

Wulingshan Hebei, China

June 7-8, 2003

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General

The aim of the trip was to find the endangered and locally breeding Grey-sided Thrush. Jorgen Eriksson and myself went by private car to Xinglong and then with the prearranged bus up the mountain. The reason for not going by our own car all the way was that we were told by the hotel that there would be SARS checkpoints along that stretch of road and no Beijing-registered cars would be allowed through. This happened to not be the case and when this report is written, fortunately most of the SARS is gone anyway. The bus that took us to the hotel was actually available for us all through the weekend, even we only used it once on the Sunday.

Wulingshan boasts most of the mountain birds that occur around Beijing and would be the most recommended mountain to visit. Also it is a mere 3-3.5 hour drive from Beijing on good roads, has a decent hotel at 1800 meters and is easily birded on foot along a paved road.

Highlights

Wulingshan has some of the most beautiful sceneries around Beijing and is only for that reason worth a visit. However being birders, we enjoyed the views of a number of good birds found. Top of the list was of course all the good views of Grey-sided Thrush, but there were numerous of other interesting birds like Koklass Pheasant (heard only), drumming White-backed Woodpecker, Chinese Song Thrush, Elisa Flycatcher, White-bellied Redstart, Large-billed, Chinese Leaf and Yellow-streaked Warblers.

Itinerary

7 June

Jorgen picked me up with his car at my house in northeastern Beijing at 03.00 and we then drove in the darkness through Miyun to Xinglong and arrived at the Wulingshan hotel reception in Xinglong at 5.00. Note that the “reception” is only a kind of office and not the hotel itself. We parked the car and went with the medium-sized bus up the valley due north of Xinglong. Saw a Brown Dipper in a stream along the road. Arrived at the hotel after ca 45 minutes.

After a quick check-in at the hotel we started the birding by walking downhill towards Longtang Waterfall. The road goes from 1800 down to 1350 and is paved all the way. It provides excellent birding as it leads through the forest. Eventually after 6 km reached the waterfall carpark where we had noodles at the primitive hut/restaurant. In the early afternoon we walked down to the waterfall (there is the option to take the chairlift) and back up again. Later walked all the way back up to the hotel and finally scored on Grey-sided Thrush slightly before dusk when two birds emerged from the forest and perched briefly in front of us. Just after dusk a few thrushes called from just outside the hotel so it looked good for next morning...

Had dinner at the hotel before falling asleep.

8 June

Up before dawn and several Grey-sided Thrushes were singing around the hotel. As this species sings from a high vantage point, they were easily located on the roof-tops of some small huts. Note that the weekend after we visited, they had stopped singing, but were seen with food in their bills.

We once again slowly walked down towards Longtang Waterfall carpark. As we had to be back in Beijing by lunchtime, we called for “our” bus to come and pick us up and drive us the last bit to the carpark where we birded for another hour before going back to the hotel. Left at 8.30 with our bus to Xinglong and then by car. Arrived Beijing around noon after having seen an Amur Falcon along the way.

Weather

The weather was sunny both days, with pleasant temperatures. A sweater could be useful in the first hours at dawn. On both days there was some wind picking up during the day.

Logistics

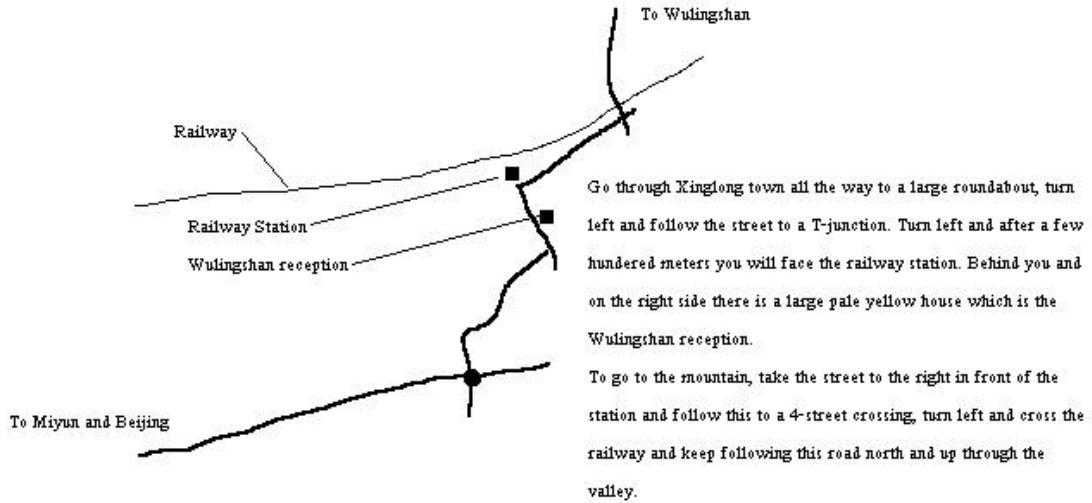
The Hotel Lianhuachi (means Water Lily Pond) can be booked in advance and this may be recommended during the summer months, although we were more or less the only guests due to the SARS travel restrictions. Phone No: +86 (0)314 5510008 to the hotel or +86 (0)314 5083938 to the reception in Xinglong.

Wulingshan has a web-page which is in Chinese, but provides some pictures and maps:

http://www.wulingshan.com.cn/fftx/in_fwtx.htm

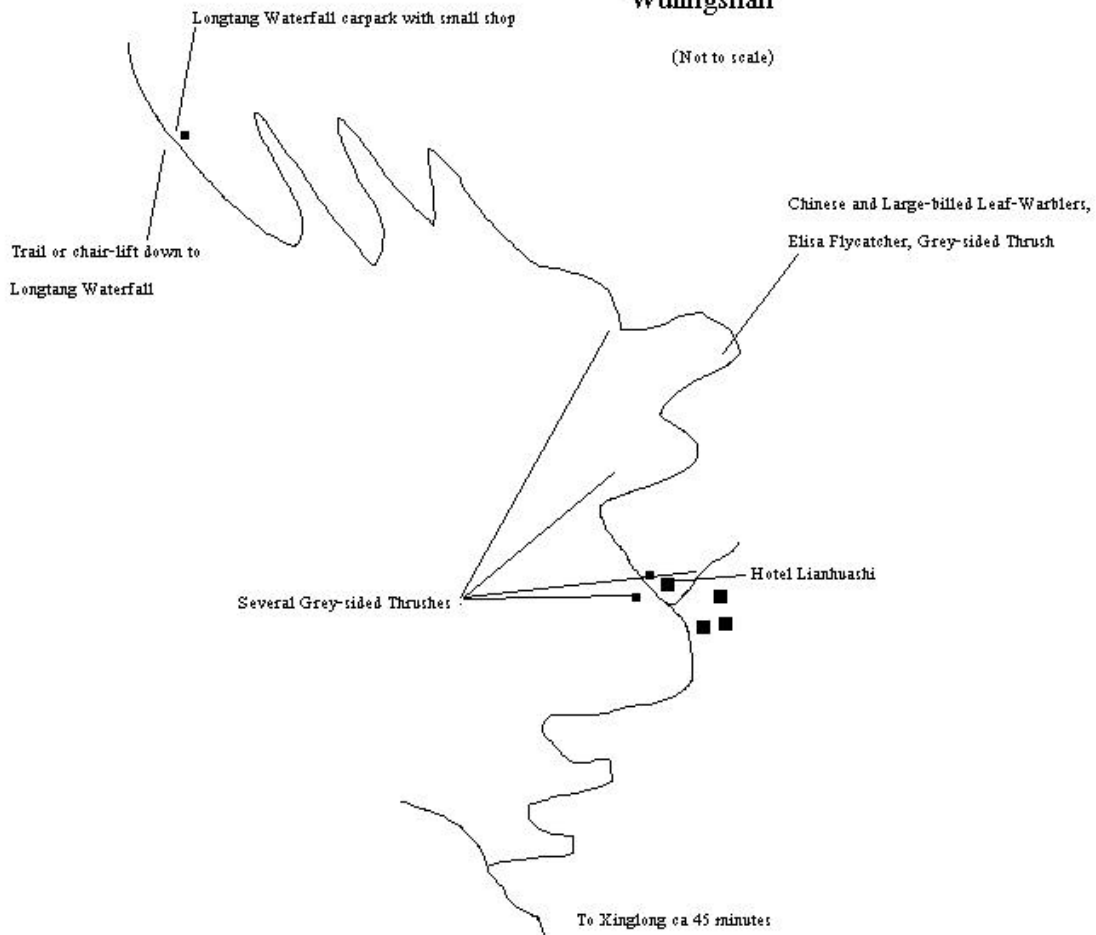
Site descriptions

Xinglong town



Wulingshan

(Not to scale)



Birds

Oriental Honey-Buzzard 1

Kestrel 2

Amur Falcon 1 2 yr male between Miyun and Xinglong 8/6

Eurasian Hobby 2 hunting at dusk around the hotel disturbed the thrushes.

Koklass Pheasant 2 heard soon after dawn in the first valley beyond the hotel. As usual with this species they stop calling shortly after dawn.

Ring-necked Pheasant several

Large Hawk-Cuckoo 3-4 heard

Horsfield's Cuckoo 3-4 heard (split from Oriental Cuckoo)

Grey Nightjar 1 calling outside the hotel at dusk

White-backed Woodpecker 1-2 drumming

Long-tailed Minivet 10-20

Brown Dipper 1 in the stream near the reserve entrance

Grey-sided Thrush 2 early evening at 1750 m and then 3-5 around the hotel at dusk. At dawn there were 3-4 singing birds around the hotel and a few more were heard giving alarm calls. Thereafter many observations seen and heard down to 1650 m. Totally we encountered 20-25 birds. This is clearly a dawn and dusk species.

Chinese Song Thrush 5-8 heard day one and two of these seen very briefly. Observations all the way from 1800 m to 1350 m. On day two, only two or three were heard and seen again very briefly. The problem with seeing this birds is that it sings from below the treetops as opposed to Grey-sided Thrush. On the other hand it keeps singing all through the day.

Chinese Bush-Warbler possibly one singing briefly at 1700 m, but no response to playback.

Yellow-streaked Warbler 1 singing at 1800 m

Chinese Leaf-Warbler 4 singing at 1600-1750 m

Hume's Warbler common at higher altitudes

Large-billed Leaf-Warbler 5-8 singing at 1650-1750 m

Blyth's Leaf-Warbler very common

Elisa Flycatcher 1 2yr male singing at 1750 m (female-coloured with two thin pale wingbars) plus one adult male at 1350 m plus 1-2 more heard birds. Note that the recently described Beijing Flycatcher (*F beijingica*) is merely the 2 yr male Elisa Flycatcher.

Siberian Blue Robin common

Daurian Redstart common

White-bellied Redstart 20+, typically in bushy clearings

Long-tailed Tit 1

Songar Tit common

Great Tit singles

Yellow-bellied Tit 1 1300 m at Longtang Waterfall

Eurasian Nuthatch 3-4

Black Drongo several along the road back to Beijing

Eurasian Nutcracker ca 5

Large-billed Crow 1

White-cheeked Starling common closer to Beijing

Godlewski's Bunting 1 Longtang carpark