Taiwan

Bird Photo Tour



Swinhoe's Pheasant by Glen Valentine

With 31 currently recognised endemics and a further 15 distinctive endemic subspecies, not to mention the incredible East-Asian Flyway, Taiwan has much to offer both birders and bird photographers. Located 100 km east of China, just south of Japan and Korea, and slightly north of the Philippines, this small island is less than 400 km long and 150 km wide with rugged central mountains interspersed with deep valleys and boasts a high biodiversity in a very manageable package.

Taiwan is well regarded as one of Asia's premier photographic destinations with plenty of photogenic species like the magnificent Swinhoe's and Mikado Pheasants, Taiwan Partridge, spectacular Taiwan Blue Magpie, incredible Flamecrest, Chestnut-bellied and Yellow Tits, Black-necklaced Scimitar Babbler, Collared Bush Robin, Taiwan Whistling Thrush, Taiwan Barwing, White-eared Sibia, Steere's Liocichla, Rufous-crowned, Rusty and White-whiskered Laughingthrushes, Malayan Night Heron, exquisite Fairy Pitta, and Japanese Paradise Flycatcher to mention just a few!

Itinerary & Map



Day 1	**Yangmingshan National Park & Taipei area**
Day 2	**Taipei area to Lower Dasyueshan**
Day 3 & 4	**Lower, Middle & Upper Dasyueshan Road**
Day 5	**Dasyueshan to Cingjing Farm (Ren'ai area)**
Day 6	**Hehuan Pass to Lower Alishan**
Day 7	**Alishan to Sun'link-Sea**
Day 8	**Sun'link-Sea to Alishan**
Day 9	**Alishan to Taipei & final departure**

Highlights

- ***Exploring fabulous mountain forests at various altitudes along the famous Dasyueshan Road***
- ***The opportunity to see and photograph a very high percentage of Taiwan's endemic birds and others like Fairy Pitta***
- ***Spectacular scenery especially from within some of the national parks we will explore such as Yushan and Taroko.***

Birding sites in detail

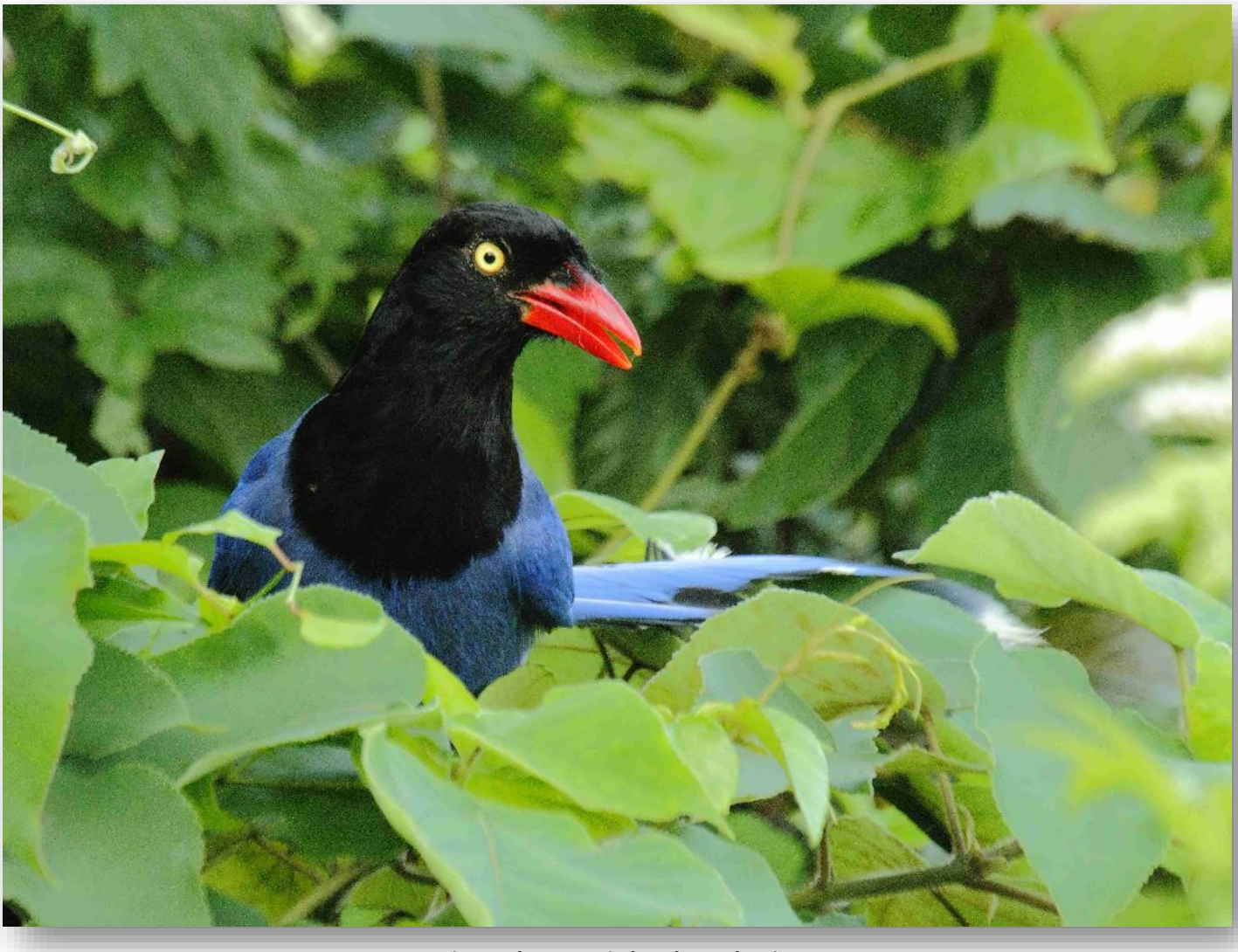
Yangmingshan National Park. Our time will be spent exploring one or two prime birding locations within Yangmingshan National Park such as Qianshan Park or Menghua Lake. Situated in the heart of the park, Qianshan Park boasts diverse habitat, providing ample opportunities to observe urban bird species such as the Taiwan Blue Magpie, Taiwan Barbet, Taiwan Whistling Thrush, and Malayan Night Heron. Our primary goal here is to locate Taiwan Blue Magpie, as sightings outside the Taipei region are relatively rare.

Taipei National Botanical Gardens. The gardens can be very rewarding and enjoyable. Nestled within the bustling, thriving, lush and humid city of Taipei, the National Botanical Gardens protects a small tract of native habitat within a sea of urbanisation. It is indeed quite remarkable how bird-rich the gardens and surrounding



Taiwan Scimitar Babbler by David Hoddinott

suburbs can be and we can expect encounters with specialities such as Malayan Night Heron, the beautiful Taiwan Barbet and Taiwan Scimitar Babbler amongst more widespread but no less attractive and enjoyable species like the abundant Light-vented and Black Bulbuls, Swinhoe's White-eye, Oriental Magpie, Black-naped Monarch, vociferous Oriental Magpie-Robin and White-rumped Shama, Grey Treepie, Crested Goshawk, Scaly-breasted Munia, White-breasted Waterhen and Red Turtle Dove. Here we will enjoy a wonderful introduction to birding in Taiwan with some excellent photo opportunities as well.



Taiwan Blue Magpie by Glen Valentine

Dasyueshan Road (Lower, Middle & Upper). We'll have the equivalent of three full days to explore this large, diverse, and bird-rich area. In doing so, we'll undoubtedly encounter a huge number of Taiwan's incredible endemics that are available along this superb birding road. The Dasyueshan Road is one of those very special and justifiably famous birding areas that meanders through pristine and endemics-rich mid and high elevation mixed broadleaf, coniferous and bamboo forest between 1500 and 3000m in elevation. There's no doubt that the Dasyueshan Road will produce some of our most productive and memorable photographic opportunities of the trip and by the time we've left the area we are likely to have already seen around 90% of the island's endemics!

In the lower elevation, scrubby areas around Dongshi town we'll search for Taiwan Hwamei, Striped Prinia and Vinous-throated Parrotbill, while other noteworthy species that are likely to be encountered include Collared Finchbill, Brown-flanked Bush Warbler, White-rumped and Scaly-breasted Munias, Yellow-bellied Prinia and Chestnut-tailed Starling.



White-whiskered Laughingthrush by David Hoddinott

Lower elevation secondary forest, edge and riparian habitats will hopefully produce the scarce and extremely local Chestnut-bellied Tit, as well as Brown Dipper, White-bellied Green Pigeon, Taiwan Scimitar Babbler, Plumbeous Water Redstart, Malayan Night Heron, Grey-chinned Minivet, White-bellied Erpornis, Grey Treepie and Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, Bronzed Drongo, Oriental Turtle Dove, Striated and Pacific Swallows, Rufous-capped Babbler, Taiwan Barbet, and the striking Black Bulbul.

As we meander our way higher up this legendary birding road, we will keep an eye open for the spectacular Swinhoe's Pheasant, the shy and unobtrusive Taiwan Partridge, the smart-looking Taiwan Vivid Niltava, White-backed (Owston's) and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, the vociferous but shy and unobtrusive Large Hawk-Cuckoo, Oriental Cuckoo, Black Eagle, Asian House Martin, Rusty Laughingthrush, Steere's Liocichla, White-tailed Robin, Snowy-browed Flycatcher, Green-backed and the uncommon but striking Yellow Tits, Black-throated Bushtit, the cute Rufous-faced Warbler, White-eared Sibia, the common and lively Taiwan Yuhina, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, the partially diurnal Collared Owlet and if we are extremely lucky, the rare, elusive and nomadic

Taiwan Thrush, while mammals could include Formosan Rock Macaque, Pallas's and Perny's Long-nosed Squirrels, Taiwan Serow and Reeve's Muntjac.

The beautiful and verdant *Trochodendron* and pine forest higher up with its dense bamboo understory is home to the scarce and nomadic Ashy Wood Pigeon, the local sub-species of Eurasian Jay, Taiwan, and Brown



Collared Bush Robin by David Hoddinott

Bullfinches and the rare and elusive Rufous-crowned Laughingthrush, while a nearby waterfall is home to Little Forktail. Our main target in the forest at the top of the road is the graceful Mikado Pheasant. While staking them out along the road or at the forest edge at the top, we're likely to be entertained by the very confiding White-whiskered Laughingthrush and Coastal Striped Squirrel. In the same area, we'll also be alert for White-browed (Sombre) and the smart Collared Bush (Johnstone's) Robins, Taiwan Rosefinch, Taiwan Cupwing and the very smart Flamecrest. As we enter the hemlock and dwarf bamboo forest at the highest point, we will meet the distinctive local subspecies of Spotted Nutcracker and Coal Tit, as well as (Taiwan) Yellow-bellied and Taiwan Bush Warblers, Taiwan Fulvetta, Taiwan Barwing, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Wren, and Taiwan Shortwing. As for the views here, they are simply breath-taking: in the distance we'll see Taiwan's highest peak, Yushan, just short of 4 000 meters (13 000ft).

In the evenings there will be the option to search for Mountain and Collared Scops Owls.

Dasyueshan Road to Cingjing Farm (Ren'ai area). Depending on our success to date, we may visit sites en route for Chestnut-bellied Tit and Maroon Oriole (a potential future split).

Cingjing Farm (Ren'ai area). Situated at 5 650 feet above sea level. This location provides an excellent base for further exploration of Taiwan's higher-elevation birds. All three of Taiwan's endemic pheasant can be found in this area, and we'll dedicate a significant portion of our time to traversing the trails through the lush temperate forests, hoping to observe these unique species.

Swinhoe's Pheasant, a striking bird, is often the most readily seen of the three. Taiwan Partridge, however, is notoriously elusive and poses a greater challenge. While the Mikado Pheasant is less abundant. Cingjing also offers opportunities for the enigmatic Taiwan Wren-babbler and Taiwan Barwing.



Taiwan Yuhina by David Hoddinott

Hehuan Pass. We have most of a day to explore the immensely scenic Taroko National Park in the Hehuan district that bounds with spectacular Taiwanese endemic birds. Our morning's birding and photo escapade is likely to begin near the head of Hehuan Pass, the highest road east of the Himalayas (at over 3,300 meters (10800ft), where the vistas are indeed breath-taking and where Collared Bush Robin, White-whiskered Laughingthrush and Eurasian Wren often hop around one's feet. The pass is also an excellent place to see Taiwan Bush Warbler, Taiwan Fulvetta and Taiwan Rosefinch. Well also stop to scan an area of rocky scree for the endemic subspecies of Alpine Accentor. Nearby, we can expect views of (Taiwan) Yellow-bellied Bush Warbler, the endearing and endemic Flamecrest and Grey-headed (Owston's) Bullfinch. The dense, broad-

leaved hill-forest lower down in the Blue Gate Track area will be explored if we still need some of the trickier mid-elevation species such as Yellow Tit, Rusty Laughingthrush and Taiwan Thrush. This area will also likely yield further views and potential photo opportunities of the noisy Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Barwing, White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Yuhina, Taiwan Vivid Niltava and Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, while flocks of fast-flying Silver-backed Needletail and Pacific Swift are sometimes seen overhead.

Huben area. Our primary focus in the humid forest and bamboo thickets in the Huben area will be finding the region's breeding Fairy Pitta for which we will visit some well-known areas. Our chance of seeing this sought-after species is very good and naturally we will hope for some decent chances to get photos as well. We also hope to encounter several other notable species while searching for the pitta such as Collared Finchbill, Black-necklaced and Taiwan Scimitar Babblers, Maroon (Red) and Black-naped Orioles, Dusky and Grey-cheeked Fulvettas, Grey Treepie, Common Emerald Dove, Taiwan Bamboo Partridge, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker,



Fairy Pitta by Glen Valentine

Black-naped Monarch, Taiwan Barbet, Black-winged Cuckooshrike and White-rumped Shama.

Sun-link-Sea. We'll have the opportunity for several special birds here such as Little Forktail, Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Barwing, Taiwan Cupwing and sometimes Taiwan Yellow Tit.

Alishan area. The scenic and bird rich Alishan area and Yushan National Park is an excellent back-up site for all of Taiwan's forest endemics and specialties that were searched for along the Dasyueshan Road. At a similar altitude and habitat, many of these now-familiar species will be enjoyed once again and we'll also have further

chances of photographing any species we may have missed at Dasyueshan. Like the Dasyueshan area, the scenery is spectacular, and we are bound to have a fabulous time birding and traversing the Alishan area.

Potential exciting new birds could include Golden Parrotbill, Taiwan Fulvetta, Taiwan Bullfinch, Taiwan Rosefinch, the rare but stunning Taiwan Thrush, Taiwan Shortwing, Taiwan Partridge, and Mountain Hawk-Eagle, all of which can be quite tricky to find in the Dasyueshan area. The upper reaches of Yushan National Park also provide our best chance of seeing the sometimes-elusive Mikado Pheasant, especially if conditions are overcast and drizzly. Other fabulous Taiwanese species we'll likely encounter during our time in the area include Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Barwing, Collared and White-browed (Sombre) Bush Robins, White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Yuhina, White-whiskered Laughingthrush and Taiwan Bush Warbler, while more widespread species such as Black Eagle, Crested Goshawk, Green-backed Tit, Black-throated Bushtit and Spotted Nutcracker are also likely to appear.

Tour Grading & Key

Photography		Worthwhile to good. No dedicated hides. Can be more challenging in forest environments.
Overall Ease		Undemanding to moderate. Standard of food & accommodation can be basic at times. Spectacular scenery.
Birding Ease		Mostly easy but forest birding & certain species can be challenging at times.
Accommodation		Variable, from good in large cities to simple/basic in remoter areas. The overall standard of lodging is inferior to most neighbouring countries.
Walking / Trails		Easy walking along roads & good, wide tracks or trails. Some forest trails that are generally easy & well-maintained. Rain & snow is possible, which can make trails more difficult.
Vehicles / Roads		Good quality roads & vehicle, mostly short drives of 2-3 hours. One longer drive of 4-5 hours.
Annoyances		Can be hot & humid in lowlands. Can be cool to cold with some rain or snow in mountain areas.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 9;
- All lodgings;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- 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.

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 you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is 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. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- There will be a few journeys of about 2-3 hours each throughout the trip, mostly done after dark on good freeways.
- Although this Taiwan tour does not require a high level of fitness, participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- The vehicles used are comfortable 9-seater VW vans.
- A fair bit of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover fair distances to get to the best areas for birds and animals. The more luggage you pack, the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44 lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (18 lb) for hand luggage.
- Accommodation is variable, ranging from good in large cities to simple/basic in remoter areas. The overall standard of lodging is inferior to most neighbouring countries. Some lodges have narrow stairs and inclines which can be slippery in rain or snow. High altitude accommodation can be cold to very cold if weather conditions are poor.
- It is best to change currency into Taiwan Dollars (NT$) on arrival at the airport.

Bird Photo Tours

- Our Bird Photo Tours are a hybrid between our Classic birding tours and dedicated photographic tours. You don't have to be a professional photographer or have the biggest lens; this is for everyone with an interest in photography and birding. Whether you're using a bridge camera or the latest body and prime lens, our aims are the same.
- These tours are not aimed at seeing the most species possible on the route, rather taking time to photograph key targets and any other interesting species we may find. Naturally, the overall species list will be lower than a comparable birding focused tour.
- Whilst we may use blinds, feeders and hide setups on some of these tours, we will not be spending an entire day nor even several hours fixed in one spot.
- These tours are suitable for photographers who prefer opportunistic photography over entire days in a hide.
- Our leaders will assist in helping everyone secure good photographic opportunities and advise as much as they can on camera setup. However, they are not professional photographic tour leaders.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour starts on day 1 with an arrival day in Taipei, for those arriving in time we will do some initial birding at the Taipei National Botanical Gardens, followed by a welcome dinner. The tour will conclude after breakfast on day 9 at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, Taipei.

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.

Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, Taipei (IATA: TPE) is the main port of entry for international flights into Taiwan.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.