ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

China

Southeast in Spring

29th April to 15th May 2023 (17 days)



Cabot's Tragopan by David Shackelford

Our southeast China in Spring tour targets some Asia's rarest species, drawing the attention of even those with already impressive Asia and world lists. Seldom visited by western birders, we shall embark on an action packed adventure beginning at north of Shanghai searching for the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper, which fattens up on the mud flats near Rudong before making its final flight to breed in Russia. We then fly south to Minjiang Estuary, Fuzhou for the very skulky White-necklaced Partridge in Fuzhou itself. We move north east to Emei Feng, to find one of the world's rarest pheasants, Cabot's Tragopan and the scarce Spotted Elachura, now placed in its own family. We also target Elliott's Pheasant and Blyth's Kingfisher before moving onwards to Wuyuan for the recently discovered Blue-crowned (Courtois's) Laughingthrush, of which perhaps 200 individuals still exist. Aside from the big draw card species, we shall collect a host of migrant passerines and other sought after species including Nordmann's Greenshank, Saunders's Gull,

Fujian Fulvetta, Hartert's Warbler, Siberian Blue Robin, Red-flanked Bluetail, Siberian Thrush, Pallas's Reed Bunting and a bevy of Phylloscopus warblers. We complete our tour in the country of Henan Province, traversing Dongzhai Nature Reserve, Ling Shan mountain and the marshes surrounding Xinyang searching for Reeves's Pheasant and Crested Ibis – both Critically Endangered species.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrival in Shanghai**
Day 2	**Shanghai to Rudong**
Days 3 & 4	**Rudong and surrounds**
Day 5	**Rudong to Shanghai and flight to Fuzhou**
Days 6 & 7	**Minjiang Estuary & Fuzhou Forest Park**
Day 8	**Fuzhou to Emei Feng**
Days 9 & 10	**Emei Feng & surrounds**
Day 11	**Emei Feng to Wuyuan**
Days 12 & 13	**Wuyuan & surrounds**
Day 14	**Wuyuan to Dongzhai**
Day 15	**Dongzhai area**
Day 16	**Dongzhai area, late PM flight to Shanghai**
Day 17	**Final departures from Shanghai**

TOUR MAP


Rudong
Dongzhai
Shanghai
Wuhan
Wuyuan
Emei Fang
Fuzhou & Minjiang Estuary
© 2018 Google
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Google Earth

THE TOUR IN DETAIL…



Spoon-billed Sandpiper by David Erterius

Day 1: Arrival in Shanghai. Today is set aside as an arrival day in Shanghai. This evening we will meet up for an introductory dinner in advance of our forthcoming adventure.

Day 2: Shanghai to Rudong. Much of the coastline and interior north of Shanghai is littered with mudflats, wooded plots and agricultural fields that temporarily host migrants on their journey between Southeast Asia and Australasia, as well as some very interesting resident species.

Taking our time to traverse the distance between Shanghai and Rudong, we will scour some of these hotspots for a wide range of potential new species for the trip. Chief among these will be Marsh Grassbird and Reed Parrotbill, whilst migrants like Ashy Minivet, Narcissus Flycatcher, Yellow-rumped, Mugimaki and Green-backed Flycatcher, Chinese Grosbeak, Chestnut Bunting, Pale-legged Leaf and Eastern Crowned Warbler, Siberian Rubythroat, Siberian and Pale Thrush, Siberian Blue and Rufous-tailed Robin, Amur Falcon, Pechora Pipit and perhaps a Northern Boobook.

Days 3 & 4: Rudong and surrounds. We will no doubt have encountered several shorebird species during our drive to Rudong, but our full day in the area will hopefully add the most prized species found along the entire eastern seaboard of China. Spoon-billed Sandpiper is of course found at several other sites along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, but none are as reliable as the coastal flats near Rudong. We therefore stand an excellent chance of seeing this Critically Endangered species. We also have enough time to search for other specials that stage in the area in preparation for their migration further south. Included in this list are Saunders's Gull, Black-faced Spoonbill, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Long-toed Stint, Far Eastern Curlew and Grey-tailed Tattler - all of which are possible in just one day!



Saunders's Gull by David Shackelford

Day 5: Rudong to Shanghai and flight to Fuzhou. Today we drive back to Shanghai to take an internal flight to Fuzhou. Depending on our arrival time, we should have some time to start some initial exploration of Fuzhou Forest Park.

Days 6 & 7: Minjiang Estuary & Fuzhou Forest Park. Our time in Fuzhou will be largely spread between the Minjiang Estuary and Fuzhou Forest Park, though our visits will be timed according to ocean tides and local weather conditions.



Reed Parrotbill by Rich Lindie

Our time in Fuzhou will be largely spread between the Minjiang Estuary and Fuzhou Forest Park, though our visits will be timed according to ocean tides and local weather conditions.

The estuary will, of course be the focus of our attention for at least a few hours. The estuary provides us the possibility of encountering Chinese Crested Tern which is present here in spring only. These very rare birds were, until recently thought to be extinct. Our chances are minimal, and we would enter the ranks of a very small number of birders to have seen these elegant birds, should a lot of luck be on our side.

When not patrolling the shores of the estuary, our primary focus will be Fuzhou Forest Park, another fabulous spot to spend at least a day exploring. Not only does the park contain a network of well-maintained trails to service such visits, the variety of habitats contained within its boundaries house a host of widespread and localized species - foremost among the latter being White-necklaced Partridge. These birds are not uncommon in heavily wooded parts of the park, as is often evident from their vocalizations, though we will likely need to invest a lot of time to catch a glimpse of one. Along the way we can expect regular distractions from several other desirable species, including Pale-headed Woodpecker, Chestnut Bulbul, Fork-tailed Sunbird, Great Barbet, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Grey-sided Scimitar Babbler, Ashy Minivet, Collared Finchbill, Indochinese Yuhina, Brown-headed Thrush and Daurian Starling. On top of this, the list of potential migrants we may bump into includes a bounty of leaf-warblers, thrushes, buntings and even a robin or two!

Day 8: Fuzhou to Emei Feng. With at least a half-day's journey lying between Fuzhou and our next destination, Emei Feng, we will depart town fairly early this morning. However, we do have a little time to revisit one of the sites nearby should we feel the need. We do hope, however, to arrive in the Emei Feng area with a few hours of daylight left to spare.

Days 9 & 10: Emei Feng & surrounds. Emei Feng is understandably one of the premier birding spots in the south-east corner of China. Not only do the area's heavily wooded slopes harbour such sought-after endemics as Elliot's Pheasant and the star bird of the region, Cabot's Tragopan, they hold healthy populations of two other spectacular 'chickens' - Silver and Koklass Pheasant. We will be making use of specially built blinds to increase our chances of seeing both Cabot's Tragopan and Elliott's Pheasant.



Mandarin Ducks by Rich Lindie



Blue-crowned Laughingthrush by Rich Lindie

A passerine platter includes Yellow-bellied Tit, Fujian and David's Fulvetta, Chinese Hwamei, Buffy, Moustached and Masked Laughingthrush, Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher and Spotted Elachura.

The latter now in a monotypic family and another big drawcard in the region for family collectors, whilst warbler enthusiasts are drawn to the area for the chance to boost their lists with a host of *Phylloscopus* warblers including Buff-throated, Hartert's Leaf, Kloss's Leaf, Sulphur-breasted, Bianchi's, Rufous-faced and Alstrom's Warblers! We will also spend some time hunting down the tricky Blyth's Kingfisher.

In an effort to catch sight of as many of all these species as possible, we will bird the upper reaches of the mountain range as well as lower elevations, often covering the best stretches of road for pheasants in our vehicles, so as to give us the best chance of spotting these often shy beasts.

Day 11: Emei Feng to Wuyuan. Our departure from Emei Feng will provide us one more opportunity to sample the lower slopes and foothills of the mountain, hopefully rewarding us with a few more sightings and species before we begin our exploration of the lowlands around Wuyuan. We might also opt to remain in the highlands for part of the day, searching for any species we may still require.

Days 12 & 13: Wuyuan & surrounds. Wuyuan and the hills to its immediate south-west comprise almost the entire global range of the recently discovered Blue-crowned Laughingthrush, making this otherwise out-of-the-way town a must-visit destination for birders. Fortunately, the area also holds a number of other birds of significant interest, including Mandarin Duck, Masked and Moustached Laughingthrush, Grey-sided Scimitar Babbler, Pied Falconet, Swinhoe's Minivet, Brown-breasted Bulbul, Japanese Grosbeak, Brown Crake, Long-billed Plover, Short-tailed and Grey-headed Parrotbill, Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher and Red-billed Starling. We have therefore dedicated at least a full day to explore the region around town, taking in a variety of habitats from agricultural areas to well-wooded slopes, quiet streams and even a restaurant rooftop!



Pied Falconet by Rich Lindie

Day 14: Wuyuan to Dongzhai. We have a long travel day ahead of us to reach the small village of Dongzhai this afternoon. We may have some time this afternoon for some initial exploration of the area.

Day 15: Dongzhai area. From our guesthouse, we shall set out on foot towards Dongzhai



Reeves's Pheasant by Clayton Burne

searching the rice paddies and surrounding trees for the first of our prime targets, Crested Ibis. Once a widespread species that inhabited Japan, China, Korea and Russia, the species was thought to be extinct in the wild by the late 1970's. Extensive research lasting more than three years managed to find a tiny population of just 7 individuals in Shaanxi Province. China enacted emergency regulations to protect the species, declaring all nesting trees as state property, forbidding logging and the use of agrochemicals in nearby rice paddies. While initial attempts at captive breeding failed in Japan, further attempts proved very successful. Having more than flirted with extinction, the Crested Ibis has mounted a strong recovery with successful re-introductions in Japan and China. The population around Dongzhai has adapted very well to living side by side with humans, nesting and raising chicks only a short distance from our guesthouse. With a little luck, the local pair will again nest in the same location allowing us extraordinarily good views from only a few metres away! This area is also a good location for the much sought after Collared Crow, and we have an excellent chance of finding one of these pied corvids perches in nearby trees or on telephone poles.

We shall continue up the concrete road until we reach Dongzhai Nature Reserve birding en route. Depending on local advice, we may opt to sit in a specially created blind and wait for our pheasant quarry to come to us, or we shall make an initial investigation of the core forest area and try to find a male Reeves's Pheasant near the paths. It should be noted that the birds rarely visit the blind area during Spring, spending much of their time vocalising and displaying to females from exposed rocks on the surrounding rock and vegetation strewn slopes.

Day 16: Dongzhai area, late PM flight to Shanghai. We head out early again today to search the forests for Reeves's Pheasant. Not only does the male sport an incredible scaled golden, white, black and red plumage, it is the tail - the monumentally long, barred tail that really stands out! The current holder of the world record for the longest natural tail feather (2.40m), it is without doubt one of the world's mind-blowing birding experiences.



Crested Ibis by Clayton Burne

Depending on recent sighting information, we may head straight to the core zone of Dongzhai Nature Reserve, or head to the nearby Ling Shan park. Either way, our tour is timed to coincide with the peak breeding season, when males



Collared Crow by Clayton Burne

vigorously call and display making them somewhat easier to locate. Fortunately, it is not uncommon to find a covey of females and young males standing in awe of a large male in full display right next to the road.

During our quest for the above target species, we should be well entertained by a number of other species in the Dongzhai area, including Chinese Bamboo Partridge, Masked Laughingthrush, Chinese Hwamei, Black-capped and Crested Kingfisher, Narcissus and Yellow-rumped Flycatcher Grey-capped Pygmy and Grey-headed Woodpecker, endemic Yellow-bellied Tit, Collared Finchbill, Mountain Bulbul, Rufous-faced Warbler, Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, White-crowned Forktail and the scarce Tristram's Bunting.

Our birding time this afternoon will be dictated by our internal flight schedule, which sees us heading back to Shanghai for the night. This evening we shall enjoy a final celebratory dinner.

Day 17: Final departures from Shanghai. We head to Pudong International Airport this morning, where the tour concludes.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 17;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Extra activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- **ANY** airfares;
- Any additional drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Please Note:

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18kg) for hand luggage.
- This tour requires a medium level of fitness, as much of the birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time.
- Accommodation in general is of a comfortable to excellent standard, while our guesthouse in Dongzhai is a little more basic.
- Western meals are not readily available in some areas. Coffee is not widely drunk in China, but we shall do our best to ensure that coffee is acquired and made available where possible. Alternatively, tea is very widely consumed.
- Tobacco smoking is prevalent across China, even in public areas and restaurants where it is apparently banned. We will of course do our best to avoid any restaurants where smoking is a problem, but avoiding all smoking in China is impossible.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **any** airfares. Day 1 is set aside as an arrival day in Shanghai. To join our introductory dinner this evening, please do arrive by mid-afternoon. The tour will conclude at Shanghai International Airport after breakfast on day 17.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Shanghai Pudong International Airport, Shanghai (IATA: PVG) is the main port of entry for this tour and is well serviced by many of the world's major airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**