



# Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## ***CHINA*** ***Giant Pandas &*** ***Birding in the Qinling Mountains***

*20<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> September 2007*



**Wild Giant Panda and Qinling Mountain Scenery**

**All photos by David Shackelford**

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**Chinese Crested Ibis and Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an**

## **Tour summary**

"The sky looks smaller by the high peaks around, the sun can be see when nap at noon. The moon is close to you during night, and cloud is around you in your traveling morning."

~Cen Can, poet of the Tang Dynasty describing the Qinling Mountains

Before us stood the gallant remains of an ancient empire long since buried and forgotten many thousands of years ago. Gazing over the most significant archeological excavations of the 20th century, we could not help but be awed by the grandeur and sheer magnitude of literally thousands upon thousands of pottery soldiers, horses, war chariots, and weapons. Located within Shaanxi Province near Xi'an, the Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum is now officially a World Cultural Heritage Site and a poignant icon of China's distant past recognized around the world.

We had arrived that day and were all excited to be witnessing the necropolis built by the first Emperor of all China, Qin Shi Huang ruling from 246 BC. Secretly hidden from the pages of history, this amazing cultural site was only uncovered in 1974 when a group of peasants were digging to create a well and happened upon the remnant chards of an archaic pottery. The Terracotta Army's purpose was thought to aid Emperor Shi Huangdi in ruling another empire in his afterlife. Complete with office chambers, gateways, and hallways, the compound palace contains staggeringly lifelike terracotta figures placed in precise military formation according to rank and duty. No two life-sized warriors are alike in the tomb, and we could only marvel at the power the Emperor must have wielded to generate such a monumental work of art.

We eagerly ventured southwards winding through the steep but fantastically scenic Qinling Mountains. Scanning the swift mountain streams and river produced the oversized Crested Kingfisher, White-capped Water-Redstart, buoyant Brown Dipper, and scope views of the attractive White-crowned Forktail. Along a sheer cliff we located a pair of the agile mountain goat called the Goral, and while making our way towards our target area near Yang County we also encountered a flock of migrant Meadow Bunting, noisy White-cheeked and Red-billed Starlings, smart Collared Finchbill, a vocal Asian Barred Owlet, and brilliantly colored Daurian Redstart. Of course our primary birding goal was to locate the critically endangered Chinese Crested Ibis, a bird that has slowly recovered from a

devastatingly low world population of less than thirty birds. It was only rediscovered in 1981 but the numbers have grown encouraging but precariously to a tiny population of less than two hundred individuals. Scanning diligently during the late afternoon, we were overjoyed to find a single adult bird that we were able to approach and scope at no less than fifty meters distance for outrageous views of one of the rarest birds on earth!

Winding deeper into the Qinling Mountains that geographically separate the northern and southern regions of China, we arrived by bumpy dirt track to our staging area where we loaded our gear onto pack mules and with an expedition team of trackers and camp staff began the journey hiking into Foping Nature Reserve. Created to protect the Giant Panda and its favored habitat, this ecological paradise lies in the transitive area from subtropics to temperate zones covering roughly 35,000 hectares. The forest ablaze with the changing leaves of autumn, we walked with a tangible excitement in our step knowing that we were within the realm of the Giant Panda, a nearly mythical animal to behold in the wild and certainly one of the most charismatic mammals on Earth. Endemic Sooty and Yellow-bellied Tits chattered noisily along our way colliding with flocks of White-collared Yuhina, Red-billed Leiothrix, and Greater Necklaced-Laughingthrush as shafts of sunlight percolated through the luminous red and yellow leaves blowing lightly in the breeze.

The frigid mountain river and an impressive series of forested streams tumbled their way past our basic but comfortable accommodation of Sanguanmiao complete with water-generated electricity and friendly staff. Chattering Chinese Babax and a boisterous flutter of Vinous-throated Parrotbills were in constant attendance outside our rooms while the raucous exclamations of gaudy Red-billed Blue Magpie woke us up each morning to start a new adventure a field. Each day we would set out on a different route into the mountains with our local Chinese trackers taking the lead in search of fresh Giant Panda sign such as tracks, scat, or freshly eaten bamboo shoots. Along our way we explored a staggering diversity of habitats including vast amounts of farges cane and umbrella bamboo, both the favored food of the Giant Panda. Here we found avian bamboo specialists such as eye-catching Barred and Moustached Laughingthrushes, Spectacled Fulvetta, amiable Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, and the furtive Spectacled Parrotbill. Both Swinhoe's Striped and Pere-David's Rock Squirrels fed along the trail edges while the undergrowth along streams produced both Pygmy and Scaly-breasted Wren Babblers, Little Forktail that dashes across the rocky water edges, prolonged views of a single migrant Siberian Thrush, small congregates of Fire-capped Tit in attendance, and over the montane forest the venerable Golden Eagle could be seen soaring overhead.

Armed with our chopsticks and hot coffee we welcomed the hearty rice and noodle dinners in the evenings mixed with a peculiar but tasty assortment of local vegetables. One late afternoon at the eve of Mid-autumn Day come nightfall we celebrated the full moon above with our Chinese local staff and sweet moon-cakes combined with their traditional music and song. With fabulous clear weather and spirits soaring we continued trekking along narrow trails until finally our day came with a scratchy assertion of the hand-held radio: the trackers had found fresh sign of a Giant Panda.

Pushing ourselves forward initially along a tapered rocky trail and then into untouched forest, we aimed to approach as closely as possible to the trackers in case they were able to actually locate the panda. Descending in the wintertime to slightly lower elevations where food is easier to obtain, Giant Pandas typically summer above 2,800 meters in altitude, an area well above our physical capabilities in these impossibly sheer mountains trekking from our base camp. Knowing that the winter was approaching but

also feeling that the climate was still unusually warm for late September, we were all ecstatic that the fresh panda sign had been locating signaling the initial stages of the panda's annual descent. Suddenly the radio crackled again as we all fell silent: one of the trackers had briefly caught sight of the Giant Panda! We knew we were very lucky to have this opportunity and wanted to make the most of it, so we continued firing on all cylinders up and down very steep ridges and across slippery stream crossings closer and closer to where the trackers were converging upon the panda site. Holding onto the bases of bamboo shoots and hoisting ourselves over moss-covered rock crevices we could feel the tension mounting as we caught sight of one of the trackers waving us forward. Adrenaline was streaming through our veins as we pushed aside the final clusters of bamboo on the mountain slope and there protected beneath a rock ledge was one of the most beautiful sights we had ever laid eyes upon – a cub Giant Panda in the wild. Its features were immaculate with fine black and white hairs outlining a perfect animal as we absorbed the experience and looked back into the legendary black spectacles of this marvelous creature. It crawled for a short distance and we decided to retreat as not to interfere with the mother that would undoubtedly be returning in short time. After ten hours of continuous hiking and after nearly twenty strenuous kilometers we returned to Sanguanmiao, absolutely exhausted but feeling higher than ever before having successfully completed one of the finest mammal trekking experiences on earth.

We continued exploring the natural wonders of Foping Nature Reserve during our final days, and although punctuated with rain and often heavy fog, we still managed to encounter some amazing wildlife. Undoubtedly one of the star birds of the tour, the spectacular Golden Pheasant was truly a sight to behold as it crept through the dense undergrowth as well as Masked and Elliot's Laughingthrushes that performed at slightly higher elevations, Slaty Buntings in the scrub, the spectacled form of Green Shrike-Babbler, and the jewel-like Golden-breasted Fulvetta in stands of bamboo. Some of us were fortunate to catch sight of the stately Serow and the diminutive Tufted Deer and everyone enjoyed stellar views of an aggressive Eurasian Hoopoe continuously dive-bombing a covey of shy Chinese Bamboo-Partridge. During one morning trek we enticed a fabulous Red-and-white Giant Flying Squirrel from its tree lair and on another expedition into the high mountains were elated to find four spectacular Koklass Pheasants including three gorgeous males, the retiring but dazzling Firethroat in a dense stand of stunted vegetation, and an immaculate pair of Temminck's Tragopan.

The local Chinese protectors living in the nearby valley treated us during our final evening to an unforgettable twelve-course dinner, all ingredients locally grown and prepared. We celebrated our excellent birding success and of course finding the Giant Panda, the symbol of global conservation, over too many glasses of decidedly strong corn-whisky before returning to the camp in boisterous song and performance. As we returned to the provincial capital of Xi'an we had time to reflect upon this truly remarkable journey into the heart of China, birding and trekking for Giant Panda with friends during the trip of a lifetime.



Foping Nature Reserve Trail and Golden-breasted Fulvetta

## Annotated List of Bird Species recorded

### Herons, Egrets & Bitterns *Ardeidae*

#### **Gray Heron**

*Ardea cinerea*

A single bird was seen by the river edge along our journey to Yang County.

#### **Cattle Egret**

*Bubulcus ibis*

Good numbers were seen near Yang Ling and Yang County in pastures.

#### **Great Egret**

*Casmerodius albus*

Several birds were found near the water edge close to Yang County.

#### **Little Egret**

*Egretta garzetta*

Up to fifty birds were seen feeding along the river edge during the first three days of the tour especially near Yang Ling.

### Ibises & Spoonbills *Threskiornithidae*

#### **Chinese Crested Ibis**

*Nipponia nippon*

One of the star birds of the tour, we were fortunate to obtain close scope views of a single representative of this critically endangered species near Yang County.

### Ducks, Geese & Swans *Anatidae*

#### **Ruddy Shelduck**

*Tadorna ferruginea*

A single flock of six birds were scoped along the river edge near Yang County.

### Hawks, Eagles & Kites *Accipitridae*

#### **Eastern Marsh Harrier**

*Circus aeruginosus*

A single bird was found flying overhead near Yang Ling in its migration southwards.

#### **Eurasian Sparrowhawk**

*Accipiter nisus*

Single birds were seen flying over the forest in Foping Nature Reserve on several occasions.

#### **Besra**

*Accipiter virgatus*

We enjoyed two excellent views of displaying birds in flight in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Oriental Honey-Buzzard**

*Pernis ptilorhynchus*

Two birds were scoped in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Golden Eagle***Aquila chrysaetos*

A single bird was seen well soaring above the forest of Foping Nature Reserve.

**Falcons & Kestrels *Falconidae*****Eurasian (Northern) Hobby***Falco subbuteo*

Two individuals were seen in Foping Nature Reserve flying at close distance.

**Eurasian (Common) Kestrel***Falco tinnunculus*

A single bird was found near the Foping Nature Reserve hovering over a scrubby meadow.

**Pheasants and Partridges *Phasianidae*****Chinese Bamboo-Partridge***Bambusicola thoracica*

We were delighted to obtain scope views of six birds on two consecutive days in Foping Nature Reserve near our accommodation.

**Temminck's Tragopan***Tragopan temminckii*

Two individuals, one beautiful male and one female were seen well during an arduous hike ascending the mountains of Foping Nature Reserve to over 2000m in elevation.

**Koklass Pheasant***Pucrasia macrolopha*

Amazing views of four birds including three males were had during a mountain hike through the Foping Nature Reserve.

**Ring-necked (Common) Pheasant***Phasianus colchicus*

By far the most common and conspicuous pheasant of Foping Nature Reserve, we encountered up to eight birds daily in scrubby meadows. Several also seen *en route* to the park.

**Golden Pheasant***Chrysolophus pictus*

An outrageous bird that has to be seen to be believed; up to six birds were seen on three separate days in the Foping Nature Reserve mostly in dense thickets of bamboo or crossing trails. Males were very vocal and could be quietly approached when calling.

**Rails, Gallinules & Coots *Rallidae*****White-breasted Waterhen***Amaurornis phoenicurus*

We found four birds near Yang County in an area of wetland.

**Plovers & Lapwings *Charadriidae*****Gray-headed Lapwing***Vanellus cinereus*

One bird was seen at the edge of the highway near a small puddle the first day of the tour.

**Sandpipers *Scolopacidae*****Common Sandpiper***Actitis hypoleucos*

A single bird was seen in the Qinling Mountains as we were driving back to Yang Ling.

**Green Sandpiper***Tringa ochropus*

A single bird was seen during the first day of the tour near Yang Ling.

**Pigeons & Doves *Columbidae*****Speckled Wood-Pigeon***Columba hodgsonii*

This species was heard calling inside the forest of Foping Nature Reserve.

**Eastern Turtle-Dove***Streptopelia orientalis*

Common especially in secondary habitat, we had almost daily sightings of up to twenty birds throughout the tour.

**Typical Owls *Strigidae*****Asian Barred Owlet***Glaucidium cuculoides*

We enjoyed prolonged scope views of a single bird at Yang County and later hear this species on several occasions in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Little Owl***Athene noctua*

A single bird was seen briefly perched conspicuously at the side of the road along our way to Yang Ling.

**Tawny Owl***Strix aluco*

This species was heard calling behind our accommodation at Foping Nature Reserve.

**Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*****Crested Kingfisher***Ceryle lugubris*

We enjoyed several sightings of this oversized kingfisher along mountain rivers throughout the tour.

**Hoopoes *Upupidae*****Eurasian Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

Only found at Foping Nature Reserve where we found an aggressive individual dive-bombing the Chinese Bamboo-Partridge near our accommodation.

**Woodpeckers *Picidae*****Gray-headed (-faced) Woodpecker***Picus canus*

A single bird was seen well in Foping Nature Reserve on one of our morning birding walks.

**Gray-capped Pygmy-Woodpecker***Dendrocopos canicapillus*

We found this tiny woodpecker on two occasions during our explorations of Foping Nature Reserve.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker***Dendrocopos major*

This species was conspicuous in Foping Nature Reserve where we encountered up to three birds daily.

**White-backed Woodpecker***Dendrocopos leucotos*

Up to two birds were seen daily in Foping Nature Reserve especially associating with mixed species flocks.

**Crimson-breasted Woodpecker***Dendrocopos cathpharius*

Up to three birds were seen almost daily inside the forest of Foping Nature Reserve.

**Rufous-bellied Woodpecker***Dendrocopos hyperythrus*

Single birds were encountered on several occasions in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Swallows & Martins *Hirundinidae*****Barn Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

Up to fifty birds were seen on each of the first two days of the tour in open habitat and water crossings.

**Red-rumped Swallow***Hirundo daurica*

Ten individuals were seen well on a bridge en route to Yang County.

**Bank Swallow (Sand Martin)***Riparia riparia*

Six birds were seen in flight during the first day of the tour along the river near Yang Ling.

**Asian House Martin***Delichon dasypus*

A dozen birds were scoped nesting along a cliff edge in the Qinling Mountains.

### Wagtails & Pipits *Motacillidae*

#### **Forest Wagtail**

*Dendronanthus indicus*

A single bird was seen along the entrance road to Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Yellow Wagtail**

*Motacilla flava*

One of these passage migrants was found attending a puddle with the grounds of our accommodation in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Citrine Wagtail**

*Motacilla citreola*

We found seven birds total during the first two days of the tour in open areas near Yang Ling.

#### **Gray Wagtail**

*Motacilla cinerea*

Seen on several occasions during the tour with two birds alighting on the roof of our accommodation in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **White Wagtail**

*Motacilla alba*

Encountered almost daily throughout the tour with high numbers of ten birds near Yang County.

#### **Red-throated Pipit**

*Anthus cervinus*

A single calling bird flew over us near Yang Ling in riverine scrub.

#### **Olive-backed Pipit**

*Anthus hodgsoni*

Good numbers of up to six birds daily were found in scrubby meadows within Foping Nature Reserve.

### Cuckoo-shrikes *Campephagidae*

#### **Long-tailed Minivet**

*Pericrocotus ethologus*

Large noisy flocks of up to fifty birds daily were seen in forested areas of Foping Nature Reserve.

### Bulbuls *Pycnonotidae*

#### **Collared Finchbill**

*Spizixos semitorques*

This species proved to be fairly common in secondary scrub with up to five birds seen almost daily throughout the tour.

#### **Light-vented Bulbul**

*Pycnonotus sinensis*

We found a single bird that showed well near Yang Ling on the way to our accommodation.

#### **Brown-breasted Bulbul**

*Pycnonotus xanthorrhous*

Another bulbul we encountered in secondary habitat, we found this species in greatest numbers near Yang County where up to twelve birds were seen in a day.

#### **Mountain Bulbul**

*Hypsipetes mcclllandii*

Two rather unexpected birds were seen well responding to the call of an owlet in Foping Nature Reserve.

### Shrikes *Laniidae*

#### **Brown Shrike**

*Lanius cristatus*

A single migratory bird was scoped near Yang County during our journey to find the Chinese Crested Ibis.

#### **Gray-backed Shrike**

*Lanius tephronotus*

Three birds total were found in secondary scrub near Yang County.

### Old World Orioles *Oriolidae*

#### **Black-naped Oriole**

*Oriolus chinensis*

A single individual was found during the first day of the tour; a very widespread Asian species.

### Starlings *Sturnidae*

#### **Daurian Starling**

*Sturnus sturninus*

At least one bird was in attendance in a mixed flock of both Daurian and Red-billed Starlings near Yang County.

#### **White-cheeked Starling**

*Sturnus cineraceus*

We encountered a large flock of two hundred noisy birds that we scoped on the way to Yang Ling.

#### **Red-billed Starling**

*Sturnus sericeus*

At least one bird was seen in a mixed flock of both Daurian and Red-billed Starlings near Yang County.

### Crows, Jays & Magpies *Corvidae*

#### **Eurasian Jay**

*Garrulus glandarius*

Seen on several occasions during our time at Foping Nature Reserve with up to fifteen in a single day.

#### **Red-billed Blue-Magpie**

*Cissa erythrorhyncha*

Very attractive and equally conspicuous, we enjoyed excellent daily encounters with this lovely Asian species in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Eurasian Magpie**

*Pica pica*

Seen only the first two days of the tour in cultivated areas.

#### **Spotted Nutcracker**

*Nucifraga caryocatactes*

We enjoyed stunning views of this attractive species often perched at the top of a conifer with up to fifteen daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Large-billed Crow**

*Corvus macrorhynchos*

Very common throughout the tour with up to forty birds daily.

#### **Carrion Crow**

*Corvus corone*

We found up to ten birds daily in the surrounding areas of Yang County.

#### **Collared Crow**

*Corvus torquatus*

Twice we found this bird mixed in with Large-billed Crows on the way to and from Foping Nature Reserve.

### Dippers *Cinclidae*

#### **Brown Dipper**

*Cinclus pallasii*

Multiple views of this charismatic species feeding in the frigid mountain rivers with up to eight birds encountered almost daily.

### Old World Flycatchers *Muscicapidae*

#### **Rufous-gorgetted Flycatcher**

*Ficedula strophiatea*

Several birds were seen very well along the trails of Foping Nature Reserve including a confiding juvenile.

#### **Taiga Flycatcher**

*Ficedula albicilla*

Several encounters throughout our time in Foping Nature Reserve of this migratory species including one bird daily near our accommodations.

#### **Slaty-blue Flycatcher**

*Ficedula tricolor*

We found several of these skulky birds in the Qinling Mountains.

#### **Rufous-bellied Niltava**

*Niltava sundara*

Four of these brilliant birds total seen in Foping Nature Reserve in dense bamboo.

**Gray-headed Canary-Flycatcher***Culicicapa ceylinensis*

Single birds encountered in mixed feeding flocks almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Hodgson's Redstart***Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

A single female was seen well on two consecutive days near our accommodation in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Daurian Redstart***Phoenicurus aureus*

Attractive and pleasantly common in Foping Nature Reserve where we found up to half a dozen daily.

**Plumbeous Water-Redstart***Rhyacornis fuliginosus*

Visible on any stretch of river we found up to fifteen birds daily throughout the tour.

**White-capped Water-Redstart***Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

We enjoyed several excellent views of this attractive species along rivers and streams in the Qinling Mountains.

**Little Forktail***Enicurus scouleri*

We were fortunate to have a total of four sightings of this tiny forktail along the river in Foping Nature Reserve with outstanding views obtained by all.

**White-crowned Forktail***Enicurus leschenaultia*

Found on five days of the tour including outrageous scope views of this beautiful species.

**Gray Bushchat***Saxicola ferrea*

Common in secondary scrub and meadows where we found up to four birds almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Thrushes Turdidae****Blue Whistling-Thrush***Myiophonus caeruleus*

Not uncommon in the undergrowth of Foping Nature Reserve with one a one day high of ten birds on the journey out of Foping Nature Reserve.

**Siberian Thrush***Zoothera sibirica*

We were fortunate to find a single male that showed exceptionally well while drinking from the edge of a stream.

**Chestnut (Gray-headed) Thrush***Turdus rubrocanus*

Four birds were found during a long hike ascending the Foping Mountains.

**Eurasian (Chinese) Blackbird***Turdus merula*

A single bird, sometimes split by some authorities as a separate species, was seen near the Terracotta Warriors Museum.

**Chinese Thrush***Turdus mupinensis*

The same day as the Chestnut Thrush, we found three birds that showed briefly near the ridgeline in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Babblers Timaliidae****Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler***Pomatorhinus ruficollis*

Heard daily in Foping Nature Reserve with up to three of these attractive birds seen almost daily.

**Pygmy Wren-Babbler***Pnoepyga pusilla*

We found two of these secretive birds along a dense section of mountain stream in Foping Nature Reserve cooperating nicely for everyone to obtain great views.

**Scaly-breasted Wren-Babbler***Pnoepyga albiventer*

Several birds showed themselves during our time at Foping Nature Reserve with a total of six birds encountered during our stay.

**Rufous-capped Babbler***Stachyris ruficeps*

Seen on several occasions at Foping Nature Reserve with up to six birds in a single day in the secondary scrub near our accommodation.

**Chinese Babax***Babax lanceolatus*

We enjoyed outrageous views almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve with our most memorable view the first morning with eight noisy birds seen through the scope at very close range.

**Spectacled (Masked) Laughingthrush***Garrulax perspicillatus*

At least one bird one seen mixed with both Barred and Elliot's Laughingthrushes in Foping Nature Reserve.

**White-throated Laughingthrush***Garrulax albogularis*

Large noisy flocks were encountered almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve with up to thirty birds daily.

**Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush***Garrulax picticollis*

Not inconspicuous and very attractive, we found up to twenty-five birds almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve often feeding on fruiting trees along the trail.

**Ashy (Moustached) Laughingthrush***Garrulax cinereiceps*

Skulky but stunning, we found this bird either singly or in pairs no less than six times during our stay in Foping Nature Reserve often in the cover of dense stands of bamboo.

**Barred Laughingthrush***Garrulax lunulatus*

Even skulkier than the previous species, a total of six birds were seen over the course of three days and otherwise only once heard near the ground in dense bamboo.

**Melodious Laughingthrush (Hwamei)***Garrulax canorus*

Three birds were seen in secondary scrub on two different days near our accommodations in Foping Nature Reserve.

**White-browed Laughingthrush***Garrulax sannio*

Two birds were seen during our time in the Qinling Mountains with excellent scope views for everyone on the way to Foping Nature Reserve.

**Elliot's Laughingthrush***Garrulax elliotii*

Three birds were seen on the way into Foping Nature Reserve with another large flock of twenty-five birds encountered inside the reserve at higher elevations.

**Red-billed Leiothrix***Leiothrix lutea*

Seen and heard daily in dense bamboo with up to fifteen of these attractive birds seen daily.

**Green Shrike-Babbler***Pteruthius xanthochlorus*

We were pleased to find three of the eye-ringed *hybrida* subspecies foraging in a large mixed feeding flock in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Golden-breasted Fulvetta***Alcippe chrysotis*

Perhaps the best place in the world to find this outrageous little gem, we had simply outrageous views in Foping Nature Reserve of up to twenty birds almost daily sometimes less than ten feet away!

**Spectacled Fulvetta***Alcippe ruficapilla*

Fairly common in the dense bamboo with up to ten birds encountered almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Chinese Fulvetta***Alcippe striaticollis*

Three birds total were seen in dense scrub and bamboo in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Gray-cheeked Fulvetta***Alcippe morrisonia*

We found three birds along the entry hike into Foping Nature Reserve.

**White-collared Yuhina***Yuhina diademata*

Seen on two days during our time in Foping Nature Reserve, we encountered up to twenty birds at a

time mixed with other secondary growth species.

### Parrotbills *Panuridae*

#### **Spectacled Parrotbill**

*Paradoxornis conspicillatus*

Rather localized, we encountered this species on three separate days during the tour in dense stands of bamboo in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Vinous-throated Parrotbill**

*Paradoxornis webbianus*

A small flock of fifteen on the hike into Foping Nature Reserve with an active flock of about forty birds seen almost daily near our accommodation in Foping Nature Reserve.

### Old World Warblers *Sylviidae*

#### **Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler**

*Cettia fortipes*

A single bird was seen on a morning walk in the secondary scrub near our accommodation in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Spotted Bush-Warbler**

*Bradypterus thoracicus*

One bird was seen and heard along the entrance trail in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Yellow-browed Warbler**

*Phylloscopus inornatus*

Seen on several occasions in mixed feeding flocks in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Chinese Leaf-Warbler**

*Phylloscopus sichuanensis*

Encountered regularly during our stay in Foping Nature Reserve with several birds almost daily.

#### **Tickell's Leaf-Warbler**

*Phylloscopus affinis*

A single bird was seen in a mixed flock in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Two-barred Warbler**

*Phylloscopus pulcher*

Several birds were encountered almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve usually associating with mixed feeding flocks.

#### **Arctic Warbler**

*Phylloscopus borealis*

Two individuals of this migratory species were seen in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Yellow-streaked Warbler**

*Phylloscopus armandii*

One bird was seen well feeding in the undergrowth in Foping Nature Reserve on several occasions.

#### **Dusky Warbler**

*Phylloscopus fuscatus*

A total of three birds were seen in riverine scrub foraging near the ground in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Chestnut-crowned Warbler**

*Seicercus castaniceps*

Fairly common in mixed flocks where we found up to five daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Golden-spectacled Warbler**

*Seicercus burkii*

Four birds total were found in the undergrowth while exploring Foping Nature Reserve.

### Kinglets *Regulidae*

#### **Goldcrest**

*Regulus regulus*

While scanning through a mixed flock we had one encounter with two birds in Foping Nature Reserve near a forested stream.

### Tits & Chickadees *Paridae*

#### **Green-backed Tit**

*Parus monticolus*

Abundant in Foping Nature Reserve with up to twenty birds daily.

#### **Yellow-bellied Tit**

*Parus venustulus*

A Chinese endemic, we enjoyed several small flocks in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Gray-crested Tit***Parus dichrous*

As single bird was found on two consecutive days in Foping Nature Reserve near our accommodation foraging in conifers.

**Coal Tit***Parus ater*

Up to five birds were seen almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve usually feeding in conifers.

**Marsh Tit***Parus palustris*

We enjoyed several encounters with this species in Foping Nature Reserve with up to four birds daily.

**Willow (Songar) Tit***Parus montanus*

We found this species in small numbers almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalidae*****Black-throated Tit***Aegithalos concinnus*

Small active flocks were encountered almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve with up to twenty daily.

**Sooty Tit***Aegithalos fuliginosus*

Another Chinese endemic that we enjoyed almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve with up to fifteen birds seen daily.

**Nuthatches *Sittidae*****European Nuthatch***Sitta europaea sinensis*

Common and confiding in mixed flocks in Foping Nature Reserve where we found good numbers daily.

**Wallcreeper *Tichodromidae*****Wallcreeper***Tichodroma muraria*

A single bird was seen at a roadside cliff by Niels, en route to Foping Nature Reserve.

**Creepers *Certhiidae*****Eurasian Treecreeper***Certhia familiaris*

We had two sightings of this species foraging with mixed flocks in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Penduline Tits *Remizidae*****Fire-capped Tit***Cephalopyrus flamiceps*

We enjoyed excellent views of four of this attractive and scarce species in Foping Nature Reserve on a morning walk near our accommodation.

**White-eyes *Zosteropidae*****Japanese White-eye***Zosterops japonica*

A single bird was found in a small flock in Foping Nature Reserve in secondary scrub.

**Chestnut-flanked White-eye***Zosterops erythropleura*

Two birds were seen during our stay in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Siskins, Crossbills and Allies *Fringillidae*****Oriental (Gray-capped) Greenfinch***Carduelis sinica*

We scoped a single bird near Yang County that showed well for several minutes.

**Vinaceous Rosefinch***Carpodacus vinaceus*

Two shy birds were seen in the bamboo and scrub in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Buntings & Allies *Emberizidae***

**Yellow-headed (-throated) Bunting** *Emberiza elegans*  
A single bird was seen on several occasions near our accommodation in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides*

We found several birds that showed well in riverine scrub near Yang Ling.

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*

Fairly common in the secondary scrub in Foping Nature Reserve with up to ten birds seen daily.

**Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica*

A few birds were seen in scrubby habitat during our explorations of Foping Nature Reserve.

**Slaty Bunting** *Latoucheornis siemsseni*

A distinctive bunting with a harsh call often given from dense undergrowth, we saw up to six birds almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Old World Sparrows *Passeridae***

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

Good numbers were seen in urban areas.

**Annotated List of Mammal Species Recorded:**

**Giant Panda** *Ailuropoda melanoleuca*

As commented in the summary, this was undoubtedly one of the highlights of the tour: Holding onto the bases of bamboo shoots and hoisting ourselves over moss-covered rock crevices we could feel the tension mounting as we caught sight of one of the trackers waving us forward. Adrenaline was streaming through our veins as we pushed aside the final clusters of bamboo on the mountain slope and there protected beneath a rock ledge was one of the most beautiful sights we had ever laid eyes upon – a cub Giant Panda in the wild!

**[Asiatic Black Bear]** *Ursus thibetanus*

A single animal was located by our local trackers in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Wild Boar** *Sus scrofa*

Signs of this animal were abundant with rooting in the earth and on our walk out of the reserve an animal burst through the bamboo in front of us across the track.

**Tufted Deer** *Elaphodus cephalophus*

As single animal was sighted as it fed on the edge of the forest near our accommodation in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Mainland Serow** *Capricornis sumatraensis*

One animal was seen briefly during the Temminck's Tragopan walk high in the Foping Nature Reserve.

**Common Goral** *Nemorhaedus goral*

We had nice views of two of these agile mountain goats skirting around a steep ledge in the Qinling Mountains followed by a single animal seen by some in Foping Nature Reserve.

**[Golden Takin]** *Budorcas taxicolor*

Some of our trackers obtained views but on the day that some of our party visited the site for this species (where up to 100 individuals can be seen), the mist obscured all viewing possibilities. A dead individual was however found.

**Red-bellied Squirrel** *Callosciurus erythraeus*

Very nice views of this species on three occasions during our stay exploring the Foping Nature Reserve.

**Pere David's Rock Squirrel**

*Sciurotamias davidianus*

Fairly common in Foping Nature Reserve where we found up to three animals in a single day including one confiding individual near our accommodation.

**Perny's Long-nosed Squirrel**

*Dremomys pernyi*

Three animals total were seen well, once chasing a Red-billed Blue-Magpie in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Red & White Flying Squirrel**

*Petaurista alborufus*

After an intensive hike we managed to entice a single stunning individual into view peering from its day roost in the cavity of a large tree.

**Swinhoe's Striped Squirrel**

*Tamiops swinhoie*

Two individuals were seen during our hike into Foping Nature Reserve near the trail on the forest floor.

**Annotated List of Reptile Species Recorded:**

**Copper-headed Trinket-Snake**

*Ceolognathus radiatus*

We had outrageous views of an aggressive individual in the Qinling Mountains.

**Big-eyed Mountain Keelback**

*Pseudoxenodon macrops*

Several of these harmless snakes were found in the vicinity of our accommodation in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Pong Green Frog**

*Rana nigromaculata*

We enjoyed three sightings of this attractive species in Foping Nature Reserve along the streams.

**Siberian Frog**

*Rana chensinensis*

One large individual was found in a moist area of undergrowth in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Chinese Toad**

*Bufo andrewsi*

We had great views of two of these intricately patterned species in Foping Nature Reserve near the trail into the reserve.

**Mountain Smooth-scaled Skink**

*Scincella tsinlingensis*

Not uncommon in the undergrowth of Foping Nature Reserve where we found several.

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