



Sillem's Mountain Finch, only seen by a handful of people before us, was definitely the rarest bird on this trip (Werner Mueller).

ULTIMATE TIBET & XINJIANG

8 JUNE–21/30 JUNE 2018

LEADER: HANNU JÄNNES

The Ultimate Tibet & Xinjiang tour to Xizang, Qinghai and the much less visited Xinjiang Provinces, proved extremely successful, producing a fantastic range of Tibetan Plateau specialities, including EVERY plateau endemic! Yes, you read it right, this time we even saw the near mythical Sillem's Mountain Finch, a species that had been seen perhaps only by a handful of people before! Our stunning list of special birds included the much sought after Lord Derby's Parakeet as well as Tibetan Eared Pheasant, Szechenyi's Monal Partridge (or Buff-throated Partridge), Giant and Tibetan (or Kozlov's) Babaxes, Brown-cheeked (or Prince Henri's) Laughingthrush, Ground Tit, Tibetan (or Kozlov's) Bunting, Tibetan (or Roborovski's) Rosefinch and the strange Przevalski's (or Pink-tailed) Finch, the sole member of its family. In addition, our brief visit to the deserts of Xinjiang yielded four important dry country birds with Biddulph's Ground Jay, White-winged Woodpecker, Tarim Babbler and Saxaul Sparrow. Add to these a number of highly sought after, but more widespread, species, like White Eared Pheasant, Tibetan Snowcock, Przevalski's, Daurian and Tibetan Partridges, Ibisbill, Tibetan and Pallas's Sandgrouse, the handsome Mongolian and gigantic Tibetan (or Long-billed) Lark, Siberian and Chinese Rubythroats, the very range restricted Przevalski's (or Ala Shan) Redstart and seven other *Phoenicurus* redstarts, Wallcreeper, Chinese and Przevalski's Nuthatches, Henderson's Ground Jay, six species of snowfinch and 11 species of rosefinch and you are a long way to understanding why our tours to 'the Roof of the World' are so popular!

Much to the surprise of many participants, mammals are also well represented on this tour, and we had great views of Grey Wolf, Tibetan and Goitered Gazelle, Chiru (or Tibetan Antelope), Blue Sheep, the attractive

Kiang, the massive Wild Yak, three species of pika, Tibetan Fox and many cute Himalayan Marmots. As well as these avian and mammalian highlights there is the privilege of travelling in this remote part of China with its breathtakingly beautiful high landscapes, the chance to see the fascinating lifestyles and cultures of the local peoples, and, of course, the usually great food.



Przevalski's Finch, voted as the 'bird of the trip' on the main tour, was another very special bird we encountered (Hannu Jännes).

Our exploration of the Tibetan Plateau began at Lhasa airport from where we were driven to our comfortable hotel in down-town Lhasa to freshen up before heading to one of the city parks, where our first Tibetan endemic, the splendid Lord Derby's Parakeet, awaited us providing decent views for us all. After success with the parakeet and a good lunch, we went to the Jokhang Temple, the most important religious site in the city and the focus for pilgrims from all over Tibet, and spent the rest of the day pottering around Lhasa as ordinary tourists.

The next day we headed out of Lhasa to Shuksep Nunnery, or Xiong Si as it is called in Chinese, for our first real birding excursion of the tour. Access to the best birding area is very easy nowadays thanks to the recently built road that takes you straight to the doorstep of the nunnery. The nunnery is built on a mountain side at 4300m asl and it offers great views over the Lhasa River valley, and is, with all the great birds on offer, a very pleasant place to spend some time. A couple of hours birding in and around the nunnery rewarded us with great views of the three Tibetan endemics we wanted to see with Brown-cheeked Laughingthrush, Tibetan Eared Pheasant and Giant Babax. We also found a Tibetan Partridge, Tibetan Blackbirds, many Pink-rumped and Streaked Rosefinches, Wallcreeper, Tibetan Blackbird, Black, Hodgson's and White-throated Redstarts, Brown Accentors, Alpine Leaf Warblers and Godlewski's Buntings. Here we had an amazing encounter with a total of seven magnificent Tibetan Snowcocks that came to check on us giving brilliant views, and on the way down we stopped at a wadi, where an almost fully fledged Eurasian Eagle Owl chick tried to hide amongst boulders. Next on our agenda was a visit to the Lhasa River, which on this occasion time didn't really produce anything of interest. Then back to the city for lunch and the obligatory visit to the vast, truly amazing Potala Palace, the centrepiece of Lhasa. Even though it has a museum-like quality now that its chief resident is no longer present, it is still an extraordinary and very special place, and a good site for Russet Sparrow!

Next morning, as we had plenty of time to kill before our early afternoon flight to Xining, we headed back to Shuksep monastery and birded there for a few hours. As we had already seen all the commoner target species on our previous visit, we had time to concentrate on some rarer ones, and after couple of hours we managed to locate our main target, Crimson-browed Finch. We managed to find three individuals of this

locally scarce bird, which included an attractive adult male. Later we flew to Xining, where we were met by our excellent local guide Mr Da Wen, who would be with us for the rest of the tour, and our very skillful, hard working driver Mr Lin.



Tibetan Eared Pheasant at Shuksep nunnery (Hannu Jännes).

The new day saw us breakfasting on a very windy and chilly Laoye mountain, a hillside covered in deciduous forest and bushes, just an hour's drive from Xining. Our morning here yielded an array of interesting new species including many Common Pheasants (wild ones here), Siberian Rubythroat, many Azure-winged Magpies, Rooks (of the distinct eastern subspecies *pastinator*), Willow Tit, Yellow-streaked Warbler, Gansu and Hume's Leaf Warblers, Plain and Elliot's Laughingthrushes, Chestnut and Chinese Thrushes, White-bellied Redstart, White-throated and Daurian Redstarts, Rufous-breasted Accentors and showy Grey-headed Bullfinches. After a huge lunch in a local holiday complex, we visited a large forest park dominated by spruce forest, where we were entertained by a Great Spotted Woodpecker at its nest, a family party of amazingly tame White-browed Tit-Warblers, a total of five Crested Tit-Warblers (always great to get this



Chinese Nuthatch at Dongxia Shan (Hannu Jännes).



Adult Pallas's Gull at Lake Qinghai (Hannu Jännes).

unpredictable and highly desired species so early on the tour), Greenish Warblers, Goldcrest, confiding Chinese and Przevalski's Nuthatches, Red-flanked Bluetail of the form *albocoeruleus*, Slaty-backed Flycatcher and Chinese White-browed Rosefinches. Thanks to the very good crop of spruce seeds, Red Crossbills were common, and we counted around 200 birds during our afternoon visit. Apparently the five Eurasian Siskins, a write-in for this tour, were also drawn here by the ample supply of spruce seeds.

The next day we visited the eroded hills on the outskirts of Xining where our task was to try and find Pale Rosefinch, which is a recent split from Sinai Rosefinch. For the last couple of years this species has been tricky to find here and it took quite some time before we managed to locate a female that gave decent scope views, but unfortunately was a little distant for photographs. Then we headed for the Plateau proper. The first stop was at a wetland at the east end of the Qinghai Lake, where we spent couple of hours enjoying the great scenery and exciting birds. Here we found a number of good birds including Great Crested and Black-necked Grebes, Greylag and Bar-headed Geese, Ruddy Shelduck, Whooper Swan, Northern Shoveler, Ferruginous and Tufted Ducks, Common and Red-crested Pochards, our first Black-necked Cranes, Pallas's and Brown-headed Gulls, Ground Tits, Horned, Hume's Short-toed and a few splendid Mongolian Larks,



Mongolian Lark at Lake Qinghai (Hannu Jännes).



Przevalski's Partridge near Chaka (Hannu Jännes).

Isabelline Wheatears, Père David's (or Small) Snowfinch, and, as an unexpected bonus, a group of three juvenile Bearded Reedlings. Apparently this species started to breed in suitable reedbed habitats of the Lake Qinghai and Chaka just couple of years ago. Later we made a stop at another wetland site on the southern shore of the lake, where our sightings included some brutish Tibetan Larks. In the evening we drove to our recently opened, very good hotel in Chaka, our home for the next three nights. Thanks to massive marketing efforts by Chinese travel agencies, the sleepy town of Chaka, especially the salt-lake, has become a major tourist attraction in the last couple of years. Locals said that during a 40-day period in July-August, over one million domestic tourists were estimated to have visited the town! And what are they doing here? Taking pictures of themselves standing in the salt-lake, which creates nice reflections!

A new day found us in a steep sided valley near Chaka searching for the special birds of the region that we needed to see. This very pleasant birding site produced a number of good birds including our first Bearded and Himalayan Vultures, a Golden Eagle, several Pine Buntings, a rather distant Chinese Grey Shrike (of the form *giganteus*, which is a potential split), Wallcreeper, several Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinches, a few noisy Przevalski's Partridges and a group of Blue Sheep. On our way back to the bus, we flushed a pair of Daurian Partridges, another important target bird of the valley. After a lunch in Chaka, we checked sites in the semi-deserts around Chaka salt-lake and found Henderson's Ground Jays, including a very confiding and photogenic juvenile bird, a female Pallas's Sandgrouse, Desert Wheatear, two White-cheeked Starlings, Blanford's Snowfinch and, at the lake itself, many Pied Avocets, Kentish Plovers and two Lesser Sand Plovers.

As we still needed to find Przevalski's Redstart, another special bird of the region, we headed some 100 kms south to juniper clad valley early the next morning. The habitat, with a good stand of tall junipers, is ideal for the Redstart, and we secured the species relatively quickly. We had at least three birds in total including a singing male. We also found our first Blue-fronted Redstart and our second Chinese Grey Shrike. Back in Chaka in the afternoon, we checked various areas for anything of interest and located Asian Short-toed Larks and four Mongolian Finches. It was also interesting to see several small flocks (30 individuals in total) of Plain Mountain Finches flying north low over the semi-desert. This movement was perhaps an altitude migration in response to adverse weather conditions higher in the mountains.



A juvenile Henderson's Ground Jay near Chaka (Hannu Jännes).

For our last morning in the Chaka area, we headed back towards Lake Qinghai, and spent a lovely morning checking the bush adorned valleys and hill sides of the Rubber Mountain area. Best birds here were a total of eight Przevalski's (or Pink-tailed) Finches, with great views of both males and females, a couple of very showy Smoky Warblers, White-browed Tits, a very vocal Red-fronted Rosefinch, Black-winged, White-rumped and Rufous-necked Snowfinches, Robin Accentors, Siberian Stonechats, Rosy Pipits and a very noisy juvenile Saker Falcon. Perhaps the most exciting observation of the day was during our early afternoon birding stop near Chaka, when a male Tibetan Sandgrouse flew past us calling and showing pretty well for us all! Later in the afternoon it was time to drive to Gonghe, where we were to spend the night, but before we checked in to our accommodation we had a couple of hours birding on the outskirts of the city. New birds included Chinese Pond Heron, Common Moorhen, Common Rock Thrush and Citrine Wagtail of the black-backed subspecies *calcarata*.

A birding session near Gonghe the next morning produced a showy Desert Whitethroat (of the form *margelanica*), and Grey-headed and Great Spotted Woodpeckers. We then headed south towards Maduo, where we would stay for the night. On the way we stopped on the Er La pass (4490m asl), which is the traditional site for Tibetan Sandgrouse. Luckily we didn't need to worry about the sandgrouse this time, but we still spent couple of hours finding a Gldenstdt's Redstart, White-throated Dipper, a Plain Mountain Finch and Tibetan (or Henri's) Snowfinches, our sixth and last snowfinch species of the tour. Later in the journey to Maduo we encountered nine Kiangs.



On the way to Maduo we encountered some Kiangs (Hannu Jnnes).



Tibetan Rosefinch, one of the 12 rosefinch species seen on this trip, is a high altitude specialist (Hannu Jännes).

Next day we made an early start to our long journey over the outer plateau to Nangqian, a road trip of about 500 kilometres. Despite the long drive, we managed some birding including a stop at Bayankala Shan pass (4750m asl), where we encountered pretty awful weather, but still found three Tibetan Rosefinches, and also saw Tibetan Snowfinch, Brandt's Mountain Finch and Gldenstdt's Redstart. During the journey we also watched many Upland Buzzards by the roadsides, found a splendid singing Chinese Rubythroat (a split from White-tailed Rubythroat), several Streaked Rosefinches on a bushy hillside, saw our first Red-rumped Swallows and had a total of five Ibisbills. Dave also saw a Rosy Starling from the bus in the middle of Yushu. In Nangqian we checked into our hotel, which used to be the best in town, but was seriously run down now and had problems with water supply and cleanliness. In fact the water supply was completely cut off on day two of our stay, and for our last night we moved to another, brand new, hotel, which will hopefully maintain standards a little longer than for the two years, which seems to be the norm in this part of China.



Upland Buzzard at nest (Hannu Jnnes).



Tibetan Bunting at Kanda Shan pass (Hannu Jännes).

The new day saw us at a high altitude pass with a breath-taking vista, where our main target, Tibetan Bunting, was secured as soon as we stepped out of the bus. Whilst admiring this very special Tibetan endemic we heard calls of a Tibetan Snowcock in the distance, which we later found sitting on a far off mountain slope. Other great birds in this beautiful area included two Snow Pigeons, a handful of Alpine Choughs, a single Wallcreeper and, to everyone's surprise, a female Amur Falcon. Lower down the valley we saw a total of ten White Eared Pheasants providing us with good scope views, Sichuan Tit, three Tibetan Babaxes and White-capped Redstarts. On the mammalian side noteworthy observations included an Altai Weasel and a magnificent Grey Wolf brilliantly spotted by Nancy.

During our second morning at Nangqian we visited the Beizha Forest about a 90 minute drive away. Luckily the overnight rain, which is regular feature of this area, eased off just as we reached our first birding spot, and after a picnic breakfast attended by stunning Daurian Jackdaws, we were ready to begin with serious birding. One of the first birds we saw was a male Blood Pheasant that showed very well, followed by a group of White-lipped Deer and Tibetan Babax. Our quest for the Buff-throated (or Szechenyi's Monal) Partridge required quite a lot of climbing this year, but we eventually obtained decent scope views of four birds including small chicks, and we heard the distant calls of a couple of other family groups. Later a walk along a



Daurian Jackdaw at Beizha Forest (Hannu Jännes).



Great Rosefinch (Werner Mueller)

track on a forest clad slope was surprisingly productive and gave us excellent views of Giant Laughingthrushes, a male Long-tailed Minivet, confiding Grey-crested and Rufous-vented Tits, many Sichuan Leaf Warblers, Hodgson's Treecreepers, a Black Woodpecker and a stunning male Three-banded Rosefinch. A male Three-toed Woodpecker of the dark-bellied subspecies *funnebris* was seen only by the leader and a pair of Chinese Fulvettas just by Dave.

On our last morning in the Nangqian area we returned to Kanda Shan gorge, where we finally managed to connect with two obliging Black-streaked Scimitar Babblers, and also encountered two Tibetan Partridges and several Tibetan Babaxes. Later we headed back to Yushu for the night with a little birding on the way seeing photogenic roadside Ibisbills, Red-fronted Rosefinches and great views of a pair of co-operative Great Rosefinches. In Yushu, where we stayed for one night, it was time to thank Nancy, Charles, Stephen and Tom, who were heading back home, for their great company on the first leg of the tour and welcome on board Max, Werner, Anne and Karen, who were joining us for the second leg.

From Yushu we headed northwest across the very scenic high plateau, stopping in the city of Zhi Duo for the first night. On the way we had several birding stops including a longer stop at the massive Longbao wetlands, where we saw 30 Ferruginous Ducks, 50 Eastern Cattle Egrets, a very scarce bird anywhere else along the route, two Great Egrets, 25 Black-necked Cranes and Whiskered and White-winged Terns. Shorter stops during the day yielded a Wallcreeper, Tibetan, Black-winged, White-rumped and Rufous-necked Snowfinches, a few Saker Falcons, thirty Bharals (or Blue Sheep) and a den with one adult and three young Tibetan Foxes.

The next day we continued our journey and crossed the immense Kekexili Nature Reserve, a truly wonderful area for wild mammals, where we encountered several Tibetan and Red Foxes, a single Gray Wolf, 123 Tibetan Gazelles, 151 Kiang, and most importantly seven Wild Yaks and 23 handsome Tibetan Antelopes new mammals for the list. Avian highlights included a single Black Stork, Lesser Sand Plover, many Upland Buzzards, 22 Saker Falcons, several Great Rosefinches and a Tibetan Lark. In Budongquan, merely a truck-stop along the Golmud-Lhasa highway, we settled in the best, but still very basic guest house, the famous, much feared "Budongquan Hilton". However, lucky for us they had just opened a new wing, which was really a rather pleasant place to stay. Now they just need to figure out how to arrange the toilet facilities to an acceptable level.



A den of Tibetan Fox with three cute cubs (Hannu Jännes).

Next in the agenda was finding the Tibetan Sandgrouse, which we did the next morning on the flat plains near Budongquan. Our pleasant birding here produced great views of a pair of Tibetan Sandgrouse on the ground and two more in flight. Later we followed the very busy Golmud-Lhasa highway north to Xidatan Scenic Area, where we met our camp crew with three four-wheel drives and a small truck and said goodbye to our excellent bus driver. The rest of the day was spent driving deep into the Yeniugou (Wild Yak) Valley, where we put up a camp that would be our base during the exciting expedition to try and find the near mythical Sillem's Mountain Finch. This species was overlooked when the first specimens were collected by a Dutch expedition that visited the area north of the Karakorum Range in the first part of the 20th century (they were misidentified as Brandt's Mountain Finch, *L. brandti*) until C. S. Roselaar worked out that they represented a new species for science). After that nothing, until 2012 when Yann Muzika rediscovered the species by chance while on a trekking expedition in southwestern Qinghai in 2012! The area where Yann rediscovered the species is decidedly remote, and he again found the species present in 2013. After Yann's two visits, the finch had been sighted only by a handful of people including a Birdquest expedition, led by Mark Beaman, in 2014.



Grey Wolf is not a rare sight at Kekexili Nature Reserve (Hannu Jännes).



Females of Tibetan Rosefinch on the left (Hannu Jännes) and Sillem's Mountain Finch (Werner Mueller), which is actually a rosefinch, look very similar.

Our first trek in the Sillem's valley at the altitude above 4800m asl, was not very successful, as a blizzard together with dense fog (low clouds) made orientation difficult during the first part of the day. In fact Dave, who, due to a knee injury, was unable to ascend the steep slopes with the rest of us, was the only one who saw the Sillem's Mountain Finch! The snow storm had pushed a single male down to the base of the mountain, where it had hung around with Horned Larks for some time but had disappeared before the rest of us got there. A classic birding tale! When the weather cleared in the afternoon giving a better overview of the area, I realised that we had wasted the best part of the day by searching for the bird in the wrong place! Unfortunately, it was getting late and we were all rather tired, so we decided to retreat from the area. However, we were back the next morning, and this time everything went well! After an easy climb up the right slope, we heard an interesting Reed Bunting type call, and few seconds later we had great views of a pair of Sillem's Mountain Finches that were pottering about right in front of us! For the rest of the morning we just relaxed around the area admiring the Sillem's Mountain Finches. These rugged slopes between 4800m and 5000m asl are not very birdy, but other species we noted during our two visits included Horned Larks, Brandt's Mountain Finches, Tibetan Rosefinches, a single Saker and a Güldenstädt's Redstart. Back at base we took down the camp and headed for Golmud one day earlier than the planned itinerary. A few quick stops along the way yielded us with some Tibetan Sandgrouse in flight and, more importantly, Twite, which was a much wanted dream bird for some.

The early departure from the Wild Yak Valley had gained us an extra day, which proved useful, as the last leg of the tour, a 750 kilometres road trip to Ruoqiang, is so time and energy consuming that originally scheduled one day stay in there would have felt far too short. In addition to the extremely long driving distance to Ruoqiang, the progress of the journey is slowed down by numerous police and military check-points (we were checked six times on both ways) and ridiculously low average speed limits, which are carefully monitored by the authorities. The journey took over 15 hours without any proper birding stops, and, as, due to some bureaucratic issues, we were not allowed to leave Golmud until nine am, it was past midnight when we arrived in our hotel in Ruoqiang.

The first morning in Ruoqiang, at the edge of the forbidding Taklimakan Desert, was spent checking the gardens on the outskirts of the city, where we had good views of Saxaul Sparrows, including stunning males, several confiding Tarim Babblers, Desert Whitethroats, a White-winged Woodpecker, Barred Warbler, a flock of 22 Pallas's Sandgrouse in flight, and a new bird for the itinerary with nice Indian Golden Oriole. After a lunch and siesta, it gets scorching hot in the middle of the day, we headed to the semi-desert areas north of the city, where we were successful in finding a total of five magnificent Biddulph's Ground Jays and a Steppe Grey Shrike.



Tarim Babbler was rather common in the gardens on the outskirts of Ruoqiang (Werner Mueller).

The next day we revisited areas north of the city spending more time at a large wetland and also exploring a patch of native poplar forest. We found several interesting birds including many Red-crested Pochards and Great Crested Grebes, Great Egrets, Great Cormorants, a few Long-legged Buzzard, Pied Avocets, Black-winged Stilts, Black-tailed Godwits, Black-headed and Vega Gulls, Little Terns, good numbers of Isabelline Shrikes, a total of eight Biddulph's Ground Jays, Carrion Crows, Crested Larks, thirty or so Bearded Reedlings, Asian Short-toed Larks, Citrine Wagtails of the grey-backed nominate subspecies, Masked Wagtails (a distinct subspecies of White Wagtail) and three Little Bitterns. In the afternoon we revisited the gardens in the outskirts of Ruoqiang, and finally, after a lot of searching, managed to locate a male Desert Finch.



Biddulph's Ground Jays were rather common at the edge of the forbidding Taklimakan Desert (Werber Mueller).



White-winged Woodpecker in a patch of native poplar forest (Werner Mueller).

Our last full day was spent on the bus travelling back to Golmud. This time, as we were now able to leave Ruopiang early in the morning, we had time for roadside birding stops, which produced very showy Henderson Ground Jays and Desert Wheatears, four Pallas's Sandgrouse in flight, a rather shy Margelanian Desert Whitethroat and a group of four Goitered Gazelles. Back in Golmud, it was time to enjoy a last dinner together, and thank everyone for being such great company during the rather exhausting extension, which nonetheless had turned up some amazing birds for us.

'BIRDS OF THE TRIP' WINNERS - MAIN TOUR:

- 1st: Przevalski's (or Pink-tailed) Finch
- 2nd: Tibetan (or Roborovski's) Rosefinch
- 3rd: Blood Pheasant, Tibetan Bunting and Przevalski's Redstart
- 4th: Tibetan Snowcock
- 5th: Tibetan Sandgrouse

'BIRDS OF THE TRIP' WINNERS - EXTENSION:

- 1st: Sillem's Mountain Finch
- 2nd: Biddulph's Ground Jay
- 3rd: Tibetan Sandgrouse
- 4th: Tibetan (or Roborovski's) Rosefinch
- 5th: Tarim Babbler



Camp Sillem somewhere in the Kunlun Mountains (Werner Mueller).

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the bird list follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **2018. IOC World Bird List (v 8.1)**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>. The species names and taxonomy used in the mammal list follow the mammal list on the iGoTerra website (www.igoterra.com). This list largely follows IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) taxonomy with just a few modifications. All of our checklists are powered by our partner iGoTerra (<http://www.igoterra.com>) who provide web and mobile applications for bird and wildlife enthusiasts and businesses.

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Bar-headed Goose ◊ *Anser indicus*

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* 10 at Lake Qinghai.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* Two at Lake Qinghai.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* Widespread and common.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* Six at Lake Qinghai, and two near Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.

Gadwall *Mareca strepera* One female in Lhasa.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Small numbers on the plateau.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* 10 at Lake Qinghai, and 200 near Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.

Common Pochard *Aythya farina* 10 at Lake Qinghai.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* Six at Lake Qinghai and 30 at Longbao Nature Reserve.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* Two at Lake Qinghai.

Common Merganser (Goosander) *Mergus merganser* Scattered sightings of small numbers.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* (NL) One at Lake Qinghai by David.



Himalayan Vulture is a common sight on his tour (Hannu Jännes).

Széchenyi's Monal Partridge ♦ **(Buff-throated P)** *Tetraophasis szechenyii* Four seen at Beizha Forest.

Tibetan Snowcock ♦ *Tetraogallus tibetanus* Amazing views of seven at Shuksep near Lhasa, plus two in Qinghai.

Przevalski's Partridge ♦ **(Rusty-necklaced P)** *Alectoris magna* Magnificent views in the Chaka area.

Daurian Partridge ♦ *Perdix dauurica* A pair near Chaka, and a singleton further south the next day.

Tibetan Partridge ♦ *Perdix hodgsoniae* Three at Shuksep in Lhasa, and a showy pair at Kanda Shan gorge.

Blood Pheasant ♦ *Ithaginis cruentus* Great views of a male at Beizha Forest near Nangqian.

White Eared Pheasant ♦ *Crossoptilon crossoptilon* Stunning views of a number of birds in the Nangqian area.

Tibetan Eared Pheasant ♦ **(Elwes's E P)** *Crossoptilon harmani* Common and very tame at Shuksep near Lhasa.

Common Pheasant (Ring-necked P) *Phasianus colchicus* Common in the Xining-Gonghe area.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Good numbers at suitable lakes.

Black-necked Grebe (Eared G) *Podiceps nigricollis* Good numbers at Lake Qinghai and Longbao Nature Reserve.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* One in the Kekexili area.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* Three in the wetlands near Ruoqiang in Xinjiang. A write-in.

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus* Two in the outskirts of Gonghe.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* One in the Yushu region, and 50 at Longbao Nature Reserve.

Great Egret (Eastern G E) *Ardea [alba] modestus* Two at Longbao NR, and a total of four in Xinjiang.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* 200 at Lake Qinghai, and 20 near Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.

Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier) *Gypaetus barbatus* One to three birds were noted on nine days.

Himalayan Vulture (H Griffon Vulture) *Gyps himalayensis* Fairly common and widespread in Qinghai.

Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* Three on the way to Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* A total of five were noted.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* One in the Xining area.

Black Kite (Black-eared K) *Milvus migrans* A handful of birds were seen.

Upland Buzzard ♦ *Buteo hemilasius* Abundant on the plateau.

Himalayan Buzzard ♦ *Buteo burmanicus* Singletons in the forests near Datong and in Beizha.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* Five in Xinjiang.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Three near Gonghe.



Ibisbills are easy to see in southern Qinghai (Hannu Jännes).

Eurasian Coot (Common C) *Fulica atra* Good numbers at suitable lakes.

Black-necked Crane ♦ *Grus nigricollis* A total of 34 were noted in Qinghai province.

Ibisbill ♦ *Ibidorhynchos struthersii* A total of nine, with some brilliant views, between Yushu and Nangqian.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Small numbers at Lake Qinghai and in Xinjiang.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avocetta* Small numbers near Chaka including several chicks, and 15 near Ruoqiang.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* A total of three in Xinjiang.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* 30 near Chaka and eight in Xinjiang.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* Two near Chaka and five or so near Budongquang.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa [limosa] melanuroides* Ten near Ruoqiang.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* (NL) One near Ruoqiang.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* Common and widespread.

Brown-headed Gull ♦ *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*

Black-headed Gull (Common B-h G) *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Common near Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.

Pallas's Gull (Great Black-headed G) *Ichthyaeetus ichthyaeetus* A total of 100 at Lake Qinghai.

Vega Gull (Mongolian G) *Larus [vegae] mongolicus* Five with juveniles near Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* Twenty near Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Widespread.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Two at Lake Qinghai and three at Longbao Nature Reserve.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Two at Longbao Nature Reserve.

Tibetan Sandgrouse ♦ *Syrrhaptes tibetanus* A total of eight with excellent views.

Pallas's Sandgrouse ♦ *Syrrhaptes paradoxus* Five in Qinghai and 26 in Xinjiang.

Rock Dove (R Pigeon) (feral) *Columba livia*

Hill Pigeon ♦ *Columba rupestris*

Snow Pigeon ♦ *Columba leuconota* Eight birds were seen in southern Qinghai.

Oriental Turtle Dove (Rufous T D) *Streptopelia orientalis* Noted in Xizang, Qinghai and Xinjiang.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*



Little Owl (Hannu Jännes).

Himalayan Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus* (H) One was heard at Laoye Shan.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* Fairly common in Qinghai and Xizang.

Eurasian Eagle-Owl *Bubo bubo* A juvenile at Shuksep monastery near Lhasa.

Little Owl *Athena noctua* Widespread, a total of seven was seen.

Common Swift *Apus apus* Widespread.

Salim Ali's Swift ♦ *Apus salimalii* Widespread.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Widespread in small numbers.

Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus* (LO) One for the leader only at Beizha Forest.

White-winged Woodpecker *Dendrocopus leucopterus* Four near Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major* One in the forests near Datong and another in Gonghe.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* One gorgeous bird at Beizha.

Grey-headed Woodpecker (Grey-faced W) *Picus canus* Three birds seen.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* One female at Kanda Shan pass was a good surprise.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* One in the Yushu region.

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* A total of 43 noted. Subspecies *milvipes*.



Saker Falcon is relatively common sight on the plateau. We logged over 20 on the best day (Werner Mueller).



We had good views of Lord Derby's Parakeet in Lhasa (Hannu Jännes).

Lord Derby's Parakeet ♦ *Psittacula derbyana* Five in Lhasa, with good views.
Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus* One male at Beizha Forest in Nangqien.
Isabelline Shrike ♦ (Xinjiang S, Chinese S) *Lanius isabellinus* Very common in Xinjiang.
Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*
Chinese Grey Shrike ♦ *Lanius sphenocercus* Three sightings in the Chaka area.
Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius pallidirostris* Four in Xinjiang.
Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo* Several on the outskirts of Ruoqiang in Xinjiang. A write-in.
Azure-winged Magpie ♦ (Asian A-w M) *Cyanopica cyanus*
Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*



Male and female Steppe Grey Shrike in Ruoqiang (Werner Mueller).



Ground Tit is a common sight on the plateau (Hannu Jännes).

Henderson's Ground Jay ♦ *Podoces hendersoni* Great encounters near Chaka and in Xinjiang. Stunning birds.

Biddulph's Ground Jay ♦ (Xinjiang G J) *Podoces biddulphi* A total of 13 near Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* Common and widespread.

Alpine Chough (Yellow-billed C) *Pyrrhocorax graculus* Five at Kanda Shan.

Daurian Jackdaw ♦ *Coloeus dauuricus* Fairly common in the Nangqian area, with brilliant views.

Rook ♦ (Oriental R) *Corvus [frugilegus] pastinator* 60 in the Xining area.

Carrion Crow ♦ (Oriental C) *Corvus [corone] orientalis* Small numbers in Xinjiang.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Northern Raven (Common R) *Corvus corax*

Rufous-vented Tit *Periparus rubidiventris* One at Beizha forest.

Grey Crested Tit *Lophophanes dichrous* Great views at Beizha forest.

White-browed Tit ♦ *Poecile superciliosus* A few with excellent views.

Willow Tit ♦ *Poecile montanus* Small numbers at Dong Xia Shan.

Sichuan Tit ♦ *Poecile weigoldicus* Small numbers in the Nangqian area.

Ground Tit (Hume's G, Groundpecker) *Pseudopodoces humilis* Common and widespread.

Japanese Tit ♦ *Parus minor* Noted in Lhasa and northern Qinghai.

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus* Three at Lake Qinghai and 30 near Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* A handful of birds in Xinjiang.

Horned Lark (Shore L) *Eremophila alpestris* One of the most common and widespread birds on the plateau.

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

Mongolian Lark ♦ *Melanocorypha mongolica* A total of eight early on the tour.

Tibetan Lark ♦ (Long-billed Calandra L) *Melanocorypha maxima* Eight birds seen in total.

Asian Short-toed Lark ♦ *Alaudala cheleensis* Noted in small numbers in Chaka and again in Xinjiang.

Pale Martin ♦ *Riparia diluta*

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus*

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropsis daurica* A total of 24 between Yushu and Nangqian.

White-browed Tit-Warbler ♦ (Severtzov's T-w) *Leptopoecile sophiae* A family of four at Dong Xia Shan.

Crested Tit-Warbler ♦ *Leptopoecile elegans* A total of five at Dong Xia Shan.

Smoky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuligiventer* Great views of two near Rubber mountains.



Smoky Warbler on Rubber Mountain (Hannu Jännes).

- Alpine Leaf Warbler** ♦ *Phylloscopus occisinensis* Widespread in small numbers.
Yellow-streaked Warbler ♦ *Phylloscopus armandii* Noted in small numbers.
Gansu Leaf Warbler ♦ *Phylloscopus kansuensis* Seen well in the forests near Xining.
Hume's Leaf Warbler (Buff-browed W) *Phylloscopus humei* Noted in the Xining area and around Nangqian.
Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Noted in the Xining area and around Nangqian.
Sichuan Leaf Warbler (Pale-rumped W) *Phylloscopus forresti* Fairly common at Beizha forest near Nangqian.
Black-streaked Scimitar Babbler ♦ *Pomatorhinus gravivox* Great views of two near Nangqian.
Giant Babax ♦ *Babax waddelli* Rather common at Shuksep, near Lhasa.
Tibetan Babax ♦ (Kozlov's B) *Babax koslowi* Good views in the Nangqian area.
Giant Laughingthrush ♦ *Garrulax maximus* A few, including stunning views, at Beizha forest.
Plain Laughingthrush ♦ (Père David's L) *Garrulax davidi* Fairly common in the Xining region.
Elliot's Laughingthrush ♦ *Trochalopteron elliotii* Common in suitable habitat.
Brown-cheeked Laughingthrush ♦ (Prince Henri's L) *Trochalopteron henrici* Common at Shuksep in Xizang.



Giant Babax and Brown-cheeked Laughingthrush were easy to see near Lhasa (Hannu Jännes).



Male Kessler's Thrush (Hannu Jännes).

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* Several on the outskirts of Ruopiang.

Desert Whitethroat (Small W) *Sylvia minula* Rather common near Ruopiang in Xinjiang.

Desert Whitethroat ♦ **(Margelanic L W)** *Sylvia [minula] margelanica* One at Gonghe and one in Xinjiang.

Chinese Fulvetta ♦ *Alcippe striaticollis* (NL) Two for Dave at Beizha Forest.

Tarim Babbler ♦ **(Chinese Hill Warbler)** *Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris* Great views on both days in Ruopiang.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* Two at Dong Xia Shan near Xining.

Chinese Nuthatch ♦ **(Snowy-browed N)** *Sitta villosa* Five, with amazing views at Dong Xia Shan.

Przevalski's Nuthatch ♦ *Sitta przewalskii* Two at Dong Xia Shan and one at Beizha Forest.

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* A total of five birds, with great views, were seen.

Hodgson's Treecreeper (Himalayan T) *Certhia hodgsoni* A few at Beizha Forest.

Crested Myna *Acridotheres cristatellus* Five birds in Lhasa.

White-cheeked Starling *Spodiopsar cineraceus* Three birds carrying food near Chaka.

Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus* (NL) One in Yushu by Dave.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* Fairly common in Ruopiang.

Tibetan Blackbird ♦ *Turdus maximus* Several were seen in Lhasa.

Chestnut Thrush ♦ *Turdus rubrocanus* Quite common in the forests near Xining.

Kessler's Thrush ♦ **(White-backed T)** *Turdus kessleri* Widespread.

Chinese Thrush ♦ *Turdus mupinensis* One at Laoye Shan near Xining.

White-bellied Redstart ♦ *Luscinia phoenicuroides* A male at Laoye Shan and heard only at Shuksep.

Chinese Rubythroat ♦ *Calliope tschebaiewi* Excellent views near Yushu. A split from Himalayan Rubythroat.

Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* Good views at Dong Xia Shan, where we had three birds.

Red-flanked Bluetail (Northern B, Siberian B) *Tarsiger cyanurus* Good views at Dong Xia Shan.

Slaty-backed Flycatcher ♦ *Ficedula hodgsonii* Seen at Dong Xia Shan and in Beizha Forest.

Przevalski's Redstart ♦ **(Ala Shan R)** *Phoenicurus alaschanicus* Three ca 100kms south of Chaka.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Hodgson's Redstart ♦ *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

White-throated Redstart ♦ *Phoenicurus schisticeps*

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus* Three in the Xining area.

Güldenstädt's Redstart ♦ **(White-winged R)** *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus* A total of six seen.

Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis* Only small numbers were noted on this year's tour.



Rufous-necked and Small (or Père David's) Snowfinch (Hannu Jännes).

White-capped Redstart (W-c Water R, River Chat) *Phoenicurus leucocephalus* Small numbers in Nangqiang.

Common Rock Thrush (Rufous-tailed R T) *Monticola saxatilis* One near Gonghe.

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* Three on Rubber Mountains near Chaka.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* One in Chaka and seven in Xinjiang.

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* Noted on four days.

Saxaul Sparrow ♦ *Passer ammodendri* Common in the Ruqiang area in Xinjiang.

Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans* A few at Potala Palace in Lhasa.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*

Tibetan Snowfinch ♦ (Henri's S) *Montifringilla henrici* Noted in small numbers on four days.

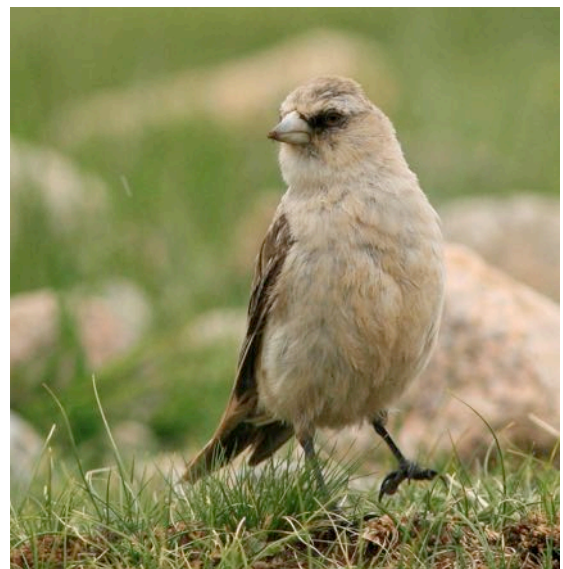
Black-winged Snowfinch ♦ (Adams's S, Tibetan S) *Montifringilla adamsi* Seen on five days.

White-rumped Snowfinch ♦ *Onychostruthus taczanowskii* Fairly common and widespread.

Père David's Snowfinch ♦ (Small S) *Pyrgilauda davidiana* One at Lake Qinghai and ten in the Wild Yak Valley.

Rufous-necked Snowfinch ♦ *Pyrgilauda ruficollis* Common and widespread.

Blanford's Snowfinch ♦ (Plain-backed S) *Pyrgilauda blanfordi* Singletons noted on four days.



Tibetan (or Prince Henri's) Snowfinch and White-rumped Snowfinch (Hannu Jännes).



Male White-winged Grosbeak in Lhasa (Hannu Jännes).

- Alpine Accentor** *Prunella collaris* (NL) One for Nancy near Yushu.
- Robin Accentor** ♦ *Prunella rubeculoides* A few seen.
- Rufous-breasted Accentor** ♦ *Prunella strophciata* Six birds at Laoye Shan.
- Brown Accentor** ♦ *Prunella fulvescens* Small numbers noted on seven days.
- Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla [citreola] citreola* Several birds near Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.
- Citrine Wagtail (Tibetan W)** ♦ *Motacilla [citreola] calcarata* Several individuals of this distinctive form seen
- Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*
- White Wagtail (Masked W)** *Motacilla [alba] personata* Noted in Ruoqiang.
- White Wagtail (Amur W)** *Motacilla [alba] leucopsis* Fairly common north of the central plateau.
- White Wagtail (Himalayan W)** *Motacilla [alba] alboides* Rather common south of the central plateau.
- Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* (LO) (H) One was heard singing near Gonghe.
- Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*
- Rosy Pipit** *Anthus roseatus* About six seen.
- Przevalski's Finch** ♦ (Pink-tailed F) *Urocynchramus pylzowi* A total of eight in the Rubber Mountains near Chaka.
- White-winged Grosbeak** ♦ *Mycerobas carnipes* Noted on seven days.
- Grey-headed Bullfinch** ♦ *Pyrrhula erythaca* Great views at Laoye Shan.
- Mongolian Finch** ♦ (M Trumpeter F) *Bucanetes mongolicus* Four near Chaka.
- Plain Mountain Finch** ♦ *Leucosticte nemoricola* Noted on three days.
- Brandt's Mountain Finch** ♦ (Black-headed M F) *Leucosticte brandti* Noted on three days.
- Common Rosefinch (Scarlet R)** *Carpodacus erythrinus*
- Streaked Rosefinch** ♦ (Eastern Great R) *Carpodacus rubicilloides*
- Great Rosefinch** ♦ *Carpodacus rubicilla*
- Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch** ♦ *Carpodacus pulcherrimus* Noted on three days, ten or so in total.
- Pink-rumped Rosefinch** ♦ (Stresemann's R) *Carpodacus waltoni* Common in S Qinghai and Tibet.
- Pale Rosefinch** ♦ *Carpodacus stoliczkae* One female near Xining. A recent split from Sinai Rosefinch.
- Tibetan Rosefinch** ♦ (Roborovski's R) *Carpodacus roborowskii* Noted at Bayankala Shan and Wild Yak Valley.
- Sillem's Mountain Finch** ♦ *Carpodacus sillemi* At least one pair and single male at Wild Yak Valley. **A MEGA!**
- Three-banded Rosefinch** ♦ *Carpodacus trifasciatus* A lovely adult male at Beizha Forest.
- Chinese White-browed Rosefinch** ♦ *Carpodacus dubius* A few in suitable forest habitats.
- Red-fronted Rosefinch** ♦ (Red-breasted R) *Carpodacus puniceus* Noted at three different sites.



Pink-rumped Rosefinch is commonly encountered in southern Qinghai and Lhasa (Hannu Jännes).

Crimson-browed Finch ♦ *Carpodacus subhimachala* A total of three near Lhasa were a good find.

Grey-capped Greenfinch (Oriental G) *Chloris sinica*

Desert Finch *Rodospiza obsoleta* One on the outskirts of Ruoqiang in Xinjiang.

Twite *Linaria flavirostris* Widespread.

Red Crossbill (Common C) *Loxia curvirostra* 200 at Dong Xia Shan near Xining.

Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus* Five at Dong Xia Shan near Xining.

Pine Bunting ♦ *Emberiza leucocephalos* Rather common in the Chaka area.

Godlewski's Bunting ♦ *Emberiza godlewskii* Widespread in small numbers.

Tibetan Bunting ♦ (Kozlov's B) *Emberiza koslowi* Great encounter with a pair at Kanda Shan.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* One near Laoye Shan and three near Gonghe.



Max after seeing the Sillem's Mountain Finch. Note the special habitat (Karen Rose).



Chiru (or Tibetan Antelope) in the Kekexili Nature Reserve (Werner Mueller).

MAMMALS

Woolly Hare *Lepus oiostolus* Common and widespread.

Plateau Pika (Black-lipped P) *Ochotona curzoniae* Very common in some areas.

Glover's Pika *Ochotona gloveri* Two in southern Qinghai.

Nubra Pika *Ochotona nubrica* A few, apparently belonging to this species, near Lhasa.

Large-eared Pika *Ochotona huangensis* Two apparently belonging to this species at Wild Yak Valley.

Himalayan Marmot *Marmota himalayana* Common and widespread.

Grey Wolf (Wolf) *Canis lupus* A total of four with good views.

Tibetan Fox *Vulpes ferrilata* A total of eight with excellent views.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* A total of four were sighted.

Altai Weasel (Pale W) *Mustela altaica* Two sightings in the south of Qinghai province.

Kiang (Tibetan Wild Ass) *Equus kiang* Common in some areas.

White-lipped Deer *Cervus albirostris* A group of 15 at Beizha Forest.

Yak *Bos grunniensis* A total of eight wild Yaks at Kekexili NP, and a group of 40 in the Wild Yak Valley.

Goitered Gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa* Four were noted in Xinjiang.

Chiru (Tibetan Antelope) *Pantholops hodgsonii* Noted in the Kexekili-Budongquan area and at Wild Yak Valley.

Tibetan Gazelle *Procapra picticaudata* Noted, often in good numbers, on six days.

Bharal (Blue Sheep) *Pseudois nayaur* Noted on four days.



Two more Kiangs for Nancy (upper Werner Mueller, lower Hannu Jännnes).