

MAMMALS, BIRDS, AMPHIBIANS and REPTILES

seen on the Roof of the World and in Sichuan Oct 3 – Oct 27 2016

Stefan Lithner



Wild yak

This trip was arranged by Greentours Natural History Holidays <http://www.greentours.co.uk/> and was conducted by Jesper Hornskov Beijing China (JH), Roland Ziedler Germany (RZ) and Phil Benstead Grevie Sweden (PB).

Participants were:

Michel Lejard Tours France (ML) , Eric McCabe Perth (EM), Lesley McCabe Perth (LM), Francis Jouanne Le Havre France (FJ), Anita Ericson Bor Sweden (AE), Ian Silvester Berkshire(JS), Virginia Silvester Berkshire (VS), Stefan Lithner Karlshamn Sweden (SL), Jacqui Green Cambridge (JG), David Thomas Devon (DT), Maureen Thomas Devon (MT), Staffan Widstrand Järfälla Sweden (SW).

Presentation:

This trip focused on mammals, but a number of birds, a few reptiles, amphibians and insects were also identified.

For identification of mammals we used Andrew T Smith and Yan Xie; *A Guide to the Mammals of China 2008*, in text referred to as; Smith et al. Some supplementary information is added from [www.iucnredlist](http://www.iucnredlist.org/) (preceded by *Nomen nescio*) are referred to as (IUCN).

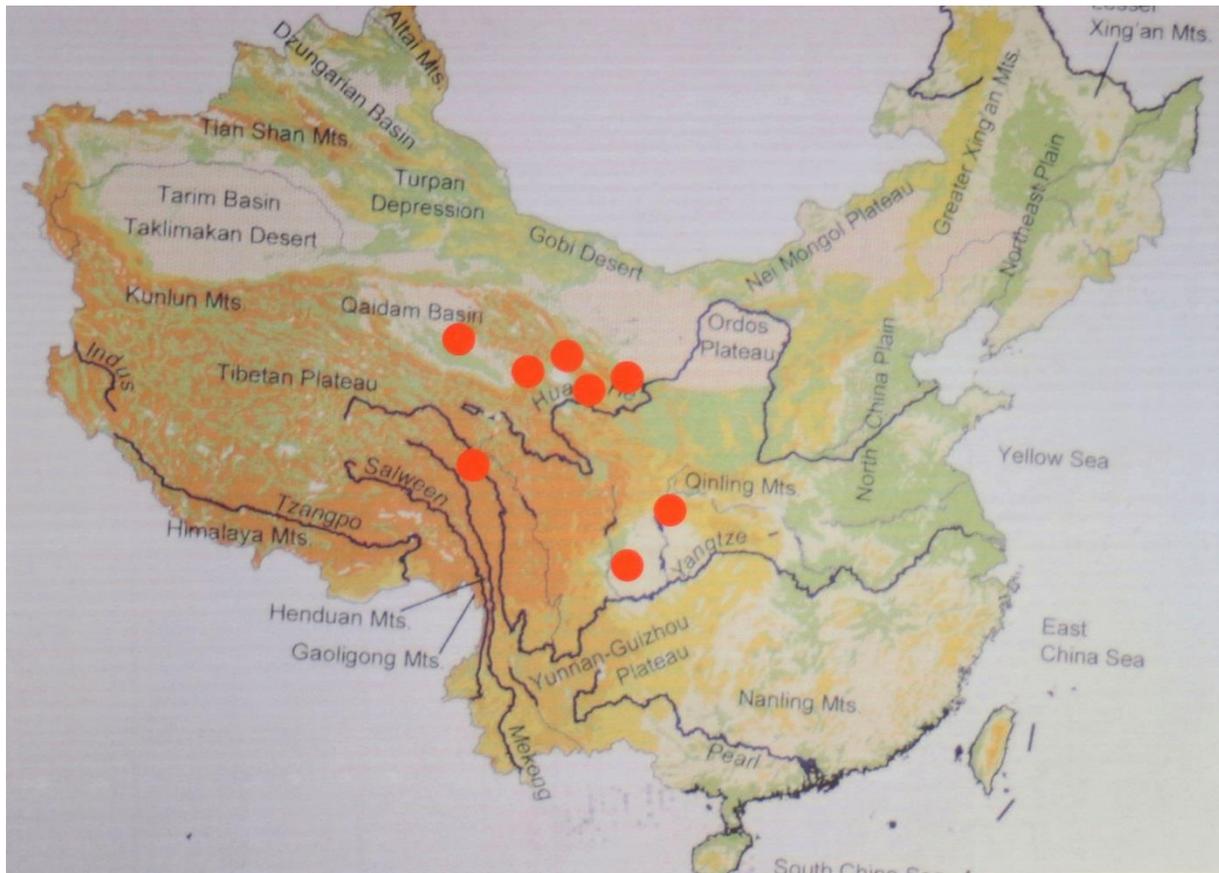
My compilation is made primarily for my own pleasure. It includes a few retrospectively identified species. In the itinerary comments are made on findings I feel are worth mentioning. Thus not all of the species of birds are mentioned in the itinerary, but can be found in the checklists.

A full day to day report written by Phil Benstead is available on:

<http://www.greentours.co.uk/doc/Trip%20Report%20Mammals%20of%20the%20Roof%20of%20the%20World%202016%20edited.pdf>

Itinerary in short:

Chengdu – Xining – Hunshu-area – Koko Nor - - Wenquan – Huashixia - Bayankala Pass – Yushu – Nanqian – Baixha Forest Reserve – Kanda Shan – Qumalai – Chang Tang - Budonquan – Yeniugou - Golmud - the Qaidam and Nuomohong – Dulan – Dulan Mountains – Chaka Desert – Gulag – Xining – transfer to Sichuan, Laba He – Dujiangyan – Tangjiahe – Chengdu.



Survey Map I: approximate areas we visited. Upper row from left to right: Golmud, Yushu (low). Gulag, Chaka, Koko Nor, Xining, Huashixia. Lower row: Laba He NR, Tangjiake NR.

ITINERARY

Oct 3rd

In the morning Anita and Stefan landed at Chengdu Airport. Since neither they nor personnel at the airport knew there is a shuttle running every half hour between the airport and Chengdu Airport Hotel they walked the maybe 500 metres to the hotel.

During the day they met up with leader Phil and the rest of the participants. After supper we all took a shuttle to the airport and caught our flight to Xining where we met our mammal-part-leader Jesper.



Survey map II: Some of the larger cities and nature reserves along our trip. Upper row from left to right: Golmud, Yushu (low). Gulag, Chaka, Koko Nor, Xining. Huashixia. Lower row: Laba He NR, Tangjiahe NR.

Oct 4th

Before sunrise we left the hotel in four four-wheel-drive vehicles and drove about two hours into the Hunshu area. Our first mammal-target-species was Siberian roe-deer. Our second target for the stop was breakfast. The weather was not optimal but just before breakfast we caught Chinese beautiful rosefinch and Chinese white-browed rosefinch. After breakfast we drove on for a while to stop at a forest patch where Jesper had previously seen some good mammals and some birds of interest. The pikas we were hoping for were not in the mood, but some birds Stefan was hoping for showed up; crested tit-warbler, Gansu leaf-warbler and the Przevalski's nuthatch (*Sitta przewalskii*) recently split from white-tailed nuthatch (*S. himalayensis*).

After lunch we went to a gully running through spruce forest hoping to get in contact with another pika and some birds. We were not successful in this effort but found a grey-headed bullfinch and an easter buzzard (*Buteo japonicas*), recently split from *Buteo buteo*. The only mammal this afternoon and also the first for the trip was a Himalayan marmot (SL).

We spent the following night in Xining.

Oct 5th

We left the hotel well before dawn in order to climb up onto the plateau to reach the site where we were hoping to find the Przevalski's gazelles.

About 15 years ago no one knew for sure if this species still existed in the wild. The most recent estimation according to IUCN (2008) the population was 1,544 – 1,635 animals, indicating an overall growth in the population since 2003. However recent studies have found that the species occupies a total area of only 250 km². The population is severely fragmented due to geographic and anthropogenic barriers. There is a continuing decline in areas of occupancy and deteriorating quality of habitat due to increasing human pressures. Therefore the species is treated as Endangered.

At about sunrise we saw the first individuals from the road. They were 38. While trying to get closer a motorbike spooked them and made them less easy to photograph. In all we saw at least 56 gazelles at this site. While trying to approach them we started a woolly hare and two Daurian partridges (PB). Here we also found Przewalski's pinktail, brown accentor, Stolzka's tit-warbler and our first Gldenstdt's redstart. We also started a Koko Nor toad-headed agama (*Phrynocephalus vlangerii*), the only one assessed during the trip.



Przewalski's gazelle

Photo Stefan@Lithner



Gldenstdt's redstart

We continued to the eastern side of Lake Koko Nor (Mongolian name) also known as Qinghai Hue, China's largest lake with a surface situated nearly 3100 metres a. s. l., however saltwater- due to lack of outflow. We stopped at a colony of black-lipped pika where Jesper had previously seen a steppe polecat.

Here some of us made our first acquaintance with pikas; black-lipped ones. A Himalayan marmot was moving about on the far side of the a freshwater lagoon next to us, maybe about hundred metres away. We had breakfast, meanwhile watching white-rumped snowfinch and groundpecker.

The freshwater lagoon held plenty of waterfowl. Most impressive were large flocks of red-crested pochard, but also two species of grebes, two species of geese and another seven species of ducks were here. We also found some species of waders here. By far, the greatest surprise was a long-billed dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*), according to Phil the first sighting in Qinghai province.

We also found a green toad which was well photographed. Retrospective data incl. photos and distribution strongly indicate it was a Mongolian toad (*Pseudepidalea raddei*). However amphibians in central Asia are not yet fully mapped and several taxa are controversial and currently not widely accepted.

Continuing westwards along the lake Stefan told some of the travelers, he hardly recognized anything from his hitch-hike along this road in June 1991. Then you could walk from the lakeshore to the foothills without seeing any person at all. Now the area was full of people gambling about and lots of buildings and settlements being knocked up along large parts of the road.



Rufous-necked snowfinch



Woolly hare

We stopped at a roadside restaurant to have lunch and then continued over South Koko Nor Range where Jesper took us to a fascinating site with thousands of black-lipped pikas. Here we also saw our first Tibetan foxes. Among birds the beautiful rufous-necked snowfinch and the abundant white-rumped snowfinch attracted our attention. A woolly hare cooperative for photographing was resting in the evening sun. As the sun dropped we continued to a hotel in Gongshe.



Lammergeiers



Upland buzzard

Oct 6th

Before dawn we headed for Er La Pass. A red fox appeared in the head-lights in front of the first car. After a while we took off on a dirt road in suitable habitat for Pallas' cat. Despite the suitable habitat we did not find it. A Tibetan fox showed up and we saw our first eastern greta rosefinch.

We here had a brief lunch where we saw our first bharal before we started to walk down a gully to look for Gansu pika. The precipitation changed from light rain to light snow. Despite the precipitation two lammergeiers, an upland buzzard, a saker falcon and a steppe eagle made a lovely show. We eventually found the Gansu pika. Along the side of the slope we found Güldenstädt's redstart, robin accentor, Tibetan snowfinch and Caucasian great rosefinch.

We had our lunch in a nearby town and afterwards went on to the Er La Pass 4300 meters a.s.l, our highest altitude that far. From where we parked we slowly walked up to a ridge about 4650 metres a. s. l. From there we could look down into a beautiful valley with some rivulets and moist areas. Here we saw our first Blyth's mountain vole at a distant running between some tussocks. We therefore descended to where they were, about 75 meters lower down on the far side and discovered there was a large colony. We were offered good views. Here we also found our first Henri's snowfinch. While studying voles and finches a few gazelles were spotted a long way away. The only gazelle here is the Tibetan gazelle.

After returning to our vehicles we drove to a nearby village, Wenquan for the night in order to be close to other sites suitable for Pallas' cat the following morning. In this little high altitude village conveniences were not quite in level with our experiences hitherto, nor afterwards.



Gansu pika



Caucasian great rosefinch

Oct 7th

We left the hotel at 06:30 and went to Wenquan Pass. We arrived at a suitable lookout and parking spot at dawn. While the drivers were preparing for breakfast Phil spotted three suspiciously looking obstacles on a ridge a few hundred meters away. As the daylight increased we eventually saw three Pallas' cats. At least two of them were young.



Pallas' cat surveilling its territory

After breakfast we prepared ourselves for a walk, primarily to close in on the cats, which proved not to be difficult. We proceeded gently. After maybe half an hour the whole group was sitting only 15 – 20 meters from the cats eagerly photographing these adorable but mean looking little cats.

After some time about half of the team started to walk on to higher altitude, while the other half remained with the cats. We were blessed with sun and not much wind as we made our way another maybe 350 meters of altitude. We stopped at suitable sites and looked for animals. Resting on one of the ridges Jesper announced a hobby sweeping by. While trying to get his eyes onto this bird Stefan caught sight of a rosefinch coming from the valley on the far side. It took a few days until Stefan got time to identify it, a male Robrowski's rosefinch.

Jesper eagerly continued the walk with most of the walking-group, to get to a sight where he sometimes had seen snow leopard on earlier visits. On this walk Jesper heard another Robrowski's rosefinch. At the far end of the walk, about 4750 meters a. s. l. Jespers group found some Tibetan dwarf hamsters and nine Brandt's mountain finch. Stefan lagged behind. Phil accompanied him. They caught glimpses of small rodents with jizz and colouring in suitable habitat indicating they were Tibetan dwarf-hamster, but the animals didn't stop long enough to be properly identified. Phil and Stefan stopped at some boulders where they soon were entertained by a curious mountain weasel.

We returned to the village where we again split up in two groups. One went down to the nearby river to do some more birding with Jesper, while the other group went to study the religious area. Jespers

team picked up another Tibetan fox, Chinese pond herons, black-crowned night-heron, a single solitary snipe and white- and citrine wagtails. Also a Eurasian wigeon, was seen in the stream (JG).



Pallas's cat



Pallas' cat

Oct 8th

We left the hotel at 06:00. After nearly two hours we reached the low sandy dunes richly covered with "meter-high" willow scrub at Huashixia. Target species for our stop was the kiang, but several more exciting mammals as well as birds we had a chance to see. We spotted a kiang rather quickly. It took a little bit of walking before we saw our first Gansu pika here, but altogether we saw three here.

Phil told Stefan how to search for the Chinese zokor. Stefan started by erasing a fresh sand-pile and searched for the entrance/exit. After five minutes he saw an even fresher mound and repeated the procedure here. After maybe 15 minutes the lush sand started to move. Moments later a Chinese zokor was pushing up sand, thus restoring its original mound and entrance.

A mountain weasel was also started by the group. A combination of our persistence and the animal's curiosity eventually gave most of us good views. Among birds Przewalski's pinktail, white-browed tit, Gldenstdt's redstart and Stolzka's tit-warbler were the most appreciated.

We drove to next town along the road and had a lovely yak-soup for lunch, of course prepared with meat from domestic yak (*Bos grunniens*), abundantly grazing on the plains between about 3800 and about 4200 meters a. s. l. The abundance of yak is about 12 millions. The abundance of the protected wild yak (*Bos mutus*) is estimated to be less than 10000 (IUCN).



Kiang



Black-necked crane

Then we continued to a sandier habitat where we saw many more kiangs and some Tibetan gazelles. The first stop after the kiangs at close range gave us the first black-necked cranes. Between the first stop and sunset we drove past nearly 250 kiangs.

After another stop with some black-necked cranes we drove to Madou, about 4300 meters a. s. l. for the night.

Oct 9th

After a night at a slightly higher elevation than most, we set south towards Yushu, starting by crossing Yellow River just outside town. As we approached Bayankala pass (4824m asl) the ground was covered with a thin layer of snow and some was falling. Along the road were plenty of kiang, Tibetan gazelle, upland buzzard, white-rumped- and rufous-necked snowfinches.

At the pass we had breakfast. Lesley had caught AMS. She was given oxygen and was transported down to a lower altitude. We rearrange our positions in the vehicles.

Thereafter we walked along the hillside looking for Tibetan dwarf hamster and some high altitude birds. We did not do well here, only a red fox chasing black-lipped pikas and glimpses of Blyth's mountain vole, but not the ones we were looking for.



Black-lipped pika



Tibetan gazelle

We left the highlands in two teams. Both teams stopped at Xiewu Pass. Heavy precipitation stopped us from seeing any mammals or birds of particular interest. On the drive down to Qingshuihe the second group stopped at the river and saw two ibisbills. The rest of the evening we spent at the hotel while the rainfall was passing.

Oct 10th

We left the hotel in Yushu while it was still raining and headed south to Nangqian. Just when we arrived the sun came out. We were offered a "neat smorgasbord" of birds including blue hill-pigeon, Tibetan magpie, large-billed crow, Siberian stonechat (*Saxicola maura*) and Godlewski's bunting, while a Tibetan fox came down to have a look at us. After breakfast we walked a gravel road into a pretty limestone gorge. Our target mammal was McNeill's deer, which Staffan spotted rather soon; six does or subadult ones. A stag McNeill's deer was also seen by some of us later in the day. Himalayan marmots were not difficult to find here.



Tibetan magpie



Large-billed crow

Jesper here spotted a Koslow's babax, which proved to be cooperative, and after a short while got company with another two.

IUCN states Glover's pika inhabits remote areas not likely to be infringed upon by human activities, but here it thrives among primitive human settlements, running around in farmyards, stone-, wooden- or clay-roofs and dirt- or dung walls. Brown accentors were common and also cooperative for photographers in the farmyards. Staffan walked into a group of Tibetan partridges while sneaking on marmots. Also Elliot's laughingthrush, Sichuan tit, alpine leaf warbler (*Phylloscopus occisinensis*) recently split from Tickell's leaf warbler (*P. affinis*) by Clements, were here. Hodgsons redstart, white-throated dipper and Sichuan leaf warbler were also here. A flock of 15 white-eared pheasants came out into the open.



Glover's pika



Brown accentor

After lunch we continued towards Nangqian. A while before we reached the town we were interrupted by a group of Tibetan partridges crossing the road, and a few pink-rumped rosefinches were flying around here. We spent the night at the same hotel in Nangqian.

Oct 11th

We left the hotel again before dawn and drove to Baixha Forest Reserve. Here Anita discovered a stag of white-lipped deer, which became her 700th species of mammal.

We drove to the center of the park before we had breakfast, and then walked downhill letting the cars follow us. We found a group of bharal high above us and Phil picked up a Moupin pika. Thereafter we searched long for that species without finding it. A number of interesting birds were seen; Chinese fulvetta, Sichuan leaf warbler, a recent split from pale-rumped leaf warbler (*P. chloronotus*), alpine leaf warbler giant laughingthrush, Sichuan tit, crested tit-warbler and Hodgson's treecreeper (*Certhia hodgsoni*) recently split from European treecreeper (*C. familiaris*).



Bharal



Sichuan leaf-warbler

In the far end of our walk Jacqui saw a zokor running on the surface of the ground. The habitat here was semi open spruce forest interspersed with brushes, open grass patches and rather stony soil. According to Smith et al. neither habitat nor altitude suits Chinese zokor. All three remaining zokors have been confirmed near southernmost Qinghai. Smith's zokor (*E. smithii*) occupies steppe and open fields and prefers wet soft soil. North China zokor (*Myospalax aspalax*) occupies grasslands and agricultural fields at low elevations, (but some populations may extend up to 1400 metres a. s. l.) Rothschild's zokor (*Eospalax rotschildi*) is known from southern Gansu, north-westernmost Sichuan next to southernmost Qinghai. It occupies forest scrub and grassland generally between 1000 and 3000 metres a. s. l. and prefers soft soil. Data favor the latter. Towards the end of our walk Michel and Francis were a bit ahead of the rest of the group when they briefly saw a steppe polecat. On our way out we saw some more white-eared pheasants. We returned to Nangjian and spent the night in the same hotel.

Oct 12th

The days target site was Kanda Shan south of Nangjian. The site is good for alpine musk deer, but the weather was not in our favour. It rained and snowed quite a bit. Our first stop gave us Szecheny's monalpartridge far away, but three blood pheasant more conveniently. During breakfast we became aware of Szecheny's monalpartridges calling from the hillside on the other side of the road. Jesper enthusiastically started climbing and nearly half of the group of participants followed. Stefan was lagging behind. On his way up to the rest of the climbers a shrew crossed over an open patch of mossy or moss-like habitat at tree-limit about two metres in front of him. Stefan used the following evenings to study literature.

According to Smith et al. the appearance (head-body-length (HB), relative tail/HB-length, pelage colour, tail colour, habitat, altitude and geographical distribution supports only Smiths shrew (*Chodsigoa smithii*) with a reservation for Salenski's shrew (*C. salenskii*).

One author: Hoffmann (1985) strongly suggests that these two will prove to be the same species. Very little is known about the two taxa. Most *smithii* have been captured in forested mountains around 3000 metres a. s. l., while the *salenskii* according to IUCN occurs in Wolong Nature Reserve, but it is not known if it is present in any other protected areas.

The group stopped about 50 – 75 meters higher up where they could see the monalpartridge fairly well despite the falling snow.

We then drove north hoping to get out of the precipitation. A memorable stop offered over 1500 blue hill-pigeons and a large number of Oriental skylarks. On the way into Yushu Phil's car stopped at the river and picked up some more ibisbills.

Since it was still raining we made a short stop at the Earthquake Memorial before we returned to our hotel. About half of the group rearranged and joined a new ibisbill-team. The team found at least five ibisbills, another solitary snipe, green sandpipers and white-throated dippers (*Cinclus cinclus*) including one individual brown morph.



White-lipped deer



Oct 13th

We left the hotel before sunrise and started our drive towards Zhidou. On the way we stopped several times along Longbaotan wetlands. We admired the black cranes, found a juvenile Pallas' fish-eagle, large numbers of ferruginous ducks and also some goosanders. Before we reached Zhidou Jesper found some white-lipped deer grazing on a ridge. We approached and tried to photograph them at long distance. Several handsome stags were present. We saw some more Tibetan foxes along the road. In Zhidou we had another lunch with lovely yak soup. On the streets outside the restaurant we met several locals seeming interested in our presence. That included the police who were interested in seeing our permits.

In the afternoon a "comfort stop" made us get the first contact with argali at a distant ahead of us. We moved closer. A saker falcon drew our attention perched on a shore of a dam before we started to count argali. At least 50 argali males posed before us along the road to Mount Pang.



Saker



Argali

The day was close to sunset when we reached two bridges crossing Yangtse River. Here we saw another two white-lipped deer, a Gldenstedt's redstart, a few eastern great rosetin and a pine bunting.

We spent the night in Qumalai.

Oct14th

This morning we made a slow start, leaving the hotel at 07:00. We drove towards a bus-stop at Budonquan. Before we reached it we saw four white-lipped deer stags at a distant. A little while later we saw our first Tibetan wolf (*Canis lupus chanco*).

Some authorities mean this taxon is different enough to be treated as a separate species. Several species in the genus *Canis* are externally rather similar. No one in our group could see anything on these wolfs supporting this hypothesis.



Tibetan wolf



During our crossing the plateau at the altitude of about 4200 metres a. s. l. on our way to Chang Tang as well as near Chang Tang we saw nine wolves and at least three Tibetan foxes. The latter generally avoiding the wolves with great respect.

At Chang Tang we saw several Tibetan gazelles. One group stayed close to the road despite our presence and allowed us to do a bit of photographing.

A little while later we stopped for a magnificent male wild yak.



Wild yak

The fully grown male wild yak is considerably larger than the domestic ones. It may well reach a shoulder-height of 200 centimetres and has a much more prominent shoulder-hump. Horns are dark grey to black. It's got long hairs only on its ventral part of the body and a tail-width about 1/3 of its length. The colour is black, but occasionally interspersed with some dark brown hairs.

Wild yaks spend summers between 4000 and 6100 metres a. s. l. and winters a little lower (IUCN). During mating-season fully grown wild yak males now and then descend to mate with domestic ones. Thus also hybrids exist.



Tibetan gazelle



Tibetan fox

We saw only wild yaks between about 4200 and 4500 metres a. s. l. Report compiler didn't see domestic yaks above 4300 even if it ought to be possible to find the domestic ones at the same altitude. A little later we saw a number of Chiru at great distance, too far worth trying to approach. Later however a group of females appeared close to the road.



Chiru



Steppe eagle

When we approached Chang Tang towards the evening we made a stop at a wildlife lookout along Lhasa Road, where we could see some magnificent chiru males at a distant. Staffan sneaked up on them and succeeded in getting photos. We reached our accommodation after dark.

Oct 15th

We started early for Yeniugou (meaning Wild Yak Valley). The last 40 kilometers up to the valley was a beautiful sandy road, still not seriously affected by man's activities. We stopped at the approximate altitude of 4500 metres a. s. l. The morning was clear and cold, and the scenery was beyond description. We saw some argali at a distance, and found a herd of wild yak, also at a distance. Despite the distance some of the fully grown bulls stood out. During our walk in the valley covered with two to three decimeters high vegetation we started many woolly hares. We searched among the low weeds for a vole but were a bit unlucky here.



Herd of wild yaks



Saker falcon

Our target bird was the Tibetan sandgrouse. It took a while, but eventually a flock came cackling like Canadian geese and passed us rather quickly. During our walk along the river we also found a flock of Mongolian finches and a Chinese grey shrike. A toad-headed agama was briefly seen (SL) It may well have been another Koko Nor toad-headed agama (*P.vlangeri*), but that could not be assessed.

After lunch we continued towards Golmud. We made a stop to have some snacks and stretch our legs near some for the season dried out rice-fields (?). Here we found some olive-backed pipits, chiffchaffs, little buntings and two blue-and-white flycatchers (*Cyanoptila cyanomelana*). apparently a bit out of normal range.

Oct 16th

We left Golmud and drove about an hour and a half through some desert- or semi-desert area in Quaidam Basin. When we stopped to have breakfast we saw two goitered gazelles. They however eluded us as we stopped and prepared for breakfast. Since we were going to stay in the habitat and look up the exciting Tarim hill warbler (*Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris*) recently split from Chinese hill warbler (*R. pekinensis*), sometimes called Chinese hill babbler, Jesper and Phil expected to see the gazelles again. Sadly this time we experience the negative component in the charm of studying wildlife, like we had done previously during the trip with some of the pikas. Wild animals don't always behave like they are expected to by man.

We had to look for the warbler a bit longer than Jesper and Phil expected. Meanwhile we also saw a flock of bearded parrotbill (bearded tit) and a reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) of one of the thick-billed races. We made an effort to find mid-day gerbil here. We found a path between two hillocks of sand covered by low vegetation where the gerbil apparently were running frequently, but during about 15 minutes of waiting we didn't see any.

We continued towards Dulan and had lunch at one of the many truck-stops. We made several stops trying to find the gazelles again. At one of these we saw four far away. At another stop we found two Henderson's ground jays. Here we also got an opportunity to photograph the beautiful Quaidam Basin subspecies of horned lark *Eremophila alpestris przewalskii*.



Henderson's ground-jay

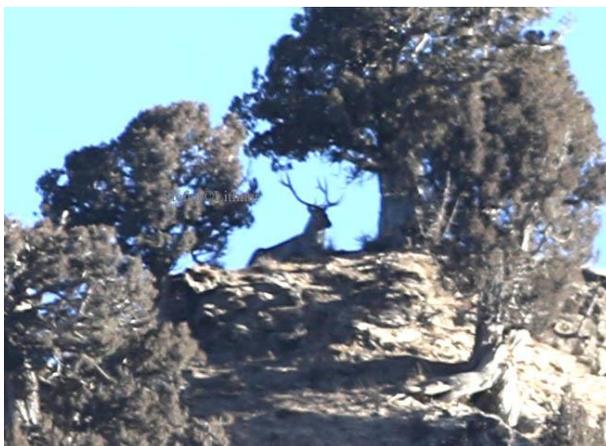


Quaidam Basin horned lark

When we reached Dulan we only had time for a quick look in the tree-clumps behind the town. Our target species here was the Przewalski's redstart. Phil got a brief view of a female. We stayed the night in Dulan.

Oct 17th

At 07:00 we took off for the Dulan Mountains. Our target species for this climb up to a little over 2000 metres was Kansu red deer and China red pika. During our climb Jesper spotted a stag Kansu red deer resting majestically under some branches of a large oak tree, causing the sight to resemble the label of a well-known whiskey. Apart from this stag we only got brief looks of four does. We had lunch on the hillside while scanning



Kansu red deer



Himalayan griffon vulture

for the pika. Despite our efforts we failed to find the pika.

On our hike up the hill we started an eagle owl. The Przewalski's partridge cooperated rather well and Himalayan vultures and lammergeiers were present.

On our way towards Chaka we stopped several times to look for gazelles, and saw a few at great distance. Our last stop we made in the desert west of Chaka. Here we soon found several mid-day gerbils. Just before sunset Stefan caught a glimpse of an animal he retrospectively realized was a steppe polecat. The identification goes well with the polecat-tracks Phil and Stefan found a little while later about 25 metres from the site.

Oct 18th

We started the day driving to grasslands surrounding a lake outside Chaka. There we had wonderful meeting with one or two flocks of Pallas's sandgrouse. A rivulet through the steppe attracted the sandgrouse, and also produced Mongolian finch, Blainford's- and Père David's snowfinches and water pipit.



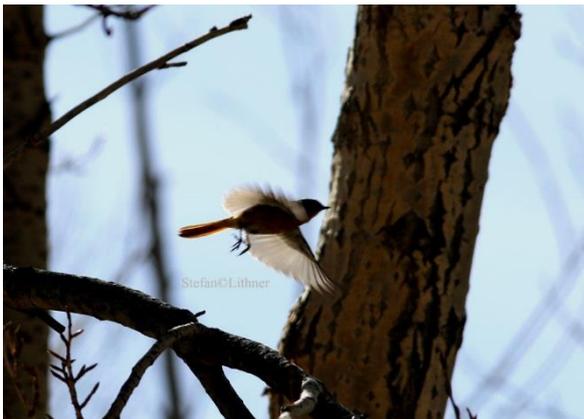
Pallas's sandgrouse



We then continued to another clump of trees a short distance from Chaka gulag.

Here we found a Chinese spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major cabanisi*), red-billed starlings White's thrush. Pallas's leaf warbler and a group of at least five Przewalski's redstarts (*Phoenicurus alashanicus*). It pleased Stefan indeed since circumstances did not allow him to photograph this rare and beautiful redstart when he found it in the mountains rising on the southern side of Koko Nor in June 1991. This time we all did better! Along the road to Xining we found a single black vulture.

In Xining we said goodbye to our four drivers. We had last thank-you-dinner for Jesper and his impressive guiding through Tibet. He however continued together with the group as a guest.



Przewalski's redstart



Oct 19th

We had breakfast in our hotel before we took a shuttle to Xining airport and departed for Chengdu. In Chengdu Jesper landed at another airport but joined us within a short while. Also we welcomed Maureen Shephering who joined us for the two extra legs (Laba He and Tangjiahe).

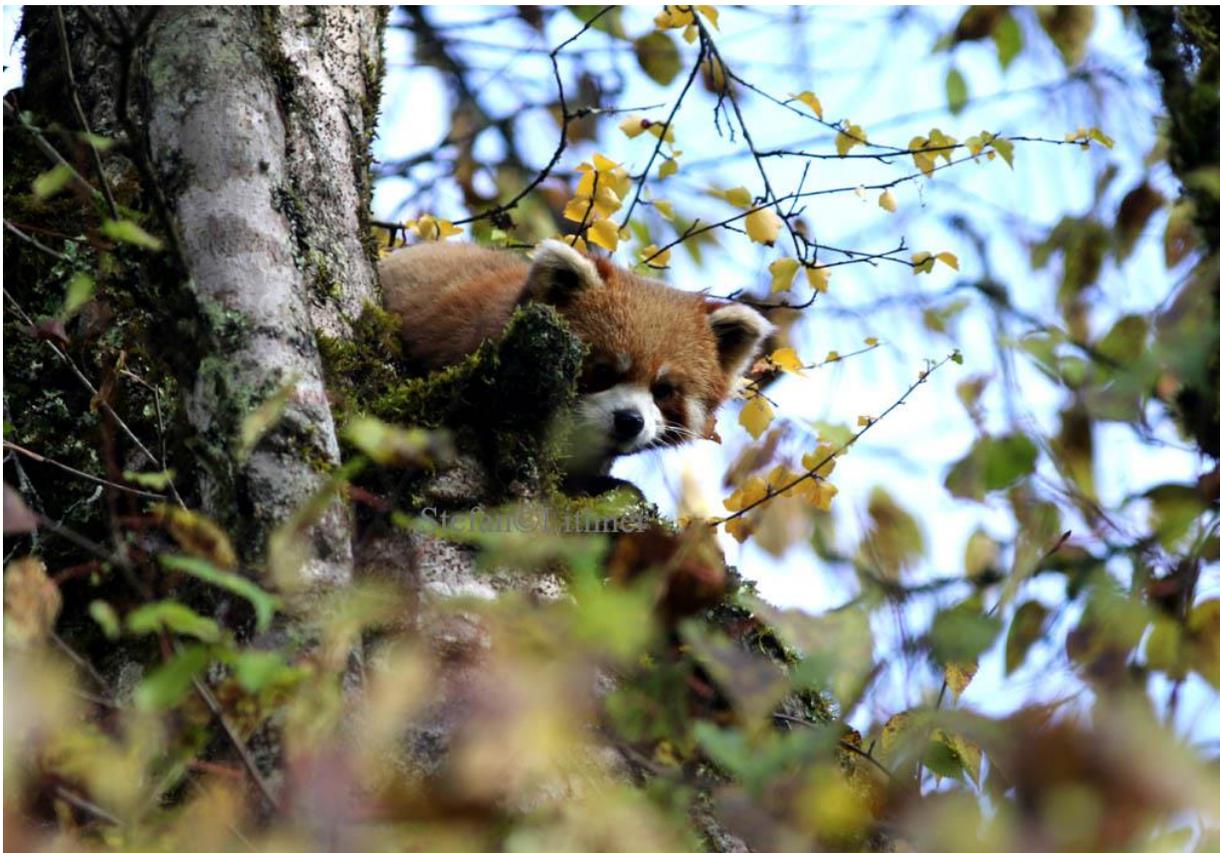
Having enjoyed lunch we drove to Laba He. At the hotel our "Sichuan-guide" Roland met us.

During dinner some sambar deer came close to our window, attracted to the hotel's salt-lick at the edge of the forest.

After dinner some of us took a walk on the tarmac road with Roland. Two bats were hunting around one of the street-lights in front of the hotel. One was small and brown. Since Stefan was not equipped with his ultrasound bat-recorder we could not get further information increasing our chances to identify it. Nor could we identify the second one, which was as large as a fruit-bat or rousette, and slightly orangeish brown. Further down along the road we encountered more bats as well as Reeve's muntjac, which was heard several times. A number of large moths and hawk-moths of different species were photographed, but sadly not determined to species. A few hundred metres further down we spotted a Chinese goral standing on the mountain side.

Oct 20th

This morning we started with breakfast at the hotel. We then took our tour-bus up to where this new road ends. Our first stop we made to twitch the Tibetan macaque, expecting to get better studies later. Shortly thereafter Roland took us to "Panda town", the best sight to find the red panda. Here we started with our first Swinhoe's striped squirrel. Here were plenty of fruiting trees. Jesper, Phil and Roland did not have to search long before they had found a red panda resting in a fork of a huge tree. We spent time there to photograph the remarkable animal. When everybody was satisfied for the moment we had lunch at the primitive carpark. Meanwhile Roland discovered a group of black-browed bush-tits and some warblers.



Red panda

After lunch we took a loop-walk up on the hillside. The highlight here was flock of maroon-backed accentors flitted around us at close range. Higher up we searched in flocks of grey-cheeked fulvetas for other species. Here we also found black-faced laughingthrush.

In a small pond Phil found an egg-laying Mongolian moorland hawkler (*Aeshna juncea mongolica*). We also photographed a large longicorn here. Stefan retrospectively received help through www.whatsthatbug.com saying *Anophlophora coeruleogantemata* is the closest match. (See below: VERTEBRATES).

We then continued our walk on the road downhill, where we found great parrotbill, while a golden bush-robins was heard.

On returning to the bus the panda was still anxious to pose for us.

In the afternoon we strolled along the road and found great parrotbill, white-collared yuhina and barred laughingthrush, while red-winged laughingthrush was heard. We also spent a while studying a European nuthatch, a "superspecies" taxonomists are still not unanimous about.



Anophlophora coeruleogantenata



White-collared yuhina

Shortly before dinner Stefan set three traps for catching small mammals alive, in the forest about 100 – 200 metres from the hotel. After dinner we made our first regular spotlighting drive. Not a lot happened until we came down to a natural mineral source for salt, where we found red-and-white flying-squirrel and complex-toothed flying-squirrel. Next to these we also saw a Chinese goral most likely the same one as previous evening. Also the sambars we saw we expect were some of those we had seen the previous evening. One Reeve's muntjac was seen and several were heard.

Oct 21st

Before breakfast Stefan collected his traps. They were all empty. Soon after leaving the hotel by bus we saw our first Perny's long-nosed squirrel crossing the road. We birded leisurely around the road-end and downwards along the road. Among birds seen were black-faced laughingthrush and grey-sided- and yellow-bellied bush-warblers. We then took a bus-ride down to Panda Town for more studies and photographs of red panda.

During the morning Roland had told Stefan about a cave some 500 metres up the road and about four-hundred stairs up to a cave-opening. As far as Roland remembered there were three species of bats in different sizes when he was down there two or three years ago. In the afternoon, before the bird-walk he took Stefan and Anita to this cave. The opening was large. The path leading down into the cave leaned maybe ten, maybe 15 degrees. After about 20 metres there were remains of a fireplace. The path turned slightly steeper and damper and turned slippery. Stefan walked only about another 50 metres until the path turned a bit too hazardous to walk on. This far there were no signs of any bats, neither old droppings visible, nor any scents of fresh droppings.

During the afternoon bird-walk Jesper found a slaty bunting and some Pére David's fulvetas.

Before dinner Stefan returned towards the hotel a little bit before the others. When passing the Tibetan macaque family at the bridge about 500 metres downhill from the hotel, where waste was left in the open, an annoyed female rushed up to Stefan from behind and hugged him by his right thigh. When she bounced off Stefans thigh she looked surprised, possibly because Stefan didn't run, as she probably was expecting. Stefan turned around and looked her into her eyes. She looked frightened. Stefan took two steps towards her. She ran to the adult male and hide behind him. Stefan sopped and looked into his eyes. They gently looked into each others eyes for a little while. Then Stefan continued towards the hotel.



Chinese goral



Reeve's muntjac



Tibetan macaque; mature male, perhaps contemplating one of his females behavior

Oct 22nd

In the morning the weather was not particularly suitable for birdwatching. We started by riding as far as the road went but because of the weather we soon drove down to somewhat more inviting weather for birding. At the waterfall we started by walking under the waterfall, continuing up the old road soon turning into an old boardwalk. Here we found a large flock of speckled wood-pigeons, a dark-chested rosefinch and Père David's tit. One of Roland's target species here was streaked barwing, which we didn't find.

A Lady Amherst's pheasant was glimpsed by one of our leaders.

After lunch we split into two groups again. One group returned to the "Panda Town" for more photos of the red panda, while the other group went birding with Roland. The bird-walkers searched for slaty bunting and Père David's fulvetta, even though the latter has not yet gained status as a full species, since neither Anita nor Stefan had seen these before and were anxious to do so. At the far end of the walk Roland picked up a call from the bunting, but was interrupted by a policeman, why we only got a brief view of the bird as it went past us. There was not a lot of activity, but a speckled piculet was cooperative.

When we returned to the hotel at dusk Roland offered to take us up to a pond where he had seen a Himalayan wood owl (*Strix nivicolium*) roosting at dusk a number of times. Anita, and Stefan were interested. We arrived at the site when it had become dark. We did not find the owl.

Oct 23rd

Before breakfast Anita and Stefan made another effort to find the owl together with Roland. One call was heard five times during three to four minutes from a nearby place at daybreak but could not be identified. Stefan suggested it was a contact call of an owl (- a mixture of about 80% juvenile *Strix aluco* and about 20% hissing-call from *Bubo bubo*). After breakfast we returned to the same site and found green-backed tit, streak-throated and rufous-capped babblers, vinaceous rosefinch, Przewalski's tree-creeper and rufous-gorgetted flycatcher. When Roland Anita and Stefan were about to meet for a bird-walk later in the morning Anita had found a bat hanging in a curtain inside the house. It was photographed and retrospectively identified as Chinese pipistrelle. One of the bats Stefan recorded with his ultrasound bat recorder the evening before was a pipistrelle. Both hunting-calls and social calls matched a pipistrelle, but did not correspond with Chinese pipistrelle. Instead they matched the calls of Japanese pipistrelle, a bat with brown pelage, commonly found around as well as inside buildings. (see below "BATS")



Streak-throated scimitar-babbler

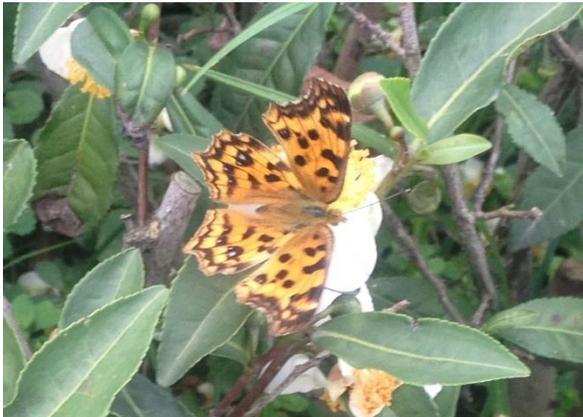


Grey-cheeked fulvetta

The pandas and thus the panda group was disturbed by weekend tourists. The group therefore turned to birding. They saw the trips only crimson-breasted woodpecker and heard and glimpsed some fulvous parrotbills. They also saw another Perry's long-nosed squirrel.

About 20 minutes before take-off from Laba He Stefan took a walk up the road a few hundred metres and was overflowed by a male slaty bunting at close range.

We then took off for transfer to Tangjiahe Nature Reserv. At lunchtime we stopped in Tianquan to have lunch. While waiting for the meal to get ready we went outside to a nearby rural gully about 100 metres from the restaurant. Here we found black-throated tit, long-tailed shrike and some interesting and beautiful butterflies. We also made a quick stop at Tea-porters' Memorial outside Ya'an, where we found Chinese comma (*Polygonia c-aureum*) and Asian green veined white (*Pieris melete*).



Chinese comma



Asian green-veined white

In the evening we arrived at the hotel in Chengdu. We had a good-bye dinner for Michel, Francis and Staffan. After dinner we took a stroll to a nearby park about 500 metres above our hotel. Here we eventually managed to call for a collared scops-owl until it came almost up to us. We also heard Northern boobook owl, but circumstances did not allow us to see it. During our walk we also found a seriously injured serpent in the gutter, likely hit by a vehicle. It was photographed and retrospectively identified as brown spotted viper (*Protobothrops mucrosquamatus*).

Oct 24th

In the morning in Chengdu we said goodbye to Michel, Francis and Staffan. While leaving them at Chengdu Airport Roland and Phil also bought a durian before they returned to the hotel and picked up the rest of the group and then left for Tangjiahe.

Having left the highway we drove along rivers interspersed with dams. These produced crested kingfisher, spot-billed duck and collared crow. The latter eventually landing in an orange/citrus tree close to us.

A little while after lunch we stopped at a countryside bar, where we were allowed to borrow some knives for the durian. We also had some tea and coffee here.

We reached the reserve's entrance at dusk and were obliged to show our passports before continuing towards the hotel. Sadly a tourist-bus drove slowly in front of us, why only a few in our bus saw the Chinese serow when it

bounced over the road and disappeared in the forest on the other side of the road. On arriving to the hotel Phil pointed out some bats flying around over the parking lot at the entrance. As soon as we had checked in and we had left our luggage in our rooms Stefan went out to record the bats with his ultrasound bat recorder. Seven different calls were recorded, belonging to at least four species (See below). After dinner we mounted the bus for our first night-drive in this park. As soon as we left the parking area we saw our first masked civet. We then focused on finding our first takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*).



The takins could appear like gnomes in the gentle forest mist.



Our first sighting was in spotlight

According to Smith et al. takin can reach a weight of 600 kgs, which would make it the largest goat (*Caprinae*)-relative in the world. According to IUCN there are four subspecies of which the golden takin (*B. t. bedfordi*) probably is the most well known. This subspecies is confined to Qinling Mountains in southern Shaanxi and north-easternmost Sichuan.

It took a little while before we saw the first ones. Prior to good views some were glimpsed in the gentle forest-mist. The animals revealed their presence by their strong smell reminding of goats. We found our first ones on an open slope on the high side of the road. Later on during the drive we saw several, magnificent animals. During the drive someone also saw or glimpsed a Chinese serow which unfortunately eluded most of us again. Masked civets, Chinese goral, Reeves' muntiac and hog badgers were also seen.



Golden takin



Tufted deer

Oct 25th

After breakfast we took the bus downhill and turned off to the Motainlig Trail bus-park. From there we walked uphill to the actual trail. Target species were Temminck's tragopan and golden pheasant. Despite a fair climb up to where Roland quite often sees them we only heard the tragopan once, but the pheasant some more times. Other birds we saw were black-faced laughingthrush and little fork-tail. A male tufted deer suddenly left bamboo-thickets near the path in a gentle pace and disappeared in the neighbouring thickets. On our walk down we heard a pygmy wren-babbler. We had a late lunch. Then we took our bus about five kilometres uphill and walked down, hoping to catch sight of a golden snub-nosed monkey. We didn't succeed in this, but returned to the hotel about 15 minutes before dinner.

Our night-drive took us on a short drive up to the rangers station in search for cats, primarily. We briefly encountered a Chinese serow, a pair of Malayan porcupines mating, Chinese goral, and several takins including a calf.

A niviventer also came out on the road, but turned back into the tangle by the side of the road, where Roland spot-lighted it for photographing. This was retrospectively determined to be a confusion niviventer (See below).

Oct 26th

We gathered on the lawn outside the hotel after breakfast, starting the day by enjoying the Daurian redstarts, before we commenced our search for the golden snub-nosed monkey. After maybe half an hour of scanning Anita spotted a group of golden monkeys as they were crossing a small gully climbing in the trees.

We relocated and tried to get up to where the monkeys were seen. Near the river we met a flock of birds offering lovely views of slaty bunting and brown-flanked bush-warbler. While Stefan stayed behind hoping to get some photos of the slaty bunting a south China field mouse quickly ran past him.

A little higher up we also found golden-breasted fulvetta. At the altitude where we saw the monkeys from the hotel most participants returned to the hotel after having failed to see them from there. Anita and Stefan continued higher up with Roland. After some serious sneaking they caught sight of the monkeys again at much closer range than from the hotel.

Roland said he knew where we should be able to see the golden pheasants. We sneaked a bit higher. He was right! On our sneak we also saw white-backed woodpecker, some sooty bush-tits and some more black-faced laughingthrushes around us.



Sooty bush-tit



Black-faced laughingthrush

In the afternoon we took a walk down the road along the river. Some participants got a short view of Père David's rock-squirrel. Roland had previously seen a tawny fish-owl roosting at the edge of the river next to the bridge. Our search for it was not successful.

When we walked to dinner as we were ready to do so, Stefan picked up the call of a Himalayan wood owl (*Strix nivicolom*) for a short while. Sadly it was quiet when we came out about five minutes later.

Our night drive after dinner gave us masked civet, Chinese goral, Reeve's muntjac, Malayan porcupine and hog badgers again. Two niviventers suddenly appeared in front of the car, unlike the one yesterday these showed two-coloured tails all the way to the tip, thus indicating indomalayan niviventer (See below).

When we returned to our hotel two takins were grazing on the lawn. It was not difficult to remember the warnings forwarded by our guides prior to arrival when we saw the size of them. On the lawn we also saw another hog badger. We made another search for leopard cat since it had been seen along the lawn a little earlier during the evening, but without success.



Malayan porcupine



Reeve's muntiac

Oct 27th

During the night wild boars were heard, probably from the lawn (SL). Anita found another south China field mouse running back and forth in the aqueduct outside our house.

After breakfast a little group of participants went for a short walk with Roland and found another Père David's rock squirrel.

We had breakfast and then took off for Chengdu. At Jiang we made a leg-stretcher where we saw a long-billed plover and some red-billed starlings.

In the evening we had a last supper together. At about 22:30 Anita and Stefan took a shuttle to the airport and departed for Europe shortly after midnight.

MAMMALS – a checklist with comments

Species presented in order according to Smith et al.

Tibetan macaque

Macaca tibetana

We saw them daily in Laba He and also saw some in Tangjiahe.

Golden snub-nosed monkey

Pygathrix roxellanae

A flock was seen in Tangjiahe from the lawn outside the hotel and also later on the hillside Oct 26.

Malayan porcupine

Hystrix brachyura

In Tangjiahe two were seen mating during night-drive Oct 25 and one was seen Oct 26.

Himalayan marmot

Marmota himalayana

This species was seen during six days on the Tibetan leg Oct 4 – 18.

Swinhoe's striped squirrel

Tamiops swinhoei

This species was seen several times in Laba He Oct 20 – 22 and a few times in Tangjiahe Oct 25 – 26.

Red and white giant flying squirrel

Petaurista alborufus

Four were seen at a natural mineral-lick during night-drive in Laba He Oct 20.

Complex-toothed flying squirrel

Troglodytes xantipes

One was seen at a natural mineral-lick during night-drive in Laba He Oct 20.

Perny's long-nosed squirrel

Dremomys pernyi

The species was seen a few times in Tangjiahe Oct 25 and 26.



Tibetan macaque



Himalayan marmot

Père David's rock squirrel

Sciurotamias davidianus

This species was seen in Tangjiahe NR along the river Oct 26 and 27.

South China field mouse

Apodemus draco

This species was seen in Tangjiahe. One along the river Oct 26 (SL) and one outside the hotel Oct 27 (AE).

Chinese zokor

Eospalax fontanieri

One was seen pushing up sand at Huashixia Oct 8 (SL).

Rotschild's zokor (not assessed)

Eospalax rotschildii

A zokor was seen running above ground in Baixha Forest Reserve Oct 11 (JG), which may belong to this species (See p 10).

Norwegian rat

Rattus norvegicus

One was seen in Chengdu (EM &JM)

Blyth's mountain vole

Phaiomys leucurus

This species is sometimes called Blyth's hamster. It is today the only species in its genus. This species was seen in colonies at high altitude during four days.

Tibetan dwarf hamster

Cricetulus tibetanus

Some were seen at about 4700 metres a. s. l. in Wenquan Pass Oct 6.

Mid-day gerbil

Meriones meridanus

Several were seen in Chaka Desert Oct 18.

NIVIVENTERS

Smith et al. recognize four species of *Niviventer* within reasonable distance from Tangjiahe Nature Reserve:

N. andersoni, *N. confucianus*, *N. fulvescens* and possibly also *N. excelsior*.

Written descriptions of niviventers in Smith et al. are very good. Illustrations in the book do not coincide with the text. Neither do illustrations (drawings and paintings) on internet coincide with descriptions in the book nor with best photos on the internet.

All four species relative tail-length (tail/head-body) may vary from 1 ¼ to 1 ½ times body length. Pelage colour can not be fully assessed in the strong white light we used during photographing the animal. Thus colours appearing greyish and brownish in this strong light do not look the same in daylight. Black/blackish is fairly reliable. Extension of white may be misleading, particularly on side of tail and side of body.

The tail on each of the two animals on Oct 26 was two-coloured all the way to the tip of the tail. That determines *N. fulvescens*. (**Indomalayan niviventer**)

N. andersoni has got a basal ¾ of tail dorsally much darker and outer ¼ is white (Not easy to see on all photographs). It has also got a dark/blackish, but often faint marking from the eye to the vibrissae but also continuing up to or towards the ears.

N. excelsior has a dark/blackish marking between the eye and the vibrissae, which may be faint. Our photographed animal has got a dark shade ("eye-shadow") around, particularly in front of the eyes reaching the vibrissae, but may be faint.



Confucian niventent. (Note artefact; dark shadow from a leaf in front of eye)



Confucian niventent

Photo Stefan©Lithner

https://www.google.se/search?q=niviventer+excelsior+images&biw=1067&bih=386&tbm=isch&imgil=cHA5Y3-dRTEzM%253A%253B1F9tzELqDFD2KM%253Bhttp%25253A%25252F%25252Fcoke-smithphototravel.com%25252F%25252Fsichuan-wildlife-expedition.html&source=iu&pf=m&fir=cHA5Y3-dRTEzM%253A%252C1F9tzELqDFD2KM%252C&usg=__gughdvcERm5VgEiFBYiYiwKRp8w%3D&ved=0ahUKEwiPifXrprfRAhXQIFAKHRCXA5kQyjcINO&ei=nq50WI_CK9DBwAKQro71CO#imgrc=cHA5Y3-dRTEzM%3A

Little is hitherto known about distribution and living prerequisites for *N. excelsior* except that it has hitherto been found at a higher altitude (2300 – 3000 metres a. s. l.) than where we photographed this animal (around 1500 metres a. s. l.)

N. confucianus .(**Confucian niviventer**) has got a tail-colouring like *N excelsior* with very pale sides and nearly outer half very pale/whitish. It has got a small dark “eye-shadow” but not extending to vibrissae.

Moupin pika

Ochotona tibetana

One was seen by Phil at Baixha Forest Reserve Oct11.

Black-lipped pika

Ochotona curzoniae

This was first seen in a little colony SE of Koko Nor Oct 5. Then seen nearly daily on the Tibetan Highland. Some days we estimated there were over 1000.

Glover’s pika

Ochotona gloveri

A few were seen south of Yushu Oct 10 .

Gansu pika

Ochotona cansus

At least two were seen in riverine gullies near Wenquan Pass Oct 7 and 3-4 were seen at Huashixia Oct 8.

Woolly hare

Lepus oiostolus

First ones were seen at the first stop SE of Koko Nor Oct 5. Then they were seen on at least nine days on the Tibetan Highland Oct 7 – 14.

Smith’s shrew

Chodsigoa smithii

One was seen crossing an open patch at tree-limit at Kanda Shan Oct 12 (SL) (see page 10)



Blyth’s mountain vole



Chinese pipistrelle

BATS

A **Chinese pipistrelle** (*Hypsugo pulveratus*) was found and photographed inside the hotel at Laba He Oct 22 and retrospectively identified.

The previous evening Stefan recorded bats outside the hotel in Laba He and also outside the hotel in Tangjiahe Nature Reserve Oct 24 with his Pettersson Ultrasound Detector D 240X. After homecoming he analyzed the recordings with Pettersson BatSound version 4.03 - program. He measured and registered peak frequency (kHz), duration time (ms), interval time (ms), start frequency (kHz) and end frequency (kHz) and also noted which species familiar to him that the signals on the sonogram resembles over a time-span of 200 ms.

The recordings reveal seven different kinds of calls. Several of below listed kinds of calls were recorded more than once, but examples are given only for one of the recordings. At least two, possibly four are social calls. At least four, probably six species are represented. Hunting calls as well as social calls are recognized as *Pipistrelle*-calls. Social calls; 3 – 4 syllable calls virtually identical to those of *P. pygmaeus* and *P. pipistrellus* in northern Europe. The *Pipistrelle*-hunting calls do not coincide with those of Chinese pipistrel, but instead of **Japanese pipistrelle** (*Pipistrellus abramus*). Remaining calls are No 0002; resembling *Nyctalus* at about 42 kHz, No 0002B; resembles a large *Myotis* between 20 - 26 kHz, No 0004; strongly resembles *Nyctalus leisleri* 21,5 - 22 kHz (which is not known from China), No 0005; *Nyctalus*-type at about 21,5 - 22 kHz, 0005B; resembles *Eptesicus nilssoni* varying between 20 and 30 kHz, No 0006; does not look like any bat recording Stefan has previous experience of at 33,7 – 34,5 kHz. No 0007 21,5 -22 possibly a social call, 0008 probably social call (kHz 3-4 syllables but different from those of *P pipistrellus* and *P. pygmaeus*) at 25,3 – 27 kHz, No 0010; resembles *E nilssoni* a little bit about 21.7 – 22,5 kHz. Sadly Stefan has not been able to get in contact with anyone who is prepared to comment on his recordings, despite contacts with some of the most well known bat experts in the world BCI (Huston Texas), Kate Jones(CBER London) and Merlin Tuttle (MTBC, Austin Texas).

Pallas´cat

Felis manul

Three individuals, probably all young were found at Wenquan Pass Oct 7, and were studied down to about 15 metres for hours.

This species often occurs in literature with scientific genus-name *Otocolobus*, meaning “mutilated ears” (Greek). The species is distributed over a large part of Asia from Transcaucasus to northern Iran, Ladakh (India), Tibet, southern Siberia and Mongolia but is nowhere common. It´s habitat is montane grasslands and shrubland steppes from 450 to 5050 metres a. s. l. IUCN estimates the world population to be less than 50 .000; with less than 15000 adults. Population is declining primarily due to fragmentation and degradation of its habitat, primarily because of man´s activities including restriction of its prey species and decline of shelters made by other animals, primarily marmots. The species is treated by IUCN 2015 as near threatened.



Pallas´ cats



Tibetan wolves

Tibetan wolf

Canis lupus chanco

During our crossing Chang Tang en route to Budonquan we saw a total of nine wolves, with one exception all at different sites Oct 14. (See also p 11)

Tibetan fox

Vulpes perlata

This species was seen during eight days while we travelled over the Tibetan Plateau Oct 5 – 16.

Red fox

Vulpes vulpes

The first red fox we saw on Koko Nor range Oct 5. The species was thereafter seen during eight days while we travelled over the Tibetan Plateau Oct 6 – 18.

Red panda

Ailurus fulgens

This exclusive species was target species for our extension to Laba He Nature Reserve. One of our French participants had visited the reserve once before without finding it. The group saw red pandas during all full days Oct 20 - 23. Most cooperative was, probably one animal, feeding at a site called “Panda Town”, but other individuals were occasionally seen as well.



Red panda

Hog badger

Arctonyx collaris

This species was seen in Tangjiahe Nature Reserve, during night-drives Oct 25 and 26, but also seen on the lawn outside our hotel in the evening of Oct 26.

Masked palm civet

Paguma larvata

This species we saw several times during night-drives in Tangjiahe Nature Reserve Oct 25 and 26.

Mountain weasel

Mustela altaica

First sighting for the trip was in Wenquan Pass Oct 7 (PB & SL) and second sighting was made at Huashixia the following day.

Steppe polecat

Mustela eversmannii

One was briefly seen by Michael and Francis south of Yushu Oct 10 and another one was briefly seen by Stefan in Chaka Desert Oct 17 (See p. 15).

Kiang

Equus kiang

Our first kiang we found at Huashixia Oct 8. During that date we estimate the number of kiangs seen to be about 250. We then saw kiangs daily on the Tibetan Plateau. Largest number was probably seen Oct 14 when we estimated the number of kiangs seen to be about 400.

Currently the IUCN recognizes seven species of wild “horselike” species (*Equidae*); three zebras (Grevy’s-, steppe-, and mountain-), Przewalski’s horse and three ass-like (African wild-, Asian wild- and Kiang). The kiangs taxonomy has long been debated. It was not until 1986 works by Groves (1986), preceded by Bennett (1980) that this taxon was separated and treated as a full species.

Wild boar

Sus scrofa

This species was heard from the hotel in Tangjiahe before dawn (SL) and one was seen during the morning-walk Oct 27 (JH).



Kiang

Reeve's muntiac

Muntiacus reevesi

This species we heard and saw in Sichuan, both in Laba He Oct 21 – 22 and in Tangjiahe Oct 24 – 26.

Tufted deer

Elaphodus cephalophus

At least one was seen, probably twice in Tangjiahe Nature Reserve Oct 25.

This species may now be endemic to China It has not been retrieved in Myanmar since 2008 despite fairly extensive camera-trapping. It is hitherto known to live in damp forests with nearness to water up to tree limits between 300 and 4700 metres a. s. l. No documented estimates of population size or trend are available. Its status is poorly known but estimations indicate the population is declining.

Sambar

Rusa unicolor

A group of sambar was seen in Laba He outside the hotel's dining-room in the evening of Oct 19, attracted by a salt-lick. A few were also seen in Laba He during night-drive Oct 20.

(Kansu) Red deer

Cervus (elapus) cansuensis

One stag and three does or juveniles were seen in Dulan Mountains Oct 17.

The "supertaxon" *Cervus elapus* is currently debated. Several subspecies are recognized. IUCN states: "Further investigations need to be conducted from additional molecular sources and nuclear coding genes as well as verification of morphology from museum specimens, before the elevation of this taxon to species level can be confirmed". *Cervus elapus cansuensis* may well be treated as a full species in the near future.

McNeill's deer

Cervus (canadensis) macneilli

A group of six does/juveniles and one stag were seen in a limestone gully between Yushu and Nanquian Oct 10. IUCN still treats this massive *Cervus*-deer as a subspecies of *C. Canadensis*. IUCN recognizes eight subspecies; four in North America and four in Asia. Recent studies indicate that several of these taxa should be treated as full species. Some authorities treat them as full species, while others favour further studies. According to IUCN the population of McNeill's deer is not known.

White-lipped deer

Cervus albirostris

We found two magnificent stags on our way to Baixha Forest Reserve Oct 11. On route to Qumalai we counted 59 individuals grazing on the edge of the ridge Oct 13 and four more stags were seen at a wildlife lookout crossing River Yangtse Oct 14.

This species was originally classified as a distinct genus *Przewalskium*, but has after more recent studies been placed in the genus *Cervus* (Red deer). The taxon thus occurs in literatures under three different scientific names:

Przewalskium albirostris, *Cervus albirostris* and *Cervus thoroldi* (Thorold's deer). It is endemic to China. The species previously ranged across much of the eastern Tibetan Plateau between 3400 and 5100 meters a s l. The species currently occurs in fragmented, scattered populations. Population was in 2011 estimated to be about 7000 in the wild. Its trend is not known.

Goitered gazelle

Gazella subgutturosa

In the grasslands between the Qaidam Basin and Chaka we saw a few individuals Oct 12 – 14. According to Jesper and Phil they were fewer than normal this year.

Tibetan gazelle

Procapra picticaudata

This species was encountered several times on the Tibetan Plateau. First acquaintance we made at Wenquan Pass at about 4500 metres a. s. l. at a great distance. Largest number we saw on Chang Tang Oct 14.

Przewalski's gazelle

Procapra przewalskii

We counted 56 or 57 along the road SE of Koko Nor Oct 5. (See also pp 3 - 4)

Wild yak

Bos mutus

We saw our first wild yak in Chang Tang Oct 14 and then a group in Yeniugou Oct 15.

The species is listed as Vulnerable. It is estimated that the population of mature individuals is less than 10,000 and it is estimated that there will be a continuing decline of at least 10% in 30 years. Historically, the wild yak occurred throughout the Tibetan Plateau, including China (Gansu, Sichuan, Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai), northern India (Ladak), and Nepal. (See also pp 7 & 12)



Takin

Golden takin

Budorcas taxicolor bedfordi

We included an extension tour to Tangjiahe Nature Reserve, Sichuan, hoping to see the remarkable takin. In Tangjiahe we found the first ones during night-driving Oct 24. During the following days and night-drives Oct 25 – 26 we encountered them rather frequently with maybe 15 per day. Also on the lawn of our hotel at night two animals were grazing. One of these was a giant.

The species occurs in China, Bhutan, N Myanmar and NE India. Four subspecies are recognized from 1987 and onwards; *B. t. bedfordi* (golden takin) which occurs in Qinling Mountains in China, *B. t. taxicolor* in S China,

NE India and N Myanmar, *B. t. tibetana* in China and *B. t. whitei* in southern China, and probably also in scattered populations of the Bhutan side of the border between Bhutan and China. The four subspecies show a variation in coat colour, most of them light colours. Sichuan takin and golden takin may appear in almost identical coat colours. IUCN's distribution map shows no overlapping for any of the subspecies. Tangjiahe NR is situated within the distribution area for *B. t. bedfordi* (golden takin). According to Smith et al. the takin has maximum length- and height measures similar to muskox (*Ovibos moschatus*), but may reach a weight of 600 kilograms, compared to maximum 410 kgs for the muskox. This makes the takin the biggest animal among "goats" (*Caprinae*). It is known to occur between 1000 and 4000 metres a. s. l. Threats for golden takin are according to IUCN: Deforestation, habitat fragmentation, hunting and disturbance.

Chinese serow

Capricornis milneedwardsii

One was briefly seen on our drive up to our hotel in Tangjiahe Oct 24 and one was seen during night-drive on the road leading up to the rangers station in Tangjiahe Nature Reserve Oct 25.

Chinese goral

Naemorhedus griseus

The species was encountered with a few animals each night during spotlighting in Laba He Oct 19 – 21 and in Tangjiahe Oct 24 – 26.

Argali

Ovis ammon

Our first ones were seen at a distant from a road-stop on our drive to Qumalai Oct 13. Some kilometres later the same day we came close to a magnificent group of at least 50 males. We also saw 16 in Yeniugou Oct 15.



Argali

Bharal

Pseudois nayaur

Our first bharal we saw looking for Gansu pika in Gansu Valley Oct 6. A small herd was seen at Wenquan Pass Oct 7. Thereafter we saw small groups on several places south of Yushu Oct 9 – 10, as well as in Dulan Mountains Oct 17.

This species occurs under several common names; naur, na, gnao, blue sheep, Himalayan blue sheep. According to IUCN it is found in Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan from 2500 to 5500 metres a. s. l. The number of adults lies somewhere between 47000 and 4140000. Two subspecies are well defined: *P. n. nayaur* and *P. n. szechuanensis*. There is also a dwarf bharal/blue sheep, variously considered to be a separate species (*P. schaeferi*) and a subspecies *P. nayaur schaeferi*. Recent genetic studies indicate that it should not be considered a separate species. Today this taxon is found in Yangtse River in western Sichuan and the prefecture Chamdo in Tibet. It inhabits an area about 300 km², population estimated to 200 animals and is treated as Critically endangered.

Chiru

Pantholops hodgsonii

Chiru also goes by the name Tibetan antelope. This species was one of the most important species to see during the trip. We found them on Chang Tang Oct 14. Males were a bit more cautious than females. Our best view of males we had at a wildlife lookout along Lhasa Road towards the evening. In total we saw over 400 chiru. The majority at medium or long distances.

The chiru was treated as Endangered by IUCN from 2000 to 2008, due to hunting. The species is slowly recovering and its need for protection is now classified as Near Threatened. Its population is now estimated to be between 100000 and 150000. It occurs in China and India (Jammu-Kashmir), but is extinct from Nepal.

BIRDS – a checklist



Black-throated tit

Species presented in order according to Mackinnon and Phillips: *The Birds of China* (2000). Recent splits are placed next to the species from which it has been split.

Daurian partridge

Tibetan partridge

Przewalski's partridge

Chinese bamboo partridge

Blood pheasant

.Temminck's tragopan]

Szecheny's monalpartridge

White eared-pheasant

Common pheasant

Golden pheasant

Lady Amherst's pheasant

Greylag goose

Bar-headed goose

Ruddy shelduck

Gadwall

Mallard

†Chinese spot-billed duck

Northern pintail

Common teal

Red-crested pochard

Ferruginous duck

Tufted duck

Common pochard

Goosander

Perdix dauurica

Perdix hodgsoniae.

Alectoris magna

Bambusicola thoracica

Ithaginus cruentus

Tragopan temminckii

Tetraophasis szechenyii

Crossoptilon crossoptilon

Phasianus colchisus

Chrysolophus pictus

Chrysolophus amherstiae

Anser anser.

Anser indicus

Tadorna ferruginea

Anas strepera

Anas platyrhynchos

Anas zonorhyncha

Anas acuta

Anas crecca

Rhodonessa rufina

Aythya nyroca

Aythya fuligula

Aythya ferina

Mergus merganser

Chinese spotted woodpecker
Crimson-breasted woodpecker
Darjeeling woodpecker
White-backed woodpecker
Grey-capped pygmy woodpecker
Speckled piculet

Dendrocopus major cabanisi
Dendrocopus cathphrarius
Dendrocopus darjellensis
Dendrocopos leucotos
Dendrocopos canicapillus
Picumnus innominatus



White-backed woodpecker



Lammergeier

Black woodpecker
Grey-headed woodpecker
Hoopoe
Crested kingfisher
Eurasian eagle owl
Himalayan wood owl
Collared scops owl
Northern boobook
Little owl
Rock pigeon
Hill pigeon
Speckled wood pigeon
Oriental turtle dove
Spotted dove
Collared dove
Black-necked crane
Common coot
Common moorhen
Tibetan sandgrouse
Pallas' sandgrouse
Woodcock
Solitary snipe
Common snipe
Ruff
Spotted redshank
Common redshank
Greenshank
Green sandpiper
Common sandpiper
Long-billed dowitcher
Ibisbill
Northern lapwing

Dryocopus martius
Picus canus
Upupa epops
Megaceryle lugubris
Bubo bubo
Strix nivicolium
Otus bakkamoena
Ninox japonica
Athene noctua
Columba livia
Columba rupestris
Columba hodgsonii
Streptopelia orinetalis
Streptopelia chinensis
Streptopelia decaocto
Grus nigricollis
Fulica atra
Gallinula chloropus
Syrrhaptes tibetanus
Syrrhaptes paradoxus
Scolopax rusticola
Gallinago solitaria
Gallinago gallinago
Philomachus pugnax
Tringa erythropus year.
Tringa totanus
Tringa nebularia
Tringa ochropus
Actitis hypoleucos
Limnodromus scolopaceus
Ibidorhynchus struthersii
Vanellus vanellus

Long-billed plover
Pallas' gull
Yellow-legged gull
Brown-headed gull
Black-headed gull
Common tern
Whiskered tern
Lammergier
Himalayan griffon vulture
Black vulture
Pallas' fish eagle
Hen harrier
Crested goshawk
Eurasian sparrowhawk
Northern goshawk
Himalayan buzzard
Japanese buzzard
Long-legged buzzard
Upland buzzard
Steppe eagle

Charadrius placidus
Larus ichthyaetus
Larus cachinnans
Larus brunnicephalus
Larus ridibundus
Sterna hirundo
Chlidonias hybridus
Gypaetus barbatus
Gyps himalayensis
Aegypius monachus
Haliaeetus leucoryphus
Circus cyaneus
Accipiter trivirgatus
Accipiter nisus
Accipiter gentilis.
Buteo buteo burmensis
Buteo japonicus
Buteo rufinus
Buteo hemilasius
Aquila nipalensis



Saker falcon



Himalayan griffon vulture

Golden eagle
Mountain hawk-eagle
Common kestrel
Merlin
Saker falcon
Peregrine
Hobby
Little grebe
Great crested grebe
Black-necked grebe
Great cormorant
Cattle egret
Little egret
Chinese pond heron
Grey heron
Black-crowned night-heron
Long-tailed shrike

Aquila chrysaetos
Spizaetus nipalensis
Falco tinnunculus
Falco columbarius
Falco cherrug
Falco peregrinus
Falco Subbuteo
Tachybaptus ruficollis
Podiceps cristatus
Podiceps nigricollis
Phalacrocorax carbo
Bubulcus ibis
Egretta garzetta
Ardeola bacchus
Ardea cinerea
Nycticorax nycticorax
Lanius schach

Tibetan grey shrike

Chinese grey shrike

Grey-backed shrike

Jay

Lanius (sphenocercus)
giganteus

Lanius sphenocercus

Lanius tephronotus

Garrulus glandarius



Collared crow

Red-billed blue magpie

Azure-winged magpie

Magpie

Tibetan magpie

Henderson's ground-jay

Groundpecker

Spotted nutcracker

Red-billed chough

Alpine chough

Daurian jackdaw

Large-billed crow

Collared crow

Raven

Long-tailed minivet

White-throated dipper

Brown dipper

Red-throated thrush

Black-throated thrush

Chinese blackbird

Urocissus erythrorhyncha

Cyanopica cyanus

Pica pica

Pica (pica) tibetana

Podoces hendersoni

Pseudopodoces humilis

Nucifraga caryocatactes

Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax

Pyrrhocorax graculus

Corvus dauuricus

Corvus macrorhynchus

Corvus torquatus

Corvus corax

Pericrotus ethologus

Cinclus cinclus

Cinclus pallasii

Turdus ruficollis

Turdus atrogularis

Turdus mandarinus

Kessler's thrush
Chinese thrush
Scaly thrush
Northern red-flanked bluetail
Himalayan red-flanked bluetail
Golden bush robin
White-browed bush robin
Siberian rubythroat
Przewalski's redstart (sometimes Ala Shan redstart)
White-throated redstart
Daurian redstart

Turdus kessleri
Turdus mupinensis
Zoothera dauma
Tarsiger cyanurus
Tarsiger rufilatus
Tarsiger chrysaeus
Tarsiger indicus
Luscinia calliope
Phoenicurus alashanicus
Phoenicurus schisticeps
Phoenicurus aureoreus



Groundpecker



Daurian redstart

Hodgson's redstart
Güldenstädt's redstart
Blue-fronted redstart
White-capped redstart
Plumbeous redstart
Rufous-gorgetted flycatcher
Slaty-backed flycatcher
Ultramarine flycatcher
Blue-and-white flycatcher
Siberian stonechat
Little forktail
White-crowned forktail
Oriental magpie robin
Red-billed starling
White-cheeked starling
Crested myna
Eurasian nuthatch
Chinese nuthatch
Przewalski's nuthatch
Wallcreeper
Eurasian treecreeper
Hodgson's treecreeper
Wren

Phoenicurus hodgsoni
Phoenicurus erythrogaster
Phoenicurus frontalis
Chaimarornis leucocephalus
Rhyacornis fuliginosa
Ficedula strophiate
Ficedula hodgsonii
Ficedula superciliaris
Cyanoptila cyanomelana
Saxicola maurus
Enicurus scouleri
Enicurus leschenaultii
Copsychus saularis
Spodiopsar sericeus
Sturnus cineraceus
Acridotheres cristatellus
Sitta europaea
Sitta villosa
Sitta przewalskii
Tichodroma muraria
Certhia familiaris
Certhia hodgsoni
Troglodytes troglodytes



European nuthatch



Black-browed bush-tit

Willow tit
 Sichuan tit
 White-browed tit
 Rusty-breasted tit
 Rufous-vented tit
 Grey-crested tit
 Grey tit
 Green-backed tit
 Black-throated tit
 Sooty tit
 Black-browed tit
 Yellow-browed tit
 Collared finchbill
 Light-vented bulbul
 Tarim hill warbler
 Spotted bush-warbler
 Brownish-flanked bush-warbler
 Yellowish-bellied bush-warbler
 Grey-sided bush-warbler
 Stolzck's tit-warbler
 Crested tit-warbler
 Ashy-throated warbler
 Pallas' leaf warbler
 Buff-barred warbler
 Yellow-browed warbler
 Alpine leaf warbler
 Gansu leaf warbler
 Sichuan leaf warbler
 Chinese leaf warbler
 Hume's warbler
 Goldcrest
 Giant laughingthrush
 Moustached laughingthrush
 Barred laughingthrush
 Hwamei
 Elliott's laughingthrush
 Black-faced laughingthrush
 Red-winged laughingthrush
 Streak-breasted scimitarbabbling

Parus montanus
Parus weigoldicus
Parus superciliosus
Parus davidi
Parus rubidiventris
Parus dichrous
Parus minor
Parus monticolus
Aegithalos concinnus
Aegithalos fuliginosus
Aegithalos bonvaloti
Sylviparus modestus
Spizixos semitorques
Pycnonotus sinensis
Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris
Locustella thoracica
Cettia fortipes
Cettia acanthizoides
Cettia brunnifrons
Leptopoecile sophiae
Leptopoecile elegans
Phylloscopus maculipennis
Phylloscopus proregulus
Phylloscopus pulcher
Phylloscopus inornatus
Phylloscopus occisinensis
Phylloscopus kansuensis
Phylloscopus forresti
Phylloscopus yunnanensis
Phylloscopus humei
Regulus regulus
Garrulax maximus
Garrulax cineraceus
Garrulax lunulatus
Garrulax canorus
Garrulax ellioti
Garrulax affinis
Garrulax formosus
Pomatorhinus ruficollis

Black-streaked scimitarbabbling
Chinese babax
Kozlov's babax
Pygmy wren-babbling
Rufous-capped babbling
Red-billed leiothrix
Blue-winged minla
Golden-breasted fulvetta
Chinese fulvetta
Grey-hooded fulvetta
David's fulvetta
White-collared yuhina
Bearded parrotbill
Great parrotbill
Fulvous parrotbill
Vinous-throated parrotbill
Tibetan lark
Hume's short-toed lark
Asian short-toed lark
Oriental skylark
Horned lark
Quaidam Basin horned lark
House sparrow
Tree sparrow
Rock sparrow
Henri's snowfinch
Tibetan snowfinch
White-rumped snowfinch
Père David's snowfinch
Rufous-necked snowfinch
Blanford's snowfinch
White wagtail
Grey wagtail

Pomatorhinus gravivox
Babax lanceolatus
Babax koslowi
Pnoepyga pusilla
Stachyris ruficeps
Leiothrix lutea
Minla cyanoptera
Lioparus chrysotis
Alcippe striaticollis
Alcippe cinereiceps
Alcippe davidi
Yuhina diademata
Panurus biarmicus
Conostoma oemodium
Paradoxornis fulvifrons
Paradoxornis webbiana
Melanocorypha maxima
Calandrella acutirostris
Calandrella cheleensis
Alauda gulgula
Eremophila alpestris
Eremophila a. przewalskii
Passer domesticus
Passer montanus
Petronia petronia
Montifringilla henrici
Montifringilla adamsi
Pyrgilauda taczanowski
Pyrgilauda davidiana
Pyrgilauda ruficollis
Pyrgilauda blanfordi
Motacilla alba
Motacilla cinerea



White-rumped snowfinch



Rufous-necked snowfinch

Citrine wagtail
Rosy pipit
Olive-backed pipit
Water pipit
Robin accentor

Motacilla citreola
Anthus roseatus
Anthus hodgsoni
Anthus spinoletta
Prunella rubeculoides

Rufous-breasted accentor
Brown accentor
Maroon-backed accentor
Brandt's mountain finch
Siskin
Twite
Brambling
Mongolian finch
Chinese beautiful rosefinch
Pink-rumped rosefinch
Vinaceous rosefinch
Dark-breasted rosefinch
Chinese white-browed rosefinch
Eastern great rosefinch
Caucasian great rosefinch
Roborovski's rosefinch
Przewalski's pinktail
Grey-headed bullfinch
Red crossbill
Chinese grosbeak
White-winged grosbeak
Slaty bunting
Pine bunting
Godlewski's bunting
Little bunting
Reed bunting (thick-billed race)

Prunella strophciata
Prunella fulvescens
Prunella immaculata
Leucosticte brandti
Carduelis spinus
Carduelis flavirostris
Fringilla montifringilla
Bucanetes mongolicus
Carpodacus davidianus
Carpodacus eos
Carpodacus vinaceus
Carpodacus nipalensis
Carpodacus dubius
Carpodacus rubicilloides
Carpodacus rubicilla
Kozlowia roborowskii
Urocynchramus pylzowi
Pyrrhula erythaca T
Loxia curvirostra
Eophonia migratoria
Mycerobas carripes
Latoucheornis siemsseni
Emberiza leucocephalos
Emberiza godlewski
Emberiza pusilla
Emberiza schoeniclus ssp.

AMPHIBIANS and REPTILES



Mongolian toad

Photo Anita Ericsson



Brown spotted pit viper

Photo Anita Ericsson

Brown spotted pit viper

One moribund was found in the getter in Chengdu in the evening of Oct 23.

Protobothrops mucrosquamatus

Mongolian toad

Some were found at a freshwater lagoon on southern side of Koko Nor Oct 5. (See also page 4)

Pseudepidalea raddei

Tsinghai toad-headed agama
One was found SE of Koko Nor Oct 5.

Phrynocephalus vlangerii

Unidentified toad-headed agama
One was found in Yeniougou Oct 15.

Phrynocephalus sp.

EVERTEBRATES



Giant silk moth (*Saturniidae sp.*)

Asian comma *Polygonia c-aureum*
Several were seen at the Tea-packer's Memorial outside Yaán Och 23.

Asian green-veined white *Pieris melete*
One was photographed at the Tea-packer's Memorial outside Yaán Och 23.

Spotted lanternfly *Lycorma delicatula*
One was seen in Tangjiahe between Oct 24 and 26.

Mongolian moorland hawker *Aeshna juncea mongolica*
One was discovered egg-laying at Laba He Oct 21.

Laba He Longicorn (inoff. name) *Anophlophora coeruleogantenata*
One was discovered and photographed at Laba He Oct 21. (See also pp 16–17)
A number of similar species of longicorns exist. This is the best match:
<https://apps2.cdfa.ca.gov/publicApps/plant/bycidDB/wdetails.asp?id=32215&w=o>

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Addresses and links

Report compiler

slithner@outlook.com

More photos of mammals

http://www.pbase.com/stefan_lithner/mammals_china_2016

More photos of birds

http://www.pbase.com/stefan_lithner/birds_china_2016

Greentours Natural History Holidays

<http://www.greentours.co.uk/>

What's that bug?

<http://www.whatsthatbug.com>

