

TROPICAL BIRDING



Chinese Tibet: Pink-tailed Buntings and Lhasa

Custom Tour: 29 May – 15 June 2011



This is a real photo taken from the train between Xining and Lhasa. The scenery in Tibet is amongst the most amazing on the planet. Rivers, lakes and giant towering peaks mix with yaks, plains, monasteries and Tibetan villages to create an intoxicating mix.

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Tour Leader: **Keith Barnes**



The 10-primaryed Pink-tailed Bunting is something of a taxonomic enigma. Clearly neither a finch nor a bunting, most authorities these days classify it in its own family, the Urocynchramidae

Introduction:

Tibet is spectacular. Both visually stunning and spiritually rich, and it is home to many scarce, seldom-seen and spectacular looking birds. If you are looking for a trip that delivers a long triplist, then it is best you look elsewhere. Our modest tally of 162 species in 18 days indicates



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that Tibet is not exactly megadiverse. However, what it lacks in species numbers it more than makes up for with a spectacular collection of local, scarce and seldom-seen species. One of the main motivations for birders to visit these days is that the taxonomic oddity, the Pink-tailed Bunting, is increasingly recognised as being in its own monotypic family, the Urocynchramidae. This part of Tibet is one of the few areas where this local and enigmatic bird can be seen with any regularity, and we saw at least 15 individuals, including males, females, found a nest, and watched them displaying, which was a serious treat. But there were a lot of other star attractions, including a ridiculously close Ibisbill, the immaculate Henderson's Ground-Jay, and a party of three Tibetan Snowcocks that stood on a high ridge, amongst a spectacular collection of gamebirds that were all extremely obliging. The endemic Prezwalski's Partridge called on a nearby rock outcrop for 15 minutes before realising I was there, a ridiculous Tibetan Partridge assumed that it was hiding under a bush, when it was actually perfectly visible to a slew of photographers, and the highly approachable group of eight Tibetan Eared-Pheasants that posed so beautifully for photographs. Robin and Brown Accentors were surprisingly common on the trip. Both members of that strange lineage in the warbler family, the pastel-painted White-browed (including a nest) and Crested Tit-warbler were seen well. Amongst the several species of leaf-warbler we scored the highly localised Gansu Leaf-warbler, it's wintering quarters still yet to be discovered. Desert Lesser Whitethroat paraded in a small gully not far from Gong He, where it snowed in the desert. We caught up with a slew of local party-attending birds including White-browed and Songar Tit, and Snowy-browed and Chinese Nuthatches. The discovery of a Lammergeier nest with a large chick resulted in some spectacular viewing and photography opportunities of this stellar raptor. It is the bird that got me into birding, and the experience with this pair reminded me why! The drier areas around Chaka revealed the scarce and declining Saker Falcon, the incredible and dapper Mongolian Ground Jay, and on the deck a beautiful Pallas' Sandgrouse. Another sought-after Tibetan specialty is the rare Black-necked Crane, and we had several of these on the shores of the aqua-colored Koko Nor. Our little jaunt to Lhasa added the local Prince Henry's Laughingthrush and Giant Babax to the mix. A sweep of all six Snowfinches that the plateau is famous for, Mongolian and Desert Finch, and six Rosefinches including Pale and Streaked, ensured that we scored almost all of the seed-eaters in the region. In addition, we had a wonderful collection of waterfowl, waders and shorebirds at the stunningly beautiful Koko Nor (aka Qinghai Hu). For the Alaudidae-lovers (i.e. me), there was a fascinating collection of larks including the strikingly-patterned Mongolian, immense Tibetan, and local Hume's Short-toed Larks, a host of redstarts, and the always delectable Wallcreeper.

In addition to this selection of highly-desirable birds, Tibet is somewhat of a mammal-haven, and one is often blessed with the most amazing sightings of "big-and-hairies". The immense and still very wild Kekexili Wilderness Area is a marvel, and we lucked out here with a few encounters with the always menacing Wolf, cute Tibetan Fox, doubly-cute Mountain Weasel, Tibetan Wild Ass (Kiang), Tibetan Gazelle, and Wild Yak. Elsewhere on the trip we saw Blue Sheep and White-lipped Deer. But Tibet is of interest not just from the standpoint of the wildlife, which is impressive in its own right. Tibet encompasses a spiritual journey, one through immense ice-clad mountain, rolling golden-green plains, vast water-worlds of aqua-marine lakes, and scattered monasteries where monks chant, wave prayer-wheels, and still conduct sky-burials. The Potola Palace, the most recognizable and striking structure in Tibetan Buddhist culture sits atop of Lhasa, and everywhere you look, it feels as if gods live in the mountains. This essential essence of the place is something



that is hard to describe, and can only really be experienced for ones-self. But it is an important character of this tour, and participants often enjoy the magical atmosphere that is distinctly and uniquely Tibetan, as much as they do the birds and the mammals. This report is unusual, in that part of the trip was a custom tour for clients who wanted to see Pink-tailed Bunting, and part of it was the continuation of a recce by Keith to Lhasa to scout for a future tour. However, the composite is similar to the tour we will be running in future, so I decided to write the whole thing up as a single comprehensive trip report.



We just happened upon a small village that was in the throes of the cultural festival of Sagadama, including the festivities associated with the visiting Lama. This ended up being one of the major highlights of this trip, with the only other attendees all being local Tibetans. It was a rare privilege indeed.

Itinerary:

May 29	Arrival in Xining, Qinghai
May 30	Xining to Chaka.
May 31	Chaka to Rubber Mountains to Xining
June 1	Xining to Heimehe (Koko Nor/Qinghai Hu) – Rubber Mountains - Niaodao
June 2	Rubber Mountains
June 3	AM. Koko Nor, PM. Beishan, Xining.



June 4	Laojeshan + Xining
June 5	Xining – Gong He – Wenchuan
Dec 6	Er La Pass
Dec 7	Er La Pass
Dec 8	Wenchuan - Maduo
Dec 9	Maduo – Datong (Yaozigou) Forest
Dec 10	Datong (Yaozigou) Forest. Late PM Train Xining to Lhasa
Dec 11	All day on the train from Xining to Lhasa through Kekexili Wilderness area
Dec 12	Potola Palace and Lhasa Cultural day
Dec 13	Drive to Reting Monastery
Dec 14	Reting to Lhasa
Dec 15	Lhasa to Xining

Main Tour

29 May: Arrival in Xining. Xining is just another Chinese city. Fuelled by rapid growth, there seems to be entire massive downtown areas being erected simultaneously. The surrounding landscape is dry and dusty. I pretty much hit the sack shortly after arrival.



China rising! Xining, until recently a small uncomplicated city, is exploding with development.

30 May: Xining to Chaka. Up early, we had a typical Chinese breakfast with a plateful of Baotse, and then hit the road for Chaka. Steaming past the attractive Koko Nor, a huge lake on the Tibetan Plateau, we saw Hume's Short-toed Larks, Horned Larks, Bar-headed Geese and several others as we sped over the Rubber Mountains and to the town of Chaka on the other side of the hills. Arriving in the late afternoon, we scoured the plains for this area's famous specialties.



The scenery around Chaka. The last Tibetan cowboys herd their Yaks and sheep (above) and Chaka Salt Lake beneath the ice-dusted peaks of the Tibetan Plateau (below).

The birding here is not overly diverse, and apart from a few Tree Sparrows and White Wagtails not much happened until we connected with one of the main target species for this region, and what a special one it was, the outlandish Mongolian Ground-Jay! This is one of the most incredible corvids in the world, and in habits it resembles an African courser more than a crow. Long-legged and strong running, these birds perched on a nearby fence, flew about showing us their striking wing-pattern, and displayed quite admirably before leading us to a small group of Mongolian Finches. Soon the sun was setting and the day was drawing to a close, we enjoyed some silk-road-style lamb and lattice noodles for dinner.



The Mongolian Ground-Jay is a great bird, both in flight (upper left) and when coursing along the ground (bottom). The scenery between Koko Nor and Chaka was not exactly bad either (upper right).

31 May: Chaka to Rubber Mountains to Xining. Up pretty early again, the aim of today was to find the scarce Pallas' Sandgrouse. Although initial attempts yielded little other than a few Rufous-necked Snowfinches, some more Henderson's Ground-Jays and some other commoner passerines, eventually the unmistakable "chakka-takka" call had me spinning around to see the first beautiful male Pallas' Sandgrouse come cruising past a little above eye-level. But that was not satisfying enough, so we kept going. A little later, another bird came whizzing past, and then eventually, what I was really hoping for, a Pallas' Sandgrouse on the deck. Although it would not allow terribly close approach this gave us the most incredible opportunity to observe this great bird at length. Moving on, and back towards the Rubber mountains a few stops at some desert scrub revealed many Twite, a few more Mongolian Finch, and the a small gully yielded an endemic Prezwalski's Partridge. The bird started off calling. I was sitting behind an outcrop at the time and it could not see me, and it kept coming closer until it was not very far away and it continued to call for an additional 15 minutes. While watching the partridge a Tibetan Fox started stalking it, which resulted in it slowly sloping away. A great encounter with this seldom seen species. As we were crossing the Rubber Mountains we picked up the cracking Rufous-necked Snowfinch, several Hume's Groundpeckers and the omnipresent Himalayan Griffon. We also got very lucky and scored three Demoiselle Cranes standing by the roadside. Clearly these migrants were passing through, and we lapped up the fortuitousness of encountering them. The day ended when I met the clients in Xining readying ourselves for the Pink-tailed Bunting excursion which was to start the following day!



Admittedly it is distant, but the Pallas' Sandgrouse seldom allows a close approach. Here this female kept on walking in advance of us, making sure we never got too close.



Prezwalski's Partridge, a Chinese endemic and tricky bird to catch up with in Qinghai.

1 + 2 June: Koko Nor and the Rubber Mountains. After an early breakfast, we made for the Rubber Mountain's area. Leaving the drier valleys of Xining, you soon begin to enter the rolling valleys and open grasslands of the higher plateau. At 3200 meters we soon encountered the southeastern shore of China's largest lake, Koko Nor, and we began seeing our first waterbirds. We were able to scope our first Great Crested and Black-necked Grebes, many hundreds of Great Cormorants, and handfuls of Great and Cattle Egrets and loads of ducks as well as Graylag and Bar-headed Geese. The lake edge held Common Redshanks displaying, several Hume's Short-toed Larks, and a bunch of gulls including the gargantuan Greater Black-headed Gull. Soon thereafter Hill Pigeon was a lifer for the group and a nearby fencepost held a rather out of place Asian Brown Flycatcher on passage. One of the most common, but still very welcome, passerines of these parts is the cocky Hume's Groundpecker. We would find many of this strange and weird-looking beastie over the course of the next few weeks. Red-billed Chough and Carrion Crow were regulars.



A collage of images from Koko Nor (Qinghai Hu), the largest lake in China.

Bar-headed Geese, the highest altitudinal migrant breed in large numbers on this altiplano lake (top left), and gulls are commonplace here including the Brown-headed (top right) and Greater Black-headed (mid right) Gulls. The nomadic culture of the plateau is evidenced by the tented camps (mid left) and temporary stockades (bottom).

However, our main quarry was the enigmatic and scarce Pink-tailed Bunting. We walked up a hillside that I knew the birds were on, and staked out an area of a suspected nest. Although the bird did not show immediately, we were rewarded with the appearance of an endemic White-browed Tit that was foraging. The scrubby slope also yielded singing Robin and Brown Accentors, and hoardes of Twite. Eventually, we decided the stake out was not working so we started moving upslope and within 5 minutes we had located a distant male Pink-tailed Bunting. We all saw the bird well, including the distinctive pink-colored outer retrices, but it was 5 minutes later when we had both a male and a female at point blank range that the real celebrations could begin. Family quest accomplished, and much relief for the participants that had gambled quite a bit on this one bird. Now, what were we going to do with the four days we had “budgeted” for this area?



The Robin (left) and Brown (right) Accentors were very vocal for the entire period of our visit to Tibet, and we had many encounters with these lively songsters.



The female Pink-tailed Bunting looks pretty different to the male, and also to its illustration in most books.

In the late afternoon we walked up a valley where we miraculously found a Lammergeier nest that was quite low down and we were able to get almost level with it. Himalayan Griffon's streamed overhead in a slow but regular procession and we located a few large Upland Buzzards. A moister patch held the bulky Tibetan Lark and the open crags held a collection of interesting birds including a collection of great snowfinches. Henri's, Tibetan, White-rumped and Rufous-necked Snowfinches were all located amongst the dowdy Rock Petronias.

The following day we pretty much visited the same main areas, hoping to pick up on a few additional specialty species, and we certainly did add a few good ones. Kessler's Thrush, Gldenstat's and Blue-fronted Redstart, Plain Mountain Finch, Streaked Rosefinch, Wallcreeper, and a spectacular White-browed Tit-warbler at a nest. However, the best experiences of the day were probably the incredible Mongolian Lark that we watched displaying overhead for some time and the amazing eye-level views we had of Lammergeier as it attended it's nest.



Lammergeier (top), the bird that got me into birding, and its no surprise why! Below a Güldenstat's Redstart (left) and Henri's Snowfinch (right) were a couple of the day's highlights.

3 June: Koko Nor and Beishan (Xining). Given that we had nailed almost all of our realistic targets in the Rubber Mountains area it was decided it was best to head north and try some other areas around Xining to see what we could add. A nice Mongolian Lark as we left Daio Niao was followed by a cruising Saker Falcon that was flying only a few meters above the ground at serious speed. One always has to be somewhat fortuitous with this big and wide-ranging raptor.

We then moved on to some freshwater portions of Koko Nor and picked up Red-crested and Common Pochard, Tufted Duck and Common Golden-eye, a pair of the rare Black-necked Crane, extremely stunning breeding-plumaged Spotted Redshank, Curlew Sandpiper, Kentish Plover, Common Black-headed Gull, and Daurian Jackdaw. After much more scanning we eventually were delighted to find the Small Snowfinch, which was our primary reason for coming to this area.

We made our way into Xining for lunch and were delighted to have a dumpling surprise sit-down menu. With ginger, Chinese vinegar and soy sauce we pretty much gorged ourselves on these pork-based treats. The parking lot of the restaurant held a delightful and vocal Grey-capped Greenfinch, which was our first one of the trip. After our sumptuous lunch we headed for the dry hills north of the city, Beishan. We added a number of new species here including the good looking local race of Common Pheasant, an angry pair of Little Owl, Daurian Redstart, Great Tit, Plain Laughingthrush, and the specialty Pale Rosefinch.



Any pheasant (even this one) is a great bird. If this species got split into a number of “common” pheasants I imagine their value to birders would go up considerably. This one is frequent on Beishan.

4 June: Beishan (Xining) and Laoje Shan. We decided to give Beishan another chance in the early morning. The only real successes were views of Common Cuckoo, Godlewski's and Meadow Buntings. As the morning wore on we decided to head off to Laoje Shan and see what we could pick up there. With proper forest abounding, it was not surprising to encounter a bunch of new birds. What was surprising however was perhaps how common and unafraid the magnificent Siberian Rubythroats were. We saw several throughout the day and also managed to add the extremely local Gansu Leaf-warbler (recently re-split) amongst the more common Yellow-streaked, Hume's, and Greenish Leaf-Warblers. Other firsts for our trip included Black Stork, Elliot's Laughingthrush, Gray-headed Bullfinch, White-winged Grosbeak, Chestnut Thrush, White-bellied Redstart, Long-tailed Tit, and Asian House Martin. We headed back to Xining for a great final meal, and Keith said goodbye to the clients and did the remainder of the trip on his own.



**Laoye Mountain Tourism Management Office
Service Instructions for Special Group**

For the convenience of tourists and making them "come with happiness and return with satisfaction", Laoye Mountain Scenic Area provides medical treatment, luggage deposit, and rental of wheelchair, crutch, etc. for people in special groups. Umbrella, mobile charger, and shoe polisher are also available.

Laoye Shan revealed many Siberian Rubythroats (left) and the local Chinese-endemic Gansu Leaf-Warbler (right). Funny Chinglish signs (bottom) are a delightful bonus of any China tour.

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5 June: Gong He to Wenchuan. We headed south this morning. After a late breakfast stop in Gong He we decided to do a little birding in the rocky crags south of town. Whilst Gong He does not produce a lot of birds it did produce a couple of good ones. Amongst the Hoopoes and Groundpeckers we scored a couple of Desert Finches, a single migrant Black-faced Bunting and a displaying Desert Lesser Whitethroat. The remainder of the afternoon was pretty much driving to the Wenchuan area. We passed over the forbidding Er La pass at 4500 m, and dropped down onto the other side where we found some pretty mediocre accommodation. Out the back we were able to photograph the lovely Rufous-necked Snowfinch.



The snazzy Rufous-necked Snowfinch was a common and widespread bird on this tour, but it's subtle beauty always attracted attention.

6 + 7 June: Er La Pass. For two solid days I pounded the slopes and high plateau of Er La pass, climbing up to 4800 m, looking for the high-altitude specialties of this place. Secretly I was hoping for an encounter with Snow Leopard, which would save me a lot of hassle and money later on in my life when I am going to have to make a dedicated trip to see this most-desirable cat! Instead we saw some great birds including loads of Black-headed and Plain Mountain-Finches, White-winged Redstart, and the amazing Tibetan Snowcock. However, it was Roborovski's Rosefinch, the high altitude Tibetan-endemic which attracted the most attention. This bird is poorly illustrated (most often with a pale bill and flat frons, neither of which it has). We also located a couple of great groups of Blue Sheep and Tibetan Gazelle, the first of several wonderful mammals of the trip. Despite two days of effort, Tibetan Sandgrouse did not appear.



The bleak uplands at over 4800 metres were walked (very slowly) as we scoured for the high-altitude endemics. Whenever you stopped, you could hear the “silence” in its low hum. This is a wild place, and it is a privilege just to walk at these altitudes and be amongst these creatures away from people.





At these altitudes the pickings are slim and diversity is low, but the prizes are scarce and well-worth the effort. The Roborovski's Rosefinch (left) and Brandt's Mountain-Finch (right) are just two such gems.

8 June: Wenchuan – Maduo. Working a small and spectacular-looking valley nearby Wenchuan town turned up a surprise, but welcome, Blandford's Snowfinch, our only new bird of the day. We located a bunch of other goodies in the beautiful valley. In the late afternoon we drove towards the southern town of Maduo, where we saw several Tibetan Antelope and Kiang (Tibetan Wild Ass).



Tibetan scenery is spectacular, and the grassy plains with domestic stock and towering mountains lend it an ethereal atmosphere.

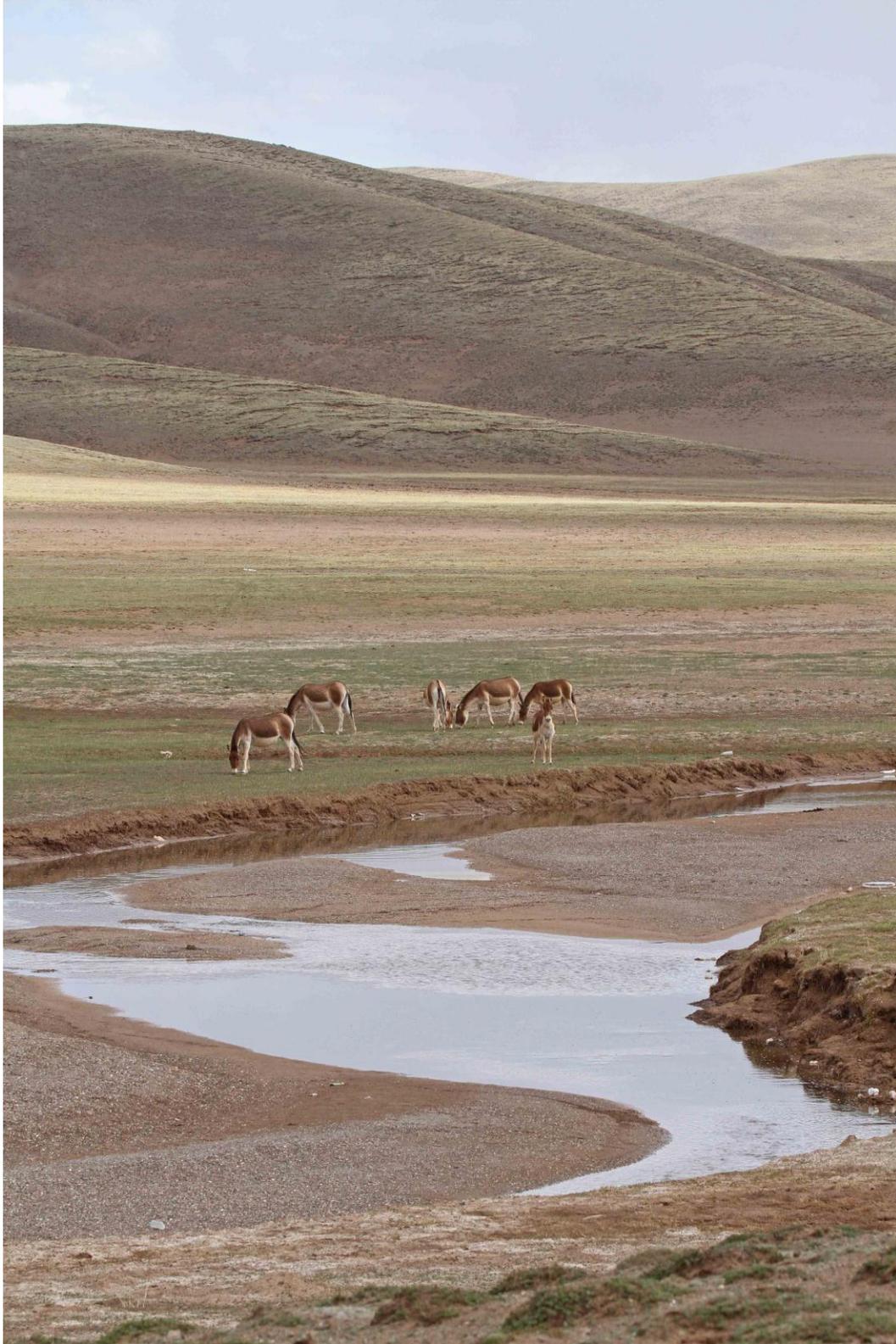


Our sixth and final snowfinch, Blanford's. Nowhere in the world can you see more snowfinches.

9 June: Maduo - Datong. We hardly did any birding today, but instead drove through African-like plains, full of thousands of animals grazing the Tibetan plateau. It is heartening to see such wild areas in Asia, a continent that supports 50% of the Earth's population. We saw many groups of the elegant Tibetan Wild Ass (Kiang) and even more Tibetan Gazelles as we drove north. It was mostly a travel day, that finished in the forested hills of Datong.



Tibetan Gazelle are common on the productive plains of the plateau.



Tibetan Wild Ass (Kiang) are a sight to behold, and we saw many sizable groups in this area.

10 June: Datong – Lhasa Train. We started off early in the forests around Datong and there were several new species for us here including the spectacular Crested Tit-warbler and two seldom-seen species, the Prezwalski's and Chinese Nuthatches and the always welcome Songar Tit and Slaty-backed Flycatcher. Inbetween we also located more Gansu Leaf-Warblers, many Siberian Rubythroats and the vocal White-bellied Redstart. Soon it was time to head back to Xining where we made for the railway station and our epic train journey down to Lhasa.



The Crested Tit-warbler (top) one of my favorite birds in the whole world. Songar Tit (lower left) and White-throated Redstart (lower right) were all new for the trip.

11 June: Lhasa Train. It took us the entire day to travel the 1500 odd km to Lhasa. We traversed the amazing Kekexini Wilderness area seeing Tibetan Fox, several Tibetan Wolves and wild Yaks in addition to the same great mammals we had the other day, and the scenery was undoubtedly amongst the best I have ever seen in my life. Hopefully the pictures can do it mild justice.





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12 June: Lhasa. The capital of Tibetan Buddhism, and one of the most spiritual cities on the planet, Lhasa has pretty much been overrun by Chinese influence. So much so, that with all the neon and glitz found throughout the modern half of the city I decided to rename it Lhasa-Vegas! Fortunately, much of the old city remains pretty much unchanged, and one can get a feel of the old capital in the more traditional Tibetan areas. Today was a day set aside for culture. The Potola Palace and the markets of Lhasa were more than enough to occupy a day.



The Potola Palace is still extremely important to Tibetans and many prostrate themselves and march around the building (above). Below are images of the markets including the militia with the monk. I have never seen such an obvious and extreme presence of police and militia anywhere in my life before.

13 June: Lhasa - Reting. After leaving Lhasa we heard rumours that a local Lama was visiting a monastery during the religious festival of Sagadama, and that if we dropped in we might see something special. We did exactly that and what followed was a ceremony and procession that was the undoubted cultural highlight of the trip, if not a lifetime.



A dancer (above) makes sure the visiting Lama is well entertained while a “jester” (below) teases an old man who enjoys the festivities too. We were the only non-Tibetans there.

By the afternoon we had arrived at the remote Reting Monastery. The slopes around here were bouncing with two of the main specialty species of the area, the rather robust Tibetan Babax and the noisy and engaging Brown-cheeked Laughingthrush. We also walked up high on a slope and got glimpses of Tibetan Eared-Pheasant, but a sky-burial ground replete with human bones and vulture feathers perhaps left the most lasting impression.



Giant Babax (above) and Brown-cheeked Laughing-thrush (below) were both common at Reting.

14 June: Reting - Lhasa. After wending our way slowly back towards Lhasa, picking up several Streaked Rosefinches en-route, we visited another monastery that required a significant climb to reach, but it was well worth it because at the top there was a party of eight ridiculously tame Tibetan Eared-Pheasants. We enjoyed these elegant creatures immensely before slowly climbing down and on our way finding a ridiculously tame Tibetan Partridge that thought it was well hidden when our photos clearly show it wasn't!



14 June: Lhasa - departure. Finishing off this tour with two stellar gamebirds was certainly a great way to complete an epic trip to one of the world's most interesting places. If, in addition to birds, you list culture, scenery and food as interests, I seriously suggest you elevate Tibet to somewhere near the top of your list for next trip to take, It certainly is an amazing and unforgettable one!

List of Bird Species recorded

Sequence and taxonomy follows Clements, J. F. (2000) Birds of the World: A Checklist.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*
Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*
Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
Chinese Pond-Heron *Ardeola bacchus*
Great Egret *Casmerodius albus*
Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*
Graylag Goose *Anser anser*
Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*
Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*
Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*
Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*
Common Golden-eye *Bucephala clangula*
Black Kite *Milvus migrans*
Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*
Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*
Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*
Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*
Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*
Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*
Tibetan Snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus*
Przevalski's Partridge *Alectoris magna*
Daurian Partridge *Perdix dauurica* (LO)
Tibetan Partridge *Perdix hodgsoniae*
Tibetan Eared-Pheasant *Crossoptilon harmani*
Ring-necked (Common) Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*
Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis*
Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo*



Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*
Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*
Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*
Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii*
Lesser Sandplover *Charadrius mongolus*
Common Redshank *Tringa tetanus*
Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*
Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*
Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*
Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*
Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*
Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*
Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*
Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*
Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*
Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris*
Snow Pigeon *Columba leuconota*
Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*
Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus sparverioides* (HO)
Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*
Eurasian Eagle-Owl *Bubo bubo*
Little Owl *Athene noctua*
Common Swift *Apus apus*
Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus*
Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
Gray-faced Woodpecker *Picus canus*
Tibetan Lark *Melanocorypha maxima*
Mongolian Lark *Melanocorypha mogolica*
Hume's Short-toed Lark *Calandrella acutirostris*
Lesser (Asian) Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens cheleensis*
Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*
Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*
Pale Sand Martin *Riparia diluta*
Eurasian Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*
Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*
Asian Martin *Delichon dasypus*
White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*
Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus*
White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*
Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*
Robin Accentor *Prunella rubeculoides*



Rufous-breasted Accentor *Prunella strophciata*
Brown Accentor *Prunella fulvescens*
Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*
Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius*
Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*
Chestnut Thrush *Turdus rubrocanus*
White-backed (Kessler's) Thrush *Turdus kessleri*
White-browed Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile sophiae*
Crested Tit-Warbler *Leptopoecile elegans*
Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*
Tickell's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*
Yellow-streaked Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus armandii*
Gansu Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus kansuensis*
Hume's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*
Greenish Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia minula*
Siberian Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*
Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*
Slaty-backed Flycatcher *Ficedula hodgsonii*
Himalayan Bush-Robin *Tarsiger cyanurus*
Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*
Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*
Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*
White-throated Redstart *Phoenicurus schisticeps*
Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*
White-bellied Redstart *Hodgsonius phaenicuroides*
White-winged Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogaster*
Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*
White-capped Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*
Plumbeous Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*
Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura*
Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*
Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*
Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*
Pere David's Laughingthrush *Garrulax davidi*
Elliot's Laughingthrush *Garrulax elliotii*
Prince Henry's Laughingthrush *Garrulax henrici*
Giant Babax *Babax waddelli*
Songar Tit *Poecile songara*
White-browed Tit *Poecile superciliosa*
Gray-crested Tit *Lophophanes dichrous*
Great Tit *Parus major*
Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*



Hume's Groundpecker (Ground Tit) *Pseudopodoces humilis*
Snowy-browed Nuthatch *Sitta przewalskii*
Chinese Nuthatch *Sitta villosa*
Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*
Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*
Gray-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*
Black-billed Magpie *Pica pica*
Mongolian Ground-Jay *Podoces hendersoni*
Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*
Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*
Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*
Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*
Common Raven *Corvus corax*
White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*
Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans*
Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*
Rock Petronia *Petronia petronia*
Henri's Snowfinch *Montifringilla henrici*
Black-winged Snowfinch *Montifringilla adamsi*
White-rumped Snowfinch *Montifringilla taczanowskii*
Pere David's Snowfinch *Montifringilla davidiana*
Rufous-necked Snowfinch *Montifringilla ruficollis*
Blanford's Snowfinch *Montifringilla blanfordi*
Plain Mountain-Finch *Leucosticte nemoricola*
Black-headed Mountain-Finch *Leucosticte brandti*
Mongolian Finch *Rhodopechys mogolicus*
Desert Finch *Bucanetes obsoleta*
Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrimus*
Pink-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus eos*
Pale Rosefinch *Carpodacus synoicus*
White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus thura*
Tibetan Rosefinch *Carpodacus roborowskii*
Streaked Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicollis*
Oriental Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica*
Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*
Gray-headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythaca*
White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carnipes*
Przewalski's Rosefinch *Urocynchramus pylzowi*
Godlewski's Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*
Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*
Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*



Annotated List of Mammal Species recorded

Sequence and taxonomy follows "A Guide to the Mammals of China", Smith & Xie (ed.) 2008.

Himalayan Marmot *Marmota himalayana*

Tibetan Dwarf Hamster *Cricetulus tibetanus*. *This is the probable hamster seen on Er La Pass.*

Plateau Pika *Ochotona curzoniae*

Chinese Red Pika *Ochotona erythrotis*

Woolly Hare *Lepus oiostolus*

Tolai Hare *Lepus tolai*

Wolf *Canis lupus*

Tibetan Fox *Vulpes ferrilata*

Mountain (=Alpine) Weasel *Mustela altaica*

Kiang *Equus kiang*

Tibetan Gazelle *Procapra picticaudata*

Blue Sheep *Pseudois nayaur*

White-lipped Deer *Przewalskium albirostris* *What was presumed to be these large deer were seen on the hillsides above Heimehe.*

Wild Yak *Bos grunniens*

