BIRDING HOTSPOT

Jiuzhaigou National Park, Sichuan, Chinaa forgotten gem?

ANGUS R. LAMONT

Jiuzhaigou National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in north Sichuan (32.733°N 104.150°E) and comprises three major valleys, the Shuzheng, the Rize and the Zehawa together with a number of minor ones. The park covers an area of 72,000 ha with a buffer area which is almost the same size and ranges in altitude from 2,000 to 4,800 m. About two thirds of the area is forested and the three major valleys form a Y with the park entrance being at the bottom of the Y. The Shuzheng valley then divides into two at Nuorilang (Tibetan for 'grand and magnificent'), the Rize valley going to the Primeval Forest to the west and the Zehawa valley ending at Long Lake to the east. The Jiuzhai Valley National Park website at www.jiuzhai.com has a map showing the roads and walking paths.

A series of pioneering trips were made by Hong Kong birdwatchers in the early to mid-1990s, but since then it seems to have been little visited by independent birdwatchers, although it is regularly visited by commercial birdtour operators, mainly during May and June. In winter snow can be a problem leading to closure of roads and the airport. It is not an easy place to access as it is a 330 km, 11-hour public bus journey from Chengdu (¥120 outward, ¥140 return) or a 1.5 hour airport shuttle bus (¥45) or taxi ride (¥200) from Jiuzhai Huanglong Airport which is served by domestic flights from centres such as Chengdu, Guangzhou, Beijing and Shanghai. Be aware that the airport, at an altitude of 3,450 m, is subject to closure due to adverse weather conditions, and flight delays are frequent.

In April 2013, almost 19 years after my previous trip, the chance to revisit arose. Of course, it had changed greatly with 50 km of paved roads and 47 km of wood-planked trails and is a very popular destination for Chinese tourists due to its spectacular scenery. The park is well managed but although the number of visitors is regulated, some areas can become very crowded. However, it is easy to get away from the main tourist attractions and to find plenty of deserted trails, all of which



Plate 1. Approaching Jiuzhaigou via the Gong Gang Ling La at 3,480 m, 20 May 2007.

Plate 3. Pearl Shoal waterfall, Jiuzhaigou, 21 May 2007.





Plate 2. Rugged scenery, near Long Lake, Jiuzhaigou, 10 April 2013

Plate 4. Arrow Lake waterfall, Jiuzhaigou, 10 April 2013.



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are well maintained; avoid weekends and public holidays if possible.

During the peak season (1 April to 15 November) the daily admission charge is ¥220 (over-60s ¥110, over-70s free).When applying for reductions proof of age is required and ID with a photograph is essential. Charges are reduced during the off-peak season but snow puts large areas of the park off-limits. There is a ¥90 charge for the bus service that covers the main valleys. The park buses can be boarded at any of the designated bus stops and they stop if requested at any official stop, but do let the bus attendant know your destination ahead of time.

The park opens at 07h00 and closes at 19h00 (08h00 to 18h00 from 16 November to 31 March) and the buses drive non-stop from the lower terminus directly to the Primeval Forest at the head of the Rize Valley. Visitors then work their way down the valley via a series of lakes towards the main centre at Nuorilang. Given this situation, it is far better for birdwatchers to visit the Primeval Forest later in the day when most of the regular visitors are already further down the valley. The bus to Long Lake at the head of the Zehawa Valley commences at 09h30 and starts from Nuorilang. There is no need to take a bus if you are exploring the lower valleys.

As in all mountain regions the weather can change quickly, so be prepared. The cold wind off the snow-covered mountains makes it feel even colder than the temperature suggests. In April it was decidedly cold with snow on the ground at the Primeval Forest and snow showers at Long Lake. However, the temperature may rise appreciably during the day so wear layers of clothing and do not forget the umbrella.

Foreign visitors should bring plenty of cash in Chinese yuan as there are few places to change money and exchange rates are poor. Foreign credit cards are not widely accepted either. Although taxis were metered, drivers seldom used them but fares demanded usually tallied closely with the meter. A wide range of accommodation is available to suit most pockets and a wide choice is available via the internet. Jiuzhaigou lives on tourism so there are plenty of reasonably priced eating places.

Accommodation and restaurants are also available at the Tibetan villages inside the park although their variety is more limited. The attraction for birdwatchers is obvious in that they can make an earlier start and that the daily entry fee can be avoided, but having no personal experience I am unable to comment on their quality. It makes good sense to give the inhabitants of the area some benefit from your visit and it is highly appreciated by them. As always it is sensible to travel with some substantial snacks on hand and a thermos flask of hot tea would not go amiss.

As would be expected, given the large area and the altitudinal range of the park, there is a great diversity of bird species and a bird checklist drawn from various sources is attached. This totals over 330 species, some of which have a very limited distribution. Most birdwatchers visit between April and June so there is a lack of records for most of the year and it seems probable that this number could be increased. In two days of casual birding we recorded 66 species.

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Angus R. LAMONT Wanting Road, Lane 99, Block 164, Apartment 303 Minhang, Shanghai 201104, China Email: angusl@hotmail.com

Editor's note: The images on the following three pages were all taken inside Jiuzhaigou National Park.





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Plate 6. Spectacled Parrotbill Paradoxornis conspicillatus, 18 June 2013.



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Plate 8. Coal Tit Parus ater, 8 June 2011.



Plate 10. Spectacled Fulvetta Alcippe ruficapilla, 13 June 2012.



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Plate 7. Bianchi's Warbler Seicercus valentini, 25 June 2005.



Plate 9. Chinese Leaf Warbler Phylloscopus yunnanensis, 8 June 2011.

Plate 11. White-throated Redstart Phoenicurus schisticeps, 11 June 2012.





Plate 12. Rufous-headed Robin Luscinia ruficeps, 17 May 2013.



Plate 14. Sooty Tit Aegithalos fuliginosus, 29 May 2013.

Plate 16. Chinese Nuthatch Sitta villosa, 29 May 2013.





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Plate 13. Three-banded Rosefinch Carpodacus trifasciatus, 3 June 2013.



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Plate 15. Grey-headed Bullfinch Pyrrhula erythaca, 29 May 2013.

Plate 17. Chinese Thrush Turdus mupinensis, 30 May 2013.



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Plate 19. White-throated Dipper Cinclus cinclus, 9 June 2011.

Plate 22. Elliot's Laughingthrush Garrulax elliotii, 25 June 2012.

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Plate 18. Chinese Grouse *Tetrastes (Bonasa) sewerzowi*, 10 July 2009.

Plate 21. Barred Laughingthrush *Garrulax lunulatus*, 17 June 2013.



Appendix

Checklist of the birds of Jiuzhaigou National Park, north Sichuan, China

Order follows An annotated checklist of the birds of the Oriental region (1996) by Tim Inskipp, Nigel Lindsey & William Duckworth but this list includes species recognised since that time by BirdLife Taxonomic Working Group.

Snow Partridge Lerwa lerwa Tibetan Snowcock Tetraogallus tibetanus Chestnut-throated Partridge Tetraophasis obscurus Tibetan Partridge Perdix hodasoniae Blood Pheasant Ithaginis cruentus Temminck's Tragopan Tragopan temminckii Koklass Pheasant Pucrasia macrolopha Chinese Monal Lophophorus Ihuysii White Eared Pheasant Crossoptilon crossoptilon Blue Eared Pheasant Crossoptilon auritum Common Pheasant Phasianus colchicus Golden Pheasant Chrvsolophus pictus Chinese Grouse Tetrastes (Bonasa) sewerzowi Mute Swan Cygnus olor Whooper Swan Cygnus cygnus Tundra Swan Cygnus columbianus Greylag Goose Anser anser Bar-headed Goose Anser indicus Ruddy Shelduck Tadorna ferruginea Gadwall Anas strepera Falcated Duck Anas falcata Eurasian Wigeon Anas penelope Mallard Anas platyrhynchos Spot-billed Duck Anas poecilorhyncha Northern Shoveler Anas clypeata Northern Pintail Anas acuta Gargany Anas guerguedula Common Teal Anas crecca Red-crested Pochard Rhodonessa (Netta) rufina Common Pochard Aythya ferina Ferruginous Pochard Aythya nyroca Tufted Duck Aythya fuliqula Snew Mergellus albellus Common Merganser Mergus merganser Eurasian Wryneck Jynx torquilla Speckled Piculet Picumnus innominatus Darieeling Woodpecker Dendrocopos dariellensis White-backed Woodpecker Dendrocopos leucotos Great Spotted Woodpecker Dendrocopos major Three-toed Woodpecker Picoides tridactylus Black Woodpecker Dryocopus martius Grey-headed Woodpecker Picus canus Common Hoopoe Upupa epops Common Kingfisher Alcedo atthis Black-capped Kingfisher Halcyon pileata Large Hawk Cuckoo Hierococcyx sparverioides Indian Cuckoo Cuculus micropterus Eurasian Cuckoo Cuculus canorus Himalayan Cuckoo Cuculus saturatus Lesser Cuckoo Cuculus poliocephalus Asian Koel Eudynamys scolopacea Himalayan Swiftlet Collocalia brevirostris

White-throated Needletail Hirundapus caudacutus Fork-tailed Swift Apus pacificus House Swift Apus affinis Eurasian Eagle Owl Bubo bubo Collared Owlet Glaucidium brodiei Little Owl Athene noctua Boreal Owl Aegolius funereus Grey Nightjar Caprimulgus indicus Hill Pigeon Columba rupestris Snow Pigeon Columba leuconota Speckled Wood Pigeon Columba hodgsonii Oriental Turtle Dove Streptopelia orientalis Spotted Dove Streptopelia chinensis Red Collared Dove Streptopelia tranquebarica Black-necked Crane Grus nigricollis White-breasted Waterhen Amaurornis phoenicurus Common Moorhen Gallinula chloropus Common Coot Fulica atra Solitary Snipe Gallinago solitaria Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa Spotted Redshank Tringa erythropus Common Redshank Tringa totanus Common Greenshank Tringa nebularia Green Sandpiper Tringa ochropus Wood Sandpiper Tringa glareola Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos Temminck's Stint Calidris temminckii Curlew Sandpiper Calidris ferruginea Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus Long-billed Plover Charadrius placidus Little Ringed Plover Charadrius dubius Lesser Sand Plover Charadrius mongolus Northern Lapwing Vanellus vanellus Grey-headed Lapwing Vanellus cinereus Oriental Pratincole Glareola maldivarum Pallas's Gull Larus ichthyaetus Brown-headed Gull Larus brunnicephalus Black-headed Gull Larus ridibundus Common Tern Sterna hirundo Whiskered Tern Chlidonias hybrida **Osprey** Pandion haliaetus Oriental Honey-buzzard Pernis ptilorhynchus Black Kite Milvus migrans Pallas's Fish Eagle Haliaeetus leucoryphus White-tailed Eagle Haliaeetus albicilla Lammergeier Gypaetus barbatus Himalayan Griffon Gyps himalayensis Cinereous Vulture Aegypius monachus Eastern Marsh Harrier Circus spilonotus Northern Harrier Circus cyaneus Crested Goshawk Accipiter trivirgatus Chinese Goshawk Accipiter soloensis

Besra Accipiter viraatus Eurasian Sparrowhawk Accipiter nisus Northern Goshawk Accipiter gentilis Grev-faced Buzzard Butastur indicus Common Buzzard Buteo buteo Upland Buzzard Buteo hemilasius Steppe Eagle Aquila nipalensis Golden Eagle Aquila chrysaetos Lesser Kestrel Falco naumanni Common Kestrel Falco tinnunculus Amur Falcon Falco amurensis Merlin Falco columbarius Eurasian Hobby Falco subbuteo Saker Falcon Falco cherrug Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis Great Crested Grebe Podiceps cristatus Great Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo Little Egret Egretta garzetta Grey Heron Ardea cinerea Great Egret Casmerodius albus Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis Chinese Pond Heron Ardeola bacchus Black-crowned Night Heron Nycticorax nycticorax Cinnamon Bittern Ixobrychus cinnamomeus Tiger Shrike Lanius tigrinus Brown Shrike Lanius cristatus Long-tailed Shrike Lanius schach Grey-backed Shrike Lanius tephronotus Chinese Grey Shrike Lanius sphenocercus Eurasian Jay Garrulus glandarius Sichuan Jay Perisoreus internigrans Red-billed Blue Magpie Urocissa erythrorhyncha Azure-winged Magpie Cyanopica cyanus Black-billed Magpie Pica pica Hume's Groundpecker Pseudopodoces humilis Spotted Nutcracker Nucifraga caryocatactes Red-billed Chough Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax Yellow-billed Chough Pyrrhocorax graculus Daurian Jackdaw Corvus dauurica Carrion Crow Corvus corone Large-billed Crow Corvus macrorhynchos Collared Crow Corvus torquatus Common Raven Corvus corax Black-winged Cuckooshrike Coracina melaschistos Long-tailed Minivet Pericrocotus ethologus Short-billed Minivet Pericrocotus brevirostris Black Drongo Dicrurus macrocercus Ashy Drongo Dicrurus leucophaeus Spangled Drongo Dicrurus hottentottus White-throated Dipper Cinclus cinclus Brown Dipper Cinclus pallasii Blue Rock Thrush Monticola solitarius Blue Whistling Thrush Myophonus caeruleus Long-tailed Thrush Zoothera dixoni White-collared Blackbird Turdus albocinctus Eurasian Blackbird Turdus merula

Chestnut Thrush Turdus rubrocanus Kessler's Thrush Turdus kessleri Dark-throated Thrush Turdus ruficollis Chinese Thrush Turdus mupinensis Dark-sided Flycatcher Muscicapa sibirica Asian Brown Flycatcher Muscicapa dauurica Brown-breasted Flycatcher Muscicapa muttui Ferruginous Flycatcher Muscicapa ferruginea Slaty-backed Flycatcher Ficedula hodgsonii Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher Ficedula strophiata Red-throated Flycatcher Ficedula parva Slatv-blue Flycatcher Ficedula tricolor Blue-throated Flycatcher Cyornis rubeculoides Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher Culicicapa ceylonensis Siberian Rubythroat Luscinia calliope Blackthroat Luscinia obscura Rufous-headed Robin Luscinia ruficeps Indian Blue Robin Luscinia brunnea Siberian Blue Robin Luscinia cyane Orange-flanked Bush Robin Tarsiger cyanurus White-browed Bush Robin Tarsiger indicus Black Redstart Phoenicurus ochruros Hodgson's Redstart Phoenicurus hodgsoni White-throated Redstart Phoenicurus schisticeps Daurian Redstart Phoenicurus auroreus White-winged Redstart Phoenicurus erythrogaster Blue-fronted Redstart Phoenicurus frontalis White-capped Water Redstart Chaimarrornis leucocephalus Plumbeous Water Redstart Rhyacornis fuliginosus White-bellied Redstart Hodgsonius phaenicuroides White-tailed Robin Mviomela leucura Grandala Grandala coelicolor Little Forktail Enicurus scouleri White-crowned Forktail Enicurus leschenaulti Common Stonechat Saxicola torauatus maurus Grey Bushchat Saxicola ferrea Isabelline Wheatear Oenanthe isabellina White-cheeked Starling Sturnus cineraceus Eurasian Nuthatch Sitta europaea Chinese Nuthatch Sitta villosa White-cheeked Nuthatch Sitta leucopsis Wallcreeper Tichodroma muraria Eurasian Treecreeper Certhia familiaris Bar-tailed Treecreeper Certhia himalayana Sichuan Treecreeper Certhia tianguanensis Winter Wren Troglodytes troglodytes Marsh Tit Parus palustris Willow Tit Parus montanus White-browed Tit Parus superciliosus Rusty-breasted Tit Parus davidi Rufous-vented Tit Parus rubidiventris Coal Tit Parus ater Yellow-bellied Tit Parus venustulus Grey-crested Tit Parus dichrous Great Tit Parus major Green-backed Tit Parus monticolus Long-tailed Tit Aegithalos caudatus

Black-browed Tit Aeaithalos bonvaloti Sooty Tit Aeaithalos fuliainosus Sand Martin Riparia riparia Eurasian Crag Martin Hirundo rupestris Barn Swallow Hirundo rustica Red-rumped Swallow Hirundo daurica Asian House Martin Delichon dasypus Goldcrest Regulus regulus Collared Finchbill Spizixos semitorques Brown-breasted Bulbul Pvcnonotus xanthorrhous Light-vented Bulbul Pycnonotus sinensis Black Bulbul Hypsipetes leucocephalus Chestnut-flanked White-eye Zosterops erythropleurus Japanese White-eye Zosterops japonicus Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler Cettia fortipes Aberrant Bush Warbler Cettia flavolivacea Yellowish-bellied Bush Warbler Cettia acanthizoides Spotted Bush Warbler Bradypterus thoracicus Brown Bush Warbler Bradypterus luteoventris White-browed Tit Warbler Leptopoecile sophiae Crested Tit Warbler Leptopoecile elegans Dusky Warbler Phylloscopus fuscatus Tickell's Leaf Warbler Phylloscopus affinis Buff-throated Warbler Phylloscopus subaffinis Yellow-streaked Warbler Phylloscopus armandii Radde's Warbler Phylloscopus schwarzi Buff-barred Warbler Phylloscopus pulcher Pallas's Leaf Warbler Phylloscopus proregulus Lemon-rumped Warbler Phylloscopus chloronotus Gansu Leaf Warbler Phylloscopus kansuensis Chinese Leaf Warbler Phylloscopus yunnanensis Hume's Warbler Phylloscopus humei Arctic Warbler Phylloscopus borealis Greenish Warbler Phylloscopus trochiloides Two-barred Warbler Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus Large-billed Leaf Warbler Phylloscopus magnirostris Claudia's Warbler Phylloscopus claudiae Davison's Leaf Warbler Phylloscopus davisoni Whistler's Warbler Seicercus whistleri Bianchi's Warbler Seicercus valentini Chestnut-crowned Warbler Seicercus castaniceps Plain Laughingthrush Garrulax davidi Snowy-cheeked Laughingthrush Garrulax sukatschewi Barred Laughingthrush Garrulax lunulatus Giant Laughingthrush Garrulax maximus Elliot's Laughingthrush Garrulax elliotii Black-faced Laughingthrush Garrulax affinis Black-streaked Scimitar Babbler Pomatorhinus gravivox Pygmy Wren Babbler Pnoepyga pusilla Chinese Babax Babax lanceolatus Chinese Fulvetta Alcippe striaticollis Spectacled Fulvetta Alcippe ruficapilla Grey-cheeked Fulvetta Alcippe morrisonia White-collared Yuhina Yuhina diademata Great Parrotbill Conostoma oemodium Spectacled Parrotbill Paradoxornis conspicillatus Vinous-throated Parrotbill Paradoxornis webbianus

Tibetan Lark Melanocorvpha maxima Greater Short-toed Lark Calandrella brachvdactvla Hume's Short-toed Lark Calandrella acutirostris Asian Short-toed Lark Calandrella cheleensis Crested Lark Galerida cristata Eurasian Skylark Alauda arvensis Oriental Skylark Alauda gulgula Horned Lark Eremophila alpestris Russet Sparrow Passer rutilans Eurasian Tree Sparrow Passer montanus Rock Sparrow Petronia petronia Tibetan Snowfinch Montifrinailla adamsi White-rumped Snowfinch Pyrgilauda taczanowskii Rufous-necked Snowfinch Pyrgilauda ruficollis Plain-backed Snowfinch Pyrgilauda blandfordi Forest Wagtail Dendronanthus indicus White Wagtail Motacilla alba Citrine Wagtail Motacilla citreola Yellow Wagtail Motacilla flava Grey Wagtail Motacilla cinerea Olive-backed Pipit Anthus hodgsoni Red-throated Pipit Anthus cervinus Rosy Pipit Anthus roseatus Water Pipit Anthus spinoletta Alpine Accentor Prunella collaris Robin Accentor Prunella rubeculoides Rufous-breasted Accentor Prunella strophiata Maroon-backed Accentor Prunella immaculata Grev-capped Greenfinch Carduelis sinica Eurasian Siskin Carduelis spinus Twite Carduelis flavirostris Plain Mountain Finch Leucosticte nemoricola Brandt's Mountain Finch Leucosticte brandti Long-tailed Rosefinch Uragus sibiricus Dark-breasted Rosefinch Carpodacus nipalensis Common Rosefinch Carpodacus erythrinus Beautiful Rosefinch Carpodacus pulcherrimus Pink-rumped Rosefinch Carpodacus eos Vinaceous Rosefinch Carpodacus vinaceus Dark-rumped Rosefinch Carpodacus edwardsii Three-banded Rosefinch Carpodacus trifasciatus Spot-winged Rosefinch Carpodacus rhodopeplus White-browed Rosefinch Carpodacus thura Streaked Rosefinch Carpodacus rubicilloides Red-fronted Rosefinch Carpodacus puniceus Red Crossbill Loxia curvirostra Crimson-browed Rosefinch Propyrrhula subhimachala Grey-headed Bullfinch Pyrrhula erythaca Collared Grosbeak Mycerobas affinis Spot-winged Grosbeak Mycerobas melanozanthos White-winged Grosbeak Mycerobas carnipes Slaty Bunting Latoucheornis siemsseni Godlewski's Bunting Emberiza godlewskii Meadow Bunting Emberiza cioides Chestnut-eared Bunting Emberiza fucata Little Bunting Emberiza pusilla Black-faced Bunting Emberiza spodocephala