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South-east China

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Cabot's Tragopan

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This exciting visit to one of the least explored areas of Asia matched our high expectations and several mouth-watering Chinese specialties included Reed Parrotbill, Courtois's Laughingthrush, Mandarin Duck and culminated with many amazing encounters with stunning Cabot's Tragopan.

Arriving into Hangzhou, 120km south-west of Shanghai in the early afternoon we made our way through Shanghai and aboard the ferry to Chongming Island before settling into our comfortable hotel in eager anticipation of the forthcoming trip. Dawn breaks before 5am in these parts allowing time for a pre-breakfast walk around the hotel. In the vegetated gardens and nearby trees we found the commoner town inhabitants – Grey-capped Greenfinch, White-cheeked Starling and Crested Myna and the dense scrub held several Manchurian Bush Warbler and a migrant Pale-legged Leaf Warbler. Following a scrumptious breakfast we soon hit the vast expanse of coastal marsh and reed-bed that encompass the eastern coastline of Chongming Island. Oriental Reed Warblers sang from seemingly every available vantage point and it was while watching our first one that our number one targets soon flew in – Reed Parrotbill! Over the course of the morning we obtained progressively better views of this feisty looking reed-dweller until we had point-blank views of calling individuals posing for the cameras. Our second target – Japanese Swamp Warbler – soon revealed itself with its characteristic song flight, launching themselves skywards before parachuting back down to the reeds. This species was only discovered

breeding in south-east China this century but surveys already indicate several thousand pairs around Shanghai and Puyang Lake. Once we had had our fill of these two species we admired some of the other species on show – Whiskered Tern, Chestnut-cheeked Starling, Black-browed Reed Warbler, resplendent Spotted Redshank, Red-necked Stint and Terek Sandpiper before we headed for the ferry and back across Shanghai before a long ride to Jiangxi province, reaching Wuyuan town in the early hours of the following morning.



Reed Parrotbill

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Wuyuan county is currently the only known area for the critically endangered Courtois's Laughingthrush, a recent split from Yellow-throated Laughingthrush. There are currently only 200 individuals known but the vast expanse of countryside still left to be surveyed gives hope that more colonies might yet to be discovered. We were fortunate to be taken to the largest colony comprising more than 30 birds, and spent several hours watching these most beautiful and entertaining birds, one of the best of this wonderful family. This species is almost unique amongst the laughingthrushes in that it is a colonial nester and more amazingly has only been found nesting in large trees within small villages in this remote, traditional countryside. The area is a stark contrast to much of the lowlands of south-east China retaining much of the original way of life with small, picturesque villages standing amongst the rice fields that are still worked using cattle and muscle. Birds abound thanks to these traditional agricultural techniques; Swinhoe's Minivet, Rufous-faced Warbler, Red-billed Starling, Oriental Turtle Dove, Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Crested Kingfisher, Masked and White-browed Laughingthrushes, Hwamei, Brown Shrike and Vinous-throated Parrotbill are all common in this environment. Nesting Mandarin Duck, Pied Falconet and Long-billed Plover were all added bonuses as were summer-plumaged White-winged Black Tern and Black Baza.

Once we had had our fill we moved south into the hills to the famed Wuyishan for yet more species endemic to south-east China. We spent 3 full days exploring the track which ascends Huangang Shan. The main prize at this site is the highly-sought after Cabot's Tragopan which proved very co-operative with sightings totalling 12 males and 5 females. Our encounters included stunning views of a male displaying on the road in front of us and several feeding birds seemingly oblivious to our presence. After our tragopan searching each morning we spent the rest of each day exploring the gorgeous forest which still cloaks the mountain in unusually fine weather. The rest of our target species generally proved forthcoming though the skulking Rickett's Hill Partridge took plenty of teasing out from their favoured bamboo covered hillsides. After some frustrating near-misses with birds calling at close range and rustling in the nearby leaf-litter we scored success with reasonable views. Recent taxonomic decisions have made this area more attractive as a number of species restricted to south-east China have been (or

should soon be) elevated to full species level. These included cracking views of a Grey-sided Scimitar Babbler (part of the four-way split of Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler), Fujian Fulvetta (noticeably distinct from Grey-hooded and Manipur), Pere David's Fulvetta (genetically, vocally and morphologically distinct from the rest of the Grey-cheeked complex), Hartet's Leaf Warbler (part of the three-way Blyth's Leaf Warbler split) and finally the uncommon nominate Kloss's Leaf Warbler. As is usual on a Chinese mountain, much emphasis is placed on the Seicercus warbler composition and here we noted Alstrom's Warbler at lower elevations, succeeded by *intermedius* White-spectacled Warbler as we climbed higher before finally being replaced at the highest points by *latouchei* Bianchi's Warbler. Other notable species recorded included Green Shrike Babbler, Small and Fujian Niltava, Mountain Hawk Eagle, wonderful prolonged views of Spotted Wren Babbler, Golden Parrotbill, nest-building Asian House Martin, Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler and on the grassy slopes at the peak, Rosy Pipit, Siberian Stonechat, Brown Bush Warbler and Buff-throated Warbler.

As we headed north to Nanchang for our international flights we completed an excellent week of birding with a fine Oriental Stork. This bird was nesting high on a roadside pylon, and their recent discovery represents a considerable southward extension to their previously known breeding area.



Cabot's Tragopans, male (left) and female (right)

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Long-billed Plover (left) and Oriental Stork (right)

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Systematic List

PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

CICONIIFORMES: Ardeidae

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
 Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
 Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*
 Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
 Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*
 Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus [ibis] coromandus*
 Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
 Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis*

CICONIIFORMES: Ciconiidae

Oriental Stork *Ciconia boyciana*

ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*
 Chinese Spot-bill *Anas zonorhyncha*

FALCONIFORMES: Accipitridae

Black-eared Kite *Milvus [migrans] lineatus*
 Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela*
 Chinese Goshawk *Accipiter soloensis*
 Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*
 Mountain Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus nipalensis*

FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae

Pied Falconet *Microhierax melanoleucos*

GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae

Rickett's Hill Partridge *Arborophila gingica*
 Chinese Bamboo Partridge *Bambusicola thoracicus*
 Cabot's Tragopan *Tragopan caboti*
 Ring-necked Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

GRUIFORMES: Rallidae

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

CHARADRIIFORMES: Jacanidae

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*
 Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus*
 Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* heard only

CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*
 Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
 Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*
 Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*
 Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
 Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

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| Red-necked Stint | <i>Calidris ruficollis</i> | |
| CHARADRIIFORMES: Sternidae | | |
| White-winged Tern | <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i> | |
| Whiskered Tern | <i>Chlidonias hybrida</i> | |
| Little Tern | <i>Sternula albifrons</i> | |
| COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae | | |
| Oriental Turtle Dove | <i>Streptopelia orientalis</i> | |
| Spotted Dove | <i>Streptopelia chinensis</i> | |
| Barred Cuckoo Dove | <i>Macropygia unchall</i> | heard only |
| CUCULIFORMES: Cuculidae | | |
| Large Hawk Cuckoo | <i>Cuculus sparverioides</i> | heard only |
| Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo | <i>Cuculus nisicolor</i> | |
| Indian Cuckoo | <i>Cuculus micropterus</i> | |
| Oriental Cuckoo | <i>Cuculus saturatus</i> | heard only |
| Lesser Cuckoo | <i>Cuculus poliocephalus</i> | |
| Asian Koel | <i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i> | heard only |
| Lesser Coucal | <i>Centropus bengalensis</i> | heard only |
| STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae | | |
| Oriental Scops Owl | <i>Otus sunia</i> | heard only |
| Collared Owlet | <i>Glaucidium brodiei</i> | heard only |
| Asian Barred Owlet | <i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i> | |
| CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Caprimulgidae | | |
| Grey Nightjar | <i>Caprimulgus indicus</i> | heard only |
| APODIFORMES: Apodidae | | |
| Pacific Swift | <i>Apus pacificus</i> | |
| House Swift | <i>Apus nipalensis</i> | |
| CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae | | |
| Common Kingfisher | <i>Alcedo atthis</i> | |
| White-throated Kingfisher | <i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i> | |
| Black-capped Kingfisher | <i>Halcyon pileata</i> | |
| Crested Kingfisher | <i>Megaceryle lugubris</i> | |
| Pied Kingfisher | <i>Ceryle rudis</i> | |
| CORACIIFORMES: Coraciidae | | |
| Dollarbird | <i>Eurystomus orientalis</i> | |
| PICIFORMES: Capitonidae | | |
| Great Barbet | <i>Megalaima virens</i> | |
| PICIFORMES: Picidae | | |
| Grey-capped Woodpecker | <i>Dendrocopos canicapillus</i> | |
| White-backed Woodpecker | <i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i> | |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker | <i>Dendrocopos major</i> | |
| Grey-faced Woodpecker | <i>Picus canus</i> | |
| Bay Woodpecker | <i>Blythipicus pyrrhotis</i> | heard only |
| PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae | | |
| Sand Martin | <i>Riparia riparia</i> | |
| Barn Swallow | <i>Hirundo rustica</i> | |
| Asian House Martin | <i>Delichon dasypus</i> | |
| Red-rumped Swallow | <i>Cecropis daurica japonica</i> | |
| PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae | | |
| Rosy Pipit | <i>Anthus roseatus</i> | |
| White Wagtail | <i>Motacilla alba alboides</i> | |

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

PASSERIFORMES: Campephagidae

Black-winged Cuckooshrike

Swinhoe's Minivet

Grey-chinned Minivet

Coracina melaschistos

Pericrocotus cantonensis

Pericrocotus solaris

PASSERIFORMES: Pycnonotidae

Collared Finchbill

Brown-breasted Bulbul

Chinese Bulbul

Mountain Bulbul

Chestnut Bulbul

Black Bulbul

Spizixos semitorques

Pycnonotus xanthorrhous

Pycnonotus sinensis

Ixos mccllellandii

Hemixos castanonotus

Hypsipetes leucocephalus

PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush

Blue Whistling Thrush

Chinese Blackbird

Monticola rufiventris

Myophonus caeruleus

Turdus mandarinus

PASSERIFORMES: Cisticolidae

Zitting Cisticola

Striated Prinia

Yellow-bellied Prinia

Plain Prinia

Cisticola juncidis

Prinia crinigera

Prinia flaviventris

Prinia inornata

PASSERIFORMES: Sylviidae

Manchurian Bush Warbler

Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler

Yellowish-bellied Bush Warbler

Brown Bush Warbler

Black-browed Reed Warbler

Oriental Reed Warbler

Buff-throated Warbler

Pale-legged Leaf Warbler

Hartet's Leaf Warbler

Kloss's Leaf Warbler

Alstrom's Warbler

Bianchi's Warbler

White-spectacled Warbler

Chestnut-crowned Warbler

Rufous-faced Warbler

Japanese Swamp Warbler

Cettia canturians

Cettia fortipes

heard only

Cettia acanthizoides

Bradypterus luteoventris

Acrocephalus bistrigiceps

Acrocephalus orientalis

Phylloscopus subaffinis

Phylloscopus tenellipes

Phylloscopus goodsoni fokiensis

Phylloscopus ogilviegranti ogilviegranti

Seicercus soror

Seicercus valentini latouchei

Seicercus affinis intermedius

Seicercus castaniceps

Abroscopus albogularis

Megalurus pryeri

PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae

Dark-sided Flycatcher

Ferruginous Flycatcher

Verditer Flycatcher

Small Niltava

Fujian Niltava

Oriental Magpie Robin

Daurian Redstart

Plumbeous Redstart

Spotted Forktail

Siberian Stonechat

Grey Bushchat

Muscicapa sibirica

Muscicapa ferruginea

Eumyias thalassinus

heard only

Niltava macgrigoriae

Niltava davidi

Copsychus saularis

Phoenicurus aureus

heard only

Rhyacornis fuliginosa

Enicurus maculatus

Saxicola maurus

Saxicola ferreus

PASSERIFORMES: Timaliidae

Courtois's Laughingthrush

Masked Laughingthrush

Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush

Chinese Hwamei

White-browed Laughingthrush

Grey-sided Scimitar Babbler

Dryonastes courtoisi

Garrulax perspicillatus

Garrulax pectoralis

Leucodioptron canorus

Pterohinus sannio

Pomatorhinus swinhoi

Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler
Pygmy Wren Babbler
Spotted Wren Babbler
Rufous-capped Babbler
Red-billed Leiothrix
White-browed Shrike Babbler
Green Shrike Babbler
Fujian Fulvetta
Dusky Fulvetta
Pere David's Fulvetta
Striated Yuhina
Black-chinned Yuhina

Pomatorhinus ruficollis
Proeopyga pusilla
Spelaeornis formosus
Stachyris ruficeps
Leiothrix lutea
Pteruthius flaviscapis
Pteruthius xanthochlorus
Fulvetta [cinereiceps] guttaticollis
Schoeniparus brunnea
Alcippe [morrisonia] hueti
Yuhina castaniceps
Yuhina nigrimenta

PASSERIFORMES: Paradoxornithidae

Reed Parrotbill
Vinous-throated Parrotbill
Golden Parrotbill

Paradoxornis heudei
Sinornis webbiana
Sinornis verreauxi

PASSERIFORMES: Aegithalidae

Black-throated Tit

Aegithalos concinnus

PASSERIFORMES: Paridae

Coal Tit
Japanese Tit
Yellow-cheeked Tit
Yellow-browed Tit

Periparus ater kuatunensis
Parus minor comixtus
Parus spilonotus
Sylviparus modestus

PASSERIFORMES: Sittidae

Chestnut-vented Nuthatch

Sitta nagaensis

PASSERIFORMES: Dicaeidae

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker

Dicaeum ignipectum

PASSERIFORMES: Zosteropidae

Japanese White-eye

Zosterops japonicus

PASSERIFORMES: Oriolidae

Black-naped Oriole

Oriolus chinensis

PASSERIFORMES: Laniidae

Tiger Shrike
Brown Shrike
Long-tailed Shrike

Lanius tigrinus
Lanius cristatus
Lanius schach

PASSERIFORMES: Dicruridae

Black Drongo
Ashy Drongo

Dicrurus macrocercus
Dicrurus leucophaeus

PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae

Eurasian Jay
Red-billed Blue Magpie
Grey Treepie
Eurasian Magpie

Garrulus glandarius sinensis
Urocissa erythrorhyncha
Dendrocitta formosae
Pica pica

heard only

PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae

Crested Myna
Chestnut-cheeked Starling
White-cheeked Starling
Red-billed Starling

Acridotheres cristatellus
Sturnus philippensis
Sturnus cineraceus
Sturnus sericeus

PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae

Russet Sparrow

Passer rutilans

Eurasian Tree Sparrow

Passer montanus

PASSERIFORMES: Estrildidae

White-rumped Munia
Scaly-breasted Munia

Lonchura striata
Lonchura punctulata

PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae

Grey-capped Greenfinch

Carduelis sinica

PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae

Black-faced Bunting

Emberiza spodocephala

164 Species recorded including 14 heard only

MAMMALS

Tufted Deer
Swinhoe's Striped Squirrel
Perny's Squirrel

Elaphodus cephalophus
Tamias swinhoi
Dremomys pernyi



Courtois's Laughingthrush

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