



**CHINA**  
**Trekking for Giant Pandas in the**  
**Qinling Mountains**  
**9<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> October 2008**



**Tour Leader:**  
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## **Tour Summary**

"Trekking for Giant Pandas in the wild, where are you going to do that?" was the all too frequently asked question before embarking on this trip, and rightfully so. Giant Pandas are endangered with only about 1600 bears living in the wild. With effective conservation measures being put into place numbers are slowly on the rise and for the first time in modern history there exists the chance for members of the public to get a glimpse of this iconic bear in the wild.

Our ultimate destination was Foping Nature Reserve in the Qinling Mountains where Giant Pandas exist in the wild in greater numbers than anywhere else. Before 'heading for the hills' we would first visit the Terracotta Warriors and Horses museum, located within Shaanxi Province near Xi'an. Built by the first Emperor of all China, Qin Shi Huang, who ruled from 246 BC, the thousands of pottery soldiers, horses, war chariots and weapons were buried to aid the Emperor in ruling in his afterlife. Unfortunately the Emperor's army was decimated after his death when the necropolis was raided and the underground offices were set alight. Forgotten for thousands of years this monumental work of art was only rediscovered in 1974 when a group of peasants were digging to create a well and happened upon the remnant shards of archaic pottery. Today this site is well preserved and presented and we had a fascinating afternoon gazing over the staggeringly lifelike terracotta figures placed in precise military formation according to rank and duty. The Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum is now officially a World Cultural Heritage Site and a poignant icon of China's distant past.

The next day some of us woke up bright and early for some birding before breakfast and had a comic moment as we waited in the gardens behind our hotel in the dark for an hour for the sun to come out in order to see a few new birds before breakfast. While we learnt that we could sleep in for a little longer in the future we were rewarded for our efforts as we were able to obtain good sightings of a migrant Siberian Rubythroat and a Chinese Hill Warbler, both birds that we would not see again on tour. After breakfast we headed south and it was not long before we were winding through the steep but fantastically scenic Qinling Mountains. Shortly after entering the mountains we were fortunate enough to see a pair of Golden Eagles perched on a lofty ridge overhead and with the aid of a scope were able to obtain excellent views of these magnificent birds as they surveyed their mountain kingdom.

The mountains are beautiful at this time of year with some of the leaves on the trees changing to their autumn shades of gold and red. Along the swift flowing mountain streams Crested Kingfisher, Common Kingfisher, White-capped Water-Redstart, Plumbeous Water-Redstart and the buoyant Brown Dipper were seen feeding. Along the roadside the brilliantly colored Red-billed Blue Magpie and Daurian Redstart stole the show amongst the plethora of avian contenders. Of course our primary birding goal was to locate the critically endangered Chinese Crested Ibis - a bird that has slowly recovered from a devastatingly low world population of less than thirty birds. In order to do this we needed to drive right through the Qinling Mountains to Yang County where this tiny wild population of less than one hundred and fifty birds still survives. On our arrival at the roost sight everyone was a little tense as it was getting late and had the birds already roosted it would have been easy to miss them as one is not permitted to enter the protected roost area. Fortunately this was not the case and we were lucky enough to witness fifteen of these rare birds as small parties flew in to settle for the night. Whilst watching the last stragglers fly in a female Peregrine Falcon broke from the tree line and chased a Crested Ibis over the rice paddies. The Peregrine was fortunately not able to kill the Ibis but it was none the less a dramatic end to the day.





The following day we backtracked much of the distance we had covered the previous day to get to a bumpy dirt road that would lead us to Foping Nature Reserve. On this part of our journey we had a brilliant birding moment when an Ibisbill and a Long-billed Plover were spotted in the river, these two birds are again extremely rare and seeing them both (at one stage in the same scope view!) certainly added value to our time spent driving through the mountains. But this was a mammal focused tour and

although we had seen magnificent birds and scenery we were all keen to see some fur.

Created to protect the Giant Panda and its favored habitat, Foping Nature Reserve lies in the transitive area from subtropics to temperate zones, covering roughly 35,000 hectares. To enter this ecological paradise we had to load our gear onto pack mules and hike eight kilometers along a well constructed path towards our base for the next week – the Sanguanmiao Research Station. The forest ablaze with the changing leaves of autumn, we walked with a tangible excitement in our step knowing that we were within the realm of the Giant Panda, a nearly mythical animal to behold in the wild and certainly one of the most charismatic mammals on Earth.

On the walk into the research station we were able to obtain sightings of Pere David's Rock Squirrel and Pery's Long-nosed Squirrel. With winter advancing these squirrels had no time to play hide and seek with humans and were visible on all our excursions into the reserve as they busied themselves stashing food for the cold months ahead. Halfway down the path to the research station our trackers pointed out a cave that was used by Golden Takin as a shelter in the winter. A few of our party explored this deep cave and it was fascinating to see how many Takin droppings were found on the cave floor. What a magical sighting it would be to witness a herd of Takin in this cave, the mammal equivalent to that of *Alibaba and the forty thieves*. We were also to discover that the cave served as a roost for numerous East Asian Tailless Leaf-nosed Bats and a Chinese Pipistrelle Bat.

As the day drew to a close we finally strolled into the Sanguanmiao Research Station where we were greeted by friendly staff with flasks of hot water provided for freshening up and hot drinks. The new research station is almost complete – a remarkable undertaking, since all the building materials need to be hauled in on horse back! This new facility will be very comfortable with en suite bathrooms and a separate lounge and dining room. But this was of no use to our party as we had to put up





with the old research station with drafty rooms, pit latrines and a communal room that served as a dinning room come lounge and pantry. None the less we were comfortable enough and had many humorous moments in the communal room - one in particular being when three featherless dead chickens were brought in to hang for the night while we were filling in our checklists after dinner! One excellent aspect of the research station is that all the electricity comes from an onsite hydroelectric scheme and hot water is provided with a solar powered geyser; hopefully these two modern concepts are applied and fine tuned to supply green energy to the new building.

Every morning we woke to the raucous exclamations of gaudy Red-billed Blue Magpie and Spotted Nutcracker to start a new adventure in the field. A small contingent of birders set out at sunrise each day to do a little birding before breakfast and small mammal traps that were left out on the warmer nights were checked. One species of rat – an Anderson's Niviventer was caught on two occasions and our mornings birding provided us with an abundance of avian gems. Some of my favorite birds at Foping Nature reserve are the laughing thrushes, their striking calls and beautiful plumage ensure rewarding encounters for each species obtained. On our birding around the research station we were able to view several species including Elliott's Laughing Thrush, the beautiful Barred Laughing Thrush (a Chinese endemic), White-throated Laughing Thrush, White-browed Laughing Thrush and the melodious Hwamei.



After a basic breakfast we would set out each day on a different route into the mountains with our local Chinese trackers taking the lead in search of fresh signs of Giant Panda such as tracks, scat, or freshly eaten bamboo shoots. As luck would have it our trackers were successful in finding a Giant Panda on our first outing! The group crept towards where the Panda was located, not an easy feat in on the steep slopes covered in thick Farges Cane, until we were just out of earshot of the bear, and from this point we tried to get people into the sighting quietly two at a time. Even with this level of caution the bear still took fright on our approach leaving a cub behind. While it would have been tempting to have waited to see the mother return to her youngster, our presence in the area may have prevented this from occurring and it would have jeopardized the safety of this tiny and highly endangered bear. After the group had a quick view of this gorgeous cub we left the mountain. We had had an amazing day, having seen this iconic mammal

in the wild and it was decided that we should continue to focus on finding an adult before pursuing other mammals. At the time this seemed like the right choice but the terrain in these mountains requires one to be incredibly fit in order to keep up

with the trackers and walking a whole group silently through the thick bamboo was very difficult. Day after day our tracking team astonished us with their tracking skills that led to more bears being found than on any previous tour but the group was unable to match their stealth and fitness and no further bears were seen. On one occasion I set out with a tracker and followed the trail of an adult bear that had been scent marking its territory. When we eventually caught up with the Panda we had magnificent views of the bear as it drank from a mountain stream. I was convinced that this bear walk stay in the glade in which we found it as it had walked a long way and Pandas are not known to be too energetic. Unfortunately we were deep in the mountains and the animal slipped away before the group's arrival.

In hindsight I feel that we should have pursued other star mammals of the reserve before attempting another Panda sighting. We did however try to look for Golden Takin and were fortunate enough to get long distance views of them on our first attempt and narrowly missed a herd of them on an another hike. Other mammals seen during our time at Foping Nature Reserve included Mainland Serow, Wild Boar, Common Goral, Swinhoe's Striped Squirrel, Yellow-throated Martin and a Long-nosed Mole - thirteen mammals in total.

On this expedition we explored a variety of pristine habitats including vast amounts of Farges Cane in the lower lying mixed broad-leafed forest valleys and Umbrella Bamboo on the coniferous ridges and peaks. We encountered a plethora of beautiful birds and a number of mammals most of which are extremely rare and one of which was a beautiful Giant Panda cub! Much like the early trekking days for Mountain Gorillas many of the mammal sightings were less than optimal as this is not the well trodden route of wildlife tourism and the animals are not accustomed to curious tourists. As our vehicle left those beautiful forests behind us and our airplanes took us even further away, it was not the Laughingthrushes, Fulvettas, Gorals, Golden Takins, Parrotbills and Pandas that stood out in my memory. What stands out strongest in my mind is the sense of adventure that this place inspires. What I remember most when I reflect on those little explored peaks and valleys is the inner feeling of excitement that over the next rise or through the next thicket a rare sighting may be waiting. It is for this reason that I feel this tour lives up to our slogan of an "Ultimate Mammal Voyage!"

## **Annotated List of Mammal Species Recorded:**

### **Giant Panda**

*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*

Our tracking team found a Panda on the first day we set out to look for them in Foping Nature Reserve. The Panda turned out to be a mother and cub and the mother moved away as we approached the sighting. Everyone was able to see the baby Panda but we moved out of the area within a few minutes to avoid disrupting the mother from her parental duties. With a baby seen the group had their sights set on viewing an adult. The trackers found several more Pandas over the next few days but we were unable to get into a viewing position in the thick Farges Cane. On the second day of Panda tracking one member of our group was brought close enough to a Panda to hear it feeding but was unable to view the animal in the dense bamboo. On another occasion the trackers and I followed the trail of a Panda marking its territory deep in the mountains and when we finally caught up with the animal, had excellent views. Unfortunately the animal moved off before the group was able to get

to the sighting. Signs of their presence were seen on every Panda trek including droppings; scent markings and eaten bamboo shoots.

**Golden Takin**

*Budorcas taxicolor*

On our third day in Foping Nature Reserve we scoped five of these magnificent animals as they fed and drank water on a distant mountain slope. On another day our trackers located a herd of Takin feeding in a valley while we scouted for them on the mountain ridges, by the time we had come down from the mountain ridge the Takin had moved uphill and everyone was too tired to pursue them for a sighting. Takin tracks and droppings were seen on most outings into the mountains.

**Mainland Serow**

*Capricornis sumatraensis*

One of our party saw this animal while following a tracker searching for Giant Panda. The Serow studied them for quite some time before letting out an alarm and fleeing up the mountains. Serow tracks and droppings were seen on most of our outings into the mountains in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Common Goral**

*Nemorhaedus goral*

Goral were seen on two occasions, once by two of our party members while trekking in the mountains in Foping Nature Reserve, and once on the drive out of the Qinling Mountains. With the aid of a scope excellent views were had of the animal in the cliffs along the roadside. Goral droppings were seen whenever we climbed onto the mountain ridges.

**Wild Boar**

*Sus scrofa*

Signs of this animal were abundant with rooting in the earth seen on every excursion in Foping Nature Reserve. Three animals were seen by one member of our group on our second to last day while setting out on the Takin trail.

**Chinese Muntjac Deer**

*Muntiacus reevesi*

This deer was heard calling twice close to the Research Station at Foping Nature Reserve.

**Forest Musk Deer**

*Moschus cephalophus*

This animal is notoriously shy, droppings and tracks were seen whenever we climbed onto the mountain ridges in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Pere David's Rock Squirrel**

*Sciurotamias davidianus*

These squirrels are common in Foping Nature Reserve and we found several animals each day.

**Perny's Long-nosed Squirrel**

*Dremomys pernyi*

Common in Foping Nature Reserve; their rattling alarm call served as a constant reminder that we were being watched as we walked through the Farges Cane thickets.

**Swinhoe's Striped Squirrel**

*Tamias swinhoie*

These animated creatures were found whenever we reached the high ridges and peaks in Foping Nature Reserve. On the ridge above the Takin trail great views were had of one individual as it flitted through the branches overhead.

**Yellow-throated Martin**

*Martes flavigula*

Fantastic views were had by a number of members of our group as one of these creatures passed close to them while they were waiting for news from our tracking team.

**Anderson's Niniventer**

*Niniventer andersoni*

On two occasions this beautiful little rat was caught in a live specimen trap that was set close to the Research Station.

**Long-nosed Mole**

*Euroscaptor longirostris*

The trackers found one of these strange looking little creatures on the Takin trail and much fun was had trying to capture the powerful little digger in order to get a good view of it for identification.

**East Asian Tailless Leaf-nosed Bat**

*Coelops frithii*

Several of these bats were found roosting in a cave off the path leading to the Research Station.

**Chinese Pipistrelle**

*Hypsugo pulveratus*

One of these tiny bats was found roosting in the same cave as the East Asian Tailless Leaf-nosed Bats.

## **Annotated List of Bird Species Recorded:**

**Pheasants, Fowl & Allies Phasianidae**

**Chinese Bamboo Partridge**

*Bambusicola thoracicus*

Good views of five or so birds were had as we walked to the Research Station on the first day in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Koklass Pheasant**

*Pucrasia macrolopha*

The eaten remains of a single bird was found by the trackers and shown to us on one of our walks into the mountains in Foping Nature Reserve. The bird appeared to have been eaten by a raptor of sorts.

**Reeves's Pheasant**

*Syrnaticus reevesii*

A fleeting sighting was had of one bird that our party flushed while walking through an Oak studded valley in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Common Pheasant**

*Phasianus colchicus*

By far the most common and conspicuous pheasant of Foping Nature Reserve, we encountered birds on most days in the scrubby meadows around the research station.

**Golden Pheasant**

*Chrysolophus pictus*

Living in dense thickets of bamboo this bird is shy and while we heard them often we only saw them on two occasions when crossing the trail ahead.

**Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae**

**Mandarin Duck**

*Aix galericulata*

We enjoyed scope views of three males and one female on a dam as we left the Qinling Mountains.

**Eastern Spot-billed Duck**

*Anas zonorhyncha*

We enjoyed good scope views of one from a major river bridge outside Xi'an on our return from the mountains.

**Grebes Podicipedidae**

**Little Grebe**

*Tachybaptus ruficollis*

We found several of this widespread species on a dam shortly before we left the Qinling Mountains.

**Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae**

**Chinese Crested Ibis**

*Nipponia nippon*

We waited for this rare bird at its roosting place in Yang County and were rewarded with good sightings of this beautiful Ibis and they came home to roost. A total of 15 birds (about 10 percent of the total wild population) were seen and we nearly watched this number drop to 14 as a female Peregrine Falcon chased one of the returning birds!

**Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns Ardeidae**

**Cattle Egret**

*Bubulcus ibis*

Small flocks were seen near Yang County in open fields as well as in fields outside Xi'an.

**Grey Heron**

*Ardea cinerea*

Seen in small numbers on rivers around Xi'an.

**Eastern Great Egret**

*Ardea modesta*

One was seen flying over a large river outside Xi'an.

**Little Egret**

*Egretta garzetta*

A numbers of these birds were seen around rivers and ponds outside Xi'an.

**Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae**

**Great Cormorant**

*Phalacrocorax carbo*

One was seen at a dam as we left the Qinling Mountains and several were seen from a large river bridge outside Xi'an.

**Falcons & Kestrels Falconidae**

**Common Kestrel**

*Falco tinnunculus*

One was seen when driving to the Terracotta Warriors museum outside Xi'an.

**Peregrine Falcon**

*Falco peregrinus*

We enjoyed a spectacular aerial display as a female chased a Crested Ibis in Yang County; fortunately she failed to kill this critically endangered species.

**Hawks, Eagles & Kites Accipitridae**

**Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzard**

*Pernis ptilorhynchus*

These birds were seen and heard on a few occasions during our walks in the Foping Nature Reserve.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk**

*Accipiter nisus*

One was seen bathing in the river in the Qinling mountains.

**Golden Eagle**

*Aquila chrysaetos*

We enjoyed a wonderful sighting of a pair perched on a mountain ridge in the Qinling Mountains en route to Foping Nature Reserve; a further bird was seen soaring above the forest of Foping Nature Reserve.

**Mountain Hawk-Eagle**

*Spizaetus nipalensis*

We had views of one circling above a valley in Foping Nature Reserve. This was an exciting find as this bird appeared to be out of its natural range.

**Ibisbill Ibidorhynchidae**

**Ibisbill**

*Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

We enjoyed fantastic scope views of a single bird feeding on a river in the Qinling Mountains. This amazingly well camouflaged wader was certainly one of the avian highlights of the trip!

**Plovers & Lapwings Charadriidae**

**Long-billed Plover**

*Charadrius placidus*

At one stage we had this scarce wader and the Ibisbill in the same scope view!

**Sandpipers Scolopacidae**

**Green Sandpiper**

*Tringa ochropus*

A single bird was seen near Yang County while searching for Crested Ibis.

**Pigeons & Doves Columbidae**

**Common Pigeon**

*Columba livia*

Seen in small numbers around Xi'an and in Yang County.

**Oriental Turtle Dove**

*Streptopelia orientalis*

Common with birds seen on most days.

**Spotted Dove**

*Streptopelia chinensis*

Seen on the drive through the Qinling mountains.



**Typical Owls Strigidae**

**Collared Owlet**

*Glaucidium brodiei*

We heard this bird several times at Foping Nature Reserve but were not able to get a sighting of the bird.

**Kingfishers Alcedinidae**

**Common Kingfisher**

*Alcedo atthis*

We had good views of several including superb scope views of this beautiful little bird.

**Crested Kingfisher**

*Megaceryle lugubris*

We enjoyed several sightings of this oversized kingfisher along the larger rivers in the Qinling Mountains.

**Hoopoes Upupidae**

**Eurasian Hoopoe**

*Upupa epops*

One bird was seen flying overhead in the gardens behind our Hotel in Yang Ling.

**Woodpeckers Picidae**

**Speckled Piculet**

*Picumnus innominatus*

One of these tiny birds was seen in a birding party on our last day in the Qinling Mountains.

**Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopos canicapillus*

Two members of our party saw this tiny woodpecker in the gardens at the Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum.

**Crimson-breasted Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopos cathpharius*

These fine looking woodpeckers were by far the most numerous seen at Foping Nature Reserve.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopos major*

One of these birds was 'spotted' as we walked into Foping Nature Reserve.

**Grey-headed (-faced) Woodpecker**

*Picus canus*

One bird was seen feeding on the ground in the Dog Wood orchard below the Research Station in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Cuckooshrikes Campephagidae**

**Long-tailed Minivet**

*Pericrocotus ethologus*

Large noisy flocks were seen daily in the forested areas of Foping Nature Reserve.

**Shrikes Laniidae**

**Chinese Grey Shrike**

*Lanius sphenocercus*

We enjoyed great views of one on the banks of a large river near Yang Ling.

**Crows, Jays & Magpies Corvidae**

**Eurasian Jay**

*Garrulus glandarius*

Seen on most days during our time at Foping Nature Reserve.

**Red-billed Blue Magpie**

*Urocissa erythrorhyncha*

Very attractive and equally conspicuous, we enjoyed excellent daily encounters with this lovely Asian species in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Eurasian Magpie**

*Pica pica*

This bird was frequently seen along the roadside as we passed through the Qinling Mountains and in the cultivated fields around Xi'an.

**Spotted Nutcracker**

*Nucifraga caryocatactes*

We enjoyed daily views of this attractive species often perched at the top of a conifer in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Collared Crow**

*Corvus pectoralis*

We found one in the Qinling Mountains en route to Foping Nature Reserve.

**Large-billed Crow**

*Corvus macrorhynchus*

Found to be common throughout the tour.

**Tits & Chickadees Paridae**

**Marsh Tit**

*Parus palustris*

Seen frequently in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Coal Tit**

*Periparus ater*

A couple was seen almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Grey Crested Tit**

*Lophophanes dichrous*

A single bird was found on one occasion on a mountain ridge in Foping Nature Reserve foraging in conifers.

**Great Tit**

*Parus major*

Seen on several occasions in the Qinling Mountains.

**Green-backed Tit**

*Parus monticolus*

This beautiful little bird was abundant in Foping Nature Reserve with several birds seen daily.

**Bushtits Aegithalidae**

**Black-throated Bushtit**

*Aegithalos concinnus*

Small active flocks were encountered on several occasions in Foping Nature Reserve often in the company of Sooty Bushtits.

**Sooty Bushtit**

*Aegithalos fuliginosus*

This Chinese endemic was enjoyed almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae**

**Chinese Hill Warbler**

*Rhopophilus pekinensis*

One bird was seen in the gardens behind our hotel in Yang Ling after we followed its beautiful call.

**Bulbuls Pycnonotidae**

**Collared Finchbill**

*Spizixos semitorques*

A few birds were seen on the drive to and from Yang County through the Qinling Mountains.

**Brown-breasted Bulbul**

*Pycnonotus xanthorrhous*

This bird was seen frequently in the on tour.

**Light-vented Bulbul**

*Pycnonotus sinensis*

This bird was seen intermittently throughout our time spent at Foping Nature Reserve as well as during our journey through the Qinling mountains.

**Mountain Bulbul**

*Ixos mcclllandii*

Two rather unexpected birds were seen well in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Old World Warblers Sylviidae**

**Oriental Reed Warbler**

*Acrocephalus orientalis*

Good views were had of one bird behind our hotel in Yang Ling.

**Tickell's Leaf Warbler**

*Phylloscopus affinis*

This beautiful little bird was seen on a few occasions at Foping Nature Reserve.

**Yellow-streaked Warbler**

*Phylloscopus armandii*

Two birds were seen amongst a flock of Spectacled Parrotbills in a stand of Farges Cane at Foping Nature Reserve.

**Chinese Leaf-Warbler**

*Phylloscopus yunnanensis*

Encountered regularly during our stay in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Pallas's Leaf warbler**

*Phylloscopus proregulus*

This beautiful, hyperactive tiny little bird was seen frequently in birding parties at Foping Nature Reserve.

**Yellow-browed Warbler**

*Phylloscopus inornatus*

This bird was seen on at least two days in bird parties at Foping Nature Reserve.

**Arctic Warbler**

*Phylloscopus borealis*

This migratory species was seen once in the orchard around the Research Station.

**Two-barred Warbler**

*Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*

We had good views of one near our accommodation in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Babblers & Parrotbills Timaliidae**

**Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler**

*Pomatorhinus ruficollis*

These attractive birds were seen almost daily at Foping Nature Reserve.

**Rufous-capped Babbler**

*Stachyris ruficeps*

This bird was seen on several occasions at Foping Nature Reserve most often in the company of Spectacled Parrotbills feeding in stands of Farges Cane.

**Chinese Babax**

*Babax lanceolatus*

Seen on at least two occasions in the disturbed areas around the research station.

**White-throated Laughingthrush**

*Garrulax albogularis*

Large noisy flocks were encountered almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush**

*Garrulax pectoralis*

This noisy and very attractive bird was frequently encountered in broadleaf woodland at Foping Nature Reserve.

**Moustached (Ashy) Laughingthrush**

*Garrulax cineraceus*

We found this bird either singly or in pairs on two occasions during our stay in Foping Nature Reserve often in the cover of dense stands of bamboo.

**Barred Laughingthrush (E)**

*Garrulax lunulatus*

Fantastic views of this Chinese endemic were had on two occasions in the orchard outside the research station.

**Hwamei (Melodious Laughingthrush)**

*Garrulax canorus*

This bird was seen on two occasions in mixed flocks and appeared to be fairly shy.

**White-browed Laughingthrush**

*Garrulax sannio*

Great views were had of this species from the trail leading to the Research Station in Foping Nature reserve.

**Elliot's Laughingthrush**

*Garrulax elliotii*

Led to this bird by its beautiful call we were fortunate enough to have good views on at least two occasions.

**Red-billed Leiothrix**

*Leiothrix lutea*

This beautiful bird has an equally attractive call and we were privileged to see it on at least three occasions in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Green Shrike-Babbler**

*Pteruthius xanthochlorus*

This bird was seen on two occasions, once by of our party while hiking in the mountains and again the following day when it was seen in the company of Red-billed Leiothrix.

**Golden-breasted Fulvetta**

*Alcippe chrysotis*

This stunning little bird was seen on several occasions while we were searching stands of Farges Cane for Giant Pandas.

**Spectacled Fulvetta**

*Alcippe ruficapilla*

These birds are fairly common in dense bamboo and were encountered almost daily on our hikes in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Streak-throated Fulvetta**

*Alcippe cinereiceps*

Seen on at least two occasions in dense scrub and bamboo on our walks into Foping Nature Reserve.

**Grey-cheeked Fulvetta**

*Alcippe morrisonia*

We found a flock of these birds on one occasion in dense Farges cane in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Dusky Fulvetta**

*Alcippe brunnea*

Fulvettas are shy at the best of times and this one was particularly so. A small flock was seen only once in a dense stand of Farges Cane.

**White-collared Yuhina**

*Yuhina diademata*

This bird was seen in the scrub at the roadside by some of our party when we stopped to scan the waters of a large dam for water birds.

**Spectacled Parrotbill**

*Paradoxornis conspicillatus*

We encountered several flocks of these birds feeding in stands of Farges Cane in the lower lying valleys of Foping Nature Reserve.

**Vinous-throated Parrotbill**

*Paradoxornis webbianus*

A large flock was seen on the road into Foping Nature Reserve with further sightings of small flocks seen in stands of bamboo alongside the trail leading to the Research Station in the reserve.

**Kinglets Regulidae**

**Goldcrest**

*Regulus regulus*

While scanning through a mixed flock we found one in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Nuthatches Sittidae**

**Eurasian Nuthatch**

*Sitta europaea sinensis*

Common and confiding in Foping Nature Reserve and along the roadside in the Qinling Mountains

**Treecreepers Certhiidae**

**Eurasian Treecreeper**

*Certhia familiaris*

We had good sightings of this bird on at least three days, twice foraging with mixed flocks, in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Starlings Sturnidae**

**White-cheeked Starling**

*Sturnus cineraceus*

We encountered a huge flock of these birds in the gardens behind our hotel in Yang Ling.

**Thrushes Turdidae**

**Scaly Thrush**

*Zoothera dauma*

A single bird was seen on the trail near the Research Station in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Eyebrowed Thrush**

*Turdus obscurus*

Two birds were seen from the trail that leads to the Research Station.

**Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae**

**Hodgson's Redstart**

*Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

These beautiful birds were seen on at least five days at Foping Nature Reserve, with one particular bird sighted several times in the gardens below the research station.

**Daurian Redstart**

*Phoenicurus aureus*

This attractive bird popped up fairly frequently throughout our tour with the first bird seen at the Crested Ibis roost.

**Plumbeous Water Redstart**

*Rhyacornis fuliginosa*

These birds were encountered on all of the fast flowing rivers we came across in the Qinling Mountains therefore were seen in good numbers on most days.

**White-capped Redstart**

*Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

One of these birds was seen alongside a fast flowing river as we entered the Qinling Mountains.

**Orange-flanked Bush Robin**

*Tarsiger cyanurus*

This delightful little Robin was fairly confiding and seen on at least three days in Foping Nature Reserve.

**White-tailed Robin**

*Myiomela leucura*

This shy bird was seen once on one of our roadside birding stops when we drove through the Qinling Mountains.

**Little Forktail**

*Enicurus scouleri*

This beautiful little bird was seen regularly on the stream close to the Research Station in Foping Nature Reserve with outstanding views obtained by all.

**Dippers Cinclidae**

**Brown Dipper**

*Cinclus pallasii*

We enjoyed multiple views of this charismatic species feeding in all the mountain rivers that we encountered.

**Old World Sparrows Passeridae**

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow**

*Passer montanus*

Good numbers were seen in the urban areas we visited on tour.

**Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae**

**White Wagtail**

*Motacilla alba*

Encountered in small numbers along the roadside on the drive through the Qinling Mountains and in Yang County.

**Olive-backed Pipit**

*Anthus hodgsoni*

This bird was first seen in the gardens behind our hotel in Yang Ling and was later seen in good numbers in scrubby meadows within Foping Nature Reserve.

**Finches Fringillidae**

**Vinaceous Rosefinch**

*Carpodacus vinaceus*

Only one of these splendid birds was seen on tour. The bird was seen in the secondary scrub below the Research Station in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Grey-headed Bullfinch**

*Pyrrhula erythaca*

One sighting of a female was seen in a stand of Bamboo-Cane on the walk into Foping Nature Reserve.

**Buntings & Allies Emberizidae**

**Slaty Bunting**

*Latoucheornis siemsseni*

This distinctive bunting was seen in small open patches in the undergrowth, we had great sightings on two occasions in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Godlewski's Bunting**

*Emberiza godlewskii*

This bird was seen in a meadow as we entered the Qinling Mountains.

**Little Bunting**

*Emberiza pusilla*

Several of these birds were seen on most days in the meadows below the Research Station at Foping Nature Reserve.

**Yellow-throated Bunting**

*Emberiza elegans*

A single bird was seen in a meadow as we entered the Qinling Mountains.

**Photo Credits:** Common Goral by Kate Anderson; baby Giant Panda by Simon Bellingham; Crested Ibis, Ibisbill, Foping Research Station & Foping Scenery by Mario Haberdorf.

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