

MONGOLIA

21 MAY – 8 JUNE 2006

TOUR REPORT

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A journey through Mongolia offers not only some superb Palearctic birding, but a real travel experience amidst some of the most spectacular landscapes our planet has to offer. This vast country, with just a few million people in a territory that would swallow Britain, France and Spain combined, is, as the Mongols say, the land without fences. Here you can wander, almost as free as a bird, and pitch camp wherever takes one's fancy, whether amongst the high, snow-capped mountains, in the cool larch forests, out in the wide open steppe or beside a lake in the Gobi Desert. During our two and a half weeks in this marvellous country we recorded 216 bird species, achieving one of our best-ever results. Amongst the many great birds were the endangered Dalmatian Pelican, the surprisingly elegant Swan Goose, Stejneger's Scoter, the increasingly rare Pallas's Fish Eagle, Lammergeier, Japanese and Upland Buzzards, Amur Falcon, the huge Saker Falcon, Hazel Grouse, Willow Ptarmigan, the fantastic Altai Snowcock, Daurian Partridge, the lovely Demoiselle Crane, the beautiful Oriental Plover, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Asian Dowitcher, the rare Relict Gull, Brown-headed and Mongolian Gulls, the enigmatic Pallas's Sandgrouse, Ural Owl, White-backed Woodpecker, Mongolian and Asian Short-toed Larks, Pale Martin, Blyth's Pipit, Brown Accentor, the endemic Kozlov's Accentor, the gorgeous Siberian Rubythroat, White's, Eyebrowed, Naumann's and Red-throated Thrushes, Pallas's Grasshopper, Paddyfield and Thick-billed Warblers, the pretty Azure Tit, the incomparable Wallcreeper, Steppe Grey Shrike, the strange Henderson's Ground Jay, Daurian Jackdaw, Oriental Rook, Oriental Crow, Saxaul Sparrow, Père David's Snowfinch, Mongolian Finch, Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch, and Pine, Godlewski's, Meadow, Grey-necked and Pallas's Reed Buntings. Best of all were the Hodgson's Bushchats we found in the high Hangay! This was the first time we have recorded this rare and seemingly vanishing species on our Mongolian tours! We even saw 20 species of mammal, a good indication of just how wild and unpopulated Mongolia still is.

One could tell the spring was late as our elderly Tupolev 144 slowly descended over the Hangay mountains towards Ulaanbaatar. (I joked that it was the same one I had arrived in during the very first birding tour to the country that I guided way back in May and June 1980, and I think some of the group even believed me!) Down below us, there was thick snow all over the mountains, even at lower altitudes, and not a hint of green, even in the river valleys. But once we emerged at Genghis

Khan International Airport it was very warm indeed, so there was a paradox until our guide explained that this was the first hot day of the year and before this it had been unusually cold.

Even in the city, the poplars and willows were largely leafless, which was most unusual, but that did not stop us enjoying some excellent birding along the Tuul Gol river and later on the largely larch-clad hillsides not far from the city. We enjoyed a very pleasant introduction to the eastern part of Central Asia, finding such birds as Little Ringed Plover, Hill Pigeon, Fork-tailed (or Pacific) Swift, Eurasian Hoopoe, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Baikal Wagtail, a fine male Siberian Rubythroat (the first of many), Daurian Redstart, Isabelline and Pied Wheatears, Two-barred, Arctic and Pallas's Leaf Warblers, Red-billed Chough, Oriental Crow, Common Rosefinch and Little Bunting. Raptors were quite prominent, and as well as the inevitable Black-eared Kites we observed the only Japanese Buzzard of the tour, two Booted Eagles and three Eurasian Hobbies. The highlights of the day were undoubtedly the wonderful views of Azure Tits (they look so soft and fluffy!) and White-crowned Penduline Tits along the Tuul, not to mention the extraordinarily co-operative Whites Thrushes, the superb Pine Buntings and a nice pair of Meadow Buntings.

Next morning we found out why the Hangay had looked so white. It was bitterly cold and even snowing at Ulaanbaatar airport! Strong winds in the Gobi delayed our flight for hours, but the icy conditions meant there was nothing new to find during a short excursion near the airport. Eventually our plane took off and we watched the terrain underneath getting more and more arid, and flatter and flatter, until we were descending to a dusty gravel strip at Dalanzadgad. We were in the Gobi Desert!

It was a bit warmer here, and we were greeted at the airport by an ultra-tame Little Bunting that one could almost touch and a Dusky Warbler that struggled to hide amongst the airport bushes. From the god-forsaken township at Dalanzadgad (if people in run-down towns in Europe think they have it bad, they should see Mongolian townships!), we headed out across the Gobi towards the distant ridges of the Gobi Altai mountains. As we neared the mountains the amount of vegetation increased and after first coming across a pair of Greater Sand Plovers and our first Horned Larks, suddenly there above us was a displaying Oriental Plover! We stopped and found out that a pair was present, and enjoyed superb scope views of this elegant wader. The high-speed wavering display flight of the male, ending in a sudden plunge to earth, is quite something to see. Eventually we entered Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park and made our way to the vicinity of Yolyn Am, the Valley of the Lammergeier. Anxious to start our exploration, we left our obliging camp crew to erect all the tents and headed off for the spectacular gorge, where huge rock walls hem in a narrow defile through the mountains. In spite of the cold weather we found a good number of resident birds and migrants, including Olive-backed and Water Pipits, a fine male Citrine Wagtail, Brown Accentor, Black Redstart, Red-throated Thrush, Red-throated Flycatcher, Brown Shrike, White-winged Snowfinch, Twite and Godlewski's Bunting, plus a lot of very amusing little Pallas's Pikas. We did manage to see a distant Wallcreeper, but had to hope for better things to come. High up on the dramatic cliffs, a number of Eurasian Griffon Vultures were roosting, as were a fine pair of Golden Eagles, while overhead two adult Lammergeiers sailed by and a total of 28 Crested (or Oriental) Honey Buzzards headed northwards towards the Siberian taiga.

Next morning we were off before dawn to ascend to the high ridges. A new route had been charted the previous day and this turned out to be much easier than the original, so quite soon the entire group were up 'on top of the world' enjoying the fantastic views over the wild ridges of the Gobi Altai. A couple of Altai Snowcocks made a fast getaway as we arrived at the summit, but after we walked further we came across two more, one of which gave fantastic prolonged scope views as it whistled away like some strange curlew. Marvellous! Other birds were active in the morning sunshine, including Eurasian Crag Martin, Alpine Accentor, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush and no less than five Wallcreepers! A couple of Sakers were watched, including one perched in the sunlight on a crag, and Upland Buzzards were also out looking for prey, while as the air warmed both Eurasian

Griffon and Himalayan Griffon Vultures soared past right in front of us. Even the Siberian Ibexes put on a great performance, with some fine males showing off their huge curved horns. After descending for a well earned lunch, we visited another valley, where a migrant Pintail Snipe was flushed from a stream and later watched through the scopes, and where a very brightly coloured male House Sparrow appeared to be an out-of-range example of the migratory form *bactrianus*. The endemic Kozlov's Accentor had proved a pain all day, with poor views on several occasions, but by evening some of us had seen the species well.

After a final exploration of the Gobi Altai, during which we finally tracked down some Chinese Beautiful Rosefinches and also came across some ultra-cooperative Kozlov's Accentors and a total of seven Pallas's Reed Buntings, including two smart males, we left the mountains behind and headed out across the endless plains of the Gobi, where some huge Eurasian Black Vultures and eight Mongolian Gazelles were a pleasant treat. We broke the journey to the saxaul forest at a tourist camp, consisting mostly of gers (yurts), where, in spite of the decidedly unhelpful 'manager', we had a great time tracking down the many migrants attracted by the patches of trees. Dusky Warblers and a number of other 'phylloscs' were literally everywhere and we also found small numbers of Dark-sided and Asian Brown Flycatchers, as well as plenty of Red-throated. The passerine migrants had clearly attracted a couple of migrant Japanese Sparrowhawks, which gave some great views, while a male Lesser Kestrel rested on the telephone lines. Other new birds included a couple of Oriental Turtle Doves and our first Desert Wheatears. Even a lone Pallas's Sandgrouse flew over, harbinger of many more to come. Eventually we reached the saxaul 'forest' (even the largest of these attractively gnarled 'trees' were little more than large bushes) and walked through the scrub towards our camp. (The latter was situated at the foot of some spectacular red cliffs where many dinosaur bones have been discovered.) Sadly the long drought seems to have done for the Henderson's Ground Jays that were once quite easy to find here, but other species still survive and the area attracts many migrants. We managed to find Eurasian Wryneck, Asian Short-toed Lark, Richards Pipit, some splendid little Asian Desert Warblers and some smart Isabelline and Steppe Grey Shrikes, as well as a couple of Goitred Gazelles.

We had failed to find any Saxaul Sparrows yesterday, so early this morning we tried a new route and were finally rewarded with a pair. This species seems to have suffered from the long drought and is nowadays barely hanging on at this locality. We also saw the first of many Ruddy Shelducks, obtained some good views of Pallas's Sandgrouse and found a migrant male Black-faced Bunting. After a late breakfast a long drive across the Mongolian Gobi's infamous 'roads' commenced. The scenery, with the endlessly changing desert in the foreground and the spectacular ranges of the Gobi Altai in the background was very impressive, but at times the route virtually disappeared and it was amazing how our drivers and guide could mostly work out which of the countless faint tracks to take, and we only got stuck in the sand once! Eventually, after coming across two Eastern Grey-headed Wagtails following some Bactrian camels across the steppe, we reached our campsite not far short of the marshes at Shar Burd.

Shar Burd was the first Mongolian wetland that we visited and, as always when there is water in the Gobi, was rich in species. A Black-necked Grebe in summer plumage here was nothing special, but a Horned Grebe in similar garb most definitely was (this was the first time we have recorded this species in Mongolia, and we were to see another 12 later in the trip). Huge Whooper Swans were nesting in the marsh, and other new waterbirds included Greylag Goose, the very handsome Bar-headed Goose, Garganey, the superb Demoiselle Crane (the first of many encounters with this evocative species, some at very close range indeed), Pied Avocet, Kentish Plover, Spotted Redshank and many beautiful White-winged Terns. A male Common Reed Bunting (of the form *pyrrhuloides*, perhaps deserving specific status as Thick-billed Reed Warbler) was another first time record for our Mongolia tours. From Shar Burd we continued westwards, finding our first Rock Sparrows and Mongolian Finches at another god-forsaken township and once again pitching camp in the middle of nowhere.

At last we found them! After much searching we finally tracked down the strange and wonderful Henderson's Ground Jay in one of the many bushy areas in the Gobi that all seem identical, but which must differ enough for the ground jays to favour some and not others. Two pairs were located and one of the birds gave repeated views, eventually allowing for some nice photographic opportunities. We even watched it calling from the bush tops, as well as flying along exhibiting its striking wing pattern. After all the excitement we could forget our worries and make our way to Boon Tsagaan Nuur, the last great lake in the Mongolian Gobi, and set up camp.

Boon Tsagaan is a fantastic place, full of waterbirds, and with a wonderful scenic backdrop of the Gobi Altai mountains. And we mostly had it all to ourselves. However, this was my windiest ever visit, and we could see why the Mongol name 'All-White Lake' is so appropriate from the fact the number of whitecaps on the lake soon made it live up to the description. After a pleasantly quiet first few hours the wind strength rose so much in the evening and through the night that we thought the tents might blow away (indeed the toilet tent decided it would!) and by the next morning it was hard to walk into the wind, although after that the wind did gradually moderate.

Along the shore not far from the camp on our first afternoon we found an adult Dalmatian Pelican, a rare and endangered species in Mongolia as elsewhere, as well as a large flock of Eurasian Spoonbills, a series of handsome Swan Geese (as usual they were common at the lake, in spite of being uncommon and endangered globally), some fine adult Pallas's Gulls, and many Mongolian Gulls, Gull-billed Terns and Caspian Terns. Not far away, a small lake with a reedbed produced Great Egret, some very smart Red-crested Pochards, a 'redhead' Smew and three Paddyfield Warblers.

After a wild walk near camp next morning (just as well we didn't have to walk upwind!), with Temminck's Stint and Ruddy Turnstone in breeding plumage, plus a juvenile Dalmatian Pelican alongside the adult, we returned to the small lake and this time found some excellent species, including a young Pallas's Fish Eagle, a superbly obliging Asian Dowitcher, a first-summer Brown-headed Gull and six smart adult Relict Gulls, which we later tracked down at the main lake and scoped. Other birds in the area included an immature male Hen Harrier (probably a late migrant), some beautiful Black Terns and a single Whiskered Tern, Pale Martin, a lone Rosy Starling and a female Yellow-breasted Bunting. In the afternoon we checked out another section of the lake where a pair of Common Cranes was still accompanied by last year's fully grown juvenile and where we found a magical selection of waders, many in full breeding plumage, including Black-winged Stilt, Mongolian and Grey (or Black-bellied) Plovers, Sanderling, Little and Long-toed Stints, Dunlin (a rarity in Mongolia) and Broad-billed Sandpiper (two gave extraordinary close-up looks). Another adult Relict Gull gave good views, as did two more Whiskered Terns, and amongst the passerines we located three more Yellow-breasted Buntings and five Pallas's Reed Buntings.

After our crossing of the Gobi plains it was time to return to the mountains, this time the high Hangay to the north. The journey from the lake was a long one, on the usual 'roads', but our first Steppe Eagle and some spectacular Mongolian Larks were seen en route and eventually we reached our goal, the high peaks of this wild range. After a thrillingly wide and deep river crossing, where we had the camp truck pull our tough little Russian minibuses across, just in case of any problems, the rain turned to very unseasonable snow (yes even the valley floor was covered!) as we reached the head of one of the many high altitude valleys and pitched camp. No doubt some of us were wondering just why we had come to this wild place at the ends of the earth, indeed this was so unlike the usual Mongolian weather at the very end of May that I was beginning to wonder myself!

By the morning the snow lay deep all around us, or even on top of our tents, so only Keith and I were crazy enough to want to explore, finding some Altai Snowcocks and a migrant Bluethroat trying to find some cover along the river bank, but no sign of the much-desired Hodgson's (or White-throated)

Bushchat. We beat a retreat down the valley as the air warmed and the snow began to melt rapidly, so by the time we reached the next valley all was clear once more. Here we headed upstream until the road expired, and made a new camp. Would we be more fortunate in this valley?

Things were far easier now, without any snow cover, and our first exploratory hike through the uplands produced a series of Willow Ptarmigan, flushed from the ubiquitous dwarf willows, but still no sign of the rare bushchat. Time was running out, so I elected to miss dinner and pressed on to explore more of the valley. And finally, after more kilometres, I found a pair on a rocky slope! Yippee! This was more like it. They seemed to be in residence, so I left my scope behind in order to speed things up and headed back to camp, arriving just as darkness fell, only to learn that Graham had found another pair on his way back to camp! Two pairs of the little-known and rarely-seen Hodgson's Bushchats in a single day, now that was quite encouraging!

Next morning the snow was back, but only lightly, and Altai Snowcocks gave marvellous views as they scampered about on the crags just above our tents. After that we set off for my Hodgson's site, as Graham's was well above the valley floor, and eventually we were all getting fabulous views of these big, bright *Saxicola* species and even comparing them with a comparatively small and dowdy pair of Siberian Stonechats! A sudden rasping call from the rocks revealed a male Daurian Partridge, watching all the fascinating goings on below.

After this triumph it was all downhill for us, literally. After retreating from the highest altitudes we stopped for a fine pair of Stejneger's Scoters and later for a fine male Merlin and some perky Père David's Snowfinches, which showed their usual trick of disappearing down a pika burrow the instant ones takes ones eyes off them. After driving to a new area, we explored some larch forest, a rarity in these parts, where Hume's Leaf Warblers had newly arrived on territory and where the nearby junipers hosted Ortolan Buntings and display-fighting Blyth's Pipits the following morning.

From the high Hangay we returned to the edge of the Gobi, camping by a wild river the first night where we failed to lay eyes on the Eurasian Eagle-Owl that was calling from the rocks, but where we did find some nice Grey-necked Buntings and some very photogenic Bar-headed Geese that were nesting on the cliff-faces. At Bayanhongor we stopped at some willows alongside the Tuyn Gol where a fine female Naumann's Thrush obliged with good views, as did several Thick-billed Warblers, and some of the group saw a Black Stork overhead, although the latter was eclipsed by another Black Stork that we found nesting right beside the road! We camped near the town of Arvayheer.

Next morning the reason for an Oriental Plover exhibiting distraction display as we pitched camp was revealed when a female was seen escorting two small chicks across the nearby steppe, and three males and a second female were also seen. Heading northwest now, we stopped off (well, it was a kind of compulsory stop too as one of the minibuses broke down temporarily) at Sangiyn Dalai Nuur, a lovely steppe lake where we found a beautiful pair of Black-throated Divers nesting on an islet, no less than 12 more Horned Grebes, an impressive congregation of 90 Whooper Swans, 12 more Stejneger's Scoters, three more Asian Dowitchers, a couple of Wood Sandpipers and some Black-tailed Godwits of the eastern form *melanuroides* (which may represent a distinct species, Eastern Black-tailed Godwit), as well as lots of Mongolian and a few Greater Short-toed Larks. Best of all were the very obliging Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers that we found creeping about in the very short marshy vegetation. Unable to hide, they gave fantastic views. After that it was time to reveal a nice surprise in the form of an unexpected overnight in Ulaanbaatar, with real beds and hot showers. The only downside was the fact it was still many hours to go to the city. but at least some sections of the road were in good condition.

Refreshed by our hotel stay, we were eager to explore some real forest, in complete contrast to the open steppe, mountains and deserts further south. Our first explorations at the Tuul Gol, on our way to Terelj, turned up some nice birds, including Daurian Jackdaw (of both plumage types), White-

cheeked Starling and a very obliging Hawfinch, while a return visit produced marvellous views of a nesting pair of White-backed Woodpeckers.

I could hardly believe how many tourist camps were springing up along the road to Terelj, where once there were none, and at Terelj itself even a golf course was under construction. Not great improvements, but at least there was plenty of wild country left, away from the roads. From our campsite high above the Terelj Gol we could see a panorama of forested mountains in all directions.

The very late spring and cold weather did not make birding in the Terelj taiga any easier, as few birds were active and there was little song. Even so, our first afternoon's walk produced one of the best sightings of the tour. Tsegi, our translator, had decided to accompany us and, partway through the walk, told me she had seen a pale grey bird fly up into the forest. Not thinking anything of this at the time, it was only when she later explained that it had been a big pale grey bird that I became excited. We searched the spot and after 10 minutes we had a magnificent Ural Owl watching us, and later another adult and a large fledged, but still downy, juvenile staring back at us as watched them in the scope. Simply magic! Other birds that we found during our walks at Terelj included several Hazel Grouse, some very obliging Black Woodpeckers, Eyebrowed Thrush, Yellow-browed Warbler and, for Henning, a male Siberian Blue Robin. On the other hand, it was clearly too early this time for Chinese Bush Warbler as there was no ground cover at all and not a sign of one.

I had put off the hike up 'Capercaillie Mountain' until our last day at Terelj, as there had been steady rain early yesterday, and luckily it was clear and dry for our ascent. A new route proved easier than the old and, after setting out before dawn, we were relatively quickly up on the flattish summit ridge and searching for our quarry. Nancy proved an extraordinary example to us all, getting up there in spite of being in her 80s! We searched for hours, but Orni refused to smile on us, sending only some Spotted Nutcrackers, a lot of Northern Red-flanked Bluetails and a very fearless Stoat. After so much effort it was a real disappointment to dip on this elusive bird, but eventually we had to descend. But we still had a grand finale in store, for following up on a tip-off we set out for a marshy spot in the Ulaanbaatar region from where White-naped Crane had been recorded, well to the west of the normal breeding area. After we crossed a wide expanse of steppe we finally found the spot, with only a few kilometres wasted trying to find the correct track, and there we were, watching an adult White-naped Crane in the scope, not to mention Oriental Rooks nearby and a nice Amur Falcon on the way back to the city! A great end to a remarkable journey through one of the wildest countries left on Earth.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

GAVIIDAE

Black-throated Loon (Black-throated Diver) *Gavia arctica*: Wonderful views of two nesting birds in pristine breeding plumage at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.

PODICIPEDIDAE

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: Common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we recorded up to 70 in a day. Elsewhere, 10 at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.

Black-necked Grebe (Eared Grebe) *Podiceps nigricollis*: Singles in breeding plumage at Shar Burd and Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Horned Grebe (Slavonian Grebe) *Podiceps auritus*: Finding one in breeding plumage at Shar Burd and then 12 more at Sangiyn Dalai Nuur was a big surprise. This was the first time we have recorded the species on this tour.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: Numerous at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we recorded up to 150 in a day.

PELECANIDAE

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*: Two (an adult and a juvenile) at Boon Tsagaan Nuur. This is an endangered species, breeding in Mongolia in small numbers.

ARDEIDAE

Great Egret *Egretta alba*: Small numbers at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and one at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we observed up to 33 in a day. Scattered records of up to six elsewhere.

CICONIIDAE

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*: Finding one of these prehistoric-looking birds nesting by the roadside in the Bayanhongor region came as a surprise. Another individual was seen over the Tuyn at Bayanhongor by some group members.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: Common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we recorded up to 44 in a day.

ANATIDAE

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*: A splendid concentration of 90 at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur. Elsewhere, small or moderate numbers at Shar Burd and Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides*: Fairly common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we recorded up to 20 in a day. In addition, one at Shar Burd and two for Keith at a small lake between there and Boon Tsagaan. This species only breeds in Russia, Mongolia and China, wintering in Korea and central/eastern China. The world population stands at 30–50,000 birds and is rapidly declining as a result of habitat loss and unsustainable levels of hunting and so the species is now considered endangered.

- Greylag Goose *Anser anser*: Common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we recorded up to 32 in a day, and four at Shar Burd. Birds here are of the eastern form *rubrirostris*.
- Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*: Fairly widespread and sometimes common from Shar Burd onwards, being found along river valleys as well as at lakes and marshes, with up to 25 recorded in a day. It was interesting to see pairs perched on cliff faces, where they nest out of reach of mammalian predators.
- Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*: Easily the most widespread and vociferous duck in Mongolia, occurring in almost all habitats apart from true desert. Even tiny pools in the middle of nowhere held a honking pair. Locally common, our maximum was 28 in a day at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.
- Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*: Common at Shar Burd and Boon Tsagaan Nuur, with a maximum of 65 at the latter. Also six at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.
- Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*: Common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we recorded up to 60 in a day, and small numbers at Shar Burd and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.
- Gadwall *Anas strepera*: Common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we recorded up to 34 in a day, and small numbers at Shar Burd and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.
- Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*: Seven at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and four at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.
- Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*: Small numbers at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and in the Hangay, and 25 at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.
- Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*: Small numbers at Shar Burd, Boon Tsagaan Nuur and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.
- Garganey *Anas querquedula*: Small numbers at Shar Burd, Boon Tsagaan Nuur and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.
- Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*: Small to moderate numbers at Shar Burd, Boon Tsagaan Nuur and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur, with a maximum of 20 at the latter.
- Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*: This exquisite duck was very common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we recorded up to 110 in a day. The males are really extremely handsome.
- Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*: Small numbers at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and 50 at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.
- Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*: Common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur, with a maximum of 60 at the latter. Elsewhere, eight at Shar Burd.
- Stejneger's Scoter *Melanitta stejnegeri*: A nice pair of these very distinctive ducks along a river in the Hangay and 12 on Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.
- Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*: Small numbers at Shar Burd, Boon Tsagaan Nuur and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur, In addition, one along the Tuul Gol near Terelj.
- Smew *Mergellus albellus*: Two sightings of a 'redhead' at Boon Tsagaan Nuur most probably referred to the same individual.
- Goosander (Common Merganser) *Mergus merganser*: Regular sightings of up to eight, both along rivers and at lakes.

ACCIPITRIDAE

- Crested Honey Buzzard (Oriental Honey Buzzard) *Pernis ptilorhynchus*: 28 were watched migrating northwards over the Gobi Altai and we had singles at the Gobi tourist camp and at the Tuul Gol near Terelj.
- Black-eared Kite *Milvus lineatus*: Widespread and locally quite common (but unrecorded in the Gobi Altai).
- Pallas's Fish Eagle (Pallas's Sea Eagle) *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*: Two sightings of single juveniles at Boon Tsagaan Nuur. The world population is now likely to be only a few thousand individuals at best (it could be much lower) and the species should be treated as endangered (the last BirdLife International review rated it only as vulnerable, but based

on my recent experiences in Asia this is way too optimistic!). This is one of the birds named after Peter Simon Pallas, a German doctor and scientist, who was invited by Catherine II to become professor at the Academy of Sciences at St Petersburg. He organised a six year long expedition through central Russia, which reached Transbaikalia and the border of Mongolia. He was one of the greatest of all eighteenth century naturalists.

- Lammergeier (Bearded Vulture) *Gypaetus barbatus*: This spectacular raptor was regularly observed in the Gobi Altai and in the Hangay. Both adult and immature birds were seen, often gliding over at close range. Maximum count 5 in a day in the Gobi Altai.
- Eurasian Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*: Up to 10 in the Gobi Altai, where they may perhaps have spread recently following the long drought in Mongolia, and in addition a single near Arvayheer.
- Himalayan Griffon Vulture *Gyps himalayensis*: Small numbers in the Gobi Altai and a few in the Hangay.
- Eurasian Black Vulture (Cinereous Vulture, Monk Vulture) *Aegypius monachus*: This huge vulture is still widespread and not uncommon in Mongolia, where our maximum count of 10 together came from the Hangay.
- Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*: Excellent views of an immature male at Boon Tsagaan Nuur. Presumably a lingering migrant, as they do not breed in the area.
- Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis*: Two migrants at the Gobi tourist camp were obviously stopping off to feed on the many migrant passerines in the trees here. They would be on their way to breeding grounds in the rich mixed forests of southern Siberia.
- Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: One for Mark at Terelj was the sole sighting.
- Japanese Buzzard *Buteo japonicus*: One near Ulaanbaatar was our only observation.
- Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*: A regularly encountered and distinctive raptor, being recorded from the Gobi Altai to the Hangay and the steppes to the west, but only in small numbers and records were rather patchy. We saw occasional potentially confusing dark morph individuals as well as more typical individuals. Seems to have declined in numbers, very probably due to the combined effects of a long drought and some severe winters.
- Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*: A total of four in the Hangay and two at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur. Clearly in decline, a situation mirrored by their obvious diminution as a winter visitor in India.
- Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*: Regular observations of this striking bird of prey in the Gobi Altai and in the Hangay.
- Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus*: Small numbers in the Ulaanbaatar region (including Terelj).

FALCONIDAE

- Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*: A nice male on the wires at the Gobi tourist camp was obviously on migration to its breeding grounds in eastern Mongolia or northeast China. It's a long way from Southern Africa to Northeast Asia!
- Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: Scattered sightings of ones and twos.
- Amur Falcon (Eastern Red-footed Falcon) *Falco amurensis*: A subadult male in the Ulaanbaatar region. This social bird of prey is named after the Amur river of Eastern Siberia and is famous for its amazing migrations over the Indian Ocean to and from its wintering haunts in southern central Africa, where roosts of several thousand birds are known.
- Merlin *Falco columbarius*: We all saw a very nice male in the Hangay and later that day Henning saw another.
- Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: Three showed well on our first afternoon near Ulaanbaatar.
- Saker Falcon (Saker) *Falco cherrug*: We had a total of eight of these powerful raptors, with scattered records from the Gobi Altai and from the Hangay and its environs. This fantastic raptor was well appreciated,, but appears to be in decline. There has been a lot of discussion

about Saker Falcons in Mongolia lately, as the government has allowed the export of 300+ Falcons a year to Arabian countries. Mongolian ornithologists have estimated that the population stands at only 3-4,000 birds (c1600 nests), which definitely could not survive this massive depletion. Biologists of the Ministry of Environment on the other hand estimate a rosy population figure of over 6500 birds and state that it can easily survive this capture. But the fact that Arabian sponsoring is involved makes this all look very, very fishy!!! The illegal trapping of Sakers is another sad fact. A single bird may fetch a price of up to \$2500 in a country where the monthly average wage is less than 100\$. Cherrug is derived from the Hindi word *charg* for the female Saker. The tiercel (male) is known as *chargela*.

TETRAONIDAE

Hazel Grouse *Bonasa bonasia*: Henning initially found a pair in the hills at Terelj and then Mark, Keith and Graham came across a fine male.

Willow Ptarmigan (Willow Grouse) *Lagopus lagopus*: A total of 10 birds, mostly flushed from dwarf willow vegetation in the Hangay, whilst we were searching for Hodgson's Bushchat.

PHASIANIDAE

Altai Snowcock *Tetraogallus altaicus*: A total of four on our 'snowcock hike' in the Gobi Altai and ten two seen and two others heard at our first campsite in the high Hangay and no less than nine individuals in the vicinity of our second camp! In the Gobi Altai we had fantastic scope views of one emitting its curlew-like whistling calls, and then in the Hangay the views were even better! This species is heavily hunted in Mongolia, because of its supposed medicinal powers. The total population is estimated at 50-150,000 individuals and is probably slowly declining. The distinctive Palearctic genus *Tetraogallus* consists of five closely-related species, which all occur in remote and steep mountainous areas and are all highly-desired by Palearctic birding enthusiasts.

Daurian Partridge *Perdix dauurica*: We found a total of three in the Hangay and had great looks at a calling male above the pair of Hodgson's Bushchats! The bird is named after Dauria or Dahuria, in ancient times the name for the area encompassing parts of eastern Mongolia and the Chinese province of Heilongjiang.

RALLIDAE

Eurasian Coot (Common Coot) *Fulica atra*: Small or moderate numbers at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.

GRUIDAE

Common Crane *Grus grus*: A pair with a fully grown young bird (born the previous year) were present at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

White-naped Crane *Grus vipio*: An adult on our last day in the steppes of the Ulaanbaatar region was an unexpected treat.

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo*: This graceful bird was widespread and locally common over most of our route, being found in grasslands from the northern edge of the Gobi onwards. Our highest count was 70 in a day and some of the views from the vehicles were absolutely fantastic, as the birds seemed almost oblivious if we kept inside. The world population is currently estimated at 200,000-240,000 birds. Mongolian birds winter in India.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: Three at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where one was incubating on a nest.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*: Fairly common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we recorded up to 25 in a day, and small numbers at Shar Burd and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.

CHARADRIIDAE

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: Quite widespread in small numbers, occurring along rivers as well as at lakes.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*: Common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we recorded up to 40 in a day. Elsewhere, small numbers at Shar Burd and other small Gobi wetlands, and at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.

Mongolian Plover (Mongolian Sand Plover) *Charadrius mongolus*: Two sightings of singles in breeding plumage at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaulti*: Not often met with this time. We had two between Dalanzadgad and the Gobi Altai, one at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and a nice pair as we headed from the lake to the Hangay. The species is named after Jean Baptiste Leschenault de la Tour (1773-1826), French botanist and collector in Australia, Java and India.

Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus*: A truly marvellous and much-wanted bird. We found a pair of these handsome plovers on the plain bordering the Gobi Altai, where we admired its bizarre and magnificent display flight, and later Graham saw another in a different part of this area. Later we found a total of seven, including a female with two chicks, in the steppes of the Arvayheer region. The species only breeds in southern Siberia, Mongolia and north-eastern China and winters in north-western and north-central Australia. The total population is estimated at 44,000 birds.

Grey Plover (Black-bellied Plover) *Pluvialis squatarola*: One at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*: Small numbers at Shar Burd, Boon Tsagaan Nuur and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur. Elsewhere, singles in the Bayanhongor and Ulaanbaatar regions.

SCOLOPACIDAE

Sanderling *Calidris alba*: One in breeding plumage at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*: 25 at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and six at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*: A total of 13 at Boon Tsagaan Nuur. Coenraad Jacob Temminck (1778-1858) was a Dutch ornithologist and the first director of the famous Leiden Natural History Museum.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*: Six of these lovely little birds, that recall a dainty version of a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and a single at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*: Two at Boon Tsagaan Nuur were, surprisingly, the first we have recorded in Mongolia.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*: Fantastic views of two at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*: Three at Sangiyn Dalai Nuur.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*: Small numbers at Shar Burd, Boon Tsagaan Nuur and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur.

Pintail Snipe (Pin-tailed Snipe) *Gallinago stenura*: One, obviously on migration, was flushed and watched on the ground at a valley in the Gobi Altai.

Asian Dowitcher (Asiatic Dowitcher) *Limnodromus semipalmatus*: Wonderful views on one at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and then three more at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur. Recent work in Indonesia (mostly in Sumatra) has shown that the world population comprises at least 20,000 birds.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*: Five at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur were of the eastern form *melanuroides*, which may represent a distinct species (Eastern Black-tailed Godwit).

- Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*: A single at Shar Burd. In addition, one seen by Chris, Keith and Henning in the Hangay.
- Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*: Small numbers at Shar Burd, Boon Tsagaan Nuur and Sangiyn Dalay Nuur, and in the Hangay.
- Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Singles at Shar Burd and Boon Tsagaan Nuur.
- Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*: Two at a tiny pool on the plains beyond the Gobi Altai.
- Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: Just two, at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur. Its Russian name, Fifi, is onomatopoeic.
- Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: Scattered sightings of small numbers. Most common in the Hangay.
- Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: A total of three in immaculate breeding plumage at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

LARIDAE

- Pallas's Gull (Great Black-headed Gull) *Larus ichthyaetus*: Small numbers of these impressive gulls at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.
- Relict Gull *Larus relictus*: We counted a total of seven adult birds at Boon Tsagaan Nuur. The birds were reasonably approachable and allowed us to study and admire them at reasonably close range. Good views were enjoyed by all. No colonies were found this year and the dry conditions made it likely that there were none. The world population estimate varies between 2,500 and 10,000 birds and is declining as a result of predation, disturbance, variable climatic factors at breeding colonies and the development of coastal wetlands in its presumed wintering range. It only breeds in eastern Kazakhstan (two localities), Russia (one locality), China (one or two localities) and Mongolia (several localities). The species is treated as Vulnerable in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future of the birds on our planet. It was originally described as a race of Mediterranean Gull, known from one specimen, then suspected of being an aberrant Brown-headed Gull or a hybrid Brown-headed x Pallas's Gull. But since breeding colonies were found in 1970 (only!) it has now been universally accepted as a distinct species.
- Black-headed Gull (Common Black-headed Gull) *Larus ridibundus*: Fairly common at Shar Burd and Boon Tsagaan Nuur.
- Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*: One in first-summer plumage at Boon Tsagaan Nuur. The Mongolian Gobi is at the northernmost limits of the range.
- Mongolian Gull *Larus mongolicus*: Very common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and its vicinity, where we recorded up to 82 in a day. Also recorded in small or moderate numbers in the Hangay and its environs. The form *mongolicus* is now often treated as specifically distinct, but alternatively it is treated as belonging with Vega or East Siberian Gull *Larus vegae*, or with Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*. Adult *mongolicus* are quite variable, with either yellow or pink legs and with either one and two mirrors in the wing. Even the colour of the mantle varies quite noticeably. This is a very tricky form to make definitive pronouncements on!

STERNIDAE

- Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*: Up to 10 at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.
- Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*: This impressive species was common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, with up to 50 recorded in a day.
- Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Widespread, mostly in small numbers, but very common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur, where we recorded up to 100 in a day. Absent from the Gobi Altai and surroundings, however. The birds seen were quite variable with some obviously

belonging to the race *longipennis*, with totally black bill and greyer plumage, compared to European birds. Others looked like the nominate form or showed intermediate characteristics.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*: Up to eight at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*: Excellent views of three adults in breeding plumage amongst the many White-winged Terns at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*: Six of these elegant migrants at Boon Tsagaan Nuur. Its strange to think of them spending the non-breeding season at sea when you watch them just a few metres away plucking insects from the waters of a steppe lake far, far from the coast.

White-winged Tern (White-winged Black Tern) *Chlidonias leucopterus*: Common at Shar Burd, Sangiyn Dalay Nuur and Boon Tsagaan Nuur, with a maximum of 160 in a day at the latter. In addition, two at the White-naped Crane marsh in the Ulaanbaatar region. In breeding dress, definitely one of the finest terns in existence.

PTEROCLIDIDAE

Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus*: A common inhabitant of the Gobi and the semidesert fringes of the Hangay. Our best day consisted of a total count of 305! We obtained fantastic views of this highly wanted bird, especially from the vehicles which enabled us to get close enough for some great photos. We were even able to discern the feathered legs and toes, a characteristic of the enigmatic genus *Syrhaptes*. This species has a wide breeding range and occurs from the Caspian Sea east to north-eastern China, but it is mainly known for its irruptive behaviour. Several major irruptions have taken place into western Europe, notably in 1863, 1888 and 1908, when thousands of birds were observed, some of which settled and bred as far west as Britain and Sweden. The epithet *paradoxus* (= unexpected, strange) obviously relates to this unique behaviour.

COLUMBIDAE

Rock Dove (Rock Pigeon) *Columba livia*: Small numbers at Ulaanbaatar. The population in Mongolia is feral in origin and some limited hybridization with Hill Pigeons seems to have occurred.

Hill Pigeon (Blue Hill Pigeon) *Columba rupestris*: Widespread but rather patchily distributed, from Ulaanbaatar region to the Hangay (but unrecorded in the Gobi Altai).

Oriental Turtle Dove (Rufous Turtle Dove) *Streptopelia orientalis*: Two migrants at the Gobi tourist camp were the only record.

CUCULIDAE

Common Cuckoo (Eurasian Cuckoo) *Cuculus canorus*: Small numbers in the Ulaanbaatar region (including Terelj) and in the Hangay. Elsewhere, a single heard in the Gobi Altai and one seen at Bayanhongor.

Horsfield's Cuckoo *Cuculus horsfieldi*: Small numbers at Terelj, two of which were seen.

STRIGIDAE

Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*: (H): We tried very hard to find one at our campsite at the southern edge of the Hangay, where a calling bird taunted us, but failed miserably.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*: Thanks to our translator, Tsegi, most of us had absolutely awesome views of two adults and a fledged but still fluffy juvenile at Terelj, and later John and Henning found the same family and ascertained that there were in fact two youngsters.

APODIDAE

Common Swift *Apus apus*: Widespread and often common. Our maximum count was 250 in a day in the Terelj/Tuul Gol area. Not recorded in the Gobi Altai or high in the Hangay, however. Birds in Mongolia are of the browner eastern form *pekinensis*.

Fork-tailed Swift (Pacific Swift) *Apus pacificus*: Widespread and sometimes common, particularly towards the north. Our maximum was 80 in a day in the Terelj/Tuul Gol area.

UPUPIDAE

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*: Scattered records of ones and twos throughout our route.

PICIDAE

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*: A single in the saxaul 'forest' in the Gobi and a total of four in the Terelj/Tuul Gol area, one of which gave fabulous scope views. We also heard its highly distinctive 'song'.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*: Small numbers at Terelj, where we enjoyed some wonderful close-up views of this white-eyed marvel. They seem unusually confiding here.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*: Two near Ulaanbaatar and three at Terelj.

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*: Henning found a nice male at the Tuul Gol and on another occasion we all had superb views of a pair in a different area.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*: Two of these little peckers near Ulaanbaatar and small numbers in the Terelj/Tuul Gol area.

ALAUDIDAE

Mongolian Lark *Melanocorypha mongolica*: This large and striking lark (especially striking when it flies and shows off those gleaming white secondaries!) was patchily distributed, but locally fairly common, in grasslands from the southern foothills of the Hangay eastwards to the Ulaanbaatar region.

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*: Small numbers of the race *longipennis* were recorded from the Bayanhongor region eastwards.

Asian Short-toed Lark *Calandrella cheleensis*: A common bird of the Gobi, but absent from the richer grasslands on the fringes of the Hangay, where replaced by *C. brachydactyla*.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*: =Widespread and locally common (although absent from the Gobi Altai).

Horned Lark (Shore Lark) *Eremophila alpestris*: Widespread and often very common. This must be the commonest bird in Mongolia, and we recorded up to 200 or more in a day.

HIRUNDINIDAE

Pale Martin *Riparia diluta*: Scattered sightings from the Gobi to the Ulaanbaatar region, with maximum counts of 20 nesting near a river in the Hangay and 20 at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur. This interesting form overlaps with Sand Martin (or Bank Swallow) *R. riparia* in Kazakhstan and probably in western Mongolia. Usually occupies drier habitat and lives in smaller colonies.

Eurasian Crag Martin *Hirundo rupestris*: Small numbers were seen in the Gobi Alta and a few even out in the more broken areas in the Gobi itself.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Surprisingly scarce, with just scattered records of small numbers. The race involved is *tyleri*, which is quite warm-coloured below.

Common House Martin (Northern House Martin) *Delichon urbica*: Scattered records of up to 25.

MOTACILLIDAE

- Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*: Fairly widespread in small numbers from the Gobi to the southern flanks of the Hangay. In Mongolia the breeding subspecies (*dauuricus*) is rather small.
- Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*: Fairly common in the Hangay and six at Terelj. Blyth was a nineteenth century English zoologist who contributed hugely to early Indian ornithology.
- Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*: Fairly common at Terelj, where it breeds. Elsewhere, two singles in the Gobi Altai and another at the saxaul 'forest'.
- Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*: One at Terelj, at the easternmost limits of the breeding range, was a good find. In addition, Henning reported another four.
- Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*: A very common bird of the alpine meadows of the Hangay, where we recorded up to 70 in a day, and we also encountered small numbers in the Gobi Altai. The local form is *blakistoni*.
- Eastern Grey-headed Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] macronyx*: Two feeding behind Bactrian Camels at a grassy area in the Gobi.
- Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*: Widespread in small numbers, even occurring in the Gobi and Gobi Altai. The subspecies involved is the grey-backed *citreola*.
- Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: Fairly widespread in small numbers, but surprisingly not recorded in the Hangay (perhaps it was too cold during our visit!?).
- Baikal Wagtail *Motacilla [alba] baicalensis*: Widespread in small numbers, but not recorded from the Gobi Altai.

PRUNELLIDAE

- Brown Accentor *Prunella fulvescens*: Fairly common in the sparsely-vegetated rocky hills and mountains of the Gobi Altai and the Hangay.
- Kozlov's Accentor (Mongolian Accentor) *Prunella koslowi*: Not uncommon in the Gobi Altai, and Mark found two in the foothills of the Hangay. Distinctly more secretive and unobtrusive than Brown Accentor, but we eventually had some wonderful views. This is a true Mongolian endemic, although there are one or two winter observations in China, where the species is probably only a vagrant. The bird is named after General Pyotr Kuzmich Kozlov (1863-1935), a Russian explorer of central Asia and Mongolia.
- Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*: Eight high in the Gobi Altai.

TURDIDAE

- Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*: Small numbers were recorded in the Gobi Altai and Gobi. Elsewhere, one at Ulaanbaatar, one in the Hangay and one heard at Terelj. We had some fantastic views of this show-stopper in the Gobi Altai, where it was fairly common.
- Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*: Mark and Keith came across a male foraging along a river during their walk in the snow in the high Hangay.
- Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane*: (NL): A male was seen by Henning at Terelj.
- Northern Red-flanked Bluetail (Northern Orange-flanked Bush Robin) *Tarsiger cyanurus*: Fairly common high up at Terelj but few were found low down.
- Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*: A common species of the Gobi Altai. We also had small numbers in the Hangay and a single male at Bayanhongor. Here of the race *phoenicuroides*, one of the red-bellied races.
- Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: A few recorded at Terelj.
- Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*: Not uncommon in the Ulaanbaatar region (including Terelj). Elsewhere, the only records were of a few migrants in the Gobi. This bird is named after Dauria or Dahuria, in ancient times the name for the area encompassing parts of eastern Mongolia and the Chinese province of Heilongjiang.
- Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura*: Fairly common in the Hangay.

- Hodgson's Bushchat (White-throated Bushchat) *Saxicola insignis*: Hurrah! All that effort getting to the Hangay, and putting up with the snow, was worth it as we found two different breeding pairs between us. What marvellous little birds (or big birds if one is comparing them with Siberian Stonechats).
- Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*: Widespread and often very common (although scarce in the Gobi plains). We had a maximum count of 66 in a day. Most common where pikas or sousliks abound and nesting holes are plentiful. A great songster, mimicking many other species.
- Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*: Widespread and often common, but absent from the Gobi plains. Our maximum count was 34 in a day.
- Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*: Fairly common in the Ulaanbaatar area and in the Hangay and its environs. Elsewhere, a female in the Gobi Altai. Pleshanka is the Russian name for the species.
- Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*: Quite common in the Gobi and in the semidesert at its northern edge.
- Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*: This handsome bird was found in small numbers in the Gobi Alta and the Hangay.
- White's Thrush *Zoothera aureus*: Fantastic, sustained views of two near Ulaanbaatar. In addition, Henning saw one at the saxaul 'forest' in the Gobi.
- Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*: Two of these attractive thrushes at Terelj.
- Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni*: Great looks at a female at Bayanhongor.
- Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*: Small numbers in the Gobi Altai and a single at Terelj. In addition, Henning found one at the saxaul 'forest' in the Gobi.

SYLVIIDAE

- Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*: Four migrants found in very short vegetation at Sangiyn Dalay Nuur, where we managed to scope this inveterate skulker.
- Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*: Quite good views of three in the reedbeds at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.
- Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*: Small numbers at Bayanhongor and at the Tuul Gol, and two singles in the Gobi. We eventually had some excellent views of this distinctive *Acrocephalus*. A pretty good songster for an *Acrocephalus* too.
- Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*: Fairly common in the Gobi, where we enjoyed plenty of sightings. A very sweet little warbler, but so fidgety!
- Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*: Small numbers recorded in the Ulaanbaatar region (including Terelj). In addition, Henning saw one at the saxaul 'forest' in the Gobi.
- Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*: Three at Terelj.
- Two-barred Warbler (Two-barred Greenish Warbler) *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*: Small numbers in the Ulaanbaatar region (including Terelj). Elsewhere, a migrant at the saxaul 'forest' in the Gobi and three at Bayanhongor.
- Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*: One near Ulaanbaatar, two at the Gobi tourist camp, one at Bayanhongor and one at Terelj.
- Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*: Quite common in the Ulaanbaatar region (especially at Terelj), where they were busy singing away, often from the treetops. Elsewhere, two at the Gobi tourist camp and one at Bayanhongor.
- Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*: Small numbers at Terelj.
- Hume's Leaf Warbler (Hume's Warbler) *Phylloscopus humei*: Small numbers in the larch forests of the Hangay and a lone migrant at Bayanhongor.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*: Scattered records from the Gobi to the Hangay and Terelj. Usually in small numbers, but a remarkable concentration of 30 migrants calling away from the trees at the Gobi tourist camp!

MUSCICAPIDAE

Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*: Two at the Gobi tourist camp and two at Bayanhongor. These were all migrant birds.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*: Three at the Gobi tourist camp, two at Bayanhongor and small numbers in the Terelj/Tuul Gol area.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*: A few in the Hangay and a migrant at Bayanhongor.

Red-throated Flycatcher (Taiga Flycatcher) *Ficedula albicilla*: Not uncommon in the Terelj/Tuul Gol area, where it nests. Small numbers seen regularly in the Gobi Altai and Gobi were on migration, as was one seen by Henning in the Hangay.

AEGITHALIDAE

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*: Just two singles at Terelj.

PARIDAE

Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*: Two at Terelj.

Willow Tit *Parus montanus*: Fairly common at Terelj. Elsewhere, a few near Ulaanbaatar and in the larch forests of the Hangay.

Coal Tit *Parus ater*: Small numbers near Ulaanbaatar and at Terelj.

Azure Tit *Parus cyanus*: This beautiful, long-tailed and much-desired species was not uncommon along the Tuul Gol.

Great Tit *Parus major*: Fairly common in the Ulaanbaatar region (including Terelj).

SITTIDAE

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*: Small numbers at the Tuul Gol and just one at Terelj. The race involved, with very white underparts and a relatively fine bill, is *asiatica*.

TICHODROMADIDAE

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*: A total of six seen in the Gobi Altai, which must be one of the best places in Eurasia to see this charismatic 'butterfly-bird'.

REMIZIDAE

White-crowned Penduline Tit *Remiz coronatus*: We found seven birds in the willows and poplars along the Tuul Gol near Ulaanbaatar on our first day.

LANIIDAE

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*: Widespread in small numbers, occurring from the arid Gobi Altai and Gobi north to the forests of Terelj.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*: Fairly common in the Gobi. This form was formerly referred to as *speculigerus*, but as a result of nomenclatural reassessment it has now become *isabellinus*!

Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius pallidirostris*: Small numbers in the Gobi, usually where there were bushes or low trees. Some had pale bills, but a majority had dark bills, which seems par for the course in the breeding season. This form is sometimes lumped in Southern Grey Shrike *L. meridionalis*.

CORVIDAE

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: Small numbers at Terelj.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*: Very common north of the Gobi.

Henderson's Ground Jay *Podoces hendersoni*: After a lot of searching in the Gobi we eventually had wonderful views of four of these enigmatic birds, and later we came across another three en route to the Hangay. This species, which seems to have declined sharply due to the long drought, is restricted to the southern half of Mongolia, northwestern China and a small adjacent area of Kazakhstan. The five species of ground jay (genera *Podoces* and *Pseudopodoces*, the latter now thought to be an aberrant tit!) are all little-known species of remote, hard to reach places that appeal very much to Palearctic birding enthusiasts. The bird is named after Lieutenant Colonel George Henderson, a 19th century British soldier, explorer and author.

Spotted Nutcracker (Eurasian Nutcracker) *Nucifraga caryocatactes*: Three seen and two heard on Capercaillie Mountain.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax*: Widespread and often common (although scarce in the Gobi), we recorded a maximum of 100 in a day in the Hangay. A very characteristic and evocative bird of Mongolia, with such beautiful calls.

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*: Fairly common in the Ulaanbaatar region (including Terelj). Seen in both the pied adult plumage and in dark immature attire.

Oriental Rook (Eastern Rook) *Corvus pastinator*: 20 on our last day in the Ulaanbaatar region. Interesting to observe how different they look compared to Western Rooks, and the calls sounded somewhat different as well. Beaman (1994) lumps this form in Western Rook *C. frugilegus*, using the name Rook for the enlarged species, but the two forms differ significantly in morphology and, given the recent re-splitting of the Carrion Crow *C. corone* complex, it seems only reasonable to treat the rooks in a similar fashion.

Oriental Crow *Corvus orientalis*: Fairly common in the Ulaanbaatar region (including Terelj) and a few in the Hangay.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*: Widespread and sometimes common.

STURNIDAE

Common Starling (European Starling) *Sturnus vulgaris*: (NL): Five seen at a township in the Hangay by Keith, Chris and Henning.

Rose-coloured Starling (Rosy Starling) *Sturnus roseus*: One at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and later five more at a rubbish dump by a township in the Hangay.

White-cheeked Starling *Sturnus cineraceus*: Fairly common along the Tuul Gol.

PASSERIDAE

Saxaul Sparrow *Passer ammodendri*: After much searching, we eventually found a single pair at the saxaul 'forest' in the Gobi. This species is only found where the famous saxaul tree (*Haloxylon ammodendron*) survives, but they have declined markedly in the last decade in Mongolia, probably due to the severe drought.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Birds of the nominate race were seen in small numbers in Ulaanbaatar and at two townships at the northern fringe of the Gobi. However, a single male seen by all of us in the Gobi Altai, and also four birds seen by Keith at the Gobi desert camp, were very bright and looked like the migratory form *bactrianus*. In theory southern Mongolia is beyond the range of *bactrianus*, but I think there is still a lot to learn about this form as I have seen similar looking birds on the Tibetan Plateau, where no House Sparrows should occur.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: Widespread and sometimes fairly common (but absent in the Gobi Altai).

- Rock Sparrow (Rock Petronia) *Petronia petronia*: Locally fairly common in the Hangay and its environs, and four deep in the Gobi.
- Père David's Snowfinch *Montifringilla davidiana*: We did well for this species, finding it locally fairly common in the Hangay and in the steppes to the south and east. This species is always associated with sousliks or pikas, as they breed in their burrows. Sometimes (together with three other steppe species) placed in the genus *Pyrgilauda*. The bird is named after the famous Abbé Père Armand David, a 19th century French missionary to China, who made his name as a naturalist, intrepid explorer and author. A splendid book about this amazing man and his accomplishments is: "Travels in Imperial China: The Exploration & Discoveries of Père David" by George Bishop.
- White-winged Snowfinch (Eurasian Snowfinch) *Montifringilla nivalis*: Very common and tame in the Gobi Altai, but just six in the Hangay.

FRINGILLIDAE

- Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus*: Four near Ulaanbaatar and, rather 'out of habitat' two migrants in the treeless Gobi Altai.
- Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*: Common in the Gobi Altai and only a little less numerous in the Hangay.
- Common Crossbill (Red Crossbill) *Loxia curvirostra*: Two on Capercaillie Mountain.
- Mongolian Finch (Mongolian Trumpeter Finch) *Bucanetes mongolicus*: This is a species that was once common but seems to have suffered badly from the drought that has afflicted much of Mongolia. We struggled to find the species, eventually recording small numbers in the Gobi and the arid fringes of the Hangay. Sometimes put in the genus *Rhodopechys*.
- Common Rosefinch (Scarlet Rosefinch) *Carpodacus erythrinus*: Surprisingly scarce. We had a nice male near Ulaanbaatar, eight migrants at the Gobi tourist camp and two at the Tuul Gol.
- Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus davidianus*: Eight in the Gobi Altai, where we obtained excellent views.
- Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: A single migrant at a township in the Gobi and a female, which gave great views, at the Tuul Gol.

EMBERIZIDAE

- Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*: Small numbers in the Terelj/Tuul Gol area. Also a migrant at the saxaul 'forest'.
- Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*: Fairly common in the Ulaanbaatar region (including Terelj). We had some wonderful views, particularly of singing males. They really do sing almost exactly like a Yellowhammer, but in the zone of overlap in the Urals and western Siberia there is only limited hybridization.
- Godlewski's Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*: Small numbers in the Gobi Altai and also four at the saxaul 'forest'. The bird is named after Wictor Witold Godlewski, a 19th century Polish farmer and amateur naturalist who was exiled to Siberia.
- Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*: A very nice pair on our first day near Ulaanbaatar, and another pair for Mark at Terelj.
- Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*: No less than eight in the Hangay, the males busy singing away and chasing females, on a mild sunny morning.
- Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani*: Four showed well on a rocky slope at the southern fringe of the Hangay.
- Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*: We obviously hit a wave of migrants in the Gobi Altai, where they were positively common. Elsewhere, two in the Ulaanbaatar area, one ultra-tame bird at Dalanzadgad and one in the Hangay.
- Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*: A total of four migrants at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*: A nice male in the reeds at Shar Burd was our first observation in Mongolia. The form concerned, *pyrrhuloides*, may, together with related thick-billed forms, represent a distinct species (Thick-billed Reed Bunting).

Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*: Seven in the Gobi Altai, five at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and a total of eight in the Hangay. The races breeding in the region are nominate *pallasii* and *lydiae*, but these are very difficult to separate in the field.

MAMMALS

Tolai Hare *Lepus tolai*: Fairly widespread, with scattered records of ones and twos from all regions except the Gobi Altai.

Daurian Pika *Ochotona daurica*: Locally common in steppe areas in the Hangay.

Northern Pika *Ochotona hyperborea*: Small numbers in the high Hangay and at Terelj.

Pallas's Pika *Ochotona pallasii*: Very common pika in the Gobi Altai, where these cute little creatures put on a great performance.

Eurasian Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*: Three very dark individuals on Capercaillie Mountain. In addition, Chris saw one near Ulaanbaatar.

Bobak Marmot *Marmota bobak*: Common in the Hangay, extending down to the foothills.

Red-cheeked Souslik *Spermophilus erythrogenys*: Scattered records of up to four from the Gobi Altai to the northern fringe of the Gobi desert. These were the shorter-tailed sousliks we saw.

Long-tailed Souslik *Spermophilus undulatus*: Common in the Hangay and small numbers in grassland areas west to Terelj.

Siberian Chipmunk *Tamias sibiricus*: Three at Terelj. This is the only Old World representative of the genus *Tamias* (which consists of 21 species).

Mid-day Jird (Mid-day Gerbil) *Meriones meridianus*: (NL): One for Henning, Keith and Chris at the saxaul 'forest'.

Mongolian Jird (Mongolian Gerbil) *Meriones unguiculatus*: A few observations of up to four in the arid region to the south of the Hangay.

Great Gerbil *Rhombomys opimus*: Common at the saxaul 'forest'. 'Great' is a good description!

Corsac Fox *Vulpes corsac*: Two in the Hangay.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*: Singles in the Gobi Altai, at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and at the northern fringe of the Gobi.

Stoat (Ermine) *Mustela erminea*: Great views of one on Capercaillie Mountain.

Goitred Gazelle (Black-tailed Gazelle) *Gazella subgutturosa*: Just two, at the saxaul 'forest'. An animal that obviously suffered badly under the harsh climatic conditions of recent years.

Mongolian Gazelle (White-tailed Gazelle) *Procapra gutturosa*: Eight on the plains beyond the Gobi Altai. Although still common in eastern Mongolia, it is only rarely seen further west. Not a typical gazelle, its nearest relatives are the Tibetan and Przewalski's Gazelles of Tibet and China.

Siberian Ibex *Capra sibirica*: Quite common in the Gobi Altai, where we saw some really splendid males and where Mark found an equally splendid skull at the base of a cliff. Perhaps they do fall off those crags from time to time?

Argali *Ovis ammon*: (NL): Up to four in the Gobi Altai for Henning, Chris and Keith. These big sheep are now far less common than they once were, due to drought and illegal grazing by domestic stock.

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES

Siberian Toad (Radde's Toad) *Bufo raddei*: Small numbers at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Toad-headed Agama *Phrynocephalus versicolor*: Fairly common in the Gobi. The red flank patch and the turned up black and white tail are very distinctive.

Gobi Racerunner *Eremias przewalskii*: Two singles in the Gobi.

Halys's Viper *Aqkistrodon halys*: A splendid little individual in the Gobi Altai.

MISSED SPECIES

- Chinese Spot-billed Duck *Anas zonorhyncha*: A single showed well on the Black-throated Loon lake. This form is now usually split from *Anas poecilorhyncha*, which is then renamed Burmese Spot-billed Duck.
- Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*: Cracking scope views of the white-eyed drake and the brown-eyed duck at Boon Tsagaan Nuur. Splendid looks. This species is treated as **Near-Threatened** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future of the birds on our planet.
- Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*: A beautiful drake showed well on a lake near Boon Tsagaan Nuur.
- White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*: Great looks at a spectacularly soaring pair of these magnificent raptors in a broad valley of the Hangay Mountains on our most scenic day of the tour. This species is treated as **Near-Threatened** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future of the birds on our planet.
- Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*: A male showed a couple of times over a reedbed at Boon Tsagaan Nuur (nominate).
- Peregrine Falcon (Peregrine) *Falco peregrinus*: A single bird was hunting over the marsh at Boon Tsagaan Nuur (race?). Try to see the National Geographic documentary, whereby a scientist freefalling from a plane is measuring the amazing diving speed of this incredible bird of prey. A speed of over 370km/h was recorded. Simply awesome.
- Black-billed Capercaillie (Siberian or Rock Capercaillie) *Tetrao parvirostris*: **THE BIRD OF THE TRIP.** Amazing scope views of a splendid male slowly walking about in the *Vaccinium* shrub vegetation of the open larch-pine forest of the Terelj taiga (*stegmanni*). It was really beautifully marked and everybody (including our translator Tunga) eventually obtained good looks. Well found, Andrew!! We also flushed two more males and a female and found lots of droppings. The distinctive feathers with the highly developed after-shaft were also encountered. Both Western and Black-billed Capercaillie occur in Mongolia, but don't seem to overlap here. These two form a superspecies and in the limited area of overlap in the basin of the Yenisey River (Russia) hybrids are frequently encountered. The male can reach a weight of up to 4.5 kg. This rarely-seen and much-wanted species was the favourite bird for Andrew, Glenn and Eileen. Everyone braved the rather intense three hour climb up 'capercaillie mountain' in true Birdquest fashion. Well done!!
- Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*: Several excellent scope studies of this lovely red-eyed skulker (nominate). Always a great bird to see well.
- Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: A single showed at a lake near Boon Tsagaan Nuur (nominate). Our first observation in Mongolia.
- Common Ringed Plover (Ringed Plover) *Charadrius hiaticula*: A couple at a steppe lake on our drive to Boon Tsagaan Nuur.
- Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*: A single in resplendent breeding plumage at the Black-throated Loon lake and a couple at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.
- Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*: Eight in exquisite breeding attire at the Yellow Oasis.
- Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*: A couple in breeding attire at the Yellow Oasis.
- Swinhoe's Snipe *Gallinago megala*: At dusk, a single displaying bird over a marshy stream valley at Terelj offered a splendid experience. The really amazing sounds were out of this world. The bird is named after Robert Swinhoe (1836-1877), British diplomat in China and naturalist.
- Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*: A single bird was roding at the Swinhoe's Snipe spot.
- Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: A regular and attractive breeding species of the Mongolian steppe lakes. A nest with four eggs was found at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*: A single migrant in attractive breeding plumage at a saline steppe lake at the edge of the Gobi desert. Our first observation in Mongolia.

Eurasian Collared Dove (Collared Dove) *Streptopelia decaocto*: No less than ten observations of this still spreading species (nominate).

European Scops Owl (Common/Eurasian Scops Owl) *Otus scops*: We heard its distinctive call on our morning walk in riverine forest near Terelj. Penny amazed us all by finding this superbly camouflaged creature only metres from where we had put our telescopes. Stunning scope views!!! Our first observation in Mongolia (*pulchellus*).

Little Owl *Athene noctua*: A single bird in the Saxaul forest (*plumipes*).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*: A single was hunting over the marshes at the Yellow Oasis (nominate).

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*: A couple of excellent sightings of a recently-fledged youngster of this often unobtrusive woodpecker at Terelj.

Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus*: Splendid studies of drumming and foraging birds in the Capercaillie forest (nominate). The Nearctic form is now usually split off as a separate species: American Three-toed Woodpecker *P. dorsalis*.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*: A single encounter in an area of sandy dunes (*leautungensis*).

Eversmann's Redstart (Rufous-backed Redstart) *Phoenicurus erythronota*: Brief looks at a pair in a lush valley of the Hangay mountains. Our first observation in Mongolia.

Güldenstädt's Redstart (White-winged Redstart) *Phoenicurus erythrogaster*: A splendid surprise was finding two bright males of this much-wanted species at a high pass in the eastern Hangay mountains (*grandis*). Julian's favourite. Johann Anton Güldenstädt (1745-1781) was a botanist and zoologist and a colleague of Peter Simon Pallas. He explored the Caucasus for nearly seven years.

Chinese Bush Warbler *Bradypterus tacsanowskii*: Excellent observations of beautifully responsive birds in their favourite short scrubby vegetation. They had only just arrived and we only heard a little bit of song.

Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*: Great scope studies of a singing bird in a reedbed at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*: Smashing eye-ball to eye-ball views of an individual in the shrub of a damp valley in the Gobi Altai (*merzbacheri*). The barred underparts, eye-colour, large size and white tail tips were noted.

TIMALIIDAE

Bearded Reedling (Bearded Tit, Bearded Parrotbill) *Panurus biarmicus*: Two males and a female showed well whilst clambering about in a reedbed at Boon Tsagaan Nuur (*russicus*). Adorable critters.

Siberian Jay *Perisoreus infaustus*: Great looks at a pair on Capercaillie mountain (*rogosowi*). Always a bit secretive during the breeding season.

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus*: A couple showed distantly in the Terelj area (nominate). Note that the Iberian form *cooki* is now usually split off as a separate species under the name Iberian (Azure-winged) Magpie.

Grey-capped Greenfinch (Oriental Greenfinch) *Carduelis sinica*: A single bird was found along a stream in the Gobi Altai mountains and was obviously out of range (*chabarowi*). Our first sighting in Mongolia.

Spotted Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus severtzovi*: A splendid male posed at length along a stream in the Gobi Altai (*kobdensis*). A really gorgeous species, which has often eluded us here.

Grey-bellied Bullfinch *Pyrrhula griseiventris* (H): We heard the distinctive call in the Terelj taiga. Was formerly lumped in Eurasian Bullfinch *P. pyrrhula*.

Eastern Roe Deer *Capreolus pygargus* (H): We heard the distinctive barks at dusk in the Terelj taiga.

Multi-ocellated Racerunner *Eremias multiocellata*: A couple of sightings in the semi desert.

