

NE Tibet w/ Oriental Bird Club, 6-25 Aug 2012:

An at-a-glance list of 214 species of birds & 20 species of mammals.

*By Jesper Hornskov ***this draft 17 Sep 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 mostly on my own field notes, this brief write-up covers the birds & mammals noted by N Adlam, G Anderson, M Hale, M Jensen, L Lander, L Nemeth & myself during the 2012 OBC Fundraiser visit to China's Qinghai province.

The birds, the mammals, the butterflies, the plants, the unbeatable scenery, a stimulating mix of local cultures, wonderful food, comfortable accommodations & (not least) the companionship all came together to produce a trip the more memorable for the region being so under-visited by bird- & mammal-watchers.

Just one 'new' species, Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, was recorded in the grounds of our hotel in Beijing on 26th, Departure Morning - those of us who were not leaving for the airport pre-dawn are regular visitors to this part of the world and figured a relaxed breakfast made better sense than getting up very early to add a handful of common birds to the trip list for purely numerical reasons.

In the same spirit we agreed to miss out on a chance of adding to the list the likes of Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Northern Pintail *A. acuta*, Common Teal *A. crecca*, Goosander *Mergus merganser*, Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* & (with luck) Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* by revisiting a site where we'd already seen all the 'important' birds. This decision freed up the time needed to try for Blue Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon auritum*, Southern Spotted Bush Warbler *Bradypterus thoracicus* & the subtly exquisite Chinese Song Thrush *Turdus mupinensis*.

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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...

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

Species list:

Szechenyi's Monal Partridge *Tetraophasis szechenyi*

Noted on two dates – despite our best efforts the species remained a heard-only: we were wrong-footed by a large gang of road workers who since my June visit had set up camp next to one regular spot, and though we heard at least six pairs elsewhere we couldn't seem to conjure the luck without which this temperamental species can prove very tricky indeed.

Tibetan Snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus*

11+ on 15th.

Przevalski's Partridge *Alectoris magna*

13 bird-days. Excellent 'scope views were had on two dates.

Daurian Partridge *Perdix dauurica*

19+ bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Tibetan Partridge *Perdix hodgsoniae*

31 bird-days. Noted on five dates, incl N of Xining on 24th.

Blood Pheasant *Ithaginis cruentus*

18+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event a group of eight males (with a Giant Laughingthrush in tow!) on 17th.

White Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

73+ bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on four dates – we were amazed^ to see no less than 43 individuals on 17th...

***^ Please see

<http://orientalbirdimages.org/search.php?p=2&Bird ID=84&Bird Family ID=&pagesize=1>
<http://orientalbirdimages.org/search.php?p=3&Bird ID=84&Bird Family ID=&pagesize=1>

Blue Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon auritum*

8+ bird-days N of Xining over 24-25th. Only half our group obtained fleeting glimpses of two distant birds in poor light on the 1st morning devoted to seeing this emblematic species so we were extremely pleased when a different group emerged over on our side at dawn the next day, offering prolonged 'scope views as they fed unworriedly out in the open in perfect light before disappearing up a ridge, giving honking calls intermittently.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

22 bird-days. Noted on five dates - a very different creature from the standard issue, introduced Ringnecks familiar from Europe & N America.

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

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

20 at Koko Nor on 8th.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

1,230+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Two adults at Koko Nor on 8th – presumably these were the nesting birds noted by JH *et al.* on four visits during May/June.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

c320 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

One drake at Koko Nor on 8th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Six at Koko Nor on 8th.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Two on 8th.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

20 at Koko Nor (including five drakes, one in breeding plumage & four in eclipse) on 8th.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Ten at Koko Nor on 8th.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

16 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Three female-types at Koko Nor on 8th.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

90+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

c25 (incl a number of juveniles) at Koko Nor on 8th.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

One along the road across the Roof of the World on 20th.

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*

One 1st c-y at Koko Nor on 8th.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*

41 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 35 N of Yushu on 13th.

***In addition, a single egret at Koko Nor on 8th which was either this species or Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

23 bird-days. Noted on two dates – main event 21 at Koko Nor on 8th.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

One 1st c-y at Koko Nor on 8th.

***Zheng *et al.* (2005) listed the species for 'all [Chinese provinces] except Qinghai, Xinjiang & Xizang', but there are at least five previous records from Qinghai – all were between 21 May – 30 June: JH *et al.* pers obs.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

179+ bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

13 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*

Five adults (two males & three females) hawking directly above us late in the afternoon of 10th – superb views enhanced against a sky darkening with thunderclouds.

***A notable as well as hugely memorable encounter – all bar one of JH's previous ten NE Tibet records have concerned singles (the exception being two on 15 July 2005).

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Four hawking directly above us late in the afternoon of 10th.

*****Amur Falcon / Eurasian Hobby**

One at Koko Nor on 8th – up on a fence post across from us & flying around hawking, but never close enough in decent light to allow us to clinch the ID... suffice to say that if we hadn't subsequently seen those splendid Amurs thoughts of this bird – and thoughts of how well we might have seen it if we'd given it longer to return! – could well have gone on haunting us!

Saker *Falco cherrug*

27 bird-days. Noted on no fewer than six dates - for most of us a most welcome opportunity to familiarize ourselves with a species which is declining globally: not many trips allow you to graduate to full Saker Expert status in less than three weeks!

Black Kite *Milvus migrans lineatus*

19 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

***Cheng (1987) considered Black Kite to be the commonest *Falconiformes* in China.

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*

14 bird-days. Noted on ten dates - a top Dreambird this emblematic species was not at all devalued by several superb encounters... which included one 2nd c-y bird doing a bone-drop right next to where we were taking a breather on 15th.

Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*

195 bird-days. Noted on 15 dates.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

One 1st c-y seen briefly - but very satisfactorily! - as it soared overhead just as we were getting out of the vehicles at our very 1st stop on 6th...

***The species was listed only for Beijing, NW Shaanxi, NW Gansu, NW Xinjiang & Chongqing by Zheng *et al.* (2005), but there is at least one previous record from Qinghai: one near Gonghe on 29 May 2001 (M Kilburn pers obs).

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Singletons were noted on six dates.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentiles*

Two [MH] on 18th.

Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus*

Seven bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event a family of four on 18th. Seeing one of the adults perched in a treetop at c75m across the river was a bit of a highlight.

***Formerly considered a race of Common Buzzard *B. buteo* but genetically closer to Upland Buzzard *B. hemilasius* (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005) from which it is ecologically separated & easily - well, fairly easily! - distinguished...

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

One 2nd + c-y bird was noted W of Koko Nor on 9th.

***A scarce-to-rare migrant through NE Tibet – prior to 2011 (when a singleton was seen well on 22 Aug by the OBC group) recorded no earlier in autumn than 25 Sep (JH pers obs).

Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*

125 bird-days. Noted on ten dates – best count 56 along the way across The Roof of The World.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Ten bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

One seen well as it scuttled along at the edge of a buckthorn thicket en route on 19th.

***Listed for neither Qinghai nor Xizang by Zheng *et al.* (2005) but there are at least four previous records for Qinghai (JH *et al.* pers. obs.), all concerning singletons over 5-20 June.

Common Coot *Fulica atra*

50+ at Koko Nor on 8th.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

One along the remotest Roof of the World stretch of road.

Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis*

59 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

***This hardy yet 'Vulnerable': <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/143783/0>) Tibetan Plateau endemic breeder was one of the most hoped-for species.

Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates – a juvenile ‘scoped at close range on 19th was as good as it got, what with only almost-completed road improvement work going on over long stretches making the customary stop-and-scan breaks less appealing than as recently as last year.

Nonetheless we continue to subscribe to the view that ‘somehow, Ibisbills seen in Tibet feeding on a flowered-over meadow or ‘frozen’ against a rushing, icy stream – with Red-billed Choughs cawing, Blue Hill Pigeons cooing & domestic yaks snorting in the background - are more *real* than the sad one or two which still attempt to 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*

Four W of Koko Nor on 22nd.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

17 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*

Three w/ 16 Northern Lapwings at Koko Nor on 8th.

***Zheng *et al.* (2005) listed the species for ‘all [Chinese provinces] except Xinjiang, Xizang, Hainan’ – probably Qinghai was included on the basis of our 2004 records (four on 20 July & two on 31 Aug: JH *et al.* pers obs.).

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

44 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

One at Koko Nor on 8th.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

15 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

‘Spot-fronted’ Sand Plover *Charadrius atrifrons*[^]

175 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 165 on 12th.

***[^]formerly consider conspecific with Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*.

***ssp *atrifrons* has ‘forehead and band through and below eye to ear coverts black, occasionally with some white mottling in front of eye; rufous-cinnamon of chest extends to flanks and breast, not bordered by black bar against white chin’ while *mongolus* has forehead white, often divided by narrow black line in middle, bordered from cinnamon forecrown by narrow black line; black line runs from lores to ear coverts and white line from above eye to above ear-coverts; narrow black bar between white chin and clear-cut cinnamon-rufous chest-band’. *schaeferi* ‘often has some white on forehead; intermediate between *atrifrons* and nominate *mongolus*’, ‘often closest to *mongolus*’: BWP vol III, p169.

***‘**Spot-fronted**’ *C. atrifrons* / **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus*

One w/ the six Greater Sand Plovers on 22nd.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

Six W of Koko Nor on 22nd.

***In addition, an unidentified Sand Plover was seen at Koko Nor on 8th.

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*

Two W of Koko Nor on 10th.

*****?Swinhoe's Snipe** *Gallinago megala*
One 'probable' W of Koko Nor on 10th...

*****Snipe sp** *Gallinago sp*
One on 12th.

Western Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
47+ bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*
111+ bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
Five bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*
Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*
23+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
Ten bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*
17 apparently heading off on migration on 22nd.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*
Nice views of one on 12th.
***A scarce migrant through Tibet...

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*
One male on 22nd.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*
c180 bird-days. Noted on five dates – we enjoyed instructive views of birds in all plumages from mint condition juveniles to full-blown adults in summer plumage: TINGALING!

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*
15 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Common Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*
One 2nd c-y at Koko Nor on 8th.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*
88+ bird-days. Noted on ten dates.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*
Three summer plumage adults at Koko Nor on 8th.

Tibetan Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes tibetana*

16 birds were enjoyed by all on 20th – '1st a family of five flew by as we had our backs to some authentic Tibetan weather... we crossed to where they landed and went closer in stages until they took off probably on account of hearing the flight calls of a passing group of 11. The two groups merged and landed within 200m of our 4WDs, allowing MH to dash back and get his prefer'd lens before joining GA & MJ in a stalk that took them to within 20m of the birds, with the light behind them under a hazy-cloudy sky ensuring a minimum of distorting shimmer'.

***Please have a look at MH's images on www.orientalbirdimages.org !

Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

17 birds W of Koko Nor on 10th – incl 15 together which were most likely three pairs with their fledged young... 'Scope views of birds on the ground – WOW!

Blue Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris*

137 bird-days. Noted on 15 dates.

Snow Pigeon *Columba leuconota*

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

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

Seven N of Xining on 7th.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

52 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

Red Turtle Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

Singles on 8+11th.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

17 bird-days over 8-10th – four of them were juveniles, incl one on 10th which was hosted by Citrine Wagtail (only the female was seen actually feeding the juvenile cuckoo, but a nearby male *citreola* was assumed to be the 'father')...

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Singles on 14+17th.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

75 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Salim Ali's Swift *Apus salimali*

105 bird-days. Noted on eight days.

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

***Salim Ali's Swift *Apus salimali* is 'restricted to E Tibetan Plateau and adjacent high-altitude W Sichuan' breeding at 'very high altitudes (above 3,400m)' – 'Fork-tailed Swifts' breeding near Xining, Qinghai, at c2,500m are also this form: JH *et al.* pers obs. 'Its winter distribution is apparently unknown but, at the very least, it must be an altitudinal migrant'.

The species is longer-tailed with a proportionately shallower tail fork, has different throat pattern ('narrow pale strip on the center of the throat and is narrowest at the base of the bill, where it tapers to a neat point', 'less than half the width of the other taxa'), 'the rump patch is

consistently narrow', 'the crown and nape are mid-brown, contrasting conspicuously' with the glossy black mantle, and the pale tips to the underparts are much reduced compared to *pacificus* (more comparable to *leuconyx* in this character).

***Salim Ali's Swift was thought to possibly breed E as far as NW Hunan (J Martinez pers com) but closer scrutiny of the photos (JH, P Leader & J Martinez) reveal the birds to be *Apus pacificus*.

*****Fork-tailed Swift** *Apus pacificus* / **Salim Ali's Swift** *Apus salimali*
One [LN] on 8th.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
151 bird-days. Noted on 14 dates.

Northern Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*
One adult in a poplar grove W of Koko Nor on 22nd – GA, who probably encounters the species less frequently than any of the rest of the also-present group members, saw it well.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*
Singletons were noted on three dates.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*
Five bird-days. Noted on three dates – three in a day is a notable count by most standards: getting 'scope views was exactly was NA had hoped for...

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*
Eight bird-days. Noted on six dates – 'scope views of a juvenile on a telegraph pole on 10th!

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*
A male & two female-types on 18th.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*
An adult *cristatus* on 8th.

***The only published record for Tibet appear to be a specimen taken at Blagodatny (c39°23'N 95°05'E) in the Northern Plateau region (*vide* Vaurie 1972). Cheng (1987) listed *L. c. cristatus* as occurring on migration in Qinghai but gave no specific locality. 'Local birding' at Golmud (JH pers obs) yielded just one Brown Shrike, on 15 June 1992, and the species appears to be genuinely rare even in E-most Qinghai though it may occasionally breed (e.g. two adults w/ one chick near Gonghe on 17 Aug 2000: JH & M Kall/AviFauna pers obs).

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*
Seven bird-days. Noted W of Koko Nor on two dates.

Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*
47 bird-days. Noted on 13 dates.

Tibetan Grey Shrike *Lanius (s.) giganteus*
One on 9th 'flew across in front of Car One – LL managed to stay on it and a mad 400m dash across the erosion-scarred hillside followed; the whole group were joint winners as the bird rewarded our efforts with great 'scope views and ditto photo opportunities!'.
*** A low-density species, wide-ranging and often inconspicuous even when present (and thus easily missed), we were fortunate to see this individual so well!

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*

One along the Mekong on 15th [GA].

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

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

****vide* Zheng *et al.* (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*

11 bird-days. Noted only N of Xining.

***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*

6+ bird-days. Noted on only two dates – team members snoozing in the vehicles may have cost us a few records of this species...

Tibetan Magpie *Pica (pica) bottanensis*

59 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

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

Henderson's Ground Jay *Podoces hendersoni*

11 bird-days. Noted on four dates – instead of the 'run-and-dodge' tactics often adopted when dealing with visiting birdwatchers several of the birds encountered were in look-at-me mode, sitting out allowing everyone in the group to enjoy long 'scope views...

Hume's Groundpecker *Pseudopodoces humilis*

155 bird-days. Noted on 14 dates.

***Apparently most closely related to *Paridae* (Dickinson 2003; B King pers com.) but please let us do our bit to avoid a newly concocted English name from slipping into common usage!

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

192 bird-days. Noted on 16 dates.

Alpine Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

22 bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on three dates.

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*

100+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – after being in short supply / incredibly distant suddenly 80 right next to the road on 19th...

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

135+ bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

***Snoozing may have cost us more than a few Common Magpies (see above) – why records of neither **Rook** *Corvus frugilegus* nor **Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*??... 'must have been the altitude!'

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

41 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

'Eastern' Great Tit *Parus minor*

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

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

Rufous-vented Tit *Parus rubidiventris*

19 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Songar Tit *Parus songarus*

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

***Note that of the several Songar Tit sspp 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 its neighbour, *affinis*.

White-browed Tit *Parus superciliosus*

34+ bird-days. This superb endemic was noted on seven dates.

Grey Crested Tit *Parus dichrous*

Six bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Pale Sand Martin *Riparia diluta*

117 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Single adults were noted on two dates.

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

30 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus*

200+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

49 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

White-browed Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile sophiae*

69 bird-days. Noted on seven dates – getting prolonged views of an adult male at <3m was a real treat.

Crested Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile elegans*

A pair 'scoped on 17th - we had to work a bit for it, but were then duly blown away by a full adult male!

Mongolian Lark *Melanocorypha mongolica*

Seven bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Long-billed Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha maxima*

A ragged adult looking after two still-downy juveniles on 10th.

Hume's Short-toed Lark *Calandrella acutirostris*

34 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Asian Short-toed Lark *Calandrella cheleensis*

34+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

One showy individual was photographed on 10th.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

Spotted Bush Warbler *Bradypterus thoracicus*

Two on 24th – what turned out to be a juvenile was heard calling and showed well enough to photograph... it was, however, unable to sing back properly: all that came out was a pitiful jumble of notes not especially like the 'proper' song.

***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*

Six bird-days. Noted on three dates. All but one were definite *weigoldicus*.

***Martens (2008) unconvincingly aligned 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

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

95 bird-days. Noted on 12 dates.

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

http://globiz.sachsen.de/snsd/publikationen/vertebrate-zoology/vz58-2/06_Martens.pdf

Yellow-streaked Warbler *Phylloscopus armandii*

46 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

Buff-barred Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus pulcher*

Seven bird-days. Noted on just two dates - noticeably scarcer than other *Phylloscopus* warblers even in optimum habitat but the distinctive call, combined with the flash of white tail as it moves across into the next tree, is a give-away.

Gansu Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

61 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

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

*****Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus*

1-2 birds were calling in the grounds of our Beijing hotel on 26th.

'Eastern' Lemon-rumped Warbler *Phylloscopus 'forresti'*

30 bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on three dates.

Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

81 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

***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."

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

193 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

'Margelanica' Whitethroat *Sylvia 'margelanica'*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis*

No fewer than 14 (of which half were seen!) on 18th.

***1st records for Qinghai apparently in 2000: JH *et al.* pers obs.

***Collar (2006) elevates *odicus* (of NE and E Burma, N Indochina, S Yunnan and Guizhou (except N), *decarlei* (of 'E Xizang', SW Sichuan, and NW Yunnan), *'dedekensi' [sic]* (of '(N)E Xizang', W Sichuan, and NW Yunnan), *gravivox* (of S Gansu, S Shaanxi, S Shanxi, NW Henan, and N Sichuan), and *cowensae* (of C and E Sichuan, N Guizhou, and W Hubei) to species status on morphological grounds, a 'new arrangement, which clearly rests on uncertain foundations and is in need of considerable fortification (which is not supplied by morphometric analysis, as this shows as much variation within the new species as between them, notably a remarkably long tail in *dedekensi' [sic]*...). In the absence of DNA analysis and a thorough study of the notoriously varied vocalizations of these birds, such rearrangement seems fairly meaningless...

Kozlov's Babax *Babax koslowi*

13+ bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Pere David's Laughingthrush *Garrulax davidi*

15 bird-days. Noted N of Xining on three dates.

Giant Laughingthrush *Garrulax maximus*

28 bird-days. Noted on three dates – a trip highlight was seeing two with a group of three Spot-breasted Scimitar Babblers by the track on 18th: WHAT A BIRD!

Elliot's Laughingthrush *Garrulax elliotii*

165+ bird-days. Noted on nine dates... 30 N of Xining on 7th incl an adult seen feeding a still-downy juvenile.

***Cheng (1987)'s range map seems to contradict his text here – according to the latter only the nominate ssp occurs in Qinghai, while the map indicates that birds in the Yangtze and Mekong watersheds are ssp *bonvaloti*. Dickinson (2003), on the other hand, does not accept *bonvaloti* but has southern birds belonging to the nominate, and northern birds to ssp *prjevalskii* (a taxon Cheng lumped with the nominate). Morphology and vocalizations suggest that birds N of Xining are indeed a different ssp from those in the SE, as per the Cheng range map & Dickinson, but what are the correct names?

Chinese Fulvetta *Alcippe striaticollis*

Ten bird-days. Noted on three dates.

***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*

Ten bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Northern Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Four on 24th.

Chinese Nuthatch *Sitta villosa*

14 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Przevalski's Nuthatch *Sitta przewalskii*

Four on 7th - a species which invariably makes the Bird of the Trip shortlist!

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

Singles were seen on three dates.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

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

Hodgson's Treecreeper *Certhia hodgsoni*

One seen on 16th.

***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).

Starling sp *Sturnus sp*

One in flight on 20th over the edge of a Roof of the World village – it seemed to land but could not be located when we stopped briefly to scan: at >4,000m any starling would be a good record, but we did not feel we could afford to spend ages on it!

Chestnut Thrush *Turdus rubrocanus*

4-6 N of Xining on 7th.

Kessler's Thrush *Turdus kessleri*

20 bird-days. Noted on just six dates.

***Evidently a somewhat erratic species – the 2011 OBC Fundraiser trip logged 128+ bird-days, encountering post-breeding gatherings of up to 70 birds.

Chinese Song Thrush *Turdus mupinensis*

Despite the somewhat challenging weather most of us managed good views of two along the forest track on 24th.

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*

Nine (of which two were seen without undue difficulty) on 7th.

Himalayan Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis*

Eight bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on two dates.

Himalayan Bluetail *Tarsiger rufilatus*

One on 17th.

Northern Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*

21+ bird-days. Noted N of Xining on three 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*

14 bird-days. Noted on two dates - this localized endemic is 'arguably the prettiest in the genus'.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

82 bird-days. Noted on 15 dates.

Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

91 bird-days. Noted on six dates – main event no fewer than 69 on 18th!

White-throated Redstart *Phoenicurus schisticeps*

73+ bird-days. Noted on nine dates - this species is arguably not far behind Przevalski's in terms of prettiness...

***It seemed completely fitting that the last birds we saw when walking out of the last patch of forest covered were 8-10 very obliging individuals of this species.

Guldenstadt's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus*

21 bird-days. Noted on five dates this extremely attractive high-mountain specialist put on a good show.

Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*

49 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

White-bellied Redstart *Hodgsonius phaenicuroides*

Two heard on 16th.

Plumbeous Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosa*

3+ [NA, MJ, LL & LN] on 25th.

River Chat *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

29 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

'Siberian' Stonechat *Saxicola 'torquatus'*

Singles were noted on two 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", and (still) NOT elevated to full species status by e.g. Svensson *et al.* (2009), who treated 'Eastern Stonechat' as a subspecies group under 'Common Stonechat' and dealt with it in a separate account only 'for practical reasons'.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

34 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

13 bird-days. Noted on four dates – 6+ (quite possibly as many as ten!) on 22nd put on a terrific show.

Sooty Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*

Ten (incl two adults w/ two juveniles 'scoped) on 18th.

***Work on vocalizations & DNA may well lead to suggestions that the distinctive *rothschildi* be elevated to full species status...

Slaty-backed Flycatcher *Ficedula hodgsonii*

11 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

Four on 14th.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*

60 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

Henri's Snowfinch *Montifringilla henrici*

39 bird-days. Noted on three 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).

***From the files: The 2006 OBC Fundraiser yielded c391 bird-days - except for two on 24th the species was seen only at Er La, where 355 on 25 Aug was 'a surprise' – of these, 298 flew S (14 flocks / groups of 2-41 birds, all but three birds passed before 08h00) on what appeared to be straightforward migration. As we were not ideally positioned the whole time it is likely that we missed a number of flocks: as many as twice the number we recorded may have passed...

Tibetan (= Himalayan) Snowfinch *Montifringilla adamsi*

7+ bird-days. Noted on two dates – first encountered near the upper altitudinal limit at c4,500m, with an adult feeding a fledged juvenile up on the wall of a stupa...

***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*

142+ bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

Pere David's Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda davidiana*

Four bird-days. Noted on just two dates.

Rufous-necked Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda ruficollis*

205 bird-days. Noted on nine dates – main event 88 along the remotest Roof of the World stretch of road on 20th.

Blanford's Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda blanfordi*

Ten bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*

Five – a family group – on 15th.

Robin Accentor *Prunella rubeculoides*

52 bird-days. Noted on no fewer than six dates – main event 27 on 12th, when birds in family groups were too busy amongst themselves to pay much attention to us... or to our long lenses!

Rufous-browed Accentor *Prunella strophiate*

13 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Brown Accentor *Prunella fulvescens*

c63 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *M. tschutschensis*

One adult male *simillima*-type at Koko Nor on 8th.

*** Alstrom & Mild (2003) conclude that “[...] the Yellow Wagtail complex is probably most appropriately classified as two species also under the BSC” (p34). Retained in *M. flava* are *flavissima*, *flava*, *beema*, *thunbergi* (incl. *plexa*), *iberiae*, *cinereocapilla*, *pygmaea*, *feldegg*, *lutea* & *leucocephala*. This treatment is adopted by Rasmussen & Anderton (2005).

***Zheng et al. (2005) did not list *simillima* for Qinghai, but there are at least one previous record: two at Koko Nor on 23 May 2011 (JH *et al.* pers obs).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

46 bird-days. Noted on ten bird-days – as the days rolled by we started to take this Dreambird for granted, but early on seeing eight together along a fence lining a lush, flowered-over meadow made a strong impression: one was an adult male *calcarata*, one was a female & the rest were flitty juveniles.

***On 10th we watched a female feeding a juvenile Common Cuckoo; a nearby adult male *citreola* was presumed to be the ‘father’.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Three bird-days. Noted on just two dates – one heard W of Koko Nor on 22nd was presumed to be a migrant: at Golmud the species occurred in autumn from 14 Aug (JH pers. obs.).

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

80 bird-days. Noted on 14 dates - sspp involved were *leucopsis* (none identified S of @ Er La pass except one 1st c-y near Nangqian on 15th) & *alboides* (in the Yushu/Nangqian area).

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

18 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

Singles on 11+23rd – the latter flew by close, calling, continuing low over the brow of the ridge but did not land.

***The former was six days earlier than the previous earliest autumn migrant (JH pers obs).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

24 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseus*

16 bird-days. Noted on two dates – on 23rd superb views of three birds by a stream as we headed back to the vehicles...

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

36+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Oriental Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica*

Four on 7th.

Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus*

One on 7th.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

74 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

Plain Mt Finch *Leucosticte nemoricola*

48 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Brandt's Mountain Finch *Leucosticte brandti*

43 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Mongolian Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes mongolicus*

14+ on 22nd – it was a not-so-minor trip highlight to get extended views a full-blown adult male with a juvenile. We watched the male land on a grass stem & slide down it to weigh it down to access the seeds: 'clinging on sideways is not that easy, and the bird's technique clearly needed perfecting'.

Przevalski's Rosefinch *Urocynchramus pylzowi*

c14 bird-days. Noted on two dates – three on 12th took some finding but fortunately there were plenty of birds (and one or two mammals!) to keep us sharp while we put in the mileage: outstanding views were eventually enjoyed by all group members: TINGALING!

***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*

78 bird-days. Noted on nine days.

Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus davidianus*

33 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

Pink-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus eos*

94 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Sinai Rosefinch *Carpodacus synoicus*

Five on 6th – two were adult males which everyone managed to see extremely well (and photograph!) despite grit-laden gusts of wind.

***It seems likely that *beicki* will be proved specifically distinct from at least the nominate.

Three-banded Rosefinch *Carpodacus trifasciatus*

Four on 18th – one was an adult male which offered great 'scope views before vanishing...

Chinese White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus dubius*

72 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

Eastern Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilloides*

42 bird-days. Noted on five dates – main event 20 on 12th.

Spotted Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus severtzovi*

11 bird-days. This often erratic species was seen on three dates – an adult male perched on the window ledge when MH entered his room on 19th: Birdiest Hotel of the Trip? Swing voters were soon convinced by an adult Brandt's Mountain Finch, trailed by two juveniles, flying over the yard as we headed for dinner...

Red-fronted Rosefinch *Pyrrhospiza punicea*

5+ bird-days. Noted on just two dates – a superb adult male 'scoped at close range on 19th was all the sweeter for having given us more of a run for our money than we'd expected: clearly not one to be taken for granted!

Roborovski's Rosefinch *Kozlowia roborowskii*

13 bird-days. This highly specialized endemic was seen well on no fewer than three dates.

Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

25+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 20+ on 17th.

Grey-headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythaca*

27 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carniceps*

22+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*

Seven bird-days. Noted on two dates – on 9th, an adult male 'scoped & a female feeding two fledglings ensured that we all felt we'd properly 'done' this attractive species.

Eastern Rock Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*

54 bird-days. Noted on 11 bird-days.

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*

One on 6th.

Kozlov's Bunting *Emberiza koslowi*

Nine on 15th.

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

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## Mammals:

**Himalayan Marmot** *Marmota himalayana*

68+ animal-days. Noted on nine dates.

**Northern Three-toed Jerboa** *Dipus sagitta*

One W of Koko Nor on 10<sup>th</sup> – seen well by GA & LN: for the rest of us, at best a speeding blur!

**Tibetan Dwarf Hamster** *Cricetulus tibetanus*

Five on 11<sup>th</sup>.

## Gansu Pika *Ochotona cansus*

7+ animal-days. Noted on three dates.

**Plateau Pika** *Ochotona curzoniae*

Widespread – not systematically recorded, but a leucistic individual on 19<sup>th</sup> was of note.

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

5+ animal-days. Noted on five dates – oncl at c4,600m on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Woolly Hare** *Lepus oiostolus*

14+ animal-days. Noted on eight dates.

\*\*\*?Gansu Mole *Scapanulus oweni*

Mole hills noted on several dates were thought to be the work of this species.

**Wolf** *Canis lupus*

Six animal-days. Noted on two dates – main event a pack of five seen at close range on 13<sup>th</sup>, ‘splashing through water, flushing birds from the meadow as they went – one appeared to catch a young marmot during an interlude while the rest of the pack were rolling around on the ground. Later they all set off again, a pair of Black-necked Cranes watching...’

**Tibetan Fox** *Vulpes ferrilata*

14 animal-days. Noted on four dates – main event ten along the remotest Roof of the World stretch of road on 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*

Seven animal-days. Noted on six dates.

**Kiang** *Equus kiang*

149 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!

**Alpine Musk Deer** *Moschus chrysogaster*

Superb 'scope views of one on 18<sup>th</sup>...

**Siberian Roe** *Capreolus pygargus*

Seven animal-days. Noted on two dates: 'a strikingly different animal from its W Palearctic counterpart – almost orangey in hue, and much less dainty'...

**MacNeill's (Red) Deer** *Cervus macneilli*

One [GA] on 18<sup>th</sup>.

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

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

Two on 9<sup>th</sup>.

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**Goitred Gazelle** *Gazella subgutturosa*

16 seen well on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Tibetan Gazelle** *Procapra picticaudata*

211 animal-days. Noted on five dates.

**Przewalski's Gazelle** *Procapra przewalskii*

55 animal-days. Noted on two dates – main event 48 on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

\*\*\*The species has recently be 'downgraded' to 'merely' Endangered (following the discovery of additional herds in 2003) although the world population may be no more than 350-400 mature individuals. See <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/18230/0>

\*\*\*Our animals appear to represent an additional 'undiscovered' population.

**Tibetan Antelope** *Panthalops hodgsonii*

93 along a remote stretch of road on 20<sup>th</sup> was truly something to remember...

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

**Blue Sheep** *Pseudois nayaur*

383+ animal-days. Noted on no fewer than nine dates – 'what sort of a town was it you were staying in? The sort where you spot a herd of 130 Blue Sheep out in the evening sun on the hillside across from the gas station as you're filling up the 4WD!'