SE CHINA 2012

3rd May to 16th May 2012

HIGHLIGHTS

Either for rarity value, excellent views or simply a group favourite.

- Cabot's Tragopan
- Elliot's Pheasant
- Black-faced Spoonbill
- Pied Falconet
- Long-billed Plover
- Little Curlew
- Great Knot
- Swinhoe's Snipe
- Spoon-billed Sandpiper
- Saunder's Gull
- Chinese Crested Tern

Leaders: Nick Bray and Menxiu Tong

SUMMARY:

In this exciting ZOOTHERA tour we targeted some of Asia's rarest species as we birded areas of south-east China rarely visited by western birders. Our adventure began at Shanghai where we immediately set about finding our first endemics of the tour, with Reed Parrotbill and Marsh Grassbird giving themselves up relatively easily. Numerous lagoons on the outskirts of the city were full of waders, with pride of place going to a Little Whimbrel. Moving on to Rudong with the primary aim of seeing Spoon-billed Sandpiper in breeding plumage being successful, we enjoyed the fantastic migration spectacle, with it literally raining birds at Magic Forest. It was an exciting bird-filled couple of days, rivalling anything Beidaihe can muster! With Japanese Paradise-flycatcher, Narcissus Flycatcher, Siberian and Pale Thrushes, Pechora Pipit, Blue-and-white Flycatcher, Pallas's Reed Bunting and many others seen well. A short internal flight to Nanchang took us to the picturesque mountains around Wuyishan produced possibly the biggest thrill of the tour, with a male Cabot's Tragopan watched feeding in a tree, just below the road for half an hour. This site also hosts several recent splits which make this corner of China so interesting for the world lister, with David's Fulvetta (split from Grey-cheeked Fulvetta), and Fujian Fulvetta (split from Greyhooded Fulvetta) present. Moving on to Wuyuan we visited a colony of the incredibly rare Courtois's Laughingthrush, a species only discovered 12 years ago and which has a world population of less than 200 individuals. Finally we visited the Min Jiang Estuary which is the best place in the world to see the Critically Endangered Chinese Crested Tern, whose world population is possibly now under 30 individuals. What a tour!

<image>

Cabot's Tragopan – Wuyishan 2012. Wuyishan is the best place to see this stunningly beautiful Chinese endemic. Several were seen along the track that wound its way up the mountain. However, this bird gave the most amazing views as it fed in a small bush just below us as we returned to the hotel on our first evening. Totally oblivious to our presence, we watched it for half an hour in the sunshine. Amazing!

Tiger Shrike Japanese Paradise-flycatcher

Swinhoe's Minivet

- **Chestnut Bulbul**
- Korean Bush-warbler
- Hartert's Leaf-warbler
- Marsh Grassbird
- Reed Parrotbill
- Courtois's Laughingthrush
 - **Buffy Laughingthrush**
 - Grey-sided Scimitar-babbler

- Blyth's Shrike-babbler
- Fujian Fulvetta
- Indochinese Yuhina
- Narcissus Flycatcher
- Blue-and-white Flycatcher
- Siberian Blue Robin
- Siberian Thrush
- Fork-tailed Sunbird
- Pechora Pipit
- Pallas's Reed Bunting
- Japanese Grosbeak

Day 1 Thursday 3rd May

Early afternoon departure on the direct Virgin Atlantic flight to Shanghai.

Day 2 Fríday 4th May

Following a morning arrival at Shanghai Airport the group met up after some had flown from UK and others had spent a day or two before the tour started in the city. We then headed the short distance to the coast and stopped along the road which transects a huge reedbed. In no time at all the first of our two key target species appeared, when a pair of superb Reed Parrotbills appeared, although frustratingly didn't linger. But we didn't have to worry as over the course of the next hour we were treated to repeated views of several birds darting around the reeds, and on a couple of occasions they appeared alongside the road right next to us. The other key bird here is Marsh Grassbird and initially all we had were rather distant views of individuals song flighting high in the air before plummeting down to an invisible perch in the dense reeds. Again our patience was rewarded with decent scope views when one bird remained on top of a reed stem for quite some time and began singing. There were lots of other birds here with an Amur Falcon and Japanese Sparrowhawk flying by, Chinese Pondheron, Purple Heron, at least 7 Great Bitterns flying around and a couple of **Pacific Swifts**. Our scrutiny of the area also revealed a Manchurian (Korean) Bush-warbler skulking alongside the road, several Oriental Reed-warblers, Vinousthroated Parrotbills nest-building, brief Siberian Rubythroat and a few Black-faced Buntings. Leaving here we drove along the coast road and found a small party of roosting waders on the rocks which turned out to be 7 Terek Sandpipers, a couple of Common Greenshanks and 2 Grey-tailed Tattlers. Just inland are numerous fish ponds and marshes which were teeming with shorebirds, and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Long-toed Stints were particularly numerous. Our first wader session to look at these beauties also resulted in Marsh, Common and Wood Sandpipers, Kentish Plover, Blackwinged Stilts and Common Redshank. Some movement on the scrub-covered bank led us to the first of two fine Pechora Pipits and Derek spotted a distant Red-throated Pipit as well. Further along this road we enjoyed incredible views of all these waders again, along with a flock of breeding-plumaged Rednecked Stints, Pied Avocet, Common Snipe and Eastern Black-tailed Godwit as well, along with two races of Eastern Yellow Wagtail and a very bright Citrine Wagtail. Best of all was the Little Curlew we scoped in a ploughed field some distance from the road which was associating with some Common Whimbrels showing the size and structure differences nicely, and a few Oriental Pratincoles flying around were only a minor distraction! After a huge lunch at a



This Reed Parrotbill is a Chinese endemic and showed incredibly well in the reedbeds near Shanghai.



Long-toed Stint proved to be a relatively common migrant here.



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was also quite common and allowed a close approach.

nearby restaurant we headed back to the coastal road and checked out a small wooded area which held a couple of **Eastern Crowned Warblers** before spending the rest of the day at a more wooded area where a gaggle of Chinese photographers pointed the way to a superb **Narcissus Flycatcher**. This area was very good and also held **Long-tailed Shrike**, several **Mugimaki** and **Asian Brown Flycatchers**, **Yellow-browed** and **Palelegged Leaf-warblers** and just before we left a **Chinese Grosbeak** flew in and landed above us. What a first day! All that remained was the tedious drive to Rudong, some 4 hours away and a late supper.

Day 3 Saturday 5th May

Early this morning we headed towards Magic Forest and birded along the tree-lined road, which had attracted a large fall of mainly warblers and flycatchers overnight. Indeed everywhere we looked Asian Brown and Grey-streaked Flycatchers were flitting amongst the green canopy, with smaller numbers of Mugimaki and surprisingly several Narcissus Flycatchers as well. A Dark-sided Flycatcher was a welcome find a little later, and we also picked out our first Claudia's Warbler amongst the more numerous Eastern Crowned and Yellow-browed Warblers, and several Oriental Turtle-doves and Olivebacked Pipits as well. A Manchurian Bush-warbler was singing from an exposed perch and we enjoyed several minutes of fine views. Then a few Eve-browed Thrushes perched up nicely for us, but a **Pale Thrush** was only present briefly. As the day warmed up we headed back for breakfast before driving out to the coast where we donned our recently purchased khakicoloured wellington boots and walked out onto the mudflats where we had an hour to find Spoon-billed Sandpiper before the high tide covered the exposed mud. The mudflats were teeming with shorebirds and we began with Grey and Pacific Golden Plovers, summer-plumaged Greater Sandplover and Curlew Sandpipers along with many fine Dunlin as well. Overhead, majestic Saunder's Gulls passed close by and we scoped a few which landed nearby. But our attention was drawn to the hundreds of lovely Red-necked Stints who were feeding avidly but were also very skittish as the tide approached rapidly. Rather frustratingly Menxiu found a roosting spoonie which refused to show its all-important bill before suddenly flying off, leaving us all a little downhearted. So we headed back along the coast, finding Broad-billed Sandpiper and a flock of 6 Blackfaced and single Eurasian Spoonbill, and plenty more shorebirds but still no spoonies. So our next port of call was at the high-tide roost where we walked out onto the mudflat and waited for quite some time in the hot sun. Eventually hundreds of birds descended after being disturbed by a passing digger and we set about the tricky task of nailing a spoonie in the suddenly increasing heat haze. A few near misses followed when a bird was found only to disappear before everyone could get on it, but



Narcissus Flycatcher was passing through in small numbers at Magic Wood.



Eastern Crowned Warbler was another common migrant.



Saunder's Gull was surprisingly common along the coast and reservoirs.

eventually we had a superb breeding-plumaged Spoon-billed **Sandpiper** in the scope and could enjoy the moment at last. Then another was found, and another and before we knew it at least 5 individuals were found – all in various stages of plumage. What a bird this is and along with its incredible rarity value it is a stunner as well! But there was plenty else to keep us occupied with both Greater and Lesser Sandplovers standing out from the hordes of stints and **Dunlins**. It was a decent photo opportunity and we spent the rest of the morning admiring the commotion and activity at relatively close quarters. After lunch and a short siesta we headed back to the Magic Forest area in high spirits as Menxiu had just received a phone call with the hot news that his friend was watching a male Japanese Paradise-flycatcher right at that moment and as we were only ten minutes away we dived over to the spot with fingers crossed. Surely it would move on before we arrived, as anyone knows its madness to chase other people's birds during spring migration right? How wrong can you be and as we pulled up Menxiu's friend pointed into the canopy above us and wham! Can you believe a stunning long-tailed vision of beauty was looking down at us! What a bird and one to set our pulses racing for sure and it certainly warranted an intensive grilling and suitably lengthy period of observation. But there had obviously been another minor fall this afternoon as this section of forest was teeming with even more birds than this morning. So we set off along the road and soon notched up our first Grey-capped Woodpecker, Swinhoe's and Ashy Minivets, Chestnut Buntings, Eurasian Wryneck, Eastern Great Tit, Dusky, Arctic and Pale-legged Leaf-warblers, Black-naped Oriole and Azure-winged Magpie, along with the other 'phylloscs' and flycatchers seen earlier. Some nearby fishponds were then checked for any lingering dowitchers, but we only found lots of Long-toed Stints and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers amongst the regular waders. But close Saunder's Gulls were nice, although a few White-cheeked and Daurian Starlings and Pallas's Reed Buntings were even better! Tony found another Pechora Pipit, whilst Black-browed and **Oriental Reed-warblers**, Reed Parrotbill and Common **Rosefinch** were also seen. As if things couldn't get any better we checked out the 'new' Magic Forest, a small area of isolated trees and scrub and immediately had eye-ball popping views of a Rufous-tailed Robin perched out in the open a foot above the ground where it remained for 20 minutes or so! With a flock of Japanese White-eves and an excellent Northern Boobook staring down at us we found it hard to tear ourselves away in the gathering gloom.

Day 4 Sunday 6th May

Just ten minutes away from the hotel is the new Magic Wood, a small patch of woodland and scrub a little larger than a football field and we were excited about returning there. This morning



Spoon-billed Sandpiper in breeding plumage was another major highlight.



Wading across the mudflats during our wader-fest at Rudong.



This Japanese Paradise-flycatcher was a surprising find at Magic Forest during an amazing fall of migrants.

we paid an early visit and turned up a number of excellent birds, in fact many more birds were present than vesterday evening's visit. A **Red-billed Starling** posed nicely on top of the temple as we arrived but we didn't dally as we were eager to see what goodies lay in wait for us. Upon arrival it seemed to be raining birds, when Lesser Cuckoo, Asian Koel, a couple of Haircrested Drongos, and flocks of *phylloscs* literally dropped in out of the sky. The first of at least 3 Rufous-tailed Robins present here demanded our attention, and then Two-barred and Pallas's Warblers appeared amongst roving flocks of Yellow-browed, Claudia's and Eastern Crowned Warblers. At least two male Siberian Blue Robins were found and skulked in typical fashion, whilst Siberian and Pale Thrushes, Radde's Warbler, and both Tristram's and Meadow Buntings were also new out in the small grassy area. Both Mugimaki and Yellow-rumped Flycatchers showed well, flocks of Yellow-billed Grosbeaks flew over, and the Northern Boobook flew around the area repeatedly looking for a birder-free zone to roost! Moving on to the other forest there appeared to be smaller numbers of flycatchers present although Narcissus and some Asian Brown and Grey-streaked Flycatchers were still around. We even had a brief view of an elusive Elisae's Flycatcher which promptly disappeared, but an impressive **Blue-and-white Flycatcher** was seen by everyone, as was a Forest Wagtail. More Rufous-tailed Robins, Siberian, Eye-browed and Pale Thrushes, a male Siberian Rubythroat, Dusky Warbler and a fine Japanese Grosbeak were all seen as well. There were also loads of Palelegged Leaf-warblers around and an estimate of 100+ was made from both sites visited so far today. So with time running out we drove to the coast and donned our wellington boots again and marched out onto the tidal flats getting our first Great Knot and Far-eastern Curlews of the tour amongst hordes of all the usual waders, along with a flyby **Black-capped Kingfisher** as well. We even ignored the dozen or so Saunder's Gulls flying overhead repeatedly! With the tide racing in towards us we walked briskly back to shore and then headed over to the hotel to pack and have lunch. A quick two hour journey was a lot less than expected and we ended up at the airport with several hours to spare for the flight to Nanchang and the next stage of our adventure.

Day 5 Monday 7th May

It took most of the morning to reach the mountains of Wuyishan but it was definitely worth the wait as we left the lowlands behind and began to climb higher. A lake beside the narrow road held a few **Chinese Spot-billed Ducks**, and the nearby area held **David's Fulvetta** (a recent split from **Grey-cheeked Fulvetta**), **Collared Finchbill** and **Crested Bunting**. Whilst at the edge of a small village we saw a pair of **Chinese Blackbirds** and heard the distinctive song as well. But we didn't do any more birding as time was pressing and we wanted to get to the hotel in the



Always a much-wanted migrant, this was one of several Daurian Starlings seen.



This Northern Boobook was a good find at the 'new' Magic Forest near Rudong.



Rufous-tailed Robin proved to be exceptionally confiding on passage.

National Park for lunch. Afterwards most of us walked up the road which turned out to be a good move as first of all we found a Yellow-cheeked Tit, followed by Rufous-faced and Chestnut-crowned warblers side-by-side on the same branch, and then nice views of Sulphur-breasted Warbler zipping around the forest beside the road. A Hartert's Warbler (a recent split from the Blyth's Leaf-warbler complex) began calling and pretty soon we had decent views of this smart little sprite. Further along a flock of Black-chinned Yuhinas and Red-billed Leiothrix appeared briefly before the minibus caught us up and we drove high up into the mountains. No sooner had we passed the Fujian/Jiangxi border than a female Cabot's **Tragopan** ran across the bumpy track in front of us. A few moments later a male tragopan flew down from the slope above and alighted right in front of us for a few moments before scurrying into the forest. Wow! Moving ever upwards we came across a mixed flock with Black-chinned Yuhinas, Whitebellied Erpornis, Yellow-cheeked Tit, Kloss's Leaf-warbler (formerly in the White-tailed Leaf-warbler complex), and a White-backed Woodpecker appeared as well which was a bonus. In the distance we heard White-necklaced Partridge, but that would have to wait for another day. A few kilometres more and a female Chestnut-bellied Rock-thrush was the first of several to be seen this afternoon, and a colony of nesting Asian House-martins also held a Fork-tailed Swift as well. A short distance further on and we had Fujian Fulvetta (split from Grey-hooded/Streak-throated complex), several singing Whitespectacled Warblers, Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes, and a brief Streak-breasted Scimitar-babbler. For a grand finale we definitely were not expecting, as we drove back down in the early evening sunshine we were extremely fortunate to spot a fine male Cabot's Tragopan feeding on fresh buds in a small tree just below the road. So we could look down on him and admire its intricately beautiful plumage, and over the next half an hour he fed totally unconcerned by our presence. As cameras clicked and many superlatives were exchanged this much-wanted species carried on feeding, and on several occasions moved around the branches and clambered into a different tree – all the time with the sun shining on him. What a treat and with smiles all round we drove slowly back down to the hotel for a celebratory beer or two!

Day 6 Tuesday 8th May

We left the hotel at 4.30am and drove up the mountainous road towards the summit of Huangang Shan. The day dawned clear and promised to be full of birds, and did indeed begin promisingly with several new species and some nice mixed flocks. A female **Cabot's Tragopan** with four chicks crossing the road in front of us was a good way to begin, and was followed by a couple **Barred Cuckoo-doves** flying by, and an extremely cooperative **Pygmy Wren-babbler** giving point-blank



The scenery at Wuyishan was spectacular and holds several prized species.



Cabot's Tragopan is undoubtedly the easiest of this family to see well!



Hartert's Warbler is a recent split from the Blyth's Leaf-warbler complex.

views. Higher up the mountain a **Buffy Laughingthrush** was watched singing in a tree, **Fujian Fulvetta** showed well, and then a pair of **Blyth's Shrike-babblers** (now split from Whitebrowed Shrike-babbler) were seen feeding beside the bank right next to the road, plus two male **Small Niltavas** were perched on the same branch singing at each other! Lots of other birds were seen on the drive up including **Yellow-cheeked Tit**, **Collared Finchbill, Hartert's** and **Kloss's Leaf-warblers**, **Whitespectacled** and **Chestnut-crowned Warblers**, **Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush**, **Red-billed Leiothrix**, **Blackchinned Yuhina** and **Chestnut-bellied Rock-thrush**.

Unfortunately the weather deteriorated rapidly and by the time we had reached the summit was pretty bad with dense mist, high wind and visibility down to just a few metres hampering our attempts at some of the goodies present here. Yet several Brown Bush-warblers were seen at very close quarters and a Yellowbellied Bush-warbler was lured in as well, but a singing Whitebrowed Shortwing failed to reveal itself. So we headed back down but couldn't escape the rain until much later in the day. During a break in the weather we walked a few kilometres but the pattern for the rest of the day was a lot of legwork for little reward. Yet a flock of Indochinese Yuhinas was very nice and a fine Spotted Wren-babbler performed very well around its damp gulley. The lower down the mountain we got the better the weather but bird activity was very low, although we still had Spotted Forktail, a pair of Red-billed Blue Magpies, Mountain Bulbul and a Brownish-flanked Bush-warbler. We walked the last few kilometres back to the hotel seeing a close Pallas's Warbler, and after much perseverance Derek found a **Brown Dipper** feeding on the fast flowing stream, and we ended the day with the endemic Yellow-bellied Tit.

Day 7 Wednesday 9th May

After a night of heavy rain it didn't look too promising for our chances of reaching Huangang Shan this morning, however the weather cleared up and we began our drive back up the mountain. Our only stop on the way up produced Yellowbellied and Yellow-cheeked Tits, as well as a flock of Blackchinned Yuhinas and Red-billed Leiothrix. On arrival at the summit we were greeted by clearing skies and a rolling mist that would occasionally obscure the wonderful view but compared to vesterday it was so much better. As soon as we arrived a couple of **Buff-throated Warblers** were found and this proved to be a common species up here, along with Brown Bush-warbler and Rosy Pipit. Several Siberian Stonechats were also seen, along with a colony of Asian House-martins, a brief Siberian Rubythroat, and several Yellow-bellied Bush-warblers. We searched the whole summit for Upland Pipit without any success, but did find Common Rosefinch, Daurian Redstart, Verditer Flycatcher and a rather unexpected Blunt-winged Warbler which seemed to be on territory and reacted very well



Fujian Fulvetta is a recent split from the Streak-throated Fulvetta complex.



Blyth's Shrike-babbler (male) is a recent split from White-browed Shrike-babbler.



Female Blyth's Shrike-babbler at Wuyishan – amazingly confiding.

to a little tape luring. Sadly by late morning we had to leave and return to the hotel in readiness for our departure, but along the way down we picked up **Bianchi's Warbler** and our sighting of **Brown-chested Jungle-flycatcher** was very unexpected, although not by our local guide! The rest of the afternoon was spent driving across the rainy lowlands to Wuyuan.

Day 8 Thursday 10th May

We drove through the rural Wuyuan countryside to a quiet little village alongside a river and walked across some fields where both White-browed and Masked Laughingthrushes were present. Moving on to a secluded little valley we birded beside a patch a Bamboo for a few hours, and almost immediately a Grev-sided Scimitar-babbler began calling from the densely vegetated slope above us. It took quite a while but eventually we had decent and tickable views of a pair as they repeatedly circled us, crossing the path nearby on numerous occasions and alighting briefly on one or two favoured perches. Then a cracking male Fork-tailed Sunbird flew in and perched nearby, whilst several flocks of David's Fulvettas passed by, and amidst one such flock a Grey-headed Parrotbill made the first of two appearances here this morning. Other birds seen included Chinese Pond-heron, Grey-headed Lapwing, Crested Serpent-eagle, Dollarbird and Greater Necklaced

Laughingthrush. By mid-morning it was really quite hot so we retraced our route to the river and after a bit of a search found a Long-billed Plover on a shingle bank. Our next stop was beside another river to view some distant Blue-throated Bee-eaters before arriving at a patch of tall woodland beside another village where in no time at all we were watching numerous Courtois's Laughingthrushes in the canopy above us. There were maybe 50 or so birds present, many of which seemed to be nest-building high overhead or moving around the wood in roving flocks. At one stage several birds came quite low and began feeding on a bare trunk allowing incredibly great views. Hardly any western birders have made the pilgrimage to see this very rare species since it's rediscovery in 2000, really quite a shame as it is a stunningly beautiful bird. The same patch of woodland also held Great Spotted and Grey-capped Woodpeckers, Chinese Blackbird, Ashy Drongo and Grey Treepie as well. Leaving here we headed to a restaurant for a fine lunch, stopping to see a Brown Crake catch a mouse in some roadside ricefields (!) and whilst it was being prepared we walked up to the roof and had very close views of a pair of Pied Falconets which were nesting in a hole in a large tree nearby. We watched the birds catching dragonflies and butterflies and bringing their catch to the hole. It really was quite a show and so great to be able to watch these birds more or less at eye-level as they perched in the surrounding treetops. The afternoon session commenced alongside a river where a Brown-breasted Bulbul was perched on a telegraph wire. As we watched this a Chinese Hwamei began singing and



The scenery at Huangang Shan was truly spectacular and unlike anywhere else.



Fork-tailed Sunbird at Wuyuan. An often tricky species to connect with.



Long-billed Plover at Wuyuan - a good bird to find and this one showed well.

was lured onto the same wires giving superb views in the scope, and a **Crested Kingfisher** also flew by and landed. Then amidst an area of rice fields a couple of **Russet Sparrows** and several **Red-billed Starlings** were present, and at the next site just along the road a short distance an **Asian Barred Owlet** gave brief views. We ended the day back at the **Courtois's Laughingthrush** wood where we enjoyed seconds of these great birds, along with a **Grey-headed Woodpecker**, **Japanese Grosbeak** and some flyover **White-throated Needletails**.

Day 9 Fríday 11th May

Not far out of the city as we were driving through the rural countryside around Wuyuan we stopped to watch a flock of noisy Masked Laughingthrushes and as we retuned to the minibus a Chinese Bamboo-partridge began calling from above us on the steep slope. As we pulled alongside the area a pair of bamboo-partridges were seen fighting and rolling down the earth bank towards us, when suddenly they realised they were being watched and ran for cover. A short wait then resulted in further views of a slightly ashamed looking individual walking up the slope and away from us! Having just said this species hardly ever shows out in the open, how wrong can you be! We then returned to the secluded valley again this morning and split up in search of the tough skulkers we wanted to see, which turned up several brief Elliot's Pheasants and a Tiger Shrike for one group and a juvenile Silver Pheasant for the others. Several Dusky Fulvettas were present this morning and showed very well for everyone, whilst plenty of other common birds were seen. Leaving here we paid a visit to another site for Short-tailed Parrotbill but only succeeded in adding Cinnamon Bittern and Yellow-bellied Prinia to our list. In the afternoon we headed back to the laughingthrush wood and had Black-collared Starling on some telegraph wires along the way. Once at the wood we walked to the far side where Menxiu found a couple of drake Mandarin Ducks roosting in a tree on the opposite bank, and in the end we counted five males. Also here was a Black-winged Cuckooshrike, as well as several fine Black-naped Orioles and a Grey-faced Woodpecker.

Day 10 Saturday 12th May

Another crack at **Elliot's Pheasant** resulted in brief views of a male after a tricky hike through tall, wet grassland and Bamboo forest. Apart from that, all the usual birds were seen at this site before we left on the long drive back to Nanchang. Well it shouldn't have been that long but with heavy rain and flooding as we approached the city, coupled with major roadwork's resulted in a much later arrival time than originally anticipated. It was here we said farewell to David who had to return to the UK early.



Courtois's Laughingthrush – only possible to see in this one small area of China.



Masked Laughingthrush is more widespread but still nice to see.



Climbing up to the roof of a restaurant was worth it for these views of Pied Falconet.

Day 11 Sunday 13th May

Another short internal flight took us to Fuzhou where we arrived early afternoon and drove the short distance to the coast, where we donned wellington boots once again upon reaching a coastal tidal creek. Here a boatman took us a few kilometres along the channel to the edge of the Minjiang Estuary, where we set about searching for the exceedingly rare Chinese Crested Tern. This is undoubtedly one of the best places to find this bird, as a few individuals regularly roost and feed here before returning to their nesting islands some 30kms away. With viewing conditions hampered by the sea mist that is often present here, this wasn't an easy search but at least 40 Great Crested Terns patrolling the coast and landing at the water's edge on several occasions kept our hopes high. The incoming tide necessitated a hasty walk up the coast before we had to return across a deeper channel in the middle of the estuary, but on at least two occasions we had views of flyby Chinese Crested Terns to get our pulses racing. They were easy to pick out, being much paler and almost white on the upperparts compared to the Great Crested Terns, with long bills and a quick view in the scope revealed the allimportant dark tip to the bill. Plenty of other waders were here and most giving close views including Far Eastern Curlew, Great Knot and Grey-tailed Tattler, along with over 70 Terek Sandpipers and large gatherings of Red-necked Stints. Unfortunately, with high tide at 4.00pm it didn't give us long to scan the tideline as the water retreated before the light began to fade and we had to return to our waiting vehicles. As we left both Arctic and Dusky Warbler were found amidst some driftwood on the beach.

Day 12 Monday 14th May

Another attempt at the elusive Chinese Crested Tern necessitated a 4.40am departure from the hotel, however with driving rain and dense mist it did seem like rather a foolish thing to do! Yet upon arrival at the narrow channel where our boatman was waiting to ferry us across to the estuary, the rain eased enough for us to seriously consider going for it. Once everyone was across and with the day brightening the thick mist was the next obstacle we had to overcome. The tide was receding rapidly but we just couldn't see more than 50 yards in any direction, but we decided to wade across the channel onto the opposite side of the estuary and try our luck there. The mist did recede a little and we began to see some waders moving around but it was hard going. A small group of around 15 Great Crested Terns could just be made out in the poor conditions some distance away, but there wasn't anything paler readily apparent amongst them. When they flew away some of the group decided to go with Menxiu and look for White-shouldered Starling so leaving a few foolish souls to continue the apparently futile tern search.



David's Fulvetta is a recent split from Grey-cheeked Fulvetta.



Chinese Pond-heron in breeding plumage is a really stunning bird when seen well.



Red-billed Starling was quite common in rural areas around Wuyuan.

Well, after a little while we could see blue sky and the mist lifted just enough to raise our optimism and then we started to hear terns somewhere in the distance and walked towards the commotion. Sure enough we could just about make out a group of Great Crested Terns, which promptly flew off and we wondered if it was just not to be our day. All of a sudden Tony picked up a couple of terns at the water's edge which flew up and close past us showing very pale upperparts and a long, dark tipped bill - Chinese Crested Terns!! They disappeared into the mist and celebrations began. But we were not done as the distinctive sound of more terns carried to us through the dense bank of mist further along the coast. So we walked towards it and spotted a line of Great Cresteds on a sand bar, as well as the two Chinese Crested Terns again. The mist lifted sufficiently and we edged closer and closer until we daren't go any more and lapped up the views of these incredibly rare birds. So feeling rather elated we caught up with the rest of the group and enjoyed nice views of several White-shouldered Starlings on the telegraph wires, along with a flyby Lesser Coucal as well before heading up to Fuzhou Forest Park. We had lunch here before setting out on the trails and despite a heavy shower managed some nice views of Great Barbet, Chestnut Bulbul and Forktailed Sunbird. Another trail gave brief views of a distant Bay Woodpecker, whilst a Collared Owlet flew in and perched overhead and a trio of Rufous Woodpeckers perched up in a big tree. Best of all was a couple Grey-headed Parrotbills called in and they gave nice protracted views as they fed close by. With Menxiu seeing a Pale-headed Woodpecker beside the trail the omens looked promising for our final bash at birding in southeast China tomorrow.

Day 13 Tuesday 15th May

A last early start saw us following the paved path that meanders along the side of the mountains here and despite the humid conditions we enjoyed some great sightings. A flock of Indochinese Yuhinas gave an outstanding show as they came in to inspect our owlet imitation, which also attracted a Chestnut Bulbul as well. Both Grev-sided and Streak-breasted Scimitar-babblers and Great Barbet also showed well, as did Orange-bellied Leafbird, whilst Scarlet Minivet was a little distant. A White-necklaced Partridge called repeatedly from the hill above us and was seen briefly by the leaders, but couldn't be lured closer. Returning to the car park we followed the path beside a fast-flowing mountain stream where a Blue Whistlingthrush flew by, and our final new bird of the tour was a splendid Slaty-backed Forktail to finish our birding in this seldom visited corner of China. In the afternoon we flew back to Shanghai and said our goodbyes to Menxiu who had proven to be a superb guide and a good friend.



Chinese Crested Tern (2 birds on left) is one of the rarest birds in the world.



Collared Owlet can be found across Asia but is always nice to see.



We came across a flock of confiding Indochinese Yuhinas at Fuzhou.



Slaty-backed Forktail was seen along the stream at Fuzhou Forest Park.

Day 14 Wednesday 16th May

All that remained was to set out on our various journey's home and our cosmopolitan group headed off to all points of the globe, namely Canada, Beijing, UK and Japan and the conclusion of another great Asian tour.

Nick Bray.

BIRDLIST FOR SE CHINA 2012

_	ECIES demics in bold	SCIENTIFIC NAME
1.	White-necklaced Partridge (H)	Arborophila gingica
2.	Chinese Bamboo-Partridge	Bambusicola thoracicus
3.	Cabot's Tragopan	Tragopan caboti
4.	Silver Pheasant	Lophura nycthemera
5.	Elliot's Pheasant	Syrmaticus ellioti
6.	Ring-necked Pheasant	Phasianus colchicus
7.	Mandarin Duck	Aix galericulata
8.	Chinese Spot-billed Duck	Anas zonhoryncha
9.	Northern Shoveler	Anas clypeata
10.	Common Teal	Anas crecca
11.	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis
12.	Great Crested Grebe	Podiceps cristatus
13.	Great Bittern	Botaurus stellaris
14.	Yellow Bittern	Ixobrychus sinensis
15.	Cinnamon Bittern	Ixobrychus cinnamomeus
16.	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea
17.	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea
18.	Great Egret	Ardea alba
19.	Intermediate Egret	Mesophoyx intermedia
20.	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta
21.	Eastern Cattle Egret	Bubulcus coromandus
22.	Chinese Pond-heron	Ardeola bacchus

22	Striated Heron	Butorides striata
23.		Nycticorax nycticorax
24.	Black-crowned Night-Heron Eurasian Spoonbill	Platalea leucorodia
25.		Platalea minor
26.	Black-faced Spoonbill	Spilornis cheela
27.	Crested Serpent-Eagle	Circus spilonotus
28.	Eastern Marsh-Harrier	-
29.	Crested Goshawk	Accipiter trivirgatus
30.	Chinese Goshawk	Accipiter soloensis
31.	Japanese Sparrowhawk	Accipiter gularis
32.	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus
33.	Mountain Hawk-Eagle	Nisaetus nipalensis
34.	Pied Falconet	Microhierax melanoleucos
35.	Amur Falcon	Falco amurensis
36.	Brown Crake	Amaurornis akool
37.	White-breasted Waterhen	Amaurornis phoenicurus
38.	Common Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus
39.	Grey-headed Lapwing	Vanellus cinereus
40.	Grey Plover	Pluvialis squatarola
41.	Pacific Golden-plover	Pluvialis fulva
42.	Lesser Sandplover	Charadrius mongolus
43.	Greater Sandplover	Charadrius leschenaultii
44.	Kentish Plover	Charadrius alexandrinus
45.	White-faced Plover	Charadrius dealbatus
46.	Long-billed Plover	Charadrius placidus
47.	Little Ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius
48.	Eurasian Oystercatcher	Haematopus ostralegus
49.	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus
50.	Pied Avocet	Recurvirostra avosetta
51.	Terek Sandpiper	Xenus cinereus
52.	Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos
53.	Grey-tailed Tattler	Tringa brevipes
54.	Spotted Redshank	Tringa erythropus
55.	Common Redshank	Tringa totanus
56.	Common Greenshank	Tringa nebularia
57.	Marsh Sandpiper	Tringa stagnatilis
58.	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola
59.	Little Curlew	Numenius minutus
60.	Whimbrel	Numenius phaeopus
61.	Far Eastern Curlew	Numenius madagascariensis
62.	Eurasian Curlew	Numenius arquata
63.	Black-tailed Godwit	Limosa limosa
64.	Bar-tailed Godwit	Limosa lapponica
65.	Ruddy Turnstone	Arenaria interpres
66.	Great Knot	Calidris tenuirostris
67.	Red Knot	Calidris canutus
68.	Sanderling	Calidris alba
<u>69</u> .	Red-necked Stint	Calidris ruficollis
70.	Little Stint	Calidris minuta
71.	Long-toed Stint	Calidris subminuta
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70	Sharp toiled Condition	Calidris acuminata
72.	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	
73.	Dunlin	Calidris alpina Calidris ferruginea
74.	Curlew Sandpiper	
75.	Spoon-billed Sandpiper	Eurynorhynchus pygmeus Limicola falcinellus
76.	Broad-billed Sandpiper	
77.	Common Snipe	Gallinago gallinago
78.	Pin-tailed Snipe	Gallinago stenura
79.	Swinhoe's Snipe	Gallinago megala
80.	Oriental Pratincole	Glareola maldivarum
81.	Saunders's Gull	Saundersilarus saundersi
82.	Black-headed Gull	Larus ridibundus
83.	Black-tailed Gull	Larus crassirostris
84.	Little Tern	Sternula albifrons
85.	Gull-billed Tern	Gelochelidon nilotica
86.	Black Tern	Chlidonias niger
87.	White-winged Tern	Chlidonias leucopterus
88.	Whiskered Tern	Chlidonias hybrida
89.	Common Tern	Sterna hirundo
90.	Great Crested Tern	Thalasseus bergii
91.	Chinese Crested Tern	Thalasseus bernsteini
92.	Rock Dove	Columbia livia
93.	Oriental Turtle-dove	Streptopelia orientalis
94.	Red Collared-dove	Streptopelia tranquebarica
95.	Spotted Dove	Streptopelia chinensis
96.	Barred Cuckoo-dove	Macropygia unchall
97.	Chestnut-winged Cuckoo	Clamator coromandus
98.	Large Hawk-cuckoo	Cuculus sparverioides
99.	Himalayan Cuckoo	Cuculus saturatus
100.	Lesser Cuckoo	Cuculus poliocephalus
101.	Asian Koel	Eudynamys scolopaceus
102.	Lesser Coucal	Centropus bengalensis
103.	Collared Owlet	Glaucidium brodiei
104.	Asian Barred Owlet	Glaucidium cuculoides
105.	Northern Boobook	Ninox japonica
	White-throated Needletail	Hirundapus caudacutus
107.	Pacific Swift	Apus pacificus
108.	House Swift	Apus nipalensis
109.	Common Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis
110.	Black-capped Kingfisher	Halcyon pileata
111.	Crested Kingfisher	Megaceryle lugubris
112.	Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis
113.	Blue-throated Bee-eater	Merops viridis
114.	Dollarbird	Eurystomus orientalis
115.	Eurasian Hoopoe	Upupa epops
116.	Great Barbet	Megalaima virens
117.	Eurasian Wryneck	Jynx torquilla
118.	Grey-capped Woodpecker	Dendrocopos canicapillus
119.	White-backed Woodpecker	Dendrocopos leucotos
120.	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos major
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-	Rufous Woodpecker	Celeus brachyurus
	Grey-faced Woodpecker	Picus canus
	Pale-headed Woodpecker (H)	Gecinulus grantia
	Bay Woodpecker	Blythipicus pyrrhotis
	Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike	Coracina melaschistos
_	Swinhoe's Minivet	Pericrocotus cantonensis
	Ashy Minivet	Pericrocotus divaricatus
128.	Scarlet Minivet	Pericrocotus flammeus
129.	Grey-chinned Minivet	Pericrocotus solaris
130.	Tiger Shrike	Lanius tigrinus
131.	Brown Shrike	Lanius cristatus
132.	Long-tailed Shrike	Lanius schach
133.	White-bellied Erpornis	Erpornis zantholeuca
134.	Black-naped Oriole	Oriolus chinensis
	Black Drongo	Dicrurus macrocercus
-	Ashy Drongo	Dicrurus leucophaeus
	Hair-crested Drongo	Dicrurus hottentottus
138.	Japanese Paradise-flycatcher	Terpsiphone atrocaudata
-	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	Terpsiphone paradisi
-	Eurasian Jay	Garrulus glandarius
141.	Azure-winged Magpie	Cyanopica cyanus
	Red-billed Blue Magpie	Urocissa erythrorhyncha
-	Grey Treepie	Dendrocitta formosae
	Eurasian Magpie	Pica pica
	Oriental Skylark	Alauda gulgula
146.	Sand Martin	Riparia riparia
	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica
	Red-rumped Swallow	Cecropis daurica
	Asian House-Martin	Delichon dasypus
150.	Coal Tit	Periparus ater
151.	Yellow-bellied Tit	Pardaliparus venustulus
152.	Eastern Great Tit	Parus minor
	Yellow-cheeked Tit	Parus spilonotus
154.	Yellow-browed Tit	Sylviparus modestus
155.	Chinese Penduline-tit (H)	Remiz consobrinus
-	Black-throated Tit	Aegithalos concinnus
157.	Brown Dipper	Cinclus pallasii
158.	Collared Finchbill	Spizixos semitorques
159.	Brown-breasted Bulbul	Pycnonotus xanthorrhous
160.	Chinese Bulbul	Pycnonotus sinensis
161.	Sooty-headed Bulbul	Pycnonotus aurigaster
162.	Himalayan Black Bulbul	Hypsipetes leucocephalus
163.	Chestnut Bulbul	Hemixos castanonotus
164.	Mountain Bulbul	Ixos mcclellandii
165.	Manchurian Bush-warbler	Cettia canturians
166.	Brownish-flanked Bush-warbler	Cettia fortipes
167.	Yellowish-bellied Bush-warbler	Cettia acanthizoides
168.	Brown Bush-warbler	Bradypterus luteoventris
169.	Dusky Warbler	Phylloscopus fuscatus
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	Buff-throated Warbler	Phylloscopus subaffinis
	Radde's Warbler (L)	Phylloscopus schwarzi
	Pallas's Leaf-warbler	Phylloscopus proregulus
	Yellow-browed Warbler	Phylloscopus inornatus
	Arctic Warbler	Phylloscopus borealis
	Two-barred Greenish Warbler	Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus
176.	Pale-legged Leaf-warbler	Phylloscopus tenellipes
177.	Eastern Crowned Leaf-warbler	Phylloscopus coronatus
	Claudia's Leaf-warbler	Phylloscopus claudiae
179.	Hartert's Leaf-warbler	Phylloscopus goodsoni fokiensis
180.	Kloss's Leaf-warbler	Phylloscopus o. ogilviegranti
181.	Sulphur-breasted Warbler	Phylloscopus ricketti
182.	Bianchi's Warbler	Seicercus valentine latouchei
183.	White-spectacled Warbler	Seicercus affinis intermedius
184.	Chestnut-crowned Warbler	Seicercus castaniceps
185.	Rufous-faced Warbler	Abroscopus albogularis
186.		Acrocephalus bistrigiceps
	Blunt-winged Warbler	Acrocephalus concinens
188.		Acrocephalus orientalis
189.		Megalurus pryeri
	Zitting Cisticola	Cisticola juncidis
	Yellow-bellied Prinia	Prinia flaviventris
	Plain Prinia	Prinia inornata
	Masked Laughingthrush	Garrulax perspicillatus
194.		Garrulax monileger
195.	Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush	Garrulax pectoralis
196.	Courtois's Laughingthrush	Dryonastes galbanus
197.	Buffy Laughingthrush	Garrulax berthemyi
198.	Chinese Hwamei	Garrulax canorus
199.	White-browed Laughingthrush	Garrulax sannio
200.	Rufous-capped Babbler	Stachyridopsis ruficeps
201.	Spotted Wren-Babbler	Spelaeornis formosus
202.	Grey-sided Scimitar-Babbler	Pomatorhinus swinhoei
203.	Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler	Pomatorhinus ruficollis
204.		Pnoepyga pusilla
205.	Red-billed Leiothrix	Leiothrix lutea
206.	Blyth's Shrike-babbler	Pteruthius ricketti
207.	Fujian Fulvetta	Alcippe guttaticolis
208.	David's Fulvetta	Alcippe morrisonia davidi
209.	Dusky Fulvetta	Schoeniparus brunnea
210.	Indochinese Yuhina	Yuhina torqueola
211.	Black-chinned Yuhina	Yuhina nigrimenta
212.	Grey-headed Parrotbill	Paradoxornis gularis
213.	Vinous-throated Parrotbill	Paradoxornis webbianus
214.	Reed Parrotbill	Paradoxornis heudei
215.	Japanese White-eye	Zosterops japonicus
216.	Dark-sided Flycatcher	Muscicapa sibirica
217.	Grey-streaked Flycatcher	Muscicapa griseisticta
217. 218.	Grey-streaked Flycatcher Asian Brown Flycatcher	Muscicapa griseisticta Muscicapa dauurica

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	Yellow-rumped Flycatcher	Ficedula zanthopygia
_	Narcissus Flycatcher	Ficedula narcissina
	Elisae's Flycatcher	Ficedula elisae
	Mugimaki Flycatcher	Ficedula mugimaki
		Cyanoptila cyanomelana
	Verditer Flycatcher	Eumyias thalassinus
	Small Niltava	Niltava macgrigoriae
	Brown-chested Jungle-flycatcher	Rhinomyias brunneatus
227.	Oriental Magpie-Robin	Copsychus saularis
	White-browed Shortwing (H)	Brachypteryx montana
	Rufous-tailed Robin	Larvivora sibilans
230.	Siberian Blue Robin	Larvivora cyane
	Blue Whistling-thrush	Myophonus caeruleus
232.	White-crowned Forktail	Enicurus leschenaulti
233.	Spotted Forktail	Enicurus maculatus
234.	Slaty-backed Forktail	Enicurus schistaceus
235.	Siberian Rubythroat	Luscinia calliope
236.		Phoenicurus fuliginosus
237.	Daurian Redstart	Phoenicurus auroreus
238.	Chestnut-bellied Rock-thrush	Monticola rufiventris
239.	Siberian Stonechat	Saxicola maura
240.	Siberian Thrush	Zoothera sibirica
241.	Chinese Blackbird	Turdus mandarinus
242.	Eye-browed Thrush	Turdus obscurus
243.	Pale Thrush	Turdus pallidus
244.	Brown-headed Thrush	Turdus chrysolaus
245.	Crested Myna	Acridotheres cristatellus
	Black-collared Starling	Gracupica nigricollis
247.	Daurian Starling	Sturnia sturnina
248.	White-shouldered Starling	Sturnia sinensis
249.	Red-billed Starling	Sturnus sericeus
	White-cheeked Starling	Sturnus cineraceus
	Orange-bellied Leafbird	Chloropsis hardwickii
252.	Fork-tailed Sunbird	Aethopyga christinae
253.	Western Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla flava
	Eastern Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla tschutschensis
	-	Motacilla citreola
	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea
257.	White Wagtail	Motacilla alba
258.	Richard's Pipit	Anthus richardi
259.	Rosy Pipit	Anthus roseatus
260.	Olive-backed Pipit	Anthus hodgsoni
261.	Pechora Pipit	Anthus gustavi
262.	Red-throated Pipit	Anthus cervinus
263.	Forest Wagtail	Dendronanthus indicus
264.	Crested Bunting	Emberiza lathami
265.	Meadow Bunting	Emberiza cioides
265.	Chestnut Bunting	Emberiza rutila
267.	Tristram's Bunting	Emberiza tristrami
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268.	Black-faced Bunting	Emberiza spodocephala
269.	Pallas's Reed Bunting	Emberiza pallasi
270.	Common Rosefinch	Carpodacus erythrinus
271.	Oriental Greenfinch	Chloris sinica
272.	Yellow-billed Grosbeak	Eophona migratoria
273.	Japanese Grosbeak	Eophona personata
274.	Russet Sparrow	Passer rutilans
275.	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	Passer montanus
276.	White-rumped Munia	Lonchura striata
277.	Scaly-breasted Munia	Lonchura punctulata

ZOOTHERA GLOBAL BIRDING

19 Tudor Close Paignton Devon TQ4 7RF Tel: 01803 431765 email: info@zootherabirding.com web:<u>www.zootherabirding.com</u>



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