

**Trip report for birding tour in northern Yunnan and western Sichuan, China
September 28 to October 9, 2024 (12 days)**

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Lady Amherst's Pheasant

Summary. Over the last years, we went on several birding tours with **Steven An** to different areas in China. He is a very friendly, trustworthy, well-organized and knowledgeable bird guide. He is also a reliable and safe driver. This year, we visited China in September and October and had about two weeks time for birding. This season is not the best time for birdwatching in northern Yunnan and western Sichuan, but the mountains look fantastic in autumn colours. Because we had already seen many of the more common Chinese birds on previous tours, we focused on some regional target species. Furthermore, we explored new birding sites in the region and spent time enjoying the local culture and scenery.

28/09/2024. We met in Lijiang in northern Yunnan in the morning. Lijiang has a beautiful old city centre and a series of parks, which are inhabited by a number of interesting bird species. Since we already saw most of those on a previous visit, we left Lijiang soon and drove to a coniferous forest about 45 minutes west of the town. Here we had a short walk and quickly found our first target species, the **Rufous-tailed Babbler!** There were a total of six birds singing near a clearing in the forest. Among other common species, we saw **Oriental Honey-buzzard**, **Besra**, and **Spectacled Fulvetta**. The site is also good for **Yunnan Nuthatch**. After this stop, we continued our trip and had lunch in Shigu Town, where a small park offers nice views of the Yangtze River. Here we observed **White-throated Fantail**, **Brown Shrike**, **Asian Tit**, **Dusky Warbler**, **Gray-crowned Warbler**, **Blyth's Leaf Warbler**, and **White Wagtail** among others. We continued our drive to Laojunshan and stopped at several good birding sites on the way. Due to the rainy weather, we missed our target bird, the **Eye-ringed Parrotbill**. Instead we saw more common species, including **Brown-breasted Bulbul**, **Sooty-headed Bulbul**, **White-browed Laughingthrush**, **Black-throated Tit**, **Little Forktail**, **Plumbeous Redstart**, **Olive-backed Pipit**, and **Gray Bushchat**. We reached Laojunshan in the late evening and stayed in a small village guest house in the middle of the forest.



Rufous-tailed Babbler



White Wagtail



Biet's Laughingthrush

29/09/2024. The next morning, we started early and visited a local bird hide focusing on the highly range-restricted *Biet's Laughingthrush*. Due to some road construction, the birds were disturbed and did not come to the hide. Instead, we saw them during a walk in the adjacent forest. After we saw our target bird, we visited a few more sites in the forests of Laojunshan and saw several nice species, including *Gray-backed Shrike*, *Green-backed Tit*, *Crested Finchbill*, *Blyth's Leaf Warbler*, *Spectacled Fulvetta*, *Manipur Fulvetta*, *White-browed Fulvetta*, *White-collared Yuhina*, *Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler*, *Black-faced Laughingthrush*, *Moustached Laughingthrush*, *Rufous-bellied Niltava*, *Black-headed Sibia*, *Blue-winged Minla*, *Brown Dipper*, *Blue Whistling-Thrush*, *Plumbeous Redstart*, *Snowy-browed Flycatcher*, *Gray Bushchat*, and *Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker*. Another highlight was a juvenile *Firethroat*, which is a bit unusual in this region at this time of the year.



Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler



Moustached Laughingthrush



juvenile *Firethroat*

30/09/2024. We left Laojunshan in the early morning and tried again for the *Eye-ringed Parrotbill*, but no luck. We need to come back during a better season! We drove north through the mountains and stopped along the way at a number of promising sites. Observed birds include *Black-rumped Magpie*, *White-throated Fantail*, *Gray-backed Shrike*, *Eurasian Hoopoe*, *Ashy Drongo*, *Brown-breasted Bulbul*, *Sooty-headed Bulbul*, *Blue-whistling Thrush*, *Plumbeous Redstart*, and *White-capped Redstart*. We reached the Black Snub-nosed Monkey National Park around lunch time, but did not do any birding in the afternoon due to rainy weather and a headache. We stayed in a simple, but good hotel in the town near the national park.

01/10/2024. In the early morning, we visited the Black Snub-nosed Monkey National Park. The visit concentrated on observing a group of 25 monkeys in the high mountains of the national park. Additionally, we recorded *Great Barbet*, *Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail*, *Hume's Warbler*, *Tickell's Leaf Warbler*, *Blyth's Leaf Warbler*, *White-collared Yuhina*, *Black-headed Sibia*, *Blue-winged Minla*, *Daurian Redstart*, *Gray Wagtail*, *White Wagtail*, and *Common Rosefinch*. After we left the Black Snub-nosed Monkeys, we continued our journey to Shangri-La. On the way through the coniferous forests, we saw several *Southern Nutcracker*. We reached Shangri-La in the afternoon and drove to the famous Alpine Botanical Garden. From the coffee shop in front of the botanical garden, we could

observe **Eastern Spot-billed Duck**, **Ferruginous Duck**, **Common Redshank**, **Little Grebe**, **Great Crested Grebe**, **Little Egret**, and **Large-billed Crow** at Napa Lake. In the sky above there were many **Red-billed Chough** flying. Even though the weather was rainy, we recorded a good number of birds inside the botanical garden. Especially the large number of warblers was striking! In addition, we saw **Ring-necked Pheasant**, **Black-crowned Night Heron**, **Short-billed Minivet**, **Long-tailed Minivet**, **Elliot's Laughingthrush**, **Giant Laughingthrush**, **Chinese Babax**, **Daurian Redstart**, and **Olive-backed Pipit**. We stayed overnight in a very beautiful Tibetan home stay on the way to Pudacuo National Park, a few kilometres east of Shangri-La.



young Black Snub-nosed Monkeys



Tickell's Leaf Warbler



Chinese Babax

02/10/2024. We started early in the morning and drove to Pudacuo National Park, where we visited Shudu Lake. The number of tourists was already quite large, because of the Chinese National Holidays. Luckily, we had a very nice sighting of our main target bird, the **White-eared Pheasant**. Additional birds (especially in the coniferous forest along the trail) included **Short-billed Minivet**, **Long-tailed Minivet**, **Eurasian Jay**, **Gray-crested Tit**, **Sichuan Tit**, **Asian Tit**, **Buff-barred Warbler**, **Yellow-browed Warbler**, **Hume's Warbler**, **Sichuan Leaf Warbler**, **Dusky Warbler**, **Giant Laughingthrush**, **Chestnut-vented Nuthatch**, **Himalayan Bluetail**, **Slaty-blue Flycatcher**, **Daurian Redstart**, **Gray Bushchat**, **White Wagtail**, and **Yellow-throated Bunting**. After leaving Pudacuo National Park, we had lunch and went on a very long drive into the high mountains along the border between Yunnan and Sichuan. We reached our next destination, Yading Nature Reserve, just after sunset. We stayed in a very beautiful hotel in the tourist village near the park's entrance.



White-eared Pheasant



Snow Pigeon



Giant Laughingthrush

03/10/2024. Today, we visited the beautiful mountain valley of the Yading Nature Reserve. This included a lot of hiking. It would be easy to spend several days in this area. The mountain scenery was impressive, but should be even better with a clear sky and outside the National Holidays (we need to come back). Recorded birds included **Ruddy Shelduck**, **White Eared-Pheasant**, **Hill Pigeon**, **Snow Pigeon**, **Chinese Pond-Heron**, **Black Kite**, **Red-billed Chough**, **Large-billed Crow**, **Sichuan Tit**, **Buff-barred Warbler**, **Sichuan Leaf Warbler**, **Tickell's Leaf Warbler**, **Elliot's Laughingthrush**, **Giant Laughingthrush**, **White-throated Dipper**, **Himalayan Bluetail**, **Blue-fronted Redstart**, **White-capped**

Redstart, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Gray Wagtail, White Wagtail, Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch, and Chinese White-browed Rosefinch. Additionally, we saw a big group of Bharal (Blue Sheep). We left the park around 4 pm and still drove a bit further north staying overnight in a small village guest house (away from the tourists).



Blue-fronted Redstart



Bearded Vulture



Chinese Fulvetta

04/10/2024. The morning saw us back on the road, driving through beautiful mountain scenery and passing a number of birding sites with **Black-rumped Magpie, White-eared Pheasant, Sichuan Leaf Warbler, Greenish Warbler, Giant Laughingthrush, White-backed Thrush, White-winged Grosbeak, and Chinese White-browed Rosefinch.** While walking through a small park along the road, we suddenly saw two **Bearded Vultures** circling close above us. In the afternoon, we visited Pujie Temple, which sits on a hill side with beautiful scrubland. Here, we recorded **White-eared Pheasant, Sichuan Leaf Warbler, Tickell's Leaf Warbler, Chinese Fulvetta, White-browed Fulvetta, Elliot's Laughingthrush, Giant Laughingthrush, Chinese Babax, White-bellied Redstart, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch, Pink-rumped Rosefinch, and Streaked Rosefinch.** Afterwards and until sunset, we spent two hours in the Sangdui-Mofang Valley. Here, we found **Tibetan Partridge, Tickell's Leaf Warbler, Chinese Rubythroat, White-capped Redstart, Hodgson's Redstart, Amur Stonechat, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Rosy Pipit, and Streaked Rosefinch.** We stayed in a simple hotel in the small town. By now, we had left most of the general tourists behind and could enjoy the nature again almost on our own.



Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch



Chinese Rubythroat



Blood Pheasant

05/10/2024. We got up very early and visited the Bungpu Monastery. The highlights were a group of **Blood Pheasants** as well as three **Crested Tit-Warblers.** In addition, we saw **Common Merganser, White-eared Pheasant, Hill Pigeon, Black-rumped Magpie, Red-billed Chough, Rufous-vented Tit, Gray-crested Tit, Sichuan Tit, Asian House-Martin, Elliot's Laughingthrush, Giant Laughingthrush, Goldcrest, Plumbeous Redstart, Hodgson's Redstart, and White Wagtail.** Afterwards we drove into the high mountains to Xingyi Tso Lake. The dramatic scenery at the high altitude is characterized by scrubland. **Przevalski's Pinktail** has been reported here during summer months, but we were not lucky enough to spot this bird. Instead, we saw two **Black-necked Cranes** as well as **Horned Lark** and

Brown Accentor among others. In the distance, we observed a group of Wild Pigs as well as Himalayan Marmots. The park rangers told us that someone saw a Snow Leopard during the previous night! We continued our drive to the town of Litang, checking for **Ibisbill** in the rivers along the road. However, we only saw two **Common Redshank**. We stayed overnight in a nice hotel in Litang.



Black-necked Crane



Ibisbill



Buff-throated Monal-Partridge

06/10/2024. Today, we visited the "Eye of Genie" west of Litang. On the way and just outside town, we finally found an **Ibisbill**. Along the road, we also encountered **Giant Shrike, Himalayan Griffon, Upland Buzzard, Eurasian Kestrel, Red-billed Chough,** and **Common Raven**. In general, we focused more on the beautiful scenery and did not do a lot of birding. We also passed a group of Tibetan Macaque on the road. After our trip to the "Eye of Genie", we visited the large monastery in Litang and then continued to drive to Yajiang, where we stayed in a very good hotel.

07/10/2024. In the early morning, we drove up on the mountain side to visit Pamuling Temple. Here, we quickly found our target bird, the **Buff-throated Monal-Partridge**. In addition, we recorded **Blood Pheasant, Hill Pigeon, Himalayan Griffon, Large-billed Crow, Common Raven, Rufous-vented Tit, Chinese Bush Warbler, Giant Laughingthrush, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Olive-backed Pipit,** and many rosefinches. Particularly good surprises were a pair of **White-browed Tit-Warblers** and a **Yunnan Nuthatch**. In the forest near the monastery, we also spotted two Tufted Deer. After visiting the monastery, we continued our journey and drove to Kangding, where we stayed in a nearby village guest house.



White-browed Tit-Warbler



Barred Laughingthrush



Maroon-backed Accentor

08/10/2024. In the early morning, we visited the bird hide of Liaokanglin. A short hike through the steep hill side leads to a hide, which is frequented by many **Lady Amherst's Pheasants** (see cover photo). In addition, we saw **Long-tailed Minivet, Red-billed Blue-Magpie, White-browed Fulvetta, Ashy-throated Parrotbill, White-collared Yuhina, Elliot's Laughingthrush, Giant Laughingthrush,** and **Chinese Babax**. A great surprise was a single **Barred Laughingthrush**, which came out of the bushes for a few seconds! After lunch, we drove towards Hailuogou Glacier Forest Park passing two **Gray-headed Lapwings** on the way. At Hailuogou Glacier Forest Park, we still had two hours before

sunset for a walk. We saw *Eurasian Kestrel*, *Coal Tit*, *Gray-crested Tit*, *Buff-barred Warbler*, *Yellow-streaked Warbler*, *Dusky Warbler*, *Bianchi's Warbler*, *Claudia's Leaf Warbler*, *Elliot's Laughingthrush*, *Sichuan Treecreeper*, *Plumbeous Redstart*, *Maroon-backed Accentor*, *Vinaceous Rosefinch*, *Chinese White-browed Rosefinch*, and *Dark-breasted Rosefinch*. We stayed overnight in the fantastic Camp 3 Hotel.

09/10/2024. We got up early in the morning and went hiking in the Hailuoguo Glacier Forest Park. Unfortunately, the weather was partly rainy and most of the mountain scenery was covered by clouds. Birding in the forest was great with a group of *Streaked Barwing* being the absolute highlight of the stay! In addition, we recorded *Red-billed Blue-Magpie*, *Southern Nutcracker*, *Long-tailed Minivet*, *Green Shrike-Babbler*, *Hume's Warbler*, *Dusky Warbler*, *Bianchi's Warbler*, *Rufous-vented Tit*, *Gray-hooded Fulvetta*, *White-browed Fulvetta*, *Stripe-throated Yuhina*, *Rufous-capped Babbler*, *Elliot's Laughingthrush*, *Black-faced Laughingthrush*, *Sichuan Treecreeper*, *Eurasian Nuthatch*, *Himalayan Bluetail*, *Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher*, *Blue-fronted Redstart*, *Maroon-backed Accentor*, *Olive-backed Pipit*, *Gray-headed Bullfinch*, *Dark-breasted Rosefinch*, and *Chinese White-browed Rosefinch*. Another target species was the *Temminck's Tragopan* and while we could hear its calls, we unfortunately did not see it. In the afternoon, we left the park and drove to Yaan, where our birding tour finished.



Stripe-throated Yuhina



Streaked Barwing



Gray-hooded Fulvetta