

# Mongolia ~ The ‘Wild Heart’ of Asia

10-22 June 2017

Trip report written by Chris Hall



The group at the Chinggis Khan statue © Chris Hall

The long approach into Ulan Bator at the eastern end of this mysterious landlocked country emphasises just how immense and empty it is, with seemingly endless miles of apparently uninhabited arid plains and rugged hills, intricately carved into dendritic patterns over the millenia by rare flash floods. Our arrival at our hotel in Ulan Bator is greeted with howls from a Peacock strutting around the hotel lobby, like he owns the place! In the absence of any ‘poop’ on the ‘deck’, he appears to be house trained! After a hearty lunch in the hotel we

spend the afternoon in a powder-dry parkland on the outskirts of town, where the local residents include Ruddy Shelduck, the local black-billed longipennis race of Common Tern, Hoopoe, Azure-winged Magpie, black and white Daurian Jackdaws, White-cheeked Starlings, popping in and out of their nest hole, and plenty of Tree Sparrows.



Azure-winged Magpie © Attila Steiner

There are Choughs, Grey Wagtail and a singing Common Rosefinch right outside the hotel this morning as we check out. On the way out of Ulan Bator, another stop by the river produces Pacific Swifts, great views of Azure Tit and a dashing male Amur Falcon, while his missus poses on a nearby wire. After a couple of hours driving through a completely treeless landscape, grazed by herd after herd of sheep, goats, cows and horses (Mongolia has a population of around three million people and over sixty million livestock) we make a brief roadside stop, amid thousands of grasshoppers displaying by clapping their wings just above the ground, for Asian Short-toed Larks and considerably larger Mongolian Larks, with really smart rusty crowns and napes, black collars and large white wing flashes in flight. Further on in the Gun Galuut nature reserve, a number of shallow saline lakes in this otherwise dry landscape, teem with waterbirds including Pintail, Garganey, loads of Ruddy Shelduck, including a pair with fourteen downy ducklings, a pair of Whoopers with five cygnets, Avocets, Black-winged Stilts and Marsh Sandpipers galore, Eurasian Spoonbill, Mongolian Gull (like Caspian, but with greenish yellow legs), and about ten elegant White-naped Cranes, with Isabelline Wheatears and plenty more Mongolian Larks on the adjacent turf. After lunch at our tented camp, a further exploration of the area adds Short-toed Lark and the local white-faced brandti race of Horned Lark to the list, as well as a flock of at least two hundred White-winged Terns, along with a few Whiskered and one or two Gull-billed Terns. There is plenty more to see here such as Black-necked Grebe, a couple of Pacific Golden Plovers, two Eurasian Curlews with exceedingly long bills, several Stejneger's White-winged Scoters and at least sixty-five Demoiselle Cranes. At one stage we have Falcated and Long-tailed Ducks

in the same scope view, with the Long-tail being such a rarity here that it is a 'lifer' for our local guide!

Wow! Stepping out of the cosy yurt this morning reveals an ultra-bright, mega-clear, super-still tranquil morning in this completely treeless plain, backed on each side by rolling hills, under a cloudless blue sky. Minutes from camp a Black Vulture circles overhead, while a Rock Sparrow delivers food to its nest in an ancient man made ruin. A small lush green wetland in this largely arid landscape is alive with plenty more White-winged Terns, along with Common Snipe, Black-tailed Godwit, Marsh Sandpiper, Garganey, another exquisite Falcated Duck, a White-naped Crane on a nest with a single egg, a pair of Whoopers with four cygnets, at least eleven Swan Geese and a vivid yellow-headed male Citrine Wagtail. A flock of nine Pallas's Sandgrouse flies by right in front of us, while Isabelline Wheatears and a Horned Lark forage the nearby dry ground. By now, an hour and a half have passed at this beguiling wetland and it's time to move on via a long, long dirt track to a scenic valley with trees! After a lovely picnic lunch under the Larches the afternoon is very fruitful, starting with plum views from all angles of a very obliging Pine Bunting. Other great sightings here, mostly at very close range, include Olive-backed Pipit, Willow Tit, the white-bellied arctica race of 'our' Nuthatch, Dark-sided Flycatcher, Hume's and Dusky Warblers, Taiga Flycatcher and Red-throated Thrush (both of which have 'Robin-coloured' throats) and a posing male Siberian Rubythroat, with a bright scarlet throat patch; so, try picking a star bird out of that lot!



Red-throated Thrush © Attila Steiner

It's another gloriously clear, bright sunny day, with Isabelline Wheatear and Horned Lark singing in the camp grounds, which are next to a swift-flowing shallow river. Exploration of the scrub alongside the river exposes the Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, previously seen



before breakfast yesterday by the group's insomniacs! While looking for the warbler, a Little Bittern-type bird shows briefly as it scurries along the ground between the dwarf Willows, before breaking cover and landing further along the open river bank, where it sits pointing its sharp beak skyward, revealing a dark-streaked pale throat. It then flies past us back along the river showing white spotted brown wings, before disappearing back into the original Willows. By now we had seen enough to identify it as the rare Schrenck's Bittern, whereupon our local guide, who is on the Mongolian Rarities Committee, declares that this is only the third record for Mongolia since records began in 1950, and the first ever record for this area of central Mongolia; and I found it! Yay!

Moving on from Steppe Nomads Ger Camp, we revisit one of the saline lakes, with an enviable list of the 'usual suspects' such as Ruddy Shelduck, Stejneger's White-winged Scoter, Black-necked Grebe, Eurasian Spoonbill, Demoiselle Crane, Marsh Sandpiper, Mongolian Gull, White-winged and Whiskered Terns, and the incongruous combination of Whooper Swan and Black-winged Stilt. After another nice picnic amid one of the few clumps of trees for miles, bristling with millions of grasshoppers, an impressively high silver statue of the great Ghengis Khan, makes a fitting backdrop for a group photo. By late afternoon we are in a new landscape of towering rounded rock formations near Terelj, with a Black-eared Kite mobbing a Steppe Eagle. A boggy thicket rings with the tinkling songs of at least three Siberian Rubythroats, and although these songsters can be as notoriously shy as our Nightingales, one eventually pops up on the top of a bush for all to see, while a calling Common Cuckoo and another stunning Citrine Wagtail also pose nearby. A short stroll from the hotel leads to a mature woodland dominated by majestic Poplars, the first we have encountered on this trip, where a calling Oriental Cuckoo is our first sighting. How ironic that Anny has waited a lifetime for a Cuckoo and then two come along at once! Next on the list are Two-barred Greenish Warbler and Hawfinch, followed by the remarkable juxtaposition of male Common and Daurian Redstarts in the same scope view. Meanwhile, a pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers peck away at opposite sides of the same tree trunk at eye level, and the very smart Daurian Redstart obligingly perches on a post for prolonged views in the scope, making a nice finale to another great day.

The mighty Black Woodpecker is first on the list this lovely sunny morning, as a red-capped male shoots by like a guided missile. Next up are a female Rock Thrush on top of a tall tree and a male Pied Wheatear on the rocks up above. This lovely wooded valley is alive with a variety of butterflies including the black and white Hungarian Glider, large white Apollos and Amanda's Blue. Other good sightings include Common Rosefinch, Black-faced Bunting and the ultrasonic Yellow-browed Warbler, all singing close by, but the stars of the show have to be a Ural Owl with two well developed chicks staring into the scope with their dark chocolate eyes. After yet another lovely picnic, prepared by our dedicated team, this time beside a river, with Common Sandpipers and a drinking Black-eared Kite along the bank, we head for a valley lined by spectacular granite rock formations, hoping for Godlewski's Bunting, and within just a few minutes a male is sitting stock-still on a nearby boulder! Not bad for a quiet day.

This morning we take the 6.30am flight from Ulan Bator, south to Dalandzadgad in the Gobi Desert, where a small plantation near the airport provides a green oasis for Barred Warblers, busy with their display flights, and Isabelline Shrikes. A noisy commotion among the shrikes and Tree Sparrows alerts us to the presence of an owl, which breaks cover as a Long-eared Owl, never to be seen again. Moving on to a second plantation, we find an Isabelline Shrike, shielding her nestlings from the heat of the sun, which reaches 30°C by 9.30am! By now we

are also starting to pant, but carry on long enough to spot a Daurian Starling in one of the larger bushes. From here our camp is way off in the vast featureless expanse of a stony desert, covered by a sparse mat of scorched yellow grass, and accessible only by an apparently random network of indeterminate tyre tracks. After lunch and some time to chill out, we reconvene at 3pm and head out across the desert in search of anything capable of surviving in such a hostile environment. Incredibly there is life here in the form of Crested and Horned Larks and a ‘fly by’ Hill Pigeon, with its diagnostic black and white banded tail. A small reservoir on the other side of the town is unsurprisingly teeming with life, including Little Ringed and Kentish Plovers, and up to a hundred Greater Sand Plovers, plus one Lesser Sand Plover with a significantly shorter bill. The water also draws in two pairs of attractive Pallas’s Sandgrouse, which show really well, while the surrounding desert is home to a herd of two-humped Camels and a handsome Desert Wheatear. On the way back to camp, one final brief stop in a surprisingly verdant plantation produces close views of Siberian Chiffchaff, three Long-eared Owl chicks staring at us from their bulky nest platform and a vagrant Black Drongo from further east in China. With so much dust rising high into the sky above Dalandzadgad, the town resembles the aftermath of an airstrike, and on the drive back to camp, thickening black clouds threaten rain, but any precipitation quickly evaporates in the warm air before ever reaching the parched ground.



Desert Wheatear © Attila Steiner

It’s cloudy, breezy and a fair bit cooler this morning, and the cute Long-eared Hedgehog nightshift around camp is replaced by a Tolai Hare, sheltering from the elements next to a couple of tyres, completely unperturbed by we campers, passing to and fro between the yurts and the ablutions. We begin by scouring the desert for Oriental Plover, but only find Pallas’s Sandgrouse and Horned Larks, before heading into the Altai Mountain range running along

the western fringe of the vast desert plain. Not far into the mountains we spot an Upland Buzzard on a high rock and then a Saker Falcon carrying prey across the valley, before landing to tear apart the unfortunate catch. By now the sky is blue again and deeper into the mountains we find Rock Sparrow, Crag Martin, Mongolian Finch and the first of many Snow Finches, as well as Pallas's Pikas, Mongolian Gerbils and Clouded Yellow and Swallowtail butterflies. Overhead another Saker cruises by and a pair of Upland Buzzards put on a great aerial show. This afternoon we explore Yolim Am, a deep valley lined by towering rock walls, patrolled by Eurasian and Himalayan Griffons and an awesome Lammergeier, while the valley floor produces Mongolian Accentor, looking like a washed out Dunnock, followed by Godlewski's Bunting and a very obliging Brown Accentor. Deeper into the chasm, a very orange-bellied male Black Redstart puts in an appearance, followed by the unmistakable butterfly wings of a Wallcreeper, displaying the red, black and white pattern as it glides across the blue sky from one cliff to another. At the end of a productive valley walk, vestiges of last winter's ice show just how cold it can get here, while a family of Siberian Ibex demonstrate how easily they can 'hop' across vertiginous rock faces. On the return walk the Snow Finches around our feet barely get a second glance, but we do stop for excellent views of an Oriental Cuckoo posing on one of the rocks, close enough to show the buff wash under the tail and the wider bars compared to 'our' Cuckoo. What a great day.



Pallas's Pika © Attila Steiner

It's a calm sunny morning as we wave goodbye to the lovely staff that looked after us so well over the last two nights in camp. More than an hour passes as we drive further west across the featureless and seemingly infinite expanse of the desert plain before reaching an outpost of 'civilisation', with a last opportunity to refuel and a green plantation to explore, finding Desert Wheatear and Pallas's Leaf Warbler as well as the ubiquitous Tree Sparrows. Back on



track we pass a herd of camels, plus Upland Buzzard, Saker Falcon, Pallas's Sandgrouse and numerous Horned Larks, before stopping for a picnic lunch, quite literally in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by Variegated Toad-headed Agami Lizards, with black-tipped coiled over scorpion-like tails, as if to fool would-be predators. By mid afternoon we reach the rugged hills bordering the plain, which are home to Siberian Ibex, Lammergeier, Saker Falcon, Pied Wheatear, and Grey-necked Bunting spotted singing from the highest rocks. After an enthralling drive of some 125 miles, entirely on tyre tracks in the stony soil, journey's end is the Khongoryn Els dunes, an impressive sandy spine stretching for hundreds of miles from east to west, and disappearing into a thick shroud of dust rising hundreds of feet into the air, obliterating the distant horizon and sky. Seeing such an apocalyptic scene, I casually comment that it seems reminiscent of "a disaster movie"; little did I know what was soon to pass. Within minutes of being allocated our yurts, the 'mother of all sand storms' rips through the camp, tearing away all un-tethered items, including Roberta's favourite hat, while blasting everything in its path with so much sand that visibility is virtually zero. Inside each tent, hanging by a rope from the top frame, is a rock anchor, which is swinging to and fro, while the tent 'lid' has 'gone with the wind'! Next comes near horizontal rain, and the scene becomes chaotic as the camp staff scurry back and forth in vain attempts to hold down the yurts, though resistance is futile as they buckle like paper bags under the strain of the storm-force battering. In the aftermath of this devastation, Ugan gives the order to evacuate the camp, and as some of the ladies can barely stand up straight against the raging wind, they are bundled towards the vehicles by the drivers, where we hastily reload the luggage, retreat to an alternative more sturdy set up nearby, and celebrate our 'survival' with plenty of beer. That is one experience we will never forget!



Pallas's Sandgrouse © Attila Steiner

It's just plain breezy this morning as we head towards the dunes for 'Operation Sparrow'. Not far from camp we find a male Lesser Kestrel, showing nicely on a low perch, followed by close views of another pair of Pallas's Sandgrouse and three Demoiselle Cranes. The edge of the dunes is bordered by a snake-like shallow river which has carved cliffs out of the sand, where we find Ruddy Shelduck, Black-eared Kite, Upland Buzzard, Little Ringed Plover, Hill Pigeon, Desert Wheatear, Isabelline and Steppe Grey Shrikes, and several Black Vultures and Ravens, which must thrive on fatalities in this incredibly harsh environment. Meanwhile, the soaring Black Vultures draw our attention to an unusual 'sunbow' in a U-shaped arc below the sun. It's now high noon and an Upland Buzzard chick is panting on its open nest platform on the top of a Saxaul bush. This dry scrub is one of the few places to see the scarce Saxaul Sparrow and we soon locate a chirpy male with his smart black bib, black crown and eye-stripe, separated by a rich sandy supercilium; mission accomplished!

We have two target birds this afternoon, starting with the highly prized Mongolian Ground Jay, and our search of a rolling moraine-type area reveals a group of five Goitred Gazelles, before we connect with the unmistakable jay, with a long curved beak and black crown, scurrying around amongst the sparse shrubbery, and showing really well for all to enjoy. Heading back to the dunes we steer around a pair of Greater Sand Plovers with at least one fluffy little 'clockwork' chick, before getting several close views of Asian Desert Warbler, flitting between the scrubby bushes, rather like a Dartford Warbler in the Heather on Dunwich Heath. So, all the day's target birds are 'in the bag' and we can return to camp to enjoy a shower, dinner and the gently changing contours of the magnificent scenery as the sun slowly sets, leaving a lovely pink flush to the wispy clouds in the afterglow. What a difference a day makes!

Another beautiful morning in a wonderful setting, as the clear morning light brings out the softly curving waves in the sea of sand, which has a mesmerising effect as we travel back to Dalandzadgad, spotting Mongolian Ground Jay, Steppe Grey Shrike, Black Vulture, two Lammergeiers, herds of camels and racing groups of Goitred and Mongolian Gazelles along the way. A brief mid morning stop at a tiny green plantation, miles from anywhere, produces Eurasian Collared Dove sitting alongside a beautifully marked Oriental Turtle Dove, and House Sparrows! How on earth did they find the place? A good two hours drive further on, a much larger green oasis makes a convenient place for a picnic, and while the team prepares the meal, we find plenty more Horned Larks and Isabelline Wheatears, plus several Common Rosefinches, Hoopoe and a vagrant male Chinese Grosbeak! This awesome landscape is an enigma, with a vast emptiness, yet so full of magical surprises that every journey here is a fabulous adventure for which there are insufficient superlatives.





© Chris Hall

An early flight back to Ulan Bator lands us in pouring rain and a temperature half what it was in the Gobi, but by the time we reach our last camp, near Hustai National Park, the rain has stopped. This sandy area is crawling with small mammals such as Brandt's Voles, Mongolian Gerbils, Long-tailed Ground Squirrels and not so small Tarbagan Marmots. No wonder we do so well for raptors here, with great views of Upland Buzzards and Saker Falcons at their nests on telegraph poles, plus a low flying sub adult Golden Eagle, as well as Steppe Eagles on the ground, and in flight alongside Black Vultures. Other good birds here include a pair of Demoiselle Cranes with a tiny chick, Mongolian and Asian Short-toed Larks, Isabelline, Northern and Pied Wheatears, Choughs and beautifully marked Meadow Buntings, while the large mammals are represented by Red Deer hinds and stags, Mongolian Gazelles and a couple of dozen Przewalski's Horses, which are a rich sandy colour, with neat black manes and matching black legs and tails.



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You know you're having a good time when you no longer know what day of the week it is, but I do know today is the longest day and very sadly our last in the field. After a photo of the whole team, we set off for Bayan Lake, with the usual Sakers, Upland Buzzards and Black Vultures along the way. Due to the recent prolonged drought, the lake is virtually dry, but a small pool covered in Gadwall, Pintail, Shoveller, Teal and Wigeon also harbours a drake American Wigeon, while further observation of the area produces loads more good stuff such

as Temminck's Stint, White-naped and Demoiselle Cranes, Paddyfield, Pallas's Grasshopper and croaking Oriental Reed Warblers, Bearded Tits and the stunning Manchurian race of Eastern Yellow Wagtail. Throughout the ninety plus minutes in this one spot, a Richard's Pipit sings insistently above us, with occasional landings, showing just what an 'upright citizen' he is and we finish the morning with great views of an Upland Buzzard on the ground at relatively close range. While all this was going on our team have laid out another super three course spread for lunch in the lovely sunshine, surrounded by hundreds of free range sheep, goats and horses and singing Mongolian and Asian Short-toed Larks. This afternoon, the action continues with a superb male Eastern Marsh Harrier in a high dipping display flight, and a Chinese Pond Heron, which in flight, resembles a giant White-winged Tern. The red throats of the local Barn Swallows bleed all the way down their underparts, making them look completely rusty below, while the eastern Greylags have rosy pink bills instead of the more familiar orange back home. This fabulous wetland is also the easternmost breeding site of neatly patterned Bar-headed Geese, currently with downy goslings, having a paddle alongside a herd of horses and a family of rare Swan Geese, with one gosling, and a pair of Ruddy Shelducks with fifteen downy ducklings! No wonder these are so common here. In addition to a pair of White-naped Cranes with a single chick, there is a pair of Common Cranes with two chicks, making this a 'three crane day'! With Gull-billed Terns earlier on, we finish up here with a party of Common, Whiskered and lovely White-winged Terns, making it a 'four tern day' as well. On the journey back to camp, the ever-changing scenery is enhanced by 'dust devils' highlighted against a dramatic black sky with occasional streaks of lightening.

After most of the group left on the last day 3 group members with Uugan and Attila visited nice steppes south of Ulanbator in search of Oriental Plover that we missed near Dalandzadgad due to the drought. We first saw good numbers of raptors including very close Steppe Eagles, Upland Buzzards and Cinereous Vultures. Then Uugan found a nice pair of Pere David's Snowfinch giving spectacular views. After lunch we drove further into the steppes and finally found a beautiful Oriental Plover giving exceptional views. A nice male Pallas's Reed Bunting and herds of Mongolian Gazelles were a nice bonus before we returned to the capital.

With so much spectacular scenery, wonderful wildlife, glittering night skies and great people, Mongolia is simply amazing, and we were quite literally blown away by this remarkable adventure.



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## Mongolia trip list - 10-22 June 2017

### BIRDS (IOC)

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indica* Bayaan Nuur

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* Gun Galuut, Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* common

Garganey *Anas guerguedula* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* Gun Galuut, Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Gadwall *Anas strepera* Gun Galuut, Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Falcated Duck *Anas falcate* 2 at Bayaan Nuur

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* common

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* Gun Galuut, Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* Gun Galuut, Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

White-winged (Stejneger's) Scoter *Melanitta deglandi stejnegeri* Gun Galuut

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* 1 at Gun Galuut

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser* Tuul River

Daurian Partridge *Perdix dauuricae* 1 in Khustai NP

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* 2 at Gun Galuut

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* Gun Galuut

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Von Schrenk's Bittern *Ixobrychus eurhythmus* 1 bird at Gun Galuut, 3<sup>rd</sup> record for Mongolia

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus* 1 at Bayaan Nuur

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Bearded Vulture *Gypaetus barbatus* Seen on 3 days in Gobi Altai Mts.

Himalayan Vulture *Gyps himalayensis* Gobi Altai

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* 1 in the Gobi Altai

Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* common

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* Commonly seen at various steppe and desert sites

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* 1 in Gobi Altai, 3 at Khustai

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* 1 only at Terelj

Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus* 3 at Bayaan Nuur, 2 at Lun marshes

Black(-eared) Kite *Milvus migrans lineatus* Common, seen almost every day

Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius* Common, seen almost every day

Eastern Buzzard *Buteo japonicus* 1 at Terelj

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

White-naped Crane *Grus vipio* Maximum 8 at Gun Galuut, 8 at Bayaan Nuur and 4 at Lun marshes

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* Common, seen almost every day

Common Crane *Grus grus* 6 at Gun Galuut, 5 adults and 2 chicks at Bayaan Nuur

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Gun Galuut, Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* Gun Galuut, Ulaan Lake

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* 2 at Gun Galuut

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* Common, seen most days at lakes and rivers

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* only at Ulaan Lake

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* 1 at Ulaan Lake

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* 100+ at Ulaan Lake, 4 at Khongoryn Els

Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus* 1 bird on the last day south of Ulanbator

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* Gun Galuut, Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* Gun Galuut, Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temmincki* 2 birds at Bayaan Nuur

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* Bayaan Nuur

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* 2 at Terelj

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Common Redshank *Tringa tetanus* The commonest Tringa, seen at most wetlands

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Gun Galuut, Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* only at Gun Galuut

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Caspian (Mongolian) Gull *Larus cachinnans mongolicus* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* 2 at Gun Galuut, 3 at Bayaan Nuur

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo ussuriensis* Tuul River, Gun Galuut, Terelj, Bayaan Nuur

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Gun Galuut, Ulaan Lake, Bayaan Nuur

Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes paradoxus* Common in the Gobi, also at Gun Galuut

Rock Dove *Columba livia* Common feral bird in towns, also some wild looking birds (*nigricans*) at Khongoryn Els

Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris* 1 in Terelj, 1 at Dalandzadgad and 4 at Khongoryn Els

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* 1 bird at a plantation south of Dalandzadgad

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* Common in towns and villages in the Gobi

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturates* Heard in forest north of Gun Galuut, 2 seen at Terelj

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* Seen or heard in forest north of Gun Galuut, Terelj, Yolin Am, Hustai

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* 1 adult with 2 fledged chicks at Terelj

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* 1 adult with 4 chicks in the plantation near Ulaan Lake

Common Swift *Apus apus pekinensis* Seen in small numbers

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* Very common, seen on most days

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops saturata* Common, seen on many days

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* A pair seen below our hotel in Terelj

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* Seen in forest north of Gun Galuut and Terelj

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* 1 in Terelj

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* 2 at Khongoryn Els, 1 at Hustai NP

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* Fairly common, seen many days

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* Seen only at Tuul River and Gun Galuut

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* 1 at Terelj

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* Much scarcer than previously, seen in the Gobi Altai and Hustai

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* 1 at the Tuul River, 1 in forest north of Gun Galuut

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* Commonly seen in the Gobi

Great (Steppe) Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor pallidirostris* Seen at Khongoryn Els

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* 1 bird in a plantation near Ulaan Lake



Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus* 3 birds seen at Tuul River near Ulanbaatar

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica leucoptera* Fairly common, seen on most days

Henderson's Ground Jay *Podoces hendersoni* 1 seen well at Khongoryn Els

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* Common, seen on most days

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus* Seen at Tuul River, Gun Galuut, Terelj and Bayaan Nuur

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* Seen at Tuul River

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* Common, seen on most days outside the Gobi

Common Raven *Corvus corax* Common, seen every day

Coal Tit *Parus ater* Seen in forest north of Gun Galuut

Willow Tit *Poecile montanus* Seen in forest north of Gun Galuut and Terelj

Azure Tit *Cyanistes cyanus* 2 at Tuul River

Great Tit *Parus major kapustini* Seen at Tuul River and Terelj

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus* Seen at Bayaan Nuur

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis kibortii* Seen at Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata magna* Seen in plantations in the Gobi

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris brandti* Very common, seen almost every day

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella cinerea* Seen at Gun Galuut and in the Gobi

Mongolian Lark *Melanicorypha mongolica* Seen in good numbers at Gun Galuut, Bayaan Nuur

Asian Short-toed Lark *Alaudala cheleensis* Fairly common in Gun Galuut, Gobi and Hustai

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* Seen at the Steppe Nomads camp in Gun Galuut

Pale Martin *Riparia diluta* Seen at the Steppe Nomads camp in Gun Galuut

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica tytleri* Seen in small numbers on many days

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Seen in the Gobi Altai

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* Seen in Gun Galuut, Terelj, Gobi Altai, Bayaan Nuur

Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* Forest north of Gun Galuut, Terelj

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* 2 in the riverside forest at Terelj

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* 1 at a plantation in the Gobi

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* 1 at Terelj

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* Fairly common in Terelj

Common (Siberian) Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis* 1 at plantation near Ulaan Lake, 1 Yolin AM

Two-barred Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus* Only in Terelj

Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis* Bayaan Nuur

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* A few singing at Bayaan Nuur

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* Gun Galuut and Bayaan Nuur

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* 3 birds at the plantation in Dalandzadgad

Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* 2 at Khongoryn Els

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* Seen only at Terelj

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* Seen in Terelj

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* 1 at Yolin Am

White-cheeked Starling *Spodiopsar cineraceus* Seen at the Tuul River near Ulanbaatar

Daurian Starling *Agropsar sturninus* 1 bird in the plantation at Dalandzadgad

Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* 2 at forest near Gun Galuut, 4 at Terelj

Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica* Forest north of Gun Galuut, Terelj and Yolin Am

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa latirostris* 2 in Terelj

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* 2 at forest near Gun Galuut, 4 at Terelj

Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla* 2 at forest near Gun Galuut, 1 at Terelj

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* Only at Yolin Am

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Forest north of Gun Galuut and Terelj

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus* 1 in forest north of Gun Galuut and several in Terelj

Common Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* 1 at the Tuul River and 1 in Terelj

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* A common breeding bird seen at many sites

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Very common, seen almost every day

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* Seen daily in the Gobi

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* 1 in Terelj, many in Gobi Altai

Saxaul Sparrow *Passer ammodendri* 2 at Khongoryn Els

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Seen frequently around habitations

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* Very common, seen every day

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* Seen at Gun Galuut and Gobi Altai

White-winged Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis* Seen at Yolin Am

Brown Accentor *Prunella fulvescens dahurica* Seen at Yolin Am

Kozlov's Accentor *Prunella kozlowi* Several seen well at Yolin Am

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis macronyx* Fairly common at Bayaan Nuur

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Common at Gun Galuut

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* Seen at Tuul River and Terelj

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba baicalensis* Fairly common breeding bird at rivers and lakes

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* Several at Bayaan Nuur

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* Seen at Hustai

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* Seen in Terelj

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* 1 female in a plantation at Dalandzadgad

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccorhraustes* 1 in Terelj

Chinese Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria* 1 bird found in a plantation south of Dalandzadgad

Mongolian Finch *Bucanetes mongolicus* Seen at Khongoryn Els and in the Gobi Altai

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* Fairly common, seen at several sites

Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus davidianus* 2 seen at Yolin Am

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus* 1 male at the forest near Gun Galuut, 1 female at Terelj

Twite *Linaria flavirostris* Seen at Yolin Am

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephala* Seen in forest north of Gun Galuut and Terelj

Godlewski's Bunting *Emberiza godlewski* Seen in Terelj, at Yolin Am and in the Gobi Altai

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides* Several singing males in Hustai NP

Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani* 1 heard at Yolin Am, 1 in the Gobi Altai

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* 4 in Terelj

Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* 1 female at Lun wetlands, 1 male south of Ulanbator

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* Seen at Bayaan Nuur

## **Mammals**

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* Seen in Terelj

Tarbagan Marmot *Marmota sibirica* Only seen in Hustai NP

Daurian Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus dauricus* Seen at Gun Galuut

Red-cheeked Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus erythrogenys* Seen in the Gobi Desert and Gobi Altai

Long-tailed Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus undulatus* Seen at Gun Galuut and Hustai

Siberian Chipmunk *Tamias sibiricus* Seen in forest north of Gun Galuut and Terelj

Northern Three-toed Jerboa *Dipus sagitta* Seen at Khongoryn Els



Brandt's Vole *Lasiopodomys brandtii* Seen at Hustai and Bayaan Nuur  
Mongolian Gerbil *Meriones unguiculatus* Seen at Yolin Am and Hustai  
Great Gerbil *Rhombomys opimus* Seen in the saxaul forest at Khongoryn Els  
Pallas's Pika *Ochotona pallasii* Seen in the Gobi Altai  
Tolai Hare *Lepus tolai* Seen at Gun Galuut, Yolin Am  
Long-eared Hedgehog *Hemiechinus auritus* 1 in Juulchin Gobi camp  
Przewalski's Horse *Equus ferus przewalskii* Good numbers in Hustai NP  
Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* Good numbers in Hustai NP  
Siberian Roe Deer *Capreolus pygargus* 2 seen in Terelj  
Goitered Gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa* Good numbers in the Gobi desert  
Mongolian Gazelle *Procapra gutturosa* Seen in the Gobi Desert and south of Ulanbator  
Siberian Ibex *Capra sibirica* Seen at Yolin Am

## **Reptiles**

Gobi Racerunner *Eremias przewalskii* Seen in the saxaul forest at Khongoryn Els  
Variegated Toad-headed agama *Phrynocephalus versicolor* Common in the Gobi Desert