

# Birds & Mammals in NE Tibet, 14 June – 4 July 2015

*An at-a-glance list of 225 species of birds & 23 species of mammals.*

By Jesper Hornskov \*\*\**this draft 9 Aug 2015*\*\*\* 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 R Ake, P Colston, N Dymond, R Fray, P Harvey, D Johnson, S Piotrowski, J Spahr, P Thompson, N Williams & myself in NE Tibet, China's Qinghai province, during 21 days in the field.

Our trip aimed to see as many of the unique birds of the Tibetan highlands as we could, but searching for birds typically allows one to pay close attention to mammals as well, and it is hopefully of interest what we saw at a time of the year when few dedicated mammal-watchers visit this mysterious land. Predictably, the timing of our trip meant that we saw relatively few migrants, but we did see many of the key specialities extremely well.

We recorded 225 spp of birds & no fewer than 23 spp of mammals, incl WOLF *Canis lupus*, TIBETAN FOX *Vulpes ferrilata*, KIANG (= Tibetan Wild Ass) *Equus kiang*, the widespread but hard-to-see SIBERIAN ROE DEER *Capreolus pygargus*, WHITE-LIPPED DEER *Przewalskium albirostris*, WILD YAK *Bos grunniens*, TIBETAN ANTELOPE *Panthalops hodgsonii*, and large numbers of BLUE SHEEP *Pseudois nayaur*.

A few additional species of birds were noted at Beijing before and after the main trip - nothing unusual but interesting nonetheless (during migration we've seen as many as 40+ spp in the grounds of our hotel in an hour and a half pre-breakfast, incl goodies such as Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*, Pere David's Bush Warbler *Bradypterus davidi* & Elisa's Flycatcher *Ficedula elisae*...).

Our photographers worked diligently, making the most of the often exquisite light – I hope their images will be made available as soon as possible...

The birds, the mammals, the unbeatable scenery (in many places enhanced by a variety of 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.

A huge 'THANK YOU!' to Nick for getting things off the ground...

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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.

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## **Species list:**

### **Severtzov's Grouse** *Tetrastes sewerzowi*

One seen only by some of us N of Xining on 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **Szechenyi's Monal Partridge** *Tetraophasis szechenyi*

11+ bird-days. Noted on two dates - this often hard-to-see species put on a fabulous performance for us close to Nangqian on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Tibetan Snowcock** *Tetraogallus tibetanus*

Eight bird-days. Great-to-OK views on three dates!

### **Przevalski's Partridge** *Alectoris magna*

9+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – one digiscoped as it repeatedly gave its advertising call.

### **Daurian Partridge** *Perdix dauurica*

5+ bird-days. Noted on two dates – on 16<sup>th</sup> four absolutely performed, allowing us leisurely 'scope looks at the black belly patch.

### **Tibetan Partridge** *Perdix hodgsoniae*

Six bird-days. Noted on two dates – main event a pair loitering by the road on 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Blood Pheasant** *Ithaginis cruentus*

12 bird-days. Noted on five dates – memorable 'scope views across the gully on 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **White Eared Pheasant** *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

44+ bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on no fewer than six dates... close encounters as well as prolonged 'scope views of more distant birds!

### **Blue Eared Pheasant** *C. auritum*

Noted N of Xining on three dates - seven tiny chicks w/ 3-4 adults feeding their way down a slope covered in flowering *Berberis* bushes was a moving sight.

### **Common Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

49+ bird-days. Noted on four dates - - a very different creature from the standard issue, introduced Ringnecks familiar from Europe & N America.

\*\*\*Cheng (1987) listed a staggering 18 races for mainland China. Of these he listed just three for Qinghai: *vlangalii*, *strauchi* (for 'NE part') & *suehschanensis* as an accidental to Zekog in SE.

### **Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*

110+ bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event 100+ at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **Bar-headed Goose** *Anser indicus*

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

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*

A pair w/ two 'ugly ducklings' at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*On 25 May there were three 'ugly ducklings' (JH *et al.* pers obs)...

**Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

12 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*

195+ bird-days. Seen AND heard (their calls are the soundtrack to memories of trips in Tibet!) on 12 dates.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera*

Six bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on two dates.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

21 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Chinese Spotbill** *Anas zonorhyncha*

Two at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

25 at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>... most were drakes fading out of their spring finery.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*

c10 at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*

One [DJ] at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Teal** *Anas crecca*

Ten at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina*

c50 bird-days. Noted on two dates at Koko Nor. Several of the drakes were only just beginning to lose their spring plumage.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*

15-20 adults at Koko Nor on both visits – incl at least a couple of females w/ ducklings.

**Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*

38+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

Six bird-days. Noted on two dates at Koko Nor.

**Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*

Six [PH *et al.*] at W end of Koko Nor on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

13 adults in total, incl a female w/ seven small ducklings – noted on five dates...

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Three bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on two dates – it was good to get views that allowed us to confirm that these birds had the white iris of ssp *poggei*, which differs from the nominate also in vocalizations.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*  
135+ bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*  
40+ adults. Noted on two dates at Koko Nor.

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*  
One adult seen well on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus*  
100 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*  
7-8 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*  
c35 at Koko Nor on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*  
16-17 bird-days. Noted on ten dates.

**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*  
Singles noted on five dates.

**Saker** *Falco cherrug*  
35 bird-days. Noted on five dates...

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

**Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides*  
An adult male in the Qaidam basin on 30<sup>th</sup>.  
\*\*\*Zheng *et al.* (2011) listed the species only for 'N Ningxia & Qinghai'.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans lineatus*  
Nine bird-days. Noted six dates.

**Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus*  
25 bird-days. Noted on ten dates - one adult 'scoped on its nest, and another seen repeatedly bone-dropping, then corkscrewing down to the target area... WOW! encounters even for our well travelled group.

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

**Black Vulture** *Aegypius monachus*  
Five near Golmud on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*  
Eight bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*

A 2<sup>nd</sup> c-y female 'scoped as it landed close to the trail on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Himalayan Buzzard** *Buteo burmanicus*

Seven bird-days. Noted on three dates - repeated encounters allowed us to get a feel for the jizz of this little known taxon.

\*\*\*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*

128 bird-days. Noted on 13 dates - main event 41 along the remotest Roof of the World stretch of road.

**Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*

Two 'scoped close to the road on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*

19-21 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

**Eurasian Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

One in flight [SP] at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

One [RF] at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

Three bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on both visits.

**Common Coot** *Fulica atra*

115+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

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

c63 bird-days. Noted on five dates - we were repeatedly treated to great views: TINGALING!

\*\*\*Widespread overgrazing - of hills and wetlands alike - is bound to spell trouble for this emblematic species... Nonetheless it was heartening to see a pair accompanying their two tiny chicks on our last day on the Plateau.

**Ibisbill** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

12 bird-days. Noted on five 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 – 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*

29 bird-days. Noted at Koko Nor on two dates.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

Four at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*

Two (an adult and a 2<sup>nd</sup> c-y) at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

Four W of Koko Nor on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Five bird-days. Noted on two dates.

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

49+ bird-days. Noted on four dates.

\*\*\*<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.

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

One [SP] at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*

11 bird-days. Noted only at Koko Nor.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

93+ bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

Three at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

Six bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Four at Koko Nor on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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

120 at W end of Koko Nor on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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

20 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

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

A 2<sup>nd</sup> c-y at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>...

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

188+ bird-days. Noted on 11 dates.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida*

Two adults on 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Tibetan Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes tibetana*

22 (a reconfiguring flock of 21 plus a singleton) at a new site near Golmud on 28<sup>th</sup> - TINGALING!

\*\*\*An outstanding encounter with an endemic which is 'on the Hardest Bird in the World shortlist along with Emperor Penguin' - prolonged views at <100m in great light, and we even witnessed a copulation! Nonetheless we all agreed that so spectacularly grand was the landscape that it would have been no loss at all to return the following morning, as we would definitely have done in the event no sandgrouse had obliged 1<sup>st</sup> time around!

**Pallas' Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

Ten W of Koko Nor on 2<sup>nd</sup>. Repeated fly-bys as a prelude to 'scope views of a pair with two chicks: our team photographers made a point of keeping a respectful distance but obtained good shots nonetheless.

\*\*\*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.

\*\*\*Despite the species' nomadic inclinations it is usually reliable at our favoured site...

**Blue Hill Pigeon** *Columba rupestris*

161+ bird-days. Noted on 17 dates.

**Snow Pigeon** *Columba leuconota*

21 bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on four dates.

\*\*\*One of those 'has-to-be-seen-to-be-believed' species...seeing these strikingly patterned birds effortlessly sail along the towering rock faces is a visual treat, the simple beauty of 'em enhancing the grandeur of the setting.

**Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis*

c12 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

41+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Red Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

An adult male by the road at c4,300m on 28<sup>th</sup>...

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

74 bird-days. Noted on 16 dates.

**Eurasian Eagle-Owl** *Bubo bubo*

Singles on two dates – one at c4,300m on 20<sup>th</sup> proved difficult to refind although we had a fair idea of where it had settled after being accidentally flushed...

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*

Singles on three dates – one on 20<sup>th</sup> bobbed & called at the Eagle Owl but we got an incorrect fix on where its attention was focus'd...

**Common Swift** *Apus apus*

860+ bird-days. Noted on nine dates – main event c500 at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Fork-tailed Swift** *Apus pacificus*

One seen well at Koko Nor on 3<sup>rd</sup> should serve as a warning not to tick Salim Ali's Swift on range!

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

97+ bird-days. Noted on 12 dates - one in the under-birded Qaidam basin may have been the 1<sup>st</sup> identified there...

\*\*\*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).

#### **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

22 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

#### **Chinese Pied Woodpecker** *Dendrocopus cabanisi*

Two on the edge of Xining on 16<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*Split from Great Spotted Woodpecker *D. major* following Perktas & Quintero (2013)

\*\*\*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 (S. Lowe, pers com), being lumped into ssp *stresemanni* [of E Xizang, W & S Yunnan, N Guizhou & Sichuan: Zheng *et al.* (2005)]; the range of nominate *cabanisi* is SW Liaoning, Hebei, Shandong, Henan, Shanxi, N Anhui & N Jiangsu: Zheng *et al.* (2005)...

#### **'Three-toed' Woodpecker** *Picoides tridactylus funebris*

Seven bird-days. Noted near Nangqian on two dates – everyone got good looks in the end!

\*\*\*"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 *funebris*."": Rasmussen & Anderton (2005).

\*\*\*In HBW Illustrated Checklist Vol 1 '*P. funebris* 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*

11 bird-days. Noted on no fewer than five dates – great 'scope views for everyone!

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

Seven bird-days. Noted on four dates.

#### **Long-tailed Minivet** *Pericrocotus ethologus*

A stray female N of Er La pass on 18<sup>th</sup>, a couple of hundred kms - if not more - from the nearest spruce forest habitat!

#### **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus*

42 – incl several family parties - on 30<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*

60 bird-days. Noted on 13 dates.

#### **Tibetan Grey Shrike** *Lanius giganteus*

Three bird-days - nice views 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!

**Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus*

One [RF] near Xining on 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

Three on 15<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\**vide* Zheng *et al.* (2005) the distinctive 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*

Eight bird-days. Noted on two dates.

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

\*\*\*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*

49 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Tibetan Magpie** *Pica bottanensis*

c85 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

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

**Henderson's Ground Jay** *Podoces hendersoni*

17 bird-days. Noted on two dates, this was - understandably! - one of the most hoped-for species...

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

280+ bird-days. Noted on 18 dates.

**Alpine Chough** *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

Ten bird-days. Noted on two dates.

**Daurian Jackdaw** *Corvus dauuricus*

68 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

Singles noted on two dates.

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

Five bird-days. Noted on two dates.

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

21 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

**Common Raven** *Corvus corax*

78 bird-days. Noted on eight dates – seven together at c4,900m on 20<sup>th</sup>: a family doing formation flying!

**Hume's Groundpecker** *Pseudopodoces humilis*

139 bird-days. Noted on 13 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!

**Eastern Great Tit** *Parus minor*

Two N of Xining on 14<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\**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*

34+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**'Songar' Tit** *Parus songarus affinis*

20+ bird-days. Noted N of Xining on two dates.

\*\*\*'Songar Tit *P. songarus*' is now lumped back in with Willow Tit *P. montanus*: IOC (2015).

**Sichuan Tit** *Parus weigoldicus*

18 bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on four dates.

\*\*\*Note that of the several 'Songar Tit' ssp only *weigoldicus* merits full species status (the rest are now lumped back in with Willow Tit *P. montanus* by e g IOC (2015)).

\*\*\*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*

Six bird-days. Noted on five dates. A pair at their nest by the side of the road on both 15+16<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey Crested Tit** *Parus dichrous*

14 bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event a long encounter with a territorial pair on 24<sup>th</sup>...

**Pale Sand Martin** *Riparia diluta*

68 bird-days. Noted on seven dates – clinching views of c20 at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Singles on four dates.

**Eurasian Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

26 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Asian House Martin** *Delichon dasypus*

80+ bird-days. Noted on four dates.

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

c42 bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on five dates - ssp *gephrya* is an even better-looking bird than the *japonica* standard-issue Red-rumpeds we saw @ the grounds of our Beijing hotel...

**Stoliczka's Tit-Warbler** *Leptopoecile sophiae*

18 bird-days. Noted on seven dates – getting repeated views & point-blank range photo ops was (please tick as appropriate)

[ ] stunning.

[ ] very stunning.

[ ] fantastically stunning.

[ ] nothing to brag about.

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

A male on 24<sup>th</sup> eluded most of us, and due to rain on the last morning *that was that...*

**Mongolian Lark** *Melanocorypha mongolica*

12 bird-days. Noted @ Koko Nor on two dates.

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

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

**Hume's Short-t. Lark** *Calandrella acutirostris*

15-17 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

**Asian Short-t. Lark** *Calandrella cheleensis*

c25 near Golmud on 30<sup>th</sup>... great views of several as they took turns sitting up.

**Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

**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 reasonable response would be 'supercalifragilisticexpialidocious'!

**Tarim Hill Babbler** *Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris*

No fewer than 26 birds in optimum (?) habitat near Golmud on 30<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, 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 two of the song types we heard were distinctive.

\*\*\*...hopefully interesting spin-off records will result from birders travelling to this 'new' species' little visited range.

**Spotted Bush Warbler** *Bradypterus thoracicus*

Four bird-days. Noted N of Xining on two dates – great photo ops on 14<sup>th</sup>!

**?Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*

A warbler seen only in flight at Koko Nor on 3<sup>rd</sup> [PH] was most likely this species.

**'Dusky' Warbler** *Phylloscopus (fuscatus) weigoldi*

Four during a rain-menaced (but otherwise very satisfactory) stop on 2<sup>nd</sup> – we were treated to an incredible singing extravaganza: close-up 'scope views, anyone??

\*\*\*Martens *et al.* (2008) unconvincingly aligned the reasonably distinctive but oddly localized taxon *weigoldi* with Smoky Warbler *P. fuligiventer* [rather than with *P. fuscatus*]:

[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)

\*\*\*Zheng *et al.* (2011) references the Martens *et al.* (2008) article but appears to disagree (as did those of us familiar with nominate *fuscatus*) that *weigoldi* is better considered a race of Smoky Warbler *P. fuligiventer*, a change IOC (2015) on the other hand accepts without comment.

**'Chinese' Tickell's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus occisinensis*

73+ 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*

28 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

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

16 bird-days. Noted on four dates – good views of several flitting about low, giving their look-at-me! flash of white tail feathers.

**Gansu Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

48+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*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...

**Chinese Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus yunnanensis*

Four on 15<sup>th</sup> – one 'scoped singing: it just couldn't help returning to the same solitary spruce!

\*\*\*Zheng *et al.* (2011) gives the range of this species as 'Liaoning, Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Henan, Shanxi, S Shaanxi, S Gansu, E Qinghai, Yunnan, E Sichuan, Chongqing & N Hubei'.

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

52 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

\*\*\*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*

116+ bird-days. Noted on eight 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/>

**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

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

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

14 bird-days. Noted N of Xining on two dates.

**'Margelanic' Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia margelanica*

13 bird-days. This puzzling taxon was seen on two dates – both adults and juveniles allowed close scrutiny, leaving everyone well satisfied...

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

One heard on 25<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*

13+ bird-days. This restricted range species was noted on five dates.

\*\*\*For birdwatchers one of the main 'pretexts' for visiting a sigh-inducingly pretty area on the remote 'Tibet Autonomous Region' border.

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

8+ bird-days. Noted N of Xining on two dates.

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

**Giant Laughingthrush** *Garrulax maximus*

38+ bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on four dates - GREAT views!

\*\*\*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 at this time of the year pairs travelling through the forest will mark their progress with occasional sessions of loud calling.

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

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

\*\*\*Cheng (1987)'s range map seems to contradict his text here – according to the latter only the nominate ssp occurs in Qinghai, while the map indicates that birds in the Yangtze and Mekong watersheds are ssp *bonvaloti*. Dickinson (2003), on the other hand, does not accept *bonvaloti* but has southern birds belonging to the nominate, and northern birds to ssp *prjevalskii* (a taxon Cheng lumped with the nominate). Morphology and vocalizations suggest that birds N of Xining are indeed a different ssp from those in the SE, as per the Cheng range map & Dickinson, but what are the correct names??

**Chinese Fulvetta** *Alcippe striaticollis*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates - a low density, low-key endemic which one needs the sort of views we got to really appreciate.

\*\*\*Knowing the call AND where to listen out for it is - even more so than in the case of 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*

PC caught a glimpse of a singleton at Koko Nor on 3<sup>rd</sup>...

\*\*\*Late summer / early autumn is probably a better time of the year to try for this monotypic family species (at Koko Nor): the August 2014 Oriental Bird Club Fundraiser recorded several individuals.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

18+ bird-days. Noted on just three dates.

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

**Northern Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Eight bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**Chinese Nuthatch** *Sitta villosa*

18 bird-days. Noted N of Xining on three dates, incl on the rainy morning of 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Przevalski's Nuth.** *Sitta przewalskii*

Five bird-days. Noted N of Xining on two dates – heard-onlies except for one seen flycatching on 15<sup>th</sup>.

\*\*\*This is may be the only nuthatch to regularly undertake flycatching sallies...

**Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*

Five bird-days. Noted on two dates.

\*\*\*'One of the most spectacular birds in the world, this [monotypic family] 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*

8+ bird-days. Noted N of Xining on two dates.

**Hodgson's Treecreeper** *Certhia hodgsoni*

Singles on two dates.

\*\*\*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).

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

Two en route back towards town from Xining airport on 4<sup>th</sup> – not countable as it was after the trip had ended, but fortunately the species is easily seen @ the Beijing hotel...

**Long-tailed Thrush** *Zoothera dixonii*

Three near Nangqian on 23<sup>rd</sup> – two heard-onlies, plus one which we'd have got the 'scopes on had it stayed a few seconds longer...

**Chestnut Thrush** *Turdus rubrocanus*

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

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

119 bird-days. Noted on 13 dates.

**Chinese Song Thrush** *Turdus mupinensis*

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

**Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia calliope*

18+ bird-days. Noted N of Xining on four dates.

**Himalayan Rubythroat** *Luscinia pectoralis*

Eight bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event a male ‘scoped at close range on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

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

Four on 24<sup>th</sup>, incl an adult male seen feeding.

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

c44 bird-days. Noted N of Xining on four 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 (and still not listed by IOC (2015)), 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*

11 near Chaka on 1<sup>st</sup>. Scope views of several fine males - what a bird!

\*\*\*The subdued song of this species – ‘arguably the prettiest in the genus’ – seems to consist largely of mimicry.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

132+ bird-days. Noted on 19 dates.

\*\*\*ssp *xerophilus* was listed by Zheng *et al.* (2011) for Qinghai & S Xinjiang, and by BWP (Vol V, p683) for ‘Astin Tagh (Sinkiang) to Western Kansu and Tsinghai’ but this ssp recognized by neither Dickinson (2003) nor IOC (2015), and BWP (Vol V, p694-695) notes that its position requires confirmation, it having been described ‘as being pale like *phoenicuroides* and large like *rufiventris*’.

**Hodgson’s Redstart** *Phoenicures hodgsoni*

79 bird-days. Noted on ten dates.

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

40+ bird-days. Noted on six dates.

**Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus aureoreus*

Four males at Xining on 16<sup>th</sup>.

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

14+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

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

15 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

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

11 bird-days. Noted on four dates... only one male responded to our coaxing, and it turned out to be an all drab brown 2<sup>nd</sup> c-y!

**Plumbeous Redstart** *Rhyacornis fuliginosa*

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

**River Chat** *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

39 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina*

33 bird-days. Noted on four dates. Main event several song-fighting at Koko Nor on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka*

Two near Xining on 16<sup>th</sup> – great views of an adult male!

**Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti*

11 bird-days. Noted three dates – several put on a good show...

**Sooty Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sibirica*

Four bird-days. Noted near Nangqian on two dates.

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

**Slaty-backed Flycatcher** *Ficedula hodgsonii*

66 bird-days. Noted on six dates – main event 36 on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

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

Five bird-days. Noted on three dates.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

One female [SP] on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

**Rock Sparrow** *Petronia petronia*

70+ bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

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

24 bird-days. Noted on five dates – at the 1<sup>st</sup> site for it the species appeared before we'd even gotten out of the 4WDs: repeated WOW! views were enjoyed by all.

\*\*\*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*

22 bird-days. Noted on four dates.

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

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

54+ bird-days. Seen on nine dates this proved 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...

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

17 bird-days. Seen along Koko Nor on two dates – main event 15 on 17<sup>th</sup>: pre-breeding flutter-flying displays watched at close range, and we even found an adult feeding a fledgling. 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°E 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*

178+ bird-days. Noted on 12 dates.

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

14 bird-days. Noted on four dates - two adults working hard to feed three full-grown juveniles along a remote stretch of Roof of the World road provided a yearned-for photo session on 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Alpine Accentor** *Prunella collaris*

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

**Robin Accentor** *Prunella rubeculoides*

45 bird-days. Noted on six dates – an adult w/ two juveniles in the S Koko Nor Range on 2<sup>nd</sup> reminded us that summer had progressed...

**Rufous-browed Accentor** *Prunella strophiata*

9+ bird-days. Noted on six dates... 'scope views alongside a Dusky Warbler in alpine scrub on 2<sup>nd</sup>!

**Brown Accentor** *Prunella fulvescens*

44 bird-days. Noted on eight days – one singing from atop the roof of our hotel on 30<sup>th</sup> was just one of several seen extremely well...

**Maroon-backed Accentor** *Prunella immaculata*

Two heard on 23<sup>rd</sup> – not seeing them could serve as an additional reason to visit Yunnan, China's biologically rich province...

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*

17 bird-days. Noted on seven dates - hard-to-beat 'scope views of eye-watering ssp *calcarata* males...

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates – a male seen feeding a juvenile N of Xining.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

82 bird-days. Noted on 14 dates - ssp involved were *leucopsis* (none identified S of @ Er La pass) & *alboides* (in the Yushu/Nangqian area).

\*\*\*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".

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

Five bird-days. Noted along Koko Nor on two dates.

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

25 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

**Rosy Pipit** *Anthus roseus*

Nine bird-days. Noted on four dates – main event six showing well in South Koko Nor Range on 2<sup>nd</sup>...

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

One seen singing below The Lookout on 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Oriental Greenfinch** *Carduelis sinica*

Five bird-days. Noted on three dates – one 'scoped on 4<sup>th</sup>...

**Twite** *Carduelis flavirostris*  
200+ bird-days. Noted on 15 dates.

**Plain Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte nemoricola*  
c60 bird-days. Noted on five dates.

**Brandt's Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte brandti*  
c60 bird-days. Noted on six dates - it is perhaps its hardiness even more than its plumage that makes this a very attractive species...  
\*\*\*Sadly, our attempt to find Sillem's Mountain Finch *L. sillemi* was thwarted by unhelpful weather...

**Mongolian Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes mongolicus*  
Long 'scope views of a pair clinging to a loess cliff to avoid getting rained on near Chaka...  
\*\*\*'Knowing where to look *does* help!'

**Przevalski's Finch** *Urocynchramus pylzowi*  
Six in the course of a morning, incl a pair just beginning nest-building, and a male doing the celebrated 'LOOK AT MY TAIL!', parachute songflight.  
\*\*\*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 well as taxonomic interest (it has for some years now been known to represent a monotypic family: just three to go for our top lister...).

**Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*  
23 bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

**'Chinese' Beautiful Rosefinch** *Carpodacus 'davidianus'^*  
34 bird-days. Noted on eight 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*'.  
\*\*\*See also [www.birdforum.net/showthread.php?t=90229](http://www.birdforum.net/showthread.php?t=90229)

**Pink-rumped Rosefinch** *Carpodacus waltoni*<sup>^</sup>  
48 bird-days. Noted S of Yushu on five dates.  
\*\*\*^See taxonomic note under Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch, above.

**Stoliczka's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus stolickaе beicki*  
8+ (perhaps 15?) near Xining on 16<sup>th</sup> - access to the exact spot proved tricky but everyone 'went the extra mile' without complaint, and what views!  
\*\*\*...all the sweeter for this taxon now at long last being formally regarded as a full species.

**Three-banded Rosefinch** *Carpodacus trifasciatus*  
Five bird-days. Noted on two dates – SE Qinghai is on the edge of the species' range: seeing it was a bonus, seeing it so well was a bonus on top of a bonus, and for our three team members who'd 'not really seen it' on their pre-trip visit to neighbouring Sichuan it was just... YEEESSSS!

**Chinese White-browed Rosefinch** *Carpodacus dubius*  
40 bird-days. Noted on nine dates.

**Eastern Great Rosefinch** *Carpodacus rubicilloides*

71 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

\*\*\*Several encounters with full-blown red males, rewarding in their own right, left us well prepared to recognize a male Caucasian Great Rosefinch...

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

7-8 bird-days. 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. What a bummer!

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

Eight bird-days. Noted on two dates Seeing a pair copulating at c4,700m was a 1<sup>st</sup> – rumour has it that this is the highest-breeding of any passerine...

\*\*\*Dickinson (2003) included 'our' area in the range of ssp *longirostris*.

**Roborovski's Rosefinch** *Kozlowia roborowskii*

Ten bird-days. This extreme altitude specialist was seen well - AND photographed! - on two dates.

**Red Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*

c65 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event one juvenile 'scoped on 4<sup>th</sup>.

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

50 bird-days. Noted on six dates.

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

c40 bird-days. This somewhat erratic species was noted on no fewer than six dates.

**Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos*

16 bird-days. Noted on two dates – superb 'scope views of singing males!

**Eastern Rock Bunting** *Emberiza godlewskii*

72 bird-days. Noted on 11 dates.

**Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides*

Nine near Xining on 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Kozlov's Bunting** *Emberiza koslowi*

21 bird-days. Noted near Nangqian on two dates - it was particularly satisfying to find 12 individuals of this oddly localized (and outrageously pretty!) species on a previously unsurveyed slope.

\*\*\*Only when this highly localized and hard-to-get-to Restricted Range endemic species is 'in the bag' will birdwatchers 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 hardly have been improved upon, and ditto photo opportunities – would have been worth far more of a trek: arguably the Most Special Bird of the Trip.

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

One heard singing on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus ssp*

One male [PC] on 30<sup>th</sup> unfortunately disappeared on us...

\*\*\*Zheng *et al.* (2011) listed *parvirostris* for 'N Qinghai', *pyrrhuloides* for 'Qinghai' & *zaidamensis* for 'N Qinghai'.



### **Kiang** *Equus kiang*

445 animal-days. Noted on four dates – main event 253 along the way across the Roof of the World: 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 long lenses!

### **Alpine Musk Deer** *Moshus chrysogaster*

One photographed [RF] at c4,300m on 24th.

### **Siberian Roe** *Capreolus pygargus*

Four N of Xining on 15<sup>th</sup> – two full-antlered males ‘scoped at fairly close range & two heard-onlies.

### **MacNeill’s (Red) Deer** *Cervus macneilli*

131 animal-days. Noted on two dates S of Yushu – main event scattered groups totaling 130 (128 adults & two youngsters; all but four counted from the same spot!).

\*\*\*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/rua group’.

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

### **Gansu Red Deer** *Cervus kansuensis*

Ten hinds W of Koko Nor on 1<sup>st</sup> – great ‘scope views of several as they made their way across a hillside and up to the ridge...

\*\*\*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.

### **White-lipped Deer** *Przewalskium albirostris*

27+ animal-days. Noted on three dates – great ‘scope views!

\*\*\*‘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*

Seven on 30<sup>th</sup> – enjoyable ‘scope views of three males w/ one female...

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

375 animal-days. Noted on seven dates - main event 178 in a day along the remotest Roof of the World stretch of road!

\*\*\*In the absence of human hunters these nimble creatures are fairly confiding (if still jumpily high-strung, no doubt on account of the healthy population of wolves roaming the highlands... in August 2005 we were even privileged to watch four particularly mean-looking wolves undertake a successful chase, killing and ripping apart their victim).

### **Wild Yak** *Bos grunniensis*

10+ animal-days. On the fairly long list of most-hoped-for mammals, these impressive creatures were seen well on two dates...

