



Field Guides Tour Report

Birding the Gobi Desert and the Mongolian Taiga 2017

Jun 1, 2017 to Jun 18, 2017
Phil Gregory & Sundeв Gombobataar

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).



We saw quite a few beautiful and delicate Demoiselle Cranes, and even found a nest at Khustai that contained two lovely eggs. Photo by guide Phil Gregory.

This was the inaugural Field Guides tour to Mongolia, with the aim to cover a number of the key sites and habitats in central, southern and northern Mongolia, including steppe, desert and boreal forest, and we succeeded very nicely. It was quite a dry spring here despite good snowfall over the winter, so water levels in the wetlands were low and some species were scarce, but breeding was certainly in full swing. Staying primarily in ger camps was fun, but you have to get used to the low doorways and starlit nocturnal treks to the bathroom.

Some of us came in early to get oriented, and also do a cultural tour, which included the National Museum, the brilliant UNESCO World Heritage lama temple at Choisin (with those wonderful metal 18th century sculptures by Zanabazar, the Mongolian Michelangelo), and a fantastic concert that included extraordinary throat singing, skilled musicians with horsehead fiddles, folk dancers and a contortionist, all well worth doing and recommended.

Most of us went to Green Lakes and some riparian habitat along the Tuul River on the first day (though some chose to go shopping), and here we saw the first of many Demoiselle Cranes, the fabulous Azure Tit and White-crowned Penduline Tit, as well as Long-tailed Rosefinch, Daurian Jackdaw and Azure-winged Magpie.

Next it was off to Khustai National Park, stopping en route to see some Steppe Eagles gathered where the steppe was being ploughed, and a colony of Mongolian Gerbils had been disturbed. These poor creatures were running about in confusion, and some took shelter between my shoes when we walked over to take a look! The striking Mongolian and much duller Asian Short-toed Larks were common as well.

Later that day we had a great experience watching the Przewalski's Wild Horses (Takhi) in the park, a remarkable creature that has come back from near extinction and looks just like the cave paintings of those horses with erect manes. Beautiful pale buffy and blonde colouration too, a striking creature that is reintroduced here and looks to be doing quite well. Other good mammals here were pikas, Red Deer, Mongolian Gazelle and the wild sheep called the Argali. Birds included Daurian Partridge, Cinereous Vulture, Golden Eagle, Upland Buzzard, Saker Falcon, Rock Petronia and Meadow and Little Bunting, and it was fun getting used to living in a ger, the large circular felt tents so common in Mongolia.

Heading west, we stopped at Dasinchilen wetland and got lucky, as here the first gull we saw was the rare Relict Gull, in full breeding plumage too. Swan Goose and Bar-headed Goose showed well, also Red-crested Pochard and Falcated Duck, with White-naped and Common Crane as well. Passerines included Paddyfield Warbler and Pallas's Bunting, as well as Reed Bunting.

This was Daphne's sponsored birding day, and she got to some 66 species before a dust storm with strong winds blew in and finished off the birding as we travelled on to Ugii Lake.

Next day, the Ugii area gave us terrific views of the rare Pallas's Fish Eagle and White-tailed Eagle, Whooper Swans and a good selection of shorebirds including Red-necked Stint, Long-toed Stint and Broad-billed Sandpiper. A wetland later on produced the huge bonus of a Siberian White Crane, which seems fairly regular here at this time of the year. Also of great interest was a mixed colony of Sand Martins and Pale Sand Martins, the latter a very poorly known species.

The ancient Mongol capital of Kharkorin had a large temple complex which was home to displaying Blyth's Pipits, and some folks went for a ride on a Bactrian Camel later. A large wetland at Elsen Tasarkhai gave us breeding plumage Asian Dowitcher and Arctic Loon, a pair of White-naped Cranes with a small chick, both Swan and Bar-headed Geese with goslings, and several Eastern Marsh Harriers.

Back to Ulaanbaatar next day, then our large bags headed south with the vehicles to Dalanzadgad whilst we took the early morning Mongolian Airlines flight and met up with them next day for the Gobi - Altai sector of the trip.

Our ger camp had a nice valley behind it that gave us Chukar, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Eastern Black Redstart, Mongolian Finch, Grey-necked (Gray-hooded) Bunting, Godlewski's Bunting and on a later visit, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler. It was also quite nearby the gorgeous Altai Mountain valley of Yolyn Am (Lammergeier Valley), where we saw Lammergeier, as well as Cinereous and Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Saker, Mongolian (Kozlov's), Alpine and Brown Accentor, Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch, Twite and many tame White-winged Snowfinch and Horned Larks. A few of us made the climb ("slippery for ladies") up to the lovely grassy ridgetops at 8000' feet in quest of Altai Snowcock, but drew a blank.

Driving into the edge of the Gobi proper was about 120 km on a dusty corrugated road, and the birding en route gave us the remarkable Henderson's (Mongolian) Ground-Jay, Asian Desert Warbler for some and both Desert and Pied Wheatear. The ger camp was sited nearby to the great Khongor sand dunes, and the saxaul forest there gave us the rare and localized Saxaul Sparrow and Hill Pigeon next day, with terrific looks at Pallas's Sandgrouse along the river there. Here we also had a remarkable encounter with a small spring, which bubbled up with great enthusiasm every time someone sang or called to it, a really bizarre phenomenon!

A nocturnal mammal foray was successful as we had a fabulous Long-eared Hedgehog that took shelter between Saint's feet, then a nice look at a very fast Gobi Jerboa, remarkably like a diminutive kangaroo!

Back then to Dalanzadgad, seeing the rare Black-tailed or Goitered Gazelle en route, and another early morning flight back to UB, where we again met out vehicles and bags, and set off for the great boreal forest at Terelj. This was really beautiful Siberian larch and pine forest, with many lovely wildflowers like globeflower, grass of Parnassus and yellow pasque flower. Birds included two daytime Ural Owl, Great, Lesser Spotted and White-backed Woodpecker, Common and Himalayan (Oriental) Cuckoo, Pine and Black-faced Bunting, Red-throated Thrush, Nutcracker, Red Crossbill and Eurasian Siskin. Arriving near our ger camp we had a neat flyover from Eastern Buzzard, a dark phase Booted Eagle and a Northern Goshawk. A lovely walk in quest of Black-billed Capercaillie failed to find one, but we saw lots of other nice species and capped it off that afternoon with a very obliging Chinese Bush Warbler and a skulking Siberian Rubythroat.

Then it was time to head back to UB and a farewell dinner at a Mongolian barbecue restaurant. Birds of the trip were a varied assortment, with Pallas's Sandgrouse, Azure Tit and Ural Owl coming out as favourites, along with Relict Gull, Siberian White Crane, Pine Bunting, Nutcracker, Red-billed Chough, Cinereous Vulture, Pallas's Fish-Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Lammergeier, Saxaul Sparrow and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, and not forgetting that delightful hedgehog as another favourite sighting.

Many thanks to our very hard working and careful drivers Tumruu, Bayraa and Bilgee, and to Gombo, our esteemed local guide and organizer who did a terrific job. He is a professor at the University in UB, and we are hoping his long-awaited book on Mongolian birds will be published in time for next year's trip. Our thanks to them for making the tour so memorable and for many small kindnesses to a demanding group. Also thanks to Sue and Rowan of Sicklebill Safaris who basically arranged things in Mongolia, and to Mandy and Sharon at Field Guides who co-ordinated the whole enterprise and did a great job.

Thanks also to the group for coming along, generally good humour, and some good spotting skills- especially Julia! Safe travels and I look forward to seeing you again on future trips.

Mongolia is a great trip for landscapes in a very unusual country, with some rare and seldom-seen birds, and an unexpectedly good selection of mammals- why not join us for another memorable adventure there in 2018?

Phil Gregory, UB and Kuranda, June 2017.

Itinerary

- Wed May 31 Arrival in Ulaanbaatar (UB) for those doing the cultural option. Khunnu Hotel overnight.
- Thursday Jun 1 Optional tour of Ulaanbaatar for early arrivals, including National Museum, Choisin Lama temple and the Mongolian culture troupe of singers, dancers and a contortionist. Highly recommended! Overnight Khunnu Hotel
- Fri Jun 2 Green Lakes and riparian habitat at Songino. Khunnu Hotel
- Sat Jun 3 Steppe areas en route to Khustai NP, overnight Khustai ger camp.
- Sun Jun 4 Khustai NP: Baishant area and Tuul River plain. Overnight Khustai ger camp.
- Mon Jun 5 Depart Khustai NP for Dashinchilen wetland, overnight Ugii Lake ger camp. Dust storm much of the afternoon.
- Tues Jun 6 Ugii Lake and wetlands, then to Kharkorin, overnight ger camp.

- Wed Jun 7 Kharkorin temple then to Elsen Tasarkhai and Hoyor Zagal ger camp.
- Thurs Jun 8 Elsen Tasarkhai to Ulaanbaatar via Tuul River bridge, over night UB Khunnu Hotel.
- Fri Jun 9 Mongolian Airlines flight to Dalanzadgad (1 hr.) then Khanbogd ger camp and Yol Am Valley
- Sat Jun 10 Yol Am valley to 2600m (8200'), overnight Khanbogd ger camp.
- Sun Jun 11 Khanbogd to Gobi Erdene, 120 km on dusty corrugated road, birding en route. Overnight Gobi Erdene ger camp.
- Mon Jun 12 Saxaul forest habitat and Khongor River and sand dunes. Overnight Gobi Erdene ger camp.
- Tues Jun 13 Gobi Erdene to Dalanzadgad, overnight
- Wed Jun 14 Mongolian Air from Dalanzadgad to UB, then 70 km drive to Terelj NP and Tumen Khaan ger camp.
- Thurs Jun 15 Tumen Khaan area, Terelj riverine woodlands. Overnight Tumen Khaan ger camp.
- Fri Jun 16 Slopes above Tumen Khaan to 1600m (6200') till 1300, then Terelj river valley late pm. Overnight Tumen Khaan ger camp.
- Sat Jun 17 Terelj Valley and journey back to UB, overnight Khunnu Hotel.
- Sun Jun 18 Departures home.

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

- SWAN GOOSE** (*Anser cygnoides*) – 5 at Dashinchilen wetlands, 70 at Ugii Lake and 14 at Elsen Tasarkhai wetlands, including a family with 3 goslings. This rare species only breeds in Russia, Mongolia and China with the border zones between these countries being their key breeding location. They winter in North and South Korea and central China. The world population is about 60– 90,000 birds and is declining as a result of habitat loss and unsustainable levels of hunting. [N]
- GRAYLAG GOOSE (SIBERIAN)** (*Anser anser rubrirostris*) – Just one in the reeds at the Dashinchilen wetland.
- BAR-HEADED GOOSE** (*Anser indicus*) – The first was at the Tuul River in Khustai NP, then 3 at Dashinchilen, 10 at Ugii wetlands and 60 at Elsen Tasarkhai wetlands. Nice to see a family with goslings at the last site. [N]
- MUTE SWAN** (*Cygnus olor*) – A fine adult with 2 well grown immatures was at Ugii Lake, a good pick up for the trip.
- WHOOPE SWAN** (*Cygnus cygnus*) – 2 at Ugii Lake included one with yellow neck ring EO3, marked here in 2016; there were about 20 at Ugii wetlands later, and 2 at Ugii Sum lake.
- RUDDY SHELDUCK** (*Tadorna ferruginea*) – Quite widespread, starting at Green Lakes, then with many at Ugii wetlands and several pairs at Khongoryn Els. [N]
- COMMON SHELDUCK** (*Tadorna tadorna*) – About 50 at Dashinchilen and 50 at Ugii lakes.
- GADWALL** (*Anas strepera*) – 10 at Green Lakes, then small numbers at other wetland sites from Khustai on.
- FALCATED DUCK** (*Anas falcata*) – 5 at the marsh at Dashinchilen.
- EURASIAN WIGEON** (*Anas penelope*) – Small numbers at 3 wetlands sites from Dashinchilen and Ugii to Elsen Tasarkhai.
- MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Small numbers at Green Lakes then at the marsh at Dashinchilen and Ugii wetlands.
- EASTERN SPOT-BILLED DUCK** (*Anas zonorhyncha*) – 4 at Ugii Lake and 2 at Elsen Tasarkhai.
- NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*) – Small numbers at the marsh at Dashinchilen, Ugii and Elsen Tasarkhai.
- NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – Just a single drake at the marsh at Elsen Tasarkhai, a late migrant.
- GARGANEY** (*Anas querquedula*) – 10 at the marsh at Dashinchilen, 30 at Ugii and 20 at Elsen Tasarkhai.
- GREEN-WINGED TEAL (EURASIAN)** (*Anas crecca crecca*) – Very small numbers at the marshes at Dashinchilen, Ugii and Elsen Tasarkhai, max 6 birds. Confusingly, the Brits call the American taxon Green-winged Teal, whilst the species in Mongolia is the Eurasian Teal.
- RED-CRESTED POCHARD** (*Netta rufina*) – 6 of this handsome species at Dashinchilen and then a pair and a lone drake at Ugii; quite an uncommon bird and one I had not encountered for many years.
- COMMON POCHARD** (*Aythya ferina*) – 10 at the marsh at Dashinchilen and 20 at Ugii, seems scarce here.
- TUFTED DUCK** (*Aythya fuligula*) – 20 at Green Lakes, then small numbers at the marsh at Dashinchilen, Ugii and Elsen Tasarkhai.
- WHITE-WINGED SCOTER (SIBERIAN)** (*Melanitta fusca stejnegeri*) – 7 on Ugii Lake were the only ones we saw; sometimes split these days as Stejneger's Scoter.
- COMMON GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala clangula*) – 3 at Ugii and a single drake at Elsen Tasarkhai.
- COMMON MERGANSER** (*Mergus merganser*) – 3 distant drakes on the Tuul River at Khustai NP were the only ones we saw.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

- CHUKAR** (*Alectoris chukar*) – A single perched up on a rock at the valley by Khanbogd ger camp, and then another spotted by Julia as we drove to Yol Am, sadly proving to not be a snowcock.....
- DAURIAN PARTRIDGE** (*Perdix dauurica*) – A fine bird in the dry valley at Baishan in Khustai NP, eventually sitting under a bush for excellent views. Another great spot by Julia.

Gaviidae (Loons)

ARCTIC LOON (*Gavia arctica*) – One beautiful summer plumage bird on the lake at Elsen Tasarkhai, a very nice sighting.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LITTLE GREBE (LITTLE) (*Tachybaptus ruficollis poggei*) – I found this at Elsen Tasarkhai, apparently the first record for the area and very exciting for Gombo. The yellow eye places it with the subspecies *poggei*.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*) – A single at Green Lake and 20 at Ugii wetlands, some in display too which was nice.

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – Just one summer plumage bird at Dashinchilen wetland, I just got onto it before the gale force dust storm hit!

Ciconiidae (Storks)

BLACK STORK (*Ciconia nigra*) – One at Tuul River in Khustai NP, and 2 singles from the Kharkorin area, always a terrific species to see. A huge stick next was on a rock face at Khustai, but may have been an old one.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – Just 10 at Ugii wetlands, the only place we saw them.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GRAY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*) – Herons overall were very scarce and we saw no egrets whatsoever! This species was seen on 4 days and was nesting at Elsen Tasarkhai where we had about 10 birds. [N]

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

LAMMERGEIER (*Gypaetus barbatus*) – A second calendar year bird flew over near Kharkorin, then we had sightings of 2 adult birds on both days at Yol Am, and one near Khanbogd. One of my favourite raptors, this is an amazing species with such an odd diet, though Mongolia must be a great place to locate bones from livestock!

ORIENTAL HONEY-BUZZARD (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) – One bird flew over the vehicles as we were coming out from Khongor sand dunes, an unexpected addition.

CINEREOUS VULTURE (*Aegypius monachus*) – Surprisingly widespread for what is overall a rare bird, with a total population of > 20,000. We had some 8 day records, the first at Khustai. The Kharkorin-Ugii day saw us see 6 near the town, and a total of 22 at Ugii Sum lake area. We saw 4 at Yol Am, and single at Terelj too. They seem to be often used in hawk displays too, with some 4 forlorn birds on perches for the tourists en route to Terelj.

HIMALAYAN GRIFFON (*Gyps himalayensis*) – Seen on two days at Yol Am, with 3 one day and a single the next, a huge species.

BOOTED EAGLE (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) – A dark phase bird showed very well near Tumen Khaan ger camp near Terelj.

STEPPE EAGLE (*Aquila nipalensis*) – Five day records, a great sighting being some 30 of them gathered in the steppe en route to Khustai, where the farmers were ploughing up the soil and had disturbed a colony of Mongolian Gerbils. These were running about in confusion, a couple sheltering in the shade between my feet at one point, and the eagles were busy picking them off, poor things! Another field later near Elsen Tasarkhai held some 32 birds.

GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – Three day records from Khustai, the first a distant bird on a crag which we had great fun with trying to discern a golden nape, then two much closer next day, before a fine subadult as we were driving out.

EASTERN MARSH-HARRIER (EASTERN) (*Circus spilonotus spilonotus*) – 3 at Dashinchilen, then a male at Ugii and 2 at the wetlands next day. Unexpectedly scarce.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK (EURASIAN) (*Accipiter gentilis schvedowi*) – A very nice look at one at Tumen Khaan, flying by and showing off very nicely, but the only one we saw.

BLACK KITE (BLACK-EARED) (*Milvus migrans lineatus*) – The default raptor, seen almost every day except around the Altai, but no large numbers at all. This is the Black-eared taxon which is sometimes split as Black-eared Kite.

PALLAS'S FISH-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucoryphus*) – Two immatures at Ugii Lake just as we were about to leave, they came soaring over and showed really well, much to Raven's delight. It is a rare bird in Mongolia and the world population is likely to be less than 15,000 individuals. This is one of the many iconic Palaearctic birds named after Peter Simon Pallas, one of the greatest naturalists of the 18th century. He was a German doctor and scientist, invited by Tsarina Catherine the Great to become a professor at the Academy of Sciences at St Petersburg. He set up a six year long expedition through central Russia, which reached Transbaikalia and the border of Mongolia.

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) – A fine adult was at Ugii Lake, and some folks saw another there as well.

EASTERN BUZZARD (*Buteo japonicus*) – Two nice adults soared over as we got to Tumen Khaan ger camp, along with a dark-phase Booted Eagle and a Goshawk, a nice beginning. One or two others were also seen.

LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD (*Buteo rufinus*) – One perched bird at Khongor sand dunes showed the reddish tail typical of this species, though it is known to hybridize with Upland Buzzard in Mongolia.

UPLAND BUZZARD (*Buteo hemilasius*) – Quite widespread in small numbers, we had some 8 day records from 9 sites, the first from Khustai and the last a nesting bird at Khongor dunes. The large size, pale head and blackish belly patch were quite striking, and the tail was often quite pale too. [N]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*) – Heard in the reeds at Elsen Tasarkhai wetland. [*]

EURASIAN COOT (*Fulica atra*) – 4 at Dashinchilen wetlands, and 6 at Elsen Tasarkhai.

Gruidae (Cranes)

DEMOISELLE CRANE (*Anthropoides virgo*) – Quite widespread with 9 day records, the first from Green Lakes, then a pair nesting in the steppe en route to Khustai, and quite good numbers around Khongor with up to 50 in a day. A nest there was just a scrape in the steppe with 2 large dark buffy brown eggs marked with dark. The world population is currently estimated at 230-280,000 birds. [N]

SIBERIAN CRANE (*Leucogeranus leucogeranus*) – An adult at Ugii Sum lake was a great find, albeit fairly distant. Odd individuals have been around sites in this area over the past few years but it was great to find one. Daphne, ever thoughtful, rang Bill to give him the news of this and Relict Gull.....See you next year Bill?

WHITE-NAPED CRANE (*Antigone vipio*) – 2 at Dashinchilen wetland looked to be nesting, and there was a pair with a small chick at Elsen Tasarkhai wetland. A fabulous bird, with a population estimated at c. 6,500 individuals and probably declining. [N]

COMMON CRANE (*Grus grus*) – Singles at Dashinchilen and then Ugii Lake.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Four day records from Green Lakes then the Khustai-Ugii area.

PIED AVOCET (*Recurvirostra avocetta*) – 30 at Dashinchilen and 8 at Ugii lake.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – 2 summer plumage birds at Ugii Lake.

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*) – A single breeding dress bird was at Ugii Lake.

NORTHERN LAPWING (*Vanellus vanellus*) – Small numbers from Green Lakes and the Dashinchilen-Ugii area, with up to 90 at the latter site. A single was at Khongor wetlands too.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (CURONICUS) (*Charadrius dubius curonicus*) – Heard at Green Lakes, then 1 at Ugii Lake and 2 at Elsen Tasarkhai. This is the western taxon with the "pee-oo" call.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*) – Small numbers on 3 days from Dashinchilen-Ugii and Elsen Tasarkhai.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – 2 at Ugii lakes were unexpected.

BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER (*Calidris falcinellus*) – A single from Ugii lakes was a nice find and showed well.

LONG-TOED STINT (*Calidris subminuta*) – Also seen well at Ugii Lake, with a single bird.

RED-NECKED STINT (*Calidris ruficollis*) – 3 at Ugii Lake, and a nice comparison with Little Stint.

LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*) – 3 at Ugii Lake, and a good comparison with summer plumage Red-necked Stint.

ASIAN DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus semipalmatus*) – A summer plumage red adult was at Elsen Tasarkhai wetland, and eventually showed quite well, always an exciting bird to get and especially in breeding dress.

COMMON SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*) – A couple were chipping away at the wetland by Khongor dunes.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – One at Green Lakes was the only record.

GREEN SANDPIPER (*Tringa ochropus*) – I think some folks saw this at Dashinchilen, but I missed it.

GRAY-TAILED TATTLER (*Tringa brevipes*) – A single bird was at Dashinchilen, an unexpected addition.

SPOTTED REDSHANK (*Tringa erythropus*) – This was seen at Dashinchilen and later Ugii lake, but I am not sure any of us got onto them.

MARSH SANDPIPER (*Tringa stagnatilis*) – 6 at Dashinchilen, 6 at Ugii and 3 at Elsen Tasarkhai, all in breeding dress.

WOOD SANDPIPER (*Tringa glareola*) – One at Green Lakes was the only record.

COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*) – 5 at Green Lakes and small numbers from the main wetland sites at Ugii and Elsen Tasarkhai.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) – 5 at Dashinchilen, with a single immature Relict Gull for comparison, then 15 at Ugii Lake.

RELICT GULL (*Ichthyaeetus relictus*) – One of the birds of the trip, a splendid breeding dress adult was the first gull we saw at the Dashinchilen wetland, with an immature bird later with 5 Black-headed Gulls. I had envisaged sorting through large flocks of gulls but these were the only small gulls we saw! The total world population is <20,000 birds and declining due to predation, disturbance, climatic factors at breeding colonies and the loss of coastal wetlands in the wintering range. The only known colonies are in eastern Kazakhstan (two localities), Russia (one site), China (one or two localities holding the largest known colonies) and Mongolia (several colonies). This rare species was originally described as a race of Mediterranean Gull, then suspected of being an aberrant Brown-headed Gull or a hybrid Brown-headed x Pallas's Gull. Breeding colonies were only discovered as recently as in 1970 and it remains very little known.

HERRING GULL (MONGOLIAN) (*Larus argentatus mongolicus*) – We had just 3 day records with very small numbers, max. 20 birds. The whole taxonomy of the "Herring Gull/Yellow-legged Gull" complex is horribly complex and mongolicus is now often treated as a subspecies of Vega Gull. Others assign it as a subspecies of Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* or as a separate species (Mongolian Gull *L. mongolicus*).

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – Just a single at Dashinchilen wetland.

WHITE-WINGED TERN (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) – Quite common at various wetlands, and most in lovely summer plumage, the old name of White-winged Black Tern is so appropriate I don't know why it was ever dumbed down.

COMMON TERN (LONGIPENNIS) (*Sterna hirundo longipennis*) – The birds seen were quite variable with most belonging to the race longipennis, with a black bill and much greyer plumage compared to European birds, almost resembling Whiskered Terns. A few had some red on the bill as well.

Pteroclididae (Sandgrouse)

PALLAS'S SANDGROUSE (*Syrhaptes paradoxus*) – The first were 6 in flight en route to the Gobi, with 2 more later, but views were only marginal. Happily over the next couple of days we got some great sightings from the river by Khongor dunes and in the steppe nearby. There were even 2 juveniles in the steppe near our lunch town of Dalay on June 13. Several major irruptions took place in western Europe, notably in 1863, 1888 and 1908, when thousands of birds were seen and it even bred in countries as far apart as Great Britain, Sweden and Poland. It was one of Phil's most-wanted birds as it was such a legendary species in his time as UK birder.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Quite common in the towns in a variety of morphs ranging from pure Rock Dove type to reddish or blackish birds. Also seen at some of the ger camps, and at the river at Khongor with Hill Pigeons.

HILL PIGEON (*Columba rupestris*) – Very nice views of at least 3 at the bridge at the Khongor dunes, with Rock Doves. They have an orange eye, and some birds looked like they were hybrids between this species and Rock Dove. Pure birds have a very striking black and white tail pattern. A single adult was at the river at Terelj too.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – A few birds at Singino in the riparian forest on the first day, then seen at the farm en route to the Gobi. We also found a nest there, which is apparently the first documented for Mongolia. [N]

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

COMMON CUCKOO (*Cuculus canorus*) – Quite vocal in the montane areas, which was nice, and seen a few times.

ORIENTAL CUCKOO (*Cuculus optatus*) – The first was a calling bird at the Tuul River in Khustai, and also seen and heard at the montane areas such as Terelj where it is sympatric with Common Cuckoo. When split this taxon is known as Himalayan Cuckoo and the SE Asian birds as Oriental Cuckoo.

Strigidae (Owls)

LITTLE OWL (LITTLE) (*Athene noctua plumipes*) – Two birds on an old building as we came out from Khustai NP.

URAL OWL (*Strix uralensis*) – We flushed one in the boreal forest at Terelj and located it perched for some good views. Then Gombo's playback brought in another vocal bird later, also seen quite well and a trip highlight.

LONG-EARED OWL (EURASIAN) (*Asio otus otus*) – Gombo found the wings of a juvenile in the boreal forest at Terelj, probably taken by a Goshawk, but sadly we could not locate a live one.

Apodidae (Swifts)

COMMON SWIFT (*Apus apus pekinensis*) – 5 at Green lakes and 4 on June 8 at the Tuul River.

PACIFIC SWIFT (*Apus pacificus*) – Quite common in Ulaanbaatar, and small numbers from Ugii and Elsen Tasarkhai, also at Terelj.

Upupidae (Hoopoes)

EURASIAN HOOPOE (*Upupa epops*) – 5 at Songino on the first afternoon, then singles from Khustai and Khanbogd.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos minor kamschatkensis*) – Fantastic looks at a nesting pair at the Terelj River June 15, the male flying back and forth to feed the noisy chicks and remove faecal sacs. He made 4 visits, with one by the female during our 20 minutes of watching. Another male was seen later. This race is very white below and has a large white patch on the mantle.

WHITE-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos leucotos*) – Quite a good look at a female in the poplar woods at the Terelj River on June 15, always a tough species to locate.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos major*) – This was quite common and vocal in the larch and poplar woods around Terelj and Tumen Khaan, most birds being females. I think Gombo's Three-toed tape is actually this species to judge by the response he got each time!

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

LESSER KESTREL (*Falco naumanni*) – This was seen by a couple of folks at Hoyor Zagal ger camp, the only sighting- sorry Joyce!

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) – Five day records, but very small numbers, only 2 or 3 birds each time.

AMUR FALCON (*Falco amurensis*) – Nice looks at males in Khustai NP, the only place we saw it.

SAKER FALCON (*Falco cherrug*) – We had 3 sightings on June 3, with a 19 day old well fledged juvenile in a nest, then a female by another nest on a power pole that had 3 fluffy chicks, and a single adult later. Two were seen next day, one being at the nest with the chicks, then there was one at Yol Am on June 9 and 3 there next day, including another adult by a nest. Finally one in the arid steppe near the farm en route to the Gobi on Jun 11. A good haul and a long overdue lifer for Phil, Mongolia must be one of the best places to see this rare species. The total population is estimated at < 30,000 birds with the Mongolian population c.4,000 pairs and declining. The falconry trade is heaping pressure on this species, as chicks can fetch \$2500 in a country where the monthly wage is less than \$100. [N]

Laniidae (Shrikes)

RED-TAILED SHRIKE (*Lanius phoenicuroides*) – Several of these were in the saxaul dunes at Khongor. Red-tailed Shrike was a former name of Isabelline Shrike, and this one is now more usually called Turkestan Shrike.

ISABELLINE SHRIKE (DAURIAN) (*Lanius isabellinus isabellinus*) – This pale washed out shrike was seen in the area of the Henderson's Ground-Jay. The old name was Red-tailed Shrike, which is now applied to what is more commonly called Turkestan Shrike.....

BROWN SHRIKE (*Lanius cristatus*) – A handful or records, the first from Khustai.

NORTHERN SHRIKE (*Lanius excubitor*) – Gray shrike taxonomy is basically now unresolved, so the shrikes we saw at Khongor belong here for the moment but will eventually be reassigned.

SOUTHERN GRAY SHRIKE (STEPPE) (*Lanius meridionalis pallidirostris*) – One of these pale taxa was at Khongor, taxonomy likewise unresolved but split by IOC as Steppe Grey Shrike.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

EURASIAN JAY (BRANDT'S) (*Garrulus glandarius brandtii*) – One was calling but stayed out of sight in the boreal forest at Terelj, but we later got a single to show a couple of times. This is one of the dark-eyed taxa, also found in Hokkaido. This species is long overdue for splitting as the various forms are very distinct.

AZURE-WINGED MAGPIE (AZURE-WINGED) (*Cyanopica cyanus cyanus*) – 6 at the riparian forest at Songino on day one were the only ones we saw.

EURASIAN MAGPIE (EURASIAN) (*Pica pica bactriana*) – Not uncommon around Ulaanbaatar and in the riparian areas nearby. According to Gombo the race is leucoptera, but IOC lists it as bactriana, and again this is another group overdue for splitting, this one most likely as a part of Oriental Magpie.

MONGOLIAN GROUND-JAY (*Podoces hendersoni*) – One of my birds of the trip, we found 3 of these spectacular birds in some scrubby bushes en route to the Gobi. They remind me of large Hoopoe-larks and seem to fill a similar niche here. All of the genus *Podoces* are restricted range and quite hard to come by.

EURASIAN NUTCRACKER (*Nucifraga caryocatactes*) – A great view and a nice recording of one in the boreal forest at Terelj.

RED-BILLED CHOUGH (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*) – Unexpectedly common noisy and commensal with humans, even in Ulaanbaatar. Most ger camps had a few around.

DAURIAN JACKDAW (*Corvus dauuricus*) – Quite common around Terelj, with many pied adults and dark-eyed immatures, also seen at Songino on day one.

ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus pastinator*) – Small numbers from Songino, then Khustai and Ugii, this is the eastern race and is a potential split.

CARRION CROW (*Corvus corone orientalis*) – Small numbers from UB and Khustai-Ugii, then again at Terelj, and another potential split.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Widespread in small numbers, with some nice looks from the Gobi and Terelj.

Panuridae (Bearded Reedling)

BEARDED REEDLING (*Panurus biarmicus*) – Very nice looks in the reeds at Dashinchilen, and a monotypic family.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (BRANDT'S) (*Eremophila alpestris brandti*) – This was one of the commonest larks in the desert areas. A recent genetic study sampled numerous individuals from across this species very wide range and concluded that it should be split into six species with *brandti* becoming a monotypic species, Brandt's, Steppe or Mongolian Horned Lark.

MONGOLIAN LARK (*Melanocorypha mongolica*) – One spectacular species, with huge white wing patches and black chest band, they were common around Khustai and Ugii.

ASIAN SHORT-TOED LARK (*Alaudala cheleensis cheleensis*) – The default small lark of the tour, a split from Lesser-Short-toed but the taxonomy is still unsettled so it may be changed. Often seen and heard in display flight.

EURASIAN SKYLARK (ASIAN) (*Alauda arvensis kibortii*) – Just one record from Dashinchilen, and very unlike Eurasian Skylark as it lacks a crest, I would not be surprised if this proves to be something else.

CRESTED LARK (*Galerida cristata magna*) – Just a couple seen briefly en route to Khongor, unexpectedly scarce.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – Just a couple of confirmed records, with 6 at the nesting colony with Pale Sand Martins on Jun 6, and a single at the Tuul River bridge. Also several sightings of *Martin* sp. which were either this or Pale Sand Martins

PALE SAND MARTIN (*Riparia diluta*) – A colony nesting in a sandpit on Jun 6, with one bird attacked by its congeners and picked up stunned, all very odd, This taxon lacked any marking below and was rather distinctive, but is clearly very localized.

EURASIAN CRAG-MARTIN (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*) – Seen around Khanbogd and Yol Am in the Altai.

BARN SWALLOW (TYTLER'S) (*Hirundo rustica tytleri*) – Small numbers from Green lakes on to Khustai and Ugii, with some nesting at the ger camps there. There was considerable variation in the intensity of the rufous underparts, some birds strongly coloured, others much more diffuse, and I wonder if it might be sexual dimorphism?

COMMON HOUSE-MARTIN (*Delichon urbicum lagopodum*) – Seen at the Tuul River bridge on the way back from Khustai, and a small colony in Terelj. This taxon has pale underwing coverts.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

COAL TIT (*Pariparus ater*) – A few at Terelj in the larch and poplar forests.

WILLOW TIT (WILLOW) (*Poecile montanus baicalensis*) – Quite common around Terelj and sounding typical of Willow Tit with the raspy "bee bee" call, but this is a dull taxon with a drab black crown, a pale wing panel and a quite long tail.

AZURE TIT (AZURE) (*Cyanistes cyanus yenisseeensis*) – One of the birds of the trip, a beautiful study in blue and white with a surprisingly long tail, and nothing like Blue Tit in shape. We saw them at Songino and then in Khustai in riparian habitat.

GREAT TIT (*Parus major*) – One at Songino then a few in the boreal forest around Terelj, looking like slightly pale but otherwise typical Great Tits.

Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)

WHITE-CROWNED PENDULINE-TIT (*Remiz coronatus*) – A female in the reeds at Green Lake, then a male at Songino in the riparian there, with 2 more on Jun 4 in Khustai by the Tuul River.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

LONG-TAILED TIT (CAUDATUS) (*Aegithalos caudatus caudatus*) – A few white-headed birds in the riparian habitat near Terelj.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

EURASIAN NUTHATCH (*Sitta europaea*) – Just a single from the poplar woods at Terelj, very white below.

Tichodromidae (Wallcreeper)

WALLCREEPER (*Tichodroma muraria*) – Despite quite windy conditions we saw two males very well at Yol Am, much attracted by Gombo's tape of the call and a terrific bird, one I had not seen for many years. A monotypic family too.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers)

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus collybita*) – Just a single quite grayish dark-legged bird at the farm near Khanbogd, presumably a Siberian Chiffchaff *tristis* which is split by some.

DUSKY WARBLER (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*) – Small numbers on 6 days, quite a vocal species which was singing at Terelj.

PALLAS'S LEAF WARBLER (*Phylloscopus proregulus*) – 2 at Songino, singing in the blackthorn trees there, then seen in Khustai, one in the poplars at Khanbogd and then singing at Terelj.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus inornatus*) – One with a Pallas's Warbler in Khustai, then singles up around Tumen Khaan where they seem to have a fairly distinct song, which I have posted to the IBC and xenocanto.

HUME'S WARBLER (*Phylloscopus humei*) – One by the dining room at Khanbogd in the poplar tree there.

ARCTIC WARBLER (*Phylloscopus borealis*) – One seen well at Songino in the blackthorns there, and one in Khustai.

GREENISH WARBLER (*Phylloscopus trochiloides*) – One at Songino, one in Khustai and I had one at the cultural centre in UB.

GREENISH WARBLER (*Phylloscopus trochiloides trochiloides*) – Gombo and I saw a single in the poplars at Khanbogd which was real migrant trap for these *Phylloscopus* warblers. Usually split as Two-barred Greenish Warbler these days.

Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and Allies)

THICK-BILLED WARBLER (*Iduna aedon*) – One at Green Lakes, then 2 seen at the Tuul River valley in Khustai.

PADDYFIELD WARBLER (*Acrocephalus agricola*) – This species was singing in the reeds at Dashinchilen on Jun 5, a typical small Acro with a pale supercilium and the only place we saw it. A long overdue lifer for Phil.

ORIENTAL REED-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus orientalis*) – Heard at Green Lakes, and see at Dashinchilen and Elsen Tasarkhai wetlands.

Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

PALLAS'S GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER (*Locustella certhiola*) – Fantastic views of one sat out in the open in the valley by Khanbogd one afternoon Jun 10.

LANCEOLATED WARBLER (*Locustella lanceolata*) – Gombo spotted a small warbler flit across by the road near Khustai ger camp, and it proved to be a quite obliging Lanceolated Warbler, not often you get the chance to study one in the field and see the streaks on the chest.

CHINESE BUSH-WARBLER (*Locustella tacsanowskia*) – This was an excellent and rather unexpected pick up as they had gone from the former site by the ger camp. This one was giving the buzzy call from bushes near Terelj, and we got good looks at it skulking by the tape. Next day we repeated the process for Daphne and Saint too, who had sat out that afternoon trip.

Sylviidae (Sylviid Warblers)

ASIAN DESERT WARBLER (*Sylvia nana*) – Phil saw a small warbler flit in some long grass en route to Gobi Erdene, and we stopped to get a good look at an Asian Desert Warbler, complete with yellow eye and pale legs. Oddly we did not find any more, I think the dry conditions had impacted here.

BARRED WARBLER (*Sylvia nisoria*) – One seen very briefly in a small Juniper-filled valley en route to Yol Am, but the very windy conditions made getting it very hard.

LESSER WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia curruca blythi*) – Good views along a meadow edge in Terelj, the taxonomy of this group is complex and unresolved as yet, they do not sound much like the European birds.

GREATER WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia communis*) – One in Yol Am, then a very dull bird with very limited reddish in the wings at Tumen Khaan, before one singing by the Chinese Bush warbler site later.

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

DARK-SIDED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa sibirica*) – Just two in the poplar woods at Terelj.

ASIAN BROWN FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa dauurica*) – One migrant in the valley by Khanbogd, then 2 in the poplar woods at Terelj.

SIBERIAN RUBYTHROAT (*Calliope calliope*) – A fine male was singing and showing briefly by the Chinese Bush Warbler.

RED-FLANKED BLUETAIL (*Tarsiger cyanurus*) – Good views of several singing males in the larch forest above Tumen Khaan.

TAIGA FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula albicilla*) – Seen in the poplar woods at Terelj, including a fine male.

COMMON REDSTART (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*) – Seen in the poplar woods at Terelj, with a nest hole too. [N]

BLACK REDSTART (EASTERN) (*Phoenicurus ochruros phoenicuroides*) – A few birds around Khanbogd in the dry valley there; the males are very unlike the western European birds and are quite likely a split in waiting.

DAURIAN REDSTART (*Phoenicurus aureus*) – A male at Khustai, then another at Yol Am and a pair at Terelj.

RUFIOUS-TAILED ROCK-THRUSH (*Monticola saxatilis*) – A couple of fine males in the valley by Khanbogd.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) – Widespread in small numbers and seen nesting. [N]

PIED WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe pleschanka*) – Also quite widespread, the male is a striking thing.

DESERT WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe deserti*) – Common in the Gobi area but not elsewhere.

ISABELLINE WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe isabellina*) – The default wheatear, we saw them almost throughout with a nesting pair with juveniles at Elsen Tasarkhai ger camp. [N]

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EYEBROWED THRUSH (*Turdus obscurus*) – One in the larch forest by Tumen Khaan.

RED-THROATED THRUSH (*Turdus ruficollis*) – A fine male in the poplar woods at Terelj; it had a nest built high up in a large poplar and we got some great views of it, a new species for everyone I think. [N]

Sturnidae (Starlings)

WHITE-CHEEKED STARLING (*Spodiopsar cineraceus*) – Two birds were at a nest hole in an ancient blackthorn at Songino, the only ones we saw. [N]

Prunellidae (Accentors)

ALPINE ACCENTOR (*Prunella collaris*) – Just one bird down the valley at Yol Am, and not very obliging.

BROWN ACCENTOR (*Prunella fulvescens*) – Very good looks and photographs at Yol Am.

MONGOLIAN ACCENTOR (*Prunella koslowi*) – This is basically a Mongolian breeding endemic, with a few winter observations in China. We saw 2 very well at Yol Am.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

EASTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (MANCHURIAN) (*Motacilla tschutschensis macronyx*) – The form *macronyx* is placed with Eastern Yellow Wagtail, though the call does not sound like other taxa in that group and the entire placement of the various subspecies remains uncertain. We saw one at Green Lakes and a few individuals at the Tuul River valley.

CITRINE WAGTAIL (GRAY-BACKED) (*Motacilla citreola citreola*) – Seen at Khustai, Ugii and Khongor, all being the grey-backed nominate taxon.

GRAY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*) – One at Yol Am and a couple around Terelj.

WHITE WAGTAIL (TRANSBAIKALIAN) (*Motacilla alba baicalensis*) – Widespread in small numbers and my last taxon of the complex, quite a white-faced grey-backed form. Long overdue for splitting out into the component species.

RICHARD'S PIPIT (*Anthus richardi*) – Seen at Khustai and Khongor.

BLYTH'S PIPIT (*Anthus godlewskii*) – This tricky species was seen in Khustai and in fine display flight at the temple at Kharkorin, then heard at altitude at Yol Am.

OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT (*Anthus hodgsoni*) – Vocal and evidently nesting at the boreal forest around Terelj. [N]

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

PINE BUNTING (*Emberiza leucocephalos*) – Great views of males around Tumen Khaan, with a nest with 5 eggs found in a tussock. I made a nice tape of one male in song which is now on the IBC and xenocanto. [N]

GODLEWSKI'S BUNTING (*Emberiza godlewskii*) – A brief view of one in the valley by Khanbogd, the only sighting, though Gombo usually sees it at Yol Am too.

MEADOW BUNTING (*Emberiza cioides*) – A couple of sightings from Khustai, with a fine male being very striking in summer plumage.

GRAY-HOODED BUNTING (*Emberiza buchanani*) – Good views and singing well in the valley by Khanbogd, the greyish head and no grey on the chest is quite distinctive in good light. More usually known as Grey-necked Bunting.

- ORTOLAN BUNTING** (*Emberiza hortulana*) – I was expecting a Grey-necked, but the first bunting I saw at Khanbogd clearly had a sage green head, not grey, and I saw it well in good light. Gombo dismisses Ortolan as a possibility, but I can't see why this should not be a migrant here.
- LITTLE BUNTING** (*Emberiza pusilla*) – One in Khustai near the wild horses was a good find, a small streaky bunting with a poorly defined reddish cheek area. Mongolia is bunting central with some 22 species on the country list.
- BLACK-FACED BUNTING (SPODOCEPHALA/SORDIDA)** (*Emberiza spodocephala spodocephala*) – Gombo worked hard and got us a nice male of this taxon with the surprisingly yellowish underparts. I expect a split from the Japanese taxon in due course.
- PALLAS'S BUNTING** (*Emberiza pallasi lydiae*) – Good views of 2 birds singing from dry grass at Dashinchilen wetland, smaller and paler than Reed Bunting and with a very different song. Another long overdue lifer for Phil.
- REED BUNTING** (*Emberiza schoeniclus pyrrhulina*) – Three birds in the reeds at Dashinchilen wetland, one of the larger billed taxa.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

- MONGOLIAN FINCH** (*Bucanetes mongolicus*) – Unexpectedly scarce, we only saw 4 birds at the small stream in the valley by Khanbogd.
- COMMON ROSEFINCH** (*Carpodacus erythrinus*) – Quite common and very vocal around Tumen Khaan, and we got one for Daphne on sponsored birding day at Khustai too.
- HIMALAYAN BEAUTIFUL ROSEFINCH** (*Carpodacus pulcherrimus argyrophrys*) – Several females and a fine male seen at Yol Am. This subspecies *argyrophrys* is now regarded by both Clements and the IOC as a race of the present species rather than, as previously, of Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch *C. davidianus*. They were formerly considered conspecific as Beautiful Rosefinch *C. pulcherrimus*.
- LONG-TAILED ROSEFINCH** (*Uragus sibiricus*) – 5 birds at Green Lakes including a fine male, and evidently nesting in the bushes here. Then a male at Terej in the riparian there. [N]
- RED CROSSBILL** (*Loxia curvirostra*) – Seen a couple of times in the boreal forest by Tumen Khaan, with 2 birds in Jun Jun 16 and about 8 early next day, and heard more often as well. I am unsure which subspecies is here, and proposed Crossbill taxonomy resembles theology these days!
- EURASIAN SISKIN** (*Spinus spinus*) – A couple of singles seen near Tumen Khaan.
- TWITE** (*Carduelis flavirostris*) – 4 birds drinking from the stream at Yol Am on both visits, and a species I had not seen for many years.
- HAWFINCH** (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*) – Seen a couple of times around Tumen Khaan, always a nice bird to get.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

- SAXAUL SPARROW** (*Passer ammodendri*) – This species is only found where the Saxaul tree (*Haloxylon ammodendron* - *Amaranthaceae*) survives. It occurs in some six disjunct desert areas across Central Asia, favouring shrubs such as Saxaul near rivers and oases. We saw them very well at Khongor, with a couple of nests seen in Saxaul bushes and one pair nesting in an outhouse! [N]
- HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Small numbers from UB, Khustai and Kharkorin. [N]
- EURASIAN TREE SPARROW** (*Passer montanus*) – The default sprog in Mongolia and seen every day. [N]
- ROCK PETRONIA** (*Petronia petronia*) – Good views from Khustai ger camp then at Hoyor Zagal and Khanbogd. [N]
- WHITE-WINGED SNOWFINCH** (*Montifringilla nivalis*) – Common and tame at Yol Am, also seen at Khanbogd.
- PERE DAVID'S SNOWFINCH** (*Montifringilla davidiana*) – We saw this nicely at Khustai and then Ugii Lake. Dumbed down to Small Snowfinch in some checklists, this species is always associated with *susliks* or *pikas*, as they breed in their burrows. It is named after the famous Abbé Père Armand David, a 19th century French missionary to China, who was also a naturalist, intrepid explorer and author. A recommended book is: "Travels in Imperial China: The Exploration & Discoveries of Père David" by George Bishop.

MAMMALS

- LONG-EARED DESERT HEDGEHOG SP.** (*Hemiechinus auritus*) – A fantastic one in the steppe by Gobi Erdene, it took shelter between Saint's feet to hide from the spotlight!
- DAURIAN PIKA** (*Ochotona daurica*) – 3 at Khustai.
- MONGOLIAN (PALLAS'S) PIKA** (*Ochotona pallasii*) – 6 on Jun 8 at Yol Am, and 2 next day there.
- NORTHERN (BLUE) HARE** (*Lepus timidus*) – A lovely view of one in brown pelage in the boreal forest at Terej, my shot of the ears is on the Smugmug page.
- TOLAI HARE** (*Lepus tolai*) – Seen on 5 days, starting at Green Lakes, then from Khustai and then some very tame ones at Hoyor Zagal ger camp.
- SIBERIAN CHIPMUNK** (*Tamias sibiricus*) – This is the only Old World representative of the genus *Tamias* (25 species). We saw them in the boreal forest at Terej and heard the single piping call note, which I taped.
- SIBERIAN MARMOT** (*Marmota sibirica*) – Common in Khustai with up to 40 in a day.
- LONG-TAILED GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus undulatus*) – Quite common at Khustai and the steppe areas.
- DAURIAN GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus dauricus*) – This shorter tailed version was seen briefly as we came out of Khustai.
- RED-CHEEKED (PALLID) GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus pallicauda*) – Quite common at Khanbogd and Yol Am.
- EUROPEAN RED SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus vulgaris*) – Some very dark animals were in the boreal forest at Terej, and we got nice looks at them with their white bellies and tufted ears.
- TUNDRA RED-BACKED VOLE** (*Clethrionomys rutilus*) – Some folks had this species or Gray Red-backed Vole by the gers at Tumen Khaan.
- BRANDT'S VOLE** (*Lasiopodmys brandtii*) – One in the steppe near the *susliks* on day 2.
- CAMPBELL'S HAMSTER** (*Phodopus campbelli*) – A tiny one at Ogiy Lake ger camp, my first wild hamster.
- MONGOLIAN GERBIL (JIRD)** (*Meriones unguiculatus*) – These were the guys that had had their colony destroyed by ploughing, and had 30 or so Steppe Eagles preying on them. Two took shelter between my feet, poor things, grabbing any shade available, and I fear their day did not end well.
- MID-DAY GERBIL (JIRD)** (*Meriones meridianus*) – 1 on Jun 8 at Khanbogd and another on Jun 13 near Dalanzadgad.
- GREAT GERBIL** (*Rhombomys opimus*) – Bob saw this at Khanbogd, and there were many burrows in the Saxaul at Khongor, with one showing very nicely for some of us.
- GOBI JERBOA** (*Allactaga bullata*) – A fabulous and very fast running on at Gobi Erdene, very like a diminutive kangaroo.
- MANCHURIAN ZOKOR** (*Myospalax psilurus*) – Many mounds in riparian areas at Terej, this is one of those odd fossorial burrowers like a mole.
- CORSAC FOX** (*Vulpes corsac*) – This was seen several times, once on the way back to UB near 2 Demoiselle Cranes, one near Khongor and then 2 animals in the steppe near Dalanzadgad. Shorter legged and paler than Red Fox, and more of an arid country species.

WILD HORSE (*Equus caballus*) – Wonderful views of 40 of these great creatures in Khustai, some with foals and with a stallion keeping guard of his herd. The erect mane is very striking, as is the pale colouration. The reintroduction seems to be working well with several hundred animals now in the park.

RED DEER (*Cervus elaphus*) – 27 females in one herd in Khustai, and 5 males in another herd later.

SIBERIAN ROE DEER (*Capreolus pygargus*) – Heard making a quite loud coughing bark in the larch forest at Terelj, but very shy and not seen. [*]

GOITERED GAZELLE (*Gazella subgutturosa*) – This is also known as the Black-tailed Gazelle, and we saw 2, then 1 and then 3 as we came out of the Gobi. They showed a distinct dark brown flank stripe and sides to the rump in some lights, and reminded us of Thompson's Gazelle. This is actually also the one we have seen in the UAE, although that may have been split by now.

ZEREN (*Procapra gutturosa*) – Nice looks at 10 of this distinctive white rumped gazelle in Khustai, also called the Mongolian or White-rumped Gazelle.

IBEX (*Capra ibex*) – Ah, well, we saw somewhere between 19 and 26 of them atop a ridge in the Altai, including some males with nice recurved horns, but Gombo's car was ahead, and we had no phone signal and no radio that morning so could not get hold of them in time. Poor Saint settled for a concrete one by the ger camp....sorry!

ARGALI (*Ovis ammon*) – We were lucky and saw 3 of this wild sheep with the recurved horns in Khustai, then a couple more later which were probably the same animals I suspect.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Birds of the trip were a varied assortment, with Pallas's Sandgrouse, Azure Tit and Ural Owl coming out as favourites, along with Relict Gull, Siberian White Crane, Pine Bunting, Nutcracker, Red-billed Chough, Cinereous Vulture, Pallas's Fish -Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Lammergeier, Saxaul Sparrow and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, and not forgetting that delightful hedgehog as another favourite sighting.

Butterflies

Surprisingly few and mostly awaiting identification, but I did note something very like a Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*) and an Apollo Butterfly (*Parnassius apollo*)

Herps

Mongolian Racerunner (*Eremias argus*) 2 seen on Jun 8

Haly's Viper (*Gloydium halys*)- several seen at Yol Am where it seems to be quite common, it is a species of pit-viper and quite venomous.

Toad-headed Agama (*Phrynocephalus versicolor*) Several seen each day down around Khongor in the Gobi, they have the strange habit of rolling up the tail, and have a red patch on the sides by the shoulder.

Mottled Lizard sp. (probably Gobi racerunner *Eremias przewalskii*) A couple at Khongor.

Mongolian Toad (*Bufo raddei*) A couple seen at Ugii wetlands.

Totals for the tour: 199 bird taxa and 27 mammal taxa