

Baishuiling, Hainan, China

4-6 July 2008



Grey-cheeked Fulvetta (as a rather poor compensation for Hainan Peacock-Pheasant...)

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General

This was a weekend trip dedicated to find Hainan Peacock-Pheasant. Although it was during the hot and rainy post-breeding season, I had a weekend available, so I just gave it a go. Through some valuable contacts in Hainan, I was fortunate to have the possibility to join one of the persons that does research on this threatened species. Hainan Peacock-Pheasant (HPP) has in the past been regarded as a subspecies of Grey Peacock-Pheasant, but morphological differences and recent genetic data clearly shows that it qualifies for species rank. This makes it one of the most seldom seen endemics in China and besides being rare in a tiny range, it seems to be decreasing in numbers. I had made attempts to find it at two previous occasions, but it had eluded me so far. As I had seen all the other Hainan specialties before, I decided to concentrate entirely on HPP this time. The consequence was that very few other birds were observed at all. In fact we decided to spend all possible day-light hours staking out a good feeding spot, meaning that we sat at one specific spot for 12 plus 7 hours! The only result being that we heard, presumably the female, several times during the first day and then heard the male calling the second day. We also found fresh feeding marks and steaming hot droppings, some that must have been dropped just 30 meters behind our backs. That was it! Next time I will go back in March-April, when they are supposed to be more actively calling...

Itinerary

4/7

I arrived at Haikou around 18.00 by a short flight from Shenzhen. The weather the past week had been very rainy in southern China, so it was a bit of a relief to find sunny and clear weather, although the heat and humidity was apparent. I was picked up at the airport by Mr Li who knows the HPP very well, and in a minibus we took off along the clockwise express-road towards Sanya. This was actually not realized by me until the day after! My expectation was that we would go to Bawangling, where I had been three years earlier. On arrival at 22.00 in the evening it dawned to me that we had not arrived Bawangling, but instead a completely different place Dujiacun. No worries, I was hoping that I would be in good hands, i.e. in the hands of people knowing the target bird.

5/7

We got up at 5.00 and left the hotel for a 45 min/20 km drive to Baishuiling, where we arrived at the crack of dawn. A mere ten minutes walk put us in position in one of three HPP territories known in the area. From then on not much was happening until dusk. We spent close to 12 hours staking out an area where the HPP was supposed to feed regularly. Several times during the day we could here one bird, the female according to Mr Li, calling very irregularly, most likely to keep in contacts with the young birds. The forest was otherwise pretty devoid of birds. When it got too dark in the forest by 17.30, we left for the hotel at Dujiacun. It was then, while still light, that I realized that I had actually been to this place once before in 2003! China is big, but it is a small world!

6/7

The first 7 hours was pretty much a repeat performance of yesterday, with the only difference being that we only heard the male calling a few times. The only excitement came in the form of a pair of Hainan Partridges. By 13.00 I had to give up and return to Haikou and it was while walking back that I found very fresh feeding marks and droppings on the trail, virtually behind our backs. But close isn't really good enough! The return journey to Haikou and onwards to Beijing was rather uneventful.

Weather

July is the rainy season, so it was a bit of gambling that I decided to pay a visit. I was lucky though and had stunningly clear weather during my entire stay, except for half an hour during Saturday afternoon when there was a light shower.

Logistics

The entire visit was kindly arranged by my assistant who did all the planning together with the local contacts. Mr Li, who is studying the Peacock-Pheasant, picked me up and dropped me off at the airport as well as joined me in the forest.



Mr Li

Site descriptions

Baishuiling is part of a larger nature reserve called Diaoluoshan. From Haikou it takes 3.5 hours to drive and from Sanya about 2 hours. Coming from the Haikou –Sanya eastern expressway, one turns off at Lingshui exit and heads towards Baoting. 12 km from Lingshui on the Baoting road, there is a turn-off to the north. From this junction it takes about 45 minutes to drive to Dujiacun. Along this smaller road there are several villages and the last village is about 10 minutes drive from turning off at the last mentioned junction. From this last village there is 18 km to Dujiacun on a gravel road. 8 km up on this road there is a fork with a round blue sign. Take the right fork and continue for the last 10 km (20 min). The HPP area at Baishuiling is along the left fork (along the road that says 13 km to somewhere).

There is a hotel at nearby Dujiacun with very comfortable cabins and a restaurant. Baishuiling's location is: 18°43'-18°58'N, 109°43'-109°53'E.



View of the forest at Baishuiling

Birds

Chinese Pond-Heron, *Ardeola bacchus*

Two south of Haikou.

Crested Serpent-eagle, *Spilornis cheela rutherfordi*

One pair heard at Baishuiling. Hainan endemic taxon with underparts heavily marked with round white black-encircled spots, which however are not possible to see on heard-only birds ;-)

Crested Goshawk, *Accipiter trivirgatus trivirgatus*

One at Baishuiling in the late afternoon.

Hainan Partridge, *Arborophila ardens*

One pair at Baishuiling the second morning. The male started calling nearby when we were waiting for the Peacock. I recorded it and it came in close and shortly afterwards a second bird was heard nearby at close range giving a different call. This could have been the female and it was seen only briefly.

Hainan Peacock-Pheasant, *Polyplectron katsumatae*

One female heard giving the contact call (single deflected 'chaa') seven times during the first morning and once in the mid-afternoon. The male was heard calling a few times in the morning of the second day. The call was somewhat similar to corresponding call of Grey PP; a hoarse 'ghaa-gha-gha-gha-gha-gah', typical in quality to several other *Polyplectron*.

[Banded Bay Cuckoo, *Cacomantis sonneratii* ssp

One bird heard calling the second morning at Baishuiling sounded identical to this species. However, according to literature it is not supposed to occur on Hainan.]

Mountain Scops-Owl, *Otus spilocephalus latouchei*

One heard pre-dawn at Dujiacun resort area the first morning.

Asian Barred Owlet, *Glaucidium cuculoides persimilie*

One heard at Baishuiling at dawn the second morning

Asian Palm-Swift, *Cypsiurus balasiensis infumatus*

One at Baishuiling the second day.

House Swift, *Apus nipalensis nipalensis*

A few in Haikou.

Red-headed Trogon, *Harpactes erythrocephalus hainanus*

Two singing at Baishuiling both days.

Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher, *Ceyx erithacus* ssp

One shot past at Baishuiling the second morning.

Black-browed Barbet, *Megalaima oorti faber*

Five heard at Baishuiling both days.

Bay Woodpecker, *Blythipicus pyrrhotis hainanus*

One heard at Baishuiling a few times both days. Endemic taxon with unbarred back, which is hard to see on heard-only birds.

Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica* ssp

Many at Dujiacun resort area.

Grey-chinned Minivet, *Pericrocotus solaris griseigularis*

About five at Baishuiling the first day.

Puff-throated Bulbul, *Alophoixus flaveolus pallidus*

At least five at Baishuiling both days.

Yellow-bellied Prinia, *Prinia subflava sonitans*

One at Baishuiling the second day.

Pale Blue Flycatcher, *Cyornis unicolor diaoluensis*

One heard at Baishuiling both days.

Oriental Magpie-Robin, *Copsychus saularis prosthopellus*

One at Haikou and two near Lingshui.

White-crowned Forktail, *Enicurus leschenaulti sinensis*

One at Baishuiling and one at Dujiacun resort area.

Rufous-cheeked Laughingthrush, *Garrulaxi castanotis*

One heard a few times both days at Baishuiling .

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

A few heard and seen both days at Baishuiling.

Eye-browed Wren-Babbler, *Napothera epilepidota hainanus*

One heard at Baishuiling both days.

Rufous-capped Babbler, *Stachyris ruficeps goodsoni*

One heard and one seen at Baishuiling.

Spot-necked Babbler, *Stachyris strilolata swinhoi*

One heard at Baishuiling both days.

Dusky Fulvetta, *Alcippe brunnea arguta*

Two at Baishuiling the second day.

Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, *Alcippe morrisonia rufescentior*

About ten at Baishuiling both days.

White-bellied Yuhina, *Erpornis zantholeuca tyrannula*

A few at Baishuiling both days.



White-bellied Yuhina

Long-tailed Shrike, *Lanius schach hainanus*

One at Haikou.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow, *Passer montanus malaccensis*

Seen in villages.