



john & jemi

*Birding China*

## **Sichuan Province, Western China 23<sup>rd</sup> October to 20<sup>th</sup> November 2006**

By John & Jemi Holmes

Participants: Nigel Croft, John Holmes and Jemi Holmes (WONG Ah-ping)

### **Introduction**

This was a four-week trip around Sichuan Province with Nigel Croft, who flew directly to Chengdu from Bristol via Amsterdam. We visited seven sites. Of the seven, five were places Jemi and I had been to on our June & July trip:-

[http://johnjemi.hkbirds.net/tp/cn/sc06\\_06/2006\\_06-07\\_sichuan.htm](http://johnjemi.hkbirds.net/tp/cn/sc06_06/2006_06-07_sichuan.htm)

Only Danba and Dangling were new places for us. We wanted to compare Tangjiahe, Wanglang, Bifengxia, Labahe and Maerkang in the different seasons in the hope that autumn viewing conditions would be easier than in summer, with birds in larger flocks and in thinner undergrowth. We hoped too, that the cooler autumn weather would drive some species lower.

Bifengxia and Tangjiahe could be counted as mid-altitude sites with birded elevations of 1,000 to 2,000 metres. At Wanglang, Dangling and Mengbi Shan the birded areas were mainly above 2,500 metres.

The above reads as though we were on a closely-planned, rigorously-organised trip. However, as usual, we were very flexible and made on-the-spot decisions about how long we would spend in various places.

Even if you don't speak any Putonghua, you can usually get a bus ticket for where you want to go by showing the destination characters in Chinese to the person (usually a woman) behind the ticket counter. Most bus tickets are electronic print-outs with the time of departure, your seat number and the amount you paid printed clearly in roman numerals.

Most bookshops in anywhere bigger than a medium-sized town sell provincial maps for 5 – 10 RMB. You can also get motoring atlases in Chinese highlighting the scenic spots and nature reserves of Sichuan and other provinces.

## Itinerary

23 & 24 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Chengdu (Sims Cozy Guest House)
25 <sup>th</sup> – 30 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Wanglang NNR, Pingwu County
31 <sup>st</sup> Oct – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov	Tangjiahe, Pingwu County
3 <sup>rd</sup> Nov	Sims Cozy Guest House, Chengdu
4 <sup>th</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Bifengxia, near Ya'an
7 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Labuhe, Tianquan County (near Ya'an)
9 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Jiaju Tibetan Village, near Danba
11 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Dangling (80km west of Danba)
13 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Jiaju Tibetan Village, near Danba
14 <sup>th</sup> - 18 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Zhuokeji, near Maerkang (Barkham)
19 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Return to Chengdu

## References

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MAP: *Central China* Nelles Maps - Nelles Verlag Gmbh 2005

## Wanglang National Nature Reserve, Pingwu County

### *Getting there*

There is a direct coach to Pingwu that leaves Chengdu at 0840 and arrives Pingwu at 1310. The travel desk at Sims Cozy GH sent someone to pick up the tickets for Nigel and I the night before; - RMB 70 each + RMB 20 commission. The Guest House people even gave me a piece of paper with the correct bus station address (Chadianzi) on it to

show to our taxi driver (Although the bus station name is also printed on the bus ticket in small characters).

If you can't get this direct coach, then there is a wide choice of coaches from Chengdu's northern bus stations to Mianyang. From there you would have to change for a coach to Pingwu town. From Pingwu you can get a bus up route S205 to Baima, but from there the visitor will still need to "baoche" (hire a vehicle) to cover the last forty kilometres to reserve HQs.

At Pingwu we were met by Mr HUNG, the minivan driver Jemi and I had used on the summer trip (Mobile 139 9015 1648). It cost RMB300 to be driven the 110km or so to Wanglang NNR. (Wanglang is marked on the new 2005 Nelles Map "Central China" – but not marked as a Nature Reserve). The journey consists of about 70km north up the main road to a junction near the town of Baima, where there is a petrol station and a motley collection of souvenir stalls. A turn left (westwards) took us past the big dam nearing completion along what is still mainly a well-maintained gravel road to Wanglang HQs at an elevation of 2,550 metres. It was quite chilly when we arrived at 1650. Jemi had telephoned ahead for us (0816 8110 8737) and we were booked into the cheaper rooms at RMB80 per person per night. (For meals we opted to eat what was put out for the staff/researchers, which cost a bargain RMB 15 per person per day.) The two of us occupied a three-person room for a couple of nights, but had to move room on the Saturday, as two coaches of domestic visitors filled the accommodation.

A snowstorm had passed through two days earlier and fallen trees blocked the northwest fork in the road in the reserve (the route to the area adjacent to Jiuzhaigou).

### ***Birding***

Our four days of birding were spent either birding around Wanglang HQs itself, or walking up and down the access track.

On 26<sup>th</sup> Oct we birded the "Riverside Eco Trail" and came across a pair of Snowy-cheeked Laughingthrushes at the upper end of the trail in bamboo. One paused on an open stump long enough to get its' picture taken, but they moved on fairly quickly. We saw another pair two days later, downhill from Wanglang HQs. Although we had only two sightings in thirty hours of birding at the site we heard them frequently, and didn't have any tape or recording equipment to lure them into view.

On Oct 27<sup>th</sup> we scrounged a lift with an "Earthwatch" group to the meadow boardwalk at Dachaoping "Grand Meadow" (2950m). Then we walked back towards HQs and were picked up in mid-afternoon. The following two days were spent on the access track downhill of HQs.



As you might expect in an area of pine-clad hillsides, we saw a lot of tits. Parties of both Sooty Tits and Rusty-bellied (Pere Davids) Tits were seen daily as well as Grey-crested, Rufous-vented, Coal, Willow, Green-backed, and Yellow-browed. Black-throated and Great Tits were seen below 2,500metres. Also noted was a flock of over 200 Grandalas which favoured the ridge to the north of Wanglang HQs. Unfortunately we never got a close view of these.

The commonest fulvetta was Streak-throated, but we saw a few Chinese Fulvettas as well as having best-ever views of Crimson-breasted Woodpecker in a mixed flock. Other highlights included a single White-cheeked Nuthatch (race *przewalskii*) and a party of twenty Spectacled Parrotbills. A mammal highlight was a large female wild boar with a couple of medium-sized young.

With the “Earthwatch” party was local researcher LEE Shan, whose camera-trap pictures of pheasants at Wanglang appeared in the 2004 China Bird Report. He gave us a fascinating slide show of his camera trap pictures on his laptop; - it’s amazing what will wander past carefully-placed cameras. Something else that impressed me about the Earthwatch people was that – while Crofty and I were eating steamed buns and congee for breakfast - they had brought sliced white bread AND A TOASTER.

## Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve, Pingwu County

### *Getting there*

Picked up at Wanglang HQs by Mr HUNG in his minivan, we took about 2 ½ hours to go back to Pingwu, from where we got the 1430 bus to Qingchuan, getting off at Qingxi. Arriving at about 1630 we were picked up by Mr WANG (mobile 138 81205061), another driver Jemi and I had met in the summer. Visibility from the rear of Mr WANG's minivan is somewhat limited due to the tinted windows, so it was he who spotted a party of about twenty Takin on the hillside between the Tangjiahe reserve entrance and HQs. Three of the Takin had radio collars.

At Tangjiahe HQs we opted for Block "B" opposite reception, RMB 300 for a twin room. It was very new and comfortable. Due to availability, Jemi and I had stayed in Block "D" in the summer (RMB100) which was very dilapidated. There was no "eating with the staff" option at Tangjiahe, the accommodation and restaurant set-up is more upmarket and formal than Wanglang.



Sketch map

## ***Birding***

Blocks B, C and D are beside the river, with the wooded hillside and nature trail on the far side. The first-floor corridors are open-ended with a platform outside. We were pleasantly surprised to find White-capped River Chats buzzing up and down the corridor at dawn, perhaps attracted by insects at the electric lights.

We had a good morning (31st Oct.) on the Nature Trail, encountering six or seven muntjacs, as well as Slaty Buntings (also noted on the summer trip), Scaly Thrushes, Grey-winged Blackbird, Chinese Babax and Eurasian Jays. Small stuff included more Sooty Tits and Spectacled Fulvettas.

In the evening we spent a couple of hours on the trail next to the river, where we saw a Yellow-throated Marten and a Tufted Deer.

I had heard a loud “Pink-pink” calling from the window of our room the first morning and thought it must have been a woodpecker somewhere. Only on day two, when putting my socks on the washing line behind the block, did I realise that the sound was coming from a pair of Crested Kingfishers, bent on removing all the goldfish from an ornamental pond next to reception.

We then spent most of the day along the track that runs parallel to the main river (upstream of HQs). After about two kilometres the track (originally built to haul out timber, I presume) has been washed away, and only a footpath remains. We had to climb down onto the riverbed in places. Highlights included Spotted and Barred Laughingthrushes, a male Temminck’s Tragopan on the way out and two male golden Pheasants on the way back.

On our third day at Tangjiahe, we got Mr WANG to come in and drive us up towards Motianling. This involved going back almost to the main entrance, and turning left over a bridge and heading north up a valley parallel to a stream. The ridges one can see from the end of this track mark the border with Baishuijiang NNR in Gansu Province. We encountered a flock of over one hundred Elliot’s Laughingthrushes and added Golden-breasted Fulvetta to the trip list. A loud clamouring in the bushes/bamboo about thirty metres uphill from the track turned out to be a flock of more than 50 Spectacled Parrotbills.

## **Return to Chengdu**

Mr Wang picked us up at 0900 and drove us, via Qingxi, to the main road between Mianyang and Pingwu. We could have gone another 30km up the road to Pingwu town bus station, but decided to take our chances on seats on a southbound bus. After about thirty minutes we were on our way. A quick change to a brand new coach down to Chengdu from Mianyang and we were back in Chengdu shortly after 1700. We met Jemi shortly afterwards at Sims Cozy Guest House.

## **Bifengxia, near Ya'an**

### *Getting there*

It was a longish taxi ride out to the South-west Bus Station. We paid RMB 44 each for the ninety-minute ride down the dual carriageway to Ya'an. We paid RMB 35 for the taxi the 18km or so up to Bifengxia. Admission tickets were RMB 80 each. Good views of the captive pandas for this.

We asked about staying at Xiaoxitian, the place we stayed in June, when we bought the admission tickets at the main hotel, but we were told that it was closed due to the off season. Another place inside was recommended.

### *Birding*

So, on a misty, damp afternoon we waited at the entrance barrier. After decent views of a party of Moustached Laughingthrushes, we got a lift around to a privately-run guesthouse called the "Sound of Water Guest Lodge" which, surprisingly enough, was next to a stream. From the balcony we could see White-capped Water Redstart, Plumbeous Water Redstart, Slaty-backed Forktail and caught a glimpse of Spotted Forktail.

We wandered up the road in the mist. Mixed flocks had a lot of Red-billed Leiothrixes and Grey-cheeked Fulvetas. Seen with the flocks we had Speckled Piculets on a couple of occasions, and also White-browed Shrike Babblers. Rufous-faced Warblers and Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker gave decent views.

A kilometre up the road, we found Xiaoxitian **was** open for business. So we moved up there for two nights (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.). It was nice place to hang out for a couple of days at the off-season rate of RMB40 per person per night. A pleasant restaurant is only a few yards away. Bifengxia was the only place on the trip that we saw Dusky Fulvetta and Black-chinned Yuhinas.

We were displeased to see one of the "security" staff in the gorge one evening with an air-rifle. I think he was looking for partridges, but if they're in the habit of shooting, they'll probably be shooting anything.

## **Labahe Scenic Spot (Erlangshan National Forest Park)**

A taxi back from Bifengxia down to Ya'an and we were at the "Tourist bus station" on Bayi Lu. The girl at the information counter remembered us from the summer trip! We got the bus to Tianquan (70 minutes along route S318), and waited until 1300 for the bus to Labahe. The Labahe bus runs almost forty km westwards along route S318 and turns north, across a bridge with an ornate arch and terminates at a mining camp a few km up the access road. We were required to "bung" the bus driver RMB 10 each to run us up to the chalets at km 22. In the summer we had hired a taxi and not solved the mystery of where the official bus route terminated. Admission tickets to the reserve were RMB58 each.

### ***Accommodation***

We were charged RMB 200 a room per night for the brand new wooden chalets. The restaurant at the chalet area was new since our summer visit. The new chalets were pleasant to stay for a couple of nights. During our summer trip we found out that this is the area from which the jeeps go up the hill to the boardwalk, and perhaps the best place to stay for birding.

Another kilometre up the main valley, we found that the biggest hotel was still under reconstruction, and a large stone wall had been erected between the road and the “Salt Lick” area. This might be to prevent disturbance to the deer that emerge from the forest at dusk, or it might be to force everyone to pay RMB20 to use the hotels’ viewing area.

At the head of the main valley, the place we stayed in the summer had changed its’ name from the “Blue Crystal Hotel” to the “Labahe Grand Hotel”. Very grand it is, too.

### ***Birding***

The evening, the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, we paid RMB100 for a two-hour jeep trip up the hill, ending up at Deer Lake after the sun had set behind the hills. We saw little of note.

On the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> we had White-throated Dipper from the restaurant and got the first jeep of the day up the track, being dropped off at the track high point at about 2650m. The hillsides have been stripped of most of the original trees but there was a dense layer of fine bamboo. Here Nigel and I headed up a side track towards a ridge, and later up what we thought was a path but which turned out to be a logging run. In the bamboo we had brief views of a pair of Giant Parrotbills, which we realised we had been hearing for some time. Jemi, meanwhile, stayed near where we had got off the jeep and saw just as much as we did.

Along the boardwalk it was very quiet in mid-afternoon until we came across a party of perhaps 30 Brown Parrotbills. Later a distant Spotted Nutcracker and a very close Crimson-breasted Woodpecker rounded off the day.

It was nice to see a flock right outside the chalet, including Streak-throated Fulvettas and Streak-breasted Scimitar Babblers, but apart from about sixty Large-billed Crows, we didn’t see any bigger birds in the area.

### ***And another thing***

On one of the jeep rides at Labahe the driver enquired of Jemi whether the two foreigners would like to buy a “licence” to hunt one of the deer. We showed no interest, of course, but there seems to be some potential for villainy here.

## **Jiaju Tibetan Village, Danba**

On our summer trip we had met some young tourists from Guangdong Province at Rilong. Rilong is the town over Balangshan Pass from Wolong, marked as “Rilongguan” on the 2005 Nelles map. They had come from Danba and impressed us with their scenery pictures on the guesthouse’s computer. One of the objects of this autumn trip was to visit Danba and nearby Dangling for autumnal views, as well as to see what birds we could find.

### ***Getting there***

Jemi had arranged a taxi to pick us up from the Labahe chalets and take us to the main road, where we planned to head west towards Luding, Kangding and/or Danba. As luck would have it, we found ourselves on the main road catching up with the Chengdu/Danba bus at some roadworks. There were some seats vacant. The bus had left Chengdu at 0600 and we boarded at about 1040. Almost immediately we stopped for lunch! The road goes through a big new tunnel as it goes west. After this, the areas of human habitation become more noticeably Tibetan in character. Our bus bypassed Luding. Route S318 continues to Kangding, but Danba traffic takes a right turn on S211. We were held up for over two hours at a small town due to delays caused by construction up the valley of yet another hydro-electric project. It was well after dark when we arrived in Danba. We were picked up by Mr Zheng of our homestay in Jiaju Village, as Jemi had telephoned ahead with the number (135 68685278) the Guangdong people had given us. The village is a twenty-minute drive north from Danba, with a turnoff from the road that follows the river upstream to Maerkang.

It seems that the road south of Danba to Luding/Kangding (S211) is going to be affected by roadworks for a couple of years. Danba can also be accessed from Wolong, via Rilong and Xiaojin.

### ***Accommodation***

Mr Zheng’s homestay was a large Tibetan-style house, with many traditional features. Much of the roof, like other places in the village, was given over to drying maize. The toilet was a “long drop” next to a vegetable patch. We had a tap on the roof next to our rooms and there was a basin on the ground floor with very cold water. There were plenty of clean blankets and quilts on the wooden beds. Large kettles of water were boiled on sunny days using a parabolic mirror mounted on a wheeled frame to focus sunlight on the kettle. Many households in the area had these devices - apparently local government subsidises the cost. Most importantly, Mr ZHENG and his wife were genuinely hospitable hosts. We paid RMB 40 per person, included food per night.

Mr ZENG Ming Fu 曾明富 mobile’s is 13568685278.

## ***Birding***

We woke to find a Grey-headed Woodpecker in the pine tree outside our room. Jiaju Tibetan village is spread over a terraced hillside and flocks of Hill Pigeon, Red-billed Chough and Chinese Greenfinch were noted. Godlewski's Bunting, White-browed Fulvetta and Olive-backed Pipit were added to the trip list. On an afternoon excursion Jemi found Rufous-tailed Babbler in the roadside thorny scrub. Danba is a nice place to visit, but as a birder, you probably wouldn't go there exclusively for the birding. Although I note a record of Spectacled Parrotbill at Jiaju in the 2004 China Bird Report, so we may only have scraped the surface.

## **Dangling, near Danba**

Danba Town and Jiaju Village are the usual bases for trips up a valley to the northwest to an area called Dangling. This is another place remnants of the Long March are said to have passed through. There is a very picturesque lake a few kilometres uphill from the houses at the end of the road. We didn't actually get to the lake – a good reason to go back! Chinese tourists take pony rides or hike to get up there. Due to difficulty of access the whole area is still relatively unspoiled.

## **Getting there**

The usual procedure is to hire a minivan from Danba to go the 80km on a rough road (takes 5 – 6 hours) and return the following day. On the Nelles map this is the road that goes through "Geshizha" and "Dandong". The standard charge for a minivan is RMB 500. We decided to stay two nights at Dangling, and paid Mr ZHENG another RMB100 to wait for us the extra day.

## ***Birding***

The sides of the valley between Danba and Dangling are well-wooded most of the way, gradient allowing. The colours of autumn were very pretty in the middle part of the valley. We added Giant Laughingthrushes, Maroon-backed Accentors and a Bar-tailed Treecreeper to the trip list in the last few km of the journey. There were flurries of snow as the houses of Dangling came into view, elevation 3,000m. A spanking male Three-barred Rosefinch sat up in a hedgerow. We had close views of Chinese Fulvettas and Eurasian Treecreeper as a mixed bird flock crossed the road. We eventually decided in which of the two guesthouses we would stay. I rejected the dusty one for the newer one with the unfinished upper floor. Cost worked out at RMB 40 per person per day, RMB20 for the bed and RMB20 for the food. After dumping bags we wandered up a path towards some hot springs behind the guesthouse.

There was not much around on a dull evening, but I focussed on a pine with some trilling coming from it – and Dangling will forever be the place I first saw Crested Tit Warbler. The Yak stew for dinner tasted all the better. We were offered it for breakfast, too.

We saw a few more Crested Tit Warblers the following day. It had snowed overnight and the pines on the hillsides were covered in frost. It seemed as though all the fulvetas in the leafless streamside scrub were Chinese. We saw Lammergeyer and Griffon Vultures above the distant ridgelines. White-browed Rosefinches were numerous and we added a flock of Snow Pigeons to the trip list. The Common Magpies had a variety of fluty treepie-like calls, indicating the Tibetan race - *bottanensis*.

After a second night we prepared to leave. We had some fun push-starting the van. Mr ZHENG loaded a large slab of yak butter (suitably packaged) in the back of the vehicle. A few kilometres down the road we stopped at an area where two valleys met – “Dabagou”. Under a grove of planted pines the ground was not frozen and it was covered with Beautiful Rosefinches, Grey-crested Tits, Black-browed Tits and Rufous-fronted Accentors, all foraging in the moss. We saw a small party of Red Crossbills, and Jemi got some pictures of White-cheeked Nuthatch. One was noted making short forays, but always returning to the same area of the same tree, apparently hoarding food for the winter. This was the only place on the trip we saw Sichuan Treecreeper.

There seems to be a lot of potential for good birds at Dangling, but the area is still a bit rough and time-consuming to get to. Apart from the Crossbills and White-cheeked Nuthatch we saw many of the same species at Mengbishan.

## **Maerkang – Zhuokeji - Mengbishan**

We had another night at Jiaju Village, and got the 0700 bus from Danba to Maerkang (“Barkham” on the Nelles map) the following morning. The bus, full at times and with our non-valuable baggage strapped onto the roof, followed the river upstream for about six hours. We arrived at Maerkang’s western bus terminal and got the RMB 1 shuttle into town. After lunch Jemi got her hair washed and dried, Nigel got onto the internet and I showed the bird book to the restaurant staff and a passing Tibetan Monk. “Pheasants...? Any of these near your monastery...?” - “In February” he said.

Although there are several hotels in Maerkang we got a taxi out to Zhuokeji, for a five-night stay with the hospitable LU family. Their homestay (60RMB per person per night) is the first building on the right as you cross the bridge into the village. It seems there are other homestays in Zhuokeji, but theirs is the only one that is permitted to accept foreigners (phone: 0837 2829162).

### ***Birding***

On our summer trip in late June we had seen Blood Pheasant, White-eared Pheasant and Black Woodpecker in this area. We were unaware then that other birders had preceded us earlier in June. We read the internet trip reports by Peter Collaerts and Remco Hofland weeks later and noted that both parties had seen Sichuan Jay at Mengbi Shan, which we missed. So we were keen to revisit on this trip.

We had four birding days to explore the area along the road to Mengbi Shan, which is 30km to the south of Zhuokeji. The road (S 210) is broad, paved, and not very busy. We saw the bus from Xiaojin to Maerkang pass in late morning and return in mid-afternoon. We engaged driver "Sidaja" and his yellow minivan for most of that time (0837 8882928). Overnight temperatures hovered just above freezing and well-shaded gullies along the road had snow on the ground. Zhuokeji is at about 2,700m elevation and the pass at km 30 just over 4,000m.

On our first morning we went beyond the pass to where the road traverses a valley (km31). A group of about 25 White-collared Yuhinas came past. A wheezy trilling in the dry scrub was a White-browed Tit Warbler. Eventually we realised there were four or five of them about. I spent a fruitless hour or so trying to manoeuvre a camera and tripod through the scrub to get a picture. A confiding Robin Accentor was photographed by Jemi at the roadside. We saw Golden Eagle and distant Himalayan Griffon Vultures overhead. Back over the pass and we wandered down the road surrounded by spruce trees. Some dry-looking bushes with orange berries were on the downhill side. Nigel spotted a shadow-like movement at the base of the pines to our left, and we both got a glimpse of a medium-sized grey bird before it disappeared into the undergrowth. Sichuan Jay! I called Jemi, but would it reappear? It turned out that there was a whole party of Jays coming to feed on the roadside berries, so I needn't have worried. We could only see three or four at a time, but eventually they crossed the road one by one, and we counted nine.

In late afternoon we went down to km 14.5, where there is a track up to a temple we had visited in the summer (Chake Temple). We had seen Blood Pheasants on the road in late June and I was quietly optimistic. However the access track had been messily widened and the Blood Pheasants were not to be seen. Our luck was good, we found a male Koklass Pheasant instead. At the temple itself, one of the monks called the White-eared Pheasant seen in the summer down from the hillside and fed it peanuts. It seems that this pheasant has learned to trust people in Lama's robes. In the summer, it gave Jemi a nasty peck – she still has the mark on her leg. This time it behaved aggressively towards me! I found that the tripod was useful to keep it at a safe distance.

Returning to the temple the following morning we again missed Blood Pheasants, but enjoyed Giant and Elliot's Laughingthrushes plus Chinese Babax around the temple. At 1030 we got to the track at km16 that leads to Bai Ma (White Horse) mountain. We were still in the shadow of the surrounding hills and it was almost birdless and cold. We spent our time trying to take artistic photographs of icicles in the stream. As Sidaja had other commitments, we were back at Zhuokeji by 1315 and took it easy in the afternoon.

On our third day, we went towards the pass and worked our way slowly downhill. We found Sichuan Jays again and descended to km 23 stopping here and there. Chinese Fulvettas seemed more common, and we also had Crested Tit Warblers and Three-barred Rosefinch.

Below the Km 23 road marker "Sidaja" signalled that he had seen something below the road, and we saw Blood Pheasants moving across the partially snow-covered ground. We estimated that there were over forty of them.

## Maerkang to Chengdu

A final few hours of birding on the 18<sup>th</sup> was a bit of an anti-climax, and we caught the Maerkang – Chengdu 0800 bus on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November. It is a scenic run from Maerkang up to the tunnel beneath Zhegushan and the first thirty km down the Miyaluo Valley. Below that, this formerly scenic area is dreadfully scarred by deforestation and hydroelectric construction. The road diverts through some impressively huge tunnels. If you like “Ghost Train” rides at the fairground, this is the bus journey for you!

Beware the roads around the new reservoir north of Dujiangyan. In November 2006 we found a twelve-hour by twelve hour “one way” system in operation. 0000 to 1159 the traffic flows north, from Chengdu towards Wolong. From 1200 to 2359 the traffic switches to southbound, from Wolong/Wenchuan towards Dujiangyan/Chengdu.

After a final night in Chengdu, Nigel flew back to Bristol via Amsterdam and Jemi and I flew to Shenzhen, a short taxi ride from the Hong Kong border. We had seen about 150 species during the trip, with about a dozen “lifers” for Jemi and I and about twenty for Nigel Croft.

We hope this Trip Report has been informative. Please forward any comments or queries on the above to “johnjemiATnetvigator.com”.

<b>Name in English</b>	<b>Simplified Chinese</b>
Ba lang shan	巴朗山
Baima	白马
Baishuijiang NNR	白水江自然保护区
Bayi Lu	八一路
Bifengxia	碧峰峡
Blue Crystal Hotel	蓝水晶酒店
Cha dian zi Bus station	茶店子汽车站
Chake Temple	察柯寺
Chengdu	成都
Dabagou	大霸沟
Danba	丹巴
Dangdong	党东
Dangling	党岭
Dujiangyan	都江堰
Erlangshan National Forest Park	二郎山国家森林公园
Gansu Province	甘肃省
Jiaju Tibetan Village	甲居藏寨
Kangding	康定
Lababe Grand Hotel	喇叭河大酒店
Lababe Scenic Spot	喇叭河风景区
Luding	泸定
Maerkang	马尔康
Mengbi Shan	蒙笔山

Mianyang	绵阳
Miyaluo	米亚罗
Pingwu County	平武县
Putonghua	普通话
Qingchuan	青川
Qingxi	青溪
Ri long	日隆
Sichuan Province	四川省
Sims Cozy Guest House	观华青年旅舍
Tangjiahe NNR	唐家河自然保护区
Tianquan County	天全县
Wanglang NNR	王朗自然保护区
Wenchuan	汶川
Wolong	卧龙
Xiaojin	小金
Xiaoxitian	小西天
Ya an	雅安
Zhegushan	鹧鸪山
Zhuokeji	卓克基

## SPECIES LIST

Species number according to Mackinnon, J. and Phillipps, K., (2000) *A field guide to the Birds of China*

0027 Chinese Bamboo Partridge *Bambusicola thoracica*

Heard in the gully at Bifengxia, near Yaan

0028 Blood Pheasant *Ignathis cruentus*

A flock of nearly fifty, at km 23 on the Mengbi Shan Road

0032 Temminck's Tragopan *Tragopan temminckii*

Adult male on the trail upstream from reserve HQs, Tangjiahe

0034 Koklass Pheasant *Pucrasia macrolopha*

Maerkang : adult male on the track up to the temple at km 14.5, Mengbi Shan Road

0043 White Eared-Pheasant *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*

The singleton fed by the monk at Chake Temple (14.5 km, Mengbi Shan road) was the only one seen

0050 Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Two seen as we left Wanglang – near the village at the top end of the reservoir

0051 Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*

Two adult males, about 2km up the track from Tangjiahe HQs

0084 Mandarin Duck *Aix Galericulata*

Four seen from the bus on the river beside the road between Miyauluo and Wenchuan

0120 Speckled Piculet *Picumnus innominatus*

In ones and twos with mixed flocks at Bifengxia

0122 Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*  
With mixed flocks at Tangjiahe and Bifengxia

0128 Crimson-breasted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos cathpharius*  
Well-seen female at Wanglang, a close male at Labahe

0131 Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*  
Two on the nature trail at Tangjiahe

0143 Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*  
Outside the homestay at Danba, and another up near the top of the hill above

0163 Hoopoe *Upupa epops*  
Noted at Wanglang NNR HQs, and on farmland here and there

0179 Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*  
Several individuals at Tangjiahe, including a pair trying to loot the ornamental pond at park HQs

0201 Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*  
Bifengxia

0247 Collared Owlet *Glaucidium brodiei*  
Heard at both Tangjiahe and Bifengxia

0248 Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides*  
Heard at dusk one day at Tangjiahe

0264 Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris*  
Two flocks of 15 to 20 each at Jiaju Tibetan Village, Danba

0265 Snow Pigeon *Columba leuconota*  
Umpteen at Dangling, in the snow, surprisingly enough

0274 Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*  
Five at a roost above Jiaju Village, Danba

0276 Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*  
Odd birds noted in the lowlands

0468 Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*  
In twos and threes daily at Dangling, and also noted at Mengbi Shan

0470 Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*  
Over the hilltops at Dangling and Mengbi shan

0482 Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*  
Noted near Dangling, and also at Mengbi shan

- 0487 Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*  
Near Dangling we saw one narrowly miss a White-cheeked Nuthatch !
- 0494 Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*  
Singles here and there
- 0500 Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*  
Noted at Dangling and Mengbi shan
- 0535 Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*  
One on the river near Danba
- 0616 Long-Tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*  
Singles on wires in populated areas on the plains
- 0617 Grey-Backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*  
Widespread in upland areas over 2,500 metres
- 0621 Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*  
A party of seven on the nature trail, Tangjiahe. Also noted at Dangling
- 0623 Sichuan Jay *Perisoreus internigrans*  
Up to eleven noted at the upper end of the road to Mengbi shan, near Maerkang
- 0626 Red-Billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*  
Four at Tangjiahe, max count was eight at Labahe
- 0632 Grey Treepie *Dendrocitta formosae*  
Up to eight noted at Tangjiahe and Bifengxia
- 0636 Black-Billed Magpie *Pica pica*  
Race *bottanensis* (differentiated by calls) noteworthy at Dangling
- 0640 Spotted Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*  
Noted in 2,500+ pine areas, such as Wanglang, Dangling and Mengbi shan
- 0641 Red-Billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*  
Sizeable flocks near Jiaju Tibetan village, Danba – also between Zhuokeji and Mengbi shan
- 0644 Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauurica*  
Seen along the road between Danba and Dangling
- 0647 Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*  
Mainly noted near Dangling.
- 0648 Large-Billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*  
Widespread
- 0677 Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*  
Three to four daily, Bifengxia

0687 White-Throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*  
Seen on the river from the restaurant at Labahe

0688 Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasi*  
Resident at Tangjiahe and Bifengxia

0694 Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*  
In wooded streams at Tangjiahe and Bifengxia

0700 Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma*  
Up to five on the nature trail at Tangjiahe

0706 Grey-Winged Blackbird *Turdus boulboul*  
Single male noted along the nature trail at Tangjiahe

0707 Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*  
Up to 15 daily at Bifengxia

0710 Kessler's Thrush *Turdus kessleri*  
Single noted along the Mengbi shan road

0717 Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*  
Pair seen briefly at Mengbi shan

0773 Orange-Flanked Bush-Robin *Tarsiger cyanurus*  
Several daily at Wanglang and Tangjiahe

0778 Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*  
Noted near the cattle pen at Jiaju Tibetan village

0785 Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*  
A male on the washing lines at Tangjiahe was the first noted

0786 White-Throated Redstart *Phoenicurus schisticeps*  
Eleven was the maximum daily count, between Zhuokeji and the pass at km 30

0787 Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureoreus*  
Noted from the bus in farmland areas, near Tianquan and along the road between Danba and Maerkang

0789 Blue-Fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*  
Tangjiahe, Wanglang and between Danba and Dangling

0790 White-Capped Water-Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*  
Widespread near suitable streams and rivers

0791 Plumbeous Water-Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*  
See 0790

0795 Grandala *Grandala coelicolor*

Flock of 200+ near Wanglang HQs

0796 Little Forktail *Enicurus scouleri*  
Tanjiahe and Bifengxia

0798 Slaty-Backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus*  
Bifengxia

0799 White-Crowned Forktail *Enicurus leschenaulti*  
Wanglang and Bifengxia

0800 Spotted Forktail *Enicurus maculatus*  
Single passing the “Teng Shui Bingguan”, Bifengxia

0807 Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea*  
Open hillsides and farmland

0829 Crested Myna *Acridotheres cristatellus*  
On wires in farmland areas

0832 Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*  
Noted at Tangjiahe and near Dangling

0833 Chestnut-vented Nuthatch *Sitta nagaensis*  
Several noted in a mixed flock on the nature trail, Tangjiahe

0838 White-cheeked Nuthatch *Sitta leucopsis*  
A single at Wanglang (below HQs) and up to six near Dangling

0844 Eurasian Tree-Creeper *Certhia familiaris* (Taxonomy of Treecreepers under review? – these should all be race *hodgsonii*, according to the 2005 China Bird Report)  
Mainly twos and three with mixed flocks in pine-wooded areas – Wanglang, Dangling and near Mengbi Shan

0845 Bar-tailed Treecreeper *Certhia himalayana*  
Single near Dangling. There were probably others, but you’ve got to see them well

0847b Sichuan Treecreeper *Certhia tianquanensis*  
Two seen near Dangling

0848 Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*  
Quite common in suitable streamside scrub

0852 Marsh Tit *Parus palustris* 0853 Willow Tit *Parus montanus*  
I confess ! We haven’t really “got a grip” on these. Songar Tits ?

0855 Rusty-Breasted Tit *Parus davidi*  
Seen daily at Wanglang, with mixed flocks, max count 12

0858 Rufous-Vented Tit *Parus rubidiventris*  
Seen in several areas, spruce above 2,500m – 20+ near Dangling was the highest count

0859 Coal Tit *Parus ater*

Only two noted, at Wanglang, the “Tit capital” of Sichuan

0860 Yellow-Bellied Tit *Parus venustulus*

Up to eight daily at Bifengxia

0861 Grey-Crested Tit *Parus dichrous*

Widespread in upland –above 2,500m – pine areas, notably Wanglang, and Dangling

0862 Great Tit *Parus major*

Common

0864 Green-Backed Tit *Parus monticolus*

Widespread in uplands

0870 Yellow-Browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus*

Noted mainly near Bifengxia and Labahe

0873 Black-Throated Tit *Aegithalos concinnus*

Around the accommodation at Bifengxia, other lower sites such as Tangjiahe and Jiaju Tibetan Village

0875 Black-Browed Tit *Aegithalos bonvaloti*

Common between Danba and Dangling, also near Mengbi Shan. Replaced by 0876 in Wanglang and to a lesser extent, Tangjiahe

0876 White-Necklaced Tit (Sooty Tit) *Aegithalos fuliginosus*

See account for 0875

0881 Dusky Crag-Martin *Hirundo concolor*

Over twenty at the lower end of the Dangling to Danba valley

0882 Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

No, missed them!

0887 Asian House-Martin *Delichon dasypus*

Only noted near Bifengxia

0889 Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Noted at the upland pine forest sites on this trip of Wanglang, Dangling and Mengbi shan

0892 Collared Finchbill *Spizixos semitorques*

Max day count 10+ at Bifengxia

0897 Brown-Breasted Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthorrhous*

Near Qingqi (Tangjiahe) and Jiaju Tibetan village

0898 Light-Vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus sinensis*

Single at a temple near the guesthouse, Chengdu

- 0970 White-browed Tit Warbler *Leptopoecile sophiae*  
Up to five noted at km31 on the Mengbi Shan road.
- 0971 Crested Tit Warbler *Leptopoecile elegans*  
A few (less than ten) daily at Dangling, also noted between Mengbi shan and Zhuokeji
- 0982 Orange (Buff) -Barred Warbler *Phylloscopus pulcher*  
Common around Dangling and similar habitat elsewhere
- 0984 Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*  
Numerous in Wanglang and Tangjiahe
- 1008 Rufous-faced Warbler *Abroscopus albogularis*  
Max count 12 daily at Bifengxia
- 1026 Snowy-cheeked Laughingthrush *Garrulax sukatschewi*  
Two pairs seen at Wanglang
- 1027 Moustached Laughingthrush *Garrulax cineraceus*  
Up to six near the entrance gate at Bifengxia
- 1029 Barred Laughingthrush *Garrulax lunulatus*  
Six along the trail upstream from reserve HQs
- 1031 Giant Laughingthrush *Garrulax maximus*  
Common in upland areas such as around Dangling and near Maerkang
- 1032 Spotted Laughingthrush *Garrulax ocellatus*  
Noisy party noted along the trail upstream from HQs
- 1036 Hwamei *Garrulax canorus*  
Quite common at Bifengxia – as in summer – highest day count 15
- 1041 Elliot's Laughingthrush *Garrulax elliotii*  
Noisy and much seen in upland areas visited
- 1044 Black-Faced Laughingthrush *Garrulax affinis*  
Maximum of five seen at Wanglang, one at Tangjiahe. Also at Labahe
- 1059 Streak-Breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*  
In mixed flocks at Wanglang, Bifengxia and Labahe
- 1071 Bar-winged Wren-babbler *Spelaeorinis troglodytoides*  
Single, all-brown (juvenile?) noted on the track upstream from Tangjiahe HQs
- 1076 Rufous-Capped Babbler *Stachyris ruficeps*  
Noted in mixed flock at Tangjiahe and Bifengxia
- 1083 Rufous-tailed Babbler *Chrysomma poecilotis*  
A single in roadside scrub uphill from Danba

- 1084 Chinese Babax *Babax lanceolatus*  
On the nature trail at Tangjiahe and around Chake temple, near Zhuokeji
- 1088 Red-Billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*  
Notably Bifengxia and Tangjiahe
- 1198 Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*  
Noted near habitation in the lowlands
- 1105 Golden-breasted Fulvetta *Alcippe chrysotis*  
Flock of about thirty near Motianling, Tangjiahe
- 1109 White-browed Fulvetta *Alcippe vinipectus*  
At Danba, Dangling and a few near Mengbi shan
- 1110 Chinese Fulvetta *Alcippe striaticollis*  
Outnumbered by *cinereiceps* at Wanglang, single figures at Mengbi shan and up to thirty daily at Dangling
- 1111 Spectacled Fulvetta *Alcippe ruficapilla*  
Tangjiahe, on the nature trail and on the track upstream of reserve HQs
- 1112 Streak-throated Fulvetta *Alcippe cinereiceps* (Grey-hooded Fulvetta)  
The commonest fulvetta at Wanglang, and numerous at Labahe as well.
- 1115 Dusky Fulvetta *Alcippe brunnea*  
Flock of six to seven noted, Bifengxia , near Yaan
- 1118 Grey-Cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe morrisonia*  
Bifengxia and Tangjiahe – common member of mixed flocks
- 1131 White-Collared Yuhina *Yuhina diademata*  
Max day count 60, feeding on roadside berries near Mengbishan. Also seen at Tangjiahe and around Danba and Dangling
- 1134 Black-chinned Yuhina *Yuhina nigrimenta*  
Party of 15 at Bifengxia
- 1138 Great Parrotbill *Conostoma oemodium*  
Pairs seen near the upper end of the boardwalk, Labahe
- 1140 Brown Parrotbill *Paradoxornis unicolor*  
Party of 25+ from boardwalk at Labahe
- 1144 Spectacled Parrotbill *Paradoxornis conspicillatus*  
Flock of 15-20 below HQs at Wanglang, a flock of 50+ near Motianling, Tangjiahe
- 1145 Vinous-Throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis webbianus*  
Party of 40 at the lower end of the nature trail, Tangjiahe
- 1147 Ashy-Throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis alphonsianus*

Small parties at Bifengxia, about a dozen in a flock uphill from Danba

1207 White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Widespread in lowlands

1212 Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Near running water, more notably at lower elevations

1218 Olive-Backed Tree Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

In the hedgerows at Danba

1228 Robin Accentor *Prunella rubeculoides*

Single at the roadside, Mengbi shan (km31)

1229 Rufous-Breasted Accentor *Prunella strophciata*

Commonest accentor on this trip, at Tangjiahe, Wanglang, Dangling and Mengbi shan

1234 Maroon-Backed Accentor *Prunella immaculata*

Six in the woodland near Dangling, the only ones on this trip

1244 Brambling *Fringilla montefringilla*

Noted in ones and twos at Tangjiahe

1246 Grey-Capped Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica*

Flock of 20+ near Danba village

1268 Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrimus*

A few near Chake Temple, Zhuokeji. Dozens at Daibagou, near Dangling

1271 Vinaceous Rosefinch *Carpodacus vinaceus*

Single female near Tangjiahe HQs

1277 White-Browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus thura*

A few at Chake Temple, near Zhuokeji, noted also at Wanglang NNR and at Dangling

1286 Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Five or six (race *himalayana*) noted at Daibagou, near Dangling

1290 Grey-Headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythaca*

Up to 12 daily at Wanglang, also seen at Tangjiahe, and just two at Chake Temple, near Zhuokeji

1297 White-Winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carnipes*

Party of five, roosting in a pine near sunset, Dangling

1301 Slaty Bunting *Latoucheornis siemsseni*

Ones and twos seen daily at Tangjiahe (seen in July there, too)

1306 Godlewski's Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*

Singles near Danba

1313 Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*  
Over 20 around the grounds of Wanglang NNR HQs

## **Mammals**

Takin *Budorcas taxicolor* - Tangjiahe – party of 20 between access gate and HQs

Reeves' Muntjac *Munjabius reevesi* –Tangjiahe – on the nature trail and along the track upstream of HQs

Tufted Deer *Latin?* – Tangjiahe – single by riverside

Yellow-throated Marten – *Martes flavigula* – Track upstream of Tangjiahe HQs

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