

Manchuria & Beijing, China: 6-12 May 2013.

An at-a-glance list of 161 species of birds recorded.

By Jesper Hornskov ***this draft 6 Oct 2013*** ALL RIGHTS RESERVED ®

Please note that the following list is best considered a work in progress. It should not be quoted without consulting the author.

Based mostly on my own field notes, this brief write-up covers the birds noted on a Field Guides visit by H Blood, R Kuehn, M & R McNutt, D Schuler, C Schumacher, S Sekarajasingham, S Setterberg, M Siu, D Stejskal (Field Guides), T Tromblee, M Veek, B Whelton & myself to Manchuria, E-most Inner Mongolia & Beijing in search of waterfowl, cranes & Jankowski's Bunting, very likely E Asia's most endangered species.

Part II of our trip, covering the Tibetan Plateau from 13th for gamebirds, Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis*, Pallas' Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes paradoxus* & Przevalski's Rosefinch *Urocynchramus pylzowi* (representing a the monotypic family), will be covered in a separate write-up.

Having arrived the day before (or in some cases a couple of days before) we set out early on 6th to get a day in at Beijing's Wild Duck Lake, a must-visit site during spring migration, before traveling in Manchuria over 7-12th.

With five-and-a-half days at our disposal we were able to accommodate a bit of 'interesting' weather. Locating Jankowski's Bunting proved no problem, and we were able to savour wildfowl, cranes & assorted migrants at a leisurely pace.

Thank you all for making this trip so enjoyable!

Anyone considering China as a birding destination is welcome to contact the author at:

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Anyone specifically attracted to the idea of doing a Manchuria / Tibetan Plateau combination should check <http://fieldguides.com/bird-tours/china>

In the species list the concept "bird-days" is used - it is the avian equivalent of man-hours, the day totals added up – it indicates relative abundance but does not consider the “problem” of lingering birds or, important in a non-scientific context such as a birding holiday abroad, how satisfying the encounters were. 25 bird-days for e.g. Spoon-billed Sandpiper could be one distant flock of migrating birds, gone in a flash, or one bird lingering for 25 days, offering the observers point-blank views anytime in that period...

The sequence of the bird list follows *The Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World – 3rd Edition* (Dickinson 2003), in my opinion by far the most useful one-volume checklist to date.

Initials in brackets after some 'non-leader' sightings does not imply that I have doubts as to the correctness of the ID.

Species list:

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

28 bird-days. Noted on six dates - the majority were heard-onlies, but we did see several males well...

Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides*

Seven bird-days. Noted on two dates - a far sleeker & more graceful bird than anyone who has seen the domesticated variety would dare to hope...

***With a world population of <100,000 birds suffering the combined onslaughts of hunting, disturbance & droughts this is another species in trouble:

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/100600373/0>

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis middendorffii* & *A. f. serrirostris*

31 bird-days. Noted on two dates – 30 *middendorffii* on 8th & a single *serrirostris* the next day.

***The two taxa are nowadays often considered to be different species – the former remains with *fabalis* as Taiga Bean Goose, while the latter is Tundra Bean Goose *A. serrirostris serrirostris*.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Five bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

17 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Six bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Ten on 10th.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*

One male at Wild Duck Lake on 6th – persistence paid off!

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

19 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*

Four on 8th.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Two on 9th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

11 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Chinese Spotbill *Anas zonorhyncha*

17 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

12 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Six bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*

One female on 9th - finally we got 'scope views of it on the water when it for the 2nd time landed directly out from where we had taken up position. Less 'stunning' than a drake would have been, but more 'instructive'! Hmmm.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

267+ bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event 210 on 10th.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

76 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

***Sadly, but hardly unexpectedly, we were unable to find its congener, Baer's Pochard *A. baeri*, a species listed as 'Critically Endangered' – 'owing to an apparent acceleration in the rate of its decline, as measured by numbers on both the breeding and wintering grounds. It is now absent or occurs in extremely reduced numbers over the majority of its former breeding and wintering grounds [which extended as far as N Thailand & E Nepal] and is common nowhere. It is thought that hunting and wetland destruction are the key reasons for its decline.' – there may be no more than a couple of hundred individuals left... see <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/100600478/0>

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Two on 10th.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

One female seen well on 9th.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

A group of five seen heading NW on 10th.

***That no diver spp was recorded for Jilin (or Inner Mongolia) by Zheng *et al.* (2005) probably – as in the case of many other species - tells us more about how desperately under-birded much of China remains rather than about how rare these species actually are...

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

44 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

***It was good to get views that allowed us to confirm that these birds had the white iris of ssp *poggei*, which also differs from the nominate in vocalizations...

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

92 bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event was seeing the dignified, unhurried display of this fascinating species.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

One in full summer plumage on 10th.

Oriental White Stork *Ciconia boyciana*

Five bird-days. Noted on two dates – a nesting pair ensured that we all got prolonged views of this 'Endangered' species!

***Possibly as few as 1,000 individuals survive – see <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/106003836/0>

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

12 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

18 bird-days. Noted on five dates – some were heard-onlies but we all got good looks at this well camouflaged reedbed species.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Ten bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

29 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

34+ bird-days. Noted on five dates – some were preparing to nest, ensuring good views through the ‘scopes...

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

27 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

One on 6th.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Six bird-days. Noted on six dates.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Single males were seen on four days.

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*

86 bird-days. Noted daily – knowing that these dainty birds cross the Indian Ocean in non-stop flights of up to 75+ hours to reach Madagascar and Southern Africa adds to their appeal!

Black Kite *Milvus migrans lineatus*

One on 11th.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

One seen well on 12th.

***The species was not listed for Inner Mongolia by Zheng *et al.* (2005), but we saw two in the same area in May 2012, and one again in late April 2013.

Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus*

Four bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos*

A 2nd c-y bird on 10th was the best we could manage.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

One female soaring on 6th.

Eastern Common Buzzard *Buteo (buteo) japonicus*

One on 8th.

***In the recommended field guide for this trip - Brazil (2009) – *japonicus* is given full species status.

Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*

One seen repeatedly on 12th – decent enough views, but later eclipsed by birds seen in NE Tibet.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

27 on 8th – it was outstanding to see 25 individuals from one spot, incl several males doing the famous inside-outing!

Eastern Water Rail *Rallus indicus*

Singles on 6+10th.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*

One on 6th.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

One on 6th.

Common Coot *Fulica atra*

Eight bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Siberian Crane *Grus leucogeranus*

277+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – seen both on the ground and, even more memorably, in flight passing directly over our bus. OK, as luck would have it we were 300-400m away from the bus at the time watching a Chinese Penduline Tit artfully weave its nest, but we had the light behind us and had time to feast our eyes on the rising-and-falling lines of these impressively slender, black-wing-tipped, red-billed, red-legged white birds.

White-naped Crane *Grus vipio*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates – we were able to 'scope an incubating bird on two dates, and saw a pair more distantly.

Red-crowned Crane *Grus japonensis*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

***It was rather bizarre to be seen off by an extremely territorial – but photo friendly! - bird.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

158+ bird-days. Noted daily.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirosta avosetta*

Nine bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

66 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*

28 bird-days. This spectacular species was noted on six dates.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

Six up close on 9th.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

12 bird-days. Noted on five dates – seeing display-flying birds near Beijing was a real treat.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Eight bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus*

Three males on 12th – doing their unique display-flight right overhead & allowing prolonged ‘scope views on the ground in soft dawn light: TINGALING!

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

267+ bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event 150+ on 7th: an excellent chance to thoroughly familiarize ourselves with a taxon formerly considered conspecific with New World Wilson’s Snipe *G. delicata*.

Eastern Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa melanuroides*

685+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

***Eastern Black-tailed Godwit is “a small and dark version of ‘Western’, with a similarly patterned but slimmer, shorter bill, a small but more prominent whitish supercilium between darker crown and eye-stripe.[...] Much less sexually dimorphic than ‘Western’. Breeding male has darker chestnut head, neck, breast and sides, with closer-spaced, finer blackish barring on underparts, including vent, than breeding male ‘Western’, and more heavily black-blotched upperparts with broader golden or rufous edgings. Breeding female usually somewhat duller. Non-breeding adult is essentially dark grey with white lower underparts; darker grey than non-breeding ‘Western’[...]. Juvenile is shorter-billed than adult; has weaker cinnamon tinge than juvenile ‘Western’, finely notched dark-and-golden scapular- and tertial-edges, barring not streaking on flanks, and looks all-dark above as tertials and mantle feathers wear. [...] distinct white wing-stripe and rump somewhat narrower than than in ‘Western’”: Rasmussen & Anderton (2005).

Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus*

22 birds allowed prolonged viewing on 9th – for many of us this long-distance migrant figured on the back-of-the-head Most Hoped-For Birds list. WOW!

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Two on 9th.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Ten bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Five bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

23 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

***Weather conditions apart, the increased water levels this year at Xianghai reserve did not favour waders...

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Singles on four dates.

***Weather conditions apart, the increased water levels this year at Xianghai reserve did not favour waders...

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

11 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

83 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

***Weather conditions apart, the increased water levels this year at Xianghai reserve did not favour waders...

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Seven bird-days.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

21 bird-days. Noted on two dates – on 9th we probably allowed the likes of Little Whimbrel and full summer plumage Curlew & Sharp-tailed Sandpipers to distract us from this subtly beautiful bird...

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*

Eight on 9th.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

No fewer than 60 on 9th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

One on 9th.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*

c40 bird-days. Noted six dates.

***Seeing the masterful aerial maneuvers of these birds one immediately understands why Swedes have chosen to refer to the *Glareola* spp as 'wader-swallows' instead of the less spot-on 'Pratincole' derived from the Latin *pratium*, 'meadow', and *incola*, 'resident'.

'Yellow-legged' Gull *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus*

One 2nd c-y on 11th.

***"Large White-headed Gull" *L. cachinnans* / *L. heuglini* / *L. vegae*

One immature on 11th.

Common Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

110+ bird-days. Noted on seven dates – rather run-of-the-mill for Palearctic regulars but nice nonetheless to get a chance to scrutinize this adaptable species.

***see <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/106003240/0>

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*
44 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*
Eight bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*
134 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*
Seven on 10th.

Blue Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris*
4+ on 12th.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
55 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*
Nine bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Common Swift *Apus apus pekinensis*
16 bird-days. Noted on four dates - it was pleasing to obtain decent views of this distinctive taxon.

Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus*
One on 10th.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*
Nine bird-days. Noted on three dates.

***One of those species that is known to and appreciated also by non-birders – a birding friend of mine told me that his father used to say, ‘no day on which you’ve seen a Kingfisher has been completely wasted!’.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
17 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

?Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*
A bird seen briefly [DS] on 12th may have been this species, which was seen and photographed in the same area in late April 2013 by B Dielissen & P v d Wielen although none had been recorded on previous visits (JH *et al.* pers. obs.)...

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*
One male on 10th.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*
Four on 8th.

Chinese Grey Shrike *Lanius sphenocercus*
Four bird-days. Noted on three dates – on 8th we screeched to a halt for the 1st of the trip, stormed out into a dusty field, and got great ‘scope views (and photos!) in decent light: BINGO!

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus*

Two near Beijing on 6th (in addition to several en route & around our hotel).

***Apparently (G Pettersson pers com) the Iberian taxon, *C. (c.) cooki*, has been shown to be sufficiently differentiated genetically to merit elevation to full species status. In addition to the ones we saw, *interposita* at Beijing & *kansuensis* in NE Tibet, the eastern species includes a further five taxa (Dickinson 2003)...

Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*

Two en route on 6th.

Common Magpie *Pica pica*

Common – not systematically recorded.

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*

34 bird-days. Noted on five dates - both attractive, pied adults & all-black, dark-iris'd 2nd c-y birds were seen well.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

80+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

***ssp *pastinator* differs from the nominate in lacking 'bare chalky white facial skin [...] and has a more sharply pointed bill': Brazil (2009).

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

One on 12th.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

One on 6th.

Eastern Great Tit *Parus minor*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Yellow-bellied Tit *Parus venustulus*

29 bird-days. Noted on five dates – outstanding views on both 11+12th.

***Neither Harrap & Quinn (1996) nor Zheng *et al.* (2005) included this vocal, endemic species for Manchuria, but there are now a number of records for the area covered by our trip (JH *et al.* pers obs). Nearest 'known' site is N Hebei (where it is a regular migrant in good numbers: JH pers. obs.).

Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*

Four on 12th.

***Given that 'each male [Marsh Tit] may have a repertoire of up to 19 song variants' (Harrap & Quinn 1996), differences in vocalizations between this taxon, the SE-most, and others will need to be shored up by DNA & behavioral studies before skeptics will even begin to consider elevating the morphologically only subtly different *hellmayri* to full species status...

'Chinese' Penduline Tit *Remiz consobrinus*

61+ bird-days. Noted on six dates, this was the very 1st species we encountered in Manchuria: one flew over the airport terminal building as we walked across the tarmac towards it...

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

265+ bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

135 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Northern House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

One with other hirundines briefly on 12th.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

96+ bird-days. Noted on six days.

Mongolian Lark *Melanocorypha mongolica*

11 on 8th.

Asian Short-toed Lark *Calandrella cheleensis*

Four at Wild Duck Lake on 6th.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

12 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis*

Eight at Wild Duck Lake on 11th.

Chinese Hill Warbler *Rhopophilus pekinensis*

Ten bird-days. Noted on four dates – pretty much the 1st bird we encountered on our 1st morning in the field... if you can call the briefest glimpses of a shape deep in a tangle across a ditch an ‘encounter’!: for most of us more patience was needed before we finally had tickable views.

***We concluded that ‘MacKinnon & Phillipps renamed this very attractive endemic species ‘White-browed Chinese Warbler’ on account of it showing absolutely no trace of a white eyebrow’.

Chinese Bulbul *Pycnonotus sinensis*

5+ at Wild Duck Lake on 6th.

Oriental Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*

Three bird-days. Two (incl one sitting up singing) noted at Wild Duck Lake on 6th & one at Xianghai reserve on 11th.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

16 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

Radde’s Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

Three on 12th.

Pallas’s Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

17 bird-days. This hardy migrant was noted on four dates.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

26 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

Two-barred Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus (trochiloides) plumbeitarsus*

Two on 12th.

Claudia’s Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus claudiae*

A migrant feeding in willows near Wild Duck Lake on 6th.

Pere David's Laughingthrush *Garrulax davidi*

Two heard singing on 12th – expecting to see this subtly attractive N China endemic species on the 2nd part of our trip we didn't try very hard to see it here...

Vinous-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis webbianus*

15 at Wild Duck Lake on 6th.

White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus*

23 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*

One singing bird was seen briefly by some of us on 12th.

***On 7 May 2011, seeing 'an adult male was somewhat unexpected – though it really shouldn't have been, given that the species is reasonably common at e.g. Beijing from October well into April.'

Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni*

One intergrade at Wild Duck Lake on 6th.

***Extensive interbreeding (a high proportion of birds @ Beijing & Beidaihe are intermediate: JH pers obs) disqualifies the two taxa – *naumanni* & *eunomus* - from full species status under the BSC.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

One on 10th.

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*

Two on 10th.

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureoreus*

Six on 12th.

'Siberian' Stonechat *Saxicola 'torquatus'*

56 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

***Sp. *maurus*, *przewalskii* & *stejnegeri* occur in China / Tibet. Dickinson (2003): "proposed splits of this complex species seem unsatisfactory if only in how the forms are ascribed to species", and (still) NOT elevated to full species status by e.g. Svensson *et al.* (2009), who treated 'Eastern Stonechat' as a subspecies group under 'Common Stonechat' and dealt with it in a separate account only 'for practical reasons'.

Eastern Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola philippensis*

One rufous-bellied male song-flighting up on rocks above the parking area on 12th!

***Zuccon & Ericson (2010) present evidence that *pandoo*, *philippensis* & extralimital *madoci* are as genetically distinct from *solitarius* & *longirostris* (which Zheng *et al.* (2005) lists for SW Xizang) as from Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush and should consequently be treated as a separate species.

Red-throated (= Taiga) Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*

24 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Common – not systematically recorded.

Siberian Accentor *Prunella montanella*

One at the roadside pool [DS] on 8th.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis*

125 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Five bird-days. Noted on four dates.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Nine bird-days. Noted on two dates – main event eight (incl five ssp *ocularis*) at Wild Duck Lake on 6th.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

22 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

One at Wild Duck Lake on 6th was 'heard 1st, then seen in flight [allowing us to appreciate the subtle differences in jizz separating it from Richard's]: doubled back & landed to allow 'scope views' – TINGALING!

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

11 bird-days. Noted on four dates – from this low total alone a savvy analyst would conclude that the overall weather patterns at the time of our visit did not favour general migration: it would have been no surprise if we'd seen ten or even 20 times as many 'OBPs'!

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*

One on 8th.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates – 'scope views of a summer-plumaged bird on 6th!

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*

14 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

15 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Oriental Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica*

Ten on 12th.

Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus*

Three [DS *et al.*] on 12th.

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus*

Two female-types at Wild Duck Lake on 6th.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

12 bird-days. Noted on two dates – no fewer than eight at the roadside pool on 8th.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Sequence and taxonomy follows "A Guide to the Mammals of China", Smith & Xie (ed.) 2008.

Daurian Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus dauuricus*

At least one was seen...