

Bin Hai, Shanghai, China

How to find Reed Parrotbill

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General

This was a fairly quick morning trip with the aim to locate Reed Parrotbill. The result was very positive indeed and after a couple of fruitless and frustrating hours, I had crippling views of six birds feeding together at ranges down to two meters.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Joakim Hammar and Nick Moran, who gave me such good directions to the site.

Itinerary & Logistics

I stayed at a fairly central hotel in Shanghai on the Pudong side of the river. From there it took me one hour to drive to Bin Hai golf course, which is the site. This was at 6.00 in the morning, so it may take somewhat longer later in the morning. I spent altogether three hours at the site.

The taxi charged 400 RMB for the return trip including the waiting time. It seems to be no problem to find Bin Hai golf course, as it was apparently well known at the hotel and is also clearly sign-posted once you get to the area.

Weather

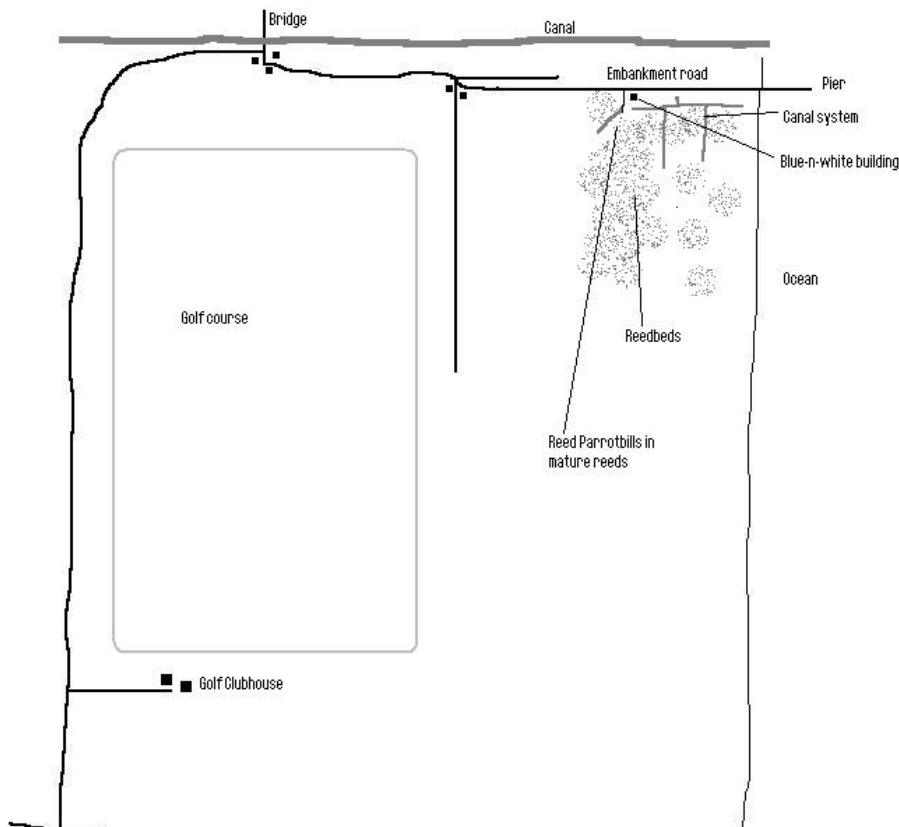
The weather was beautiful, almost clear sky and no wind. Sub-zero temps during the night had covered the ground with frost. Later in the morning it warmed up to almost 10 degrees.

Site descriptions

Bin Hai golf course, <http://www.binhaigolf.com/eng/outside.htm>, is located along the coast about 30 minutes drive south of Pudong airport, which is 30 minutes drive south of central Shanghai. The given web-site might prove useful, as it has Chinese characters to show the taxi driver. At the northeastern part of the golf course there are some reedbeds, that at least formerly were extensive, although it seems that the habitat starts to get degraded recently. Many of the fish-ponds are turned into an extended golf course and many new canals are being built. Still the area held lots of potential habitat for Reed Parrotbill. Vinous-throated Parrotbill were actually one of the commonest birds.

Reed Parrotbills are reportedly mostly feeding low in mature reeds, especially where there are small clearings in the reedbed. Sometimes they sit in the top of the reeds and sing, although this was not the case when I saw them. I heard the song only once, but they were calling fairly frequently a scolding “ksch-ksch-ksch-ksch”, slightly falling. The call was not very loud and very different from the twittering and whistling calls of Vinous-throated. Reportedly they often go in flocks together, but not when I saw them. If they are not calling or singing, they could presumably be very difficult to find, as they fed very inconspicuously amongst the reed. Some people have been trying several times without success, although others seem to find them almost every time, so it is probably crucial to know exactly where and how to look for them.

Besides the area marked on the map where I saw them, they also occur just north of the large canal. There is also a site just north of Pudong airport, where other birders have seen them. When going from Bin Hai north along the coast towards the airport, I noticed several areas with mature reedbeds, so the species might occur at several sites nearby. This should however, not be taken for granted and the change of habitat goes very fast in this developing area of China.



Birds

Grey Heron, *Ardea cinerea*

Two.

Little Egret, *Egretta garzetta*

Five.

Vega Gull, *Larus argentatus vegae*

20+.

Eurasian Skylark, *Alauda arvensis*

25 near Bin Hai.

White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba*

Five.

Yellow Wagtail, *Motacilla flava* ssp

One in flight.

Buff-bellied Pipit, *Anthus rubescens japonicus*

30+.

Light-vented Bulbul, *Pycnonotus sinensis*

Singles.

Plain Prinia, *Prinia inornata*

Ten.

Daurian Redstart, *Phoenicurus aureus*

One female.

Vinous-throated Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis webbianus*

Ca 200 in small to large flocks. Mostly in scrub near reedbeds.

Reed Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis heudei*

Six in one flock was the target-bird of the day! Yip!

Long-tailed Shrike, *Lanius schach*

Five.

Tree Sparrow, *Passer montanus*

50+.

Black-faced Bunting, *Emberiza spodocephala*

Three.

Pallas's Reed Bunting, *Emberiza pallasi*

20+.

Common Reed Bunting, *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Five.