



# birdtourASIA

specialists in asian birding tours

## Sichuan, China

24<sup>th</sup> May – 12<sup>th</sup> June 2010

**Leader: James Eaton**

Our Sichuan tour includes birding among some of the most spectacular scenery in the world and takes in the area's fascinating culture and famed Sichuan cuisine.

We start south of Chengdu where the table top mountain of Wawu Shan will provide us with easy access to several endemic and localised species. The rich bamboo understorey is home to the recently described Sichuan Treecreeper, Grey-hooded and Fulvous Parrotbills, a plethora of bush warblers and twinkling Golden Bush Robins. The lower slopes of Wawu Shan have a fascinating diversity of habitat and an impressive list of avian delights including Red-winged Laughingthrush, Golden Parrotbill, Emei Leaf Warbler, Emei Liocichla and Chinese Blue Flycatcher.

Heading north, our next destination is Wolong, famous for its population of Giant Pandas, and the mossy forest with thick bamboo understorey which is their home provides an atmospheric setting for some truly special birds. These include the stunning Temminck's Tragopan and the striking Firethroat. The scenery along the upper reaches of the park, where the highest peaks rise to over 4,500m, is spectacular. It provides a perfect back drop against which to search for Wood Snipe, Chinese Monal, Tibetan Snowcock, Grandala, White-browed Tit Warbler and White-tailed Rubythroat.

From Wolong we head northeast along the rim of the Tibetan Plateau hoping to encounter species typical of the high plateau grasslands. Black-necked Crane, Hume's Ground Tit and a host of snowfinches are all likely. We complete our exploration at Juizhaigou National Park where we have two full days exploring the picturesque forests, lakes and alpine meadows. The rare Rufous-headed Robin is one of our main targets although the likes of Severtzov's Grouse, Przevalski's Nuthatch, Sukatschev's Laughingthrush and Three-banded Rosefinch will all vie for our attention.

### **Day 1:**

Arrival at Chengdu International Airport. If time allows we will spend the afternoon birding around Du Fu's Cottage Park. Active feeding flocks of Vinous-throated Parrotbills and confiding White-browed Laughingthrushes are resident here, and we will spend time searching for the more localized species the park and its surroundings hold, including Chinese Grosbeak and both Red-billed and White-cheeked Starlings. Night in Chengdu.

### **Day 2:**

Driving south takes us through the heart of rural Sichuan, and checking patches of scrub and bamboo en-route could reveal our second parrotbill of the tour – Ashy-throated. Other possibilities include Oriental Greenfinch and Hwamei. Following lunch we pass the entrance gates to the wonderful forest that surrounds Wawu mountain, driving up the long, winding road will provide us with plenty of opportunities for birding before we reach our hotel for the next 5 nights.

### **Days 3-6:**

The lower slopes of Wawu Shan will provide us with yet another suite of new species as we explore the forest that surrounds our hotel in search of the various warblers, babblers and laughingthrushes, while the spectacular Lady Amherst's Pheasant is one of the most sought-after species on the mountain. Marten's, Alstrom's, Emei Leaf, Kloss's (part of the 'White-tailed' complex), Claudia's (split from Blyth's)

and Sulphur-breasted Warblers, Golden-breasted Fulvetta, Golden and Grey-headed Parrotbills, 4 species of Forktail, Buffy, Red-winged and Spotted Laughingthrushes, Emei Liocichla, Red-billed Leiothrix, Fujian, Vivid and Rufous-bellied Niltavas, Chinese Blue Flycatcher ((the finest songster of the region), Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo and Russet Bush Warbler are just some of the species we'll be looking for from the roadside.

On one day we will board a cable car that takes us up into a surreal landscape, with a lush bamboo understorey dominating the mixed evergreen and pine forest on this table top mountain. An extensive well-maintained trail system allows us an easy walk through this bird-rich area. The understorey holds an incredible variety of bush warblers, including Brown, Spotted, Aberrant, Chestnut-crowned and Grey-sided, while the occasional flash of golden yellow reveals the presence of delightful Golden Bush Robins. Fulvous Parrotbills are present, and other possibilities include Great and Brown Parrotbills and Three-toed Woodpecker, which we can hope to find whilst in pursuit of the two main attractions of this mountain - the recently described Sichuan Treecreeper and the rare Grey-hooded Parrotbill. Nights at Wawu Shan.

#### **Day 7:**

Following breakfast we shall head north, entering the famous Wolong National Park, home of the Giant Panda. In the late afternoon we shall explore the scrubby hillside behind our hotel for Slaty Bunting, Ferruginous Flycatcher, Chinese Song Thrush and Golden Pheasant. Night in Wolong.

#### **Day 8:**

We hike in the early morning to our simple accommodation at Wuyipeng Panda Research Station. We shall spend a night in the heart of this wonderful forest at a Panda Research Centre, home of the Giant Panda and a whole range of rare or endemic bird species, including Temminck's Tragopan, Blood and Koklass Pheasants, Barred and Spotted Laughingthrushes, Long-tailed Thrush, Fire-capped Tit, Green Shrike-Babbler, Scaly-breasted and Pygmy Wren Babblers, Great and Three-toed Parrotbills, Darjeeling and White-backed Woodpeckers, White-browed Bush Robin and most importantly to us, the stunning Firethroat. Night at Wuyipeng Panda Research Centre.

#### **Day 9:**

We spend all morning at Wuyipeng before departing back down the hillside to the more comfortable setting of Sawang. In the late afternoon we shall bird the woods and scrub surrounding Sawang which can be surprisingly productive; Slaty Bunting, Chinese Babax, Golden Pheasant, Rufous-bellied Niltava and Indian Blue Robin all being possible. Night in Wolong.

#### **Days 10-11:**

We shall spend two days at high altitude, birding amid the dramatic landscape at the Balang Shan Pass. We shall have an early morning departure from Sawang to arrive before first light to listen for the increasingly rare Wood Snipe at one of their few known leks. Birding just above the tree-line, favoured by the Snipes, will give us a chance for another of our key target species, Chinese Monal, along with White Eared-Pheasant, Tibetan Partridge and Kessler's Thrush. We shall proceed to the pass to try for Grandala, Snow Pigeon, Tibetan Snowcock and Snow Partridge, an assortment of rosefinches and both Brandt's and Plain Mountain Finches. A brief foray over the pass will give us the chance to search for such mouth-watering gems as White-tailed Rubythroat, White-browed Tit Warbler and Giant Laughingthrush.

In the afternoon of day 11 we shall head north to our next destination; the scenic town of Maerkang. Nights in Wolong and Maerkang.

#### **Day 12:**

We spend all day in the wonderful coniferous forests on Mengbishan. The forest covered slopes are home to such specialties as Sichuan Jay, Przewalski's Nuthatch, Three-banded, Chinese White-browed, Common, Beautiful and Pink-rumped Rosefinches, Blood and Koklass Pheasants. The Pheasants, while the more open areas could provide us with views of family parties of White Eared Pheasants and maybe even Verreaux's Monal Partridge. Night in Maerkang.

#### **Days 13-14:**

Our drive along the eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau gives us the opportunity to look for birds generally found further west into Tibet. Azure-winged Magpie, Dusky Warbler, Daurian Jackdaw, Common Pheasant, White-browed Tit and Japanese Tit (split from Great Tit) favour the dense scrub, while checking the watercourses on the way should produce some waterbirds; Ferruginous Duck, Goosander and *tibetana* Common Terns, while dapper Tibetan Wagtails (split from Citrine) and rosy-rumped Twites feed along the muddy margins. Nights in Hongyuan and Roeruegi.

### Day 15:

This morning we visit a nearby forest in search of some scarce species that are rarely seen at the more traditional sites. Possibilities include Tibetan Grey Shrike, Blue Eared Pheasant, Giant, Pere David's and Sukatschev's Laughingthrushes, Severtsov's Grouse, Chinese and Przewalski's Nuthatches, Verreaux's Monal Partridge, Godlewski's Bunting and Sichuan Tit (split from Songar Tit).

Following lunch, we drive north to the open plains of the Tibetan Plateau. The plains are full of Black-lipped Pikas, whose burrows are used as nest sites by White-rumped Snowfinches and Hume's Ground Tit. Overhead, Sakar Falcon and Steppe Eagles are possible amongst the abundant Upland Buzzards, whilst elegant Black-necked Cranes and hulking Tibetan Larks can be present in numbers. Night in Roeruegi.

### Day 16:

Today we drive from Roeruegi to Juizhaigou, stopping en route at several birding spots. We shall be keeping an eye out for such specialities as Blue Eared Pheasant, Pere David's, Giant and Sukatschev's Laughingthrushes, Severtsov's Grouse, Three-banded, Chinese White-browed and Pink-rumped Rosefinches, Chinese and Przewalski's Nuthatches, Verreaux's Monal Partridge and Godlewski's Bunting. Night in Roeruegi.

### Days 17-18:

We have two full days birdwatching in scenic Jiuzhaigou National Park with its distinct avifauna. This park harbours several species that can be difficult or near-impossible to find outside its boundaries, and we will be in pursuit of Rufous-headed Robin, Severtsov's Grouse, Sichuan Jay, Chinese Nuthatch, Blue Eared Pheasant, Sukatschev's Laughingthrush and a whole variety of equally stunning but more widespread species. As we check the hidden valleys and vividly coloured lakes against a dramatic mountainous landscape in search of the park's rarer inhabitants we are likely to come across a plethora of other species, possibly including Indian Blue Robin, Sooty Tit, Common Pheasant, Chinese Tawny Owl, Three-banded, Vinaceous and Chinese White-browed Rosefinches, Maroon-backed Accentor and Bar-tailed & Hodgson's Treecreepers.

Of particular interest in Sichuan are the large number of *Phylloscopus* species and their rapidly changing taxonomic status. We will pay particular attention to the species found in Juizhaigou, which include both Chinese and Sichuan Leaf Warblers. Nights in Juizhaigou.

### Day 19:

Following some morning birding near Juizhaigou, we spend most of the day driving back to Chengdu for our sumptuous farewell dinner. Night in Chengdu.

### Day 20:

Departure from Chengdu International Airport.

<b>Total tour cost:</b>	<b>£ 3950</b>	<b>\$ 5810</b>
<b>Single room supplement:</b>	<b>£ 320</b>	<b>\$ 475</b>
<b>Deposit:</b>	<b>£ 300</b>	<b>\$ 600</b>

### Maximum Group Size: 7

#### The cost includes:

All accommodation, all main meals, overland transport, entrance fees, permits & guide fees

#### The cost excludes:

International flights & departure taxes, insurance, alcoholic drinks & other items of a personal nature

For further information please [e-mail](#) us or phone on **+44 1332 516254**