

TAIWAN - QUEST FOR ENDEMIC



Sunday 15th April – Thursday 26th April 2012



This small strikingly attractive island with its growing number of endemics is a 'must-visit' for anyone interested in Asian birding. Situated some 200 kilometres off the eastern coast of China, the often mist-laden and dramatic mountainous interior with lofty peaks cloaked in mature forest will be our base as we search for some very special birds. Our unique itinerary covers the best birding sites in order to see all of the endemics and many of the endemic subspecies that make this such a fascinating country to visit. On this tour it is quality rather than quantity that counts as we target the 30 or so endemics currently recognised, although taxonomic revisions are increasing this figure all the time! Inevitably most of our time will be spent in the mountains, yet a whole new range of species awaits us along the coastal plain where some fine

wetlands and estuaries are home to an impressive array of waders, as well as an important population of the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill. So why not join us on this exciting adventure which is only available for a maximum of 6 birders to experience one of the finest selections of birds in Asia?

TARGETS:

- Taiwan Partridge
- Mikado Pheasant
- Swinhoe's Pheasant
- Steere's Liocichla
- Taiwan Fulvetta
- Taiwan Blue Magpie
- Taiwan Shortwing
- Taiwan Wren-babbler
- Collared Bush-robin
- Flamecrest
- White-eared Sibia
- Taiwan Whistling-thrush
- Rufous-capped Laughingthrush
- White-whiskered Laughingthrush
- Black-faced Spoonbill
- Malayan Night-heron

Our Tour Itinerary:

Days 1 - 2 UK – Taipei – 15th April

Overnight Flight from UK to Taipei. Upon arrival in the late afternoon we will transfer to a nearby hotel for the night.

Days 3 - 4 Taipei - Dasyueshan - Anmashan Mountains



We will begin early this morning and head to the Dasyueshan National Forest Recreation Area in the Anmashan mountain range where we have two full days to explore the whole area. As the road slowly winds its way up higher a few stops along the way could result in our first Oriental Honey-buzzard, Black Eagle, Japanese White-eye, Plumbeous Water-redstart, Daurian Redstart, Grey-chinned Minivet or Grey-cheeked Fulvetta. Any fruiting trees could prove attractive to species such as Vivid Niltava, Brown-headed and Pale Thrushes or even a Red-flanked Bluetail. Our birding will be spent mainly around the 7,500 feet altitude amidst some stunning scenery with a vista of green ridges and rugged peaks stretching far away into the distance. Our tour to this beautiful island is focused on the many endemics that reside here and this mountain range is home to many. Besides our first chance to see Swinhoe's Pheasant we should easily pick up Steere's Liochicla, Taiwan Whistling-thrush,

White-eared Sibia, Collared Bush-robin, Taiwan Varied Tit, Taiwan Yellow Tit, Flamecrest, Taiwan Yuhina, Taiwan Barwing, Taiwan Scimitar-babbler (split from Streak-breasted), Taiwan Wren-babbler (split from Pygmy) and Rufous-capped Laughingthrush (split from White-throated). Other species present include Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, Yellowish-bellied Bush-warbler, Brown Bullfinch, Dusky Fulvetta, and both Green-backed and Black-throated Tits. Overhead we could see a dashing Silver-backed Needletail, whilst a wintering Eye-browed Thrush may still be present. This is also our first chance of finding the stunning Mikado Pheasant amidst these beautiful montane forests. Some stands of Bamboo are home to Golden Parrotbill (a Chinese endemic and potential split as Taiwan Parrotbill), whilst nearby areas have the distinctive Taiwan Bullfinch (a potential split from Grey-headed Bullfinch), Black-necked Scimitar-babbler (split from Rusty-cheeked) and Spotted Nutcracker (of the owstoni race and a potential split as Taiwan Nutcracker). At higher altitudes (8,530 ft.) we will look for White-whiskered Laughingthrush, Taiwan Fulvetta (split from Streak-throated Fulvetta), Rusty Laughingthrush and Taiwan Bush-warbler (split from Russet Bush-warbler). There are also chances of White-backed Woodpecker, Scaly Thrush, White-tailed Robin, Vinaceous Rosefinch and other high elevation species. Night in Dasyueshan National Forest Recreation Area.

Day 5 Dasyueshan - Huisun

Another early start will see us at Huisun Forest Reserve (2530 ft.) which is an excellent site to find the stunning Taiwan Blue Magpie. It is also a good site for Malayan Night-heron, as well as Red Oriole, Varied Tit, Taiwan Partridge, Taiwan Bamboo-partridge (split from Chinese Bamboo-partridge) and Collared Finchbill. After lunch we will check out a good area for Rusty Laughingthrush, Vinous-throated Parrotbill and Brownish-flanked Bush-warbler. A nearby area can give us Scaly Thrush, Taiwan Scimitar-babbler, Taiwan Whistling-thrush, Taiwan Hwamei, Taiwan Barbet (split from Black-browed Barbet), Collared Finchbill, Grey-capped Woodpecker, Ashy Woodpigeon, Grey-chinned Minivet, Grey Treepie, Black Bulbul, Dusky Fulvetta, Rufous-capped Babbler, Rufous-faced Warbler and White-bellied Yuhina. Returning to Huisun we will have another opportunity to search for the unforgettable Swinhoe's Pheasant, whilst it's worth trying in the evening for the often tricky Mountain Scops-owl. Night at Huisun Forest Station.



Days 6 - 7 Huisun - Wushe



After some final birding at Huisun we will cross the Hehuan Shan pass, at 3275m the highest road in East Asia, to the Wushe area for a two-night stay. As we cross the pass, where there are magnificent mountain views on a clear day (the surrounding peaks rise to 3605m), we will stop to look for another endemic, the drably-coloured Taiwan Bush-robin (split from White-browed Bush-robin) and we will also hope to find Alpine Accentor and the beautiful Vinaceous Rosefinch. Amidst these splendid montane forests we shall look for two of the most exciting and most sought-after endemic birds in Taiwan, the handsome Taiwan Partridge and have further chances of the lovely Swinhoe's Pheasant. Both are shy and elusive and we shall devote much of our time to tracking them down in some of their most favoured

locations. Another star bird of the area is the endemic Rufous-capped (or Rufous-crowned) Laughingthrush. Other species we may well encounter include Besra, Collared Owlet, Large Hawk-Cuckoo, Oriental Cuckoo, Northern Boobook (split from Brown Boobook), Grey-capped and White-backed Woodpeckers, Large Cuckooshrike, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Jay and the rather uncommon Brown Bullfinch. Away from the forest, areas of cultivation, tea gardens and scrub hold Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler (the local form *robustipes* may perhaps represent a distinct species), Striated Prinia and Vinous-throated Parrotbill (a Chinese near-endemic). We can also spend some time on the famous Pipeline and Blue Gate Trails with a visit to some higher areas at the Hehuan Pass in Taroko National Park which is a good site for White-bellied Green-pigeon, Ferruginous Flycatcher, Taiwan Barwing, Flamecrest, Taiwan Wren-babbler, Taiwan Shortwing, Alpine Accentor and Vinaceous Rosefinch.

Days 8 - 9 Wushe - Alishan Forest - Yushan National Park

This morning we shall leave Wushe and visit an area of lowland forest which is good for the uncommon Taiwan Varied Tit. Whilst searching for this delightful species, we may also find Crested Goshawk, White-bellied Yuhina and Grey Treepie, and will have another chance to find the superb Taiwan Blue Magpie if we have missed it earlier. We will also look for Rusty Laughingthrush and Black-necklaced Scimitar-Babbler before climbing up to Alishan Forest Recreation Area (7,200 ft.) where we will search for any montane species we may have missed so far. Early mornings give us our best chance for Taiwan Bamboo-partridge and we can also see Striated Swallow and Rufous-faced Warbler in the same area. Tataka Recreation Area (8,536 ft.) in Yushan National Park is another excellent site for more montane specialties and if we have not already seen Mikado Pheasant we will make a very early start to search for one. As always, searching for pheasants requires a great deal of patience and our best chance is to find one feeding along the roadside.

Throughout our time here we will be within sight of Yushan

Peak, or better known as Jade Mountain which at just under 13,000 ft. is the highest mountain in East Asia. In



its shadow a wide variety of species can be found and our birding depends on which ones we still need. Collared Bush Robins and White-whiskered Laughingthrushes are everywhere here and Yushan is also a good place for the shy Taiwan Wren-babbler and Taiwan Bush-warbler. We can also drive higher still to the Tataka Recreation Area in Yushan National Park for additional high mountain specialities, including Taiwan Shortwing (split from White-browed Shortwing) and the endemic subspecies of Island Thrush.

Days 10 - 11 Tainan - Kenting NP - Tsengwen Estuary



After some final birding in the mountains we will descend into the lowlands, stopping for Collared Finchbill, Little Forktail, or maybe a late lingering Brown Shrike, Olive-backed Pipit, Arctic Warbler or Black-faced Bunting. Our destination this morning will be the river mouths, extensive coastal wetlands and farmlands near Tainan which hosts a great variety of wetland species. Foremost amongst these is the rare and endangered Black-faced Spoonbill, which overwinters in good numbers on this coast and which should still be present. Shorebirds are another big attraction of this part of Taiwan and the star attractions are likely to include the impressive Great Knot, Long-toed Stint, Broad-billed and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Grey-tailed Tattler and even the rare Asiatic Dowitcher or Far Eastern Curlew. More widespread species may well include Black-winged Stilt, Oriental Pratincole, Kentish, Little Ringed, Mongolian, Greater Sand and Pacific Golden Plovers, Red-necked Stint, Marsh, Wood and Terek Sandpipers, Red-necked

Phalarope and tons of more familiar waders. Other species that we have a good chance of encountering include Yellow and Cinnamon Bitterns, Eastern Cattle Egret, Intermediate and Great Egrets, Slaty-breasted Rail, Caspian, Gull-billed, Greater Crested and Whiskered Terns, House Swift, Japanese Skylark, Grey-throated Martin, Pacific and Striated Swallows, Green-headed and Eastern Yellow Wagtails, Plain and Yellow-bellied Prinias and the introduced Javan Myna. Early morning will see us birding at Long Luan Tan Lake, which is part of Kenting National Park where a good couple of hours could produce Ruddy-breasted Crake, White-breasted Waterhen, Striated Heron, plenty of waders and wintering ducks and other wetland species. A thorough check of the Tsengwen Estuary could produce Saunter's Gull, whilst this area should produce our last endemic as Styan's Bulbul is quite common here. Depending on information received we may well alter our plans slightly and visit an area for Fairy Pitta as they should just be arriving from their wintering grounds. In the afternoon of Day 11 we will return to Taipei for our international flight back home.



Day 12 Arrive UK – End of Tour – 26th April

Morning arrival in UK and end of tour.

Leader: Nick Bray.

Ground Price: £1895.00 – Taipei/Taipei

Airfare: £730 (approx) - UK/UK

Single supplement: £210.00 **Deposit:** £350.00

Group size: Minimum for tour to go ahead 3 and maximum 6

Included in cost: Accommodation in twin rooms en-suite, all meals including picnic lunches where necessary, all entrance fees to National Parks, transport throughout in air-conditioned coach, and services of leader.

Not included: International airfare, insurance, departure tax, drinks, tips and items of a personal nature.

Accommodation: Our hotels and lodges vary in quality from good to excellent, but all are within easy reach of the areas we wish to bird, eliminating long travelling days.

Tour Code: This is a standard birding tour with all day birding. We will generally take picnic lunches unless close to our lodge where we will take a restaurant lunch. The weather can be unsettled at this time of year, so expect some cooler weather in the mountains and with chances of a shower or two.

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