

Wuyishan, Jiangxi, China

7-10 April 2005

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Male Cabot's Tragopan

General

This was an extended weekend trip with the purpose of seeing Cabot's Tragopan. Thanks to professor He Fen-qi in Beijing, who helped me to get in contact with Mr Lin. He is one of the two local birders in Nanchang and knows Wuyishan extremely well. Together with him and his birding colleague Ms Zheng Ying Chun, we spent 2.5 days of brilliant birding on this mountain that is a key birding site in southeast China.

Itinerary

7/4

I took an evening flight from Beijing and arrived at Wuyishan airport on schedule at 19.40 and was met by Mr Lin and Ms Zheng. We directly boarded the minibus and drove straight (2.5 hours) to the hotel on the Jiangxi slope of the mountain. The last 34 km was on rather poor roads and took 1.5 hours. Eventually arrived at the hotel and had a good night sleep.

8/4

We set off at 6.00, which was slightly after dawn. Even though we stopped for some birds on the way up, we basically drove straight on to the elevations of 1300 and above, which is the core area for the tragopans. We reached all the way up to 1800 m without having seen anything and the worry was on! We slowly drove back down again and stopped at a place where Mr Lin had seen them before. After playing a quick burst from the tape, a male replied above us and soon came walking slowly across a streambed, right out in the open at a distance of 20 m! He proudly strolled through the vegetation and started to display, perched on a branch. After that, he walked back and forth a couple of times, feeding in between short displays.



Displaying male Cabot's Tragopan

Very happy with the success so soon, I decided to spend most of the day walking along the mountain road. Mr Lin and Ms Zheng followed with the bus until it was time for a lunch-break. At the hotel we had a quick bite and then walked up a streambed in the main valley for about an hour. In the afternoon I again walked along the mountain road and covered elevations of 1300-1400m before calling it a day before 18.00, when the gate closes. Dinner in the village in the evening.

9/4

Today was the day for the White-necklaced Hill-Partridge, as I had only heard it distantly the day before. We left the hotel at 5.30 and drove quickly to the core area around 1600 m. None was calling and none was seen along the road! Not even a tragopan today. I walked for several km, but only heard a duetting pair near km 23. At the house beyond km 23 we had a bowl of noodles, which was nice as the weather was a little bit chilly. I then started to walk slowly downhill with the aim of spending the entire day walking all the way down to the gate. A female tragopan was showing the star-speckled plumage close to the road and I heard a few more Hill-Partridges. Once I even spooked one from the roadside, although it quickly walked down the slope.

In the late afternoon, it started to drizzle and Mr Lin came and picked me up and we then drove down the Fujian slope for some 10 km. We could not find the hoped-for Short-tailed Parrotbill and by dusk we returned to the hotel. It was raining hard while we were having dinner.

10/4

We had decided to spend the last morning on the Fujian side, as the road we had arrived on was impassable due to a roadwork. Before the departure, the plans were changed though, as it turned out there was another road down the Jiangxi side, and more importantly a Hill-Partridge started calling just above the village. I decided to give it a go and walked up through the bamboo forest. By the time I was very close to the duetting pair, they stopped calling, although most likely not because of me but rather that it had gotten too late in the morning. After that we birded along the road below the hotel for another half hour before it was time to leave for Nanchang. The journey was on sometimes very poor roads and it took us six hours to reach the airport in Nanchang. All the logistics over the entire weekend had run very smoothly (thanks to Mr Lin!), so it came as no surprise that I am now waiting for a seriously delayed flight back to Beijing...

Weather

The first day I was treated to clear sky and the temperature was just about perfect. The second day was overcast with some light rain in the late afternoon when clouds swept in. The third morning was overcast, but no rain. Most birding took place in a light fleece jacket.

Logistics

All logistics were kindly arranged by Mr Lin who picked me up at Wuyishan airport and dropped me off at Nanchang airport and in between took care of all practicalities. This included arranging the hotel, necessary permits (required!), food and especially helping to find the stunning male Cabot's Tragopan.

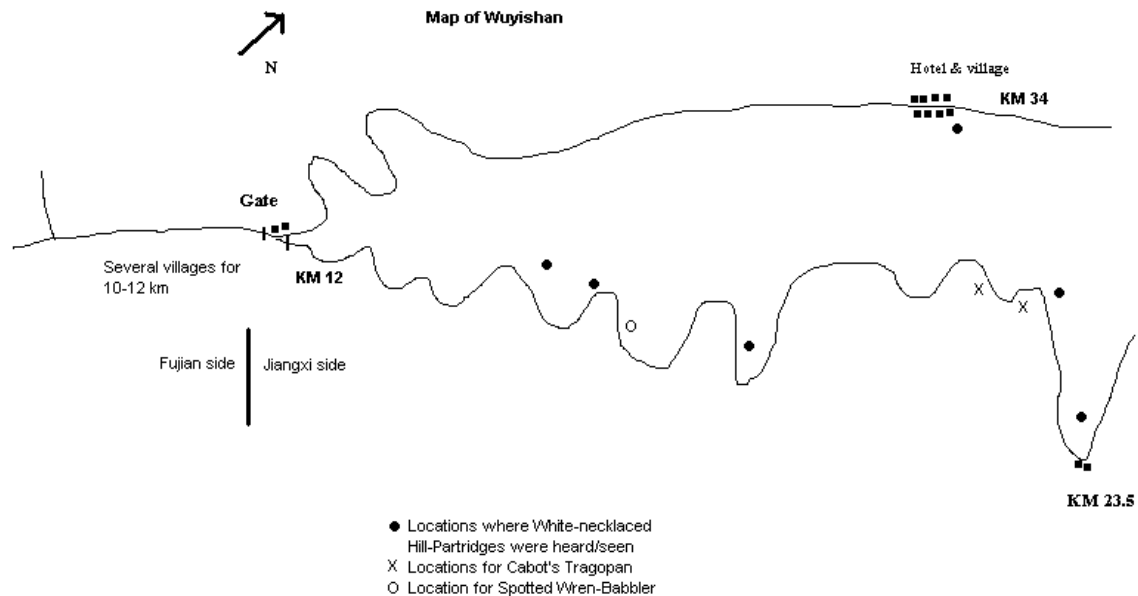
Site descriptions

Wuyishan is a fairly isolated mountain range in the southeast of China. Several species have isolated populations (often on subspecific level) and it is probably the best place to see the endemic Cabot's Tragopan. There is lots of good forest along the road towards the top, although at many places the mountain is very steep. I found no good trails except along a couple of the noisy streams.

Other foreign birders have had problems entering the reserve, especially from the Fujian side where foreigners are not permitted for unknown reason. It is strongly advised to sort out permits in advance.

Wuyishan town can be reached by flight from Beijing and a few other cities. There are however, not daily flights so some planning is essential. From this airport it took us 2.5 hours to drive to the hotel on the Jiangxi side. I believe that the Fujian side may be closer. Another option is to go to Nanchang, which is six hours drive from the hotel at Wuyishan.

We stayed at a reasonably good hotel with clean sheets and hot water. A double room was 200 RMB and apparently included food. The forest comes all the way down to the tiny village and White-necklaced Hill-Partridge apparently occurs just above the houses.



Some positions (due to the surrounding high mountains the GPS reading of altitudes may be somewhat inaccurate).

N27°50.784, E117°43.832, 890 m
N27°49.018, E117°42.771, 1127 m
N27°50.092, E117°43.806, 1336 m
N27°50.614, E117°45.417, 1819(?) m
N27°50.313, E117°45.448, 1815 m

Hotel
Gate (border between Fujian/Jiangxi)
Spotted Wren-Babbler
Male Cabot's Tragopan
House beyond KM23

Birds

Most birding took place along the road between the gate (ca 1100 m) and the small house slightly beyond KM 23 (ca 1900 m). If not specifically mentioned, all sightings refer to this area.

Little Grebe, *Tachybaptus ruficollis poggei*

One between WS and Nanchang.

Black Eagle, *Ictinaetus malayensis*

Two sightings of single birds over the ridges.

White-necklaced Hill-Partridge, *Arborophila gingica*

Duetting pair at 1800 m, male calling at 1700 m, male calling at 1600 m, one seen briefly next to the road at 1300 m, duetting pair at 1200 m and duetting pair at 900 m (just above the hotel). All but the last pair was just too far away to access and the last pair just vanished when I was very close.

Chinese Bamboo-Partridge, *Bambusicola thoracica thoracica*

10-15 seen and heard. Mostly at lower altitudes and around tea plantations.

Cabot's Tragopan, *Tragopan caboti caboti*

One splendid male was seen the first morning. Attracted by playback, he walked back and forth, displayed a few times and really showed himself. All this at a distance of 15-20 m! Truly one of the birding highlights during my time in China. The second morning, a female was seen feeding just above the road about 300 m uphill from the sighting of the male.

White-breasted Waterhen, *Amaurornis phoenicurus phoenicurus*

One near the hotel.

Spotted Dove, *Streptopelia chinensis chinensis*

A few between WS and Nanchang.

Large Hawk-Cuckoo, *Cuculus sparverioides sparverioides*

One heard at the hotel.

Mountain Scops-Owl, *Otus spilocephalus latouchi*

One heard at the hotel.

Collared Scops-Owl, *Otus lettia erythrocampe*

One heard at the hotel.

Collared Owlet, *Glaucidium brodiei brodiei*

Three heard.

Asian Barred Owlet, *Glaucidium cuculoides whitelyi*

One heard at the hotel.

House Swift, *Apus nipalensis nipalensis*

Two between WS and Nanchang.

White-throated Kingfisher, *Halcyon smyrnensis fokiensis*

Two between WS and Nanchang.

Pied Kingfisher, *Ceryle rudis insignis*

One between WS and Nanchang.

Crested Kingfisher, *Megaceryle lugubris guttulata*

Two by the river on the Fujian slope. Two singles when driving down the mountain on the Jiangxi side.

Great Barbet, *Megalaima virens virens*

Four seen and heard.

Speckled Piculet, *Picumnus innominatus chinensis*

One seen.

White-backed Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos leucotos fohkiensis*

One male seen.

Bay Woodpecker, *Blythipicus pyrrhotis sinensis*

One heard on the mountain and two seen below the hotel.

Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica* ssp

Common between WS and Nanchang.

Red-rumped Swallow, *Hirundo daurica japonica*

A few on the Fujian slope.

Asian House Martin, *Delichon dasypus nigrimentalis*

A couple of breeding colonies along the cliff-faces next to the mountain road.



Asian House Martin

White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba leucopsis*

A few in the villages and several between WS and Nanchang.

Olive-backed Pipit, *Anthus hodgsoni yunnanensis*

One heard. One seen between WS and Nanchang.

Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike, *Coracina melaschistos intermedia*

One seen at 1900 m.

Grey-chinned Minivet, *Pericrocotus solaris griseogularis*

Common.

Collared Finchbill, *Spizixos semitorquates semitorquates*

Five below the hotel.

Light-vented Bulbul, *Pycnonotus sinensis sinensis*

One on the Fujian slope and a few between WS and Nanchang.

Chestnut Bulbul, *Hemixos castanonotus canipennis*

About five seen.

Mountain Bulbul, *Ixos macclllandii holtii*

Three seen.

Black Bulbul, *Hypsipetes leucocephalus leucocephalus*

Five plus 50 seen.

Brown Dipper, *Cinclus pallasii pallasii*

Three in the river at the hotel and two further down the mountain.

Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush, *Monticola rufiventris*

About ten seen.

Blue Whistling-Thrush, *Myophonus caeruleus caeruleus*

Three seen on the mountain and a few along the road down the Jiangxi side.

Blackbird, *Turdus [merula] mandarinus*

A few between WS and Nanchang.

Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler, *Cettia fortipes davidiana*

Fairly common at low elevations, especially in tea plantations.

Yellowish-bellied Bush-Warbler, *Cettia acanthizoides acanthizoides*

About five, mostly heard, at higher elevations.

Russet Bush-Warbler, *Bradypterus seebohmi melanorhynchus*

One heard in a tea plantation near the hotel.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler, *Phylloscopus proregulus*

One seen.

Goodson's Leaf Warbler, *Phylloscopus goodsoni fokiensis*

Common. Separated from Blyth's Leaf Warbler.

Ogilviegranti's Leaf Warbler, *Phylloscopus ogilviegranti ogilviegranti*

A few seen and heard. Separated from White-tailed Leaf Warbler.

Sulphur-breasted Warbler, *Phylloscopus ricketti*

Three seen on the Fujian slope and one below the hotel.

Plain-tailed Warbler, *Seicercus soror*

One seen and heard near the hotel.

Bianchi's Warbler, *Seicercus valentine*

About ten at higher elevations.

White-spectacled Warbler, *Seicercus affinis intermedius*

About 20 seen and heard between ca 900-1600 m. Spectacles actually yellow, not white. Similar song to recording from south Sichuan. Call is tuu-turrrr.

Chestnut-crowned Warbler, *Seicercus castaniceps sinensis*

Common.

Rufous-faced Warbler, *Abroscopus albogularis fulvifacies*

Commonly heard, but only one seen.

Blue-and-white Flycatcher, *Cyanoptila cyanomelana* ssp

One male seen near the hotel.

Small Niltava, *Niltava macgrigoriae macgrigoriae*

Common.



Small Niltava

Blue-throated Flycatcher, *Cyornis [rubeculoides] glaucicomans*

One seen and one heard around 1800 m.

Daurian Redstart, *Phoenicurus aureus aureus*

One on the Fujian slope.

Plumbeous Water-Redstart, *Rhyacornis fuliginosus fuliginosus*

Fairly common in most large streams.

Necklaced Laughingthrush sp, *Garrulax monileger/pectoralis*

One heard and seen briefly at 1400, could have been either species. The Lesser is still my jinx bird...

Rusty Laughingthrush, *Garrulax poecilorhynchus berthemyi*

Pairs or small groups seen and heard at four occasions between 1400-1800 m.

Hwamei, *Garrulax canorus canorus*

Two below the hotel.

Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis swinhoei*

One seen at 1400 m.

Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, *Pomatorhinus ruficollis stridulus*
A few seen and heard.

Pygmy Wren-Babbler, *Pnoepyga pusilla pusilla*
Commonly heard.

Spotted Wren-Babbler, *Spelaeornis formosus*
One heard down an impenetrable steep slope and refused to come in to playback.

Rufous-capped Babbler, *Stachyris ruficeps davidi*
Fairly common.

Red-billed Leiothrix, *Leiothrix lutea lutea*
Common.

White-browed Shrike-Babbler, *Pteruthius flaviscapis ricketti*
Common.

Streak-throated Fulvetta, *Alcippe cinereiceps guttaticollis*
Three at 1800 m.

Striated Yuhina, *Yuhina castaniceps torqueola*
Common, often in large quick-moving flocks.

Black-chinned Yuhina, *Yuhina nigrimenta pallida*
Common, always in flocks.

[Golden Parotbill, *Paradoxornis verreauxi*
One seen and photographed by Mr Lin.]

Black-throated Tit, *Aegithalos concinnus concinnus*
A few seen.

Coal Tit, *Periparus ater kuantunensis*
Several at higher elevations.

Great Tit, *Parus major comixtus*
A few around the hotel and two between WS and Nanchang.

Yellow-cheeked Tit, *Parus spilonotus rex*
10-15 seen.

Yellow-browed Tit, *Sylviparus modestus modestus*
A few seen.

Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, *Sitta nagaensis montium*
One pair at a nest-site at 1400 m.

Japanese White-eye, *Zosterops japonicus simplex*
A few seen.

Long-tailed Shrike, *Lanius schach schach*
A few between WS and Nanchang.

Eurasian Jay, *Garrulus glandarius sinensis*
One at 1900 m.

Red-billed Blue Magpie, *Urocissa erythrorhyncha erythrorhyncha*
Fairly common in the valleys.

Black-collared Starling, *Gracupica nigricollis*
A few between WS and Nanchang.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow, *Passer montanus saturatus*
Common between WS and Nanchang.

Oriental Greenfinch, *Carduelis sinica sinica*
One between WS and Nanchang.

Brown Bullfinch, *Pyrrhula nipalensis ricketti*
About five seen.

Meadow Bunting, *Emberiza cioides castaneiceps*
One between WS and Nanchang.

Black-faced Bunting, *Emberiza spodocephala spodocephala*
15+ between WS and Nanchang.