

WILDWINGS SICHUAN TOUR

MAMMALS AND BIRDS 23rd October to 5th November 2017

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Chinese Ferret Badger (Pete Wheeler)

INTRODUCTION

Sichuan has in recent years become one of the best áreas in eastern Asia for mammal watching and has been a destination which we had hoped to run tours to for several years. However with the Chinese authorities having previously closed the best áreas for Giant and Red Pandas to tourism previous attempts to run tours had been aborted.

However with Labahe re-opening with the opportunity to see Red Pandas we were delighted to be able to offer the first Wildwings' mammal tour to Sichuan and we were not to be dissapointed. We racked up the impressive total of at least 36 species of mammal (excluding unidentified rodents and bats) and no less than 168 species of birds although some views were more distant than others.

At Labahe the tour started well with at least seven and possibly eight **Red Pandas**, an unexpected **Mountain Weasel**, **Chinese Serow**, **Chinese Goral**, **Sambar**, **Tibetan Macaque**, **Swinhoe's Striped Squirrel** and at least three species of **flying squirrel**.

Rouergai lived up to its reputation as a great site for high altitude species with both Pallas's and Chinese Desert Cats, three Asian Badgers, superb close range views of Siberian Weasel at Baixi, a hunting Steppe Polecat, numerous Tibetan Foxes, at least 12 'Tibetan' Wolves and ten Tibetan Gazelles and a supporting cast including Red Fox, Siberian Roe, Woolly Hares and Plateau Pikas.

The journey to Tangjiahe added some unexpected **Blue Sheep** to the species list while Tangjiahe itself produced a superb **Chinese Ferret-Badger**, several **Hog Badgers and Himalayan (Masked) Palm Civets**, a troop of 40+ **Golden Snub-nosed Monkeys**, an obliging **Tufted Deer**, a less-obliging single observer **Northern Leopard Cat**, **Chinese Goral**, numerous **Takin** and **Reeves' Muntjac**, **Wild Boar**, **Pere David's Rock Squirrel** and **Tibetan Macaques**.

Our final stop in a park near our hotel on the final night produced the final species of the trip, a Pallas's Squirrel.

On the bird front we saw or heard 168 species with highlights including Himalayan and Tawny Fish Owls and Lady Amherst's Pheasants at Labahe, Blood Pheasants at Baixi and Tawny Fish Owl again at Tangjiahe.

I would like to thank all the group for their good company throughout the trip and for the photographs that accompany this report. In particular thanks to Sid Francis whose guiding, driving and cooking were outstanding, and the drivers who supported us during a great trip. Their efforts were really appreciated by everyone.

Richard Webb 8th November 2017

DAILY SUMMARIES

23rd October

The majority of the group arrived in Chengdu via Bangkok during the early afternoon and after quickly clearing immigration met up with Jean who had flown in an hour earlier via Amsterdam. Sid was there to greet us and we quickly transferred our bags to the two vehicles and headed off south-west towards Labahe with a brief service station stop for water.

The drive was trouble-free and we arrived at the reserve within four hours, much quicker than on the recce when the return journey had taken eight hours. The Chinese road-building programme certainly has some benefits.

After checking in to our comfortable rooms and our first dinner we were back out on the road for the first spotlighting session of the trip with at least eight **Red-and-White Flying Squirrels**, several **Sambar** and a single **Chinese Goral** getting the trip off to a good start before we retired for the night.

24th October

Our first morning found us heading out with high expectations and we were soon in the best área for pandas where we parked up, had a quick coffee and started walking downhill in pursuit of our target. Early morning mist limited visibility and the first hour or so was largely dominated by birding with the bird list getting off to a good start with Rufous-breasted Accentor, Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Pere David's Tit, Yellow-browed Tits, White-collared Yuhinas plus large numbers of leaf warblers including Sichuan and Buff-barred and a range of other species.

Reaching the área which had been so good for pandas during the recce Sid decided to take a walk up a side track where pandas had been seen the week before and after encountering Golden Bush Robin and Grey-hooded Fulvettas on route, sure enough we were soon watching our first **Red Panda** of the trip, albeit on the other side of a valley. We were delighted to have got our main target species under the belt so quickly.

After enjoying good views through the scope we returned to the main road but not before adding Plumbeous and White-capped Redstarts and Spotted Nutcrackers to the bird list. We then walked back uphill, a bit of a slog at over 2,000 metres above sea level, adding Daurian Redstarts, Himalayan Bluetails, Brown Shrike and Dark-breasted Rosefinch to our growing bird list on the way.

After a very late picnic breakfast back at the car we headed out walking downhill again by now in much brighter conditions and were soon enjoying our second **Red Panda** of the trip, an individual spotted much closer to the road by Pete. We were able to enjoy good views of this from the road although sadly it quickly left the tree as we tried to move in for even closer views. Nevertheless we were all very happy with the views obtained.



We carried on walking downhill adding our first **Swinhoe's Striped Squirrels** to the mammal list and Siberian Stonechat and our only Long-tailed Shrike of the trip being the best of the additions to the bird list and eventually we were picked up by the cars for the drive back to the hotel with a further brief birding stop on route.

Back at the hotel 'Sid's Café' opened for business for the first time and we were soon enjoying a rather late lunch of cheese toasties in his room.

After the late lunch most people chose to rest prior to dinner but Ewan and Richard went out for a short walk on a couple of nearby trails and were rewarded with two **Sambar**, the first **Tibetan Macaques** and the only Oriental Turtle Dove of the trip.

After dinner we went back out for the second spotlighting session of the trip. It was an enjoyable evening with a fabulous immature male **Chinese Serow** being the highlight although we also saw several **Chinese Goral, Sambar** and numerous **Red-and-White Flying Squirrels** along with some more distant flying squirrels which are now believed to be **Grey-headed Flying Squirrels**.

Several rodents were also encountered and one in particular caused considerable consternation in Sid's vehicle being described as 'huge, long-tailed and scary as it dashed around in a demented manner'. Whether the beer and wine consumed at dinner contributed to this description remains to be seen but at the time of writing it has not been positively identified and has simply been nicknamed the 'Psycho' Rat. More conventional rodents seen during the drive appeared to be **Confucian Niviventers.**

All in all a good evening's spotlighting even if the rat was rumoured to have caused nightmares for some that night.

Red Panda (Steve Holloway & Pete Wheeler)



Chinese Serow (Steve Holloway)

Chinese Goral (Pete Wheeler)

25th October

Day 3 found us heading back out to look for more pandas and after parking up in the same área as yesterday we started to walk downhill in rather clearer conditions than the day before. After brief views of a Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Steve soon spotted what he thought was probably a distant Red Panda although the rest of the group were unable to relocate it. However while scanning Pete picked up a **Red Panda** about 100 metres from Steve's animal and use of the thermal imaging camera suggested that there may have actually been two pandas in the same tree although only one was ever seen through the scopes or binoculars.

Continuing on we explored another track on the right of the main road for Temminck's Tragopans but were unsuccessful in our quest. We continued along the track clambering over (or in the case of Richard under) an obstruction across the track but tragopans continued to evade us. As Richard and Tom reached the end of the main track Richard found another **Red Panda** close to the track but although Tom saw it as it descended from the tree it had annoyingly already disappeared into thick bamboo by the time the rest of the group got there.

We returned to the road where Sid and Fugui were waiting with the cars and we were soon having a picnic breakfast.

After breakfast most of us chose to walk slowly uphill looking for pandas but Sid and Fugui decided to head back to the área where the original panda had been seen and quickly found another **Red Panda** walking along the track in front of them but it equally quickly disappeared.

The rest of the group continued walking up the road and were about to turn around to walk back downhill when Jean spotted another **Red Panda** walking towards the road but it disappeared before anyone else saw it. We quickly starting searching for it and it was re-found feeding in a nearby tree. We watched it on and off for over 20 minutes although for much of the time it was partially obscured by branches and leaves. Eventually we did find a point from which we could get largely unobscured views for a few minutes.

Happy enough we carried on back past the cars and were rewarded with Grey-capped Woodpecker, brief views of an immature male and two female Lady Amherst's Pheasants, a stunning Darjeeling Woodpecker and a nice Little Forktail.

Happy with our morning and early afternoon we headed back to the hotel for a slightly earlier lunch than the day before and were soon enjoying toasties again. A post-lunch walk along the river produced a nice troop of 30+ **Tibetan Macaques**, our first Brown Dipper of the trip and Hodgson's Redstarts alongside a range of commoner birds.



Tibetan Macaques (Steve Holloway)

We returned to the hotel for dinner and then headed out for another spotlighting session. We had planned to return to the main forest área to look for owls but were put off by slightly wet conditions so concentrated on the main access road again instead. This proved to be a good move. We quickly found the **Chinese Serow** again along with **Chinese Goral, Sambar** and numerous **Red-and-White Flying Squirrels.** Richard's car took the lead and eventually found another flying squirrel, an apparent **Grey-headed Flying Squirrel**, on a cliff close to the road.

Turning around we worked our way back along the river and were soon enjoying a superb Tawny Fish Owl, the first that Sid had actually encountered at Labahe and a welcome bonus. Further on the second car found another flying squirrel on the opposite side of the river and reversing to join them we were all soon enjoying nice views of a médium-sized flying squirrel now thought to be a **Complex-toothed Flying Squirrel**.



Grey-headed Flying Squirrel (Steve Holloway)

We continued on our way back towards the hotel and found our second owl of the night when a superb Himalayan Owl was disturbed from the side of the road and flew up and perched over the road giving everyone superb views. It's amazing how many owls you can see when you decide not to look for owls!

The remaining drive back to the hotel was relatively quiet apart from a group of several **Sambar** but we arrived back at the hotel very happy after another great evening spotlighing.

26th October

Another early start found us heading up the road to try to see pheasants but before reaching our destination a **Mountain Weasel** crossed the road and was seen by everyone in the front vehicle before quickly dissapearing. Everyone left the vehicles and fortunately the weasel went back across the road and was re-located by Ray on a fallen branch where it paused briefly for most of the group before dissapearing again. We continued on and spent some time looking for Lady Amherst's Pheasants with most of the group being rewarded with further views of females and a few lucky souls also seeing a couple of nice males. A Grey-headed Woodpecker nearby was new for the trip and Steve spotted a Hawfinch, an unexpected species which even turned out to be a Chinese lifer for Sid!

While most of the group grabbed a sandwich from the back of the vehicle Richard walked down the road and just as the two vehicles caught up with him another, or possibly the same **Mountain Weasel**, ran across the road in front of the vehicles but frustratingly eluded Tom who had also missed the earlier sighting. Sometimes there's just no justice.

We continued back to the hotel making a quick detour to a bat cave where one solitary bat eluded identification, although some nearby **Tibetan Macaques** provided good photo opportunities for some.

We returned to the hotel for toasted sarnies in 'Sid's Café' before loading up the vehicles for the drive back towards Chengdu. A stop on route back to the gate proved quite good for birds with the only Speckled Piculet, Green Shrike Babbler, Ash-throated Parrotbill, Claudia's Warbler and Brown-breasted Bulbuls of the trip all being seen along with a range of commoner species.

We continued on our way and had another trouble-free journey back to Chengdu and Dujiangyan where we stopped at our hotel for the night. After dinner a drive up a nearby mountain failed to produce the hoped for Northern Boobook but we did hear at least three Collared Scops Owls calling but they refused to show themselves to the group.

27th October

We set out early from our hotel for the long drive to Rouergai on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau and made good progress on the first stage of the journey adding Eastern Cattle Egret and Himalayan Griffin to the bird list as we headed towards Songpan. After refuelling and a lunch stop in a restaurant near Songpan we stocked up on supplies in a nearby shop and headed off towards Rouergai.

The whole afternoon was spent driving towards Rouergai and we stopped at several spots along the way adding a number of new birds to the trip list including Himalayan Buzzard, Northern Goshawk, the exquisite White-browed Tit Warbler, White-browed and Sichuan Tits, Guldenstadt's Redstarts, Azure-winged Magpies and Chinese Grey Shrikes.

At one birding stop Richard spotted the first **Red Fox** of the trip and at another stop to look at the first of many Black-necked Cranes Sid spotted what could only be described as an inter-galactic **Asian Badger**. Most of the group managed to see it through the scope before it dissapeared but continuing almost a kilometre and a half along the road Richard fortunately managed to re-find it and we obtained much closer, although still somewhat distant, views of it an an adjacent hillside. In past years this had been an almost mythical species but it has become somewhat more reliable this year and it is possible that some previous reports of Hog Badgers from the Rouergai área may actually have been this species. Highly satisfied with our views of this much-wanted species we continued on to Rouergai where we checked into our hotel for the next five nights.

After dinner at a nearby restaurant we were soon back out on the road for a spotlighting session at a nearby site and were soon enjoying the first of three **Woolly Hares** and another **Red Fox** while the first vehicle also encountered the first **Chinese Desert Cat** of the trip although due to a communication breakdown the second vehicle was not aware of this until we were back at the hotel.

Fortunately however the return drive produced the same or another **Chinese Desert Cat** closer to the road, and both vehicles were able to enjoy good spotlight views of what until a couple of years ago was another almost mythical species!

We returned to the hotel after a successful first evening on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau.

28th October

Happy with our first cats the night before we were out again prior to dawn in search of the next main target, Pallas's Cat. Our preferred site, a quarry where both species of cat occur alongside each other, was frustratingly off limits due to the presence of large numbers of yak herders and railway construction workers, but we headed on to a second quarry where we have also seen both cats previously.

On our arrival prior to dawn we quickly picked up eyeshine from both **Red** and **Tibetan Foxes** and shortly afterwards picked up eyeshine from at least two **Pallas's Cats** on a nearby hillside. Leaving the vehicles we found a position to scan for them as the light came up but despite our best efforts we were unable to find them through the scopes or the thermal imaging camera.

Sid decided to take the group around the other side of the hill while Richard waited for Jean who had misplaced his binoculars when we first stopped the vehicle and had gone back to look for them. Just as Jean returned with a pair of compact binoculars now actually broken into two compact monoculars, the radio crackled and Sid reported that the others had re-found one of the cats. Jean and Richard quickly joined the rest of the group and we were able to enjoy prolonged views of the cat as it hunted the numerous **Plateau Pikas** on the side of the hill, albeit in less than perfect light. Unfortunately the weather took a turn for the worse and it started snowing with a deterioration in the light and we eventually returned to the cars having lost sight of the cat but happy with the views we had had.

We continued on to a road 'discovered' by Sid on a recent trip and were soon enjoying good views of **Tibetan Foxes** and distant views of our first **Tibetan Gazelle**, a species which Sid had been having trouble finding prior to the trip and an added bonus. Birds were also well represented with good views of Lammergeier, and good numbers of White-rumped and Rufous-necked Snowfinches, Horned Larks, Twite and Guldenstadt's Redstarts. Turning back towards the main road our driver Fugui spotted the gazelle again and we had much closer views as it crossed the track ahead of us. Making another u-turn we continued along the road finding a further three **Tibetan Gazelles** on route before Sid spotted the first, albeit distant, '**Tibetan' Wolf** of the trip.



Lammergeier (Steve Holloway)

Himalayan Griffin (Steve Holloway)

We carried on along the road to an earlier where Sid had found a desert cat a few weeks before but being a Saturday the área was quite busy so we passed quickly through the area into a very interesting gorge where we found a nice flock of Snow Pigeons and some smart White-throated Redstarts. We vowed to return for a spotlighting session but sadly a deterioration in the weather over the next few days prevented us from doing so.

We headed back towards Rouergai with more **Tibetan Foxes** and some close Black-necked Cranes on route before eventually arriving back at the hotel for a late lunch in 'Sid's Café'.

After a short rest we were back out on the road where we had seen the cat the night before and quickly found some even closer Black-necked Cranes, our first eight **Siberian Roe** and another fairly distant **Asian Badger.** As darkness fell we pulled out the spotlights but it was relatively quiet mammal-wise initially probably due in part to the surprisingly heavy traffic on what is only a side road. However we eventually found a **Red Fox** and shortly afterwards found what was probably the same **Chinese Desert Cat** as the night before although it was more distant and the views less satisfying than the day before.

We returned to the hotel for dinner and a well-earned night's sleep.



Black-necked Cranes (Steve Holloway)

29th October

The morning saw us take a change of direction as we headed out towards the forests and hillsides of Baixi in search of ungulates and pheasants although the early morning mist and rain made scanning difficult. The first mammal of the morning proved to be an obliging **Red Fox** feeding on something close to the road but 15 minutes later as we ascended into the valley things got better when a superb **Siberian Weasel** was spotted to the left of the road, crossed the road in front of the first vehicle, and then stood on its back legs looking at the second vehicle as we squeeked it in. It gave us a great opportunity to compare it with the Mountain Weasel we had seen a few days earlier and the blackish face and black tip to the tail were clearly visible. One of the highlights of the trip.



Siberian Weasel (Steve Holloway)

We continued on to the main área for ungulates but visibility was poor so we continued onto Baixi and took a turn that took us into another slightly clearer valley. The valley was bereft of mammals but we surprisingly saw Rufous-breasted and Robin Accentors alongside each other, and a number of new birds including a terrific Przewalski's Nuthatch, Crested Tit Warbler, Chinese White-browed and Pink-rumped Rosefinches and Common Crossbill and Ewan had brief views of a Blue Eared Pheasant which eluded the rest of the group.



Robin Accentor (Steve Holloway)

Rufous-breasted Accentor (Steve Holloway)

We eventually stopped at a small village along the road to scan for pheasants but picked up two **Siberian Roe** and Giant Laughingthrushes instead. We headed back through Baixi to the original valley and a stop to scan for Blue Eared Pheasants produced the unexpected bonus of a group of four Blood Pheasants picked up in Pete's thermal imaging scope and Sid spotted yet another **Asian Badger** on a distant hillside.

We returned to Rouergai where Sid cooked up a veritable feast of omelettes and toasties.

Our afternoon drive took us back to the Pallas's Cat quarry but it was bitterly cold in the brisk wind and we could only find another ten or so **Tibetan Foxes** for our efforts. We attempted a short spotlighting session along the 'new road' where we encountered both species of **fox** before returning to Rouergai for dinner.

30th October

Another cold morning found us back out at the quarry but despite a considerable amount of effort we drew a further blank on the cats. Richard and Ray returned to the car as the weather deteriorated to scan from there but Sid continued around the back of the hill from where he and the rest of the group found three distant **Wolves** on the opposite side of the main road. Richard and Ray also found them after being alerted to their presence by Sid and decided to drive down to the road where they had slightly closer views and also encountered our only Tibetan Larks of the trip.

We reassembled back at the vehicles for a picnic breakfast before trying an área where Sid and Richard had first found Pallas's Cat in 2012 but the area is now largely fenced off and the best thing we could find was a Black Stork.



Plateau Pika (Steve Holloway)

We then took a short drive along the 'new road' but the road became increasingly icy so we aborted and headed back towards Rouergai for lunch.

After lunch we decided on a change of scenery and headed out on a different road to the south-west of Rouergai encountering some large groups of Black-necked Crane before turning off on a track into the Rouergai Marsh reserve where we had encountered desert cats in 2016.

We were soon enjoying the first of over 25 **Woolly Hares** encountered in the valley and as we crossed a causeway across the marsh we saw three Black Storks and the first Water Pipit of the trip. We continued further into the valley finding Tibetan Partridge, Little Owl and Hume's Ground Tit close to the track and eventually turned on the spotlight encountering the first eyeshine which frustratingly eluded identification shortly afterwards. Turning around for the drive back we picked up several more **Woolly Hares** in the spotlight before hitting the jackpot with a fantastic **Steppe Polecat** which entertained us as it hunted among the burrows of a pika colony, frequently dissapearing down one burrow only to reappear at the entrance of another several feet, or even metres, away. This was another unexpected bonus and the highlight of the trip for some of the group.

Extremely happy we carried on spotlighting back to the main road with an obliging Little Owl on a track side post and both **Tibetan** and **Red Foxes** seen on the way back. Back on the main road we decided to head straight back to Rouergai and arrived back just as the restaurant was about to close but the owners were happy to remain open and cooked up dinner in super quick time. A good end to an excellent evening.



Woolly Hare (Steve Holloway)

31st October

We woke to find very snowy conditions so drove out cautiously towards the quarry for a further look for Pallas's Cat. Once there Sid and most of the group headed out to search the área where the cat had been seen previously while Richard and Steve chose to remain closer to the car and scan the other side of the hill and the main quarry.

The cat proved elusive again but Sid's group did find another six **Tibetan Gazelles**, several **Tibetan Foxes**, and had distant views of six **Wolves** towards Rouergai Marsh while Steve and Richard found another group of three **Wolves**, probably the same group as the day before, a nice Peregrine that exited the quarry just after dawn, and everyone was able to enjoy the only Cinereous (Black) Vulture of the trip perched up on a nearby hillside.

After a picnic breakfast we headed back towards Rouergai and a short diversion off on a side road produced another two **Wolves**, a total of eleven for the morning, more **Tibetan Foxes**, and our only Red Collared Dove of the trip on a roadside wire.

After lunch and a rest back at the hotel we headed out to Baixi for the afternoon and the group made an unsuccessful attempt to look for Gansu Pika in the forest there in damp conditions, two **Siberian Roe** being slight compensation for some of the group.

We headed back towards Rouergai and started spotlighting the 'desert cat' road. We soon picked up eyeshine from an apparent cat but poor conditions with sleet and snow caused prevented a positive identification and we gave up and headed back to town for dinner. We made another spotlighting attempt after dinner but with weather conditions just as bad as before we quickly gave up and conceded defeat, a slightly dissapointing end to our otherwise largely successful time on the plateau.

1st November

The planned early start for the long drive to Tangjiahe was delayed by early morning ice on the roads with Sid rightly preferring to err on the side of caution and allow much of the ice to clear before setting out and we eventually set out nearly two hours later than originally planned.

Continuing to remain cautious the first part of the drive was relatively slow but was enlivened by a roadside stop which produced our only Pine Bunting and Streaked Rosefinch of the trip along with a nice flock of Guldenstadt's Redstarts.

After a shop stop to stock up on supplies for a picnic lunch we continued south-east and were pleased to find a new tunnel seemingly open avoiding the need for a longer drive up and over the pass. However when we got to the other end of the tunnel it was actually blocked off with several vehicules queuing to exit. Fortunately some of the drivers were able to get the barriers removed enabling us to continue on our way. Others trying to pass the same way were less fortunate and were refused permission to go through the tunnel so we were extremely lucky.

A roadside stop beyond the tunnel for a picnic lunch proved equally fortuitous when Richard spotted six **Blue Sheep** high on an adjacent mountainside and we were all able to enjoy scope views of this unexpected bonus, a lifer for many of the group.

We continued onwards making several short stops in an impressive river valley but saw little of note on route to Pingwu. South of Pingwu after a roadside Crested Kingfisher, and a refuelling stop we turned off the main road and headed up towards Tangjiahe, roadworks slowing our progress before eventually reached Qingxi, the last town before the reserve and we had dinner in a restaurant there.

After dinner we made our way to the reserve and after obtaining our entrance permits were soon spotlighting on our way up to the hotel. Before reaching the main nature reserve the second vehicle picked up bright blue-green eyeshine on the opposite side of the vehicle but its owner remained annoyingly hidden in thick vegetation.

Entering the main reserve we started picking up more mammals including our first impressive **Takin**, **Reeve's Muntjac** and a close **Hog Badger** although only a rear end view for the second vehicle.

We eventually arrived at the hotel at 2145 and unpacked and quickly retired for the night.

2nd November

With no rest for the wicked we were back out on the road at 0500 and started spotlighting along the main access road. Richard's car headed out ahead of Sid's and we were rewarded with nice views of **Himalayan (Masked) Palm Civet** and **Hog Badger** and **Wild Boar** although frustrating the only **Northern Leopard Cat** (recently split from Sunda Leopard Cat) of the trip dissapeared quickly when found by Richard in the spotlight and was missed by everyone else. **Takin** and **Reeve's Muntiac** were common seen as expected.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast at 'Sid's Café' and then headed out for a walk initially along the river near the hotel and then up the track behind the hotel where we did a return walk of around 4 kilometres. It was relatively quiet but we did add our first **Pere David's Rock Squirrels** to the trip list and had close views of several tame **Tibetan Macaques** in the hotel car park. The best of the birds were several Brown Dippers and we frequently encountered groups of three dippers with two males seemingly courting a female. Other birds included an obliging Crested Kingfisher, a pair of Little Forktails, Mountain Hawk Eagle, a pair of Crested Goshawks and some nice Black-throated Tits.

After lunch back at 'Sid's Café' and some free time around the hotel we headed out for a later afternoon drive where we had nice views of **Takin** and two **Wild Boar** although we were somewhat bemused concerned to find a Chinese film crew seemingly filming an episode of a Chinese soap opera around the protection station between the hotel and the main gate. This continued well into the evening as they were still filming when we spotlighted the same stretch later in the evening.



Takin (Steve Holloway)

Arriving back at the hotel Ray had a near miss when a **Takin** that had been standing outside the lobby came charging past him as he walked back to the hotel lobby! What was assumed to be the same individual was feeding feet from the cars when we returned to them for the evening spotlighting session after dinner at the hotel.

The evening spotlighting session was pretty quiet probably not being helped by the bright lights emanating from the Chinese film crew on route but we did see a nice **Himalayan (Masked) Palm Civet** along with some commoner ungulates before returning to the hotel.

3rd November

Although the film crew had packed up and gone home or back to the hotel the pre-dawn spotlighting was dissapointing although Ewan spotted a nice Tawny Fish Owl on the far bank of the river and a short post-dawn walk back at the protection station produced another Little Forktail.

After breakfast back at the hotel we took the shuttle bus up the track behind the hotel but decided against getting off at the top due to the number of tourists milling around and chose to eventually get off about three kilometres back towards the hotel. From here we walked back towards the hotel birding on route but it was relatively quiet except for a single White-backed Woodpecker and a troop of **Tibetan Macaques** until Sid's exceptional spotting produced a small group of the much-wanted **Golden Snub-nosed Monkeys** in a mountainside clearing about a kilometre or more away. Although distant everyone in the group enjoyed watching the monkeys through the scope and eventually we realised that what had initially appeared to be a small group of six animals was actually a large troop of over 40 mammals, a terrific sight even at this range.

Extremely pleased with the monkeys we continued our walk back towards the hotel and were rewarded with close range views of our only **Tufted Deer** of the trip near a protection station. It was a real case of 'chalk and cheese' with the deer being extremely close and a complete contrast to the views of the monkeys.



Tufted Deer (Pete Wheeler)

Continuing walking back towards the hotel most of the group eventually jumped onto a passing shuttle bus after a six kilometre walk but Jean decided to continue walking down and did disturb something that may have been a Eurasian Otter in a river on the way back to the hotel but could unfortunately not pin it down.

After a late lunch most of the group chose to explore the area around the hotel with several walking the lower section of the Fragrance trail where Richard saw at least eight **Reeve's Muntjac** and Grey-headed Woodpecker, while at least two species of unidentifiable bats were seen feeding around the hotel towards dusk.

After dinner back in the hotel restaurant we were back out on the road for our final night's spotlighting of the trip. We put a considerable amount of effort in for ferret badgers but despite a couple of false alarms we drew a blank. We did however manage to find our only **Chinese Goral** at Tangjiiahe, four **Himalayan (Masked) Palm Civets** including an adult with two young, at least seven **Reeve's Muntjac** and a **Hog Badger** that crosed the road in front of the car.

We eventually got back to the hotel around 2330 slightly dissapointed at having drawn a blank with the ferret badgers.

4th November

Most of the group were up for another 0500 start although Tom decided to have a morning off, and Richard decided to stay behind to free up space in the vehicle for the others, a move which proved to be a mistake.

The group quickly headed out towards the best area for **Chinese Ferret Badgers** and immediately struck gold with one feeding in a roadside culvert. It walked alongside the car and across the road in front of the car giving everyone great views. For some it was the mammal of the trip.



Chinese Ferret Badger (Pete Wheeler)

Two **Himalayan (Masked) Palm Civets** were also seen in the road but the group celebrated their success by returning to the hotel for some well-earned additional sleep and were back in their beds by 0630!

After a short rest and a final breakfast in 'Sid's Café' we loaded up the vehicles for the drive back to Dujiangyan north of Chengdu. The numbers of Chinese tourists thronging around the hotel car park waiting for shuttle buses and the large number of cars in the car park when we reached the entrance indicated that we were definitely leaving at the right time and that the park was likely to be packed with tourists over the weekend, particularly as there was also a conservation conference taking place in the hotel itself.

Birding near the entrance to the park and along the road towards Dujiangyan produced our first Little and Black-necked Grebes, and Common Kingfisher of the trip but the day was largely spent driving and we eventually arrived at our hotel around 1800 hours and after unloading the vehicle went out for dinner along with Sid's wife Meg, and young son Saker, with Saker entertaining us with a demonstration of Kung Fu during dinner. A series of toasts rounded off a pleasant evening.

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5th November

Most of the group were up at 0700 for a final walk in a nearby park and were rewarded with the only **Pallas's Squirrel** of the trip along with an unidentifiable bat and a selection of new birds for the trip including White-browed Laughingthrushes, Chinese and Grey-winged Blackbirds, Light-vented Bulbuls, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker and Grey-capped Greenfinches.

After breakfast back at the hotel for some we were soon packed and heading back to the airport for our flights back to the UK with Jean Dille staying on for a further 24 hours before his flight back to Belgium, at the end of a highly successful first Wildwings' mammal tour to Sichuan.

MAMMALS

Nomenclature follows A Guide to the Mammals of China (Smith and Xie).

1 - Tibetan Macaque Macaca thibetana

Labahe: Two on the 23rd & 30+ on the 24th. Tangjiahe. 10+ daily.

2 - Golden Snub-nosed Monkey Rhinopithecus roxellana

40+ on a distant hillside viewable from the track approximately six kilometres from the hotel at Tangjiahe on the 3rd.

3 - Pere David's Rock Squirrel Sciurotamias davidianus

Tangjiahe: Two on the 3rd and 2+ on the 4th.

4 - Swinhoe's Striped Squirrel Tamiops swinhoei

Labahe: 6+ on the 24th and one on the 25th.

5 - Pallas's Squirrel Callosciurus erythraeus

One in the park at Dujiangyan on the 5th.

6 - Red-and-White Flying Squirrel Petaurista alborufus

Labahe: Common (10+) on all three night drives.

7 - Grey-headed Flying Squirrel Petaurista elegans

Labahe: One seen at close range on the 25th and possibly one distantly on the 24th.

8 - Complex-toothed Flying Squirrel Trogopterus xanthipes

Labahe: One on the 24th and another on the 25th.

9 - Woolly Hare Lepus comus

Rouergai – three SE of Rouergai on the 27th and 25+ in a valley SW of Rouergai on the 31st.

10 - Plateau (Black-lipped) Pika Ochotona curzoniae

Rouergai – abundant, 100s seen each day, and the reason for the exceptional numbers of mammalian and avian predators in the area.

11 - Confucian Niviventer (Chinese White-bellied Rat) Niviventer confucianus

Labahe: One on the 24th and two on the 25th. Tangjiahe: Probably encountered most nights with most unidentified rodents likely to have been this species.

Rodent sp?

Several unidentified rodents were seen particularly at Tangjiahe. An extremely large, long tailed and highly mobile rat was seen distantly at Labahe by the first vehicle but remains unidentified at the time of writing although was nicknamed 'Psycho' Rat.

12 - Pallas's Cat Felis manul

Rouergai – One of the highlights of the trip. Eyeshine from two individuals shortly prior to dawn on the 28th one of which was re-found by Sid shortly after dawn and performed well hunting pikas at one of our tradtional sites albeit in poor light.

13 - Chinese Desert (Mountain) Cat Felis bieti

Rouergai – two sightings of probably the same individual while spotlighting SE of Rouergai on the 27th with presumably the same individual in the same área on the 28th.

14 - Northern Leopard Cat Felis bengalensis

One seen briefly by Richard while spotlighting at Tangjiahe prior to dawn on the 3rd. Now Split from Sunda Leopard Cat found in Borneo and Sumatra.

15 - Himalayan (Masked) Palm Civet Paguma larvata

Tangjiahe: Three on the 2nd, four on the 3rd including a female with two young, and two prior to dawn on the 4th. All seen while spotlighting.

16 - 'Tibetan' Wolf Canus lupus

Rouergai: One on the 28th, three on the 30th and a total of eleven (five, three, one and two) on the 31st. All somewhat distant but great views of the three on the 30th interacting with each other.

17 - Tibetan Fox Vulpes ferrilata

Rouergai. Seen on all four full days with daily counts of four, 10+, 12+ and five.

18 - Red Fox Vulpes vulpes

One on route to Rouergai and daily counts of three, one, four and one at Rouergai.

19 - Mountain Weasel Mustela altaica

At Labahe two brief daytime sightings of possibly the same individual on the 26th.

20 - Siberian Weasel Mustela sibirica

Fabulous close range daytime views of an individual that responded well to squeeking at Baixi on the 29th.

21 - Steppe Polecat Mustela eversmanni

A fabulous individual watched hunting at night in a valley south-west of Rouergai on the 30th. It was interesting to watch it disappear down one burrow only to re-emerge from another several metres away,

22 - Red Panda Ailurus fulgens

A good showing at Labahe with a distant individual on the morning of the 24th followed by a much closer individual the same afternoon. On the 25th at least two distant individuals, a much closer individual seen by Richard and Tom before it descended into the bamboo, another seen by Sid and Fugui walking along a track just in front of them and a final individual initially found by Jean and seen at close range by the whole group albeit in partial cover for much of the time.

23 - Hog Badger Arctonyx collaris

Tangjiahe: One on the drive into the reserve on the 1st, two on the 2nd and another on the 3rd.

24 - Asian Badger Meles leucurus

Three sightings of what was a previously difficult to find species but which now appears relatively reliable. One about 25 kilometres from Rouergai on the 27th, another 8 kilometres south-east of Rouergai on the 28th and a third near Baixi on the 29th. All three were daytime sightings high on roadside slopes with the initial individual being positively inter-galactic when first sighted but fortunately much closer when we drove further along the road.

25 - Chinese Ferret Badger Melogale moschata

Excellent close range views of one for most of the group on our final morning in Tangjiahe and mammal of the trip for some.

26 - Wild Boar Sus scofa

Tangjiahe. Two sightings on the 3rd. A single boar and a sow with a young one.

27 - Siberian Roe Capreolus pygargus

Eight south-east of Rouergai on the 28th, two near Baixi on the 29th and 30th. .

28 - Tufted Deer Elaphodus cephalophus

Scarce this year but the one that we did see near the protection station at Tangjiahe on the 3rd performed superbly at close range during the early afternoon.

29 - Reeve's Muntjac Muntjacus reevesi

Up to 15 each day at Tangjiahe.

30 - Red Deer Cervus elaphus

Up to three per day at Labahe were releases from the aborted introduction scheme.

31 - Sambar Deer Rusa unicolor

Up to 11 each night at Labahe.

32 - Chinese Takin Bodorcas taxicolor

Common at Tangjiahe with up to 15 being seen on each drive.

33 - Chinese Serow Capricoris milneedwardsii

Great views of a single sub-adult male while spotlighting at Labahe on the 24th and 25th.

34 - Chinese Goral Naemorhedus griseus

Nightly counts of one, 6+ and two at Labahe and one at close range at Tangjiahe on the 3rd.

35 – Blue Sheep Pseudois nayeur

An unexpected bonus of six on a distant mountainside as we had a picnic lunch stop on route from Rouergai to Tangjiahe.

36 – Tibetan Gazelle *Procapra picticaudata*

Not seen on either recce but four near Rouergai on the 28th and at least six at a second site on the 31st.



Red-and-White Flying Squirrel (Steve Holloway)

BIRDS

Notes:

- R & B Rouergai and Baixi including road from Songpan to Rouergai.
- Tang Tanjiahe L Leader only. H heard only.

			Labahe	R&B	Tang.	Additional records
1	Ruddy Shelduck	Tadorna ferruginea		Х		
2	Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos		Х		Also Tangjiahe-Dujiangyan
3	Red-crested Pochard	Netta rufina		Х		
4	Goosander	Mergus merganser		Х		
5	Tibetan Partridge	Perdix hodgsoniae		Х		
6	Koklass Pheasant	Pucrasia macrolopha			Н	
7	Blue Eared Pheasant	Crossoptilon auritum		Х		
8	Blood Pheasant	Ithaginis cruentus		Х		
9	Common Pheasant	Phasianus colchicus		Х		Also Rouergai-Tangjiahe
10	Lady Amherst's Pheasant	Chrysolophus amherstiae	Х			
11	Black Stork	Ciconia nigra		Х		
12	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis				Tangjiahe-Dujiangyan
13	Black-necked Grebe	Podiceps nigricollis				Tangjiahe-Dujiangyan
14	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta				Chengdu
15	Great Egret	Casmerodius albus		Χ		
16	Eastern Cattle Egret	Bubulcus coromandus				North of Dujiangyan
17	Chinese Pond Heron	Ardeola bacchus	Х	Х	Х	
18	Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax		Χ		
19	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo				Tangjiahe-Dujiangyan
20	Cinereous Vulture	Aegypius monachus		Χ		
21	Lammergeier	Gypaetus barbatus		Χ		
22	Himalayan Griffon	Gyps himalayensis		Х		
23	Upland Buzzard	Buteo hemilasius		Χ		
24	Himalayan Buzzard	Buteo burmanicus		Χ		
25	Eastern Buzzard	Buteo japonicus	Х			Also Tangjiahe-Dujiangyan
26	Hen Harrier	Circus cyaneus		Χ		
27	Bonelli's Eagle	Aquila fasciata		Χ		
28	Mountain Hawk Eagle	Spizaetus nipalensis			Х	
29	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus	Х	Х		
30	Northern Goshawk	Accipiter gentilis	Х	Х		
31	Crested Goshawk	Aquila chryggsaetos	Х		Х	
32	Black-necked Crane	Grus nigricollis		Х		
33	Northern Lapwing	Vanellus vanellus		Х		
34	Speckled Wood Pigeon	Columba hodgsonii	Х			
35	Snow Pigeon	Columba leuconota		Χ		

			Labahe	R&B	Tang.	Additional records
36	Hill Pigeon	Columba rupestris		Х		
37	Spotted Dove	Streptopelia chinensis				On route to Rouergai
38	Oriental Turtle Dove	Streptopelia orientalis	Х			
39	Red Collared Dove	Streptopelia tranquebaric		Х		
40	Collared Scops Owl	Otus lettia				Heard Dujiangyan
41	Little Owl	Athene noctua		Х		
42	Himalayan Owl	Strix nivicolum	Х			
43	Tawny Fish Owl	Ketupa flavipes	Х	Х		
44	Common Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis				Tangjiahe-Dujiangyan
45	Crested Kingfisher	Megaceryle lugubris		Х		
46	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Х			
47	Speckled Piculet	Picumnus innominatus	Х			
48	Grey-capped Woodpecker	Dendrocopos canicapillus	Х			
49	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos major		Х		
50	Crimson-breasted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos cathpharius	Х			
51	White-backed Woodpecker	Dendrocopos leucotos			Х	
52	Darjeeling Woodpecker	Dendrocopos darjellensis	Х			
53	Grey-headed Woodpecker	Picus canus	Х	Х	Х	
54	Bay Woodpecker	Blythipicus pyrrhotis	Х			
55	Peregrine	Falco peregrines		Х		
56	Saker	Falco cherrug		Х		Also east of Songpan
57	Eurasian Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus		Х		
58	Brown Shrike	Lanius cristatus	Х			
59	Long-tailed Shrike	Lanius schach	Х			
60	Chinese Grey Shrike	Lanius sphenocercus		Х		
61	Green Shrike Babbler	Pteruthius xanthochlorus	Х			
62	Eurasian Jay	Perisoreus internigrans			Х	
63	Red-billed Blue Magpie	Urocissa erythrorhyncha	Х		Х	
64	Azure-winged Magpie	Cyanopica cyana		Х		
65	Black-billed Magpie	Pica pica	Х	Х	Х	
66	Spotted Nutcracker	Nucifraga caryocatactes	Х			
67	Red-billed Chough	Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax		Х		
68	Daurian Jackdaw	Corvus dauurica		Х		
69	Carrion Crow	Corvus corone		L		
70	Large-billed Crow	Corvus macrorhynchos	Х	Х	х	
71	Northern Raven	Corvus corax		Х		
72	Sichuan Tit	Poecile weigoldicus		Х		
73	Black-bibbed Tit	Poecile hypermelaenus		Х		
74	Pere David's Tit	Poecile davidi	Х			
75	White-browed Tit	Poecile superciliosus		Х		
76	Coal Tit	Periparus ater	Х			
77	Grey-crested Tit	Lophophanes dichrous		Х		

			Labahe	R&B	Tang.	Additional records
78	Japanese Great Tit	Parus minor		Х		
79	Green-backed Tit	Parus monticolus	Х	Х	Х	
80	Yellow-browed Tit	Sylviparus modestus	Х		Х	
81	Hume's Ground Tit	Pseudopodoces humilis		Х		
82	Oriental Skylark	Alauda gulgula		Х		
83	Horned Lark	Eremophila alpestris		Х		
84	Tibetan Lark	Melanocorypha maxima		Х		
85	Collared Finchbill	Spizixos semitorques	Х		Х	
86	Brown-breasted Bulbul	Pycnonotus xanthorrhous	Х			
87	Light-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus sinensis				Dujiangyan
88	Mountain Bulbul	Ixos mcclellandii			Х	
89	Asian House-Martin	Delichon dasypus	Х			
90	Rufous-faced Warbler	Abroscopus albogularis			Х	
91	Grey-sided Bush Warbler	Cettia brunnifrons	Х			
92	Black-throated Bushtit	Aegithalos concinnus			Х	
93	White-browed Tit Warbler	Leptopoecile sophiae		Х		East of Songpan
94	Crested Tit Warbler	Leptopoecile elegans		Х		
95	Dusky Warbler	Phylloscopus fuscatus	Х			
96	Buff-throated Warbler	Phylloscopus subaffinis	Х			
97	Buff-barred Warbler	Phylloscopus pulcher	Х			
98	Pallas's Leaf Warbler	Phylloscopus proregulus	Х	Х		
99	Sichuan Leaf-Warbler	Phylloscopus forresti	Х	Х		
100	Yellow-browed Warbler	Phylloscopus inornatus	Х			
101	Claudia's Leaf-Warbler	Phylloscopus claudia	L			
102	Streak-throated Scimitar Babbler	Pomatorhinus ruficollis			Х	
103	Sukatchev's Laughingthrush	Garrulax sukatschewi		Н		
104	Plain Laughingthrush	Garrulax davidi		Х		
105	Giant Laughingthrush	Garrulax maximus		Х		
106	White-browed Laughingthrush	Garrulax sannio				Dujiangyan
107	Elliot's Laughingthrush	Garrulax elliotii	Х	Х	Х	
108	Red-billed Leothrix	Leiothrix lutea	Х		Х	
109	Chinese Fulvetta	Fulvetta striaticollis		Х		East of Songpan
110	Grey-hooded Fulvetta	Fulvetta cinereiceps	Х			
111	Ashy-throated Parrotbill	Sinosuthora alphonsianus	Х			
112	Black-chinned Yuhina	Yuhina nigrimenta			Х	
113	Stripe-throated Yuhina	Yuhina gularis	Х			
114	White-collared Yuhina	Yuhina diademata	Х		Х	
115	Goldcrest	Regulus regulus	L			
116	Eurasian Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes			Х	
117	Chestnut-vented Nuthatch	Sitta nagaensis	Х			
118	Przewalski's Nuthatch	Sitta przewalskii		Х		
119	Hodgson's/Bar-tailed Treecreeper	Certhia hodgsoni/himalayana	?			

			Labahe	R&B	Tang.	Additional records
120	Eurasian Starling	Sturnus vulgaris		Х		
121	White-cheeked Starling	Sturnus sericeus		Х		
122	Crested Myna	Acridotheres cristatellus				Chengdu only
123	Chinese Blackbird	Turdus merula mandarinus				Dujiangyan
124	Grey-winged Blackbird	Turdus boulboul				Dujiangyan
125	Slaty-backed Flycatcher	Ficedula hodgsonii	L			
126	Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher	Ficedula strophiata	Х			
127	Taiga Flycatcher	Ficedula albicilla	Х			
128	Himalayan Bluetail	Tarsiger rufilatus	Х		Х	
129	Golden Bush Robin	Tarsiger chrysaeus	Х			
130	Little Forktail	Enicurus scouleri	Х		Х	
131	White-throated Redstart	Phoenicurus auroreus		Х		
132	Hodgson's Redstart	Phoenicurus hodgsoni	Х		Х	
133	Daurian Redstart	Phoenicurus auroreus	Х			
134	Blue-fronted Redstart	Phoenicurus frontalis	Х	Х	Х	
135	Guldenstadt's Redstart	Phoenicurus erythrogaster		Х		
136	White-capped Water-Redstart	Chaimarrornis leucocephal	Х		Х	
137	Plumbeous Water-Redstart	Rhyacornis fuliginosus	Х	Х	Х	
138	Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush	Monticola rufiventris			L	
139	Grey Bushchat	Saxicola ferrea	Х			
140	Siberian Stonechat	Saxicola maurus	Х			
141	Brown Dipper	Cinclus pallasii	Х		Х	
142	Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	Dicaeum ignipectus				Dujiangyan
143	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	Passer montanus		Х		
144	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus			Х	
145	Rock Petronia	Petronia petronia		Х		
146	White-rumped Snowfinch	Pyrgilauda taczanowskii		Х		
147	Rufous-necked Snowfinch	Pyrgilauda ruficollis		Х		
148	Rufous-breasted Accentor	Prunella strophiata	Х	Х		
149	Robin Accentor	Prunella rubeculoides		Х		
150	White Wagtail	Motacilla alba	Х	Х	Х	
151	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea	Х			
152	Olive-backed Pipit	Anthus hodgsoni	Х			
153	Water Pipit	Anthus spinoletta		Х		SE of Songpan
154	Brambling	Fringilla montifringilla	Х		х	
155	Hawfinch	Coccothraustes coccothraustes	Х			
156	Grey-headed Bullfinch	Pyrrhula erythaca		Х		
157	Dark-breasted Rosefinch	Procarduelis nipalensis	Х			
158	Pink-rumped Rosefich	Carpodacus eos		Х		
159	Vinaceous Rosefinch	Carpodacus vinaceus	Х			
160	Chinese White-browed Rosefinch	Carpodacus dubius		Х		
161	Streaked Rosefinch	Carpodacus rubicilloides		Х		

			Labahe	R&B	Tang.	Additional records
162	Grey-capped Greenfich	Chloris sinica				Dujiangyan
163	Twite	Linaria flavirost		Х		
164	Common Crossbill	Loxia curvirostra		Х		
165	Slaty Bunting	Emberiza siemsseni	Х	Х		
166	Godlewski's Bunting	Emberiza godlewskii		Х		
167	Pine Bunting	Emberiza leucocephalos		Х		
168	Little Bunting	Emberiza pusilla	Х		Х	



Guldenstadt's Redstarts (Steve Holloway)

Tawny Fish Owl (Steve Holloway)



Blood Pheasants (Steve Holloway)

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