk Cuckoo** *Hierococcyx sparverioides*

At Happy Island singles on 11th & 14th. The latter was heard singing at c19h20...

**451 Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

At Happy Island singles on 10+15+16th; back in Beidaihe six on 19th...

**452 Oriental Cuckoo** *C. saturatus*

Ten bird-days from 10th. Max three on 15th.

**469 Oriental Scops Owl** *Otus sunia*

Seven bird-days on Happy Island: two on 10th, four (all flushed from below one, very unpromising-looking bush!) on 12th & one on 14th.

**483 Brown Hawk Owl** *Ninox scutulata*

Singles on Happy Island on 11th & 13th.

**494 Grey Nightjar** *Caprimulgus indicus*

On Happy Island one on 14th & six on 15th.

**502 White-throated Needletail** *Hirundapus caudacutus*

Two on 10th & six (at c12h50) on 13th - none lingered long in the Happy Island airspace, but satisfactory views were had both throat-on as they approached & from above as they banked low over the temple woods.

**504 Common Swift** *Apus apus pekinensis*

Four at the Res on 7th & two at Great Wall the following day.

**505 Fork-tailed Swift** *A. pacificus*

c500 on the move over Happy Island on 10th, and 2-25 birds on seven other dates.

\*\*\***[515 Ruddy Kingfisher** *Halcyon coromanda*

A distinctive series of calls heard on Happy Island on 14th (BFK only) were believed to be from this species.

Playback - using BFK's pre-recorded tape - elicited no response. A notoriously retiring species, and the record is kept as tentative in view of it being the first for the Hebei coast.】

**515 Black-capped Kingfisher** *H. pileata*

Eight bird-days from 10th. Singles at Happy Island on 10+11+14+16th, three there on 15th & one on a wire by Radar Marsh on 17th.

**520 Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

2-5 almost daily in the Beidaihe Reservoir area, and singles on a couple of days on Happy Island.

**531 Dollarbird** *Eurystomus orientalis*

One on 10th & five on 15th. The latter appeared to head off on migration as dusk approached, giving croaking calls as they went.

**532 Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

Ten bird-days. Most were in the Beidaihe area.

**545 Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*

One at Beidaihe on 7th; singles on Happy Island on 12+16th & two there on 14th.

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

2-8 noted on five dates at Beidaihe, where the species is a fairly widespread resident.

**557 Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopus (/Picoides) major*

1-5 noted on five dates at Beidaihe, where it is resident occurring in gardens, woods & poplar shelterbelts.

**552 Rufous-bellied Woodpecker** *D. (/Picoides) hyperythrus*

Eight bird-days from 11th. Max four on 11th. A long-distance migrant.

**587 Mongolian Lark** *Melanocorypha mongolica*

One at the Beidaihe Sandflats on 17th. Flew strongly and was considered to be of undoubtedly wild origin, unlike most of those seen by other birdwatchers in the area (which tend to be ragged & sickly).

A very common cagebird in China, prized for its varied song (consisting largely of mimicry) & hardiness, but also an irruptive visitor to the Hebei coast... our bird's credentials were boosted by the fact that the species had been less rare than usual in autumn 1999.

**592 Asian Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella (rufescens) cheleensis*

One on Happy Island on 14th was, sadly, the only record: the species appear to be facing local extinction in an area where it was common only a few years ago...

**594 Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

One at Beidaihe on 6th. A rather late record.

**598 Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*

c45 bird-days. Rather uncommon - four at Great Wall & 15 in the Beidaihe Reservoir area on 8th, 20 over Happy Island on 10th & occasionally heard on 2-3 subsequent dates on the island.

**601 Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Noted almost daily - max 200+ on at least three dates.

**603 Red-rumped Swallow** *H. daurica*

Recorded on most days. Daily max 50+ on 7th. Breeds locally.

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

82 bird-days. Recorded daily except on 17th, daily max 22 on 13th.

**618 Blyth's Pipit** *A. godlewskii*

29 bird-days. Recorded on nine dates with a maximum of 11 in the Beidaihe Reservoir area on 7th. As with the preceding species, most were identified on call (& structure), but the birds regularly allowed 'scope viewing of critical plumage features such as median covert markings.

A good year for the species: just prior to our arrival up to 30-40 birds had been noted on Happy Island in a day.

**620 Olive-backed Pipit** *A. hodgsoni*

c197 bird-days. Seen daily - max 55 over Great Wall on 8th.

**621 Pechora Pipit** *A. gustavi*

Eight bird-days from 13th.

**623 Red-throated Pipit** *A. cervinus*

26 bird-days 6-13th. Daily max ten in the Beidaihe Reservoir area on 7th. Several were 'scoped at close range.

**626 Buff-bellied Pipit** *A. rubescens*

Singles on 7+13th.

**608 Forest Wagtail** *Dendronanthus indicus*

23 bird-days from 7th. Daily max six on 11th. Most were fly-overs, but we eventually found a 'scope-able bird on the ground in the Happy Island temple woods (and duly ooh'd & aah'd it!).

**609 Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava plexa/macronyx*, *M. f. simillima* & *M. f. taivana*

c415 bird-days - 2-c75 were noted daily. The Beidaihe Reservoir/ Oozy Pool area proved a good place to get to grips with the various races.

**610 Citrine Wagtail** *M. citreola*

One on 7th & three the next day in the Beidaihe Reservoir/ Oozy Pool area.

**611 Grey Wagtail** *M. cinerea*

Singles on 7+13+14+15th & three on 19th.

**612 White Wagtail** *M. alba*

Ten bird-days. Only *M. a. ocularis* was identified...

**629 Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina melaschistos*

One on Happy Island on 14th was a surprise, although the species apparently breeds inland in Hebei Province (at Laiyuan: Cheng 1987) at approximately the same latitude.

Subsequently one was seen by other birders at Beidaihe over 19-20 May.

**632 Ashy Minivet** *Pericrocotus divaricatus*

14 bird-days. 1-6 recorded on seven dates, incl. three at Great Wall on 8th & six on Happy Island on 11th.

**646 Chinese Bulbul** *Pycnonotus sinensis*

Up to 10-20 birds noted most days.

**679 Japanese Waxwing** *Bombycilla japonica*

On Happy Island one on 11th, four on 14th & two on 15th. Very good views were obtained as the birds perched conspicuously in a bare tree top.

**698 Rufous-tailed Robin** *Luscinia sibilans*

17 bird-days: 1-6 noted almost daily on Happy Island, max on 14th.

**700 Siberian Rubythroat** *L. calliope*

c100 bird-days from 9th. Best counts c60 on 14th & c25 the next day.

**702 Bluethroat** *L. svecica*

24 bird-days over 14-17th.

**707 Siberian Blue Robin** *L. cyane*

c161 bird-days. Seen daily on Happy Island, max counts c40 on 14th & c75 the following day.

**708 Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus*

A late, somewhat sickly-looking individual was present on Happy Island over 15-16th. An early migrant which is distinctly scarce by early May...

**723 Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus aureus*

One at the Beidaihe Reservoir on 7th, singles female(s) at Happy Island on 9+10+11th, and a fine male there on 14th.

**737 Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata stejnegeri*

c105 bird-days. 2-25 noted almost daily.

**747 White-throated Rock Thrush** *Monticola gularis*

On Happy Island singles on 12+14th & five on 15th. Prolonged 'scope views were obtained of at least two of these birds in the woods adjacent to the derelict temple.

**749 Blue Rock Thrush** *M. solitarius philippensis*

17 bird-days. 1-4 birds were noted most days.

**751 Blue Whistling Thrush** *Myophonus caeruleus*

A black-billed individual was seen by our group on 14+15th. Other birders saw a yellow-billed bird on 14th...

Breeds inland at latitudes similar to that of Happy Island but remains an irregular (and pleasingly exotic) visitor to the coast.

**756 White's Thrush** *Zoothera dauma*

21 bird-days during 7-15th. Max count six on 14th. Happy Island remains an excellent place to catch up with this charismatic species, and many more than we recorded undoubtedly visited during our stay: thorough coverage also of outlying scrubby areas can yield 20-25+ birds during a major fall (such as was witnessed on 14th).

**753 Siberian Thrush** *Z. sibirica*

16 bird-days on Happy Island over 9-15th. Superb views were obtained...

**768 Grey-sided Thrush** *Turdus feae*

A male on 11th & a female on 14th. Both birds showed about as well as one might reasonably hope for.

**759 Grey-backed Thrush** *T. hortulorum*

Six bird-days during 9-15th.

**769 Pale Thrush** *T. pallidus*

On Happy Island a female was 'scoped at close range on 10th, and briefer views were had (of what was presumably different birds!) on 12+14th.

**770 Eyebrowed Thrush** *T. obscurus*

c275 bird-days. Recorded almost daily from 7th with a maximum of c180 on 10th.

**773 Naumann's Thrush** *T. naumanni eunomus*

16 bird-days. 1-4 birds were noted on six dates on Happy Island.

**778 Chinese Song Thrush** *T. mupinensis*

One at Happy Island on 10th in scrub well away from the temple woods.

**921 Short-tailed Bush Warbler (= Asian Stubtail)** *Urosphena squameiceps*

Single birds were scrutinized daily on Happy Island over 13-15th.

**961 Fan-tailed Warbler (= Zitting Cisticola)** *Cisticola juncidis*

1-5 daily except on 9th.

**807 Chinese Hill Warbler** *Rhopophilus pekinensis*

Six at Great Wall on 8th. One finally responded to a taperecording of its song... Endemic to China.

**940 Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola*

One in the Beidaihe Sandflats reeds on 18th was all we managed. A late migrant...

**938 Lanceolated Warbler** *L. lanceolata*

On Happy Island 1-3 daily from 11th; back at Beidaihe six on 17th, 20 on 18th & 10 on 19th.

**949 Black-browed Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps*

c145 bird-days from 7th. No more than four in a day until 14th, when c20 appeared on Happy Island. A similar number was logged the next day (with one of the birds scrutinized in the hand)... back at Beidaihe good coverage of the right habitat yielded 25 on 17th, 20 on 18th & c50 on 19th.

**951 Manchurian Reed Warbler** *A. tangorum*

Two on 17th. Prolonged 'scope views were obtained of one as it sat out singing.

**956 Oriental Great Reed Warbler** *A. orientalis*

Singles at Happy Island on 12+14+15th. Back at Beidaihe morning hours devoted to reedbeds yielded ten on 17+19th & 15 on 18th.

**958 Thick-billed Warbler** *A. aedon*

31 bird-days from 14th. Daily max 15 on 15th.

**1,003 "Golden-spectacled" Warbler** *Seicercus "burkii"* [taxonomy under revision]

Singles on 13+14th. In-the-hand examination suggested that the first bird was a *S. valentini* (let's hope DNA testing supports this!) - the second bird was very closely similar, if not identical... however, birds netted after our departure appeared to belong to two different taxa (DB verbally).

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

17 bird-days. A singing bird performed for us at Great Wall on 8th. On Happy Island 1-5 birds were noted daily except on 13th.

**996 Eastern Crowned Warbler** *P. coronatus*

Two on Happy Island on 12th. Unusually scarce this year.

**994 Pale-legged Leaf Warbler** *P. tenellipes*

13 bird-days on Happy Island over 10-15th.

**992 Greenish Warbler** *P. trochiloides plumbeitarsus*

c69 bird-days from 9th. Daily max c30 on 15th.

**991 Arctic Warbler** *P. borealis*

One on 19th at the Beidaihe Reservoir. The latest of the *Phylloscopus* warblers - very rare or absent until 3rd week of May: other birders reported singles at Happy Island from 14-15th.

**985 Pallas's Leaf Warbler (= Pallas's Leaf-Warbler)** *P. proregulus*

c570 bird-days. Recorded almost daily during 8-16th with a daily maximum of c300 on 15th.

**\*\*\*[986 Lemon-rumped Warbler** *P. chloronotus*

2-3 birds seen over 14-15th may have been this taxon (which is probably unrecorded on the Hebei coast: past reports are now, I believe, thought to have been misidentified *P. sichuanensis*, then undescribed).]

**988 Chinese Leaf Warbler** *P. yunnanensis*

Singletons at Happy Island on 9+11th. A locally abundant species which breeds across much of north/central China from the Burma border to N Hebei.

**989 Yellow-browed Warbler** *P. inornatus*

c305 bird-days. 2-c75 logged daily.

**990 Hume's Leaf Warbler** *P. humei mandellii*

Eight bird-days on Happy Island over 11-15th.

**982 Radde's Warbler** *P. schwarzi*

c420 bird-days. Recorded almost daily: c100 on Happy Island on 14th & c200 there the next day were the main events... all birders present became instant experts on this highly variable species!

**976 Dusky Warbler** *P. fuscatus*

c430 bird-days. Recorded daily, incl. 5-10 daily over 17-19th in reedbed habitat at Beidaihe (from which the similar Radde's Warbler was conspicuously absent)... on Happy Island c100 on 14th & c200 on 15th.

**978 Tickell's Leaf Warbler** *P. affinis*

Two on Happy Island on 14th. Only one previous record for the area. Nearest known breeding grounds (Cheng 1987) are in S Shaanxi, c1,000 kms due SW of Happy Island.

**1,024 Sooty Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sibirica*

On Happy Island four on 11th & singles on 13+14th.

**1,023 Grey-streaked Flycatcher** *M. griseisticta*

One on 14th was the only record.

**1,025 Asian Brown Flycatcher** *M. dauurica*

17 bird-days over 10-16th, max five on 11+15th.

**1,033 Red-throated Flycatcher** *F. (parva) albicilla*

c136 bird-days. Recorded almost daily - best days on Happy Island 30 on 14th & 40 on 15th.

**1,030 Mugimaki Flycatcher** *F. mugimaki*

15 bird-days. 1-5 seen daily on Happy Island over 9-16th.

**1,028 Yellow-rumped Flycatcher** *F. zanthopygia*

34 bird-days from 10th. Daily max ten on 15th. A real breath-taker!

**1,029A Elisa's Flycatcher** *F. elisae* [formerly treated as a race of *F. narcissina*]

Single female-type birds on 13+14+16th. On the last date, at least four birds were present in the afternoon (DB verbally), after we had left the island.

**906 Vinous-throated Parrotbill** *Paradoxornis webbianus*

2-5 noted on most visits to the Beidaihe Reservoir area. Also two at Great Wall on 8th. Endemic to China.

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

At least three birds were heard (we could undoubtedly have got to see them, too, but were quite content with aural records as we'd all seen the species well on previous occasions) at Great Wall on 8th. Endemic to N China.

**1,069 Marsh Tit** *Parus palustris*

Five at Lotus Hills on 7th & as many the next day at Great Wall.

**1,078 Yellow-bellied Tit** *P. venustulus*

Singles on 7+11th. The latter was eventually seen very well as it sat immobile in an acacia after a bout of frenzied flying about. Endemic to China.

**1,080 Great Tit** *P. major minor*

c15 bird-days in total for Beidaihe & Great Wall.

**1,067 Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus consobrinus*

1-25+ seen almost daily.

**1,123 Chestnut-flanked White-eye** *Zosterops erythropleurus*

c250 bird-days: 1-c150 noted on nine dates, best day 11th (when several bunched-up groups, presumably a mere fraction of the actual passage, were seen over Happy Island).

**1,124 Japanese Whiteeye** *Z. japonicus*

Eight bird-days on Happy Island over 9-16th.

**1,250 Black-naped Oriole** *Oriolus chinensis*

c80 bird-days from 7th. Passage only really got started on 15th, with c30 on Happy Island. Back at Beidaihe we noted 10-15 daily over 17-19th, with much singing by presumed local breeders...

**667 Bull-headed Shrike** *Lanius bucephalus*

One at Happy Island on 14th.

**668 Brown Shrike** *L. cristatus*

c185 bird-days. Recorded daily - max counts on Happy Island c30 on 14th & c50 the next day.

**1,254 Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocerus*

12 bird-days from 11th. 1-5 birds were noted on six dates.

**1,267 Red-billed Blue Magpie** *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*

14 bird-days. Noted at Lotus Hills, Res & Great Wall.

**1,277 Common Magpie** *Pica pica*

Common on the mainland; none seen on Happy Island.

**1,282 Red-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

One at Great Wall on 8th.

**1,289 Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Five at Great Wall on 8th.

**1,234 Daurian Starling (= Purple-backed Starling)** *Sturnus sturninus*

18 bird-days from 10th. 1-4 daily on Happy Island (where memorable views included one flycatching from a leafless tree - in which also up to 40+ Japanese & one Chinese Grosbeaks were perched!). Back at Beidaihe eight appeared briefly by the Reservoir on 19th.

**1,238 White-cheeked Starling** *S. cineraceus*

En route to and from Happy Island c20 on 9th & two on 16th.

**1,221 Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

Not systematically recorded: common at Beidaihe, 15-20 present on Happy Island.

**1,157 Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

Four on Happy Island on 11th & one at the Beidaihe Reservoir on 19th.

**1,160 Oriental Greenfinch** *Carduelis sinica*

Ten bird-days. Noted at Great Wall & in Beidaihe near our hotel, at Lotus Hills & close to the Reservoir.

**1,163 Eurasian Siskin** *C. spinus*

Two on Happy Island on 14th.

**1,180 Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

140+ bird-days. Noted daily over 10-16th, max counts 45+ on 14th & c50 the next day. Several red males were 'scoped at close range.

**1,206 Chinese Grosbeak** *Eophona migratoria*

Seven bird-days. 1-2 were noted on five dates 9-15th.

**1,207 Japanese Grosbeak** *E. personata*

103 bird-days from 10th. 1-3 daily over 10-13th, 27 on 14+16th & a remarkable 42 on 15th (on which day numbers increased in the course of the day as arriving birds joined the "resident", tree-demolishing feeding swarm). Flock calls softer, more conversational, than loud, grating call uttered by migrating birds.

It was, we hope, somewhat unfair of us to presume that a Chinese marvelling at these superb creatures on 16th was trying to calculate how many times his monthly salary worth of Japanese Grosbeak had descended on the island that day: the species is one of the most sought-after for the cagebird trade, and consequently (increasingly?) rare. We were truly privileged to see so many so well!

**1,205 Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

One at Lotus Hills on 7th.

**1,150 Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala*

c135 bird-days: 2-30 recorded daily.

**1,132 Godlewski's Bunting** *E. godlewskii*

Two at Great Wall on 8th.

**1,133 Meadow Bunting** *E. cioides*

Five at Great Wall on 8th included a couple of superb, singing males.

**1,139 Chestnut-eared Bunting** *E. fucata*

Back at Beidaihe two on 17+18th & five on 19th.

**1,143 Yellow-throated Bunting** *E. elegans*

On Happy Island a male on 9+10th, two (male & female) on 11th & a female on 16th. Adult males are very scarce by early May so we can count ourselves lucky also in the Yellow-throated Bunting department...

**1,141 Yellow-browed Bunting** *E. chrysophrys*

12 bird-days: 2-3 birds noted daily over 7-11th. Memorable views of 2-3 birds feeding on the ground near the Happy Island accommodation.

**1,138 Tristram's Bunting** *E. tristrami*

61 bird-days. Recorded almost daily, max c30 at Happy Island on 11th.

**1,140 Little Bunting** *E. pusilla*

c96 bird-days. 1-25 noted on 11 dates.

**1,145 Chestnut Bunting** *E. rutila*

48 bird-days. Max 15 on 14th.

**1,144 Yellow-breasted Bunting** *E. aureola*

c240 bird-days: noted daily except on 7th, with a daily maximum of c100 on 11th.

**1,153 Common Reed Bunting** *E. schoeniclus minor*

One by Oozy Pool at Beidaihe on 6th was the only record.

**1,152 Pallas's Reed Bunting** *E. pallasii*

18 bird-days: recorded on eight dates, max five on 7+10th.

**1,137 Japanese Reed Bunting** *E. yessoensis*

15 bird-days. Recorded on six dates 7-19th, max six on 7th.