

Mammals of the roof of the World

The glorious Changtang and delightful Sichuan

October 1st - 26th 2015

A Greentours Trip Report

Led by Jesper Hornskov & Phil Benstead

Daily report by Phil Benstead

Day 1 1st October flight from home

Two-thirds of the team met up at Heathrow in the afternoon and flew through the night to Chengdu. The other 'half' of the team had already made their way to Xining from the other direction. Would we all converge the next day?

Day 2 2nd October more flying and finally Xining

An interminable but thankfully time-zone truncated day saw us landing in Chengdu, going through immigration, picking up our bags, taking the shuttle bus to the domestic terminal and then trying to get Jason's spotlight batteries through security (no dice they had to wait in Left Luggage for our return). All this seriously cut-down our wait time for our final flight to Xining, where we finally met up with Steve and Karen (who had had a much more relaxing day looking around the panda conservation centre in town). Jesper was waiting at Xining to pick us up and he whisked us to the hotel, fed us well and then we could sleep at last.

Day 3 3rd October Hu Zhu area

We gathered together at 0530 all wrapped up and ready for any weather, fairly champing at the bit to get at some wildlife after being stuck in planes for two days. We were to experience a surprisingly pleasant blue-sky day with lots of sun.

We drove into the Hu Zhu area about an hour-and-a-half out of town. Dawn broke as we started attacking the route up to the pass and on the other side Jesper stopped us for breakfast and three

Siberian roe deer. They fed high above us in a grassy clearing on a steep slope and included a fine male.

After breakfast we moved a short distance and parked up for a short walk. The altitude was telling here though and we were all glad that we would have some opportunity to acclimatise before we got really high up on the plateau during the tour. Soon we arrived at a hillside overlooking a small clearing. As the day warmed up quickly birds got going. Elliott's laughingthrushes whistled from nearby cover. Tickell's warbler put in its first appearance of the day. The superb Stolzka's tit-warbler was available, stunning males were hard to come by though in the flocks that passed us during the morning, but were well worth the effort. Kenny spotted a lone red-throated thrush high above us in a tree. Closer at hand our first redstarts appeared, beautiful blue-fronteds and a few stunning white-throateds. A bluetail was more elusive. The strange call of the white-browed rosefinch alerted us to their presence and the more prosaic willow tit was present in good numbers. Walking back Phil spotted the first of two Himalayan marmots that had popped up in the clearing whilst we had been away.

Continuing our acclimatisation/fitness efforts we walked up into a quiet side valley before lunch hoping for a couple of species of pika that Jesper has seen in the past on this track. We were to fail in this quest but greatly enjoyed the birding on offer. More redstarts greeted us from the berry-laden bushes and our first Himalayan buzzards and red-billed choughs soared overhead. Our first Severtzov's grouse were elusive. The warblers here were amazing with singing Gansu leaf-warblers present in good numbers, plenty of buff-barred warblers and a few Chinese leaf warblers. Chinese nuthatches were ridiculously common here. Eventually hunger got the better of us and we headed down the road to find a restaurant for lunch.

After a late lunch we did one more track to look for birds in spruce forest. Along the track we found a number of rather prosaic species; treecreeper, great spotted woodpecker and wren amongst them, before finally getting to grips with some more interesting species such as grey-crested tit (great views of one), rufous-vented tit and more Chinese nuthatch. White-winged grosbeak put in an appearance too. A black woodpecker dropped in nearby, only to be immediately buzzed by a feisty Eurasian sparrowhawk. Severtzov's grouse finally appeared on the ground but best of all we had a close group of perhaps 13 blood pheasants. The superb males often lingering in gaps between the junipers and other scrub for great views and photographs. Tired we headed down and tackled the bank holiday weekend traffic on the road back to Xining. A great first day.

Dinner was welcome and then we tackled the checklists before getting a headstart on our packing, another early start in the morning...

Day 4 4th October Koko Nor and the South Koko Nor Range

Another early start saw us heading out of sleepy Xining well before dawn. Dawn revealed that we were out into decent habitat and driving up onto the plateau. Jesper called a halt in a sand dune area and we climbed out of the cars to find a frost in hollows on the ground and the temperature

decidedly nippy. The sky above us was blue though, and it was the start of another fantastically sunny day.

Heading to some high ground we were soon watching the first of a total of seven Przewalski's gazelles – an incredibly rare and threatened species. After the first we quickly found a group of three and then by tramping the dunes (punishing at this altitude) we found three more. They were all wary and adept at avoiding us in the dune terrain however hard we tried. Good 'scope views were had by all though and we were well pleased as we trudged back to the road. Woolly hare appeared for the first time here. This trek was also greatly livened up by the presence of a number of small toad-headed agamas (species?). An unidentified immature harrier here was either Montagu's or pallid, either of which would have been a very good record...

Driving further we pushed on to the eastern side of the huge and impressive Koko Nor lake and our first encounter with the seriously cute black-lipped pika. We breakfasted by a freshwater lagoon that was filled with waterfowl. Black-necked and great crested grebes bobbed about. Big rafts of red-crested pochard contained smaller numbers of dabbling duck. Flying around we found brown-headed and Pallas' gull. It was hard to concentrate on breakfast with so much to look at. Eventually though we had our fill on both fronts and went for a long walk alongside the nearby marsh. Raptors were much in evidence here and frequently spooked up the wildfowl and waders present. Huge immature sakers put the fear of god into their prey and at least 5-6 hen harriers were on site today. A Mongolian lark gave great flyby views to the leaders.

After a late breakfast we walked along the edge of the marsh. Crossing the first of many fences we stopped to admire our first black-necked cranes – a family group of three. Heading on Jesper told us of a mystery mammal that he had encountered here, and we also found evidence of a grassland species that was making burrows, well-defined runs and left small haystacks dotted around outside their burrows. We were keen to solve the mystery but apart from hearing some squeaks we failed to encounter the animal involved. What is it – Daurian pika perhaps? Around here too some nice dragonflies including a small and very black libellulid and a nice big hunting aeshnid. Bearded tit was heard too.

Walking the marsh was a great pleasure. We saw our first Tibetan larks – a monster lark, big enough to survive the winters at high altitudes. Horned larks and Oriental skylarks were common. Our first groundpeckers appeared. These curious little, rather comical, birds were to become a firm favourite during the tour. Although a superficial resemblance to ground-jays put them in the crow family for many years, DNA studies have shown amazingly that their true affinities lie with the tits.

We took lunch in a roadside restaurant, the roads still amazingly busy with bank holiday traffic. Taking the road into the South Koko Nor Range Jesper led us to a fascinating area pock-marked by the activities of thousands of black-lipped pikas. The area was huge and it was rather hard to take in its scale and the sheer number of pikas that made the area their home. Everywhere you looked the pikas were basking in the afternoon sun. Unsurprisingly this great bounty was a huge magnet for predators and we found our first Tibetan foxes here and enjoyed watching them scent-marking and trying to dig out pikas through the telescopes. This is a really attractive and charismatic dog. We also watched a saker carrying a freshly-caught pika, landing to start feeding before an upland buzzard

tried to dispossess it of its hard-won meal. Jesper moved us on in the cars for one last overlook. More foxes here in the distance and then Steven found a much closer animal snoozing away on a nearby hillside. The photographers gave chase eventually waking the fox which posed nicely for them before slinking off uphill and away. It was getting dark by now but we had one more new mammal a fleeing red fox before we made it to the hotel and dinner/checklists.

Day 5 5th October Pallas' cat and the Er La Pass

A pre-dawn start saw us heading for the Er La pass. En route we tried a dirt road side track into great habitat. Jesper stopped the cars when he spotted a Pallas' cat (from the car!) on a nearby ridge-top. Ordinarily this is a species we have to yomp over the mountains for! We all failed to connect with this individual unfortunately but undaunted we started searching the area. Jason came up trumps a little way away and only a short time later when he found two nearly full-grown kittens on a nearby rock outcrop (no doubt the first individual was one of their parents).

The views were prolonged and at much closer range than is normal for viewing this species. The kittens themselves were enchanting, playing posing and loafing about, we were naturally delighted. All around us birds were appearing but these largely went ignored for the duration. We eventually filled our pockets with breakfast and walked to get closer views. We did this just in time, grabbing some images just before a herd of domestic yak sent the youngsters scuttling for their nearby den. What an encounter! During all this Jesper searched a distant peak and came up with yet another Pallas's cat – a hunting adult that soon made itself scarce.

Pallas' cat done and dusted we headed for the nearby Gansu gully, our real reason for coming down the track. Here we eventually tracked down great views of the rather non-descript Gansu pika – another mammal under the belt. This spot was very birdy. A pair of Guldenstadts' redstarts put in an appearance. Small birds were drinking in numbers in pools in the dried up stream bed, including numerous twite and robin accentors. White-browed tits moved through the low scrub. Up at the road we had found the beefy Caucasian great rosefinch and here we found it's sister species the eastern great rosefinch. Pere David's laughingthrush appeared for all too. Dragging ourselves away from this magic spot we took to the vehicles once more and drove a short distance to a noodle restaurant for a celebratory feed. Pallas' cat! What with the recent developments in Ladakh way more people have seen snow leopard these days than this angry-looking little furball.

After lunch we drove on to the Er La Pass (4499 metres and our highest point to date) and slowly walked up to a saddle and then along a narrow contouring sheep trail to a likely overlook. The weather took a turn for the worse here and as the wind picked up and clouds loomed we headed home. We did not just get some hard exercise on this walk; we were rewarded with distant views of our first Tibetan gazelle and our first flock of Henri's snowfinch, one of which was taken by a sparrowhawk. Overhead a light passage of raptors was evident through the pass producing a small number of steppe eagles and our first northern goshawk. Snow hit on the walk back, some battled through whilst others huddled together like penguins on the slope and waited for it to ease up. Reaching the cars we headed for the nearby village of Wenquan and sorted ourselves out into our

basic lodgings for the night. Dinner was at a nearby restaurant and was good, Jesper rewarding us for our hard work with some Chinese chips!

Day 6 6th October the road to Maduo

Having achieved our aim of seeing Pallas' cat we left the high-altitude walk at the Wenquan Pass for another day! We got a lie-in this morning, leaving at 0630 and heading over the pass en route to some scrubby dunes. Mammals dominated proceedings as we stopped to photograph our first close Tibetan gazelles and kiang.

Another hour down the road and we arrived at an exciting site, some low dunes covered in scrub (and snow) that hosts the fabled Przevalski's pinktail – all on its own in a monotypic family! If you have an interest in birds it does not get more exciting than this.

After breakfast we tramped off towards the habitat through the snow and initially things seemed quiet. On the grassland black-lipped pikas were busy feeding. Inside the scrub we searched for the closely related Gansu pika, but only Kenny caught a glimpse during our morning walk. Walking on we flushed the occasional woolly hare, an active constituent of the mammal fauna if the numerous tracks present were anything to go by. Karen dug out a zokor mound and was rewarded with a fleeting glimpse of one as it came back to repair the damage!

Birdwise the pinktail surrendered as we entered the dunes – a simply superb little bird. We found at least eight during the session and the supporting cast included plenty of robin accentors, Stoliczka's tit-warbler, white-browed tit and some Guldenstadt's and blue-headed redstarts. The lucky few had a brief contact with a Eurasian eagle owl.

After lunch in a nearby restaurant we drove a short distance to an area where the team pursued photographs of kiang, found lacustrine voles, saw another red fox and generally enjoyed themselves. Phil holed up in the vehicle hoping his cold virus would not get chesty... Job done we drove the short distance to Maduo, a delightfully Tibetan town and had another splendid dinner in a nearby restaurant.

Day 7 7th October Bayankala pass and south to Yushu

Rather bleary-eyed we assembled for the day's drive south to Yushu. Most of us missed the first bridge over the Yellow River just outside town but cross it we did. The day dawned well with blue sky for most of the morning.

Driving up to the Bayankala pass (4800m asl) we spent some time searching the scree patches for dwarf hamsters without success sadly. This was hard work but four hours here did produce our first wolf. With time swiftly running away from us we headed down to Qingshuihe for a late noodle lunch in a restaurant where we quickly became the toast of the town, largely thanks to Karen's polaroid camera and Phil's wild yak beard!

We stopped later at the last pass before dropping off the plateau, but the place was quiet and we soon moved on. The drive down off the plateau took us down to trees and buckthorn scrub a stark contrast with the plateau. We stopped briefly to look for Glover's pika and found at least three of this pretty little lagomorph.

Day 8 8th October south of Yushu to Nangqian

Another early start saw us checking out of the hotel in Yushu and heading south down the road to Nangqian. As dawn occurred we became aware of a good number of Tibetan gazelle by the roadside but the light was not yet good enough for photography. Driving through a pass we dropped down into the catchment of the Mekong and a nice limestone landscape that captivated us throughout the day. We took breakfast by a bridge at the start of a walk that took us through a charming valley, past a small hamlet and into a small gorge. This took the best part of the day. We succeeded in our aim of finding some *mcneilli* red deer pretty quickly, when Jesper spotted a group of ten feeding on a high alpine meadow. We also provided much entertainment to the local people as we journeyed through the valley.

Marmots were rather easily found here and we got some good photographs. Two flocks of white eared-pheasants were most welcome. This robust pheasant is quite a treat. Tibetan partridges were common, large coveys often bursting from underfoot in an alarming fashion. Glover's pika scampered on rock faces and even along the walls of the hamlet. The small stream produced our first white-bellied dipper and the nearby scrub our first good looks at Elliot's laughing thrush and our first pink-rumped rosefinches. A tiring day but worth it for the scenery alone.

Driving to Nangqian we settled into our quirky hotel for a luxury two-night stay!

Day 9 9th October Baixha Forest Reserve

Another early start had us out the door well before dawn for the drive down to the Baixha Forest reserve. Rain, sleet and then snow fell as we crossed the high ground en route to the reserve. We all hoped the weather would get better on the other side of the catchment and it did! Arriving at the gate we delivered a fruit-basket to the forest guards who let us in. Driving into the heart of the reserve we eventually pulled up for breakfast before commencing a downhill hike that lasted for most of the rest of the day with the odd lift in the vehicles and of course lunch. It was a beautiful walk memorable for producing regular sightings of blue sheep. We searched the open areas on the slopes above us for mammals as we followed the river downstream.

There were plenty of highlights on this walk. Cat found one of the best mammals of the day when she spotted a small (presumably female) mountain weasel bouncing along with what looked like a pika clamped in its jaws. We all eventually got good views when it came down close to the road after stashing the prey item somewhere on a scree slope.

Birding was good with special mention going to the crested tit-warbler Jesper found us – what a bird! Giant laughingthrush was relatively common and we also found a few Chinese fulvetas. Drifting down the valley the 'A-team' surrounded a tiny moupin pika, encouraging it out of a coppiced willow clump for photographs. A few Sichuan leaf-warblers appeared in riverside willows. Further on Phil spotted a distant troupe of rhesus macaques. Driving out at the end of our session, Jesper spotted a nice solitary snipe along the river and we stopped later on again to look at close blue sheep and some very close white eared-pheasants. On the drive back to the hotel we had a nice encounter with a small group of Tibetan gazelles.

Day 10 10th October The Kanda Shan

Today we once again headed south of Nangqian in the dark retracing part of yesterday's route before diving off towards the unbelievably beautiful Kanda Shan. In these snow-dusted mountains we searched for alpine musk-deer and other wildlife. Some of us managed good views of two skittish musk-deer found by James just after breakfast but the rest were painfully disappointed. The whole area was remarkable for the number of blue sheep present though and we enjoyed watching sparring males on the slopes above us at one point.

Birds here were excellent too with great views of several groups of Szecheny's monal-partridge, distant but satisfying looks at a pair Tibetan snowcock and more blood pheasants. Kessler's thrushes were present in small numbers and distracted us from the task of trying to find another musk-deer. Both moupin and Glover's pika were tracked down by the team. An adult golden eagle performed its roller-coaster display right past us at eye-level, later we saw a sub-adult soaring over a massive flock of blue sheep.

With time pressing we headed back to Nangqian for a bite to eat before tackling the drive back to Yushu. En route to Nangqian vehicle 1 had a great encounter with a couple of wolves that most in vehicle 2 just glimpsed. On the way to Yushu after lunch Jesper took us to a scenic overlook to photograph the Mekong river and then we drove on stopping once to look for white-lipped deer and again to get photos of a close Tibetan gazelle.

Day 11 11th October drive to Qumalai

Another travel day interspersed with stops at likely-looking spots and known mammal locations. No sign of any snow this morning, just blue sky and bitter cold. We drove over the first of two high passes through rolling hills and plenty of evidence of over-grazing. Dropping down we came to a superb wetland. We stopped just once along the northern shore, tallying at least 13 black-necked cranes and finding big flocks of ferruginous ducks and other wildfowl.

As the day progressed we trundled along the now tarmac road and stopped occasionally to look at a roadside Tibetan fox. Lunch was taken in a bustling Zhiduo, market day! Here we quickly became a star attraction and stopped traffic! The afternoon produced the most memorable sightings of the day in many ways. Jesper took us to a great spot and Cat quickly found a small herd of white-lipped deer

feeding high above us on a slope. Moving further on we found another concentration of white-lipped deer, here huge stags were roaring and hanging with their harems. Phil found three male argali nearby and they stayed in view over the hours we enjoyed watching the goings-on high above us. We hoped for more encounters with this impressive wild sheep. Moving closer to the small stream we were surprised to find it contained larval amphibians and also a minnow-like fish species.

Our penultimate stop of the day was by two bridges spanning the Yangtze. Here in the riverbed we found eastern great rosefinch and more Guldenstadt's redstarts. Our last stop just outside Qumalai was a huge pika warren stretching off into the distance. It was no surprise to find our last Tibetan fox of the day here.

Day 12 12th October drive to Xidatan

A nice late 0700 start saw us on the road out of Qumalai. The new tarmac road was to be our constant companion as we drove yet again through some staggeringly desolate scenery on our way to our lodgings. Through the day we stayed mostly above 4200m asl.

Our morning drive was punctuated by numerous stops. Just outside Qumalai we noted but did not stop for the captive white-lipped deer (bred for powdered antler products...). We did stop for two wolves that crossed the road in front of vehicle 1 though, they soon made themselves scarce. As we drove on we enjoyed excellent but fleeting views of sakers, steppe eagles and the first of over a thousand Tibetan gazelles logged during the day. En route we had one short stop at Old Qumalai which this year had been overtaken by Tibetan gazelles. Vehicle 2 stopped for a splendid encounter and great photos of a female Tibetan fox (one of 17 seen during the day).

Driving on we stopped occasionally to scan for animals, eventually taking our breakfast by a Blyth's mountain vole colony. Reaching the Chang Tang the landscape opened out considerably and we started to search for antelope. We did not have to wait too long for our first chiru (or Tibetan antelope) but the animals were distant and we elected to move on in search of others. At the next stop we struck gold with perhaps 18 males at reasonable range. We stalked these for closer views and photographs – amazing animals. Out on the flats we found over 150 kiang, loads of Tibetan gazelles and yet more (mostly female) chiru.

Towards the end of the afternoon we started spotting impressive wild yaks out on the Yangtze floodplain, they were butch and sleek, making their domestic counterparts look decidedly frail and untidy by comparison! We walked to the Yangtze to get closer views, picking up a nice pack of five wolves including a frisky cub for our efforts. To see wolves like this and in this landscape was a rare privilege. Typically after expending so much effort to see wild yak we found a small group of five magnificent animals just near the road at Budongquan. These provided some great images as they allowed close approach.

One of our drivers arranged for us to try alternative accommodation for the night, so instead of a high-altitude truck-stop at the junction we dropped downhill for 400 metres or so and stayed in a

rather quirky establishment further south. Definitely more comfortable, quieter rooms but lacking facilities of so many kinds...

Day 13 13th October to Golmud

Another early start saw us out the door of our simple accommodation and into the cars for the ride downhill to the start of the dirt track up a side valley. It was an awfully corrugated dirt road and the Chinese army were exercising around every corner this year and even stopped us for an id check at one point. Vehicle 2 suffered a puncture about halfway in and missed the first flock of Tibetan sandgrouse on the road, luckily more were to fly by later. Before breakfast Jesper showed us the first small group of argali (16 spotted in total during the morning) and the first wild yak were spotted here too (giving an eventual total of 35 for the day). Mammal numbers were down

A breakfast stop further along provided another small herd of argali. After breakfast we walked along the river searching for Irene's mountain vole. Steve found us one that did indeed look sandier than the Blyth's we had become used to on the high ground but later we found some that looked more like Blyth's. Vole identification without specimens is tricky! The highlight of the walk though came when Kenny spotted a lone wolf carrying some food across the river. We watched this slender (female?) wolf for some time as it criss-crossed the river.

Job done we drove on to Golmud, through an increasingly arid, desert landscape. As we neared Golmud we sensed the edge of the great Qaidam Basin, our hunting ground in the morning for a new suite of mammals and birds.

Day 14 14th October to Dulan, via the Qaidam and Nuomohong

The road out of Golmud was mostly an arrow-straight good paved road that led us through some exciting desert and mountain scenery viewed through a forest of pylons. Our first stop was not productive although two goitered gazelles were briefly spotted. Next stop was more productive, on the way in we bumped into a good herd of goitered gazelles and over breakfast we spotted our only desert wheatear and our first Henderson's ground-jays.

After breakfast we did a long circuit through the rather strange Qaidam Basin habitat. Bearded tits called all around us and we did not have to wait too long for our first looks at Tarim hill warbler. Other notable birds included the thick-billed race of reed bunting and common pheasant. Goitered gazelles occasionally popped up but we could find no trace of any midday gerbils.

Lunch was taken at a nearby truckstop and then we cracked on to Dulan. We eventually reached Dulan in time for a very quick walk around the woods behind the town. This produced a few nice birds. We found our first flock of Przewalski's redstart (exciting), our first collared doves (!) and a nice red-breasted flycatcher. Dusk fell far too quickly and as the temperature plummeted we headed back to our pick-up spot.

Dinner was a happy affair as we celebrated Kenny's birthday with a massive cake and much food and beer.

Day 15 15th October Dulan Mountains and the Chaka desert

A 0700 start saw us heading down the road for better photographic opportunities with nearby goitered gazelles. That done we headed off the road and up to the start of what was to be a rather strenuous 6-hour walk, walking up to a viewpoint from which we could watch distant groups of *kansuensis* red deer. We were immediately side-tracked by a big flock of birds that included more Przewalski's redstarts and our first Chinese beautiful rosefinches and pine bunting.

Walking up, we searched a rocky gully really hard hoping for a Chinese red pika but succeeded in finding just one Glover's pika. Cat found us not one but two obliging and very photogenic red foxes during this early part of the walk. The sun blazed down throughout and we watched dust devils swirling across the plain below us. The scenery was some of the best we had seen so far on the tour. Black vulture appeared above us and a really close lammergeier was a treat. A tight flock of Przewalski's partridge shot past. As we walked we glimpsed our first red deer and attaining the ridge-top vantage we disturbed a fine stag that quickly made itself scarce. On the other side of the valley small groups of red deer were apparent and we also found a nice bachelor herd of blue sheep. Tramping back down we searched again for the pika but had to admit defeat. Nearer the cars we got views of Przewalski's partridge running about.

Motoring on to Chaka we stopped a few times. Once to look at a distant herd of 19 Przewalski's gazelle, another encounter with this rare ungulate. Lastly we stopped to search a good site for midday gerbil. We found plenty of evidence of their presence but could not catch a break with a sighting. As dusk fell we headed for town, vowing to return in the morning.

Day 16 16th October Chaka desert, gulag and to Xining

Our last morning of the Tibetan leg of the journey dawned and found us already half-an-hour into a last desperate hunt for midday gerbil in the Chaka desert, but again no luck despite the presence of numerous apparently active burrows... It was to be a largely mammal-free day.

Relocating we moved the short distance to Chaka woods and here we had a delightful encounter with a flock of azure-winged magpies and even found a few brambling. Next stop was the old gulag site which was initially quiet but eventually produced views of grey-capped greenfinch (2), and water pipit. Whilst photographing azure-winged magpie here Cat and Kenny turned up our first views of great spotted woodpecker. That just left the expressway road trip into Xining, which produced our only house sparrow of the trip and a few other notables, including only our second black vulture. Our final meal with Jesper and his wife Aiqin was a pleasant way to end the Tibetan leg of our travels.

A Note – due to extensive roadworks in and around Labahe, our normal destination on the Red Panda Extension, we were denied access this year. So we tried two new areas where Red Pandas have been seen during the last few months. By the time of the tour in 2016 we very much hope that Labahe will have reopened.

Day 17 17th October transfer to Jiajin Mtn

Breakfast in the hotel was a novelty affair and then Jesper was amongst for the last time as he organised us into three matching black limos that whisked us to the airport. Our flight left a little late but was otherwise uneventful and before we knew it we were out meeting Roland and all set to tackle the journey to Jiajin. Any journey in Sichuan is hard to predict and typically this one stretched on and on and was beset by many trials.

We had to stop in Dujiangyan for lunch, wellington boots and camera cards. We also had to negotiate 20 km of road badly damaged by the 2008 earthquake and still affected by appalling landslides. At Wolong we hosed down the vehicles (!) and spotted our first white-collared yuhinas. Driving the first high pass to 4500m was hampered only by fog and a light snowfall. Then we took dinner – a rapid noodle soup in Rilong before tackling our final 4000m pass. Here we discovered a heavy snowfall had left 3-4 inches of snow on the road.

Fate had one more trial for us as just after midnight and just after our first masked palm civet we got a puncture – just four kilometres from our destination! Using the baggage van we ferried everyone to the hotel but it was quite late when we all arrived and got settled.

Day 18 18th October Leech valley (Jiajin Mtn)

An early start after yesterday's late arrival seemed a little cruel and I think it can be said we were probably rather tired throughout the day as a result. Bleary-eyes did not stop Phil spotlighting our first Chinese serow (2) high on the slope above the road near the hotel though. Driving into Leech Valley produced little on the road but once we got the 'scopes out Phil found a big flock of grandala high above the valley floor and then our first tufted deer. After breakfast we wandered the track picking up a few birds including our first Sharpe's rosefinch (a tentative split from spot-winged?).

The aim during the entire morning was of course to try and find a red panda for the team. Having been denied access to Laba He (the ultimate red panda mecca) due to roadworks (no surprise there) we were to work very hard over the next few days looking for this animal the old-fashioned way – always difficult and sadly we failed to find one. With the red panda hunt on our mind we elected to take a very muddy cattle trail up to a valley side overlook (armed with the wellington boots purchased yesterday). Reaching the viewpoint was rather underwhelming apart from being greeted by the elusive rufous-tailed babbler on arrival. We tried hard to scan the opposite valley side but came up with nothing. The return walk produced our first rufous-gorgetted flycatcher and better still on the edge we found a small family party of three-toed parrotbills.

After dinner we set out spotlighting, picking up the same two serow and finding at least four masked palm civets.

Day 19 19th October Jiajin to Wolong

After yesterday's activities we decided to work the main track into the mountain and not repeat the muddy march. This produced a few good birds including a nice male Sharpe's rosefinch and our first nutcrackers and red-billed blue magpies but mammals were hard to find. Eventually we withdrew to the hotel for lunch and check-out.

Our plan to leave in good time to give us time on the high pass to search for birds and mammals soon came unstuck... When we drove up to the first pass – picking up a huge flock of plain mountain finches and a single alpine accentor – we were happy. Dropping down though we were stopped by a road closure and sat in a queue for three hours. The local birds were given a good grilling but nothing unusual was found. When the roadwork was finally complete and the barrier lifted it was nearly dark and we dined once again in the noodle restaurant at Rilong.

The high pass was therefore negotiated in the dark – Kenny finding us a fine red fox with the lamp near the top. Dropping finally down towards Wolong we lit up the lamps and had a great session along the main road. Cat found us a nice riverside Himalayan owl and masked palm civets reappeared and we found our first Chinese goral. Late again and rather tired we settled into our comfortable accommodation and fired up the electric blankets.

Day 20 20th October Dengsheng Valley (Wolong)

Dawn saw us breakfasting at the trailhead of the Dengsheng Valley. We spent all day here, tramping the concrete paths through pretty decent habitat in search for red panda but to no avail. The forest was eerily quiet most of the time and we added only a few new bird species. The only mammal highlight during the day was a number of Swinhoe's striped squirrels, including one hyperactive gang of four. Walking back out of the valley we took our lunch under some nearby trees and then got involved in a yak herding experience...

Taking a break from the valley we worked the road above the valley. A flock of female grandala was an easy highlight here although Phil caught glimpses of an elusive deer species (red muntjac?). Back to the valley and another circuit of the valley. Again no joy with the panda search and only a few birds glimpsed. A long, tiring and rather frustrating day! Back at the vehicles we geared up for a spotlighting session on the way back to the hotel and had two close Chinese gorals and a masked palm civet.

Day 21 21st October transfer to Tangjiahe

After our recent travel experiences it was with some trepidation that we tackled today's big transfer. We had elected to take it easy in the morning, appearing for a 0700 restaurant breakfast before heading off down the road. The noodles were good and plentiful and the tea went down well. Dropping down the through the earthquake zone was bone-jarring but we were able to confirm Kenny's little forktail record of the other day.

Arriving late morning outside Dujiangyan meant we had time for some birds before lunch. Roland took us to a pretty non-descript site that nevertheless produced a nice mixed species feeding party. Two small parrotbills (vinous-breasted and ashy-throated) stole the show but we also enjoyed the rufous-faced warblers and David's fulvettas, and our first light-vented bulbuls. Unfortunately Chinese and pygmy cupwings were heard only in the short time available to us. Moving on into town we found a restaurant, did some car maintenance and visited a supermarket before heading onwards. A short comfort stop in old-fashioned farmland produced a few new birds including white-browed laughingthrush and spotted dove.

No journey in Sichuan would be complete without a slight hitch and although we had thought we might get away with it we nevertheless found the road ahead barred by traffic cops. The new road had suffered a landslide and the cops were not keen to discuss alternative routes! Parking up patiently we met some local characters and they offered to get us round the blockage. This was surprisingly easy but involved driving through 'Love Valley'; lots of mooning couples, heart-shaped floral plantings and other lovey-dovey stuff. Thankfully it took very little time to hook back up with the main road again and as soon as we did we celebrated with a stop at a river bridge that gave us common and crested kingfisher.

Driving on we stopped for dinner just outside the park and then headed in. At the gate a huge security light had attracted hundreds of moths and Phil had to be dragged away eventually. Driving in we tried not to spot too much but could not avoid masked palm civet and our first hog-badger. The palatial accommodation was slightly incongruous but welcome all the same. Once settled in many of us headed out for two hours along the roads with lamps. Overcast conditions and mizzly rain created ideal conditions for spot-lighting and we were frequently telling Roland to stop, sometimes because observers on both sides of the vehicle had found something at the same time. Reeve's muntjac were common. We found our first takin, an incredibly impressive animal and one we had all been willing to appear since we entered the park. They became comonplace. Another hog-badger tripped across the road. A close serow was a treat and we found more Chinese goral. Phil had brief encounters with a possible cat and a flying squirrel or two but these did not end satisfactorily. Plenty to aim for over the next few nights therefore.

Day 22 22nd October Motainling trail (Tangjiahe)

Keen as mustard we all collected for a 0500 spotlighting departure. There was a nice hog-badger outside the accommodation on the lawn which delayed Phil pleasantly en route to the car park. The morning spotlighting session was not as busy as the previous night but we managed to show Steve

and Karen some of the species they had missed including some excellent takin and a showy Chinese goral.

Dawn found us breakfasting at the start of the Motainling trail. Up we walked enjoying occasional encounters with bird parties that all seemed to include spectacled fulvetta. Highlights were great views of barred laughingthrushes and our first spectacled parrotbills. Whilst watching one busy area Phil spotted a very well-marked yellow-throated marten scampering up the side of the river, we later caught up with him again higher up. Brief views but a very nice mammal. Kenny found us our first Pere David's rock squirrel and we found some more later on, many comically gathering food in their cheek pouches.

Steve and Karen had trekked on ahead and we caught up with them later and discovered that Steve had been watching Temminck's tragopan high up in the mist. We put our heads down and tackled the steps and before we knew it we had arrived at an area that produced a small flock of beautiful tragopans (mostly male) and even a few golden pheasants. Just amazing. The walk back was no hardship after a great morning session and we managed our first glimpse of a Tibetan macaque. Driving back we found a crested kingfisher along one of the rivers. After lunch back at the hotel we rested up before dinner and another spot-lighting session.

The evening spot-lighting session (up a different road) produced two new mammals for the trip – two porcupines entertained us in the riverbed and we also found two single leopard cats that looked very smart indeed. Other returns for the session included; masked palm civet (1), goral (1), Reeve's muntjac (8), tufted deer (1) and takin (4).

Day 23 23rd October Tangjiahe

A much-reduced team headed out into the field this morning pre-dawn for a spotlighting session and a return to the Motainling trail. Light rain fell from a grey sky as dawn broke. We did OK for mammals but recorded nothing new, the highlight being two hog-badgers, some close takin and a brief look at a tawny fish-owl. Arriving at the trail-head we had breakfast and decided rightly that the weather was not going to break and that going up into the cloud would be futile. Instead we walked the riverside access road and did some birding and hoped for an encounter with the regular Asiatic black bear being seen in the neighbourhood. No luck with the latter but we did enjoy the birds and Cat found our first daylight Chinese goral.

Bird flocks were very evident along the road and Roland found us our first black-chinned yuhinas, speckled piculets and grey-capped pygmy woodpeckers. Little forktails and brown dippers appeared occasionally along the river, joined by the more commonplace white-crowned water redstarts and plumbeous redstarts. At one point Phil relocated the tawny fish-owl at roost but it became nervous, started flying and never settled properly and was soon lost to view. Roland lured out some black-streaked scimitar-babblers for us at one point – a very skulky species. Driving back to the main road we were stopped by a huge flock of birds that included our first yellow-bellied tit and overhead a large flock of long-tailed minivets swirled around. A bull takin grazed high on a slope and above us a nearby golden eagle surveyed the scene.

Wet but happy lunch was taken back at base and then we had a free afternoon ahead of another spotlighting session in the evening. Roland took a small team for a late afternoon walk and they came back having encountered a good flock of woodpeckers, that included our first Darjeeling and even more excitingly a sighting of Sichuan treecreeper. The returns for another rainy spotlighting session were; porcupine (2 – excellent views), hog badger (3), leopard cat (1), Chinese goral (1) and Chinese serow (1), plus the usual takin and muntjac.

Day 24 24th October Tangjiahe

Our last full day in the field arrived, more morning rain and overcast all day as usual. We elected to head out just after dawn and tackle the Spirit Monkey Trail that started near the hotel. This was rather wet but reasonably productive. Kenny spotted a Chinese sparrowhawk perched in the hotel clearing which was a nice way to start the day. We all enjoyed our encounter with two myopic wild boar that allowed a close approach until suddenly realising we were human and vanishing. Other highlights included a couple of close Sichuan treecreepers and a nice woodpecker flock that included our first (and only) white-backed woodpecker, a nice crimson-breasted, great spotted and lots of grey-capped pygmy woodpeckers. Phil spotted a brief mountain weasel but the rest of us had to make do with the numerous takin available. Walking up the valley we encountered occasional bird flocks and worked them hard for new birds. Roland pointed out our first streak-breasted scimitar-babblers – a striking species.

Eventually we headed back for lunch. On arrival at the hotel we were informed that the Tibetan macaques had taken up residence for the weekend and we went to have a look at them and get some photos. The volume of fried potatoes eaten at lunch was prodigious and thus fuelled we took the bus high up one of the valleys. The autumn colours here were being much admired by local tourists and they were rather impressive. Walking down we worked hard again. Picking up black-faced laughingthrush on call, our first rufous-capped babbler and hearing a collared owlet. Before we knew it though dusk was falling the last bus was coming alongside, we gratefully climbed aboard for the ride to the hotel. On board we discovered that the first busload up in the morning had seen golden snub-nosed monkey! A huge target species for the group – plans were hatched for our last morning.

The evening spotlighting session revealed a total of four hog-badgers (our best score to date) and the usual ungulates and masked palm civets (2) but we failed in our quest to record a flying-squirrel on the tour.

Day 25 25th October Tangjiahe and transfer to Chengdu

Roland had organised an early bus up the valley for us this morning so after breakfast we followed the rumours of snub-nosed monkeys up to the high ranger station. Roland interviewed the staff and found that the monkey sighting was halfway back to the hotel so off we went with our willing bus driver an accomplice in our quest. Dropped off at the right location we started searching the forested

slopes on the other side of the river. Crested kingfisher and brown dipper sightings kept us amused until Phil finally spotted a lone male sentinel sitting out on an exposed branch high above the river. Golden snub-nosed monkey!

Getting the 'scopes on the hillside revealed that a whole herd of monkeys were crossing a bare gully and the team were elated. This is a difficult monkey to find at this time of year. Almost as soon as everyone had had a good look the cloud swept in and the hillside was obliterated, waiting ten minutes for it to clear revealed no more monkeys. A dream? Our bus driver returned and we climbed aboard happy for the short run back down the hill to the hotel, packing and departure. We said our goodbyes to the macaques in the carpark and headed out of the reserve. Tangjiahe had exceeded our expectations – what a stay.

Shortly after leaving the park we drove up and over a small pass. The forest here produced a good bird flock that included our only collared finchbill, moustached laughingthrush and another hwamei. Nearby agricultural land produced a number of buntings including our only elegant buntings and some brown-breasted bulbuls. Lunch was taken at a roadside restaurant and we quickly became the focal point of some gawking. The reservoir produced our only little grebes of the trip. Driving on we searched the roadsides for collared crow eventually turning up two bathing in the river. Nice bird.

Driving on we called stop by a river. Starling flocks shot past and included crested myna and red-billed and white-cheeked starling. The river itself produced our first and only spot-billed duck, common sandpiper, sand martin and stonechat. That left the remainder of the drive back to Chengdu, including an hour snarled in bad traffic in town, our last supper (pizza and chips!) and bed.

Day 26 26th October Chengdu and flight home

We waved off Karen and Steve and thanked Roland for his hard work and then a reduced team took to the nearby park for a last gasp hour of birding. Our main target was Eurasian blackbird – the *mandarinus* race sometimes being considered a separate species. These were not hard to find and rubbed shoulders with white-browed laughingthrushes and spotted dove. Checking heaps of refuse outside the park produced our last new mammal – brown rat!

Then it was back to the hotel for breakfast and we were whisked to the airport and entered the machine. An unforgettable tour.

Systematic List Number 1 Mammals

Order and nomenclature follow Smith & Xie (2008) *A guide to the mammals of China*. Species in square brackets [] were recorded by sign only.

Tibetan macaque	<i>Macaca thibetana</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers at Tangjiahe around the hotel complex at the weekend.
Rhesus macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>	Troupe noted high above us on the Baixha gorge hike (south of Yushu).
Golden snub-nosed monkey	<i>Rhinopithecus roxellana</i>	'Scope views of a large troupe at Tangjiahe on the last morning – whew!
Swinhoe's striped squirrel	<i>Tamias swinhoei</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few in the Dengsheng Valley (Wolong). Single at Tangjiahe.
Père David's rock squirrel	<i>Sciurotamias davidianus</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few daily at Tangjiahe.
Himalayan marmot	<i>Marmota himalaya</i>	Two at Hu Zhu on the first day. Small numbers thereafter on two further days on the Tibetan leg of the tour.
Malayan porcupine	<i>Hystrix brachyura</i>	Two together (adult with youngster?) at Tangjiahe distantly in riverbed. Two the next night at close range.
Chinese zokor	<i>Eospalax fontanierii</i>	Only Karen had the patience and skill to excavate a zokor mound at Huashixia and wait for the animal to effect repairs. Sign noted elsewhere.
Brown rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	One in Chengdu.
Niviventer sp	<i>Niviventer sp.</i>	Tangjiahe (1 at night). Confucian niviventer (<i>Niviventer confucianus</i>) seems the most likely here.
Chinese birch mouse	<i>Sicista concolor</i>	Common at night at Tangjiahe.
Blyth's mountain vole	<i>Phaiomys leucurus</i>	All the diurnal, colonial voles noted at high altitude were assigned to this species.
Irene's mountain vole	<i>Neodon irene</i>	Voles at Yenigou were tentatively assigned to this species.
[Midday gerbil]	<i>Meriones meridionalis</i>	We found plenty of sign in the Qaidam Basin and around Chaka but could we find one...
Moupin pika	<i>Ochotona thibetana</i>	The group showed their class by twice recording this diminutive species in the absence of their leaders. Once at Baixha and again the next day in the Kanda Shan.
Black-lipped pika	<i>Ochotona curzoniae</i>	First seen around the edge of Koko Nor and frequently encountered thereafter (on some days we must have seen thousands).
Glover's pika	<i>Ochotona gloveri</i>	Nice colony encountered 'north of Yushu'. A few encountered on the days south of Yushu. Just one in the Dulan Mountains whilst searching for Chinese red pika.
Gansu pika	<i>Ochotona cansus</i>	A few seen at the Pallas' cat site in the scrubby riverine gullies and again the next day at Huashixia.

Wooly hare	<i>Lepus oiostolus</i>	Two at the first stop on Koko Nor. Thereafter seen in small numbers in suitable habitat (8 further dates).
Pallas' cat	<i>Felis manul</i>	Jesper had a fleeting adult en route to the Er La pass, searching the area produced two nearly full-grown kittens that enchanted us at short-range for an hour before a herd of grazing yaks sent them scuttling back into their den. Later on Jesper found us a hunting adult at long-range. An easy trip highlight.
Leopard cat	<i>Prionailurus bengalensis</i>	Tangjiahe – three sightings at night.
Tibetan wolf	<i>Canis (lupus) chanco</i>	One at Bayankala Pass on Day 5. Two seen briefly in the Kanda Shan were seen close but only by vehicle 1. One very pale individual between Yushu and Qumalai. Our best day came on the Chang Tang with two just after dawn outside Qumalai and a magic encounter of a pack of five near Budonquan. Finally one in Yeniugou. Another great showing by this iconic mammal.
Tibetan fox	<i>Vulpes ferrlata</i>	Frequently encountered in suitable high altitude habitat infested with pikas. A joy to watch.
Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	One just after dusk in the South Koko Nor range en route Gong He. Small numbers thereafter (five dates). The best sightings came in the Dulan Mountains.
[Asian badger]	<i>Meles leucurus</i>	Skull found at Huashixia.
Hog badger	<i>Arctonyx collaris</i>	1-4 seen on every nocturnal excursion at Tangjiahe.
Yellow-throated marten	<i>Martes flavigula</i>	One at Tangjiahe.
Masked palm civet	<i>Paguma larvata</i>	Frequently encountered at night in Sichuan.
Mountain weasel	<i>Mustela altaica</i>	One encountered at Baixha, stashing a pika and giving us the runaround. Phil had one briefly at Tangjiahe.
Kiang	<i>Equus kiang</i>	Frequently encountered up on the plateau. Up to 158 on three dates.
Wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Feeding sign at Wolong. One seen at night at Tangjiahe and two seen very well during the day there too.
Alpine musk deer	<i>Moschus chrysogaster</i>	Two in the Kanda Shan, sadly not seen by all.
Siberian roe deer	<i>Capreolus pygargus</i>	Three on the first morning at Hu zhu, including a fine male.
Reeve's muntjac	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>	Only in Sichuan. Abundant at Tangjiahe.
Tufted deer	<i>Elaphodus cephalophus</i>	One at Jiajin. Another at night at Tangjiahe.
Gansu red deer	<i>Cervus (elephus) kansuensis</i>	At least 37 kansuensis deer in the Dulan Mountains. These are likely to be split out somehow in future.
McNeil's deer	<i>Cervus macneilli</i>	We looked for and found 10 mneilli deer on our first day south of Yushu.

White-lipped deer	<i>Przewalskium albirostris</i>	At least 37 en route to Qumalai, including some fine rutting stags.
Goitered gazelle	<i>Gazella subguttorsa</i>	At least 70 in the grasslands between the Qaidam Basin and Chaka.
Tibetan gazelle	<i>Procapra picticaudata</i>	Frequently encountered on the high plateau in both the flat valley bottoms and the mountains. Best day count was just over a thousand on the Chang Tang day!
Przewalski's gazelle	<i>Procapra przewalskii</i>	Seven near Koko Nor on day 2. Nineteen at Jesper's site en route to the Dulan Mountains. An endangered mammal and one of the trip highlights.
Wild yak	<i>Bos grunniens</i>	Perhaps 15 in the Zuonan Valley, a surprise outside the admittedly nearby Wild Yak Valley. A further 31 in Wild Yak Valley (Yeniugou) the next day.
Golden takin	<i>Budorcas taxicolor</i>	Only in Sichuan. Amazingly easy to find at Tangjiahe. Close-up and often unasked-for encounters available around the hotel buildings.
Chinese serow	<i>Capricornis milneedwardsii</i>	Only in Sichuan. Two at Jiajin (Baoping) and another two at Tangjiahe.
Chinese goral	<i>Naemorhedus griseus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Frequently encountered when spotlighting at all three sites. [Note that long-tailed goral <i>Naemorhedus caudatus</i> probably does not occur in Sichuan contra previous tour reports. An error in the mapping in the first edition of the mammal guide and the presence of long-tailed specimens of <i>griseus</i> no doubt creating a certain amount of confusion!].
Argali	<i>Ovis ammon</i>	Three superb males at reasonable range en route to Qumalai. Also 16 in Wild Yak Valley (Yeniugou) a few days later.
Blue sheep	<i>Pseudois nayaur</i>	At least 40 in a group en route to Maduo at Huashixia were our first. Thereafter noted in good numbers on days south of Yushu and in the Dulan Mountains.
Tibetan antelope	<i>Pantholops hodgsonii</i>	A total of 396 on the day we crossed the Chang Tang.

Systematic List Number 2 Birds

The systematic order is taken from the 'Birds of China' by Mackinnon and Phillips (2000), nomenclature and taxonomy invariably is not. Deviations are marked with a † and are totally justified!

Tibetan snowcock	<i>Tetraogallus tibetanus</i>	Two in the Kanda Shan.
Tibetan partridge	<i>Perdix hodgsoniae</i>	Amazing numbers up 'Greentours gorge' on the first day south of Yushu.
†Przewalski's partridge	<i>Alectoris magna</i>	At least 18 in the Dulan Mountains on our red deer hike.
Blood pheasant	<i>Ithaginus cruentus</i>	13 in the last valley on Day 1 (Hu zhu). Another small group (6) watched feeding in the Kanda Shan.
Temminck's tragopan	<i>Tragopan temminckii</i>	A fantastic group of mostly males (!) on the Motainling trail at Tangjiahe.
Szecheny's monal-partridge	<i>Tetraophasis szechenyii</i>	At least three groups located in the Kanda Shan.
†White eared-pheasant	<i>Crossoptilon crossoptilon</i>	Seen in reasonable numbers on all three days south of Yushu. Also a small flock at Jiajin in Sichuan. A trip highlight for many of us.
Common pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchisus</i>	Small numbers encountered around Xining and in the Qaidam Basin.
Golden pheasant	<i>Chrysolophus pictus</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few around the Tangjiahe area.
†Svertzov's hazelhen	<i>Tetrastes svertzowi</i>	At least three on the first day in the Hu zhu area.
Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Small numbers at Koko Nor.
Bar-headed goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>	A few at plateau wetlands. A large number on the big wetland near Maduo.
Ruddy shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	Frequently encountered on plateau wetlands.
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Recorded at Koko Nor.
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Small numbers on three dates on the plateau. Small numbers on the reservoir en route to Tangjiahe.
†Chinese spot-billed duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>	Two on the river we stopped at en route to Chengdu on the last day.
Northern shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Recorded at Koko Nor.
Northern pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Recorded at Koko Nor and near Maduo.
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Three at Koko Nor.
Common teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Recorded at Koko Nor and a few other plateau wetlands. A few flying upriver Baixha a surprise.
Red-crested pochard	<i>Rhodonessa rufina</i>	Large numbers on the freshwater lagoon at Koko Nor only.
Ferruginous duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Huge flock at Longbaotan as usual.
Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Recorded at Koko Nor.
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	One at Koko Nor.
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Noted at Koko Nor and on another four dates on rivers and wetlands on the plateau. Three migrating south through Bayankala Pass.
Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>	One heard on the first day around Hu zhu. One at Chaka gulag and another over the road en route to Xining the same day.

Rufous-bellied woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos hypererythrus</i>	One in the Dengsheng valley (Wolong)
Crimson-breasted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos cathparius</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers at Tangjiahe (two dates).
Darjeeling woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos darjellensis</i>	Single at Tangjiahe.
White-backed woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>	Only in Sichuan. One at Tangjiahe.
Grey-capped pygmy woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos canicapillus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers daily at Tangjiahe.
Speckled piculet	<i>Picumnus innominatus</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few in flocks at Tangjiahe.
Black woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	Single heard at the second Hu zhu site and one seen well in the last valley on the same day. Another at Baixha.
Grey-headed woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	Jesper heard one on the Hu zhu day. We all saw one in the Kanda Shan. Another at Tangjiahe.
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Feathers at the Pallas' cat site. Two south of Yushu.
Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Only in Sichuan. One on the river en route to Tangjiahe.
Crested kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>	Only in Sichuan. One on the river en route to Tangjiahe and small numbers daily at that site.
Eurasian eagle owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	Some of us connected with this species in a brief encounter at Huashixia.
Tawny fish-owl	<i>Ketupa flaviceps</i>	Tangjiahe – three sightings (two at night).
†Himalayan owl	<i>Strix nivicola</i>	Only in Sichuan. Single seen very well at night en route to Wolong. Formerly part of tawny owl.
[Collared owlet]	<i>Glaucidium brodei</i>	Only in Sichuan. Single heard only at dusk at Tangjiahe.
Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	A total of four birds noted on the Tibetan leg of the tour.
Rock pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Scarce in towns in the lowlands. One with hill pigeons at the Pallas' cat site.
Hill pigeon	<i>Columba rupestris</i>	Recorded on nine dates on the plateau.
Snow pigeon	<i>Columba leuconota</i>	Three in the Kanda Shan.
Speckled wood pigeon	<i>Columba hodgsonii</i>	Roland had one above the Dengsheng Valley.
Spotted dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	Only in Sichuan. Noted in the lowlands on transit days.
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Small numbers on two dates up on the plateau.
Common crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	Two flying past at Huashixia.
Black-necked crane	<i>Grus nigricollis</i>	A trip highlight. Noted on three dates on the plateau (total of just 28).
Common coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Recorded on just two dates on the plateau. One in transit in Sichuan.
Tibetan sandgrouse	<i>Syrrhaptes tibetanus</i>	A total of 25 birds in two flocks in Wild Yak Valley.
Pallas' sandgrouse	<i>Syrrhaptes paradoxus</i>	A distant flyby by four at the site outside Chakha was all we got this year.
Solitary snipe	<i>Gallinago solitaria</i>	One at Baixha.
Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	At least ten at Koko Nor.
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Six at Koko Nor.
Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Small numbers Koko Nor & one plateau wetland.

Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	A few at Koko Nor and at one other plateau wetland.
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Two at Koko Nor, another along the river en route to Chengdu.
Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Two at Koko Nor.
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Only in Sichuan. Two noted along the river en route to Chengdu on the last day.
Ibisbill	<i>Ibidorhynchus struthersii</i>	Encountered around Yushu in small numbers along the many streams and rivers we drove past.
Asian golden plover	<i>Charadrius fulva</i>	Thirteen at Koko Nor.
Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Small numbers at Koko Nor.
Pallas' gull	<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>	Small numbers on just three dates on the plateau.
Brown-headed gull	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>	Occasionally encountered on plateau wetlands (three dates).
Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Single at Longbaotan (plateau wetland).
White-winged tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	Single at Longbaotan (plateau wetland).
Oriental honey buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	Two at Hu Zhu on the first day.
Lammergier	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	Records on seven days on the plateau. One of the highlights of the tour was the frequently excellent observations of this fantastic species.
Himalayan griffon vulture	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	A few at Hu Zhu on the first day. Recorded daily on the plateau, often in large numbers. A few in Baoxing and Wolong on the Sichuan leg.
Black vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	Just two birds on two dates on the plateau.
Pallid/Montagu's harrier	<i>Circus macrourus/pygargus</i>	An immature bird hunting over the dunes near Koko Nor on Day 2 was one of these two species but did not come close enough for a positive id. Either would have been staggeringly unusual.
Hen harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Recorded on just one date on the plateau this year when at least six present at Koko Nor.
Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Scattered records (seven dates on the plateau and at least two in Sichuan).
Chinese sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter soloensis</i>	Male seen perched at Tangjiahe.
Northern goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Three birds noted up on the plateau.
Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Birds on the plateau leg of the tour were Himalayan buzzards, subsp. burmanicus, sometimes split. We also recorded Steppe buzzards on one day (Day 2). The few birds noted in Sichuan were japonicus.
Upland buzzard	<i>Buteo hemilasius</i>	Large numbers daily on the plateau.
Steppe eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	Small numbers noted on four days on the plateau, all migrating south.
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	One or two birds on six dates on the plateau. A few at Jiajin and one at Tangjiahe.
Booted eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>	A dark phase bird over the gorge on the first day south of Yushu was a surprise. Another three days later!
Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Scattered records throughout the Tibetan leg of our journey.

Saker	<i>Falco cherrug</i>	One of the delightful aspects of the Tibetan leg of the tour was the frequent encounters, often at close range, with this fantastic species.
Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Only in Sichuan. Two on the reservoir en route to Chengdu on the last day.
Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Recorded in small numbers at Koko Nor and Longbaotan.
Black-necked grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	Small numbers at Koko Nor and a few at Longbaotan.
Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Small numbers at Koko Nor and another plateau wetland.
Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Sichuan only – a few noted in transit.
Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Only in Sichuan Basin, where reasonably common, even turning up in the middle of towns.
Great egret	<i>Casmerodius alba</i>	One or two for Kenny in transit in Sichuan.
Chinese pond-heron	<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>	Small numbers noted along rivers in Sichuan.
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Small numbers at Koko Nor only on the plateau leg. A few noted in transit in Sichuan.
Black-crowned night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Sichuan – a small flock noted en route to Tangjiahe.
Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	Single at Huashixia for Jesper only.
Tibetan grey shrike	<i>Lanius (sphenocercus) giganteus</i>	Just one at Huashixia this year.
Chinese grey shrike	<i>Lanius sphenocercus</i>	One on the first day. Three singles on the plateau thereafter.
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Small numbers in the woods on the first day (Hu zhu). Also at Tangjiahe, including one grabbed by a goshawk there.
Red-billed blue magpie	<i>Urocissus erythrorhyncha</i>	Only in Sichuan. Frequently encountered at all the sites we visited.
Azure-winged magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>	This species is spreading on the plateau (as more trees are planted) and we found birds at Chaka woods and Chaka gulag this year. Some in transit around Chengdu.
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	'Lowland' birds were of little interest to us but the Tibetan race <i>bottanensis</i> was quite different and was recorded on four dates.
†Henderson's ground-jay	<i>Podoces hendersoni</i>	A total of seven birds noted whilst crossing the Qaidam Basin.
Hume's groundpecker	<i>Pseudopodoces humilis</i>	This frequently encountered clown was the jewel in the crown of the plateau's avifauna. Now placed with the tits but maintained here for now!
Spotted nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers daily at all sites visited.
Red-billed chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Recorded on eleven dates on the plateau.
Alpine chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>	A small flock low down on the first day south of Yushu were a big surprise.
Daurian jackdaw	<i>Corvus dauuricus</i>	Only seen on the three days south of Yushu on the Tibetan leg of the tour where pleasingly numerous.

Large-billed crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchus</i>	Small numbers on the first two days, thereafter only noted low down south of Yushu and in Sichuan.
Collared crow	<i>Corvus torquatus</i>	Two en route to Chengdu on the last day.
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Only on the high plateau, where recorded daily. A few at Jiajin (Sichuan).
Long-tailed minivet	<i>Pericrotus ethologus</i>	Large flock on one day at Tangjiahe. Another heard over Chengdu?
White-throated dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Singles recorded on two dates on the plateau.
Brown dipper	<i>Cinclus pallasii</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few daily around Tangjiahe.
Grandala	<i>Grandala coelicolor</i>	Sichuan only. Large flock at Jiajin (Baoping) and a small flock of females seen well above Dengsheng Valley (Wolong).
Red-throated thrush	<i>Turdus ruficollis</i>	One at Hu Zhu. Thereafter occasional in small numbers on the plateau (six dates in total).
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few in the park at Chengdu. The mandarin race of blackbird.
Kessler's thrush	<i>Turdus kessleri</i>	A total of 32 birds recorded at scattered locations on the plateau.
Chinese thrush	<i>Turdus mupinensis</i>	Single at Hu zhu.
Himalayan red-flanked bluetail	<i>Tarsiger rufilatus</i>	A few on the first day and one seen well at Baixha.
[Siberian rubythroat]	<i>Luscinia calliope</i>	A few in Sichuan.
†Przwalski's redstart	<i>Phoenicurus alashanicus</i>	Heard at Hu zhu. We did well for this beautiful redstart, seeing a large flock in Dulan plantation and more the next day on the breeding grounds in the Dulan Mountains.
White-throated redstart	<i>Phoenicurus schisticeps</i>	Small numbers on the first day around Hu zhu and thereafter on six additional dates on the plateau.
Daurian redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureoreus</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. A few at each site visited.
Hodgson's redstart	<i>Phoenicurus hodgsoni</i>	Three birds (all females/immatures) south of Yushu.
†Guldenstadt's redstart	<i>Phoenicurus erythrogaster</i>	Frequently encountered often in large concentrations on the plateau leg of the tour.
Blue-fronted redstart	<i>Phoenicurus frontalis</i>	Frequently encountered on the first day. Pair at Huashixia. Also recorded at Tangjiahe.
White-capped redstart	<i>Chaimarornis leucocephalus</i>	One in the Hu zhu area on the first day. Common in Sichuan.
Plumbeous redstart	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosa</i>	One female/immature on the first day outside Xining. Common along rivers and streams in Sichuan.
Rufous-gorgetted flycatcher	<i>Ficedula strophliata</i>	Sichuan only. Small numbers at Jiajin and Tangjiahe.
Red-breasted flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	One in the woods at Dulan at dusk was tentatively assigned to this species.
Siberian stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>	Single along the river en route to Chengdu on the last day.
Pied wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	A single bird at Koko Nor was a pleasant surprise.
Desert wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Single in the Qaidam Basin.

Little forktail	<i>Enicurus scouleri</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers noted along the earthquake section of the road into Wolong and daily at Tangjiahe.
White-crowned forktail	<i>Enicurus leschenaulti</i>	Seen daily at Tangjiahe.
Red-billed starling	<i>Spodiopsar sericeus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers en route to Chengdu on the last day.
White-cheeked starling	<i>Sturnus cineraceus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers en route to Chengdu on the last day.
Crested myna	<i>Acridotheres cristatellus</i>	Only in Sichuan – a few noted in transit in the lowlands.
Chestnut-vented nuthatch	<i>Sitta nagaensis</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers encountered in flocks all sites visited.
Chinese nuthatch	<i>Sitta villosa</i>	One of the many highlights of the first day acclimatising was connecting with good numbers of these little beauties in the Hu zhu area. Also small numbers at Baixha
[Eurasian treecreeper]	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	A few heard on the first day.
Hodgson's treecreeper	<i>Certhia hodgsoni</i>	One or two on the first day south of Yushu on the plateau leg. Small numbers at all forest sites on the Sichuan leg.
†Sichuan treecreeper	<i>Certhia tianquanensis</i>	Only in Sichuan. A total of three on two dates at Tangjiahe.
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	A few encountered on the first day. Small numbers in Sichuan.
Willow tit	<i>Parus montanus</i>	Common on the first day. Songar tit is now lumped with this species.
Sichuan tit	<i>Parus weigoldicus</i>	Noted on all three dates south of Yushu. A few daily at Tangjiahe too. A recent split.
White-browed tit	<i>Parus superciliosus</i>	Small numbers of this smart little bird on four days on the plateau.
Rusty-breasted tit	<i>Parus davidi</i>	Roland saw a small flock at Jiajin (Sichuan).
Rufous-vented tit	<i>Parus rubidiventris</i>	A few on the first day and at Baixha. Also a few at Jiajin and Wolong.
Coal tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. One at Wolong. A strikingly crested race.
Yellow-bellied tit	<i>Parus venustus</i>	Tangjiahe (1).
Grey-crested tit	<i>Parus dichrous</i>	One on the first day seen well, recorded on two further dates on the plateau and small numbers at forest sites in Sichuan.
Grey tit	<i>Parus minor</i>	A few on the first day and at Dujiangyan and en route to Chengdu in Sichuan.
Green-backed tit	<i>Parus monticolus</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Recorded in small numbers daily at all forest sites.
Black-throated tit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Seen on the outskirts of Dujiangyan and even in the city centre there. Tangjiahe.
Sooty tit	<i>Aegithalos fuliginosus</i>	Tangjiahe.
Black-browed tit	<i>Aegithalos bonvaloti</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few flocks encountered at Jiajin.

Yellow-browed tit	<i>Sylviparus modestus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Frequently encountered in mixed-species flocks.
Sand martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Numerous along the river en route to Chengdu on the last day.
Eurasian crag martin	<i>Hirundo rupestris</i>	Two along the river outside Yushu. Small numbers at Tangjiahe.
Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Noted in very small numbers on three dates on the plateau.
Red-rumped swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	A few over the hotel car park in Yushu on the first stay.
Asian house martin	<i>Delichon dasypus</i>	Kenny had a few over the hotel car park in Yushu on the first stay. Also recorded above the Dengsheng Valley (Wolong).
Collared finchbill	<i>Spizixos semitorques</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few going over the pass outside Tangjiahe and en route to Chengdu the same day.
Brown-breasted bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus xanthorrhous</i>	Only in Sichuan – seen on the day we returned to Chengdu.
Light-vented bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus sinensis</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Noted at Dujiangyan and in Chengdu.
Mountain bulbul	<i>Ixos mcclelandii</i>	Tangjiahe.
†Tarim hill warbler	<i>Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris</i>	At least nine of this recently-split species in the Qaidam Basin.
Aberrant bush-warbler	<i>Cettia flavolivacea</i>	Tangjiahe (1).
Brownish-flanked bush-warbler	<i>Cettia fortipes</i>	One in the flock on the outskirts of Dujiangyan.
Yellowish-bellied bush-warbler	<i>Cettia acanthizoides</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Small numbers daily at all forest sites visited.
†Stolitzcka's tit-warbler	<i>Leptopoeile sophiae</i>	Widespread and frequently encountered on the plateau.
Crested tit-warbler	<i>Leptopoeile elegans</i>	Two of these gorgeous birds at Baixha (south of Yushu).
Buff-barred warbler	<i>Phylloscopus pulcher</i>	Good numbers still present in Hu zhu this year. A few at Baixha. Noted in small numbers at sites visited in Sichuan.
Yellow-browed warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	One for Roland at Tangjiahe.
†Alpine leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus occisinensis</i>	A few at Hu zhu. This race of Tickell's leaf warbler has been split by Clements.
Yellow-streaked warbler	<i>Phylloscopus armandii</i>	A single one morning at Jiajin (Baoxing).
Gansu leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus kansuensis</i>	Good numbers remained at Hu zhu this year and many were in glorious song.
†Sichuan leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus forresti</i>	Small numbers at Baixha on the plateau leg. Small numbers almost daily in Sichuan. A recent split from pale-rumped leaf warbler <i>P. chloronotus</i> .
†Chinese leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus yunnanensis</i>	Three or four at Hu zhu on the first day.
Hume's warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>	Two or three at Hu zhu.
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Hu zhu and Baixha on the plateau leg. Also a few in the Dengsheng Valley (Wolong).

Rufous-faced warbler	<i>Abroscopus albogularis</i>	Only in Sichuan. Two or three in a flock in the outskirts of Dujiangyan. Frequently encountered at Tangjiahe.
Lesser whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	One in the wood at Dulan for Jesper.
Giant laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax maximus</i>	Seen well a number of times at Baixha and heard the next day in the Kanda Shan. Heard in the Dengsheng Valley (Wolong).
Moustached laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax cineraceus</i>	One in the big bird flock on the pass just outside Tangjiahe on the last day.
Barred laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax lunulatus</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Small numbers at Tangjiahe.
[Spotted laughingthrush]	<i>Garrulax ocellatus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Glimpsed in the Den Sheng Valley (Wolong).
Hwamei	<i>Garrulax canorus</i>	Single lured out at Tangjiahe. Another on the pass outside Tangjiahe.
White-browed laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax sannio</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Small flock on farmland en route to Tangjiahe.
Elliott's laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax ellioti</i>	Vocal but not seen on the first day. Thereafter frequently encountered in lowland areas, eg south of Yushu and in Sichuan.
Plain laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax davidi</i>	One on the first day around Hu zhu. More in the scrubby gullies at the Pallas' cat site.
[Black-faced laughingthrush]	<i>Garrulax affinis</i>	Only in Sichuan. Heard at Tangjiahe.
Rufous-tailed babbler	<i>Chrysomma poecilotis</i>	Only in Sichuan. One taped in at Jiajin.
Streak-breasted scimitar-babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus ruficollis</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Occasionally encountered at Tangjiahe.
Black-streaked scimitar-babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus gravivox</i>	Three one day at Tangjiahe.
†[Scaly-breasted cupwing]	<i>Pnoepyga albiventer</i>	Only in Sichuan. Heard on the outskirts of Dujiangyan.
†[Pygmy cupwing]	<i>Pnoepyga pusilla</i>	Only in Sichuan. Heard on the outskirts of Dujiangyan.
†[Bar-winged cupwing]	<i>Spelaeornis troglodytoides</i>	Heard only at Tangjiahe.
Rufous-capped babbler	<i>Stachyris ruficeps</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Tangjiahe (1).
Kozlov's babax	<i>Babax koslowi</i>	A few birds heard on the first day south of Yushu. Three seen later in the Kanda Shan.
Red-billed leiothrix	<i>Leiothrix lutea</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Frequently encountered at Tangjiahe.
Green shrike-babbler	<i>Pteruthius xanthochlora</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Baoxing (1) and small numbers in some bird parties at Tangjiahe.
White-browed fulvetta	<i>Alcippe vinipectus</i>	Frequently encountered at Jiajin (Baoxing).
Chinese fulvetta	<i>Alcippe striaticollis</i>	Three birds at Baixha (south of Yushu).
Grey-hooded fulvetta	<i>Alcippe cinereiceps</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Small numbers daily at Baoxing and the Dengsheng Valley (Wolong). Formerly part of the streak-throated fulvetta complex.
David's fulvetta	<i>Alcippe davidi</i>	Dujiangyan and Tangjiahe.

White-collared yuhina	<i>Yuhina diademata</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Small flocks of this species encountered occasionally on transit days and in Tangjiahe.
Black-chinned yuhina	<i>Yuhina nigrimenta</i>	Occasional in bird flocks at Tangjiahe.
Bearded parrotbill	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	Heard at Koko Nor and several seen in the Qaidam Basin.
Great parrotbill	<i>Conostoma oemodium</i>	Only in Sichuan. Single at Jiajin.
Three-toed parrotbill	<i>Cholornis paradoxa</i>	Small family party at Jiajin (Baoping).
Spectacled parrotbill	<i>Paradoxornis conspicillatus</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few at Tangjiahe.
[Fulvous parrotbill]	<i>Paradoxornis fulvifrons</i>	Heard at Jiajin.
Vinous-throated parrotbill	<i>Paradoxornis webbianus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Seen on the outskirts of Dujiangyan.
Ashy-throated parrotbill	<i>Paradoxornis alphonsianus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Seen on the outskirts of Dujiangyan.
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Seen on the first day and in Sichuan.
Tibetan lark	<i>Melanocorypha maxima</i>	Seen well at Koko Nor and the desert at Chaka and heard and seen elsewhere on the plateau in wetter areas.
Mongolian lark	<i>Melanocorypha mongolica</i>	One great flight view for the leaders at Koko Nor. The rest of the birding team caught up with this species very well drinking at the spring in the desert at Chaka.
Asian short-toed lark	<i>Calandrella cheleensis</i>	Noted around Chaka and in Wild Yak Valley.
Oriental skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>	Often common in the lower-lying areas of the plateau.
Horned lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	Frequently encountered often in good numbers on the plateau.
[Fire-breasted flowerpecker]	<i>Dicaeum ignipectus</i>	Heard in town at Dujiangyan.
Mrs Gould's sunbird	<i>Aethopyga gouldiae</i>	One at Tangjiahe.
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Single female for Phil whilst stuck at roadworks en route to Xining on the last day of the plateau leg.
Tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Almost ubiquitous.
Rock sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	Noted around Koko Nor, south of Yushu and around Chaka.
Henri's snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla henrici</i>	Large flock on the Er La pass (perhaps 130), less one taken by a passing sparrowhawk. Elsewhere small numbers on just one other day on the plateau.
Tibetan snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla adamsi</i>	Seen on the plateau on just two dates and in small numbers.
White-rumped snowfinch	<i>Pyrgilauda taczanowski</i>	A bruiser! Frequently encountered in the vicinity of black-lipped pika colonies on the plateau.
Père David's snowfinch	<i>Pyrgilauda davidiana</i>	Two briefly at Koko Nor.
Rufous-necked snowfinch	<i>Pyrgilauda ruficollis</i>	Only on the higher plateau where recorded, often in large flocks, on nine dates.
Blanford's snowfinch	<i>Pyrgilauda blanfordi</i>	Small numbers in the desert outside Chaka.
White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	A few late birds lingered on the plateau. Frequently encountered in Sichuan on the extension.

Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	One at Baixha on the Tibetan leg. Small numbers noted in Sichuan in suitable habitat.
Citrine wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	Singles on four dates on the plateau.
Olive-backed pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	A few birds at Hu zhu and Baixha seen well. Also at Tangjiahe (1).
Water pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	Scattered records on the plateau.
Alpine accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>	One on the 4000m pass en route to Wolong.
Robin accentor	<i>Prunella rubeculoides</i>	One at Hu zhu for Jesper. Frequently encountered in suitable habitat on the plateau leg of the tour (seven dates).
Rufous-breasted accentor	<i>Prunella strophiata</i>	Small numbers on three dates on the plateau leg of the tour. Small numbers on the extension at Jiajin.
Brown accentor	<i>Prunella fulvescens</i>	Small numbers on seven dates on the plateau leg of the tour.
Brandt's mountain finch	<i>Leucosticte brandti</i>	Four at Bayankala Pass.
Plain mountain finch	<i>Leucosticte nemoricola</i>	A small flock at Bayankala Pass and a larger flock of perhaps 80 birds in the Kanda Shan. At least 40 in the Dulan Mountains. Huge flock crossing the high pass in Sichuan.
Grey-capped greenfinch	<i>Carduelis sinica</i>	Two at Chaka gulag. Frequently encountered on the Sichuan leg.
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	A few in the woods around Chaka.
Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	Recorded on six dates on the plateau leg of the tour.
Mongolian finch	<i>Bucanetes mongolicus</i>	Five or six dropped in to drink at the spring in the desert around Chaka.
†Chinese beautiful rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus davidianus</i>	Only recorded in the Dulan Mountains this year.
Pink-rumped rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus eos</i>	Recorded in small numbers on all three dates south of Yushu.
Vinaceous rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus vinaceus</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. A few at Baoxing and Tangjiahe.
Dark-rumped rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus edwardsii</i>	Jiajin.
Spot-winged rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rhodopeplus</i>	A few at Jiajin. This ilrace (verreauxi) is sometimes considered a separate species (Sharpe's rosefinch).
†Chinese white-browed rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus dubius</i>	Small numbers on the first day (Hu zhu), on three dates on the plateau and finally in the Dulan Mountains.
†Eastern great rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rubicilloides</i>	Noted on three dates in high altitude scrub and woodland.
†Spotted great rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rubicilla</i>	Recorded on three dates on the plateau in arid areas.
†Przewalski's pinktail	<i>Urocynchramus pylzowi</i>	At least 8 at Jesper's site for this fantastic species on the plateau near Huashixia.
Grey-headed bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula erythaca</i>	Two at Baixha. Occasional thereafter, especially in Sichuan.
White-winged grosbeak	<i>Mycerobas carnipes</i>	Three in Hu zhu and another at Baixha.
Slaty bunting	<i>Latoucheornis siemsseni</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. A few daily at Tangjiahe.
Pine bunting	<i>Emberiza leucocephalos</i>	A few in the Dulan Mountains.

Godlewski's bunting	<i>Emberiza godlewski</i>	Two on the first day. Thereafter scattered records on the plateau (four dates).
Little bunting	<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. A few daily at Baoxing and Tangjiahe.
Elegant bunting	<i>Emberiza elegans</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. A few on the pass near Tangjiahe on the last day.
Reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Single in the Qaidam Basin. One of the thick-billed races.