

SILLEM'S ROSEFINCH THE ULTIMATE TWITCH?

A search for Sillem's Rosefinch combined with a visit to the
Xinjiang province.

19 UNTIL 30-06-2018



Max Berlijn, Epen, The Netherlands, maxberlijn@gmail.com

Legenda:

***AAAA** = New (Holarctic) Species **(3)**

AAAAA = Good species for the trip or for me (because not often seen)

The list order is conform the AOU checklist with the recent changes on the splitting and lumping issue mainly based on publications in the "important magazines". Subspecies is only mentioned when thought to be important and visible in the field. The totals of birds per species are just a total of the birds I saw to give an idea how many of a species you encounter during a trip. Only species seen are mentioned and heard when no lifer.

On this trip the weather was variable on the Tibetan plateau with every thinkable weather type following quickly after each other. The Xinjiang part was dry, hot and windless.



Basecamp from where we undertook our "Sillem's searching's"

Itinerary

19-06 Flew from Amsterdam to Shanghai, later on to Chengdu to spend the night.

20-06 Flew in the early morning to Yushu and relaxed all day, with only a short walk in the village. In the evening met my fellow group members and had dinner with them.

21-06 Drove from Yushu via the Longbau wetlands and the hills near Longbau town to the Duocai Mountains and later on to Zhi Duo to spend the night.

22-06 Drove from Zhi Duo to Budongqoun with many birding stops along the way.

23-06 Drove from Budongquan to a "sandgrouse site" 28 km east and then drove to the "Wild Yak valley" (changed vehicles for the last 100 km) and into it to put up camp around 17.00 (in the rain).

24-06 Drove another 20+ km into the Yenigou Valley (a further part of the Wild Yak Valley) and searched for the Sillem's Rosefinch.

25-06 Again drove another 22+ km into the Yenigou Valley and searched again for the Sillem's Rosefinch with success!!!

https://www.dutchbirding.nl/globalbirding/1470/als_ik_dit_ja_sillem_nu_eens_allemaal_had_kunnen_vertellen Later on drove back to the basecamp, broke up and drove to Golmud.

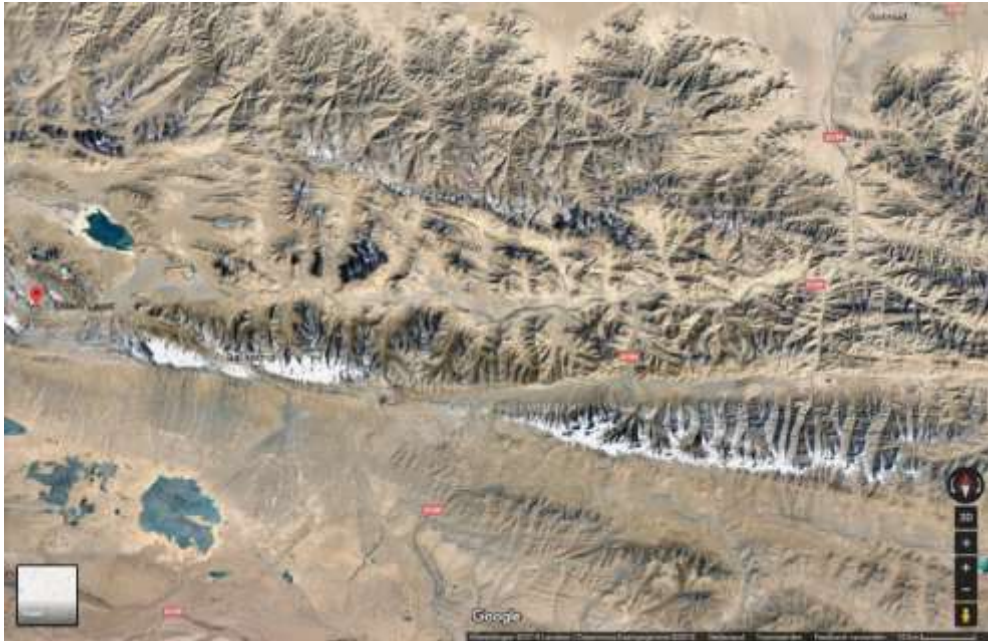
26-06 Drove from Golmud 700 km west to Ruoqiang with a lot of security checks and traffic control, stopped for birds along the way.

27-06 Birded in the morning in the orchards of Ruoqiang and in the afternoon along the G218 about 80 km to the north and back.

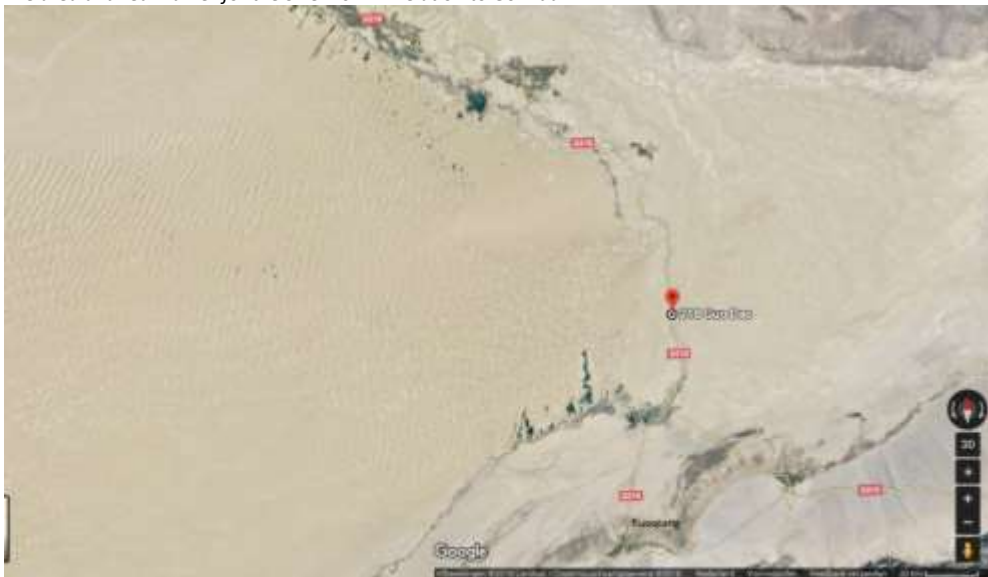
28-06 Birded in the morning along the G218 about 100 km to the north and back, and in the afternoon in the orchards of Ruoqiang.

29-06 Drove from Ruoqiang 700 km east to Golmud with a lot of security checks and traffic control, stopped for birds along the way.

30-06 Flew from Golmud to Xi'an and later on to Shanghai and Amsterdam (to arrive on the early morning of 01-07 without a suitcase...)



The area and red marker for the Sillem's R. in relation to Golmud



The area and most northern point (red marker) to where we birded in Xinjiang from Ruoqiang



Into the great wide open.....(the Tibetan plateau)

THE BIRD SPECIES

01. **Bar-headed Goose – *Anser indicus***
Common throughout the trip along rivers in flocks and family groups, many birds had a yellow wash on the head.
02. **Ruddy Shelduck – *Tadorna ferruginea***
Common throughout the trip along rivers in flocks and family groups, less common than Bar-headed G.
03. **Mallard – *Anas platyrhynchos***
21-06 5 ex. at the Longbau wetland.
04. **Red-crested Pochard – *Netta rufina***
27+28-06 Common in flocks on the lakes passed during these days, most (not all) were in eclipse plumage molt.
05. **Feruginous Duck – *Aythya nyroca***
21-06 30 ex. at the Longbau wetland, often in pairs.
06. **Common Merganser – *Mergus merganser***
22-06 1 female in flight at a stream where we stopped.
07. **Great Crested Grebe – *Podiceps cristatus***
Common on the lakes visited on the Tibetan plateau
08. **Black-necked Grebe – *Podiceps nigricollis***
21-06 30 ex. at the Longbau wetland, often in pairs.
09. **Black Stork – *Ciconia nigra***
22-06 1 ex. very distant seen at a pond along the way.
10. **Little Bittern - *Ixobrychus minutus***
28-06 3 ex. seen in flight above the reedbeds of one of the big ponds along the road.
11. **Eastern Cattle Egret – *Bubulcus (ibis) coromandus***
21-06 50 ex. at the Longbau wetlands, some in summer plumage. This seems to be a new colonizer of the plateau?
12. **Great Egret – *Ardea alba ssp: modesta***
A total of 7 birds seen spread over the trip, in both parts.
13. **Great Cormorant – *Phalacrocorax carbo***
27+28-06 At total of 10 birds seen on both days on the lakes visited.
14. **Bearded Vulture – *Gypaetus barbatus***
A total of 4 seen spread over the plateau part of the trip, one flying at eyelevel along side the bus was worth mentioning.
15. **Himalayan Vulture – *Gyps himalayensis***
The commonest vulture on the plateau, seen daily in respectable numbers.
16. **Cinereous Vulture – *Aegypius monachus***
26-03 3 ex. seen well along the long drive to Xinjiang.
17. **Black Kite – *Milvus lineatus***
28-03 2 ex. flying over a little wood along the way.
18. **Upland Buzzard – *Buteo hemilasius***
A total of 111 birds seen during the Qinghai part of the trip, many on nests with young.



Upland Buzzards at a nest see how variable they are.

So many Sakers.....

19. **Long-legged Buzzard – *Buteo rufinus***
A total of 4 seen in the Xinjiang province.
20. **Eurasian Coot – *Fulica atra***
Seen in low numbers on the visited lakes on both parts of the trip.
21. **Black-necked Crane - *Grus nigricollis***
21+22
visited wetlands along the way. 30 ex. seen all in pairs with fledged young at the
22. **Black-winged Stilt – *Himantopus himantopus***
27+28-06
young. Common in the visited wetland pools also with
23. **Pied Avocet – *Recurvirostra avosetta***
28-06
15 ex. with chicks at a pool along the way.
24. **Little-ringed Plover – *Charadrius dubius***
27-06
1 ex. in a dry area behind Ruoqiang.
25. **Kentish Plover – *Charadrius alexandrinus***
27+28-06
young. Common in the visited wetland pools also with
26. **Lesser Sand Plover – *Charadrius (mongolus/atrifrons) ssp: pamirensis***
23-06
heard singing in a song flight. 4 ex, nicely in pairs and in summer plumage. Also
27. **Black-tailed Godwit – *Limosa limosa ssp: melanuroides***
28-06
winter plumage. 2 ex. in a pool along the road, molting already into
28. **Green Sandpiper - *Tringa ochropus***
27-06
1 ex. flushed along pool along the way.
29. **Common Redshank – *Tringa tetanus***
The commonest wader encountered, seen on the plateau and in Xinjiang.
30. **Brown-headed Gull – *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus***
22+23-06
A total of 3 birds seen while traveling over the plateau, one adult in summer plumage flew by our tent along the river.
31. **Common Black-headed Gull - *Chroicocephalus ridibundus***
27+28-06
in Xinjiang. Common on the passed lakes (in small colonies)

32. **Mongolian Herring Gull – Larus (smithsonianus?) mongolicus**
 28-06 5 first summer and (almost) adult birds at one of the visited lakes in Xinjiang.
33. **Little tern – Sternula albifrons ssp: *sinensis***
 27+28-06 Common at the visited lakes, also a small breeding colony.
34. **Common Tern – Sterna hirundo ssp: *tibetana***
 Quite common during the whole trip with a breeding colony on a pond in Xinjiang.
35. **Whiskered Tern - Chlidonias hybrida**
 21-06 3 ex. at Longbau wetland just outside Yushu.
36. **White-winged Black Tern – Chlidonias leucopterus**
 21-06 2 ex. at Longbau wetland just outside Yushu, nice breeding plumage birds.
37. **Tibetan Sandgrouse – Syrrhaptes tibetanus**
 23-06 2 ex. a pair seen and heard well near Budongqoun.
 25-06 5 ex. driving out of the Wild Yak Valley. Great views of them, in flight, calling and with the dark underwings. Great to see this species again.



A pair on 23-06.

38. **Pallas's Sandgrouse – Syrrhaptes paradoxus**
 27-06 22 ex. in one flock in flight behind Ruoqiang.
 29-06 4 ex. in flight along the way back to Golmud.
39. **Hill Pigeon - Columba rupestris**
 Seen daily in low numbers on the plateau part of the trip.
40. **Oriental Turtle Dove – Streptopelia orientalis ssp: *orientalis?***
 27-06 5 ex. around Ruoqiang.
 29-06 5 ex. around Ruoqiang. They seemed quite small. Tail end was grey though.
41. **Eurasian Collared Dove - Streptopelia decaocto**
 Common in Xinjiang.
42. **Common Cuckoo – Cuculus canorus**
 21-06 1 ex. along the way on the plateau.
 27-06 Common around Ruoqiang.
43. **Little Owl – Athene noctua ssp: *impasta***
 21-06 1 ex seen well along the way.
 28-06 1 ex. near Ruoqiang.

44. **Common Swift – *Apus ssp: pekinensis***
 26+27-06 Flocks seen along the way to Golmud and around Ruoqiang.
45. **Salim Ali's Swift – *Apus salimalii***
 21-06 2 ex near Longbau. Big white-rumped swift.
46. **Eurasian Hoopoe – *Upupa epops***
 27-06 1 ex. around Ruoqiang.
47. **White-winged Woodpecker – *Dendrocopos leucopterus***
 27+28-06 A total of 4 seen spread over the day, also near recently used nesting holes.



Long time no see Woodpecker for me



Sakers where everywhere

48. **Common Kestrel – *Falco tinnunculus***
 21-06 1 ex. along the way.
 28-06 1 female type above a visited wood for WW Woodpeckers, maybe this bird was a Lesser K. Hopefully photos will confirm this later.
49. **Saker Falcon – *Falco cherrug***
 A total of 34 birds was seen spread over the plateau part of the trip and one dead one was found near Ruoqiang. Also, some nests with already big chicks were seen. It was remarkable how variable they are.
50. **Steppe Grey Shrike – *Lanius (excubitor) pallidirostris***
 27+28-06 A nice pair at a nesting site along the road we traveled a few times back and forth



The pair by Werner Mueller

51. **Indian Golden oriole – *Oriolus kundoo***
 27+28-06 4 ex. seen and heard well. Nice yellow males. Like European but a bit different in call (more shortcut). Did not look very different, although they had much black on the eye. ID on sonogram.

52. **Isabelline Shrike (Tarim Shrike) – *Lanius isabellinus* ssp: *arenarius***

26+27+28-06

Common in Xinjiang with many birds in many plumages, also some very nice males. I did not see any “workable” ID differences with Daurian Shrike.

53. **Henderson’s Ground Jay – *Podoces hendersoni***

26-06

2 ex. seen from the road, quite far away.

29-06

8 ex. seen along the road, some very close coming

to us while we had breakfast.



Henderson’s

and Biddulph’s Ground Jay



Great new Ground Jay!

54. ***BIDDULPH’S GROUND JAY – *Podoces biddulphi***

27+28-06

13 ex. in total seen spread over the two days.

Great birds, in family groups making almost the same sound as Henderson’s.

55. **Red-billed Chough – *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax***

Common on the plateau part of the trip.

56. **Carrion Crow – *Corvus corone* ssp: *orientalis***

27+28-06

Quite common around Ruoqiang.

57. **Northern Raven – *Corvus corax***

Quite common throughout the trip.

58. **Ground Tit – Pseudopodices humilis**

Common on the plateau in family groups sometimes with small young.

59. **Bearded Reedling – Panurus biarmicus ssp: *russicus***

27+28-06

Common in big flocks in the reedbeds along the visited and passed ponds. It looked if they almost exploded due to the big numbers.

60. **Horned Lark – Eremophila alpestris ssp: *elwesi***

Common on the highest parts of the plateau, also with recently fledged young.

61. **Hume's Lark – Calandrella acutirostris**

23-06

1 ex. while driving into the Wild Yak Valley

25-06

2 ex. while driving out of the wild Yak valley. Very

plain Short-toed Lark, showing well.

62. **Tibetan Lark – Melanocorypha maxima**

22-06

1 ex. seen well along the way in a field visited on the plateau. A large longbilled huge lark with a dark spot on the side of the breast.



63. **(Asian) Lesser Short-toed Lark – Alaudala cheleensis/rufescens ssp: *seebohmi***

27+28-06

10 ex. seen on both days along the shores of the visited ponds. Very plain small larks with streaks on the breast.

64. **Pale Sand Martin – Riparia diluta ssp: *tibetana***

21+22-06

25 birds seen in feeding flocks flying above the

passed wet area's

29-06

25 ex. seen extremely well at a colony near a

small river bank. Great views and sound recordings.

65. **Barn Swallow – Hirundo rustica**

Seen in low numbers during the whole trip but only two at the plateau.

66. **Asian House Martin – Delichon dasypus**

21-06

15 ex. at a little colony during a lunch stop. Nice

big white rump and dark underwing coverts.

67. **Red-rumped Swallow – Cecropis daurica ssp: *daurica***

21-06

2 ex. seen at a wire along the way offcourse very

streaky underparts.

68. **Alpine Leaf Warbler – Phylloscopus occisinensis**

21-06

1 ex. seen and heard well in song at a small rocky

mountain slope. Nice yellow on the underparts and supercilium.

69. **Barred Warbler – Sylvia nisoria**

27-06

4 ex. all singing males seen quite well near

Ruoqiang. Nice barred males with beady white eye.

70. **Desert (Lesser) Whitethroat – *Sylvia curruca* (?) ssp: *minula***

27+28+29-06

18 birds in total in the Xinjiang province giving nice views. Small pale whitethroats with a song which was different but sounded related to *curruca* birds.



Desert Lesser Whitethroat and

Tarim Babbler

71. ***TARIM BABBLER – *Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris***

27_28-06

25 birds in total in small family groups. Very pale compared to its “sister” taxon around Beijing but much like these birds. The calls were good to here.

72. **Wallcreeper – *Tichodroma muraria***

21-06

2 ex. giving good views during a lunch stop in a little canyon.

73. **Common Starling – *Sturnus vulgaris* ssp: *porphyronotus***

27+28-06

25 ex. in total breeding around Ruoqiang. Very spotless birds.

74. **Kessler’s Trush – *Turdus kessleri***

A total of 7 birds seen in and around the villages on the plateau.

75. **Black Redstart – *Phoenicurus ochruros* ssp: *rufiventris***

A total of 16 birds seen of these red-bellied subspecies.

76. **Hodgson’s Redstart – *Phoenicurus hodgsoni***

21-06

21-06 1 male on a wire along the way.

77. **Guldenstadt’s Redstart – *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus***

24-06

1 female near our “basecamp” seen well, a huge redstart.

78. **Isabelline Wheatear – *Oenanthe isabelline***

23-06

1 ex. seen along the way into the valley.

79. **Desert Wheatear – *Oenanthe deserti***

27+28-06

5 ex. seen very well in total during our stay in Xinjiang.

80. **White- throated Dipper – *Cinclus* ssp: *leucogaster***

21-06

2 ex, one normal bird and one dark morph (*sordidus*) together. The dark morph was a new “thing” for me.

81. **Saxaul Sparrow – *Passer ammodendri***

27+28-06

Common in quite big flocks seen on both days in the surroundings of Ruoqiang.

82. **Eurasian Tree Sparrow – *Passer montnus***

Commonly seen on the trip, mainly in towns on the plateau.



Again Saxaul Sparrow on a trip, always a treat.

and Tibetan Snowfinch (by Hannu Jannes)

83. **Tibetan (Prince Henri's) Snowfinch - *Montifringilla henrici***

21-06 4 ex. in one flock along a stream in a little canyon.

84. **Black-winged (adams's) Snowfinch – *Montifringilla adamsi***

21-06 1 ex. in one flock along a stream in a little canyon with the Tibetan.

85. **White-rumped Snowfinch – *Onychostruthus taczanowskii***

Quite common on the plateau and the second most common snowfinch.

86. **Rufous-necked Snowfinch – *Pyrgilauda ruficollis***

Very common on the plateau and the most common snowfinch.

87. **Blanford's Snowfinch – *Pyrgilauda blanfordi***

25-06 1 ex. seen well at the campground while packing up with much black on the face.

88. **Robin Accentor – *Prunella rubeculoides***

22-06 1 ex. seen while searching for the Tibetan Lark.

89. **Citrine Wagtail – *Motacilla citreola* ssp: *werae* + *calcarata***

27-06 3 juv. *werae* ex at the shores of the birded ponds in Xinjiang.

29-06 4 ex. *calcarata* along the way back into Qinghai. Some nice adults.

90. **White Wagtail – *Motacilla alba* ssp: *personata* + *leucopsis***

27+28-06 8 ex. *personata* spread over the day in Xinjiang.

29-06 1 ex. *leucopsis* seen on a wire in Qinghai a migrant.

91. **Brandt's Mountain Finch – *Leucosticte brandtii* ssp: *pallidior***

24+25-06 20 ex. in small flocks in the Yenigou Valley with nice black heads.

92. **Streaked Rosefinch – *Carpodacus rubicilloides***

20-06 1 female in Yushu town on the buildings of the main street.

93. **(Eastern) Great Rosefinch – *Carpodacus rubicilla* ssp: *severtzovi***

A total of 8 birds seen mainly in the visited villages along the way on the plateau.



94. **Tibetan Rosefinch – *Carpodacus roborowskii***

24+25-06

9 birds in total, mainly in pairs in the Yenigou Valley. Great views of the males and females. The later were a bit variable. Also hear there pwik-pwik calls

95. ***SILLEM'S ROSEFINCH (Mountain Finch) – *Carpacus sillemi***

25-06

2 ex. a pair seen very well at close range around us at the sloping hill in the Yenigou valley at a height of 5025 m. The birds were very confining (the female up to some centimeters) and the female was collecting nesting material. The story about this finding (in Dutch) is found here:

https://www.dutchbirding.nl/globalbirding/1470/als_ik_dit_ja_sillem_nu_eens_allemaal_had_kunnen_vertellen#1470

The call reminded of Reed Bunting or maybe even Penduline Tit.



Female by Karen Rose



Female by Anne Murray

96. **Desert Finch – *Rhodospiza obsoleta***

28-06

1 male seen on a wire just outside Ruoqiang.

97. **Twite – *linaria flavirostris* ssp: *montanella***

25-06

5 ex. in little flock in a little park along the way to

Golmud.

MAMMALS

Woolly Hare - *Lepus oiostolus* Common and widespread.

Plateau Pika (Black-lipped P) - *Ochotona curzoniae* Very common in some areas.

Glover's Pika - *Ochotona gloveri* Two in southern Qinghai.

Large-eared Pika - *Ochotona huangensis* Two apparently belonging to this species at Wild Yak Valley.

Himalayan Marmot – *Marmota himalayana* Common and widespread.

Grey Wolf (Wolf) - *Canis lupus* A total of 3 with good views.

Tibetan Fox - *Vulpes ferrilata* A total of eight with excellent views.

Red Fox - *Vulpes* A total of four were sighted.

Kiang (Tibetan Wild Ass) - *Equus kiang* Common in some areas.

Yak - *Bos grunniensis* A total of eight wild Yaks at Kekexili NP, and a group of 40 in the Wild Yak Valley.

Goitered Gazelle - *Gazella subgutturosa* Four were noted in Xinjiang.

Chiru (Tibetan Antelope) - *Pantholops hodgsonii* Noted in the Kexekili-Budongquan area and at Wild Yak Valley.

Tibetan Gazelle - *Procapra picticaudata* Noted, often in good numbers, on six days.

Bharal (Blue Sheep) - *Pseudois nayaur* Noted on four days.



Eating dinner at Basecamp (before we saw the mega)



The day after....
