

CHINA – BEIDAIHE & HAPPY ISLAND



Saturday 7th May – Saturday 21st May 2011



The spring migration hot-spot of Beidaihe offers birders the unique opportunity to witness one of nature's truly outstanding spectacles. This eastern birding Mecca plays host every year to a mouth-watering selection of Siberian vagrants and in the right conditions can produce spectacular falls. Situated at the northern end of the Yellow Sea, the classic birding destinations of Beidaihe and Happy Island are superbly located to entice wave upon wave of tired migrants to linger in the scrub, small woods and gardens. Quite often they are exhausted and birds that are extremely shy on their breeding grounds are remarkably tame here and allow unparalleled opportunities to study them up close and personal! We also visit the hills to the north of Beijing for Ibisbill and Long-billed Plover, as well as staying at

Zuysan Forest Park in the mountains north of Beidaihe for a wonderful selection of breeding birds including the localised Chinese Leaf-warbler.

If you have ever dreamed of cleaning up on those eastern rarities that occasionally straggle to the UK, then this is the chance.

TARGETS:

- Amur Falcon
- Ibisbill
- Little Whimbrel
- Vinous-throated Parrotbill
- Blyth's Pipit
- Yellow-rumped Flycatcher
- Mugimaki Flycatcher
- Siberian Rubythroat
- Siberian Blue Robin
- Dusky Thrush
- Naumann's Thrush
- White's Thrush
- Siberian Thrush
- Pere David's Laughingthrush
- Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler
- Lanceolated Warbler
- Yellow-browed Bunting
- Pallas's Reed Bunting

Our Tour Itinerary:

Days 1 - 4 Beijing - Beidaihe

After a morning arrival in Beijing on 7th May we will drive to Beidaihe our base for the next 4 nights, which is a seaside resort 175 miles east of Beijing, on the Gulf of Bohai situated at the northern end of the Yellow Sea. The

journey will take around 4 hours along a relatively new and modern highway and we should arrive in time to check out a few nearby sites for our first taste of birding in this exciting place.

We have 3 full days to explore the area around Beidaihe although our daily excursions will depend on the weather and bird movement. There are several migrant hot-spots all within walking distance or a short drive away such as



Lighthouse Point, Jinshan Field and the Lotus Hills. Every year the species mix is different and is weather dependant but we have a good chance of finding White-throated Needletail, Pacific Swift, Siberian Rubythroat, Siberian Blue Robin, Taiga and Asian Brown Flycatchers, Siberian, Dusky, Naumann's, Eye-browed and White's Thrushes, Brown Shrike, Blyth's, Olive-backed, Richard's and Pechora Pipits, Pallas's Grasshopper, Lanceolated, Thick-billed, Pallas's, Yellow-browed, Two-barred, Radde's and Dusky Warblers, and Little, Black-faced, Pallas's Reed, Yellow-breasted and Yellow-browed Buntings. More exotic species are also present or passing through including

Japanese Quail, Amur Falcon, Chinese Goshawk, Oriental Honey-buzzard, Brown Hawk-owl, Eastern Marsh Harrier, Pied Harrier, Large Hawk and Oriental Cuckoos, Black-capped Kingfisher, Dollarbird, Forest Wagtail, Grey-sided and Chinese Song Thrushes, Tiger Shrike, Chestnut-flanked and Japanese White-eyes, Yellow-bellied Tit, Grey-crowned Warbler and Chinese Grosbeak.

Apart from the small pockets of cover, scrub and woodland there's also the Sandflats, Yang He Estuary and Reservoir as well where Saunter's and Relict Gulls are regularly recorded along with Black-tailed, Heuglin's, Mongolian and Vega Gulls, and is a good area for herons, egrets and waders including Schrenk's and Yellow Bitterns, Chinese Egret, Baillon's Crake, Watercock, Pintail Snipe, Pacific Golden Plover, Mongolian Sandplover, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, and flocks of more familiar waders. No visit would be complete without a visit to the Great Wall of China at Shanhaiguan Jiao Mountain which could also add a few extra species such as Pere David's Laughingthrush, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Chinese Hill Warbler, Godlewski's Bunting and if weather conditions are favourable then some visible migration and raptor watching.

Days 5 - 7 Happy Island



Today we head south to another remarkable migration watchpoint at Happy Island, stopping along the way to check out a few good sites and hopefully find Little Whimbrel along the way. We will pay particular attention to Magic Wood which has gained an enviable reputation of producing good birds over the years with Yellow-legged Buttonquail, Grey Nightjar, Oriental Scops-owl, Indian Cuckoo, Siberian Rubythroat, Yellow-rumped, Mugimaki and Dark-sided Flycatchers, Ashy Minivet, Dusky and Eye-browed Thrushes, Chinese Bush-warbler and Hair-crested Drongo often seen here. By mid afternoon we will catch the small ferry over to the island and head to our accommodation for a 3 night stay. If conditions are right then the number of migrants here can be overwhelming. We'll search the mudflats for Relict, Saunter's

and the commoner Black-tailed Gulls, and wader watching can also be exciting with Oriental Pratincole, Greater Sandplover, Great Knot, Broad-billed and Terek Sandpipers, Far-eastern Curlew, Long-toed Stint, Grey-tailed Tattler and Asiatic Dowitcher all possible. There is a variety of habitats here, including a rubbish tip (!), small pockets of woodland, grassland and scrub which will give us further chances of any species not yet seen. However, Happy Island can produce good numbers of birds and often a different mix of species from Beidaihe and possibilities include Japanese Sparrowhawk, Grey-faced Buzzard, Oriental Turtle-dove, Little Cuckoo, Japanese and Rufous-tailed Robins, Siberian Thrush, White-throated Rock-thrush, Red-flanked Bluetail, Citrine Wagtail,

Hume's Warbler, Oriental and Black-browed Reed Warblers, Gray's Grasshopper Warbler, Daurian Starling, Japanese Grosbeak, Tristram's, Japanese Reed, Yellow-throated and Yellow-browed Buntings.

Day 8 Happy Island - Beidaihe

After a final check of the harbour area for Saunder's and Relict Gulls, we will turn our attentions to Magic and Big Woods which often hold an amazing variety of migrants. During our visit last year we found only the 3rd record of Fujian Niltava for the Hebei province! After lunch we will head back to Beidaihe and should arrive back at our hotel with enough daylight to do some birding in the late afternoon.

Days 9 - 10 Beidaihe - Zuyshan Forest Park (Old Peak)



We'll check the local sites before breakfast and then head up into the mountains to our superbly located hotel in heading to Old Peak for an overnight stay. Along the way we'll make a short diversion and try to locate a singing Manchurian Bush-warbler which inhabits the dense scrubby hillsides en-route, and there are further chances of Pere David's Laughingthrush as well. The scenery here is magnificent and a total contrast to anywhere else visited on the tour and as such, the different habitat and altitude means a totally different avifauna as well. Our main targets here are the sought-after and localised Chinese Leaf-warbler and the near-endemic Chinese Nuthatch, both of which are relatively common here. A few pairs of the very tricky White-bellied Redstart also breed higher up and we'll need a very early start to stand any chance of seeing this amazing bird. A good variety of other breeding species

are usually present including Oriental and Indian Cuckoos, Large Hawk-cuckoo, Grey-sided and Grey-backed Thrushes, Asian Stubtail, Yellow-streaked Warbler, Hume's and Claudia's Leaf-warblers, Yellow-throated, Siberian Meadow and Godlewski's Buntings. This has been a good site for Koklass Pheasant over the years but they are very hard to find now and a great deal of luck is needed to catch a glimpse of one. We will return to Beidaihe during the afternoon of Day 10 for a 3 night stay.

Days 11 -12 Beidaihe



It will be very interesting to see how things have changed and we'll try to key in on any new species, as well as having the opportunity to study any previously seen species. Maybe there is a fall of *phylloscopus* warblers, or will there be flocks of thrushes passing through the woods? But whatever happens there will always be new birds for us to search for and amongst many exciting possibilities there could be Chinese Penduline-tit, Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, Grey-backed Shrike, Grey-streaked and Elisae's Flycatchers, Pale-legged Leaf-warbler, Black-naped Oriole, Japanese Waxwing, Pale Thrush, Siberian Bush-warbler, Asian Stubtail, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Chestnut-eared Bunting, or even a real rarity like Mongolian Lark! Nights Beidaihe.

Day 13 Beidaihe - Beijing

We can spend the morning checking out the local sites to see what has newly arrived before returning to Beijing and our comfortable hotel where we spend the next 2 nights.

Day 14 White River Gorge (Bai He River)

An early start will see us head north on a relatively scenic drive to the Bai He River where we will begin our search for the spectacular-looking Ibisbill. It frequents undisturbed sections of the boulder-strewn river, where another special bird, Long-billed Plover can also be found. There are plenty of other good birds here, including Hill Pigeon, Mandarin Duck, Crested Kingfisher, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, Daurian Redstart, Chinese Bulbul, Yellow-

streaked, Dusky & Claudia's Warblers, Godlewski's & Siberian Meadow Bunting, Songar Tit, Japanese White-eye and White-cheeked Starling, plus plenty of commoner species we'll have already seen.

Day 15 Beijing - End of Tour

Morning transfer to the airport and the conclusion of the tour.

Leaders: Nick Bray

Tour Price: **£1295.00** per person

Single supplement: £250.00

Deposit: £300.00

Group size: Minimum for tour to go ahead 4 with 1 leader and maximum 12 with 2 leaders.

Included in cost: Accommodation in twin rooms en-suite (except at Happy Island where facilities are shared), all meals, some drinks, all entrance fees, ground transport throughout, and services of leaders and an English speaking guide.

Not included: International flight, insurance, drinks, tips, visa fee and items of a personal nature.

Flight information: If travelling from the U.K please note that you need to arrive in Beijing in the early morning of Saturday 7th May. Departure should be from Beijing in the morning on Saturday 21st May and would normally arrive back in the U.K the same day. Please contact our agent Shane Wheatley at Dial-a-Flight on 01732 591470 or 01732 593196 for the best up-to-date flights that you can book for your requirements.

Accommodation: At Beidaihe, Zuyshan (Old Peak) and Beijing we stay at standard hotels where rooms are en-suite. On Happy Island we use bungalows with 3/4 twin rooms per bungalow and a shared bathroom.

Tour Code: This is a standard birding tour with regular birding walks along roads and well marked trails. We usually break the day into 3 sections with a pre-breakfast excursion, followed by the morning and afternoon sessions. The weather is generally unsettled at this time of year, so expect some cooler weather and odd showers during the first week, followed by warmer weather during the second week.



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