

Beidaihe & Beijing, China: 14-16+18th Sep 2012

An at-a-glance list of 138 species of birds recorded.

By Jesper Hornskov @ ****this draft 6 Oct 2012**** ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Please note that the following list is best considered a work in progress. It should not be quoted without consulting the author.

Based on my own field notes, this brief write-up covers the birds noted at Beidaihe & Beijing by M Neale & myself during an add-on to a work visit to China's capital – the add-on was planned to make the most of the time available, drawing on general experience garnered over the years & inspired in particular by three highly enjoyable visits in autumns 2011 & 2012:

a four-nights-away extension to the 2011 Oriental Bird Club Fundraiser to NE Tibet
(see http://www.netfugl.dk/trip_reports/asia/China_Beidaihe_Aug2011_JesperHornskov.pdf),

a 'Pied Harrier Quest' over 12-19 Sep 2011
(see http://www.netfugl.dk/trip_reports/asia/China_Beidaihe_Sep2011_JesperHornskov.pdf),

and a follow-up 'Pied Harrier Quest' over 2-8 Sep 2012
(see http://www.netfugl.dk/trip_reports/asia/China_Beidaihe_2-8Sep2012_JesperHornskov.pdf)

Beidaihe - rediscovered in 1985 and almost instantly recognised as THE place to enjoy a superb range of E Asian migrants - had been receiving some poor reviews over the last 3-4 years, but in 2011 some good news: the local mudflats had been fenced-off to create an 'Ecological Restoration Area', virtually eliminating disturbance! In terms of ease of access (<2 hours by train from Beijing, or 3 hours by car from Beijing airport) & opportunities to view waders, gulls and terns we were suddenly and unexpectedly back to World Class!

Back in Beijing it was only feasible to do a morning, and we opted for Botanical Gardens – a fairly safe bet except in mid-summer, and we were not disappointed!

We recorded 138 species of birds without any undue rushing about. Everything – the ease of the birdwatching, the outstanding food, and extremely comfortable & convenient accommodations - came together to produce a pleasant & enjoyable short break.

Anyone considering China as a birding destination is welcome to contact the author at:

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Enquiries concerning future **Oriental Bird Club Fundraisers** - to Yunnan, following an updated itinerary, or NE Tibet (our near-annual trips have been very popular) - can be made to Michael Edgecombe, OBC's Promotion Officer, at [mail\(at\)orientalbirdclub.org](mailto:mail(at)orientalbirdclub.org) or directly to this author.

Species list:

In the species list the concept "**bird-days**" is used - it is the avian equivalent of man-hours, the day totals added up – it indicates relative abundance but does not consider the "problem" of lingering birds or, important in a non-scientific context such as a birding holiday abroad, how satisfying the encounters were. 25 bird-days for e.g. Spoon-billed Sandpiper could be one distant flock of migrating birds, gone in a flash, or one bird lingering for 25 days, offering the observers point-blank views anytime in that period...

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

6+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

***The genuine, wild article... Cheng (1987) listed no fewer than 18 races for mainland China!

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Eight on 15th.

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*

Four on 14th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Seven bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Chinese Spotbill *Anas zonorhyncha*

36 bird-days. Noted on two dates – main event 32 at the river S of Beidaihe on 14th.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

One male at the river S of Beidaihe on 14th.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

Six bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

2-3 female-types on the sea on 15th.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

***It was good to get views that allowed us to confirm that these birds had the white iris of ssp *poggei*, which also differs from the nominate in vocalizations...

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Six bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

20 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Striated Heron *Butorides striata*

A juvenile was seen repeatedly on 15th.

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*

18 bird-days. Noted on three dates – nice fly-bys & 'scope views of singletons perched up in willows...

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

21 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

95+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

180+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

54 bird-days. Noted on three dates – most were loafing birds but we did see a flock of 16 flying S with determination, high above the river S of Beidaihe on 14th.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Nine bird-days. Noted on three dates.

***In addition, a **Kestrel sp.** at Great Wall on 15th.

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates: three juveniles (incl one in superb light which landed in a willow near where we had taken up position!) on 14th & a juvenile hunting over Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

72+ bird-days. Noted daily – morning counts of 31 on 15th & 33 on 16th...

***Patrols high and/or offshore for passing migrants, heading inland only when passerine migration dries up as the morning wears on.

Saker *Falco cherrug*

We were amazed to get long 'scope views of a grounded 2nd+ c-y bird feeding as a Peregrine stood close by awaiting its turn...

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

One 2nd+ c-y on 14th. See above! As it took off after finishing the Saker's leftovers it flushed 11 Relict Gulls off the tideline...

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Four bird-days. Two singles on 15th, one hunting on 16th & one migr at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

Five bird-days. Noted at Great Wall on 15th (good views of birds in both adult & juvenile plumage) & at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus*

Seven bird-days. Noted on three dates...

Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos*

Eight bird-days. Noted on three dates – three were adult males passing through... very nice, but on balance it was the juvenile appearing out of the blue at Great Wall which made the greatest impression.

Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis*

Singles on 15+16th – could have been the same individual on both dates: a juvenile male more concerned with getting some food than with heading S.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Three bird-days – one female on 14th & two at Botanical Gardens.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Seven bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

39 bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirosta avosetta*

A flock of 15 on the tideline on 15th.

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*

c750 bird-days. Noted daily – main event c500 on 15th, incl a particularly impressive, strung-out flock of 320 heading S.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

13 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Grey Plover *Vanellus squatarola*

Two heading off S w/ three Pacific Golden Plovers on 16th...

Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus*

One 1st c-y at the river S of Beidaihe on 14th... 'eventually flying by and landing in good light close to us, allowing 'scope views before heading off with some LRPs. It soon returned with just two of the LRPs'.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

17 bird-days. Noted on three dates, incl 14 at the river S of Beidaihe on 14th.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

153+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*

One on 14th.

***During autumns 1986-1990 recorded from 20 Aug – 16 Oct (JH pers. obs., Williams 2000).

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

21 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 14 on 15th.

Eastern Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa melanuroides*

Two on 15th, migr w/ one Spotted Redshank.

'Siberian Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa baueri*[^]

15 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

***[^]vide Inskipp *et al* (2011) split from 'Lapland' Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*. Both Cheng (1987) & Zheng *et al.* (2005) lists only *baueri* from China. However, *lapponica* breeds E to the Taimyr peninsula and winters E to Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and coasts and islands of W Indian Ocean (BWP vol III, p476) and should be considered certainly in W China. NE Asian birds (*anadyrensis* vide Rasmussen & Anderton (2005)) differ from E-most 'Lapland' (separated as *taimyrensis* vide Rasmussen & Anderton (2005)) 'mainly in much darker (barred) axillaries and upper tail coverts': Rasmussen & Anderton (2005). In addition, back and upper rump dark brown, feathers tipped white; lower rump and upper tail coverts white, barred or spotted with black; under-wing coverts (and axillaries) brown with narrow white bars (BWP vol III, p481).

***N Moores (email 19 Sep 2012) commented: 'without additional details, I would assume that the

Barwits you saw were *menzbieri* rather than *baueri*? While both subspp are known to be numerous on northward migration in the Yellow Sea, *baueri* undertakes the cross-Pacific route on southward migration. Therefore, while we do get very occasional *baueri* in autumn in the ROK (singletons that had overwintered in the Yellow Sea?) the vast majority are clearly *menzbieri*. As *menzbieri* show much white on the uppertail covers and other differences from *baueri* (size, underwing barring, migration strategy, and some differences in range) they seem often to be considered to be part of "western" Bar-tailed Godwit (more or less inseparable from *taimyrensis*?), and *baueri* (if it is to be split) as monotypic. ‘

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*^

One on 15th.

***^vide Inskipp *et al* (2011) split into three species, incl Siberian Whimbrel *Numenius variegatus* & European Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*...

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Three on 14th.

Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*

Nine bird-days. Seen well on three dates – of note was four heading off S at the river S of Beidaihe on 14th.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

One heard on 15th.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

21 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates, incl at the river S of Beidaihe on 14th.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

24 bird-days. Noted only on 14th.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

One on 15th.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*

A juvenile giving superb ‘scope views on 16th was pretty much the last bird we saw before heading back to Beijing: what a way to finish - TINGALING!

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*

26 bird-days. 6-11 noted daily over 14-16th.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*

18 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Temminck’s Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Two ‘scoped at the river S of Beidaihe on 14th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Perhaps the same individual on both 14+15th.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*

Up to 75+ were noted daily over 14-16th.

'Yellow-legged' Gull *Larus (cachinnans) mongolicus*

Several 1st c-y birds were identified.

Heuglin's Gull *Larus (fuscus) heuglini ssp taimyrensis*[^]

Three 1st c-y birds were identified on 15th.

***[^]*taimyrensis* was considered a synonym (of *heuglini*) by Dickinson (2003) who did not follow the trend of elevating Heuglin's Gull to full species status.

*****'Herring' / 'Large White-headed' Gull**

Up to 150+ seen daily over 14-16th.

Common Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

Noted daily over 14-16th... main event 500+ roosting on 16th.

Relict Gull *Larus relictus*

14 bird-days. 1st c-y birds were noted on two dates.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*

Two on 14th.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

One on 15th.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

25 heading S on 15th.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

64 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 35 on 16th.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

One on 16th.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*

Eight bird-days. Noted daily – main event three at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Northern Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus hyperythrus*

One adult seen well in flight through the canopy on 15th – it seemed to land but could not be relocated.

Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata*

Perhaps the same singleton daily over 14-16th – it eventually sat out nicely on 16th...

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

6+ bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

One along the river S of Beidaihe on 14th.

Northern Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

A juvenile was seen briefly on 16th...

Rufous-bellied Woodpecker *Hypopicus hyperythrus*

Four bird-days – our visit proved well timed: this attractive long-distance migrant was noted daily over 14-16th.

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*

Two at Botanical Gardens on 18th – one ‘scoped at close range: mission accomplished, and the sun was barely up yet!

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

One male on 14th.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*

One at Great Wall on 15th & four at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Ashy Minivet *Pericrocotus divaricatus*

Two heard on 16th.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

20 bird-days. Noted daily over 14-16th.

Chinese Grey Shrike *Lanius sphenocercus*

We were blown away by protected ‘scope views of one on 15th.

Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*

One dropped in on 15th – nice ‘scope views!

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*

15 bird-days. Noted on two dates – main event 14 at the river S of Beidaihe on 14th.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Two at Great Wall on 15th.

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus*

30+ at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*

30+ bird-days. Noted daily – some superb encounters with this beautiful bird: WOW! and WOW again!!

Common Magpie *Pica pica*

Common – not systematically recorded.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

One at Great Wall on 15th & four at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

‘Eastern’ Great Tit *Parus minor*

18+ bird-days. Noted daily.

Yellow-bellied Tit *Parus venustulus*

136+ at Botanical Gardens on 18th – we managed to find as many as 20 together, feeding in

deciduous trees...

Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*

Five at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Modest numbers were seen daily.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

c10 on both 15+16th.

'Silver-throated' Tit *Aegithalos glaucicomans*[^] *vinaceus*

Four at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

***^IOC, following HBW, elevates the Long-tailed Tit taxa *vinaceus* & *glaucogularis* to full species status as 'Silver-throated Bushtit' *Aegithalos glaucogularis* - as recently as 2008, however, the notion of *vinaceus* as a possible split was met with groans of skepticism by group members.

Chinese Hill Warbler *Rhopophilus pekinensis*

One 'scoped at close range on 14th... and two heard at Great Wall the next day.

***Let's avoid the new-fangled, highly misleading 'White-browed Chinese Warbler' for this inquisitive endemic – I mean, we don't refer to *Sylvia borin* as 'Gaudy Warbler'... or do we?

Chinese Bulbul *Pycnonotus sinensis*

17+ bird-days. Noted daily – main event 13+ at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Pere David's Bush Warbler *Bradypterus davidi*

Singles on 15+16th.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates – BVD!

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*

One showing well on 16th...

Thick-billed Warbler *Phragmaticola aedon*

Ten bird-days. Noted daily over 14-16th.

Oriental Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*

One 'scoped on 16th.

Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps*

17 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

38 bird-days. Noted daily.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

Three bird-days. Noted on two dates... BVD!

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

84 bird-days. Noted daily.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides plumbeitarsus*

Five bird-days. Noted on three dates but getting views proved tricky...

Pere David's Laughingthrush *Garrulax davidi*

17+ bird-days. Noted at Great Wall & Botanical Gardens.

Vinous-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis webbianus*

48+ bird-days. Noted daily over 14-16th – this cheeky reed-stirrer was seen well on a number of occasions.

Chestnut-flanked White-eye *Zosterops erythropleurus*

c185 bird-days. Noted daily – memorable views of a busy feeding party above us on 16th...

Chinese Nuthatch *Sitta villosa*

Three at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus*

Three bird-days. Noted on 15+16th.

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*

One seen briefly on 16th.

White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea*

One seen well – incl underwing pattern! – on 16th.

Chinese Blackbird *Turdus mandarinus*

One heard at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*

One on 15th.

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane*

Six bird-days. Noted daily over 14-16th.

'Siberian' Stonechat *Saxicola 'torquatus'*

92+ bird-days. Noted daily @ Beidaihe – main event 65+ on 16th... 'even on quieter days there always seem to be a few of these charismatic birds around, flycatching out of a reed bed, hopping about on the sand, or attracting attention by landing atop a distant willow'.

***NOT elevated to full species status by e.g. Svensson *et al.* (2009), who treated 'Eastern Stonechat' as a subspecies group under 'Common Stonechat' and dealt with it in a separate account only 'for practical reasons'.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*

Instructive views of a single bird on 15th.

Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*

24 bird-days. Noted daily – 'scope views of one or two birds...

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Common – not systematically recorded.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis*

383+ bird-days. Noted daily over 14-16th – main event 241 on 15th.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Four bird-days. Noted on three dates, incl at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

199+ bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 78+ on 16th.

***Only ssp *leucopsis* was identified.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

33 bird-days. Noted on three dates.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

29 bird-days. Noted on three dates – main event 15 at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*

One flew NW on 16th.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

305 bird-days. Noted daily over 14-16th – main event 257 on 15th.

***During autumns 1986-1990 recorded from 5 Sep – 16 Oct; previous max count a still pretty impressive 97 on 20 Sep 2002 (JH pers. obs., Williams 2000).

Oriental Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica*

Two at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Two on both 15+16th – outstanding views as the birds stayed around...

Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

One at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Chinese Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria*

Six bird-days – five on 15th & one at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Eastern Rock Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*

Two at Great Wall on 15th.

Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata*

A juvenile was 'scoped as it sat up in reeds directly in front of us on 15th.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

Four bird-days. Noted on two dates.

Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*

17 bird-days. This Dreambird was noted daily over 14-16th – one of the three on 14th sat up in a willow, allowing 'scope viewing.

Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*

One adult male migr on 16th.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*

Five bird-days. Noted on three dates, incl at Botanical Gardens on 18th.

Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*

One on 15th – BVD!