

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



MONGOLIA

15th to 28th August 2023

Mongolia 2023: trip report and species lists

Philip Precey
Yumchin Batkhoo

Wildlife Travel
Soaring Expeditions www.facebook.com/soaringexpeditions



A gallery of photos and videos from the trip is at
www.flickr.com/photos/wildlifetravel/albums/72177720310926192

You can see the latest news from the ringing camp at www.facebook.com/birdringinginMongolia

The wildlife documentaries produced by the MUR wildlife awareness project can be found on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5Y4XSOKhllrF-vctoskm7A>

The facebook page for Project Mur is at <https://www.facebook.com/ProjectMur>

Front: Jargalant Mountains, scanning for Snow Leopards. Above: group at Snow Leopard Camp

15th August 2023. Hustai National Park

With an early morning arrival in Ulan Baatar, we met up with Yumchin (our guide) and Nasa (our driver) at the airport: once currency and mobile phone connections had been sorted out, we hit the road: initially we enjoyed the smooth new highway, where we passed a pair of Demoiselle Cranes, we then skirted the sprawling capital city, where large numbers of Pacific Swifts scythed around the low-rise brick buildings to distract us from the traffic jams, and headed west along the increasingly bumpy tarmac, across a landscape of rolling hills covered in open pasture grassland, where we saw some large flocks of Red-billed Chough and our first (of many) Black-eared Kites and Black Vultures. A brief pause at the roadside to enjoy a trio of soaring Steppe Eagles led to a more extended stop when we realised there were around 20 following the tractor in a newly ploughed patch, along with a group of wagtails closer to us, a mixture of Eastern Yellow Wagtail and Citrine Wagtail.

Not long after, we bade farewell to the tarmac, and struck off 'inland', to Khustain Nuruu National Park, generally known as Hustai National Park, where we eventually arrived at our camp, out in the solitude of the steppe, with views right across the broad valley.

After settling in, we had a short afternoon wander along a dry stream, lined with stunted Siberian Elm trees, where we found a couple of Asian Brown Flycatchers and a Brown Shrike, with another shrike present all afternoon on the fence around the camp.

Not long after, well fed and with the long travel days catching up with us, it was time to hit the hay...

16th August 2023. Hustai

Next morning, and our 4.30am alarm call initially felt painfully early... A short drive later, and we were watching an amazing sunrise across the valley, with a herd of Mongolian Gazelles spread out before us, maybe 2000 or more animals grazing and mumbling amongst themselves. And then Yumchin uttered the single word 'Wolf', and all thoughts of 'too early' left us, as a big adult Grey Wolf trotted across the plain.

Hearts racing, we all got great views of him as he headed slowly but determinedly towards the hills. And a little while later, as if we hadn't already been treated to one of the highlights of the trip, Yumchin announced 'another wolf'. And amazingly, a second animal was indeed sauntering about lower down on the plains, heading right towards us. A younger, slimmer, less confident animal this, she was sniffing around for ground squirrels, or perhaps scenting the young gazelles higher up the slopes. The gazelle flock certainly knew she was there, and all moved higher up towards us, some at quite a pace. Eventually, the wolf gave up on the gazelles, and headed off back down along the valley, leaving us lost for words...

The pair of Bar-headed Geese that flew past while we saw our first wolf barely got a look in.

With one the major targets for the trip safely 'under the belt', we turned our attention to birding, and headed into a scrubby, rocky valley to look for a couple of the park's key species. Amongst the elm trees

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we found a single Arctic Warbler, a Brown Shrike and family groups of both Northern and Pied Wheatears, and an immature Golden Eagle flapped slowly by, even perching up on a rock for a while, before a covey of Daurian Partridges were flushed from the taller vegetation.

While we scanned the rocky slopes for another sighting of the partridge, Lesley caught the briefest of sightings of a waft of furry tail disappearing into an outcrop of rocks: with several Pied Wheatears and a Meadow Bunting (the other key bird of the area, after the partridge) acting quite agitated around the same area, we focussed our attention on the rocks, and waited. After some time, movement could be made out through a gap in the rocks... a flapping wing? a blowing leaf? And then, quite amazingly, the head of a Pallas's Cat popped up into the gap, to stare at us, giving superb 'grumpy cat' attitude. And not only did he stay glaring at us (and at life in general) long enough for everyone to get a view of this, one of Mongolia's top wildlife attractions, but then, after dropping back out of sight, he walked out into the open, not once but twice, giving us all perfect views as he walked slowly over the rocks and eventually dropped down over the horizon, followed by his entourage of angry Pied Wheatears. Wow.

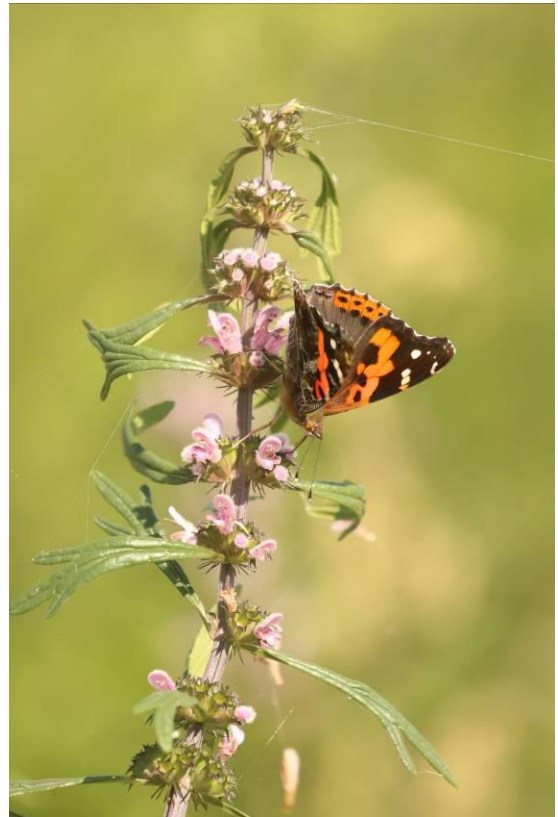
We headed back to camp in something of a daze, an entire day of fantastic wildlife watching crammed in before we'd even had breakfast. Just our first day in the country, and we had already had amazing views of two of Mongolia's most exciting mammals. What next??

After breakfast, we had an amble up onto the rocky hillside behind the camp, checking the interesting steppe flora along the way, as well as finding a couple of Mongolian Racerunners, one of just a handful of reptiles to be found in the park. A couple of Golden Eagles passed overhead, unseen by us but watched by those who'd stayed back in camp. A small group of Citrine Wagtails flew overhead, and back down on flatter ground we flushed a Mongolian Lark, which just would not show itself on the ground.

As we had lunch, the rain arrived, and settled in for much of the rest of the afternoon: diaries were written and naps were napped until we headed off in the bus once more, travelling further into the hills under the low rain clouds. Eventually we found a suitable viewing spot, once the rain had stopped, to scan the valley and surrounding hillsides. Two group of Altai Wapiti, the local equivalent of Red Deer, were grazing just below the cloud line, watching us warily from a distance. Tarbagan Marmots were spotted, variously running across the hillsides or standing sentinel on their look-out rocks, whistling loudly at us. And a Red Fox made its way across a ridge opposite us. Various familiar raptors put in appearances, including our second Black Vulture nest of the day, Kestrels hunting from the tree tops, and several Black-eared Kites, including at least three bearing large white wing tags, part of a research study being carried out by the national university.

After dinner, we had a less-than successful night drive, with a single Tolai Hare the only mammal we managed to see, and that less than 50 metres from the camp! The star-studded night sky, with no hint of light pollution to be seen, was worth the late finish, even if the nocturnal mammals weren't playing ball... And so to bed.

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Photos (clockwise, from top left): Grey Wolf and Pallas's Cat (photos courtesy Alison P); Indian Red Admiral and Brown Shrike (all Hustai National Park).

17th August 2023. Hustai and Lun wetlands

The Hustai National Park is famous as the site of the first reintroduction of Przewalski's Horse after its extinction in the wild in the 1960s, and we weren't going to be leaving without seeing the Takhi. After quite a bit of searching, we finally found a herd, feeding on a distant ridge in the morning sunshine. Maybe not as close views as we might have liked, we could nevertheless pick out the stocky legs, thick-set neck and relatively solid head, along with their characteristic buffy-ginger colouring. Slightly closer to, we found a herd of Altai Wapiti, browsing quietly, while the hillsides were alive with marmots this morning, chubby fellows sunning themselves at their burrow entrances and watching the world go by.

Moving on, we found a pair of Lesser Kestrels on the telegraph wires, along with two more females later on, and our first Amur Falcon, a slaty backed female making a meal of a big grasshopper. Not far on, we found a third falcon species on the telegraph lines, but this time a much more formidable beast, a big adult Saker Falcon.

Out of the park, as we crossed the agricultural lands we finally, after much effort, all had good views of a Mongolian Lark on the deck, along with the first of many Asian Short-toed Larks, while a ringtail Hen Harrier was quartering the wheat fields.

Onto the paved road again, and we headed west, pausing to admire a quartet of Demoiselle Cranes, before finally reaching the wet grazing meadows, reeds and open water at the wetlands near Lun.

This being peak migration period, almost anything can turn up here when it comes to waders and wildfowl, and though the numbers were perhaps lower than we might have liked, the variety was top notch. After initially studying a handful of Spotted Redshank, Wood Sandpiper and Common Sandpiper, we moved on to the next muddy pool, where the new species kept on coming: a Terek Sandpiper was followed in quick succession by a juvenile Red-necked Stint, a Long-toed Stint and a couple of Curlew Sandpipers, while a small group of Pacific Golden Plover flew through, with a much larger group of maybe a couple of hundred birds swirling about in the distance. Ducks included around ten Teal, a couple of Gadwall and a pair of Ruddy Shelduck, as well as a solitary Coot. A couple of Grey Herons flew about, and a female Western Marsh Harrier quartered the reeds a couple of times.

At our feet we found both Mongolian Toad and numerous Siberian Wood Frogs, as well as some lovely flowering Grass of Parnassus, before we pushed on to try and get a better view across the marshes, 'around the corner'. And it's lucky we did push on, as we were treated to some great (if rather distant) views of a pair of White-naped Cranes, perhaps the world's most elegant crane species, strutting about on the marshy grassland along with their gingery-headed youngster.

Content with our lot, we headed back to the bus, but not before admiring the flocks of Pere David's Snow-finches in the dry areas, and a handsome male Pallas's Reed Bunting that popped up in some tussocky grassland.

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The drive back to camp felt longer than the drive out, but was enlivened by a loose group of around 15 Amur Falcons hunting from the wires.

The day finished with hot showers, followed by the sound of rain on our ger roofs... followed, for some, by the howling of wolves in the middle of the night.

18th August 2023. Hustai and travel to Gun Galuut

Our last morning in Hustai dawned misty, with the mist burning off rather impressively as we had our breakfast. After saying farewell (twice...) to the ladies of the camp, who had looked after us so well, we started the drive out of the park and back to the paved road. But long before we made it that far, Yumchin spotted a herd of Przewalski's Horses on a nearby hill. Getting out, we eventually found a total of five herds on the various hilltops and ridges around us, numbering around 60 individuals, with a Red Fox, marmots a-plenty, a nicely posing Long-tailed Ground Squirrel and a group of fine Wapiti stags all adding to the vista. Amur Falcons were also a feature of the drive, with around 20 on the wires this morning, hawking for grasshoppers.

Once out of the park, we found a young male Siberian Stonechat on a fence line, before reaching the road and heading to (and through) Ulanbaatar and beyond, travelling ever eastwards. Equally epic in proportions to the journey was the enormous statue of Genghis Khan astride his horse, on the hilltop where, legend has it, he lost his Golden Stick... something which must have had more significance than it sounds! Similarly massive were the mixed flocks of corvids, with several hundred Daurian Jackdaws and Eastern Rooks at the roadside.

Eventually we made it to the town of Baganuur, with its vast coal mine, and struck off to the south, towards the wetlands of Gun Galuut. After so long sitting in the bus, it was good to get out and get back to birding, with a flock of a couple of hundred Pacific Golden Plovers the highlight of our first stop, along with a couple of Spoonbills, a smart adult Spotted Redshank in full sooty summer garb, a handful of Wood Sandpipers and some Ruddy Shelduck. Unfortunately we couldn't get close enough to the more distant pool to check out the various ducks and waders over there... something for tomorrow!

After settling into our impressive camp, on the banks of the river, we headed straight out, binoculars and telescopes primed, to a hillside overlooking a wide expanse of marshy floodplain.

Lapwings were very common out on the grazing marshes, along with smaller numbers of Pacific Golden Plover and Black-tailed Godwit, one or two Curlew, a handful of Pin-tailed Snipe and a couple of Black-winged Stilts. Several Grey Herons were feeding out here and there, but for once they weren't the tallest birds of the swamp: in total we found five family groups of elegant White-naped Cranes, with two pairs having two youngsters each, an impressive feat for a bird that usually has just the one offspring. Out beyond were four Demoiselle Cranes, very dapper birds but overshadowed here by their taller, paler cousins.

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Photos (clockwise, from top left): Saker and Reverdin's Blue (both Hustai NP); White-naped Crane (Gun Galuut); *Orostachys fimbriata* (Hustai NP)

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One of the families of cranes had a bit of a sparring match with a couple of little Corsac Foxes, whose eyes were most definitely bigger than their stomachs.

All too soon our time was up, and it was back to the camp for dinner and a can of Golden Gobi.

19th August 2023. Gun Galuut and Gorkhi-Terelj National Park

An early start had us out exploring the pools and marshes of Gun Galuut, starting at the small marshy pools we had first checked on the way in yesterday, then moving around to two small bare-shored lakes, and ending up at a reedy area of the floodplain marshes: the morning was full of waders and waterfowl.

At our first stop, one from our 'wish list' suddenly appeared in front of us: a single Swan Goose, that seemingly materialised out of nowhere in the middle of a pool: considered Vulnerable, with a rapidly declining global population which breeds in Mongolia and neighbouring areas of Siberia and northern China, wintering in Korea and eastern China, this is one of the major bird targets for the trip.

Sharing the Swan Goose's pool were a couple of Bar-headed Geese, courting pairs of Whooper Swans, Spoonbills and plenty of Ruddy Shelduck, Lapwing, Spotted Redshank and Black-tailed Godwit, amongst others.

At the two round lakes, we found another good variety of waders included Terek Sandpipers, both Temminck's and Red-necked Stints, a solitary Avocet, two each of Grey Plover and Turnstone, both looking rather out of place this far from any coast, and a quartet of wonderful Red-necked Phalaropes, spinning out in the middle of the larger pool.

Grebes included Black-necked Grebes feeding their young, a lone adult Slavonian Grebe just losing his breeding colours, and a couple of Great Crested Grebes.

Wildfowl included a large flock of more than 100 Goldeneye, plenty of Pochard, Tufted Duck, Mallard and Teal, a single female Wigeon and, in the floodplain marshes, a pair of Garganey. The wetlands were also home to a nesting colony of White-winged Black Terns, with plenty of juveniles and adults still around, hawking over the dry hillsides beside us as well as noisily flying about the marshes.

And, of course, there were the cranes, with pairs of White-naped Cranes seemingly on every wetland, stunning statuesque birds, in a beautiful landscape.

Headed back to the camp, we had a late breakfast before hitting the road once more, with some miles to cover before lunch. We headed back to the tarmac, and travelled back westwards, pausing to admire the mixed flocks of Daurian Jackdaws and Eastern Rook at the roadside, before we stopped at the giant hilltop statue of Genghis (or should that be Chinggis) Khan, looking out over the hills on his return to eastern Mongolia, followed by a rather depleted Golden Horde.

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Having taken the obligatory tourist selfies with Genghis and his enormous horse, we continued westwards, to the (very) popular national park of Gorkhi-Terelj, arriving in time for lunch.

Fed and rested, we tripped into the woods, where once we had managed to find our way across the river and escaped the Saturday afternoon crowds, we began to find the birds. A family group of Hawfinches were feeding on small black bird-cherries, while a pair of Olive-backed Pipits chased around the trees. Willow Tit, Great Tit, Nuthatch and Common Treecreeper were all familiar birds from home, but new for us was a Taiga Flycatcher low in the birches, while another flycatcher high in the trees proved to be a Dark-sided Flycatcher, and a tiny Pallas's Warbler hovered nearby, flashing its yellow rump. Mammalian interest came in the form of a cheeky little Siberian Chipmunk, and a couple of confiding Red Squirrels, albeit not red in colour but a dark chocolatey grey with a white belly.

Before too long, it was time to get back to the camp, to try and grab some much-needed sleep before our early start, for the journey west...

20th August 2023. Travelling to Jurgalant

Our morning flight went without a hitch, crossing a time zone along the way, and we arrived in the western city of Khovd, Mongolia's 9th largest city and the 'gateway to the Altai', in time for breakfast in the 'ger district' on the river banks just outside the city. Black-eared Kites circled in their hundreds, along with plenty of Mongolian Gulls, while Sand Martins hawked all around us.

After filling up on coffee, bottles of drinking water for the next week, and fuel for the vehicles, our convoy of land cruisers, piloted ably by Gana, Sindee and Erka headed south, past Khar-Us lake and across the flat plains of Altan Teel towards the southern end of the imposing Jargalant massif, and our camp for the next few days, where we settled in with a hot lunch and hot showers, followed by an amazing fly-past by an adult Lammergeier... welcome to the Jargalant!

Our afternoon explorations were along the valley just behind the camp. A female Common Rock Thrush posed at the start of the walk, with a brief male later on, while both Crag Martin and Eastern House Martin hawked high overhead. Down at the bottom of the valley, flocks of Rock Sparrows were coming down to drink from the stream, and flitting about the rocky valley sides, along with a handful of Grey-necked Buntings and Mongolian Finches, two characteristic species of these arid rocky valleys. Up in the valley sides, a couple of interesting migrants came in the form of a sandy Daurian Shrike, to add to our list of Daurian species, and a Spotted Flycatcher, while the pigeons flying around were all the lovely Hill Pigeon, somehow more 'pretty' than the more familiar Rock Doves that they closely resemble.

And so our longest day came to an end, some 18 hours after it started, and 1129km away from where we began...

21st August 2023. Urdgol birch woodland and Durgun Lake

We started our day with a visit to an area of stunted birch woodland, growing where a spring line emerges from the hills, creating an island of green in the otherwise parched landscape.

Making our way through the trees, we picked up various migrants, stopping off here on their way south: a handful of Greenish Warblers, one or two Lesser Whitethroats, a juvenile Cuckoo and a Bluethroat were chief amongst them, along with a handful of Pin-tailed Snipe springing up from the marshy areas.

Amongst the noisy Black-eared Kites, a trio of Booted Eagles were great to see: a pale morph and a dark morph adult soared overhead, while a smart dark morph juvenile allowed close approach as it sat under a tree with its newly-caught (but unidentifiable, at least for us) meal.

From here, after having filled the vehicles with petrol in the nearby 'town', we struck out across the great flat plains headed towards Durgun Lake. Along the way, we found a handful of mother-and-calf pairs of Mongolia's fastest mammal, the bizarre Mongolian Saiga. Not a great fan of human-kind, the most recent surveys estimated the total population of this critically endangered antelope to number just 5,000 individuals. Very sensibly, as soon as they caught sight of us, most individuals put their heads down and barrelled away across the steppes at speed.

Lunch was taken on the shores of Durgun Lake, while a couple of Dusky Warblers, a pale 'icterops' Common Whitethroat and a gingery Amur Stonechat flicked about in the bushes. An Eastern Marsh Harrier quartering the water's edge was a new bird for us, followed by a juvenile Western Marsh Harrier. Out on the water, literally thousands of Red-crested Pochard were spread out in front of us, alongside smaller numbers of Common Pochard, Coot and Great Crested Grebes, amongst which we found a handful of other familiar ducks: Wigeon, Gadwall, Shoveler, Teal and Mallard.

A noisy pack of 75 Caspian Terns were resting out on a spit, along with a couple of Little Terns and some Common Terns of the Siberian subspecies, with their sooty underparts and dark bills.

Walking along the shore, we began to find interesting waders amongst large numbers of Kentish Plovers: chief prize amongst them was a single Little Whimbrel, alert on the muddy shore, along with Terek Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, a handful of Pacific Golden Plovers and a single Dunlin, the only one of our trip, all stopping off to refuel on their long journey down to their wintering groups along the coasts of south and eastern Asia.

Heading back home, we found our first Pallas's Sandgrouse, a flock of around 20 birds that popped up in front of us as we drove back across the plains.

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Photos (clockwise, from top left). Genghis Khan; Siberian Chipmunk (Gorkhi-Terelj National Park); Tuva Toad-headed Agama and Mongolian Saiga (plains beneath Jargalant)

22nd August 2023. Jargalant: up the Mountain

After some last-minute changes to our plans the night before, an early morning wake up call had us all gathered at the cars at dawn, ready to head 'up the mountain'... Our convoy of vehicles headed onwards and ever upwards, across the kind of terrain that we would never previously have thought it was possible to take a motor vehicle over, along dry river beds, up hillsides, and across mountain plateaus, before we finally arrived in the awe-inspiring scenery of the Jargalant, the spectacular setting for our day of 'scanning' for the grey ghost of the mountains...

Let's be honest, while we checked every grassy ledge, sheer cliff face and shaded rocky corner, we all knew that there was really only one real target for our day up at altitude. But along the way, we found plenty of exciting wildlife to keep us interested.

We started when eagle eyed Lesley spotted a Wolf walking across a distant slope: in fact, a pair of Wolves, which trotted across the hillside before disappearing over the ridge, an amazing start to what promised to be an amazing day.

The valleys were echoing with the curlew-like calls of Altai Snowcock, and we found two groups of these mountain turkeys feeding amongst the steep scree slopes, singing all morning with occasional bouts of courtship. Eyes skyward, we found a single Himalayan Griffon, along with the 'usual' Black Vultures, Golden Eagle, Steppe Eagle and Lammergeier soaring, sometime even below eye level, giving an unexpected view point on these great birds of prey. A brief flurry of passerine activity below us in the morning gave us sightings of Siberian Stonechat, a pair of Brown Accentors and, not long after, two pretty Altai Accentors.

Moving location after lunch, we began to scan a second valley in the afternoon, where the bright white wing-flashes of an adult Gldenstdt's Redstart and a trio of Siberian Ibex were initially the highlights.

And that was when the panics began, as first one and then a second brief sighting of 'the cat' frustrated all but those who first spotted the animal, as they were lost amongst the landscape.

More scanning, plenty of radio messages back and forth between the trackers, speedy horse manoeuvres across the hills, and then a hurried packing of the cars and re-positioning of the assembled watchers had us all waiting in silence, as the trackers worked their magic...

And then, all of a sudden, the early start, the bumpy journey, and the previous frustrations of a long day all melted away, as the various telescopes were trained on a ridge of rocks and a trio of Snow Leopard cubs materialised in front of us, leaving 8 Wildlife Travellers grinning for the next hour, grins that lingered well after we'd made it back down from the mountain to our beds.

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23rd August 2023. Out onto the plains and back up the mountain.

After the excitements of the previous day, we enjoyed a well-deserved lie in, before heading down through the broken hills of the foothills and had a wander across the stony steppe, where we found the characterful Tuva Toad-headed Agama, a trio of Black-tailed Gazelles, some impressive grasshoppers (a chunky, blundering Armoured Ground Cricket *Zichy asp* and the maroon-winged buzzing grasshopper *Bryodema gebleri*) and the lovely pink-flowered *Allium mongolicum*.

The track showed the signs of the overnight rains, with large puddles and mudslides appearing in what was previously a dusty semi-desert.

After lunch, we went back up the mountain, for another bite of the Güldenstädt's Redstart cherry, and to enjoy the superb scenery some more. Along the way, we stopped to view the petroglyphs on the valley-side, ancient drawings of Siberian Ibex and Wapiti carved on the rocks by Altai people some 10,000 years ago. Here we were buzzed by a Saker Falcon.

From the heights, we could see storm clouds gathering from all sides, and before too long we were chased back down to camp level by thunder, lightning and an impressive hail storm.

24th August 2023. Tugrug River and Altan Teel plains

This morning we visited the Khovd Ringing Camp at the Tugrug River. After making our way across the swollen river itself, which was running high following the recent rains up on the mountains, we met the ringing team of Batbayasgalan, Otgonjargal and volunteer Sam from Melton Mowbray... Between them, they told us more about the work they do here, including the grizzly tale of their most recent 'recovery', a Whitethroat ringed here in August 2022 which was caught for food in Yemen in May 2023. We watched the 'processing' of some of the morning's birds, including Isabelline and Brown Shrikes, Lesser Whitethroat, Common Whitethroat, a Greenish Warbler, Tree Pipit, Citrine Wagtail, a young Common Rosefinch, a family group of Greenfinch (by no means a common bird in Mongolia) and a very 'bouncy' Pin-tailed Snipe, with up-close views of the 'pins' that give this bird its name.

After lunch by the river, with Pied Wheatear and Masked Wagtails chasing about and a Western Marsh Harrier passing by, we ventured out onto the plains of the Altan Teel, where we stopped at a small, irrigated 'allotment' of Sea Buckthorn and Water Melon fields, our arrival coinciding with the fly-past of several flocks of Pallas's Sandgrouse, numbering more than 190 birds in total.

Alas, our visit also coincided with the mass emergence of voracious mosquitoes, enjoying the combination of overnight rains and hot weather to form a buzzing plague... We tried our best, finding more Isabelline Shrikes, a calling Greenish Warbler, brief Ortolan Bunting and a young Rose-coloured Starling, as well as flushing Pin-tailed and Common Snipe, Water Pipits and Tree Pipits from the damper corner, but before long we had to admit defeat, and were driven back into the vehicles and back up to our mosquito-free mountain camp

25th August: Jargalant to Khar Us Nuur

We started our day with a pre-breakfast search of the broken hills just beyond the camp, where a trilling call eventually led us to a pair of Mongolian Ground Jays, characterful birds digging around in the tussocks for food, running along the ground and occasionally jumping up onto the top of stunted Caragana bushes to check us, making their way steadily along the valley and out of sight round the corner.

Ground Jays successfully 'in the bag', after breakfast some of us had another wander along the valley behind the camp, where along with the 'usual suspects' of Eastern Black Redstart, Mongolian Finch, Grey-necked Bunting and Rock Sparrows, a Saker Falcon came screeching overhead, a pair of Golden Eagles soared above the head of the valley, single Ortolan Bunting and Common Rosefinch came down to drink at the stream, and best of all, a Sulphur-bellied Warbler was singing from a small bush up on the rocks, flashing his sulphurous underparts.

All too soon, our time at the mountain camp had come to an end, and we packed up, bade sad farewell to the camp team and Soc and his trackers, and headed back down to the plains, and the paved road. After an hour of asphalt, we headed 'off road' again, arriving down at the shores of the enormous Khar-Us Nuur, a lake so big that it inspired questions of when does a lake become an inland sea...

From the birding 'tower', we scanned through the huge flocks of wildfowl visible out on the water beyond the reeds: thousands of Red-crested Pochard and Pochard, hundreds of Gadwall, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Cormorants, Coot and Ruddy Shelduck. Amongst the grazing flocks of Greylag Geese we picked out at least 6 Swan Geese, while other 'goodies' came in the form of around 50 White-headed Ducks out amongst the large flocks, and a single Eastern Spot-billed Duck resting on the shoreline nearby. Western Marsh Harriers quartered the reeds, Common and White-winged Black Terns flew back and forth, and a pack of around 30 Ruff zipped by.

Moving a short way along the shore, we arrived at our lake-side camp: a great location, right on the shore and next to a sheltered bay: alas, the hot weather and overnight rains had released a plague of mosquitoes, which somewhat hampered our enjoyment of the birding...

Nonetheless, the thousands of Pale Sand Martins resting on the powerlines and all around the camp, along with a single Greater Sand-plover in with a flock of Kentish Plovers and a couple of fly-past Pallas's Gulls did their best to distract us from the insect life, as did a juvenile Little Gull which appeared in the bay after dinner, something of a local rarity. But before too long, we were rueing the decision to head down from the mountains, and retired to our gers, where the incense worked wonders at driving the mozzies into remittance.

26th August: from "the lake" to Khovd

Leaving the mosquito-plagued shores of Khar-Us behind, we drove slowly through one last dry rocking gorge, where we disturbed a Hobby, found the now familiar mix of wheatears, and most bizarrely of all,

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a single human skull in a small cave just up from the track... presumably (hopefully!) an ancient burial, rather than a recent addition to the valley!

Back in the 'big city' of Khovd, we first topped up our caffeine levels with an impromptu visit to a surprising coffee shop, with some particularly restorative cake and coffee, before it was time to check in to our memorably-named hotel.

The combination of heat, lack of migrants and anything-but-lack of mosquitos meant that our visits to the Sea Buckthorn plantation along the riverside in the city, and later to an area of small agricultural plots and poplar plantations on the outskirts of Khovd, were less successful than we might have liked, with a single Siberian Stonechat and a handful of Spotted Flycatchers the best we could eek out of the afternoon.

The evening called for a cold beer in the town square, soaking up some of the local night life, before a lantern-lit dinner back at the hotel, after a (brief) neighbourhood-wide black-out.

27th August: Khovd to Ulanbaatar

A travel day, bidding farewell to our trio of drivers in Khovd before our short flight whisked us back to 'UB' and Nasa with his trusty bus.

We were at our hotel in time for lunch, before an afternoon wandering along the approach road, where 'azure' was the colour of choice. We started with a family party of Azure Tits, beautifully frosty cousins of our Blue Tits which initially led us something of a dance, before eventually showing well to everyone. The same small poplar trees were home to a very confiding Grey-headed Woodpecker, while a couple of Amur Falcons hawked in the distance and both Taiga Flycatcher and Greenish Warbler briefly popped up, and a fly-by Collared Dove was new for our trip.

Next on our bluish hit-list was Azure-winged Magpie, and we found a loose party moving through the bushes, the East Asian doppelganger of the related (and perhaps slightly more brightly coloured) birds from southern Iberia.

Happy with our lot, we retired to the hotel gardens for a relaxing beer in the sun, celebrating another successful day.

28th August. Walking to Swan Lake

After a less-than-successful pre-breakfast wander around the gardens, with just a flushed Pin-tailed Snipe and a couple of Dusky Warblers for our efforts, followed by a similarly lack-lustre breakfast of broccoli soup, we set off with Yumchin for a walk out along the river to the nearby local 'nature reserve' at Swan Lake.

But first we had more to find in the immediate surroundings of the hotel. We started with a female Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, calling loudly from one of the poplars, where she eventually showed very

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well, pecking her way through the smaller branches. Another family group of Azure Tits bundled through the willows, along with one each of Dusky Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat and Taiga Flycatcher. Finally, after some gentle nudging from Yumchin, we found another of the area's 'specials', a Long-tailed Rosefinch preening quietly in a willow thicket.

Botanical interest in the area came in the form of big cushions of the golden yellow *Clematis tangutica*, the creamy spikes of *Orostachys spinosa* and the deep blue of Large-flowered Larkspur *Delphinium grandiflorum*.

Making our way away from the hotel, we crossed a bridge over the River Tuul, where a mixed group of Eastern Rook, Daurian Jackdaws and a couple of Red-billed Chough were feeding along the bank. Meanwhile, the ever-present kettles of Black-eared Kites were building up overhead as the day warmed up, their horse-y whinnying so much a part of our travels in Mongolia.

A little further along, on the banks of the river, another flock of Azure Tits came through, this time with a couple of phylloscopus warblers amongst them: an angry Arctic Warbler, followed closely by the more gentle-looking Greenish Warbler. But we were quickly distracted from the Azure Tits by the high-pitched 'tseep'-ing of a family party of White-crowned Penduline Tits, with at least 3 juvenile birds eventually found feeding in the bushes. An eastern counterpart of 'our' Penduline Tit, this species breeds from Kazakhstan across to far eastern Mongolia, moving down to Pakistan and Afghanistan for the winter.

Turning the corner, we made our way through an increasingly 'post-industrial' landscape of former gravel workings and the strangely run-down 'Happy Valley' theme park, before arriving at Swan Lake, where we were greeted by a Black Stork flying low over the water.

Amongst the flock of Tufted Ducks and Gadwall we picked out a single Slavonian Grebe, a male Ferruginous Duck and a female Garganey, while more 'tseep'ing revealed another group of White-crowned Penduline Tits in the reeds, and a juvenile Red-necked Grebe was a surprise, spinning around next to a family of Tufted Ducklings.

Our bus journey back to the hotel took us through the semi-industrial western outskirts of the city, a much more round-about route by road than our morning walk.

29th August. Home

One last early morning, and the bus whisked us along the deserted streets to Chinggis Khaan International Airport, and our flights home, bidding farewell to Yumchin and the big skies, open plains and amazing wildlife of Mongolia.

Philip Precey, Wildlife Travel, August 2023.

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Photos (clockwise, from top left): Ortolan Bunting and Yumchin (Tugrug River); Azure Tit (UB: photo courtesy Alison P); *Clematis tangutica* (UB); Amur Falcon (Hustai NP)

BIRDS

This checklist follows the taxonomy published in the **HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World**, as updated by www.birdsoftheworld.org

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th	25 th	26 th	27 th	28 th
Family Anatidae (Ducks, Geese and Swans)															
Bar-headed Goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>		2		2	2									
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>			H				X			X	X	X		X
Swan Goose	<i>Anser cygnoides</i>					2						X	X		
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>			6	X	X		X				X	X		
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>											X	X		
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>			2	X	X						X	X		X
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>					X									
Mandarin	<i>Aix sponsa</i>					1									
Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>					2									1
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>							X					X		
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>			2				X				X	X		X
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>					1		1				X	X		
Eastern Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>											1			
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				X	X		1				X	X	X	X
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>			10	X	X		5				X	X		
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>							X				X	X		
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya farina</i>					X		X				X	X		
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>												1		1
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>				X	X						X	X		X
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>					X									
White-headed Duck	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>											X	X		
Family Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse and allies)															
Daurian Partridge	<i>Perdix dauurica</i>		10												
Altai Snowcock	<i>Tetraogallus altaicus</i>								10						
Family Podicipedidae (Grebes)															
Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>					1									1
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>					2		X				X	X		X
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>					X									
Family Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)															
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hill Pigeon	<i>Columba rupestris</i>						X	X	X		X	X			
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>													X	X
Family Pteroclididae (Sandgrouse)															
Pallas's Sandgrouse	<i>Syrhaptes paradoxus</i>							X			X				

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ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th	25 th	26 th	27 th	28 th
Family Cuculidae (Cuckoos)															
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>							1							
Family Apodidae (Swifts)															
Pacific Swift	<i>Apus pacificus</i>	X			X										
Family Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules and Coots)															
Brown-cheeked Rail	<i>Rallus indicus</i>							H							
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>							1				3	X		
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>			1		X		X				X	X		
Family Gruidae (Cranes)															
Demoiselle Crane	<i>Anthropoides virgo</i>	2		4	4										
White-naped Crane	<i>Antigone vipio</i>			3	16	6									
Family Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)															
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>				X	X		X							
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>					1									
Family Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)															
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>					2									
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>			X	X	X		X							
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			X	X	X		X				X	X		
Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>											1	3		
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>							X				21	X		
Family Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and allies)															
Little Whimbrel	<i>Numenius minutus</i>							1							
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>				X										
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>				X	X									
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>					2							1		
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>											X	X		
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>			2											
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>			8		6		X			2		1		
Long-toed Stint	<i>Calidris subminuta</i>			1											
Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>			2		1		1							
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>							1							
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>					3		X							
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>										1				
Pin-tailed Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>			2	X	X		X			X				X
Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>			1		8		1							
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>					4									1
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		3	4	X	X					X	X	X		X
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			2	X	X		X			3	X	X		X
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>			6	1	X									
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>				2	1									
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>			2	X	X		X			X				
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa tetanus</i>			1		X									

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ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th	25 th	26 th	27 th	28 th
Family Laridae (Gulls, Terns and Skimmers)															
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>					1		X				X	X		
Pallas's Gull	<i>Ichthyiaetus ichthyiaetus</i>											2	6		
Mongolian Gull	<i>Larus argentatus mongolicus</i>		1			3	X	X				X	X	X	
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>							2							
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>							75				2	X		
White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>				X	X						2	X		
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>				X	X									
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>				X	X		X				X	X		
Family Ciconiidae (Storks)															
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>														1
Family Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)															
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				3	X		X				X	X		X
Family Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets and Bitterns)															
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			2	X	X		X			X	X	X		X
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>				1	1		X				X	X		
Family Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)															
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>				2	3		X					X		
Family Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles and Kites)															
Bearded Vulture	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>						1		3	1					
Black Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
Himalayan Griffon	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>								1						
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>					1		3							
Steppe Eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		4	5	X	1	X		
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>		X						1		1	2			
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>			1				1			1	X	X		
Eastern Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus spilonotus</i>							1							
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>			1											
Black-eared Kite	<i>Milvus migrans lineatus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Upland Buzzard	<i>Buteo hemilasius</i>	2	2	4	X	X		X	X		X				
Family Strigidae (Owls)															
Eurasian Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>								H		H				
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		1		1			1							
Scops Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>														H
Family Upupidae (Hoopoes)															
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		1	1	1			1			2				
Family Picidae (Woodpeckers)															
Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>										1				
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>														X
Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>													1	1

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ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th	25 th	26 th	27 th	28 th
Family Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)															
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>			4											
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X
Amur Falcon	<i>Falco amurensis</i>			12	X	X								X	X
Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>		1			1							1		1
Saker Falcon	<i>Falco cherrug</i>			1						1		1			
Family Laniidae (Shrikes)															
Isabelline Shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>						X	X			X	X	X		
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X				X
Family Corvidae (Crows, Jays and Magpies)															
Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>													10	
Common Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X			X		X	X	X
Mongolian Ground-Jay	<i>Podoces hendersoni</i>											2			
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	X	X	X	X	X			X						X
Daurian Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus dauuricus</i>				X	X									X
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus pastinator</i>				X	X									X
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone orientalis</i>	X		X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Family Paridae (Tits, Chickadees and Titmice)															
Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>					X									
Azure Tit	<i>Cyanistes cyanus</i>													X	X
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>					X								X	X
Family Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)															
White-crowned Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz coronatus</i>														X
Family Alaudidae (Larks)															
Steppe Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris brandti</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		
Mongolian Lark	<i>Melancorypha mongolica</i>	X	X	X	X	X									
Asian Short-toed Lark	<i>Alaudala cheleensis</i>			X	X		X	X		X	X				
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	X		X											
Family Hirundinidae (Swallows)															
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
Pale Martin	<i>Riparia diluta</i>											X	X		
Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>						X	X		X	X	X			
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	X		X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Eastern House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum lagopodum</i>				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Family Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers)															
Pallas's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>					1									
Sulphur-bellied Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus griseolus</i>											1			
Dusky Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>							2			1				X
Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>							X			X			X	1
Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>		1												1

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ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th	25 th	26 th	27 th	28 th
Family Sylviidae (Sylviid Warblers, Parrotbills and allies)															
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>						X	X		X	X		X		X
Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>							X		X	X				
Family Sittidae (Nuthatches)															
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>					X									
Family Certhiidae (Treecreepers)															
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>					X									
Family Sturnidae (Starlings)															
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			1									4		
Rose-coloured Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>										1				
Family Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)															
Dark-sided Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa sibirica</i>					1									
Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	2													
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>						1	X			X		X		X
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>							1					X		
Taiga Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicilla</i>					2								2	2
Güldenstadt's Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus erythrogastrus</i>								2	1					
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>						1		1		X	X	X		
Daurian Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureoreus</i>					4									
Common Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>						2		2		X				
Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>				1			3	1	1	X	1	1		
Amur Stonechat	<i>Saxicola stejnegeri</i>							1							
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>						X				X		X		
Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>		X						X		X	X	X		
Family Prunellidae (Accentors)															
Altai Accentor	<i>Prunella himalayana</i>								2						
Brown Accentor	<i>Prunella fulvescens</i>								2						
Family Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)															
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	X		X	X	X	X	X			X				
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>						X	X		X	X	X			X
White-winged Snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla nivalis</i>								X						
Pere David's Snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla davidiana</i>			X					X						
Family Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)															
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			X	X	X		X			X			X	X
Sykes' Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava beema</i>							X				X	X		
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla tschutschensis</i>	X		X	X	X									
Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X		X
Transbaikal White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba baicalensis</i>				X	X		X						X	X

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ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th	25 th	26 th	27 th	28 th
Masked White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba personata</i>										X		X		
Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>							X				X			
Blyth's Pipit	<i>Anthus godlewskii</i>				X	X									
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>										X				
Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>					2									
Asian Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta blakistoni</i>								X		X				
Family Fringillidae (Finches)															
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>					6									
Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrurus</i>										1	1			
Long-tailed Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus sibiricus</i>														1
Mongolian Finch	<i>Bucanetes mongolicus</i>						2	X			X	X			
Greenfinch											3				
Family Emberizidae (Buntings)															
Meadow Bunting	<i>Emberiza cioides</i>		1												
Grey-necked Bunting	<i>Emberiza buchanani</i>						X	X		X		X	X		
Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>										1	1			
Pallas's Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza pallasii</i>			1											
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>							X							

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MAMMALS

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th	25 th	26 th	27 th	28 th
Vespertilionidae (Vesper Bats)															
Alashanian Pipistrelle	<i>Hypsugo alaschanicus</i>								X						
Family Ochotonidae (Pikas)															
Pallas's Pika	<i>Ochotona pallasii</i>						X	X	X	X	X	X			
Family Leporidae (Hares and Rabbits)															
Tolai Hare	<i>Lepus tolai</i>		1							1		1			
Sciuridae (Squirrels)															
Long-tailed Ground Squirrel	<i>Urocitellus undulatus</i>	X		X	X										
Tarbagan Marmot	<i>Marmota sibirica</i>	X	X	X	X				X	X					
Siberian Chipmunk	<i>Tamias sibiricus</i>					X									
Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>					X									
Cricetidae (Voles and Hamsters)															
Brandt's Vole	<i>Lasiopodomys brandtii</i>			X		X									
Zaisan Mole-Vole	<i>Ellobius tancrei</i>						X								
Muridae (Mice, Rats and Gerbils)															
Mongolian Jird	<i>Meriones unguiculatus</i>			X							X	X			
Family Dipodidae (Jerboas)															
Siberian Jerboa	<i>Oreintallactaga sibirica</i>		1												
Gobi Jerboa	<i>Orientallactaga bullata</i>								1	1					
Hairy-footed Jerboa	<i>Dipus sagitta</i>								1	4					
Canidae (Dogs)															
Grey Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>		2		H				2						
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		3		1				1		D				
Corsac Fox	<i>Vulpes corsac</i>				2	2	1								
Felidae (Cats)															
Snow Leopard	<i>Panthera uncia</i>								3						
Pallas's Cat	<i>Otocolobus manul</i>		1												
Equidae (Horses)															
Przewalski's Horse	<i>Equus przewalskii</i>			8	60										
Cervidae															
Altai Wapiti	<i>Cervus canadensis sibiricus</i>	X	X	X	X										
Bovidae															
Mongolian Saiga	<i>Saiga mongolica</i>							8			1				
Black-tailed Gazelle	<i>Gazella subgutturosa yarkandensis</i>									6	3				
Mongolian Gazelle	<i>Procapra gutturosa</i>	X	X	X	X										
Siberian Ibex	<i>Capra sibirica</i>								4						

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ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NOTES
AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES		
Mongolian Toad	<i>Bufo raddei</i>	One in the Hustai camp (15 th) and several at Lun (17 th)
Siberian Wood Frog	<i>Rana amurensis</i>	Common at Lun (17 th), 1 or 2 at Mongolica (28 th)
Mongolian Racerunner	<i>Eremias argus</i>	The 'normal' lizard, at Hustai, 16 th
Halys Pit Viper	<i>Gloydus halys</i>	Hillside walk, Hustai, 16 th
Steppe Rat Snake	<i>Elaphe dione</i>	Hillside walk, Hustai, 16 th
Tuva Toad-headed Agama	<i>Phrynocephalus kulagini</i>	Durgan Lake, 21 st , Altan Teel 23 rd
LEPIDOPTERA		
Old World Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>	Hustai
Lesser Bath White	<i>Pontia chloridice</i>	Hustai
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	
a Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias sp.</i>	
False Comma	<i>Nymphalis l-album</i>	Gorkhi-Terelj
Indian Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa indica</i>	Hustai & Mongolica
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>	Mongolica
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>	Common, eg Hustai
Dryad	<i>Minois dryas</i>	Hustai
a rock grayling	<i>Hipparchia autonoe</i>	Hustai
Brown Hairstreak	<i>Thecla betulae</i>	Hustai, around the elm trees
Silver-spotted Skipper	<i>Hesperia comma</i>	Hustai
Reverdin's Blue	<i>Plebejus argyrognomon</i>	eg Mongolica
Fischer's Blue	<i>Tongeia fischeri</i>	eg Hustai
an orange underwing moth	<i>Catocala helena</i>	The orange underwing moth around the elm trees, Hustai
MISCELLANY		
a grasshopper	<i>Angaracris barabensis</i>	'minty green' mottled grasshopper, Hustai
an armoured ground cricket	<i>Zichya sp.</i>	the armoured ground cricket, eg Altan Teel
a buzzing grasshopper	<i>Bryodema gebleri subsp mongolicum</i>	The large maroon-underwing grasshopper around Khovd/Jargalant
a buzzing grasshopper	<i>Bryodema tuberculata</i>	The red-underwing grasshopper around Hustai
Banded Darter	<i>Sympetrum pedemontanum</i>	Lun wetlands: small red darter with black wing bands
a longhorn beetle	<i>Polyzonus fasciatus</i>	The red and black banded longhorn, Hustai
Asiatic Bumblebee	<i>Bombus asiaticus</i>	red-tailed, white and black, Jargalant Mountains
Siberian Bumblebee	<i>Bombus sibiricus</i>	yellow and orange bumblebee, Mongolica
Asian Tadpole Shrimp	<i>Triops granarius</i>	Swan Lake puddles

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PLANTS

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH NAME	NOTES
Amaranthaceae		
<i>Grubovia dasyphylla</i>		Furry-leaved shrub, 'desert' plains around Jurgalant
Apiaceae		
<i>Bupleurum bicaule</i>		Fine-leaved, yellow flowers. Hustai
<i>Stenocoelium sp.</i>		Low growing, high altitude, Jargalant
Apocynaceae		
<i>Cynanchum thesioides</i>		Milkweed with large seed pods, 'desert' plains around Jurgalant
Asteraceae		
<i>Artemisia adamsii</i>		Fine-leaved Artemisia on heavily grazed steppe
<i>Artemisia argyi</i>	Chinese Mugwort	eg Hustai
<i>Artemisia macrocephala</i>		large hanging flower heads
<i>Cirsium esculentum</i>		Stemless thistle, eg Tuul River
<i>Echinops latifolius</i>		Globe thistle, eg Gorkhi-Terelj
<i>Heteropappus sp</i>		Purple and yellow daisies, common on steppe
<i>Inula britanica</i>		Yellow 'doronikum'-like daisy, Tuul River
<i>Neopallasia pectinata</i>		Formerly Artemisia, unbranched stems, common on grazed steppe
<i>Parasenecio hastatus</i>		Large spade-shaped leaves in woods at Gorkhi-Terelj
<i>Saussurea schanginiana</i>		Low growing, high altitude, Jargalant
<i>Saussurea cf amara</i>		Purple-flowered saw-wort, eg Hustai
<i>Serratula centaurioides</i>		Tall purple 'knapweed', Hustai
Amaryllidaceae		
<i>Allium mongolicum</i>		Small pink-flowered allium on stony slopes in the west.
<i>Allium polyrhizum</i>		The round-headed allium across the 'desert' plains
Boraginaceae		
<i>Arnebia guttata</i>		Yellow flowers with dark spots, gravel areas around lake camp
<i>Cynoglossum divaricatum</i>		Hound's-tongue, Tuul river
<i>Nonea pulla</i>		Black flowered Nonea, Hustai
Campanulaceae		
<i>Adenophora stenanthina</i>		'blue bells' eg Hustai
Caryophyllaceae		
<i>Dianthus chinensis</i>	Chinese Pink	Hustai, Mongolica
<i>Silene jensiseensis</i>		campion with striped inflated calyx: Hustai
<i>Silene repens</i>		Cream-flowered campion, Mongolica

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SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH NAME	NOTES
Celastraceae		
<i>Parnassia palustris</i>	Grass of Parnassus	Damp areas, Hustai and Mongolica
Convolvulaceae		
<i>Convolvulus ammanii</i>		White-flowered shrubby bindweed, Hustai
<i>Convolvulus chinensis</i>		Pretty pink-flowered bindweed, Hustai
<i>Convolvulus gortschakovii</i>		Pink-flowered shrubby bindweed, Altan Teel plains
<i>Cuscuta chinensis</i>		Yellow dodder, riverside plantation in Khovd
Crassulaceae		
<i>Orostachys spinosa</i>		Creamy flower spikes, Mongolica
<i>Orostachys fimbriata</i>		Pink flower spikes, Hustai
Eleagnaceae		
<i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i>	Sea Buckthorn	
Fabaceae		
<i>Caragana cf pygmaea</i>		Needle-leaved woody bush, Hustai hillsides
<i>Caragana leucophloea</i>		Yellow-stemmed woody bush in the dry valleys around Jurgalant
<i>Gueldenstaedtia monophylla</i>		Glaucous round leaves, Khovd allotments
<i>Lespedeza hedysaroides</i>		Hustai: pink-flecked white flowers, woody
<i>Medicago falcata</i>	Sickle Medick	Yellow pea, Khovd allotments
<i>Medicago ruthenica</i>		Mongolica
<i>Trifolium lupinaster</i>		Bright pink 'clover', Tuul River
Gentianaceae		
<i>Gentiana decumbens</i>		Tall blue gentian on steppe, eg Hustai and Gorkhi-Terelj
<i>Gentiana squarrosa</i>		Tiny pale blue gentian with 'complicated' petals, Urdgol woods
<i>Gentianopsis barbata</i>		Fine-leaved gentian, Mongolica
<i>Halenia corniculata</i>		Strange yellow flower in the woods, Gorkhi-Terelj
<i>Lomatogonium cf carinthiacum</i>		Pale blue gentian with simple petals, Urdgol woods
Geraniaceae		
<i>Geranium pratense</i>	Meadow Crane's-bill	Eg Mongolica
<i>Erodium stephanianum</i>		Deep purple stork's-bill, Hustai campsite
Lamiaceae		
<i>Amethystea caerulea</i>		Tiny blue flowers
<i>Caryopteris mongholica</i>		Fringed blue flowers, eg Hustai
<i>Dracocephalum cf foetidum</i>		Large-flowered Dragonhead, Hustai
<i>Dracocephalum cf moldavicum</i>		Small-flowered Dragonhead, Jargalant
<i>Lagochilus illicifolius</i>		cf sea holly, 'desert' steppes
<i>Leonurus deminitus</i>		Finer 'motherwort', Hustai NP

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SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH NAME	NOTES
<i>Leonurus sibiricus</i>	Siberian Motherwort	Common 'motherwort', Hustai NP
<i>Nepeta lophanthus</i>		Small flowered catmint, Hustai
<i>Phlomis tuberosa</i>		Pink flowered Jerusalem Sage
<i>Phlomis tuberosa</i>	Pink Jerusalem-Sage	Hustai, Tuul River
<i>Scutellaria scordifolia</i>		Mongolica
<i>Stachys palustris</i>	Marsh Woundwort	Mongolica
<i>Thymus gobicus</i>		Thyme, eg at Mongolica
Orobanchaceae		
<i>Odontites ruber</i>	Red Bartsia	Mongolicq
<i>Euphrasia cf tatarica</i>		Tall eyebright
Plantaginaceae		
<i>Linaria acutiloba</i>		Yellow toadflax, eg Hustai and Mongolica
Papaveraceae		
<i>Papaver nudicaule</i>		Large yellow poppy, Mongolica
<i>Papaver cf pseudocanescens</i>		Small yellow poppy, Jargalant
Polygonaceae		
<i>Rheum rhubarb</i>	Wild Rhubarb	eg Hustai
Ranunculaceae		
<i>Clematis tangutica</i>		Golden clematis
<i>Delphinium grandiflorum</i>		Dark blue Larkspur, eg Mongolica
<i>Halerpestes salsuginosa</i>		'Celandine' in damp areas, eg Swan Lake walk
<i>Paeonia anomala</i>		wild peony in the woods, Gorkhi-Terelj
<i>Pulsatilla cf turczaninovii</i>		Pasque flower, Gorkhi-Terelj camp
<i>Thalictrum foetidum</i>		Meadow rue, eg Mongolica
Rosaceae		
<i>Crataegus sanguinea</i>		Red berried bush, Mongolica
<i>Padus asiatica</i>		Black berried bush, Mongolica
<i>Potentilla cf viscosa</i>		tall potentilla, Hustai
<i>Potentilla anserina</i>	Silverweed	eg Khovd allotments
<i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>	Great Burnet	Hustai and UB
Solanceae		
<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i>	Black Henbane	Hustai
Urticaceae		
<i>Urtica cannabina</i>		The fiendish stinging nettle, throughout
Ulmaceae		
<i>Ulmus pumila</i>	Siberian Elm	The small elm tree, eg Hustai tree-lined valleys
Zygophyllaceae		
<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	Devil's Thorn	Yellow-flowers, dry rocky flat areas
<i>Zygophyllum rosovii</i>		Fleshy-leaved, low growing plant around the lake camp



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www.wildlife-travel.co.uk

01954 713575

wildlifetravel@wildlifebcn.org

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