

TROPICAL BIRDING



CHINA: Beidaihe & Happy Island **Custom tour** **3rd – 12th May, 2013**

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A last minute visit to the Temple of Heaven was a nice way to end a great trip.

This short custom birding tour took in the 'must see' tourist highlights in Beijing of the Summer Palace, Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square as well as an impromptu visit to the Temple of Heaven on our return. For birding, we concentrated our efforts on the famous migration hot-spots of Beidaihe and Happy Island, although we also had a very successful trip to the Jiaoshan Great Wall at Shanhaiguan which produced our 3 resident targets of Pere David's Laughingthrush, Godelewski's Bunting and White-browed Chinese Warbler. An added bonus of seeing the Jiaoshan Great Wall was that it was closed to the general public due to fire risk, but we obtained special permission to enter, meaning that we had the place all to ourselves. Our birding highlights of the trip were many, including Falcated Duck, Saunder's Gull, Dollarbird, Rufous-bellied Woodpecker, a surprise Chinese Nuthatch in Beidaihe, Claudia's Leaf-Warbler, Yellow-throated & Yellow-browed Buntings. We also saw many common but beautiful migrants like Korean & Mugimaki Flycatchers, Siberian Rubythroat, Bluethroat and Siberian Blue Robin. Attractive residents like Blue Magpie and Yellow-bellied Tit did not go unnoticed either. The unexpected highlight though was an improvised day trip to the Qinglong River to see the Ibisbill and other interesting birds like Long-billed Plover, Hill Pigeon and Mandarin Duck.

May 4th – Beijing (Summer Palace, Forbidden City & Tiananmen Square)

After a late arrival last night, we would spend the day today taking in some of the tourist sights in Beijing. We started the day with a trip to the Summer Palace. Unfortunately it was a weekend, the place was quite crowded and the lake full of little paddle boats, with none of our hoped for waterbirds visible aside from a pair of **Mallards** and a **Black-crowned Night-Heron**. As we walked around the ornate gardens and temples we picked up some common birds like **Oriental Turtle-Dove**, **Common Swift**, **Eurasian Magpie**, **Large-billed Crow**, **Barn Swallow** and **Eurasian Tree Sparrow**. The latter which fill the same niche as House Sparrows in East Asia. Despite the crowds, we had a nice walk around the place and did find a few quieter corners where we found several beautiful **Azure-winged Magpies** and our first migrant warbler, the **Yellow-browed Warbler**. After lunch back at the hotel, we headed out again, this time to visit the amazing Forbidden City, off limits to commoners for hundreds of years and now a major tourist attraction. We exited from the south gate and walked into the enormous Tiananmen Square, the largest of its kind in the world. After this we visited a shopping area to the south in search of souvenirs before we got down to the serious business of birding tomorrow.



Yellow-bellied Tit is a common but charismatic endemic.

May 5th – Beijing to Beidaihe

It was a 4 hour drive from Beijing to Beidaihe, a small peninsular jutting out into the gulf of Bohai that is a magnet for migrating birds on the eastern flyway. We checked into our hotel and had lunch, then took a walk in the gardens to kickstart our migration birding here. We saw several **Red-rumped Swallows** amongst the more common **Barn Swallows**, **Yellow-browed & Pallas's Leaf-Warblers** (the 2 commonest *Phylloscopus* warblers we would see on this tour), the dainty **Taiga Flycatcher** characteristically flicking its tail and even a **Great Spotted Woodpecker**. We went down to Lighthouse point where all was quiet apart from one or two skulking **Radde's Warblers**, a soaring **Japanese Sparrowhawk** and several **Black-headed Gulls**. We walked along the coast road to a hidden patch of habitat called Legation Gully, a narrow area of trees and scrub between hotels which looks like it is marked for development, a sad reality in this area. Here we found the pretty endemic **Yellow-bellied Tit**, along with the endemic **Arctic Warbler**, **Japanese White-eye**, **Hawfinch** and the *dauma* race of **Scaly Thrush**, which is split by many as White's Thrush.

From here our driver took us to a local orchard where we saw the eastern *minor* race of **Great Tit**, the beautiful red-billed **Blue Magpie** and the introduced **Crested Myna** in flight. We also added the migrant **Brown Shrike**, many **Siberian Stonechats** and a **Hume's Warbler** which we took special care to separate from the common **Yellow-browed Warbler**, finally having it call, confirming our ID. In a small pine plantation I was surprised to hear a **Oriental Scops-Owl** calling in the day-time, but as we walked near, it stopped calling and we were unable to locate it. From here it was on to the extensive grounds of the Friendship Hotel where we found our first **Siberian Rubythroat**, **Eurasian Hoopoe** and a **Northern Hobby**. On the way out we found an active little spot where we came across **Gray-faced Woodpecker**, the *mandarinus* race of **Eurasian Blackbird** (sometimes split as Eastern or Chinese Blackbird) and a very pretty male **Yellow-throated Bunting**. The last call of the day was to check out the sandflats and we added our first shorebirds in the form of **Common Redshank**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Black-winged Stilt** and **Marsh Sandpiper** as well as **Little Tern**.



Northern Hobby

May 6th - Beidaihe to Happy Island

Today we were heading down to Happy Island, 2 and a half hours drive south from Beidaihe. Before breakfast, our friendly ground agent took us to the new wetland reserve, previously known as 'The Reservoir'. Here we spent a wonderful couple of hours building our fledgling list with waterbirds like **Whiskered Tern**, **Little Grebe**, **Purple Heron**, **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, **Eurasian Moorhen & Coot** and some good ducks including **Garganey**, **Green-winged Teal** and the rare East Asian endemic **Falcated Duck**. We had our first **Ring-necked Pheasant**, which is a widely established exotic in the UK and US but native to this part of China. We also saw 2 pairs of **Amur Falcons** which appeared to be getting ready to nest. Other resident species seen were **Marsh & Great Tits** and a flock of very cute **Vinous-throated Parrotbills**. For migrants we saw **Dusky & Radde's Warblers**, several **Dusky Thrushes**, **Olive-backed Pipit** and a **Black-browed Reed Warbler** giving its scratchy call from deep in a reed bed.

We had several sites to bird on the way down to Happy Island, the first of which was the Dapu River. After finding the drop off spot, we walked past a small wood, a pond and along a line of trees to where our vehicle was waiting for us. On the way we spotted **Eastern Marsh-Harrier** and **Northern Goshawk** in flight, our first **Bluethroat** in some long grass, a **Whimbrel** flying by and large number of migrant passerines passing along the tree line, including **White-cheeked Starling**, **Chestnut-eared**, **Yellow-browed**, **Little** and **Pallas's Buntings** and **Asian Brown Flycatcher**. It was our first good look at visible migration. From here we hit a great site for shorebirds called Qilihai. Here we saw **Wood**, **Sharp-tailed** & **Curlew Sandpipers**, **Lesser Sand-Plover**, **Bar-tailed Godwit** and (after a thorough inspection) **Common Snipe**. We also had our first (*ocularis* race) **White Wagtail** and a pair of **Eastern Spot-billed Ducks**. At another shorebird site further on and close to the Daqing River, we added a breeding plumage **Spotted Redshank**, a few **Dunlin**, **Black-bellied** & **Kentish Plovers** and **Far Eastern** & **Eurasian Curlews** plus our first **Black-tailed Gull** and **Common Tern**.



Pallas's Leaf-Warbler is one of the most distinctive and easily identified *Phylloscopus* warblers.

The last site to bird before crossing over to Happy Island was Magic Wood. A famous migrant trap named so by the discoverer because of how many bird species he saw there. Worryingly, there was evidence of development with the area around the wood cleared and half the wood surrounded by a moat where we flushed a **Green Sandpiper**. It was fairly quiet in the woods but we still managed to see a pair of **Japanese Quail**, another nice male **Yellow-throated Bunting** plus **Pallas's Leaf-Warbler** and the *plumbeitarsus* race of **Greenish Warbler** often split as Two-barred Greenish Warbler. As we left the wood we saw a **Zitting Cisticola** and heard the distinctive call of a **Lesser Short-toed Lark** which we located with some difficulty up in the sky, singing in flight. Next it was on to Happy Island, which has been a favoured birding site on migration for many years with European birders. Although an island, a temporary causeway has been built which we were able to drive over and we were met on the other side. Recently, the island has been developed as part of the Tangshan International Tourist Islands which has meant the accommodation has got a lot better. A golf buggy took us to our wooden 'mansion' which had to be seen to be believed.

Unfortunately, although much habitat has been conserved and a network of boardwalks put in, the construction was on-going and parts of the island were still a bit of a building site. One of the best known sites on the island is Temple Wood and it was here that we started our birding. On the way there we saw our first migrating **Chinese Penduline-Tits**, which were not as numerous as several days ago but still fairly common in the reed beds. The woods themselves were fairly quiet but we did find **Rufous-bellied Woodpecker**, **Pale-legged & Eastern Crowned Warblers** and our first **Siberian Blue Robin** which flushed from underneath the boardwalk. We also saw a **Tolai Hare**, our first mammal of the trip. In a clearing next to the wood, we saw a **Gray-streaked Flycatcher** and a beautiful male **Korean Flycatcher** expertly spotted by Dan. Walking back along the edge of the water we added several new shorebirds, including **Eurasian Oystercatcher**, **Terek Sandpiper**, **Ruddy Turnstone** and good numbers of the globally threatened **Great Knot** in full breeding plumage. **Gull-billed Tern** and **Cattle Egret** also winged their way by.



Chinese Penduline-Tits are tricky birds to see on their breeding grounds but abundant on Happy Island.

May 7th – Happy island

We had been told by some of the other birders present on the island about a new, small golf course that was attracting several wagtails, pipits and buntings. On the way, we saw a few good birds including a male **Ring-necked Pheasant** crossing the road, a beautiful male *philippensis* race **Blue Rock-Thrush**, **Chestnut-flanked White-eye**, **Eurasian Hoopoe** and an **Eyebrowed Thrush**. After a bit of searching, we found the golf course and saw **Eastern Yellow Wagtail** and several breeding plumage **Red-throated Pipits** and also a winter plumage **Saunders's Gull** flying along the exposed mud flats nearby. On our way back we had a **Radde's Warbler** singing, a beautiful **Common Kingfisher** on one of the creeks, more **Chinese Penduline-Tits** and a pair of **Eastern Spot-billed Ducks**. After a late breakfast, we went back to the Temple woods which again had very few birds, with just **Taiga & Asian Brown Flycatchers**, another **Siberian Blue Robin** male flushed from under the boardwalk and a **Tristram's Bunting**.

Some helpful Swedish Birders had informed us of the uncommon Claudia's Leaf Warbler in the West wood so we made our way there, flushing a **Green Sandpiper** in one of the creeks. We scoured the tree tops for our target but could only find **Pallas's Leaf- & Yellow-browed Warblers**. We gave up on them, but walking away from the wood we had one final scan and I finally spotted a **Claudia's Leaf Warbler**. We walked back and got great views. We decided to devote the rest of the morning to shorebirding and on the way to the flats saw **Brown Shrike, Zitting Cisticola** and **Little Bunting**. After passing a construction site on the sea wall, we found a nice pond with several interesting shorebirds on it. Here we saw **Long-toed Stint, Wood Sandpiper** and a breeding plumage **Spotted Redshank** as well as a **Common Snipe** which we identified after a close inspection through the scope. Further on still at a larger pool, we had several **Black-winged Stilts** and our first **Pied Avocets** of the trip. From here on, we walked along the edge of the mudflats which we had caught just a little late on the out-going tide. We had good number of shorebirds, including **Black-bellied Plover, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Terek & Marsh Sandpipers, Far Eastern & Eurasian Curlews, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Great Knot** and also **Gull-billed & Common Terns**.



The rare **Saunders's Gull** is a mudflat specialist.

It was getting towards lunch time so we turned around and on the way back flushed a **Siberian Rubythroat** and had a flyby of a young *heuglini* race **Lesser Black-backed Gull**. After lunch we took a rest before heading back out to check Temple Woods again, spotting a **Pale Thrush** on the way. The woods were very quiet although we did see **Olive-backed Pipit, Eastern Crowned Warbler** and our first **Rufous-tailed Robin** which flushed from under the boardwalk and perched briefly to give good views. We hadn't planned to, but we went to check shorebirds again, getting good views of a male **Pallas's Bunting** on the way. At the flats we had our first **Greater Sand-Plover** mixed in with the more common **Lesser Sand-Plovers, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Dunlin** and a cooperative **Saunders's Gull** amongst the numerous **Black-headed Gulls**. We walked back to our 'mansion' hoping for a better day for migrants tomorrow.

8th May – Happy Island

Again, before breakfast we walked to the golf course hoping for new arrivals. We saw another **Ring-necked Pheasant** in the garden and our first **Common Cuckoo** on the way there and on the golf course itself a **Chestnut-eared Bunting**, **Eastern Yellow Wagtail** and our first **Richard's Pipit** of the trip. Walking back we had a nice flyby of **Oriental Honey-buzzard** which we took as a sign that things were starting to happen. In the creeks on the way back we had **Eurasian Moorhen**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Common Kingfisher**, **Bluethroat** plus many **Black-faced Buntings** and **Chinese Penduline Tits**. After breakfast we walked up to Temple woods with high hopes and things certainly started well with a dozen or so **Eyebrowed Thrushes**. Apart from that it was disappointing and apart from another flushed **Siberian Blue Robin** and **Olive-backed Pipit**, it was very quiet indeed. The West Woods were quiet too with just a pair of **Chestnut-flanked White-eyes** and the usual **Pallas's Leaf- & Yellow-browed Warblers**. After our high hopes it had been a disappointing morning and we went back for a rest before lunch. On the way to lunch we had a **Dusky Warbler** singing and another **Eurasian Hoopoe**. The manager persuaded us to pose for Chinese TV cameras doing a piece on Happy Island and I was asked to be interviewed.



Olive-backed Pipit forages on the ground but if disturbed, flies up into a tree, pumping its tail.

If we thought the morning was quiet, the afternoon in Temple woods was completely dead so we walked again to the mudflats where at least we were guaranteed some birds to look at. On the way we had another **Brown Shrike** and also flushed a **Japanese Quail** next to the road. We stopped at the same pool as before, seeing **Marsh, Wood & Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** and **Common Snipe**. Several **Chinese Pond-Herons** and some **Black-tailed Gulls** flew by, but apart from that the shorebirds were all the same, with the highlights being **Greater Sand-Plovers**, **Eurasian Oystercatcher**, **Pied Avocet**, **Terek Sandpiper**, **Far Eastern & Eurasian Curlews** and **Great Knot**. At the end we did add some **Red-necked Stints** before turning back. At dinner, a British birder said he had just seen a pair of Chestnut bunting so we tried after dinner without success.

May 9th – Happy Island to Beidaihe

It had rained over night which is just what we had been hoping for. It looked promising for our final morning on the island but it still seemed strangely quiet as we walked towards Temple Woods, only seeing **Common Kingfisher** and a single **Pale Thrush** on the way. As we entered the woods, it became apparent that the rain hadn't had the desired effect and all we managed to see were **Eyebrowed Thrush** and **Olive-backed Pipit**. We decided to walk down to the golf course one more time but all we saw there was a *leucopsis* race **White Wagtail** and **Richard's Pipit**. On the walk back just more **Chinese Penduline Tits** and **Black-faced Buntings**. It was a disappointment but we were looking forward to getting back to Beidaihe where hopefully there were more birds. On the boat ride back across to the mainland we had many **Black-bellied Plovers** and a few **Whimbrel, Far Eastern & Eurasian Curlews, Bar-tailed Godwit** and **Great Knot**.



Scaly Thrushes like other Asian thrushes are very shy birds and best seen by waiting quietly.

We had high hopes for Magic Wood and there were a few bits and bobs like **Japanese Quail, Pallas's Leaf-Warbler, Taiga Flycatcher** and **Yellow-browed, Little & Yellow-throated Buntings** but it wasn't exactly kicking. We visited the nearby Big Wood, which is a good deal smaller and fragmented than it used to be. It seemed to be a roost for mixed heron species and we flushed many **Cattle Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons** and **Chinese Pond-Herons** from the canopy. We heard a **Common Cuckoo** and found a nice corner with several **Bramblings** and many **Common Rosefinches** before heading back towards Beidaihe. After we got back, our ground agent took us to check some nearby paddyfields at Caigezhuang where Dan spotted **Chestnut-eared Bunting** before we went on to Lotus Hills. This is a large forest park on some hills near Beidaihe and especially nice as it is closed to the general public due to the risk of fire in the dry season. We had special permission to enter though. Inside we saw **Ring-necked Pheasant, Great Spotted, Gray-faced** and after quite a bit of searching, **Gray-capped Woodpecker**. We also saw many **Blue Magpies**, both **Yellow-bellied & Great Tits** and a few migrants like **Japanese White-eye, Scaly Thrush** and a flock of **Eurasian Siskins** near the entrance. Chatting with the increasing number of British birders at our hotel, it seemed that things hadn't been much better here than on Happy Island,

10th May – Jiaoshan Great Wall & Stone River

Today was our day trip to the Jiaoshan Great Wall at Shanhaiguan, another site with no public access at this time of year due to fire risk. We had special access thanks to the efforts of our wonderful ground agent and we had the place to ourselves. Once in, we birded a spot near the gate where we found a singing **Meadow Bunting** and also a **Common Cuckoo**. Before starting our climb we next birded the bottom area, finding **Ring-necked Pheasant**, **Eurasian Collared Dove** and many **Bramblings**, **Common Rosefinches** & **Eurasian Siskins** in the top of the trees. At the base of the stairs we found **Pere David's Rock-Squirrel** in exactly the same place I had found it before and some **Great Tits**. We starting climbing the stone stairs by the side of the Great Wall and on the way up, saw many **Large-billed Crows**, a **Radde's Warbler**, **Gray-faced Buzzard** and **Eurasian Kestrel**. As well as seeing the wall itself, our targets of the morning were actually 3 resident species. We found **Pere David's Laughingthrush** fairly quickly although they were rather skulking.



White-browed Chinese Warbler is also known as Chinese Hill Warbler.

About half way up I heard some buntings singing, and scanning, we found a nice male **Meadow Bunting** and a lucky **Godelewski's Bunting** which hopped into the same scope field of view. Higher up we got better views of this beautiful bird. The only bird left to see was **White-browed Chinese Warbler** which we found in their usual stake out at the top. They took a while to come in but we finally had one singing nearby and had nice views. This is somewhat of a taxonomic enigma and has now been placed within the *Sylvia* warblers and parrotbills. We walked up higher to a section of 'Wild Wall' that was crumbling and had not been rebuilt. It was nice to see both the old and the new and we had fine scenic views from here. Having seen all the bird targets on the way up, we decided to come down the wall itself. Not as easy as it sounds as there were some steep sections and towers only accessible with ladders. Looking between the turrets we even saw a flock of **Vinous-throated Parrotbills**. It had been a great morning even though we were a little tired.

We went to pick up some things for lunch before heading to Stone River where we would bird in the afternoon. First off we checked gulls by the bridge and found many **Black-headed Gulls** with a single **Black-tailed** and a *mongolicus* race **Caspian Gull** (often split as Mongolian Gull). We checked some ponds on the way to the river mouth, finding **Dusky Warbler** and a few shorebirds like **Spotted Redshank**, **Common Greenshank** and **Marsh & Green Sandpipers**. At the beach, it was high tide so we walked along the sea wall and found a large and very productive pond for shorebirds. There weren't big numbers but we had **Terek Sandpiper**, **Gray-tailed Tattler**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, breeding-plumage **Red Knot**, **Long-toed Stint**, **Sharp-tailed**, **Curlew & Broad-billed Sandpipers**. Several of which were new birds for the trip. Next we checked the forest where we had **Pallas's Leaf-Warbler**, our first **Daurian Redstart**, **Olive-backed Pipit** and some **Common Swifts** flying over head. At the river mouth itself we only saw **Little Ringed Plover** and **Little Tern** before heading back to the van. On the drive out, we stopped to check a flock of **Whimbrel** and also spotted **Garganey**, **Green-winged Teal** and many **Little Grebes**.



Although common, Blue Magpie is surely one of the most beautiful birds in the region.

Back at Beidaihe, we still had a bit of birding time left and we went to the Friendship Hotel gardens in search of Chinese Nuthatch which bizarrely seemed to be breeding there, a very unusual record indeed. We didn't manage to find them but did see **Spotted Dove**, **Great Spotted & Gray-faced Woodpeckers**, **Blue Magpie**, **Chestnut-flanked White-eye**, **Asian Brown Flycatcher**, **Eurasian Blackbird** and **Little Bunting**. We were about to leave when we bumped into some other birders that have seen **Chinese Nuthatch** and they took us to the exact location. We soon found one on top of a tree seemingly feeding on nectar. Not typical behaviour for a nuthatch. Here we also had **Eastern Crowned Warbler** and a **Rufous-tailed Robin** before calling it a day and heading back to our hotel for dinner.

11th May – Qinglong River & Beidaihe

Last year an exciting new site for Ibisbill was found, easily accessible in a day trip from Beidaihe. When the tour participants heard of this development, they were very keen to try for this unique bird. Our local guide had seen a pair with chicks just a few days before so they shouldn't have moved much. We would leave after breakfast, so we birded a couple of local sites before setting off for the site. We started at Lighthouse Point which was dead, but walking back, Dan scanned across the bay to the beach on the other side. He said he saw a goose which I thought extremely unlikely, but checking through the scope, I saw that it was actually a **Bar-headed Goose**. Now this was either an incredibly rare vagrant or an escapee. We called to let one of the other groups know and before long there was a twitch on. The scopes lined up examining the bird and after a short while it became clear that the flight feathers on one side were short and looked like they had been clipped. It was a disappointment but had definitely been worth checking. We went up to the Friendship Hotel grounds again to see what was going on there. We met another group near the gate and they showed us a female *elisae* race **Narcissus Flycatcher** which is often split as Chinese or Elisa Flycatcher. After that, a short walk through the grounds produced **Eurasian Hoopoe, Dusky, Pallas's Leaf- & Yellow-browed Warblers, Scaly & Eyebrowed Thrushes, Eurasian Blackbird**, the ever present **Blue Magpies** and also a heard **Common Cuckoo**.



The Ibisbill is a totally unique bird and is in its own family.

After breakfast we drove to the Ibisbill site at the Qinglong River, 2 and a half hours away. We arrived at the same time as a large group of British birders, and from the river bank everybody scanned through the scopes to try and locate the birds. They were spotted at some distance so we crossed the river and made our way closer through the cover of a poplar plantation to make sure we didn't disturb the birds. We got great views of the pair of **Ibisbills** with 2 chicks and we watched them for some time trying to get some photos through the heat haze. Nearby we saw a **Gray-faced Woodpecker** and a group of **Red-billed Choughs** on the other bank of the river. Our next target was Long-billed Plover and walking back along the river we spotted a plover on the other bank. We thought at first it was a Long-billed but on closer inspection we saw it was actually **Little Ringed Plover**. Driving further downstream to another site, I spotted a pair of **Hill Pigeons** coming down to the river to drink. They looked almost exactly the same as Rock Pigeons until they flew and you could see the distinctive white band in the tail.

We stopped at a lower bridge and started scanning for Long-billed Plover. We couldn't find them so walked downstream along the river to carry on the search. Along here we saw another male **Blue Rock-Thrush**, **White Wagtail** and **Common & Green Sandpipers**, but no **Long-billed Plovers**. My phone rang and I was told that they had been located back where we had parked the vehicle. Typical. Luckily it stayed put and we joined the other birders assembled to get good views of these uncommon birds. Next we decided to drive further upstream in search of **Mandarin Duck**. We had a couple of false alarms when we saw **Little Grebe & Mallard** before Dan finally spotted one in the river next to the road. We stopped and the bird flushed upstream although we saw it clearly in flight. Two more additions were a **Striated Heron** which flew across the river and an **Amur Falcon** flying over the valley before we started driving back. We had just enough time when we got back to check out the Friendship Hotel. There was a report of a Siberian Thrush this morning, so we checked the spot but could only find **Eyebrowed Thrush**. Other birds seen were **Eastern Crowned Warbler**, **Taiga Flycatcher** and **Brown Shrike** before we called it a day and went back to the hotel for dinner.



Parrotbills are social birds and often found in large flocks.

12th May – Beidaihe to Beijing

Today was our last chance for birding around Beidaihe. We wanted to visit the wetland reserve one more time and stopped at sandflats briefly on the way. The birds were very backlit but we could make out **Wood Sandpiper** and **Long-toed Stint**. Looking over the reservoir on the other side of the road, the light was better and we saw **Common & Green Sandpipers** and **Falcated Duck**. We were dropped at the entrance to the reserve and started to walk along the water's edge. We saw many of the same water birds as before including **Eastern Spot-billed Duck**, **Green-winged Teal**, **Purple Heron**, **Chinese Pond-Heron**, **Eurasian Moorhen** and **Common Kingfisher**. As we started to walk around, it became obvious that there was some significant movement of birds today. A pair of **Black-naped Orioles** flew by, the bushes were full of **Little & Black-faced Buntings** and reedbeds with **Oriental & Black-browed Reed Warblers**. We saw several **Common Cuckoos** in flight but only heard **Indian Cuckoo**. The trail passed through the woods and here we saw **Amur Falcon**, **Vinous-throated Parrotbill**, **Rufous-tailed Robin**, **Rufous-bellied & Great Spotted Woodpeckers**.

It was time to head back for breakfast and on the way back to the car I saw what looked like a Olive-backed Pipit flush up from the ground and perch in a low branch pumping its tail. I checked it with my bins and saw it was actually a **Forest Wagtail**, a very good record here. The breakfast room was buzzing with talk of all the birds people had seen in the morning and it seems things were starting to happen. Lighthouse point had received some particularly good birds in the morning so we headed down there after breakfast. The forest was absolutely full of **Radde's Warblers** and **Siberian Blue Robins** and I even saw a **Spotted Bush-Warbler**, but many of the other birds sighted seemed to have moved on. We went on to Legation Gully which was also full of **Radde's Warblers** and **Siberian Blue Robins** but we also saw a stunning male **Siberian Rubythroat**. Further on we flushed a **Japanese Quail**, and also saw **Scaly Thrush**, a beautiful **Bluethroat** next to a small pool and then a stunning male **Mugimaki Flycatcher**. We had time for just one more site and we decided to go back to the Friendship Hotel where **Blue Magpies** seemed to be having a field day chasing all the birds around. We saw a few more birds here including **Dusky Warbler**, **Asian Brown Flycatcher**, **Eurasian Blackbird** and **Eyebrowed Thrush** but the best bird and final addition to our trip list was a **Dollarbird** in flight.



We had to go back to the hotel for an early lunch and then check out and drive back to Beijing where we spent the night before flying out early the following day. The clients were keen to drive by the 'Bird's Nest' Olympic stadium and visit the temple of heaven before being dropped at the hotel. It had been a great trip in which we had not only seen the highs and lows Asian migration but also the amazing Ibisbill, some wonderful sights in Beijing and of course had a section of the Great Wall of China all to ourselves. The final trip list stood at 162 with some real quality species.

Bird list

Taxonomy follows Clements 6.6 online checklist. Updated Aug 2012

DUCKS, GEESE and SWANS: Anatidae

1	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	Seen at Qinglong River.
2	Falcated Duck	<i>Anas falcata</i>	Near-threatened. Seen at the Reservoir.
3	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Seen at Summer Palace, Stone River, Qinglong River & the Reservoir.
4	Eastern Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>	Seen at Qilihai, Happy Island & the Reservoir.
5	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Seen at Stone River & the Reservoir.
6	Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Seen at Stone River & the Reservoir.

PHEASANTS and PARTRIDGES: Phasianidae

7	Japanese Quail	<i>Coturnix japonica</i>	Near-threatened. Seen on Happy Island, at Magic Wood & Legation Gully.
8	Ring-necked Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Seen at the Reservoir, Happy Island, Lotus Hills & the Jiaoshan Great Wall.

GREBES: Podicipedidae

9	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Seen at Stone River, Qinglong River & Reservoir.
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HERONS, EGRETS and BITTERNS: Ardeidae

10	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Seen on Happy Island & at the Reservoir.
11	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Seen at the Reservoir.
12	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Seen at Dapu River, Happy Island, Caige Ricefields & Reservoir.
13	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Commonly seen throughout.
14	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Seen at Big Wood & on Happy Island.
15	Chinese Pond-Heron	<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>	Seen at Dapu River, Happy Island, Big Wood & Reservoir.
16	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	Seen at Qinglong River.
17	Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Commonly seen throughout.

HAWKS, EAGLES and KITES: Accipitridae

18	Oriental Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	Seen at Happy Island.
19	Gray-faced Buzzard	<i>Butastur indicus</i>	Seen at the Jiaoshan Great Wall.
20	Eastern Marsh-Harrier	<i>Circus spilonotus</i>	Seen at Dapu River.
21	Japanese Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter gularis</i>	Seen at Dongshan Orchard.
22	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Seen at Dapu River.

RAILS, GALLINULES and COOTS: Rallidae

23	Eurasian Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Seen on Happy Island, at Stone River & the Reservoir.
24	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Seen at the Reservoir.

PLOVERS and LAPWINGS: Charadriidae

25	Black-bellied Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Seen at Daqing River & on Happy Island.
26	Lesser Sand-Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	Seen at Qilihai & on Happy Island
27	Greater Sand-Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	Seen on Happy Island.
28	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Seen at Daqing River & on Happy Island.
29	Long-billed Plover	<i>Charadrius placidus</i>	Seen at Qinglong River.
30	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Seen at Sandflats, Qilihai, Stone River & Qinglong River.

OYSTERCATCHER: Haematopodidae

31	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Seen on Happy Island.
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AVOCETS and STILTS: Recurvirostridae

32	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Seen at Daqing River, Qilihai, Sandflats, Happy Island & Stone River.
33	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Seen at Happy Island.

SANDPIPERS: Scolopacidae

34	Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	Seen at Happy Island & Stone River.
35	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Seen at Magic Wood, Happy Island, Stone River, Qinglong River & the Reservoir.

36	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Seen at Magic Wood, Happy Island, Stone River, Qinglong River & the Reservoir.
37	Gray-tailed Tattler	<i>Tringa brevipes</i>	Seen at Stone River
38	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Seen at Daqing River, Happy Island & Stone River.
39	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Seen at most coastal sites.
40	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Seen at most coastal sites.
41	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Seen at Qilihai, Happy Island & Sandflats.
42	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Seen at Sandflats.
43	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Seen at Dapu River, Daqing River, Happy Island & Stone River.
44	Far Eastern Curlew	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	Vulnerable. Seen at Daqing River & on Happy Island.
45	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Near-threatened. Seen at Daqing River & Happy Island.
46	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Seen at Qilihai & on Happy Island.
47	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Seen on Happy Island & at Stone River.
48	Great Knot	<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	Vulnerable. Seen at Happy Island.
49	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Seen at Stone River.
50	Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	Seen at Happy Island.
51	Long-toed Stint	<i>Calidris subminuta</i>	Seen on Happy Island, at Stone River & Sandflats.
52	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>	Seen at Qilihai, Daqing River, Happy Island & Stone River.
53	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Seen at Daqing River & on Happy Island.
54	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Seen at Qilihai, Daqing River, Happy Island & Stone River.
55	Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>	Seen at Stone River.
56	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Seen at Qilihai & Happy Island.

IBISBILL: Ibisbill

57	Ibisbill	<i>Ibidorhyncha struthersii</i>	Seen at Qinglong River.
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GULLS & TERNS: Laridae

58	Saunders's Gull	<i>Saundersilarus saundersi</i>	Vulnerable. Seen on Happy Island.
59	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Commonly seen at coastal sites.
60	Black-tailed Gull	<i>Larus crassirostris</i>	Seen at Daqing River, Happy Island & Stone River.
61	Caspian (Mongolian) Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans (mongolicus)</i>	Seen at Stone River.
62	Lesser Black-backed (Heuglin's) Gull	<i>Larus fuscus (heuglini)</i>	Seen on Happy Island.
63	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	Seen at Daqing River, Sandflats, Happy Island, Magic Wood & Stone River.
64	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Seen at Happy Island.
65	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	Seen at Reservoir & Qilihai.
66	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Seen at Daqing River & on Happy Island.

PIGEONS and DOVES: Columbidae

67	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Introduced. Commonly seen throughout.
68	Hill Pigeon	<i>Columba rupestris</i>	Seen at Qinglong River.
69	Oriental Turtle-Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	Commonly seen throughout.
70	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocta</i>	Seen at the Jiaoshan Great Wall.
71	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	Seen at Friendship Hotel.

CUCKOOS: Cuculidae

72	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Seen on Happy Island, Jiaoshan Great Wall & at the Reservoir. Heard at Big Wood & Friendship Hotel.
73	Indian Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus micropterus</i>	Heard at the Reservoir.

OWLS: Strigidae

74	Oriental Scops-Owl	<i>Otus sunia</i>	Heard at Dongshan Orchard.
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SWIFTS: Apodidae

75	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Seen at Summer Palace & Stone River.
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KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae

76	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Seen at Happy Island & the Reservoir.
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ROLLERS: Coraciidae

77	Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>	Seen at Friendship Hotel.
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HOPOES: Upupidae

78	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Seen at Happy Island & Friendship Hotel.
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WOODPECKERS: Picidae

79	Gray-capped Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos canicapillus</i>	Seen at Lotus Hills.
80	Rufous-bellied Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos hyperythrus</i>	Seen at Happy Island, Legation Gully & Reservoir.
81	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Seen at Jinshan Hotel, Lotus Hills, Friendship Hotel, Legation Gully & the Reservoir.
82	Gray-faced Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	Seen at Lotus Hills, Friendship Hotel & Qinglong River. Heard at Reservoir.

FALCONS: Falconidae

83	Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Seen at the Jiaoshan Great Wall.
84	Amur Falcon	<i>Falco amurensis</i>	Seen at Qinglong River & the Reservoir.
85	Northern Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Seen at Friendship Hotel.

SHRIKES: Laniidae

86	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>	Seen at Dongshan Orchard, Dapu River, Happy Island, Friendship Hotel, Legation Gully & the Reservoir.
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ORIOLES: Oriolidae

87	Black-naped Oriole	<i>Oriolus chinensis</i>	Seen at Reservoir.
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CROWS: Corvidae

88	Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>	Seen at Summer Palace.
89	Blue Magpie	<i>Urocissa erythrorhyncha</i>	Seen at Dongshan Orchard, Lighthouse Point, Qinglong River & Friendship Hotel.
90	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Commonly seen throughout.
91	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Seen at Qinglong River.
92	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	Seen at Summer Palace & Jiaoshan Great Wall.

LARKS: Alaudidae

93	Lesser (Asian) Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella rufescens (cheleensis)</i>	Seen at Magic Wood.
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SWALLOWS: Hirundinidae

94	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Commonly seen throughout.
95	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	Seen at Jinshan Hotel, Dapu River & Friendship Hotel.

NUTHATCHES: Sittidae

96	Chinese Nuthatch	<i>Sitta villosa</i>	Seen at Friendship Hotel.
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TITS: Paridae

97	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecetes palustris</i>	Near-threatened. Seen at the Reservoir.
98	Yellow-bellied Tit	<i>Periparus venustulus</i>	Seen at Legation Gully, Happy Island & Lotus Hills.
99	Great Tit	<i>Parus major (minor)</i>	Seen at Dongshan Orchard, Lotus Hills, Jiaoshan Great Wall, Friendship Hotel & the Reservoir.

PENDULINE-TITS: Remizidae

100	Chinese Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz consobrinus</i>	Seen on Happy Island.
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BULBULS: Pycnonotidae

101	Light-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus sinensis</i>	Commonly seen throughout.
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LEAF WARBLERS: Phylloscopidae

102	Dusky Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>	Seen at the Reservoir, Happy Island, Stone River & Friendship Hotel.
103	Radde's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus schwarzi</i>	Commonly seen throughout.
104	Pallas's Leaf-Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	Seen at Jinshan Hotel, Happy Island, Magic Wood, Stone River & Friendship Hotel.
105	Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	Commonly seen throughout.
106	Hume's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>	Seen at Dongshan Orchard.
107	Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>	Seen at Legation Gully.
108	(Two-barred) Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides (plumbeitarsus)</i>	Seen at Magic Wood & Stone River.
109	Pale-legged Leaf-Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus tenellipes</i>	Seen on Happy Island.
110	Eastern Crowned Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus coronatus</i>	Seen at Legation Gully, Happy Island & Friendship Hotel.

111	Claudia's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus claudiae</i>	Seen on Happy Island.
REED WARBLERS: Acrocephalidae			
112	Black-browed Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus bistrigiceps</i>	Seen near Legation Gully & at the Reservoir. Heard on Happy Island..
113	Oriental Reed-Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus orientalis</i>	Seen at the Reservoir.
GRASSBIRDS & ALLIES: Locustellidae			
114	Spotted Bush-Warbler	<i>Bradypterus thoracicus</i>	Seen at Lighthouse Point.
CISTICOLAS: Cisticolidae			
115	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Seen at Happy Island & heard at Magic Wood..
OLD WORLD WARBLERS: Sylviidae			
116	White-browed Chinese Warbler	<i>Rhopophilus pekinensis</i>	Seen at the Jiaoshan Great Wall.
117	Vinous-throated Parrotbill	<i>Paradoxornis webbiana</i>	Seen at the Jiaoshan Great Wall & Reservoir.
YUHNAS, WHITE-EYES & ALLIES: Zosteropidae			
118	Chestnut-flanked White-eye	<i>Zosterops erythropleurus</i>	Seen on Happy Island & at Friendship Hotel.
119	Japanese White-eye	<i>Zosterops japonica</i>	Seen at Legation Gully & Lotus Hills.
LAUGHINGTHRUSHES: Leiothrichidae			
120	Pere David's Laughing-thrush	<i>Garrulax davidii</i>	Seen at the Jiaoshan Great Wall.
FLYCATCHERS: Muscicapidae			
121	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa latirostris (daurica)</i>	Seen at Dapu River, Happy Island, Magic Wood & Friendship Hotel.
122	Gray-streaked Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa griseisticta</i>	Seen at Happy Island.
123	Rufous-tailed Robin	<i>Larivora sibilans</i>	Seen at Happy Island, Friendship Hotel & the Reservoir.
124	Siberian Blue Robin	<i>Larivora cyane</i>	Seen at Happy Island, Friendship Hotel, the Reservoir, Legation Gully & Lighthouse Point.
125	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	Seen at Dapu River, Happy Island & Legation Gully.
126	Siberian Rubythroat	<i>Calliope calliope</i>	Seen on Happy Island, at Friendship Hotel & Legation Gully.
127	Taiga Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicilla</i>	Seen at Jinshan Hotel, Happy Island, Magic Wood, Friendship Hotel & the Reservoir.
128	Korean Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula zanthopygia</i>	Seen on Happy Island.
129	Narcissus (Chinese) Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula narcissina (elisae)</i>	Seen at Friendship Hotel.
130	Mugimaki Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula mugimaki</i>	Seen at Friendship Hotel & Legation Gully.
131	Daurian Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureus</i>	Seen at Stone River.
132	Blue Rock-Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Seen on Happy Island & Qinglong River.
133	Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>	Seen at Dongshan Orchard, Dapu River, Happy Island, Stone River & the Reservoir.
THRUSHES & ALLIES: Turdidae			
134	Scaly Thrush	<i>Zoothera dauma</i>	Seen at Legation Gully, Lotus Hills, Friendship Hotel & Legation Gully.
135	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula (mandarinus)</i>	Seen at Friendship Hotel.
136	Eyebrowed Thrush	<i>Turdus obscurus</i>	Seen at the Reservoir, Happy Island, Magic Wood & Friendship Hotel.
137	Pale Thrush	<i>Turdus pallidus</i>	Seen at Happy Island & Big Wood.
138	Dusky Thrush	<i>Turdus eunomus</i>	Seen at the Reservoir.
STARLINGS : Sturnidae			
139	Crested Myna	<i>Acridotheres cristatellus</i>	Seen at Dongshan Orchard.
140	Daurian Starling	<i>Sturnia sturnina</i>	Seen at Dongshan Orchard, Happy Island & the Reservoir.
141	White-cheeked Starling	<i>Sturnus cineraceus</i>	Seen at Dapu River.
WAGTAILS and PIPITS: Motacillidae			
142	Eastern Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla tschutschensis</i>	Seen at Happy Island.
143	Gray Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Seen at Stone River & Qinglong River.
144	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Seen at Qilihai, Happy Island & Qinglong River.
145	Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>	Seen at Happy Island.
146	Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	Seen at Dongshan Orchard, Reservoir, Happy Island, Big Wood & Stone River.
147	Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	Seen on Happy Island.

BUNTINGS: Emberizidae

148	Godelewski's Bunting	<i>Emberiza godlewskii</i>	Seen at the Jiaoshan Great Wall.
149	Meadow Bunting	<i>Emberiza cioides</i>	Seen at the Jiaoshan Great Wall.
150	Tristram's Bunting	<i>Emberiza tristrami</i>	Seen on Happy Island.
151	Chestnut-eared Bunting	<i>Emberiza fucata</i>	Seen at Dapu River, Happy Island & Caige Ricefields.
152	Yellow-browed Bunting	<i>Emberiza chrysophrys</i>	Seen at Dapu River & Magic Wood.
153	Little Bunting	<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>	Seen at Dapu River, Happy Island, Magic Wood, Friendship Hotel & Reservoir.
154	Yellow-throated Bunting	<i>Emberiza elegans</i>	Seen at Friendship Hotel & Magic Wood.
155	Black-faced Bunting	<i>Emberiza spodocephala</i>	Seen at Dapu River, Happy Island, Caige Ricefields, Stone River & Reservoir.
156	Pallas's Bunting	<i>Emberiza pallasii</i>	Seen at Dapu River & Happy Island.

FINCHES, SISKINS, CROSSBILLS: Fringillidae

157	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Seen at Big Wood & the Jiaoshan Great Wall
158	Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	Seen at Big Wood & the Jiaoshan Great Wall
159	Oriental Greenfinch	<i>Chloris sinica</i>	Seen by the guide at the Jiaoshan Great Wall.
160	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	Seen at Lotus Hills & the Jiaoshan Great Wall.
161	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Seen at Legation Gully.

SPARROWS: Passeridae

162	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Commonly seen throughout.
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Mammal list

1	Tolai Hare	<i>Lepus tolai</i>	Seen on Happy Island.
2	Pere David's Rock-Squirrel	<i>Sciurotamias davidianus</i>	Seen at the Jiaoshan Great Wall.
3	Striped Field Mouse	<i>Apodemus agrarius</i>	Seen at the Jiaoshan Great Wall.