

Taiwan

A Greentours Itinerary

Days 1 & 2 To Taipei and Wulai

After an evening departure from London we'll arrive early the following evening into Taipei and after a night at Wulai near the airport we'll head straight for Taiwan's beautiful mountains.

Days 3 – 6 Big Snow Mountain at Dasyueshan and Basianshan

The scenery in the Big Snow Mountains is fantastic with great craggy peaks rising from slopes of dwarf bamboo dotted with junipers. Good roads allow us to experience the subtropics and an hour later we can be in the temperate alpine zone! Large blue and white flowered *Thunbergias* cascade down roadsides where birds and butterflies are abundant as we rise up to Dasyueshan, a beautiful place with many Monumental Trees, many of them over a thousand years in age. Little Forktails forage in streams along whose banks perch the local 'beak' butterfly *Libythea geoffroy*. Banks are draped with a variety of blooms that attract an abundance of butterflies. Great Orange-tips drift around the lodge's gardens with Blue Admirals landing regularly and sunning themselves. Every few yards there seems to be Common Jesters and the more striking *Symbrenthia hypselis* is even commoner. There's a job telling all the *Neptis* and *Aythya* species apart. Common Mapwings, the Rustic, Common Leopard, bushbrowns, grass yellows, *Gonepteryx* species, Yellowjack Sailor, *Parasarpa dudu* and the mind-boggling red headed and winged skipper *Bibasis jaina* are among the throng. Swallowtails are abundant with many species – Taiwan is surely the best place in the World for these special butterflies. We'll soon be learning to tell the Chinese Peacock and Southern Chinese Peacock apart, both dark species shot with green and blue. Altogether more colourful are the superb Paris Swallowtail and *Papilio hopponis*, both species a shimmering mixture of blues, greens and reds. Here too are Common Mormon, Yellow Helen, Common Bluebottle and the Chinese Windmill, *Byasa alcinous*. There is also a wonderful variety of smaller butterflies including *Caretis*, *Megisbas*, *Rapalas* and the simply stunning silverline *Spindasis kuyanianus*.

Noisy troupes of Formosan Macaques will be encountered regularly along with birds such as Bronzed Drongos, Grey-chinned Minivets, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers and Taiwan Barbets. We'll see both Black-necklaced and Taiwan Scimitar Babblers. Chinese Bamboo Partridges are common along track sides whilst Large Cuckoo-shrike and rare Maroon Orioles regale us from tree tops. Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Vivid Niltava, and the splendid brilliance of the endemic Formosan Blue Magpie will keep us hungry for more. *Psolodesmus mandarinus* demoiselles flutter their long smokey-grey and black-tipped wings at us by shady streams. Taiwan is endowed with a fine range of *Odonata* with many choice species. Here we'll be introduced to the yellow damselfly *Ceriagrion fallax* whilst

larger species include *Neurothemis ramburei* and the stunning pink *Trithemis aurora*.

Evenings see Wild Boar and Reeve's Muntjac's emerge from the forest into open areas where we'll also see Brown Hawk Owl and Mountain Scops Owl. On nightwalks we'll seek Crab-eating Mongooses, Formosan Ferret Badger and flying squirrels with both Formosan White-faced Flying Squirrel and Formosan Giant Flying Squirrel likely here. A pond has abundant Swinhoe's Frogs, *Bufo bankorensis* and Gunther's Frog, and moths of all sizes, shapes and colours are everywhere. During daylight we'll discover the forest floor is covered in Begonias, seven species, some still in flower.

Higher up, good trails provide our best chance of finding the rare endemic Mikado Pheasant. Though locally quite common the endemic Taiwan (Alishan) Bush Warbler will not be easy to find at this season, however Yellow-bellied Bush Warbler, Island Thrush, Flamecrest and the fabulous Golden Parrotbill will be more obvious and approachable. Lower down we'll encounter Collared Finchbill as well as the newly separated Taiwan Wren-Babbler. Butterflies will again become abundant and we'll look for the Red Ring Skirt, Great Nawab and Spotted Sawtooth. We'll also see the Asian Comma *Polygonia c-aureum*, rare *Euthalia formosana* and the stunning Japanese Emperor Butterfly. Growing on the trunks of mossy trees is *Lysionotus*, a peculiar little Gesneriacean shrub, and we'll also enjoy the curved purple flowers of *Parachampionella* and the 'bindweed-gentian' *Tripterospemum taiwanense*.

A wide track takes us through varied forests, the banks lined with pink *Impatiens uniflora* and the long pinky-white trumpets of another 'bindweed-gentian' *Tripterospemum lanceolatum*. Swallowtails are abundant and will include Southern Chinese Peacocks, their uppersides all shimmering blue. Brilliant Fire-breasted Flowerpeckers buzz about the mistletoes and both Brown and Beavan's Bullfinches enjoy the abundant seeding bushes. This is rich bird country with an abundance of fine species such as White-tailed Robin, White-backed Woodpecker, Ferruginous and Grey-sided Flycatchers, and the uncommon Taiwan Barwing. We'll quietly seek the elusive Taiwan Partridge and Swinhoe's Pheasant, the male Swinhoe's will surely be a tour highlight with their immaculate velvety blue-black plumage set off by a brilliant red and snowy white face.

Day 7

Via Aogu Wetlands to Tainan

An altogether different habitat today as we travel towards the south of the island. We'll be heading for Tainan, visiting the famous wetland at Aogu on the way. Unlike almost everywhere else on our itinerary Aogu is not a pretty place. However for wetland birds it is a site par excellence in Taiwan. Foremost among its avian stars is the highly endangered Black-faced Spoonbill. This is a wintering species however there are usually one or two about even at this time of year. Egrets are abundant and we'll see plenty of waders too including Oriental Pratincole, Red-necked Stint and Terek Sandpiper. Caspian and Gull-billed Terns patrol the

channels where we'll see Yellow Bitterns, Japanese Skylark, Grey-throated Martin and some pretty eastern races of Yellow Wagtail. In the afternoon we'll continue into Tainan itself and take time out for a little culture. Tainan is the oldest city in Taiwan and it is a treasure-trove of Taiwanese history and architecture. We'll visit some of Tainan's finest temples and enjoy a little of the atmosphere of this lively and welcoming city.

Day 8

Maolin & Kenting

We head now for the southernmost tip of Taiwan, to Kenting's almost tropical ambience, and a very different fauna and flora. En route we'll visit the Maolin Scenic Area and it is in the valleys downstream of here that the World's second largest wintering concentration of butterflies gathers. In October they will be migrating towards these valleys and the result is an abundance of shimmering purple and blue-winged butterflies. *Euploea tulliolus* flashes its wings blue and off, blue and off, whilst the Blue Striped Crow *Euploea mulciber* flutters hesitantly as if having trouble deciding which Busy Lizzy to settle on. Round-winged *Euploea eunice* is common too and then there are the *Parantica* species, with Chestnut and Swinhoe's Chocolate Tigers joining abundant Glassy Tigers. Swallowtails reach yet greater diversity with perhaps a dozen or so species here. The huge Great Mormon flaps up and down tracks, putting up the abundant damselflies and dragonflies, whilst the shimmering blue Chinese Peacock and Southern Chinese Peacock flutter their wings provocatively at photographers. Endemic *Papilio taiwanus*, *Papilio castor* and the long-winged Spangle are joined by fantastic green-winged Paris Peacocks.

We won't be able to fit all the following into one day at Kenting, however if inclement weather means the trip to Orchid Island is off then we'll have extra time at both Kenting and Jhibpen, which as you will see from the following, will not be time wasted!

Styan's Bulbuls and Black Bulbuls are common inside Shedding Nature Park where the warm weather means butterflies are active even early in the day. We'll soon see the magnificent tree nymph *Idea leuconome*, whose huge yet delicate white and black patterned wings allow it to waft through the forest like some paper tissue, apparently at the mercy of the merest zephyr. The delicate damselfly *Coeliccia flavicauda* with blue-lined thorax and with a yellow tail end flits amongst butterflies such as Lemon Pansies, Common Albatrosses and the impressive skipper *Bibasis jaina*. The Longkeng Nature Reserve protects the southernmost tip of Taiwan, the sea hemming in the promontory from both sides. The flora here is exceptional, and very different from elsewhere on the island. Lemon-yellow *Ipomoea obscura* covers the sandy ground and the track is lined with Portia Tree, a flowering *Alpinia*, and spiny *Maytenus*. Mangrove Skinks are everywhere as we admire aromatic *Premna* with spikes of white flowers, twining *Parsonia*, and the striking *Paederia scandens*, a climber whose white flowers have maroon throats. Closer to the shore we'll see the short purple *Vitex rotundifolia*, a compact hairy *Evolvulus* and mat-forming *Tephrosia obovata*, as well as the very local endemic

Chamaesyce garambiensis. Pacific Golden Plovers and Whimbrel inhabit a surreal landscape of raised fossilised coral beds, beaches and wave-cut platforms and above these coralline rocks are shrouded in the low shrub *Pemphis acidula* and a pale yellow sea-lavender (*Limonium sinense*).

Formosan Rock Macaques will keep us entertained in Kenting National Forest Reserve. Pallas's Squirrels are also not uncommon and we'll see Taiwan Green Pigeon, Taiwan Barbets, Black-naped Monarchs, Grey-cheeked Fulvettas and White-bellied Erpornises. The 'clearwing' moth *Euchromia elegantissima* is common, a most striking sight with yellow black-spotted wings and red, blue and white body! Another unusual moth is *Histia flabellicornis*, a species that mimics the *Byasa* swallowtails. There are many butterflies too with species such as Great Eggfly, Danaid Eggfly, *Timelea albescens*, and many tigers and crows. The latter include the large floaty *Euploea phaenareta* as well as both blue crows *Euploea sylvester* and the smaller *Euploea eunice*.

In the evening we'll visit the main street in Kenting so as to try the remarkable variety of excellent street food and take in the atmosphere of this, the most cosmopolitan of Taiwan's beach hotspots. Nightwalks near to our hotel should allow us to see Sika Deer, Wild Boar, a surprising variety of roosting butterflies (!) as well as various frogs and snakes.

Days 9 & 10

Lanyu (Orchid) Island

Weather permitting we'll catch the ferry from Kenting to Lanyu (Orchid) Island. If the weather, as it reasonably often does, intervenes (the ferries are cancelled if there is any prospect of even moderate winds), then instead we'll have an additional day in the very productive Kenting area, and more time too at Jhibpen.

Still inhabited by Yami aboriginals living much as they have done for centuries, the wonderfully convoluted volcanic landforms of Lanyu, coupled with a distinctive cultural and ecological heritage, make this little-known emerald islet a most intriguing place. Both the aboriginals and the wildlife show more affinities to the Philippines than Taiwan and this subtropical idyll is home to many rare species including Japanese Paradise Flycatcher and Ryukyu (or Elegant) Scops-Owl. These special little owls often dwell in *Barringtonia racemosa* trees, nicknamed 'devil trees' by the Yami, and so the owls are considered incarnations of evil spirits. Among the island's other avian attractions are Whistling Green Pigeons, Brown-eared Bulbuls and Brown Cuckoo Doves. Along the shores we'll watch for terns, migrant shorebirds and Pacific Egrets. There are many unique life forms on the island including an elegant pure white snail, and several butterflies. Magellan's Iridescent Birdwing, the yellow of the hindwing glowing blue from some angles, was selected as Taiwan's most beautiful butterfly in a recent web contest, though it had some healthy competition from the country's many swallowtails!

If we travel overland to Jhibpen we'll visit Nanrenshan. Nanrenshan is reputedly the second most bio-diverse spot in Taiwan and the butterflies are amazing. *Idea leuconome* drifts along roadside banks of flowers were abundant danaiids include

Ceylon Blue Tigers, Blue Glassy Tigers, Glassy Tigers, Common Tigers, Double-branded Blue Crow, *Euploea eunice*, *Euploea tulliolus* and *Parantica luzonensis*. We'll see Great Mormons, *Papilio nephelus* and *Papilio dialis* and the Common Rose is ...common. Whites are varied with Common and Chocolate Albatrosses accompanied by *Cepora nandina*, *Cepora coronnis*, Psyche and Great Orange-tip. Skippers are incredibly varied, some we'll see are *Udaspes folus*, Striped Bush Hopper, Shiny-spotted Bob, Common Straight Swift, and several species of Dart or Bob. Chocolate Pansies, Lemon Pansies, Blue Admirals, Indian Red Admirals, various sailors and sergeants, Common Jester, Great, Malaysian and Danaid Eggflies hint at the amazing diversity however the glory goes to Australian Lurcher and the fabulous Orange Oakleaf – what a beauty! Along the river we'll see *Trithemis festiva* and the pretty damselfly *Euphaea formosana* with its dark banded wings. There are many other fine insects here, perhaps the pick of the bunch is the bluish longhorn beetle *Paraglenea swinhoei* with large black spots. Jhibpen is another hot spring resort, but quiet roads head inland into hillsides covered in sub-tropical semi-natural vegetation. Here we can watch swallowtails such as *Papilio bianor*, *Papilio nephelus* and *Papilio polytes* and we might see a group of Swinhoe's Pheasants cross the road. The lilac 'indian pipe' blooms of the saprophytic *Aeginetia indica* mark trail sides where we'll watch Collared Finchbills and Taiwan Scimitar-Babbler.

Day 11

Fuyuan and East Coast Rift Valley

Today we'll drive up the scenic East Rift Valley and stop at Fuyuan Forest, a renowned haven for butterflies. Dark Blue Tigers and Ceylon Blue Tigers will be putting on quite a show, many hundreds swarming in the rapidly warming air. Glassy Tigers and many crows, the latter mostly *Euploea eunice* join them. These butterflies swarm up into the air if we come too close and are generally very active – video is a good medium here! Crested Goshawks and Crested Serpent Eagles call noisily and White-throated Needletails scythe through the skies as we watch Chocolate Albatrosses, *Catopsilia scylla*, Common Roses and all manner of *Lycaenids* including sunbeams, silverlines and Indigo Flashes. The rivers, streams, ditches and ponds produce a fantastic array of *Odonata* with at least four *Orthetrum*s, lots of the demoiselle *Psolodesmus mandarinus* and the brilliant emerald demoiselle *Matrona basilaris*. Band-winged *Euphaea formosana* buzz back and forth and we'll see the superb *Neutrothemis ramburii* and the blue wing-based *Rhyothemis triangularis*. Exploring Fuyuan further we'll find many more butterflies; abundant Lemon Emigrants, Common Mormon, Plain Tiger, Chocolate Albatross, Magpie Flat, and the Spangle. Amongst the commoner swallowtails are endemic *Papilio rumanzovia* whose hind wings have two areas of red spotting, and the lovely *Papilio hoppo* with blue and green hind wing uppers. Flowery areas by the river attract the Tawny Mime, *Curetis acuta*, and the spectacular Autumn Leaf, whilst up in more natural forest are sailors and sergeants and the strikingly marked *Parasarpa dudu*. Flocks of White-eared Sibilias and White-bellied Erpornises pass through trees supporting the orange-flowered epiphytic orchid *Oberonia japonica*, whilst below is plenty of *Hemiboaea* and the pink-flowered *Ophiorhiza*.

We'll take a look at a cave where Formosan Leaf-nosed Bats roost, a substantial 'horseshoe' type bat the size of some of the smaller fruitbats.

Fataán Wetland is a lovely site, the many pools and channels now managed to produce organic food. Yellow water-lily, Water-lettuce and Water-chestnut hide various crakes, though we've a good chance of actually seeing Ruddy-breasted Crake and Eastern Water Rail. Spot-billed Ducks and Cinnamon Bittern will be seen, and as darkness descends we'll note the heady scent of White Gingers attracting a lot of hawkmoths as well as dancing fireflies! We'll sample the local produce in Fataán's restaurant before continuing on to our hotel.

Day 12 - 14

Taroko Gorge & Hehuan Mountain

The breathtaking Taroko Gorge cuts like a knife through hard marble producing one of the scenic wonders of Asia, a defile created by immense tectonic forces and sharpened by the rushing Liwu River. Needless to say the ascent of the gorge involves a quite spectacular road! This takes us through several 'life zones' in just a couple of hours, from the sub-tropics of the gorge entrance, through broad-leaved forests clinging to increasingly vertiginous slopes, then conifer forests, before finally emerging into alpine grasslands! Our lodge is situated on a bluff overlooking one of the most spectacular parts of the lower gorge and the grounds have a trail through forest where medicinal plants are marked, for this lodge is run by the local Ayatal tribals. Lush forest backed by cliffs is full of strangling figs, China Doll Tree (*Radermachia*), pepper and bamboo. Yellow Tits, Varied Tits and Rufous-capped Babblers move through gardens humming with butterflies. Huge Great Mormons ghost past as we photograph Swinhoe's Chocolate Tigers, Tawny Mime, and the superb chequer-patterned skipper *Thoressa horishana*. An endemic goat-antelope, the Formosan Serow, can be seen grazing quietly on the cliff-ledges whilst at night we can find Formosan Giant Flying Squirrel and various owls.

We'll visit some impressively well-built trails, these cut alongside the gorge walls or in places through them. Taiwan Whistling Thrushes and Plumbeous Redstarts are everywhere singing from boulders of marble patterned with swirls of green and blue. The Trail known as the Tunnel of Nine Turns provides the most amazing gorge experience of all, the sky has disappeared and there are only the swirling white waters below and multiple waterfalls cascading down wildly sculpted and coloured marble – breathtaking! Butterflies seem everywhere. In Tiansiang planted *Ixora* attracts half a dozen swallowtail species including Common Mormon, Yellow Helen, Red Helen, fast-flying Bluebottles, and the endemic *Papilio rumanzovia*. In other parts of the Taroko Gorge we'll see Spangles, the windmill *Byasa impediens*, green and blue *Papilio hopponis*, and the uncommon endemic *Papilio taiwanus*, it is quite possible to see a dozen species of swallowtail in a day here! Amongst several 'Sailors' is *Limnitis sulphita* and we'll also see the Comma, *Polygonia c-aureum*, Indian Red Admirals, various grass yellows and emigrants, and the stunning pearly green swallowtail *Graphium cloanthus*. The huge gold trumpets of *Lycoris aurea*, a relative of *Amaryllis*, are a local speciality. The demoiselle *Matrona basilaris* patrols forest edge where the variety of Coleoptera will dazzle us,

especially *Lamprocornis lateralis*, ladybird-like leafbugs of a shimmering iridescent green with undersides of brilliant red and purple, and all covered in black spots. We'll see the huge yellow and black, turquoise-eyed dragonfly *Anatogastor sieboldii*, and fabulous *Rhyothemis regia*, a dragonfly with darkened wings, the inner part of which shines iridescent blue-green.

The Shakadang Trail is beautiful. Cliffs rise majestically above us, all but the steepest pale cliffs cloaked in verdant greenery. Below us the river waters are clear and blue the swirling patterns of the marble clear in even the deepest pools. Mapwings are common and among a host of choice butterflies are the nawab, *Polyura narcaea*, *Chitoria chrysolona*, the colourful Red-base Jezebel, and the Black Prince *Abrota ganga*. Blooming on cliffs is the red and yellow *Titanotrichum oldhami* a beautiful relative of the African Violets. *Pteridophyta* are everywhere, including the big clubmoss *Selaginella doederleinii*, appropriately-named *Quercifilix*, several spleenworts, *Woodwardia orientalis*, climbing *Arthropteris palisotii*, and the very distinctive *Osmunda banksiaefolia*. On boulder tops is *Psilotum nudum*, a rootless and leafless fern-relative which has been talked of as a "living fossil" being apparently similar to the Devonian ancestors of all vascular plants, though modern research suggests these may be modified true ferns.

Out of the top of the gorge, Taiwan's highest road pass, a heady 3265m, takes us over the shoulder of Mount Hehuan, and is almost as high as the surrounding 3600m peaks. Mount Hehuan is famous in Taiwan for its flowers. Many still bloom at this season and we will see purple-blue *Gentiana arisanensis* and little purple *Gentiana davidii* amongst blue *Aconitum fukutomei* and the lovely purple-veined white violet *Viola nagasawai*. Roadside cliffs are draped with the yellow stars of *Sedum morrisonense* mixed with Grass of Parnassus and the delicate spotted beauty of *Swertia tozzanensis*. A yellow sea of the dwarf bamboo *Yushania niitakayamensis* dominates the high slopes interrupted by pink *Dianthus pygmaeus*, mats of white-flowered *Gaultheria ithoana*, orange-berried *Rubus rolfei*, and cascading pink-red *Polygonatum cuspidatum*. Alpine Accentors inhabit roadside screes (and are tame in the carpark!) while Vinaceous Rosefinch, the gorgeous endemic Collared Bush-Robin, and endearing White-whiskered Laughingthrushes illuminate the shrubberies. *Swertia randaiensis* flowers in damp soil among rocks shrouded in the honeysuckle *Lonicera acuminata*, whilst the local race of White-backed Woodpecker inhabits montane forest of fir and Taiwan Hemlock. Beautiful Golden Parrotbills move through the dwarf bamboo like a breeze moving through the forest whilst we watch parties of Beaven's Bullfinches eating seeds in roadside gullies.

Day 15

Wuling Farm

Wuling offers a chance to explore some of the highest parts of the Tri-Mountain National Scenic Area and Shei-Pa and Taroko National Parks. Black Eagles and Crested Serpent Eagles over-fly hillsides decked out in golden bamboos, the later harvested to make containers for cabbages grown in fields that are nothing but outwash gravel – there seems not a speck of soil! Over the Sihyuan Pass we enter

a land of dark conifer forests and beautiful orchards lining winding alpine valleys of great beauty. The orchards are full of birdlife with flocks of Black-throated Tits joining abundant White-eared Sibias and Rufous-faced Warblers, whilst an extraordinary number of resplendent Highland Red-bodied Swallowtail gather around small trees covered in large creamy blooms. Less common is the endemic *Agehana maraho*, another red and black swallowtail, this one with wide tails and a large white square on the hindwing. Another swallowtail, the narrow-winged windmill *Byasa polyeuctes* flies by the bridge over the Cijiawa Creek among Liquidambar and trees of *Platycarya* with their cone-like fruit. We'll find spikes of *Goodyera schlechtendaliana* as we watch Steere's Liocichlas, Grey-cheeked Fulvettas and Taiwan Yuhinas. Blue Admiral and Pale Clouded Yellow will be popular subjects but maybe the beautiful darkest blue and yellow *Milionia basilis* day-flying moth might be more so!

A trail takes us alongside rushing streams and up through mixed endemic conifer forest where we'll see the dapper black and white Little Forktail whilst beautifully marked Taiwan Fulvettas explode with energy from stands of dwarf bamboo. We'll pass evergreen Chinese Photinia trees with Japanese Ivy, balsam and *Fatsia* as the understory with flowering *Viola formosana* and the native monkey-flower *Mimulus nepalensis*. *Ellisiophyllum* is dominant by the shady path, but mitrewort (*Mitella formosana*), *Astilbe longsicapa* and *Spiraea formosana* (all endemic) are rarer. The landscapes are stunning but if we don't keep our eyes on the paths we might miss the compact ladies tresses *Goodyera maximowicziana* or secretive birds such as White-browed Shortwing and Manchurian Bush Warbler. In the pines are Coal and Varied Tits and in the fern-bedecked shrubberies garrulous groups of Russet Laughingthrushes.

Days 16 & 17

Mingchih

The approach to Mingchih takes us into a 'land of faery' the deep emerald mossy forest is so of another realm that one half expects little green elves to scurry across the road and disappear into the fernery. A flicker of burnished gold picked out with scarlet, white and black filigree, is the underwing of Mingchih's commonest butterfly, *Heliophorus ila*. Colourful Red-base Jezebels float through the trees, and Oak Blues, their beautifully camouflaged underwings making them difficult to detect on tree trunks, suddenly surprise us with a flash of deep satiny blue. A rare red-bodied swallowtail *Atrophaneura sempperi* inhabits these cloudforests along with the Restricted Demon (a kind of skipper!) while the jester *Symbrenthia hypselis*, the hairstreak *Hypolycaena kina*, and the blue *Udara albocaerulea* visit sturdy *Tetrapanax*. The twisted boles of oaks and ancient red cedars are draped with mosses, lichens and ferns, some of the latter are huge! *Asplenium antiquum* 'birdsnests' a metre or more across perch precariously amongst lianas twining through the trees. The ground too is covered in ferns, the variety seems near infinite and it's easy to count forty or fifty species on a short walk from the lodge. Mossy stumps are bedecked with tiny *Aspleniums* and the winged fronds of *Mecodium badiumo* and trees covered in strap-like *Pyrrhosias*. There is the impossibly delicate 4-pinnate *Diacalpe aspidoides*, the individual pinnules so small

that the impression is more of mist than plant, and of course, there are tree ferns. Taiwan has many species, and Mingchin is rich in them with at least four of the larger species present. Along mossy bouldery streams we'll see Brown Dipper whilst the trees above carry a phenomenal epiphyte load including a good number of orchids. One of the most spectacular is *Bulbophyllum melanoglossum* which has umbels of long red-veined yellow flowers hanging from the mossy boughs. Fleshy leafy *Gastrochilus formosanus* has pendulous yellow flowers while *Liparis cespitosa*, a relative of our very rare Fen Orchid, flowers communally on tree trunks. Groups of White-eared Sibia and Grey-chinned Minivets are joined by pretty Flame-breasted Flowerpecker as we photograph more orchids, this time robust many-flowered yellow spikes of terrestrial *Calanthe speciosa*. We might flush a Stejnejer's Narrow-mouthed Toad or the golden-green form of Swinhoe's Frog as we are photographing the large graceful purple flowers of the terrestrial orchid *Calanthe puberula*. Lime-green Bamboo Pit-vipers sit motionless below huge birdsnest ferns awaiting a meal of colourful tree frog. The rare *Satyrid* butterfly *Zophoessa siderea* flits about patches of dramatic "cobra-lilies" *Arisaema thunbergii* with their strongly marked spathes and a spadix bearing a thread-like appendage up to two feet long! Diminutive Taiwan Wren-Babblers skulk amongst ferns such as large *Diplazium dilatatum*, 1-pinnate *Stegnogramma* with its net venation, and *Antrophyum obovatum* with broad undivided fronds suddenly narrowed to a sharp point.

The elegant pinky-white trumpets of *Lilium formosanum* are a stunning sight, smaller but equally gorgeous is *Epilobium nankotaizanense* with large pink almost prostrate blooms decorating mossy banks. On shaded mossy rock-faces was *Shortia*, a delicate white gem rather suggesting a wintergreen but belonging to the tiny mainly Arctic-Alpine family *Diapensiaceae*. Endemic Yellow Tits join flocks of noisy Grey Treepies and perky little Taiwan Yuhinas. Endemic Steere's Liocichlas and Grey-cheeked Fulvettas are common and at night we'll see Brown Wood-Owl and Collared Owlet near the lodge as well as giant White-faced Flying Squirrels crashing around in the oak tops. Stunning green and white Moltrecht's Tree Frogs position themselves above our lodge's reception door, poised to decide which of the amazingly coloured, patterned and shaped moths to make their evening meal.

Day 18 depart Taipei

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