Jiuzhaigou National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in north Sichuan (32.733ºN 104.150ºE) 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...
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.

Acknowledgements
Thanks go to Richard Lewthwaite, Jing Li, Terry Townshend and Clive Viney for information which enabled me to prepare the checklist and my wife Rowan Sham for her photographs and without whom my second visit would never have taken place.

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


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


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


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 hodgsoniae*
Blood Pheasant *Ithaginis cruentus*
Temminck’s Tragopan *Tragopan temminckii*
Koklass Pheasant *Pucrasia macrolopha*
Chinese Monal *Lophophorus lhuysii*
White Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*
Blue Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon auritum*
Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*
Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus 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*
Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*
Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*
Garganey *Anas querquedula*
Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*
Common Teal *Anas crecca*
Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*
Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*
Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*
Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
Eurasian Shoveler *Anas clypeata*
Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*
Common Teal *Anas crecca*
Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*
Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*
Ferruginous Pochard *Aythya nyroca*
Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*
Snoe *Mergus albellus*
Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*
Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*
Common Teal *Anas crecca*
Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*
Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*
Ferruginous Pochard *Aythya nyroca*
Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*
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Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*
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Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
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Common Teal *Anas crecca*
Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*
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Besra **Accipiter virgatus**
Eurasian Sparrowhawk **Accipiter nisus**
Northern Goshawk **Accipiter gentilis**
Grey-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**

Chinese Pond Heron **Ardeola bacchus**
Black-crowned Night Heron **Nycticorax nycticorax**
Cinnamon Bunting **Habia cincta**
Tiger Shrike **Lanius tigrinus**
Brown Shrike **Lanius cristatus**
Long-tailed Shrike **Lanius schach**
Grey-backed Shrike **Lanius tephronotus**
Chinese Grey Shrike **Lanius cristatus**
Eurasian Jay **Garrulus glandarius**
Sichuan Jay **Perisoreus internigrans**
Eurasian Blackbird **Turdus merula**

Red-billed Blue Magpie **Urocissa erythrorhyncha**
Azure-winged Magpie **Cyanopica cyanus**
Black-billed Blue 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**
Large-billed Crow **Corvus macrorhynchos**
Carrion Crow **Corvus corone**
Collared Crow **Corvus cornix**
Common Raven **Corvus corax**
Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike **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 albocinclus**
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 daunica**
Brown-breasted Flycatcher **Muscicapa mutuvi**
Ferruginous Flycatcher **Muscicapa ferruginea**
Slaty-backed Flycatcher **Ficedula hector**
Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher **Ficedula sylvestris**
Red-throated Flycatcher **Ficedula parva**
Slaty-blue Flycatcher **Ficedula tricolor**
Blue-throated Flycatcher **Cyanis rubecula**
Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher **Culicicapa ceylonensis**
Siberian Rubythroat **Luscinia calliope**
Blackthroat **Luscinia svecica**
Rufous-headed Robin **Luscinia svecica**
Indian Blue Robin **Luscinia brunnnea**
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 gutturalis**
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 **Hylocichla fusca**

Eurasian Blackbird **Turdus merula**
White-throated Redstart **Phoenicurus schisticeps**
Hodgson’s Redstart **Phoenicurus gobius**
Black Redstart **Phoenicurus ochruros**

Eurasian Blackbird **Turdus merula**

Winter Wren **Troglodytes troglodytes**
Marsh Tit **Parus palustris**
Willow Tit **Parus montanus**
White-browed Tit **Parus superciliosus**
Rustic-breasted Tit **Parus davi**
Rufous-vented Tit **Parus rubidivertris**
Coal Tit **Parus ater**
Yellow-bellied Tit **Parus venustus**
Grey-crowned Tit **Parus palustris**
Great Tit **Parus major**
Green-backed Tit **Parus monticola**
Long-tailed Tit **Aegithalos caudatus**
Black-browed Tit *Aegithalos bonvaloti*
Sooty Tit *Aegithalos fuliginosus*
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 *Pycnonotus 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 fortpides*
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*
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 plumbeatus*
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 suatschewi*
Barred Laughingthrush *Garrulax lunulatus*
Great Laughingthrush *Garrulax maximus*
Elliott’s Laughingthrush *Garrulax elliotii*
Black-faced Laughingthrush *Garrulax affinis*
Black-streaked Scimitar Babbler *Mycerobas carnipes*
Chinese Babbax Babax *Babax lanceolatus*
Chinese Fulvetta *Alcippe striaticollis*
Spectacled Fulvetta *Alcippe ruficapilla*
Grey-cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe morrisonia*
White-collarred Yuhina *Yuhina diademata*
Great Parrotbill *Conostoma oemodium*
Spectacled Parrotbill *Paradoxornis conspicillatus*
Vinous-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis webbianus*
Tibetan Lark *Melanocorypha maximus*
Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*
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 *Montifringilla adamsi*
White-rumped Snowfinch *Pyrgaluca taczanowskii*
Rufous-necked Snowfinch *Pyrgaluca rubicollis*
Plain-backed Snowfinch *Pyrgaluca blandfordi*
Forest Wagtail *Hirundo rustica*
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 spinoloeta*
Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*
Robin Accentor *Prunella rubeculoides*
Maroon-backed Accentor *Prunella immaculata*
Grey-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 pulcherimus*
Pink-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus eos*
Vinaceous Rosefinch *Carpodacus vinaceus*
Dark-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus edwardsi*
Three-banded Rosefinch *Carpodacus trifasciatus*
Spot-winged Rosefinch *Carpodacus rhodopeplus*
White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus thura*
Streaked Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicollis*
Red-fronted Rosefinch *Carpodacus puniceus*
Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*
Crimson-browed Rosefinch *Propyrrhula subhimalaya*
Grey-headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythaca*
Collared Grosbeak *Mycerobas affinis*
Spot-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas melanogonchus*
White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carnipes*
Slaty Bunting *Luscinia sibirica*
Godlewski’s Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*
Russet Bunting *Emberiza citrinella*
Grey-cheeked Bunting *Emberiza fucata*
Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*
Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*