

Mongolia

21st May – 6th June 2023



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Mongolia is a country that has always been on my bucket list and plans had been well advanced in 2019 for a visit in 2020 when Covid intervened. With all Covid travel restrictions removed it was time to try again in 2023. With David Steele and Stuart McKee up for the trip I contacted Purevsuren Tsolmonjav, Puje for short, (info@wildlifetoursmongolia.com) at <https://www.wildlifetoursmongolia.com> as they had a fifteen-day tour at the end of May which targeted all the special species we most wanted to see. A few weeks before the trip Puje let us know that we would be joined by Stefan Hirsch and Carmen Fuertes who would also be flying from Frankfurt but who would be staying for an extra six days after we left. The tour was a mix of camping and staying in tourist ger camps with just two nights in a hotel. Puje provided two Toyota Landcruiser's, necessary as much of the driving was off road, with him driving one and Gantulga, Gana for short, driving the other, and all the camping gear and sleeping bags etc. We also had a cook with us, Bolorzul, Bogi for short, who provided all the meals when we camped. Puje and his team did a great job of looking after us, making sure that we got a great list of birds while keeping us well fed and watered.

With dates to work with it was time to look for flights. Currently the only direct flights from Europe to Ulaan Bator, the capital of Mongolia, are from Frankfurt or Istanbul.

The Frankfurt flights worked best for us as there are regular flights to and from Dublin. So, we booked a flight from Frankfurt with Mongolian Airways, (MIAT), leaving at 2.30pm on Saturday 20th May arriving in Ulaan Bator at 6.30am on 21st. The return flight left Ulaan Bator at 9.40am on 6th June and arrived in Frankfurt at 1.00pm the same day. We booked a flight on the Saturday morning from Dublin to Frankfurt with Lufthansa but when MIAT moved our flight forward, first to 12.30pm and then to 11.50am we had to change our Lufthansa flight forward to Friday evening and stay over in Frankfurt to make sure we made the Mongolia flight.

Visa – In early 2023 Mongolia dropped the requirement for travellers from most western European countries to have a visa to enter the country so no problem there.

Health – There are no vaccinations currently required for Mongolia. We saw no sign of any mosquitoes on our travels but did come across ticks at a couple of sites. We had no health issues throughout the trip although Carmen did have an upset stomach for a few days.

Itinerary -

Day 1. Terelj National Park. Night camping.

Day 2. Gun Galuut Nature Reserve. Night at Mongolica Resort Hotel.

Day 3. Small ephemeral lake near Delgertsog town. Night at Khanbogd Ger Camp.

Day 4. Town of Dalanzadgad (DZ) where we visited a plantation called Odsuren's Tree Plantation. Birding a valley called Khavtsgait. Night at Khanbogd Ger Camp.

Day 5. Yolyn Am, meaning Valley of the Lammergeier. Night at Gobi Discovery Ger Camp.

Day 6. Khongor Sand Dunes, night at Gobi Discovery Ger Camp.

Day 7. Baga Bogd Mountain. Night camping

Day 8. Kholboolj Lake.

Day 9. Buuntsagaan Lake.

Day 10-11. Khangai Mountain.

Day 12. Khangai Mountain. Night camping.

Day 13. Sangyn Dalai Lake, Takhilt Lake and Bayan Lake. Night camping.

Day 14 Hustai National Park, night at Hustai Ger Resort.

Day 15. Terelj National Park, night at Terelj Ger Lodge.

Day 16. Tuul River around Mongolica Resort Hotel. Night at Mongolica Resort Hotel.



Sunday 21st May – Weather warm and sunny during the day, cold at night.

Our flight arrived on time at Chinggis Khaan airport, and we quickly collected our bags, cleared immigration and made our way out to meet Puje, Stefan and Carmen. With our bags loaded into the vehicles we set off on our adventure. The first birds were Chough, ubiquitous throughout our trip, Black Kite and Daurian Jackdaw. We did a quick stop at the giant Chinggis Khaan statue outside Ulaan Bator for some pictures. Heading on we went off road, following tracks into the hills of the Terej National Park and picking up our first Isabelline Wheatears, Little Buntings and a Golden Eagle along the way.

We arrived at our camping site in the hills and within a few moments Stuart found a Black-billed Capercaillie at the edge of the forest quickly followed by two further birds. After this great start a walk through the forest around the campsite produced a great list of birds, Rufous-throated and Eye-browed Thrushes, Red-flanked Bluetail's, Pine Buntings, Taiga Flycatchers and Olive-backed Pipits.



Rufous-throated Thrush

After the first of many great meals produced by Bogi we drove over into an adjacent valley where we enjoyed a great afternoon's birding. We found more Little Buntings along with our first Pallas's Buntings, a pair of Rock Thrushes followed by a pair of Daurian Redstarts and four male Siberian Rubythroat's skulking in a small patch of bushes. Finally, after a bit of a search we had good views of a pair of Hazel Grouse.

Returning to the campsite we spotted a Capercaillie on the slope by our tents, this was followed by a second and then a third. Eventually we had six of these superb birds wondering around and feeding within yards of our camp, ignoring us as we watched and photographed them.

After this great end to our days birding, we had dinner and retired to our tents tired but happy.



Daurian Redstart

Monday 22nd May – Weather warm and sunny.

An early start at 6am and we headed down a track in the forest were, very quickly, we could hear the strange clicking and popping of displaying Capercaillies. Several birds were displaying close to the track, and we were able to stand quietly and watch this amazing display, the birds oblivious to our presence as they competed to outdo each other. As time moved on the displays started to subside and we moved off to explore more of the forest before returning to the camp for breakfast.

Birding around the camp after breakfast provided good views of more Pine Buntings, Taiga Flycatchers and Olive-backed Pipits along with our first Tree Pipits.

After breaking camp, we headed back towards the road seeing our first Demoiselle Cranes, Cinereous Vultures, Upland Buzzards and Mongolian Larks. Once back on the road we headed to Gun Galuut Nature Reserve and two small lakes for another of Mongolia's special birds, Stejneger's Scoter. As soon as we pulled up at the larger of the two lakes we spotted the Scoters, some forty birds concentrated in small flocks at one end of the lake. Once we had good looks at the Scoters, we started scanning the other birds present. There was a good selection of other ducks including Common and Ruddy Shelducks, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Garganey, Shoveler, Gadwall, Pintail, Teal,

Goldeneye, Mallard and Goosander. There were also four Slavonian Grebes and twenty Black-necked Grebes. Over the water there were small numbers of White-winged, Black and Common Terns and our first Mongolian Gulls. Around the edges of the lake, we found good numbers of waders, there were Avocets, Black-winged Stilts, thirteen Pacific Golden Plovers, at least twenty Wood Sandpipers, a few each of Kentish and Little-ringed Plovers, Common and Green Sandpipers and ten Spotted Redshanks. At the smaller lake two White-naped Cranes were resting on a small island and several Demoiselle Cranes were flying around, two Asian Dowitchers dropped in and gave good scope views, a Marsh Sandpiper showed along the edge along with a small flock of Black-tailed Godwits and a Whimbrel, one of only two seen on the trip, did a couple of flybys. Then the first surprise of the trip, two heads sticking up from behind a bank in the distance, upon closer examination turned out to be two Great Bustards, with a third bird tucked in behind the bank, a nice end to our time Gun Galuut Nature Reserve.

We moved on to the nearby Kherlen river valley for lunch and to bird the scrub along the river's edge. We found a female Naumann's Thrush, our first Arctic and Dusky Warblers, Lesser Whitethroats and a Brown Shrike but there was no sign of the hoped for Yellow-breasted Buntings.

We headed back to Ulaan Bator and into the evening rush hour, our slow progress alleviated by the sighting of several Mandarin Ducks along the Tuul River which runs through the city. We arrived at the Mongolica Resort Hotel in time to do some birding around the grounds. We made a good start with a Daurian Partridge near the entrance and followed that with a few Azure-winged Magpies and a couple of White-cheeked Starlings before the light faded and dinner called.



Stejneger's Scoter

Tuesday 23rd May – Weather warm and sunny to begin changing to wet and windy in the afternoon.

Another early morning start, in the grounds of the hotel, and more good birds. Searching the grounds, the Azure-winged Magpies and White-cheeked Starlings were still present along with plenty of Black Kites. Searching further we found a pair of smashing Long-tailed Rosefinches, a smart male Amur Falcon and a small flock of Pallas's Buntings with a pair of flyover Swan Geese.

After breakfast we started out on the long drive to Dalanzadgad, a town on the edge of the Gobi Desert. After some time on the road, we stopped for a comfort break and found we had stopped in an area full of Brandt's Voles. The Voles were sharing their holes with pairs of Pere David's or Small Snowfinches. As we walked around watching the Snowfinches we were stunned when a pair of Black Larks flew past us and away to the south, these birds have only been recorded in Mongolia away to the west close to Kazakhstan. We searched the area the birds had flown towards but couldn't find them although we did find the only White's Thrush of the trip.

Moving on we next stopped at a small temporary lake near the town of Delgertsog. From a distance there didn't appear to be much at this lake but when we got close, we realised it was teeming with birds. There were many waders including lots of Long-toed Stints and Temminck's Stints along with a few Little Stints, several either

Swinhoe's or Pin-tailed Snipe, four Common Snipe and Wood and Marsh Sandpipers. Around the lake there were at least thirty Citrine Wagtails, mostly stunning males, a flock of Mongolian Finches coming in to drink, along with Pallas's, Black-faced and Little Buntings. But best of all was when David picked up a female, Yellow-breasted Bunting which was then joined by a male, an absolutely stunning bird.



Female, Yellow-breasted Bunting

As we continued south, we had our first flyover flocks of Pallas's Sandgrouse and a Saker Falcon perched close to the road. Our next amazing sighting had nothing to do with birds, initially we ran into a small sandstorm which we quickly cleared, but then we saw a massive dust cloud coming towards us. We pulled off the road along with the other traffic and were quickly enveloped by the cloud reducing visibility to zero as small stones bounced off the cars. We were blanketed by the sandstorm for about twenty minutes before it started to clear, and we were able to resume our journey. The sandstorm signalled the end of the warm and sunny weather that we had enjoyed up to now because from here on it was wet and windy for the rest of the day. When we reached Dalanzadgad a stop for fuel and supplies gave us time to explore a small group of bushes in front of an abandoned building. There were four or five Pallas's Warblers sheltering in the bushes along with a Humes Warbler, Taiga Flycatcher and male Siberian Rubythroat. After this nice break we spent some time driving across the steppe looking for Oriental Plover but without any luck, not helped by the cold, wet weather. We headed off to our very comfortable ger at the Khanbogd Tourist camp.

Wednesday 24th May – Weather wet and windy, snow on higher ground.

It was a windy and damp morning, but our first Pied Wheatear was in the campsite grounds and while we sat at breakfast the bushes just outside the window of the restaurant had a Brown Flycatcher, Taiga Flycatcher and a Brown Shrike.



Brown Flycatcher

Today we were due to go to a valley in the mountains called Yolyn Am which means the valley of the Lammergeier and despite the unpromising weather we headed off to try our luck but not before we found a small flock of Twite near the camp carpark. On the way up into the hills we stopped to watch a couple of White-winged Snowfinches, two very confiding birds. By the time we reached the carpark at the start of the valley the wind was blowing, and it was snowing hard. We waited in the cars to see if the snow would ease but after half an hour with no sign of the weather abating, we decided to retreat to lower ground and, hopefully some less inclement weather.

We went to Odsuren's Tree Plantation on the outskirts of Dalanzadgad where the plantings gave some shelter from the wind and rain. The plantation had plenty of birds sheltering from the weather, there were numerous Pallas's Warblers, a few each of Dusky and Humes Warblers, two White-crowned Penduline Tits, a brief Siberian Blue Robin, good numbers of Common and Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinches, several

Little Buntings, Taiga Flycatchers and Oriental Turtledoves, an Isabelline Shrike and a Japanese Sparrowhawk.



Pallas's Warbler

By the time we left the plantation to go for lunch the rain had eased, and the wind had dropped. After lunch we explored the steppe again seeing our first Pallas's Sandgrouse on the ground along with plenty of Horned Larks, Mongolian Larks and Isabelline Wheatears but no Oriental Plovers.

We returned to Khanbogd Camp and explored the Khavtsgait Valley which runs away from the back of the camp. The valley had breeding Lammergeier which showed a couple times during our walk. There were also several Godlewski's Buntings, Eastern Black Redstarts and Common Rosefinches along with more Pied Wheatears and White-winged Snowfinches and a single Brown Shrike. After our walk it was back to the camp for dinner and bed.

Thursday 25th May - Weather – Fine, sunny and warm.

As the weather was much better this morning, we headed again to Yolyn Am. On the way up, we had further sightings of White-winged Snowfinches, Mongolian Finches along with two Hill Pigeons. At the carpark at the start of the valley first a pair of Brown Accentors showed very well, quickly followed by a pair of Kozlov's Accentors. The first section of the valley had numerous Isabelline Wheatears. Horned Larks and Black Redstarts along with further Brown Accentors. As the valley narrowed there were Himalayan Griffon Vultures and a pair of Lammergeiers sitting high up on the valley sides and a pair of Golden Eagles soaring overhead. We found at least six different Wallcreepers, a small flock of Godlewski's Buntings and Puje and Stuart had a Rustic Bunting. As we headed back towards the carpark an Oriental Honey Buzzard drifted overhead.



Brown Accentor

After leaving the valley we headed to a local wetland for a few new birds. There was a good selection of ducks, Common and Ruddy Shelduck, Shoveler, Gadwall, Wigeon Pintail and Teal and plenty of Kentish Plover and Temminck's Stints. New for the trip were single Bar-headed Goose and Bewick's (Tundra) Swan and five Great White Egrets. There were plenty of hirundines over the water including thirty Sand Martins, a few Swallows and Crag Martins, large numbers of Common Swifts with a few Pacific Swifts among them. Careful examination of the many House Martins in the area showed that they all appeared to be Siberian House Martins. As we headed back to the cars for lunch, we found several Richard Pipits.

After lunch we headed off across the steppe to a small plantation with a stream running alongside it. The stream had formed a small wetland patch which held a few each of Long-toed and Temminck's Stints, Citrine Wagtails and an Eastern Yellow

Wagtail. The small patch of trees held many birds including a female Brambling, Paddyfield Warbler, Pallas's Warblers, Humes Warblers, Taiga Flycatchers, Common and Himalayan Rosefinches.

After an enjoyable few hours in this small area, we headed on to the Gobi Discovery Camp near the Khongor sand dunes where we would be spending the night.



Paddyfield Warbler

Friday 26th May – Weather warm and sunny, getting breezy in the afternoon.

An early morning walk around the camp revealed a Desert Wheatear which was nesting around the gers. After breakfast we headed to an area at the base of the sand dunes where several pairs of Saxual Sparrows and a pair of Desert Wheatears were nesting in the stone wall surrounding an animal pen. As we watched the Sparrows small flocks of Pallas's Sandgrouse were flying over our heads to a nearby stream to drink. At least three different Isabelline Shrikes were hunting in the nearby scrub.

A walk through an area of Saxual scrub was quiet but we did find a Desert Warbler, a Steppe Grey Shrike and a Little Bunting. We moved on to the stream at the base of the sand dunes, the water attracting a good selection of birds. Two Spoonbills were with a small group of Demoiselle Cranes, Richards Pipits and Horned Larks were common in the lush grass by the stream, Avocets, Black-winged Stilts and Common

Snipe were present in the wetter areas and as we drove away, we had a smart Pied Wheatear of the sub-species vittata.

After lunch we drove off into the steppe to look for Mongolian Ground Jay. The first bird we found was elusive, running off at speed when we tried to get closer views. The next two birds didn't play ball either, we thought they had a nest in a large bush and parked the cars to wait and get a view as the birds came to the nest. Unfortunately, it wasn't a Mongolian Ground Jay nest but rather the nest of a pair of Steppe Grey Shrikes, so we got good views of the Shrikes but again the Jays stayed distant. Third time lucky, we found six Mongolian Ground Jays and after giving us the run around one bird sat up and showed exceptionally well.



Mongolian Ground Jay

We returned to the camp and after dinner went for a walk to look for mammals. Our walk out through the scrub produced very little, an unidentified large bat and a brief view of a hamster, but when we returned to the camp, Gana our driver pointed out two Long-eared Hedgehogs under the toilet block and by lying on the ground we got good views and a few pictures.

Saturday 27th May – Weather warm and sunny all day.

We set off early for the drive to Baga Bogd Mountain and hadn't got very far when we found a Little Owl sitting on a fence post. As we drove, we came across a group of four Greater Sand-plovers and then a Mongolian Ground Jay. A comfort break brought a group of Saxual Sparrows, a Hoopoe and an Isabelline Shrike. In the middle of the day, we stopped for lunch in a high pass and while Bogi was preparing the food we explored the area. Several Chukar were on the surrounding slopes, a Grey-necked Bunting was present, a pair of Lammergeiers nested on the cliffs, a Golden Eagle soared overhead, and several Pied Wheatears and Black Redstarts were holding territory along the pass.

A further comfort break mid-afternoon and a walk through the scrub only produced a pair of Desert Warblers and a Lesser Whitethroat.

We arrived at our camping site on Baga Bogd Mountain late in the afternoon and after pitching our tents we headed out to explore. Scoping the surrounding mountains, we eventually found a single Altai Snowcock which stayed on view for a short time before disappearing over a crest. Other birds seen included two pairs of Rock Thrush, a Wallcreeper, a Sulphur-bellied Warbler and several Pallas's Warblers and Taiga Flycatchers.



Asian Desert Warbler

Sunday 28th May – Weather Sunny and warm all day.

Another early start and the hunt was on for Altai Snowcocks. Puje, David, Carmen and Stefan elected to climb up higher into the mountains while Stuart and I contented ourselves with scanning with scopes from the campsite. We had good scope views of two Snowcocks on a ridge above us while the others got excellent views of several birds higher up on the slopes. We were distracted from the Snowcocks when we realised there had been a fall of birds overnight and the trees around the campsite were full of warblers. Dusky Warblers were present in large numbers, possibly as many as sixty birds, there were also good numbers of Pallas's Warblers, at least six Humes Warblers, three Lesser Whitethroats and a single Yellow-browed Warbler. Further down from the campsite there were at least four Barred Warblers and two Isabelline and a single Brown Shrike.

After breakfast a further exploration brought several Sulphur-bellied Warblers, three Godlewski's Buntings, up to six Rock Thrushes, four Taiga Flycatchers, two Common Rosefinches, two Brown Accentors and a Greenish Warbler.

After breaking camp, we set off on the drive to Kholboolj Lake where we would camp for the night. Once at the lake we had a quick look at the surrounding area while Bogi prepared lunch. The area close to the campsite had a few Kentish Plovers and Redshanks and a nice summer plumaged Slavonian Grebe on a small pool. Slightly more distantly we could see numbers of Whooper Swans and Bar-headed and Greylag Geese, a single Swan Goose along with our first Red-crested Pochard and Great Crested Grebes among the commoner ducks. In the far distance there were good numbers of waders, too far to identify, but they would have to wait until after lunch. Once lunch was over, we headed off towards the distant waders. As we slowly approached, we were able to pick out the larger waders first, Black-necked Stilts and Avocets, Black-tailed Godwits and Northern Lapwings, but we needed to move closer for the large flock of small waders. Once closer to the flock we found Kentish Plovers and Temminck's Stints were present in good numbers but among them were at least sixty Broad-billed Sandpipers, twelve Sanderling and six each of Curlew Sandpipers and Dunlin.

Later we drove to the other end of the lake where there were at least twenty Spoonbills, four Grey Herons, several Great Cormorants and at least six Common Cranes. Also at this end of the lake was a nesting colony of Mongolian Gulls along with many Gull-billed Terns and about twenty White-winged Black Terns. The final bird of the day was a rather distant Eastern Marsh Harrier.



Altai Snowcock

Monday 29th May – Weather warm and sunny in the morning turning wet and windy later.

An early morning walk around the camp didn't reveal anything new although the Slavonian Grebe had moved onto a very small pool right beside our tents. After breakfast we left to head to our next destination. Travelling along we had a few Long-legged Buzzards near the road along with Desert Wheatears and Mongolian Larks before we made a stop at a small lake for lunch. By this time the weather was changing with the wind starting to pick up and cloud rolling in. Despite the changing weather we managed to dig out a few decent birds. In and around the patches of reeds in the lake we found two Baillon's Crakes, a Water Rail and a Great Reed Warbler along with our only Moorhens of the trip. Also present around the edge of the lake were a few waders, including two Asiatic Dowitchers, which showed well.

As we headed towards Buuntsagaan Lake, where we would be spending the night, the rain started and would persist on and off for the rest of the day. When we arrived at the camp, where we would be staying in huts rather than gers, we started scanning the lake distantly while dinner was prepared. Even at a distance we could pick out

Pallas's Gulls and Caspian Terns and we had a single Brown-headed Gull flying along the shore. After lunch we drove down towards the lake where there was a viewing platform that, despite the wind and rain, gave good views along the shore. From the viewing platform we had numerous birds to look through. As well as the Pallas's Gulls and Caspian Terns there were plenty of Mongolian Gulls, Black-headed Gulls and Gull-billed Terns and we managed to find a few Common and Little Terns. The waders present included single Grey and Pacific Golden Plovers along with small numbers of Broad-billed Sandpipers and Black-tailed Godwits. Among the wildfowl we managed to pick out all three species of swan, along with about twenty Whoopers there were two Mute Swans and a single Bewicks. The only bird missing was Relict Gull, despite constant scanning of the gull flocks there was no sign of this hoped for bird.

We moved further along the shore to check for more gulls. There was no sign of Relict Gull but there were new birds to be seen, a cracking breeding plumaged Eastern Cattle Egret and several Blyth's Pipits.



Blyth's Pipit

As the light faded, we returned to the campsite for dinner and after that, as we were preparing for bed, Puje came to tell us that he had found a Northern Three-toed Jerboa nearby, so it was a quick dash out to see this stunning little rodent.



Northern Three-toed Jerboa

Tuesday 30th May – Weather damp early morning before warming but getting cold in the evening.

An early start on the viewing platform, there seemed to be less birds about than there were yesterday although two Pallas's Fish Eagles were new for the trip. Despite a lot of searching, we couldn't turn up anything else new but worryingly, we did find a number of dead birds along the shore which suggested the presence of bird flu. After breakfast we walked out towards the river that runs into the lake. Along the river there was a Black Stork, five Great White Egrets and a few Demoiselle Cranes.

We left the campsite and drove away along the shore on our way to our next stop. At our first stop we got better views of a Pallas's Fish Eagle and another Bewick's Swan. Further along the shore a flock of smaller gulls attracted our attention. Despite extensive scanning the best we could find among the flock of Black-headed Gulls was a single Brown-headed Gull plus two Eastern Yellow Wagtails of the sub-species *macronyx*. Our final stop along the lake was when we spotted a bird diving into cover by a small pool. A quiet approach and careful scanning revealed a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler creeping around the edge of the pool.

As we headed towards the Khangai Mountains, our next destination, we crossed a small stream where we saw a few Pallas's Sandgrouse, the last we would see on the trip.

By the time we got close to the Khangai Mountains the wind was picking up and it was getting very cold, so the decision was made to stay in gers in the local town rather than camping. Before dinner we took a walk around the edge of town where there was

a group of Small Snowfinches, four Cinerous Vultures, an Upland Buzzard and an Ortolan Bunting which was feeding on a manure pile with Tree and House Sparrows.



Ortolan Bunting

Wednesday 31st May – Weather cool in the morning, warming up during the day but cool again in the evening.

Before breakfast we did another walk around town seeing the same birds as yesterday evening but now there were two Ortolan Buntings feeding on the manure heap. We headed off into the mountains where there was snow on the ground, stopping us from driving to the highest level and giving us a long walk to reach the top. On the slope on the way up we found our first White-throated (Hodgson's) Bushchat which showed very well. We split up to explore the higher areas but fairly deep snow on the ground meant that birds were hard to find. By the time we started back down the day was warming up, the snow was starting to melt, and birds started to appear. First up was a pair of distant Guldenstadt's Redstarts and then at least four White-throated Bushchats, two Brown Accentors, a Water Pipit and finally two much closer Guldenstadt's Redstarts, a great end to our hike.

We headed back to town for lunch and then packed up and headed off. We had a long drive northward ahead of us to our next destination. As we had a long way to go, we didn't do any birding stops but we did spot a few birds from the car including at least twelve Cinerous Vultures and four each of Saker Falcons and Upland Buzzards.

We were due to camp again but after a long day there wasn't much enthusiasm for pitching tents, so we decided to stay in a local town. We couldn't get any gers so ended up in a sort of local youth hostel, I think we ended up in the girl's room as the bedding was covered in bunny rabbits! The bushes around the front of the hostel had a Pallas's Warbler and a Taiga Flycatcher, a nice end to the day.



White-throated Bushchat

Thursday 1st June – Weather cool in the morning, warm and sunny during the day, cool again in the evening.

Our early morning walk around town was nice with the Pallas's Warbler and Taiga Flycatcher still present, along with a couple of flocks of Common Rosefinches, mostly females but at least two bright males.

After breakfast we headed off across the steppe to an area that Puje said had recently had Oriental Plovers and sure enough after a bit of searching we found a stunning male Oriental Plover that showed brilliantly, including several spectacular display flights. Walking around the area we found the only Siberian Stonechat of the trip among the numerous Asian Short-toed and Horned Larks.

We left the plains and headed back into the mountains where we would camp for the night. Once we had the camp set up, we went for a walk in the extensive Larch forest that cloaked parts of the area. The weather was cold and bird activity was low, but we

did find nesting Cinerous Vulture and Black Kite along with two Common Redstarts, a Taiga Flycatcher and a Greenish Warbler. When we returned to the camp site, we had a walk around the immediate area and had a couple of Brown Accentors, Northern Wheatear and two distant Golden Eagles. We also found the Black Kites had discovered the camp and were circling around the tents obviously hoping for scraps. As the sun went down, we had dinner before retiring to our tents for a cold night.



Oriental Plover

Friday 2nd June – Weather very cold in the morning warming to a pleasant, sunny day.

We awoke to snow and low cloud so our plan for a further exploration of the Larch forest didn't hold much appeal and we decided to have breakfast and then break camp and head to lower ground where, hopefully, the weather would be better.

Once on lower ground we headed to Sangyn Dalai Lake. At the lake, even from a distance, we could see large numbers of White-winged Black Terns and once we got closer, we picked out a few Black Terns among them. As we walked around the lake, we found a colony of Rock Sparrows nesting in a stone monument and several Pallas's Buntings around the edge. Among a large flock of roosting ducks there were four

Falcated Ducks and out on the open water there were Eurasian Wigeon, Pintail and Garganey among the commoner duck. Ten Pacific Golden Plover were present close to the shore and a Hen Harrier showed distantly with a Western Marsh Harrier slightly closer.

Moving on we headed to Takhilt Lake where we would be having lunch. Once at the lake we quickly found what we thought would be the star birds of the site, a pair of smart summer plumaged Black-throated Divers, one bird on the nest on an island in the middle of this small lake, the second bird diving close by. White-winged Black Terns were again present in good numbers and again there were a few Black Terns among them. More Falcated Ducks were present and at least six Chinese Spot-billed Ducks were lurking in the reeds along with two each of Slavonian and Black-necked Grebes. On the far side of the lake a small flock of Pochard and a few Tufted Duck were sticking close to the shore and among them was another slightly larger duck tucked up sleeping. The bird was back on to us but the white undertail and orangey coloured flanks only seemed to fit one species, Baer's Pochard. We walked down to get better views of the bird and once we were opposite the flock, we got excellent scope views after it lifted its head to confirm that it was indeed a Baer's Pochard. This was a fantastic surprise cut short by the flock being flushed by a car driving near the far shore. The bird dropped into a reedy area at the other end of the lake where we could continue to watch it although it was partially concealed by the vegetation. After a short time, the flock was flushed again by cattle tramping around the edge of the lake and this time, after doing a couple of circuits of the lake the Baer's and the Common Pochards headed off to the south not to return.



Baer's Pochard

After the excitement of the Baer's the appearance of a small flock of Pale Sand Martins didn't perhaps get the attention they deserved!

After lunch we headed on towards our next stop, Bayan Lake. The drive across the steppe was slightly disturbing as we passed through an area where there were many dead horses, apparently killed by a shortage of food but now due to feed the many Cinerous Vultures and Steppe Eagles in the region. We arrived at Bayan Lake late afternoon and set up our tents before birding the shore nearby. There was a small flock of Red-crested Pochards among the commoner ducks and once again White-winged Black Terns were numerous over the lake. There were both Eastern and Western Marsh Harriers hunting over a small reed bed, at least four of the former and two of the latter, nice to be able to end the birding day comparing them side by side.

Saturday 3rd June – Weather warm and sunny, getting hot in the middle of the day.

We spent the morning birding around the lake. Both Eastern and Western Marsh Harriers were still present over the reed bed and there were several Bearded Tits within the reed bed. Along the open shore there were at least six Marsh Sandpipers, several of them display flighting, along with a single Curlew Sandpipers, and numerous Swan Geese were out on the open water. Two Whiskered Terns showed

briefly and three Asiatic Dowitchers were in grassland across the road from the lake. At a bridge over a river there were nesting Barn Swallows of the subspecies tytleri with deep rufous underparts. Moving to the far side of the reed bed we heard an Oriental Reed Warbler, but the bird didn't show but a nice Eastern Yellow Wagtail showed well.

We drove to a small nearby lake where, despite a lot of heat haze we picked out another Whiskered Tern among the numerous White-winged Black Terns. We hoped for a Relict Gull but while there were good numbers of Black-headed and Mongolian Gulls there was no sign of any Relict Gulls.

Returning to the camp site for lunch a further look around the reed bed brought Paddyfield Warblers and two flycatchers, a Brown and a Dark-sided, new for trip.



Eastern Marsh Harrier

We headed to Hustai National Park where we would be staying at Hustai Ger Resort. Upon arrival we dropped our bags in the ger, and we headed into the national park, famous for its herd of Przewalski's horses. Almost as soon as we left the ger camp we found a male Amur Falcon on an overhead wire. We drove quite a long way into the park to a valley with a Larch wood along one side. Climbing along the side of the wood we found at least four pairs of Daurian Partridge along with two pairs of Pied Wheatears and over the woods we had four Lesser Kestrels, two Hobbys and another Amur Falcon. Within the woods there were Brown and Taiga Flycatchers and two Arctic Warblers while a walk up the other side of the valley produced a pair of

Meadow Buntings after a bit of searching and a group of six Oriental Honey Buzzards migrating overhead. Heading back to the ger camp at the end of the day we came upon a small herd of Przewalski's horses which showed well close to the track.

Sunday 4th June – Weather warm and sunny all day.

After breakfast we loaded up and headed to Terej National Park for the day. The area we were heading to was quite mountainous and very scenic. We parked up by the side of the road and headed up a side valley. Daurian Redstarts seemed to be common here, the first of at least three pairs were close to the road. Further up we started the search for our target bird, Chinese Bush Warbler which is a late arriving breeder in this area. We made a steep climb up to what seemed like good habitat but there was no sign of any Bush Warblers although there was another pair of Daurian Redstarts and a pair of Common Whitethroats, a new bird for the trip. Heading back down to the valley bottom we heard the Bush Warblers strange buzzing song a few times, but the bird wouldn't show. After a long search with no result, we headed back down the valley where we found a few Greenish Warblers and a single Pallas's Warbler along with Willow, Coal and Great Tits. As we got close to the road a bit of scanning of the valley sides produced a calling Oriental Cuckoo and a Black Woodpecker and back at the car there was a White Wagtail.

We headed to the ger camp where we would be staying, dropped our bags in our ger and went and had lunch in the restaurant. After lunch we returned again to the same valley to try again for the Chinese Bush Warbler. We made a long search along the valley bottom and heard the Bush Warbler a few times, but it refused to show although we did find a singing Yellow-browed Warbler, a smart Siberian Rubythroat, a Red-flanked Bluetail and another Greenish Warbler. After a long day it was back to the ger camp for an excellent dinner and bed.



Greenish Warbler

Monday 5th June – Weather warm and sunny all day.

Before breakfast we did a walk up the hill at the back of the camp. A pair of Nuthatches were nesting in a dead tree and Cuckoos were calling constantly, a Brown Shrike was hunting in the trees and, oddly, a pair of Ruddy Shelducks were on the cliff at the top of the hill.

After breakfast we headed to an area of pine forest north of Ulaan Bator where there had been sightings of a Pygmy Owl. We parked at the start of the forest and headed off along a forest track, finding a couple of Common Rosefinches and a Citrine Wagtail before we got into the forest proper. In the forest there seemed to be Yellow-browed Warbler singing from every pine tree, easy to hear but difficult to see at the top of the tall, dense pines. We reached the area where the owl had been seen but despite an extensive search there was no sign of the bird. We did see two Nuthatches and several Willow Tits plus a showy Siberian Rubythroat. Heading back to the car a stop to look for a Red-flanked Bluetail was unsuccessful, but we did have two Long-tailed Tits, these were the white-headed form that you don't get in Ireland.

We stopped on the outskirts of Ulaan Bator for some lunch before heading to the Mongolica Hotel, our base for our last night in Mongolia. We birded the grounds and the first birds that we found were a pair of Azure Tits that showed very well, next up a couple of Arctic Warblers flitted about in the taller trees and White-cheeked Starlings showed near some houses. Moving towards the back of the hotel there were several Greenish Warblers flitting about in the bushes, another pair of Azure Tits showed up and a Long-tailed Rosefinch made a brief appearance. Further searching produced the final new bird of the trip, a Yellow-rumped Flycatcher but it was only seen by Stuart. And so back to the hotel for dinner and packing for the trip home.



Azure Tit

On Tuesday morning we left the hotel at 6.30am for the drive to the airport. We said our goodbyes to Puje and headed to a quick check in and smooth transition through the airport. Our flight was on time and the plane was only about half full, so we had plenty of space to stretch out. Our only problem on the way back to Dublin was a wait of two hours for our bags at Frankfurt, otherwise it was a smooth trip home.

The end of a superb trip, we had seen 229 species plus either Swinhoe's or Pintailed Snipe, or maybe both! We also had two species heard only, Chinese Bush Warbler and Oriental Reed Warbler. There were three species seen by Stefan, Carmen or Puje that were not seen by any of us, a Nightjar seen by Stefan and Carmen at the Gobi Discovery Camp, a juvenile Night Heron, also seen by Stefan and Carmen, at Buuntsagaan Lake and a Lapland Bunting seen by Puje at Kholboolj Lake.

Mongolia is a fantastic birding location, stunning scenery, some amazing birds and plenty of unexplored birding locations, it should definitely be on the bucket list for

anyone interested in Palearctic birds. If you do decide to visit, we would happily recommend Puje and his team at www.wildlifetoursmongolia.com to organise your trip.



Bird List:

Altai Snowcock *Tetraogallus altaicus* – six birds seen well at Baga Bogd Mountain.

Chukar *Alectoris chukar* – four birds on a high pass on the way to Baga Bogd Mountain.

Daurian Partridge *Perdix dauurica* – a single bird at the Mongolica hotel and at least four pairs at Hustai National Park.

Hazel Grouse *Bonasa bonasia* – A pair in Terelj National Park.

Black-billed Capercaillie *Tetrao urogalloides* – at least six males in Terelj National Park.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* – a pair at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* – seen at most wetlands.

Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus* – a single at a small wetland near Yolyn Am and another single at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* – seen in good numbers at most lakes and wetlands.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* – good numbers seen around most wetlands.

Swan Goose *Anser cygnoid* – small numbers at most lakes, fairly common at Bayan Lake.

Siberian Scoter *Melanitta stejnegeri* – around 40 birds seen at Gun Galuut Nature Reserve.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* – a few seen at Gun Galuut and at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser* – a couple of birds at Gun Galuut and at least a dozen in flight at the Mongolica hotel.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* – seen in good numbers at most wetlands.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* – the commonest duck of the trip, seen at all wetlands and also in areas apparently without water.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* – seen along the Tuul River near Ulaan Bator.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* – fairly common at Kholboolj and Buuntsagaan Lakes, a few at other lakes.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* – common at most wetlands.

Baer's Pochard *Aythya baeri* – bird of the trip, a single at Takhilt Lake.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* – present in small numbers at most lakes.

Garganey *Spatula querquedula* – present at all wetlands.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* – common at all wetlands.

Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata* – a few at Sangyn Dalai, Takhilt and Bayan Lakes.

Gadwall *Mareca strepera* – common at all wetlands.

Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope* – present in small numbers at all wetlands.

Chinese Spot-billed Duck *Anas zonorhyncha* – a few at Takhilt and Bayan Lakes.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* – common at all wetlands.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* – small numbers at most wetlands.

Common Teal *Anas crecca* – small numbers at all wetlands.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* – small numbers at a few wetlands.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* – present at all the northern lakes.

Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus* – one or two at most wetlands.



Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* - twenty at Gun Galuut and one or two at other lakes.

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* – common everywhere.

Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris* – seen in small numbers on five days.

Oriental Turtledove *Streptopelia orientalis* – four at Odsuren’s Tree Plantation outside Dalanzadgad.

Eurasian Collared-dove *Streptopelia decaocto* – five recorded over two days.

Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes paradoxus* – at least five hundred seen over eight days.

Common Swift *Apus apus* – seen in reasonable numbers every day.

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* – small numbers seen with Common Swifts.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* – seen or heard most days.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus* – heard and seen in Terej National Park.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* – a single bird seen briefly at a small lake.

Baillon's Crake *Zapornia pusilla* – two birds seen briefly at the same site as the Water Rail.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* – two at the same small lake at the Baillon’s Crake and Water Rail.

Common Coot *Fulica atra* – present at most wetlands.

White-naped Crane *Antigone vipio* – small numbers seen on four days.

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* – seen on ten days with a best day of over one hundred.

Common Crane *Grus grus* – six at Kholboolj Lake and eight at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* – three were a surprise find at Gun Galuut Nature Reserve.

Arctic Loon *Gavia arctica* – a pair nesting at Takhilt Lake.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* – singles at Gun Galuut Nature Reserve and Buuntsagaan Lake.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* – seen on five days with a maximum of fifty on 2nd June.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* – a single bird in breeding plumage at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* – seen in reasonable numbers on six days.

Great White Egret *Ardea alba* – seen in small numbers on five days.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* – seen on five days including several thousand at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* – common on most wetlands.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* – common on all wetlands.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* – two birds at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* – flocks at Gun Galuut Nature Reserve and Sangyn Dalai Lake.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* – fairly common, seen on five days.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* – common around all wetlands.

Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii* – seen in small numbers in desert areas on three days.

Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus* – single male on open steppe display flighting.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* – common around all wetlands.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* – singles in flight at Gun Galuut Nature Reserve and Khongor Sand Dunes.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* – small numbers seen at most wetlands.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* – six at Gun Galuut Nature Reserve and a single at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* – at least sixty at Kholboolj Lake and small numbers at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* – six at Kholboolj Lake and three at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* – very common around all wetlands.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* – fairly common, seen on five days.



Sanderling *Calidris alba* – approximately twelve birds at Kholboolj Lake.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* – six at Kholboolj Lake.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* – seen in small numbers on five days.

Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* – a total of eleven birds seen over four days.

Pintail/Swinhoe's Snipe *Gallinago stenura/megala* - at least three birds of one of these species seen at a small pool on the road to Dalanzadgad.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* – seen in small numbers on five days.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* – fairly common around wetlands.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* – twelve birds at Gun Galuut Nature Reserve, single birds at other wetlands.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* – ten at Gun Galuut Nature Reserve was the only sighting.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* – a single bird at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* – seen at all wetlands.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* – seen at most sites, fifty plus at Gun Galuut Nature Reserve.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* – at least eight at Bayan Lake.

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus* – two birds at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* – common at Kholboolj and Buuntsagaan Lakes, a few at other wetlands.

Pallas's Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* – at least thirty at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Heuglin's Gull *Larus fuscus* – one definite bird at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Mongolian Gull *Larus mongolicus* – seen in reasonable numbers at most wetlands.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* – at least four birds at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Common Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* – at least one hundred at Kholboolj Lake and thirty at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* – over one hundred at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* – four birds around Bayan Lake.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* – small numbers in the first week, numerous around the lakes in the second week.



Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* – small numbers among the White-winged Black Terns.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* – small numbers at most wetlands including a few of the dark billed eastern race longipennis.

Little Owl *Athene noctua* – a single bird seen on a fence post near the Gobi Discovery camp.

Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* – migrating birds seen on four days.

Bearded Vulture *Gypaetus barbatus* – a total of seven birds seen over three days.

Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* – common, seen almost every day with a maximum of thirty on 2nd June.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* – singles seen on four days, four seen on 2nd June.
Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* – seen on seven days with a maximum of three on 25th May.
Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* – singles seen on four days.
Western Marsh-harrier *Circus aeruginosus* – seen on five days, a maximum of three at Bayan Lake.
Eastern Marsh-harrier *Circus spilonotus* – at least six birds at Bayan Lake, singles on two other days.
Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* – a single bird at Sangyn Dalai Lake.
Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis* – a single bird hunting around Odsuren's Tree Plantation near Dalanzadgad.
Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* – single birds on three days.
Pallas's Fish-eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* – three birds at Buuntsagaan Lake.
Black Kite *Milvus migrans* – common, seen every day.
Eurasian Buzzard *Buteo buteo* – single birds at Yolyn Am and Khongor Sand Dunes.
Japanese Buzzard *Buteo japonicus* – birds seen at Terelj National Park and at the pine forest while looking for Pygmy Owl.
Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* – seen on three days with a maximum of six on 29th May.
Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius* – common, seen on eight days.
Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops* – one or two seen on five days.
Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* – two seen at Terelj National Park.
Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* – two at the Black-billed Capercaillie site and two at Terelj National Park.
Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* – four at Hustai National Park.
Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* – small numbers seen on twelve days.
Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* – singles at the Mongolica Hotel on two days and at Gun Galuut, three at Hustai National Park.
Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* – two birds at Hustai National Park.



Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* – birds seen on six days with maximums of four on the 31st May and 2nd June.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* – a single bird at Baga Bogd Mountain.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* – seen in small numbers on nine days.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* – seen on four days with a maximum of six on the 26th and 27th May.

Great (Steppe) Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* – seen around Yolyn Am and Khongor Sand Dunes.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* – very common, seen most days.

Asian Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus* – six birds around the Mongolica Hotel

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* – two seen near the Black-billed Capercaillie site.

Mongolian Ground-jay *Podoces hendersoni* – eight birds on the steppe near the Gobi Discovery camp on the 26th, one or two birds seen on three other days.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* – seen on five days, with a maximum of twenty on 3rd June.

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus* – common around Ulaan Bator, scarce elsewhere.

Eurasian Rook *Corvus frugilegus* – common around Ulaan Bator, Hustai and Terej National Parks.

Common Raven *Corvus corax* – seen in small numbers every day.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* – only seen around Ulaan Bator.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater* – seen in good numbers in Larch and pine woods.

Willow Tit *Poecile montanus* – common in areas of Larch and pine forests in the north.

Azure Tit *Cyanistes cyanus* – at least six birds around the Mongolica Hotel on our last day.

Great Tit *Parus major* – fairly common in forest areas in the north.

White-crowned Penduline-tit *Remiz coronatus* – 3 birds in Odsuren's Tree Plantation outside Dalanzadgad.



Asian Short-toed Lark *Alaudala cheleensis* – very common, seen almost every day.

Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* – very surprised to have a pair fly past us at a comfort stop on the way to Dalanzadgad.

Mongolian Lark *Melanocorypha mongolica* – common in most steppe and desert areas.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* – very common, seen most days.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* – only definitely seen on two days but probably overlooked.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* – a few birds around Yolyn Am and the Gobi Discovery camp.

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus* – at least ten birds in a reedbed at Bayan Lake.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* – a single bird at a small plantation on the steppe on the 25th and at least ten birds at Bayan Lake.

Pallas's Grasshopper-warbler *Locustella certhiola* – single bird around a small pool at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Siberian House Martin *Delichon lagopodum* – after a careful examination a flock of at least fifty birds at a small wetland on the steppe all appeared to be this species.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* – very few seen until Bayan Lake where many birds of the subspecies *tytleri* were present and apparently breeding.

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* – seen in small numbers on seven days.

Collared Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* – seen in good numbers at several wetlands.

Pale Sand Martin *Riparia diluta* – at least thirty at Takhilt Lake.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* – single migrants at Baga Bogd Mountain and Terelj National Park, numerous breeding birds at the pine forest on the 5th June.

Hume's Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus humei* – migrants seen on six days.

Pallas's Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* – seen on seven days, at least thirty in Odsuren's Tree Plantation near Dalanzadgad.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* – seen on nine days, at least fifty at Baga Bogd Mountain.

Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus tristis* – six birds at Baga Bogd Mountain, one at Terelj National Park.

Sulphur-bellied Warbler *Phylloscopus griseolus* – three birds seen at Baga Bogd Mountain, several more heard.



Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* – seen on three days with six at Terelj National Park on the 4th June.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* – a single at Kherlen river, five at Hustai National Park and two around the Mongolica Hotel.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* – two birds in the pine forest on the 5th June.

Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* – a single bird in Saxual forest near Khongor Sand Dunes, two birds on the way to Baga Bogd Mountain and another single on the way to Buuntsagaan Lake.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* – at least five at Baga Bogd Mountain.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* – small numbers seen on six days.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* – two birds at Terelj National Park.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* – a total of six birds seen in forest areas.

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* – six birds at Yolyn Am and a single bird at Baga Bogd Mountain.

White-cheeked Starling *Spodiopsar cineraceus* – only seen around the Mongolica Hotel with a maximum of twenty.

White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea* – single bird on 23rd May while searching for the Black Larks.

Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* – ten birds in the Capercaillie forest.

Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni* – single birds at the Kherlen River and on the drive south on the 23rd May.

Rufous-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* – at least twenty in the Capercaillie forest.

Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica* – a single bird in the reedbed at Bayan Lake.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* – single birds at Khanbogd camp, Buuntsagaan Lake and Bayan Lake and two birds at Hustai National Park.

Siberian Blue Robin *Larvivora cyane* – a single bird seen at Odsuren's Tree Plantation on the 24th June.

Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* – seen on seven days with a maximum of six on the 21st May.

Orange-flanked Bush-robin *Tarsiger cyanurus* – seen on four days with a maximum of ten on the 20th May.

Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia* – a single bird at the Mongolica Hotel on the 5th June.

Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla* – very common, seen on twelve days.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* – common in mountain areas, seen on six days.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* – two birds in the Khangai Mountains.

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureoreus* – fairly common, seen on six days.

White-winged Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus* - two pairs seen at the Bushchat site in the Khangai Mountains.

Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush *Monticola saxatilis* – seen in mountain areas on four days.

White-throated Bushchat *Saxicola insignis* – seven birds seen at a site in the Khangai Mountains.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* – a single bird at the Oriental Plover site.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* – common, seen on eleven days.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* – very common, seen on nine days.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* – common in the south, seen on six days.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* – fairly common in the south, seen on seven days including one of the subspecies *vittata* on the 26th May.

Brown Accentor *Prunella fulvescens* – common in mountain areas, seen on five days.

Mongolian Accentor *Prunella koslowi* – two pairs seen at Yolyn Am on the 25th May.

Saxaul Sparrow *Passer ammodendri* – at least six birds near the Khongor Sand Dunes and eight at a comfort stop in the desert while driving to Baga Bogd Mountain.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* – common, seen most days.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* – common, seen every day.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* – seen on three days, a maximum of twelve on the 2nd June.

White-winged Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis* – common, seen on seven days.



Small Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda davidiana* – common, seen on six days.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* – single birds seen on three days.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* – very common at the Capercaillie site.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* – two birds at the Bushchat site in the Khangai Mountains.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* – common, seen on six days.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* – two birds at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* – common around wetlands, seen on six days.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* – common, seen on nine days, maximums of thirty on several days.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla macronyx* – surprisingly scarce, seven birds seen over three days.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* – singles on three days, five at Terelj National Park.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* – a single bird on at Odsuren's Tree Plantation.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* – a single female at the small plantation on 25th May.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* – fairly common, seen on six days with a maximum of twenty on 25th May.

Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrimus* – seen on three days with a maximum of twenty at Yolyn Am on the 24th May.

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Carpodacus sibiricus* – four birds at the Mongolica Hotel.

Mongolian Finch *Bucanetes mongolicus* – small flocks seen on six days.

Eurasian Twite *Linaria flavirostris* – a flock of ten at Khanbogd camp on 25th May.

Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus* – two birds at Odsuren's Tree Plantation.

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides* – two birds at Hustai National Park.

Godlewski's Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii* – small numbers seen in mountain areas on five days.

Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani* – single birds at Baga Bogd Mountain and at the high pass on the way to Kholboolj Lake.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* – two birds in the small town in the Khangai Mountains.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* – common at the Capercaillie site and in Hustai and Terelj National Parks.



Pallas's Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* – fairly common, seen on eight days.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* – two birds at the small lake near Delgertsog on 23rd May.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* – a single bird at Yolyn Am on the 25th May.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* – seen in small numbers on seven days.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* – fairly common, seen on eight days.

Mammal List:

Mountain Hare *Lepus timidus* – one seen near our camp in the Khangai Mountains.

Tolai Hare *Lepus tolai* – widespread in small numbers during the trip.

Pallas's Pika *Ochotona pallasii* – numerous among the rocks at Yolyn Am and at Baga Bogd Mountain.

Daurian Pika *Ochotona dauurica* – one or two were observed in the grounds of the Mongolica Hotel.

Northern Three-toed Jerboa *Dipus sagitta* – several spot-lighted near the huts at Buuntsagaan Lake.

Robrovski's Desert Hamster *Phodopus robrovskii* – one spot-lighted near the Khongor Sand Dunes.

Brandt's Vole *Lasiopodomys brandtii* – locally abundant in the grass-steppe areas.

Mongolian Gerbil *Meriones unguiculatus* – widespread sightings during the trip.

Mid-day Gerbil *Meriones meridianus* – several observations in southern desert-steppe areas.

Eurasian Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* – two black-morphs were seen in the taiga forest north of Ulaan Bator.

Tarbagan Marmot *Marmota sibirica* – widespread in the mountains but showed best in Hustai National Park.

Long-tailed Ground Squirrel *Urocitellus undulatus* – several sightings, mostly in the north.

Alashan Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus alashanicus* – several sightings in the south including at Yolyn Am.

Siberian Chipmunk *Eutamias sibiricus* – several sightings in the northern forests.

Long-eared Hedgehog *Hemichinus auritus* – two were spot-lighted at the Gobi Discovery camp near the Khongor Sand Dunes.



Wapiti (Eastern Red Deer) *Cervus canadensis* – a small herd was observed at the Hustai National Park.

Eastern Roe Deer *Capreolus pygargus* – one was glimpsed in the forest at Terelj National Park.

Goitered Gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa* – widespread sightings in the south, up to thirty in a day.

Mongolian Gazelle *Procapra gutturosa* – widespread sightings, up to sixty in a day.

Siberian Ibex *Capra sibirica* – a group of nine including two young on the high slopes of Baga Bogd Mountain.

Przewalski's Horse *Equus przewalskii* – about fifty seen in Hustai National Park.

