

Beijing & Kunming, China, 2-6 March 2009.

- an at-a-glance list of 138 bird species recorded.

By Jesper Hornskov ***all rights reserved***

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The list is best considered a work in progress and should not be cited without consulting the authors.

Based mostly on my own field notes, this brief write-up aims to document that it is possible to see some good birds in China even if you only have 3-4 days, say, as an add-on to a business visit (as in this case) or a sightseeing holiday. Much improved infrastructure – frequent flights to many cities from both Beijing, Shanghai & Guangzhou (=Canton), improved road- and rail network - means that the visitor has a choice between relaxed, general birding and raids dedicated to finding some of the country's many endemic species.

2 March 2009: S Walsh met at airport by JH at noon, then transfer to hotel on the edge of the city (the convenient location minimizing the risk of getting caught in traffic) and birding Summer Palace.

3 March 2009: Wild Duck Lake...Great Wall on the way back.

4 March 2009: Ibisbill site the mountains N of Beijing. In early evening we flew to Kunming, capital of Yunnan.

5 March 2009: Xishan all day.

6 March 2009: Xishan until 16h00, then return to Beijing.

In the species list the concept "bird-days" is used - it is the avian equivalent of man-hours: for example, separate flocks of ten and 15 Baikal Teals 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, nothing more.

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Species List:

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*
Nine bird-days.

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*
Seven on 3rd & five on 4th.

Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus*
One flying w/ Whoopers on 3rd.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*
26 on 3rd.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*
Two on 3rd.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*
A pair in the line-up of Mallards on 2nd were recent arrivals.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*
55+ bird-days.

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*
Five bird-days – two males & a female on 3rd, and a distant pair on 6th.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
One on 6th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
325+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*
A flighty flock of 150 on 3rd.

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*
No less than 44 yielded nice 'scope views on 3rd.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*
15 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*
8+ on 6th.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*
One male on 3rd.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*
One male on 2nd & 50+ on 3rd.

Smew *Mergellus albellus*

220 (mostly in scattered groups engaging in courtship display) on 3rd & three on 4th.

***Although a more widespread & 'better known' species than, say, Baikal Teal, seeing so many so well was something to be savoured.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

62 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* 8)

16 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Three bird-days.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

One fast-flying individual on 3rd.

Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

One overhead as we were having lunch on 6th.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* 11B)

One on 5th.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Two imm on 3rd & three (one adult and two 2nd c-y birds) on 4th... several WOW moments!

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

Two soaring high over Great Wall on 3rd.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

One female on 2nd.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo japonicus* 11D)

Singles on three dates.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

95+ on 3rd. Heard constantly and seen repeatedly throughout the morning...

Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

Four showing well on 4th – Tingaling!

Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus*

Diligent searching paid off when one was seen well on 4th.

Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

One flushed from the edge of the track on 6th.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

One on 4th.

'Mongolian' Gull *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus* 19)
One adult on 3rd.

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*
One in the distance on 6th.

Common Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*
500+ on 6th.

Blue Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris*
Four in flight on 4th.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
11 bird-days. Noted on four dates – 'scope views!

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*
11 bird-days in the Beijing area.

Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus sparverioides*
Four bird-days – heard on two dates.

Himalayan Swiftlet *Aerodramus brevirostris*
25+ on 6th.

House Swift *Apus nipalensis* 34)
50+ on 5th & 130+ on 6th.

Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*
Three on 4th – superb 'scope views of one trying to swallow a fish.

Speckled Piculet *Picumnus innominatus*
One seen well & heard calling on 6th.

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*
Eight bird-days. Noted on three dates - three together on 2nd...

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*
Eight bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*
Singles heard on five dates.

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*
22 bird-days.

Chinese Grey Shrike *Lanius sphenocercus*
Prolonged 'scope views of a singing bird on 3rd.

*****Slender-billed Oriole** *Oriolus tenuirostris*
An oriole heard on 6th was presumably this species – the song did not fit that of Black-naped or Maroon.

White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*

Two on 5th.

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

20 on 2nd.

***Apparently a different species from the ones in Spain and Portugal...

Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*

30 (incl four en route) on 4th.

Common Magpie *Pica pica*

Common in the Beijing area – not systematically recorded.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone orientalis*

Six on 4th.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

22+ bird-days. Noted daily in the Beijing area.

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulous*

1+ on 2nd.

Japanese Waxwing *Bombycilla japonica*

5+ showing well on 2nd. Coming across this sought-after species pretty much directly we'd arrived at our trip's 1st stop jump-started the adventure!

***In addition, three unidentified Waxwings...

'Great' Tit *Parus (major) minor* & *P. (major) subtibetanus* 54)

23 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus*

34 bird-days.

Yellow-bellied Tit *Parus venustulus*

Five bird-days. This vocal and very pretty, endemic species was noted on both days at Xishan.

Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*

Ten bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Songar Tit *Parus songarus stoetzneri*

Three bird-days.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

18 bird-days.

Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus*

Five on 6th.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

Seven on 6th.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus vinaceus*
Three on 4th.

Black-throated Tit *Aegithalos concinnus*
55+ bird-days.

Asian Short-toed Lark *Calandrella cheleensis* 69)
At least five on 3rd.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*
17 on 3rd.

Chinese Hill Warbler *Rhopophilus pekinensis* 71)
13 bird-days. Noted on two dates – superb views!

Mountain Tailorbird *Orthomus cucullatus*
Nine bird-days. Two seen well on 6th...

Crested Finchbill *Spizixos canifrons*
One on 5th.

Brown-breasted Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthorrhous*
62+ bird-days – 14 on 5th & 48+ on 6th.

Chinese Bulbul *Pycnonotus sinensis*
65 on 2nd.

Mountain Bulbul *Ixos mcclellandii*
A flock of eight seen well on 5th as they hawked about in a bare tree.

Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler *Cettia fortipes*
Two heard singing on 6th – one seen.

Buff-barred Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus pulcher*
One on 5th & three on 6th.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*
30 on 5th & 38 on 6th.

Eastern Lemon-rumped Warbler *Phylloscopus forresti* 95A)
Eight on both 5+6th.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*
Singletons heard on 5+6th.

Claudia's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus claudiae* 99A)
One on 5th.

White-tailed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus davisoni* 100)
Six on 5th & eight on 6th – much singing...

Bianchi's Warbler *Seicercus valentini*

Two seen well & heard calling on 5th.

Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis* 105A**)

22 on 5th & 18 on 6th – most were only heard, but two came in nicely in response to taping.

Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*

Four (incl two working the trunk of the Mountain Bulbul tree) on 5th & seven on 6th.

Rufous-capped Babbler *Stachyris ruficeps*

Nine bird-days.

Pere David's Laughingthrush *Garrulax davidi*

14 bird-days. Noted on two dates, with excellent views of this subtly attractive N China endemic at Great Wall on 3rd.

White-browed Laughingthrush *Garrulax sannio*

20 bird-days. Noted on two dates, with memorable views on 5th.

Silver-eared Mesia *Leiothrix argentea*

Four (of which two were seen well) on 5th & heard singing in same general area on 6th.

***Stott (1993) did not list the species for the Kunming area. Interestingly, the species was recorded at Tengchong for the 1st time in Apr 2008 (JH pers obs)...

Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*

23 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

White-browed Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius flaviscapiss*

23 bird-days. Noted on two dates, with two males seen very well on 5th as they engaged in a song stand-off along the ridge.

Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanouroptera*

33 on 5th & five on 6th.

Spectacled Fulvetta *Alcippe ruficapilla*

75 bird-days. This attractive China endemic was noted on two dates.

Rusty-capped Fulvetta *Alcippe dubia*

43 bird-days. Noted on two dates – vocal and, with a bit of patience, not too hard to get good views of.

'Northern' Grey-cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe davidi* 117A)

21 bird-days. Good view obtained on two dates.

White-collared Yuhina *Yuhina diademata*

Seven on 5th & 34 on 6th.

Vinous-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis webbianus* 121)

55 on 4th & four 'Ashy-throated' on 5th.

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*
16 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*
One on 5th & three on 6th.

Northern Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*
Three along the river on 4th.

Naga Nuthatch *Sitta nagaensis*
Six bird-days. Noted on two dates.

White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus*
Four on 2nd.

White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea* 127)
One seen well on 5th.

Chinese Blackbird *Turdus mandarinus* 130)
13 – 12 together plus a singleton – on 2nd.

Chestnut Thrush *Turdus rubrocanus*
One on 5th & four on 6th.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*
One immature on 2nd & three on 4th.

Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* 132)
Four on both 2+4th.

Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni* 133)
87 (85 *naumanni* & two *eunomus*) on 2nd & 41 (incl 23 *naumanni*, two *eunomus* & three intermediates).

Chinese Song Thrush *Turdus mupinensis*
Three on 5th & six on 6th.

***One incorporated mimicry of two calls of Large Hawk Cuckoo into its overall Mistle Thrush-like song.

Northern Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* 134A)
One male on 5th.

***In addition, two unidentified Red-flanked Bluetails, possibly the 'expected' Himalayan *Tarsiger rufilatus*, were seen briefly that day...

Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*
Three on 5th.

Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*
Nine bird-days. Noted on two dates – a couple of males showing well...

'Common' Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* 138)
A 'Siberian' male seen singing on 6th.

Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferreus*
One male 'scoped on 5th.

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush *Monticola rufiventris*
One male 'scoped on 5th.

Asian Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus*
One heard singing on 5th.

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*
One seen repeatedly on 4th.

Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum melanoxanthum*
Two female-types together on 5th.

Buff-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum ignipectum*
12 bird-days. Unbelievable views of a male on 5th...

Mrs. Gould's Sunbird *Aethopyga gouldiae*
Five on 5th & three on 6th.

Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans*
42 bird-days. Good views of both sexes at Xishan.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*
Common in the Beijing area – not systematically recorded.

Siberian Accentor *Prunella montanella*
One heard on 3rd & 11 (incl several seen well) on 4th.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
Three bird-days at Kunming. 1-2 *alboides* birds showed well.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*
11 bird-days at Kunming.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*
A female seen well N of Beijing on 4th.
***Perhaps not annual around Beijing!

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*
148 bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event 90 on 2nd.

Oriental Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica*
87 bird-days. Noted daily at Beijing.

Black-headed Greenfinch *Carduelis ambigua*
18 bird-days. Noted on both days at Kunming – memorable views of a pair on the track on 6th.

Dark-breasted Rosefinch *Carpodacus nipalensis*

One heard on 5th & two – one heard-only, one seen in flight - on 6th.

Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus davidianus*

A pair N of Beijing on 4th.

Vinaceous Rosefinch *Carpodacus vinaceus*

One male seen briefly on 6th.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

11+ showed well on 4th.

Eastern Rock Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*

Five on 3rd & no less than 70 on 4th.

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*

Six on 4th.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

One on 4th & four on 6th.

Yellow-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans*

Two on 4th.

Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*

105 on 3rd & five along the river on 4th.

*** All those seen well were of the 'brown' taxon.

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Notes:

8) *T. r. poggei* differ from nominate in iris colour & vocalizations.

11D) "The racial group *vulpinus* is very close genetically to nominate *B. b. buteo* and is considered to hybridise regularly with the latter, although it is usually distinctive in appearance, and might also be vocally distinct. *B. [b.] japonicus* is genetically and morphologically more distant, seems to differ vocally as well, and is probably specifically distinct": Rasmussen & Anderton 2005.

19) May or may not be a full species...

34) split from Little Swift *A. affinis* "but evidence not yet wholly convincing": Dickinson (2003).

54) Dickinson (2003): Three species may be involved – *P. major* (ssp *major* (incl. *kapustini*) in Xinjiang), *P. cinereus* (ssp *commixtus* in S+E China & *hainanus* in Hainan), and *P. minor* (ssp *tibetanus* (apparently incl. Cheng's *subtibetanus* & *artatus*) in SE Tibet – W Sichuan & *minor* in NC+NE China).

69) "Probably, but not certainly, separate from *C. rufescens*": Dickinson (2003).

71) DNA studies may reveal this species to be closer to babblers than to warblers.

95A) 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?*

- 99A) *claudiae* (C China – N Hebei) is best considered a monotypic species though “the morphological differences between the three [Blyth’s Leaf Warbler] species are very slight [...], and their songs and calls are presently considered indistinguishable”: Olsson *et al.* in press.
- 100) The taxon *davisoni* (N+W+C Yunnan) is best considered a monotypic species despite only very slight morphological differences & extremely similar songs and calls: Olsson *et al.* 2005. “Burmese *davisoni* have a greyish-olive cast on the mantle so that is less pure than in other races”: Williamson (1967). For this species ‘Davison’s Leaf Warbler’ was the English name of choice for Rheindt (2006), as “retaining ‘White-tailed Leaf Warbler’ as the English name would lead to confusion”.
- 105A**) 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...
- 117A) Zou *et al.* (2007) discovered that sspp *schaefferi* (of northern Vietnam, SE Yunnan, Guizhou & Guangxi) & *davidi* (of ‘Gansu, Shannxi [sic], Sichuan, Guizhou, Hunan, Fujian [error?: if correct this is an isolated population; Fujian is listed also for *hueti*] & NE Yunnan), probably, based on range, with *yunnanensis* (which was excluded from the study as no DNA sample was handy; this taxon was listed for Dali by Cheng (1987) and is probably the one occurring at Kunming – from where no taxa was listed by Cheng (1987)) are better considered one species (morphologically they differ in having a brown, not grey, head, and they lack the prominent black superciliary line found in ‘the peripheral taxa’), *fratercula* (E & SE Burma, N & C Laos, N Thailand & SW Yunnan) another, *annamensis* (previously considered to belong with Mountain Fulvetta *Alcippe paracensis*) a third, and *morrisonia* (Taiwan), *hueti* (of SE China, ‘incl Guangxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, Zhejiang, Fujian & Guangdong’) & *rufescentior* (of Hainan) a fourth. The authors concede that a case can be made to consider *morrisonia* a full species: it is c5% diverged from both *hueti* & *rufescentior*.
- 121) Includes Ashy-throated Parrotbill. This arrangement “[which retains Brown-winged Parrotbill *P. brunneus* as a separate species] follows a large, careful study of Han (1991), and maps in earlier publications were corrected by Cheng (1993), who endorsed Han’s findings”: Dickinson (2003).
- 127) Ssp *aurea* & *toratugumi* – the northern forms split from *dauma* on size and voice: Dickinson (2003).
- 132) “Separated from [*atroregularis*] based on Russian work”: Dickinson (2003).
- 133) Ssp *naumanni* & *eunomus*. Dickinson (2003) splits the two “based on Russian work” but judging from mixed characters shown by many birds on migration and in winter quarters there is very extensive interbreeding (JH pers. obs.).
- 134A) “Sino-Himalayan *rufilatus* and N Asian *cyanurus* are widely disjunct in breeding ranges. Consistent differences in morphology and song-types over wide areas indicate they are better treated as separate species.”: Rasmussen & Anderton (2005).
- 138) Ssp *maurus*, *przewalskii* & *stejnegeri*. Dickinson (2003): “proposed splits of this complex species seem unsatisfactory if only in how the forms are ascribed to species”.

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