

# Donglingshan Beijing, China

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Björn Anderson



## General

Myself and Brian Elder visited this mountain twice during April in the hope of seeing Brown Eared-Pheasants (BEP). The first visit was conducted as a day trip on 12th of April and the second as an overnight trip on 25th of April.

To start with, we did not find any sign of BEPs even though at least our second visit was conducted early morning in perfect weather. We did however see some other interesting birds and a visit to this mountain is highly recommended and may potentially later in the spring yield other good birds such as Grey-sided Thrush and Elisa Flycatcher. According to later sources, the BEPs are hard too see at this site and should be much easier to see at Pangquangou in Shanxi province.

## Highlights

Best birds during our first visit were some buntings including Godlewski's and Yellow-throated. Otherwise this was a very wintry trip with few birds around.

During the second visit, much more birds were recorded. Top of the list goes to a splendid male Koklass Pheasant that slowly walked past us in the forest in the middle of the day. Other goodies included a pair of Daurian Partridges standing in front of the car before dawn, Yellow-bellied Tit, Blyth's Leaf and Hume's Warblers and a few Beautiful Rosefinches.

## **Itinerary**

### 12 April

We left Beijing at 4.30 and arrived Donglingshan at 7.30 after having spent half an hour in a traffic jam. It was cold and extremely windy and the birds were hard to come by. We birded the forest and slopes just above the main tourist complex. Also tried finding BEPs along the pass further up from the tourist complex.

Eventually we could not stand the harsh conditions so we returned to lower elevations along the entrance road and did some roadside birding.

At 14.00 we left the area and went back to Beijing for some birding along Wenyu River near my house.

### 24 April

Started from Beijing in the late afternoon and arrived about an hour before dusk. Listened for pheasants along the entrance road, but only the Ring-neckeds performed. Checked in at the hotel and had dinner after some initial struggling with ordering the food.

### 25 April

Got up early after a freezing cold night. We wanted to position ourselves at a selected valley at 1800 m before dawn in order to maximize our chances for BEPs. Three Koklass and a few Ring-necked Pheasants called from the valley, but nothing that could be taken for a BEP.

Before it got too late in the morning we decided to check some other areas at lower altitudes of ca 1400 m, but alas with the same result. Spent a couple of hours birding in this forest along the entrance road.

Later in the morning we returned to the valley mentioned above and walked through the forest up to 2000 m altitude. Good general birding with a male Koklass Pheasant performing well.

In the early afternoon we checked some areas beyond the pass but the only bird of interest was a pair of Pied Wheatears. We were stopped at a SARS checkpoint in the next valley so returned to the main road and decided to go back to Beijing via a circle into Hebei province. This turned out not to be a good idea as we were again stopped at a SARS checkpoint at the border...

## **Weather**

The first visit was extremely cold and windy and we had to cross a number of snow-fields. We were much more lucky with the weather at the second visit, having clear skies, no wind and much nicer temperatures, although far below those in Beijing at the time. By far the lowest temperatures were recorded in the hotel room, where I used my sleeping bag in the bed under some blankets!

## **Logistics**

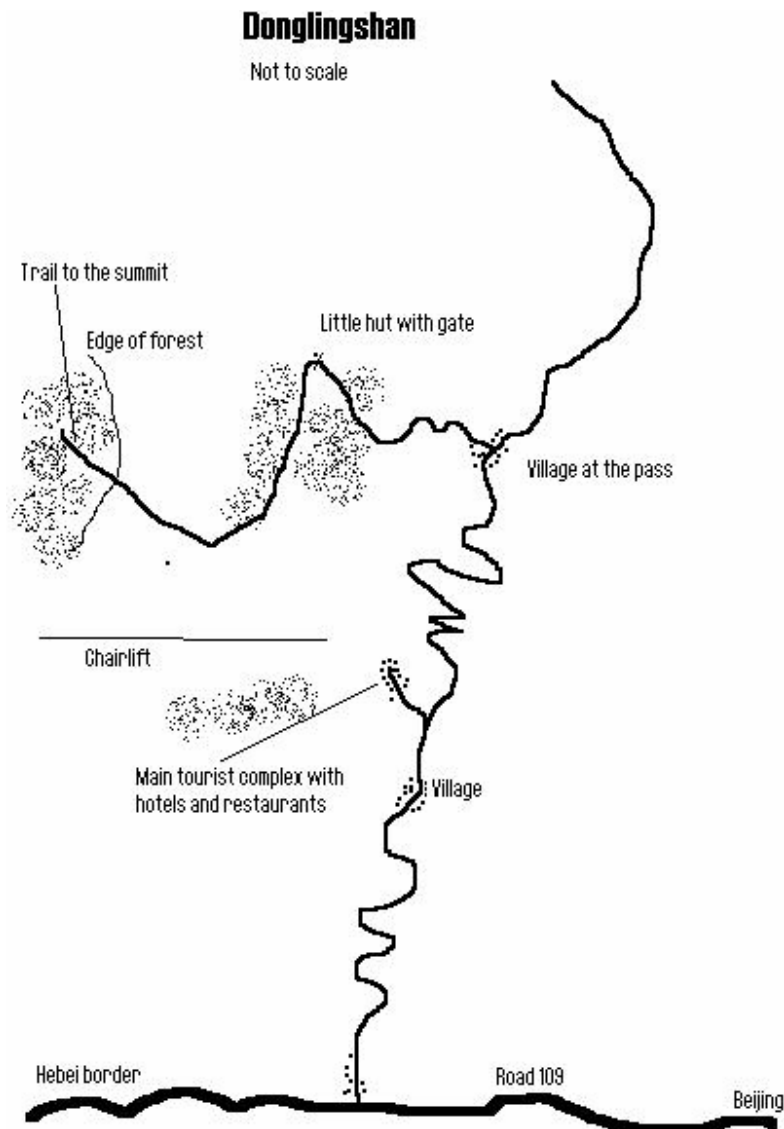
Wulingshan has a tourist complex with a few (?) hotels and restaurants. We made a booking in advance (+86-10 6085 7000 or 6085 7007) which was not necessary with regards to availability of rooms. It is however certainly worth checking ahead that they are open if you visit at other times than summer (and early autumn?). The hotel also has a restaurant, which we felt ripped us off when it comes to the pricing.

On site, we found it useful to have a car, as there are good habitats at several different altitudes and it would be too far to walk.

## Site descriptions

Donglingshan is an easily accessible mountain with a tourist complex at the altitude of 1500 m and access up to above 2000 meters is easy, through driving and walking.

Donglingshan is located almost on the border with Hebei, about 100 km west of Beijing. From the city it takes about 2.5 hours to drive to the mountain along road 109.



## **Birds**

### 12 April

Mandarin Duck 2 along the road  
Eurasian Sparrowhawk 1  
Golden Eagle 1 along the road  
Eurasian Kestrel 1  
Ring-necked Pheasant 4 ssp torquatus  
Hill Pigeon singles  
Swift sp 10 in Beijing  
Hoopoe 1 along the road ssp saturata  
Great Spotted Woodpecker 1 ssp cabanisi  
Greater Short-toed Lark 3 ssp dukhunensis  
Skylark 2  
Crag Martin 10 lungs vagen ssp rupestris  
Grey Wagtail 1 ssp robusta  
White Wagtail 3 ssp leucopsis  
Winter Wren 1 ssp idius  
Daurian Redstart 10 ssp aureus  
Long-tailed Tit 3 ssp vinaceus  
Greta Tit 10 ssp minor  
Songar Tit 5 ssp stoetzneri  
Marsh Tit 5 ssp brevirostris  
Eurasian Nuthatch 1 ssp sinensis  
Magpie common ssp sericea  
Red-billed Chough 6 ssp brachypus  
Carrion Crow 5 ssp orientalis  
Large-billed Crow singles  
Brambling 50+  
Godlewski's Bunting 20 ssp omissa  
Meadow Bunting 5 ssp? Brown cheeks  
Yellow-throated Bunting 1 ssp elegans

### 25 April

Golden Eagle 1 ad  
Upland Buzzard 1 migrating north  
Daurian Partridge 1 pair pre-dawn on the small gravel road from the small village to the edge of the forest.  
Koklass Pheasant 3 heard soon after dawn and one male seen and video-filmed at close range.  
Ring-necked Pheasant ca 20 heard and seen  
Hill Pigeon 2 along the way to Donglingshan  
Crested Kingfisher 1 along the road back to Beijing  
White Wagtail 2  
Long-tailed Minivet 1-2 males at 1900 m  
Bohemian Waxwing ca 25  
Winter Wren 2  
Siberian Accentor 2  
Hume's Warbler ca 30 above 1800 m  
Blyth's Leaf Warbler 1 singing at 1500 m  
Daurian Redstart 10

Pied Wheatear 1 pair below and beyond the village at the high pass

Long-tailed Tit ca 10

Marsh Tit ca 10

Songar Tit ca 20

Yellow-bellied Tit 1 at 1500m

Great Tit ca 20

Eurasian Nuthatch ca 5

Eurasian Jay 1 heard at 1300 m

Nutcracker 1 pair at 2000 m

Red-billed Chough ca 5

Beautiful Rosefinch ca 10 above 1800 m

Eurasian Siskin 1 female at 1800 m

Godlewski's Bunting 2

Meadow Bunting 30

Yellow-throated Bunting ca 5