

Species list:

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

Himalayan Marmot *Marmota himalayana*

11 animal-days. Noted on five dates.

Przewalski's Steppe Vole *Eolagurus przewalskii*

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

Kam Dwarf Hamster *Cricetulus kamensis*

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

Tibetan Dwarf Hamster *Cricetulus tibetanus*

One on 6th.

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

Gansu Pika *Ochotona cansus*

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

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

Common in places, this cornerstone species was not systematically recorded.

Glover's Pika *Ochotona gloveri*

Seven seen well & photographed on 9th.

Tsingling Pika *Ochotona huangensis*

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

Woolly Hare *Lepus oiostolus*

Ten animal-days. Noted on five dates.

Pallas' Cat *Felis manul*

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

Wolf *Canis lupus*

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

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

Tibetan Fox *Vulpes ferrilata*

63 animal-days. Noted on seven dates.

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

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

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

Asian Badger *Meles leucurus*

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

Kiang *Equus kiang*

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

Siberian Roe *Capreolus pygargus*

One heard on 3rd.

Gansu Red Deer *Cervus (elaphus) kansuensis*

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

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

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

***Subsequently (Groves & Grubb: *Ungulate Taxonomy* (2011)) it was felt, however, that *kansuensis* is probably NOT a valid taxon. There are specimens from S Koko Nor Range 37°N 100°E & from Tatung Shan 37°15'N 100°E, and there are sight records from Qilian Shan.

Macneil's Deer *Cervus macneilli*

Five – incl two well antlered, pretty much alpha stags – 'scoped S of Yushu on 9th.

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

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

White-lipped Deer *Przewalskium albirostris*

201 animal-days. Noted on two dates.

Goitred Gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa*

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

Tibetan Gazelle *Procapra picticaudata*

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*

One in flight at Koko Nor on 4th.

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

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

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

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* P

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

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

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

Saker *Falco cherrug*

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

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

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*

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

Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*

166+ bird-days. Noted on 12 dates.

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

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

Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*

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

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

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

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

One [IG] on 10th.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

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

Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis*

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

Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

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

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

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

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*

88+ bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

Tibetan Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes thibetana*

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

Pallas' Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

c70 in desert W of Koko Nor on 16th.

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

Eurasian Eagle-Owl *Bubo bubo*

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

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

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

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

3-4 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

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

Tibetan Grey Shrike *Lanius giganteus*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Three seen extremely well on 3rd.

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

Henderson's Ground Jay *Podoces hendersoni*

Four on 14th.

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

Hume's Groundpecker *Pseudopodoces humilis*

96 bird-days. Noted on 11 dates.

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

White-browed Tit *Parus superciliosus*

Eight bird-days. Noted on four dates.

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

30 bird-days. Noted on seven dates.

Long-billed Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha maxima*

52 bird-days. Noted on five dates – main event a flock of 34 at Koko Nor on 4th, showing wonderfully well...

Elwes' Horned Lark *Eremophila elwesi*

Widespread – not systematically recorded.

Tarim Hill Warbler *Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris*

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

Gansu Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus kansuensis*

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

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

Kozlov's Babax *Babax koslowi*

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

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

Giant Laughingthrush *Garrulax maximus*

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

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

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Heard in two locations at Koko Nor on 4th.

Chinese Nuthatch *Sitta villosa*

15 N of Xining on 3rd – outstanding views!

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

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

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

Kessler's Thrush *Turdus kessleri*

36+ bird-days. This emblematic species was noted on five dates.

Guldenstadt's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus*

160+ bird-days. Noted on eight dates.

White-rumped Snowfinch *Onychostruthus taczanowskii*

c145 bird-days. Seen on nine dates this was easily 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...

Mongolian Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes mongolicus*

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

Przevalski’s Rosefinch *Urocynchramus pylzowi*

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

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

Eastern Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilloides*

35+ bird-days. Noted on five dates.

White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carniceps*

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