

# 'EASY' SICHUAN

6 – 25 MAY 2006

## TOUR REPORT

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**GROUP MEMBERS:** AL BOGGESS, NANCY BOGGESS, CHUCK BRAUN, ADIE COLLINGWOOD, CAROLE DAVIES, STAN DAVIES, DANIEL GRUNEBERG, MICHAEL HOLLINGS and OLWEN HOLLINGS.

Birdquest's second 'Easy' tour to Sichuan was a great journey through the breath-taking landscapes of this large and varied Chinese province, on which we recorded 284 species of birds and no fewer than 16 mammals. We managed to see a remarkable proportion of Chinese endemics and Sino-Himalayan specialities with just a tiny bit of physical effort. Families that were especially well represented include pheasants and partridges (11 species seen and another heard), robins, chats and thrushes (28 species), warblers (29 species) and babblers (30 species, including six parrotbills). The Bird of the Trip was without any doubt the fabulous Chinese Monal that we observed so incredibly well on its snow-covered alpine slope. Other highlights included Snow Partridge, Verreaux's Monal Partridge, Tibetan Snowcock, Blood Pheasant, Temminck's Tragopan, Koklass, White Eared and Lady Amherst's Pheasants, Black-necked Crane, Eurasian Eagle Owl, White-tailed Rubythroat, Rufous-headed Robin, Firethroat, Golden Bush Robin, Grandala, Severtzov's and Crested Tit-Warblers, Great, Brown, Grey-hooded and Fulvous Parrotbills, Sukatshev's, Giant and Rusty Laughingthrushes, Emei Shan Liocichla, Sooty, Black-browed, White-browed and Père David's Tits, Przevalski's Nuthatch, Wallcreeper, Sichuan Jay and Hume's Groundpecker. Quality mammals included Red Panda, Takin and Chinese Ghoral.

The tour started in earnest in Chengdu, the modern capital of the large province of Sichuan. Upon arrival we were warmly welcomed by Kathy, our experienced local guide/translator. On our first afternoon we visited one of the city's parks for some enjoyable introductory birding. Several lovely encounters with cute Vinous-throated Parrotbills made us all avid members of the parrotbill fanclub. We found a nice selection of Phylloscopus warblers, a genus we were to become very familiar with over the following weeks. Other interesting species here included Common Kingfisher, Himalayan Wagtail, Chinese Bulbul, Chinese Blackbird, the dainty Rufous-faced Warbler, Red-throated Flycatcher, Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, White-browed Laughingthrush, Red-billed Leiothrix, Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, Black-throated Tit, Black-naped Oriole and the impressive Yellow-billed Grosbeak. Early next morning found us again at the park, where now people were practising taichi. A couple of hours strolling through this attractive place with its temples, musea and bamboo copses added Black-crowned Night Heron, Striated Heron, White-breasted Waterhen, Rufous-capped Babbler and Ashy Drongo to the tally. The Yellow-billed Grosbeaks really stole the show as they were collecting nesting material almost at our feet. After a scrumptious buffet breakfast at the hotel we drove south through the rice paddies of the Red Basin to fabled Wawu

Mountain. A stop in the foothills gave us Collared Finchbill and Grey-capped Greenfinch. Upon arrival it started to drizzle and dense mist sabotaged our birding efforts for the rest of the day. On our first full day at Wawu Shan (Roof Tile Mountain) we took the cable car to the top, where we spent a delightful time wandering over the bamboo choked open spruce and fir forest that covers the plateau. In this great habitat we concentrated on finding several more of the parrotbill guild and came away with excellent sightings of Brown, Fulvous and the very localized Grey-hooded Parrotbill. Other goodies included Crested Honey Buzzard, Oriental and Lesser Cuckoos, Himalayan Swiftlet, a dazzling Golden Bush Robin, Brownish-flanked and Aberrant Bush Warblers, Bianchi's Warbler, Blyth's Leaf, Large-billed Leaf, Buff-barred and Lemon-rumped Warblers, Slaty-blue and Rufous-gorgeted Flycatchers, Black-faced Laughingthrush, Stripe-throated and White-collared Yuhinas, Rufous-vented Tit, the only recently described Sichuan Treecreeper and a smart male Vinaceous Rosefinch. We also bumped into a Red Panda, and although the encounter was a bit brief, it was pure magic nevertheless. We were impressed by the wide variety of tree species, of which the attractive Dove or Handkerchief Tree, the blue flowering Anna Paulowna Tree, the bizarre Cunningham's Fir and the many Dawn Redwoods stood out. The next day we explored the middle elevations of Wawu Shan. The morning turned out very misty and we experienced continuous rain, but goddess Orni was in a very good mood, as we had fantastic views of three female Temminck's Tragopans and several male and female Lady Amherst's Pheasants. The glorious, incredibly attractive males of the latter were especially much appreciated. Cherished moments!! Slowly walking through the beautiful mixed broad-leaved, conifer forest yielded Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon (what an amazing song!), Darjeeling Woodpeckers feeding young at the nesthole, Brown Dipper, Slaty-backed Forktail, Pygmy Wren-Babbler (great views), Spotted and Rusty Laughingthrushes, Yellow-browed and Yellow-bellied Tits and Gould's Sunbird.

Early next morning, before dawn, we enjoyed great studies of a cooperative Himalayan Wood Owl (a split from Tawny Owl). It turned out very misty again, and although we heard several Emei Shan Liocichlas, it took a while before we managed to get satisfactory views for the whole group of this expert endemic skulker. We then took the cablecar again to the top plateau, where we waited quite a while at a strategically-chosen open area. Here, in quick succession we obtained dynamite views of species like Rufous-breasted Accentor, Golden Bush Robin, White-bellied Redstart and Swinhoe's Striped Squirrel. A pair of Great Parrotbills took our breath away with a splendid performance at minimal distance. White-throated Needletails showed briefly and then the mist came down and the rain really ruined our birding efforts for the rest of the day. The only other bird of note was a Whistling Hawk Cuckoo. Early next morning we made another try for mid elevation birds but we were again rained out. Extremely frustrating. After a tasty breakfast we boarded our bus for the long drive to Chengdu and Wolong. An Ashy-throated Parrotbill saved the day. On the drive we witnessed the Chinese way of life in the small villages and on the endless ricefields. In late afternoon we arrived at our very nice hotel in Wolong.

Our first day at Wolong started with a Raccoon Dog just before dawn. All the higher and middle elevations of the Wolong Reserve were covered in a thick blanket of fresh snow and although we were very grateful for the splendid and often awesome scenery and the many "Christmas" photos, we also felt a bit frustrated by the relative lack of activity. Big flocks of Plain Mountain Finches had been pushed down by the inclement weather. Rosy Pipits were everywhere and striking Himalayan Red-flanked Bluetails and Blue-fronted Redstarts showed well. We heard a distant Firethroat and found another male Golden Bush Robin, Daurian Redstart, several impressive Giant and Elliot's Laughingthrushes, Grey-backed Shrike and Common and Chinese White-browed Rosefinches. In the afternoon we visited the famous Wolong Giant Panda centre where we saw these highly attractive gentle giants play, climb trees and gnaw bamboo. There were quite a few young Pandas and it was great fun to see them frolicking about. It gave us a good feeling to see them doing so well, especially as the Chinese have started to release these rare animals again into the wild. Later we checked out some nearby fields and forest edge where Golden Eagle, Asian House Martin, Eurasian Hoopoe and Asian Brown Flycatcher showed. We also heard Golden Pheasants call from a steep rise.

Early next morning we still found the slopes of Balang Shan covered in deep snow. Just before dawn, high above the treeline we briefly heard a Wood Snipe call and when I went to fetch the bus I observed a Grey Wolf run in the distance. Dawn was really impressive, with clear skies over

tremendous mountain scenery. We then positioned ourselves at our favourite viewpoint where Carole soon found a terrific male Chinese Monal in all its glory. The scope views of this mega beauty were out of this world and we could admire all the details of its exquisite finery. Not much later we also observed him in flight below us, allowing views of the large white rump patch. It was then already clear what the Bird of the Trip was going to be! The supporting cast here consisted of Himalayan Griffon Vultures, several superb Lammergeiers, Brandt's Mountain Finch, White-winged Grosbeak and several Chinese Goral. We then headed up towards the pass itself, where at a breath-taking 4500m and amidst really thick snow we observed a flock of fabulous Grandala – the celestial males are real eye candy. Himalayan Marmot, a female Red-breasted Rosefinch and an imposing Himalayan Snowcock also obliged. Lower down we investigated a patch of tall bushes where we found a Northern Goshawk, a flock of Lemon-rumped Warblers, Buff-throated Warbler, White-browed Fulvetta, Maroon-backed Accentor, rare Black-browed Tits and Grey-headed Bullfinches, but best of all was the herd of more than 30 rarely-observed Takin on a mountain slope. Several big males, many females and a few young of this awkward-looking mammal were grazing on an alpine meadow. Our eyes feasted on the Gnu-like horns and the long golden-yellow woolly coat of this amazing animal. A Birdquest first!!

We started our last full day at Wolong in a patch of alpine scrub with another big flock of divine Grandala, but the main bird here was undoubtedly that smashing male Firethroat that put up such a great show!! A couple of Chinese Babax and a Grey-crested Tit also appeared and higher up, at the treeline, we located several more Lammergeiers, Eurasian Black Vulture, Snow Pigeon, Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch and a Moupin Pika. Near the pass Snow Partridges and a Tibetan Snowcock were found feeding together and an Alpine Accentor allowed for great views. Lower down scrubby alpine bushes held a cracking White-tailed Rubythroat and a furtive Severtzov's Tit-Warbler and at the last stop of the day we added a male Chinese Goshawk, a Golden Eagle on its eyrie, Hill Pigeon, Grey-headed Woodpecker and Eurasian Crag Martin to the list. Next morning it was biting cold in the area of alpine scrub that we wanted to explore. Two magnificent males White-tailed Rubythroat vied for attention and we observed a couple of Tibetan Snowcocks flying uncharacteristically high across a really wide valley. But, we were totally stunned by the jaw-dropping spectacle of displaying and sparring males Blood Pheasant that we managed to observe undisturbed from our bus at minimal distance. A truly magnificent spectacle! After breakfast and scoping a male Godlewski's Bunting and a White-throated Dipper at the hotel we left the Balang Shan/Wolong area and drove via a beautiful gorge towards the north. A roosting Eurasian Eagle Owl was a great find and a male Wallcreeper posing in the scope for all was very much appreciated. Other goodies on our drive today included Hodgson's Redstart and several really smart White-throated Redstarts. In the afternoon we walked along a quiet road through beautiful coniferous forest where a couple of White Eared Pheasants, a trio of Sichuan Jays and several dainty and incredibly charming Crested Tit-Warblers made us all gasp! Not much seemed to go right at the hotel in Maerkang, so that chapter is better forgotten, but the full day in the nearby fir and spruce forest, interspersed with juniper scrub and small patches of deciduous bushes was a delight. It started with a male Koklass Pheasant that we surprised along the road and continued with fairly brief views of Verreaux's Monal Partridges and scope views of cracking Blood Pheasants. A Black and a Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker posed at length, a Maroon-backed Accentor scurried in the undergrowth, a Long-tailed Thrush sang in a treetop, a Slaty-backed Flycatcher and several Chinese Fulvettas obliged, the localized Przevalski's Nuthatch showed off, a Bar-tailed Treecreeper tried to remain unseen and several Pink-rumped Rosefinches could be admired.

A travelling day followed, whereby we drove from Maerkang to the town of Hongyuan, situated on the Tibetan plateau. A distinctive Tibetan feeling was palpable everywhere with characteristic houses, traditionally dressed people, thousands of yaks, clusters of prayer flags, golden chortens and colourful yurts. Short stops added lots of new birds like Goosander, Ruddy Shelduck, Upland Buzzard, Pacific Golden Plover, a surprise Grey-headed Lapwing, Tibetan and Horned Larks, Citrine Wagtail, Black Redstart, Daurian Jackdaw, Azure-winged Magpie, Common Raven (huge) and Tibetan Siskin. But the most wanted bird was obviously the regal Black-necked Crane, that we observed so well in its marshy habitat. A dozen or so of these stately birds were studied in detail and photographed and videod at length. In the afternoon we explored a bush-covered valley where Black Stork, Siberian Stonechat, Père David's Laughingthrush, White-browed Tit and a male

Przevalski's Rosefinch (for the lucky ones) were noted. Our full day on the Tibetan plateau had to be curtailed quite a bit, as we were told about a closed road that resulted in a rather dramatic detour. On our drive over the undulating grasslands we picked up several family parties of adorable Hume's Ground-Jays, found an active eyrie of imposing Upland Buzzards, encountered several more Black-necked Cranes, scoped a Little Owl and Pale Martins at a colony and noted unobtrusive Twites. Black-lipped Pikas abounded and a Red Fox with its two cubs provided more entertainment. The latter part of the journey today took us through beautiful steep-sloped mountains cloaked in dense mixed forest and in late afternoon we arrived at the world famous National Park of Jiuzhaigou.

It is one of the main tourist attractions in Sichuan and its many, mainly Chinese visitors have caused the park authorities to ban private transport from the park. Luckily we still had our own bus and after the obligatory entrance formalities, including getting our photos taken, we drove into this spectacularly beautiful park. At our first port of call we observed a couple of well-behaved and extremely localized Sukatschev's Laughingthrushes. On the road several Blood Pheasants obliged again and then it started to rain. So, we had a look at the lovely waterfalls for which the park is so famous. After several hours, the rain finally subsided and we then visited a beautiful valley cloaked in larch and birch where soon a skulking Rufous-headed Robin showed to some of us. We all had great views of Sooty and Père David's Tits, Chinese Nuthatch and Spotted Nutcracker, but on the whole it was rather quiet.

On our second day in Jiuzhaigou we enjoyed splendid sunshine and first walked a stretch of road where we scoped a couple of retiring Chinese Thrushes and a Chinese Nuthatch. We revisited our favourite valley but the Rufous-headed Robin really played hard to get and some of us had to make do with brief views only. Scope views of singing male Indian Blue Robin provided some consolation as did lots of Chinese Leaf Warblers and a Yellow-streaked Warbler. We also visited the spectacular waterfalls, the aquamarine lakes and took lots of photographs with and without our cute local guide dressed in traditional costume. Luckily, we found the famous Primeval Forest virtually abandoned by people and were able to admire several eye-catching Three-banded Rosefinches at minimal distance. Wonderful moments. The Siberian Chipmunks were very playful and tame and in late afternoon we found a herd of 32 Bharal, including some really big rams, on a distant slope. The next morning we wanted to explore some scrubby hillsides just outside the park. We had to climb a little bit to get to some decent habitat and located species like Oriental Turtle Dove, Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, Dark-sided Flycatcher, Père David's Laughingthrush, a pair of Blanford's Rosefinch (for a few lucky souls) and several Père David's Rock Squirrels in a mosaic of fields, hedgerows and patches of dense scrub. In the afternoon we visited some high altitude scrub where a superb male Siberian Rubythroat allowed excellent studies as did Olive-backed Pipit and Songar Tit. We spent lots of time scoping near and distant slopes but no gamebirds obliged. Early next morning, while loading our bus, we heard a Grey Nightjar sing from the slope above the hotel. At our first stop Daniel found us a splendid Blue Eared Pheasant, that sadly did not stay long enough for everyone to see as it disappeared into dense bush. The rest of the day was taken up by the long drive through the deep cut steep sided valley of the turbulent Min river. The trip was only interrupted by several Blue Rock Thrushes and by beautifully groomed white Yak bulls (posing for photography).

We arrived in time at Qingcheng Shan for some initial exploration and readily found a splendid male Tiger Shrike, a "seesawing" Forest Wagtail and a modest Swinhoe's Minivet. Parties of eye-catching white-headed Himalayan Black Bulbuls and a Eurasian Jay on its nest were also noted. An after dinner owling session did not yield anything, but early next morning we were rewarded with splendid looks at a couple of Northern Boobooks. We also heard a distant Asian Barred Owlet. Another visit to the mountain gave us the same assortment of species and in a different patch of woodland we watched Indian Cuckoo, Sulphur-breasted Warbler and big flocks of Black-throated Tits (complete with many cute fledglings). Red-billed Starling and Crested Myna were the last additions to the list before we reluctantly started the long return journey home. Our marvellous travels through some of the most beautiful and gamebird-rich spots of Sichuan had come to their end.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

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

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

### PODICIPEDIDAE

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: One showed well at the marshy lake above Jiuzhaigou.

### ARDEIDAE

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Small numbers were observed in Chengdu.

Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*: A single bird was seen in flight in Chengdu.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*: Regular observations of this widespread species.

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*: Scattered records of small numbers, always in lovely breeding plumage. The scientific epithet *bacchus* (= wine) refers to the colour of the head, neck and breast in breeding attire.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: Small numbers were seen on the longer journeys.

Great Egret *Egretta alba* (NL): A single bird was observed in Chengdu.

### CICONIIDAE

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*: An immature bird showed well in the Hongyuan region.

### ANATIDAE

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* (H): We heard it in the marshlands of the Hongyuan region. The race involved is *rubrirostris*.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*: Common in the Hongyuan region.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*: Three were seen in flight on the Tibetan plateau.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*: Fairly common on the colourful lakes at Jiuzhaigou.

Goosander (Common Merganser) *Mergus merganser*: A pair was scoped in the Hongyuan region.

### ACCIPITRIDAE

Crested Honey Buzzard (Oriental H B) *Pernis ptilorhyncus*: Three observations only of this migratory species.

Black-eared Kite *Milvus lineatus*: Fairly common in the Hongyuan region.

Lammergeier (Bearded Vulture) *Gypaetus barbatus*: No fewer than seven observations of this magnificent species. We managed to see the wispy beard!! Both adults and dark immature birds were noted. Always a great bird to see well!!

Himalayan Griffon Vulture (H Griffon) *Gyps himalayensis*: Fair numbers at Balang Shan and in the Maerkang and Hongyuan regions.

Eurasian Black Vulture (Cinereous Vulture) *Aegypius monachus*: We observed a single bird flying with Himalayan Griffon Vultures at Balang Shan. It is considered as **Near-Threatened** by BirdLife International in "Threatened Birds of the World".

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*: A male showed well at Wolong.

Chinese Goshawk *Accipiter soloensis*: Good views of a crisp male near Rilong. The scientific epithet refers to the town of Solo, in Java, Indonesia.

Besra *Accipiter virgatus*: A small male showed well at Wawu Shan.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: Small numbers of this familiar bird of prey were noted all over our itinerary.

Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*: A single bird performed nicely at Qingcheng Shan.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*: Just a handful of observations of this well-known bird. The form concerned is sometimes considered a separate species: Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo*

*burmanicus*. The status of this form, which is now increasingly treated as a separate species (as, for example, in Rasmussen & Anderton's milestone work *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*) is still poorly understood, but it probably breeds widely from Tibet to Sichuan, Shaanxi and Shanxi.

Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*: 11 sightings of these big 'eagle-buzzards' in the Hongyuan region. Best of all were the views at a well-positioned eyrie.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*: No fewer than ten observations. We found a cliff at Balang Shan with more than a dozen old eyries, of which one was occupied.

#### FALCONIDAE

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: As always, surprisingly scarce: only three were noted.

#### PHASIANIDAE

Snow Partridge *Lerwa lerwa*: Four of these handsome birds were spotted by Daniel at Balang Shan and admired by all in the scope. Great stuff!!!

Verreaux's Monal Partridge (Chestnut-throated P) *Tetraophasis obscurus*: We all heard their distinctive voices at Mengbi Shan and managed to get fair views of these retiring gamebirds.

Tibetan Snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus*: Several excellent encounters amidst the awesome high mountain scenery at Balang Shan, where amongst others we observed and photographed a bird at minimal distance. Remarkably, early one morning we saw a very vocal couple fly very high across a wide valley – quite an unusual sight!! The distinctive Palearctic genus *Tetraogallus* consists of five closely-related species, which all occur in remote and steep mountainous areas and are all highly-desired by Palearctic birding enthusiasts. One usually has to work hard to see snowcocks!!!

Blood Pheasant *Ithaginis cruentus*: We did well with this attractive pheasant, turning up six at Wolong, four at Mengbi Shan and five at Jiuzhaigou. Excellent views for all!!! But best of all were those two sparring males that performed so incredibly well for c20 minutes at minimal distance next to our bus near Wolong. Two different races were seen. The well-deserved number two in the Bird of the Trip contest. The favourite bird for Michael, Olwen and Chuck.

Temminck's Tragopan *Tragopan temminckii*: Fantastic close up views of three females at Wawu Shan, but sadly no male this year.

Koklass Pheasant *Pucrasia macrolopha*: We first heard it at Wolong and then most of us got great views of a cracking male next to the road. Michael saw a female at Jiuzhaigou.

Chinese Monal *Lophophorus lhuysii*: **THE BIRD OF THE TRIP!!** Fantastic, close up scope views in perfect light of a brilliant male perched up in a conifer at Wolong. What a mega bird! Well done, Carole! Another male was found nearby and we also saw them flying below us so we were able to admire their exquisite finery. This splendid species is endemic to montane west central China and its total range covers less than 50,000 square km. It is considered as **VULNERABLE** by BirdLife International in "Threatened Birds of the World", a splendid book on the dire fate of 10% of the world's avifauna. The favourite bird for Adie, Carole and Stan.

White Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*: A nice sightings of these huge and impressive beasts. Good scope views of two foraging birds. It is considered as **Near-Threatened** by BirdLife International in "Threatened Birds of the World".

Blue Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon auritum*: Increasingly difficult to see at Jiuzhaigou, where we first could not find any, but then luckily Daniel found us a bird that sadly, only performed for half of the group.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*: Scattered records of small numbers of this well-known species from Balang Shan to Jiuzhaigou. No less than 19 races are known from China.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* (H): Heard nearby at Wolong, but as this was an “Easy tour”, we had to leave them in peace on their steep mountain slope.

Lady Amherst’s Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae*: No fewer than six magnificent observations at Wawu Shan! One of the males performed very well for all of us, showing off his resplendent plumage. The bird is named after Sarah, Countess Amherst (1762-1838), first wife of William Pitt Amherst, Governor General of Bengal from 1822 till 1828. The favourite bird for Al, Nancy and Daniel.

#### RALLIDAE

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*: A couple of observations of this widespread bird.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: A single observation of this well-known species.

#### GRUIDAE

Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis*: A total of 20 of these magnificent birds in the marshlands of the Hongyuan region. We also found an active nest. This species is restricted as a breeding bird to the Tibetan plateau. It is considered as **VULNERABLE** by BirdLife International in “Threatened Birds of the World”, a splendid book on the dire fate of 10% of the world’s avifauna.

#### CHARADRIIDAE

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: A single was seen in the Hongyuan area.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*: A single bird in lovely breeding attire in the Hongyuan area.

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*: It came as a surprise to find this species on the Tibetan plateau.

#### SCOLOPACIDAE

Wood Snipe *Gallinago nemoricola* (H): The distinctive ‘song’ was only heard briefly, just before dawn at Balang Shan. The rather dire weather conditions obviously had something to do with that. It is considered as **VULNERABLE** by BirdLife International in “Threatened Birds of the World”.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*: Common in the Hongyuan region.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: A single migrant in the Hongyuan region, whilst we were admiring the Black-necked Cranes.

#### LARIDAE

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*: Three were found in the Hongyuan area.

#### STERNIDAE

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Small numbers at wetlands in the Hongyuan region. We saw birds with black bills (*longipennis*), but also with partially red bills (race?).

#### COLUMBIDAE

Rock Dove (R Pigeon) *Columba livia*: Feral birds were fairly common in the Red Basin, with a few elsewhere.

Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris*: Eight showed quite well on the Golden Eagle cliff at Balang Shan and others were found on our drive towards the Tibetan plateau.

Snow Pigeon *Columba leuconota*: First we observed a flock of 20 of these smart pigeons at Balang Shan and later found another two.

Speckled Wood Pigeon *Columba hodgsonii* (NL): One of us obtained brief views of a flying bird at Wawu Shan.

Red Turtle Dove (R Collared D) *Streptopelia tranquebarica*: A pair was foraging at the edge of a Tibetan village on the plateau.

Oriental Turtle Dove (Rufous T D) *Streptopelia orientalis*: Just a few observations on our travels.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*: Fairly common in Chengdu.

Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon (W-t Pigeon) *Treron sphenura*: Scope views of a singing bird at Wawu Shan. A truly remarkable song!

#### CUCULIDAE

Whistling Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx nisicolor*: Seen and heard at the lower levels of Wawu Shan.

Large Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparverioides*: Widespread and fairly common in forested areas. Calls all through the night as well as all day!

Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*: We obtained fair views of a bird at Qingcheng Shan. A very distinctive song.

Common Cuckoo (Eurasian C) *Cuculus canorus*: Widespread and fairly common, especially in more open areas.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*: Widespread but rather uncommon in forested areas. Usually heard only, but several excellent observations at Wawu Shan.

Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus*: Fairly common at Wawu Shan and Jiuzhaigou. Mostly heard, but several remarkable scope studies.

Common Koel (Asian K) *Eudynamis scolopacea* (H): A few heard at Wawu Shan and Qingcheng Shan.

#### STRIGIDAE

Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*: Perfect scope views of a roosting bird in the Rilong area. A much-appreciated surprise, as we were looking for Wallcreepers at the time.

Collared Owlet *Glaucidium brodiei* (H): We heard it at Wawu Shan and at Jiuzhaigou, but it remained a voice in the distance.

Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides* (H): One was heard pre-dawn at Qingcheng Shan.

Northern Boobook *Ninox japonica*: Excellent views of two in the gardens at Qingcheng Shan. A recent split from Brown Hawk Owl *Ninox scutulata*.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*: We saw a single bird on the Tibetan plateau.

Himalayan Wood Owl *Strix nivicola*: Perfect and prolonged close up views of one at Wawu Shan. This form used to be lumped in Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* but it sounds quite different from this well-known species.

#### CAPRIMULGIDAE

Grey Nightjar *Caprimulgus jotaka* (H): We heard it at Jiuzhaigou and also at Qingcheng Shan, but always rather distantly.

#### APODIDAE

Himalayan Swiftlet *Collocalia brevirostris*: Up to ten together at Wawu Shan.

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*: Good views of several flying low over the forest at Wolong. The race involved is *nudipes*.

Common Swift *Apus apus*: Several at Beijing airport.

Fork-tailed Swift (Pacific S) *Apus pacificus*: Fairly widespread but patchy, in small or moderate numbers.



House Swift *Apus nipalensis*: A few on our travels in the Red Basin.

#### ALCEDINIDAE

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: Two showed quite well at the park in Chengdu and another was scoped at Qingcheng Shan.

#### UPUPIDAE

Eurasian Hoopoe (Common Hoopoe) *Upupa epops*: A couple of sightings on the Tibetan Plateau and a single bird near Chengdu.

#### CAPITONIDAE

Great Barbet *Megalaima virens* (H): We heard it distantly on Wawu Shan.

#### PICIDAE

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* (H): Heard distantly in riverine scrub near Hongyuan.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*: Perfect scope views of a well-behaved male near Rilong.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*: Several excellent sightings of a male at the edge of the Tibetan plateau. A truly great bird!!

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* (H): A couple were heard at Jiuzhaigou.

Darjeeling Woodpecker *Dendrocopos darjellensis*: Great scope views of birds feeding hungry young at the nesthole at Wawu Shan.

Grey-capped Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*: A single bird showed well at Wawu Shan.

Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker *Picooides tridactylus*: Gorgeous scope studies of a female at the edge of the Tibetan plateau.

#### ALAUDIDAE

Tibetan Lark (Long-billed Calandra Lark) *Melanocorypha maxima*: A total of 14 in the Hongyuan region, at the edge of the species' distribution. Always a bit distant.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*: Very common in the Hongyuan region.

Horned Lark (Shore Lark) *Eremophila alpestris*: Fairly common in the Hongyuan region.

#### HIRUNDINIDAE

Pale Martin *Riparia diluta*: Great scope views at a colony in the Hongyuan region.

Eurasian Crag Martin *Hirundo rupestris*: Regular observations in the highlands.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Quite common in the Red Basin.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*: Fairly common in the Red Basin and up to the foothills.

Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus*: Fairly widespread away from the plains and sometimes fairly numerous, with up to 20 in a day. Great looks at birds in their nest on a rock face at Balang Shan.

#### MOTACILLIDAE

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*: A single bird on top of Wawu Shan. The very long hind toe was very obvious.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (H): Heard distantly on the Tibetan Plateau.

Olive-backed Pipit (O Tree P) *Anthus hodgsoni*: Unusually few this year, with just a few observations.

Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus*: Common at Balang Shan and a few at Jiuzhaigou. Lovely breeding attire.

Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*: Great scope views in the trees at Qingcheng Shan where the males continually uttered their see-saw song.

Citrine Wagtail (Yellow-hooded W) *Motacilla citreola*: c20 in the Hongyuan region. Splendid to see up to four birds chase each other in display. Two races were seen, *calcarata* (which breeds on the Tibetan plateau) and the nominate (breeds further north).

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: Fairly widespread in small numbers, being most common at Wawu Shan.

Himalayan Wagtail *Motacilla [alba] alboides*: Common almost throughout.

#### CAMPEPHAGIDAE

Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Coracina melaschistos*: One showed briefly in a park at Chengdu.

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*: Fairly common in all higher altitude forested areas.

Swinhoe's Minivet (Brown-rumped Minivet) *Pericrocotus cantonensis*: Perfect scope views of one at Qingcheng Shan.

#### PYCNONOTIDAE

Collared Finchbill (C Finch-billed Bulbul) *Spizixos semitorques*: Regular observations of this striking species.

Chinese Bulbul (Light-vented B) *Pycnonotus sinensis*: Fairly common in the Red Basin up to the foothills.

Himalayan Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus*: Small numbers at Wawu Shan and at Qingcheng Shan. Really smart looking with their white heads.

#### CINCLIDAE

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*: Five observations of this well-known species.

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*: Two showed very well not far from Wawu Shan.

#### TROGLODYTIDAE

Winter Wren (Northern W) *Troglodytes troglodytes*: Recorded in small numbers at the edge of the Tibetan plateau.

#### PRUNELLIDAE

Maroon-backed Accentor *Prunella immaculata*: Singles at Wolong and Mengbi Shan. Always quite secretive.

Rufous-breasted Accentor *Prunella strophiatea*: Fairly common at high altitudes at Wawu Shan, Balang Shan and Mengbi Shan, plus a single at Jiuzhaigou.

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*: Fantastic views high up at Balang Shan.

#### TURDIDAE

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*: A fine male was scoped in the scrub south of Jiuzhaigou.

White-tailed Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis*: A couple of males of these stunning little birds performed at length at Balang Shan. Always a delight to observe.

Rufous-headed Robin *Luscinia ruficeps*: Good views for most of this mega-bird at Jiuzhaigou. They were not terribly cooperative. One of the least known birds in Asia! It is considered as **VULNERABLE** by BirdLife International in "Threatened Birds of the World".

Firethroat *Luscinia pectardens*: It took a while, but eventually we all obtained stunning views of a male at Wolong, where we also heard another two. A magnificent species!! It is considered as **Near Threatened** by BirdLife International in "Threatened Birds of the World".

Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea*: Fairly common by voice at Wolong and Jiuzhaigou. Glorious scope studies of a singing male at Jiuzhaigou! A real cracker of a bird.

Himalayan Red-flanked Bluetail (H Orange-f Bush Robin) *Tarsiger cyanurus*: Fairly common at higher levels at Balang Shan, in the Maerkang region and at Jiuzhaigou.

Golden Bush Robin *Tarsiger chrysaesus*: Three excellent observations of these glowing little birds at upper levels on Wawu Shan and in Wolong.

White-browed Bush Robin *Tarsiger indicus*: Small numbers of these secretive birds were heard at Wawu Shan, where a male performed all too briefly.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*: Common in the Hongyuan region.

Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*: Small numbers below Mengbi Shan and near Hongyuan.

Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*: Common in high level forest and alpine meadows at Balang Shan and Mengbi Shan.

White-throated Redstart *Phoenicurus schisticeps*: Small numbers of these very smart redstarts were seen in the Maerkang region and at Jiuzhaigou. A real jewel of a bird!

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*: Just a few records.

Plumbeous Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*: Widely distributed and fairly common along rivers throughout, apart from the Hongyuan region.

White-bellied Redstart *Hodgsonius phaenicuroides*: Two males really showed off at Wawu Shan. What a performance!

White-capped Redstart (River R, River Chat) *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*: Common from Wolong to Jiuzhaigou, apart from the Hongyuan region.

Grandala *Grandala coelicolor*: Perfect scope views of wonderful males in sunny conditions at Balang Shan. The blue colour of their finery is really out of this world. We also admired their bee-eater-like flight. Several fair-sized flocks were noted. A truly magnificent species!

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura*: Small numbers in the Hongyuan region.

Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea* (NL): A single bird was noted at Qingcheng Shan.

Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis*: Small numbers at Chengdu and at Qingcheng Shan.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*: Several males were noted near cliff faces on travelling days.

Blue Whistling Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*: Widely scattered records of small numbers from Wawu Shan till Qingcheng Shan.

Long-tailed Thrush *Zoothera dixonii*: Great scope views of a singing bird at the edge of the Tibetan plateau.

Chinese Blackbird (Mandarin B) *Turdus mandarinus*: Common at Chengdu and small numbers elsewhere in the Red Basin. This very distinctive form surely deserves full species status.

Chestnut Thrush *Turdus rubrocanus*: Fairly common at Jiuzhaigou. Attractive!!

Kessler's Thrush (White-backed T) *Turdus kessleri*: We found this striking species fairly commonly from Balang Shan to the approaches to Jiuzhaigou. A town bird at Hongyuan.

Chinese Thrush (C Song T) *Turdus mupinensis*: We first heard this accomplished songster at Jiuzhaigou, and later obtained excellent scope views of a couple of feeding birds.

Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus*: Two at Wawu Shan gave quite good views in the streambed below us. The seven species of Forktail are one of the more adorable targets for birdwatchers in Asia.

#### SYLVIIDAE

Chestnut-headed Tesia *Tesia castaneocoronata*: We heard this delightful mite at Jiuzhaigou, and it was briefly glimpsed.

Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler *Cettia fortipes*: Common, by voice at Wawu Shan, where we obtained repeated good views. Others were heard elsewhere on our travels. A very distinctive song.

Aberrant Bush Warbler *Cettia flavolivacea*: Common at Wawu Shan, where several showed at length.

Yellowish-bellied Bush Warbler *Cettia acanthizoides* (H): A single was heard in the high altitude bamboo at Wawu Shan.

Grey-sided Bush Warbler *Cettia brunnifrons*: Heard and seen at Balang Shan.

Brown Bush Warbler *Bradypterus luteoventris*: Brilliant views of two at Wawu Shan. Quite a song!!

Plain-tailed Warbler *Seicercus soror*: A single at Wawu Shan. On average, the lowest altitude representative of the 'Golden-spectacled Warbler' complex.

Grey-crowned Warbler *Seicercus tephrocephalus*: Fairly common at moderate altitudes at Wawu Shan and at Wolong.

Bianchi's Warbler *Seicercus valentini*: Common in most high altitude areas.

Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps*: A couple of these distinctive warblers were found at Wawu Shan.

Rufous-faced Warbler *Abroscopus albogularis*: Small numbers in Chengdu and at Qingcheng Shan, where it favoured tall bamboos while uttering its remarkably hard-to-pinpoint song. A striking species.

Sulphur-breasted Warbler *Phylloscopus ricketti*: Great views of two of these handsome warblers at Qingcheng Shan.

Blyth's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*: Common in most forested areas at moderate to high altitudes.

Emei Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus omeiensis* (H): Very frustrating this year, as the birds failed to respond to the tape. A total of four were heard at Wawu Shan. Birdquest trips have located this species across a huge swathe of Central China!

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*: A few were recorded on our travels.

Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*: Commonly recorded from all forested areas at moderate to high altitudes, but rare around Maerkang. The most distinctive song in Sichuan!!

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*: A couple of migrants were found in a park in Chengdu on our first afternoon.

Buff-barred Warbler *Phylloscopus pulcher*: Common in all high altitude forests.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*: A single bird was located in a patch of scrub at Balang Shan.

Lemon-rumped Warbler *Phylloscopus chloronotus*: Numerous in all higher altitude forested areas.

Chinese Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus sichuanensis*: Small numbers were noted at Wolong and at Jiuzhaigou. Sings from the treetops. A recent study (Martens et al, 2004) suggests to change the scientific name of Chinese Leaf Warbler to *P. yunnanensis*, whilst yet another new species has now been recognized in the Pallas's Warbler complex: Sichuan Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus forresti*.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*: A single migrant was noted at Chengdu.

Hume's Leaf Warbler (Buff-browed W) *Phylloscopus humei*: Small to moderate numbers from the Maerkang region to Jiuzhaigou. A very distinctive song.

Yellow-streaked Warbler *Phylloscopus armandii*: A few played hide and seek at Jiuzhaigou.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*: Fairly common in the high altitude scrub of the Hongyuan region.

Tickell's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*: Fairly common in high altitude scrub from Balang Shan to the Hongyuan region and Jiuzhaigou.

Buff-throated Warbler *Phylloscopus subaffinis*: Several at Mengbi Shan and Wolong.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*: Small numbers of this well-known species in the Maerkang area.  
Severtzov's Tit-Warbler (White-browed T-W) *Leptopoecile sophiae*: Several nice observations at Balang Shan, but not everyone managed to connect with this adorable little critter;  
Crested Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile elegans*: Regular cracking observations at the edge of the Tibetan plateau. What a splendid bird the male is!! Those colours, simply out of this world. The crest is only rarely raised.

#### MUSCICAPIDAE

Chinese Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis glaucicomans*: Fair looks at a pair at Jiuzhaigou. Chinese Blue Flycatcher is a preferable English name as this requires no modifier for the residual Blue-throated Flycatcher.

Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassina*: Good views of several at Wawu Shan. A widespread species.

Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*: A single migrant at Jiuzhaigou.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*: We found a couple of these widespread birds at Wolong.

Slaty-blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolor*: Several excellent sightings of this subtly attractive species.

Slaty-backed Flycatcher *Ficedula hodgsonii*: Two males in conifer forest at the edge of the Tibetan plateau.

Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher *Ficedula strophinata*: Small numbers in most high altitude forested areas.

Red-throated Flycatcher (Taiga Flycatcher) *Ficedula albicilla*: Good views of two at Chengdu.

Grey-headed Flycatcher (G-h Canary F) *Culicicapa ceylonensis*: Small numbers at Wawu Shan, Wolong and Qingcheng Shan.

#### TIMALIIDAE

Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis*: It took a while, but after a bit of effort we obtained good views of three at Jiuzhaigou.

Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*: Three showed well in Chengdu.

Scaly-breasted Wren-Babbler *Pnoepyga albiventer* (H): A single bird was heard singing at Wawu Shan.

Pygmy Wren-Babbler *Pnoepyga pusilla*: Glorious views of this little mite at Wawu Shan. Excellent stuff!

Rufous-capped Babbler *Stachyris ruficeps*: Fairly common at Chengdu and at Qingcheng Shan.

Great Parrotbill *Conostoma oemodium*: Magnificent eye-ball to eye-ball views of a couple of birds at Wawu Shan. What a performance!!

Brown Parrotbill *Paradoxornis unicolor*: Two birds really showed off at Wawu Shan. Cherished moments!

Ashy-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis alphonsianus*: A single performed quite well in the Wawu Shan region.

Vinous-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis webbianus*: Quite common and showing well at Chengdu and also noted at Qingcheng Shan.

Grey-hooded Parrotbill (Crested P) *Paradoxornis zappeyi*: This very restricted range endemic was admired at Wawu Shan. It is considered as **VULNERABLE** by BirdLife International in "Threatened Birds of the World", a splendid book on the dire fate of 10% of the world's avifauna.

Fulvous Parrotbill *Paradoxornis fulvifrons*: Two of these beautiful little birds at Wawu Shan. Simply endearing.

Chinese Babax *Babax lanceolatus*: We found two at Wolong but they did not perform too well.

Père David's Laughingthrush (Plain L) *Garrulax davidi*: Fairly common in the Hongyuan area and in the drier scrub above Jiuzhaigou. The bird is named after the famous Abbé Père Armand David, a 19th century French missionary to China, naturalist, intrepid explorer and author. A splendid book about this amazing man and his accomplishments is: "Travels in Imperial China: The Exploration & Discoveries of Père David" by George Bishop.

Sukatschev's Laughingthrush (Snowy-cheeked L) *Garrulax sukatschewi*: Splendid views of a pair at close range at Jiuzhaigou. This Chinese endemic is considered as **VULNERABLE** by BirdLife International in "Threatened Birds of the World", a splendid book on the dire fate of 10% of the world's avifauna.

Giant Laughingthrush *Garrulax maximus*: Quite common at Balang Shan and in the Maerkang region. Many great views.

Spotted Laughingthrush *Garrulax ocellatus*: One was briefly seen at Wawu Shan.

Rusty Laughingthrush *Garrulax poecilorhynchus*: Several excellent encounters with this accomplished songster at Wawu Shan.

Hwamei *Garrulax canorus* (H): Heard only at Chengdu and at Qingcheng Shan.

White-browed Laughingthrush *Garrulax sannio*: Common and very cooperative at Chengdu.

Elliot's Laughingthrush *Garrulax elliotii*: Common in all higher altitude forested areas. Best experiences were had in the Primeval Forest at Jiuzhaigou where birds were totally unafraid.

Black-faced Laughingthrush *Garrulax affinis*: Good views of a single bird at Wawu Shan.

Red-winged Laughingthrush *Garrulax formosus* (H): Sadly, only heard rather distantly at Wawu Shan. A pity!

Emei Shan Liocichla *Liocichla omeiensis*: Regularly heard at Wawu Shan, where, at first, we struggled a bit to get good views of this Chinese endemic, but eventually we all obtained very satisfying looks. The species' range is wider than once thought. It is considered as **VULNERABLE** by BirdLife International in "Threatened Birds of the World". A closely related form was very recently discovered in NE India!

Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*: We saw several at Chengdu and found it to be fairly common (by voice) at Wawu Shan and Qingcheng Shan.

White-browed Fulvetta *Alcippe vinipectus*: A single bird showed well in alpine scrub at Wolong.

Chinese Fulvetta *Alcippe striaticollis*: Three showed well at Mengbi Shan.

Streak-throated Fulvetta *Alcippe cinereiceps*: Common and cooperative at Wawu Shan.

Brown-capped Fulvetta *Alcippe brunnea*: A single showed briefly at Qingcheng Shan.

Grey-cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe morrisonia*: Fair numbers at Chengdu and at Qingcheng Shan.

Stripe-throated Yuhina *Yuhina gularis*: Four showed nicely at Wawu Shan.

White-collared Yuhina *Yuhina diademata*: Fairly common at Wawu Shan, Wolong and Jiuzhaigou. Very approachable in flowering rhododendrons.

## AEGITHALIDAE

Sooty Tit (White-necklaced T) *Aegithalos fuliginosus*: An excellent showing at Jiuzhaigou, where we obtained stunning views of numerous birds. A Chinese endemic.

Black-browed Tit *Aegithalos bonvaloti*: Good views of two in a patch of scrub on the lower slopes of Balang Shan. Not often recorded!

Black-throated Tit (Red-headed Tit) *Aegithalos concinnus*: Small to moderate numbers in Chengdu, at Wawu Shan and at Qingcheng Shan. Delightful little critters. The young birds especially are really adorable little things.

## PARIDAE

Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus*: Great looks at a single bird at Wawu Shan. Unobtrusive!!

White-browed Tit *Parus superciliosus*: Three performed very well in the high altitude scrub of the Hongyuan region. Endemic to west central China.

Songar Tit *Parus songarus*: Singles were noted at Mengbi Shan and Jiuzhaigou. Recent genetic studies show that *songarus* in the strict sense is close to Willow Tit *P. montanus* after all, so may not merit specific status, whereas the *weigoldicus/affinis* forms of the Tibetan Plateau are very distinct, so these may soon be split off as Tibetan Tit or suchlike. Keep tuned.

Grey-crested Tit *Parus dichrous*: Not uncommon in the high altitude forests of Mengbi Shan and Jiuzhaigou. Many great views.

Père David's Tit (Rusty-breasted Tit) *Parus davidi*: Good looks at small numbers at Jiuzhaigou. A bird of mixed forest. Endemic to central China.

Yellow-bellied Tit *Parus venustus*: Small numbers of this handsome Chinese endemic at Wawu Shan, Jiuzhaigou and Qingcheng Shan.

Rufous-vented Tit *Parus rubidiventris*: Regular in all high altitude forests.

Coal Tit *Parus ater*: Fairly common at Wawu Shan and Jiuzhaigou.

Japanese Tit *Parus [major] minor*: Scattered records of small numbers from the Red Basin right up to the Tibetan Plateau in the Hongyuan region.

Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus*: Fairly common in most forested areas.

#### SITTIDAE

Chinese Nuthatch (Snowy-browed N) *Sitta villosa*: Repeated great looks at posing birds at Jiuzhaigou. A real cutie!!

Przevalski's Nuthatch *Sitta przewalskii*: A single bird performed well in the Maerkang region. Always a good one to get.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*: Good looks at a couple of these well-known birds at Jiuzhaigou.

#### TICHODROMADIDAE

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*: Fantastic views of this magnificent species!!! A single was found clambering over rocks at Balang Shan and an exquisite male was scoped en route to Maerkang. One of those must see birds!! Always a favourite!!

#### CERTHIIDAE

Bar-tailed Treecreeper *Certhia himalayana*: A single bird showed well at the edge of the Tibetan plateau.

Eurasian Treecreeper (Common T) *Certhia familiaris*: A few at Wawu Shan, in the Maerkang region and at Jiuzhaigou.

Sichuan Treecreeper *Certhia tianquanensis*: Great looks at several at Wawu Shan. This interesting relict form, restricted to northwest Sichuan, was originally described as a new race of Eurasian Treecreeper but has recently been treated as a full species (and is probably more closely related to Brown-throated Treecreeper *C. discolor*).

#### NECTARINIIDAE

Gould's Sunbird (Mrs Gould's S) *Aethopyga gouldiae*: Small numbers at Wawu Shan and at Wolong. The male is a real jewel.

#### ZOSTEROPIDAE

Chestnut-flanked White-eye *Zosterops erythropleurus*: Just a single bird at Qingcheng Shan.

Japanese White-eye *Zosterops japonicus*: Common at Qingcheng Shan and small numbers at Chengdu and Wawu Shan.

## ORNIOLIDAE

Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*: Three showed brilliantly at Qingcheng Shan and a single was seen at Chengdu.

## LANIIDAE

Tiger Shrike *Lanius tigrinus*: A resplendent male allowed prolonged scope studies at Qingcheng Shan. A striking species, that is more secretive than other shrikes.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*: Four observations.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*: Three sightings in the Red Basin.

Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*: Common from Wolong to Jiuzhaigou. No fewer than 41 observations!!

## DICRURIDAE

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*: Two encounters only.

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*: Good views of a couple at Chengdu.

Hair-crested Drongo (Spangled D) *Dicrurus hottentottus*: Small numbers at Wawu Shan and at Qingcheng Shan. A great tail.

## CORVIDAE

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: Small numbers of the race *sinensis* all over the tour. The pair at the nest at Qingcheng Shan was particularly cooperative. No less than 40 races have been described of this well-known species.

Sichuan Jay *Perisoreus internigrans*: Five showed very well at the edge of the Tibetan plateau. This Chinese endemic always behaves rather unobtrusively. It is considered as **VULNERABLE** by BirdLife International in "Threatened Birds of the World".

Blue Magpie (Red-billed B M) *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*: Not uncommon at Wawu Shan, at Wolong and at Qingcheng Shan.

Azure-winged Magpie (Asian A-w M) *Cyanopica cyanus*: Not uncommon in the Hongyuan region and near Beijing airport. Following the discovery of significant genetic differences, the isolated Iberian form *cooki* (which lacks a white tail tip) merits being split off as Iberian Magpie or Iberian Azure-winged Magpie. If the latter name is adopted the residual *C. cyanus* is renamed Asian Azure-winged Magpie.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*: Fairly common in the Hongyuan region.

Hume's Groundpecker *Pseudopodoces humilis*: At least 25 of these odd little bounders in the Hongyuan region, right at the edge of their range. Perfect scope views of adults and fledglings near their nest holes. Recent genetic research suggests that *Pseudopodoces* (but not the very different-looking *Podoces*) is an aberrant, terrestrial tit! Hence the use of the name Hume's Groundpecker rather than the more familiar Hume's Ground Jay.

Spotted Nutcracker (Eurasian N) *Nucifraga caryocatactes*: Small numbers at Jiuzhaigou. Here members of the southern group, with much less spotting.

Alpine Chough (Yellow-billed C) *Pyrrhocorax graculus*: Common at Balang Shan.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*: Small numbers at Balang Shan, near Hongyuan and in the Jiuzhaigou region.

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*: A total of 18 on the Tibetan plateau and at Jiuzhaigou.

Oriental Crow *Corvus orientalis*: Small numbers all over the circuit. Now that Hooded Crow *C. cornix* has been once again split from *C. corone* it is logical to give specific status to the now hugely isolated eastern population.



Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchus*: Scattered records of small numbers from Wawu Shan to Jiuzhaigou.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*: Ten individuals of the huge Tibetan race were observed on the Tibetan plateau. Really big boys!!

#### STURNIDAE

Red-billed Starling (Silky Starling) *Sturnus sericeus*: Two showed well in the gardens of our hotel at Qingcheng Shan.

Crested Myna *Acridotheres cristatellus*: A single was observed on roadside wires in the Red Basin.

#### PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Regular encounters on the Tibetan plateau.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: Recorded in small to moderate numbers in the Red Basin and the Maerkang/Hongyuan region.

Adam's Snowfinch (Tibetan S) *Montifringilla adamsi* (NL): A single was seen by Adie from the bus on the Tibetan plateau.

#### ESTRILDIDAE

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*: Four at the edge of a weedy patch below Wawu Shan.

#### FRINGILLIDAE

Grey-capped Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica*: Great views of small numbers below Wawu Shan and at Qingcheng Shan.

Tibetan Siskin (Tibetan Serin) *Carduelis thibetana*: Flighty flocks were noted on the Tibetan plateau and at Jiuzhaigou.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*: Small numbers in the Hongyuan region.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* (H): A few were heard at Jiuzhaigou.

Plain Mountain Finch *Leucosticte nemoricola*: Good views of good numbers at Balang Shan after a severe snowstorm.

Brandt's Mountain Finch *Leucosticte brandti*: Up to 30 at Balang Shan. Close up views.

Blanford's Rosefinch (Crimson R) *Carpodacus rubescens* (NL): A pair was seen well by several participants in the Jiuzhaigou area.

Dark-breasted Rosefinch *Carpodacus nipalensis*: A single female was noted at Wawu Shan.

Common Rosefinch (Scarlet R) *Carpodacus erythrinus*: A few at Wolong.

Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus davidianus*: Small numbers were noted at Balang Shan, Mengbi Shan and in the Hongyuan region.

Pink-rumped Rosefinch (Stresemann's R) *Carpodacus eos*: Good views at Balang Shan and Mengbi Shan.

Vinaceous Rosefinch *Carpodacus vinaceus*: Great looks at two males at Wawu Shan. Tertian tips!!

Three-banded Rosefinch *Carpodacus trifasciatus*: Fantastic close up views of several birds at Jiuzhaigou. Splendid stuff!!

Chinese White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus dubius*: Small numbers at Balang Shan and in the Maerkang region.

Streaked Rosefinch (Eastern Great R) *Carpodacus rubicilloides* (NL): A single female was seen in alpine scrub at Balang Shan.

Red-breasted Rosefinch (Red-fronted R) *Carpodacus puniceus*: Scope views of a female quietly feeding amongst mossy rocks at Balang Shan. This hardy species is usually considered to be the highest breeding species in the Palearctic!

Przevalski's Rosefinch (Pink-tailed R) *Urocynchramus pylzowi* (NL): A distant male was observed by several participants in the Hongyuan area.

Grey-headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythaca*: Common at Jiuzhaigou and also a few at Wolong. A lovely species.

White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carnipes*: Fair numbers at Balang Shan and Mengbi Shan. Many good views.

Yellow-billed Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria*: At least eight showed brilliantly at Chengdu. Several birds were collecting nesting material and performed very, very well. Also called Chinese Grosbeak.

#### EMBERIZIDAE

Godlewski's Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*: Scope views of a single male in the Balang Shan area.

## MAMMALS

Black-lipped Pika *Ochotona curzoniae*: Quite common on the Tibetan plateau.

Moupin Pika *Ochotona thibetana*: Scattered records of singles or couples from Balang Shan and Mengbi Shan.

Cape Hare *Lepus capensis*: A single was noted at Jiuzhaigou.

Père David's Rock Squirrel *Sciurotamias davidianus*: A couple performed nicely at Jiuzhaigou.

Siberian Chipmunk *Tamias sibiricus*: Small numbers at Jiuzhaigou. Sometimes extremely tame.

Himalayan Marmot *Marmota himalayana*: A few at Balang Shan and quite a few on the Tibetan plateau.

Perny's Squirrel (Perny's Long-nosed Squirrel) *Dremomys pernyi*: Three at Qingcheng Shan.

Swinhoe's Striped Squirrel *Tamias swinhoei*: A few at Wawu Shan.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*: Two playing cubs and an adult on the Tibetan plateau. The closely related Tibetan Fox *Vulpes ferrilata* looks quite different.

Raccoon Dog *Nyctereutes procyonoides*: One was seen at Wolong and another at Jiuzhaigou.

Grey Wolf *Canis lupus*: A leader only animal, which I spotted when I fetched the bus after trying for the Wood Snipe at Balang Shan.

Siberian Weasel *Mustela sibirica* (NL): Adie saw one of these golden-coloured carnivores at Balang Shan.

Red Panda *Ailurus fulgens*: Fairly brief looks at this extraordinary animal at Wawu Shan. A much desired and much appreciated mammal!!! Not closely related to the Giant Panda!!

Chinese Goral *Nemorhaedus caudatus*: Nine were found feeding along forest edges at Wolong. Strange animals!!

Bharal (Blue Sheep) *Pseudois nayaur*: We found 2 males high up at Balang Shan and another 32 above Jiuzhaigou.

Takin *Budorcas taxicolor*: A great surprise was finding a herd of over 30 of these really bizarre and rarely-seen animals on a slope at Wolong. Definitely one of the highlights of the tour!!