

NE Tibet w/ Greentours, 2-17 Oct 2014:

An at-a-glance list of 161 species of birds & 26 species of mammals.

By Jesper Hornskov ****this draft 30 Oct 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 Appleton, I Green, S Morgan, M Singfield, R Smith & I in NE Tibet, China's Qinghai province, during two weeks in the field over 3-16 Oct 2014.

It was the 2nd Greentours mammalwatching trip in this area; the first was in October 2012. Our trip aimed to see as many of the unique mammals of the Tibetan highlands as we could, but searching for mammals typically allows one to pay attention to birds as well, and it is hopefully of interest what we saw at a time of the year when few dedicated birdwatchers visit this mysterious land. Predictably, the relatively late dates meant that some breeders had already departed for their winter quarters, and the bulk of the Siberian passage migrants, notably waders, had gone through already. No matter: all the key endemics are residents, and the lateness of the season has its potential advantages – we saw some of the specialities better and/or in far greater numbers than we would have in summer, and as a bonus turned up a few surprises. We recorded 161 spp of birds (two more than in 2012!) & no fewer than 26 species of mammals, incl PALLAS' CAT *Felis manul*, WOLF *Canis lupus*, TIBETAN FOX *Vulpes ferrilata*, ASIAN BADGER *Meles leucurus*, KIANG (= Tibetan Wild Ass) *Equus kiang*, WHITE-LIPPED DEER *Przewalskium albirostris*, the ultra-rare PRZEVALSKI'S GAZELLE *Procapra przewalskii*, WILD YAK *Bos grunniens*, ARGALI *Ovis ammon*, TIBETAN ANTELOPE *Panthalops hodgsonii*, and BLUE SHEEP *Pseudois nayaur*.

Our photographers worked diligently, making the most of the often exquisite light – their images will be uploaded as soon as possible; meanwhile please view images in this gallery, obtained in 2012:

<http://www.greentours.co.uk/Gallery/Asia/Mammals-of-the-Roof-of-the-World/3/>

The mammals, the birds, the unbeatable scenery (at this time of the year in places still 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 mammals or birds - being so under-visited.

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

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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...

***Zheng *et al.* (2005) listed the species for 'all [of China] except Gansu, Qinghai, Xinjiang & Xizang', and it appears to be genuinely scarce in Qinghai (JH pers obs)...

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

11 at Koko Nor on 4th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

145 at Koko Nor on 4th.

Chinese Spotbill *Anas zonorhyncha*

Seven at Koko Nor on 4th.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

55 at Koko Nor on 4th.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

150 at Koko Nor on 4th.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

2,610+ bird-days. Noted on two dates – main event 2,580+ at Koko Nor on 4th.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

600 at Koko Nor on 4th.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

6+ bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Two [JH] on 10th.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

c75 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event a flock of c70 staging at c4,800m on 8th.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Nine bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

One [RS] at Koko Nor on 4th.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* P

Two at Koko Nor on 4th – seen well, and even heard booming a couple of times.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

17 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 14 at Koko Nor on 4th.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

c85 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

Four on 16th – 'scope views of a male on a wire!

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

28 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Singles on two dates.

Saker *Falco cherrug*

97 bird-days! Noted on eight dates – main event 44 in a day on the high plateau!

***For most of us a welcome opportunity to familiarize ourselves with a species which is declining globally: not many trips allow you to graduate to full Saker Expert status in two weeks!

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

One 1st c-y on a fence post at Koko Nor on 4th.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans lineatus*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*

26-27 bird-days. Noted on nine dates - a top Dreambird, this emblematic species was not at all devalued by one superb encounter after another...

Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*

166+ bird-days. Noted on 12 dates.

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

Ten bird-days. Noted on two dates – main event two doing synchronized flying directly overhead on 13th: we felt they must have touched, one above the other, though because of the angle we couldn't be sure...

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

One adult male at Koko Nor on 4th.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Seven bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Singletons were seen on five dates.

Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus*

One N of Xining on 3rd.

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

Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*

360 bird-days. Noted on 11 dates – main event 183 along the way across the highest part of the plateau...

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

Ten bird-days. Noted on four dates – a 1st c-y bird 'against far snow-ridges' was a sight to remember.

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

One [IG] on 10th.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Singles on four dates... nice, but fewer than expected: in 2012 we logged eight bird-days, seeing this Holarctic species on six dates.

European Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

One heard at Koko Nor on 4th.

Common Coot *Fulica atra*

765+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis*

63 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*

Six bird-days. Noted on three dates – things got off to a good start on 8th with one heard, then seen flying along, and finally 'scoped across the mighty Yangtze after it landed directly opposite where we'd stopped for scenery photos...

Pied Avocet *Recurvirosta avocetta*

Six at Koko Nor on 4th.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

45+ at Koko Nor on 4th.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

12 at Koko Nor on 4th.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

One at Koko Nor on 4th.

Western Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Five at Koko Nor on 4th.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Eight at Koko Nor on 4th.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Six at Koko Nor on 4th.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

Ten bird-days. Noted on three dates – one adult on 12th was mobbed by a juvenile Saker...

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*

88+ bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

Common Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

Eight at Koko Nor on 4th.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Three on 11th.

Tibetan Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes thibetana*

Noted on two dates. One flying over, high, as we were concluding a field breakfast on 13th might have got away if it hadn't been for our sharp-eyed driver...

Pallas' Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

c70 in desert W of Koko Nor on 16th.

***For some of us, growing up carrying one of the field guides covering the Western Palearctic, Pallas' Sandgrouse was one of a handful of Ultimate Dreambirds, along with White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*, White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea*, Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* & Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*: see one, and you'd be in Seventh Heaven; find one, and your street cred would be established forever.

Blue Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris*

c460 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

c100 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Eurasian Eagle-Owl *Bubo bubo* P

One in a wood on the edge of the Qaidam basin on 14th...

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

One flushed off half a vole – which RS obligingly put on his coat sleeve for photos (no unequivocal ID resulted from this; on the plus side, nor did blood stains... – on 16th).

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One [IG] on 11th.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

3-4 bird-days. Noted on two 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.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*

Singles heard on two dates.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*

Singles on two dates.

Chinese Grey Shrike *Lanius sphenocercus*

Singles noted on two dates.

Tibetan Grey Shrike *Lanius giganteus*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

***A low-density species, wide-ranging and often inconspicuous even when present (and thus easily missed), we were fortunate to see it so well!

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Three seen extremely well on 3rd.

****vide* Zheng *et al.* (2005) the very pretty 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.

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus*

One en route on 16th.

Common Magpie *Pica pica*

12 bird-days. Noted on just two dates.

Tibetan Magpie *Pica (pica) bottanensis*

77 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

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

Henderson's Ground Jay *Podoces hendersoni*

Four singletons on 14th.

***This sought-after species frequently gives birdwatchers the dodge-and-run treatment, but then typically succumbs to curiosity to sit up allowing good views...

Hume's Groundpecker *Pseudopodoces humilis*

96 bird-days. Noted on 11 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*

252+ bird-days. Noted on ten dates.

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*

19 bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on two dates.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

One N of Xining on 3rd.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

15 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

97 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

Eastern Great Tit *Parus minor tibetanus*

One S of Yushu on 9th.

****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!

Rufous-vented Tit *Parus rubidiventris*

Seven bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Songar Tit *Parus songarus*

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

***Note that of the several 'Songar Tit' ssp 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*

Eight bird-days. This striking endemic was noted on four dates.

Grey Crested Tit *Parus dichrous*

Eight N of Xining on 3rd.

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*
Eight S of Yushu on 9th.

Stoliczka's (= White-browed) Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile sophiae*
30 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

Crested Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile elegans*
One N of Xining on 3rd...

Long-billed Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha maxima*
52 bird-days. Noted on five dates – main event a flock of 34 at Koko Nor on 4th, showing wonderfully well...

Hume's Short-toed Lark *Calandrella acutirostris*
4+ bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Asian Short-toed Lark *Calandrella cheleensis*
Four bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*
Three at Koko Nor on 4th.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*
Fairly widespread – noted on at least three 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*'[^]: 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*...
***[^]To which the only possible response would be 'supercalifragilisticexpialidocious'!

Tarim Hill Warbler *Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris*

Three very active and excitable birds allowed interrupted 'scope viewing in the Qaidam basin on 14th.
***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, 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.

***While there was no denying the birds' dark irides none of the three discrete vocalization types heard were 'distinctively different' from the *R. pekinensis* equivalents, and none the birds showed noticeably reduced orange on the flanks. Hmmm.

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

Three bird-days. Noted on two 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

Yellow-streaked Warbler *Phylloscopus armandii*

Three S of Yushu on 9th.

Buff-barred Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus pulcher*

Three N of Xining on 3rd.

Gansu Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

No fewer than 24 birds N of Xining on 3rd.

***This attractive warbler – a real gem-with-wings - is the key *Phylloscopus* to look for in this part of the world: it was only recently reaccepted as a valid species, and its winter quarters remain undiscovered...

Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

Four N of Xining on 3rd.

Kozlov's Babax *Babax koslowi*

6+ bird-days. Noted on two dates, this restricted-range species proved obliging on 10th, becoming vocal & starting to move around pretty much as soon as the morning sun reached the frosted-over hillside we were keeping an eye on.

***For birdwatchers one of the main 'pretexts' for visiting an sigh-inducingly pretty area on the remote Xizang border.

Giant Laughingthrush *Garrulax maximus*

6+ on 10th, alongside Kozlov's Babax...

***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*

19 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Heard in two locations at Koko Nor on 4th.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Eight N of Xining on 3rd.

Northern Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Ten N of Xining on 3rd.

Chinese Nuthatch *Sitta villosa*

15 N of Xining on 3rd – outstanding views!

Przevalski's Nuthatch *Sitta przewalskii*

Six N of Xining on 3rd – sadly, not seen as well as we'd hoped...

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

One headed S across a grassy valley on 9th after allowing brief-ish 'scope views.

***'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*

One N of Xining on 3rd.

White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus*

One on a wire along Koko Nor on 16th.

Chestnut Thrush *Turdus rubrocanus*

Nine N of Xining on 3rd.

Kessler's Thrush *Turdus kessleri*

36+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*

One on 10th.

Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*

21+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni*

One ssp *naumanni* bird along Koko Nor on 16th.

Northern Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus ssp*

Two N of Xining on 3rd.

***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*'.

Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

Singles on two dates.

White-throated Redstart *Phoenicurus schisticeps*

11 bird-days. Noted on three dates – BINGO!

Guldenstadt's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus*

160+ bird-days. Noted on eight dates this extremely attractive high-mountain specialist put on a good show.

Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*

Nine N of Xining on 3rd.

River Chat *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

Three bird-days. Heard on two dates.

Red-breasted / Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* / *F. albicilla*

One [IG, JH] on 16th – from what we saw of it probably the former, but when a sparrowhawk appeared on the scene it (and several other passerine migrants) simply vanished...

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

One heard N of Xining on 3rd.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*

C90 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Henri's Snowfinch *Montifringilla henrici*

c130 bird-days. Noted on 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*

Four on 5th.

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

White-rumped Snowfinch *Onychostruthus taczanowskii*

c145 bird-days. Seen on nine dates this was the most charismatic of the snowfinches encountered – the species 'dive-bombs' rivals, engages in strutting stand-offs, and lumbers along, all hunched up and true intentions hidden behind its highwayman's mask...

Rufous-necked Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda ruficollis*

1,665+ bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

Blanford's Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda blanfordi*

30+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Robin Accentor *Prunella rubeculoides*

37 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

Rufous-browed Accentor *Prunella strophciata*

Five bird-days. Noted on two dates – main event 'scope views of two on 3rd.

Brown Accentor *Prunella fulvescens*

Eight bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

22 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

20 bird-days. Noted on six dates – main event three ssp *leucopsis* w/ one ssp *ocularis* on 6th.

***In addition, ssp *alboides* birds delighted S of Yushu over 9-10th.

***Dickinson (2003) evidently consider without merit the idea that *lugens* is a valid species. Alstrom & Mild (2003) also concludes that various factors "suggest that the White Wagtail is best treated as a single species under the BSC".

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

Seven N of Xining on 3rd.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

Five bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

29+ bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

Plain Mountain Finch *Leucosticte nemoricola*

c50 bird-days. Noted on three dates – BVD!

Brandt's Mountain Finch *Leucosticte brandti*

A flock of 25+ in town on 11th...

Mongolian Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes mongolicus* P

Two dropped in onto a sandy patch at Koko Nor: seen well, but only for ten seconds... then, gone for good – another magic migration moment had passed!

Przevalski's Rosefinch *Urocynchramus pylzowi* P

9+ bird-days. Noted on two dates. TINGALING!

***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), odd song (as we confirmed: not always delivered from atop a bush!), as well as taxonomic interest (it has for some years now been known to represent a monotypic family).

Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus davidianus*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

***^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*'.

Pink-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus waltoni*

Seven bird-days. Noted on 9+10th... 'scope views of an adult male!

Chinese White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus dubius*

Nine bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Eastern Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilloides*

35+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

***Several encounters with adult males, rewarding in their own right, left us well prepared to recognize a male Caucasian Great Rosefinch... but no luck in that department (see below)!

Caucasian Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilla severtzovi*

Six bird-days. Birds in female-type plumage were noted on three 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 Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Singles noted on two dates – 'scope views of a near-adult male on 10th allowed us to confirm that

this is strikingly different bird from the one more or less familiar from W Europe - Clements (1993) include our area in the range of ssp *himalayensis*.

Grey-headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythaca*

Two N of Xining on 3rd.

White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carniceps*

22 bird-days. This somewhat erratic species was noted on three dates.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*

Five bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Eastern Rock Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*

26 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

Mammals:

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

Himalayan Marmot *Marmota himalayana*

11 animal-days. Noted on five dates.

Przewalski's Steppe Vole *Eolagurus przewalskii*

35+ animal-days. Noted three dates – 10+ on 8th were busy doing home improvement (AND taking breaks to enjoy the warming sunlight!)..

Kam Dwarf Hamster *Cricetulus kamensis*

3-4 scrutinized & digiscoped at c4,450m N of Maduo on 6th.

Tibetan Dwarf Hamster *Cricetulus tibetanus*

One on 6th.

***^'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*

Six animal-days. Noted on two dates - WOW! looks of one out in the sun next to two Przewalski's Rosefinches...

Black-lipped (= Plateau) Pika *Ochotona curzoniae*

Common in places – not systematically recorded.

Glover's Pika *Ochotona gloveri*

Seven seen well & photographed on 9th.

Tsingling Pika *Ochotona huangensis*

Staking out the spot where the Oriental Bird Club Fundraiser trip had found the species in August 2014 finally paid off...

Woolly Hare *Lepus oiostolus*

Ten animal-days. Noted on five dates.

Pallas' Cat *Felis manul*

One on 6th allowed extended 'scope views on x60 magnification: TINGALING!

Wolf *Canis lupus*

11 animal-days. Noted on three dates – main event a memorable pack of seven on 12th: six joined by a seventh after moving uphill scraping & scent-marking – greeting ceremony seen: animals falling over each other w/ tails wagging... finally moved off across snow covered hillside... wonderfully lit, evocative photos obtained by MS!

***The above followed an equally interesting and satisfying encounter on the 2012 trip (during which we also saw a total of 11 wolves!): a long session with two individuals 'down on the flats', 'scoped quite close - 'one of them was seen trying to punch through a patch of frozen snow, then carried on tentatively while the other animal was lying down. All of a sudden that one was making off in a different direction carrying a Tibetan Fox (!), seemingly trying to take advantage of the lay of the land to get away and not share the meal with its companion... nice plan, but as they disappeared from view the more active individual was firmly on the trail of the meal-carrying one.'

Tibetan Fox *Vulpes ferrilata*

63 animal-days. Noted on seven dates.

***The first we encountered – a day or two ahead of schedule, catching one or two of us underdressed and / or 'scope-less - constituted a 'range extension' only as far as our own previous sightings go: mapped range incl W end of Tulai Nanshan, S of Yumen (Gansu), and extends as far W as the Tajikistan border mts, S of Kashgar (Xinjiang): Smith & Xie (2008).

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

Six animal-days. Noted on five dates – several nice encounters, but the one in soft afternoon light hunting the edge of scrub on 8th made the strongest impression: 'in absolutely immaculate nick, w/ narrow rufous stripe along top half of tail'...

Asian Badger *Meles leucurus*

One on 12th – a bit distant, but definitely worth watching!

Kiang *Equus kiang*

581 animal-days. Noted on four dates... it was a real pleasure to watch these dignified 'donkeys' - in the absence of hunters they (and most other large mammals on the Plateau, even the mythical Chiru) are fairly confiding, and in a couple of cases it would have been possible to get good-to-decent photos even without the help of long lenses!

Siberian Roe *Capreolus pygargus*

One heard on 3rd.

Gansu Red Deer *Cervus (elaphus) kansuensis*

50 in mts W of Koko Nor – ONE very impressive alpha stag, and quite a few well antlered younger stags: once we got to our vantage point and were feasting our eyes on a rare concentration of these little-known animals (we could see the clouds of steam emitted with clearly audible bellows!) the climb to get there was forgotten...

***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.

Macneil's Deer *Cervus macneilli*

A group of five – incl two well antlered, pretty much alpha stags – ‘scoped S of Yushu on 9th.
***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).

White-lipped Deer *Przewalskium albirostris*

201 animal-days. This spectacular endemic was noted on two dates.
***‘The species previously ranged across much of the eastern Tibetan Plateau, [but now] occurs in fragmented populations in northwestern and southwestern Gansu, eastern and central, and southern Qinghai, eastern [Xizang], western Sichuan, and northwest Yunnan’.
‘There is no [official] global population estimate’, [though] ‘Wang (1998) estimated a total population of some 7,000’: see <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/4256/0>

Goitred Gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa*

Six on 14th – nice view of one wandering back & forth unceasingly wagging its erect tail.

Tibetan Gazelle *Procapra picticaudata*

1,187 animal-days. Noted on six dates – main event no fewer than 779 along the remotest Roof of the World stretch of road!

Przevalski's Gazelle *Procapra przewalskii*

A bachelor group of 17 males at fairly close range (great photos by MS!)...
***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>

Wild Yak *Bos grunniensis*

189 animals on The Roof of the World - incl some impressive bulls ‘just across the river’ !

Argali *Ovis ammon*

62 animal-days. Noted on two dates – main event a herd of 36, incl 2-3 near-alpha rams!
***Our first three permitted digiscoping as they grazed not far above the road without showing any sign of being alarmed; however, if they’d timed their move across the hillside into a steep gully even slightly differently we’d quite likely not have seen them at all!

Tibetan Antelope *Panthalops hodgsonii*

131 along the remotest Roof of the World stretch of road – we potted closer without at all spooking the animals, getting back to the cars only at 6PM, by which time the weather had quite suddenly turned menacing (and soon we indeed found ourselves for 20 min driving through a snow squall) after the loveliest light on both the antelope and on the far-away snow peaks, revealed briefly in all their glory: enough to send shivers down the spine of even the most talented water-colourist...

Blue Sheep *Pseudois nayaur*

463+ 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 5th.