

Xiaolongmen, Beijing, China

11 and 26 January 2004

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Three Brown Eared-Pheasants at Xiaolongmen.

General

These trips were dedicated to find the threatened Brown Eared-Pheasant. Together with Brian Elder, we had unsuccessfully been looking for this species twice at nearby Dong Ling Shan in April 2003. These times we went to a different site, where a flock of nine had been seen in December 2003. Although we were shown the exact location and saw a number of droppings, the pheasants remained unseen during the first visit and they did not call at all. To summarize it, that was a rather cold and birdless day. The second visit together with Brian Elder and Jesper Hornskov, was however very successful and we encountered two flocks of Pheasants. As the bird density in general is fairly low at this time of the year, the Pheasant was actually the most numerous bird species, even outnumbering various tits!

Weather

As is normal during this time of the year it was very cold, many degrees below zero. There was also a light snowfall from very thin clouds during the first visit. The second day was however brilliantly clear, although very cold.

Site descriptions

The driving time from BJ to Xiaolongmen (Little Dragon Gate) is 2.5 hours following road 109 that runs west out of BJ. The site is very close to the Hebei border. Brown Eared-Pheasants occur in a few of the valleys in this area. They are apparently confined to the pine forests that occur patchily in these mountains.

Xiaolongmen is part of the mountain range that holds summits like Dong Ling Shan that is well over 2000 meters. It still has some good forests and in the summer specialities like Elisae Flycatcher and possibly Grey-sided Thrush occur.

Birds

Brown Eared-Pheasant, *Crossoptilon mantchuricum*

One flock was first discovered by Jesper and they soon flew across the valley and landed out of sight. Then three other birds started to call from across the valley and they could be nicely scoped and seen when slowly walking uphill. I followed them up towards a ridge and into the next valley, where one of them joined a group of 12 and two flew further down the second valley. This larger group was probably the same as initially encountered. It consisted of 13 birds and was seen for a long time and at least one bird displayed several times. Back at the car another group of birds was found and seen several times. This group consisted of about ten birds. This makes a total of ca 25 individuals in at least two separate flocks.

Ring-necked Pheasant, *Phasianus colchicus*

One flying across the valley was unfortunately the only galliform the first visit.

Hill Pigeon, *Columba rupestris*

15 seen along the road back to Beijing.

Tawny Owl, *Strix aluco*

One found at a day-roost in the pine-forest at the second visit close to the parked car.

Grey-headed Woodpecker, *Picus canus*

One at the first visit.

Siberian Accentor, *Prunella montanella*

One at the second visit.

Long-tailed Tit, *Aegithalos caudatus*

About 20.

Marsh Tit, *Parus palustris*

Singles

Songar Tit, *Parus songarus*

One at the second visit.

Coal Tit, *Parus ater*

Singles.

Great Tit, *Parus major*

Singles.

Eurasian Nuthatch, *Sitta europaea*

About ten seen and heard.

Snowy-browed Nuthatch, *villosa*

Three seen in the pine forest during the first visit and one the second.

Eurasian Jay, *Garrulus glandarius*

Three at the second visit.

Red-billed Blue Magpie, *Urocissa erythroryncha*

Two at the second visit.

Large-billed Crow, *Corvus macrorhynchos*

A few flying over the valley.

Daurian Jackdaw, *Corvus dauuricus*

Several hundreds in the outskirts of Beijing coming back from the second visit.

Oriental Greenfinch, *Carduelis sinica*

Heard flying over.

Brambling, *Fringilla montifringilla*

A few the second visit.