



birdtour **ASIA**
specialists in asian birding tours

Sichuan and Shaanxi, China

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Temminck's Tragopan, Labahe NNR

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This year our Sichuan itinerary took a dramatic twist, with the closure of Wawu Shan we had to search for an alternative. We decided on including Emei Shan once more, a site we were disappointed to ditch after 2007, and also Labahe NNR, both of which provided highlights that we wouldn't have had using our previous years itinerary. We recorded a total of 321 species, including such Sichuan specialities as Rufous-headed Robin, Firethroat, Barred and Sukatchev's Laughingthrushes, Purple Cochoa, 13 species of galliform with prolonged views of male Lady Amherst's and Golden Pheasants and outrageous views of several male Temminck's Tragopans.

With most of us arriving into Chengdu a day ahead of schedule, we picked up the remaining two participants at the airport (with KLM keeping up their reputation for losing checked baggage during tight connections!) before carrying on south through the countryside along the expressway and eventually winding our way up Emei mountain and arriving at our hotel in the early evening in the thick fog.

Worryingly, during our breakfast, the thick fog had not only remained, but was joined by a mighty gust and heavy rain not ideal for a two-day hike down a mountain! Waiting for an extra hour or so the weather eventually cleared to the point that we weren't too daunted by the prospect of birding outside... good job we did, as we hit a couple of purple patches during the morning that made it all worthwhile; one flock in particular containing Golden Parrotbill, Grey-hooded and Golden-breasted Fulvettas, our first Elliot's Laughingthrush, Darjeeling and Crimson-breasted Woodpeckers, Red-billed Leiothrix, White-browed Shortwing and Abberant and Yellowish-bellied Bush Warblers, while a later flock contained a pair of Vinaceous Rosefinch and Mrs Gould's Sunbird. The most fascinating aspect of walking down the mountain is the shift in species composition, most notable in the warblers – we started off with Bianchi's Warbler, then by mid-morning it was replaced with Marten's Warbler for the rest of the day, and most of the following day. *Phylloscopus* were dominated by Blyth's, Buff-barred and Sichuan Leaf Warblers, with smaller numbers of Large-billed Leaf.

We reached Wannian Temple, a slightly dilapidated structure perched preciously on top a ridge looking out over what was once glorious sub-tropical forests stretching across the surrounding steep hillsides. As expected, Speckled Wood Pigeons were perched around the temple (as on our last visit in 2007!), and more predictably were the Tibetan Macaques, waiting expectantly for their first victims. Though the macaques tried their best, circling us with the occasional grunt and show of teeth we didn't give in, though some bemused tourists almost lost their bags to a particularly bulky male macaque with a short spell of tug-of-war. We headed down, stopping for lunch at a hut, and hearing what was to be our only Emei Liocichla of the trip (unless we can count the caged bird seen later on!). The rest of the walk was relatively quiet, as the endless steps started to tire our well-used feet until we hit the final ascent to our end point, here was some beautifully tall trees, and birds became immediately more numerous. Our first Emei Leaf Warbler appeared, and then a pair of the rarely-encountered Vivid Niltava, right by the trail – their large size, habits and vocalisations clearly showing why they should not be considered conspecific with 'Taiwan' Niltava.

We arrived at our night-camp, at the beautiful Xianfeng Monastery, situated in a bowl of sub-tropical forest beneath dramatic limestone cliffs and looking out towards the 'red basin'. It was a beautiful evening just to relax our tired feet and enjoy the scenery, though it wasn't easy with such forest around us, so a short walk revealed a pair of the highly localised Chestnut-crowned Bush Warbler, then after dinner and a bit of standing around in the dark a Chinese Tawny Owl looked down on us, *hooting* in the spotlight – a fine way to end the day.



Firethroat, Labahe NNR and Emei Leaf Warbler, Emei Shan

Today would be a long walk down more winding steps, as we dropped over 1000m in elevation through some of the most stunning, dramatic scenery China, let alone Sichuan, has to offer. The birding was at times fantastic, with nearly all possible species located, starting off with a short pre-breakfast stroll as a male Purple Cochoa performed outrageously for as long as we wanted at trail-side, singing away, at times in the mid-storey – shame the camera was at the breakfast table!

As we walked down, Emei Leaf Warbler became more evident, with several singing birds, then a small feeding flock contained our only Chinese Blue Flycatcher of the tour, more leiothrix and our first White-spectacled Warbler – a common species here, though absent from other mountains including Wawu Shan due to the degradation of habitat. Funnily enough, with all the playing of Collared Owlet it wasn't long before we had a real bird sat calling just upslope from us, though the calling Oriental Scops Owl that responded to the owlet refused to budge! Black-chinned Yuhina was the next to show-up, as the feeding flocks altered the further down we trekked, followed by Pere David's Fulvetta. Laughingthrushes had been notable by their absence so it was a relief to finally find a pair of Buffy Laughingthrush by the trackside showing really well, seemingly oblivious to the noisy local tourists coming towards them – unfortunately

the Fujian Niltava a little further down was more aware of the noise and was a struggle to see until a little further down we found another, sat motionless above the track allowing prolonged views.

It was now becoming rather hot, and as we wended our way down the steps we hit a lull in activity. Finally our first forktail appeared, a dainty Little, which showed itself to half of us before disappearing into thin air, then the *Seicercus* changed once more, this time to Alstrom's Warbler, while the next *Phylloscopus* to show up was the localised Sulphur-breasted. Eventually the end was in sight, tourists were literally popping out from every nook and cranny, though 3 more Little Forktails didn't seem to mind too much, nor the bamboo-loving Rufous-faced Warbler.

Our weary legs eventually made it to our hotel after the long 2-day walk downhill. With a couple of hours of daylight we were still keen on more birding so a casual walk through farmland was surprisingly productive – several Tiger Shrike peered down from their low perches, as did a family of Long-tailed Shrike from roadside wires. Chinese Grosbeak, Red-billed Starling, White-browed Laughingthrushes and Crested Myna were also around in numbers.

Stiff legs the following morning made walking a bit tricky, and certainly at a very slow pace, even by birding standards! The first bird of the day was our main target – an Ashy-throated Parrotbill, though it took some time as they favoured tall grass, so half the time it was just the shaking of grass giving away their continual roving around before they finally gave in, peering out before sitting out, calling. Next up was the second target, a pair of Hwamei, feeding in the undergrowth, with one bird rising up to the canopy to sing and show why they are in such high-demand for the pet-trade. After that, a few bits-and-bobs showed up, Fork-tailed Sunbird, Great Barbet, Collared Finchbill, Slaty-backed Forktail, and back near the accommodation, a Chinese Bamboo Partridge that eventually ran through a clearing after some gentle persuasion.



Grandala and White-tailed Robythroat, Balang Shan

Leaving Emei Shan in the rain – which would more-or-less continue for the next 15 days - we headed to a new site for us, Labahe National Nature Reserve. Though well known for its population of Red Panda and Takin (and even Giant Panda still survives here), it's bird-life is poorly known. It took the rest of the day to get to this rather remote locality; we were just hoping it would be worth it...

Leaving our lovely accommodation shortly after dawn, in the thick fog, we drove up a long windy road in search of one of the most important birds of the tour, and boy we were not disappointed, as after just 5 minutes we grounded to a halt as in front of us, casually feeding on the road were 2 male and a female Temminck's Tragopan. We very carefully got out of the back of the vehicle, 100 metres away, attempting to be as quiet as possible – in hindsight this was a bit of a joke, as we eventually got less than 10 metres from one of the males, that even put his head down and charged towards us, before hopping on top of a stump and remaining motionless, peering down at us for over 15 minutes!

At the top of the road, a boardwalk cut through a large area of dwarf bamboo, after careful checking we had two more parrotbills under the belt – our first of several confiding Brown Parrotbills (we would find 2 nests during our time here), and a couple of ridiculously tame Fulvous Parrotbill, way too close for some of our binoculars to focus on! With the odd new bird keeping us occupied, Ferruginous Flycatcher being the most notable, we again found a pair of tragopans. These produced even better views than earlier, as the male ran under the boardwalk, so he could walk up a sloping tree-trunk and just sit directly above us, with the female joining him right next to us – one of the very few places left where a tragopan shows no fear of humans, quite wonderful!

As the clouds had lifted, it revealed a valley beneath us with 29 Takin enjoying a natural mineral source, this rare animal is also rarely observed at such a close range – we were all beginning to feel rather taken by Labahe, especially when a male Lady Amherst's Pheasant was found on the opposite slope, casually feeding out in the open, and next up was one of the tours most important birds – Firethroat! It took us a little bit of time, as he simply came too close to us in the dense bamboo by our feet, until he eventually backed-off to sing in full view in a bush rising above the bamboo.

Nothing would quite beat a morning like this, so we spent the next 1 ½ days exploring different areas of the park in search of other specialities that might be on offer, in the miserably wet weather. Slaty Bunting, a forest-dwelling Chinese endemic was present in good numbers, with several birds carrying food and offering views like I have never had before, Black-browed Tit, Emei, Kloss's and Claudia's Leaf Warblers all in the same tree, more Lady A's and tragopans, several particularly co-operative Brown Bush Warblers, flocks of Speckled Wood Pigeon, White-throated Needletail, Rosy Pipit, Slaty Blue Flycatcher, White-bellied Redstart, Rufous-bellied Niltava, a male Mandarin on a secluded forest pool, an elusive Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler, Yellow-bellied Tits and lots of Nutcracker. The only real downside was the generally slow birding, combined with the weather and our bad luck with a Red-winged Laughingthrush – to this day I'm not sure how we didn't see it, as it called so close – we would get our revenge!



Wallcreeper, Balang Shan and Crested Tit Warbler, Mengbi Shan

After 3 nights here, we took a long drive through deep misty gorges, over two 4000+m passes and down to Wolong village, arriving in the very late evening in the pouring rain, which continued to the following morning. Arriving at our allocated spot, pre-dawn, we could hear Wood Snipes displaying all around us, unfortunately the thick fog reduced visibility to just a few metres, and as dawn approached we had just about given up on any hope that the skies would clear. Amazingly the fog lifted for a mere 10 minutes and right at the crucial moment, with the Wood Snipe producing his amazing aerial display above us, at first light with the snow-capped mountains producing a dramatic back-drop and some very big smiles!

The fog soon descended once more leaving us disappointed without potential monal-spotting opportunity, though some compensation came in the form of a showy Spotted Bush Warbler and White Eared Pheasants just about visible through the mist. At our back-up monal site we found a distant female Chinese Monal but views were left-wanting so we proceeded to the pass for the high-altitude species where the weather was perhaps even worse! Snow Pigeon, Plain Mountain Finch, Alpine Accentor and Snow Partridge turned up, but otherwise it was a disappointment until we found a flock of exquisite male Grandala, a distant flock of Brandt's Mountain Finch and a couple pairs of Streaked Rosefinch. Walking down to our picnic lunch produced several gorgeous White-tailed Rubythroats in full voice and fine fettle, and some less exciting Rufous-breasted Accentor.

We headed back down towards Wolong, stopping in some scrub to see what was about – a glowing male Golden Bush Robin was quite unexpected! A couple of feeding flocks here made for a productive stop, including good views of Chinese Fulvetta and Dark-breasted Rosefinch, as a group of Crimson-browed Finch, quite a rarity in Sichuan, fed quietly by the trail and a Giant Laughingthrush was unusually quiet as it fed in an open field. Driving back down to the valley bottom, we headed for our strategic vantage point, notching up our first Chinese Babax in the process, and waited... with little but a Chinese Goral and Buff-throated Warblers singing away, optimism was notable by its absence until Ron turned up the goods and spotted a beautiful male Golden Pheasant feeding atop of a small bush, while another walked across the road, success!

Next day it was back up Balang Shan, and in position early for more scanning. This time the mist was higher (but still present!), and a male Chinese Monal was found feeding on its usual slope, along with several White Eared Pheasant, the Spotted Bush Warbler once more, and also a Maroon-backed Accentor

singing from the bush warbler bush. With our successes we headed back up to the pass, fortunately the weather was much better, Snow Partridges were more evident with a couple of groups on show, then a while later, after much scanning a Tibetan Snowcock was found just above the road, quietly feeding in an alpine meadow until another pair glided in, landing 200m further upslope. At this point the lone snowcock went bananas, raucously calling, tail-pumping as he ran up the slope, chasing the pair away!

We spent the afternoon above Wolong village along the roadside. Responsive Collared Grosbeaks were first to appear after lunch, followed by another Chinese Fulvetta and a few bits-and-pieces we had seen the previous day. Three Verreaux's Monal Partridges glided down a valley towards us but were spooked and would have to wait for another day, and rather bizarrely two Hog Badgers were strolling around by the roadside, looking completely drenched!

Feeding in the budding bushes were lots of finches, Tibetan Siskin, Grey-headed Bullfinch, White-winged Grosbeak, Chinese White-browed and Common Rosefinches, and after considerable effort, perhaps China's most elusive rosefinch, Sharpe's, with great looks at 3 birds feeding unobtrusively by the road. After lots more bush warblers, leaf warblers and fulvettas a singing male Firethroat perched out in full view was a great way to end another wonderful day.

With fingers firmly crossed for a dry day, we woke to the sound of drizzle, as we prepared ourselves for a walk to the famous Wuyipeng Panda Research Station for the day. Usually we over-night in the rather basic accommodation but with it under renovation we would have to day-trip – we were well-aware that this site was the last-chance saloon for 3 special birds, and held a few must-see species. We made surprisingly good time heading up the steep trail until we hit some of the most beautiful-looking forest in all of Asia, half expecting to see fairies bouncing along the mossy-branches, and not only that, but the weather was glorious!

Only the birds could better the weather – our very first bird on top was a stupidly tame Great Parrotbill, target #1, quickly followed by a typically inquisitive flock of Sooty Tit, a central Chinese endemic, then the next patch of bamboo held another regional endemic – yet another inquisitive parrotbill, Three-toed – what a start! Several confiding feeding flocks came our way, containing a few new birds for us, Fire-capped Tit, Green Shrike Babbler and a brief Pere David's Tit being the most notable. Our final target, Barred Laughingthrush, proved unusually quiet, and despite coming across them a few times, they never stuck around long enough for good views. Right at the end of trail, a final throw of the dice revealed a different but significant Laughingthrush as a pair of Red-winged came into view, offering views this shy bird rarely allows, and a Barred Laughingthrush popped up at the same time too! As we slowly made our way back, a Chinese Leaf Warbler performed wonderfully well, and a couple of Temminck's Tragopans were far more skittish than usual here. Just as we were about to walk back down the slope, yet another Barred Laughingthrush appeared, though this one was far more cooperative, running across a fallen log over the trail a couple of times.



Tibetan Grey Shrike, Tibetan plateau and Giant Laughingthrush, Mengibi Shan

Next day was another driving day, this time heading north-west, back over Balang Shan We stopped to watch the male Chinese Monal once more, and at the pass we finally got to grips with a confiding pair of Red-fronted Rosefinch, and much better views of Brandt's Mountain Finch. A longer than anticipated stop before lunch produced numbers of both Snow and Hill Pigeon, Lesser Cuckoo overhead in flight-display, Golden Eagle, more Black-browed Tits, our first Hume's Leaf Warblers and a male Crested Tit Warbler, the latter a surprise here though pride of place went to the nesting Wallcreepers, with the male fluttering in, bill full of food offering wonderful looks at this widespread but always a favourite species.

With heavy rain during the afternoon we headed over Mengbi Shan pass and down into 'Tibet', to the riverside town of Maerkang, looking forward to more new birds over the following days.

Mengbi Shan is one of the few mountains in the area that still retains a sizeable chunk of old-growth conifers, though the main target, Sichuan Jay didn't show on this day, all other targets did. The wet weather kept us inside the vehicle for breakfast until a racket outside revealed Verreaux's Monal Partridges very close to us. Slowly getting out and hiding by the vehicle, one bird was just about to pop into view – and it did for our lucky driver, who in all of the excitement jumped out of his seat and ran towards the bird! The humorous side of that would have to wait another 10 minutes when it finally reappeared further along the roadside, had a good look around before ungainly flapping across the road and strolling up the bank. Later on, another galliform, this time a small party of Blood Pheasant appeared below us in the mossy forest before bounding across the road. Higher up the road a few birds started to sing as the rain ground to a momentary halt; Maroon-backed Accentor, Himalayan Bluetail, Rufous-vented and Grey-crested Tits all sang away from the tree-tops, and a Long-tailed Thrush posed wonderfully, sat in full view. Feeding flocks were tough to come by, but eventually we found two pairs of Crested Tit Warbler in roadside conifers showing nicely – once again without a raised crest! In the open areas with scattered bushes, White-throated Redstart were numerous, and Giant Laughingthrushes were conspicuous, along with good numbers of Rosefinches including Pink-rumped.

After a short return visit to Mengbi Shan the following morning we headed out of 'Gorge country', gaining elevation until we hit the easternmost edge of the Tibetan plateau. Species composition changed dramatically in the space of an hour – Daurian Jackdaw, Eurasian Magpie, Azure-winged Magpie, Hodgson's Redstart, Kessler's Thrush and Carrion Crows suddenly appeared. We made a couple of productive stops, the first for some fresh yak yogurt at a roadside farm, then a search of the low-lying scrub produced all the hoped-for species, a White-browed Tit sang away at arm's length, Siberian Stonechat, Alpine Leaf and Dusky Warblers popped up, and finally so did a pair of Severtzov's Tit Warbler.

Beyond Hongyuan, and a wonderful dumpling lunch, the wide-open flower-ridden grasslands with sweeping rivers and rolling hills produced a marvellous sight. Opportunistic birding gave us our only Black-winged Snowfinch of the trip, along with Hume's Ground-Tit, a surprise female Amur Falcon, 10 Little Owls, Godlewski's Buntings, over 100 Grey-backed Shrike, 'Tibetan' Wagtail (the striking black-backed 'Citrine'), Horned Larks, Hoopoe, Black-capped Kingfisher, a minimum of 59 Eurasian Cuckoo, and our first Upland Buzzards and Ruddy Shelducks before arriving into Ruergai in the early evening.



Spectacled Parrotbill and Spectacled Fulvetta, Jiuzhaigou

With the mayhem the weather was playing we opted to spend the morning at a nearby forest patch, our first target, Blue Eared Pheasant showed only to James, performing then disappearing into the forest, followed by the mist! Much better luck came with one of the most range-restricted and elusive of China's endemics as a Sukatchev's Laughingthrush flew straight towards us from a gully below us then sitting up, and singing away – one of only a handful of occasions James has had them sat up like this. Heading further down the road we ventured up a favoured gully, finding a pair of the most striking of rosefinches – Three-banded in a large feeding flock. High above us a Przewalski's Nuthatch called away from the top of a tall conifer, though keeping our eyes to the ground failed to find the hoped-for Severtzov's Grouse, with a calling bird refusing to come into view. In a different gully we finally found another species that was so far missing – Sichuan Jay, with a pair flying over the valley then tree-hopping across the forest before disappearing out of view – result!

Back at the roadside, Pere David's Laughingthrushes came into view and the bushes were full of buds and birds, Chinese Beautiful, Common and Chinese White-browed Rosefinches, Slaty-backed Flycatcher, Grey-headed Bullfinch, several species of tit and Elliot's Laughingthrush were very common and a Grey-faced Woodpecker was new. On the way back for lunch, a stop at our regular spot revealed that a pair of Tibetan

Grey Shrikes had once again nested successfully, with 4 fledged young (they have fledged at least 3 every year since we found the nest in 2007 – where do all these youngsters go?!).

A full afternoon on the open plateau is always a wonderful occasion, and this was no exception. Heading out towards the Ruergai wetlands we found plenty of birds making use of the Plateau Pika burrows – Ground Tits, Oriental Skylarks, Horned Larks and White-rumped and Rufous-necked Snowfinches, were all numerous. The latter particularly surprising as we saw over 30 breeding birds, the first time we've encountered them at this spot before. Upland Buzzards peered down from their vantage points, though not as numerous as previous years, and just a single Saker was encountered – presumably due to the worryingly low numbers of pika this year. As we headed for 'Flower Lake', a local tourist spot, our first of 33 Black-necked Cranes came into view. Though Flower Lake has intentionally been flooded to a higher level than previous years birds were still everywhere. Good numbers of breeding Red-crested Pochard and Ferruginous Ducks were on the lake, and a few hulking Tibetan Larks were close-by, with several birds song-fighting overhead and chasing each other. An elegant White-winged Black Tern in full breeding attire flew through among the Common Terns, and the recently split Salim Ali's Swift passed through as the clouds lowered – a sign for us to get moving! Going back in the tourist bus we persuaded the driver to stop as a pair of cranes were feeding right beside the road – every tourist gasped in excitement, taking photos with their phones too.

Our drive back to the forest for dawn was halted en-route, as two Wolves decided to walk very casually along the river running alongside the road, a real buzz and a moment to savour with the scenic backdrop and very early morning light. At the forest, the Blue Eared Pheasants were found almost immediately, feeding in an open meadow, though the mist descended before anyone but James could see them! Over the course of the next 90 minutes the odd hole in the mist, for just a matter of seconds, would confirm their continued presence but there was nothing we could do about it – one of the most frustrating moments in birding! Eventually, the mist lifted, and the pheasants were wonderful – a pair with 2 fully-grown youngsters in tow. Relieved, we went back to the same spots as the previous morning, encountering much the same but in stark contrast to the previous day we had glorious sunshine beating down on us – the leaf warblers were out in force, singing everywhere! Rosefinches fed in clear view, and all-in-all it was a wonderful morning walking through the open forest, and at the end finding a pair of nest-building Sichuan Tit, which had eluded us up until this point.

Another long drive in the afternoon, heading east this time, produced little of particular note except for one stop for a Siberian Rubythroat singing from the thickets, revealing his ruby-throat, shimmering in the sunshine.



Sichuan Treecreeper and Pere David's Tit, Jiuzhaigou

Our final port of call on the tour is always the most splendid, two days inside Jiuzhaigou World Biosphere Reserve – 'the valley of Nine villages' is surely one of the most scenic spots in all of Asia, the glacial valleys contain several dramatic waterfalls, clear, turquoise lakes amid a spectacular back-drop of snow-capped mountains formed by glacial, hydrological and tectonic activity a very long time ago!

To the birder, Jiuzhaigou is better-known as the only known breeding site for the finest of all *Luscinia's*, Rufous-headed Robin. Only single figures of singing birds are known, from just two areas in the park so we headed straight to a favoured area on our first morning – after ridiculously good views of Spectacled Fulvetta while waiting for the bus. Upon entering the habitat, we heard one immediately, so slowly made our way along the boardwalk trying to be as quiet as possible, when a small passerine flew straight for us, and landed actually under the boardwalk just 2 metres from where we were standing – the powerful, melodic song of the robin began to emanate from this very spot – what to do?! As we waited patiently the robin did the right thing, and flew out to land on a bare snag right next to us for a brief period of time but

enough to soak in the details and colours before flitting off! Though very grateful for the views we had, we wanted more, which is where the robin regained control over us, playing hide-and-seek to a point where we just gave up, and made us realise how lucky we had been in the first place! We moved down for lunch in the beautiful surrounding of Zechawa village before spending the afternoon in the lower parts of the park for some more new species – these didn't take very long, first up was a small number of Spectacled Parrotbill, our 8th of the tour, at super-close range. Walking further along the boardwalk a Grey-crowned Warbler was singing ahead of us, though a Chinese Thrush also started to sing, and after a couple of flushed attempts, disappeared as the onslaught of noisy tourists began! The warbler did however show, then a large feeding flock up ahead held incredibly over 40 Spectacled Parrotbills, and a pair of Chinese Nuthatch – at last! Flushed with success, we headed out of the park, and spent a bit of time birding the scrub outside, producing more Spectacled Fulvetta, another pair of Spectacled Parrotbill and a pair of Black-streaked Scimitar Babbler giving as good a view as you can expect from these elusive birds.

With the closure of Wawu Shan, a notable omission from the checklist so far (and for all other groups this year) was Sichuan Treecreeper. Fortunately, when James and Rob first visit Jiuzhaigou many years ago they found a spot in a remoter area of the park with the treecreeper, despite not visiting here since 2004 we decided to try our luck. Though the trail wasn't the most well-marked we eventually started getting towards the right spot, when a familiar contact call to our left revealed a Sichuan Treecreeper, with a beak full of food! Over the next 20 minutes we had great views of this pair, and thankfully quite a way from James's original spot – which in hindsight was probably a rather long way in!

Later in the morning we returned to the Rufous-headed Robin area in search of Pere David's Tit, which proved surprisingly straight-forward, as we found at least 3 pairs, and an Indian Blue Robin. The robins were singing again, and giving it another go some of us ended up with nice views of the bird singing away before disappearing once more.

Wanting to find out why over 20,000 tourists come here on some days, we headed to the top of the park in the afternoon to do the tourist thing – it was spectacular. Birding was good too, with more Three-banded Rosefinch, Hodgson's Treecreepers and finally a Bar-tailed Treecreeper. To finish the day off, we visited the dramatic waterfall, 'Pearl Shoal', and relaxed a little to reflect on a great trip amidst fantastic scenery.

Our final day was a driving day, winding our way back down to the Red Basin. Though a stop at Gonggangling for a couple of hours couldn't have been better timed as we picked up a Plain-backed Thrush early on, feeding by the roadside. Another Crested Tit Warbler, Tibetan Siskin, Long-tailed Thrush and a really stonking Himalayan Bluetail was a good way to say good-bye – much better than the Brown-breasted Bulbuls and Common Pheasants further down! Once back in Chengdu, a short venture out to the local park brought about a Vinous-throated Parrotbill, unfortunately paired with an Ashy-throated – hmm, what do we make of that?!



Wolf, Tibetan plateau

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*White-browed Laughingthrush and Chinese Grosbeak (top)
Collared Owlet and Red-billed Leiothrix (middle)
Black Bulbul and Tibetan Macaque (bottom)*



*Brown Parrotbill and Takin, Labahe NNR (top)
Slaty Buntings, male and female, Labahe NNR (middle)
Temminck's Tragopan and Tibetan Snowcock (bottom)*



*Golden Eagle and Black-browed Tit, Balang Shan (top)
White-throated Redstart and Sichuan Tit, Baxi Forest (middle)
Siberian Chipmunk, Baxi and White-browed Tit, Tibetan plateau (bottom)*



*Pere David's Laughingthrush and Grey-headed Bullfinch, Baxi Forest (top)
Rufous-necked Snowfinch and Amur Falcon, Tibetan plateau (middle)
Black-necked Crane and Severtzov's Tit Warbler (bottom)*

Bird-of-the-tour

- 1 Temminck's Tragopan
- 2 Tibetan Snowcock
- 3 Rufous-headed Robin
- 4 Firethroat
- 5 Blue Eared Pheasant

Systematic List

PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

CICONIIFORMES: Ardeidae

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*
Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*
Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*
Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*
Gadwall *Anas strepera*
Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*
Ferruginous Pochard *Aythya nyroca*
Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*
Goosander *Mergus merganser*
Mandarin *Aix galericulata*

FALCONIFORMES: Accipitridae

Black-eared Kite *Milvus [milgrans] lineatus*
Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*
Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*
Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*
Besra *Accipiter virgatus*
Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*
Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*
Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus*
Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*
Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae

Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*
Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

GALLIFORMES: Tetraonidae

Severtzov's Grouse *Bonasa sewerzowi* heard only

GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae

Snow Partridge *Lerwa lerwa*
Verreaux's Monal Partridge *Tetraophasis obscurus*
Tibetan Snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus*
Chinese Bamboo Partridge *Bambusicola thoracica*
Blood Pheasant *Ithaginis cruentus berezowskii*
Temminck's Tragopan *Tragopan temminckii*
Koklass Pheasant *Pucrasia macrolopha ruficollis* heard only
Chinese Monal *Lophophorus lhuysii*
White Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*
Blue Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon auritum*

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus suehschanensis*
Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*
Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae*

GRUIFORMES: Turnicidae

Yellow-legged Buttonquail *Turnix tanki*

GRUIFORMES: Gruidae

Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis*

GRUIFORMES: Rallidae

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae

Wood Snipe *Gallinago nemoricola*
Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*

CHARADRIIFORMES: Sternidae

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo tibetana*
Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*
White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae

Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris*
Snow Pigeon *Columba leuconota*
Speckled Wood Pigeon *Columba hodgsonii*
Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis orientalis*
Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*
Red Collared Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

CUCULIFORMES: Cuculidae

Large Hawk Cuckoo *Cuculus sparverioides*
Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo *Cuculus nasicolor* heard only
Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*
Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*
Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus*
Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*

STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae

Little Owl *Athene noctua inpasta*
Oriental Scops Owl *Otus sunia stictonotus* heard only
Chinese Tawny Owl *Strix nivicola*
Collared Owlet *Glaucidium brodiei*

APODIFORMES: Apodidae

Himalayan Swiftlet *Aerodramus brevirostris*
White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*
Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus pacificus*
Salim Ali's Swift *Apus salimalii*
House Swift *Apus nipalensis*

CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae

Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata*

CORACIIFORMES: Upupidae

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

PICIFORMES: Capitonidae

Great Barbet

*Megalaima virens***PICIFORMES: Picidae**

Grey-capped Woodpecker

Dendrocopos canicapillus

Darjeeling Woodpecker

Dendrocopos darjellensis

Crimson-breasted Woodpecker

Dendrocopos cathpharius

White-backed Woodpecker

Dendrocopos leucotos tangi

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Dendrocopos major

Grey-faced Woodpecker

Picus canus sordidor

Bay Woodpecker

*Blythipicus pyrrhotis***PASSERIFORMES: Alaudidae**

Tibetan Lark

Melanocorypha maxima

Oriental Skylark

Alauda gulgula

Horned Lark

*Eremophila alpestris khamensis***PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae**

Eurasian Crag Martin

Ptyonoprogne rupestris

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Red-rumped Swallow

Cecropis daurica

Asian House Martin

*Delichon dasypus***PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae**

White Wagtail

Motacilla alba alboides

Tibetan Wagtail

Motacilla [citreola] calcarata

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

Olive-backed Pipit

Anthus hodgsoni hodsoni

Rosy Pipit

*Anthus roseatus***PASSERIFORMES: Campephagidae**

Long-tailed Minivet

*Pericrocotus ethologus***PASSERIFORMES: Pycnonotidae**

Collared Finchbill

Spizixos semitorques

Brown-breasted Bulbul

Pycnonotus xanthorrhous

Chinese Bulbul

Pycnonotus sinensis

Black Bulbul

*Hypsipetes leucocephalus leucothorax***PASSERIFORMES: Regulidae**

Goldcrest

*Regulus regulus yunnanensis***PASSERIFORMES: Cinclidae**

White-throated Dipper

Cinclus cinclus przewalskii

Brown Dipper

*Cinclus pallasii***PASSERIFORMES: Troglodytidae**

Winter Wren

*Troglodytes troglodytes szetschuanus***PASSERIFORMES: Prunellidae**

Alpine Accentor

Prunella collaris

Rufous-breasted Accentor

Prunella strophciata

Maroon-backed Accentor

*Prunella immaculata***PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae**

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush

Monticola rufiventris

Blue Rock Thrush

Monticola solitarius pandoo

Blue Whistling Thrush

Myophonus caeruleus caeruleus

Plain-backed Thrush

Zoothera mollissima

Long-tailed Thrush

Zoothera dixonii

Grey-winged Blackbird

Turdus boulboul

heard only

Chinese Blackbird
Chestnut Thrush
Kessler's Thrush
Chinese Thrush
Purple Cochoa
Lesser Shortwing
White-browed Shortwing

Turdus mandarinus
Turdus rubrocanus gouldi
Turdus kessleri
Turdus mupinensis
Cochoa purpurea
Brachypteryx leucophrys
Brachypteryx montana cruralis

PASSERIFORMES: Sylviidae

Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler
Chestnut-crowned Bush Warbler
Aberrant Bush Warbler
Yellowish-bellied Bush Warbler
Spotted Bush Warbler
Brown Bush Warbler
Severtzov's Tit Warbler
Crested Tit Warbler
Dusky Warbler
Alpine (Tickell's) Leaf Warbler
Buff-throated Warbler
Yellow-streaked Warbler
Buff-barred Warbler
Ashy-throated Warbler
Sichuan Leaf Warbler
Chinese Leaf Warbler
Hume's Leaf Warbler
Greenish Warbler
Large-billed Leaf Warbler
Claudia's (Blyth's) Leaf Warbler
Emei Leaf Warbler
Kloss's Leaf Warbler
Sulphur-breasted Warbler
Grey-crowned Warbler
Bianchi's Warbler
Alstrom's Warbler
Marten's Warbler
White-spectacled Warbler
Chestnut-crowned Warbler
Rufous-faced Warbler
Chestnut-headed Tesia

Cettia fortipes davidiana
Cettia major major
Cettia flavolivacea intricata
Cettia acanthizoides acanthizoides
Locustella thoracicus thoracicus
Locustella luteoventris
Leptopoecile sophiae obscura
Leptopoecile elegans
Phylloscopus fuscatus robustus
Phylloscopus [affinis] occisinensis
Phylloscopus subaffinis
Phylloscopus armandii armandii
Phylloscopus pulcher pulcher
Phylloscopus maculipennis
Phylloscopus [chloronotus] forresti
Phylloscopus yunnanensis
Phylloscopus humei mandellii
Phylloscopus trochiloides
Phylloscopus magnirostris
Phylloscopus [reguloides] claudiae
Phylloscopus emeiensis
Phylloscopus ogilviegranti disturbans
Phylloscopus ricketti
Seicercus tephrocephalus
Seicercus valentini valentini
Seicercus soror
Seicercus omeiensis
Seicercus affinis [subsp unknown]
Seicercus castaniceps sinensis
Abroscopus albogularis fulvifacies
Tesia castaneocoronata

PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae

Ferruginous Flycatcher
Dark-sided Flycatcher
Slaty-backed Flycatcher
Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher
Snowy-browed Flycatcher
Slaty-blue Flycatcher
Verditer Flycatcher
Fujian Niltava
Rufous-bellied Niltava
Vivid Niltava
Chinese Blue Flycatcher
Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher
Siberian Rubythroat
White-tailed Rubythroat
Rufous-headed Robin
Firethroat
Indian Blue Robin
Himalayan Bluetail
Golden Bush Robin
Oriental Magpie Robin
Black Redstart
Hodgson's Redstart
White-throated Redstart
Daurian Redstart
Blue-fronted Redstart
White-capped Redstart
Plumbeous Redstart
White-bellied Redstart
White-tailed Robin

Muscicapa ferruginea
Muscicapa sibirica
Ficedula hodgsonii
Ficedula strophinata
Ficedula hyperythra
Ficedula tricolor diversa
Eumyias thalassina
Niltava davidi
Niltava sundara denotata
Niltava [vivida] oatesi
Cyornis glaucicomans
Culicicapa ceylonensis
Luscinia calliope
Luscinia pectoralis tschebaiewi
Luscinia ruficeps
Luscinia pectardens
Luscinia brunnea
Tarsiger rufilatus
Tarsiger chrysaesus
Copsychus saularis
Phoenicurus ochruros rufiventris
Phoenicurus hodgsoni
Phoenicurus schisticeps
Phoenicurus aureus
Phoenicurus frontalis
Chaimarrornis leucocephalus
Rhyacornis fuliginosus
Hodgsonius phaenicuroides
Cinclidium leucurum

Siberian Stonechat
Grandala
Little Forktail
Slaty-backed Forktail
White-crowned Forktail

Saxicola maura przewalskii
Grandala coelicolor
Enicurus scouleri
Enicurus schistaceus
Enicurus leschenaulti sinensis

PASSERIFORMES: Timaliidae

Buffy Laughingthrush
White-throated Laughingthrush
Chinese Babax
Chinese Hwamei
White-browed Laughingthrush
Pere David's Laughingthrush
Sukatshev's Laughingthrush
Barred Laughingthrush
Spotted Laughingthrush
Giant Laughingthrush
Elliot's Laughingthrush
Black-faced Laughingthrush
Red-winged Laughingthrush
Emei Liocichla
Black-streaked Scimitar Babbler
Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler
Scaly-breasted Cupwing
Pygmy Cupwing
Rufous-capped Babbler
Red-billed Leiothrix
Golden-breasted Fulvetta
Chinese Fulvetta
Spectacled Fulvetta
Grey-hooded Fulvetta
Dusky Fulvetta
Pere David's Fulvetta
Blue-winged Siva
Stripe-throated Yuhina
White-collared Yuhina
Black-chinned Yuhina

Dryonastes berthemyi
Garrulax albogularis
Babax lanceolatus
Leucodioptron canorus
Pterorhinus sannio
Pterorhinus davidi
Ianthocincla sukatschewi
Ianthocincla lunulatus
Ianthocincla ocellatus
Ianthocincla maximus
Trohalopteron elliotii
Trohalopteron affinis
Trohalopteron formosus
Liocichla omeiensis heard only
Pomatorhinus gravivox
Pomatorhinus ruficollis
Pnoepyga albiventer
Pnoepyga pusilla heard only
Stachyris ruficeps
Leiothrix lutea
Lioparus chrysotis
Fulvetta striaticollis
Fulvetta ruficapilla
Fulvetta cinereiceps
Fulvetta brunnea heard only
Alcippe [morrisonia] davidi
Siva cyanouroptera
Yuhina gularis
Yuhina diademata
Yuhina nigrimenta

PASSERIFORMES: Paradoxornithidae

Great Parrotbill
Three-toed Parrotbill
Brown Parrotbill
Spectacled Parrotbill
Vinous-throated Parrotbill
Ashy-throated Parrotbill
Fulvous Parrotbill
Golden Parrotbill

Conostoma oemodium
Cholornis paradoxus
Cholornis unicolor
Sinornis conspicillatus
Sinornis webbiana
Sinornis alphonsianus
Sinornis fulvifrons cyanophrys
Sinornis verreauxi verreauxi

PASSERIFORMES: Aegithalidae

Red-crowned (Black-throated) Tit
Black-browed Tit
Sooty Tit

Aegithalos concinnus concinnus
Aegithalos iouschistos
Aegithalos fuliginosus

PASSERIFORMES: Paridae

Sichuan Tit
White-browed Tit
Pere David's Tit
Coal Tit
Rufous-vented Tit
Yellow-bellied Tit
Grey-crested Tit
Japanese Tit

Green-backed Tit
Yellow-browed Tit
Ground Tit

Poecile [songarus] weigoldei
Poecile superciliosa
Poecile davidi
Periparus ater aemodius
Periparus rubidiventris
Pardaliparus venustulus
Lophophanes dichrous
Parus minor minor
Parus minor tibetanus
Parus monticolus
Sylviparus modestus
Pseudopodoces humilis

PASSERIFORMES: Sittidae

Chestnut-vented Nuthatch
Chinese Nuthatch
Przewalski's Nuthatch
Eurasian Nuthatch

Sitta nagaensis montium
Sitta villosa bangsi
Sitta przewalskii
Sitta europaea

PASSERIFORMES: Tichodromidae

Wallcreeper

Tichodroma muraria

PASSERIFORMES: Certhiidae

Hodgson's Treecreeper
Bar-tailed Treecreeper
Sichuan Treecreeper

Certhia hodgsoni
Certhia himalayana
Certhia tianquanensis

PASSERIFORMES: Remizidae

Fire-capped Tit

Cephalopyrus flammiceps

PASSERIFORMES: Nectariniidae

Mrs Gould's Sunbird
Fork-tailed Sunbird

Aethopyga gouldiae dabryii
Aethopyga christinae latouchii

PASSERIFORMES: Dicaeidae

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker

Dicaeum ignipectus

PASSERIFORMES: Zosteropidae

Chestnut-flanked White-eye
Japanese White-eye

Zosterops erythropleurus
Zosterops japonicus simplex

PASSERIFORMES: Laniidae

Tiger Shrike
Long-tailed Shrike
Grey-backed Shrike
Tibetan Grey Shrike

Lanius tigrinus
Lanius schach schah
Lanius tephronotus
Lanius [sphenocercus] giganteus

PASSERIFORMES: Dicruridae

Black Drongo
Ashy Drongo
Hair-crested Drongo

Dicrurus macrocercus
Dicrurus leucophaeus salangensis
Dicrurus hottentottus brevirostris

PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae

Sichuan Jay
Eurasian Jay
Azure-winged Magpie
Red-billed Blue Magpie
Eurasian Magpie
Spotted Nutcracker
Red-billed Chough
Yellow-billed Chough
Daurian Jackdaw
Oriental [Carrion] Crow
Large-billed Crow

Perisoreus internigrans
Garrulus glandarius sinensis
Cyanopica cyana kansuensis
Urocissa erythrorhyncha
Pica pica bottanensis
Nucifraga caryocatactes macella
Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax himalayanus
Pyrrhocorax graculus digitatus
Corvus dauuricus insolens
Corvus [corone] orientalis
Corvus japonensis tibetosinensis
Corvus japonensis colonorum
Corvus corax tibetanus

Common Raven

PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae

Crested Myna
Red-billed Starling

Acridotheres cristatellus
Sturnus sericeus

PASSERIFORMES: Estrildidae

White-rumped Munia

Lonchura striata

PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae

Slaty Bunting

Emberiza siemsseni

Godlewski's Bunting

Emberiza godlewskii

PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae

Plain Mountain Finch	<i>Leucosticte nemoricola</i>
Brandt's Mountain Finch	<i>Leucosticte brandti</i>
Crimson-browed Finch	<i>Pinicola subhimachalus</i>
Dark-breasted Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus nipalensis</i>
Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus roseatus</i>
Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus davidianus</i>
Pink-rumped Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus eos</i>
Vinaceous Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus vinaceus</i>
Three-banded Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus trifasciatus</i>
Sharpe's Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus verreauxii</i>
Chinese White-browed Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus dubius</i>
Streaked Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rubicilloides</i>
Red-fronted Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus puniceus</i>
Oriental Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis sinica</i>
Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris miniakensis</i>
Tibetan Siskin	<i>Serinus thibetanus</i>
Grey-headed Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula erythaca</i>
Chinese Grosbeak	<i>Eophona migratoria sowerbyi</i>
Collared Grosbeak	<i>Mycerobas affinis</i>
White-winged Grosbeak	<i>Mycerobas carnipes</i>

PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae

Russet Sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia brevirostris</i>
Black-winged Snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla adamsi</i>
White-rumped Snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla taczanowskii</i>
Rufous-necked Snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla ruficollis</i>

PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae

Blyth's Shrike Babbler	<i>Pteruthius aeralatus ricketti</i>	heard only
Green Shrike Babbler	<i>Pteruthius xanthochlorus pallidus</i>	

MAMMALS

Tibetan Macaque	<i>Macaca thibetana</i>
Complex-toothed Flying Squirrel	<i>Troglodytes xanthipes</i>
Pallas's Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus erythraeus</i>
Swinhoe's Striped Squirrel	<i>Tamias swinhoei</i>
Himalayan Marmot	<i>Marmota himalayana</i>
Pere David's Rock Squirrel	<i>Sciurotamias davidianus</i>
Siberian Chipmunk	<i>Tamias sibiricus</i>
Plateau Pika	<i>Ochotona curzoniae</i>
Moupin Pika	<i>Ochotona thibetana</i>
Woolly Hare	<i>Lepus oiostolus</i>
Wolf	<i>Canis lupes</i>
Mountain Weasel	<i>Mustela altaica</i>
Hog Badger	<i>Arctonyx collaris</i>
Domestic Yak	<i>Bos grunniens</i>
Takin	<i>Budorcas taxicolor</i>
Common Goral	<i>Naemorhedus griseus</i>

321 species recorded including 9 heard only



Pearl Shoals, Jiuzhaigou

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