

Dear Friends and Relatives,

I am writing this update Saturday, August 7, at the Incheon airport of Seoul, South Korea, where I have a 5 hour layover. This week has been mostly for sightseeing with few team meetings. So I will share some of the highlights and interesting features.

On Sunday, August 1, we went westward over a high mountain plateau pass (11,500 ft / 3500 m) to Qinghai Lake, the largest in China. The first photo shows some of the yaks and youngsters at that pass. Some yaks are all white. There were regular cattle mixed into the herd.

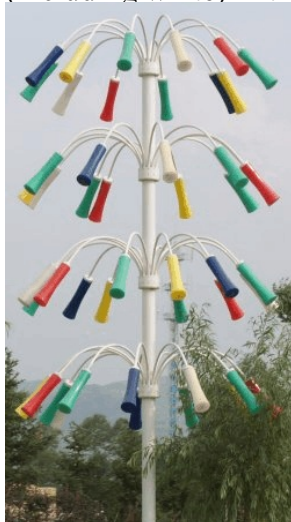


There was much Tibetan culture in the area, often shown by banner-coated poles used to send prayers to their heaven, especially from hilltops.

On Monday, August 7, we went to the east, first to a museum showing some prehistoric graves and painted pottery finds of the area. When crossing a concrete bridge we saw an example of lazy threshing of wheat - letting traffic run over it. Gail and I first saw that practice in southern India in 1970. The farmers in our group just had to photograph it. Next we visited another Tibetan Buddhist temple. I'll show bird photos from there later.



Our final visit of the day was to the north of Xining at the main city of the Tu minority group. They had a dinner theater operating all day long. I think that I was told that they have a specialty of 7 colors (including white) in their clothing. I noticed the same colors in their light poles.



We flew to Beijing mid-day Wednesday. Thursday morning some of us went to the Great Wall, to the same location that Gail and I visited in 2004. Back then we took a chair lift to the top and a toboggan slide down. This time I walked down very slowly to the parking lot, enjoying the solitude in the forested environment.





Our group got back to Beijing in the mid-afternoon and we were dropped off at the Pearl Market where most went shopping. I quickly went across the street to explore the Temple of Heaven historical site. Of particular interest to me is the Imperial Vault of Heaven, the middle of three main structures. Inside it is the illustrated blue plaque with Chinese characters dedicating the structure to Shang Di, the original, monotheistic, Creator God of the Chinese. The sign says, “Huang Tian Shang Di / Supreme Lord of the Great Heaven”. I had been wanting to visit there for the past two decades.



I mentioned birds earlier. The first photo is of a young but fully grown Eurasian Cuckoo, the famous one of literature. The adults lay their eggs in the nests of other species. The cuckoo chick hatches early and pushes the normal offspring out of the nest. The parents, in this case a pair of Black Redstarts, feed this oversized chick, thinking that it is their own. The female redstart is shown with the cuckoo (more than twice its size) in the second photo.

Coming home now. It has been an excellent trip.

Ed Holroyd

