

Dear Friends and Relatives,

I have now been in Xining for an entire week. The weather has been variable. There were some cool and rainy days at the start and lately it has been sunny and pleasantly warm. It is much like Denver weather, so I enjoy it very much.

Out of about 97 teacher-students, I have a class of 14. They know their English well and are eager to polish it. The 12 women range in ages from 24 to 43, mostly in the upper 20s. The two men are ages 29 and 40. The classroom sessions all go well, partly because I taught this material last year. My presentation on American geography was well received by the combined classes Saturday morning. Our pretend production of an American wedding was done yesterday (Tuesday) afternoon, and loved by all. The girl at the far left in the photo is one of my enthusiastic students.



I was the designated photographer for this production. I had been worried about that role because for two days last week my camera failed to focus either lens. It is back to normal now, but I do not know the cause of the problem.

Friday evening our American team went downtown to the central park. We watched people playing games. One man was flying his kite far above and beyond the tall buildings. Muslim culture was more obvious downtown with distinctive head coverings for some of the men and women, plus several mosques.



On Saturday afternoon we were all free to do whatever we liked. I went on a hike to test my camera (it behaved) and to start exploring the area. I found a street going into the hills. Very soon I

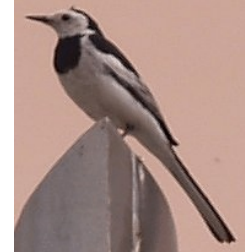


was into natural habitat, a long deep valley with grass-covered hillsides. I passed a flock of sheep on the road. At scattered locations for miles there were graves with Chinese culture headstones.

Though afternoons (I walked about 1-4 PM) are not the best for bird watching, I got 7 new species for my lifetime list. There were numerous Pied Wheatears. The male is black and white, as shown, but the female is tan. They catch insects on the ground. Another bird (not a new one for me) is the White Wagtail, again black and white, shown perched on a post on our campus. It sometimes bobs its tail up and down, hence its name. I hear its twittering on campus throughout the days.



With so much fun seeing new birds I eventually reached the 5 kilometer marker. The concrete road then started to climb up the hillside through switchbacks, and so I decided to return instead. The weather for this hike was pleasantly warm and sunny, much like Denver's.



Saturday evening our leaders (one is a former nurse) and I had an interesting visit to the local hospital. We observed the full procedures for a dehydration patient: examination, various tests, the expected overnight IV injection, and morning exit. I had failed to take a water bottle on my hike. I was fully recovered by 7 PM Sunday.

The food here is different from last year - not as spicy. There are lots of fruit (bananas, yellow watermelon, cantaloupe) and vegetables, the expected rice, and various meat dishes. A tomato and egg mix is usually served every meal. We have also been at a special banquet hosted by the school officials.

I love being here in Xining. The environment is just right. There is easy access around (busses and taxis) and out (walking) of the city into the hills. The weather is much nicer than the hot and humid eastern cities of China. I am very comfortable with my classroom duties. I am also keeping up with the homework submissions by my American graduate students. The inconveniences are very minor. The Chinese students are very friendly and enjoyable. I am developing fond memories of this place very quickly.

Ed Holroyd  
Wednesday, July 14