



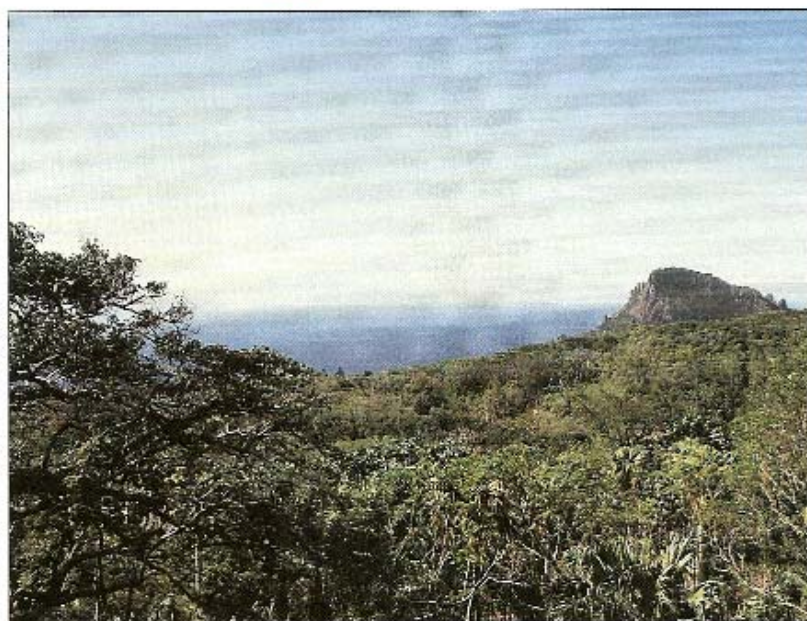
CIN-TY LEE

Light-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus sinensis*), left, also known as Chinese Bulbul, is an abundant resident in cities and farmlands. The endemic Styan's Bulbul (*Pycnonotus taiwanus*), right, also known as the Taiwan Bulbul, is closely related and is found only on the east coast of Taiwan. Styan's generally prefers thicker vegetation than Light-vented Bulbul, thus occurring in parks and in the foothills. Styan's Bulbul is easily found in Chiipeh. Hybridization occurs in northeastern Taiwan.



台灣賞鳥

Birding Taiwan



This is the view looking south toward the Pacific Ocean from Kenting National Park. Besides harboring all the foothill birds of Taiwan, Kenting's unique floral complexity supports several bird species that exist nowhere else on Taiwan. Photographed in January 1995.

墾丁國家公園

CIN-TY LEE

CIN-TY LEE*
and **NOAM SHANY†**

THE ISLAND OF TAIWAN (or the Republic of China), located 125 miles off mainland China (People's Republic of China), is a familiar destination and place of transit for business travelers. It is also known for its rapid economic growth and its beautiful scenery. Portuguese sailors, who docked on her shores hundreds of years ago, called it "Ilha Formosa," or "beautiful island."

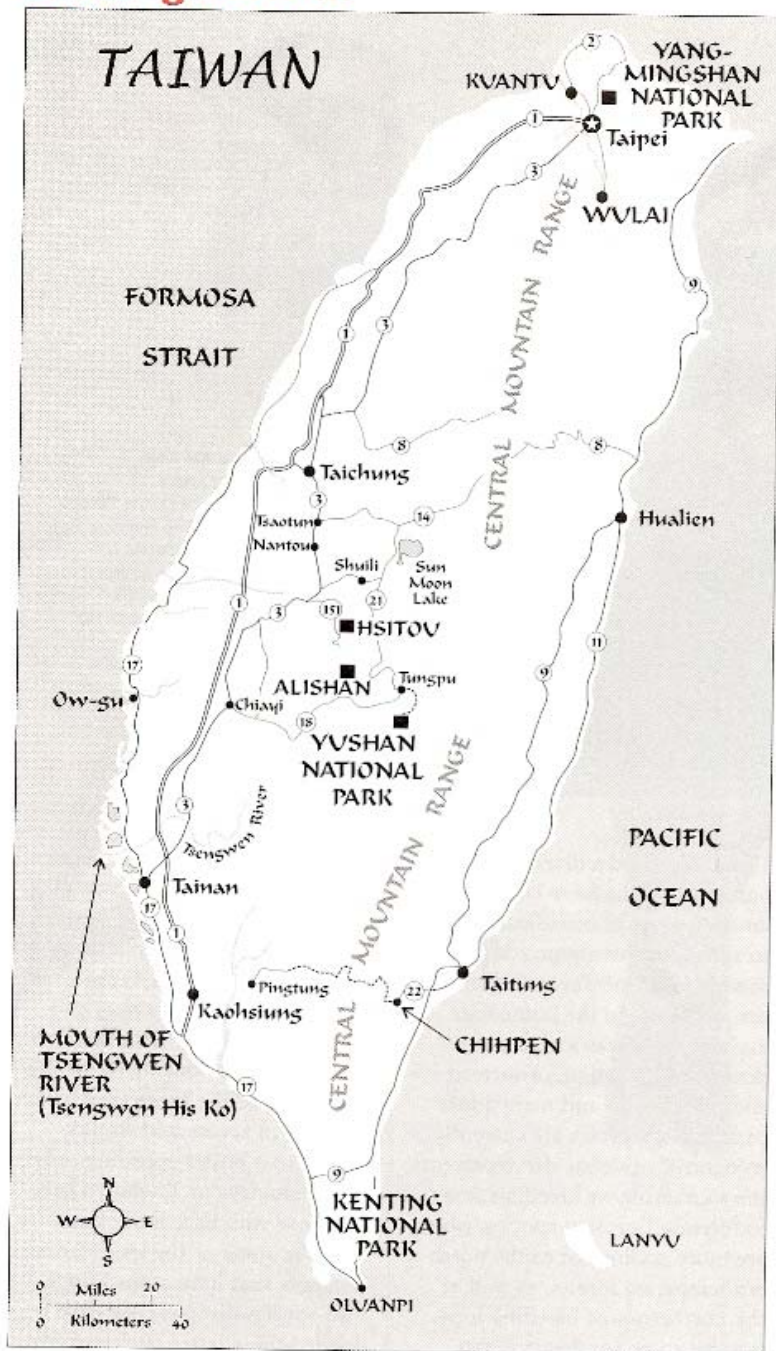
Although Taiwan is only about the size of Maryland and Delaware combined and is situated directly on the Tropic of Cancer, a close look reveals over 450 recorded bird species, elevations up to

13,110 feet, and a diversity of habitats ranging from coastal lowlands to tropical broadleaf forests to an impressive alpine zone. Even though many of Taiwan's birds can be found on the immediate mainland, Taiwan's avifauna is demonstrably unique. Fourteen endemic species and many more endemic subspecies are currently recognized. Taiwan also represents the southernmost breeding area for certain Eurasian species, which are more acclimated to the northern temperate forests, as well as the northernmost breeding location for some southeast Asian species which are strictly tropical. What is more remarkable is that Taiwan also has relic populations of some middle-to-high-elevation species which are now found only in the eastern Himalayas and bordering regions, but not in any of the intervening areas.

Most of Taiwan's endemics can be found during a one-to-two-week visit at any time of year. In addition, globally sought-after species, such as Black-faced Spoonbill (*Platalea minor*) and Saunders's Gull (*Larus saundersi*), are easily found during the winter. We first describe those sites which are easy to access and would appeal to a birder spending only a few spare days in Taiwan. Then, for those who have more time, we describe some of the lesser-known hotspots that have a much higher bird-species diversity. We have divided these latter sites into five categories: (1) lowlands and farmlands, (2) coastal wetlands, (3) foothills, (4) middle-elevation tropical broadleaf forests, and (5) upper-elevation and alpine habitats. We also give a brief description of Lanyu Island, which is known for a few endemic

* P. O. Box 381085, Cambridge,
Massachusetts 02238
† 2530 Ocean Cove Drive,
Cardiff-by-the-Sea, California 92007

birding taiwan



Taiwan's diverse avifauna and habitats result partly from the coupled effects of global climatic change and a recently active geologic history. Taiwan arose from the Pacific Ocean three to four million years ago (young by geologic standards) when a series of volcanic islands associated with the Philippines collided with the Eurasian continent, or eastern edge of China. Continued collision created Taiwan's high mountains, which allowed the preservation of relic Himalayan species. Collision, in fact, is still continuing today. The small island, Lanyu, located off the southeastern corner of Taiwan and known for having a few endemic subspecies, is an example of a volcanic island that will in the distant future dock onto Taiwan's southern tip.

subspecies. The logistics of travel are provided at the end. For more information about birding Taiwan, the following articles or field notes are useful: Brazil (1992), Lehman (1993), and Lee (1994, 1996). For general logistics, we recommend Storey (1994). Although English bird names here follow Clements (1991), names used in field guides, which differ from Clements, are parenthesized.

Sites near Taipei

Most people visit Taipei on a business trip. Taipei is one of the true jungle cities of Asia, crowded and polluted. Use busses and taxis to move around the city. In the city itself, you will be greeted by Light-vented Bulbuls (Chinese Bulbul; *Pycnonotus sinensis*), Eurasian Tree Sparrows (*Passer montanus*), and Japanese White-eyes (*Zosterops japonica*). Surprisingly, perhaps, there are a few excellent birding spots near the city.

陽明山

Yangmingshan National Park

Lying in the forested mountains north of Taipei, Yangmingshan National Park is a true piece of tranquility. The park is known for its cherry blossoms that paint the park pink in early spring, attracting thousands of visitors. From the Taipei Central Bus Station (located next to the Taipei Railway station), it is only a 45-minute bus ride. To avoid crowds, visit on weekdays. Take a stroll along the stone paths, watching for noisy groups of Black Bulbul (*Hypsipetes madagascariensis*) raiding the fruiting

trees and for Black-browed Barbet (Müller's Barbet; *Megalaima oorti nuchalis*), Gray Treepie (*Dendrociitta formosae*), Streaked-breasted Scimitar-Babbler (*Pomatorhinus ruficollis*), Gray-cheeked Fulvetta (*Alcippe morrisonia*), and Rufous-capped Babbler (Red-headed Tree Babbler; *Stachyris ruficeps*) can be found lurking in any thick vegetation. Near the waterfall, watch for the endemic Taiwan Whistling-Thrush (*Myiophonus insularis*) as it hops among the river stones. This glossy, dark-blue, red-eyed bird is best chanced upon very early in the morning. Taiwan Magpie (Taiwan Blue Magpie; *Urocissa caerulea*) can also be seen here with some luck.

關渡

Kuantu

For a sampling of waterbirds, try Kuantu, located at the confluence of the Tamsui and Keelung Rivers, a one-and-a-half-hour bus ride northeast of Taipei. This is Taipei's most popular birding spot and a good place to meet local birders. Walk past the row of shops and begin birding on the concrete dike. Kuantu's mangrove swamps, marshes, and rice paddies have been set aside as a bird sanctuary. The best time to visit is in winter or during spring and fall migrations. Watch for Gray Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), Great Egret (*Egretta alba*), Intermediate (*E. intermedia*), and Little (*E. garzetta*) Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), and, with patience and a little luck, Yellow Bittern (*Ixobrychus sinensis*) and Ruddy-breasted Crake (*Porzana fusca*). You should have little trouble finding

Black-faced Spoonbill Conservation



JIA-SHENG CHEN

The Black-faced Spoonbill (*Platalea minor*), rarest spoonbill in the world, is a species of international concern. Its breeding biology is almost a total mystery. The only known colonies are on a few small rocky islands off the coast of North Korea and, due to military restrictions, these colonies are rarely visited. The spoonbills nest on sheer cliffs among the very gulls and other seabirds that may pose threats to the spoonbill eggs and young.

This species is much better known from its wintering range. It spends the winter primarily in estuaries from central Japan to Taiwan and along the coast from Jiangsu Province in Central China south to the Red River delta in Vietnam. Over half of the world's population winters in Chiku, near the Tsengwen estuary in southern Taiwan. Recent efforts have preserved these wetlands, although there is always a threat (most recently from a proposed steel and petrochemical complex several kilometers from the main roost area).

Ten years ago, the known world population was just over 200 birds. Interest from the Wild Bird Federation of Taiwan, the Wild Bird Society of Japan, World Wildlife Fund-Hong Kong, and other groups has increased awareness of the species' plight. Tom Dahmer and Mary Felley (Ecosystems Limited, Hong Kong) have coordinated winter censuses of the species since 1993,

and have found that the birds are wintering in many new areas. As of January 1998, the global census recorded 613 birds. This apparent increase reflects greater awareness and more intensive census efforts rather than an actual increase in the population since 1988.

The Wild Bird Society of Japan has also sponsored satellite tracking of birds from wintering areas in Taiwan, northern Vietnam, and Hong Kong to determine migration routes and additional nesting areas. The first result of those studies was identification of a new stopover site on the spring migration in Zhejiang Province, People's Republic of China.

The fate of the Black-faced Spoonbill will depend on increasing our understanding of the species' biology and on preservation of its wetland habitats. Only four of the 14 sites used by wintering Black-faced Spoonbills in January 1998 are protected or are under some form of conservation management; each of those four sites is in China. The remaining 10 sites have no formal conservation status. The 10 unprotected sites were used in January 1998 by 495 of the world's 613 Black-faced Spoonbills (81 percent); thus, there is a serious threat to most of the world's Black-faced Spoonbill population.

Malcolm C. Coulter
Co-chairman, IUCN Specialist Group
on Storks, Ibises, and Spoonbills

birding taiwan



These Taiwanese birders were keeping track of the Black-faced Spoonbill flock at Tsengwen Hsi Ko in January 1995.

CIN-TY LEE



Saltflats like these are abundant along Highway 17 north of Tsengwen Hsi Ko and are good in winter for Marsh (Tringa stagnatilis) and Curlew (Calidris ferruginea) Sandpipers. Shown here are workers harvesting the salt, January 1995.

CIN-TY LEE

Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*), Spot-billed Duck (*A. poecilorhyncha*), Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), and other widespread northeast Asian species. In bamboo-stands Vinous-throated

Parrorbills (*Paradoxornis webbianus*) move in small parties. The reedbeds offer shelter for Oriental Reed-Warbler (*Acrocephalus orientalis*) and, during migration, Siberian

Rubythroat (*Luscinia calliope*). Check the fields for Red Turtle-Dove (*Streptopelia tranquebaria*), Yellow (*Motacilla flava*) and Gray (*M. cinerea*) Wagtails, Tawny-flanked (*Prinia subflava*) and Yellow-bellied (*P. flaviventris*) Prinias, Brown (*Lanius cristatus*) and Long-tailed (*L. schach*) Shrikes, Crested Mynah (*Acridotheres cristatellus*), Blue Rock-Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*), Dusky Thrush (*Turdus naumanni*), Black-faced Bunting (*Emberiza spodocephala*), and Scaly-breasted (*Lonchura punctulata*) and White-rumped (*L. striata*) Munias. During migration, the hills above Kuantan are excellent for hawk-watching. Gray-faced Buzzards (*Butastur indicus*) and Chinese Goshawks (Chinese Sparrowhawk; *Accipiter soloensis*) pass through in large numbers.

烏來

Wulai

Another location for forest birds and endemics is Wulai, only a one-hour bus ride south of Taipei. Wulai is an aboriginal cultural center. Beautiful waterfalls and temples and year-long cool temperatures draw crowds to this site, especially during the summer months. Look for Plain Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum ignipectus*) foraging in the trees that surround the visitors parking lot. Walk through the tourist shops and take the road upstream along the river. There are now signs marking the recommended birding route. Watch (and listen) for Crested Serpent-Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*) and Black Eagle (Indian Black Eagle; *Ictinaetus malayensis*) overhead. Plumbeous

Redstart (*Rhyacornis fuliginosus*), White Wagtail (Pied Wagtail; *Motacilla alba leucopsis*), and possibly Brown Dipper (*Cinclus pallasii*) may be seen along the river. As you go farther away from the building district, you begin to enter an extensive stand of tropical broadleaf forest. This habitat is located on the steep walls of the canyon, so you must bird from the road. You should see Gray-chinned Minivert (*Pericrocotus solaris*), Bronzed Drongo (*Dicrurus aeneus*), Gould's Fulvetta (*Alcippe brunnea*), Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, Taiwan Yuhina (*Yuhina brunneiceps*), and Taiwan Barwing (*Actinodura morrisoniana*). Keep your eyes open for the uncommon Varied Tit (*Parus varius*). Most birders come to Wulai in quest of the beautiful and endemic Taiwan Magpie, which used to be more common but has decreased in recent years. It is still possible to find them along the upper parts of the trail.

Habitat Birding Sites

Lowlands and Farmlands

Most of Taiwan's west coast is characterized by flat lowlands that are either extensively farmed or densely populated. The drive along Highway 3 from Taipei to Kaohsiung passes through the typical lowland landscape of rice paddies and cane and tobacco fields.

The best habitats for birds are weedy fields bordered by drainage ditches. Birds of the lowlands include such common birds as Oriental Turtle-Dove (*Streptopelia orientalis*), Red Collared-Dove (*S. tranquebarica*),

House Swift (*Apus affinis*), Light-vented Bulbul, Crested Mynah (*Acridotheres cristatellus*), and Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*). Some of the other common birds that might pique the interests of a New World birder are Pacific (*Hirundo tahitica*) and Striated (*H. striolata*) Swallows, Long-tailed Shrike, Zitting Cisticola (*Cisticola juncidis*), Tawny-flanked and Yellow-bellied Prinias, Vinous-throated Parrotbill, and Scaly-breasted Munia. In winter, expect to see White, Gray, and Yellow Wagtails, Red-throated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*), Brown Shrike, Blue Rock-Thrush, and Black-faced Bunting (*Emberiza spodocephala*). You may also see wintering Siberian Rubythroats and Oriental Greenfinches (*Carduelis sinica*). Rice paddies, flooded fields, and rivers should be checked for waterbirds. Watch for Ruddy-breasted Crane, Green (*Tringa ochropus*; winter) and Common (*Actitis hypoleucos*; winter) Sandpipers, and Greater Painted-Snipe (*Rostratula benghalensis*). Painted-snipers are found in wet stubble and weedy fields, particularly in post-harvest rice paddies.

Coastal Wetlands

Taiwan's coastal wetland habitats are primarily on the west coast. Unfortunately, all of these sites suffer from heavy pollution, but the birds have nowhere else to go. National and international conservation efforts are badly needed for the preservation of these wetlands (see sidebar). One of the most productive spots is Tsengwen Hsi Ko (Hsi Ko = river estuary), which is accessed via

Highway 17, about 10 kilometers north of the city of Tainan.

Birders have painted signs on the pavement, making it easy to find the rivermouth. About half of the world's Black-faced Spoonbill population winters here, 321 of the 613 individuals. Being the rarest and least-studied of the world's six spoonbill species, the Black-faced Spoonbill is definitely a mega-tick. Although the flock moves from place to place in this area, there are usually birders present every day who keep track of the flock. Eurasian Spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia*), very rare in Taiwan, have associated with this flock. Tsengwen Hsi Ko is also one of the few places in the world that hosts regularly wintering Saunders's Gulls. This very rare gull's nesting grounds were first discovered in eastern China only in 1987. Saunders's Gull is another mega-tick for western birders. These mudflats also produce Little Ringed (*Charadrius dubius*), Snowy (*C. alexandrinus*), and Mongolian (*C. mongolus*) Plovers, Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*), Dunlin (*C. alpina*), Curlew Sandpiper (*C. ferruginea*), Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*), Common Greenshank (*T. nebularia*), Black-tailed (*Limosa limosa*) and Bar-tailed (*L. lapponica*) Godwits, and Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*). The gulls include Slaty-backed (*Larus schistisagus*), Herring (*L. argentatus*), and Black-headed (*L. ridibundus*). During spring and fall migrations, watch for Greater Sandplover (*Charadrius leschenaultii*), Sharp-tailed (*Calidris acuminata*) and Terek (*Xenus cinereus*)

Sandpipers, and Great Knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*). Rarities have included Spoonbill Sandpiper (*Eury-norhynchus py-meus*; extremely rare), Asian Dowitcher (Asiatic Dowitcher; *Limnodromus semipalmatus*), and Far Eastern Curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*).

Driving along Highway 17 just south of the Tsengwen River crossing, you pass by some wetland preserves on the west side of the highway. By exploring some of the side roads, you can find seasonal ponds and flooded fields that are very productive for wintering waterfowl. In the preserve itself we have seen Ruddy (*Tadorna ferruginea*) and Common (*T. tadorna*) Shelducks (both rare in Taiwan), Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), Green-winged Teal (*A. crecca*), Garganey (*A. querquedula*), Eurasian Wigeon (*A. penelope*), and Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*).

Backtrack and take Highway 17 north of the Tsengwen River crossing to pass through extensive salt flats that can produce Marsh (*Tringa stagnatilis*) and Curlew Sandpipers. Farther north on Highway 17 (about 70 kilometers north of Tainan) is the fish-farming town of Ow-gu, located on



JIASHENG CHEN

White-eared Sibia (*Heterophasia auricularis*) is a common endemic in mixed broadleaf and coniferous forests at high elevations (Yushan National Park and Hsitou). It is highly vocal.

the boundary between Yunlin and Chiayi counties. The habitat here consists of freshwater ponds and wetlands, where wintering shorebirds include Long-toed Stint (*Calidris subminuta*) and Wood and Common Sandpipers. Scan flocks of Whiskered (*Chlidonias hybridus*) and Little Terns (*Sterna albifrons*) for White-winged (*C. leucopterus*) and Caspian (*S. caspia*) Terns. In addition, you should see Little Grebe (*Tachyhaptus ruficollis*), Striated Heron (*Butorides striatus*), Cinnamon Bittern (*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*), Yellow Bittern, Little, Intermediate, and Great Egrets, and, in winter, Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*). Winter-

ing raptors include Eurasian Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) and Northern Harrier (Hen Harrier; *Circus cyaneus*). Small flocks of Little Curlews (*Numenius minutus*) occasionally drop in to the grassy fields during migration.

Accommodations are available in Tainan, or you may wish to stay at one of the temples at Beimen, a small town just north of Tsengwen Hsi Ko.

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Foothills: Kenting National Park

Low-elevation

broadleaf forest occurs in foothills. Although any suitable habitat will do, a good location for foothill birds is Kenting National Park, located at the southernmost tip of Taiwan. Most visitors to Kenting are surprised by how different it looks from the rest of the island. The climate is dry and windy. The landscape is characterized by stunted trees and vegetation growing in chasms and behind knobs of limestone, which were once living coral reefs. These conditions have created a unique flora and fauna. In addition, Kenting is the only place in Taiwan where several bird species more closely associated with the Philippines can be found.

From Kaohsiung, Kenting is only two to three hours by bus.

Accommodations in Kenting are affordable and comfortable. Because of the large area, we advise renting a car or a moped from one of the hotels in Kenting. (Avoid renting a jeep because it is noisy, large, and expensive.) The main tourist attraction is the park's center, also known as the "Tropical Botanic Garden," which is often crowded with people. Many more birds can be found just outside of the park. A good spot is the picnic area about a mile past



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Here is a view of a middle-elevation tropical broadleaf forest in Chihpen.

Many Asian specialities and Taiwan endemics can be found here.

This spot is one of the few places in Taiwan where Maroon Oriole (*Oriolus traillii*) can be found. January 1995.

the turnoff to the main park, where Crested Serpent Eagle, Chinese Bamboo-Partridge (*Bambusicola thoracica*), White-bellied Pigeon (Japanese Green-Pigeon; *Treron sieboldii*), Black-browed Barbet, Styan's Bulbul (Taiwan Bulbul; *Pycnonotus taiwanus*), Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, White-eared Sibia (*Heterophasia auricularis*), Gray-cheeked Fulverra, White-bellied Yuhina (*Yuhina zantholeuca*), Black-naped Monarch (*Hypothymis azurea*), and Gray Treepie can be seen. If you are lucky, you may also spot Emerald Dove (*Chalcophaps indica*) and Whistling Green-Pigeon (*Treron formosae*), the latter found only on the southern tip of Taiwan. In

winter, fruit trees often have Brown-headed (*Turdus chrysolais*), Eyebrowed (*T. obscurus*), and Pale (*T. pallidus*) Thrushes. Dusky Thrush is also a possibility. Another good birding spot is Oluanpi, which is Taiwan's southernmost tip. Here, the scrubby bushes harbor, in addition to some of the above-mentioned species, Brown-eared Bulbul (*Ixos amaurotis*) and Hwamei (*Garrulax canorus*). We have seen Arctic Warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*) here during winter. Check Lungluan Lake for Green-winged Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, and Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*). Spot-billed Ducks occur in small numbers. Some of the

plowed fields occasionally have Northern Lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*) among the more common Pacific Golden-Plovers (*Pluvialis fulva*).

During the first two weeks of October, the skies above Kenting become filled with migrating hawks: tens of thousands have been recorded in one day. Regularly occurring species include Gray-faced Buzzard, Chinese Goshawk, Japanese Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter gularis*), and Eurasian Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*).

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Middle Elevation:

Chihpen Hot Springs

Middle elevations are characterized by broadleaf and mixed deciduous forests. Well known sites such as Yangmingshan National Park and Wulai have already been discussed. A less famous area, but undoubtedly better, is Chihpen Hot Springs, located near Taitung on the southeastern coast of Taiwan. It is a relatively undisturbed area, very close to major tourist attractions, and ranks as one of our favorite birding spots. You can reach Chihpen via Highway 22. It is only a half-hour bus or taxi

birding taiwan



JIA-SHENG CHEN

The endemic Steere's Liocichla (*Liocichla steerii*) is a common resident of broadleaf and coniferous forests at high elevations (Yushan National Park and Hsitou). It is one of the most vocal birds in the forest.

ride from Taitung. Staying the night in one of the hotels can be a memorable experience (although sometimes expensive), as some of Taiwan's best hot springs are located here. Then, the next morning, fully refreshed, you can hike up Chihpen Canyon.

The best birding occurs along the unfinished portion of the Chihpen road (Highway 22), which is accessed by continuing uphill on the road from the hot-spring district which follows the south side of the river. The road continues up the mountain, eventually reaching the west coast at Pingtung. It is up to you how far to go. In just a half-day hike you can see many birds. Species of interest include Chinese Bamboo-Partridge, Gray-chinned Minivet, Styan's and Black Bulbuls, Collared Finchbill (*Spizixos semitorques*), Brown Dipper, Plumbeous Redstart, White-eared Sibia, White-bellied Yuhina, Rufous-capped Babbler, Black-naped Monarch, White-rumped

Mannikin, Bronzed Drongo, and Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*). Watch for Black-faced Bunting and Siberian Rubythroat in winter.

The uncommon Maroon Oriole (*Oriolus traillii*) can be reliably found at Chihpen. Although the orioles can be

seen anywhere along the dirt road, they are most often encountered about a mile-and-a-half after passing the suspension bridge in a patch of deciduous trees that borders a small grove of Betel Nut trees. This road makes a great backpacking or camping trip during winter. Listen for Oriental Cuckoos (*Cuculus saturatus*) and Large Hawk Cuckoos (*C. sparveriooides*) in spring and summer.

Upper Elevation and Alpine Habitats

It is in this region where many of Taiwan's floral and faunal gems are found. Even though Taiwan is just north of the equator, its mountains are high enough for certain alpine bird species normally found in the Himalayas. The best areas for high-elevation birding are Yushan National Park, Alishan, and Hsitou.

Access to Yushan National Park is via the small town of Tungpu, which is itself reached by taking Highway 21 from Shuili, located just east of Nantou. From Tungpu you can hike directly into the national park. If you are in good shape, you may be able to

reach the alpine forests and return by the end of the day, although we would not recommend this trek because you will be rushed.

Moreover, if you wish to hike this trail in summer, make sure that there are no typhoons forecast!

A good reason to go to Yushan is that it is a place where most of Taiwan's endemics can be easily found. The first portion of the trail passes through terraced orchards and tea farms before entering mixed broadleaf forests. Check the orchards in winter for Olive-backed Pipit (*Anthus hodgsoni*), Orange-flanked Bush-Robin (Red-flanked Bluetail; *Tarsiger cyanurus*), Daurian Redstart (*Phoenicurus auroreus*), and Russet Sparrow (*Passer rutilans*). After leaving the orchards, you climb wooded slopes. The area just before the trail skirts a high cliff is one of the best spots to see the rare and endemic Swinhoe's Pheasant (*Lophura swinhoei*). Your best bet is to walk quietly along the trail and hope that one crosses the path. Listen for it scratching in the leaves. Other endemics to watch for are White-whiskered Laughingthrush (Taiwan Whistling Thrush; *Garrulax morrisonianus*), Steere's Liocichla (*Liocichla steerii*), White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Barwing, Taiwan Yuhina, and Yellow Tit (Taiwan Tit; *Parus holsti*).

In addition to endemics, watch for Ashy Wood-Pigeon (*Columba pulchricollis*), Black-browed Barbet, Gray-capped Woodpecker (Gray-capped Pygmy Woodpecker; *Dendrocopos canicapillus*), Gray-chinned Minivet, White-tailed Robin (White-tailed Blue Robin; *Cinclidium*

leucurus), Rusty-cheeked (*Pomatorhinus erythrogeus*) and Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babblers, Gould's, Streak-throated (*Alcippe cinereiceps*), and Gray-cheeked Fulvettas, Brown Prinia (Brown Hill Prinia; *Prinia polychroa*), Snowy-browed Flycatcher (Thicket Flycatcher; *Ficedula hyperythra*), Vivid Niltava (*Niltava vivida*), Black-throated Tit (Red-headed Tit; *Aegithalos concinnus*), Eurasian Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*), Green-backed Tit (*Parus monticolus*), Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, and Bronzed Drongo. Although you may never see them, you will certainly hear the calls of the very secretive Blue Shortwing (*Brachypteryx montana*) and Pygmy Wren-Babbler (*Pnoepyga pusilla*). In the evening, listen for Collared Scops-Owl (*Otus lempiji*) and Brown Wood-Owl (*Strix leptogrammica*). The diurnal



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The endemic Collared Bush-Robin (*Tarsiger johnstoniae*) is a common bird of upper elevation habitats. It is best found at Yushan National Park.



CHIUNG-WEI YEN

Formosan Hill Partridge, also known as Taiwan Hill Partridge (*Arborophila crudigularis*), is an endemic that is generally reported in books as being fairly common in foothills to middle-elevation forests. It is, however, a seldom-seen bird due to its preference for extremely dense vegetation. Check Yushan National Park and Hsitou.

birding taiwan

Logistics

Weather and best time to bird. The best weather is in winter and spring when temperatures are moderate and rain is minimal. Bird diversity is highest during these months, when wintering landbirds and shorebirds can be seen along with the permanent residents.

How to get there. Many airlines (China, Evergreen, Malaysia, Singapore) go to Taipei. It is wise to book flights early, especially if you plan to visit in winter, as these flights are always full. Some airlines offer a brief stay in Taiwan en route to Hong Kong or other Southeast Asian destinations.

Visas. In general, a visa is needed to visit Taiwan for extended periods of time. But a two-week visa-free stay is permitted if you are a United States citizen. Visas can be obtained from the Coordination Council for North American Affairs at 3731 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700, Los Angeles, California 90010 (213/389-1215) and at 4201 Wisconsin Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016-2137 (202/895-1800). In Canada, contact Taipei Economic and Cultural Office at Island Park Drive, Ottawa, Ontario (613/722-6960).

Getting around. Public transportation is inexpensive, convenient, and punctual. All of the places described in this article can be visited by bus or train. Taxis are cheap and can be found everywhere. We do not advise renting a car for travel in major cities because of the intense traffic.

However, traffic in the countryside is not so bad, and renting a car or moped is advised. Maps of Taiwan can be bought at any major bookstore. Most major roads and all highways are clearly marked by signs in Chinese and English.

Language. The official language in

Taiwan is the Mandarin dialect of Chinese. In the countryside, however, most people speak the Taiwanese dialect. English is understood by many of the younger people.

Currency. 34.4 NT (New Taiwan dollar) to 1 U.S.\$.

Hotels, Camping. All of the places described (except for Hohmashan and Tsengwen Hsi Ko) have hotels. Most hotels are inexpensive or fairly priced. If you opt for adventure, you may wish to stay overnight in temples, which exist almost everywhere. Camping is permitted in some national parks.

Field Guides, Sources of Information. The best field guide is the *Taiwan Wild Bird Field Guide*, published by the Taiwan Wild Bird Society. It is available at the Los Angeles Audubon Society Bookstore (7377 Santa Monica Boulevard, West Hollywood, California 90046-6694). Unfortunately, except for the species names, this guide is entirely in Chinese. The illustrations and maps, however, are very good. English field guides include *A Field Guide to the Birds of Taiwan* by Chang and a *New Guide to the Birds of Taiwan* by Severinghaus and Blackshaw.

Birding groups around Taiwan have been established for some time, although their growth (including on college campuses) really began developing only about 15 years ago. Two with permanent addresses and phone numbers are the following:

- Wild Bird Society Republic of China, 6, Alley 13, Lane 295, 2nd Floor, Fu Hsien South Road, Section 1, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China, Telephone: 011-88627067219
- Taiwan Wild Bird Society, 30, Lane 38, Hoping Street, Taichung, Taiwan, Republic of China, Telephone: 011-8864/2241590

Collared Owlet (*Glaucidium brodiei*) may also be encountered.

As you climb higher and enter cedar and pine forests, watch for Collared Bush-Robin (Johnstone's Bush-Robin; *Tarsiger johnstoniae*), Flamecrest (Taiwan Firecrest; *Regulus goodfellowi*), and White-whiskered Laughingthrush, the latter two endemics. You should also encounter Scaly Thrush (*Zoothera dauma*), Yellowish-bellied Bush-Warbler (*Cettia acanthizoides*), Gray-sided Laughingthrush (*Garrulax caeruleus*), Rufous-faced Warbler (White-throated Flycatcher-Warbler; *Abroscopus albogularis*), Russet Bush-Warbler (Mountain Scrub-Warbler; *Bradypterus seebohmii*), Ferruginous Flycatcher (*Muscicapa ferruginea*), Coal Tit (*Parus ater*), Blyth's Parrotbill (*Paradoxornis nipalensis*), Vinaceous Rosefinch (*Carpodacus vinaceus*), and Gray-headed Bullfinch (Beavan's Bullfinch; *Pyrrhula erythaca*). Along the fast-flowing streams watch for Little Forkrail (*Enicurus scouleri*), White-backed (*Dendrocopos leucotos*) and Gray-headed Woodpeckers (*Picus canus*) and White-browed Bush-Robin (*Tarsiger indicus*) are possibilities. At approximately 13 kilometers from the trailhead is the turnoff onto an old logging road called Guangow. A walk along this road may turn up the very rare Mikado Pheasant (*Syrnaticus mikado*). In recent years, campers have seen a family of these pheasants here. Check grassy clearings in winter for an occasional Little Bunting (*Emberiza pusilla*). Listen for Mountain Scops-Owl (*Otus spilocephalus*) at night. Areas above timberline are good for Alpine Accentor (*Prunella collaris*), Winter Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), and Eurasian

Nutcracker (*Nucifraga caryocatactes*).

You can also reach the park from the southwest at the park's visitor center at Tatchia, which is easily accessed by continuing up the road from Alishan. The pamphlets and the people in the visitor center are very knowledgeable and helpful. There is a youth hostel and a small restaurant. Tatchia is located at high elevations and is a good place to find most of the high-elevation birds. Mikado Pheasants have been seen here.

阿里山 溪頭

Alishan and Hsitou

For those birders with limited time, we recommend going to Alishan or Hsitou. Many of the birds found at Yushan can be found at either of these sites, but you will need to compete with tourists for space. Make sure to visit on weekdays.

Alishan is accessed via Highway 18 from Chiayi and is one of the most popular destinations for tourists. There is a wide range of accommodations and dining. With well-groomed gardens, a sacred tree, and numerous hotels, gift shops, and restaurants, Alishan is Taiwan's premier tourist spot. Despite the crowds, you should be able to see many of the typical upper-elevation birds. Endemics, such as Collared Bush-Robin, Taiwan Barwing, White-whiskered Laughingthrush, and Flamecrest, can be found here. In addition watch for Rufous-faced Warbler, Ferruginous Flycatcher, Coal Tit, and Vinaceous Rosefinch.

Hsitou is located on Highway 151 south of Nantou. It is a one-hour bus ride from Nantou. Birds here are characteristic of a transition from middle- to upper-elevation habitats. Watch for Steere's Liocichla, White-eared Sibia,

Taiwan Barwing, Taiwan Yuhina, Snowy-browed Flycatcher, Gray-sided Laughingthrush, and Ferruginous Flycatcher. The rare and endemic Formosan Hill Partridge (Taiwan Hill Partridge; *Arborophila crudigularis*) has been seen here.

蘭嶼

Lanyu Island

Lanyu (Orchid Island) is an extinct volcanic island, located southeast of Taitung. Of interest here is the endemic subspecies of the Common Scops Owl (*Otus scops botelensis*). Other birds of interest are Japanese Paradise-Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone atrocaudata periophthalmica*), Chestnut-eared Bulbul, and Brown Cuckoo-Dove (*Macropygia phasianella*). Lanyu Island is accessed by local airlines (Formosa Airlines and Taiwan Aviation Company) from Taitung to Lanyu (flight time 30 minutes). There are two hotels on the island.

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