

Qinghai/Sichuan Mammal Report - 18th June to 9th July 2016



Tibetan Antelope

Nigel and Sissel Goodgame - nigel.goodgame@gmail.com

Guide – Sid Francis – chengduuk@hotmail.com

Itinerary and mammals seen

18th June – Airport pickup drive to Tangjiahe – Night drive Tangjiahe – Asian Black Bear, Takin, Chinese Goral, Chinese Serow, Reeve's Muntjac, Tufted Deer, Pere David's Rock Squirrel, Pearson's Horseshoe Bat

19th – Morning Tangjiahe – Hog Badger, Chinese Ferret Badger, Yellow-throated Martin, Tibetan Macaque

Drive to Ruorgai – night drive – Chinese Mountain Cat, Black-lipped Pika, Himalayan Marmot, Tibetan Fox

20th – Baxi morning – Siberian Roe, Tufted Deer

Ruorgai Cats night – Pallas's Cat, Tibetan Fox

21st – Ruorgai/Baxi morning – drive to Luqu

22nd – Luqu to Yushu via Erla Pass – Kiang, Tibetan Gazelle, Tibetan Fox

23rd – Kanda pass – back to Lushu - McNeills Red Deer, Glover's Pika, Blue Sheep

24th – drive to Zhidui – White-lipped Deer

25th – Zhidui – White-lipped Deer, Tibetan Gazelle, Tibetan fox, Red Fox

26th – drive to Qumarleb – White-lipped Deer, Tibetan Gazelle

27th – Qumarleb to Budongquan – Tibetan Antelope, Kiang, Tibetan Gazelle

28th – morning Yak Valley drive to Dulan – Tibetan Antelope, Wild Yak, Tibetan Gazelle

29th – drive to Chaka, Night drive – Gansu Red Deer, Mongolian Five-toed Jerboa

30th – morning Rubber Mountain – night drive Chaka – Corsac Fox

- 1st – drive to Gancha – Przewalski's Gazelle
- 2nd – morning Przewalski's Gazelle – drive to Huzhu Beishan, night drive – Gansu Red Deer
- 3rd – morning Huzhu Beishan – drive to Linxia
- 4th – Linxia to Ruorgai
- 5th – Baxi – Sika Deer, Tufted Deer
- 6th – Morning Baxi – drive to Wolong
- 7th – Wolong/Balang
- 8th – morning Balang – drive to Dujiangyan – Chinese Goral and Flower-nosed Bat at Dujiangyan
- 9th – flight home Chengdu

This trip illustrates, with new and upgraded road systems, how mammal/birding trips, to the Tangjiahe and Ruorgai areas of North Sichuan can be easily combined with a tour of the major mammal watching sites in Qinghai. We used Chengdu Airport, with its various flight options, as the arrival/departure point, but future trips, where clients were not so interested in following up on the Sichuan birding options we made for the end of the itinerary, could choose a flight departure from Xining in Qinghai.

During the first 3 days of the Sichuan section we already picked-up the outstanding ticks of Asian Black Bear (Mother and single cub; the first animals we saw at Tangjiahe), Takin, Chinese Serow, Chinese Goral, Hog Badger, Tibetan Macaque, Yellow-throated Martin and last but not least, around Ruorgai/Baxi, Pallas's and Chinese Mountain Cat (with 2 kittens), Tibetan Fox, Siberian Roe, Tufted and Sika Deer.

During the Qinghai section of the trip we able to see Tibetan Antelope, Przewalski's Gazelle, Tibetan Gazelle, Kiang, Tibetan Fox, Corsac Fox, Wild Yak, White-lipped Deer, McNeill's and Gansu Red Deer, Glover's Pika, Wooly Hare and Mongolian five-toed Jerboa

Our final list of mammals came to 34 species

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| 1. Black-lipped Pika | 18. Wild Yak |
| 2. Glover's Pika | 19. Kiang |
| 3. Himalayan Marmot | 20. Blue Sheep |
| 4. Confucian Niviventer | 21. Przewalski's Gazelle |
| 5. Mongolian Five-toed Jerboa | 22. Tibetan Gazelle |
| 6. Wooly Hare | 23. Tibetan Antelope |
| 7. Chinese Ferret Badger | 24. Reeve's Muntjac |
| 8. Hog Badger | 25. Tufted Deer |
| 9. Tibetan Fox | 26. Siberian Roe |
| 10. Red Fox | 27. Sika Deer |
| 11. Corsac Fox | 28. Red Deer (McNeill's and Gansu Ssp) |
| 12. Chinese Mountain Cat | 29. White-lipped Deer |
| 13. Pallas's Cat | 30. Chinese Goral |
| 14. Wild Boar | 31. Chinese Serow |
| 15. Asian Black Bear | 32. Takin |
| 16. Pearson's Horseshoe Bat | 33. Pere David's Rock Squirrel |
| 17. Flower-nosed Bat | 34. Tibetan Macaque |

Birding also gave some great ticks – outstanding birds included Tibetan Bunting, Tibetan Babax, Tibetan Rosefinch, Tibetan Sandgrouse, Tibetan Lark, Henri's Snowfinch, Blanford's Snowfinch, Pere David's Snowfinch, Black-necked Crane, Przewalski's Redstart, Przewalski's Finch, Guldenstadt's Redstart, Henderson's Groundjay, Blue and White Eared Pheasant, Chinese Grouse

Sites

Tangjiahe

Most of the mammal watching time was given to night drives. However, the daytime ticks included mother and cub Asian Black Bears that were spotted, during early evening, half way between the park gate and hotel. Takin was an easy tick but the badgers proved more elusive. We all got brief views of Hog Badger but only Sissel managed to see the Chinese Ferret Badger, which was also seen by the two groups that preceded and followed ours. A pair of road crossing Yellow-throated Martins were seen well on our drive out of the park.

Ruoergai

Once again our cat sites gave results. On the first night we were easily able to find Chinese Mountain Cat – an adult presumed to be the mother with two well grown kittens. Our second night at the site gave a single Pallas's Cat found sleeping between large boulders. Locals living close to the site have also seen Pallas's Cat kittens.

Baxi

Visited both at the beginning and end of trip – scanning for ungulates gave results. Tufted Deer and Siberian Roe seen well, and we got great views of 3 Sika Deer that passed just under us at the high pass area in the direction of Jiuzhaigou.

214 Xining to Yushu Highway

Lots of Kiang, Tibetan Gazelle and a few Tibetan Fox seen from this road – particularly on the sections immediately before and after Madoi. After years of construction, the G214 motorway is almost complete – this makes for fast driving but difficulty in finding safe stopping points to scan and photograph. The old G214 still runs on one side of the new road – a slower option but one that gives options for both parking and walking into the grassland. We got into Qinghai and onto the 214 on the road from Luqu, Gansu (2 hours north of Ruoergai) that leads to Xinghai in Qinghai. Although some of this route is still under construction the drive was an easy 9 hours – which, after the road is completely finished, will be reduced by at least another hour.

Yushu to the Kanda Pass

As the 214 starts to wind its way through rocky gorges there is the chance to scan the mountain sides for ungulates. We picked up a herd of McNeills Red Deer during a breakfast stop – the same scanning site also giving Glover's Pika and Blue Sheep.

Zhidai

Although we picked up our first White-lipped Deer in this area the grassland was full of herder tents and domestic animals. Mammal sightings – Tibetan Gazelle, Tibetan and Red fox – were few and far between. The S308 road that links Yushu, Zhidai, Qumarleb and Budongquan is completely finished and allows very quick, comfortable passage between the sites.

Qumarleb

The hill-sides around the town gave more sightings of White-lipped Deer.

Qumarleb to Budongquan

The closer we got to the Kekexili desert the more animals we began to see. Our first antelopes were seen roadside from the S308 at around 50km from the Budongquan junction to the G109. On the G109, around Budongquan, Antelopes were common – all being males with the females having moved into fawning areas. Other animals were Kiang and Tibetan Gazelle.

Although hotels at Zhidai and Qumarleb had been adequate the choice around Budongquan has been limited to over-priced, trucker quality accommodation. However, during this trip we were lucky enough to find rooms at an antelope protection station – clean dormitory room at 50RMB/bed.

Wild Yak Valley

We had to travel 64km up the bumpy valley road to find wild Yaks – they were all scoped up on the high valley pastures. Gazelles also present but we were unsuccessful in finding Argali.

Around Dulan

A Gansu Red Deer was scoped at a Przewalski's Redstart site just to the north of the town.

Around Chaka

The first night-drive gave several Jerboa. These animals are fairly easy to catch and we were able to identify them as Mongolian five-toed.

During the second night's drive we caught a pair of Corsac Fox in our spotlight – just before we had seen Badger but were not able to determine which species.

Around Gancha

Przewalski's Gazelle were easy to find in an area around 40 minutes east of the town – many males

Huzhu Beihe

A night-drive in the area gave nice road-side views of a female Red Deer



Chinese Mountain Cat



Woolly Hare



Tibetan Fox



Tibetan Antelope



Kiang



White-lipped Deer



Tibetan Gazelle



Prezwalski's Gazelle



Mongolian Five-toed Jerboa (Sid Francis)



Himalayan Rubythroat



Prezwalski's Pinktail

Nigel Goodgame