



CHINA IN WINTER TOUR REPORT

17th Nov to 2nd Dec
2016

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Either for rarity value, excellent views or simply a group favourite.

- Swan Goose
- Lesser White-fronted Goose
- Mandarin Duck
- Falcated Duck
- Baikal Teal
- Scaly-sided Merganser
- White-necklaced Partridge
- Cabot's Tragopan
- Elliot's Pheasant
- Koklass Pheasant
- Silver Pheasant
- Oriental Stork
- Black-faced Spoonbill
- Siberian Crane
- Sandhill Crane
- White-naped Crane
- Red-crowned Crane
- Hooded Crane
- Spoon-billed Sandpiper
- Long-billed Plover
- Saunder's Gull
- Pied Falconet
- Silver-throated Bushtit
- Hartert's Leaf Warbler
- Grey-sided Scimitar-Babbler
- Dusky Fulvetta
- Moustached Laughingthrush
- Short-tailed Parrotbill
- Reed Parrotbill
- Indochinese Yuhina
- Spotted Elachura
- White's Thrush
- Grey-sided Thrush
- Pale Thrush
- Northern Red-flanked Bluetail
- Slaty-backed Forktail
- Buff-bellied Pipit
- Yellow-browed Bunting
- Pallas's Reed Bunting
- Japanese Reed Bunting

SUMMARY:

Our SE China in Winter tour focussed on some of the rarest and most stunning species on the planet as we visited a variety of habitats from wide, open plains, marshes and huge lakes to forested mountains and coastal marshes and mudflats. This was a thoroughly enjoyable tour with a great group as we visited the famous wetlands of Yangcheng and Poyang Hu during the first half of the tour, which met all of our expectations as we saw 6 species of crane and numerous Oriental Storks. Add to that a few Spoon-billed Sandpipers and the first of our 12 species of buntings seen, plus 8 species of thrush made this a spectacular start. Moving further south to Wuyuan we were lucky to find a pair of Moustached Laughingthrushes in a secluded valley and our main target of Scaly-sided Merganser swimming along a secluded river set amidst beautiful rolling, forested hills. From here we visited Emei Feng, a stunning mountain where 7 Elliot's Pheasants were the highlight, plus we had some views of Cabot's Tragopan, and both Koklass & Silver Pheasants. We rounded off our tour at Fuzhou Forest Park and an extra day at Nanhui, close to Shanghai with Spotted Elachura, Asian Stubtail and great looks at a drake Baikal Teal. China has an excellent road network, good hotels and great food making travelling here very easy indeed and I for one cannot wait to return.

Days 1 - 2 UK – SHANGHAI - RUDONG - YANCHENG

Following a ten hour overnight direct flight with Virgin Atlantic we landed just over half an hour late in Shanghai at 8.30am and met up with our guide and my good friend Tang Jun. We then drove north towards Rudong and kept on going for another 50kms further up the coast... A quick stop for our first meal in China was made and then we were off again and driving to the coast where we discovered that the tide was already receding. Everyone was out from the bus quickly and we were all scanning the shorebirds feeding below us. After a few minutes Derek declared he'd found a **Spoon-billed Sandpiper**, the bird we had come to see. After a few frantic directions our scopes were trained on the bird and not one but two spoonies. This is such a star bird and even though I see them every year, the thrill is always there. And if it's a lifer for you, well what better way to start a tour than this. We spent quite some time watching them, before getting distracted by a few **Black-faced Spoonbills**, before going down the slippery path of gull identification. We had both **Vega** and **Heuglin's Gulls** side-by-side but the lure of more shorebirds was rather compelling. There were a few **Red-necked Stints** and plenty of commoner waders, but the 15 **Dalmatian Pelicans** were something of a surprise to say the least. So from here we drove on along the coastal road, stopping frequently to scan through flocks of ducks in the lagoon. The star birds were the drake **Falcated Ducks** amongst scores of more familiar waterfowl, but we also saw **Black-necked Grebe**, **Greater Scaup** and **Eastern Spot-billed Duck** as well. The light was poor by now and the grey, leaden skies cast a grey cast over everything but at our last stop our spirits were lifted by firstly a **Dusky Thrush**, which was joined a short while later by a **Pale Thrush**. And that was the end of the day as the deteriorating light stopped us scanning through a large flock of **Eurasian Curlew** for something better. So with it getting too dark to continue birding at 5pm we headed to a nearby hotel for the night.



Chinese Penduline Tit

Day 3 DONGTAI - YANCHENG NNR

After a very long night's sleep we returned to the same area of coastline this morning with the intention of searching through the duck flocks. Those people that know me are aware of my dislike for ducks but still I tried and must admit I enjoyed seeing numerous **Falcated Ducks** in better light, amongst the flocks of other commoner species. But the bund we were viewing from had grass and trees on the landward side and we pulled out a cracking **Meadow Bunting** and a couple of **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** that showed rather well. Out on the mudflats a pair of **Black-faced Spoonbills** posed nicely and then we got distracted with some visible migration (vis mig) with numerous passerines flying overhead. These included **Bramblings** (and we'd see some big flocks later this morning), **Oriental Skylarks** and some unidentified buntings. Some **Chinese Penduline Tits** flew over but then I managed to call in a small party from the reedbed below us and these little crackers gave mind-boggling views. A



Rustic Bunting

flock of **Vinous-throated Parrotbills** also came in to check us out and as I wandered across the marsh a **Japanese Reed Bunting** hopped up onto the reeds and we spent the next half an hour trying to get decent views, which we did in the end. It was at this point that an immature **Amur Falcon** flew right over our heads – a very late migrating bird, although I've heard of a few sightings at Nanhui near Shanghai this week as well. A few **Pale Thrushes** were moving through the trees as well, but then a **Rustic Bunting** showed amazingly well down to about a metre away. And I'd almost forgotten about the flock of **Tundra Bean Geese** here as well. Absolutely stunning! With time slipping away we drove on further along the coastline and stopped to view a group of **Pied Avocets** that were in



Chestnut-eared Bunting

company with some gulls. They proved to be **Black-headed Gulls**, but after further scrutiny we realised there were at least 5 **Saunders's Gulls** present as well. When I heard a **Brown-cheeked Rail** calling we walked further along the road to view a marsh area, but despite playing the call it never showed. However, Derek found a **Chestnut-eared Bunting** and we enjoyed great views of at least 3 birds, along with our first **Pallas's Reed Buntings** and another **Japanese Reed Bunting**, plus **Mongolian** and **Heuglin's Gulls** and a flock of **Eurasian Spoonbills**. Dragging ourselves away from here we jumped on board the bus and started driving to Yancheng, passing through lots of woodland that would be superb in the spring migration period. And there were quite a few **Dusky Thrushes** on the muddy track before we reached the main highway.

After a two hour drive we reached our hotel and dived straight into the restaurant across the street. I wasn't sure what to expect of this hotel as it was in such a small town but it turned out to be rather good. Anyway, after lunch we drove just 20 minutes away to Yancheng Reserve and started driving along a dirt track. We hadn't got far when our first cranes were spotted and we all jumped out of the coach rather excitedly. Across the field was a family of 2 adult and 2 immature **Red-crowned Cranes** – but I prefer their other name of Japanese Crane. What an elegant bird they are. I didn't realise just how big they are until a short while later a **Grey Heron** flew past them and was totally dwarfed. We watched the cranes for a while, practically ignoring a couple families of **Common**



Red-crowned Cranes

Cranes nearby. In the trees behind us it was hard to ignore a flock of **Rustic Buntings**, a **Daurian Redstart** and a **Little Bunting**. Walking on we came across a group of **Reed Parrotbills** – like Bearded Tits on steroids this Chinese endemic gave excellent close views. Then a few **Black-faced Buntings** appeared – our 7th bunting species of the day. And just around the corner we came across a flock of 35+ **Red-crowned Cranes** and this time they were much closer. A few **Pallas's Reed Buntings** were along the ditch next to us, a **Hen Harrier** flew by and a **Trumpeter Swan** flew over. So we spent quite a while watching and photographing the cranes, but it was a shame the weather was so dull, grey and overcast. But at least it was dry! We walked on further, seeing a flock of 10 **Reed Parrotbills**, as well as **Black-crowned Night-heron** and **Eurasian Hoopoe** before it got dark at just after 5pm and we returned the short distance to our hotel. What a day!



Red-crowned Cranes in flight

Day 4 YANCHENG NNR

A great day at Yancheng National Nature Reserve began at a small park on the edge of town where we waited patiently for some **Japanese Waxwings** to appear. Unfortunately they failed to materialise but we did score with an unexpected party of **Silver-throated Bushtits**, **Northern Red-flanked Bluetail**, **Eye-browed** and **Dusky Thrushes**, a flock of **Chinese Grosbeaks**, **Yellow-browed** and **Pallas's Leaf Warblers**, several **Japanese Tits**, and a **Northern Red-flanked Bluetail** for some of us. It was just a shame the male **Japanese**



Oriental Stork

Thrush that flew over us didn't land. From here we drove back into the reserve and found more **Red-crowned Cranes** than yesterday in the fields alongside the main track. In fact there was so much activity with hundreds of **Common Cranes** flying in to land in the surrounding fields with little groups of **Red-crowned Cranes** arriving all the time. What a spectacle this was, and add to this groups of **Great Cormorants**, **Tundra Bean Geese** and thousands of ducks it was a very impressive spectacle indeed. Tang Jun then found a rare **Sandhill Crane** amongst a group of **Common Cranes**, and this bird had

migrated the wrong way and should be in the USA so was quite a sighting. We did walk a fair way this morning and headed to the first bridge before Derek and I trudged across a stubble field in the hopes of finding **Japanese Quail**. No such luck but our first spectacular **Oriental Stork** (see photo on previous page) of the tour flew low, right over our heads. And there was the first of many **Little Buntings** to be seen today, as well as **Eurasian Bittern**, **Red-throated Pipit**, **Merlin** and hundreds of **Common Reed Buntings** along the path. In fact we spent quite some time sifting through the buntings and picked up a **Yellow-browed**, several **Rustics**, **Black-faced** and a rare **Yellow-breasted Bunting**. We then drove back to the approach road and walked alongside a line of trees where I found another **Sandhill Crane**, but the walk is best remembered for the crippling **Eye-browed** and especially a confiding male **Pale Thrush** we had along the path. And there were many more **Little Buntings**, and a surprising female **Chestnut Bunting** as well.

After lunch we drove to the fishponds but there weren't many ducks on the water and rather frustratingly we saw thousands flying off into the distance and dropping down into the closed area of the reserve. Despite this there was a fine drake **Falcated Duck**, as well as our first **Northern Lapwings**. So we decided to drive back to the small park and this turned out to be a good move as we had much better views of **Red-flanked Bluetail** than this morning, along with **Olive-backed Pipit** and at dusk hundreds (at least 700+) **Dusky Thrushes** were flying in to roost, which made for a very impressive spectacle.



Eye-browed Thrush



Pale Thrush

Day 5 YANCHENG WOOD

We had a couple of hours back in what we called Yancheng Wood this morning before setting off on the long drive back to Shanghai. Still no waxwings but plenty of other birds to keep us occupied and I was particularly pleased to see the flock of **Silver-throated Bushtits** again, this time showing much better than yesterday. There were also plenty more **Pallas's Warblers** around, some **Dusky**, a few **Pale** and a single **Naumann's Thrush** as well. A **Mugimaki Flycatcher** was a bit of a surprise, but at least 5 **Northern Red-flanked Bluetails** were more expected and in the bare tree tops we saw 6 **Hawfinches** and **Brambling**. A singing **Manchurian Bush Warbler** was odd but reaffirmed the brief glimpses given yesterday to Paul and Derek. At 8.40am we had to leave and walking back to the bus a **White's Thrush** flew right across the path in front of us. Our flight eventually left Shanghai several hours late and we arrived in Nanchang and were greeted by Steven An and drove an hour to our next hotel inside Poyang Hu reserve.

Day 6 POYANG HU

We woke to gale force winds and some light rain that did little to dampen our spirits and I'm always a little amazed at the resilience of birders to cope with such tough conditions. But our perseverance did pay off with some stunningly excellent, quality, rare birds today. We began by walking 1.5kms to a large lake where we had distant views of both **Siberian and White-naped Cranes**, which was a little frustrating but definitely

good enough to tick. I was hopeful of getting them closer at some stage during our stay here, so we scoped them and had reasonable views. There were also 8 **Oriental Storks** dotted around the lake, as well as brief **Black-throated Bushtit**, **Japanese White-eyes** and **Vinous-throated Parrotbill** on the walk in, but with the high winds it wasn't really a day for doing passerines. So we returned to the bus and drove to a different lake that was teeming with birds, and after scoping huge congregations of geese and ducks that were just too distant we began getting closer birds from the road. There was an amazing number of **Taiga Bean Geese** and **Greater White-fronted Geese** here and we made several stops to scan the area, sheltering behind the bus from the wind. It then began to rain quite steadily, just to add to the drama! But we continued birding and enjoyed nice looks at the geese, with Paul first picking out a **Swan Goose** and then a **Lesser White-fronted Goose**. What fabulous birds and 28 years since I've seen a **Lesser White-front**. Driving further along the lakeshore a family of 3 **Hooded Cranes** was next up – our 6th species of crane on this tour! But by now it was after midday so we retraced our steps, stopping to view an **Eurasian Bittern** and then getting to grips with a few **Buff-bellied (*japonicas*) Pipits** to compare to the **Water Pipit** seen earlier.



Lesser White-fronted Goose

During lunch at a restaurant in Wucheng we had **Red-billed** and **Black-collared Starlings**, some **White Wagtails (*Iugens* and *ocularis* races)**, and an **Oriental Magpie Robin**. Then we drove to the other side of the lake we had visited after breakfast this morning and got much closer to the 16 **Siberian Cranes** we had seen so distantly then. And boy was this good! There were 3 **White-naped Cranes** with them and we crept as close as possible, although still around 400m away and separated by an arm of the lake so the birds weren't in the least bit bothered by us. We studied them for over an

hour and lapped up the views – a real privilege to see such rare birds. It wasn't raining but still the wind was ridiculous and we hunkered down below a bank for a modicum of shelter. And that was our day, so we retreated back to the hotel 'wind blown and interesting' at 5pm. A great day.



Siberian and White-naped Cranes

Day 7 POYANG HU

Still had the strong winds and a little rain today and the birding proved to be a struggle really. But we still saw 4 species of crane: **Common**, **Hooded**, **White-naped** and a family of **Siberian** this morning – so not too shabby. With the wind making birding difficult we had to persevere and our first stop saw a few of us walking across some stubble fields where we put up a **Japanese Quail**, along with numerous **Little** and **Black-faced Buntings**, I mean hundreds of buntings were here and it really was quite a spectacle. A flock of

over 30 **Chinese Penduline-Tits** was also pretty impressive here as well. We also saw more **Buff-bellied Pipits**, **Oriental Greenfinch** and lots of **Eurasian Skylarks**, plus our first **Richard's Pipit** on the track as well. Around an abandoned building we stopped the bus when a flock of **Chinese Grosbeaks** was seen and further scrutiny revealed **White-browed** and **Masked Laughingthrushes**, **Brown Crike** and yet more buntings. Our next stop to view a large congregation of **White-cheeked Starlings** also revealed some **Red-billed Starlings**, **Bramblings**, more grosbeaks, **Red-flanked Bluetail** and a **Brown-flanked Bush-Warbler**. We had lunch in the nearby city that consisted of burgers, fries and ice-cream before checking out some fields where a **Collared Crow** had been reported. Unfortunately no crows and the only new bird was a pair of **Ruddy Shelducks**, but some **Black-collared Starlings** were new for a few of the group who had missed them earlier in the trip.



Yellow-throated (Elegant) Bunting

Day 8 POYANG HU

At breakfast we watched some starlings outside the restaurant, along with **Daurian Redstart**, **Black-faced Bunting**, **White-rumped Munia** and a **Red-flanked Bluetail**, whilst some **White-rumped Munias** were seen in the hotel grounds. We then drove a couple of hours to a strip of woodland amidst some stubble fields where we spent the next half an hour trying to get views of **Yellow-browed Bunting**, which eventually fell to everyone. **Yellow-throated (Elegant) Buntings** were numerous here and we'd now brought out bunting tally up to 12 species. There were lots of **Black-faced** and some **Rustic & Little Buntings** here as well, along with 6+ **Red-flanked Bluetails**, **Brambling** and **Scaly-breasted Munia**. Flocks of **Taiga Bean Geese** were out in the fields, along with our first **Black-winged Stilts**. Moving on from here to Nanjishan, another area of the vast Poyang Hu Reserve and we saw huge numbers of birds - it really was incredible. Just driving along we saw 30+ **Eurasian Bitterns**, and also roadside **Buff-bellied** and **Red-throated Pipits**. Lagoons along the road held hundreds of **Greylag Geese**, **Trumpeter Swans**, several **Swan Geese**, **Ferruginous Duck** and other common waterfowl. After lunch we checked out the huge lake behind the town and we were all in agreement it was "amazeballs". There must have been almost a thousand **Whiskered Terns** here, with some still retaining their breeding plumage, plus a couple of **White-winged Terns** were spotted. Two **Siberian Cranes** were present, along with a flock of **Bar-tailed Godwits**, a flock of **Pied Avocets**, hundreds of **Spotted Redshanks**, **Mongolian Gull**, hundreds of **Black-headed Gulls**, another flock of **Swan Geese** and incredibly 360 **Oriental**



Swan Goose

Storks. But by now it was after 3.00pm and we had a 350km drive to Wuyuan so we drove back the same way, stopping a few times to check the ducks and get one last look at **Swan Geese** before finally ending a cracking day's birding Gromit.

Day 9 WUYUAN – XINJIANG RIVER

Well today there wasn't any wind and we had a cracking morning's birding – in fact far better than I could have anticipated. We drove to the Xinjiang River near Wuyuan at 6.30am and arrived shortly after 7.00am, and as Steven prepared our field breakfast we stood on the bridge and scanned the surrounding area. Initially we had to content ourselves with a flock of 6 **Yellow-browed Buntings** feeding below us – outrageous! And then the 'Boonmeister' picked up the key target for this morning, a cracking **Scaly-sided Merganser** feeding far upriver. As we kept looking a few more birds were seen, but all females and we wanted a drake! So after a great breakfast we walked up the side of the river and got much closer to the mergansers, including at least 4 drakes. We had great scope views although not close enough for decent photos, but we were all extremely happy to have got **THE** bird so easily. And there were quite a few **Mandarin Ducks** along the river, as well as **Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker**, **Plumbeous Water-Redstart**, **Vinous-throated Parrotbill**, **Masked Laughingthrush**, **Eurasian Jay**, **Grey Treepie**, **Olive-backed Pipits**, **Collared Finchbill** and **Chestnut Bulbul**. After hearing a flock moving in a nearby valley we took a narrow trail to try and get a look but it was very frustrating, apart from brief looks at a **Fork-tailed Sunbird**, we only heard quite a few new trip birds including a **Collared Owlet**. So we returned to the road and had more mergansers (we counted 15 in total), and then some of the group got on a calling **Chinese Hwamei**. A little further along and a **Grey-sided Scimitar-Babbler** showed briefly, but a pair of **Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babblers** showed very well. Walking back to the bridge, Derek spotted a pair of **Long-billed Plovers** before we had a coffee break.



Moustached Laughingthrush

Then we walked along the other side of the river into a narrow, enclosed valley. A few drops of rain didn't deter us and in the shelter of some dense bushes and bamboo we had our first looks at the common **Huet's Fulvetta** with a large flock feeding right beside us in the bushes. The same area also had a group of cracking **Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes** that came in for a close look at us, along with a few **Grey Treepies** tagging along behind them. Then a **Dusky Fulvetta** sang back at my iPod and perched out in the open and showed really well, and there was also a **Rufous-capped Babbler**, several **Pallas's Warblers** and

a few more **Grey Treepies** appeared. As we watched the fulvettas, Derek rather frantically stated he had a **Moustached Laughingthrush**, my most wanted bird on this tour. It's extremely skulking, usually silent at this time of year and very shy. Well, we enjoyed watching a pair feeding about 10-15 feet away from us amongst the dense bushes and bamboo for half an hour, getting repeated looks at this mega! Wow! We were also searching for **Short-tailed Parrotbill** and kept trying but had no luck, but it was now around 1.30pm so returned to the bus and drove into town for a quick noodle lunch. Then we headed to the Pied Falconet stakeout but the weather had deteriorated and it was a 'no show' from them, although a **White-crowned Forktail** was a little compensation.

Day 10 WUYUAN

Today was just one of those days that thankfully doesn't happen very often. We had a light drizzle until 1.00pm which hampered our birding considerably. We visited another site where I have seen **Short-tailed Parrotbill** in the past but we had no such luck today and, in fact, bird activity was very low. We began just after 7.00am with a very grey and overcast dawn with a **Stejneger's Stonechat** and **Crested Kingfisher**, whilst a flock of **Grey-headed Parrotbills** just about gave us the slip as they moved across the top of a hill above us. We tried numerous spots here for the parrotbill without getting any response and didn't see many birds at all. During short breaks in the weather we saw **Chinese Bamboo-Partridge**, very brief **Chinese Hwamei** and **Grey-sided Scimitar-Babbler**, a few flocks of **Huet's Fulvetta**, **White-crowned Forktail** and that was about it. At 10.30am we left and headed back to the **Pied Falconet** site where we had lunch but no falconet. Afterwards a few snickers bars were consumed and whilst enjoying our chocolate a cute little **Pied Falconet** appeared at the top of a tall tree right in front of us. What a little beauty and a bird I wouldn't have been too pleased to dip on! Buoyed by our success (well sort of!) we set out to a forest where Steven had seen **Asian Stubtail** before. It was a nice area of mature, deciduous forest beside a sluggish river where **Mandarin Ducks** loafed. In the field across the river a flock of **Greater** and **Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrushes** were scoped, an **Eastern Buzzard** flew over and a **White-crowned Forktail** picked its way along the bank. We heard an **Asian Stubtail** late in the day as we walked back to the coach but it failed to show and by now the light was fading and it was time to call it a day.

Day 11 XINJIANG RIVER

We returned to the Xinjiang River early doors and gave it one last shot at **Short-tailed Parrotbill**. It was a beautiful clear, sunny day and there was much more birdsong and activity but alas no parrotbills. We only had a short time here before our 6 hour drive to Emei Feng so walked quickly to the bamboo area, but all we had to show for our efforts were a flock of **Grey-chinned Minivets** and a flock of **Black-throated Bushtits**. So we returned to the coach, had a picnic breakfast during which a group of **Scaly-sided Mergansers** flew over the bridge.

We then spent most of the day driving to Emei Feng, arriving at 4.00pm and drove slowly around the fields and bamboo area with the best bird being a male **Silver Pheasant**, plus a few **Mandarin Ducks** and **Collared Finchbills**. But we were all excited for our full day on the mountain tomorrow.

Day 12 EMEI FENG

With our re-jigged itinerary we now had a full day on Emei Feng instead of the intended single night stay so we had a good long time to look for 'chickens'. We started off birding the lower slopes and driving around the area looking for **Elliot's Pheasant** but couldn't have anticipated how successful this would be. We began with a male and female appearing at the roadside before melting into the undergrowth without everyone getting a view. So we quietly got off the bus and made our way to a point where we could scan the bamboo slope below us and unbelievably we watched 4 females and a male walking below us about 30m away. Wow! But even better was to come when Steven spotted a male on a grassy slope above us, this time much closer and from the coach we watched him pick his way across the slope above us and was on view for a good ten minutes. This was unbelievable for such a truly skulking and shy creature and after all of the elation had subsided we continued driving up the



Elliot's Pheasant

mountain. Next up was a female **Silver Pheasant**, followed a short while later by a male. Then a **Koklass Pheasant** appeared by the roadside before we reached **Cabot's Tragopan** habitat higher up and the first of a frustrating 4 brief sightings of the day. At the top we had an encounter with 7 **Chinese Bamboo-Partridges** at breakfast before we began walking down the mountain in the hopes of a better Tragopan encounter. We never got a classic view, just a few more brief sightings but the weather was perfect with sunshine and clear blue skies all day. Passerines were few and far between in this tragopan habitat but we still saw **Northern Goshawk**, **Yellow-cheeked Tit**, **Grey-headed** and a brief **Bay Woodpecker**, **White-bellied Erpornis**, **Japanese White-eye**, **Spotted Forktail**, **Red-flanked Bluetail**, **Mugimaki Flycatcher**, and both **Dusky & Pale Thrushes**. Driving lower for a short time we found some fruiting trees where the white-headed form of **Black Bulbul** was seen, along with several **Chestnut** and **Mountain Bulebuls**. At the end of the day we had a look along the river where a **Slaty-backed Forktail** was found.

Day 13 EMEI FENG - FUZHOU

We drove back up to look for tragopans early this morning but a near gale force wind hampered our search and all we had to show was a brief sighting of a female along the road. Another **Elliot's Pheasant** and a **Silver Pheasant** were seen, along with a couple of **White's Thrushes** but the wind was really strong. So we decided to cut our losses and set out on the four and a half hour drive to Fuzhou earlier than we had originally planned.

Along the way we stopped at a couple of service stations and the second one provided us with a very unexpected bonus. Derek and I were checking out the bushes and bamboo behind the buildings when a flock of parrotbills appeared close by, but not the vinous-throated I was expecting as they had black chins and all rufous heads - **Short-tailed Parrotbills**. Holy cow!! Yes a flock of Short-tailed Parrotbills! A previously unrecorded flock of these rare birds. Just goes to show you can never stop birding! After a few frantic minutes gathering everyone up we watched them for quite a while before following a trail across some fields and into the farmland beyond, seeing **Black-faced Bunting**, **Chinese Pond-Heron**, **Greater Coucal**, both **White-browed** and **Masked Laughingthrushes**, and a pair of **Chinese Hwamei**. So a good end to the day and it was only another hour or so to our hotel in Fuzhou.



Short-tailed Parrotbill by Steven An

Day 14 FUZHOU FOREST PARK

We had a really enjoyable day at Fuzhou Forest Park, adding 14 new species to our trip list in the process. We arrived just after 6am and had a picnic breakfast before walking the trails until lunchtime and this turned out to be quite a productive morning as we began with a fine **Rufous-faced Warbler** in the first flock of the day, followed by a very surprising and very yellowish **Hartert's Warbler** picking its way along a branch in nuthatch-fashion. I didn't expect this species at all. We came across a few more feeding flocks and saw **White-bellied Erpornis** very well, **Red-billed Leiothrix**, **Fork-tailed Sunbird**, **Tristram's Bunting**, and both **White's** and **Pale Thrushes**. A male **Silver Pheasant** melted away into the undergrowth and as we approached the upper car park a pair of **Orange-bellied Leafbirds**, a flock of **Black-throated Bushtits**, and a **Fire-breasted Flowerpecker** were seen.

During a break over lunch an **Oriental Honey Buzzard** flew over, and we also saw **Red-whiskered Bulbul**, **Grey-sided Scimitar-Babbler** for Derek and a **Blue Whistling-Thrush**. Then we birded along the hillside trail and despite only having a couple of hours before we needed to leave for the airport and our flight back to Shanghai we notched up a few more goodies. A **Slaty-backed Forktail** was very pleasing for Trish as well. I was surprised how many **Asian Stubtails** were along this trail and everyone caught glimpses of at least one of them. Then a flock of **Indochinese Yuhinas** appeared close by, we had very nice looks at **Chestnut Bulbul**, **Barred Cuckoo-Dove**, and a **Spotted Elachura** was coaxed in for repeated views. With time running out we descended towards the car park but still had time to nail a **Grey-backed Thrush** before it was time to leave for the airport and our flight back to Shanghai.

Day 15 NANHUI - SHANGHAI

Thanks to Virgin Atlantic cancelling our flight today we had the whole day to go birding around the Nanhui area and this turned out to be a very relaxed and enjoyable time for all. We picked up several new trip birds and Derek even found what is probably the first record of **Grey-sided Thrush** for this area! The small



Tundra Swans

wooded area around the Holiday Inn also held several **Pale Thrushes**, **Red-flanked Bluetail** and some **Pallas's Warblers**. We then worked our way along the road that borders the seawall and found **Intermediate Egret**, **Eurasian** and **Black-faced Spoonbills**, **Red Knot**, **Richard's** and **Buff-bellied Pipits** and a few **Dusky Thrushes**. There were several flocks of **Eastern Spot-billed Ducks** on the sea, mingling with some more familiar ducks, more **Tundra Swans** and **Tundra Bean Geese**. And whilst we were scoping these a flock of **Common Teals** flew in and amazingly we spotted a single male **Baikal Teal**.

After missing it a few usually regular

sites on the tour it was a huge bonus to finally catch up with this bird. After a while we discovered another drake and two females in the same flock and we thoroughly enjoyed scoping these little cracker. At one point the whole flock took off and flew around in front of us and it was great fun to pick out the Baikals and watch them in flight, with the obvious vertical pale stripe on the rear of the bird making it a relatively simple task. We then spent some time trying to locate the reported Long-billed Dowitcher but the area was vast and in hindsight spent too long criss-crossing these huge wide-open plains and fields. But we did see two **Oriental Pratincoles** hawking for insects over the fields in the process, as well as a **Brown Crake**, **Black Drongo** and **Eurasian Hoopoe**. Returning to the coast after lunch a flock of 12 **Swan Geese** was a surprise. But by now it was 2pm and we didn't pick up too much more apart from an **Western Osprey** but everyone was pretty relaxed and we just enjoyed watching whatever was around and it was a thoroughly enjoyable way to end the tour.

Day 16

All that remained was to walk the short distance from the airport hotel to the Virgin check-in desk and fly back to the UK where the tour concluded this evening.

Nick Bray



Photos (clockwise): Pallas's Leaf Warbler, Northern Red-flanked Bluetail, Silver-throated Bushtit and Hooded Crane. All photos in this report by Nick Bray unless otherwise stated.

SYSTEMATIC LIST – CHINA IN WINTER NOV/DEC 2016

H – Heard Only SO – Single Observer sighting L – Leader Only

ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae

Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>
Swan Goose	<i>Anser cygnoides</i>
Taiga Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>
Tundra Bean Goose	<i>Anser serrirostris</i>
Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>
Lesser White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser erythropus</i>
Tundra Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Falcated Duck	<i>Anas falcata</i>
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Eastern Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Baikal Teal	<i>Anas formosa</i>
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
Scaly-sided Merganser	<i>Mergus squamatus</i>

GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae

White-necklaced Partridge	<i>Arborophila gingica</i>
Japanese Quail	<i>Coturnix japonica</i>
Chinese Bamboo Partridge	<i>Bambusicola thoracicus</i>
Cabot's Tragopan	<i>Tragopan caboti</i>
Silver Pheasant	<i>Lophura nycthemera fokiensis</i>
Koklass Pheasant	<i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i>
Elliot's Pheasant	<i>Syrnaticus ellioti</i>
Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>

PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae

Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>

CICONIIFORMES: Ciconiidae

Oriental Stork
Eurasian Spoonbill
Black-faced Spoonbill

Ciconia boyciana
Platalea leucorodia
Platalea minor

PELECANIFORMES: Ardeidae

Eurasian Bittern
Black-crowned Night Heron
Chinese Pond Heron
Eastern Cattle Egret
Grey Heron
Great Egret
Intermediate Egret
Little Egret

Botaurus stellaris
Nycticorax nycticorax
Ardeola bacchus
Bubulcus coromandus
Ardea cinerea
Ardea alba
Ardea intermedia
Egretta garzetta

PELECANIFORMES: Pelecanidae

Dalmatian Pelican

Pelecanus crispus

SULIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae

Great Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Pandionidae

Western Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae

Black-winged Kite
Oriental (Crested) Honey Buzzard
Eurasian Sparrowhawk
Northern Goshawk
Eastern Marsh Harrier
Hen Harrier
Black Kite
Eastern Buzzard

Elanus caeruleus
Pernis ptilorhynchus
Accipiter nisus
Accipiter gentilis
Circus spilonotus
Circus cyaneus
Milvus migrans
Buteo japonicus

GRUIFORMES: Rallidae

Brown-cheeked Rail (H)
Brown Crake
Common Moorhen
Eurasian Coot

Rallus indicus
Amaurornis akool coccineipes
Gallinula chloropus indica
Fulica atra

GRUIFORMES: Gruidae

Siberian Crane
Sandhill Crane
White-naped Crane
Red-crowned Crane
Common Crane
Hooded Crane

Grus leucogeranus
Grus canadensis
Grus vipio
Grus japonensis
Grus grus
Grus monacha

CHARADRIIFORMES: Haematopodidae

Eurasian Oystercatcher

Haematopus ostralegus

CHARADRIIFORMES: Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt
 Pied Avocet

Himantopus himantopus
Recurvirostra avosetta

CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae

Northern Lapwing
 Grey Plover
 Common Ringed Plover
 Long-billed Plover
 Kentish Plover
 Lesser Sand Plover

Vanellus vanellus
Pluvialis squatarola
Charadrius hiaticula
Charadrius placidus
Charadrius alexandrinus
Charadrius mongolus

CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae

Eurasian Woodcock
 Common Snipe
 Bar-tailed Godwit
 Eurasian Curlew
 Spotted Redshank
 Common Redshank (H)
 Common Greenshank
 Green Sandpiper
 Common Sandpiper
 Red Knot
 Sanderling
 Red-necked Stint
 Dunlin
 Spoon-billed Sandpiper
 Ruff

Scolopax rusticola
Gallinago gallinago
Limosa lapponica
Numenius arquata
Tringa erythropus
Tringa totanus
Tringa nebularia
Tringa ochropus
Actitis hypoleucos
Calidris canutus
Calidris alba
Calidris ruficollis
Calidris alpina
Eurynorhynchus pygmeus
Philomachus pugnax

CHARADRIIFORMES: Glareolidae

Oriental Pratincole

Glareola maldivarum

CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae

Black-headed Gull
 Saunders's Gull
 Vega Gull
 Mongolian Gull
 Heuglin's Gull
 Caspian Tern
 Whiskered Tern
 White-winged Tern

Chroicocephalus ridibundus
Chroicocephalus saundersi
Larus vegae
Larus mongolicus
Larus heuglini taimyrensis
Hydroprogne caspia
Chlidonias hybrida
Chlidonias leucopterus

COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae

Rock Dove
 Oriental Turtle Dove
 Spotted Dove
 Barred Cuckoo-Dove

Columba livia
Streptopelia o. orientalis
Spilopelia c. chinensis
Macropygia unchall

CUCULIFORMES: Cuculidae

Greater Coucal

Centropus sinensis

STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae

Collared Owlet (H)

*Glaucidium brodiei***CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae**

White-throated Kingfisher

Common Kingfisher

Crested Kingfisher

Pied Kingfisher

*Halcyon smyrnensis perpulchra**Alcedo atthis bengalensis**Megaceryle lugubris guttulata**Ceryle rudis insignis***BUCEROTIFORMES: Upupidae**

Eurasian Hoopoe

*Upupa epops***PICIFORMES: Megalaimidae**

Great Barbet (H)

*Psilopogon virens virens***PICIFORMES: Picidae**

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Grey-headed Woodpecker

Bay Woodpecker

Rufous Woodpecker (H)

*Yungipicus canicapillus nagamichii**Dendrocopos major**Picus canus**Blythipicus pyrrhotis sinensis**Micropternus brachyurus***FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae**

Pied Falconet

Common Kestrel

Amur Falcon

Merlin

Peregrine Falcon

*Microhierax melanoleucos**Falco tinnunculus**Falco amurensis**Falco columbarius**Falco peregrinus***PASSERIFORMES: Campephagidae**

Grey-chinned Minivet

Scarlet Minivet

*Pericrocotus solaris griseigularis**Pericrocotus speciosus***PASSERIFORMES: Laniidae**

Long-tailed Shrike

*Lanius schach schach***PASSERIFORMES: Vireonidae**

White-bellied Erpornis

*Erpornis zantholeuca***PASSERIFORMES: Dicruridae**

Black Drongo

*Dicrurus macrocercus***PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae**

Eurasian Jay

Azure-winged Magpie

Red-billed Blue Magpie

Grey Treepie

Eurasian Magpie

Large-billed Crow

*Garrulus glandarius sinensis**Cyanopica cyanus**Urocissa erythroryncha**Dendrocitta formosae sinica**Pica pica sericea**Corvus macrorhynchos***PASSERIFORMES: Paridae**

Yellow-cheeked Tit

Machlolophus spilonotus

Japanese Tit	<i>Parus minor</i>
PASSERIFORMES: Remizidae	
Chinese Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz consobrinus</i>
PASSERIFORMES: Alaudidae	
Oriental Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
PASSERIFORMES: Pycnonotidae	
Collared Finchbill	<i>Spizixos s. semitorques</i>
Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>
Brown-breasted Bulbul (L)	<i>Pycnonotus xanthorrhous</i>
Light-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus sinensis</i>
Mountain Bulbul	<i>Ixos mccllellandii</i>
Chestnut Bulbul	<i>Hemixos castanonotus</i>
Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>
PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>
PASSERIFORMES: Cettiidae	
Rufous-faced Warbler	<i>Abroscopus albogularis</i>
Brown-flanked Bush Warbler	<i>Horornis fortipes</i>
Manchurian Bush Warbler	<i>Horornis borealis</i>
Asian Stubtail	<i>Urosphena squameiceps</i>
PASSERIFORMES: Aegithalidae	
Silver-throated Bushtit	<i>Aegithalos glaucogularis</i>
Black-throated Bushtit	<i>Aegithalos c. concinnus</i>
PASSERIFORMES: Phylloscopidae	
Dusky Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>
Pallas's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>
Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>
Hartert's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus goodsoni</i>
PASSERIFORMES: Cisticolidae	
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Yellow-bellied Prinia	<i>Prinia flaviventris</i>
Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
PASSERIFORMES: Timaliidae	
Grey-sided Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus swinhoei</i>
Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus ruficollis</i>
Rufous-capped Babbler	<i>Stachyridopsis ruficeps davidi</i>
PASSERIFORMES: Pellorneidae	
Dusky Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe brunnea</i>
Huet's Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe hueti</i>

PASSERIFORMES: Leiothrichidae

Chinese Hwamei
 Moustached Laughingthrush
 Masked Laughingthrush
 Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush
 Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush
 White-browed Laughingthrush
 Red-billed Leiothrix

Garrulax canorus
Garrulax cineraceus
Garrulax perspicillatus
Garrulax pectoralis
Garrulax monileger
Garrulax sannio
Leiothrix lutea

PASSERIFORMES: Sylviidae

Vinous-throated Parrotbill
 Short-tailed Parrotbill
 Grey-headed Parrotbill
 Reed Parrotbill

Sinosuthora webbiana
Neosuthora davidiana
Psittiparus gularis
Paradoxornis heudei

PASSERIFORMES: Zosteropidae

Indochinese Yuhina
 Japanese White-eye

Yuhina torqueola
Zosterops japonicus

PASSERIFORMES: Regulidae

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus japonensis

PASSERIFORMES: Elachuridae

Spotted Elachura

Elachura formosa

PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae

Crested Myna
 Red-billed Starling
 White-cheeked Starling
 Black-collared Starling
 Common Starling

Acridotheres cristatellus
Spodiopsar sericeus
Spodiopsar cineraceus
Gracupica nigricollis
Sturnus vulgaris

PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae

White's Thrush
 Grey-backed Thrush
 Japanese Thrush (L)
 Chinese Blackbird
 Grey-sided Thrush
 Eye-browed Thrush
 Pale Thrush
 Brown-headed Thrush (SO)
 Naumann's Thrush
 Dusky Thrush

Zoothera aurea
Turdus hortulorum
Turdus cardis
Turdus mandarinus
Turdus feae
Turdus obscurus
Turdus pallidus
Turdus chrysolais
Turdus naumanni
Turdus eunomus

PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae

Oriental Magpie-Robin
 Siberian Rubythroat (H)
 Northern Red-flanked Bluetail
 Little Forktail
 Spotted Forktail
 Slaty-backed Forktail

Copsychus saularis
Calliope calliope
Tarsiger cyanurus
Enicurus scouleri
Enicurus maculatus
Enicurus schistaceus sinensis

White-crowned Forktail	<i>Enicurus leschenaulti</i>
Blue Whistling Thrush	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>
Mugimaki Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula mugimaki</i>
Daurian Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureoreus</i>
Plumbeous Water Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus fuliginosus</i>
Stejneger's Stonechat	<i>Saxicola stejnegeri</i>

PASSERIFORMES: Cinclidae

Brown Dipper (L)	<i>Cinclus pallasii</i>
------------------	-------------------------

PASSERIFORMES: Chloropseidae

Orange-bellied Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis hardwickii</i>
-------------------------	------------------------------

PASSERIFORMES: Dicaeidae

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum ignipectus</i>
----------------------------	---------------------------

PASSERIFORMES: Nectariniidae

Fork-tailed Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga christinae</i>
---------------------	-----------------------------

PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae

Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
-----------------------	------------------------

PASSERIFORMES: Estrildidae

White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>

PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae

Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
East Siberian Wagtail	<i>Motacilla a. ocularis</i>
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla a. lugens</i>
Amur Wagtail	<i>Motacilla a. leucopsis</i>
Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>
Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>
Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>
Buff-bellied Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>

PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae

Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
Chinese Grosbeak	<i>Eophona migratoria</i>
Grey-capped Greenfinch	<i>Chloris sinica</i>
Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>

PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae

Meadow Bunting	<i>Emberiza cioides</i>
Tristram's Bunting	<i>Emberiza tristrami</i>
Chestnut-eared Bunting	<i>Emberiza fucata</i>
Little Bunting	<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>
Yellow-browed Bunting	<i>Emberiza chrysophrys</i>
Rustic Bunting	<i>Emberiza rustica</i>
Yellow-throated Bunting	<i>Emberiza elegans</i>

Chestnut Bunting
Black-faced Bunting
Pallas's Reed Bunting
Japanese Reed Bunting
Common Reed Bunting

Emberiza rutila
Emberiza spodocephala
Emberiza pallasi
Emberiza yessoensis
Emberiza schoeniclus

OTHER ANIMALS

Yellow-bellied Weasel
Siberian Weasel
Chinese Water Deer
Red-bellied (Pallas's) Squirrel
Maritime Striped Squirrel

Mustela kathiah
Mustela sibirica
Hydropotes inermis
Callosciurus erythraeus
Tamias maritimus



Reed Parrotbill at Yancheng



email: info@zotherabirding.com
web: www.zotherabirding.com
Tel: (+44) 01803 390721

