Beijing & Beidaihe, China: 5-8 Nov 2012.

An at-a-glance list of 128 species of birds & two species of mammals recorded.

By Jesper Hornskov ® ***this draft 22 Dec 2012*** ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

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

Based on my field notes, this brief write-up covers the birds noted at Beijing & Beidaihe by D Mirecki & myself during an add-on to a work visit to China's capital – to make the most of the time available no more than an outline plan had been made: general experience garnered over the years would allow us to 'play it by ear', depending on what the weather was doing. As we'd hoped, everything – the ease of the birdwatching, the food, comfortable & convenient accommodations - came together to produce a pleasant short break.

Our plans drew inspiration from four highly enjoyable visits to Beidaihe in autumns 2011 & 2012:

a four-nights-away extension to the 2011 Oriental Bird Club Fundraiser to NE Tibet (see http://www.netfugl.dk/trip reports/asia/China Beidaihe Aug2011 JesperHornskov.pdf),

a 'Pied Harrier Quest' over 12-19 Sep 2011 (see http://www.netfugl.dk/trip_reports/asia/China_Beidaihe_Sep2011_JesperHornskov.pdf),

a follow-up 'Pied Harrier Quest' over 2-8 Sep 2012 (see http://www.netfugl.dk/trip reports/asia/China Beidaihe 2-8Sep2012 JesperHornskov.pdf)

and an rewarding follow-up to *that* in mid-Sep 2012 (see http://www.netfugl.dk/trip_reports/asia/China_BeidaiheBeijing_Sep2012_JesperHornskov.pdf)

Beidaihe - rediscovered in 1985 and almost instantly recognised as THE place to enjoy a superb range of E Asian migrants - had been receiving some poor reviews over the last 3-4 years, but in 2011 some good news at last: the local mudflats had been fenced-off to create an 'Ecological Restoration Area', virtually eliminating disturbance! In terms of ease of access (<2 hours by train from Beijing, or 3 hours by car from Beijing airport) & opportunities to view waders, gulls and terms we were suddenly and unexpectedly back to World Class!

Opportunities for local birding around Beijing, likewise, vary depending on the season and what the weather is doing. As luck would have it, the weather was 'interesting' during the days we had available: a massive cold front was sweeping across N China! On 3rd/4th so much snow fell on the capital that driving into the mountains to the N on 5th was out of the question. Instead we opted for Botanical Gardens & Summer Palace before traveling by car to Beidaihe.

By mid-afternoon of 7th it was obvious that we'd already seen so much @ the Beidaihe area that we might be better off returning to Beijing, so this is what we did, and even before the sun had climbed above the snowy mountains at Wild Duck Lake the next morning we knew we'd done the right thing: we were watching the 5th crane species of our trip. Brown Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon mantchuricum* (nowadays a one-night-away bird from Beijing at pretty much any time of the year) will have to wait until my companion's next visit!

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

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

Species list:

Common Pheasant Phasanius colchicus

Eight bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Bean Goose Anser fabalis

275+ bird-days. Noted on two dates - main event 275+ ssp serrirostris at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

***Geese sp Anser sp

c40 migr at Beidaihe on 6th – by the time they passed it was already too dark to see what they were!

Mute Swan Cygnus olor

Eight (a pair with four f g 'ugly ducklings' + a pair of adults) at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Bewick's Swan Cygnus columbianus

One adult migr at Beidaihe (where rare, especially in autumn: JH pers obs) on 6th, and 180 at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Whooper Swan Cygnus cygnus

20 at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Common Shelduck Tadorna tadorna

Two at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Ruddy Shelduck Tadorna ferruginea

37 bird-days. Noted daily.

Mandarin Duck Aix galericulata

One in flight w/ Mallards at Beidaihe on 6th.

Gadwall Anas strepera

200 at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Falcated Duck Anas falcata

Two in flight ('disappered forever') at Summer Palace on 5th, and a pair seen well through the 'scope at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Eurasian Wigeon Anas penelope

15 at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Mallard Anas platyrhynchos

105+ bird-days. Noted on three dates - main event 80 at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Chinese Spotbill Anas zonorhyncha

Two at Beidaihe on 6th & 125 at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Northern Shoveler Anas clypeata

One male at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Northern Pintail Anas acuta

One at Beidaihe on 6th.

Red-crested Pochard Netta rufina

A pair at Summer Palace on 5th & two males at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Common Pochard Aythya ferina

15 on 8th.

Baer's Pochard Aythya baeri

One male flying around with six Ferruginous Ducks, then landing & allowing 'scope views, at Wild Duck Lake on 8th: TINGALING!

Ferruginous Duck Aythya nyroca

Eight at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Tufted Duck Aythya fuligula

Ten at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

White-winged Scoter Melanitta deglandi stejnegeri

One at Beidaihe on 6th.

Common Goldeneve Bucephala clangula

135+ bird-days. Noted daily - main event 85 at Beidaihe on 6th.

Smew Mergellus albellus

80+ (incl a number of immaculate drakes looking very smart in the bright, wintry sunshine) at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Goosander Mergus merganser

62 bird-days. Noted daily - man event 35 at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

One at Beidaihe on 6th.

Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis

Five at Botanical Gardens & 11 at Summer Palace on 5th.

***It was good to get views that allowed us to confirm that these birds had the white iris of ssp *poggei*, which also differs from the nominate in vocalizations...

Great Crested Grebe Podiceps cristatus

40 bird-days. Noted daily - main event 30 on the sea at Beidaihe on 6th.

Slavonian Grebe Podiceps auritus

At Beidaihe one on 6th & four on 7th.

Black-necked Grebe Podiceps nigricollis

Five at Beidaihe on 6th.

Oriental White Stork Ciconia boyciana

A flock of 275 migr at 10h28 on 7^{th} – they appeared 'without warning' and passed in the best possible light so close that we could hear the *woosh* as the still air was cleaved by their mighty wings!

Eurasian Spoonbill Platalea leucorodia

Two bird-days - undoubtedly the same 1st c-y bird showing well at Beidaihe on both 6+7th.

Grey Heron Ardea cinerea

Nine bird-days. Noted at Beidaihe on both 6+7th.

Great Egret Ardea alba

At Beidaihe two on 6th & one on 7th.

Little Egret Egretta garzetta

At Beidaihe 24 on 6th & 18 on 7th.

Great Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo

One 1st c-y migr at Beidaihe on 6th.

***'Cormorant sp' Phalacrocorax sp

13 headed S at Beidaihe at 14h30 on 6th – four adults in the flock looked a little dumpier than Great Cormorant (on the not-all-black 1st c-y birds the jizz was much harder to judge) but we just didn't see them well enough to clinch the ID as Temminck's Cormorant *P. capillatus*

Saker Falco cherrug

One perched on a mast at Wild Duck Lake on 8th – we were able to approach & got decent views through the 'scope.

Peregrine Falco peregrinus

Probably the same 1st c-y at Beidaihe throughout the day on 6th & PM on 7th, identified as a male on the last day.

***Plenty of action on 6th: "took off... a Goldeneye was forced down to crash land: it rolled over violently upon impact on a narrow sandbar but got into the water. The falcon was soon at it again: it struck a white pigeon in the 2nd attempt, right over the reedbed in front of us. We watched it devour the prey, much bothered by the Common Magpies as it did so.'

Hen Harrier Circus cyaneus

Five bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk Accipiter nisus

Two at Botanical Gardens on 5th & one at Great Wall on 7th.

Northern Goshawk Accipiter gentiles

Two (an unsexed 1st c-y & an adult male) at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Common Buzzard Buteo buteo japonicus

Four bird-days. Noted on three dates.

***A 1st c-y at Great Wall on 7th showed an aberrant white rump...

Rough-legged Buzzard Buteo lagopus

One at Wild Duck Lake on 8th (instead of the hoped-for Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*!).

Common Coot Fulica atra

30+ showed well at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Siberian Crane Grus leucogeranus

101 bird-days. 46 migr on 6th & 55 migr on 7th.

***It was simply outstanding to be there for this textbook example of weather-triggered migration: how often has it occurred that the weather maps have suggested that something – maybe not something as major as what we witnessed, but at least something – would happen...and then: not much going on at all!?

White-naped Crane Grus vipio

Five at Wild Duck Lake on 8th

Common Crane *Grus grus*

494+ bird-days. 141+ migr on 6th & c40 migr on 7th, and 310 at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Hooded Crane Grus monacha

92 bird-days. 61 migr on 6th & 31 migr on 7th.

Red-crowned Crane Grus japonensis

282 bird-days. Five migr on 6th & <u>277</u> (in 24 flocks) migr on 7th.

***Seeing this emblematic species in such numbers (possibly the highest day count for more than a decade?) was very special – and made more so by the fact that it doesn't seem to ever swing by the Beijing area.

Northern Lapwing Vanellus vanellus At Beidaihe two on 6th & one on 7th.

Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus

At Beidaihe two on 6th & one on 7th.

Eurasian Curlew Numenius arquata

One at Beidaihe on 6th.

Far Eastern Curlew Numenius madagascariensis

Two at Beidaihe on 6th.

Spotted Redshank Tringa erythropus

One at Beidaihe on 6th.

Dunlin Calidris alpina

Five at Beidaihe on 6th.

Black-tailed Gull Larus crassirostris

At Beidaine 75 on 6th & 40+ on 7th

Common Gull Larus canus

360+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – c160 at Beidaihe on 6th incl three 1st c-y *kamtschatschensis*, while a singleton at Wild Duck Lake on 8th was a *heinei*.

'Mongolian' Gull Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus

Four 1st c-y at Beidaihe on 6th.

Heuglin's Gull Larus (fuscus) taimyrensis

Five bird-days. Noted on three dates – it was nice to see an adult at Beidaihe on 6th...

Common Black-headed Gull Larus ridibundus

Fairly common at Beidaihe – and ten at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

'Herring'-type Gull Larus vegae / Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus / Larus (fuscus) taimyrensis 200 at Beidaihe on 7th.

Oriental Turtle Dove Streptopelia orientalis

21 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Eurasian Collared Dove Streptopelia decaocto

Three at Beidaihe on 6th.

Spotted Dove Streptopelia chinensis

Eight bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Common Kingfisher Alcedo atthis

One at Summer Palace on 5th.

Hoopoe Upupa epops

Perhaps the same singleton at Beidaihe on both 6+7th.

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker Dendrocopos canicapillus

Two at Botanical Gardens on 5th & one at Great Wall on 8th.

Great Spotted Woodpecker Dendrocopos major

Singles on three dates.

Grey-headed Woodpecker Picus canus

Two both at Botanical Gardens on 5th & at Beidaihe on 6th.

Chinese Grey Shrike Lanius sphenocercus

No fewer than four putting on a terrific show at Wild Duck Lake on 8th – what a bird!

Eurasian Jay Garrulus glandarius Two at Great Wall on 7th.

Azure-winged Magpie Cyanopica cyanus

c144 bird-days. Noted only @ Beijing - main event c100 at Botanical Gardens on 5th.

Red-billed Blue Magpie Urocissa erythrorhyncha

36 bird-days. Noted daily.

Common Magpie Pica pica

Common – not systematically recorded.

Daurian Jackdaw Corvus dauuricus

36 - a flock of five pied adults & 31 all-dark 1st c-y - flying by at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Carrion Crow Corvus corone

Five at Summer Palace on 5th & four at Wild Duck lake on 8th.

Large-billed Crow Corvus macrorhynchos

12+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Bohemian Waxwing Bombycilla garrulous

One at Great Wall on 7th.

Japanese Waxwing Bombycilla japonica

One at Great Wall on 7th.

'Eastern' Great Tit Parus minor

37 bird-days. Noted daily.

Yellow-bellied Tit Parus venustulus

41 bird-days – 36 at Botanical Gardens on 5th & five at Beidaihe the next day.

Coal Tit Parus ater

Two at Beidaihe on 6th & one at Great Wall the next day.

Marsh Tit Parus palustris jeholicus

Seven bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Songar Tit Parus songarus stotzneri

One at Great Wall on 8th.

Chinese Penduline Tit Remiz consobrinus

21 (incl four 'scoped!) at Beidaihe on 6th & two at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

'Silver-throated' Tit Aegithalos glaucocularis^ vinaceus

14+ at Botanical Gardens on 5th & six at Great Wall on 7th.

***^IOC, following HBW, elevates the taxa *vinaceus* & *glaucogularis* to full species status as 'Silver-throated Bushtit' *Aegithalos glaucogularis* - as recently as 2008, however, the notion of *vinaceus* as a possible split was firmly booh'd by group members.

Mongolian Lark Melanocorypha mongolica

Two at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Asian Short-toed Lark Calandrella cheleensis

One heard at Beidaihe on 6th & four at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Eurasian Skylark Alauda arvensis

128+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Chinese Hill Warbler Rhopophilus pekinensis

17 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event one seen at <6m at Great Wall on 7th: WOW!

Chinese Bulbul Pycnonotus sinensis

45 bird-days. Noted only on 5th...

Dusky Warbler Phylloscopus fuscatus

Three (incl one seen well) at Beidaihe on 6th.

Pallas' Leaf Warbler Phylloscopus proregulus

18 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event ten at Botanical Gardens on 5th.

Yellow-browed Warbler Phylloscopus inornatus

Three in a grove of trees filled to bursting with migrants at Beidaihe on 6th.

Pere David's Laughingthrush Garrulax davidi

36 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 25 at Great Wall on 7th.

Vinous-throated Parrotbill Paradoxornis webbianus

70+ at Great Wall on 7th & 115 at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Goldcrest Regulus regulus

Five at Great Wall on 7th.

Northern Wren Troglodytes troglodytes

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Chinese Nuthatch Sitta villosa

Three at Botanical Gardens on 5th & one at Great Wall on 7th.

***Crested Mvna Acridotheres cristellatus Feral

Eight at Summer Palace on 5th.

White-cheeked Starling Sturnus cineraceus At Beidaihe four on 6th & c15 on 7th.

Chinese Blackbird Turdus mandarinus

Four at Botanical Gardens on 5th.

Naumann's Thrush Turdus naumanni

90 bird-days. Noted daily - main event 51 (14 naumanni, one eunomus, one intergrade & the rest '?') at Great Wall on 7th.

Northern Red-flanked Bluetail Tarsiger cyanurus

23 bird-days. Noted only at Beidaihe: 20 (incl three adult males!) on 6th & three the next day.

Daurian Redstart Phoenicurus auroreus

Single males at Beidaihe on both 6+7th.

'Siberian' Stonechat Saxicola 'torquatus'

One female at Beidaihe on 6th.

***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'.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow Passer montanus

Common - not systematically recorded.

Alpine Accentor Prunella collaris

Four at Great Wall on 7th.

Siberian Accentor Prunella montanella

56 bird-days. Noted daily - main event no fewer than 49 (of which quite a few showed well!) at Great Wall on 7th.

Olive-backed Pipit Anthus hodgsoni

Four at Beidaihe on 6th.

Buff-bellied Pipit Anthus rubescens japonicus

12 bird-days. Fly-overs were recorded on three dates...

Water Pipit Anthus spinoletta blakistoni

24 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Brambling Fringilla montifringilla

630+ bird-days. Noted daily - main event c525 at Botanical Gardens on 5th.

Oriental Greenfinch Carduelis sinica

Eight at Botanical Gardens on 5th & 14 (sitting up nicely) at Great Wall on 8th.

Eurasian Siskin Carduelis spinus

Two at Beidaihe on 6th.

Pallas's Rosefinch Carpodacus roseus

A flock of four migr at Botanical Gardens on 5th & a flock of ten ditto at Beidaihe the next morning.

Hawfinch Coccothraustes coccothraustes

30 bird-days. Noted daily - main event ten, incl several 'scoped at close range as they sat out in the top of a leafless tree, at Great Wall on 8th.

Chinese Grosbeak Eophona migratoria

Eight at Botanical Gardens on 5th.

Pine Bunting Emberiza leucocephalos

Three at Beidaihe on 6th & 15 at Wild Duck Lake on 8th – BVD!

Eastern Rock Bunting Emberiza godlewskii

Six at Botanical Gardens on 5th & five at Great Wall on 7th.

Meadow Bunting Emberiza cioides

Four at Great Wall on 7th - one 'scoped as it sat out singing...

Tristram's Bunting Emberiza tristrami

Two creeping about on a slope at Botanical Gardens on 5th.

Little Bunting Emberiza pusilla

One showing well at Botanical Gardens on 5th & two at Beidaihe the next morning.

Yellow-browed Bunting Emberiza chrysophrys Two at Beidaihe on 6th – BVD.

Rustic Bunting Emberiza rustica

Seven at Beidaihe on 6th & four at Great Wall on 7th.

Yellow-throated Bunting Emberiza elegans

22 bird-days. Noted daily - hard-to-beat views of four males as they 'migrated through the bushes' along an unrestored section of the Great Wall on 7th.

Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* 53 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Japanese Reed Bunting *Emberiza yessoensis*Two were seen at close range at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Common Reed Bunting Emberiza schoeniclus Six at Beidaihe on 6th & one female at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Lapland Bunting Calcarius Iapponicus
15 at Beidaihe on 6th & three at Wild Duck Lake on 8th.

Mammals:

Eurasian Red Squirrel Sciurus vulgaris Two at Botanical Gardens on 5th.

Pere David's Rock Squirrel *Sciurotamias davidianus* Ten at Great Wall on 7th.