



SICHUAN, CHINA:

Chinese endemics in Sichuan's 'Heavenly' mountains

19 May - 9 June 2009, Leader: Keith Barnes, Set Departure

**Photos by Keith Barnes, Brit Thal, John and Karen Shrader and
Josh Engel**



The spectacular and rare Black-necked Cranes were a major highlight on the Tibetan Plateau and rated joint favourite bird of the trip.

Introduction

This was our most successful ever Sichuan trip, finishing off with 307 bird species for the tour, including almost all of the major Central Chinese specialties, but it was also one of the toughest. We had to deal with some major obstacles and challenges to travelling through this, simply one of the most beautiful and spectacular parts of the world! Most of the participants had been to Bhutan, in it's own right gob-smackingly gorgeous, and all had to admit that while Bhutan was more interesting culturally, Sichuan took the cake for physical beauty. Many times people would stand and just relentlessly take photos of the stunning landscapes because anything else seemed inappropriate. The Wolong region is still recovering from the horrific earthquake that shook it to its foundations last year. While access was possible, infrastructure was limited, and intermittent power and water made our time here challenging. However the spectacular scenery of Balagshan, and the incredible birds of this area more than made up for it. The Sichuan government has also decided to embark on one of their unpredictable roadworks projects. Simultaneously tearing up many miles of perfectly good mountain roads, which made travel through the province slower than expected. Although this made the trip more arduous it also took us through some new exciting areas we would otherwise never have covered, in the process unearthing some new sites that are absolute gems!



Omigosh, it's so beautiful I am going to weep, Balangshan's beauty in full cry.

Last, but by no means least, Chinese government paranoia about H1N1 (Swine flu) and the Tibetan Plateau political situation threatened to halt, or occasionally divert our progress on our planned itinerary. Here I can only thank Frank, our patient, efficient, sensible ground agent, who carefully negotiated, intelligently plotted and amazingly managed to convince a hoarde of well-armed and cigarette wielding police and army guys that they should let through the telescope-toting, khaki-clad grinning foreign birders into one of the country's most sensitive areas. Take a bow Frank, you are a genius, and in China the Yin to my Yang!

This tour covered all the regular sites including Omei and Wawushan, Tagong Grasslands, Wolong, Wuyipeng, Maerkeng, Roergai and Juijaigou. Highlights were many and included almost all the key Sichuan endemic bird species including the usual bounty of incredible central Chinese pheasants, parrotbills and babblers! We also lapped up the simply spectacular scenery from the wide open, grassy plains of the Tibetan Plateau to the hulking, snow-capped mountain peaks around Balang Shan. Along with the great scenery there were obviously some great birds - not least among these some beautiful Asian Pheasants that are always a big draw for many birders visiting this exciting birding region. The breathtaking group of **Blue-eared Pheasant's** (we had 3 in total) walking in the open for everyone on one of the last days of the tour was an undoubted highlight; while others may say that that the rare and reclusive **Lady Amherst's Pheasants** seen several times earlier in the tour were much better. We recorded 13 species of Phasianidae on this tour including nine pheasants! We also had some luck with rarer non-endemic species, such as the incredible **Saker Falcon** that we found with chicks at a nest! Another major favourite was the regal **Black-necked Cranes**, we saw large groups of these elegant birds foraging unconcernedly near the side of the road, and were able to watch them at our leisure. Any way you look at it, many birds on the tour were stunning and highly cooperative, and anything this tour lacks in diversity is made up for with sheer quality of the species you see. We scored an incredible beautiful male **Firethroat** that worked around us constantly in the Wolong reserve near the beginning of the tour; although the comical nature and great character of the **Hume's Groundpecker** up on the windswept Tibetan Plateau was also memorable; as was the brilliant male **Tibetan Snowcock** that we saw calling and cocking its tail high up on the mountains of Balangshan and the ridiculous groups of **Verreaux's Monal-Partridge** and **Koklass Pheasant** that attacked our tape at Mangbishan. All in all it was a challenging, but super tour, for the scenery, the birds, the incredible and friendly Tibetan and Chinese people of this diverse region and the superb Chinese cuisine that this region is rightfully internationally famous for.

19 May: ARRIVAL Chengdu. Panda Breeding Centre

20 May: am. Du Fu's Cottage. Chengdu-Omei Shan. Pm. Omei Shan birding.

21 May: Omei shan to Wawushan. Pm. Birding Wawushan.

22 May: Wawushan.

23 May: Wawushan.

24 May: Wawushan.

25 May: Wawushan – Ya'an - Kanding.

26 May: Zhedou Pass – Tagong Grasslands – Danba

27 May: Danba – Rilong – Wolong

28 May: Wolong – Wuyipeng.

29 May: Wuyipeng

30 May: Wuyipeng – Wolong (Sawan)

31 May: Sawan – Balangshan – Rilong

1 June: Rilong – Maerkang pm. Mengbishan.

- 2 June:** Mengbishan
- 3 June:** Maerkang – Hongyuan – Roergai
- 4 June:** Roergai area
- 5 June:** Roergai – Jiuzhaigou
- 6 June:** Jiuzhaigou NP.
- 7 June:** Jiuzhaigou NP to Chuanzhusi
- 8 June:** Chuanzhusi to Chengdu
- 9 June:** Chengdu – DEPARTURE.

19 May: Chengdu.

Shortly after arriving from Beijing at about 12 p.m. we had lunch in the hotel in central Chengdu, before heading out to the Panda breeding centre in the middle of town with our newly issued Panda cards (incentives from local government) to explore the Chengdu Panda Breeding centre. This is a fantastic facility and we enjoyed watching the Giant and Red panda's interacting here in their open-zoo like facilities. Of course, knowing how unlikely a chance encounter with these beasts is on this tour we enjoyed the antics of the captive animals. The birding was pretty good with common urban lowland species like **Spotted Dove**. We also encountered our first **Light-vented (Chinese) Bulbul**, and **Eurasian Blackbird** that many split as a separate species, **Mandarin** or **Chinese Blackbird**. The bamboo-skulking **Rufous-faced Warbler** and the very handsome **White-browed Laughing-thrush** were also enjoyed by all. Parrotbills however were the stars of the day, and these distinctly "tweety" like birds came in the form of two similar-looking species, **Ashy-throated** and **Vineous-throated parrotbills** (the first of 7 species of this charismatic family recorded on the tour) as well as the incredibly cute **Black-throated Tit**. A late migrant **Brown Shrike** was another surprise and a **Grey Treepie** was the only one for the trip. **Oriental Greenfinch** and **Yellow-billed (Chinese) Grosbeak** were two welcome additions, as these are tough birds to find outside of Chengdu! The evening finished off with an immaculate and impressive meal, one of many culinary feasts that we enjoyed on this "foodie" birding tour, with Sichuan's famed food coming our way in a bewildering array of dishes at a well-known Chengdu restaurant.



They may be captive, but watching the antics of these giant endearing racoons really makes you want to see one in the wild!

20 May: Chengdu - Omeishan.

An early departure saw us make for Du Fu's Cottage. A small patch of forest in the concrete jungle that is Chengdu. Du Fu's Cottage is the former home of a famous Tang Dynasty poet. Although we did not have a lot of time at this site we were quick to rack up the key specialties here. We saw many similar species to that of yesterday, but managed to catch these up for the late-arriving members of our party. We also added **White-throated Laughing-thrush** that were probable escapes, although seemed perfectly happy patrolling the gardens. We then headed through to Omeishan where we worked the lower slopes of the mountain finding some late migrant raptors including **Chinese Sparrowhawk**, and a spectacular **Black Baza**, surely one of the world's neatest birds. A soaring **Mountain Hawk-Eagle** made it a fine raptor day. Our hotel was home to a surprise covey of **Chinese Bamboo Partridge** that scuttled across the lawn, chicks in tow, at high pace. The base of the mountain yielded most of the specialty birds we were after including frustratingly brief views of **Brown-rumped (Swinhoe's) Minivet**, **Collared Finchbill**, **Brown-breasted Flycatcher**, beautiful and co-operative **Slaty-backed Forktail**, noisy but skulking **Chinese Hwamei** and the rather diminutive **Fork-tailed Sunbird**.



White-browed Laughingthrush (left) and Chinese Hwamei (right) are both specialties of the lowlands in Sichuan

21 – 24 May: Wawushan.

We headed for the subtropical forests on the flanks of Wawu Shan or 'Roof Tile' Mountain. Leaving Omei shan we saw our only **Crested Myna** of the tour and also managed to find breeding **Red-billed Starling** and **White-cheeked Starlings**, two unexpected bonus'. The birding on Wawu Shan was superb with many of the special species that are found on its more popular neighbour Emei Shan, also being found there. The road that head's up the mountain covers a range of altitude from around 1128m at the bottom to 1950m at the top end giving a good chance at a number of different groups of birds, ranging from subtropical species at the lower end to temperate forest species at the summit. At the lower end of the road several of these subtropical species were located including **Asian Koel**, and **Gray Wagtails**, while **Collared Finchbills** were a regular feature around the restaurant where we lunched,

down near the base. Other super new birds included several **Red-billed Leiothrix** and a cooperative **Pygmy Wren Babbler** as well as **Golden-breasted** and **Streak-throated Fulvettas**. As things cooled down we did score two species that most of the participants were dying to see. First of all we spent some time taping in the spectacular endemic, **Omei Shan Liocichla** (endemic to just two mountains in southern Sichuan), which at first insisted on flying rapidly between the bushes, but eventually succumbed and showed itself on a perch for all to admire the wax-like orange and red patterning on the wings. A little later a small flock of the effervescent and tweetie-like **Golden Parrotbills** came in to feed at some bamboo. We watched to our heart's content as these amazing little birds foraged away at arm's length.



Fujian Niltavas sang high up in the canopy, Wawu Shan.

We were to spend the next four days exploring the many different altitudes of this magical mountain, including some rarely visited and not easily accessed low-altitude areas. The relatively recently described **Emei Leaf-Warbler** has a restricted altitudinal range, although within that narrow range it can be fairly common. On our first full morning, upon reaching the prime area for the bird on Wawu, we soon heard one of these great little warblers giving it's highly distinctive call, that helps to separate this species from the otherwise very similar Blyth's Leaf-Warblers also found on the mountain, and soon we all had some good looks at the bird. This species was initially only known from nearby Emei Shan, although has been found at a number of other sites since its discovery, with Wawu Shan holding a sizable breeding population of its own. Other birds noted along the road included a pair of calling **Fujian Niltavas**. Other new birds included the **Wedge-tailed Pigeon** a good looking bird that has an even more memorable call, resembling the ramblings of a maniac who's voice is breaking with whoops and crescendos alternating with clicks and grates. Cuckoos were omnipresent on the mountain, and we recorded seven species, including good views of **Lesser Cuckoo**. We did rather well with woodpeckers at Wawushan, finding nests of several species including **Darjeeling**,

Crimson-breasted and **White-backed Woodpeckers** and we also encountered **Grey-faced Woodpecker** twice.



The Yellow-bellied Tit in one of several Chinese-endemic Paridae seen on this tour.

The morning's will be remembered for the scarce and skittish **Lady Amherst's Pheasants**. We had several encounters with these incredible birds. However as is often the case on these tours, we had a scenario where we ended up seeing the bird one-by-one. Anyone not diligently staring at the road being disappointed because these birds motor off the path at quick pace. In the end though everybody got good looks at this dazzling pheasant. There was a real buzz amongst the group as we had expected to struggle a little more for this much-wanted species. Although this species has been introduced into some countries (notable in the UK), nothing can beat seeing them in their natural home. Other species seen along the peaceful mountain road included **Chestnut-crowned Warbler**, the most distinctive and attractive of the otherwise confusing group of *Seicercus* warblers; a singing male **Snowy-browed Flycatcher**; while the pair of superb noisy **Spotted Laughingthrushes** right next to the road was a great close to one of the days. Several **Streak-throated** and a pair of extremely skittish **Spot-breasted Scimitar Babblers** made appearances as did the more local **Russet Bush-Warbler**. A pair of **Great Barbets** called non-stop and made one cameo appearance and a few **Eurasian Jay's** made an appearance along with the spectacular **Red-billed Blue Magpie**. We also saw **Hair-crested (Spangled) Drongo** in the lower subtropical sections.

Other birds seen along the road were electric-blue **Verditer Flycatchers**; a male **Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher** of the race that many now split off as a separate species - **Chinese Blue Flycatcher**; superb views of **Rusty Laughingthrushes**, a

normally shy and retiring near-endemic species that showed unusually well for us; and a pair of skittish but hard-to-see **Red-winged Laughingthrushes** did not show particularly well. A few **Himalayan Swiftlets** feeding as the clouds pushed the insects lower and lower. We also spent a fair bit of time at the 2,657m high summit, getting there by using their self-proclaimed 'most modern cable car in China' (although this claim would clearly not stand up in a court of law!). The cable car transports you to a totally different kind of forest than occurs lower down, lower in species diversity although extremely important for some key birds that occur there, a few of which are how Wawu Shan became to be known to birders.



Birding Wawu Shan's atmospheric fir forests at the summit - the haunt of some really special birds like Grey-hooded & Fulvous Parrotbills and Sichuan Treecreepers.



The fir forest of the summit is open and easy to bird in although, the carpet of bamboo that layers the ground up there makes seeing some of these specialties trickier than it would first appear. Fortunately we had a completely clear morning where we scored most of the desirable bird species, but unfortunately, by the afternoon a constant drizzle and heavy mist enshrouded the mountain, both on the lower and higher sections. So we had no choice but to go for it anyway, and on the whole it did not hamper our birding too much. Wawu Shan came to prominence due to the discovery of a new species of Treecreeper which frequents the summit fir forest - **Sichuan Treecreeper**, one of which we saw quite well. However, the mountain was known, although little visited before then, for another threatened endemic, the **Grey-hooded Parrotbill** that roams the bamboo understorey. This bird challenged us on this day and proved more elusive than on the last tour. However, once we chanced upon a **Fulvous Parrotbill**, another of our targets, we also found a **Grey-hooded Parrotbill** feeding within the same low stand of bamboo. A real surprise for the morning came in the form of a fully-plumaged male **Fire-tailed Sunbird**, a bird that defies description and quite a rare find in Sichuan. Other perhaps less appealing birds that the summit is good for are the cryptic Bush-Warblers, and we added to our burgeoning list of these when we recorded 5 new species up there - **Yellowish-bellied, Gray-sided, Aberrant, Spotted & Brown Bush-Warblers**. We also scored two new *Phylloscopus* warblers in the form of **Buff-browed** and **Yellow-browed Warblers**. The summit also held our only **Speckled Wood Pigeons** of the trip...they had been surprisingly absent at other localities. Both **Darjeeling** and a spectacular **Crimson-breasted Woodpecker** made appearances at the top as did several flocks including **Stripe-throated Yuhina**. Walking one of the bamboo trails resulted in a golden-yellow flash off the side of the path and the surprising discovery of a nest of the **Golden Bush-Robin**! Then the bird approached us rediculously closely, and folks were pulling out their compact camera's to basically get frame-filling photos. These rewards were ample for the effort made in walking in the mists of the top of Wawu Shan.



The spectacular Golden Bush Robin is a major highlight and makes a great break from Bush Warblers at the top of Wawushan.

25 May: Wawushan – Ya'an – Kanding

After some early morning bird, finding **Snowy-browed Flycatcher**, we passed through some of the historical parts of southern Sichuan, including the town of Ya'an, a key locality for Mao in the Red Army's struggle with Chiang Kai Shek. We ended up in a very beautiful and quaint Tibetan town called Kanding, where the town square was the scene for a massive festival with much dancing and parading, which we enjoyed before we struck out for a dinner in a small restaurant in this quaint town.



The Kanding square was alive with a huge audience doing an improv dance session that occupied the whole square. Karen did the group a service by jumping in for a bit of a jig, managing to hold her own with the Tibetan style dance moves.

26 May: Kanding – Xinbuqiao – Tagong Grasslands - Danba

Our route to Wolong was a little different due to the Wenchuan earthquake. However, this gave us an opportunity to explore a pass and upland Tibetan area that we normally do not visit on this tour, with some pleasantly surprising results. We made for the pass which was visually stunning, and it also soon revealed some great birds such as **Rosy Pipit** and **Himalayan Rubythroat**, as well as very close views of both **Plain** and **Brandt's Mountain Finches**. The high-altitude had us huffing-and-puffing, but we managed to squeeze out two unexpected birds, **Robin**

and **Brown Accentors**. A nearby **Beautiful Rosefinch** added a splash of colour to the dramatic scenery.



A surprise Brown Accentor (left) and the spectacular Tibetan Scenery of the Tagong Grasslands (right) were highlights from today

A surprise flock of pigeons shortly after we ascended the pass were **Snow Pigeons**, later in the day these were easily compared with **Hill Pigeons** in the rocky valleys. The open plateau soon yielded trip first **Horned Lark** and **Oriental Skylarks** along with the dark backed 'Tibetan' race of **Citrine Wagtail**. Redstarts such as **Hodgson's** and **Blue-fronted** started becoming commonplace, and a few **Siberian Stonechats** were a welcome addition. Other 'new' trip birds included several corvids such as **Eurasian Magpie**, **Red-billed Chough**, including several nests with chicks on Tibetan houses, and **Daurian Jackdaws** were surprisingly common. The big open skies were full of fantastic raptors including stunning views of low soaring **Lammergeiers**, our first **Himalayan Griffons**, and **Golden Eagle**. Later a stop on a sloping valley revealed **Chestnut** and **Kessler's Thrushes**, as well as a trip exclusive **Tiger Shrike**, a strange bird at such high altitude, amongst the more expected **Gray-backed Shrikes**. We also picked up our first **Godlewski's Bunting** today amongst some stunning and serene scenery on the roof of the world. The plateau is truly one of the most visually spectacular places on our planet, and a must visit place for every avid traveller and naturist! We decided to stop in Danba for the night.

27 May: Danba – Balangshan – Wolong

Today was supposed to be relatively simple. It didn't turn out that way. The roadworks heading into Rilong were incredible and painful. Only the Chinese can do something with such devotion and energy, I mean ripping a road apart! Our progress was painfully slow, and we even had to have an impromptu lunch at the roadside as our one traffic delay lasted for nearly 2 hrs.



Some more stunning scenery near Danba

We did eventually get some birding in at Balangshan, but not quite as much as I would have wanted. Highlights included **Brown Dipper**, and our first **Alpine Chough** and **Alpine Accentors**, appropriately right at the alpine tippy top of Balangshan, a place which is worth seeing birder or not! The peak also delivered fabulous views of the iridescent purple male **Grandala**, with some more dowdy streaky females. Keith went wandering upslope looking for partridges only to flush a scarce **Red-fronted Rosefinch**, which unfortunately most of the group missed, but luckily we were to catch up with again later in the trip! Before long it was time to make for Wolong. I'd be lying if I told you that the devastation this little village has felt is not a tad depressing. Seeing the once magnificent hotel annihilated and many people in this once-thriving town sitting around with nothing to do was a bit of dampener. But they were genuinely happy to see us. We were probably one of the first sets of tourists to visit here in over a year. The only way to help these people get back on their feet is to visit and spend money in this little town. The government has spent a fortune on rehabilitating the more populated areas of the earthquake zone, and their efforts and endeavour are very impressive, but the smaller, more rural areas, such as Wolong have understandably been regarded as secondary priorities, as they would be anywhere else in the world. Hopefully by 2010 things will be up and running again. Our hotel was OK, given the circumstances, but the intermittent electricity and water made things more challenging than in the past. We settled in and prepared ourselves for a hike to Wuyipeng the next morning.



Above The pass at Balangshan, covered in snow and ice, maybe my favourite birding spot in the whole world? **Bottom left**, devastation at Wolong – Hai Karamba, when the earth moves it does some serious damage. **Bottom right**, White-collared Yuhina. It is amazing, while the Earthquake subjected the human constructs to incredible damage, the birds and forests continue with little impact on these systems.

28 + 29 May: Wolong (Wuyipeng Area)

The plan for the day was to leave early for the fairly tough hike up to the Wuyipeng panda research station in Wolong reserve. On the way up we soon got some good looks at another sought-after species, the **Barred Laughingthrush**, as well as calling **Yellowish-bellied & Brownish-flanked Bush-Warblers** (perhaps more interesting for their song than their appearance). We had a brief look at the spectacular **Indian Blue Robin** and some **Speckled Wood-Pigeons** flew over. Lunch at George Schaller's famous Panda research centre was well received and we soon headed out for an afternoon sortie back along the trail we'd walked up on. No sooner had we started and we found a small party of decidedly skittish **Elliot's Laughingthrushes**. No matter how hard I tried to convince the group that this endemic is much easier to see in the open areas on Balangshan, everyone wanted to see them. So we persisted till all had had satisfactory views. Our afternoon yielded a few parties and we picked out the more interesting species including the vociferous and quirky **Red-billed Blue Magpie**, **Oriental Cuckoo**, the regular gamut of warblers with the addition of **White-tailed Leaf Warbler** and **Bianchi's Warbler**. Spishing and squeaking brought in **White-browed Bush-Robin**, **Scaly-breasted Wren-Babbler**, **Eurasian Nutcracker** (a hungry youngster of which screeched for the next three days!!) , a stunning male **Mrs Gould's Sunbird**, and a bunch of flycatchers including **Verditer**, **Grey-headed Canary**, **Rufous-gorgeted** and **Slaty-Blue Flycatchers** as well as a surprising migrant **Yellow-rumped flycatcher** and several **Rufous-bellied Niltavas**.



It's not an endemic, but the Yellow-rumped Flycatcher was a welcome surprise addition to our Sichuan checklist.

The flocks that we had added a few new canopy species including the *aemodius* race of the **Coal Tit** (almost certainly a good species) and the somewhat less flashy **Yellow-browed Tit!** Late in the afternoon however, we had a frustrating moment when a spectacular male **Temminck's Tragopan** showed but darted off the trail so quickly that no one saw it. The days were spent birding along the trails that surround the Wuyipeng panda research station. This field station was originally set up for George Schaller's pioneering studies on Giant Pandas. Although, unfortunately, sightings of these creatures today are now extremely rare as they are famously secretive. Every year we visit this place and meet panda researchers that have never seen a panda, emphasising what a true privilege it would be to see one of these near-mythical creatures. This is primeval forest, festooned with moss and ferns. Huge trunks of conifers rose everywhere and when you could see the horizon, and the cloud cleared, massive peaks with jagged rock surrounded us. At one point we could see up Balangshan, and the excitement and anticipation of exploring the giant mountain over the next few days was palpable. However, first things first, the forest around Wuyipeng is great for so many birds and we scored our first **Lesser Cuckoo, Eurasian Treecreeper, Collared Owlet, Fire-capped Tit, Chestnut-vented Nuthatch,** and both **Gray-crested** and **Pere David's Tits** in a few mixed flocks. Other birds seen around the station on this day included an impressive pair of **Great Parrotbills** (a more appropriate name might be Giant Parrotbill as it dwarfs all its congeners) and superb luck with, the undoubted bird of the day, the very unpredictable **Firethroat,** a magnificent male emerged from the bamboo, and with further playback gave several brief views, crimson throat pumping as he sang in response to playback. Another festival of hot food awaited us that evening back at the camp where the local rangers decided to have a get together!

30 May: Wolong (Wuyipeng – Sawan)

On this morning we birded our way from Wuyipeng back to Sawan. Our time here had been a mixture of joy and frustration. The frustration being the tragopans which had just refused to show, so this morning was a last ditch effort to get looks at this incredible bird. Shortly after dawn we heard a bird calling nearby. I taped it and played back. The spectacular breeding male jumped up on a trunk low to the ground, but only I could see it. I continued to play the tape and the bird started working its way uphill towards us. Closer, closer, closer and eventually just metres in front of us a crimson and blue head popped into view. It was brief but very close, and most of the group got onto it, save for a few unlucky individuals. On our way down the hill we got great looks at **Streak-throated Fulvettas,** which came through in a small party. A stunning male **Indian Blue Robin,** with its melancholic and fluty calls, was found skulking in the forest undergrowth on the trip down the hill. Lunch back at Sawan was a real treat after the relative 'hardship' of the field centre, with cashewnuts and Szechuan peppercorns to spice proceedings up! Due to the work on the Balangshan road we decided to leave our first assault on the pass until tomorrow, so we spent the afternoon concentrating on the forest trails behind the hotel. We heard plenty of **Large Hawk Cuckoos** and **White-throated Needletails** sailed overhead. The forest held several flocks with quite a few **Long-tailed Minivets, Collared Finchbills, Green-backed Tits,** and **Japanese White-eyes.** We also got a taste of that most confusing group of Chinese birds - the *Phylloscopus* warblers - with **Sichuan, Greenish** and **Blyth's Leaf-Warblers** identified. Between parties we located a few **Dark-sided** and **Ferruginous Flycatchers** and a cooperative cracking **White-collared Yuhina.** We also managed to find several Chinese-endemic tit species, with a nesting **Sooty Tit** and a **Yellow-bellied Tit** in the same area. We were very lucky to have several encounters with female **Slaty**

Buntings, until everyone had had satisfactory views of this bizarre Chinese endemic, which is in its own monotypic genus. Emerging from the forest at close to dark the group wanted to pack it in, but I felt that the evening still had something in it, so I encouraged everybody to make one final little push around the hotel grounds. It proved to be an inspired move with our first **Gray-headed Bullfinch** and our only **Daurian Redstart!**

31 May: Balangshan.

One always gets excited at the prospect of birding the incomparable Balangshan. One of Asia's great birding mountains, you always know that although the mountain holds some amazing high quality birds, there is also the chance that bad weather or bad luck may strike. Because of the considerable roadworks we decided to make this morning an early one, leaving at 04h30. Amazingly roadworks were ongoing regardless. One of our first birds in the predawn gloom was a **Long-tailed Thrush** that sat on the road, unfortunately not for very long. Our first stop not far above Bei Mu Ping monument (altitude around 3,339m) yielded **White-browed Rosefinch**, and some **Giant Laughingthrushes**. However, we were quick to move onto higher altitudes where more sought-after prizes awaited. One of our first real coups was a party of three **Chinese Monals** moving through the snow. We started searching for the amazing **White-eared Pheasants** when the mist quickly descended and obliterated our view and could not see a thing. We heard the culprits start calling in the distance, but with the weather being unpredictable I decided it best to make straight to the higher altitudes where most of our quarry lay. We soon also encountered **White-capped** and **Blue-fronted Redstart**. As the day heated up raptors soon started to soar and we had added **Himalayan Griffon**, **Eurasian Buzzard**, and **Eurasian Kestrel** before long. Open areas soon revealed **Rosy Pipits**. A little higher we started seeing many **Chestnut** and several **White-backed (Kessler's) Thrushes**. A surprise **Dark-breasted Rosefinch** also made an appearance not long after a **Common Rosefinch**. As we gained altitude however, we soon became enveloped in thick cloud, which was threatening to remain there for the rest of the day. Fortunately, we stopped briefly near a roadworkers camp, and after a bit of banter with the locals, miraculously, the cloud cleared. This window of clarity brought an amazing burst of luck, at first I scanned unsuccessfully and told everyone to get back into the car, but then Frank's excited motioning meant he had something good. Alighting again Frank had found a magnificent male **Tibetan Snowcock** only 30 m off the road. The bird, seemingly unconcerned by us continued to call and cackle, gurgles and whistles with his rather insubstantial tail cocked over his back menacingly! Right at the top we located a small flock of Snow Partridge, but not everyone could get onto them, and then the cloud came into to close off the view. Right near the top of the pass we did manage to find quite a few **Plain Mountain-Finches**, **Red-billed Chough**, **Large-billed Crow** and both **Alpine** and **Rufous-breasted Accentors**. A brief view of **Snow Partridge** for some followed, as did further views of the scarce **Red-fronted Rosefinch**. Again the cloud cut us off and we headed for a nice lunch. The afternoon yielded many more fun birding moments, but perhaps our greatest quarry was a large group of **Blue Sheep** that were scattered on the stark and spectacular mountain horizon. We finished the day in Rilong, in a comfortable hotel that still had sporadic water and heat issues due to the effects of the Wenchuan quake.



White-capped Redstart (top left), Chinese Monals in the snow (top right) and birding in the mist on Balangshan (bottom)

1 June: Balangshan – Maerkeng.

It had been a tough few days with early starts and so today we decided to take it a little easier with a later wake-up call than usual and a sit down breakfast. Eventually we moved off working the tight hairpin valleys and curves towards Maerkang. As we headed over the pass there was torrential snow that looked almost like blizzard conditions. The idea of birding in a blizzard did not appeal, so we headed into town for a sit-down lunch. This is a spectacular little town right on the edge of the

Tibetan region. Maerkang is a strongly Buddhist town, with several different forms being practiced there. The Tibetan influence is clearly evident in the distinctive and attractive architecture and style of houses in the town, where the different forms of Tibetan Buddhism are also easy to discern in the vastly different styles of buildings found in various sections of Maerkang. It is a really attractive town with a great feel to it, and on top of that there is some great birding very close to the town itself. Within minutes of checking into our hotel the Police had tracked us down, with alarming and disturbing efficiency. Frank faced a barrage of questions about our past and planned future movements. The lunch was incredible, and we gorged ourselves on a remarkable spread while we waited for it to stop snowing up on Mengbishan. Frank stayed behind to negotiate with Police and other officials on our behalf. We always knew that getting to Maerkang should be straightforward, but our progress beyond this town was going to be a challenge, due to the unrest that had happened just before the Olympics, and us heading into a particularly sensitive region. So while the birders headed back up to Mengbishan with a tummy full of delicious food, Frank set to task the tricky job of securing our passage to the northern plateau areas we wanted to visit, while a couple of people could not resist the allure of spending the afternoon exploring this fascinating little town. The afternoon was a birding boon and one of our first successes was super views of a group of spectacular **Blood Pheasants** that squealed as they came running into tape. Scanning the open slopes near the top of the pass also revealed no fewer than 6 **White-eared Pheasants**. A calling **Black Woodpecker** was also lured in, and this gigantic black pecker alighted on a tree right besides us calling and hammering away looking for the 'invader'. The Spruce groves held the dapper little **Goldcrest**, and we also encountered the pretty **Crested Tit-Warbler**. Amongst a good selection of warblers and tits we located the scarce **Songar Tit** as well as our first **Rufous-vented Tits** and a surprise **Bar-tailed Treecreeper** in one of the flocks. One of the most spectacular finds of the afternoon was a small cooperative flock of **Three-banded Rosefinch**, with both females and one spectacular male sitting up for great views. To make things interesting that evening a nurse and crumple-coated doctor, with smoking cigarette in hand, appeared after dinner wanting to test our temperatures. After insisting that the medical team stop endangering our lives with second-hand smoke I urged our somewhat disgruntled group to comply with the ridiculous investigation. All our temperatures were self-obtained and then shouted to a scribe who wrote down all the perfectly ordinary body-temperature details meticulously on a paper serviette. They were only doing their job!



Three-banded Rosefinch is one of those unforgettable Carpodacus finches, and is localised and endemic to central China!

2 June: Maerkeng.

We had another full day to explore the magnificent coniferous forests of this area. Our first stop yielded the much hoped for male **Koklass Pheasant** that scuttled through a clearing and then eventually launched himself across the road and landed on the roadside verge, almost clinging to a vertical cliff! He stood for quite a while before being flushed by a car. All in all great looks at this stunner. We also quickly caught up with both **Blood** and **White-eared Pheasants** for the folks who had taken the cultural option the afternoon before. Not long thereafter the tell-tale calls of **Chestnut-throated Partridge** emanated from the roadside. I am normally used to seeing this bird only briefly and fleetingly, but it seems we were trapped between two competing coveys and the show we eventually witnessed was gob-smacking. First the covey above the road showed with a big male ringing out the chorus of his groups calls and then a loud flutter alerted us to another covey that had come to the Armco-barrier only metres away from our birding group. It was just silly, but the birds did not seem to mind our presence as they battled over their territorial limits. It was indeed a privilege to watch though. We also scored with great views of Plain-backed Thrush and Giant Laughingthrush right by the roadside. We nailed one Collared Grosbeak amongst the more numerous White-winged Grosbeaks and were graced by the presence of a very cooperative Red-flanked Blue-tail. A major surprise as we were heading back to town was a pair of singing **Chinese Babax**. This bizarre and boisterous babbler, looking decidedly thrasher-like, sat up and sang for some time. We again saw the attractive endemic **Crested Tit-Warbler**, a stunning, cute white-topped pink-and-blue warbler that was easy to see as it fed in the open conifer forest and then dropped down into some low scrub, approaching us from below!



A distinctive Tibetan settlement on the edge of Maerkang

Other good birds encountered included **White-throated Redstarts**, **Red-flanked Bluetail**, and **Pink-rumped Rosefinch**. The afternoon was much slower, and we were frustrated when repeated attempts to see a calling **Sichuan Jay** proved fruitless. The day also yielded the only **Besra** of the trip. We returned to town with the news that the Chinese authorities were happy to let us through, but had no idea or could not issue orders on behalf of any of the 4 major roadblocks that we would encounter on the next day. It became clear that no-one wanted to make a decision, and certainly no-one was prepared to issue any orders. I talked it over with the group and bravely decided that we would try and get up on the plateau. I convinced them that it was worth trying.....oh what would tomorrow bring



White-throated Redstart (left) and Giant Laughingthrush (right)

3 June. Maerkeng – Hongyuan – Roergai.

Frank truly showed his immense value today. He was tasked with negotiating with increasingly rough-looking unhappy officials the closer we got to Roergai. Amazingly every interaction started with a grumpy sullen official (and an uneasy feeling crept through the bus as we wondered if we'd reached the end of the road) and after Frank was done explaining our predicament they would be beaming, issuing large waves and grinning from ear-to-ear with nicotine-soaked brown teeth! God bless Mao. The day was spent travelling up to the Tibetan Plateau rounding off in the spectacular little town of Roergai. However, before reaching there we soon got a taste of Tibetan birding with some good birds right near the plateau edge. On checking an area of stunted scrub just before the wide open plains of the plateau opened up before us we spotted a pink movement in the undergrowth which proved to be our second Tit-Warbler of the trip, completing our haul of this cool set of birds, with a fine male **White-browed Tit-Warbler**. In the same area it was nice to see a pair of **White-browed Tits** (for me the best of the Chinese endemic tits of which there are a few), still actively coming in and out of their nest hole carrying food for their demanding offspring. Other birds seen en-route were much more typical of the Tibetan Plateau, like some spectacular lemon-and-black male **Citrine Wagtails** in bright breeding plumage, a hulking **Upland Buzzard**, plenty of **Ruddy Shelduck**, a handful of the smart **Daurian Jackdaws**. Also, although there were no trees, we were not to go pheasantless, finding a beautiful male **Common Pheasant** next to the vehicle as we were doing top speed. We also nailed the *tibetanus* race of the **Common Tern**, which seems so out of place so far from the coast! After lunch we spent considerable time on the wide open plains of the Tibetan Plateau. The birding up here is just spectacular, completely different from what we had experienced previously on the tour. The area also has a very different feel to other parts of Sichuan, with curious Tibetan Yak herders roaming around on horses and motorbikes, their simply patterned, temporary tented homes scattered around the open plains. Throughout that day we met a number of interesting characters, including a man who was keen to share his Yak-yogurt (delicious with a sprinkling of sugar) and Yak-butter tea with us (should be called Yuk butter tea!). The afternoon started with us looking for one of the more inconspicuous endemics in the area - **Pere David's Laughingthrush** (also referred to more aptly as Plain Laughingthrush), that we soon found in an area close to where we'd had lunch. It was good to get another Chinese endemic straight after a meal. We then headed off to explore the grasslands of the plateau. For one of the most charismatic residents up there we went straight to where we had found them nesting in previous years (in a convenient roadside bank), and a short time after arriving there sure enough a **Hume's Groundpecker** (that has now been renamed **Ground Tit** after its taxonomic affinities were found to be tied with the tit family, something that is hard to fathom when you look at this oddball bird), came bouncing along towards the hole. It was obligatory to watch this bird with its clumsy looking bill and awkward gait for a while, as it quite simply a fascinating beast with bundles of character, all the better for its strange taxonomic position.



Sichuan hot-pot on the left, one of the many incredible cuisine delicacies in the 'hot-and spicy' capital of China. Mind you there is so much choice that any diet (vegan, vegetarian and non-spice lovers) are easily catered for. On the right, one of the plateau's many unforgettable vistas.



Hume's Groundpecker bringing food to the nest, Tibetan Plateau

The stake outs were working well at this time, and it continued in that fashion for the rest of the day. A roadside stop yielded the scarce **Chinese Gray Shrike**, always a welcome find on this trip. We had great views of **Oriental Skylark** and **Horned Larks** in this area. It was a red-letter day for redstarts and we found both **Black** and **Hodgson's Redstarts**. As we approached the town of Roergai we scored our first **Twite**, **Hoopoe**, **Great Tit** and **Little Owls** of the trip, along with many **Common Cuckoo** perched on the telephone wires straddling the grasslands. **Black-billed**

Magpie and **Common Raven** were new corvids for the trip. We had a little time to do some dude stuff, although the large garrisons of Chinese army guys made us think twice about wondering streets. Stories abounded of tourists being ejected from this area if they were seen to be interacting with Tibetans, so we thought it best to keep a low profile.

4 June. Roergai area.

We left early from this stunning little town for what would turn out to be the best day of our tour, yielding both equal-ranking top 2 birds of the tour. After a few detours because we could not find our way out of the town in the predawn light, we eventually made our way out. After an hour we were at a pass which we knew held a host of enticing possibilities. Not long after arrival we scored **Godlewski's Bunting** singing away at the top of a rock. As sweet as this was, it was not why we were here. A little later we landed the first of our target quarry, a smart **Sukatchev's Laughingthrush** working its way up some scree-side scrub, and a welcome **Chinese Song Thrush**. **Songar Tit**, **Slaty-backed** and **Slaty-blue Flycatchers** were also quite common in this area. A great find was **Tibetan Serin**. We listened and listened for our main target but failed to hear one so we slowly drove scanning openslopes within the spruce forest. Every now and then we'd get out and search more diligently, but as the morning wore on I started thinking our chances of success were waning. We eventually came into a small town and then turned the car around to work our way back up the pass. Literally on the edge of town John and Karen said there's one, in a moderately calm voice. I looked and saw, they weren't joking. Now to tell the driver to back-up in Chinese tested my limited abilities in the language, but obviously the wild jesticulations and mouth action got the message across. He backed up and there they were, three **Blue Eared-Pheasants** walking slowly but purposefully away from us upslope. We were able to alight and enjoy these handsome beasts in both bins and scope. Smart and elegant, and surely the most sought-after pheasant quarry of the trip. This area also yielded **Black Woodpecker** and another great view of **Blood Pheasant**. On our way up the pass we found an odd pair of **Amur Falcons** on the overhead wires. Strange bird in this area at this time of year. We then returned to Roergai and headed out in another direction finding a breeding pair of **Saker Falcon** with chicks along with both **Rock Petronia** and **Blackwinged Snowfinch** amongst the many ridiculous Himalayan Marmots and Ground Tits.



Saker Falcon (left) and Blue Eared-Pheasant (right) were two of days highlights, probably our best day on tour.

A marsh with breeding Redshanks displaying and courting wrapped up the morning before a great lunch left us with the afternoon to go looking at waterbirds and get looks at stunning **Black-necked Crane**. We located a large series of waterbodies that yielded an epic afternoon's birding. First off, on the approach we saw as many as 16 regal **Black-necked Cranes** all teed up waiting for photos. This (along with the morning's Blue-eared Pheasant) ranked as the top two birds of the trip. The waterbody also yielded many brutish **Tibetan Larks**, which with a scientific name *Melanocorypha maxima* should be rechristened Maximum lark in my opinion. It is a hulking bird. The scattered wetlands revealed a bunch of cool new species including **White-tailed Eagle, Greylag Goose, Great Crested Grebe, Eurasian Wigeon, Red-crested Pochard, Greater Sand Plover, Brown-headed Gull** and most surprisingly a single female **Red-necked Phalarope** in breeding plumage! Heading home for Roergai, well satisfied, we were excited to find a group of **White-rumped Snowfinches** that were breeding with Pikas, which they seem to consort with in a bizarre commensal relationship!



Tibet is breathtaking, truly one of the most spectacular regions on planet Earth.



It may not look like much, but the Tibetan Lark is big and brutal...Maximum Lark indeed.

5 June: Roergai – Jiuzhaigou.

This was supposed to be an easy, chilled out travelling day. So far on this trip we'd negotiated the Chinese army, H1N1 and the Earthquake stricken areas. So today's journey to one of Sichuan's busiest and most well-known tourists spots would be a cinch, right? Wrong! It started off well enough, we were sailing along and enjoying the scenery and mostly enjoying the virtually traffic free roads. We then started noticing that we'd travel for hours without traffic. Strange in this part of the country? A few areas where rock falls had crossed the road concerned us, and then we came to the first major obstacle. A boulder the size of a small BBQ lay in the road. Frank and I leapt from the car and removed it. At this stage I could tell that there was concern in the bus, but when we rounded a corner and 2 foot of earth lay right across the road, it turned into panic. The next 2-3 hours on the landslip ridden road were hair-raising to say the least, especially when we turned a corner and knew...that's it, do not pass go, do not collect \$ 200.00, go straight to jail. Fortunately the ingenious Chinese had worked another nearby road and with a bit of discussion and a few wrong turns we still found our way to Juizhaigou by the end of the day much to everyone's relief. The last hour on a perfect double-lane highway, with lots of traffic going either way, was pure bliss!



A collage of some of the days more exciting events, including bottom right, the 'end of the road' one that stopped the bus in its tracks. Fortunately the Chinese are jolly clever and they had an alternate route. But at the time we turned around we were expecting a 5 hour trip back from the town we'd started the day in! Bottom right Frank and I removing boulders and above pix, coaxing the bus around other 'interesting' and 'everday' road obstacles in Sichuan. I think next year I'll skip this road!

With little birding for the day we settled into our nice hotel in Jiuzhaigou, praying that the adventure for the tour was truly over – fortunately it was!

6 June: Jiuzhaigou NP (Pearl Shoal Falls, Long Lake & Lufu Hill)

This day was spent in the visually stunning Jiuzhaigou National Park which has become famed for its scenic lakes, attractive waterfalls and beautiful wooded valleys.



The visually spectacular Pearl Shoals Falls, Jiuzhaigou

After a considerable hoo-ha getting into the park we made our way to the stunning Pearl Shoal falls. While many places in the world are a mild disappointment with regards to their scenic beauty I have never heard any participants criticise the amazing and visually stunning azure water-world of Jiuzhaigou. After soaking up the falls we snuck up off a side trail to get away from the crowds for some birding. Mixed flocks of tits and treecreepers and other goodies were a lot of fun, but the much hoped for **Rufous-headed Robin**, one of Sichuan's most amazing songsters and attractive birds, and also one of Sichuan toughest birds to see. We went after the bird on this day although the bird lived up to its famed reputation, and we didn't hear a peep. Then, on the way back I stumbled into a pair on the ground, but unfortunately only the person right behind me got a look before they took off into the brush. Playback only yielded one brief snippet of song, and then complete silence. A little further down the track we stumbled upon a covey of **Chinese Grouse**, but unfortunately these moved off before anyone but the leader could see them. The day was not wasted however as there are plenty of other birds in the park, like the handsome male **White-bellied Redstart**, similarly attractive **Slaty-backed Flycatchers**, and another endemic in the form of a small party of 3 **Snowy-cheeked (Chinese) Nuthatches**. A late afternoon, optional foray just outside the park produced the hoped for **Spectacled Fulvettas**, in addition to the endemic **Spectacled Parrotbill**.



Wherever you venture in this park you are confronted by stunning vistas and outrageous landscapes.

7 June

With the trouble caused by the **Rufous-headed Robin** the day before we decided to head out to another known territory for it. However in order to get there in the early morning we had to negotiate and commandeer a small Tibetan villager's van to get to the site. Anyway, after that a bit of excitement we heard a bird calling deep in the thicket, and despite calling for a long time and allowing us to get very close the bird appeared completely uninterested in showing itself. However then it shot into view. Unfortunately I could only get a couple of people on it before it hid itself again, and then it came very close but appeared only fleetingly for most of the group before shooting back into the thicket. Most people got brief views however. The remainder of the day was pretty much just enjoying the beauty of this fantastic area, before after lunch we decided to head south to Chuanzhusi, picking up **Maroon-backed Accentors** on the way and a bunch of feathers from a **Blue Eared-Pheasant** that had unfortunately become roadkill.

8 June

Today was pretty much a travel day back to Chengdu. We passed the fateful village of Wenchuan – named as the epicentre of the earthquake. It was pretty amazing to see the devastation, but equally impressive was the Chinese government's resolve to repair this area, and we were pretty much unaffected by the roadworks and were astounded by the impressive infrastructure that was being installed in this area. We did pick up the first new trip bird for the day **Peregrine Falcon**, and closed out the day with a bit of birding in the lowlands near Chengdu where we managed to add

Grey-headed Fulvetta to a burgeoning triplist of 307 species, the longest and most impressive ever for a Tropical Birding Sichuan tour! We then all left for Sichuan's steamy capital, where we had a final and possibly best meal of the trip visiting an internationally famous Sichuan restaurant, where we were treated to a spectacular hot-pot. With sizzling chilli oil on one half and a tasty broth in the other, you have to cook your own goodies and then add cooling (or heating!!) sauces to add flavour. I think it would be fair to say that the bevy of top quality birds combined with the dynamic (if somewhat unique) Chinese hospitality, absolutely gob-smacking scenery, culturally fascinating Tibetan experience, and amazing food made this tour one of the world-favourites amongst the well-travelled participants! If you have not been birding in Sichuan, book now...you just have to go!



Bridge down near Wenchuan. The earthquake damage was almost as impressive as the recovery work which has recreated infrastructure just one year after this horrific tragedy.



People are people (left), Frank a Han Chinese hangs with Tibetan dude who wants to look through his bins, high up on the plateau (right) we found a restaurant that specialised in the noodles from the Muslim province of Xinjiang, they apparently make the best noodles in China. We all concurred!

BIRD LIST

Taxonomy and nomenclature follow: **Clements, James F. 2000. *Birds of the World: A Checklist*. Fifth Edition. Vista, CA: Ibis Publishing Co.** Includes recent updates.

All the birds on this list were seen by at least one person in the group other than the leader, except those marked with an 'H' which were only heard. 307 bird species were recorded on the tour. Central Chinese endemics and specialties are marked in red.

GREBES (Podicepsidae)

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* – In Chendgu at Du Fu's

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* – lakes on the Tibetan Plateau

HERONS, EGRETS AND BITTERN (Ciconiiformes Ardeidae)

Gray Heron *Ardea cinerea* – In Chendgu at Du Fu's

Great Egret *Casmerodius alba*

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* – scattered localities throughout the lowlands

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* – scattered localities throughout the lowlands

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus* – scattered localities throughout the lowlands

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* – In Chendgu at Du Fu's

DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS (Anseriformes Anatidae)

Graylag Goose *Anser anser* – small numbers in lakes on the Tibetan Plateau

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* – common on the Tibetan Plateau

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas Penelope* – small numbers in lakes on the Tibetan Plateau

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* – On the Tibetan Plateau

Northern Shoveller *Anas clypeata* – small numbers in lakes on the Tibetan Plateau

Gadwall *Anas strepera* – small numbers in lakes on the Tibetan Plateau

Common Pochard *Aythya farina* – small numbers in lakes on the Tibetan Plateau

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* – small numbers in lakes on the Tibetan Plateau

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser* – one pair along a high altitude river

HAWKS, EAGLES AND KITES (Falconiformes Accipitridae)

Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes* – A couple on passage in the Omei Shan area

Black (Black-eared) Kite *Milvus migrans lineatus* – Common on the Tibetan Plateau.

Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis* – Common on high passes and the Tibetan Plateau.

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* – Just the one day at Tagong Grasslands where we had incredible views of a bird low down. No matter how many times you see them they are magnificent. The bird that got me into birding!

Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus* – just one when leaving Wawushan.

Chinese (Sparrowhawk) Goshawk *Accipiter soloensis* – one bird on passage in the Omei Shan area

Besra *Accipiter virgatus* - One bird high up on Mengbishan.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* – One fleetingly on Balangshan.

Eurasian (Himalayan) Buzzard *Buteo buteo burmanicus* – This version (possibly a split) was seen regularly in high altitude areas.

Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius* – A few up on the Tibetan Plateau were nicely contrasted with the former species.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* – We saw this species a couple of times on the trip including great views on the Tagong Grasslands and on Balangshan.

Mountain Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus nipalensis* – Wawushan delivered the best views of this trip.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicauda* – One on a wetland near Roergai.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS (Falconiformes Falconidae)

Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* – Once only on Balangshan.

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* – a pair of males were seen near Roergai were presumably early migrants on their way to Africa?

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* A nest with two chicks found in the Roergai area was very neat. We were able to soak up this beautiful and increasingly scarce raptor which is now classified as Endangered.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* – Actually seen from the bus on our way back to Cengdu as we passed an area of massive cliffs.

GROUSE (Galliformes Tetraonidae)

Severtzov's (Chinese) Grouse *Bonasa sewerzowi* – One covey scuttled off a path in Jiuzhaigou. Unfortunately a leader only bird!

PHEASANTS AND PARTRIDGES (Galliformes Phasianidae)

Snow Partridge *Lerwa lerwa* – Fleeting views high up on Balangshan on two days. Only seen by some.

Verreaux's (Monal) Partridge *Tetraophasis obscurus* – Brilliant, best ever views of two coveys having a major fight on Mengbishan. Heard elsewhere.

Tibetan Snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus* – seen several times, most memorably a male calling and cocking its tail and displaying close to the road on Balangshan.

Chinese Bamboo-Partridge *Bambusicola thoracica* – A covey was seen well scuttling across the lawns of our hotel at Omei Shan.

Blood Pheasant *Ithaginis cruentus* – seen on several occasions and very well on a few with birds right next the road.

Temminck's Tragopan *Tragopan temminckii* – A tricky one this year and not seen by all participants. On our last morning at Wuyipeng a male came within 5 metres of us, stuck his head up, saw us and bolted. Those looking in the right place got crippling close views.

Koklass Pheasant *Pucrasia macrolopha* – Seen superbly on Mengbishan when a male catapulted out of the scrub and stuck to a near-vertical cliff face opposite us. He sat there for nearly a minute before ambling into the brush.

Chinese Monal *Lophophorus lhuysii* We lucked out with three of these wandering slowly over a snow-clad hill. If it hadn't snowed they would not have stuck out like a sore thumb, which they did!

White Eared-Pheasant *Crossoptilon crossoptilon* – Seen brilliantly on two days on Mengbishan and also heard on Balangshan just as the mist came in!

Blue Eared-Pheasant *Crossoptilon auritum* A small party of three seen right next to the road was welcome reward for our early morning departure. This stunning deep-blue pheasant with white ear tufts that curl up its cheeks and give it a Victorian gentleman look is no disappointment. A lifer for everyone including the leader! Rated as joint top bird of the trip with Black-necked Crane.

Ring-necked (Common) Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus suehschanensis* – the subspecies in Sichuan is a gorgeous bird. We take this too much for granted, but it is another stunning and welcome pheasant on this trip. Seen many times on the plateau and to Jiuzhaigou.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* – We got to within 3 metres of one calling, but moving bamboo, as it scuttled off was as close as we got. Frustrating miss.

Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae* We all eventually had great views of males of this stunning white, red and blue pheasant. A real knock-out!

CRANES (Gruiformes Gruidae)

Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis* – A day of three followed with a day of 16 close to the road was fabulous. Interestingly, although many people had seen this bird in Bhutan it still ranked as joint top-bird of the trip with Blue eared-Pheasant. Apparently the views and watching the cranes doing something interesting was enough to get them a lofty ranking.

RAILS, GALLINULES AND COOTS (Gruiformes Rallidae)

White-breasted Waterhen *Amurornis phoenicurus* – In Chengdu.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* – A few on lakes near Roergai.

SANDPIPERS (Charadriiformes Scolopacidae)

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* breeding and displaying birds close to Roergai, and a few others on the Tibetan Plateau were fun.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* was seen at the base of Wawushan.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* – Tibetan Highlands

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* – A female in full breeding regalia was found on the Tibetan Plateau, much to everyone's surprise and Sonia's delight!

Greater Sand-Plover *Charadrius lescheanaltii* – A few at a marsh near Roergai

Lesser Sand-Plover *Charadrius mongolus* – Just the one at the same marsh as above.

GULLS (Charadriiformes Laridae)

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus* - Seen on the Tibetan Plateau

Black-headed Gull *Larus rudibundus* - Seen on the Tibetan Plateau

Greater Black-headed Gull *Icthyaetus icthyaetus* - Seen on the Tibetan Plateau

TERNs (Charadriiformes Sternidae)

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo tibetana* - Seen on the Tibetan Plateau

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* – A bird in full breeding plumage was sitting with the very obviously different species above.

PIGEONS AND DOVES (Columbiformes Columbidae)

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* – common in towns and urban areas throughout Sichuan

Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris* – Tagong grasslands and areas around Balanganshan

Snow Pigeon *Columba leuconota* - Tagong grasslands and areas around Balanganshan

Speckled Wood-Pigeon *Columba hodgsonii* – fairly common in Wolong NR.

Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* – Seen in a couple of scattered lower valleys throughout the tour.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis* – Seen in the lowlands around Chengdu

Red Collared Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica* one seen at the base of Wuyipeng.

Wedge-tailed Pigeon *Treron sphenura* – Seen and heard frequently on Wawushan.

CUCKOOS (Cuculiformes Cuculidae)

Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus sparverioides* – Heard commonly and seen once in flight on Wawushan.

Northern (Hodgson's) Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus fugax hypertherus* – Heard a few times on Wawushan, but not tape responsive

Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus* - Heard only near the base of Wawushan.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* – seen in many places, most stragely on the top of high passes and perching on wires on the Tibetan Plateau.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus* – Seen at several sites and heard almost daily in Sichuan.

Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus* – First seen well on Wawushan.

Asian Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea* – heard only on Wawushan.

OWLS (Strigiformes Strigidae)

Oriental Scops-Owl *Otus sunia* – Heard only on Wawushan.

Collared Owlet *Glaucidium brodei* – Seen at Wuyipeng, and heard elsewhere on the tour.

Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides* – heard at Omeishan

Little Owl *Athene noctua* – Seen on the Tibetan Plateau near Roergai

NIGHTJARS (Caprimulgidae)

Gray Nightjar *Caprimulgus indicus* – Heard only at Juizhaigou

SWIFTS (Apodiformes Apodidae)

Himalayan Swiftlet *Aerodramus brevirostris* – seen most days at Wawushan

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* – a couple of low flying flocks over Wolong

Fork-tailed (Pacific) Swift *Apus pacificus* – Seen at several places on tour
House Swift *Apus nipalensis* – In Chengdu and Omeishan

HOOPOES (Coraciiformes Upupidae)

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* – A few seen at a variety of localities throughout

BARBETS (Piciformes Capitonidae)

Great Barbet *Megalaima virens* – Seen at Omeishan

WOODPECKERS (Piciformes Picidae)

Darjeeling Woodpecker *Dendrocopos darjellensis* – Seen once on Wawushan

Crimson-breasted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos cathpharius* – Seen once on Wawushan

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos* – Found a nest on Wawushan

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* – Over 5 encounters with this wonderful giant between Mengbishan and Juizhaigou

Gray-faced Woodpecker *Picus canus* – Seen a couple of times at Wawushan and near Kanding

LARKS (Passeriformes Alaudidae)

Tibetan Lark *Melanocorypha maxima* – Several seen near Roergai

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula* – Common in all high altitude areas

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris khamensis* - Common in all high altitude areas

SWALLOWS (Passeriformes Hirundinidae)

Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia* – Seen at the base of Wawushan and again near Rilong.

Pale Sand Martin *Riparia diluta* – One seen near Maerkang

Eurasian Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* – Frequent at scattered localities

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* – Frequent at scattered localities

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* – Frequent at scattered localities

Asian Martin *Delichon dasypus* – Frequent at scattered localities

WAGTAILS AND PIPITS (Passeriformes Motacillidae)

(Himalayan) White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alboides* – Frequent at scattered localities and a possible split

Citrine (Black-backed) Wagtail *Motacilla citreola calcarata* – Frequent on the high Plateau. Black-backed race may be a different species

Gray Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* – Frequent at scattered localities

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* – Seen once near Wolong

Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus* – Frequent at scattered localities

CUCKOO-SHRIKES AND MINIVETS (Passeriformes Campephagidae)

Brown-rumped (Swinhoe's) Minivet *Pericrocotus cantonensis* – Brief views of a flock flying near Omeishan

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus* – Frequent at scattered localities

BULBULS (Passeriformes Pycnonotidae)

Collared Finchbill *Spizixos semitorques* - Wolong area.

Brown-breasted Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthorrhous* – On overhead wires near the base of Wawushan

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* – One in Chengdu possibly an escape

Light-vented (Chinese) Bulbul *Pycnonotus sinensis* – near Chengdu and Omeishan

Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus leucothorax* – Omeishan and Wawushan

KINGLETS (Passeriformes Regulidae)

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus yunnanensis* – Mengbishan and Roergai area

DIPPERS (Passeriformes Cinclidae)

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii* – Wawushan and near Rilong

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus przewalskii* – Seen particularly well at Juizhaigou

WRENS (Passeriformes Troglodytidae)

Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* – Heard only on Mengbisha

ACCENTORS (Passeriformes Prunellidae)

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* – On the top of Balangshan

Robin Accentor *Prunella rubeculoides* – Just the one on Zhedou Pass

Rufous-breasted Accentor *Prunella strophiate* – Zhedou Pass

Brown Accentor *Prunella fulvescens* – One bird on the Tagong Grasslands

Maroon-backed Accentor *Prunella immaculate* – Best views were had just outside Jiuzhaigou. Also heard on Mengbisha.

THRUSHES (Passeriformes Turdidae)

Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush *Monticola rufiventris*. Recorded on Wawushan.

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius pandoo*. – Frequent at scattered localities

Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus* – Frequent at scattered localities

Plain-backed Thrush *Zoothera mollissima* – Mengbisha and Juizhaigou

Long-tailed Thrush *Zoothera dixonii* – On the way up Balangshan we got this sucker in the headlights out on the road!

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula* – Common in the lowlands, especially around Chengdu, local race may be a separate species Chinese Blackbird.

Chestnut Thrush *Turdus rubrocanus*. – Frequent at scattered localities

White-backed Thrush *Turdus kessleri*. – Frequent at scattered localities

Chinese (Song) Thrush *Turdus mupinensis* – Seen near Roergai

White-browed Shortwing *Brachypteryx montana* – Heard only at Wawushan

OLD WORLD WARBLERS (Passeriformes Sylviidae)

Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler *Cettia fortipes davidiana* – Frequent in Wawushan area

Chestnut-crowned Bush-Warbler *Cettia major major* – recorded once on Wawushan

Aberrant Bush-Warbler *Cettia flavolivacea intricata* – recorded once on Wawushan

Yellowish-bellied Bush-Warbler *Cettia acanthizoides acanthizoides* – recorded on Wawushan

Gray-sided Bush-Warbler *Cettia brunnifrons* – recorded on Wawushan

Spotted Bush-Warbler *Bradypterus thoracicus* – recorded once on Wawushan

Russet Bush-Warbler *Bradypterus seebohmi* – recorded on Wawushan

Brown Bush-Warbler *Bradypterus luteiventris* – recorded on Wawushan

White-browed Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile sophiae* – recorded once on the Tibetan Plateau edge.

Crested Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile elegans* – recorded on Mengbisha

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* – recorded on Tibetan Plateau

Tickell's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis* – recorded in Balangshan area

Buff-throated Warbler *Phylloscopus subaffinis* – recorded in Wolong and Wawushan

Buff-barred Warbler *Phylloscopus pulcher* – Frequent at scattered localities

Sichuan Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus forresti* – few at scattered localities

Chinese Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus sichuanensis* – Wuyipeng and Juizhaigou

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* – A late migrant near Rilong.

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* – Mengbisha area

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* - One migrant seen near Wolong.

Large-billed Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris* – This spritely songster was heard at all low altitude localities. It was even rated by one participant as bird of the trip because of its wonderful tune.

Blyth's (Claudia's) Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides claudiae* – Common at scattered localities throughout the tour.

Emei Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus emeiensis* – This distinctive songster was seen several times on Wawushan

Klossi's (White-tailed) Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus ogilviegranti disturbans* – Wawushan and Wuyipeng

Sulphur-breasted Warbler *Phylloscopus ricketti* – heard only at Wawushan.

Bianchi's Warbler *Seicercus valentini valentini* – Wuyipeng area

Marten's (Omei Spectacled) Warbler *Seicercus omeiensis* - Wawushan

Plain-tailed Warbler *Seicercus soror* – base of Wawushan

Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps* – Common at Wawushan

Grey-crowned Warbler *Seicercus tephrocephalus* – Seen at Juizhaigou

Rufous-faced Warbler *Abroscopus albogularis* - Chengdu

OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS (Passeriformes Muscicapidae)

Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher *Rhinomyias bruneatus* – One low down on Wawushan.

Siberian (Dark-sided) Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica* – A few at scattered mid altitude localities.

Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui* – Seen once at Omeishan.

Ferruginous Flycatcher *Muscicapa ferruginea* – Wolong Area

Korean (Yellow-rumped) Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia* – One in the Wolong area

Slaty-backed Flycatcher *Ficedula hodgsonii* – Wolong and Juizhaigou area.

Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher *Ficedula strophiatea* – A few at scattered localities.

Snowy-browed Flycatcher *Ficedula hyperythra* – One heard only low down on Wawushan.

Slaty-blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolor* – Wolong and Roergai areas

Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassina* – Common on Wawushan

Fujian Niltava *Niltava davidi* – On Wawushan

Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara* – Wolong and Juizhaigou

Blue-throated (Chinese Blue) Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides* – One ridiculously stubborn individual succumbed on Wawushan

Gray-headed Canary-flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis* - Wawushan

White-tailed (Himalayan) Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis* – On Zhedou Pass

Rufous-headed Robin *Luscinia ruficeps* – One lucky individual saw some on a path and then the remainder had to be satisfied with views of this mega-skulker flitting around the canopy and it sung its spectacular melancholic song.

Firethroat *Luscinia pectardens* – Another spectacular robin in this phenomenal genus seen at Wuyipeng.

Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea* – Seen at Wuyipeng

Himalayan Red-flanked Bluetail (Orange-flanked Bush-Robin) *Tarsiger cyanurus rufilatus* – Seen in Juizhaigou area

Golden Bush-Robin *Tarsiger chrysaesus* – Seen very well on the top of Wawushan.

White-browed Bush-Robin *Tarsiger indicus yunnanensis* – Seen well at Wuyipeng and heard elsewhere.

Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis* – Common in the lowlands around Chengdu

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* – Common on the Tibetan Plateau

Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni* - Common on the Tibetan Plateau

White-throated Redstart *Phoenicurus schisticeps* - Frequent at scattered localities throughout the tour

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus* - Wolong

Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis* - Frequent at scattered localities throughout the tour

White-capped Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus* - Frequent at scattered localities throughout the tour

Plumbeous Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus* Frequent at scattered localities throughout the tour

White-tailed Robin *Cinclidium leucurum* – Heard on Wawushan

Grandala *Grandala coelicolor* – Seen once on Balangshan

Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus* - Wawushan

Gray Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea* – near Wawushan

BABLERS (Passeriformes Timaliidae)

White-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax albogularis* – In Chengdu, possibly introduced?

Pere David's (Plain) Laughingthrush *Garrulax davidi* – near Roergai.
Sukatchev's Laughingthrush *Garrulax sukatschewi* – seen well near Roergai.
Spotted Laughingthrush *Garrulax ocellatus* – Seen at Wawushan and Wuyipeng
Barred Laughingthrush *Garrulax lunulatus* – Seen briefly on the walk up to Wuyipeng
Giant Laughingthrush *Garrulax maximus* – Seen very well on Balangshan and Mengbisha
Buffy (Rusty) Laughingthrush *Garrulax poecilorhynchus berthemvi* – Seen very well at Wawushan
Chinese Hwamei *Garrulax canorus* – Seen at Omeishan.
White-browed Laughingthrush *Garrulax sannio* – Seen in Chengdu and elsewhere in the lowlands
Elliot's Laughingthrush *Garrulax elliotii* – Common at scattered localities on tour
Black-faced Laughingthrush *Garrulax affinis* – Seen well on Wawushan.
Red-winged Laughingthrush *Garrulax formosus* – Seen briefly on Wawushan and at Wuyipeng
Gray-faced (Emei Shan) Liocichla *Liocichla omeiensis* – Seen well on Wawushan
Black-streaked (Spot-breasted) Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis gravivox* – Seen near Juizhaigou
Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis* – Seen briefly at Wawushan
Scaly-breasted Wren-Babbler *Pnoepyga albiventer* – Heard only at Wuyipeng
Pygmy Wren-Babbler *Pnoepyga pusilla* – Seen well at Wawushan
Rufous-capped Babbler *Stachyris ruficeps* – Seen fleetingly on Wawushan
Chinese Babax *Babax lanceolatus* - Seen well on Mengbisha
Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea* - Seen well and commonly on Wawushan
Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanouroptera* – Seen well on Wawushan
Golden-breasted Fulvetta *Alcippe chrysotis* – Seen well on Wawushan and Wuyipeng
Chinese Fulvetta *Fulvetta striaticollis* – seen near Juizhaigou
Streak-throated Fulvetta *Alcippe cinereiceps* - Seen well on Wawushan and Wuyipeng
Gray-cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe morrisonia* – Seen well at Chingchongshan.
Stripe-throated Yuhina *Yuhina gularis* – Seen well at Wuyipeng
White-collared Yuhina *Yuhina diademata* - Seen well at Wuyipeng and Wawushan
Black-chinned Yuhina *Yuhina nigrimenta* - Seem well low down on Wawushan

PARROTBILLS (Passeriformes Paradoxornithidae)

Great Parrotbill *Conostoma oemodium* – Seen well at Wuyipeng
Spectacled Parrotbill *Paradoxornis conspicillatus* – Seen near Juizhaigou
Vinous-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis webbianus* – Seen well in Chengdu
Ashy-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis alphonsianus* – Seen well in Chengdu
Gray-hooded Parrotbill *Paradoxornis zappeyi* – Seen at Wawushan
Fulvous Parrotbill *Paradoxornis fulvifrons* – Seen at Wawushan
Golden Parrotbill *Paradoxornis verreauxi* – Seen at Wawushan

LONG-TAILED TITS (Passeriformes Aegithalidae)

Black-throated Tit *Aegithalos concinnus* – Seen well in Chengdu
Sooty Tit *Aegithalos fuliginosus* – Seen well at Wuyipeng and Juizhaigou

CHICKADEES AND TITS (Passeriformes Paridae)

Songar Tit *Poecile songara* – Seen near Roergai. It seems this race is best placed within Willow Tit and some authorities even suggest that it be split as Sichuan Willow Tit *Poecile weigoldicus*.
White-browed Tit *Poecile superciliosa* – Seen well on the Tibetan Plateau
Pere David's Tit *Poecile davidi* – Seen well at Wuyipeng and Juizhaigou
Coal Tit *Periparus ater* – Seen well at Juizhaigou
Rufous-vented Tit *Periparus rubidiventris* - Seen well at Mengbisha and Juizhaigou
Yellow-bellied Tit *Pardaliparus venustulus* – This little stunner was common and frequent throughout the trip.
Gray-crested Tit *Lophophanes dichrous* – Common and frequent at higher altitudes
Great Tit *Parus major minor*. Sometimes considered to be Japanese Tit. Seen well on the Tibetan Plateau.

Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus* - Common and frequent on the tour.

Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus* – In mixed flocks on Wawushan

Ground Tit/Hume's Groundpecker *Pseudopodoces humilis* - NB. Traditionally thought to be allied with the crow family, this has recently been found to be genetically closely related to tits (hard to believe looking at this quirky bird), and is now accordingly grouped with them. Seen commonly around Roergai.

NUTHATCHES (Passeriformes Sittidae)

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* – in Juizhaigou

Chestnut-vented Nuthatch *Sitta nagaensis montium* – Seen once at Wawushan

Chinese (Snowy-browed) Nuthatch *Sitta villosa bangsi* – Seen a couple of times at Jiuzhaigou

WALLCREEPER (Passeriiformed Tichodromidae)

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* – One in flight en route to Juizhaigou

CREEPERS (Passeriformes Certhiidae)

Hodgson's (Eurasian) Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris hodgsoni* – Seen at Wawushan

Sichuan Treecreeper *Certhia tianquanensis* – Seen at Wawushan

Bar-tailed Treecreeper *Certhia himalayana* – Seen in a flock at Mengbisha

PENDULINE TITS (Passeriformes Remizidae)

Fire-capped Tit *Cephalopyrus flammiceps* - Wawushan

SUNBIRDS AND SPIDERHUNTERS (Passeriformes Nectariniidae)

Gould's Sunbird *Aethopygia gouldiae* – Common and frequent on tour

Fire-tailed Sunbird *Aethopygia ignicauda* – A splendid male in full plumage was a surprise find on Wawushan

Fork-tailed Sunbird *Aethopygia christinae latouchii* – Fantastic male at Omeishan.

FLOWERPECKERS (Passeriformes Dicaeidae)

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker *Dicaeum ignipectus* – Seen at Omeishan

WHITE-EYES (Passeriformes Zosteropidae)

Chestnut-flanked White-eye *Zosterops erythropleurus* – Seen by Sonia but not leader at Omeishan, and by all at Wolong

Japanese White-eye *Zosterops japonicas* – Seen at Wawushan

SHRIKES (Passeriformes Laniidae)

Tiger Shrike *Lanius tigrinus* – Seen on top of a high altitude pass in Zhedou.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* – One migrant passing through in Chengdu

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* – Seen in the lowlands

Gray-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus* – Common in high altitude areas

(Tibetan) Chinese Gray Shrike *Lanius sphenocercus giganteus* – Seen once on Tibetan Plateau

DRONGOS (Passeriformes Dicruridae)

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* – A few at scattered localities

Hair-crested Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus* – One at Wawushan

CROWS AND JAYS (Passeriformes Corvidae)

Sichuan Jay *Perisoreus intermigrans* – Unfortunately heard only on Mengbisha

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* – One on Wawushan

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyana* – Several on the Tibetan Plateau

Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha* – Common at Wolong.

Eurasian (Black-billed) Magpie *Pica pica* – Common on Tibetan Plateau

Gray Treepie *Dendrocitta formosae* – In Chengdu

Eurasian Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* – Common at scattered localities
Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* – Common in high altitude areas
Yellow-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus* – At Balanganshan
Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus* – Common on Tagong Grasslands and again near Hongyuan.
(Oriental) Carrion Crow *Corvus corone orientalis* – Seen on Tagong Grasslands
Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos* - Common in high altitude areas
Common Raven *Corvus corax* - Common in high altitude areas

STARLINGS (Passeriformes Sturnidae)

Crested Myna *Acridotheres cristatellus* – In Chengdu
Red-billed Starling *Sturnus sericus* – In Omeishan area
White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus* – In Omeishan area

OLD WORLD SPARROWS (Passeriformes Passeridae)

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* – Only one individual of this 'scarce' species (on this tour) in Juizhaigou. It also happened to be the 300th bird on this tour and was greatly celebrated by Keith, even if all the participants looked at him with a quizzical smile on their faces.
Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* – Common in urban areas
Rock Petronia *Petronia petronia* – A few near Roergai
Black-winged (Tibetan) Snowfinch *Montifringilla adamsi* – A few near Roergai
White-rumped Snowfinch *Montifringilla taczanowskii* – A colony was discovered breeding within a Pika colony!

WAXBILLS AND ALLIES (Passeriformes Estrildidae)

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata* – A few in the lowlands at Omeishan

FINCHES, SISKINS, CROSSBILLS (Passeriformes Fringillidae)

Plain Mountain-Finch *Leucosticte nemoricola* – At Balangshan and a few other high altitude passes.
Black-headed (Brandt's) Mountain-Finch *Leucosticte brandti* - At Balangshan and a few other high altitude passes.
Dark-breasted Rosefinch *Carpodacus nipalensis* – Just one seen on Balangshan.
Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* – Seen on Balangshan and again at Juizhaigou
Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrimus davidianus* - A few on most high altitude passes
Pink-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus eos* – Just the one on Balangshan.
Vinaceous Rosefinch *Carpodacus vinaceus* – We saw these well on Wawushan, its such a stunner!
Three-banded Rosefinch *Carpodacus trifasciatus* – Males and females of this wonder were seen on Mengbishan.
Spot-winged Rosefinch *Carpodacus rhodopeplus* – Another scarce rosefinch, this was seen on an odd pass between Maerkang and Hongyuan.
Chinese White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus thura dubius* – Seen commonly on mountain passes.
Red-fronted Rosefinch *Carpodacus puniceus* – This bulky fellow was seen on Balanganshan
Oriental Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica* – In Chengdu
Twite *Carduelis flavirostris* - Common on the Tibetan plateau
Tibetan Siskin *Serinus tibetanus* – near Roergai
Gray-headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythaca* – Roergai area
Yellow-billed (Chinese) Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria* – Quite a few were around in Chengdu
White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carnipes* – At several high altitude passes
Collared Grosbeak *Mycerobas affinis* - Just the one noisy group on Mengbishan.

BUNTINGS, SEEDEATERS, ALLIES (Passeriformes Emberizidae)

Slaty Bunting *Latoucheornis siemsseni* – A nest found at Wolong.

Godlewski's Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii* – Seen on Tagong and again near Roergai.

Mammals

Pere David's Macaque *Macaca tibetana* – On Wawushan

Swinhoe's Striped Squirrel *Tamiops swinhoi* – Wawushan

Penry's Long-nosed Squirrel *Dremomys pernyi* – Juizhaigou

Siberian Chipmunk *Tamias sibiricus* – Juizhaigou

Himalayan Marmot *Marmota himalayana* – At all high altitudes

Black-lipped Pika *Ochotona curzoniae* – At all high altitudes

Masked Palm Civit *Paguma larvata* – One ran across the road into the half light going up Balangshan, a great surprise for those that were awake!

Bharal (Blue Sheep) *Pseudois nayaer* – Seen both days up Balananshan in good numbers.