

Hexigten (克什克腾), Inner Mongolia, China

September, 2019

4 days (from Beijing), 12 + 1 mammal species

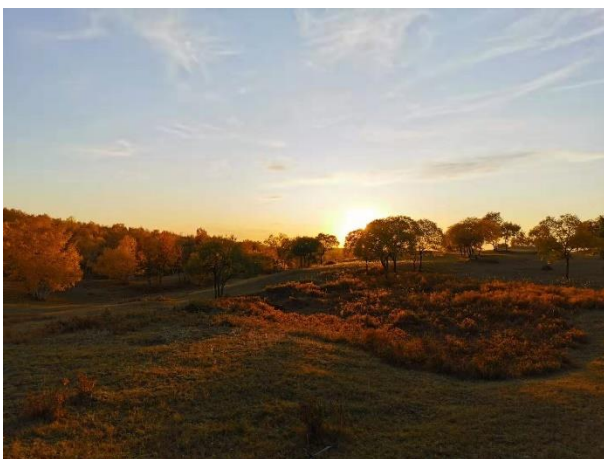
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There are some world-famous mammal watching destinations in China, mainly in Sichuan and Tibet, Western China. Here I share a trip report in Northern China. In Northern China there are fewer species we can see but the travel is convenient. Hexigten is 600 km from capital Beijing, you can drive there by yourself and it takes about 8 hours.

I went Hexigten with two friends by self-drive. Travel with an experienced guide would be good for sure. However, we are all novices in mammal watching, so we are satisfied with the harvest. In addition, it was a money-saving trip. We took comfortable hotels and most meals in restaurants, while the cost is not much.

Day 1 Beijing – Jingpeng (经棚), Hexigten – Baiyin Obo (白音敖包) – Jingpeng

Baiyin Obo is a national nature reserve mainly for *Picea mongolica*, 1-hour-drive from Jingpeng, the capital town of Hexigten. We arrived there in late afternoon. We didn't enter the tourist resort but drive into the shrubs on a sand road. We were unfamiliar with the road so we didn't drive deeply and only saw a tolai hare. Call of Siberian roe deer were heard but no sight. After dark, we lighted the searchlight and found some unidentified rodents as they hide into the hole quickly. While a Gobi jerboa gave us a good view – it stood still and the hole's mouth and watched us. Then we went back to our hotel in Jingpeng town.



Shrubs, Baiyin Obo



Gobi jerboa

Day 2 Jingpeng – Dalinuoer (达里诺尔) – Dalainuori (达来诺日)

Dalinuoer is a national nature reserve includes multiple ecosystems. On the way to the reserve, we saw great bustards, white-naped cranes and other birds share the pasture with cattle and sheep.

The main roads in Dalinuoer is hard surface and easy to drive. Most animals we saw were cattle, sheep, horses and camels. Suddenly we saw an Asian badger going to cross the road while driving. We stopped the car immediately but the badger was still frightened and ran hundreds of meters away without stop. We had not expected the Asian badger could live in such an open area and be so active at 10:30 am.



Bustards and cattle



Asian badger

During the daytime we didn't get much. In the late afternoon we arrive at the north shore of Dalinuoer Lake and saw many birds. Before the sunset, we heard many small mammals calling in the grass, then we saw they were Daurian pikas. They were in large number but not easy to see clearly. Meanwhile tolai hares also started to jump here and there. When it was darker, many rodents with black fur and medium-length tail started to be active, too, but no clear view for identity.



North shore of the Dalinuoer Lake



Daurian pika

The night safari from 8 pm to 10 pm was amazing. We saw many tolai hares as well. Corsac foxes were seen three times and one close view. They did not show much fare to us. One steppe polecat was seen at a hole very near the road. It might be hunting rodents, as it left the hole while we illuminating it. One striped dwarf hamster was seen crossing the road, and shortly after that we saw a road killed – the hamster crosses the road in very low speed. At last we saw a racoon dog crossing the road.



Steppe polecat



Corsac fox

This night we stayed in a hotel in Dalainuori town. All three night we stay in good hotels.

Day 3 Dalainuori – Huanggangliang (黄岗梁) – Jingpeng

In the morning we drove from Dalainuori to Huanggangliang, it took 2.5 hours and passed Baiyin Obo, so actually the schedule can be optimized. There were broad pastures on both sides of the road. We saw some Daurian ground squirrels on the pasture. They had been said to be in in great numbers, but we didn't see many. A steppe eagle far away was seen resting on the fence.



Daurian ground squirrel



Steppe eagle

Huanggangliang is both a nature reserve and a forest park. Note that the park is closed from March 15th – June 15th and September 15th – November 15th for fire prevention.

We drove in to the park in late afternoon along the gravel road. We encountered three wapitis, including one stag, one hind and her young, standing still on the road side. Wapiti or red deer may be common in Europe or America, but in China they were hard to see in the wild. We encountered black grouses three times, but all female. Eurasian red squirrels could be seen.



Wapiti



Black grouse female

During the night safari we encountered four Siberian roe deer. They often stopped to observe us after run for a short distance, offering good photographic opportunities. We saw a racoon dog on the road side outside the park while driving to Jingpeng. There are also hotels near Huanggangliang.



Siberian roe deer



Huanggangliang

Day 4 Jingpeng – Wulingshan (雾灵山)

This day, the trip in Hexigten, Inner Mongolia was end, we can drove back to Beijing. Instead, we decided to spend one more night at Wulingshan National Nature Reserve & Forest Park.

Hog badgers and leopard cats were reported to be seen sometimes here, but our main target was the Northern China flying squirrel. Flying squirrels in such a large size are special in palearctic. We succeed to find one during the night safari along the mountain road. It didn't care much about the searchlight.



Northern China flying squirrel



Wulingshan Mountain

Mammal List (watching only)

English name	Chinese name	Scientific name	Location
Eurasian red squirrel	松鼠	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	Huanggangliang
Daurian ground squirrel	达乌尔黄鼠	<i>Spermophilus dauricus</i>	Pasture near Dalainuori
Gobi jerboa	巨泡五趾跳鼠	<i>Allactaga bullata</i>	Baiyin Obo
Campbell's dwarf hamster	坎氏毛足鼠	<i>Phodopus campbelli</i>	Dalinuoer
Daurian pika	达乌尔鼠兔	<i>Ochotona dauurica</i>	Dalinuoer
tolai hare	蒙古兔	<i>Lepus tolai</i>	Baiyin Obo, Dalinuoer
raccoon dog	貉	<i>Nyctereutes procyonoides</i>	Dalinuoer, Huanggangliang
corsac fox	沙狐	<i>Vulpes corsac</i>	Dalinuoer
Asian badger	狗獾	<i>Meles leucurus</i>	Dalinuoer
steppe polecat	艾鼬	<i>Mustela eversmanii</i>	Dalinuoer
Siberian roe deer	东方狍	<i>Capreolus pygargus</i>	Huanggangliang
Wapiti	马鹿	<i>Cervus canadensis</i>	Huanggangliang
Northern China flying squirrel	沟牙鼯鼠	<i>Aeretes melanopterus</i>	Wulingshan (outside Hexigten)