

# **Ruili, Yunnan, China**

**1-3 December 2006**

*Updated Feb 2007*



*Forest edge at the Hydro plant near Ruili, showing a typical scenery of southwestern Yunnan*

**Björn Anderson**

## General

This was intended as a brief visit to Ruili with the purpose of picking up a couple of previously missed birds. Rufous-necked Laughingthrush and Pale-footed Bush-Warbler were the key targets, while I also spent time looking for Rufous-headed Parrotbill and Yellow-vented Warbler as bonuses. This was my fourth trip to this bird-rich province of southwestern China.

Top of the pops was the flock of ten Rufous-necked Laughers that eventually turned themselves in after almost an entire day of searching as well as the pair of Rufous-headed Parrotbills that showed well shortly before I had to leave Moli.

All in all it was a very pleasant weekend trip with smooth logistics and brilliant birding. My thanks go to Jesper, who supported my whereabouts with numerous text-messages, even in the early morning.

*Update Feb 2007:* In retrospect, the three *Zoothera* thrushes that I saw at Moli turned out to be not Dark-sided Thrushes as I thought, but instead Long-billed Thrushes. The former is a rare bird in western Yunnan and as far as I know the latter is never before recorded in China. A photo of the same or another Long-billed Thrush at Moli was taken by another birder in early February 2007.

## Itinerary

I flew from BJ with the 14.15 (plus one hour delay) flight to Kunming and got on the 20.00 evening flight to Dehong=Mangshi=Luxi. The pre-arranged driver met me and within minutes after touch-down, I was on my way to Ruili. The distance from the airport is 100 km and takes only 1.5 hours on a very good road. In Ruili I checked in at Kaitong International Hotel, although I am not quite sure what specifically makes it an international hotel.

Saturday morning and the driver punctually met up at 7.00 for the short drive up the hills to the Hydro station north of Ruili. Many reports describe this as the pump-house forest and although the forest has been degraded over the years, it still yields some good birds. At dawn 7.30 I started walking uphill along the ridge trail and kept eyes and ears peeled for my two target birds. It wasn't until mid-afternoon when I eventually scored on a flock of ten Rufous-necked Laughingthrushes. I was then treated to some super views of this stunning Laugher. Other Laughers seen during the day were Hwamei, a few Black-throated and two White-browed and other good birds included a Black-backed Forktail and a White-browed Piculet.

As there seemed to be no responsive Bush-Warbler around, I decided to spend the last two hours of day-light at another forest near Wanding. This is a forest park about 20 km east of Ruili on the way to Mangshi. We entered the forest from the back side, i.e. the main road, and I birded here until dusk without adding the target bird.

On the Sunday, we left Ruili at 6.55 and arrived at Moli waterfall before dawn at 7.25. We drove in to the parking lot and I birded around a clearing a couple of hundred meters along the walkway to the waterfall. The waterfall itself is less than a km up the gorge and leads through good forest, although very noisy from the river. I divided my time until 11.30 between the clearing, the forest path to the waterfall and along the drive-way back to the main gate. The best birds were the Rufous-headed Parrotbills that I eventually got a response from, but even rarer in China were the three Long-billed Thrushes that I stumbled upon on the walk to the waterfall. Perhaps the first record for China. Before I had to return to the airport, I decided to give the Bush-Warbler a last shot at Wanding Forest Park. Armed with a recording I spent a bit more than an hour searching through suitable habbo, but at last I had to give up and by 13.00 we were on the road back to Mangshi. The journey

was very swift and it only took one hour, so there was plenty of time before the 15.50 on time departure for Kunming.

## Weather

The weather was rather warm (except for the early morning) and dry, with only very light wind. I believe this is rather typical weather at this time of the year. In the morning it was a bit foggy, although it cleared by late morning.

## Site descriptions

The Hydro station or the pump house is situated in the hills just north of Ruili and is probably the closest forest to town.

Wandering Forest Park with the temple Wan Fu Si is just north of the town Wanding. I accessed the forest from the main road immediately east of KM 3607, which is about 20 km east of Ruili.



Moli waterfall and tropical rainforest is a tourist spot and sign-posted from the main road just at the west end of the bridge across Shweli River, about 25 km east of Ruili. From the bridge it is 5.5 km north along the west side of the river.

## Birds

Oriental Honey-Buzzard, *Pernis ptilorhynchus ruficollis/orientalis*

One at Wanding Forest Park.

Crested Serpent-Eagle, *Spilornis cheela burmanicus*

One at the Hydro station.

Eurasian Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus interstinctus*

One at the Hydro station.

Red-breasted Parakeet, *Psittacula alexandri fasciata*

A dense flock of about 500 flew high above Moli in the early morning.

Green-billed Malkoha, *Phaenicophaeus tristis saliens*

One at the Hydro station.

Collared Owlet, *Glaucidium brodiei brodiei*

One heard at the Hydro station.

Grey Nightjar, *Caprimulgus indicus ssp*

One on the road before dawn near the Hydro station.

Common Kingfisher, *Alcedo atthis benghalensis*

One in the small pond at the Hydro station.

Indian Roller, *Coracias benghalensis affinis*

One east of Wanding Forest Park.

Blue-throated Barbet, *Megalaima asiatica davisoni*

One at Wanding Forest .

Coppersmith Barbet, *Megalaima haemacephala indica*

One at Wanding Forest Park.

Speckled Piculet, *Picumnus innominatus malayrum*

Two at the Hydro station and one at Wanding Forest Park.



*Speckled Piculet*

White-browed Piculet, *Sasia ochracea kinneari*

One along the canal at the Hydro station.



*White-browed Piculet*

- Bay Woodpecker, *Blythipicus pyrrhotis pyrrhotis*  
One heard at Moli.
- Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica* ssp  
Common in Ruili.
- White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba alboides*  
Two at Wanding Forest Park.
- Grey Wagtail, *Motacilla cinerea robusta*  
Two at the Hydro station.
- Olive-backed Pipit, *Anthus hodgsoni yunnanensis*  
Three at the Hydro station and five at Wanding Forest Park.
- Black-winged Cuckoo-Shrike, *Coracina melaschistos avensis*  
One pair at the Hydro station and one at Wanding Forest Park.
- Small-billed Minivet, *Pericrocotus brevisrostris affinis*  
15 at Wanding Forest Park. Also a few unidentified minivets at the Hydro station.
- Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, *Hemipus picatus capitalis*  
Ten at the Hydro station and five at Wanding Forest Park.
- Flavescent Bulbul, *Pycnonotus flavescens vividus*  
Ten at Moli.
- Black-crested Bulbul, *Pycnonotus melanicterus flaviventris*  
Five at Wanding Forest Park.
- Red-whiskered Bulbul, *Pycnonotus jocosus monticola*  
Three at the Hydro station, common at Moli and a few at Wanding Forest Park.
- Red-vented Bulbul, *Pycnonotus cafer stanfordi*  
20+ at the Hydro station, a few at Moli and at Wanding Forest Park.
- Black Bulbul, *Hypsipetes leucocephalus concolor*  
One at the Hydro station and ten at Moli.
- Orange-bellied Leafbird, *Chloropsis hardwickii melliana*  
Two at the Hydro station and two at Moli.
- Common Iora, *Aegithina tiphia philipi*  
Two at the Hydro station.
- Blue Whistling-Thrush, *Myophonus caeruleus* ssp  
Two at Moli.
- Long-billed Thrush, *Zoothera monticola* (monticola?)  
Three birds were seen feeding loosely together near a stream between the car-park and the waterfall at Moli. These birds were first thought to be Dark-sided Thrushes, as this would be the expected, although rare, species in Western Yunnan. However, in retrospect, they were actually found to be Long-billed Thrushes, a species that has probably never before been recorded in China. The bill was strikingly/astonishingly long and obviously curved, extremely short tail for a *Zoothera* thrush, obvious whitish throat, contrasting with darker moustaches and head-sides and breast, whitish blotchy belly-patch, rather uniform head-sides/cheeks and all of the upperparts, no pale scales on the flanks. A photo of a Long-billed Thrush was taken at the same site in early February 2007, with a plumage and shape that was absolutely spot on for my birds.
- Grey-breasted Prinia, *Prinia hodgsonii confusa*  
Several small flocks at the Hydro station and Wanding Forest Park.
- Sichuan Leaf-Warbler, *Phylloscopus forresti*  
Five at the Hydro station.
- Yellow-browed Warbler, *Phylloscopus inornatus*  
Common at the Hydro station, Wanding Forest Park and Moli.
- Greenish Warbler, *Phylloscopus trochiloides* ssp  
Common at the Hydro station. Not *plumbeitarsus* ssp.

Blyth's Leaf-Warbler, *Phylloscopus reguloides assamensis*

10+ at the Hydro station. None were seen single-wing-flicking.

Grey-crowned Warbler, *Seicercus tephrocephalus*

10+ at the Hydro station, a few at Wanding Forest Park and one at Moli. Identification tentative due to difficulties in separation from *S omeiensis*. Very pale grey crown-stripe contrasting with strong blackish lateral crown-stripes from forehead to nape as well as grey below the lateral stripes. Called consistently with a low chu or chup.

Yellow-bellied Warbler, *Abroscopus superciliaris superciliaris*

Ten at Moli.

Snowy-browed Flycatcher, *Ficedula hyperythra hyperythra*

One male at Moli.

Fujian Niltava, *Niltava davidi*

One female at the Hydro station.

Hill Blue Flycatcher, *Cyornis banyumas whitei*

One male at the Hydro station.

Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher, *Culicicapa ceylonensis calochrysea*

10+ at the Hydro station and one at Wanding Forest Park.

Robin sp

One female at Moli.

Oriental Magpie-Robin, *Copsychus saularis ssp*

Five at Wanding Forest Park.

White-capped Water-Redstart, *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

One at Moli.

Plumbeous Water-Redstart, *Rhyacornis fuliginosus fuliginosus*

One at the Hydro station and two at Moli.

White-bellied Redstart, *Hodgsonius phaenicuroides ssp*

One male at the Hydro station.

Slaty-backed Forktail, *Enicurus schistaceus*

One at Moli.

Black-backed Forktail, *Enicurus immaculatus*

One along the canal at the Hydro station.



*Black-backed Forktail, hiding in the bottom right corner...*

Spotted Forktail, *Enicurus maculatus guttatus*

One or two at Moli.

Grey Bushchat, *Saxicola ferrea*

Two at the Hydro station and two at Wanding Forest Park.

Yellow-bellied Fantail, *Rhipidura hypoxantha*

Two at Moli.

White-throated Fantail, *Rhipidura albicollis celsa*

Three at the Hydro station and one at Wanding Forest Park.

Rufous-necked Laughingthrush, *Garrulax ruficollis*

A flock of about ten at the Hydro station.



*Rufous-necked Laughingthrush. Good views were obtained, but never posing for a decent shot...*

Black-throated Laughingthrush, *Garrulax chinensis lochmii*

Two encounters of 2-3 birds each at the Hydro station.

Hwamei, *Garrulax canorus canorus*

One at the Hydro station.

White-browed Laughingthrush, *Garrulax sannio comis*

Two at the Hydro station.

Puff-throated Babbler, *Pellorneum ruficeps shanense*

One at the Hydro station and two plus one at Wanding Forest Park.

Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, *Pomatorhinus ruficollis albipectus*

Five at the Hydro station and one at Wanding Forest Park.

Streaked Wren-Babbler, *Napothera brevicaudata venningi*

A total of four at three places at Moli.

Rufous-capped Babbler, *Stachyris ruficeps davidi*

One seen briefly at the Hydro station was probably this species.

Golden Babbler, *Stachyris chrysaea chrysaea*

Two at Moli.

Grey-throated Babbler, *Stachyris nigriceps*

Five at Moli.

Silver-eared Mesia, *Leiothrix argenteauris vernayi*

Two small flocks at Moli.

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

One male at Wanding Forest Park.

Chestnut-fronted Shrike-Babbler, *Pteruthius aenobarbus intermedius*

One female at the Hydro station.

Striated Yuhina, *Yuhina castaniceps plumbeiceps*

Two large flocks at the Hydro station and a small flock at Moli.

White-bellied Yuhina, *Yuhina zantholeuca zantholeuca*

Five at the Hydro station.

Rufous-headed Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis ruficeps ruficeps*

One pair moving along the hillside between the gate and car park at Moli. It was first discovered when it started to sing, most likely in response to me playing a recording. They were then seen when moving in between the bushes, sometimes even perching right in the top of bushes. Mega to eventually see this long sought-after species and now there are only two in this charismatic family to go...



Great Tit, *Parus major subtibetanus*

Five at the Hydro station, one at Wanding Forest Park and one at Moli.

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, *Sitta frontalis frontalis*

Two at the Hydro station and three at Wanding Forest Park.

Sunbird sp

One female with short thick bill and yellow below at the Hydro station.

Black-throated Sunbird, *Aethopyga saturata assamensis*

One male at Moli.

Japanese Whiteeye, *Zosterops japonicus simplex*

Several large flocks at the Hydro station and Wanding Forest Park.

Slender-billed Oriole, *Oriolus tenuirostris tenuirostris*

One at Wanding Forest Park. Also one unidentified oriole at the Hydro station.

Maroon Oriole, *Oriolus traillii traillii*

Three at Moli.

Long-tailed Shrike, *Lanius schach nigriceps*

Four at the Hydro station, one at Ruili and a few along the journey back to Mangshi.

Ashy Drongo, *Dicrurus leucophaeus hopwoodi*

Two at Wanding Forest Park and one at Moli.

Bronzed Drongo, *Dicrurus aeneus aeneus*

Ten at the Hydro station, four at Moli and two at Wanding Forest Park.



*Bronzed Drongo*

Green Magpie, *Cissa chinensis chinensis*

One at the Hydro station.

White-rumped Munia, *Lonchura striata swinhoei*

Five at the Hydro station.