

# NE Tibet w/ Oriental Bird Club, 28 July – 16 Aug 2014:

*An at-a-glance list of 220 species of birds & 26 species of mammals.*

By Jesper Hornskov \*\*\**this draft 29 Sep 2014*\*\*\* 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 & mammals noted by J Clark, A Daws, M Hoit, J Jackson, S Lowe, H & P Schiermacker-Hansen, W Sterling, T Sykes, A Whitehouse & myself during a 2014 OBC Fundraiser visit to China's Qinghai province.

It was the 9<sup>th</sup> Oriental Bird Club Fundraiser trip in this area (another three have targeted desperately neglected Yunnan province, China's biologically richest). This year we followed a slightly adjusted itinerary: as in the past we had allowed a good margin for altitude acclimatization & plenty of time to ensure that all specialities could be properly searched for – hopefully, as in 2011 & 2012, we'd be seeing **TIBETAN SANDGROUSE** *Syrrhaptes thibetana* whilst having coffee (or tea!) by the cars!

The birds, the mammals, the unbeatable scenery (at this time of the year in many places absolutely blanketed in wildflowers), an intriguing amalgam of local cultures, wonderful food, comfortable - from 'definitely OK' to 'surprisingly good' - accommodations & (not least) the companionship all came together to produce a trip the more memorable for the region - though in many ways an indisputable 'MUST' destination for anyone hooked on Palearctic and/or Asian birds or mammals - being so under-visited.

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

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Enquiries concerning future **Oriental Bird Club Fundraisers** - to NE Tibet, by and large following the itinerary used on the trip dealt with here, or Yunnan (our trips to China's in every way most diverse province have been very popular) - can be made to Michael Edgecombe of the OBC at [mail\(at\)orientalbirdclub.org](mailto:mail(at)orientalbirdclub.org) or directly to this author.

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, far from unimportant 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 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Dickinson 2003), in my opinion by still the most useful one-volume checklist.

Initials in brackets after a few single-observer sightings does not imply that I have doubts as to the correctness of the ID.

Some species recorded in Beijing have been added but are NOT counted in the species total.



**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*  
205+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera*  
Two at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*  
One at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Teal** *Anas crecca*  
Ten at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina*  
12+ at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*  
100+ at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup> – there were at least four females each with a raft of ducklings in tow.

**Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*  
11 offered close-up viewing at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*  
An estimated 300 at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup> – most of us were too preoccupied with the Great Black-headed Gulls to worry about exactly how many Tufted Ducks and Great Crested Grebes were present!

**Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*  
Eight at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser*  
22 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*  
Just one was seen – at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*  
100+ at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*  
40+ at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus*  
42 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*  
c25 at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*  
One flew in and landed directly in front of us – as if to ensure we didn't miss it: there are perhaps no more than half a dozen previous records from Tibet - at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba*  
One at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*  
c270 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*  
20-21 bird-days. Noted on 11 dates.

**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*  
Ten bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Saker** *Falco cherrug*

27 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

\*\*\*A juvenile on 11<sup>th</sup> was seen rather spectacularly buzzing a Woolly Hare – ‘must have been just fooling around’ was one reaction, but ‘numbers of lagomorphs and Ochotona taken’: BWP vol II p347.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans lineatus*  
Seven bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus*

34 bird-days. Noted on no fewer than seven dates - a top Dreambird, this emblematic species was not at all devalued by one superb encounter after another... 12 in the course of an afternoon's hike, incl an adult doing repeated bone-drops within a few hundred meters of where we had taken up position!

**Himalayan Griffon** *Gyps himalayensis*  
c205 bird-days. Noted on 17 dates.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*  
Six bird-days. Noted on five dates – one on 5<sup>th</sup> was hunting well above the scrubline.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*  
One 1<sup>st</sup> c-y [MH] on 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Himalayan Buzzard** *Buteo burmanicus*

Nine bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*Formerly considered a race of Common Buzzard *B. buteo* but genetically closer to the much commoner Upland Buzzard *B. hemilasius* (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005) from which it is ecologically separated & easily - well, fairly easily! - distinguished...

**Upland Buzzard** *Buteo hemilasius*  
180+ bird-days. Noted on 11 dates.

**Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*  
1-2 immatures along the way across the Roof of the World on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*

18 bird-days. Noted on no fewer than 11 dates this classy Holarctic species granted us some memorable encounters: WOW!

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*  
One at Koko Nor [JC] on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Coot** *Fulica atra*

c250 at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-necked Crane** *Grus nigricollis*

22 bird-days. Noted on four dates – this hardy yet vulnerable (and ‘Vulnerable’: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/143783/0> ) Tibetan Plateau endemic breeder was one of the most hoped-for species, and we were repeatedly treated to great views: TINGALING!

**Ibisbill** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

Nine bird-days. Noted on two dates...

\*\*\*As anyone contemplating a quick twitch for this charismatic species had better bear in mind, Ibisbills seen in Tibet feeding on a flowered-over meadow next to a rushing, icy stream (as our 1<sup>st</sup> five were) – with Red-billed Choughs cawing, Blue Hill Pigeons cooing, Elliot’s Laughingthrushes cheerfully whistling & domestic yaks snorting thoughtfully in the background - are more REAL than the sad one or two which still desperately attempt to cling on in competition with sickly-looking domestic ducks along the last stretches of barely acceptable water close to Beijing!

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*

14 bird-days. Noted on three dates – a widespread species hardly new for anyone of us, but thoroughly enjoyed nonetheless during a ‘now-for-something-completely-different!’ stop on 14<sup>th</sup> ...

**Pied Avocet** *Recurvirosta avocetta*

31 off in the distance on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

13 at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*

14 at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

Six bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

18 bird-days. Noted on just two dates.

**‘Spot-fronted’ Sand Plover** *Charadrius atrifrons*<sup>^</sup>

Noted on three dates – main event a post-breeding gathering of 360+ on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

\*\*\*<sup>^</sup>formerly consider conspecific with Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*.

\*\*\*ssp *atrifrons* has ‘forehead and band through and below eye to ear coverts black, occasionally with some white mottling in front of eye; rufous-cinnamon of chest extends to flanks and breast, not bordered by black bar against white chin’ while *mongolus* has forehead white, often divided by narrow black line in middle, bordered from cinnamon forecrown by narrow black line; black line runs from lores to ear coverts and white line from above eye to above ear-coverts; narrow black bar between white chin and clear-cut cinnamon-rufous chest-band’. *schaeferi* ‘often has some white on forehead; intermediate between *atrifrons* and nominate *mongolus*’, ‘often closest to *mongolus*’: BWP vol III, p169.

**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultia*

One juvenile seen well alongside single Spot-fronteds on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stenura*

Three on 12<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*An additional four Snipe sp on the same date were either this species or **Swinhoe’s Snipe**

*Gallinago megala*.

**Western Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

29 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*

Eight at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*

Three at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

c210 bird-days. Noted on seven dates – main event 135 on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

\*\*\*At Golmud, the largest autumn numbers were noted in late July through early Aug: JH pers. obs.

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*

One on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

9+ bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

Singles were noted on four dates.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

c30 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 25 on 2<sup>nd</sup>: all we could manage at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup> were 4-5 birds...

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

10-11 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*

9+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*

12 adults on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Mongolian Gull** *Larus cachinnans mongolicus*

One adult at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Listed as Arctic Herring Gull *L. smithsonianus* ssp *mongolicus* in HBW Illustrated Checklist Vol 1 - 'smithsonianus split on molecular grounds split from morphologically extremely similar European *argenteus*. Large breeding range of this ssp, from seAltai to Korea, wintering in sAsia': S Lowe pers com.

\*\*\*Interestingly, the earlier OBC Fundraiser recorded an adult Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans cachinnans* at Koko Nor on 5 July 2014, with 'leg colour eliminating *mongolicus*': JH *et al.* pers. obs.

\*\*\*In addition, a near-adult 'Great White-headed' Gull was seen rather poorly at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus*

18+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – seeing newly fledged juveniles at Heimahe on 15<sup>th</sup> was a treat!

**Brown-headed Gull** *Larus brunnicephalus*

60+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*

One adult at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

103+ bird-days. Noted on ten dates.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrid*

Two adults showed well at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Tibetan Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes thibetana*

It turned out that unlike on the earlier trip this year, taking up position next to the cars, drinking coffee, didn't quite do the trick, but pretty much as soon as we started into the habitat we came upon a pair... the birds seemed reluctant to increase the distance between us and them, and sure enough: once we retreated they approached to collect their single, hard-to-spot chick.

\*\*\*A very satisfying encounter with an endemic which is 'on the Hardest Bird in the World shortlist along with Emperor Penguin' – nonetheless we all agreed that so spectacularly grand was the landscape that it would have been no loss at all to have 'had' to return the following morning in the event none had been found 1<sup>st</sup> time around!

**Pallas' Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

47+ on 14<sup>th</sup>: long 'scope views after a flock flew in and landed not too far away... MAGIC!

**Blue Hill Pigeon** *Columba rupestris*

c110 bird-days. Noted on 17 dates.

**Snow Pigeon** *Columba leuconota*

13 bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on three dates.

**Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

\*\*\*In addition, the species was present in the grounds of our Beijing hotel.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

41 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Spotted Dove** *Streptopelia chinensis*

One on 16<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*In addition, the species was present in the grounds of our Beijing hotel.

\*\*\*'S. *chinensis* split from Western Spotted Dove S. *suratensis* of Indian Subcontinent in HBW Illustrated Checklist Vol 1': S Lowe pers. com.

\*\*\***Indian Cuckoo** *Cuculus micropterus*

Present @ the grounds of our Beijing hotel.

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

11 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

\*\*\*A juvenile seen on both 13+14<sup>th</sup> was hosted by Richard's Pipit.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*

Eight bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Common Swift** *Apus apus*

205+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Salim Ali's Swift** *Apus salimali*

195+ bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

\*\*\*Leader (2011) concluded that the *Apus pacificus* complex should be treated as four species, at least three of which occur in China/Tibet.

\*\*\*Salim Ali's Swift *Apus salimali* is 'restricted to E Tibetan Plateau and adjacent high-altitude W Sichuan' breeding at 'very high altitudes (above 3,400m)' – 'Fork-tailed Swifts' breeding near Xining, Qinghai, at c2,500m are also this form: JH *et al.* pers obs. 'Its winter distribution is apparently unknown but, at the very least, it must be an altitudinal migrant'.

The species is longer-tailed with a proportionately shallower tail fork, has different throat pattern ('narrow pale strip on the center of the throat and is narrowest at the base of the bill, where it tapers to a neat point', 'less than half the width of the other taxa'), 'the rump patch is consistently narrow', 'the crown and nape are mid-brown, contrasting conspicuously' with the glossy black mantle, and the pale tips to the underparts are much reduced compared to *pacificus* (more comparable to *leuconyx* in this character).

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

\*\*\*...there are perhaps no more than c20 previous records for Qinghai.

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

193+ bird-days. Noted on 15 dates.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*

12 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

\*\*\*It is worth noting that ssp *beicki* [of Ningxia, Gansu & E Qinghai: Zheng *et al.* (2005)] is not recognized as a taxon in HBW Illustrated Checklist Vol 1, being lumped into ssp *stresemanni* [of E Xizang, W & S Yunnan, N Guizhou & Sichuan: Zheng *et al.* (2005)], but 'this latter may be split with *cabanisi* [of SW Liaoning, Hebei, Shandong, Henan, Shanxi, N Anhui & N Jiangsu: Zheng *et al.* (2005)] as Chinese Great Spotted Woodpecker': S Lowe pers com.

\*\*\*In addition, the species was present in the grounds of our Beijing hotel.

**Three-toed Woodpecker** *Picoides tridactylus*

A 'memorable encounter' – or put plainly: possibly the best-ever opportunity to snap away since the advent of digital photography, with two juveniles and two adults competing for our attention! - on 6<sup>th</sup>...

\*\*\*"Taxonomy: needs re-evaluation. Nearctic and Palearctic races recently split into two species, *P. dorsalis* and *P. tridactylus*, without discussion of status of the very distinct *funnebris*."': Rasmussen & Anderton (2005).

\*\*\*In HBW Illustrated Checklist Vol 1 '*P. funnebris* of eQinghai & wGansu to wSichuan & nYunnan is split from Three-toed Woodpecker, which by the way is relumped with the American forms...': S Lowe pers. com.

**Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius*

12 (!) bird-days. Noted on no fewer than five dates.

**Grey-headed Woodpecker** *Picus canus*

Four bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus*

Two (an adult *lucionensis* & a 1<sup>st</sup> c-y) in desert poplars on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus*



20 bird-days. Noted on three dates – superb photo ops on 12<sup>th</sup>...

\*\*\*Of the similar Turkestan Shrike *L. phoenicuroides* Svensson *et al.* (2009) notes: ‘often treated as a race of Isabelline Shrike, but adult males usually differ quite clearly, hybridization limited, and genetic difference sizeable [...]’.

**Grey-backed Shrike** *Lanius tephronotus*

62 bird-days. This charismatic species was noted on 13 dates.

**Tibetan Grey Shrike** *Lanius (s.) giganteus*

Six bird-days. Noted on five dates – we’d hoped to confirm breeding at a site where two birds had been around since May (JH pers. obs.) but nothing doing: no fledglings were in evidence, and even the adults left us wishing for better views. Which we all got later!

\*\*\***Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus*

At least one in the grounds of our Beijing hotel on 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

17+ bird-days. Noted on two dates – main event 16+ (possibly 25!) on 30<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\**vide* Zheng *et al.* (2005) ssp *kansuensis* is restricted to NW & SW Gansu and ‘Qinghai’, though the only Qinghai locality for which it was listed by Cheng (1987) was Zekog. Dickinson (2003) listed it also for NW Sichuan.

**Eastern Azure-winged Magpie** *Cyanopica cyanus*

12 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*In addition, present @ the grounds of our Beijing 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, *kansuensis* in NE Tibet & *interposita* at Beijing, the eastern species includes a further five taxa (Dickinson 2003)...

**Common Magpie** *Pica pica*

13+ bird-days. Noted on just three dates – snoozing in the cars may have cost us a few...

\*\*\*In addition, present @ the grounds of our Beijing hotel.

**Tibetan Magpie** *Pica (pica) bottanensis*

72+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

\*\*\*The two *Pica* taxa occupy mutually exclusive ranges and display a number of vocal, morphological & habitat differences.

**Henderson’s Ground Jay** *Podoces hendersoni*

Eight bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Hume’s Groundpecker** *Pseudopodoces humilis*

182+ bird-days. Noted on ten dates.

\*\*\*Although most closely related to *Paridae* (Dickinson 2003; B King pers com.) please let us do our bit to avoid a newly concocted English name – which the risk of keyboard distress prevents me typing here \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - from slipping into common usage!

**Red-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

185+ bird-days. Noted on 16 dates.

**Alpine Chough** *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

Six bird-days. Noted on just two dates – main event five (probably a family) on 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Daurian Jackdaw** *Corvus dauuricus*

109+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos*

39 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

\*\*\*According to Zheng *et al.* (2005) ssp *tibetosinensis* is restricted to E Qinghai, SW Xizang, NW & W Yunnan, and N & W Sichuan.

**Common Raven** *Corvus corax*

c75 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

**Eastern Great Tit** *Parus minor*

10+ bird-days. Noted on three dates - ssp *minor* near Xining & ssp *tibetanus* S of Yushu.

\*\*\**P. minor* is one of 3-4 'Great Tit' species in China. Keep your fingers crossed that the inappropriate name 'Japanese' Tit doesn't stick!

\*\*\*In addition, ssp *minor* birds were noted @ the grounds of our Beijing hotel.

**Rufous-vented Tit** *Parus rubidiventris*

31 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Songar Tit** *Parus songarus*

37 bird-days. Noted on six dates N of Xining (ssp *affinis*) & S of Yushu (ssp *weigoldicus*).

\*\*\*Note that of the several 'Songar Tit' sspp maybe only *weigoldicus* merits full species status (the rest are now lumped back in with Willow Tit *Parus montanus* by e.g. IOC).

\*\*\*Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) noted that "the case for treating *weigoldicus* as a full species appears particularly strong on the basis of its unusually high genetic distances from other taxa, despite weak morphological differentiation". Actually – as we couldn't help noticing (& see Collar & Pilgrim 2007) - *weigoldicus* does differ 'conspicuously' in many respects, incl vocalizations, from even *affinis*.

**White-browed Tit** *Parus superciliosus*

17+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Grey Crested Tit** *Parus dichrous*

32 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Pale Sand Martin** *Riparia diluta*

28+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

14 bird-days. Noted @ desert poplars on two dates.

**Eurasian Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

c50 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

**Asian House Martin** *Delichon dasypus*

c115 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica*

37+ bird-days. Noted on four dates – we all agreed that ssp *gephrya* is an even better-looking bird than the *japonica* standard-issue Red-rumped we'd seen @ the grounds of our Beijing hotel...

**Stoliczka's (= White-browed) Tit-Warbler** *Leptopoecile sophiae*

41 bird-days. Noted on nine (!) dates – getting repeated views at point-blank range was (*please tick as appropriate*)

[ ] stunning.

[ ] very stunning.

[ ] fantastically stunning.

[ ] nothing to brag about.

**Crested Tit-Warbler** *Leptopoecile elegans*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Mongolian Lark** *Melanocorypha mongolica*

Singles were noted on two dates.

**Long-billed Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha maxima*

31 bird-days. Noted on six dates – main event 11 on 14<sup>th</sup>, including both adults & juveniles posing: click, click, click!

**Hume's Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella acutirostris*

Six bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Asian Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella cheleensis*

13 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula*

35+ bird-days. Noted on ten dates.

**Elwes' Horned Lark** *Eremophila elwesi*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

\*\*\*Drovetski *et al.* (2014) – in an article record-breakingly titled 'Limited Phylogeographic Signal in Sex-Linked and Autosomal Loci Despite Geographically, Ecologically, and Phenotypically Concordant Structure of mtDNA Variation in the Holarctic Avian Genus *Eremophila*'<sup>^</sup>: PLoS ONE 9(1) – proposed splitting Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* into six species.

Of relevance in an Oriental context are:

*E. elwesi* of Tibet etc. (to be renamed if the uninvestigated ssp *longirostris* proves to belong to this clade).

*E. penicillata* including 'birds inhabiting alpine zone of Palearctic mountains from southeastern Europe to Tian Shan' (ssp *albigula* is found in Xinjiang, China).

*E. flava* 'breeding in the tundra from Scandinavia to Amguema River in Chukotka' (and occurring S in winter at least to Beijing).

*E. brandti* 'breeding in aridlands from the northwestern border of Kazakhstan to northeastern Inner Mongolia in China' (and occurring S in winter at least to Beijing).

The dust is yet to settle, but *elwesi* is as genetically distinct as Temminck's Horned Lark *E.*

*bilopha*...

\*\*\*<sup>^</sup>To which the only possible response would be 'supercalifragilisticexpialidocious'!

**Tarim Hill Warbler** *Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris*

Four on 12<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*The much-loved Chinese Hill Warbler *Rhopophilus pekinensis* turns out to be two monotypic species (Leader *et al.* 2013: Forktail 29, pp31-36): *Rhopophilus pekinensis* & *R. albosuperciliaris*, with the proposed English names Beijing Babbler & Tarim Babbler, respectively... Seeing that Beijing is only a tiny dot on the map of the former's vast range (from N Korea to NE Tibet), and that the latter is *not* endemic to Xinjiang's Tarim Basin (its range extends into Qinghai's Qaidam Basin) perhaps the

best selling point for these names are that they consign the 'Chinese Bush-dweller' of Handbook of the Birds of the World (Vol XII, p281: Collar & Robson 2007) to history?

The two taxa are easily distinguished – *pekinensis* has a striking whitish iris, broad-ish streaking on the mantle & extensive orangey streaking on the flanks, while *albosuperciliaris* has a dark iris, narrower & less extensive streaking above, and much less orange markings on the flanks. Both species 'have a wide repertoire of vocalizations', but at least one song type is distinctively different.

**\*\*\*Chinese Bulbul** *Pycnonotus sinensis*

Present @ the grounds of our Beijing hotel.

**'Chinese' Tickell's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus (affinis) occisinensis*

90 bird-days. Noted on 13 dates.

\*\*\*Martens (2008) elevates part of Tickell's Warbler to full species status as *P. occisinensis*

[http://globiz.sachsen.de/snsd/publikationen/vertebrate-zoology/vz58-2/06\\_Martens.pdf](http://globiz.sachsen.de/snsd/publikationen/vertebrate-zoology/vz58-2/06_Martens.pdf)

**Yellow-streaked Warbler** *Phylloscopus armandii*

50 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**Buff-barred Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus pulcher*

13+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Gansu Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

32 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

\*\*\*This attractive warbler was only recently reaccepted as a valid species, and its winter quarters remain undiscovered...

**Chinese Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus yunnanensis*

Very likely the same individual encountered N of Xining on both 29+31<sup>st</sup>...

**'Eastern' Lemon-rumped Warbler** *Phylloscopus (chloronotus) forresti*

Eight bird-days. Noted on just two dates – even with our trusted Landcruisers access to a much-loved site near Nangqian proved impossible...

\*\*\*Martens *et al.* 2004 (*vide* Rheindt 2006) elevated *forresti*, considered a synonym of *chloronotus* by Cheng (1987), to full species status, splitting it from *chloronotus* (of Nepal) which, with *simlaensis*, becomes Western Lemon-rumped Warbler. The two differ "dramatically in song and mitochondrial DNA (4.2% cytochrome-b divergence)": Rheindt (2006). Given that the type locality for *forresti* is Lijiang, in Yunnan (Cheng 1987) it is not obvious that "Sichuan Leaf Warbler" is preferable to 'Eastern Lemon-rumped Warbler'. "Presumably the hitherto unknown border between both species lies somewhere in Yunnan, Burma or north-eastern India.": Rheindt (2006). *Ahem?*

**Hume's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei mandellii*

78+ bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

\*\*\*Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) treats both ssp as full species, noting that "although the call of *mandellii* is markedly different from [nominate] *humei*, the whistled songs of both taxa are variable and often inseparable. While *mandellii* is genetically closer to *humei* than to *inornatus*, it is long-separated from either according to mtDNA (Irwin *et al.* 2001); its status as a full species thus remains equivocal." – NOT (yet) accepted as a full species by IOC:

<http://www.worldbirdnames.org/BOW/bushtits/>

\*\*\*Nominate *humei* occurs in Qinghai on passage in autumn (JH pers obs).

**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

195+ bird-days. Noted on eight dates – quite a few showed more than a trace of a 2<sup>nd</sup> wingbar...

\*\*\*Zheng *et al.* (2005) includes 'Qinghai' in the range of ssp *obscuratus*, and SE Qinghai in the range

of ssp *trochiloides*.

\*\*\*Zheng *et al.* (2005) included 'all [of China] except Xinjiang, Xizang & Taiwan' in the range of ssp *plumbeitarsus*, considering the taxon a full species, a position shared by IOC but not by Svensson (2009).

**Large-billed Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus magnirostris*

20 bird-days. Noted N of Xining on three dates.

**'Margelanica' Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia (minula) margelanica*

Seven bird-days. This puzzling taxon was seen on two dates – an adult and two juveniles allowed close scrutiny on 11<sup>th</sup>, leaving everyone well satisfied...

**Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis*

Three heard on 6<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Collar (2006) elevated *odicus* (of NE and E Burma, N Indochina, S Yunnan and Guizhou (except N), *decarlei* (of 'E Xizang', SW Sichuan, and NW Yunnan), '*dedekensi [sic]*' (of '(N)E Xizang', W Sichuan, and NW Yunnan), *gravivox* (of S Gansu, S Shaanxi, S Shanxi, NW Henan, and N Sichuan), and *cowensae* (of C and E Sichuan, N Guizhou, and W Hubei) to species status on morphological grounds, a 'new arrangement, which clearly rests on uncertain foundations and is in need of considerable fortification (which is not supplied by morphometric analysis, as this shows as much variation within the new species as between them, notably a remarkably long tail in *dedekensi [sic]*...'. In the absence of DNA analysis and a thorough study of the notoriously varied vocalizations of these birds, such rearrangement seems fairly meaningless...

**Kozlov's Babax** *Babax koslowi*

Eight bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*One of our main 'pretexts' for visiting an unbeatably pretty area on the remote Xizang border, this restricted-range species proved obliging.

**Pere David's Laughingthrush** *Garrulax davidi*

18 bird-days. Noted on two dates – main event 17 near Xining on 16<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Only when seen well does one realize why the alternative name, 'Plain' Laughingthrush, isn't appropriate.

**Giant Laughingthrush** *Garrulax maximus*

38+ bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event 26 on 6<sup>th</sup>, incl several which allowed close-up viewing.

\*\*\*This superb-looking but all-too-frequently hard to see species has an impressive range of calls, some subdued, some anything but, yet others direct or derived mimicry – duetting birds are often a striking component in the dawn chorus, and throughout the day groups travelling through the forest will mark their progress with occasional sessions of loud calling.

**Elliot's Laughingthrush** *Garrulax elliotii*

157+ bird-days. This attractive W China / E Tibet endemic was recorded on eight dates.

**Chinese Fulvetta** *Alcippe striaticollis*

Two on 6<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Knowing the call AND where to listen out for it is - even more so than in the case of the skulking Kozlov's Babax – the key to locating this subtly attractive but, alas, skulky endemic. Despite its universally accepted name (?), the IOC tersely states its range as 'Tibet'.

**Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus*

3+ at Koko Nor on 15<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*None recorded at this site since 2008: JH.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

Nine bird-days. Noted on four dates.

\*\*\*Zheng *et al.* (2005) listed both sspp *tristis* & *sikkimensis* for Qinghai, without further detail.

**Northern Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

11 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Chinese Nuthatch** *Sitta villosa*

34 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Przevalski's Nuthatch** *Sitta przewalskii*

Four on 30<sup>th</sup> - a species which invariably makes the Bird of the Trip shortlist!

**Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

\*\*\*'One of the most spectacular birds in the world, this species is aptly named 'rock flower' in Chinese': Harrap & Quinn (1996) – I'm not sure which Chinese dialect Harrap and/or Quinn is familiar with but both Cheng (1987) and Zheng *et al.* (2005) refer to *Tichodroma muraria* as '*Hongchi xuanbi que*', 'red-winged cliff-hanging bird'.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*

15 bird-days. Noted on three dates N of Xining.

\*\*\*No Hodgson's Treecreeper *Certhia hodgsoni* were noted - this newly elevated species 'embraces the Sino-Himalayan [taxa formerly treated as subspecies of *C. familiaris*] *hodgsoni* Brooks, 1874 (W Himalayas), *mandellii* Brooks, 1874 (E Himalayas) and *khamensis* Bianchi 1903 (SW & W China [N as far as the road between Jiuzhaigou & Sungpan in N Sichuan]': D T Tietze *et al.* 2006. Birds in SE Qinghai & E Xizang are this taxon: Cheng (1987).

\*\*\***Crested Myna** *Acridotheres cristellatus*

Two @ the grounds of our Beijing hotel on 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus*

c12 on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**White-cheeked Starling** *Sturnus cineraceus*

One 1<sup>st</sup> c-y in the poplar grove on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Chestnut Thrush** *Turdus rubrocanus*

34 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Kessler's Thrush** *Turdus kessleri*

41+ bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

\*\*\*Evidently a somewhat erratic species – the 2011 OBC Fundraiser trip logged 128+ bird-days, encountering post-breeding gatherings of up to 70 birds.

**Chinese Song Thrush** *Turdus mupinensis*

Five bird-days. Seen well on two dates.

**Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia calliope*

12+ bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Himalayan Rubythroat** *Luscinia pectoralis*

21+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – on the rather long shortlist of FANTASTIC birds seen on this trip: just to make sure everyone got great views (some group members had already headed back to HQ when the rest of us obtained ‘scope views of a fine male late one afternoon) we made a special stop on 9<sup>th</sup> & saw no fewer than seven adult males.

**Himalayan Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger rufilatus*

Two on 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus*

24 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*Apparently (L Svensson pers com) birds breeding in NE Qinghai – with a white brow in adult males – are *albocoeruleus*, a long neglected taxon hitherto considered of doubtful validity, but with a song distinct from both *cyanurus*’ & *rufilatus*’. It is genetically closer to *cyanurus*, but has legs as long as *rufilatus*’.

**Przevalski’s Redstart** *Phoenicurus alaschanicus*

Ten bird-days. Noted on two dates – all the sweeter for appearing a day early! ‘Arguably the prettiest in the genus’? Oh yes!!

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

94 bird-days. Noted on 15 dates.

**Hodgson’s Redstart** *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

52 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**White-throated Redstart** *Phoenicurus schisticeps*

48 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

**Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus aureus*

16+ bird-days. Noted on just two dates near Xining.

**Guldenstadt’s Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus*

34+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Blue-fronted Redstart** *Phoenicurus frontalis*

21 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**White-bellied Redstart** *Hodgsonius phaenicuroides*

One heard calling on 16<sup>th</sup>... even with our trusted Landcruisers access to a mostly reliable site for this widespread but very skulky species proved impossible.

**Plumbeous Redstart** *Rhyacornis fuliginosa*

8+ bird-days. Noted daily over 29-31<sup>st</sup>.

**River Chat** *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

35 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**Common Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus*

Three juveniles on 9<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Ssp *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'.

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina*

31+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka*

5+ on 28<sup>th</sup>... nice views of a pair w/ at least one fledgling.

**Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti*

Five bird-days. Noted on just two dates.

**Common Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis*

One seen well on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Sooty Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sibirica*

10+ bird-days. Noted on two dates.

\*\*\*Work on vocalizations may well lead to suggestions that the distinctive *rothschildi* be elevated to full species status...

**Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa dauurica*

An early migrant flycatching off a Koko Nor fence on 15<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*The species is rarely recorded in Tibet...

**White-throated Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus*

Singles were noted on three dates.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

**Rock Sparrow** *Petronia petronia*

27 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Henri's Snowfinch** *Montifringilla henrici*

11+ bird-days. Noted on just one or two dates.

\*\*\*DNA work has shown this taxon to be more closely related to Tibetan Snowfinch than to Eurasian (with which it was lumped in the past).

**Tibetan Snowfinch** *Montifringilla adamsi*

14+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

\*\*\*Rather unspectacular on the ground but truly striking in flight, this species is blessed with no less than four English names...

**White-rumped Snowfinch** *Onychostruthus taczanowskii*

63+ bird-days. Seen on six dates this was the most charismatic of the six spp of snowfinch encountered – it 'dive-bombs' rivals, engages in strutting stand-offs, and lumbers along, all hunched up and true intentions hidden behind its highwayman's mask...

**Pere David's Snowfinch** *Pyrgilauda davidiana*

21 bird-days. Seen well on two dates: TINGALING!

\*\*\*It is doubly misleading to call this 'one of the most localized snowfinch species' (as done by H Jannes in a 2011 Birdquest trip report) as



a) its range is vast, covering SE Russian Altai, Mongolia & SE Transbaikalia S to E Qinghai and W & C Inner Mongolia (Dickinson, 2003)!

b) the only Snowfinch that could be reasonably said to be 'localized' is Afghan Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda theresae*, 'endemic to the N & C ranges of the Hindu Kush, Afghanistan (Shibar, Sabz & Unai Passes, Bamian [Prov]), between approximately 67\* and 69\*E', descending from its summer range between 2575-3000m to lower levels, and 'occasionally moves N into Badghyz and Karabil, SE Turkmenistan': Clement *et al.* (1993)!

**Rufous-necked Snowfinch** *Pyrgilauda ruficollis*  
c270 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

**Blanford's Snowfinch** *Pyrgilauda blanfordi*

Nine bird-days. Noted on three dates – we'd nearly come full circle before everyone had seen this rather specialized species.

**Alpine Accentor** *Prunella collaris*  
Two on 5<sup>th</sup> [MH].

**Robin Accentor** *Prunella rubeculoides*

53 bird-days. Noted on five dates – main event 28 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, incl two at their nest near our hotel...

**Rufous-browed Accentor** *Prunella strophiatea*  
18 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Brown Accentor** *Prunella fulvescens*  
39 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*

34 bird-days. Noted on eight dates – seeing (AND photographing!) a couple of splendidly black-backed *calcarata* males on 8<sup>th</sup> was a highlight.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

7+ bird-days. Noted on three dates, with two on 11<sup>th</sup> being 3-4 days earlier than the previous earliest autumn records in that area (JH pers. obs.).

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

69+ bird-days. Noted on 13 dates.

\*\*\*Spp involved were *leucopsis* (none identified S of @ Er La pass) & *alboides* (in the Yushu / Nangqian area).

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi*

Nine bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*

27 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**Rosy Pipit** *Anthus roseus*

10+ bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

8-9 bird-days. Noted only on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Oriental Greenfinch** *Carduelis sinica*

Three on 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Siskin** *Carduelis spinus*

Two on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Twite** *Carduelis flavirostris*

114+ bird-days. Noted on 11 dates.

**Plain Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte nemoricola*

15 bird-days. Noted on just two dates...

**Brandt's Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte brandti*

13+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – it is perhaps its hardiness rather than its plumage that makes this an attractive species...

**Mongolian Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes mongolicus*

c15 on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Przevalski's Rosefinch** *Urocynchramus pylzowi*

Eight birds were seen so well that we did not feel a need to try to see more – in the course of the OBC Fundraisers we have found this species at half a dozen or so sites.

\*\*\*A not-to-be-taken-for-granted bird which has something to offer no matter what subspecies of birder you are: beauty, interesting behavior (notably its parachute type song-flight which we saw repeatedly), odd song, as well as taxonomic interest (it has for some years now been known to represent a monotypic family).

**Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

53+ bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

\*\*\*Local breeders are ssp *roseatus* (Dickinson 2003) which is markedly different from at least the nominate...

**'Chinese' Beautiful Rosefinch** *Carpodacus 'davidianus'*<sup>^</sup>

18 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

\*\*\*<sup>^</sup>Tietze *et al.* (2013) seem to conclude, *contra* Rasmussen & Anderton (2005), that *davidianus* is NOT sufficiently diverged (just 2.1%) from its sister lineage *pulcherrimus* / *argyrophrys* to merit treatment as a full species: having determined (p299) that *waltoni* & *eos* form one species *C. waltoni*, they state that '*Carpodacus pulcherrimus* (F. Moore, 1856) consequently is left with only the subspecies *argyrophrys* Berlioz, 1929, *davidianus* A. Milne-Edwards, 1866, and nominate *pulcherrimus*'.

\*\*\*See also [www.birdforum.net/showthread.php?t=90229](http://www.birdforum.net/showthread.php?t=90229)

**Pink-rumped Rosefinch** *Carpodacus waltoni*<sup>^</sup>

25 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*<sup>^</sup>See taxonomic note under Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch, above.

**Stoliczka's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus stolicka beicki*

13 on 28<sup>th</sup> – outstanding views of several males...

**Three-banded Rosefinch** *Carpodacus trifasciatus*

Four (incl two heard-onlies) on 6<sup>th</sup> – SE Qinghai is on the edge of the species' range.

**Chinese White-browed Rosefinch** *Carpodacus dubius*

54 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Eastern Great Rosefinch** *Carpodacus rubicilloides*

48+ bird-days. Noted on seven dates – main event 18 on 9<sup>th</sup>, incl several showy adult males.

**Caucasian Great Rosefinch** *Carpodacus rubicilla severtzovi*

Single adult males on two dates.

\*\*\*“Treatment of *severtzovi* as a subspecies of (Caucasian) Great Rosefinch *C. rubicilla* (of Caucasus) is unjustified given differences in plumage [Caucasian is much brighter red overall, and lacks whitish spots on the crown: Rasmussen 2005], habitat and (apparently) vocalisations (Dement’ev *et al.* 1970)...”: Rasmussen & Anderton 2005; Tietze *et al.* (2013), however, established that *severtzovi* genetically is insufficiently differentiated from *rubicilla* to merit treatment as a separate species.

**Red-fronted Rosefinch** *Pyrrhospiza punicea*

Six bird-days. Noted on two dates – main event five on 4<sup>th</sup>, incl two fine adult males.

**Roborovski’s Rosefinch** *Kozlowia roborowskii*

13 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

\*\*\*We saw no fewer than ten species of rosefinch in addition to the not-really-a-rosefinch Przevalski’s... and eight of these were seen extremely well, incl the scarce Roborovski’s: our team photographers were simply blown away when a male dropped in for a sip of melt water at <10m from where we were purposefully lingering.

**Red Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*

14+ bird-days. Noted on four dates – a couple of obliging males allowed ‘scope viewing.

\*\*\*A strikingly different bird than the one more or less familiar to us from W Europe - Clements (1993) include our area in the range of ssp *himalayensis*.

**Grey-headed Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula erythaca*

63 bird-days. Noted on five dates – main event 35 on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carniceps*

c85 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos*

Three was all we could manage – but one of them was VERY obliging, sitting up on a fence post.

**Eastern Rock Bunting** *Emberiza godlewskii*

48 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

**Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides*

Five - incl a pair carrying food – on 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Kozlov’s Bunting** *Emberiza koslowi*

Nine on 5<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Only when this highly localized and hard-to-get-to Restricted Range endemic species is 'in the bag' does anyone allow themselves a sigh of relief and a pleasant 1<sup>st</sup> taste of 'we've done it!'. And did we do it!? Superb views, views that could not possibly have ben improved upon, and ditto photo opportunities of adult males, adult females & fledged juveniles - well worth the efforts, and arguably the Most Special Bird of the Trip.

**Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala*

Four on 12<sup>th</sup> – at least one was an adult male.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Mammals:

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

### Rhesus Macaque *Macaca mulatta*

13+ animal-days. Great views on two dates.

### Himalayan Marmot *Marmota himalayana*

Noted on 13 dates – remarkably common in some areas / along some stretches of road, with up to 100+ a day...

### Przewalski's Steppe Vole *Eolagurus przewalskii* / Grey Dwarf Hamster *Cricetulus migratorius*

25+ on 10<sup>th</sup>... cute little animals can be hard to ID! AND very distracting...

\*\*\*'based on the literature I really can't see it being a hamster [despite it being considered probably *Cricetulus migratorius* by the author of The Field Guide, A Smith: email to JH]. I thought the 'best fit' from the field guide was Przewalski's Steppe Vole (*Eolagurus przewalskii*), based on:

- size and bulk
- ear size
- tail length
- the white furry feet, which seem to show the fringe of white stiff hairs mention[ed] in Smith & Xie (third pic).

However, I'm a long way from being confident, especially as I can't find any images of this species on google! This is the roadside animal, I'm not sure if the colony further away in the grass was the same; I assumed so at the time despite them being darker/greyer and possibly smaller, but have a look at the bottom four images in this blog post:

<http://mammalwatching.wordpress.com/2014/08/31/qinghai-tour-highlights-and-need-help-with-pikavolehamster-ids/>

those seem pretty similar to those rodents, and from the description it sounds like they may have been at the same place - the plot thickens!': M Hoit, email to JH.

### Irene's Mountain Vole *Neodon irene*

One seen well & photographed at c4,600m on 5<sup>th</sup> [TS].

### Tibetan Dwarf Hamster *Cricetulus tibetanus*<sup>^</sup>

c15 animal-days. Noted on two dates.

\*\*\*'^someone really needs to do a review of the hamsters of the plateau – they are a mess and we could only guess in 'The Mammals of China' as to the best possible arrangement': A Smith in email to 2009 OBC Fundraiser participant P Los when tentatively confirming the ID of the small animal we're seeing regularly...

### Gansu Pika *Ochotona cansus*

6+ on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### Plateau Pika *Ochotona curzoniae*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

\*\*\*An all-black individual was noted on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### Chinese Red Pika *Ochotona erythrotis*

Probably the same individual noted on both 29<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>.

\*\*\*On 31<sup>st</sup> we were surprised & delighted in equal measure by finding two pika spp in close proximity...

**Glover's Pika** *Ochotona gloveri*

21+ animal-days. Noted on four dates.

**Tsing-Ling Pika** *Ochotona huangensis*

Noted in two different spots (both different from where one was seen briefly on the June/July OBC Fundraiser) on 29<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>.

\*\*\*Proved every bit as photogenic as its neighbour!

**Woolly Hare** *Lepus oiostolus*

37+ animal-days. Noted on eight dates.

**Tolai Hare** *Lepus tolai*

Four near Xining on 28<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*?**Gansu Mole** *Scapanulus oweni*

Mole hills noted on several dates were thought to be the work of this species.

**Pallas' Cat** *Felis manul*

Three animal-days. An adult w/ one kitten in view intermittently over a period of four hours on 1<sup>st</sup>, and one photographed close to the road on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Wolf** *Canis lupus*

Prolonged views of a pregnant female on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Tibetan Fox** *Vulpes ferrilata*

31 animal-days. Noted on six dates.

**Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*

Six animal-days. Noted on four dates – one on 28<sup>th</sup> caught a Tolai Hare that we were watching!

**Mountain Weasel** *Mustela altaica*

Four animal-days – three on 2<sup>nd</sup>, and one 'seen well; on size probably a juvenile' on 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Kiang** *Equus kiang*

272 animal-days. Noted on four dates. It was a real pleasure to watch these dignified 'donkeys' - in the absence of hunters they (and other large mammals on the Plateau) are fairly confiding, and in a couple of cases we were able to get good-to-decent photos even without the help of very long lenses!

**Alpine Musk Deer** *Moschus chrysogaster*

Great views of one on 7<sup>th</sup>!

**Siberian Roe** *Capreolus pygargus*

4+ animal-days. Singles heard N of Xining on both 29+30<sup>th</sup>, and 2-3 males seen very well on 9<sup>th</sup>: 'a strikingly different animal from its W Palearctic counterpart – almost orangey in hue, and much less dainty'...

\*\*\*A deer sp also on 9<sup>th</sup> could have been one of the two Roe Deer, but was more likely a third one, or possibly an Alpine Musk Deer...

**MacNeill's (Red) Deer** *Cervus macneilli*

Seven animal days. A female w/ one small, still-marbled juv on 4<sup>th</sup> & five [MH] in roughly the same place on 8<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Groves (2005) concluded that two Shou taxa merit full species treatment - *Cervus wallichii* & *Cervus macneilli*. They 'retain many features' 'that characterized the primitive basal stock of the entire red deer/wapiti/sika/rusa group'.

\*\*\**macneilli* is 'the pale red-grey deer of the eastern margins of the Tibetan plateau': Groves (2005).

#### **Gansu Red Deer** *Cervus (elaphus) kansuensis*

29 (incl 25 seen only by MH!) on 13<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*In N Tibet the respective ranges of *Cervus kansuensis* and *Cervus canadensis alashanicus* are unclear, as is their taxonomic status. The type locality for *kansuensis* is Lintan (= Xincheng: 34° 42'N, 103° 21'E), not far NE of where Schafer collected undoubted *macneilli*.

\*\*\**vide* Groves (2005), *kansuensis* is 'quite distinct, the winter pelage being especially different: *macneilli* stags are very light, creamy grey, while *kansuensis* stags are deep steely grey. The black on the croup [...] is much more conspicuous in *kansuensis*.'

\*\*\*Subsequently (Groves & Grubb: *Ungulate Taxonomy* (2011)) it was felt, however, that *kansuensis* is

probably NOT a valid taxon. There are specimens from S Koko Nor Range 37°N 100°E & from Tatung Shan 37°15'N 100°E, and there are sight records from Qilian Shan.

#### **Goitred Gazelle** *Gazella subgutturosa*

20+ animal-days. Noted on two dates.

#### **Tibetan Gazelle** *Procapra picticaudata*

341 animal-days. Noted on eight dates.

#### **Przevalski's Gazelle** *Procapra przewalskii*

64+ animal-days. Noted on two dates – my 'we might see some birds on the way' swayed those reluctant to undertake a minor trek across a broad valley to try and get close enough to these rare creatures to see the fish hook twist to the tip of the male's horns...

\*\*\*The species has recently be 'downgraded' to 'merely' Endangered (following the discovery of additional herds in 2003) although the world population may be no more than 350-400 mature individuals. See <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/18230/0>

#### **Tibetan Antelope** *Panthalops hodgsonii*

135 animals, incl at least 60 males!

\*\*\*Noted only along the remotest Roof of the World stretch of road.

#### **Blue Sheep** *Pseudois nayaur*

502+ animal-days. Noted on six dates... Given how important a prey this species is to Snow Leopard (Schaller, 1998: pp204-5) we felt almost aggrieved that we failed to spot one – the closest we got to seeing one was, as far as we know, getting an undeniable whiff of cat pee along a cliff on 5<sup>th</sup>.