

**Winter birding**  
**in northern**  
**Nei Mongol**  
**CHINA**

**16-19 December 2012**



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## **SUMMARY**

I had long wanted to explore and bird in northern China in winter – and with apparent irruptions of several species further south than normal this winter and a busy schedule of bird tours in the coming New Year, December 2012 seemed like an ideal time to make the trip. WANG Qingyu had asked around our Chinese birding contacts and eventually, with the help of Panjin based birder Cunzhang and WWF's Lei Jinyu, we got in touch with Hailar based birder ZHAO Shuanglong (mobile 13848708421). Mr ZHAO had agreed to guide us for a few days while we searched northern Nei Mongol (Inner Mongolia) for Snowy Owl and a few other regional highlights. Mr ZHAO had also told us in advance that he charges a daily guiding fee of 600 yuan, another fee of 600 yuan/day for the use of his four-wheel drive vehicle and that we'd also be expected to pay for the petrol. Mr ZHAO was an impressive off-road driver and his skills in negotiating the snow covered grasslands were truly impressive – as was his knowledge of where to find the owls. I would certainly not encourage anyone to attempt to find these species without his help

This was Paul's third and Jennifer Leung's (= Liang Wenying) first trip to Nei Mongol and I recorded 24 species

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Cunzhang, Lei Jinyu and Zhu Lei all helped supply information and contact details in advance of our trip; WANG Qingyu spent considerable time liaising with these three and those whose contact details they had supplied. She subsequently had several telephone conversations with ZHAO Shuanglong and continued to do so right up until our departure. Qingyu also facilitated Paul's last night's accommodation in the Manzhouli Shangri-La hotel. Several others, including Brian Ivon Jones also provided contact details of various people in northern China – but none of the latter led to anything. Terry Townshend had hoped to have been able to join Jennifer and me on this trip, but work commitments prevented him from doing so – nevertheless he was as helpful as ever kindly booking (and paying for) Paul's return plane ticket. Several years ago Richard Lewthwaite also provided Paul with an annotated checklist of the birds of Nei Mongol. A big thanks to everyone for their time, help and generosity

## **Sunday 16 December 2012. Flew Beijing to Manzhouli, Nei Mongol & drove to Xiqi & beyond.**

I met Jennifer near the Hainan Airlines check-in desk in terminal 1 of Beijing's Capital Airport just before 05h00. We duly checked in, cleared security and headed off to the gate for our 08h05 Hainan Airlines flight (HU7115) north to Manzhouli in northern Nei Mongol. The flight was scheduled to depart at 08h05 and arrive in Manzhouli at 10h25 and it duly pulled away from the gate right on time – but then we waited and waited and waited. Breakfast was served and we finally took off 69 minutes late at 09h14. The flight took two hours nine minutes and landed in Manzhouli at 11h24. It was about 80% full – with a large number of the passengers being elderly Russian women.

Manzhouli is about 170 kilometres west-north-west of Hailar in northern Nei Mongol Autonomous Region (hereafter simply Nei Mongol). Both of these towns have their own airports and are served by daily flights from Beijing and both are in Hulunder, Nei Mongol's northernmost district. Manzhouli is right on the border with Siberia – and claims to be the busiest land border anywhere in China (note that this must be by volume or weight of items crossing the border as massive amounts of lumber are clearly shipped south). Manzhouli is also only a few kilometres away from the north-easternmost corner of Mongolia.

## **Manzhouli airport (49°34.3'N., 117°19.9'E.) is at 650 metres elevation and is 9 kilometres from the city centre**

We were picked up by Mr Yu, a taxi driver friend of Mr ZHAO, and whisked off to meet our guide. Mr ZHAO was in Xiqi (short for Xinbaerhuyouqi Aletan Emole zhen and called New Barag Youqi on Google Earth) - a smaller town a drive of 116 kilometres southwest of Manzhouli airport. Xiqi is close to Hulun Nur and what my GPS was calling Altai Emel. The non-stop drive 116 kilometre drive took us 75 minutes (11h55-13h10)

Mr ZHAO had arranged a hotel for us in Xiqi and that's where we met him. The hotel was a modest 120 yuan/night place where the bedrooms all had a TV, a computer with internet access, heater, kettle and en suite bathrooms with western toilets and individual hot water heaters for showers. Most importantly the hotel was warm!

## **Sun rise and sun set in Manzhouli on 16 Dec. 2012**

Sun rise	08h00
Sun set	16h10

Mr ZHAO discovered the wintering population of Snowy Owl in this part of Nei Mongol and had seen between three and five Snowy Owls there within the last few days. The best area for them is another two hour drive from Xiqi –and we arrived simply too late to do this justice and opted instead to spend time looking for raptors and passerines closer to town. In the event we later discovered that he'd also seen Snowy Owl at the site he took us this afternoon – but hadn't seen it there for at least two weeks. This afternoon's site was supposed to good for raptors – and it certainly was as we saw a dozen Upland Buzzards over a five kilometre stretch of highway.

Mr ZHAO later told us that the first Snowy Owls of the season usually arrive in mid-November, that he's never seen the species in October but that he's once seen it (in 2006 or 2007) in late September. The period between January and early March is typically the best time to see them. He saw up to 10 different birds in the Xiqi area in early March 2012 (a record count) and noted that the last sighting of spring 2012 was on the 20 March. A small number of birds usually remain in to early April – but even these move out once all the snow has melted.

In the afternoon we took a smaller, but still paved, road from Xiqi out towards Menggu Kou'an. We drove about 50 kilometres out on this road and came back exactly the same way. At one stage we did some off road exploration.

### Weather

It was cold, really cold with, according to an inflight announcement, the temperature at Manzhouli airport being a chilly minus 20°C when we landed at 11h24! This was predicted to drop to a frigid -30°C or so just before dawn the following morning. To make matters worse there was a decent wind – and at one point during our subsequent drive the wind was strong enough to weep up lots of snow almost creating a white-out!

The birding was, as we expected, pretty slow with just seven species being logged today -

Upland Buzzard

12 between kilometres 46-50 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. (800 metres)



Eurasian Eagle-owl

1 at kilometre post *ca.*25 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. (640 metres)

Little Owl

1 at kilometre post 21.5 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. (635 metres)

Mongolian Lark

3 between Manzhouli, Xiqi and 50 kilometres west of there towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. The first bird was at kilometre 74 on route 203 between Manzhouli & Xiqi while the other two were at kilometre 39 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an. (590 & 750 [2 birds] metres)

Horned Lark

37 between Manzhouli, Xiqi and 50 kilometres west of there towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. 13 birds were seen between kilometres 88-90 on route 203 between Manzhouli & Xiqi while the other 24 were seen between kilometres 21.5 and *ca.*Km 50 on the road west of Xiqi. Flock sizes were as follows – 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, (590-750 metres)



Eurasian Tree Sparrow  
Eurasian Bullfinch

2 in Xiqi town on the 16/12/2012.  
1 male near our hotel in Xiqi town on the 16/12/2012.

**Mammals**

Red Fox

3 singles between kilometres 21.5-50 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. (635-800 metres)

'Sand Fox'

1 poorly seen animal at kilometre 39 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012 was identified as a 'sand fox' by Mr ZHAO.

**Monday 17 December 2012. All day in the Xiqi-Hulun Nur area.**

We finally left the hotel at 07h30 (a full one hour late) as Mr ZHAO failed to turn up on time. He was driving a different four-wheel drive vehicle to yesterday – a vehicle that on the face of things appeared newer, better and was certainly warmer and more comfortable to yesterday's.

Jennifer and me had already eaten so, once we'd picked up some food for Mr ZHAO, we headed off southeast on route 203 before eventually driving around the southern end of Hulun Nur (the fifth largest freshwater lake in China – a fact that Mr ZHAO was clearly very proud of). The day's primary target was Snowy Owl – and Mr ZHAO duly found us two birds, a female and, about four kilometres away from her, a male. We also saw two sizeable flocks of Snow Buntings.

We made a couple of brief detours off the main highway on route to the Snowy Owl area today – though only one of these, the one at kilometre 147 on route 203, lasted for any significant length of time.

**Small derelict house that held a Eurasian Eagle owl and a Little Owl. (48°28.9'N., 117°04.2'E.) 555 metres**

We turned right off the highway at kilometre post 147. ZHAO Shuanglong told us that he had seen a Snowy Owl in this area the previous winter. Today we saw -

Eurasian Eagle Owl	1
Little Owl	1

Returning to the main highway, route 203, we continued southeast for another ten minutes before turning off the paved road close to the settlement of Bodgul cun (=Baodun cun) at Km post 159 (48°27.9'N., 117°15.0'E.). 610 metres. We turned off here at 09h05 and headed out in to the snow-covered grasslands.

**Snow Bunting**

ZHAO Shuanglong has been birding in Nei Mongol for about five years and, while he's primarily a bird photographer, he's very sharp-eyed and is interested in seeing most things. He had seen his first ever Snow Buntings this current winter – seeing a flock of 30-40 birds on the 20 November 2012 and on three or four occasions between then and our sighting today.

Our first flock of Snow Buntings today were 70 birds, along with six Lapland Buntings, at (48°45.0'N., 117°32.3'E.) 590 metres

### Snowy Owl

Mr ZHAO requested that we didn't give anyone details on where we saw either of our Snowy Owls – and since he's invested a considerable amount of his own time and own money in finding them I think that's not an unreasonable request. In any event, even knowing exactly where they currently are doesn't mean they'll be at that same place subsequently as, according to Mr ZHAO they are highly mobile. A four wheel drive vehicle with an experienced off road driver who has a snow shovel, a mobile phone and an extensive network of contacts should you have a problem, are all essential. Mr ZHAO is recommended and is definitely THE guy to go with. Ideally it would be good to go with a large group of people using more than just one vehicle. If I went again in winter I would definitely also take a good quality sleeping bag.

We saw two Snowy Owls today – a male and female that were about four kilometres apart and both on the eastern side of Hulun Nur. Jennifer returned with some Beijing & Taiwanese bird photographers the very next day and between their three cars they saw three different Snowy Owls – the two individuals that we saw today and another female. All were again on the eastern side of Hulun Nur.

After watching the owls for some time we continued on, venturing closer to Hulun Nur's lake edge. Here we came across a large number of passerines –

### Grassland ridge about two kilometres east of Hulun Nur lake edge. (48°47.7'N., 117°31.7'E.) 550 metres

Mongolian Lark	80
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	170
Chinese Grey Shrike	1
Horned Lark	4
Eurasian Eagle Owl	1

We then started to head back to Xiqi – but soon ran in to vehicle problems with the radiator leaking profusely. We were unable to fix the leak and very soon ran out of water! It was late afternoon, hideously cold outside and now the car heater – and the car itself weren't working. Between us we discussed the options of a either lengthy, extremely cold night in the car (a lengthy night that we might not wake up from as the temperature would surely plunged to well below minus 30°C or a lengthy walk. Time went on, Mr ZHAO contacted a friend of his who had another four wheel-drive vehicle and would come to our rescue – but this would take a lot of time and it was already getting dark, and colder! Fortunately Mr ZHAO had also managed to call the owner of a Mongolian yurt that we'd stopped at earlier in the day and this guy eventually appeared, on horseback with a large plastic jerry-can full of mostly unfrozen water. He'd ridden about three kilometres through foot deep snow with at least two gallons of water – and had come to our rescue. The water that he brought was just enough to enable us to start the engine and limp to his yurt – a safe haven. About 1.5 hours later Mr ZHAO's friend arrived in another four-wheel drive and, after stocking up on gallons of water he helped tow us slowly back to Xiqi. It was after 21h00 hours when we arrived back at the hotel – we were tired and cold but relieved that the day hadn't ended differently!

### Weather

Cold, really cold with my cheap thermometer bottoming out at minus 27° outside our Xiqi hotel at 06h45 and never climbing about minus 22°C all day! Fortunately it was immaculately clear, sunny and wasn't very windy.

Upland Buzzard	3 singles in the area between Xiqi and the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.
Snowy Owl	2, a female & shortly afterwards a male, on the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.
Eurasian Eagle-owl	2 singles between Xiqi and the and the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.
Little Owl	1 between Xiqi & Bodgul cun (=Baodun cun) at Km post 159 on route 203 on the 17/12/2012.
Chinese Grey Shrike	1 on the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.
Common Magpie	2 near a small farmhouse in the grasslands at the southern end of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.
Mongolian Lark	80 in a single flock on the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.
Horned Lark	10 in the area between Xiqi and the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012. The first (four birds) were seen just ten minutes out of Xiqi, another single was seen about 15 minutes out while the rest were closer to Hulun Nur.
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	200 in the area between Xiqi and the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012. The first 10 were seen just ten minutes out of Xiqi while a flock of 170 birds was with other passerines on the eastern side of Hulun Nur.
Lapland Longspur	6 on the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012. They were all in the first flock of Snow Buntings that we encountered.
Snow Bunting	135 on the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012. They were in two discrete flocks – the first of 65 birds & the second of 70. Mr Zhao had seen his first ever Snow Buntings ( a flock of 30 or 40 birds) in the same area on the 20 November and had seen them three times in that same area prior to our visit.



**Mammals, reptiles & amphibians**

Red Fox

1 between Xiqi & Bodgul cun (=Baodun cun) at Km post 159 on route 203 on the 17/12/2012.

**Tuesday 18 December 2012. Early morning Xiqi. Late morning returned to Manzhouli**

Jennifer wanted another shot at photographing the Snowy Owls – I didn't so we headed our separate ways today. She accompanied Mr Zhao and a group of six Beijing and Taiwanese bird photographers who had arrived late the previous evening back in to the grasslands on the eastern side of Hulun Nur. Instead I headed back to Manzhouli hoping to find a few passerines in the city's urban parks, we agreed that Jennifer would join me there the next day.

I left the Xiqi hotel at 07h45, took a taxi from right outside and headed back to the small coppices that we'd seen on the south-eastern edge of town yesterday morning. Arriving just a few minutes later I spent a couple of hours there (there was disappointingly little to see) before walking back to the hotel, picking up my gear and getting another taxi to take me from there back to Manzhouli city. The latter cost 260 yuan, I left Xiqi at 10h40 and arrived at the 5-star Shangri-La hotel in central Manzhouli at about 12h00. I checked in, dropped most of my gear and almost immediately headed back out spending the afternoon at a couple of parks in urban Manzhouli.

Manzhouli has numerous hotels – including a Hotel Ibis. The frigid winters are obviously low season – and the Shangri-La must have been making a hefty loss when I was there. Summer is the peak with lots of Russian tourists and people from south China visiting Manzhouli.

**Shangri-La Hotel, Manzhouli. (49°35.5'N., 117°26.9'E.) 650 metres.**

99 Liudao Street, Manzhouli, Nei Mongol (Inner Mongolia), China 021400. Tel. 470 396 888 and fax 470 391 9777

[www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com)

The first of the two parks in Manzhouli that I visited today was Beihu Park – and this small park is right besides the Shangri-La hotel and is effectively on the southern shore of the modestly sized North Lake (Beihu = Bei Hu). The largest trees, where almost all of the rather few birds present in the park were found, are right besides the lakeside hotel. I walked anticlockwise right around the frozen lake, also making sure to check the small reed beds that remain at various sites around it. A river flows in to the lake on the opposite side of the hotel to the direction I walked and it had more extensive reed beds in it. This river channel leads west and in to a more urbanised area closer to the town centre – in fact it leads right up to the rear of the FATA department store.

After walking a loop around the lake I headed in to town, picked up a town map from the Xinhua bookstore and then took another taxi out to Xi Shan Park on the western flank of the town. I spent the rest of the afternoon there, left at dusk and then headed straight back to the hotel.

**Site 1. Small coppices besides route 203 on southeast edge of Xiqi town. (48°39.1'N., 116°49.3'E.) 545 metres. 07h45-10h45.**

Common Magpie	50. They had probably roosted in the small coppice overnight and were already leaving, flying towards town, when I arrived.
Mongolian Lark	1
Horned Lark	10
Long-tailed Tit	1 nominate <i>caudatus</i> in the small coppice
House Sparrow	2 feeding with Eurasian Tree Sparrows right in Xiqi town
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	30 in town
Pine Grosbeak	1 in the small coppice

**Xiqi to Manzhouli**

Little Owl	1
Horned Lark	12

**Mammals, reptiles & amphibians**

Red Fox	1
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**Site 3. Beihu Park, Manzhouli. (49°35.5'N., 117°26.9'E.) 650 metres. 12h50-14h10**

I walked from the Shangri-La Hotel east going anticlockwise right around the lake – the well paved trail initially goes through a small park with a modest number of trees and light scrub. On the opposite side of the lake it's much more open, with very few trees and hardly any cover.

Great Spotted Woodpecker	2
Great Tit	1
Bohemian Waxwing	1
Long-tailed Tit	24
Eurasian Bullfinch	8

**Site 4. Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli. (49°36.0'N., 117°24.9'E.) 650 metres. 14h55-16h35**

This was a good site – and one that I visited again the very next day. It had a large number of trees in it – many were large, mature deciduous but others were small conifers. There's a gate into the park that remained closed 100% of the time that I was there but the two gents that lived in the house just inside this gate were friendly and allowed me to go in.

Daurian Partridge	1h
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1
Azure-winged Magpie	6
Common Magpie	1
Bohemian Waxwing	76
Long-tailed Tit	8
Eurasian Bullfinch	6

**Weather**

Another cold day It was probably below minus 30°C in Xiqi before dawn. Fortunately it was immaculately clear, sunny and wasn't very windy.

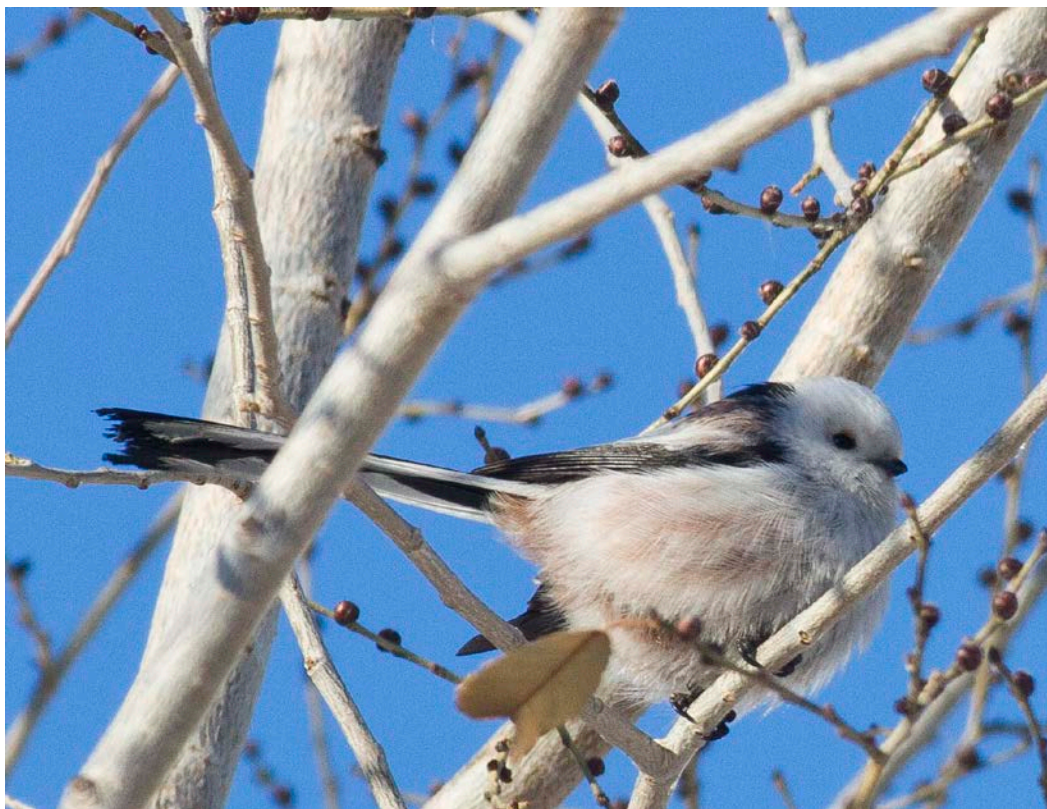
Daurian Partridge	1 was heard in Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012.
Little Owl	1 between Xiqi & Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	3 in Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012 with two (a male & a well separated female) in Beihu Park and another in Xi Shan Park.
Azure-winged Magpie	6 in Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012.
Common Magpie	50 on the 18/12/2012 with 50, mostly leaving a roost, in the small coppice besides route 203 southeast of Xiqi & another high over Xi Shan Park in Manzhouli town.
Bohemian Waxwing	77 in Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012 with one in Beihu Park and another 76 in Xi Shan Park.
Great Tit	1 male in Beihu Park, Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012.



Mongolian Lark  
Horned Lark

Long-tailed Tit

1 in waste ground near route 203 and about one kilometres southeast of Manzhouli town on the 18/12/2012.  
22 in the Xiqi - Manzhouli area on the 18/12/2012 with 10 immediately southeast of Xiqi town and 12 more between there and Manzhouli. On the drive birds were seen at kilometre 82 (three birds), Km 75 (three birds), Km 63 (four birds) & Km 52 (two birds).  
32 in the Xiqi & Manzhouli areas on the 18/12/2012. Two subspecies were seen - nominate *caudatus* was the commonest with just four *vinaceous* being seen. Just one was seen near Xiqi & it was *vinaceous* &. The other 31 were in Manzhouli town with 23 (one flock of 17 *caudatus* & another of four *caudatus* & three *vinaceous*) in Beihu Park and another eight *caudatus* in Xi Shan Park.



House Sparrow  
Eurasian Tree Sparrow

Eurasian Bullfinch

2 feeding with Eurasian Tree Sparrows right in Xiqi town on the 18/12/2012.  
36 in the Xiqi & Manzhouli areas on the 18/12/2012. The first 30 were in Xiqi town while the other six were in Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli later in the day.  
15 in the Xiqi & Manzhouli areas on the 18/12/2012. The first was heard in the small coppice besides route 203 & about one kilometre southeast of Xiqi town centre while another 14 were seen in Manzhouli - eight (one male & seven females) in Beihu Park and another six (two males & four females) in Xi Shan Park.





**Mammals, reptiles & amphibians**

Red Fox

2 on the 18/12/2012 – the first was in the small coppice besides route 203 southeast of Xiqi while the other was between there & Manzhouli.

**Wednesday 19 December 2012. Most of day in Manzhouli. Pm flight back to Beijing.**

The Shangri-La hotel's breakfast started at 06h30 – I was there just after 07h15, ate and then headed out. I spent all day in the field visiting three parks in Manzhouli. Two of these were ones that I'd explored yesterday while a third, the so-called Botanical Garden, was new to me – but virtually birdless! Jennifer arrived from Xiqi around 14h00, I met her back at the Shangri-La hotel and the two of us spent the late afternoon back in Beihu Park. I checked out of my room at 18h00, we had burgers for dinner in the coffee shop and headed off in a taxi to the airport just after 19h00. The taxi cost 50 yuan (a bit expensive although this did include a car parking fee at the terminal and was basically the price for a round trip as the driver wasn't sure whether he'd get a fare back in to the city. The drive to the airport took less than 15 minutes and the check-in desk for our flight back to Beijing didn't open until 19h45 – 1.5 hours before our flight was scheduled to depart.

**Site 1 Beihu Park, Manzhouli. (49°35.5'N., 117°26.9'E.) 650 metres. (07h50-09h00, 10h25-11h15 and 15h15-16h10)**

Being so close to the hotel I visited this small park three times today – and saw different birds each time!

Common Kestrel	2
Spotted Dove	2
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1h
Bohemian Waxwing	58
Great Tit	2
Long-tailed Tit	16
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	5
Eurasian Bullfinch	7
Hawfinch	1

**Site. 2. Dong Shan Botanical Gardens. (49°34.6'N., 117°30.1'E.) 645 metres. 09h10-10h00**

The taxi driver knew this places as something like - Hunli Gong Jiaotang. I certainly would never have guessed that it was a botanical garden – it was windswept, there were very few trees and it was the most bird-less site that I visited in Manzhouli town. In its defence it was apparently fairly a fairly new park – and befitting its name was at the eastern end of Manzhouli town. The park was centred around a massive church on a mound overlooking the city. The only trees of any consequence were a modest number of evergreens lining the approach road. There are numerous lumber yards between the monument and the city.

This site was very exposed – and consequently extremely cold!

Azure-winged Magpie	1
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	30
Eurasian Bullfinch	1

**Site 3. Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli. (49°36.0'N., 117°24.9'E.) 650 metres. 11h35-14h05**

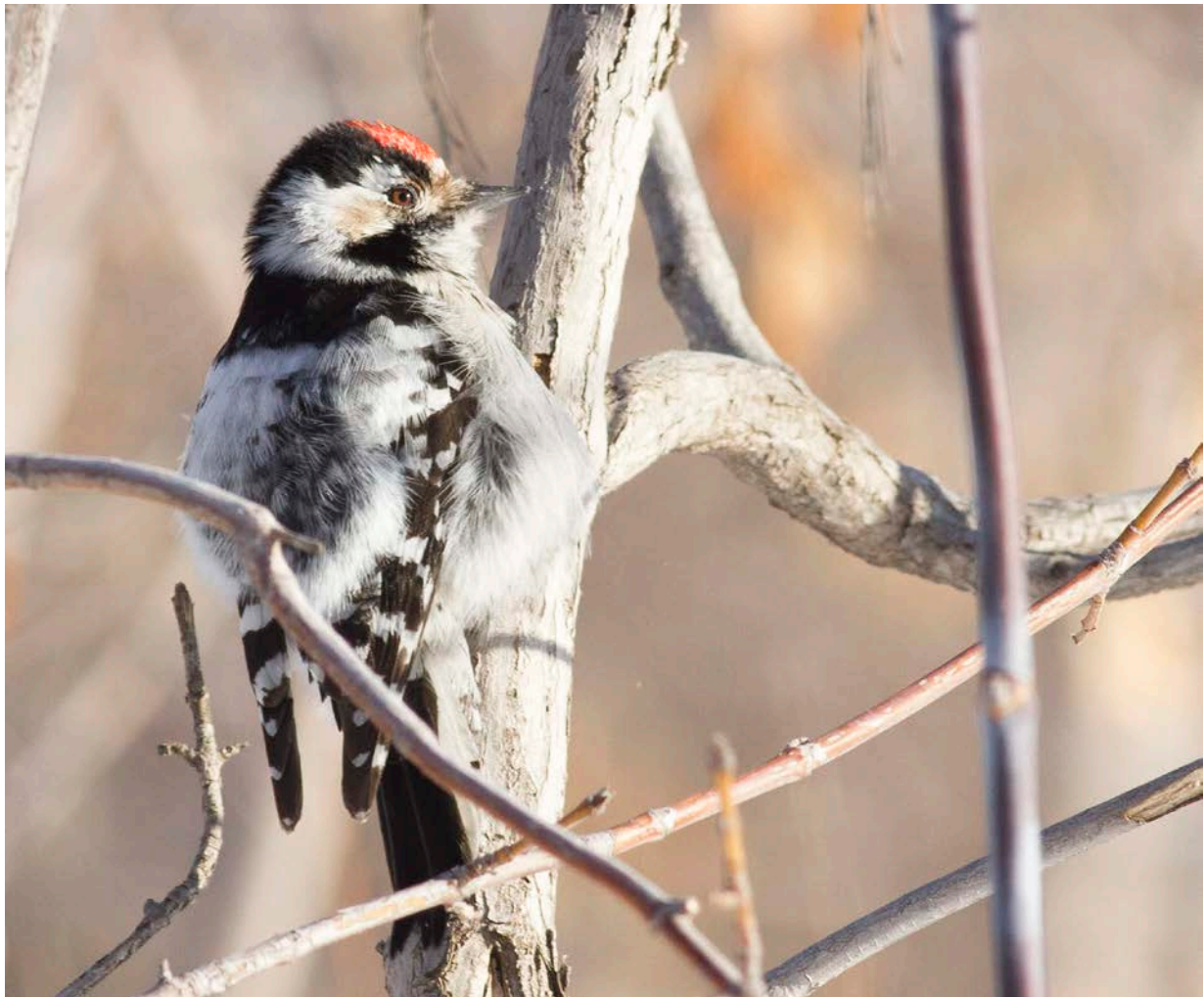
I saw a couple of birds in this park today that I didn't see yesterday – a male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and a Hawfinch while there was also a fly-over Red Crossbill.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1 male
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1
Azure-winged Magpie	5
Bohemian Waxwing	6
Horned Lark	1
Long-tailed Tit	11
Red Crossbill	1h
Eurasian Bullfinch	8
Hawfinch	1

**Weather**

Cold, really cold with my cheap thermometer bottoming out at minus 32° C outside the Shangri-La hotel in Manzhouli at 07h15 and it probably never climbed about about minus 18°C or so all day! Fortunately it was immaculately clear, sunny and wasn't very windy.

Common Kestrel	2 near the Shangri-La hotel & Beihu in central Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012. One of them was seen well and it was a first year male.
Spotted Dove	2 in Beihu Park, Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012. Shockingly far north for me this was the biggest surprise of our entire trip!
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1 male in Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012.



Great Spotted Woodpecker	2 singles in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012. The first was heard in Beihu Park & the second, a male, was seen in Xi Shan Park.
Azure-winged Magpie	6 in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012 with one in Dong Shan Botanical Gardens & five in Xi Shan Park.
Bohemian Waxwing	64 in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012 with 58 in Beihu Park in the early morning & six more in Xi Shan Park. Those in Beihu Park had possibly roosted there, or nearby, overnight and headed off west in the early morning with flocks of 21 and 37 heading away shortly after 08h00.
Great Tit	2 widely separate males in Beihu Park, Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012.
Horned Lark	1 was heard flying high over Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012.

Long-tailed Tit	27 <i>caudatus</i> in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012. 16 of these (in parties of seven & nine) were in Beihu Park with the other 11 (in flocks of five & six) were in Xi Shan Park.
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	35 in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012 with five in Beihu Park and at least 30 in the Dong Shan Botanical Gardens.
Red Crossbill	1 was heard flying over Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012.
Eurasian Bullfinch	16 in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012 with seven (including just one male) in Beihu Park, one was heard in Dong Shan Botanical Gardens & eight (including just two males) in Xi Shan Park. Until today all sightings have been of <i>pyrrhula</i> but one of the females in Xi Shan Park was grey-backed and probably <i>cineracea</i> .
Hawfinch	2 singles in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012. The first was in Xi Shan Park & the second in Beihu Park.

## **BIRD LIST**

Four figures are given in parentheses - the first two of these figures details how many days out of 16, that particular species was seen in Xinjiang. The third figure notes the highest daily count and the fourth the number of bird-days. The second set of parentheses presents the altitudinal range that particular species was encountered at. Hence the entry for Upland Buzzard reads (2/4 12 15) - birds were noted on two of the four days, with up to 12 individuals on any one date and with a total of 15 bird-days.

Names, order and taxonomy follow the IOC World Bird Names accessed on-line on 15 Sept. 2011.

### **DAURIAN PARTRIDGE *Perdix dauurica* 斑翅山鹑**

(1/4 1 1)

1 was heard in Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012.

### **UPLAND BUZZARD *Buteo hemilasius* 大鵟**

(2/4 12 15)

12 between kilometres 46-50 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. (800 metres)

3 singles in the area between Xiqi and the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.

### **COMMON KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus* 红隼**

(1/4 2 2)

2 near the Shangri-La hotel & Beihu in central Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012. One of them was seen well and it was a first year male.

### **SPOTTED DOVE *Spilopelia chinensis* 珠颈斑鸠**

(1/4 2 2)

2 in Beihu Park, Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012. Shockingly far north for me this was the biggest surprise of our entire trip!

### **SNOWY OWL *Bubo scandiacus* 雪鸮**

(1/4 2 2)

2, a female & shortly afterwards a male, on the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.

### **EURASIAN EAGLE-OWL *Bubo bubo* 雕鸮**

(2/4 2 3)

1 at kilometre post ca.25 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. (640 metres)

2 singles between Xiqi and the and the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.

### **LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua* 纵纹腹小鸮**

(3/4 1 3)

1 at kilometre post 21.5 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. (635 metres)

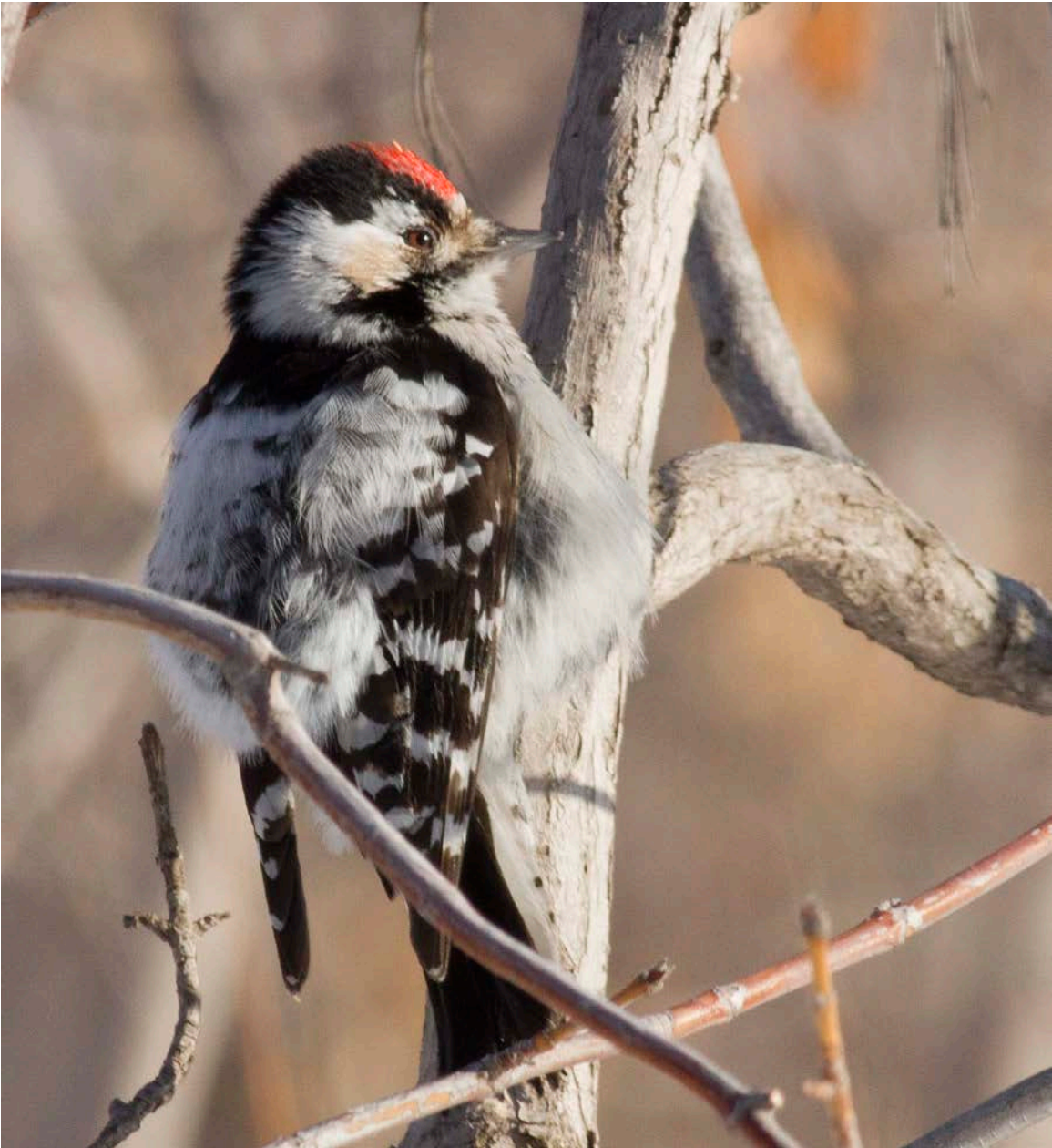
1 between Xiqi & Bodgul cun (=Baodun cun) at Km post 159 on route 203 on the 17/12/2012.

1 between Xiqi & Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012.

### **LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor* 小斑啄木鸟**

(1/4 1 1)

1 male in Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012.



**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopos major* 大斑啄木鸟

(2/4 3 5)

3 in Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012 with two (a male & a well separated female) in Beihu Park and another in Xi Shan Park.  
2 singles in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012. The first was heard in Beihu Park & the second, a male, was seen in Xi Shan Park.

**CHINESE GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius sphenocercus* 楔尾伯劳

(1/4 1 1)

1 on the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.

**AZURE-WINGED MAGPIE** *Cyanopica cyanus* 灰喜鹊

(2/4 6 12)

6 in Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012.  
6 in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012 with one in Dong Shan Botanical Gardens & five in Xi Shan Park.

**COMMON MAGPIE** *Pica pica* 喜鹊

(2/4 50 52)

2 near a small farmhouse in the grasslands at the southern end of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.  
50 on the 18/12/2012 with 50, mostly leaving a roost, in the small coppice besides route 203 southeast of Xiqi & another high over Xi Shan Park in Manzhouli town.

## BOHEMIAN WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus* 太平鸟

(2/4 77 141)

77 in Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012 with one in Beihu Park and another 76 in Xi Shan Park.

64 in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012 with 58 in Beihu Park in the early morning & six more in Xi Shan Park. Those in Beihu Park had possibly roosted there, or nearby, overnight and headed off west in the early morning with flocks of 21 and 37 heading away shortly after 08h00.

## GREAT TIT *Parus major* 大山雀

(2/4 2 3)

I'm uncertain of which subspecies I saw – either *kapustini* or *bargaensis*. According to Eck, S. & Martens, J. *Systematic notes on Asian birds*. 49 (2006) *A preliminary review of the Aegithalidae, Remizidae and Paridae* the yellow-bellied and green-backed subspecies of the *major* group that occur within Chinese borders are not yet fully clarified. Cheng (1987) indicated *kapustini* for north-western Xinjiang Province and a disjunct presence in Nei Mongol. ... and Eck & Martens agree that the Nei Mongol population is indeed *kapustini* and that it extends from the middle Amur into northern China. According to them its biological characters are now pretty well known (Päckert et al., 2005). The type of *bargaensis*, held by the YIO and said to originate from Barga steppe near Hailar in Nei Mongol, has been kindly photographed by Hiraoka Takashi and, contrary to its placement by Cheng (1987: 879) in the synonymy of *artatus* Thayer & Bangs, 1909, which is part of the *minor* group, belongs to the yellowish-greenish *major* group. The type localities of *kapustini* (Sretensk) and *bargaensis* (Dalai Nor, Barga steppe) are possibly only 350 km apart and Cheng (1987) may be correct that former Lamagusulu Monastery is now Lamuquer Miao, though Lamagusulu is some 100 km north of Lamuquer. Also, Barga steppe, from which the name *bargaensis* is derived, now Barag, is between Hailar and Hulun Nur (C.S. Roselaar pers. comm.). Consequently, *kapustini* and *bargaensis* may be synonyms, *bargaensis* being the older name. But see comments on *bargaensis* by Snow in Vaurie (1957: 42). The type of *bargaensis* seems unlikely to have been directly compared with topotypes of *kapustini* and until then we prefer to recognise both.

1 male in Beihu Park, Manzhouli on the 18/12/2012.

2 widely separate males in Beihu Park, Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012.

## MONGOLIAN LARK *Melanocorypha mongolica* 蒙古百灵

(3/4 80 84)

3 between Manzhouli, Xiqi and 50 kilometres west of there towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. The first bird was at kilometre 74 on route 203 between Manzhouli & Xiqi while the other two were at kilometre 39 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an. (590 & 750 [2 birds] metres)  
80 in a single flock on the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012.

1 in waste ground near route 203 and about one kilometres southeast of Manzhouli town on the 18/12/2012.

## HORNED LARK *Eremophila alpestris* 角百灵

(4/4 37 70)

37 between Manzhouli, Xiqi and 50 kilometres west of there towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. 13 birds were seen between kilometres 88-90 on route 203 between Manzhouli & Xiqi while the other 24 were seen between kilometres 21.5 and ca. Km 50 on the road west of Xiqi. Flock sizes were as follows – 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, (590-750 metres)

10 in the area between Xiqi and the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012. The first (four birds) were seen just ten minutes out of Xiqi, another single was seen about 15 minutes out while the rest were closer to Hulun Nur.

22 in the Xiqi - Manzhouli area on the 18/12/2012 with 10 immediately southeast of Xiqi town and 12 more between there and Manzhouli. On the drive birds were seen at kilometre 82 (three birds), Km 75 (three birds), Km 63 (four birds) & Km 52 (two birds).

1 was heard flying high over Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012.

## LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus* 银喉长尾山雀

(2/4 32 59)

32 in the Xiqi & Manzhouli areas on the 18/12/2012. Two subspecies were seen - nominate *caudatus* was the commonest with just four *vinaceous* being seen. Just one was seen near Xiqi & it was *vinaceous*. The other 31 were in Manzhouli town with 23 (one flock of 17 *caudatus* & another flock containing four *caudatus* & three *vinaceous*) in Beihu Park and another eight *caudatus* in Xi Shan Park.

27 *caudatus* in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012. 16 of these (in parties of seven & nine) were in Beihu Park with the other 11 (in flocks of five & six) were in Xi Shan Park.



**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus* 家麻雀

(1/4 2 2)

2 feeding with Eurasian Tree Sparrows right in Xiqi town on the 18/12/2012.

**EURASIAN TREE SPARROW** *Passer montanus* 麻雀

(4/4 200 273)

2 in Xiqi town on the 16/12/2012.

200 in the area between Xiqi and the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012. The first 10 were seen just ten minutes out of Xiqi while a flock of 170 birds was with other passerines on the eastern side of Hulun Nur.

36 in the Xiqi & Manzhouli areas on the 18/12/2012. The first 30 were in Xiqi town while the other six were in Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli later in the day.

35 in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012 with five in Beihu Park and at least 30 in the Dong Shan Botanical Gardens.

**RED CROSSBILL** *Loxia curvirostra* 红交嘴雀

(1/4 1 1)

1 was heard flying over Xi Shan Park, Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012.

**EURASIAN BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* 红腹灰雀

(3/4 16 32)

1 male near our hotel in Xiqi town on the 16/12/2012.

15 in the Xiqi & Manzhouli areas on the 18/12/2012. The first was heard in the small coppice besides route 203 & about one kilometre southeast of Xiqi town centre while another 14 were seen in Manzhouli - eight (one male & seven females) in Beihu Park and another six (two males & four females) in Xi Shan Park.

16 in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012 with seven (including just one male) in Beihu Park, one was heard in Dong Shan Botanical Gardens & eight (including just two males) in Xi Shan Park. Until today all sightings have been of *pyrrhula* but one of the females in Xi Shan Park was grey-backed and probably *cineracea*.



**HAWFINCH** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* 锡嘴雀

(1/4 2 2)

2 singles in Manzhouli on the 19/12/2012. The first was in Xi Shan Park & the second in Beihu Park.

**LAPLAND LONGSPUR** *Calcarius lapponicus* 铁爪鹀

(1/4 6 6)

6 on the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012. They were all in the first flock of Snow Buntings that we encountered.

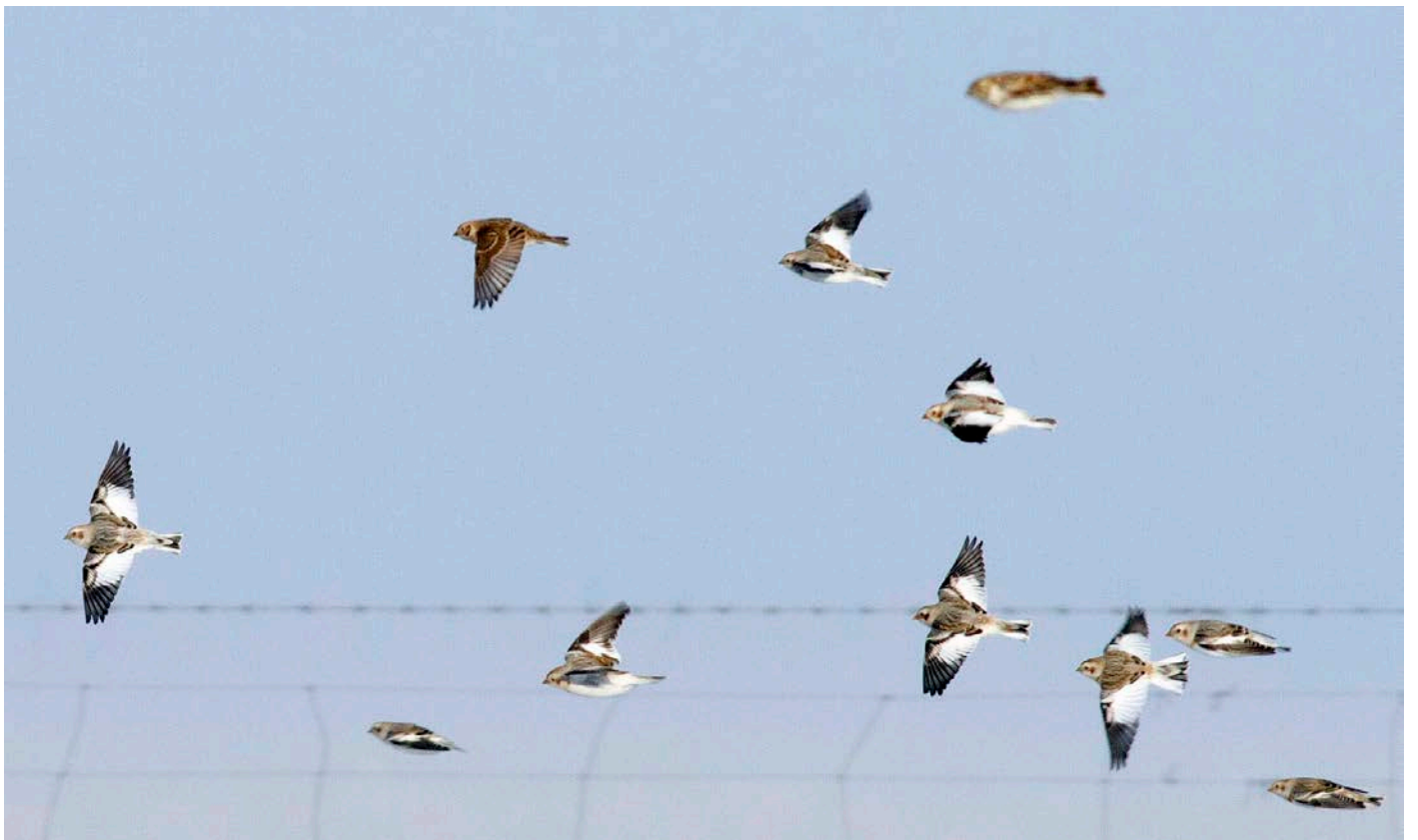
**SNOW BUNTING** *Plectrophenax nivalis* 雪鹀

(1/4 135 135)

135 on the eastern side of Hulun Nur on the 17/12/2012. They were in two discrete flocks – the first of 65 birds & the second of 70.

Mr Zhao had seen his first ever Snow Buntings ( a flock of 30 or 40 birds) in the same area on the 20 November and had seen them three times more in that same area prior to our visit.





## MAMMALS

**RED FOX** *Vulpes vulpes*  
(3/4 3 5)

3 singles between kilometres 21.5-50 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012. (635-800 metres)  
1 between Xiqi & Bodgul cun (=Baodun cun) at Km post 159 on route 203 on the 17/12/2012.  
2 on the 18/12/2012 – the first was in the small coppice besides route 203 southeast of Xiqi while the other was between there & Manzhouli.

**'SAND FOX' *Vulpes sp.***

**(1/4 1 1)**

1 poorly seen animal at kilometre 39 on the road west of Xiqi towards Menggu Kou'an on the 16/12/2012 was identified as a 'sand fox' by Mr ZHAO.

Paul HOLT Clitheroe 23/12/2012.