



A Surprising Birding Excursion in Chongqing





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June 2018 by Philip He



Details

Last Minute Booking and Hurried to Chongqing

While I was enjoying a wonderful weekend with my family, I suddenly got a phone call from a foreign number. I answered the phone. It was from Andrew from South Africa. He was attending a conference at Chongqing which is about 320km from Chengdu. He asked whether it is possible to arrange a birding excursion for him the next day. I suggested he send me an email with all his requirements and I would reply immediately. I waited for about 30 minutes and got an email from Andrew with the necessary information. I worked out the cost and sent it to Andrew within 20 minutes. I told him that he needed to confirm this trip before 7 p.m so that I have time to go to the train station to catch a bullet train to Chongqing, because it was too late for us to find an English-speaking bird guide in Chongqing by this time, I decided to go to Chongqing myself. Also to ensure the quality of the trip, we are very cautious over the choice of guide, never use any guide we are not familiar with. Just before 7 p.m, I got final confirmation from Andrew that he would like to take this one-day excursion with us. I quickly got my bag and hurried to the train station. I tried to get train tickets but it was too late. It was Sunday, lots of people chose comfortable train ride back to Chongqing from Chengdu. So I had to try my luck. I went to the train station anyway. Without surprise, there were no tickets left. So I walked out from ticket office and there were vendors lingering around, trying to persuade people taking their vans to Chongqing. It did not take long for me to get into a small van, sitting on one of the closely packed seats. But now I had very few options. After waiting for about one hour, the van eventually got another 10 passengers to start. Three hours later, I arrived at Chongqing. It was already middle night. I found a small hotel room and checked in as soon as possible.

Birding in Chongqing Forest Park

The morning started with a beautiful blue sky, with white thin clouds floating like long gauze kerchiefs. The eastern part of the sky has already started showing golden color from the first-morning ray. Though the weather forecast said it was going to rain in the afternoon, I seriously doubted the accuracy. After a quick breakfast, I got a taxi and headed toward Grand Metropark Hotel where I was scheduled to meet with Dr. Andrew at 6:30 am. I got there at 6:20 but Andrew was already there. So we set off immediately toward our first birding destination, Zhaomushan Forest Park.

We got off the taxi at the entrance and started our birding from there. As soon as we got off the car, the chirping of birds came to our ears right away. The noisy Chinese Bulbul and White-browed Laughingthrush show their strong presence from the trees. We spotted them without much difficulty and walked toward the big parking lot in search of other birds. In distance, we saw a small bird perching on the top of the post of power lines. We quietly walked closer and found it was Large Hawk Cuckoo. In the breeding season, you can easily hear their calls but it was really difficult to get a decent look because of their masterful hiding skill.



White-browed Laughingthrush



Red-billed Leiothrix

We were so lucky this morning that this bird seemed just sitting there to show us how beautiful he is. After enjoying the great look of this bird, we moved on to higher part of the forest, we saw a good number of birds, such as Rufous-faced Warbler, Oriental Magpie Robin, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Japanese Tit, Spotted Dove, Red-billed Leiothrix, Crested Myna, Japanese White-eye, Black-throated Tit, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, and Chinese Blackbird, just name a few.

After spending most of the morning searching for birds, we decided to move to another habitat. Just before we climbed down the hill, we heard the call of Chinese Bamboo Partridge. This is extremely shy birds. You can hear there in lots of places in China, but it is very difficult to get a look because they hide very well in the bushes. We stood there quietly and looked around very closely. Suddenly, we saw a movement of bushes. A partridge family eventually came to our sights when they were crossing a small trail. We saw both male, female and a flock of chicks. After that we climbed down the hill along a small quiet trail.



Chinese Bamboo Partridge

Moving to Wetlands along a Winding Stream

First, we walked from the road trying to find some birds from the roadside. Now it was close to noon, it became much quieter as we walked to the small winding river, searching for birds along

the river. Suddenly we saw a Little Egret flying just above us. Along this river we did not see many birds as in the forest park. However we were still able to find some nice birds such as Long-tailed Shrike, Tiger Shrike, Common Kingfisher, Black-capped Night Heron, Little Grebe and Yellow-rumped Flycatcher. By now it was already lunchtime. So we decided to move to our next birding sites close to Metropark Hotel. Dr. Andrew needed to go back to hotel around 4 p.m.



Mountain Bulbul

Birding in a park and Pouring Rain

This is a gigantic park consisting. After buying entrance tickets, we walked in and both of us were impressed by the traditional entrance gate and the huge architecture. After taking some photos, we went to the Wetlands to search for birds. Most birds we saw here had already been seen by us in the other two birding sites. Walking by the side of big artificial lake, we saw Mountain Bulbul. Just at this time, computer proves to be much more powerful than human minds. It became darker and darker. It looked like a shower was on the way. We walked to the main road before the rain got really heavy. I did not know how long the rain would last so I suggested we have simple lunch first. If the rain stops, we could continue our birding. We saw some houses, there were already people taking shelter from the rain.

Delicious Lunch and Culture Talk

So we walked to a small restaurant, there I bought some traditional Chinese dumpling called Zongzi, eating under the shelter. I hope the rain could stop soon. Unfortunately, the rain got heavier and heavier. There was no point for us to search in the rain. Dr. Andrew shows a strong interest in Chinese culture, he asked me some very interesting questions. So while waiting for the rain to stop, we had an in-depth talk about Chinese culture. We covered quite wide range of topics such as culture revolution, Chair Man, Chinese modern history, the relations between Han Chinese and Tibetan, the Reform and Opening-up and the chances and problems we are facing now in China. Time flies, we talked for about 40 minutes but there were no signs that the rain would stop soon. So Dr. Andrew decided to call it day. I got a taxi and we drove back to his hotel and then I went on to the train station to get back to Chengdu.

Short Birding Day, Great Birding Memory

Though we only had a little bit more than half a day birding in Chongqing. I felt so lucky that I could show him the bird species in China. Totally we saw 36 species of birds and I enjoyed talking with Andrew a lot. This is his first China trip and he already got fascinated by the rich Chinese culture and beautiful Chinese birds. China is so big in size with almost all kinds of habitat varieties.



It is not possible for me to show him all the wonderful birds and rich culture to our friend from South Africa in one morning. It was such a great beginning. I felt so lucky that I got the chance to unveil this wonderful country to Dr. Andrew.

Bird List:

1. Chinese Bamboo Partridge
2. Speckled Piculet
3. Common Kingfisher
4. Large Hawk Cuckoo
5. Eurasian Cuckoo (heard)
6. Indian Cuckoo (heard)
7. Spotted Dove
8. Little Grebe
9. Little Egret
10. Black-capped Heron
11. Long-tailed Shrike
12. Tiger Shrike
13. Red-billed Blue Magpie
14. Azure-winged Magpie
15. Chinese Blackbird
16. Yellow-rumped Flycatcher
17. Oriental Magpie Robin
18. White-shouldered Starling.
19. Crested Myna
20. Japanese Tit
21. Black-throated Tit
22. Barn Swallow
23. Red-rumped Swallow
24. Chinese Bulbul
25. Collared Finshbill
26. Mountain Bulbul
27. Rufous-faced Warbler
28. White-browed Laughingthrush
29. Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler
30. Red-billed Leiothrix
31. Rufous-capped Babbler
32. Vinous-throated Parrotbill
33. Japanese White-eye
34. Eurasian Tree Sparrow



35. White Wagtail

36. Grey-capped Greenfinch



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