

# Yunnan and Guangxi, China

25 December 2003 – 3 January 2004

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*Lijiang's Black Dragon Pool with Jade Dragon Snow Mountain in the background.*

## General

This trip was primarily a family vacation trip with some birding stuck in between, especially in Yunnan, where I was able to get a few interesting birds.

From a birding perspective the best bird was undoubtedly the Yunnan Nuthatch at Lijiang, closely followed by Giant Nuthatch, Brown-winged Parrotbill and Black-bibbed Tit. Three new Alcippe species were also a real highlight.

## Itinerary

### 25/12

Left Beijing at lunchtime on Christmas Day and arrived Kunming in Yunnan three hours later. The weather was a lot more pleasant although a jacket was required. Surprisingly enough it was the kind of airport where people were not hovering over you to offer taxi-rides. We quickly went downtown to our prebooked hotel, Holiday Inn, which apparently had changed ownership. A late afternoon stroll along the main streets before we got into a nice restaurant and had “noodles from across the bridge”, which is the traditional food in Yunnan. Nice local dancing performance was entertaining for the kids.

### 26/12

A full day to Shilin, the Stone Forest. It is a very fascinating geological place to visit about 100 km southeast of Kunming. With our taxi it took almost two hours to get there, although a quarter of that time was spent getting out of Kunming itself. The weather was

grey and gloomy with some drizzle. Fortunately it improved slightly when we were at the Stone Forest.

In the late afternoon we stopped at Dagan, which is a park just south of Kunming on the shore of Dian Chi Lake. Only birds of interest were a few Brown-headed Gulls among all the Black-headed and a Rosy Pipit.

### 27/12

Almost a full day at Xishan (Western Hills). The place is covered with good forest at mid-altitude and more scrub near the top. I birded only for a few hours in the morning and one hour in the afternoon. Most of the time birding was spent in the forest near the temples.

In the afternoon we visited a display area for minority villages in the outskirts of Kunming.

### 28/12

Spent the morning sightseeing in central Kunming before taking the midday flight to Lijiang in northwestern Yunnan. Spectacular views of Lijiang valley when approaching the airport. After installing ourselves at the hotel in the middle of the Old Town, we walked the town itself for the rest of the afternoon. The old town, a UNESCO world heritage site, is certainly a place not to be missed. Very charming houses, bridges and canals with a scenic background of the snow-covered Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.

### 29/12

This morning was devoted for the nuthatch-quest on the hills just above Lijiang. I arrived pre-dawn and walked uphill to the pine-forests. The weather was drizzling, but fairly soon I found a mixed species flock containing at least one Yunnan Nuthatch. Continuing higher, I found another flock containing both Yunnan and one Giant Nuthatch. With mission completed I birded my way back down and found a Rusty-capped Fulvetta. Back at the gate at Black Dragon Pool, I was met by the rest of the family and we left Lijiang for The First Bend of Yangtse Kiang. This turned out to be a good spot, as I immediately found a flock of ca 70 Brown-winged Parrotbills just at the site where Mao crossed the river. The landscape was magnificent, and it became even better when we in the afternoon went to Tiger Leaping Gorge. We walked the three km from the parking lot through the gorge and admired the scenery where the gorge is narrowest. Returned to the hotel in Lijiang at dusk.

### 30/12

Another early start, this time for Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. It took us almost one hour to go to the second chairlift at Yunshanping. At dawn it was freezing cold and the kids complained. The sight of the first sun-rays hitting the snow-covered mountain tops were however something not easily forgotten. As the sun warmed the air, we took the chairlift up to Spruce Meadow. Accompanied by a zillion chinese tourists, the birding was slightly difficult. I managed to escape for some time and saw some good birds like Black-bibbed Tit and White-browed Fulvetta.

After a late lunch we drove back towards Lijiang, stopping en route where I found two pairs of Moupinia. Then we spent an hour at the village of Baisha and watched the famous frescoes. The last stop of the day was at Black Dragon Pool before returning to the hotel.

### 31/12

I did a few hours birding at Black Dragon Pool and added Rufous-vented Yuhina to the list. Then back to the hotel and packed up and left for the early afternoon flight to Kunming. Arrived Guilin in Guangxi in the early evening.

1/1

Full day sightseeing around Guilin with no birding at all.

2/1

Morning departure for a river trip along the Li river. Due to the extremely low water level, we had to take the bus halfway to Yangshuo and go with the boat downriver and then return back to the same wharf. Very few birds seen from the river. In the afternoon we arrived Yangshuo and did some sightseeing.

3/1

Almost a full day touring the countryside of Yangshuo by bikes and bamboo-raft. Fantastic scenery and pleasant weather. In the late afternoon we packed up and returned to Guilin for our flight back to Beijing.

### **Weather**

All in all we had pretty good weather. At times in Lijiang it was rather cold, especially in the mornings. In the daytime it was often enough with a fleece-jacket. Most days it was sunny or only slight overcast, which seems to be the norm during this time of the year.

### **Logistics**

As we visited mostly touristic sites, the logistics were very easy to arrange. Some we had pre-booked already in Beijing and some we did on site. In all areas, local guides and transportation could be easily arranged, so at least during the low season no pre-arrangements are necessary.

### **Birds (Yunnan part)**

Little Grebe, *Tachybaptus ruficollis poggei*

Five at Shilin.

Great Crested Grebe, *Podiceps cristatus cristatus*

One at Tiger Leaping Gorge, Lijiang.

Chinese Pond-Heron, *Ardeola bacchus*

One just west of Lijiang.

Black-shouldered Kite, *Elanus caeruleus vociferus*

Two between Kunming, Shilin and one north of Lijiang.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk, *Accipiter nisus nisosimilis/melaschistos*

One at Elephant Hill, Lijiang.

Eurasian Buzzard, *Buteo buteo japonicus*

Two just south of Kunming. About five around Lijiang.

Eurasian Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus interstinctus*

One just south of Kunming. Three around Lijiang.

Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus japonensis*

One pair at The First Bend, Lijiang.

Black-headed Gull, *Larus ridibundus*

Common around Kunming.

Brown-headed Gull, *Larus brunnicephalus*

Two immatures among all the Black-headed Gulls at Dagan Park just south of Kunming.

House Swift, *Apus nipalensis*  
Two at Xishan.

Common Kingfisher, *Alcedo atthis bengalensis*  
One at Black Dragon Pool, Lijiang.

Eurasian Hoopoe, *Upupa epops epops/saturata*  
One in Kunming.

Great Spotted Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos major stresemanni*  
One at Xishan and one at Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Lark sp, *Alauda* sp  
Two south of Lijiang.

Eurasian Crag-Martin, *Hirundo rupestris*  
Five at Xishan. Common at Lijiang and 20 at Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.

Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*  
50+ at Xishan and common just south of Kunming.

White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba alboides*  
Seen in small numbers all around Kunming and Lijiang.

Grey Wagtail, *Motacilla cinerea*  
Two just south of Kunming.

Rosy Pipit, *Anthus roseatus*  
One at Dagan Park, Kunming.

Minivet sp, *Pericrocotus* sp  
Three at Xishan.

Brown-breasted Bulbul, *Pycnonotus xanthorrhous xanthorrhous*  
Common around Kunming, Shilin, Xishan and Lijiang.

Sooty-headed Bulbul, *Pycnonotus aurigaster latouchei*  
One at Shilin.

Chestnut Bulbul, *Hemixos castanonotus*  
5-10 at Xishan.

Goldcrest, *Regulus regulus yunnanensis*  
10 at Cemetary Hill, Lijiang and common at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Winter Wren, *Troglodytes troglodytes*  
One at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Rufous-breasted Accentor, *Prunella strophiatea*  
One at The First Bend, Lijiang.

White's Thrush, *Zoothera dauma socia*  
Almost ten at Xishan. Crippling views of up to five together in a fruiting tree.

Black-breasted Thrush, *Turdus dissimilis*  
Three at the fruiting tree at Xishan.

Chestnut Thrush, *Turdus rubrocanus gouldii*  
Five at the fruiting tree at Xishan.

Red-throated Thrush, *Turdus ruficollis ruficollis*  
One at Cemetary Hill, Lijiang.

Dusky Thrush, *Turdus naumanni eunomus*  
10 at Cemetary Hill, Lijiang.

Chinese Song Thrush, *Turdus mupinensis*  
Three or four at the fruiting tree at Xishan.

Striated Prinia, *Prinia criniger catharia*  
One pair near the top of Xishan and one south of Tiger Leaping Gorge, Lijiang.

Plain Prinia, *Prinia inornata extensicauda*  
One at The First Bend, Lijiang and two at Black Dragon Pool, Lijiang.

Mountain Tailorbird, *Orthotomus cuculatus*  
Two at Xishan.

Buff-throated Warbler, *Phylloscopus subaffinis*  
One south of Tiger Leaping Gorge, Lijiang.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler, *Phylloscopus proregulus*  
10-15 at Xishan and small numbers at Shilin, Kunming and Lijiang.

Yellow-browed Warbler, *Phylloscopus inornatus*  
Small numbers at Shilin, Kunming, Xishan and Lijiang.

Red-flanked Bluetail, *Tarsiger cyanurus rufilatus*  
One male and one female-type at Xishan.

Oriental Magpie-Robin, *Copsychus saularis prosthopellus*  
Two at Shilin and one in Kunming.

White-throated Redstart, *Phoenicurus schisticeps*  
Four at Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Blue-fronted Redstart, *Phoenicurus frontalis*  
Five at Xishan, five at Cemetery Hill, Lijiang and two at Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

White-capped Water-Redstart, *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*  
One between Kunming and Shilin, one at Tiger Leaping Gorge, Lijiang and one at Black Dragon Pool, Lijiang.

Plumbeous Water-Redstart, *Rhyacornis fuliginosus fuliginosus*  
One together with the White-capped Water-Redstart between Kunming and Shilin. Two in Lijiang. One again together with W-c W-R at Tiger Leaping Gorge, Lijiang. Two females at Black Dragon Pool, Lijiang.

White-throated Fantail, *Rhipidura albicollis*  
Three at Xishan.

White-browed Laughingthrush, *Garrulax sannio comis*  
Five at Cemetery Hill, Lijiang.

Elliot's Laughingthrush, *Garrulax elliotii elliotii*  
20 at Cemetery Hill, Lijiang, 10 at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis decarlei*  
One + three at Cemetery Hill, Lijiang.

Moupinia (Rufous-tailed Babbler), *Chrysomma poecilotis*  
Two pairs not far from the golf course between Lijiang and Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. Both pairs in knee-high oak scrub among low pine forest.

Red-billed Leiothrix, *Leiothrix lutea yunnanensis*  
Two at Xishan.

White-browed Shrike-Babbler, *Pteruthius flaviscapis ricketti/validirostris*  
One pair at Xishan.

Blue-winged Minla, *Minla cyanouroptera wingatei*  
Five at Xishan.

Chestnut-tailed Minla, *Minla strigula yunnanensis*  
Four at The First Bend, Lijiang.

White-browed Fulvetta, *Alcippe vinipectus perstriata*  
Two at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Spectacled Fulvetta, *Alcippe ruficapilla sordidor*  
30+ at Xishan.

Rufous-capped Fulvetta, *Alcippe dubia genestieri*  
One just above Black Dragon Pool, Lijiang.

White-collared Yuhina, *Yuhina diademata*

Three at Xishan.

Rufous-vented Yuhina, *Yuhina occipitalis obscurior*  
 15 in one flock at Black Dragon Pool, Lijiang.

Brown-winged Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis brunneus ricketti*  
 One flock with about 70 birds at the grassy river-side at The First Bend, Lijiang.

Ashy-throated Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis alphonisianus yunnanensis*  
 Two near the top at Xishan.

Black-throated Tit, *Aegithalos concinnus talifuensis*  
 Several fairly large flocks at Xishan. Two in Lijiang. 10 at Cemetery Hill, Lijiang  
 and two at Tiger Leaping Gorge, Lijiang.

Black-browed Tit, *Aegithalos iouschistos bonvaloti*  
 10 at Cemetery Hill, Lijiang.

Black-bibbed Tit, *Poecila hypermelaena*  
 One + two at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Coal Tit, *Periparus ater aemodius*  
 Two at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Rufous-vented Tit, *Periparus rubidiventris beavani*  
 One at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Grey-crested Tit, *Lophophanes dichrous wellsi*  
 Five at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Great Tit, *Parus major subtibetanus*  
 Two near the top at Xishan. 20+ at Cemetery Hill, Lijiang and small numbers at  
 Tiger Leaping Gorge and Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Green-backed Tit, *Parus monticolus yunnanensis*  
 10+ at Xishan and five at Cemetery Hill, Lijiang.

Yellow-browed Tit, *Sylviparus modestus*  
 Four at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, *Sitta nagaensis montium*  
 Two at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Yunnan Nuthatch, *Sitta yunnanensis*  
 One + two at Cemetery Hill, Lijiang.

Giant Nuthatch, *Sitta magna*  
 One at Cemetery Hill, Lijiang.

Wallcreeper, *Tichodroma muraria*  
 One feeding on the trail at Tiger Leaping Gorge, Lijiang.

Eurasian Treecreeper, *Certhia familiaris khamensis*  
 Ten at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Bar-tailed Treecreeper, *Certhia himalayana yunnanensis*  
 Ten at Cemetery Hill, Lijiang.

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, *Dicaeum ignipectus ignipectus*  
 Five at Xishan.

Japanese White-eye, *Zosterops japonicus simplex*  
 Ten at Shilin. Several heard *Zosterops* at Xishan were unidentified.

Long-tailed Shrike, *Lanius schach tricolor*  
 One of the black-headed ssp at Kunming.

Grey-backed Shrike, *Lanius tephronotus*  
 Five around Lijiang.

Black Drongo, *Dicrurus macrocercus cathoecus*  
 Two at Black Dragon Pool, Lijiang.

Red-billed Blue Magpie, *Urocissa erythrorhyncha alticola*

Two at Cemetary Hill, Lijiang and two at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Daurian Jackdaw, *Corvus dauurica*  
20 at Tiger Leaping Gorge, Lijiang.

Large-billed Crow, *Corvus macrorhynchos tibetosinensis*  
20 at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Russet Sparrow, *Passer rutilans intensior/batangensis*  
At least one south of Tiger Leaping Gorge, Lijiang.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow, *Passer montanus*  
10 at Baisha, Lijiang.

Brambling, *Fringilla montifringilla*  
Three heard at Cemetary Hill, Lijiang.

Red Crossbill, *Loxia curvirostra himalayensis*  
One small flock heard at Yunshanping, Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, Lijiang.

Black-headed Greenfinch, *Carduelis ambigua ambigua*  
At least one pair at Black Dragon Pool, Lijiang.

Oriental Greenfinch, *Carduelis sinica sinica*  
One at Xishan. Small flocks of another greenfinches/siskins were heard at Xishan.

Godlewski's Bunting, *Emberiza godlewski yunnanensis*  
Two near the top at Xishan. Five at Cemetary Hill, Lijiang.

### **Birds (Guangxi part)**

Eurasian Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus interstinctus*  
Five south of Guilin and five around Yangshuo.

Common Moorhen, *Gallinula chloropus chloropus*  
Four near Yangshuo.

Spotted Dove, *Streptopelia chinensis chinensis*  
One near Yangshuo.

Asian Barred Owlet, *Glaucidium cuculoides whitelyi*  
One between Guilin and Yangshuo and one near Yangshuo.

Common Kingfisher, *Alcedo atthis bengalensis*  
One near Yangshuo.

White-throated Kingfisher, *Halcyon smyrnensis*  
One near Yangshuo.

White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba leucopsis*  
Singles in Guilin and common around Yangshuo.

Light-vented Bulbul, *Pycnonotus sinensis hainanus*  
20+ in Guilin and common around Yangshuo.

Common Tailorbird, *Orthotomus sutorius*  
One plus three near Yangshuo.

Oriental Magpie-Robin, *Copsychus saularis prosthopellus*  
Ten around Yangshuo.

Daurian Redstart, *Phoenicurus aureus*  
Two near Yangshuo.

Plumbeous Water-Redstart, *Rhyacornis fuliginosus fuliginosus*  
One female along the river between Guilina and Yangshuo.

Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, *Pomatorhinus ruficollis hunanensis*  
Two near Yangshuo.

Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, *Alcippe morrisonia*  
Five near Yangshuo.

Black-throated Tit, *Aegithalos concinnus concinnus*

Ten near Yangshuo.  
Great Tit, *Parus major comixtus*  
Three in Guilin.  
Yellow-bellied Tit, *Pardaliparus venustulus*  
Two in Guilin.  
Long-tailed Shrike, *Lanius schach schach*  
Two near Yangshuo.  
Collared Crow, *Corvus torquatus*  
Four along the river between Guilin and Yangshuo.  
Crested Myna, *Acridotheres cristatellus cristatellus*  
One flock of 30 south of Guilin and common around Yangshuo.  
White-cheeked Starling, *Sturnus cineraceus*  
50+ in Guilin.  
White-rumped Munia, *Lonchura striata swinhoi*  
Ten near Yangshuo.  
Chinese Grosbeak, *Eophona migratoria migratoria/sowerbyi*  
15+ in one flock in Guilin.  
Black-faced Bunting, *Emberiza spodocephala spodocephala/sordida*  
One near Yangshuo.