

Guangxi, Beihai Birding Trip Report – October 13-17, 2021

Having recently made a trip to Beihai city in Guangxi, I wanted to post some basic information about the hawk watch and birding in the city to expand some of the information available in English for those wanting to bird in this area.

Beihai (北海) is located on the southern coast on the Gulf of Tongkin (北部湾) in Guangxi province. While not a large city, it has its own (high speed) train station which is conveniently located in the center of town. Most locations for hotels or birding are less than a 30-minute drive from the train station. There is also an airport further outside the city with connects Beihai with a number of other Chinese cities. Being a beach tourist city, Beihai has no lack of hotels, and for those traveling with a larger party, there are also larger apartment hotels which are available in some of the many high-rise apartment complexes in the city. If you don't have your own vehicle, getting around the city is easy by using DiDi to call for rides, which usually arrived within 2-3 minutes.

As for food, Beihai is known for its local seafood. For those wanting to enjoy other cuisines there is a good French Restaurant (Houze Chef) as well as a Canadian Diner (Hollywood Diner).

Guantouling National Forest Park Hawk Watch (冠头岭国家森林公园猛禽检测点)



The main reason I wanted to visit Beihai was to visit the hawk watch that is being administered by BRC (Guangxi Biodiversity Research and Conservation Association), known locally as 美境自然 (WeChat ID: BRC-GX, following their WeChat will provide updated hawk watch counts and Guangxi conservation articles). This is the 12th year that hawk monitoring has been happening in the Guantouling National Forest Park, which is located at the very end of the peninsula. Besides counting hawks, the BRC is actively helping (with the help of local police) to reduce the amount of raptor poaching which had previously been quite common in the park, and still unfortunately continues to the present time. BRC has even been doing night patrols in the park to find night poachers who seek to find roosting raptors. The hawk watch has raptor counters present every day from the end of September until early November, with daily monitoring times roughly 8:00am-5:00pm.

During my visit in mid-October, my son and I took a taxi to the east side of the park near 流下

村 (see map; the hawk watch in 2021 is at location E) and walked about 1km up to the current hawk watch location, where we found about 10-15 people, most with professional cameras on tripods, observing the sky. During our three days of visits, as many as thirty birders and photographers were at the site. If you are driving a car, it is possible to drive up the hill and park at the top, though parking can get a little crowded.

During our visit from October 14-17, we observed 14 species of diurnal raptors and averaged seeing about 100 birds per day in a space of 2-3 hours. On days with high numbers of hawks, it is possible to see more than 20 species in a single day at the hawk watch, with total numbers of 1000-2000 individual birds recorded.

The volunteers from BRC were extremely kind and helpful, and the community of people at the top were very friendly overall, which was great to see. Photographers and volunteers helped me and my eight year old son with ID tips and showing us photos as well (using both Mandarin Chinese and some English to communicate).

Beihai Binhai National Wetland Park (北海滨海国际湿地公园)

After doing online research, I had found an article which mentioned this park as an excellent birding location for shorebirds and sandpipers. However, upon arrival, it was disappointing to discover that the park has been closed for more than a year. This meant that the mudflats on the bay side were not really accessible at all, as most of the park was completely gated off from the main road. The best we could do was walk along the (rather wide) sidewalk and observe birds through the rail fences that lined the bay. This was not without some nice birds, including an obliging Slaty-backed Rail.

On the opposite side of the street are a number of shrimp ponds, which we scanned for shorebirds. At high tide, the mangroves on the bay side are flooded with water, so I read that shorebirds can more readily be found around the numerous shrimp ponds in the area. Again, we came up with a decent number of birds such as Black-winged Stilts and Common Greenshanks, but not the variety we had hoped for. I'm guessing that hitting the park at low tide would have been quite different as the birds may have been out on the mangrove mudflats more, and wouldn't have been so spread out around the shrimp ponds.

Trip Summary

The hawk watch at Guantouling is certainly worth a visit for anyone in the general area or those who are interested in observing migrating birds of prey. The work that BRC is doing in Guangxi is certainly commendable.

Species List

Over four days of not-too-intense birding we observed about 65 species of birds. Certainly much higher totals would be possible for those who spent more time, had more birding skill, and visited (even for a short time) more wooded areas or diverse habitats.

1. Garganey

2. Little Grebe
3. Rock Pigeon
4. Red Collared-Dove
5. Spotted Dove
6. White-throated Needletail
7. Himalayan Swiftlet
8. House Swift
9. Slaty-breasted Rail
10. Black-winged Stilt
11. Pacific Golden-Plover
12. Lesser Sand-Plover
13. Kentish Plover
14. White-faced Plover
15. Little Ringed Plover
16. Common Sandpiper
17. Common Greenshank
18. Yellow Bittern
19. Gray Heron
20. Purple Heron
21. Great Egret
22. Little Egret
23. Chinese Pond-Heron
24. Black-crowned Night-Heron
25. Black-winged Kite
26. Oriental Honey-buzzard
27. Gray-faced Buzzard
28. Eastern Marsh-Harrier
29. Pied Harrier
30. Chinese Sparrowhawk
31. Japanese Sparrowhawk
32. Besra
33. Black Kite
34. Eastern Buzzard
35. Common Kingfisher
36. Eurasian Kestrel
37. Amur Falcon
38. Eurasian Hobby
39. Peregrine Falcon
40. Ashy Minivet
41. Black-winged Cuckooshrike
42. Ashy Woodswallow
43. Black Drongo
44. Ashy Drongo
45. Hair-crested Drongo
46. Brown Shrike
47. Long-tailed Shrike
48. Eurasian Jay
49. Japanese Tit

50. Common Tailorbird
51. Bank Swallow/Pale Sand Martin
52. Barn Swallow
53. Red-rumped Swallow
54. Asian House-Martin
55. Red-whiskered Bulbul
56. Light-vented Bulbul
57. Sooty-headed Bulbul
58. Yellow-browed Warbler
59. Dusky Warbler
60. Swinhoe's White-eye
61. Crested Myna
62. Oriental Magpie-Robin
63. Amur/Siberian Stonechat
64. Scaly-breasted Munia
65. White Wagtail
66. Richard's Pipit