

Tengchong and Ruili, Yunnan, China

23-25 November 2007



Black-browed Parrotbill – one of China's gorgeous Parrotbills

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General

The main purpose of this short trip to Yunnan was to find the nominate taxon of Brown-winged Parrotbill. The ricketti taxon that is found further northeast and on the other side of the Salween River, is sometimes separated as a distinct species: Yunnan Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis ricketti*. Having seen the latter near Lijiang a few years ago, I was keen to find out if it really looked that different.

Marco della Seta joined me and we were fortunate to quite easily (and with the kind early morning support from Jesper Hornskov) find a large flock of Parrotbills at Laifengshan just outside Tengchong. We then continued to Ruili, where I eventually caught up with the long over-due Pale-footed Bush-Warbler. A short stop at Moli, on the way back to the airport, produced a close encounter with some cute Black-browed Parrotbills. We also enjoyed a good selection of typical western Yunnan birds during the two days in the field.



Brown-winged Parrotbills. The first three are the taxon brunneus from Tengchong and bottom right is taxon ricketti from near Lijiang. The differences are not extreme, but still detectable. Brunneus has more purplish/pinkish colour on the throat and necksides, more pronounced pale eyebrow, less conspicuous eye-ring and in the field also brighter rufous head.

Itinerary

23/11

We took the 12.25 flight from Beijing to Kunming and soon after caught the 17.30 flight bound for Mangshi (=Luxi=Dehong) in the western part of Yunnan. When arriving at the airport we were quickly picked up by the pre-booked driver that took us on a 2.5 hours drive due north to Tengchong. The road condition was good and by 21.15 we arrived at Lei Hua Hotel in downtown Tengchong. We had a late dinner on a small restaurant across the street that offered some superb local cuisine.

24/11

Dawn was not until 7.30, so we started off with breakfast at the hotel. Chinese breakfasts are not my favorites, but some noodles did the trick. At dawn we took a 5 minutes taxi ride to the entrance of Laifengshan. We birded mostly the lower slopes for the first few hours, until walking the small road up to the summit. The birding was good with several nice flocks moving through the forest. Best of all was naturally the large flock of Brown-winged Parrotbills that we followed through the forest. By 12.30 we were back down at the entrance and walked down the street until we found a taxi to take us the short distance to the hotel. Lunch was had at the same place across the street.

As we had been successful with the target species, we decided to change habitat and zip across to Ruili. This would enable us to bird in a different habitat and at lower altitudes. We called in a taxi and after some negotiation, we settled on a reasonable price for a car with safety belts in the back seats. The ride took us four hours (15.30-19.30) and provided nice scenery along the valleys and across three different ridges. This brought back fond memories when I birded these ridges a few years ago.

Interestingly enough when we got closer to Ruili, our Tengchong driver was on the look-out for Ruili taxis. When he saw one he frankly stopped it and after some negotiation between the taxi drivers, we accepted to switch cars in order to reduce the total mileage for everyone involved. The Ruili taxi now took us the last half hour to Ruili and even though it was a worse car, the drivers were probably happy to contribute to reduced emission of green-house gases.

Eventually we checked in at the rather luxurious, but price-worthy, Jing Cheng Hotel

25/11

After a quick breakfast at the hotel at 7.00, we took a taxi just out of town to a nearby Hydro station. This area has a nice patch of forest where I birded exactly one year ago. My personal target species was Pale-footed Bush-Warbler. It took me until 10.00 until I eventually scored on a nice encounter, after having had two too-brief views. Marco spent more of his time inside the forest and when my mission was completed, I met up with him along a trail. The forest held some nice mixed species feeding flocks, but by 13.00 we called the taxi driver to come and pick us up.

We just picked up the bags at the hotel and then chartered another car to take us back to Mangshi airport. The distance is only 100 km and about 1/3 of the way east of Ruili is a forest park called Moli. We stopped here for a couple of hours and birded both inside the forest along the trail to the waterfall and also along the entrance road where bamboo is plentiful. Streaked Wren-Babbler was appreciated by Marco and we finally rounded off the weekend with a close and prolonged encounter with a party of gorgeous Black-browed Parrotbills.

By 16.00 we left Moli for a 70 minutes drive to the airport, where we had dinner at one of the small restaurants across the street. The flight to Kunming left at 18.45, which was 15 minutes ahead of schedule. Then it was on to Beijing where we arrived shortly after midnight.

Weather

As is usual in Yunnan at this time of the year it was clear skies and very nice temperatures, making it an ideal time to visit.

Logistics

The car from Mangshi airport to Tengchong was pre-booked from Beijing through my travel agent. The remaining transport was arranged by taking taxis that were easily available. Hotels in Tengchong and Ruili are plentiful and readily found on internet. In Tengchong we stayed at Lei Hua Hotel and in Ruili at Jing Cheng Hotel.



Marco at my favorite restaurant just near Mangshi airport.

Site descriptions

Laifengshan, Tengchong

Laifengshan is a small mountain that towers some 200 meters above the small town of Tengchong. The summit is just above 2000 masl. The mountain is covered with decent forest and is partly a graveyard, especially on the lower slopes. There is a small road that leads up to the summit where a temple is situated.

Ruili

The Hydro station or the pump house is situated in the hills just north of Ruili and is probably the closest forest to town. The area also holds some scrub and grass, fringing the plantations.

Moli

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. The birding is good along the entrance road from the ticket gate to the parking lot and holds secondary forest and bamboo. Beyond the parking lot, there is a trail that leads to the waterfall. Unfortunately this trail is quite noisy due to the stream as well as all the people.

Birds

The numbers given are basically those seen by myself and birds in square brackets were only observed by Marco.

Little Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax niger*

One between Tengchong and Ruili.

Little Egret, *Egretta garzetta garzetta*

10-20 between Tengchong and Ruili.

Chinese Pond-Heron, *Ardeola bacchus*

Five between Tengchong and Ruili

Cattle Egret, *Bubulcus ibis coromandus*

100+ between Tengchong and Ruili and a few between Ruili and Mangshi.

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

One at Laifengshan outside Tengchong, one at the Hydro station at Ruili and one at Moli.

Crested Goshawk, *Accipiter trivirgatus indicus*

One at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Besra, *Accipiter virgatus affinis*

One at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Common Buzzard, *Buteo buteo refectus*

One at Laifengshan outside Tengchong and one at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Eurasian Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus interstinctus*

Five between Tengchong and Ruili and one the Hydro station at Ruili.

Mountain Bamboo-Partridge, *Bambusicola fytchii fytchii*

One pair duetting at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Oriental Turtle-Dove, *Streptopelia orientalis agricola*

Ten at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Spotted Dove, *Streptopelia chinensis chinensis*

Two at Laifengshan outside Tengchong and 50+ between Tengchong and Ruili.

Green-billed Malkoha, *Phaenicophaeus tristis saliens*

One or two at the Hydro station at Ruili.



Green-billed Malkoha

Coucal sp, *Centropus* sp

One flew away in the grassy plantation at the Hydro station at Ruili, probably a Lesser Coucal.

Swiftlet sp, *Aerodramus* sp

One at Laifengshan outside Tengchong was most likely a Himalayan Swiftlet.

White-throated Kingfisher, *Halcyon smyrnensis fokiensis*

One just east of Ruili.

[Blue-bearded Bee-eater, *Nyctyornis athertoni athertoni*

One seen by Marco at the Hydro station at Ruili.]

- Indian Roller, *Coracias benghalensis affinis*
One just east of Ruili.
- Great Barbet, *Megalaima virens clamator*
One heard at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.
- Speckled Piculet, *Picumnus innominatus malayrum*
One at the Hydro station at Ruili.
- Grey-capped Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos canicapillus* ssp
Three at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.
- Great Spotted Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos major stresemanni*
Two at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.
- Rufous Woodpecker, *Ceelus brachyurus fokiensis*
One heard (and seen by Marco) at the Hydro station at Ruili.
- Lesser Yellownape, *Picus chlorolophus chlorolophus*
One at the Hydro station at Ruili.
- [Grey-headed Woodpecker, *Picus canus sordidor*
One seen by Marco at the Hydro station at Ruili.]
- Grey-throated Sand-Martin, *Riparia chinensis*
Several between Tengchong and Ruili.
- Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica* ssp
Several between Tengchong and Ruili.
- White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba alboides*
Ten between Tengchong and Ruili and two at Moli.
- Grey Wagtail, *Motacilla cinerea robusta*
Two at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.
- Olive-backed Pipit, *Anthus hodgsoni yunnanensis*
20-30 at Laifengshan outside Tengchong and ten at the Hydro station at Ruili.
- [Large Cuckoo-Shrike, *Coracina macei siamensis*
One seen by Marco at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.]
- Long-tailed Minivet, *Pericrocotus ethologus* ssp
15-20 at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.



Long-tailed Minivet

Scarlet Minivet, *Pericrocotus flammeus elegans*
15 at the Hydro station at Ruili.



Scarlet Minivet

Black-crested Bulbul, *Pycnonotus melanicterus flaviventris*
Two at Moli.

Red-whiskered Bulbul, *Pycnonotus jocosus monticola*
Five at Moli and two at Mangshi.

Brown-breasted Bulbul, *Pycnonotus xanthorrhous xanthorrhous*
Three at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Red-vented Bulbul, *Pycnonotus cafer stanfordi*
Fairly common between Tengchong and Ruili, around Ruili and towards Mangshi.

White-throated Bulbul, *Alophoixus flaveolus burmanicus*
Two at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Ashy Bulbul, *Hemixos flavala flavala*
Two at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Black Bulbul, *Hypsipetes leucocephalus concolor*
Common at Laifengshan outside Tengchong. Both white- and black-headed birds.

Leafbird sp, *Choloropsis* sp
One at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Scaly Thrush, *Zootera dauma*
One at Laifengshan outside Tengchong. Identification as the Himalayan taxon based primarily on the small bill size.



Scaly Thrush

Black-breasted Thrush, *Turdus dissimilis*
15+ at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.



Black-breasted Thrush

Prinia sp, *Prinia* sp

Five at the Hydro station at Ruili were most likely Grey-breasted, although I admittedly did not pay enough attention.

Pale-footed Bush-Warbler, *Cettia pallidipes laurentei*

First one was seen very briefly as it dived back into the grass, but eventually another one was seen nicely as it finally made it to the top of the weeds and sat out for half a minute.

Russet Bush-Warbler, *Bradypterus seebohmi idoneus*

One heard singing at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Buff-throated Warbler, *Phylloscopus subaffinis*

One at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Yellow-streaked Warbler, *Phylloscopus armandii* ssp

One at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Sichuan Leaf-Warbler, *Phylloscopus forresti*

A few identified at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Pallas's Leaf-Warbler, *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Two identified at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Yellow-browed Warbler, *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Common at Laifengshan outside Tengchong, at the Hydro station at Ruili and at Moli.

Hume's Leaf-Warbler, *Phylloscopus humei mandelli*

At least one at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Two-barred Greenish Warbler, *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*

One at the Hydro station at Ruili.

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

At least five at Laifengshan outside Tengchong and one at the Hydro station at Ruili. No single-wing-flicking by any and at least the Ruili bird had the nuthatch feeding-style.

White-tailed Leaf-Warbler, *Phylloscopus davisoni davisoni*

One at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Grey-crowned or Omei Warbler, *Seicercus tephrocephalus* or *omeiensis*

3-4 at the Hydro station at Ruili. Called with a single or sometimes double chu or chlu.

[Chestnut-crowned Warbler, *Seicercus castaniceps* ssp

One seen by Marco at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.]

Striated Grassbird, *Megalurus palustris toklao*

One near Husa.

Large Niltava, *Niltava grandis grandis*

5+ at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Rufous-bellied Niltava, *Niltava sundara denotata*
One female and one male at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Hill Blue-Flycatcher, *Cyornis banyumas whitei*
One male at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher, *Culicicapa ceylonensis calochrysea*
Four at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Orange-flanked Bush-Robin, *Tarsiger rufilatus*
One at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Oriental Magpie-Robin, *Copsychus saularis ssp*
One between Tengchong and Ruili and several around Ruili and Mangshi.

Blue-fronted Redstart, *Phoenicurus frontalis*
Five at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

White-capped Water-Redstart, *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*
Three below Husa Ridge.

Plumbeous Water-Redstart, *Rhyacornis fuliginosus fuliginosus*
One female at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Slaty-backed Forktail, *Enicurus schistaceus*
One at the Hydro station at Ruili and one at Moli.

White-crowned Forktail, *Enicurus leschenaultia sinensis*
One at the Hydro station at Ruili. This and the previous species were seen at exactly the same spot as where I saw a Black-backed last year. Must be an appealing site for Forktails!

Siberian Stonechat, *Saxicola maurus ssp*
Three between Tengchong and Ruili and one at Mangshi.

Pied Bushchat, *Saxicola caprata burmanicus*
Two between Tengchong and Ruili.

Grey Bushchat, *Saxicola ferreus*
Three at Laifengshan outside Tengchong and three at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Yellow-bellied Fantail, *Rhipidura hypoxantha*
One at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

White-throated Fantail, *Rhipidura albicollis celsa*
One at the Hydro station at Ruili. One seen by Marco at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

White-browed Laughingthrush, *Garrulax sannio comis*
Five at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush, *Garrulax pectoralis monileger/schauenseei*
Five at Moli.

[Puff-throated Babbler, *Pellorneum ruficeps shanense*
Four seen by Marco at the Hydro station at Ruili.]

Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis ssp*
Four at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, *Pomatorhinus ruficollis albipectus*
Five at Laifengshan outside Tengchong and one at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Streaked Wren-Babbler, *Napothera brevicaudata venningi*
One at Moli was initially seen moving around and calling. On response to playback it started to sing loudly, but as is normal, from a hidden place.

Silver-eared Mesia, *Leiothrix argentauris vernayi*
Five at Laifengshan outside Tengchong, a few at the Hydro station at Ruili and a few at Moli.

Red-billed Leiothrix, *Leiothrix lutea yunnanensis*
5-10 at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

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

Two at Laifengshan outside Tengchong and one at the Hydro station at Ruili.



White-browed Shrike-Babbler

Blue-winged Minla, *Minla cyanouroptera wingatei*

20+ at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Chestnut-tailed Minla, *Minla strigula yunnanensis*

One at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Red-tailed Minla, *Minla ignotincta ignotincta*

10-15 at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, *Alcippe morrisonia fratercula*

Ten at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Black-headed Sibia, *Heterophasia desgodinsi*

Three at the summit at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.



Black-headed Sibia

Whiskered Yuhina, *Yuhina flavicollis rouxi*

One at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

White-bellied Yuhina, *Yuhina zantholeuca zantholeuca*

One at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Brown-winged Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis brunneus brunneus*

30-40 at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Black-browed Parrotbill, *Paradoxornis atrosuperciliaris atrosuperciliaris*

Three or possibly four at Moli. Song was a clear fluty whistle: huiii-huyyy-huuuuu. They were seen at virtually the same site as I saw a pair of Rufous-headed Parrotbills one year ago, i.e. between the gate and the parking lot.



Black-browed Parrotbill

Black-throated Tit, *Aegithalos concinnus talifuensis*

Three at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Great Tit, *Parus major subtibetanus*

10-20 at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

[Green-backed Tit, *Parus monticolus yunnanensis*

One seen by Marco at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.]

Yellow-cheeked Tit, *Parus spilonotus spilonotus*

Three at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.



Yellow-cheeked Tit

Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, *Sitta nagaensis nagaensis*

Five at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.



Chestnut-vented Nuthatch

[Ruby-cheeked Sunbird, *Chalcoparia singalensis assamensis*

One seen by Marco at the Hydro station at Ruili.]

Gould's Sunbird, *Aethopyga gouldiae dabryii*

Three males at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Streaked Spiderhunter, *Arachnothera magna magna*

Two at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Flowerpecker sp, *Dicaeum* sp

One female at Moli, called like a Fire-breasted.

Chestnut-flanked White-eye, *Zosterops erythropleurus*

At least two at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Japanese White-eye, *Zosterops japonicus simplex*

30+ at Laifengshan outside Tengchong and a few at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Slender-billed Oriole, *Oriolus tenuirostris tenuirostris*

Three at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.



Slender-billed Oriole

[Maroon Oriole, *Oriolus traillii traillii*

One seen by Marco at the Hydro station at Ruili.]

Long-tailed Shrike, *Lanius schach nigriceps*

Common between Tengchong and Ruili, around Ruili and towards Mangshi.

Black Drongo, *Dicrurus macrocercus cathoecus*

Two the Hydro station at Ruili. Five seen by Marco between Tengchong and Ruili.

Ashy Drongo, *Dicrurus leucophaeus hopwoodi*

Five at Laifengshan outside Tengchong and a few at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Bronzed Drongo, *Dicrurus aeneus aeneus*

Five at Moli.

[Eurasian Jay, *Garrulus glandarius leucotis*

One seen by Marco at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.]

Large-billed Crow, *Corvus macrorhynchos* ssp

Two at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Russet Sparrow, *Passer rutilans intensior*

One female at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Scaly-breasted Munia, *Lonchura punctulata yunnanensis*

Ten at the Hydro station at Ruili.

Black-headed Greenfinch, *Carduelis ambigua ambigua*

5-10 at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Tibetan Siskin, *Serinus thibetanus*

40-50 plus 20+ at Laifengshan outside Tengchong.

Crested Bunting, *Melophus lathami*

Six on a wire between Ruili and Mangshi was a China-tick.



Tibetan Siskins