

Southeast China December 2023

Target trip 17-25 December



Cabot's Tragopan



Blyth's Kingfisher

By Anders Bacher Nielsen

Timing and background

As a part of a business trip to China (my first visit ever to China), I saw my chance to get started on the birding project of China. Work meetings were in December, so it fitted well doing a fairly short and intense trip in SE China which was the perfect timing for my target species. These were the key regional birds, wintering rarities and local subspecies. Winter is very cold – also this south - and I wore two layers of trousers most days, a very warm jacket and hat and gloves. This part of China in winter is more about quality than quantity when it comes to bird species and before I got into the facts, I would not have guessed that the addition to my world list would have been only between 50-60 new species. And that only if I saw almost all target species. Since I had been to Northern India and Japan, there were a few species I could focus less on (e.g Spotted Elachura, which I saw in India and to my surprise there are no subspecies).

Before my official SE birding trip, I did a bit of birding around Beijing and this December there was plenty of snow which made the birding somehow less rewarding. Last work appointment was in the city Wenzhou and the 15 Dec, I wore a t-shirt here (15-18 degrees), but the day after it was closer to zero degrees and even driving SE to Sanming to start the official trip, did not do any good for the temperature where it was sub-zero all days, snowing and often misty in the morning. Further north, temperature rose to 7-9 degrees and here weather was generally nicer with blue sky.

I have included the days before and after the official SE trip, but birding was very limited and my trip to the Great Wall ended up being seeing the Great Wall alone, since it was snowing, very cold and misty.

Short itinerary:

12-Dec: Beijing, arrival 11am. No birding.

13-Dec: Full day to The Great Wall (snow and misty)

14-Dec: Beijing, Jingshan Park overlooking the Forbidden city (snow) around 45 minutes

15-Dec: Flight to Wenzhou, no birding.

16-Dec: Morning birding around hotel in Wenzhou. Train to Sanming. Pick-up and drive to mountains

Start of official bird trip

17-Dec: Mountain morning birding. Drive to Blyth's Kingfisher place. Drive to Barbet place

18-Dec: Pre-dawn drive to top of Emei Feng. High altitude birding all day.

19-Dec: Morning Emei Feng area. Afternoon drive to Wuyuan.

20-Dec: Morning by the "Merganser" river. Drive to the village Cha Guan (Pied Falconet)

21-Dec: Morning Cha Guan. Drive to Wucheng area of Poyang Lake)

22-Dec: Morning Wucheng area. Drive to N part of lake for Baer's Pochard, then to Jiujiang.

23-Dec: Morning "Baer's lake" again. Drive to Dongzai (Reeves's pheasant feeder).

24-Dec: Morning at Lingshan mountain. Afternoon at Reeves's feeder. Drive towards Hefei

25-Dec: Morning at Chao Lake. Drive to Liu He Wetland. Afternoon train to Shanghai.

End of official bird trip.

26-Dec: Shanghai, morning birding for 45 min in Suzhouhe Mengqing Garden (near hotel)

27-Dec: Shanghai, Century Park.

28-Dec: Morning flight to Beijing/Copenhagen

Logistics

This trip was truly a target trip. Given the logistical challenges entering China it is not a country you just spontaneously decide to revisit several times a year. Some of the complications were:

- Visa application: I started the application 2 months before the trip start. The guide can issue an invitation letter if needed, but since I was mainly in China for work, I had to apply for a working visa and got the invitation letter from the company.
- Literally no English is spoken and that goes for large cities and of course rural areas
- Long distances are to be covered if you want to include the winter sites for SE China
- Limited mobile phone freedom. I brought my company phone with free roaming (however, I did almost hit the roof of 25 GB per 30 days). I used the AnyConnect VPN function and could access Google maps literally everywhere in China and mobile reception was amazing.
- I would say that you absolutely need a guide. In principle you need a driver as well, and that can of course be the guide as well. Before I went, I got the impression that foreigners need to take a (short) driving lesson class to be able to rent a car, but while in China, I heard that foreigners actually *CAN* rent a car in airports in bigger cities. I am not fully sure how easy it is, and after 10 days on the Chinese roads in various “interesting” traffic situations, I would probably suggest a local driver anyway.



Indochinese Yuhina



Crested Ibis

Besides the challenges mentioned above, many things are actually working extremely smooth in China. Roads are often very good quality, trains are fast and very reliable, payment is extremely easy if you get Alipay on your mobile phone. Remember to activate public transportations parts in the app (if you need them). Food is easily found almost everywhere, and it is very tasty. The most remote places cook dishes that would be extremely hyped in Copenhagen. One thing is A/C in your hotel rooms. As indoor temperatures sometimes were down to 8 degrees, it is truly needed. At times we had to test them before confirming a night at a hotel. Beds are very hard compared to western standards, but they often had an electronical heated blanket to lie on. I did not freeze any nights.

The trip was arranged very flexible, with no pre-booked hotels. The idea was to move on when we have seen the target species in an area well enough to be satisfied. This is the good thing about a small group (I was just myself).

The trip basically started when I was picked up on Sanming Train Station by the guide.

The Guide

As stated above, a guide is almost essential for birding in China, and I quickly connected with **Steven An** from [China Bird Tour](#). He and the very few other guides with fluency in English are very busy, so it turned out that I was actually lucky that Steven had a space for me in his busy calendar those days. It is highly recommended to book your guide as early as possible. I paid a “one day” deposit and from this, Steven booked for me the ticket for the fast speed train from Wenzhou (last work assignment) to Sanming where he picked me up. This is exactly the type of “project management” I am looking for and he drove down from his home city Nanjing the day before and activated his local contacts in the south.

For SE China, I cannot imagine a better guide than Steven and I would also be very comfortable having him as a guide for all other parts of China. He knows most calls, he is good at keeping track of the key birds from the target list and can provide a plan B if one site fails. He knows the cities and villages and also where to stay and eat. I made it clear that I did not need luxury accommodation or western food. We had a good mix of really nice hotels and others where we had to test the A/C in several rooms before we accepted (or moved on).

As stated, all night was flexible and after a very good start we moved north quickly. We could probably have done the trip one day shorter but starting this south to include Blyth’s Kingfisher (and the Chinese Barbet which we only heard) you need minimum 8 days, but it is advisable to allow 1-2 days extra for missed species and better views.

Steven was fine with a few instances to drive after dark. This is ok – especially on the highways.

I used Birds of East Asia by Mark Brazil, and it served the purpose nicely. The new Birds of China (Liu Yang & Chen Shuihua) was not available when I left Denmark, but that seems to be the perfect book for future trips.



Oriental Stork



Chinese Sparrowhawk

The target bird list

Some of the romantics of birding is of course toned down when you come to a country with a rather strong target list of bird species, and I can easily say that we deliberately skipped scanning for waders and gulls and the focus was entirely on endemics, regional specialties, striking subspecies or widespread Asian species notoriously difficult elsewhere (including China). I included 3 subspecies for future splits on my list and with only 59 species on my list (again SE China is quality – not quantity) it was a manageable task. I decided to include the 3 heard-only (**yellow** below) species and with 56 seen (**green** below) or heard out of 59 I see the outcome of the trip as very successful. The

missed birds (red below) were not true local specialties (Sooty-headed Bulbul is more an urban species you either hit or miss), but especially failing on Baikal Teal was not good. The Reeves's Pheasant story (heard only) can be found elsewhere in the report and was of course by far the biggest disappointment.

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. White-necklaced Partridge, E | 31. Pallas's Leaf Warbler |
| 2. Chinese Bamboo Partridge, E | 32. Grey-sided Scimitar Babbler, E |
| 3. Cabot's Tragopan, E | 33. Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler (ssp) |
| 4. Silver Pheasant | 34. Masked Laughingthrush |
| 5. Elliot's Pheasant, E | 35. Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush |
| 6. Reeves's Pheasant, E | 36. Moustached Laughingthrush |
| 7. Swan Goose | 37. Buffy Laughingthrush, E |
| 8. Baikal Teal | 38. Chinese Hwamei |
| 9. Baer's Pochard | 39. White-browed Laughingthrush |
| 10. Scaly-sided Merganser | 40. White-browed Shrike-Babbler |
| 11. Oriental Stork | 41. Dusky Fulvetta |
| 12. Crested Ibis, E | 42. Huet's Fulvetta, E |
| 13. Pied Falconet | 43. Indochinese Yuhina |
| 14. E Water Rail/Brown-cheeked Rail | 44. Vinous-throated Parrotbill |
| 15. Brown Crake | 45. Grey-headed Parrotbill (ssp) |
| 16. Siberian Crane | 46. Short-tailed Parrotbill |
| 17. Blyth's Kingfisher | 47. Reed Parrotbill |
| 18. Chinese Barbet | 48. Black-collared Starling |
| 19. Chinese Grey Shrike | 49. Red-billed Starling |
| 20. Oriental Magpie | 50. Grey-backed Thrush |
| 21. Daurian Jackdaw | 51. Chinese Blackbird |
| 22. Collared Crow | 52. Little Forktail |
| 23. Yellow-bellied Tit, E | 53. White-crowned Forktail |
| 24. Chinese Penduline Tit | 54. Orange-bellied Leafbird (ssp) |
| 25. Silver-throated Tit, E | 55. Fork-tailed Sunbird |
| 26. Collared Finchbill | 56. Tristram's Bunting |
| 27. Brown-breasted Bulbul | 57. Little Bunting |
| 28. Sooty-headed Bulbul | 58. Yellow-browed Bunting |
| 29. Chestnut Bulbul | 59. Pallas Reed Bunting |
| 30. Brown Bush Warbler | |

In addition to the list above, I added 3 lifers (Red-throated Thrush, Siberian Accentor and Chinese Grosbeak) around Beijing in the beginning of the trip. These are included in the bird list at the end.



Pied Falconet



Masked Laughingthrush

Detailed itinerary:

12-Dec: I landed in Beijing around noon and was picked up by a pre-arranged car (benefits of the working part). The joy of scanning for lifers just after you touch ground in a completely new country did only yield the rather unexciting local version of the magpie, the Oriental Magpie.

13-Dec: This day was dedicated to the Great Wall (the part at Mutianyu). I had a plan to get up there around sunrise, but it proved to be rather complicated to arrange a taxi to take me there. The official trips start at 10 or 10:30 and surprisingly enough, the first trains/buses run start to run rather late. However for around 40€ one way, it was an easy decision to go solo. The evening before, the hotel confirmed that they now had found a taxi willing to go this far (around 70 km) and 6am I was picked up and he drove me straight to the Village Beigo near the ticket office. The project got further complicated as it had started to snow and to be honest the drivers are not really comfortable driving in snow. I arrived just after the sun got up and I now had 1 hour before the ticket office would open. In the village itself I stopped for a group of buntings (turned out to be Elegant and Meadow), but in the same moment, one of my target birds suddenly sat on a post near me, a beautiful Siberian Accentor. Birding activities were very low besides this and absolutely no nuthatches (Chinese), laughingthrushes (Plain) or babblers (Beijing) were to be seen nor heard (winter). Later at the circus-like ticket area I saw Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Great-spotted Woodpecker, Large-billed Crow, Japanese Tit, Chinese Bulbul, Red-throated Thrush (lifer), Red-flanked Bluetail and Tree Sparrows. It was partly snowing and misty (but extremely beautiful) on the wall which I had for myself until 10.30am. In those two hours, I only saw a Brambling flying over the wall and 2 Red-Throated Thrushes flying low underneath the wall, barely visible. So much fewer birds than I had hoped for.

At noon I started to get a taxi back to a larger nearby city (Huairou) from where there were trains to Beijing. The station was called Huairounan, and the train drove straight to Chaoyang, the main station in Beijing. Problem was that no drivers were available due to the weather (I got great help from the Brickyard Retreat). My plan B was to figure out a complicated return with two different buses and plan C was to stay one more night. Luckily, the daughter of the receptionist at the retreat located a car via Didi (the Chinese version of Uber) but he only wanted to drive the 20 km if I doubled my payment (which I did). Overall, it was a bit reckless to get up to the wall in those conditions as an independent traveler with work commitments the day after, but as it often turns out, things get solved.

14-Dec: Beijing: Mostly work, but I went with 2 Chinese colleagues to the Jingshan Park overlooking the Forbidden City. Here there were a surprising abundance of birds, including Spotted Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Azure-winged Magpie, Oriental Magpie, Large-billed Crow, Willow Tit, Chinese Bulbul, Red-billed Starling (lifer), White-cheeked Starling, Naumann's Thrush (lifer), Tree Sparrow, Brambling, Oriental Greenfinch, Chinese Grosbeak (lifer)

15-Dec: Flight to Wenzhou and no birding.

16-Dec: Wenzhou. Morning birding along the canals in Wenzhou, just by the hotel got me Daurian Redstart, Common Kingfisher and Yellow-browed Warbler. I took the train to Sanming and was picked up by Steven and we drove straight to a temple on the top of mountain (De Huaipo Jiutianshan). On the drive up I saw my first Silver Pheasant (a group of 5) and a group of Black-chinned Yuhinas.

17-Dec: This place was included by Steven as there had been fairly recent observations of up to 6 Cabot's Tragopans sitting in a tree by the temple. And who will not see that. It was a bit of a gamble as they had stopped coming but hopes were that they were around. However, we did not see any Tragopans and my suggestion – unless you want a very unique experience staying by the temple and having the temple people cooking for you – would be to skip this place.

The main reason we were in that area was that Steven knew a reliable place for Blyth's Kingfisher. I will not disclose the location here as it most likely will mean hordes of careless photographers scaring the bird away. Please arrange directly with Steven to see this sought-after kingfisher. In the same area as the kingfisher, we saw the trip's only Little Forktail.

Then we drove to a place where the Chinese Barbet can be seen, but with the mist and the snow, we only managed to get one bird to sit hiddenly in the top of a tree. A bit of a disappointment, but chances for a singing or responding bird is just very low in winter. On the way to the Barbet place we stopped a bit randomly and had great views of a group of Bay Woodpeckers.

Finally, we drove to the city Taining for the night. Here there are plenty of hotels but the drive to Emei Feng is about 1½ hour and if time allows, I would recommend driving to the village Xinqiao just at the road going up to Emei Feng.

Bird list for the day (43 species): Silver pheasant, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Chinese Pond Heron, Little Egret, Black-shouldered Kite (2), Chinese Sparrowhawk, Spotted Dove, Blyth's Kingfisher, Chinese Barbet (heard only), Bay Woodpecker, Grey-chinned Minivet, Long-tailed Shrike, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Sultan Tit, Red-whiskered, Light-vented/Chinese, Mountain, Chestnut and Black Bulbul, Yellow-browed Warbler, Masked Laughingthrush, Indochinese Yuhina, Black-chinned Yuhina, White-bellied Epornis, Swinhoe's White-eye, Crested Myna, Black-collared starling, Red-billed Starling, White Thrush, Chinese Blackbird, Plumbeous Redstart, Daurian Redstart, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Little Forktail, Slaty-backed Forktail, White-crowned Forktail, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Tree Sparrow, White-rumped Munia, White wagtail, Olive-backed Pipit, Chinese Grosbeak, Tristram's Bunting (heard only)

18-Dec: Pre-dawn drive to Emei Feng. High altitude birding all day. We saw our first tragopan crossing the mountain road in the early morning. We later saw one more pair and the Elliot's pheasants also started to show. Strategy is simply to drive up and down to and from Emei Feng. The misty weather was actually an advantage as the birds feel more invisible.

At the top of Emei Feng we walked around on the nice boardwalks, we walked around the lake and down the waterfall trail, where we managed to get good views of a White-necklaced Partridge. All areas at the top seem good for birding, but as the day before, very few birds showed themselves and it was partly raining all day. A very special thing is the constant music and singing from speakers and messages in Chinese. We walked out a path where the road ends and we got great views of a pair of Grey-sided Scimitar Babblers. Same area we tried – unsuccessfully – to get a brown Bush Warbler to respond.

Night at Xinqiao where there is this only hotel just by the road going up to Emei Feng.

Bird list for the day: White-necklaced Partridge, Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Cabot's Tragopan (4), Silver pheasant, Elliot's pheasant, Chinese Sparrowhawk, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Yellow-cheeked Tit, Sultan Tit, Black-throated tit, Mountain Bulbul, Grey-sided Scimitar-Babbler, Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler (heard only), Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush, Moustached Laughingthrush

(heard only), Chinese Hwamei, White-browed Shrike-Babbler, Huet's Fulvetta, White-bellied Epornis, Grey-headed Parrotbill, Swinhoe's White-eye, White-crowned Forktail, Brambling

19-Dec: We returned to the top of Emei Feng. We had only had brief views of the tragopan the day before and the main reason to return was if a miracle would occur and suddenly Steven yelled "TRAGOPAN" and on a rock above the car, about 5 meters up, a beautiful male Cabot's Tragopan was enjoying the sun. We got cameras out of the car but after 30 seconds a car came from behind and honked the horn and the tragopan slowly disappeared, but we had great views.

Around 10am we drove to another mountain top, basically the old road to the Jiangxi border. The most memorable birds were a group of curious Indochinese Yuhinas. We returned and had a tasty lunch in Xinqiao and drove from here to Wuyuan. Night at a Homestead in Kengkou village, just by the river (where it was very cold, 8 degrees inside).

Bird list for the day (selected): Cabot's Tragopan, Silver and Elliot's Pheasants, Tristram's bunting, Pallas' Leaf Warbler, Indochinese Yuhina, Buffy Laughingthrush, Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, Eurasian Jay, Red-billed Blue Magpie, White's Thrush (5 birds), Slaty-backed and White-crowned Forktail.

This was the last day we did the full bird list after the end of a day. Only selected birds mentioned in the text, please refer to the bird list at the end.



Grey-backed Thrush



Grey-sided Scimitar Babbler

20-Dec: First part of the morning was spent at hide No 2 seeing up to 12 Scaly-sided Mergansers (around 80 meters away). A Crested Kingfisher perched nicely on a stone in the river. On the walk back to the road from the hide we were lucky to see 2 Short-tailed Parrotbills at close range but only for few seconds. This merganser place was also out best place for Fork-tailed Sunbird and after having dissatisfying views of 2 overflying birds, we suddenly got a brief close look at a perfect male just above eye level (the pale colors in Mark Brazil's book cannot be justified). Here we also heard a small group of Dusky Fulvetta's (they do NOT like to be seen) and we had to accept the views of one bird crossing the road low.

Hereafter, we were ready to head for the well-known Falconet place in the village of Cha Guan. Basically it is a rooftop at a hotel overlooking a tree which is favored by the Pied Falconets. Arriving around 4pm we should be fine, but Steven had this wrong gut feeling that afternoon as there were no photographers. Correctly, no falconets came to the tree this afternoon, but one falconet flew quickly over the rooftop at dusk. What a bullet. We decided to stay one night in the village.

21-Dec: Next morning we were back on the rooftop at 7am, still alone, but from we came until 8:30am, 7 or 8 Chinese photographers arrived with equipment worth a fortune. And by 9:30, 3 Pied Falconets arrived at the tree and sat for 30 minutes. Satisfied we then drove to Poyang Lake, and we drove straight to the wintering area for the Siberian Cranes and quickly had 1000+ Siberian Cranes in the bins. White-naped and Common Cranes were also around in much smaller numbers. Plenty of Swan Geese were also seen. On the way to the hotel we saw a small group of Hooded Cranes. We stayed at the very nice place called “Starry Night” in Wucheng town.

22-Dec: The morning was spent looking for Brown Crake and Eastern Water Rail along the dikes not far from the hotel. We heard several Eastern Water Rails, but it was only the Brown Crake we saw (2 different birds). While walking in water edges, we flushed two Short-eared Owls. Before we left this part of the lake, we drove many km’s and scanned trees, poles and electronic lines for Chinese Grey Shrike (a bird Steven reports to be more and more difficult to see). In the end, there was a Chinese Shrike for us and it actually resulted in one of the biggest reliefs on the trip.

We then drove to the Baer’s Pochard site in the N part of the lake. Just before sunset, we had the scope on a great pair of Baer’s Pochards fairly close and in total we saw around 50 of this rare duck. We spent the night in Jiujiang.

23-Dec: Next morning we returned to the Baer’s Pochard site in hope for morning light and an even closer bird, but the views the day before ended up being the best.

We then drove towards Dongzai and the last part of the trip. What was believed to be one of the easiest target bird – the Reeves’s Pheasant from hide – turned out to be the biggest disappointment and I need to add some personal notes here. I have mixed emotion about the whole feeding strategy. Not that I would not have liked to see 5 amazing pheasants close up and click 200 pictures, but *if* it fails, it suddenly becomes a very reactive way of birding, because what then?

We were at the hide by 4pm, and as it gives you 1-2 hours of reflecting, I sat wondering, when had anyone last seen pheasants there. For the person in charge of the feeding and the hide, nothing could be worse than if the pheasants stopped to come, or only came every 3rd day in average. We got the message that they would come but I was left with the feeling that such info is simply not reliable. Too much money is involved. We did hear minimum 2 birds in the thick habitat to the right of the hide (but again, the hide part makes you caught in there without “legitimate” possibilities to leave the hide to see what is going on. We did not see any birds, but strangely, when we left in darkness at 6pm, a Reeves’s pheasant was flushed up just when we stepped on the small bridge from the hide to the trial. So this afternoon there were around, but too skittish to show themselves at the feeding station at the huge rocks. Very disappointed we returned to our hotel, and I was wondering about the frequency the pheasants have been seen at the rocks for the previous many weeks. There is a new hotel/pheasant conservation building a bit further down the road and it seems like they have made even better hides (less open spaced as the old hide), but they were not open to the public.

24-Dec: We did not give up. We dedicated the full morning to drive up the mountain Lingshan (with a local car and driver as we were not allowed to go up our car). We walked a total of 8 km up and down and we might have heard one pheasant flushing its wings, but no birds seen. This is the tough way of seeing this bird, but I am sure that if the area had not leaned so much towards the feeding station more efforts had been put into how to find them “in the wild”.

Instead we saw several groups of Yellow-bellied Tits and several great views of Brown-breasted Bulbul. Only place we saw these two species on the trip. We tried the Reeves's feeder again from 4-6 pm but today there were absolutely no activity.

We then drove 1½ hours in darkness to get closer to next stop, which were Hefei for some good reeds.

25-Dec: Early morning departure for Chinese Penduline Tit habitat around Chao Lake. Fairly quickly we found some deep and strong reeds and after some playback a group of penduline tits came close. Attempts to lure out a Reed Parrotbill failed. We then drove to Liu He Wetland (north of Nanjing and now almost in Steven's backyard). We got great views of groups of both Masked Laughingthrushes and Reed Parrotbills.

The whole day we also looked for Baikal Teal but never found one.

Steven dropped me off at the train station in Nanjing and I took the train to Shanghai ending the official part of the trip.

26-Dec: Shanghai: My first morning in Shanghai was spent with a nice stroll to the small park Suzhouhe Mengqing Garden where I got nice and close looks of groups of Grey-backed Thrushes which we did only see briefly on the trip, but it was rather common here. Rest of the day was pure sightseeing.

27-Dec: This morning I took the metro to Century Park, which is huge and have many nice species. In a 5 minutes period moving 20 meter I saw Yellow-browed Warbler, Eurasian Hoopoe, Common Kingfisher, Oriental Magpie Robin and Eastern Water Rail. Especially the rail was a bonus as we only heard it on the main trip, despite hours looking for calling birds. I did not list all birds but had the trip's best view of Pale Thrush here as well.

28-Dec: Morning flight to Copenhagen via Beijing



Baer's Pochard (photo taken with high ISO)

Bird list following “Birds of East Asia” by Mark Brazil.

1. White-necklaced Partridge (*Arborophila gingica*):

18/12: 2 birds heard from the road up to Emei Feng. We climbed down and got closer but never saw the birds

18/12: 1 bird seen well at the upper part of the Waterfall trail (starting at the top of Emei Feng)

2. Chinese Bamboo Partridge (*Bambusicola thoracicus*):

Seen once flushed from the road at Emei Feng and later a group of birds near Wuyuan

3. Cabot’s Tragopan (*Tragopan caboti*):

18/12: a total of 5 birds seen rather briefly. In the misty morning one bird crossed the road up to Emei Feng (more erect chicken like posture). Later 2 pairs seen moving slowly away partly hidden. Funny enough, my first impression both times were “mammals” due to size, back pattern and the way of crawling away rather slowly

19/12: star bird of the trip. Steven suddenly saw a stunning male standing still on a rock above us (again at the upper part of the Emei Feng road) where it stood silently until a car from behind honked the horn.

4. Silver pheasant (*Lophura nycthemera*)

The “common” pheasant. Groups of up to 6 birds seen several times, both at Emei Feng and other mountain areas.

5. Elliot’s pheasant (*Syrnaticus ellioti*):

Up to 10-12 birds seen driving up and down the road to Emei Feng. Not so scared if you stay in the car.

6. Reeves’s Pheasant (*Syrnaticus reevesii*), heard only:

The nightmare bird of the trip where we tried – as all other birders – at the hide near Dongzhai.

23-Dec: Spent time from 4-6PM at the classical hide. Never seen but minimum 1 bird heard very close to the hide.

Flushed after dusk when we left the hide .

24-Dec: Morning spent searching at the higher elevations at Mt Lingshan. From 4-6 PM, no activity at all at the hide.

7. Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*):

1 bird seen at the Collared Crow village

8. Swan Goose (*Anser cygnoides*)

Fairly large numbers of this endangered goose at Poyang Lake mostly in the SE part.

9. Taiga Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis*)

A few Taiga’s picked out among the Tundra at the SE part. Not looked for hereafter.

10. Tundra Bean Goose (*Anser serrirostris*)

High numbers seen at the SE end part of Poyang Lake

11. Graylag Goose (*Anser Anser*)

Up to 10 birds seen around Poyang Lake

12. Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*)

Seen around Poyang Lake

13. Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*)

1 bird with yellow eye-ring picked out among the much more common Greater White-fronted Goose)

14. Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*)

Only Swan seen on the trip, primarily around Poyang Lake

15. Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

One single bird seen at the end of the trip near Nanqing

16. Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*)

Few small groups seen at the end of the trip

17. Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*)

A pair seen at the merganser river

18. Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

Few numbers seen throughout the trip

19. Falcated Duck (*Anas falcata*)

Few birds seen at Poyang Lake

20. Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas Penelope*)

Fairly common throughout the trip

21. Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Fairly common throughout the trip

22. Eastern Spot-billed Duck (*Anas zonorhyncha*)

Most common duck on the trip, seen everywhere.

23. Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Small numbers throughout the trip

24. Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

Small numbers throughout the trip

25. Eurasian Teal (*Anas crecca*)

Second most common duck on the trip, seen throughout

26. Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)

Small groups seen at Poyang Lake

Baer's Pochard (*Aythya baeri*)

Total number around 50, seen at NW part of Poyang Lake, small groups rather close to the shore 22 Dec.

27. Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

2 birds seen at Poyang Lake

28. Smew (*Mergellus albellus*)

1 bird flying over the lake at ...

29. Scaly-sided Merganser (*Mergus squamatus*)

10 birds seen from the hide, another 2 seen on the way to the hide

30. Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

Seen in almost every lake or waterhole. Sometimes in large numbers.

31. Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

A few birds seen, 1 at the lake just outside xxxx

32. Oriental Stork (*Ciconia boyciana*)

This sought-after stork was seen in small groups most places we stopped at Poyang Lake and up to 6 birds also seen near Nanqing.

33. Crested Ibis (*Nipponia nippon*)

A single bird was reported near the Merganser River. We quickly found a very unshy bird. 2 birds also seen sitting in a tree near Dongzhai.

34. Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)

Groups flying over around Poyang Lake and N of Nanqing.

35. Eurasian Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*)

1 bird seen from the dike scanning for xxx

36. Black-crowned Night-heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

Seen a few places in large colonies, especially at the dike at...

37. Chinese pond Heron (*Ardeola bacchus*)

Few birds seen throughout the trip

38. Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

Commonly seen throughout the trip

39. Great White Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)

Seen in fewer numbers throughout the trip

40. Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

Commonly seen throughout the trip

41. Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Few birds seen throughout the trip

42. Eurasian Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

Seen in small numbers through the trip

43. Pied Falconet (*Microhierax melanoleucus*)

21-Dec: 3 birds seen at 09:45AM for around 20 minutes from the rooftop in the village at their favorite tree

44. Northern Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

1 bird seen at the sunbird place

45. Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)

1 bird seen at the marsh grassbird area

46. Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*)

A total of 3 birds seen on the trip. First was a couple just outside Sanming.

47. Black-eared Kite (*Milvus lineatus*)

A single bird seen on the trip

48. Eastern Marsh Harrier (*Circus spilonotus*)

A few birds seen in suitable habitat

49. Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)

1 bird seen flying over marsh at Poyang Lake

50. Chinese Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter soloensis*)

Seen several times throughout the trip – one bird perched perfectly around Emei Feng

51. Eastern Buzzard (*Buteo japonicus*)

Seen a few times throughout the trip

52. Indian Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malayensis*)

Seen twice, one flying close over us at the sunbird place

53. Eastern Water Rail (*Rallus indicus*)

22-Dec: Heard several times at shallow overgrown areas around Poyang Lake. Only seen bird was at Century Park in Shanghai 27-Dec.

54. Brown Crake (*Amaurornis akool*)

22-Dec: Two birds seen at marshes along the dikes at Poyang Lake in the Wucheng part.

55. Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Very common in same places, where looking for rails and crakes

56. Common Coot (*Fulica atra*)

Seen in very high numbers throughout the trip

57. Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*)

1000+ cranes seen gathering together in SE part of Poyang Lake

58. White-naped Crane (*Grus vipio*)

Up to 10 birds seen around Poyang Lake

59. Common Crane (*Grus grus*)

Second most common crane, seen around Poyang Lake

60. Hooded Crane (*Grus monacha*)

Small groups seen around Poyang Lake

61. Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)

Only seen once – N of Nanjing at the Liu He Wetland

62. Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

Poyang lake, no details

63. Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Rather common among the cranes and geese at Poyang Lake

64. Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Flushed a few times mainly around Poyang Lake

65. Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*)

Most common wader, throughout

66. Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*)

Poyang lake, no details

67. Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

Poyang lake and a few other places, no details

68. Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)

Poyang lake and a few other places, no details

69. Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Poyang lake and few other places, no details

70. Vega Gull (*Larus vegae*)

Small numbers seen throughout the trip – no longer stops to sort out subspecies

71. Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

Seen a few times, no details

72. Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*)

2 birds flying over a river near Poyang Lake

73. Rock Dove (*Columbia livia*)

Few birds seen here and there

74. Oriental Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia orientalis*)

Single birds seen a few times during the trip

75. Eastern Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*)

Seen throughout the trip

76. Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

2 birds flushed several times along the dikes at NW Poyang Lake while looking for crakes and rails

77. White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)

One bird seen nicely perched in the Chao Lake area

78. Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

One at Poyang Lake. Also seen along a river in urban Wenchou and then an unshy bird at Century Park Shanghai

79. Blyth's Kingfisher (*Alcedo Hercules*)

17-Dec, 1 bird near Sanming – for more details please arrange with Steven

80. Crested Kingfisher (*Megaceryle lugubris*)

1 bird seen from the Merganser hide

81. Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*)

1 bird seen at NW part of Poyang Lake

82. Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

27-Dec in Century Park, Shanghai and a few birds along the trip

83. Chinese Barbet (*Psilopogon faber*), heard only

Tried for this bird at a more regular place (26.4407,117.5842) for this bird N of Sanming. We played the call, after some attempts a single bird came close but remained unseen in the top of a tree.

84. Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker (*Yungipicus canicapillus*):

1 single bird seen the morning at Lingshan mountain (Dongzhai)

85. Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)

Seen in small numbers throughout the trip

86. Grey-headed Woodpecker (*Picus canus*):

1 single bird seen the morning at Lingshan mountain (Dongzhai)

87. Bay Woodpecker (*Blythipicus pyrrhotis*)

17-Dec: A group of birds seen well outside Bailian Town

88. Grey-Chinned Minivet (*Pericrocotus solaris*)

17-Dec: a single bird seen outside Bailian Town

89. Long-tailed Shrike (*Lanius schach*)

This beautiful bird seen in small numbers throughout the trip. Always a pleasure.

90. Chinese Grey Shrike (*Lanius sphenocercus*)

22-Dec morning: 1 bird seen and photographed along the dikes in SE Poyang Lake (Wucheng area)

91. Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

A group of jays seen the morning at Lingshan mountain (Dongzhai). Single birds seen a few other places.

92. Azure-winged Magpie (*Cyanopica cyanus*)

Mostly in cities or villages, seen the more N we went

93. Red-billed Blue Magpie (*Urocissa erythrorhyncha*)

Pleasantly common – noisy groups seen throughout the trip. Somehow an underrated bird.

94. Oriental Magpie (*Pica serica*)

Common, seen throughout China

95. Daurian Jackdaw (*Coleus dauuricus*)

1 single bird seen from en route not far from the Collared Crow place below. Clearly less white on the neck and smaller.

96. Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)

2 single birds seen at the Collared Crow place below

97. Collared Crow (*Corvus pectoralis*)

First seen in the Bayi village of Lvwang town.

98. Large-billed Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*)

Common in N, less common in S

99. Japanese Tit (*Parus minor*)

Small numbers seen throughout the trip

100. Yellow-bellied Tit (*Periparus venustulus*)

Groups seen well at the lower parts of the Lingshan mountain (Dongzhai)

101. Yellow-cheeked Tit (*Periparus spilonotus*)

Fairly common at Emei Feng

102. Willow Tit (*Poecile montanus*):

14-Dec, Jingshan Park, Beijing

103. Sultan Tit (*Melanochlora sultanea*)

A single bird among the more common tits at Emei Feng

104. Chinese Penduline Tit (*Remiz consobrinus*)

25-Dec: Group of birds lured out of the reeds at Chao lake (31.713306, 117.388972)

105. Silver-throated Tit (*Aegithalos glaucogularis*)

Only seen at the end of the trip (N), mainly the morning at the Lingshan mountain.

106. Black-throated tit (*Aegithalos concinnus*)

Seen throughout the trip with other tits

107. Oriental Skylark (*Alauda gulgula*)

A single bird seen a Poyang Lake

108. Zitting Cisticola (*Cisticola juncidis*)

A single bird in large reed area at the west side of the Poyang Lake Nature reserve (Wucheng part)

109. Plain Prinia (*Prinia inornate*)

Only prinia species on the trip, seen often in reeds throughout the trip

110. Collared Finchbill (*Spizixos semitorques*)

Seen first at the merganser place, rather common and unshy

111. Red-Whiskered Bulbul (*Pycnonotus jocosus*)

1 bird seen in a village (no specific notes)

112. Brown-breasted Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthorrhous*)

This hit-or-miss bulbul seemed to be rather common at the Lingshan mountain near Dongzhai, only place we saw it

113. Chinese Bulbul (*Pycnonotus sinensis*)

Most commonly seen bulbul, literally everywhere, mountains, cities and in between

114. Mountain Bulbul (*Ixos mcclllandii*)

Seen throughout the trip

115. Chestnut Bulbul (*Hemixos castanonotus*)

This handsome bulbul was seen throughout the trip

116. Himalayan Black Bulbul (*Hypsipetes leucocephalus*)

Not so commonly seen but great views just outside Bailian Town including the striking white-headed *leucocephalus* ssp

117. Marsh Grassbird (*Megalurus pryeri*)

A single bird flushed up in large reed area at the west side of the Poyang Lake Nature reserve (Wucheng part)

118. Brown-flanked Bush Warbler (*Cettia fortipes*)

2 birds together at the foot of the Lingshan mountain

119. Dusky Warbler (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*)

1 bird around Dongzhai

120. Pallas's Leaf Warbler (*Phylloscopus proregulus*)

2 birds seen at the top of Emei Feng

121. Yellow-browed Warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*)

Seen in downtown Wengchou and in Century Park Shanghai. Also a few along the main trip

122. Rufous-faced Warbler (*Abroscopus albogularis*)

Lingshan mountain

123. Grey-sided Scimitar-Babbler (*Pomatorhinus swinhoei*)

2 birds, seen only once at the path that starts where the road ends at the top of Emei Feng

124. Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler (*Pomatorhinus ruficollis*)

First heard at Emei Feng but later seen a couple of times at lower altitudes in same area

125. Masked Laughingthrush (*Garrulax perspicillatus*)

Seen en route around Sanming in the beginning. Later a group of birds were called out from the reeds N of Nanjing at the Liu He Wetland

126. Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush (*Garrulax pectoralis*)

A large group feeding with Grey-headed Parrotbill at the top of Emei Feng at a path leading down from the housings before the road ends

127. Moustached Laughingthrush (*Garrulax cineraceus*), heard only

Emei Feng, one bird heard only. The bird would simply not show itself despite intense search. We did not have the call.

128. Buffy Laughingthrush (*Garrulax berthemyi*)

Emei Feng, 2 birds feeding along the road going up

129. Chinese Hwamei (*Garrulax canorus*)

2 birds seen flying over from the boardwalks at Emei Feng top

130. White-browed Laughingthrush (*Garrulax sannio*)

Habitat-wise a rather unusual laughingthrush. Seen only once but rather openly in a village near Dongzhai

131. White-browed Shrike-Babbler (*Pteruthius flaviscapis*)

A few sightings, mainly at Emei Feng

132. Dusky Fulvette (*Alcippe brunnea*)

Very difficult to get your eyes on. Two calling birds crossed the road at the sunbird place.

133. Huet's Fulvetta (*Alcippe hueti*)

Small flocks seen and especially heard at all slightly higher elevation, starting around Sanming.

134. Indochinese Yuhina (*Yuhina torqueola*)

Few sightings – first ones high up in the trees but at Emei Feng we got closer looks.

135. Black-chinned Yuhina (*Yuhina nigrimenta*)

Only seen at the start of the trip – especially around Sanming

136. White-bellied Epornis (*Epornis zantholeuca*)

Seen several times with bulbul and tit flocks

137. Vinous-throated Parrotbill (*Paradoxornis webbianus*)

A noisy and unshy group of birds in the trees just by the river just by the Homestead in Kengkou village

138. Short-tailed Parrotbill (*Paradoxornis davidianus*)

2 birds seen well but short on the path leading to the merganser hide number 2

139. Grey-headed Parrotbill (*Paradoxornis gularis*)

A large group feeding with Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes at the top of Emei Feng

140. Reed Parrotbill (*Paradoxornis heudei*)

Group of birds called out from the reeds N of Nanjing at the Liu He Wetland

141. Swinhoe's White-eye (*Zosterops japonicus*)

Few birds seen in the south of the trip

142. Crested Myna (*Acridotheres cristatellus*)

Everywhere

143. Black-collared starling (*Sturnus nigricollis*)

This very large starling was seen in small numbers in urban areas throughout the trip

144. Red-billed starling (*Sturnus sericeus*)

Most common starling on the trip, seen in large groups throughout the trip

145. White-cheeked Starling (*Sturnus cineraceus*)

Not so common but seen throughout the trip in smaller number

146. Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Small groups seen a few places

147. White Thrush (*Zoothera dauma*)

Up to 5 birds seen well on the road going up to Emei Feng

148. Grey-backed Thrush (*Turdus hortulorum*)

Most easily seen in Shanghai parks but seen briefly once en route in the Poyang lake area.

149. Chinese Blackbird (*Turdus mandarinus*)

Common in villages

150. Pale Thrush (*Turdus pallidus*):

Single bird at the Lingshan mountain near Dongzhai. Also seen in Century Park in Shanghai.

151. Red-throated Thrush (*Turdus ruficollis*)

At ticket centre at the Mutianyu part of the Great Wall

152. Naumann's Thrush (*Turdus naumanni*)

Single bird at the Lingshan mountain near Dongzhai. Also seen in Beijing.

153. Dusky Thrush (*Turdus eunomus*)

Single bird at the Lingshan mountain near Dongzhai

154. Red-flanked Bluetail (*Luscinia cyanura*):

Seen in small numbers throughout the trip

155. Oriental Magpie-Robin (*Copsychus saularis*)

Seen in small numbers throughout the trip, also in Century Park in Shanghai

156. Daurian Redstart (*Phoenicurus aureus*)

This handsome redstart seen in small numbers throughout the trip

157. Plumbeous redstart (*Rhyacornis fuliginosa*):

Seen often at streams throughout the trip

158. Little Forktail (*Enicurus scouleri*)

Near the Blyth's Kingfisher place, feeding in a river in the middle of a village

159. Slaty-backed Forktail (*Enicurus schistaceus*)

Seen surprisingly often throughout the trip where there were mountain streams

160. White-Crowned Forktail (*Enicurus leschenaultia*)

Seen surprisingly often throughout the trip where there were mountain streams

161. Siberian Stonechat (*Saxicola maurus*)

1 bird in the merganser area

162. Orange-Bellied Leafbird (*Chloropsis hardwickii*)

The Greyish-crowned subspecies. Seen a few times in mixed flocks at Emei Feng other mountain areas.

163. Fork-tailed Sunbird (*Aethopyga christinae*)

In the merganser area. Two birds calling and flying high above us until one of them perched just over the road allowing great views.

164. Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

Seen in cities and villages

165. White-rumped Munia (*Lonchura striata*)

Small groups seen first at Emei Feng

166. Scaly-breasted Munia (*Lonchura punctulate*)

A group of birds in the trees just by the river just by the Homestead in Kengkou village

167. Siberian Accentor (*Prunella montanella*)

In Beigo near the Mutianyu part of the Great Wall

168. Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

2 single birds seen on the trip, no further details

169. White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*)

Common, seen throughout the trip

170. Olive-backed Pipit (*Anthus hodgsoni*)

Most commonly seen pipit, often on electronic wires

171. Red-throated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*)

One bird seen along the dikes at Poyang Lake (Wucheng part)

172. Buff-bellied Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*)

A few birds seen at the merganser area

173. Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

Few birds seen here and there. Also, literally the only bird I saw at my 3 hours walking on the Great Wall

174. Oriental Greenfinch (*Carduelis sinica*)

Small groups seen a few places (no details), also seen in Beijing

175. Eurasian Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*)

Only seen in Century Park in Shanghai

176. Chinese Grosbeak (*Eophona migratoria*)

A few birds seen here and there along the trip. Also Seen in Beijing

177. Meadow Bunting (*Emberiza cioides*)

In Beigo near the Mutianyu part of the Great Wall

178. Tristram's Bunting (*Emberiza tristami*)

A forest bunting, notoriously difficult to see. A small group seen briefly at the top of Emei Feng.

179. Chestnut-eared Bunting (*Emberiza fucata*)

A single bird flushed up in large reed area at the west side of the Poyang Lake Nature reserve (Wucheng area)

180. Little Bunting (*Emberiza pusilla*)

2 birds seen well (but skulking) in the small bushes by the river just by the Homestead in Kengkou village

181. Yellow-browed Bunting (*Emberiza chrysophrys*)

Several birds in the small bushes by the river just by the Homestead in Kengkou village

182. Rustic Bunting (*Emberiza rustica*)

A single bird at Poyang Lake Nature reserve (Wucheng part)

183. Elegant Bunting (*Emberiza elegans*)

2 birds feeding on the road up to Lingshan mountain near Dongzhai

184. Black-faced Bunting (*Emberiza spodocephala*)

Most common bunting, seen throughout the trip

185. Pallas's Reed Bunting (*Emberiza pallasi*)

A single bird flushed up in large reed area at the west side of the Poyang Lake Nature reserve (Wucheng part), notice the small head. Later a rather unshy bird showed well for long time at the reeds at Chao Lake.



Vinous-throated Parrotbill



Mountain Bulbul