

Dear Friends and Relatives,

Here is a photo of my class of 14 excellent student teachers in my classroom. We will be together only until this coming Friday.



For cultural exposure on Saturday we visited

the Grand Mosque here in Xining, one of the 4 largest in western China. The lower entrance sign ranks it (AAA) as a National Tourist Attraction. The view from the street shows the outer facilities built only 12 years ago. The inner view in the reverse direction shows the courtyard for



prayers, with white lines for alignment of the people during prayers. Hard to see is the old entrance (pale blue and Chinese style towers) in front of the more modern structures. That entrance is more than 400 years

old. In the modern part there are large scale models of the temples at Mecca and Medina and a city layout of Mecca. Side buildings (not shown) are for education.

Today's visit was to a smaller and less crowded facility. The people were extremely friendly to us. Inside and upstairs, the choir sat on the right side of the view. Only a violin provided



accompaniment. Everything was in Chinese. People around us passed us notes for readings (Ps. 89, 90) and the speaker's texts (1 Cor. 11:1; Rom. 14:7,8; 2 Cor. 11:28,29), or opened our books for us, so that we could at least grasp the subject matter. This site is in our part of the city.



From the dorm the city limit is much less than a mile away. Then there is an abrupt scenery change from urban high rise buildings to a hillside densely covered with trees and shrubs (nice bird habitat). At the top of the first hills are lots of sites for parties and picnics, and they are well-used. Behind the first hills, 0.8 miles by straight line from the dorm, longer by road, the “wilderness” begins. This picture is of the valley in which I do part of my bird watching. There is a single lane concrete road at the right side and scattered Chinese grave markers along it. The hillsides have only grass and small shrubs, as in the foreground. I usually walk to the end of the tan terracing and return. Such easy access to several good birding environments is what I love about this assignment to Xining. The other wonderful feature is the very comfortable Summer climate.

Today’s special bird photo is of a Hoopoe. I first saw this type in Srinagar, northwest India, in 1970. This bird is sitting on a pile of dried cattle dung, looking for a breakfast of flies and other insects. It has a very long bill, good for probing. The unusual feature is its crest of feathers at the top of its head, extending back horizontally almost as long as its bill. It can spread those feathers into a tall colorful fan across its entire head. When it flies the wings and tail show a very bold black and white pattern in great contrast with its tan head and body. Yesterday I got 4 more birds for my lifetime list.

Ed Holroyd, 25 July 2010