

Taiwan – Endemics & Winter Birds

Naturetrek Tour Report

5th – 14th January 2024



Taiwan Blue Magpie



Rufous-faced Warbler



Collared Bush Robin



Swinhoe's Pheasant

Tour report kindly compiled by client Malcolm Collis, photos by Simon Walkley



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Richard Foster (leader) and 7 Naturetrek Clients.

Tim, Liz and Simon had arrived the day before from the UK, as had Greg and Marie, but direct from California. Richard B and Malcolm (author) had met up at Heathrow for the Cathay Pacific leg to Hong Kong, before the relatively short hop over to Taiwan, arriving the following day about midday local time. None of the group had been to Taiwan before.

Day 1

Saturday 6th January

Travel to Taiwan

Members of the group began their journeys from both UK and US airports.

Day 2

Saturday 6th January

Taipei Airport; nearby wetlands; Shimen Reservoir; Dongshi

Exiting the Taipei airport Richard B and Malcolm, met up with the other five who were waiting for them, along with our Tour Leader, Richard Foster. Originally from Northern Ireland, he has lived in Taiwan for well over 20 years and is practically a local! We made our way out to our coach and met our driver Miss Cheng, and with bags loaded up we boarded the well-appointed 24-seater coach – plenty of room for the seven of us!

Heading south from the airport, thus avoiding Taipei City, we soon arrived at our first trip stop-off, but not before crossing over a river bridge with hundreds of Black-crowned Night Herons roosting on the hand rails! The area consisted of both flooded and dry small fields, which held plenty of tantalising birds. We were soon ticking them off: Common Moorhen were in with plenty of waders such as Black-winged Stilts, Pied Avocets, Little Ringed Plover, Common Snipe, Marsh, Wood and Common Sandpipers and Common Greenshank. There were also good numbers of Grey Heron and Great and Little Egrets. A Long-tailed Shrike, a pair of Black-collared Starlings and a Crested Myna would be the only trip sightings, but the Black Drongo would become a frequent sight, as would the Light-vented (Chinese) Bulbuls. The pond margins held plenty of wagtails of various types (the striking Eastern Yellow, Grey and White), while a pair of Red-throated Pipits fed in a drier field. In the roadside vegetation were several Black-faced Buntings, Scaly-breasted Munias and Plain Prinias. Tree Sparrows, Pacific Swallows and Spotted Doves were plentiful.

Back on the coach, we headed a further 25km south to our next stop, the Shimen Reservoir. This large body of water serves Taipei and held a few waterfowl: Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Teal, Eurasian Wigeon and the hoped-for Eastern Spot-billed Duck. Good numbers of House Swift were overhead. A Crested Goshawk swept over as did a Black (Black-eared) Kite, while a pair of Large-billed Crows circled. Near the main buildings were a few introduced Javan and Common Mynas.

We set off along the reservoir road in search of our main quarry, the endemic Taiwan Blue Magpie. It wasn't long before a well-concealed flock high up in the roadside trees began responding to Richard's play-back. We all managed brief views before continuing. However, the flock had different ideas and followed us, until at one point they had descended right alongside us, just metres away, giving crippling eye-level views of these stunning birds.

We also saw two more endemics: the gorgeous Taiwan Barbet in good numbers, and a single lovely Taiwan Whistling Thrush. A flock of white-eyes (Japanese or Warbling or Swinhoe's – just to confuse!) were around, and Grey Treepie, Oriental Magpie and a flock of Black Bulbuls were also spotted. A brilliant way to start our endemic listing!

We loaded back onto the coach to head the 100km south for our first overnight stop in the Dasyueshan region. It was dark by the time we arrived at a Dongshi restaurant for dinner, where we had a traditional Taiwanese meal, served on a lazy Susan onto which dish after dish were placed. Replete, we then continued to our nearby accommodation: fairly basic but served the purpose. This was different to that on our itinerary and appears not to have a name other than it was at the 13km marker (altitude 845m) on the road leading to the Dasyueshan National Forest Recreational Area. Following our first listing session it was off to bed in anticipation of an early start in the morning.

Day 3

Sunday 7th January

Dasyueshan Mid-elevation to viewing platform at the 23km marker

It was straight to 06.00 breakfast before a 06.30 departure. Stopping off fairly soon, we made our way along a side road, picking up White-rumped Munia and Plumbeous Water Redstart in a small stream, which also provided a Common Kingfisher and Striped Prinia. The onomatopoeic endemic Taiwan Yuhinas were in good numbers, and in with the several flocks were, variously: Rufous-faced Warbler, Arctic Warbler, White-bellied Erpornis, Plain Flowerpecker, Green-backed Tit, and the lovely endemic Yellow Tit. Taiwan Barbets were also showing, as was a Black-naped Monarch. Asian House Martins were overhead.

Back at the coach, Miss Cheng had set up the first of many roadside 'tea stations', serving up a range of drinks and snacks. A pair of rare Collared Finchbills were admired over our teas and coffees. Our next stop had us walking another quiet section of the road picking up fleeting glimpses of

Taiwan Scimitar Babbler, Taiwan Hwamei and Rusty Laughingthrush, all endemics. We stopped off at a small roadside temple. These are dotted about everywhere and Richard explained the significance of them and the component parts. Next to it, calling, was another endemic, Rufous-crowned Laughingthrush, but they were playing even harder to spot. Richard circled through the undergrowth and brought them to the front of the large bush, allowing brief views. Whilst we watched the Rufous-crowned Laughingthrush a Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzard drifted over. Carrying on with the walk, we were treated to excellent views of a pair of Crested Serpent Eagles which circled at low level close by. Mountain Hawk-eagle and Crested Goshawk completed the day's raptors. Lunch was another roadside affair with a large selection on offer.

Our final destination of the day would be a viewing platform at marker 23km, where the target bird would be the Swinhoe's Pheasant, a gorgeous endemic and a much sought-after one. As we neared the spot, we became aware of dozens and dozens of parked cars on the roadside, some with table and chairs set up with picnics and long-lens cameras on tripods. The small carpark was heaving, although Miss Cheng expertly found a spot. The viewing platform was likewise crammed full of photographers, all with expensive cameras and long lenses. The attraction was the trees, which only fruit for a few weeks and are a magnet for myriad birds. Numerous, stunning and endemic Taiwan Vivid Niltavas and the endemic and lovely White-eared Sibia were the focus of the attention for the

photographers trying to get flight shots. A Taiwan Barwing, endemic of course, was an unusual find at this low an elevation and the performance was topped off by Grey-chinned Minivet, Bronzed Drongo and Grey-cheeked Fulvetta.

We strolled a short way along the road when someone pointed out an endemic, Taiwan Hill Partridge, skulking in the roadside vegetation; we all managed to get views of it even though it didn't want to show itself. In contrast, the male and three female Swinhoe's Pheasants that suddenly materialised feeding on the verge nearby allowed a very close approach: brilliant! A brief view of a Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker completed the day and we boarded the bus to make our way back down to our accommodation, arriving at 17.50. With a quick turnaround, it was dinner at 18.15, followed by listing and an optional owl walk from the accommodation. The Mountain Scops Owl was responding to the play-back and was eventually briefly spotted flying between trees – unlike the calling Collared Scops Owl that was having none of it! The Mountain Scops Owl was later heard calling from a large tree close by our rooms.

Day 4

Monday 8th January

Dasyueshan National Forest to end (50km), stopping off at 15, 23, 35 and 41 kilometre markers

Away by 06.30, heading back out on the same road as yesterday, but this time heading for the high-elevation end at the 50km marker. Our first stop was only a couple of kilometres away, and by now it was light. Our target bird here was the endemic Chestnut-bellied (Varied) Tit. The 'crested' subspecies of Coal Tit was seen before Richard pointed out a single Chestnut-bellied Tit high up on the top of a dead tree. Time to move on.

Next stop was the viewing platform at marker 23km, as yesterday. A male Swinhoe's Pheasant ran across the road in front of the coach as we approached. It was equally as busy, although there was great excitement due to the presence of a much sought after endemic, the Taiwan (Island) Thrush. Two white-headed males and a female were giving stunning views. Also present, as yesterday, were White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Barwing and the niltavas, along with Taiwan Barbets, while a Taiwan Whistling Thrush also put in an appearance. A short stroll up the road produced brief views of a female White-tailed Robin in the roadside bushes. The lovely endemic Collared Bushrobin was altogether showier and put on quite a display for us.

Moving higher on up, the next stop was at 35km and the toll gate into the park. We had time for tea in the carpark while we admired the cherry blossom, which held plenty of yuhinas, Japanese White-eyes, Green-backed Tits and a Yellow Tit. Passing a temple in the carpark, we witnessed a Daoist priest chanting with his followers behind with offerings. We left them to it and set off on a walk on the Shaolai Siaosyue Shan national trail, taking note of the warnings for Formosan Black Bears, snakes and wasps! It was reasonably busy with local hikers. We hadn't gone far before we spotted the delightful endemic Taiwan Rosefinch; a male and a female sitting tight, giving great views. Richard was surprised to see them this low. We also picked up a small flock of lovely Fire-breasted Flowerpeckers, exactly where the books said they would be, around mistletoe clumps! On the way back, the rosefinches were still sitting tight, but had been joined by another male.

The next stop was at marker 41km next to a small mountain stream, which was now just a trickle. The hoped for Little Forktail failed to put in an appearance, although a Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzard drifting over was some compensation.

We arrived at the end of the road at the car park at 50km, at 2578m altitude. It was decidedly colder here, and we were grateful we'd all packed warm clothing, hats and gloves, although it was dry and sunny, as it would be throughout our stay. Here the hoped for target bird would be the Mikado Pheasant, although Richard's enquiries revealed that none had been seen in the last few days. From the car park there were several pairs of Spotted Nutcrackers showing the distinctive plumage of the endemic *owstoni* subspecies.

Our first walk took us to a small pond/lake, called Tianchih, apparently formed by three effects: a meteorite, a volcano, and orogeny (the folding of the earth's crust)! Here we were treated to up-close views of a confiding flock of endemic, beautiful White-whiskered Laughingthrushes. A lovely Collared Bushrobin also put on a show. Continuing our walk, an Olive-backed Pipit fed unconcernedly on the ground before us, while in the trackside undergrowth was a cracking Taiwan Fulvetta, more yuhinas, more Taiwan Rosefinches and Barwings, Coal Tits and a tiny Rufous-faced Warbler. A Eurasian Nuthatch was at the top of a dead tree, eclipsed by a fly-over Flamecrest – yet another endemic.

Back at the carpark, it was time for a late lunch, including (hot) hot dogs and pot noodles; these were ready by the time park officials had spotted the two camping stoves and insisted they were extinguished! All packed up and about to board the coach, we were summoned by another park official over towards the ablution blocks. Half expecting another admonishment, we were delighted to have a Formosan Serow pointed out, grazing right alongside the toilets. It was a strange-looking creature, resembling a cross between a deer and a goat, and actually in a genus of just four species, *Capricornis*. We made our way back down to our accommodation with dinner served soon after arrival, followed by listing and early beds.

Day 5

Tuesday 9th January

Dasyueshan National Forest to 50km

Once again, we were heading back up towards marker 50km by 06.30. We made several stops for short walks before stopping off at the 23km viewing platform: the photographers were already there! Richard spoke to an eminent guide leading a group of Japanese birders, and we felt quite grateful to have seen the blue magpies on our first day as his group had dipped out on them.

There were much the same birds here as yesterday, including the Island Thrushes. A short walk produced tantalising views of an endemic Steere's *Liocichla* as it flitted about calling in the undergrowth below us. Another endemic, a Taiwan Cupwing, was calling right alongside the road in dense undergrowth as it moved about, but, despite our best efforts, it refused to show itself – sadly, this was our only encounter of the trip. As we returned to the coach a female Swinhoe's Pheasant was happily feeding in the car park in amongst the tourists. A flock of eight Ashy Wood Pigeons sitting in a tree at our next stop was a good sighting as, apparently, they are “only ever seen in flight”. A Mountain Hawk-eagle drifted over, much to the angst of a Large-billed Crow which harried it out of its territory, before returning triumphantly to its mate.

A stroll amongst the cherry trees at the car park at marker 35km produced much the same as yesterday, although a close by Formosan Muntjac posed for photos. Tea was taken further on up the road alongside the local Xueshan Police Station, Heping Precinct, Taichung City Government Police Bureau. Richard and I had a long chat with the two officers inside: its outside thermometer showed 10°C.

With no further reports of any Mikado Pheasants we set off along the hiking trail, picking up White-backed Woodpecker, another Taiwan Rosefinch and good views of several Flamecrests in a mixed flock of yuhinas and the like.

The greatest excitement came at 15.17 when Richard's and a few others' mobile phones sounded an alert. Probably an earthquake, said Richard, until he looked at it: a 'Presidential Alert [Air Raid Alert] Missile Flyover Taiwan Airspace. Be Aware'. The increasing tension between this nation, not recognised as an independent sovereign country by the rest of the world, and China, had hit the news just before our departure, along with the upcoming presidential elections the day we were due to leave. However, any thoughts of impending doom were soon dispelled as Richard quickly established through social media that the message had been misinterpreted by officials and should have read 'satellite' rather than 'missile' – a slight difference! It did, however, bring into focus the state of affairs between Taiwan and its neighbour, just 160km away.

Back at the carpark a large Yellow-throated Marten ran across the lawn and along a drainage gully towards us. Being the largest marten of them all, it was quite impressive. Late dinner was again taken in the car park, but out of sight in the coach section, where hot dogs and noodles were prepared, along with plenty of other choices. When Miss Cheng went to start the coach there was a problem – it wouldn't start. Eventually, dispelling any fears of having to spend the night in the cold, the fault was traced to a cab isolating switch that had been knocked; we were then soon on our way back down.

Dinner and listing was at 19.30 and Richard asked if, as a group, we would be happy, tomorrow, to divert back up north to try and see a reported Spoon-billed Sandpiper – we didn't need asking twice, even though it meant an earlier than usual start.

Day 6

Wednesday 10th January

To Hsinchu City; Shizhao Village, Alishan

With bags outside the door by 05.00, we were soon on our way heading north to Hsinchu City, the capital of the semi-conductor. A Spoon-billed Sandpiper had been causing something of a twitch, being an extreme global rarity with less than 500 left in the wild, and an extreme Taiwan winter rarity. It didn't take that long, thanks to the excellent road infrastructure, to cover the 75km to the shore at the Xiangshan Wetlands, and although we arrived quite early, a crowd had already gathered. The tide was way out, and we imagined we would have to wait for it to turn and push the birds closer to us. However, one very helpful chap pointed out our quarry some 200m away, and we were all soon on to it. It was easily distinguished from the numerous Dunlin by its much smaller size and frenetic feeding style, dashing around after its prey. One or two photographers made their way out onto the 'crab watching boardwalk' which would bring them within 50 metres of the bird. Why not? So, we joined them and had brilliant views. Even a small tracked tractor returning from the crab nets and driving very close didn't disturb it. It continued to show well allowing the long-lensed photographers to get some stunning shots, which they proudly

showed off. One couple, just back from their honeymoon, had diverted here without telling their family or work that they were back – that's what you call dedication!

We had plenty of time as the tide slowly made its way in to admire the many other waders on offer: a single Greater Sand Plover, a few Pacific Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Sanderling, Dunlin, Common Snipe, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, lots of Kentish Plover, a few Ruddy Turnstones, and a delightful Red-necked Stint. We tried to turn some of the gulls into the smaller Saunders's, but they were all Black-headed Gulls. In amongst the hundreds of Grey Herons, Great and Little Egrets, Richard pointed out one that looked different – a Chinese (Swinhoe's) Egret, not much bigger than a Little Egret but with a heavier yellow beak. Ospreys were hunting out over the surf.

The tide eventually reached the point where the Spoon-billed Sandpiper was feeding and it flew off – and did the decent thing and landed not ten metres from the boardwalk giving us all brilliant views. We were about to leave anyway, but the crowd on the boardwalk was chased off by an official – that was probably what the gate at the entrance was about?

Feeling elated, we boarded the coach and found a nearby 7/11 for coffee and breakfast while marvelling at the intricate City entrance archway next to us. We headed for the Jincheng Lake in the Siangshan Wetland, a little way further north in the Gangnan region for our next stop, where more extreme rarities awaited us. The lake held good numbers of waders: Black-winged Stilt, Common Greenshank and a locally scarce Spotted Redshank in amongst Common Redshanks. There were also plenty of ducks and the like, with Northern Shoveler, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Northern Pintail, Eurasian Teal, Tufted Duck, a single Greater Scaup, Common Moorhen and Eurasian Coot all present, and the rarest of them all, a Mallard! However, the main reason for visiting was to try and see the Swan Goose; a rare and declining species which infrequently visits Taiwan. It was seen swimming in and out of the reeds in the company of a single Greylag Goose. We didn't get too excited by the latter sighting, until Richard told us that too was an extreme rarity here! The rarities didn't stop there. A nearby gaggle of geese were Bean Geese, with two Taiga and four Tundra, both 'species' being rarities in Taiwan.

With an excellent morning under our belt, it was time to move on 120km further south, heading for the Xiaping Nature Education Area Botanical Garden near Zhushan, some spotting a Black-winged Kite from the bus on the way. Here we were expecting the Malayan Night Heron to be common and walking around the grounds: sadly, they weren't. We did, however, pick up: Grey-capped Woodpecker, Black-naped Monarch, Taiwan Scimitar Babbler, White-eared Sibia, Javan Myna, and a new trip bird, the introduced White-rumped Shama. Much to Richard's disappointment, we exited the park heronless. Tea was taken just outside next to a large temple where we spotted a female Maroon Oriole showing well, high up in the tree tops. It flew off with a colourful male in tow. Also around were one or two Black and Bronzed Drongoes, and a Light-vented Bulbul.

At the Gukeng Service Area we pulled off the main road for fuel when Richard suddenly halted the bus and we hastily "de-bussed" as he had spotted a Malayan Night Heron – we had to be quick though, as we had stopped where we shouldn't have. One of the group ended up bare-footed! It was worth it as the lone Malayan Night Heron stayed put out in the open, allowing a close approach: relief all round. In the parking area most of the street lights had two or three Red Collared Doves perched up; lovely doves they were too.

Reunited with Miss Cheng and her coach, we continued to tonight's accommodation, but we managed a final short walk before we arrived and some of us saw the back end of a Taiwan Bamboo Partridge as it exploded into flight before us. The accommodation was marked up as 68K in the 'centre' of Shizhao village and arriving at 18.40 left us twenty minutes to settle in before the take-away arrived.

Day 7

Thursday 11th January

Upper Elevation Alishan, Yushan N.P.

Today it was an early 05.00 departure, heading further up Route 18 making for the Alishan Recreational Area in the Yushan National Park. Having failed to pick up the Mikado Pheasant in Dasyueshan, here offered the best chance of catching up with it. From the 68km spot we stopped, at the 90km mark where Richard said the pheasants may be spotted roadside from here on up. Simon sat up front next to Miss Cheng and Richard as an extra pair of pheasant-spotter eyes...but none were on show. It was really cold with a hard frost on the verges – extra layers would be needed!

At the Tataka visitor centre we set off along the road, passing the police and rescue centre where a female Red-flanked Bluetail was happily hopping around under the parked police cars. An Indian Black Eagle cruised by and not long after, around the corner, it or another one treated us to a really close eye level flyby. There were plenty of birds around: flocks of mainly yuhinas, interspersed with a trip first, a Black-throated Bushtit, Chestnut-bellied Tit, Green-backed Tit, Flamecrest, and a stunning male Grey-chinned Minivet. A couple of White-browed Bush Robins, together with several Collared Bush Robins gave a good opportunity for comparison. A flock of White-whiskered Laughingthrushes also held a Steere's Liochla and a Rusty Laughingthrush, both of which gave better views than before. There were also quite a few Taiwan Barbets and Nutcrackers around, plus a Taiwan Whistling Thrush.

The next stop was at the facilities at 107km. Here, a fairly sizeable troop of Formosan Rock Macaques was hanging about up to no good, no doubt attracted to the rich pickings to be had from unsuspecting visitors. The alpha male headed for the open door of the coach until I shooed him off; he fled glaring at me, looking daggers. From here we set out on a small road that climbed up into the forest. Reaching the Giant Hemlock tree, we turned right and followed the level road for quite some way. From this point there were plenty of dense bamboo patches around that should have been holding Golden Parrotbills, but try as we might, none were responding to calls throughout the rest of the walk.

We did, however, pick up other good birds including two new ones, Rufous-capped Babbler and Yellow-bellied Bush Warbler, plus a Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, all of whom prefer to stay hidden in the dense undergrowth and generally give the briefest of views. At the Mount Linzhi entrance which leads off to hiking trails into the mountains, with Mount Yushan before us being the highest in Taiwan at 3952m, we watched the steady stream of returning hikers. There are a hundred peaks that are considered to be a lifetime challenge, with some of the trails taking up to 12 days to complete: we were happy to stick to the tarmac, although Richard has done over seventy of them to date!

We carried on until we reached a grand building, the Lulin Lodge, which is accommodation reserved for VIPs of the highest order – and we're talking world leaders only. It doesn't get much use! Now, there was just an Olive-

backed Pipit making the most of the grounds. The return route failed to throw up any Parrotbills, so we left somewhat disappointed. Rather than take lunch at the rest area and run the gauntlet of the macaques, we headed off to another picnic area.

Traversing the highest point on the road at 2610m, the R18 changes to the R21 and the kilometre markers both end – ours at 108km while the other coming the other way stops at 144km – all very confusing. The railway track used to run to this point, servicing the logging industry and built by the Japanese during their occupation. The Tropic of Cancer transects the road hereabouts but, strangely, is unmarked!

At marker 141km, late lunch was taken in a small picnic area next to the single Fuqi Tree. Two red cypress trees had been previously destroyed in a fire, but left standing; the ‘husband and wife trees’ as they used to be called, until lightning reduced them to one! The remaining dead tree held a Coal Tit and Eurasian Nuthatch. There were no cars in the car park, but cooking equipment had been left on a picnic bench, attracting the attentions of a pair of Large-billed Crows. Just as we were wondering what had happened, a car turned up, packed up and drove off!

The return journey down as far as marker 90km was to be our last hope of spotting the elusive Mikado Pheasant. I took up spotting duties, and off we set. The light was fading, as were our chances of collecting this mega endemic, when, just 2.7 kilometres from the end of the pheasant section, there on the side of the road, was a magnificent male. An emergency stop had us all de-bussing but unfortunately only the first four out got a view of it as it casually strode over the grass and down a steep slope into the undergrowth, never to be seen again. Wow. A great spot, but mightily disappointing for the other three. The coach was turned around, and those three took up positions at the front as we back-tracked quite some way, in the hope of spotting another in the gathering gloom. It wasn't to be, and it was very dark by the time we left. We were back by 19.00 to find our take-away dinner waiting for us.

Day 8

Friday 12th January

Lower Elevation Alisan; Guantin; Jiangjun, Budai

We were moving on today, but not before a 06.00 walk in the vicinity of the hotel in amongst the tea plantations. It was just getting light when a pair of duetting Black-necklaced Scimitar Babblers responded to the play-back. They were very close but well hidden in the dense trackside vegetation, although we did get glimpses as they flitted around. One then gave good views as it flew across the track, still calling to its mate, before flying back. That was going to be the best view we were going to get of this skulking endemic.

Wandering back towards the hotel we spotted our first Oriental Turtle Doves of the trip, as well as Red Collared and Spotted Doves, followed by a few Russet Sparrows on the wires – a rare and declining Taiwan species. Also on the wires were some Brown-headed Thrushes. A good start to the day!

A short coach trip to the top of the village, the signs said we were in the Alishan Township, brought us to a large and splendidly ornate temple. Although we could hear calling Bamboo Partridges from the short track behind the temple, none were on show in amongst the tea plantations below us. Opposite the temple from the roadside retaining wall, we had great views just below us onto a semi-cultivated area with fruit trees and the like – it was full of birds. First up was a splendid male Siberian Rubythroat, followed by a stunning Daurian Redstart, as well as a pair of Collared Finchbills, a Rufous-capped Babbler, Red-faced Warbler, Black-faced Buntings and a Taiwan

Rosefinch. A passing raptor landed in a distant tree and after some debate we concluded it was a juvenile Crested Serpent Eagle – we later saw a pair of adults circling nearby.

We could have happily spent longer here but continued walking to the start of the Sakura Trail, a short trail dropping down steps through dense low vegetation where Bamboo Partridges were calling. We stayed on the main track while Richard circled round on another; eventually they broke cover and we all got good flight views of up to three birds – a bit of a relief for Richard. Giving surprisingly good views was a Japanese Bush Warbler flitting in the low vegetation.

The end of the track emerged opposite terraced cultivations. Within feet of the road, Richard picked up the call of an endemic Taiwan Bush Warbler. It stuck to one small low bush but, despite Richard's best efforts on his hands and knees, we only managed fleeting glimpses of bits of it. Another called nearby and this one was even closer to the road, probably only two feet away, but still wouldn't show itself properly – 'skulking and very elusive', the book says!

Walking back up towards the coach and temple, a few White-eared Sibias were in a small plantation, with a single Steere's *Liocichla* popping out to give a good, albeit brief, viewing. Entering the temple by the right door we had a good look round, marvelling at the work involved, then exited through the left door – only the Gods can use the middle door!

It was then back to the hotel for breakfast, packing, and an 11.00 departure down to the coast at Budai. We stopped off at a couple of spots en route picking up, firstly; good numbers of Grey-breasted Martins, Pacific Swallows, Asian House Martins and a rare Red-rumped Swallow. The next stop produced Grey-headed Woodpecker, White-bellied Erponis, Common Kingfisher, Taiwan Barbet, Grey Treepie and Plumbeous Water Redstart.

Eventually we arrived at wetland paddy field area not too far from the Pheasant-tailed Jacana Reserve at Guantin. One field was full of Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, a very localised Taiwan rarity, with plenty of waders such as Black-winged Stilts. A Ruddy-breasted Crake out in the open gave great views, while a pair of waders on the far bank turned out to be Long-toed Stints. A lovely Black-winged Kite drifted low over our heads.

Again, we could have stayed longer, but after a quick roadside lunch we were on the move again, heading for the Budai region. As we neared the wetlands at Jiangjun, a couple of fly-by Black-faced Spoonbills were spotted from the coach. We stopped off at a couple of spots overlooking the extensive tidal wetlands which was full of birds, with a dozen or more Black-faced Spoonbills, lots of Grey Herons, Great and Little Egrets with a trip first, Eastern Cattle Egret, although we had probably overlooked these before in amongst the multitude of other egrets. Good numbers of Caspian and Whiskered Terns were around, along with plenty of ducks: Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, a new trip bird, Eurasian Wigeon, and Eurasian Teal. The first trip Great Cormorants were spotted, as was a Striated Heron coming in to roost with the numerous Black-crowned Night Herons.

There were also many waders: Pied Avocets, Pacific Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Kentish Plover, Dunlin, Common Snipe, Common Redshank, Wood Sandpiper, together with Common Greenshank. We tried unsuccessfully to turn one or two into Nordmann's. One of the Eurasian Curlews looked a bit different and sported a very long bill. We suspected a Far Eastern Curlew, and as we got closer it flew and a couple of the group noted the dark rump, clinching the ID. A Bar-tailed Godwit was also a scarce sighting. The roadside shrubbery held

Striped and Plain Prinias, while Eastern Yellow, Grey and White Wagtails were on the shoreline, with an Olive-backed Pipit on the track.

The light was fading and the tide was still out, so we headed for our overnight hotel, Long Yuan (Dragon Garden) Hotel in Budai. After settling in and freshening up, we drove a short distance to a restaurant. The entrance was lined with large fish tanks and an array of creatures that would later be appearing on the menu! Our round table had a large lazy Susan, onto which a succession of dishes was served, and we helped ourselves. Once finished, we walked back to the hotel, did the day's listing in the foyer, then turned in – tomorrow would be a very long day.

Day 9

Saturday 13th January

Budai Wetlands and Estuary; Airport

Today was our last day, so we were off at 06.15 for a final session of birding. We stopped at the nearby wetlands in the Budai region. The car park and facilities were right alongside some lakes, which held plenty of birds. There were good numbers of Black-faced Spoonbills. A 2023 survey revealed that Taiwan held a wintering population of 4228, 64% of the world total, so a very significant proportion, with the area we were in being one of the most important in Taiwan. Also very rare were two accidental European Spoonbills in with their Black-faced cousins. Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Tufted Duck and Eurasian Teal were in good numbers, as were the Little Grebes, showing much variation. In amongst them was a Black-necked (Eared) Grebe, an accidental visitor. A pair of Grey-capped Woodpeckers showed in the car park trees, along with Red Collared and Spotted Doves.

Following our final 'roadside' breakfast we headed off the short distance to a track running along the northern side of the Baxhang River estuary. With estuary on one side and clam ponds, both wet and dry drained ones, the other side, the area was most productive and we were soon ticking off more good birds. Good numbers of Caspian and Whiskered terns were around, along with a few Gull-billed Terns, which were new for the trip. The small gulls were all Black-headed, although a large one that flew over our heads had us puzzled. Fortunately, Simon managed a brilliant flight shot, from which it was concluded it was a Mongolian gull, an unusual winter visitor.

Out on the mud flats were: Pacific Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, Dunlin, Common Snipe, Common Redshank, Wood Sandpiper, Sanderling, Common Sandpiper, Eurasian Curlew and Common Greenshank, none of which would turn themselves into a Nordmann's. Richard B picked up a Terek Sandpiper and most of the group also had reasonable views of a nearby Grey-tailed Tattler before it flew off. The clam ponds held lots of Marsh Sandpipers, Pied Avocets, and Black-winged Stilts, with a solitary Little Stint the rarest of them all. Eastern Yellow, Grey and White Wagtails and Olive-backed Pipits were making the most of the damp ponds. Grey-throated Martins and Pacific Swallows hawked over the numerous ponds.

In among the many egrets, an Intermediate was picked out, while the margins held Black-crowned Night Heron and a single Striated Heron. Great Cormorants were present in good numbers. A nearby stump sticking out the mud was the perch for a lovely Osprey, finishing off his breakfast. The track bushes held Yellow-bellied and Plain Prinias, Light-vented Bulbul and Black Drongo, with the best one being a trip first, a Brown Shrike. A pair of Oriental Magpies flew over too. The tide was supposed to be at its highest at 09.00 and we hoped it would push the birds closer to us, but for some reason, it seemed to be ebbing!

As we were leaving on the coach, one of the group spotted a Little Tern. Also spotted from the coach, perched on wires at a busy junction, were three Red-billed Starlings – everyone managed to see these scarce visitors. Back at the first stop-off point we headed off along a track beside the lakes, hoping to pick up a Cinnamon or Yellow Bittern in the channel: but a Common Kingfisher was the only thing showing.

Back at the lakes, a Yellow Bittern finally showed itself, giving great close views, as did a nearby Intermediate Egret. With nothing else new on the lakes and the Black-necked Grebe not showing, we loaded up and headed for the hotel. What we thought was the sound of hunting was apparently fire crackers – the Presidential election was today!

Back at the hotel by 10.45, showered, changed and packed, we were back on the coach by 11.15 and heading a short distance for an early lunch. We found an empty restaurant (many were very busy thanks to the elections - the Taiwanese have to return to their home town to vote, so it's a good opportunity for a family gathering) and sat down at a round table. A sheet of polythene covered the table cloth as bowls of local prawns, clams, oysters and many others were served up. As we tucked in discarded shells and the like were just stacked up on the table in front of us; by the time we had finished it looked as if a bomb had hit it – hence the polythene, as everything could just be wrapped up and discarded!

Back on the coach, after a few words and presentations to Miss Cheng and Richard for all that they had done for us, we were off heading 260km north to the airport, a drive that would probably take three hours. We made good progress, despite some busy sections, and arrived at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport in good time for the first flight. Greg and Marie were staying in an airport hotel as their flight back to California wasn't until tomorrow. However, the remaining five of us were, for some reason, booked in on three separate Cathay Pacific flights over to Hong Kong: Richard B and Simon were on the 18.35, I was on the 19.30 while Tim and Liz were on the 20.10 – all three flights were virtually empty! At Hong Kong, Richard alone was on the 22.55 Cathay Pacific, while the remaining four of us were on the 23.35. The departure board showed another three flights leaving this evening to London on different carriers. A very popular route, and our flight was ram-packed.

Day 10

Sunday 14th January

The return leg was just over three hours longer than coming out on exactly the same plane – thanks to the jet stream! CX255 landed at Heathrow about on time at 06.30, and thanks to being early on a Sunday we were soon through immigration and at the carousel. With bags retrieved and fond farewells said, we headed our separate ways. I hoped the M25 would be a lot quieter than my last trip!

REFLECTIONS

A brilliant trip with great people and a superb leader in Richard Foster: he even managed to teach us a few phrases and the meaning of a few Chinese characters – we passed the end-of-trip test with flying colours!

Was six whole days and two half days long enough? – probably not, although we did manage as a group to amass a trip list of 172, which included 26 of the 30 species considered endemic [we won't mention the Mikado Pheasant!]. We heard one of the missing four, Taiwan Cupwing, and should have picked up the Taiwan Bullfinch, but Styan's

Bulbul was now only to be found in the south of the island, and the Taiwan Shortwing was an extreme sulker that, apparently, would require an all-day stake out without any guarantees of success, and we just didn't have time to devote to it ... and it wasn't the most stunning of birds!

Compiling the list, it was obvious that very many of the listed species have distinct Taiwan or regional sub-species that some consider full species or are destined to be split. We managed to see many rare residents and visitors – how could we forget the Spoon-billed Sandpiper?

The vast majority of the wildfowl, gulls, terns, spoonbills, waders and egrets are winter visitors with the rest being residents. Likewise, very many of the smaller species either stay put, some with altitudinal migration, or are just winter visitors. The number of summer visitors or migrants doesn't seem too great making the winter, apparently, the best time to visit Taiwan – our January trip was perfect.

Books – Richard had with him an extensive library on the coach covering a range of wildlife, including a Field Guide of Birds of Taiwan which was excellent, but not readily available in the UK, US or Canada and will cost just under £50, if you can track down a copy! The Helm Birds of East Asia by Mark Brazil, whilst covering a huge geographical region, was pretty good, and in most cases gave the bird's status in Taiwan along with sub-species details – not cheap at £35 but will come in handy for future eastern trips! It is also readily available in the US and Canada. However, don't bother with the Avitopia Birds of Taiwan, a complete waste of £20.

Taiwan is a lovely small island with distinct habitats, from the lowlands to the high elevations. Come prepared for very cold temperatures and wind, and bring plenty of layers and hats and gloves. We were very lucky with the weather, with sun most of the time and no rain: I wouldn't relish being out on the trails in cold rain! The lack of any reptiles or insects, save a few butterflies, was probably down to the temperatures.

The people were all very friendly, and while our accommodation served the purpose, they were more like hostels than hotels. However, there wasn't too much choice up in the mountains to enable us to be close to the action without lengthy morning trips – and we were after all, in search of endemics and rarities. We dined in restaurants on the first and last evenings, and the first accommodation served up a good selection of local dishes. Other food was either supplied by Richard or brought in take-aways. The ubiquitous 7-elevens were a go-to for food in a pinch. Food was typical Chinese but fairly bland. There were ample vegetarian selections.

I would certainly recommend Taiwan as a winter destination.

Malcolm Collis



Spoon-billed Sandpiper



Taiwan Rosefinch



White-whiskered Laughingthrush

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		January 2024								Comments
Common name	Scientific name	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	√				√		√	√	Common in wetlands
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>							√		A few - occasional visitor
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	√				√		√	√	Common in wetlands
Eastern Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>	√				√				A few
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>					√				A few - uncommon
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>					√			√	Reasonable numbers
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	√				√		√	√	Common in wetlands
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>					√			√	A few
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>					√				Single
Swan Goose	<i>Anser cygnoides</i>					√				Single - Xiangshan Wetlands Jin-chang lake - very rare
Taiga Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>					√				Pair - Xiangshan Wetlands Jin-chang lake - rare
Tundra Bean Goose	<i>Anser serrirostris</i>					√				Four - Xiangshan Wetlands Jin-chang lake - rare
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>					√				Single - Xiangshan Wetlands Jin-chang lake - occasional visitor
Taiwan (Hill) Partridge - E	<i>Arborophila crudigularis</i>		√							Single - in undergrowth Mid-elevation - 23km marker Dasuehshan
Mikado Pheasant - E	<i>Syrnaticus mikado</i>						√			Single male - 92.7km marker R18 Alishan
Swinhoe's Pheasant - E	<i>Lophura swinhoii</i>		√	√	√					M & 3F on 7th, singles - viewing area 23km marker Dasuehshan
Taiwan Bamboo Partridge - E	<i>Bambusicola sonorivox</i>					√		√		Frequently heard but secretive - flight views only (<i>sonorivox</i> s.s.)
House Swift	<i>Apus nipalensis</i>	√	√			√		√		Common -mid-elevation
Ashy Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba pulchricollis</i>				√		√			8 in trees + fly overs
Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>							√		Common only in Yushan region
Red Collared (Turtle) Dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>					√		√	√	Fairly common lower elevations
Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>	√	√			√		√	√	Common lower elevations
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	√				√		√	√	Common in wetlands
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>					√				A few - Xiangshan Wetlands Jin-chang lake
Ruddy-breasted Crake	<i>Zapornia fusca</i>							√		Single - paddy fields Gauntin

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		January 2024								Comments
Common name	Scientific name	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>								✓	Common Budai - much plumage variation
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>								✓	Single with little grebes - accidental
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	✓				✓		✓	✓	Very common in wetlands
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓						✓	✓	Low numbers in wetlands - accidental
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>					✓		✓	✓	Reasonable numbers shoreline
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>					✓		✓	✓	Few on shoreline
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	✓				✓		✓	✓	Common in wetlands
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>					✓		✓	✓	Common on shoreline
Lesser Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>								✓	Single Budai estuary
Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>					✓				Single on shore Xiangshan Hsinchu City - uncommon
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>							✓		Good numbers but localised - paddy fields Guantin
Far Eastern Curlew	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>							✓		Single - Budai estuary - uncommon
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>							✓	✓	Good numbers on shoreline
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>							✓		Single - Budai estuary
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>					✓				Small numbers - shore Xiangshan Hsinchu City
Long-toed Stint	<i>Calidris subminuta</i>							✓		Pair - paddy fields Gauntin
Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>					✓				Single on shore Xiangshan Hsinchu City
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>					✓			✓	Small numbers on shoreline
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>					✓		✓	✓	Very common on shoreline
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>								✓	Single - Budai wetland - rare
Spoon-billed Sandpiper	<i>Eurynorhynchus pygmeus</i> (<i>Calidris pygmaea</i>)					✓				Mega rarity - Single on shore Xiangshan Hsinchu City
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓				✓		✓		Singles in wetlands
Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>								✓	Single - Budai estuary
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓				✓		✓	✓	A few in wetlands
Grey-tailed Tattler	<i>Tringa brevipes</i>								✓	Single - Budai estuary
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>					✓		✓	✓	Reasonable numbers
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	✓							✓	Plentyful Budai wetlands
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	✓						✓		A few in wetlands
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>					✓				Single - Xiangshan Wetlands Jin-chang lake - scarce
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	✓				✓		✓	✓	Common in wetlands and shoreline
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>					✓		✓		Common on shoreline

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		January 2024								Comments
Common name	Scientific name	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Mongolian Gull	<i>Larus mongolicus</i>								✓□	Single - Budai estuary - uncommon
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>								✓□	Several - Budai estuary
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>							✓□	✓□	Common - Budai estuary
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>								✓□	Single - Budai estuary
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>							✓□	✓□	Reasonable numbers - Budai estuary
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>							✓□	✓□	Reasonable numbers - Budai estuary
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>								✓□	Two in with black-faced - Budai wetlands - accidental
Black-faced Spoonbill	<i>Platalea minor</i>							✓□	✓□	Good numbers - Budai estuary & wetlands
Yellow Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus sinensis</i>								✓□	Single - Budai wetland
Malayan Night Heron	<i>Gorsachius melanolophus</i>					✓□				Single - Gukeng Service area
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	✓□				✓□		✓□	✓□	Very common in wetlands
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>							✓□	✓□	Singles - Budai wetlands
Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>							✓□		Probably overlooked amongst large egret numbers
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓□				✓□		✓□	✓□	Common in wetlands and estuaries
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓□	✓□			✓□		✓□	✓□	Very common in wetlands and estuaries
Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>								✓□	Singles - Budai estuary - probably overlooked
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓□	✓□			✓□		✓□	✓□	Common in wetlands and estuaries
Chinese Egret	<i>Egretta eulophotes</i>					✓□				Single on shore Xiangshan Hsinchu City
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>					✓□			✓□	Small numbers on estuaries
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>					✓□		✓□		Singles - one from bus & one paddy fields Guantin
Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	✓□	✓□							Singles - mid-elevation Dasuehshan
Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>		✓□					✓□		Pairs - mid-elevation Dasuehshan & lower-elevation Alishan
Mountain Hawk-Eagle	<i>Nisaetus nipalensis</i>		✓□		✓□					Singles - mid-elevation Dasuehshan
(Indian) Black Eagle	<i>Ictinaetus malaiensis</i>					✓□				Close views - Alishan - rare
Crested Goshawk	<i>Accipiter trivirgatus</i>	✓□	✓□							A few lower elevations
Black Kite (Black-eared)	<i>Milvus migrans (lineatus)</i>	✓□								Single - Shimen Reservoir
Mountain Scops Owl	<i>Otus spilocephalus</i>		✓□							Heard & brief flight views - Dongshi Chu-Yun Hotel
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		✓□					✓□	✓□	Singles - rivers and estuary
Taiwan Barbet - E	<i>Psilopogon nuchalis</i>	✓□	✓□	✓□			✓□	✓□		Common in suitable habitat

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		January 2024								Comments
Common name	Scientific name	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Yungipicus canicapillus</i>					✓		✓	✓	Singles & pairs - lower elevations
White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>			✓	✓					Singles - higher elevations
Grey-chinned Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus solaris</i>		✓				✓			Singles - higher elevations
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>								✓	Single - Budai wetlands
Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	✓								Single - near airport wetland
White-bellied Erpornis	<i>Erpornis zantholeuca</i>		✓					✓		Singles - mid-elevation (<i>griseiloris</i> s.s.)
Maroon Oriole	<i>Oriolus traillii</i>					✓				M & F - Xiaping Botanical Gardens - scarce
Bronzed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>		✓			✓		✓		Singles - mid & higher elevations
Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	✓				✓		✓	✓	Singles - lower elevations
Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>		✓			✓				Singles - lower elevations
Taiwan Blue Magpie - E	<i>Urocissa caerulea</i>	✓								Large flock giving close views - Shimen Reservoir
Grey Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta formosae</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			Fairly common - lower-elevations
Oriental Magpie	<i>Pica serica</i>	✓							✓	Pairs - lower-elevations
Spotted Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>			✓	✓		✓			Common in pairs (<i>owstoni</i> s.s.) - high-elevation
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>			✓	✓		✓			Odd pairs - higher elevations
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		✓				✓			A few with mixed flocks - high elevation (<i>ptilosus</i> s.s. <i>large crest</i>)
Chestnut-bellied Tit (Varied) - E	<i>Sittiparus castaneiventris</i>			✓			✓			Singles - mid-elevation (<i>castaneiventris</i> s.s.)
Green-backed Tit	<i>Parus monticolus</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓			A few with mixed flocks - mid- elevation
Yellow Tit - E	<i>Machlolophus holsti</i>		✓	✓			✓			A few with mixed flocks - mid-elevation
(Himalayan) Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>	✓	✓					✓		Large flocks - mid-elevation (<i>nigerrimus</i> s.s. - <i>all black</i>)
Collared Finchbill	<i>Spizixos semitorques</i>		✓					✓		Pairs - mid-elevation - rare (<i>cinereicapillus</i> s.s.)
(Chinese) Light-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus sinensis</i>	✓				✓		✓		Pairs - low-elevation (<i>formosae</i> s.s.)
Grey-throated (Plain) Martin	<i>Riparia chinensis</i>							✓	✓	A few - low-elevation and coastal (<i>chinensis</i> s.s.)
Pacific Swallow	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>	✓				✓		✓	✓	Common (<i>namiyei</i> s.s.)
Asian House Martin	<i>Delichon dasypus</i>		✓					✓		A few - mid-elevation (<i>igrimentale</i> s.s.)
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>							✓		Single - with Pacific swallows - rare
Taiwan Cupwing - E	<i>Pnoepyga formosana</i>				H					Calling in dense undergrowth - close but did not show
Rufous-faced Warbler	<i>Abroscopus albogularis</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		Reasonably common
Japanese Bush Warbler	<i>Horornis diphone</i>							✓		Single - good views - Shizhao Town (<i>cantans</i> s.s.)

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		January 2024								Comments
Common name	Scientific name	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
(Taiwan) Yellow-bellied Bush Warbler	<i>Horornis acanthizoides</i>						✓			Single - Tataka Walk (<i>concolor</i> s.s.)
Black-throated Bushtit (Tit)	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>						✓			Single - Tataka Walk
Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>		✓							Single
Taiwan Bush Warbler - E	<i>Locustella (Bradypterus) alishanensis</i>							✓		2 calling in undergrowth - fleeting glimpses only - Shizhao Town
Striped Prinia	<i>Prinia striata</i>		✓					✓		Singles - wetlands (<i>flaviostris</i> s.s.)
Yellow-bellied Prinia	<i>Prinia flaviventris</i>								✓	Single - wetland/shore (<i>sonitans</i> s.s.)
Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>	✓						✓	✓	Several - wetlands (<i>striata</i> s.s.)
Taiwan Fulvetta - E	<i>Fulvetta formosana</i>			✓	✓		✓			Singles - higher elevations
Taiwan Yuhina - E	<i>Yuhina brunneiceps</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓			Large, noisy flocks - higher elevations (onomatopoeic)
Japanese White-eye	<i>Zosterops japonicus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	Common in mixed flocks (<i>simplex</i> s.s.)
Rufous-capped Babbler	<i>Cyanoderma ruficeps</i>						✓	✓		Singles - mid-elevation (<i>praeognita</i> s.s.)
Taiwan Scimitar Babbler - E	<i>Pomatorhinus musicus</i>		✓			✓				Singles - mid-elevation
Black-necklaced Scimitar Babbler - E	<i>Erythrogonys erythrocnemis</i>							✓		Pair - Shizhao Town. Sulking.
Grey-cheeked Fulvetta - E	<i>Alcippe morrisonia</i>		✓				✓			Singles - mid-elevation (<i>morrisonia</i> s.s.)
White-whiskered Laughingthrush - E	<i>Trochalopteron morrisonianum</i>			✓	✓		✓			Large confiding flocks - high elevation
(Taiwan) White-eared Sibia - E	<i>Heterophasia auricularis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		Small flocks - mid-elevation
Taiwan Barwing - E	<i>Actinodura morrisoniana</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓			Pairs - mid-elevation
Steere's Liocichla - E	<i>Liocichla steerii</i>				✓		✓	✓		Singles - mid-elevation. Sulking
Taiwan Hwamei - E	<i>Garrulax taewanus</i>		✓							Pair -mid-elevation - fleeting flight views only. Sulking.
Rufous-crowned Laughingthrush - E	<i>Pterorhinus ruficeps</i>		✓							Single or pair - mid-elevation. Sulking
Rusty Laughingthrush - E	<i>Pterorhinus poecilorrhynchus</i>		✓				✓			Single - mid-elevation - with mixed flock
Flamecrest - E	<i>Regulus goodfellowi</i>			✓	✓		✓			Several in with mixed flocks - high elevation
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>			✓			✓			Singles - high elevation (<i>sinensis</i> s.s.)
Crested Myna	<i>Acridotheres cristatellus</i>	✓								Pair - airport wetlands - rare (<i>formosanus</i> s.s.)
Javan Myna - I	<i>Acridotheres javanicus</i>	✓				✓	✓			Fairly common
Common Myna - I	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	✓						✓		Fairly common
Red-billed Starling	<i>Spodiopsar sericeus</i>								✓	3 on roadside wires - Budai - scarce
Black-collared Starling - I	<i>Gracupica nigricollis</i>	✓								Pair - airport wetlands

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		January 2024									
Common name	Scientific name	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Comments	
Taiwan (Island) Thrush - E	<i>Turdus niveiceps</i>			✓	✓					Single then 2m & 1f - viewing area 23km (<i>niveiceps</i> s.s.)	
Brown-headed Thrush	<i>Turdus chrysolaus</i>				✓			✓		Singles - mid-elevation (<i>chrysolaus</i> s.s.)	
Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>								✓	Single - Budai estuary	
White-rumped Shama - I	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>						✓			Single - Xiaping Botanical Gardens	
Taiwan (Vivid) Niltava - E	<i>Niltava vivida</i>		✓	✓	✓					Common - viewing area 23km (<i>vivida</i> s.s.)	
Siberian Rubythroat	<i>Calliope calliope</i>						✓			Male - stunning views - Shizhao Village	
White-tailed Robin	<i>Myiomela leucura</i>			✓						Female - viewing area 23km (<i>montium</i> s.s.)	
White-browed Bush Robin	<i>Tarsiger indicus</i>					✓				A few on Tataka road - (<i>formosana</i> s.s. Taiwan Robin)	
Collared (Johnstone's) Bush Robin - E	<i>Tarsiger johnstoniae</i>			✓	✓		✓			Common & confiding - higher elevations	
Red-flanked Bluetail	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>						✓			Female - Tataka road	
Taiwan Whistling Thrush - E	<i>Myophonus insularis</i>	✓		✓			✓			Singles - low & mid-elevation	
Daurian Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureus</i>						✓			Single - Shizhao village (<i>aureus</i> s.s.)	
Plumbeous (Water) Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus fuliginosus</i>		✓				✓			Singles - mid-elevation near streams (<i>affinis</i> s.s.)	
Plain Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum minullum</i>		✓							Small numbers in mixed flock (<i>uchidai</i> s.s.)	
Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum ignipectus</i>			✓	✓					Good numbers at mistletoe - mid-elevation (<i>formosum</i> s.s.)	
Russet Sparrow	<i>Passer cinnamomeus</i>							✓		A few - Shizhao Village - rare & declining (<i>rutilans</i> s.s.)	
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	✓				✓		✓	✓	Common - low elevations (<i>montanus</i> s.s.)	
Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	✓								Small flock airport wetlands (<i>topela</i> s.s.)	
White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>		✓					✓		Small numbers low-elevation (<i>swinhoei</i> s.s.)	
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla tschutschensis</i>	✓				✓		✓	✓	Reasonably common low-elevation (<i>taivana</i> s.s. Green-headed)	
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓					✓	✓		Reasonably common low-elevation (<i>melanope</i> s.s.)	
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓				✓		✓		Reasonably common low-elevation (<i>lugens</i> and/or <i>leucopsis</i> s.s.)	
Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>			✓			✓	✓		Seveal - confiding - mid & high elevation (? s.s.)	
Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	✓								2 airport wetlands	
Taiwan (Vinaceous) Rosefinch - E	<i>Carpodacus formosanus</i>			✓	✓			✓		Small numbers - mid to high elevations	
Black-faced Bunting	<i>Emberiza spodocephala</i>	✓				✓		✓		Small flocks - low elevation (<i>spodocephala</i> and/or <i>personata</i> s.s.)	

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	January 2024							
		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Coastal Striped Squirrel	<i>Tamias maritimus</i>		✓	✓	✓				
Owston's Long-nosed Squirrel	<i>Dremomys pernyi owstoni</i>								
Pallas's Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus erythraeus</i>				✓				
Red-and-white Giant Flying Squirrel	<i>Petaurista alborufus lena</i>								
Formosan Giant Flying Squirrel	<i>Petaurista philippensis grandis</i>								
Chinese Civet	<i>Viverricula indica pallida</i>								
Formosan Rock Macaque	<i>Macaca cyclopis</i>				✓		✓		
Formosan Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus reevesi micrurus</i>			✓			✓		
Formosan Serow	<i>Capricornis swinhoei</i>			✓					
Yellow-throated Marten	<i>Martes flavigula</i>				✓				