

# China

## Beidaihe



### Participants:

Bob Bailey	John and Sue Rowe
Michael Baker	Gary Rowe
Roy Evans	Bob and Jenny Sandy
Gail Marsden	John and Tess Spalding
Chris and Ray Rolph	Roger Terrell
Chris Rose	Kevin White
Andrew Ross	

### Leaders:

Bill Blake and Vaughan Ashby

### Rufous-tailed Robin

**Day 1** An afternoon flight from London Heathrow (or Manchester for some) to Helsinki where the whole group met up for an overnight flight to Beijing landing at the plush new international airport, a legacy of the 2008 Olympics.

**Day 2** We met up with Vaughan and our interpreter June, boarded our coach and headed to the Exhibition Centre Hotel, our base for the next two nights. After checking in and freshening up, we headed out to Yuyuantan Park where we had an introduction to some of the commoner Chinese birds whilst also checking for any signs of migration: Spotted Doves, Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Barn and Red-rumped Swallows, Chinese Bulbuls, White-cheeked Starlings and Crested Mynas, Azure-winged Magpies, Large-billed Crows and Oriental Greenfinch plus the ubiquitous Eurasian Magpies and Tree Sparrows were all seen. Two Songar Tits were a good find plus our first Olive-backed Pipits, Yellow-browed, Pallas's and Radde's Warblers and Taiga Flycatcher were added to the list and a Chinese Thrush was heard singing but only seen by a lucky few before it flew off. We had lunch at a restaurant close to Tiananmen Square before exploring the Square and then the Forbidden City following in the footsteps of Chinese Emperors, courtesans and eunuchs – overhead were groups of screaming *pekinensis* Common Swifts and three or four Amur Falcons that included a cracking adult male. Our hotel beckoned and after dinner everyone got some well-earned sleep.

**Day 3** An early start to beat the rush hour traffic saw us heading north-east out of Beijing to the White River (Bai He) valley with a packed breakfast. A short comfort stop produced our first Yellow-billed (Chinese) Grosbeak, a young male, singing from the top of a Poplar tree and later we had our first views of part of the Great Wall as it snaked across the hilltops. Arriving at the river valley it did not take us long to find our three target species: within minutes we had located a pair of stunning Ibisbills, a magnificent Crested Kingfisher and a pair of the tricky Long-billed Plovers. A Black Stork and 'real' Mandarin Ducks graced the river and two Grey-faced Buzzards flew through the valley. A single Blyth's Pipit, White Wagtails of the race *leucopsis* (known as Amur Wagtail), numerous Daurian Redstarts, Siberian Stonechats, Vinous-throated Parrotbills, and another Songar Tit were also seen plus a pair of Russet Sparrows, which proved to be our only ones of the trip. A singing Chinese Hill Warbler showed briefly as it flitted in hillside vegetation and a Pere David's (Plain) Laughingthrush was even briefer for two or three people. We drove a bit further along the valley and took a walk along the river: two Red-billed Choughs feeding on the opposite bank were a surprise and a Common Raven was also new. We had a relaxed packed lunch before returning to where we first stopped – other new birds included Little Grebe, Eurasian Kestrel, Common Pheasant, Green and Common Sandpipers, Common Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail, Dusky Warbler and Marsh and Great Tits. A bunting fest ended with seven species for the day: Black-faced, Godlewski's,

Meadow, Yellow-throated (Elegant), Little, a single Chestnut plus a male Japanese Reed (Ochre-rumped) in transitional plumage that had us puzzled for a while. It was time to head back to our hotel, just as we were leaving the hills two pigeons flew up from the side of the road. Vaughan and I shouted in perfect unison – “HILL PIGEON – stop the bus.” Everybody had good views both in flight and perched of this declining species. At the end of an excellent first full day we had dinner at our hotel, called the bird log and retired to bed.

**Day 4** After an early breakfast we boarded our coach and were soon heading east out of Beijing to Beidaihe on the coast. As it was a Sunday morning there was little traffic and we were soon on the Expressway. En route Black-crowned Night-herons and Chinese Pond-herons were seen from the coach plus at least seven Oriental Honey-buzzards and what were probably Eastern Marsh-harriers. Light drizzle greeted us on arrival at Beidaihe where we checked in to the Jin Shan Hotel and freshened up before having an excellent lunch in the hotel restaurant. Whilst waiting for our food we were able to watch Chestnut-flanked White-eyes feeding in the blossom of the Cherry trees outside the restaurant windows. After lunch we visited Jin Shan Field to look for a Little Curlew that had been here for a few days, only to find a Chinese photographer had flushed it earlier that morning; a fine male red-spotted Bluethroat was poor consolation. We moved on by coach to the Dong Shan Hotel and birded the extensive grounds in heavy drizzle. Initially there seemed to be little about but as the rain stopped and the sun came out so did the birds. Eurasian Collared-doves, Spotted Doves and Oriental Turtle-doves, Eurasian Hobby, Siberian Blue Robin, Eye-browed Thrushes, Pallas's, Two-barred Greenish, Yellow-browed, Hume's, Radde's and Dusky Warblers, Asian Brown Flycatcher, a stunning male Yellow-rumped (Korean) Flycatcher, Brown Shrikes and Black Drongo were all seen. A Northern Boobook (Brown Hawk-owl) was seen briefly being harassed by Eurasian Magpies before flying off and some were fortunate to see a migrant Chinese Leaf-warbler. Next we visited Lighthouse Point where, amongst others, we saw Japanese Quail, a male Blue Rock-thrush of the red-bellied form *philippensis* and a large group of Chinese Penduline-tits. Another visit to the Jin Shan Field added a group of Yellow-bellied Tits and Brambling to the growing list. Rain started to fall again as we returned to the hotel. An excellent dinner and the bird log rounded off another good day.

**Day 5** Those that wanted to assembled outside our building for a pre-breakfast walk on what would become a regular route, Lighthouse Point to Jin Shan Field to Suzi Wongs to Jin Shan Hotel grounds. This morning's walk was rather quiet, a Eurasian Wryneck in the hotel grounds, two Eurasian Hoopoes and a female Daurian Redstart being the pick of the bunch. After a buffet style breakfast, Chinese or English, we headed out to the sandflats area north of town. Despite some disturbance due to work being carried out we did have excellent views of at least seven Pallas's Buntings in the reeds plus a male Common Reed Bunting thrown in for good measure. Also seen here were Little and Great Egrets, Common Shelduck, Kentish Plovers and Greater Sandpipers, a Common Snipe, Eurasian Whimbrel, Eurasian Curlew, Black-headed, Black-tailed and Vega Gulls, a single Gull-billed Tern plus more Chinese Penduline-tits.

Our next site was the Heng Ho Reservoir across the road where drainage work was being carried out and this provided excellent wader habitat. Black-winged Stilts, Little Ringed Plover, a single Long-toed Stint (which proved to be our only one of the trip), Common Greenshank plus Marsh, Green, Wood and Common Sandpipers were all seen on the exposed mud plus a Eurasian Teal and *ocularis* White (Swinhoe's), Eastern Yellow and Citrine Wagtails. The pools, reedbeds and trees around the reservoir held a Great Crested Grebe, Eastern Spot-billed Ducks, Eurasian Hoopoes, Rufous-bellied Woodpecker, Olive-backed Pipits, Black-browed Reed-warblers and Vinous-throated Parrotbills whilst overhead Oriental Honey-buzzard, Amur Falcon and Fork-tailed (Pacific) Swifts were seen. We also had very good views of a Baillon's Crake that posed out in the open for the photographers amongst us. After another excellent lunch at our hotel we spent the afternoon birding in the grounds of the Friendship and Dong Shan Hotels. The former was rather quiet but we did have good looks at Grey-headed Woodpecker. The Dong Shan was quieter than yesterday with Oriental Turtle-doves in song plus Siberian Blue Robin, Vinous-throated Parrotbills, and two each of Yellow-browed and Tristram's Buntings being of note. Dinner again was excellent followed by the bird log.

**Day 6** Our pre-breakfast walk was rather quiet apart from a passage of Fork-tailed Swifts, hirundines and Olive-backed Pipits and 50+ Vega Gulls overhead. Andy had been out even earlier and had seen three Asian House Martins passing through with the hirundines. We decided on an early breakfast to get away earlier to check some of the estuaries to the south of Beidaihe. Our first stop was at Nandaihe, the estuary here produced Little Ringed Plover, Common Redshanks, Marsh, Green and Common Sandpipers plus, rather surprisingly, a late drake Common Goldeneye. Next stop was to be the Yang He but a 20-minute detour was needed to reach it as a 'sit-in' by protesters had closed the bridge. The estuary itself was quiet, another Great Crested Grebe was seen, and so we drove on to check out some lagoons and a small wood close by. The lagoons held a good mix of waders that included 40+ Marsh and three Terek Sandpipers and a Grey-headed Lapwing flew over calling. Initially the 'wood' seemed very quiet but on closer scrutiny a fine male Siberian Rubythroat

was seen but it proved uncooperative and only a few people managed good views of this much wanted cracker. Oriental Turtle-doves, Olive-backed Pipits, Sand Martins, Taiga Flycatchers and Little and Yellow-throated (Elegant) Buntings were also seen and three Oriental Pratincoles flew over. A *lucionensis* Brown Shrike was seen close to where we parked and two Red-necked Stints were seen on some other lagoons as we headed back to Beidaihe. The bridge was now open and we were soon having lunch at the hotel. We spent the afternoon in the Dong Shan grounds where thrushes seemed to be new in with everyone eventually getting views of Eye-browed, Grey-backed, Dusky, Naumann's and an elusive male Siberian Thrush with a supporting cast of Siberian Blue Robins and Grey-streaked Flycatcher plus an Oriental Scops-owl at a daytime roost and a showy Japanese Quail.

**Day 7** The pre-breakfast walk started in our hotel grounds with a Lanceolated Warbler that had our group contorting themselves to stare into a bush from all angles as this charismatic little skulker tried its best to hide. After checking the Jin Shan field and Suzi Wong's we decided to walk to the Friendship Hotel where a Red-throated Thrush was reported yesterday. We found a smart male White-throated Rock-thrush, a female Siberian, a couple of Whites and several Eye-browed Thrushes but no Red-throated. A Yellow-legged Buttonquail was found by another group and showed well to all and Bluethroats, Taiga Flycatchers and Chestnut-flanked White-eyes seemed to be everywhere.

After a latish breakfast we headed north from Beidaihe to Jiaoshan Mountain where we took the chairlift up the first part of the mountain, then walked slowly up to the temple and beyond to the summit. A Chinese Hill Warbler gave short bursts of song but refused to respond to playback, a Common Cuckoo called and a Hume's Warbler sang its insect-like buzzing song. Two each of Oriental Honey-buzzard and Eurasian Hobby were the only raptor passage and Pere David's Laughingthrushes were only frustratingly glimpsed. We descended in the chairlift and spent a very successful half hour or so in the gardens. A stunning male Siberian Thrush showed brilliantly out in the open to those that descended early and a pair of Pere David's Laughingthrushes also gave prolonged views in the open for everyone even posing for photographs. A Black Stork flew over and Grey-capped Woodpecker, Common Rosefinch, Chestnut and Yellow-breasted Buntings all showed well.

We drove into Qinhuangdao City for lunch at a McDonalds before driving back to Beidaihe. We went straight to the Dong Shan and it was soon evident there had been a good fall as the grounds were full of birds. Brown Shrikes seemed to be everywhere and six species of thrush were seen as well as numerous Siberian Rubythroats, Bluethroats, Siberian Blue Robins and flycatchers. Two Oriental Scops-owls were found at roost, another Eurasian Wryneck was seen and Arctic Warbler was new for the trip. Bird of the afternoon proved to be a large snipe, which Andy saw landing in an open area of grass in an orchard – a Swinhoe's Snipe, which gave excellent views to all and also posed for photographs. Two Daurian Starlings found in the orchard were new birds for the group too. As we returned to our coach late afternoon a Grey Nightjar was heard churring. Dinner and the birdlog rounded off a tiring but very rewarding day.

**Day 8** Lighthouse Point held more *Phylloscopus* warblers this morning with good numbers of Yellow-browed and lesser numbers of Radde's and Dusky, Jin Shan field had had an influx of Siberian Stonechats and our hotel grounds held a Grey-backed Thrush and Common Rosefinches. After breakfast we left Beidaihe and drove north to Old Peak (Zushan Forest Park) where, at the village below the park, we transferred to minibuses for the drive up the mountain and into the park via the North Gate and booked into our hotel for an overnight stay. We had time to freshen up before lunch, and then it was back into the minibuses for the drive up the mountain, round hairpin bends to the pass at 4200 feet. Spring was late at this altitude with many trees still in bud and few in leaf. We walked into the next valley and explored some of the quieter tracks off the main walkway in search of the elusive Koklass Pheasant but we neither heard nor saw them. We did see an Eastern Marsh-harrier and a Eurasian Sparrowhawk fly over and heard Northern Hawk-cuckoo and Oriental Cuckoos calling. Blyth's (Claudia's) Leaf-warblers were in song and showing well, their characteristic alternate wing flicking rather comical to watch and a couple of Chinese Nuthatches were also seen. We had brief views of a Yellow-streaked Warbler but only heard Chinese Leaf-warbler and Grey-sided Thrush. Long-tailed Tit and Eurasian Jay were also new for the trip. We drove back down to our hotel for dinner and the birdlog. A pre-dinner walk for some of the group was rewarded with prolonged close views of a pair of noisy Chinese Nuthatches in woodland below the hotel.

**Day 9** An early start as we drove back up to the pass for a rather chilly pre-breakfast walk either side of the pass. As we arrived at the top a Yellow-streaked Warbler was singing and responded well to playback giving good views for all. We finally got to see an Oriental Cuckoo as it perched in the open calling and a Chinese Thrush sang from the top of a distant bush giving reasonable scope views. We saw at least three Grey-sided Thrushes, one of which responded aggressively to play back and 10 Chinese Leaf-warblers were seen or heard plus more 'Claudia's' and nuthatches; Winter Wren and Common Chaffinch were new to the list. The surprise of the morning however was a 'thrush' that turned out to be a

migrant Japanese Waxwing that showed rather briefly to some of the group. We returned for a latish breakfast and then took a short walk downhill for Chinese Nuthatch as some of the group missed them last evening or earlier this morning. The minibuses then took us down to the entrance (North) gate where we spent an hour birding the area. It was warmer down here but still rather windy. A Manchurian Bush-warbler sang in the valley below us but it was too distant to respond to playback – we had to content ourselves with Chinese Penduline-tits and Godlewski's Buntings. Again we changed from minibus to coach back in the village and drove into Qinhuangdao for an excellent lunch at the Tiem Bo Restaurant. Arriving back at Beidaihe we checked back in to the Jin Shan before heading back out for the Dong Shan. There were plenty of migrants on show with good numbers of chats, thrushes (50+ Eye-browed) and warblers plus three new birds for the list: a nice male Mugimaki Flycatcher, a rather skulking Rufous-tailed Robin and a fly-through Striated Heron. A Grey Nightjar was seen both in flight and roosting on a branch posing for photographers. Once again the Jin Shan served up an excellent dinner, washed down with cold beer for some, and followed by the bird log.

**Day 10** This morning at Lighthouse Point the pick of the bunch was a single Japanese Quail, a Lanceolated Warbler and an uncooperative Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, which was new for the group. At Suzi Wong's Andy saw a skulking Manchurian Bush-warbler but unfortunately no one else saw it well enough to count. After breakfast we visited the Friendship Hotel – thrushes were very much in evidence with at least two White-throated Rock-thrushes, a single Blue Rock-thrush, four White's, seven Siberian, 10+ Eye-browed, two Dusky and a Chinese Thrush being seen plus good numbers of Dusky Warblers and five species of flycatcher. Migrants were also in good numbers at the reservoir with another Lanceolated, 12 Black-browed Reed-warbler, three Oriental Reed-warbler, two Thick-billed, two Arctic and four Two-barred Greenish Warblers, a Rufous-tailed Robin plus Yellow-breasted and Common Reed Buntings. New birds for the trip list were a Eurasian Coot, an Eastern Crowned-warbler and a Black-naped Oriole.

After a hotel lunch we visited the Dong Shan before moving on to the sandflats; the former was busy with migrants – chats, thrushes, warblers and flycatchers were well represented. At the sandflats four Pied Avocet, single Grey Plover, Temminck's Stint and Dunlin plus two Ruddy Turnstones were all new for the trip list as was an adult *kamtschatschensis* Common Gull (sometimes split as Kamchatka Gull). A group of 20 Red-necked Stints was also seen and in the rank vegetation around the edge of the sandflats a Grey Nightjar churred and a Striated Heron skulked; another busy but productive day.

**Day 11** Our early walk was rather quiet this morning: a Chinese Blackbird had been seen on the lawns at the entrance to the submarine base but all we could find were three Eye-browed Thrushes. Nine Whiskered Terns flew over and a Black-naped Oriole was heard. Today was a moving day so after breakfast we loaded up the coach and travelled south towards Jingtang for a three-night stay, stopping to bird on the way. Our first stop was at another estuary, Da Pu He, where amongst others we saw four Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and two Zitting Cisticolas which were both new plus two each of Pied Avocet and Black-browed Reed-warbler. Carrying on southward we stopped to check out some Eurasian Whimbrels for their smaller cousin but drew a blank. We did see a Pied Harrier and our first Cattle Egrets of the tour and had close views of an Oriental Pratincole in a field. Arriving at the Luang He we found plenty to keep us busy with Chinese Egret, Eurasian Spoonbill, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Lesser (Mongolian) Sandpipers, Pacific Golden-plovers and Grey Plovers, two Grey-headed Lapwings, Great Knot, Red-necked Stints, Sharp-tailed, Curlew, Marsh and Terek Sandpipers, Black-tailed and many Bar-tailed Godwits, Far Eastern Curlews, a single Heuglin's Gull, Gull-billed, Little and *longipennis* Common Terns were all seen. A second summer Saunder's Gull patrolled the exposed mud giving its tern-like call as it searched for small crabs and Asian Short-toed Larks fed in the surrounding dunes. Carrying on to Jingtang we saw our first beautifully summer plumaged White-winged Terns hawking over paddy fields and a couple of Spotted Redshanks were also new. We had lunch at a rather quaint restaurant close to our hotel as the skies darkened and rain began to fall. We checked into our hotel then drove to the harbour at Laoyujian but the tide was up so we retraced our steps and stopped at Magic Wood – a Siberian Rubythroat and three Grey-streaked Flycatchers were seen but the rain beat us and we returned to the hotel doing some 'refreshment shopping' on the way. Our hotel did not have a restaurant so dinner was in a restaurant just around the corner where the friendly staff made us very welcome and served up an excellent meal. We called the birdlog in the hotel lobby before retiring to bed.

**Day 12** We had planned a pre-breakfast trip to Magic Wood but the rain that greeted our arrival yesterday had continued unabated so we abandoned the walk and had a lie-in. After breakfast we drove to Laoyujian pier to get an early boat across to the fabled Happy Island. The crossing used to take over 30 minutes in an open boat as it followed the meandering deepwater channel. This morning's crossing took less than 10 minutes in a fast, covered launch although the rain meant the windows of the boat were all steamed up and we could see little of the estuary or its birds. Landing at the islands new quay we took electric buggies to the temple in the centre of the island but because of the inclement weather

we decided to restrict our efforts to the mature woodland behind the temple. It was hard work in the rain but Pied Harrier, Common Cuckoo, Olive-backed Pipits, Eye-browed Thrushes, Arctic, Pallas's and Two-barred Greenish Warblers, Grey-streaked, Asian Brown and Mugimaki Flycatchers and Yellow-breasted Buntings were seen. We decided to take a late morning coffee break in the island restaurant to dry out and hope the rain would stop but it turned into an early lunch as the rain continued. As we could see no break in the weather we decided to return to the mainland directly after lunch and then to our hotel to dry out and hope to get out later if the weather improved. The rain finally stopped late afternoon so we visited the harbour at Laoyujian to look for waders. We saw a good selection but nothing new and not the hoped-for Asiatic Dowitchers. A relaxed and enjoyable dinner in the restaurant round the corner ended a frustrating day.

**Day 13** This morning dawned dry and after an early breakfast we drove to Laoyujian harbour where, amongst the assorted waders Lesser and Greater Sandplovers, a single Red Knot with the Great Knot, *sakhalina* Dunlin and two Grey-tailed Tattlers were seen plus three Saunders's Gulls. A Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler was seen on the exposed mud below us, it seemed as surprised to see us as we were to see it as it frantically searched for cover in which to hide. We continued on to the pier and boarded boats for the crossing to Happy Island, as yesterday the speed of the boat made searching for waders and gulls impossible. Electric buggies again took us to the temple. An initial search of the wood showed it to be busy without being heaving with birds. Two Oriental Scops-owls were found at roost, five species of thrush, Eastern Crowned-warbler and Arctic Warbler amongst many Pallas's Warblers, five species of flycatcher with Asian Brown being the most numerous, Black-naped Oriole and Tristram's and Yellow-breasted Buntings were seen. Next we walked across the island to check on the wader roost but the tide was right out and the birds were distant specks in the heat haze however the more open areas of the island held a different cast of birds. Common Shelduck, Eastern Spot-billed Ducks, a pair of Eurasian Teal and White-winged Terns were on the pools. Overhead two Oriental Honey-buzzards and two different Eastern Marsh-harriers were seen plus five Pied Harriers that included two splendid adult males sparring together and a broad-winged bird with a large white rump patch and dark underwing/undertail that some of us thought was a Hen Harrier. Japanese Quail and a Blyth's Pipit were flushed from the vegetation and Chestnut-eared, Chestnut and Common Reed Buntings were also seen. Lunch and refreshments were had in the island restaurant before returning to the field. Visible migration was obvious after lunch with birds seen or heard passing overhead included Fork-tailed Swifts, hirundines including three Asian House Martins, Richard's and Olive-backed Pipits, White Wagtails and Common Rosefinches. Earlier Andy had seen a White-throated Needletail speed across the island but sadly no one else saw it. In the bushes we found our sixth flycatcher species for the day, a Chinese (Narcissus) Flycatcher which initially proved elusive before co-operating for all to see. Some of the group revisited the wader roost but, although the tide was on its way in, the birds were still too distant. The buggies picked us up at the temple and ferried us back to the quay where we got the last boat back to the mainland. We called in at Magic Wood where a Red Turtle-dove was seen on telegraph wires as we arrived and a couple of Whiskered Terns flew over but the wood itself held little of note and was rather quiet except for the noisy commotion of the heronry. Once again we had some excellent real Chinese food at our restaurant around the corner.

**Day 14** In the early morning we visited the harbour again in search of Asiatic Dowitcher and Relict Gull but the tide was high so we retraced our steps and stopped at Magic Wood. Walking into the wood a Chinese Grosbeak was seen on the ground before flying off – it soon became obvious there had been a good fall as the wood was alive with birds. Rufous-tailed Robins, Siberian Rubythroats, Siberian Blue Robins, Thick-billed, Eastern Crowned, Arctic, Pallas's and Yellow-browed Warblers, Grey-streaked, Taiga, Asian Brown, Mugimaki and Yellow-rumped Flycatchers and Common Rosefinches were the most numerous. A Grey Nightjar and three White's Thrushes were also seen plus another Chinese Flycatcher. New birds for the list were an obliging Asian Stub-tailed Warbler that showed in the open, three Manchurian Reed-warblers, and a Dark-sided Flycatcher was the seventh species of flycatcher in this small copse. We returned to our hotel, had breakfast in our restaurant, checked out of the hotel and loaded up the coach.

Returning to the harbour the tide was now a fair way out. Three Chinese Egrets fed on the tide line and an assortment of waders was present, careful searching through the Bar-tailed Godwits failed to find an Asiatic Dowitcher though. Far Eastern Curlews and Terek Sandpipers were the pick of the waders and a search of the gulls present found only Black-headed and Black-tailed. We called again at Magic Wood which was still heaving but we could find nothing new however. Driving north back to Beidaihe we searched through any whimbrel groups we saw in the fields and we stopped at Qilihai (Seven Mile Sea) to search through the assorted waders and gulls but we drew a blank on both. Arriving back in Beidaihe we checked into the Jin Shan Hotel again, for some it was like coming home, and had lunch in the restaurant. We spent the afternoon at the Dong Shan where there were plenty of birds, it was much as before but with fewer thrushes and warblers and more flycatchers and shrikes – Asian Brown Flycatchers and Brown Shrikes both numbered 50+ and Black-naped Orioles were much in evidence. It was our last night at the Jin Shan and the restaurant kitchen served up an

excellent combination of dishes that included what had become old favourites and some new dishes, washed down with soft drinks or cold beer; the birdlog rounded off an excellent day.

**Day 15** Our last morning in Beidaihe and our normal pre-breakfast route was rather quiet so we walked on to the Friendship Hotel, the grounds were heaving with a good mix of migrants. Rufous-tailed Robins and Thick-billed Warblers had arrived in good numbers and everybody finally got good views of both these species. The robins posed for photos out in the open and some bushes seemed to be overflowing with Thick-billed Warblers showing their beady-eyed, floppy tailed shrike-like jizz. Seven species of thrush included a migrant Grey-sided Thrush and sharp-eyed Andy picked out a Pale Thrush but sadly everyone missed the latter. Andy was on form this morning as he also saw a flyover Black-capped Kingfisher again missed by everyone. An Oriental Scops-owl was seen to fly into a window pursued by a Eurasian Magpie; the owl recovered and flew off. 10+ Eurasian Hoopoes, 15+ Rufous-tailed Robins, one Manchurian Reed-warbler, five Lanceolated, 20+ Thick-billed and 30+ Dusky Warblers, four Black-naped Orioles, 60+ Brown Shrikes and three Tristram's Buntings were just some of the birds seen. It was hard to pull ourselves away but we returned to our hotel for a late breakfast before returning to the Friendship for one last effort. Late morning we had to leave for good and headed into Qinhuangdao for a barbecue style lunch at a popular restaurant; after a visit to our interpreters' proper place of work, a cosmetic surgery clinic, we left Qinhuangdao behind heading west to Beijing. Lane closures and road works on the expressway delayed our progress and we were rather late checking into the Exhibition Centre Hotel for the night. We had time to wash and change for our final dinner.

**Day 16** After breakfast our driver loaded the coach for the last time before heading for the airport. Indian Cuckoo was the last new bird of the trip – one could be heard calling outside the hotel and was seen briefly in flight by some of the group. We arrived at the airport in plenty of time for our flight; thanks and farewells were said to our driver, Mr. Lee and to June and after a relaxed check-in we had time to do some duty free shopping and chill before the flight. After an uneventful flight we arrived at Heathrow on time and said our farewells before going our separate ways.

This was Birdfinders second tour to China and I have been privileged to lead both with Vaughan. As with most tours we experienced highs and lows and although we did not experience some of the mega falls of migrants that this well known Asian migration hotspot can have we did see good numbers and a good selection of species. Surely there can be no finer place to see all those mouth-watering Siberian species that everyone wants to see and all in summer plumage too. My thanks go to Vaughan for his unceasing sense of humour and leading skills, to June, not only for her skills as an interpreter and her happy personality but for her resourcefulness and her work behind the scenes, especially in preparing some of the breakfasts, and to Mr Lee for his safe driving and sharp stopping skills when birds were seen from the moving coach. Finally my thanks go to the group for making it a rewarding and fun tour to be on.

**Bill Blake**