



# Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## CHINA

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

*19<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008*



Qinling Mountain Scenery and Sooty Bushtit All photos by David Shackelford

**Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader David Hoddinott**



Chinese Crested Ibis and Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an

**Some of the top Birds seen on the tour:**

Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Golden Pheasant, Crested Ibis, Japanese Sparrowhawk, Pied Harrier, Long-billed Plover, Ibisbill, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, White-backed Woodpecker, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Spotted Nutcracker, Collared Crow, Yellow-bellied Tit, Fire-capped Tit, Sooty Bushtit, Chinese Babax, Barred and Moustached Laughingthrushes, Red-billed Leiothrix, Green Shrike Babbler, Chinese Hill Warbler, Golden-breasted and Spectacled Fulvetta, Great and Spectacled Parrotbill, Red-billed Starling, Little and White-crowned Forktail, Vinaceous Rosefinch and Slaty Bunting

**Tour Summary**

"The sky looks smaller by the high peaks around, the sun can be seen 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

Our tour started with a short morning flight from Beijing to Xi'an. On arrival we were met by our local guides and soon we were on our way to the stunning Qinling Mountains. Our first birding stop produced a superb Crested Kingfisher, the first of many, a delightful flock of Grey-capped Greenfinch and several Meadow Buntings.

Winding our way into the Qinling Mountains we were inspired by the beautiful scenery, magnificent oak and conifer forests all around us interspersed with steep mountain slopes and sheer cliffs in many places. The road meandered along several fast flowing rivers and we were soon picking up great birds including a migratory flock of Grey-headed Lapwings that were seen resting in one of the quieter bays. Overhead we enjoyed our first sighting of a lovely pair of Golden Eagles soaring along the lofty peaks and a little further on we had great views of the localized Collared Crow. Arriving at the basic but comfortable Liangfengya Station situated at the edge of Foping Nature Reserve we settled in and then enjoyed some birding nearby which produced a superb adult Japanese Sparrowhawk and a noisy flock of the impressive Red-billed Blue Magpie.

Our next morning we awoke excited to be heading into the one of the few protected areas for the endangered Giant Panda. We were fortunate this year to be able to drive the first six kilometers into the park since it was raining, which meant we would walk the last eight kilometers to Sanguanmiao Station, our base for the next six nights. 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. 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. The rain did not let up but despite this we were treated to some superb birding along the way including a feast of five species of woodpeckers, the difficult White-backed and striking Crimson-breasted, large flocks of Long-tailed Minivets, endemic Yellow-bellied Tit, the tiny Fire-capped Tit, a chuckling flock of Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes, the exquisite Red-billed Leiothrix and a very confiding pair of Streak-throated Fulvettas. A smart Swinhoe's Striped Squirrel showed well and we arrived in the late afternoon and settled in to our basic but comfortable accommodation of Sanguanmiao complete with water-generated electricity and friendly staff.

The beautiful and tranquil setting of our accommodation was enhanced by the forested streams and cold flowing mountain rivers all around us. We were awoken each morning by a family group of Red-

billed Blue Magpies that entertained us by flying around the yard and at times perched just metres away whilst we enjoyed a hot cup of coffee.

Each day we would set out on a route where the local Chinese trackers thought we would have the greatest chance of seeing a Giant Panda, this inevitable took us on different trails and 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 the eye-catching Moustached and endemic Barred Laughingthrushes, Spectacled Fulvetta, amiable Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, and the furtive Spectacled and impressive Great Parrotbill. 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 dashes across the rocky water edges and on one occasion we enjoyed superb scope views of a Mountain Hawk-Eagle. On our return in the evenings we would enjoy a hearty Chinese meal of rice and noodles mixed with a peculiar but tasty assortment of local vegetables and spices.

Unfortunately due to inclement weather with thick fog and visibility down to fifty metres and rain at regular intervals we were unable to locate a Giant Panda however our time spent on the various trails in the reserve produced many other highlights including several sightings of Chinese Bamboo Partridge, the spectacular Golden Pheasant, Crested Honey Buzzard, Collared Owlet, a family group of four Grey-headed Woodpeckers, striking Spotted Nutcrackers, Black-throated and the endemic Sooty Bushtits, Mountain Bulbul, small flocks of the tiny Rufous-capped Babbler, Chinese Babax, Hwamei and Elliot's Laughingthrushes, Green Shrike-Babbler, Golden-breasted Fulvetta, White-collared Yuhina, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Ferruginous and Slaty-blue Flycatcher, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Brown Dipper, Vinaceous Rosefinch, Grey-headed Bullfinch and endemic Slaty Bunting.

From Foping we headed for Yang County in search of the endangered Crested Ibis. En route we found several Chinese Pond Heron, a superb Eurasian Eagle-Owl at its day roost, a pair of the unique Ibisbill, migrant Long-billed Plover, a family of White-browed Laughingthrushes, a lovely White-crowned Forktail, Black-capped Kingfisher, many Collared Finchbill and Blue Rock Thrush. A diligent search treated us to stunning views of several Crested Ibis flying in and landing in nearby fields, the beautiful pink in their wings clearly evident and they also afforded us great scope views. This species 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 slowly to a tiny population of less than two hundred individuals and we counted ourselves very fortunate to have had outrageous views of one of the rarest birds on the planet!

Shortly before leaving the Qinling Mountains we were treated to a wonderful passage of twelve species of raptors on migration southwards including Lesser Kestrel, Eurasian Hobby, Northern and a stunning male Pied Harrier, Northern Goshawk, Amur and Peregrine Falcons and a perched Grey-faced Buzzard, a fitting finale to our time in the Qinling Mountains.

Once back in Xi'an we visited the famous Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum. 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 shards 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. What a wonderful way to end our trip to Shaanxi Province.



Foping Nature Reserve Trail

## Annotated List of Bird Species recorded

### Pheasants, Fowl & Allies Phasianidae

#### **Chinese Bamboo Partridge (E)**

*Bambusicola thoracicus*

We enjoyed good flight views of three birds on two consecutive days in Foping Nature Reserve near our accommodation.

#### **Common Pheasant**

*Phasianus colchicus*

By far the most common and conspicuous pheasant of Foping Nature Reserve, we encountered up to five birds daily in scrubby meadows.

#### **Golden Pheasant (E)**

*Chrysolophus pictus*

An outrageous bird that has to be seen to be believed; up to five birds were seen on four separate days in the Foping Nature Reserve mostly in dense thickets of bamboo or crossing trails. We enjoyed outstanding views of a female perched up in a tree and some of us had good views of two stunning males.

### Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae

#### **Mandarin Duck**

*Aix galericulata*

A male was seen flying overhead as we left the Qinling Mountains.

#### **Mallard**

*Anas platyrhynchos*

We enjoyed scope views of three on a dam as we left the Qinling Mountains.

#### **Eastern Spot-billed Duck**

*Anas zonorhyncha*

We enjoyed good views of one on the Cham River, Xi'an.

#### **Northern Shoveler**

*Anas clypeata*

Three birds were seen near the Cham River, Xi'an.

#### **Ferruginous Duck**

*Aythya nyroca*

A pair was seen flying over the Cham River, Xi'an.

**Grebes Podicipedidae****Little Grebe***Tachybaptus ruficollis*

We found three of this widespread species on a dam shortly before we left the Qinling Mountains and enjoyed a further sighting of eight on the Cham River, Xi'an.

**Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae****Crested Ibis (E)***Nipponia nippon*

One of the star birds of the tour, we were fortunate to obtain close scope views of several of this critically endangered species near Yang County. We also enjoyed the sight of them in flight, revealing their beautifully suffused pink underwings.

**Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns Ardeidae****Yellow Bittern***Ixobrychus sinensis*

We enjoyed wonderful views of three at a small wetland near Cham River, Xi'an.

**Black-crowned Night Heron***Nycticorax nycticorax*

One juvenile was seen near Yang County.

**Chinese Pond Heron***Ardeola bacchus*

We enjoyed great sightings of three near Foping County and a further two near Yang County.

**Cattle Egret***Bubulcus ibis*

Small flocks were seen near Yang County in open fields.

**Grey Heron***Ardea cinerea*

Seen daily in small numbers in Yang County.

**Eastern Great Egret***Ardea modesta*

One was seen near Yang County.

*Note: This is a very recent split from Western Great Egret, A.alba.*

**Little Egret***Egretta garzetta*

Up to ten birds were seen daily near Yang County.

**Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae****Great Cormorant***Phalacrocorax carbo*

One was seen at a dam as we left the Qinling Mountains.

**Falcons & Kestrels Falconidae****Lesser Kestrel***Falco naumanni*

A flock of twenty was seen on migration as we left the Qinling Mountains.

**Common Kestrel***Falco tinnunculus*

Two were seen during the drive to the Qinling Mountains and several more near Yang County.

**Amur Falcon***Falco amurensis*

We had great views of two males seen on migration as we left the Qinling Mountains.

**Eurasian (Northern) Hobby***Falco subbuteo*

One was seen flying over Sanguanmiao Station in Foping NR and a further five were seen migrating overhead as we left the Qinling Mountains.

**Peregrine Falcon***Falco peregrinus*

We enjoyed scope views of one shortly before leaving the Qinling Mountains.

**Hawks, Eagles & Kites Accipitridae****Osprey***Pandion haliaetus*

One was seen as we left the Qinling Mountains and another at a wetland near the Cham River, Xi'an.

**Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

One bird was scoped in Foping Nature Reserve and another seen on migrating south as we left the Qinling Mountain.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*

We had good scope views of one shortly before leaving the Qinling Mountains.

**Eastern Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

A single bird was found flying overhead near Foping County in its migration southwards and a further one shortly before we left the Qinling Mountains.

**Northern Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*

We had great views of three on their southward migration shortly before we left the Qinling Mountains.

**Pied Harrier** *Circus melanoleucos*

We had good views of two males shortly before leaving the Qinling Mountains. One of the great raptors of the world !

**Japanese Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter gularis*

We had good views of an adult during our first day in Foping NR.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

One was seen perched and then flying over the forest in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*

We had good views of one perched en route to Foping County and a further two on migration southwards in the Qinling Mountains.

**Grey-faced Buzzard** *Butastur indicus*

We enjoyed excellent scope views of one shortly before leaving the Qinling Mountains.

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*

We enjoyed a wonderful sighting of a pair en route to Foping NR, a further bird was seen well soaring above the forest of Foping Nature Reserve.

**Mountain Hawk-Eagle** *Spizaetus nipalensis*

We enjoyed scope views of one in Foping Nature Reserve.

### Rails, Gallinules & Coots Rallidae

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

One was seen briefly at a wetland near Yang County.

**White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

We found one near Yang County.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

We found one juvenile near Yang County and a further five at a wetland near the Cham River, Xi'an.

**Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra*

We had good views of three on the Cham River, Xi'an.

### Ibisbill Ibisbillidae

**Ibisbill** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

We enjoyed fantastic scope views of a pair near Foping County. This cryptically coloured and unique wader was certainly one of the highlights of the trip!

### Plovers & Lapwings Charadriidae

**Grey-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus cinereus*

A flock of thirteen was seen along a river in the Qinling Mountains.

**Long-billed Plover** *Charadrius placidus*

We enjoyed superb scope views of this scarce wader near Foping County.

### Sandpipers Scolopacidae

#### **Green Sandpiper**

*Tringa ochropus*

A single bird was seen near Yang County.

### Terns, Gulls & Skimmers Laridae

#### **Common Tern**

*Sterna hirundo*

One was seen along a river in the Qinling Mountains, en route to Foping NR.

#### **White-winged Tern**

*Chlidonias leucopterus*

One was seen at a dam shortly before we left the Qinling Mountains and a further four were seen on the Cham River, Xi'an.

### Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

#### **Common Pigeon**

*Columba livia*

Seen in small numbers in Yang County.

#### **Speckled Wood Pigeon**

*Columba hodgsonii*

Two were seen flying over the forest of Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Oriental Turtle Dove**

*Streptopelia orientalis*

Common especially in secondary habitat, we had almost daily sightings of up to twenty birds and peak number of one hundred during the drive from Foping NR to Yang County.

#### **Eurasian Collared Dove**

*Streptopelia decaocto*

At least four were seen near Yang County.

#### **Spotted Dove**

*Streptopelia chinensis*

We had good scope views of two en route to the Qinling Mountains.

### Typical Owls Strigidae

#### **Eurasian Eagle-Owl**

*Bubo bubo*

We enjoyed stunning scope views of one en route from Foping County to Yang County.

#### **Collared Owlet**

*Glaucidium brodiei*

One was seen high up in the canopy of Foping NR.

### Kingfishers Alcedinidae

#### **Black-capped Kingfisher**

*Halcyon pileata*

We enjoyed superb views of two along a river in the Qinling Mountains en route from Yang County to Xi'an.

#### **Common Kingfisher**

*Alcedo atthis*

We had good views of several including superb scope views of our first one near Foping County.

#### **Crested Kingfisher**

*Megaceryle lugubris*

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

### Woodpeckers Picidae

#### **Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopos canicapillus*

We found this tiny woodpecker almost daily during our explorations of Foping Nature Reserve.

#### **Crimson-breasted Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopos cathpharius*

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

#### **White-backed Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopos leucotos*

One of these scarce birds was seen in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker***Dendrocopos major*

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

**Grey-headed (-faced) Woodpecker***Picus canus*

Seen on three days in Foping Nature Reserve, on one occasion we enjoyed scope views of four birds.

**Cuckooshrikes Campephagidae****Long-tailed Minivet***Pericrocotus ethologus*

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

**Long-tailed Shrike***Lanius schach*

We enjoyed great sightings of six birds en route from Liangfengya to Yang County.

**Chinese Grey Shrike***Lanius sphenocercus*

We enjoyed great views of one near Yang County.

**Drongos Dicruridae****Black Drongo***Dicrurus macrocercus*

We enjoyed great views of one en route from Liangfengya Station to Yang County.

**Hair-crested Drongo***Dicrurus hottentottus*

A couple was seen in Foping NR and a flock of eight near Foping County.

**Crows, Jays & Magpies Corvidae****Eurasian Jay***Garrulus glandarius*

Seen on most days during our time at Foping Nature Reserve with up to five in a single day.

**Azure-winged Magpie***Cyanopica cyanus*

We enjoyed good views of two near the Cham River, Xi'an.

**Red-billed Blue Magpie***Urocissa erythrorhyncha*

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

**Eurasian Magpie***Pica pica*

Common in the Yang County area with up to thirty seen daily 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 ten daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Carrion Crow***Corvus corone*

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

**Collared Crow (NE)***Corvus pectoralis*

We found one in the Qinling Mountains en route to Foping NR and later five en route from Yang County to Xi'an.

**Large-billed Crow***Corvus macrorhynchos*

Found to be common throughout the tour with up to twenty birds daily.

**Tits & Chickadees Paridae****Marsh Tit***Poecile palustris*

Ben and I saw two birds in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Willow (Songar) Tit***Poecile montana*

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

Note: Clements splits the ones we observed as Songar Tit, *P. songara*.

**Coal Tit***Periparus ater*

A couple was seen almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve usually feeding in conifers.

**Yellow-bellied Tit (E)***Periparus venustulus*

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

**Grey Crested Tit***Lophophanes dichrous*

A single bird was found on two days in Foping NR foraging in conifers.

**Great Tit***Parus major*

One was seen on our first day en route to Foping NR and a further ten en route from Liangfengya Station to Yang County.

**Green-backed Tit***Parus monticolus*

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

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

We enjoyed excellent views of six of this attractive and scarce species in a large mixed species flock in Foping Nature Reserve on the walk from Liangfengya to Sanguanmiao Station.

**Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae****Sand Martin (Bank Swallow)***Riparia riparia*

Ten birds were seen near Yang County and a further two near Foping County.

**Barn Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

Up to fifteen birds were seen near Yang County.

**Asian House Martin***Delichon dasypus*

Three were seen near Yang County.

**Red-rumped Swallow***Cecropis daurica*

Twenty-five were seen well near Yang County.

**Bushtits Aegithalidae****Black-throated Bushtit***Aegithalos concinnus*

Small active flocks were encountered on two days in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Sooty Bushtit (E)***Aegithalos fuliginosus*

This is another Chinese endemic that we enjoyed almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve with up to thirty seen daily.

**Larks Alaudidae****Crested Lark***Galerida cristata*

We enjoyed great views of five near the Cham River, Xi'an.

**Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae****Chinese Hill Warbler (E)***Rhopophilus pekinensis*

Some of us had good views of two at a small wetland near the Cham River, Xi'an.

**Bulbuls Pycnonotidae****Collared Finchbill***Spizixos semitorques*

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

**Brown-breasted Bulbul***Pycnonotus xanthorrhous*

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

**Light-vented Bulbul***Pycnonotus sinensis*

We found two birds that showed only briefly near Yang County however later we enjoyed great views of a further two at the Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum, Xi'an.

**Mountain Bulbul***Ixos mccllellandii*

Two rather unexpected birds were seen well in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Old World Warblers Sylviidae****Brown-flanked Bush Warbler***Cettia fortipes*

A single bird was seen on two consecutive mornings in the secondary scrub near our accommodation in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Oriental Reed Warbler***Acrocephalus orientalis*

Some of us had good views of one at a small wetland near the Cham River, Xi'an.

**Dusky Warbler***Phylloscopus fuscatus*

A single bird was seen in riverine scrub foraging near the ground near Foping County.

**Yellow-streaked Warbler***Phylloscopus armandii*

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

**Chinese Leaf Warbler***Phylloscopus yunnanensis*

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

**Pallas's Leaf Warbler***Phylloscopus proregulus*

We enjoyed good sighting daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Yellow-browed Warbler***Phylloscopus inornatus*

Seen on our first day during the walk into Foping NR.

**Arctic Warbler***Phylloscopus borealis*

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

**Two-barred Warbler***Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*

We had good views of one near our accommodation in Foping NR.

**Eastern Crowned Warbler***Phylloscopus coronatus*

One was seen in a large mixed species flock in Foping NR.

**Green-crowned (Golden-spectacled) Warbler***Seicercus burkii*

Small numbers were seen daily in the undergrowth while exploring Foping Nature Reserve.

**Chestnut-crowned Warbler***Seicercus castaniceps*

Seen on three days in mixed flocks in Foping Nature Reserve.

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

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

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

Rod and Clive saw one on the walk out of Foping NR.

**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.

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

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

**Chinese Babax***Babax lanceolatus*

Some of us enjoyed good views of a group of six in Foping Nature Reserve.

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

Bob was fortunate to find one bird 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 pectoralis*

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

**Moustached (Ashy) Laughingthrush** *Garrulax cineraceus*

Skulky but stunning, we found this bird either singly or in pairs on two occasions during our stay in Foping Nature Reserve often in the cover of dense stands of bamboo.

**Barred Laughingthrush (E)** *Garrulax lunulatus*

Even skulkier than the previous species, a total of five birds were seen over the course of three days, allowing everyone fantastic views of this Chinese endemic.

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

A pair of these smart birds was seen in secondary scrub on one occasion near our accommodations in Foping Nature Reserve.

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

Up to eight birds were seen during the drive through the Qinling Mountains from Liangfengya to Yang County.

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

We found small flocks of up to five birds on three occasions in Foping Nature Reserve.

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

This real stunner was seen and heard daily in dense bamboo with up to twenty-five of these attractive birds seen daily.

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

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

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

Unfortunately only seen briefly on one occasion.

**Spectacled Fulvetta (NE)** *Alcippe ruficapilla*

Fairly common in the dense bamboo with singles or pairs encountered almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Streak-throated Fulvetta** *Alcippe cinereiceps*

A total of five birds were seen in dense scrub and bamboo including stunning views of a pair on our walk into Foping Nature Reserve.

**Grey-cheeked Fulvetta** *Alcippe morrisonia*

We found one bird in a large mixed species flock along the entry hike into Foping Nature Reserve.

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

Seen on three days during our time in Foping Nature Reserve, we encountered up to twenty-five birds at a time mixed with other secondary growth species.

**Great Parrotbill** *Conostoma oemodium*

What a fantastic bird ! We enjoyed great views of one in dense bamboo in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Spectacled Parrotbill (E)** *Paradoxornis conspicillatus*

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

**Vinous-throated Parrotbill** *Paradoxornis webbianus*

A large flock of thirty was seen during one of our hikes in Foping Nature Reserve with two further

sightings of small flocks in the Qinling Mountains.

### White-eyes Zosteropidae

**Japanese White-eye** *Zosterops japonicus*  
We enjoyed scope views of a flock of ten near Foping County.

### Kinglets Regulidae

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*  
While scanning through a mixed flock we found one in Foping Nature Reserve.

### Nuthatches Sittidae

**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea sinensis*  
Common and confiding in mixed flocks in Foping Nature Reserve where we found up to twenty daily.

### Treecreepers Certhiidae

**Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*  
We had a good sighting of two foraging with mixed flocks in Foping Nature Reserve.

### Starlings Sturnidae

**Red-billed Starling** *Sturnus sericeus*  
We enjoyed scope views of a flock of fifteen near Yang County.

**White-cheeked Starling** *Sturnus cineraceus*  
We encountered a small flock near the Cham River, Xi'an.

### Thrushes Turdidae

**Blue Whistling Thrush** *Myophonus caeruleus*  
Single birds were seen in the undergrowth of Foping Nature Reserve on four days.

**Common (Eurasian/Chinese) Blackbird** *Turdus merula*  
Up to twenty were seen near a small village near Yang County.

*Note: This species may be a future split as Chinese Blackbird, T.maximus*

### Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

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

**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 leschenaulti*  
Our first sighting was very brief views of one in Foping Nature Reserve, later we were treated to stunning views of this beautiful species along a river in the Qinling Mountains.

**Eurasian Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus*  
We enjoyed several sightings in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Grey Bush Chat** *Saxicola ferreus*  
Found to be common in secondary scrub and meadows where we saw up to five birds in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius*

We enjoyed good views of two during the drive from Liangfengya to Yang County.

**Dark-sided Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sibirica*

We enjoyed great scope views of one juvenile near our accommodation in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Ferruginous Flycatcher** *Muscicapa ferruginea*

We had great views of one in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Taiga Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicilla*

We enjoyed two encounters during our time in Foping Nature Reserve of this migratory species.

**Slaty-blue Flycatcher** *Ficedula tricolor*

We found several of these skulky birds in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Blue-and-white Flycatcher** *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*

Rod was fortunate to see a female in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Rufous-bellied Niltava** *Niltava sundara*

Two of these brilliant birds were seen in Foping Nature Reserve in dense bamboo.

**Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher** *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

Up to four birds encountered in mixed feeding flocks almost daily in Foping Nature Reserve.

### Dippers Cinclidae

**Brown Dipper** *Cinclus pallasii*

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

### Old World Sparrows Passeridae

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

Good numbers were seen in urban areas.

### Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae

**Eastern Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla tschutschensis*

Two of these passage migrants were found at a wetland near the Cham River, Xi'an.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

Seen almost daily in small numbers in Foping Nature Reserve.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

Encountered almost daily with peak numbers of thirty birds near Yang County.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*

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

### Finches Fringillidae

**Grey-capped (Oriental) Greenfinch** *Carduelis sinica*

We scoped a small flock en route to the Qinling Mountains and enjoyed a further sighting of thirty birds near Yang County.

**Vinaceous Rosefinch** *Carpodacus vinaceus*

Four shy birds were seen in secondary scrub in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Grey-headed Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula erythaca*

We had good scope views of four on our walk into Foping Nature Reserve with several further sightings in the reserve.

### Buntings & Allies Emberizidae

**Slaty Bunting (E)** *Latoucheornis siemsseni*

A distinctive bunting with a harsh call often given from dense undergrowth, we had great sightings on four occasions in Foping Nature Reserve.

**Godlewski's Bunting** *Emberiza godlewskii*

Some of us saw one shortly before we left the Qinling Mountains.

**Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides*

We found a small flock en route to the Qinling Mountains and enjoyed further sightings of twelve birds shortly before leaving the Qinling Mountains.

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*

One was seen at a small wetland near the Cham River, Xi'an.

**Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica*

One was seen in riverside scrub near Foping County.

## Annotated List of Mammal Species Recorded:

**[Giant Panda]** *Ailuropoda melanoleuca*

Due to rain and mist with severely reduced visibility for an extended period of seven days we were thwarted in our efforts to find this highly sought after mammal. The trackers were not even able to see one during our time in the reserve however on two occasions the trackers did manage to find fresh scat.

**[Wild Boar]** *Sus scrofa*

Signs of this animal were abundant with rooting in the earth seen at several sites.

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

Some of our trackers obtained views on the day that some of our party visited the site for this species (where up to 100 individuals can be seen), but the mist and rain obscured our viewing possibilities.

**Pere David's Rock Squirrel** *Sciurotamias davidianus*

Found to be common in Foping Nature Reserve where we found up to ten 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 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** *Tamios swinhoie*

One individual was seen during our hike into Foping Nature Reserve sitting on a branch over the trail.

**Rockjumper Birding Tours**  
**Worldwide Birding Adventures**  
**PO Box 13972, Cascades, 3202, South Africa**  
**Tel: +27 33 394 0225**  
**Fax: +27 88 033 394 0225**  
**Email: [info@rockjumper.co.za](mailto:info@rockjumper.co.za)**  
**Alternative Email: [rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com](mailto:rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com)**  
**Website: [www.rockjumper.co.za](http://www.rockjumper.co.za)**