

Trip Report

thoroughly enjoyed by all.

18 Nov. Wushe - Hohuanshan.

19 Nov. Wushe - Hualien.

20 Nov. Hualien-Taitung.

21 Nov. Taitung mountains.

22 Nov. Taitung-Tainan.

bellied Prinias.

23 Nov. Taichung-Taipei.

Taiwan Triplist

Species_

Little Grebe

Gray Heron

Great Egret

Little Egret

Cattle Egret

Yellow Bittern

Cinnamon Bittern

Black-headed Ibis

Eurasian Wigeon

Spot-billed Duck

Northern Pintail

Northern Shoveler

Oriental Honey-buzzard

Crested Serpent-Eagle

Crested Goshawk

Eurasian Buzzard

Eurasian Kestrel

Peregrine Falcon

Taiwan Partridge

Swinhoe's Pheasant

Ring-necked Pheasant

White-breasted Waterhen

Barred Buttonquail

Common Moorhen

Pheasant-tailed Jacana

Pacific Golden-Plover

Black-bellied Plover

Little Ringed Plover

Mongolian Plover

Greater Sandplover

Eurasian Woodcock

Common Snipe

Eurasian Curlew

Spotted Redshank

Common Redshank

Common Greenshank

Marsh Sandpiper

Green Sandpiper

Wood Sandpiper

Red-necked Stint

Long-toed Stint

Dunlin

Common Sandpiper

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

Greater Black-headed Gull

Black-headed Gull

Saunders' Gull

Gull-billed Tern

Caspian Tern

Common Tern

Whiskered Tern

Ashy Wood-Pigeon

Oriental Turtle-Dove

Red Collared-Dove

White-bellied Pigeon

White-throated Needletail

Savanna Nightjar

Fork-tailed Swift

Common Kingfisher

Black-browed Barbet

Gray-capped Woodpecker

White-backed Woodpecker

Gray-faced Woodpecker

Oriental Skylark

Plain Martin

Barn Swallow

Pacific Swallow

Striated Swallow

Asian Martin

White Wagtail

Yellow Wagtail

Olive-backed Pipit

Red-throated Pipit

Collared Finchbill

Styan's Bulbul

Black Bulbul

Flamecrest

Brown Dipper

Winter Wren

Alpine Accentor

Blue Rock-Thrush

Island Thrush

Pale Thrush

Dusky Thrush

Zitting Cisticola

Plain Prinia

Eye-browed Thrush

Brown-headed Thrush

White-browed Shortwing

Golden-headed Cisticola

Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler

Yellowish-bellied Bush-Warbler

Yellow-bellied Prinia

Oriental Reed-Warbler

Yellow-browed Warbler

Rufous-faced Warbler

Vivid Niltava

Siberian Rubythroat

Red-flanked Bluetail

Collared Bush-Robin

Daurian Redstart

Plumbeous Redstart

White-tailed Robin

Common Stonechat

Black-naped Monarch

Rusty Laughingthrush

Steere's Liocichla

Pygmy Wren-Babbler

Rufous-capped Babbler

Streak-throated Fulvetta

Gray-cheeked Fulvetta

White-eared Sibia

White-bellied Yuhina

Vinous-throated Parrotbill

Taiwan Yuhina

Golden Parrotbill

Black-throated Tit

Green-backed Tit

Taiwan Yellow Tit

Eurasian Nuthatch

Japanese White-eye

Maroon Oriole

Brown Shrike

Black Drongo

Bronzed Drongo

Formosan Magpie

Eurasian Jay

Gray Treepie

Eurasian Magpie

Eurasian Nutcracker

Large-billed Crow

Crested Myna

Common Myna

White-vented Myna

Red-billed Starling

Eurasian Tree Sparrow

White-rumped Munia

Vinaceous Rosefinch

Gray-headed Bullfinch

Black-faced Bunting

Gray Bunting

Nutmeg Mannikin

Eurasian Siskin

Brown Bullfinch

Long-tailed Shrike

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker

Coal Tit

Varied Tit

Taiwan Barwing

Dusky Fulvetta

White-whiskered Laughingthrush

Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler

Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler

Little Forktail

Hwamei

Snowy-browed Flycatcher

Formosan Whistling-Thrush

Light-vented Bulbul

Gray-chinned Minivet

Gray Wagtail

Black-backed Wagtail

House Swift

Spotted Dove

Little Tern

Rock Dove

Snowy (Kentish) Plover

Black-winged Stilt

Eurasian Coot

Water Rail

Mikado Pheasant

Chinese Bamboo-Partridge

Garganey

Osprey

Black Kite

Besra

Eurasian Teal

Baikal Teal

Black-faced Spoonbill

Great Cormorant

Intermediate Egret

Pacific Reef Heron

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Malayan Night-Heron

(Based on Clements)

was no better than western Karaoke and we slipped off to bed!

Scientific_name

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Phalacrocorax carbo

Egretta intermedia

Egretta sacra

Egretta garzetta

Nycticorax nycticorax

Gorsachius melanolophus

Ixobrychus cinnamomeus

Threskiornis melanocephalus

Ixobrychus sinensis

Platalea minor

Anas penelope

Anas poecilorhyncha

Anas crecca

Anas acuta

Anas querquedula

Anas clypeata

Pandion haliaetus

Milvus migrans

Spilornis cheela

Accipiter

Buteo buteo

Falco tinnunculus

Falco peregrinus

Lophura swinhoii

Syrmaticus mikado

Phasianus colchicus

Amaurornis phoenicurus

Hydrophasianus chirurgus

Himantopus himantopus

Pluvialis fulva

Pluvialis squatarola

Charadrius dubius

Charadrius alexandrinus

Charadrius mongolus

Charadrius leschenaultii

Scolopax rusicola

Gallinago gallinago

Numenius arquata

Tringa erythropus

Tringa totanus

Tringa stagnatilis

Tringa nebularia

Tringa ochropus

Tringa glareola

Actitis hypoleucos

Calidris ruficollis

Calidris subminuta

Calidris acuminata

Calidris alpina

Larus ridibundus

Larus saundersi

Sterna nilotica

Sterna caspia

Sterna hirundo

Sterna albifrons

Columba livia

Chlidonias hybridus

Columba pulchricollis

Streptopelia orientalis

Streptopelia chinensis

Treron sieboldii

Apus pacificus

Apus nipalensis

Alcedo atthis

Picus canus

Alauda gulgula

Riparia paludicola

Hirundo rustica

Hirundo tahitica

Hirundo striolata

Delichon dasypus

Motacilla lugens

Motacilla flava

Motacilla cinerea

Anthus hodgsoni

Anthus cervinus

Pericrocotus solaris

Spizixos semitorques

Pycnonotus taivanus

Pycnonotus sinensis

Regulus goodfellowi

Troglodytes troglodytes

Cinclus pallasii

Prunella collaris

Monticola solitarius

Turdus poliocephalus

Turdus obscurus

Turdus chrysolaus

Turdus naumanni

Cisticola juncidis

Cisticola exilis

Prinia inornata

Cettia fortipes

Cettia acanthizoides

Acrocephalus orientalis

Phylloscopus inornatus

Abroscopus albogularis

Ficedula hyperythra

Niltava vivida

Luscinia calliope

Tarsiger cyanurus

Tarsiger johnstoniae

Phoenicurus auroreus

Rhyacornis fuliginosus

Cinclidium leucurum

Enicurus scouleri

Saxicola rubicola

Garrulax canorus

Liocichla steerii

Hypothymis azurea

Garrulax poecilorhynchus

Garrulax morrisonianus

Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis

Pomatorhinus ruficollis

Actinodura morrisoniana

Pnoepyga pusilla

Stachyris ruficeps

Alcippe cinereiceps

Alcippe morrisonia

Yuhina brunneiceps

Yuhina zantholeuca

Paradoxornis webbianus

Paradoxornis verreauxi

Aegithalos concinnus

Periparus ater

Parus monticolus

Macholophus holsti

Dicaeum ignipectus

Zosterops japonicus

Oriolus traillii

Lanius cristatus

Lanius schach

Dicrurus aeneus

Garrulus glandarius

Urocissa caerulea

Pica pica

Dendrocitta formosae

Nucifraga caryocatactes

Corvus macrorhynchos

Acridotheres cristatellus

Acridotheres tristris

Acridotheres

Sturnus sericeus

Passer montanus

Lonchura striata

Lonchura punctulata

Carpodacus vinaceus

Pyrrhula nipalensis

Pyrrhula erythaca

Emberizia spodocephala

Carduelis spinus

Dicrurus macrocercus

Sittiparus varius

Sitta europaea

Heterophasia auricularis

Alcippe brunnea

Prinia flaviventris

Brachypteryx montana

Turdus pallidus

Myophonus insularis

Hypsipetes leucocephalus

Motacilla alba

Megalaima oorti

Dendrocopos canicapillus

Dendrocopos leucotos

Caprimulgus affinis

Hirundapus caudacutus

Streptopelia tranquebarica

Larus

Gallinula chloropus

Turnix suscitator

Rallus aquaticus

Fulica atra

Arborophila crudigularis

Bambusicola thoracica

Accipiter trivirgatus

Pernis ptilorhynchus

Anas

Bubulcus ibis

Ardea cinerea

Ardea alba

most-famous dim-sum dumpling houses and participants all raised their glasses to very successful and enjoyable Taiwan adventure!

23 Nov. Tainan (Tsengwen) - Taichung

from a shallow western coastal plain to reach 4000 m a.s.l. at its highest peak.

impressive endemics, the best time to visit the country is November, when many of the migrants are present.

the locally scarce **Black-winged Stilt**, **Common Sandpiper** and **Red-necked Stilt**. After dark we tried a spot for some owls but got skunked, so we retired to Puli satisfied with the day's bag!

to roost and we were lucky enough to get some decent views, before we headed off up the hill in anticipation of our first serious attempt at the endemic pheasants tomorrow!

sizzling black beef and a variety of tofu and bean-sprout dishes that defied description. I guess that is one thing birding the east provides...spectacular meals in the most fascinating places!

For the rest of the day we searched for the Taiwan form of Russet Scrub Warbler (considered an endemic species Alishan Bush Warbler by some) but we turned up only Coal Tit and a scarlet male Vinaceous Rosefnch.

expedition to look for Mikado Pheasant required a very early wake-up. After numerous trucks went backwards and forwards Keith eventually got the bus hauled out of the sand at near midnight.

Introduction

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Taiwan – Formosa – The beautiful island

The spectacular Taiwan Blue Magpie was seen several times during the tour Set departure tour 14-25 November 2004 **Leader: Keith Barnes** "Remember those bird tours when after hours of tramping along trails, soaking wet, freezing cold or steaming with sweat and aching all over, you've asked yourself... and I paid to do this?' Well, do yourself... and I paid to do this?' Well, do yourself a favour and do Taiwan with Tropical Birding. Its 'Absolute Bloody Luxury'. No humping up and down endless trails, long extensive death marches and up hours before sunrise to get to the birds. Taiwan is fabulous with tons of birds, dynamic endemics and we saw them all with relative ease and not just one Swinhoe's Pheasant, but a whole shed-load. Missed only a grotty Bradypterus warbler of dubious speciation!! All these great birds with a superlative infrastructure, luxury hotels and scrumptious food. Thanks to Tropical Birding, Keith and Yvonne. Now, where else do they do tours?" Ian Sinclair – near-legendary bird trip leader and author of African bird books.

Taiwan combines an eclectic mix of phenomenal south Chinese montane birding, 14 endemic species and nearly 60 endemic sub-species and nearly 60 endemic species and nearly 60 endemic sub-species and nearly 60 endemic species and nearly 60 endemic up for in endemicity. On this tour we managed 14 endemics and a host of endemic sub-species in a triplist of 184. Undoubted highlights included a staggering 14 Swinhoe's Pheasants in one hour. We think this is some kind of world record, and one we don't think we will ever repeat, but needless to say, we saw these birds exceptionally well. Some of the group also nailed Mikado Pheasant fleeing from the path and Taiwan Hill Partridge, both extremely tricky species. The bevy of endemic babblers were also fantastic including Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Yuhina, White-whiskered Sibia, Taiwan Barwing and White-whiskered Laughing-thrush. The striking Taiwan Yellow Tit did not fail to mesmerise, and although we saw it commonly in one locality we never saw it again. As we climbed higher into the cool but crisp mountains the ruby-red neck and throat patch of the Collared Bush Robin became a daily feature and we also got to see the most impressive Kinglet in the world in the form of the spectacular Flamecrest, a surprisingly beautiful bird. As we reached the lowlands of the east coast, we were able to find the increasingly endangered Styan's Bulbul, which is moving farther and farther south. We eventually caught up with the electric blue Taiwan Whistling Thrush. After a few days of it singing sweetly from the bushes we were able to feast on it in an open riverbed. The final endemic, seen on the first and last days, was the giant Formosan Blue Magpie. This marvellous beast hangs around in imposing flocks of 8 – 15 and they came bounding out of the forest like woodhoopoes on steroids. In the lowland rivers non-endemics specialities included a few Little Forktails and Brown Dippers negotiating their way through the waterways. A major highlight was a large flock of roving Golden Parrotbill that we were extremely lucky to locate in the high mountains, as well as the curvaceous Streak-breasted and Spotbreasted Scimitar Babblers. Taiwan is also famous as a flyway, and migrants formed a significant proportion of our tally including the highly endangered Black-faced Spoonbill, of which we saw over 200 birds, some 25% of the global population and Saunder's Gull, another threatened species. In the mountains, migrant thrushes featured and we scored with Dusky, Brown-headed, Pale and Eye-browed Thrush which were joined at the fruiting trees on a couple of occasions by the dazzling resident white-headed Taiwan-endemic subspecies of Island Thrush. We finished off with the now famous Malayan Night Heron's in Taipei Gardens on a bumper-filled tour that was

Although Taiwan is best known for its political defiance of mainland China and cheap electronics shopping markets of Taipei, and is commonly thought of as wall-to-wall industrialised and full of people, these ideas represent a tiny portion of this island nation. Although the west coast may meet some of these perceptions, what is not commonly known about Taiwan are the extensive and rugged wilderness areas of the interior and east coast, including some of the most stunning mountain landscapes in Asia. Taiwan is a continental island, formed by the action of tectonic plates on the eastern edge of the Asian shelf; this dramatic uplift has given it the most remarkable topography. Although only 400 km long and 150 km wide, the island rises

Lying on the tropic of cancer, the coastal lowlands are distinctly tropical, warm and muggy, but with over 15 peaks that reach above 3000 m a.s.l., the interior of the island comprises a series of concentric vegetation bands that terminate in temperate coniferous forest and arctic-like alpine tundra at the highest limits. In winter the highest peaks are

blanketed in snow and ice, where only accentors are brave enough to endure. At 35 800 km², this small island is about one quarter the size of England. An important part of the Asian flyway, Taiwan attracts a variety of migrants and accidentals, which have led to it having an impressive birdlist of over 400 species. Although there are many

14 Nov. Taipei. Although today was officially an arrival day, those that made it early got to enjoy one of Taipei's great new outdoors spots, the Kuan-Du Nature Park. Handed over to the Wild Bird Society of Taipei (WBST) by the city government, the NGO group has done a phenomenal job at turning it into a state of the art recreation and education area for the people of Taipei city and it is a pretty useful place to start a birding tour if you are stuck in the city for a few unusual ones as this was one of the few places we saw Yellow Bittern, Common Snipe, Common Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Prinia, Oriental Reed Warbler and most importantly Vineous-throated Parrotbill. We also saw many common waterbirds for the first time including Little Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasia Wigeon, Eurasi

15 Nov. Shimen Dam. Up early today we headed to some forest surrounding the dam and recreation area. We started looking for a couple of the lowland forest endemics but first came up trumps with a few commoner forest birds such as the immaculate Streak-breasted Scimitar-babbler and Red-headed Tree Babbler. A Black Kite soared over the water and we located our only Great Cormorant of the trip as well as our first Crested Goshawk soaring above the canopy. The calls of the much sought after Taiwan Hill Partridge emanated from way up the hill slope but we were lucky enough to get glimpses of a Chinese Bamboo Partridge scurrying away in the understorey. The staccato "troook-troookdescription of this green, blue, red and black beauty! A flock of spectacular and noisy Grey Treepies were located and soon thereafter the highlight on the morning (and for some the trip) a flock of 10 Formosan Blue Magpies came barrelling out of the forest. We followed these exquisite creatures for a while. Being nearly 65 cm long from tail to tip they resembled a group of woodhoopoes on steroids! The serene and melancholy call of a White-tailed Blue Robin gave away a superb electric-blue male....stunning creature. Above it a small mixed species flock comprised a male Black-naped Monarch and both Dusky (Gould's) and Grey-cheeked Fulvettas, along with a White-bellied Yuhina and Japanese White-eye. Both Light-vented and several hundred Black Bulbuls were feeding in a fruiting tree. We located a singing Formosan Whistling Thrush, but obtained only the briefest views before it scuttled away. We also found a Yellow-browed (Inornate) Warbler, a scarce passage migrant and several Large-billed Crows and Tree Sparrows. After a sumptious lunch we headed for the central island town of Puli, the gateway to the mountains. Approaching the hills, one can't help but be impressed by the huge mountains that cloak Taiwan's interior, covered in mixed conifer and broadleaved woodland, they are as striking as they are enticing. The river held many hirundines, particularly big groups of Barned Buttonquail was one of the highlights. We were able to flush these birds several times for superb flight views of both male and female. We also encountered White-breasted Waterhen and Black Drongo here. The wetlands around Puli were great and one of the prize finds was a Cinnamon Bittern that exploded from some nearby reedbeds. The wetlands also revealed Common Kingfisher, a flushed Water Rail and White-breasted Waterhen and

16 Nov. Wushe Area. Another predawn wake-up because we were making our way into the higher mountains to look for a whole lot of new and interesting goodies. Our first stop produced Fire-breasted Flowerpecker almost immediately. A group of Olive-backed Pipits foraged on the open lawns in earnest, and we were able to scope these for classic looks before a mixed flock of Little Swift and Asian House Martins flew overhead. Later we located our first White-bellied Pigeon of the trip. Walking along a spectacular stream that carved its way through the steep-sided granite we found a Grey Wagtail and then the much sought-after Little Forktail. The most diminutive of this exclusive Asian group of river birds the little pied male stood on a large boulder in the middle of the torrent. Pink legs standing out, we all soaked up this little jewel. A mixed species flock started making its way through the red, brown and yellow leaves of the fall trees, and soon it was hard to find the Grey-chinned Minivets as their spectacular yellows-and-reds did not contrast with the trees! Other members in the flock included the sweet little Rufous-faced Warbler and the rufescent and sapphire Vivid Niltava. A gully with a billboard of a Swinhoe's Pheasant got pulses racing, and we did see some great endemics but no pheasants. A group of noisy Steere's Liocichla passed close by with some fulvettas before we nabbed a spectacular white-whiskered Taiwan Sibia and comically-crested Taiwan Yuhina. A tit flock proved spectacular, resulting in a virtual clean sweep of the Paridae on the island. The one everyone remembers is the fantastic crested Taiwan Yellow Tit. But we also encountered a flock of 30-odd Blackthroated Tit, Green-backed Tit and a few immaculate chestnut and grey Varied Tits, which were joined by a Eurasian Nuthatch and Eurasian Nuthatch Eurasian Nutha Plumbeous Water Redstart which wagged its tail from side to side in typical fashion and a very co-operative male Snowy-browed Flycatcher. This superb little understorey bird flitted backwards and forwards, fearlessly returning to the same perch time and time again. A large raptor could be seen above the trees and soon we identified it as an Oriental Honey Buzzard soaring overhead. On our way down the hill we heard and then located the bizarre Collared Finchbill – a bulbul with the beak of a finch – as well as a spectacular singing male Siberian Rubythroat that showed in the open for some time....absolutely dazzling! A Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler called incessantly and responded very well to tape but never showed for any length of time before slipping back into the thick undergrowth! Pulling into Wushe our local expert took us into an unspectacular looking restaurant (not one I would have chosen) but we enjoyed what turned out to be a delicious lunch of sweet & sour fish, black-bean chicken,

Feeling somewhat bloated and in need of a walk, shortly after lunch we wondered around town and while looking for a Formosan Whistling Thrush quickly found Blue Rock Thrush and a tree full of Eye-browed and Pale Thrushes. I had been somewhat concerned as my contacts on the ground had reported that precious few migrating passerines were around, but obviously the large front a few days ago was

bringing a windfall, and we were to encounter more migrant passerines over the next few days! Our last stop for the day was in some farmland near Wushe where we took a lot of time and tape-playing to get a Hwa-mei out of cover; eventually it showed well for all to see. The area also yielded a superb male Daurian Redstart and as it was nearing dusk we located a small covey of Chinese Bamboo Partridge heading off

The dainty and spectacular Taiwan Yellow Tit was seen today and on no other day on the trip.

17 Nov. Wushe Area. Another early start was needed to be tracking pheasants at dawn. We drove for about 40 minutes in the designated pheasant spot. One can normally count yourself lucky if you see one or two pheasants in a morning, four would be exceptional, and 14 would be....well, a world record! We saw 14 Swinhoe's Pheasants in a little under one hour by driving quietly along a private track (that very few people know about), which hardly has any disturbance and where the birds are safe from hunters. From point blank range we had males, females and youngsters of all sizes and descriptions. The males are the stars of the show though, with their brilliant sapphire-and-white plumage contrasting with the scarlet face and legs. Shortly after parking the car we found a White-bellied Pigeon perched overhead. A fair game of cat-and-mouse progressed before we saw our first red-necklaced Collared Bush Robin. fortunately we were to locate this species several times throughout he day. Stunned and overjoyed by our pheasant success, we made for a walking trail through some forest where we were to locate several seldom seen birds (although none endemic). The first was a flock of Rusty Laughing Thrush. We soon discovered that they were constantly returning to a bush low-down in the forest that was fruiting with red berries. Chasing after a pair of calling Spot-breasted Scimitar Babblers, which showed themselves to people with varying degrees of success, we returned to the fruiting shrub which was attracting both the Rusty Laughing Thrush and Spot-breasted Scimitar Babblers for spectacular extended looks. A Yellowish-bellied Bush Warbler kept us entertained momentarily before we started waltzing up the trail. Immediately eliminating Black-throated Tit because of the jizz, my heart started racing and we stormed up the path towards them. Upon arrival my suspicions were confirmed, a flock of over 30 exquisite Golden Parrotbills shot across the road at quite a pace. Although they never remained in one place for long I was delighted as I was a lifer for me. The group indulged me! Next we located some Taiwan Partidge that were extremely close. Although not everyone saw them, several people got good looks. A small flock with all the regular tits, nuthatches and jays moved through and we located a couple of gorgeous Taiwan Barwings gleaning away on the treebark. We were rapidly cleaning away on the treebark. We were rapidly cleaning up the endemics. Moving slowly down the hill and back towards lunch, I heard the tell-tale wavering warble of a White-browed Shortwing. Tracking through the undergrowth and playing tape I eventually managed to lure the bird out momentarily for all to see. We caught up with another new bird before we headed out to a different site, where we located huge flocks of Ashy Woodpigeon. Although we located many species we'd seen previously we were starting to look for the needles in the haystack, the rare birds of the mountains and first we located a beautiful White-backed Woodpecker high in the tree and a little later before calling it a day, we saw one of my favourite birds in Taiwan, the diminutive, cute and strange tail-

The beautiful Taiwan Sibia was one of the day's babbler highlights

Because today we were headed to the top of the pass at Mt. Hohuanshan, we thought we better wait a little while for it to warm up, which proved to be a wise decision. We started the day in some lower montane forest in an effort to see Mikado Pheasant (which we dipped!), but we did add Besra and a flock of smart Brown Bullfinch to the list. As it warmed up we moved through the stunted upper forest and scrub before reaching the conifer zone. This extremely beautiful area is graced with sweeping vistas of most of Taiwan's impressive 3000 m tall peaks, all covered in forest and glades. Our first stop almost instantly yielded our main target bird, the White-whiskered Laughingthrush along with a very co-operative Winter Wren that refused to get off the boardwalk we were walking on and then a pair of white-eyed Streak-throated Fulvetta. On our way back to the car, Ian Sinclair picked up the call of a Goldcrest-like bird and soon we had nailed the dazzling, red-and-yellow, grey and white-spectacled Taiwan Flamecrest! Much buoyed we headed for the vendors at the top of the hill who sell extra-hot Mr. Brown's Coffee and hot noodle-soup from the back of their trucks. We enjoyed the infusion of warmth while enjoying the dramatic view, but not before we had three Alpine Accentors scamper across the road and we had to slam on breaks for them.

Essentially a travel day we stopped along the road up to Mt Hohuanshan looking for species that we still needed. Amongst the more common doves, tits and babblers we located a couple of **Pale Thrush**, near some fruiting trees. Moving on we bumped into some Taiwanese birders and exchanged notes. They quickly showed us a digi-scoped photo of the local and very rare endemic white-headed race of Island Thrush that they had just seen. We asked them where it was and in typical Taiwanese hospitality they walked back along the way they had come to show us the spot. No sooner had we all arrived and a pair of Island Thrushes landed in a fruiting tree and showed well for a period of five minutes for all to see. This was a serious bonus bird on this trip and not one I had been expecting at all. The white-head, chestnut throat and breast, make this form unlike any other Island Thrush, and it seems to be a very strong contender for species status, the Taiwan Thrush! Further up the hill we located Eurasian Siskin and Grey-headed Bulfinch before heading over the top of Mt Hohuan. On the lower slopes we made for the exceptionally scenic Taroko Gorge where there are many spectacular rivers, torrents and forested streams and one of these eventually yielded a pair of Brown Dipper. Dropping through Taroko is exceptional. Termed one of Asia's seven wonders, it is truly a magnificent setting and no-better place to see the endemic Styan's Bulbul. Unfortunately this species is being hybridised with the Light-vented Bulbul and its range is slowly being forced farther and farther south. Just before lunch we rounded a corner and perched in the centre of the road was a Dusky Thrush!! The last of the regular migrant thrushes we needed. After a picnic lunch on the sides of the gorge we made our way to the coastal lowlands of Hualien, where the open seashore and grassy areas provided Eurasian Kestrel, Snowy (Kentish) Plover, Oriental Skylark and Zitting Cisticola. We spent the night in

Now needing only a handful of lowland birds we made for one of the lowland forest reserves on the east coast. Apart from having to do some serious negotiating to get in, because they had closed the park for renovations we had an excellent time locating several flocks of fulvettas, babblers and tits. In amongst the flocks were the birds we sought including repeat views of Black-crested Monarch and White-bellied Yuhina that some had missed earlier but four new species Crested Serpent Eagle, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Bronzed Drongo and the exceptional Maroon Oriole. All showed nicely and we also enjoyed a walk along a river where we saw a displaying Crested Goshawk, had by far our best views of Taiwan Whistling Thrush bouncing along boulders in the riverbed and more Plumbeous Water Redstarts and Brown Dipper! We made for Taitung and headed out to some wetlands south of town to look for some sought-after birds. This is one of the few areas where wild and non-introduced Ring**necked Pheasant** roam wild and were able to locate a couple of females; much more timid than their released counterparts in Britain or the USA. Despite much looking we only added **Black-faced Bunting** and waited for nightfall to do some nocturnal birding in this area. After dark we located two nocturnal birds that are rarely seen in Taiwan. Savanna Nightjar and Short-eared Owl. But not long thereafter after some bad directions we got bogged in the sand for what was to turn out to be an epically bad night for Keith. Repeated attempts to dig ourselves out on the soft beachsand failed, so Keith arranged for the participants to be transferred back to the hotel as the morning

Keith wasn't sure if it was morning, it sure still felt like the 20th! After 2-and-a-half hours sleep we were on the road again, headed to an area reputed to be very reliable for Mikado Pheasant. The long drive into the mountains took us 90 minutes and we arrived just in time as the light was starting to come up. The vehicle in front got lucky, first locating a foraging Eurasian Woodcock in the middle of the road and then seeing a male Mikado Pheasant on the road just next to where the parking area was. We spent most of the morning looking for a second bird, and only Keith got to see a female as it scampered off the trail very quickly and down a precipitous slope that could not be followed. Small consolation for those who dipped came in the form of a magnificent Asian Black Eagle, distant Eurasian Nutcracker and White-throated

Another travel day. We needed to spend some time on the massive and impressive wetlands of the populous east coast. Perhaps the most threatened habitat in Taiwan, the wetlands are under increasing pressure in this industrious sector of the country. However Taiwan has excellent green legislation and seems to be behaving according to acceptable international standards when it comes to protection of natural habitat. Ironically, Tseng-wen Estuary, the remarkable wetland near Tainan cannot be declared a RAMSAR site (Wetland of International Importance) because China refuses to allow Taiwan to enter the treaty! There is no doubt that the political stand-off across the Taiwan straits is fascinating and a topic of much discussion on the long drives. It seems that most Taiwanese accept that a One-China policy will prevail, but are not prepared to accept that a One-China policy will prevail, but are not prepared to accept the restrictive conditions that the union, be it 10 or 20 years down the road, is a happy one for all. Apart from political ramblings a fortuitous stop near the bottle-neck bottom end of the island revealed a group Red-billed Starlings. These are very scarce migrants and we were well pleased to catch up with this unexpected extra! Nearer to Tainan, we headed for an area that holds the last remaining handful of Pheasant-tailed Jacana in the country. Although not in breeding plumage, we watched them strut their stuff to our hearts content while watching a juvenile Yellow Bittern. While not threatened in the bigger scheme of things the Taiwanese government has invested considerable resources into a recovery program for its local population, which has grown from 20 to about 100 individuals, in this small area. We were also lucky enough to see a Common Snipe in this area and recorded our second serious find of the day when we located a Baikal Teal! Seriously stoked and after all the Asian food the group opted for a smash and grab at a Kentucky Fried Chicken joint so that we could head out to the birdier areas northwest of the city! Here we encounered a host of egrets and herons. We also had a massive duck parade seeing just about the entire suite of ducks and waders available in Taiwan, including Pintail, Gargany, Eurasian Wigeon, Common Greenshank, Green and Wood Sandpipers as well as a pool with our only Sharp-tailed Sandpipers of the trip. A surprise addition to the list was a group of four Black-faced Spoonbills that foraged alongside the highway completely unperturbed! Returning to Tainan we enjoyed a meal of very small dishes that were a specialty of the Tainan area before retuning to our hotel, where on the first floor there was a remarkable offer of free food, free beer and karaoke for guests of the hotel. We tried a few lagers while listening to the din of hopeless men trying to woo their women and decided that Taiwanese Karaoke

The Tsengwen estuary and area around Tainan supports hundreds of thousands of waterbirds in the Taiwanese winter and to enjoy this spectacle is why we time this trip in November. We were not to be disappointed today as we saw thousands of waterbirds of many different species. We decided to head for a few spots that I had been to a week earlier which looked good for waders and soon scored with Dunlin, Greenshank, Redshank, Spotted Redsha Spoonbill area as rumour had it that many school children would be visiting the site as an educational outing. We saw nearly 300 of the magnificent creatures, considered globally Endangered by BirdLife International, some 40% of their global population, in a single tightly knit flock. One hopes that the estuary at Chi-ku never gets developed despite the considerable pressure to do so. The flats also yielded the threatened Saunder's Gull and Gull-billed Tern amongst the Caspian Terns. The freshwater ponds revealed Common Greenshank, Common, Green and Wood Sandpipers as well as Little Grebe, Gray Heron, Great, Intermediate and Little Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron and our first "non-escape" Black-headed Ibis. A little further north we headed to a spot where the near-mythical Chinese Crested Tern had been spotted a year ago. We did not see the tern, but did emerge, courtesy again of Ian's spotting, with a rarity of our own in the form of a Greater Black-headed Gull in a group of Black-headed Gulls. The seaside grasslands held a Golden-headed Cisticola and both Plain and Yellow-

Our final day, initially scheduled as a contingency day to either hit the lowlands or highlands we were stuck with little to do because we had done so well. Fortunately my local contacts had informed us that Yeileo, a strange peninsula-shaped set of rocks northeast of Taipei and a well-known migrant trap had been delivering the goods recently, so off we went. On our way there via the Yan-ming-shan mountains we encountered a flock of Taiwan Blue Magpie. They had been the grandest bird we saw on day one, so it was apt that it was to see us off. After arrival at Yeileo we located a Pacific Reef Heron foraging in the ponds near the parking lot. Although this is a serious tourist attraction, the migrants don't seem to mind. Exchanging info with a few Taiwanses birders led us straight to the small group of Gray Buntings, a rare Japanese bird that very seldom gets to Taiwan. A photographer was trying to take pictures of them and we got the scowls we are more accustomed to as western birders. After the unbelievable reception and impact we had had everywhere else it was a mild relief to discover that not every single Taiwanese person bends over backwards to accommodate you or make your stay in their country their personal responsibility! We soon discovered the Red-flanked Bluetail and Brown-headed Thrush that were present, but also learned that the Japanese Robin that had been present had not been seen for a few days, so we returned to the Taipei basin and our final adventure was looking (not very hard) for the Malaysian Night Herons in the city centre. Found in a remarkable setting, this bird, normally difficult to find and observe are so tame and approachable in one of Taipei's main recreational parks in the middle of the city! We enjoyed point-blank range views of them before showing a couple of Taiwanese kids a Common Kingfisher through a scope...hopefully they can become the future little birdguides to this remarkably friendly and gratifying birding destination. Yvonne arranged a final meal at one of Taipei's

this quiet country town and our Yvonne (Tropical Birding's own Taiwanese!) joined us for the next two days. She ordered up a sumptious meal that comprised Dim-sum dumplings, Hot-and-sour soup and something George decided he could not live without! The meals were simply spectacular when she was around!

Needletail, which were the only new birds for the morning. Many of the previous day's flock birds were seen. In the afternoon we birded some wetlands seeing ducks, herons and egrets we had a much deserved rest. An evening foray back to the nightbird area revealed Intermediate Egret.

less Pygmy Wren-babbler. Dancing across the ground like a miniature pitta, the scales across the breast of oriental cuisine.

Eurasian Coot. Oriental Turtle, Spotted and Red-collared Dove were also all seen well for the first time. After we had picked up the last of the participants we headed to a nearby hotel, enjoying the first of our many escapades on the Taiwan food front.