



Sunrise Birding LLC & Bird's Wildlife & Nature Tours



MONGOLIA

June 05 – June 19, 2022

TRIP REPORT



Photo: Group shadows at the Flaming Cliffs in the Gobi Desert!

MONGOLIA - 2022

05th June – 19th June 2022

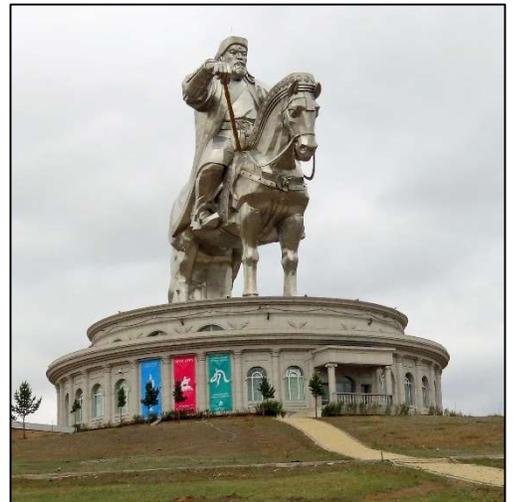
HIGHLIGHTS

Either for rarity value, excellent views or simply a group favourite.

- Black-billed Capercaillie
- Oriental Plover
- Daurian Partridge
- Ural Owl
- Mongolian Finch
- Wallcreeper
- Pere David's Snowfinch
- Ural Owl
- Amur Falcon
- Eurasian Eagle Owl
- Pallas's Reed Bunting
- Godlewski's Bunting
- Grey-tailed Tattler
- Chukar (singing)
- Greater Sand Plover
- Yellow-breasted Bunting
- Mandarin Duck
- Pine Bunting
- Desert Finch
- White-naped Crane
- Azure Tit
- Kozlov's Accentor
- Swan Goose
- Pallas's Sandgrouse
- Siberian Rubythroat
- Falcated Duck
- Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch
- Demoiselle Crane
- Eastern Marsh Harrier
- Asian Short-toed Lark
- Black Woodpecker
- Himalayan Vulture
- Upland Buzzard
- Barred Warbler
- Vega Gull (Mongolian Gull)
- Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch
- Lammergeier
- White-crowned Penduline Tit
- Daurian Jackdaw
- Saker Falcon (on nest)
- Przewalski's Horse
- Alashan Ground Squirrel
- Desert Hamster
- Corsac Fox
- Long-eared Hedgehog
- Siberian Ibex
- Pallas's Pika
- Siberian Marmot
- Mongolian Gazelle
- Toad-headed Agama
- Mongolian Pit Viper
- Snow Leopard (scat, fresh kill, scent marking and camera trap footage)

SUMMARY:

Our first Mongolia tour was a real adventure with a totally fun and easy-going group. We secured many of our target species including seeing 4 Black-billed Capercaillie walking around at close range. A Ural Owl gave fabulous views in the same spot as Black and Three-toed Woodpeckers, while the much-wanted Azure Tit was easily seen near our hotel. Several lakes and ponds attracted many good birds such as White-naped Cranes, Swan Geese, Falcated Ducks and Eastern Marsh Harrier. A pair of Siberian Rubythroats were great to see and Pine, Grey-necked, Godlewski's, Pallas's Reed and Yellow-breasted Buntings were all seen singing. Snow Finches, Wallcreepers and Lammergeier all added extra excitement and a search of miles and miles of the Gobi Desert rewarded us with up to 6 Oriental Plovers. Numerous Pallas's Sandgrouse were always good to see as was a Saker Falcon on its nest with three chicks with nearby Kozlov's and Brown Accentors, Barred Warblers and Mongolian Finches.



The magic of the Gobi Desert and our wonderful Ger Camp near the famous flaming cliffs was only topped by the fantastic food prepared by Nara our mobile chef. We found some excellent mammals such as inquisitive Long-eared Hedgehogs, Jerboas, speedy Corsac Foxes and many other small creatures. The rare Przewalski's Horse gave us excellent views. We caught two Snow Leopards on our camera traps and found scat, scent marks a freshly killed goat and even eye shine at night, but a day sighting of the elusive 'Grey Ghost' eluded us. What lovely people we

met from our fabulous drivers, farmers and our guides Tumen and Oyoona. Endless steppe grasslands, desert and some of the most scenic mountain valley's imaginable made the trip something to never be forgotten. Oh, and back to the birds, Mick found us Mongolia's 5th record and first breeding record of Desert Finch in a little city park! We can't wait to return to this culturally unique country and its wonderful wildlife.

Arrive Ulaanbaatar - Tuul River - Ponds - 05th June

After a variety of flights from, around the world, all via Istanbul, Turkey we all eventually arrived early in the morning in to Ulaanbaatar. The weather was a clear blue sky with a cool refreshing breeze. We were soon aboard our fancy bus driven by George and heading towards our hotel. Beside our bus at the hotel were Pacific Swifts flying around, a singing Common Rosefinch and plenty of Red-billed Choughs. Up on the hillside we spotted several Ibex and even a Siberian Marmot. We dropped our luggage off then had a quick breakfast before driving to an area alongside the Tuul River. Sacred to the Mongols, the Tuul is generally called the Hatan Tuul, and is 704 kilometres or 437 miles long. Our first stop was at an area of small trees a scrub beside the river. Here we soon found Daurian Jackdaws, an Oriental Turtle Dove and a Brown Shrike.

Common Terns flew up and down the river and Black Kites of the eastern subspecies (*lineatus*) often referred to as Black-eared Kite. An Olive-backed Pipit showed briefly before flying deep into cover, then in an area of flowering trees we one of our main target birds a nice male Azure Tit. It was soon to be joined by two others and we had wonderful views. A Hoopoe flew past and Ruddy Shelducks were seen well and Eurasian Magpie's



were fairly common. After

lunch we headed for an area of small ponds. Our first stop was to view a nest of White-crowned Penduline Tit, and we were soon to be treated to wonderful views as the adult birds returned constantly to their feathered ball of a nest hanging in a willow. Nearby a male Daurian Redstart was spotted and a male Mandarin Duck disappeared up a small creek. Once we got to the ponds, we were delighted to find a male Citrine Wagtail in full breeding plumage. On the lake itself we found a drake Falcated Duck, plus Goldeneye's, Eurasian Teal, Gadwall, Tufted Duck and some Great Crested Grebes. On the banks were a pair of Demoiselle Cranes and a few Northern Lapwings. We also found Redshank, some White Wagtails and a singing Horned Lark, the

first of many hundreds to be seen and these are of the subspecies *brandti*.

Gun Galuut - Mungun - 06th June

Today after breakfast we loaded the bus, had a quick check for the Marmots on the hillside and set off toward the hot spot of Gun Galuut. A stop along the way for a falcon sat on a wire turned out to be a Eurasian Hobby. We continued on and made a quick stop at the 40-metre (130 ft) tall, stainless-steel statue of Chinggis Khan. We then went off road across open desert to a couple of small lakes.

We were soon watching Common and Ruddy Shelducks, Eurasian Coot and a few Demoiselle Cranes. Around the edges in the open ground, we found the first of many Mongolian Larks and had them perched and also excellent views of display flights. As we slowly made our way around one lake, we

spotted Pied Avocets and a flock of 60 White-winged Terns. A Pere David's Snowfinch flew in front of the bus so we positioned ourselves to all get good looks at this excellent bird. While watching the



Snowfinch we noticed a family of Isabelline Wheatears with young birds looking out of a hole in the ground. Unbelievably 7 young wheatears came out to be fed by the adults. This seemed an unusually high number of chicks, but their clutches range from 4 to 7 so this pair seemed very successful in bringing up the maximum number! Several Brandt's Voles popped their heads out of holes and then looking back at the lake we found Whooper Swans with cygnets, Common Pochard, Goldeneye, Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe and some Mongolian Gulls, which are a subspecies of Vega Gull. A pair of Eurasian Skylarks showed well and then we drove around the lake to another area where we had lunch set up in a 'Ger' a perfect location. We could hear some

noisy chicks calling from inside the roof of our picnic hut and as we went to leave 2 Rock Sparrows the parents of these noisy chicks appeared. After this we drove to the next lake seeing an Upland Buzzard before we stopped to view a pond with over 100 Demoiselle Cranes feeding with 3 beautiful White-



naped Cranes and one Eurasian Spoonbill. More Mongolian Larks displayed around us and a pair of Little Ringed Plovers came over to distract us from their nearby nest or chicks. Further investigation of this lake produced a Falcated Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, another Upland Buzzard, several Citrine Wagtails and some distant Black-tailed Godwits alongside a Marsh Sandpiper and some Common Redshank. Pacific and Common Swifts flew low overhead, and then we set off through the desert to our hotel in the middle of a waterless town!! Amazing to find out the entire towns hot water is supplied by a Russian power station which had stopped working so no hot water for the next 2

weeks! After settling in to our hotel we had a rest and then headed out into the beyond! After an hour and a half we got close to a forested area. A quick stop got us good looks at two Greater Short-toed Larks, and then a little further on just as we reached the tree line Paul shouted out 'Capercaillie! And just off to the right of our bus was a male Black-billed Capercaillie walking in the open towards some small bushes. We all got superb views before it slowly disappeared behind some scrub. We waited a while and then got out to see if we could relocate it. After a short search it was seen flying off and away. This is a hard bird to see with most birders views being of a flying bird, so we considered



ourselves very lucky to see one walking around and close to us. We then walked down to an area of small trees. Here a distinct call led us to its owner a fabulous male Pine Bunting. Several other birds were then seen, including a stunning male Yellow-breasted Bunting in the same tree as the Pine Bunting. On some wires we also spotted a Common Cuckoo and three Richards Pipits before heading back to the bus and returning back to town and our hotel.



Mungun - Terelj National Park - 07th June

Today we set off early to drive across the vast (Steppe) grasslands to reach our woodland site. A quick stop for a pair of Tolai Hares and we continued on. As we approached a small patch of forest where we stopped yesterday, we spotted a Black-billed Capercaillie under a tree, then there were two more. We watched as they slowly walked into the bushes and out of view. We all got out and quietly walked around to the back of the forest patch hoping they would be there. A brief sighting confirmed they were deep in cover, so we waited and then from the far end of the patch 3 Capercaillies took flight and crossed the valley. Two and a half hours after leaving our hotel we were nearly at our destination but overnight rains had made the final part of the valley wet and it wasn't long before 3 vehicles were bogged down in mud. Our alfresco breakfast was all set up as we enjoyed the cool morning surround by cattle and mountain scenery.



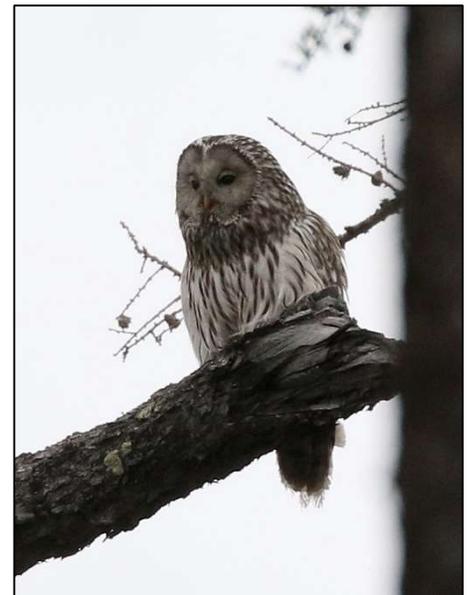
Northern Lapwings and Ruddy Shelduck were flying around as were Black Kite, Ravens and Daurian Jackdaws, while Eurasian Skylarks serenaded us. As the drivers, local villagers and farmers tried to free our vehicles from the mud went for a walk towards some pines and smaller bushes. A Blyth's Pipit showed well and was compared to a Richards Pipit which was nearby. A Hobby flew past and



Cinereous Vultures drifted over the forest. We found a male Pine Bunting singing from a dead tree and a Common Cuckoo sat high in the tree tops. We then walked a small track up into the hills. Steve found some fresh woodpecker holes in a tree and we could see the head of a bird deep inside the top hole. We thought it was probably going to be a Three-toed Woodpecker based on what we could see and the small size of the hole but eventually the bird came out as was seen to be a Eurasian Wryneck! In the same area an Asian Brown Flycatcher was seen singing and a Eurasian

Nuthatch was spotted, as well as a few Yellow Pasque Flowers.

Moving on, we found some nice butterflies and flowers and then a pair of Hawfinches showed briefly before flying off. It was time we made our way back to the unstuck vehicles and had lunch. Afterwards we drove to another patch of forest and took a short walk. Immediately we started the walk a Hazel Grouse called right beside us but wherever it was we could not locate it. Further up we found Willow Tits and some nice flowers including patches of Asian Globeflower. While looking at these a Black Woodpecker called and after half an hour of tracking it down, we eventually got great views. In the same spot some of the group saw a European Three-toed Woodpecker. We then



started to walk back down when a Ural Owl called from within 100 metres of us. We noticed the Daurian Jackdaws going crazy and sure enough they had found it and it flew out of the woods being chased and landed high on a bare branch just 50 metres away. We all got fantastic views as it was harassed by the Jackdaws. But the bird just sat for us as we all got our fill. Back at the bus we loaded up and set off back towards our hotel, noting a group of 3 White-cheeked Starlings along the way. Once back, we packed our luggage and set off to our next destination of Terelj.

Terej National Park - Hustai National Park - 08th June

Today we took an early walk around the river and woodland beside our hotel. A nice male Daurian Redstart was on the footbridge and both Grey and White Wagtail on the shingle island on the river.

Inside the forest we found Great, Coal and Willow Tits, and a Ruddy Shelduck with chicks was cute. We then came across a singing Taiga Flycatcher, and in the same spot a pair of Lesser spotted Woodpeckers chased each other around. A Red Squirrel was found and then beside a small stream we found a singing Two-barred Warbler. Back over by the river a Mandarin Duck and several Common Goldeneye flew past, while a female Common Merganser swam downstream and a Common Sandpiper was walking along the shore line. Back at the hotel we



watched a group of Pacific Swifts circling overhead. We then had breakfast, packed our luggage and set off toward Ulaanbaatar. A short stop just a few minutes down the road found us a group of Long-tailed Ground Squirrels. And then in a nice area of roadside scrub we were soon watching good numbers of Dusky Warblers, a brief Grey-necked Bunting and then a fabulous pair of Siberian Rubythroats. Although trying to get good views of these beautiful birds took a while. A Black-faced Bunting appeared at the back of the tree the Rubythroats were seen but was hard to view and then across the road we could hear the distinctive call of an Oriental Cuckoo but could not see it.

Continuing on we passed through Ulaanbaatar and on to Hustai National Park. We arrived in time for a late lunch and a walk around our Ger Camp. We did not know what to expect with respect to the Gers but were soon



pleasantly surprised at how roomy and comfortable they were, and with a log fire going in each one, who could ask for anything more. Our walk found a Brown Shrike, Hoopoe and Rock Sparrows all showing well before we drove into the park where many Siberian Marmots

greeted us. More Long-tailed Ground Squirrels were also noted before a Corsac Fox was seen running across the open grasslands. A pull in allowed us to get out with our scopes and we were soon watching the endangered Przewalski's Horse with a family group seen high up on a hillside. This rare horse almost became extinct but reintroduction schemes to places such as Hustai has seen it slowly recover. It is believed that this horse is the only truly wild horse predating all other domesticated species of horse. Nearby a Steppe Eagle was perched on the ground and two Golden Eagles flew around and landed on some rocks. Red Deer known as (Altai Wapiti) were spotted and then we moved on. Our next stop had us walk a little up towards a patch of rocks. A Meadow Bunting was singing



from the top of a rock and Pied Wheatears were easily seen. Isabelline Wheatears performed their song flights and over the hills we scoped our first Himalayan Griffons, plus many Cinereous Vultures, a Honey Buzzard which must have been a late migrant and a Peregrine Falcon. As we returned back to our camp, we got fantastic looks at a family of Przewalski's Horses! Talking to the BBC who were making a film about these horses they said that they are very difficult to get close enough to film. Maybe they should have stayed in their vehicles like us!! During the night Steve had a moth light running and it attracted a few nice-looking ones such as Banded Tiger Moth, Lesser Swallow Prominent and *Hyles exilis* a lookalike of Striped Hawkmoth.



Hustai National Park - Bayan Lake - 09th June

Today after an early breakfast and a look at last night's moth catch, we set off to Bayan Lake. As we headed out towards the main road, we saw a couple of Upland Buzzards and also Long-legged Buzzard and Common Kestrel. Continuing our journey good numbers of Cinereous Vultures were seen along the



way including a group on a dead sheep. We had our fingers crossed that there was going to be some water on the lake and on arrival were pleased to see lots of water and thousands of birds in all directions. The first viewable pond beside the road was literally teeming with waterfowl. The first birds we looked at were a pair of White-naped Cranes, while in the pool itself were Eurasian Coots and Gadwall, Common Shelduck, Pochard, Northern Shoveler, and a speciality a few Swan Geese and Eastern Spot-billed Ducks. Grey Herons were nesting unusually in the reeds, but I guess there are no trees anywhere nearby. We then found 4 Common Cranes plus up to 9 Bar-headed Geese, some Graylag Geese, a group of Garganey, one Eurasian Wigeon, Pintail, Eurasian Teal and 3 Red-crested Pochard. A

Common Quail was heard calling close by, and a pair of Eastern Marsh Harriers gave great views as they flew around hunting and returning back to their nest in the reeds. Another pair of White-naped Cranes flew over.

We then moved to another area of the lake and found lots of Pied avocets, Black-winged Stilts and a few Northern



Lapwing, as well as distant Common

Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper and a few Eastern Yellow Wagtails. Amongst the gulls far away in the heat haze we identified Black-headed Gulls and 3 Little Gulls and possibly one possible Relict Gull but the haze prevented conclusive identification so we didn't count it. Up to 30 beautiful White-winged Terns graced us with their wonderful flights back and forth, then a White-tailed Eagle flew past and a low flying



Merlin was spotted. Moving around to another side of the lake we located a pair of Pallas's Reed Buntings and found some unique looking Toad-headed Agama's. Beside an area of reeds, we could hear the booming of a Great Bittern, but could not identify the brown warblers flying around the back of the reed bed. It was time to leave and head back to our hotel in Ulaanbaatar.

Mongolica - Dalanzadgad - 10th June

Today was a travel day as we set off from our hotel in Ulaanbaatar and crossed endless steppe grassland habitat into the Semi Gobi Desert to eventually arrive at Dalanzadgad. Very little was seen along the



way. One particular area of desert held at least 12 Steppe Eagles all perched on the ground. Horned Larks were seen flying around and at a rest stop in just a couple of windblown trees we tried desperately to get good views of a Pallas's Leaf Warbler and an Arctic Warbler. Continuing on we saw a few Mongolian Gazelle and pairs of Pallas's Sandgrouse flying past. On arrival at our hotel in Dalanzadgad few people checked an area of trees close to the hotel and found three Common Rosefinches. Later we met up and had a great dinner followed a beautiful birthday cake made especially for Wendy.

Yol Valley - Dalanzadgad - 11th June

Today after breakfast we loaded up into our four comfortable 4x4 vehicles and their expert drivers and set off into the desert and the nearby Yol Valley. Our targets came one by one as we walked into this beautiful mountain valley. Our first stop was to view a Saker Falcon nest. There were two fairly large chicks sat there, and later an adult flew in and gave spectacular views. Nearby we found a male Barred Warbler and then got superb views of Kozlov's Accentor. We moved further on to the car park where White-winged Snowfinches literally hopped around our feet. Walking into this most scenic valley, a small stream attracted Brown Accentors which were easily seen, followed



shortly by our first Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch. A small deep-sided gorge held a wonderful male Wallcreeper plus a singing Godlewski's Bunting and Common Rock Thrush. A Lammergeier circled above us along with several Himalayan Griffons. More Beautiful



Rosefinches were seen as well as Crag Martins and lots of Isabelline Wheatears and Rock Sparrows. A Great Rosefinch was seen by just a couple of people before disappearing and then 2 Lammergeier's and a Golden Eagle were spotted before Tumen found a Siberian Pit Viper. As we made our way back to the car



park Mongolian Finches and Twite were seen as well as plenty of tame White-winged Snowfinch. We had our lunch and afterwards set off to the other side of Dalanzadgad where we traversed the plains and only managed to find a pair of Pallas's Sandgrouse and nesting Greater Sand Plover.

Dalanzadgad - Gobi Desert Base Camp - 12th June

We aimed to leave our city hotel early to head into the desert. Mick had been out before breakfast and in the local scrubby park he photographed a male Desert Finch a superb rarity for Mongolia with just four previous records. Our 4x4s were loaded up and we were soon off road searching the vast steppe for



our target the Oriental Plover. Not an easy task as there are very few pairs and the distances and habitat are vast. After 2hrs of zigzagging across endless open desert we spotted one and got super views before it flew off seemingly toward the far mountains. We continued our drive finding Greater Sand Plover and then another Oriental Plover. In all we may have seen up to 8 Oriental Plovers but most were distant or flying. So, the 2 we saw well were much appreciated.

Heading ever closer to camp, we found plenty of Pallas's Sandgrouse and saw many flying past in pairs. A brief bathroom stop at a luxury lodge in the desert and we found both Pallas's and Dusky Warbler in the bushes.

Moving on several Tolai Hares were seen and then a super-fast Corsac Fox which one car tried to keep up with to no avail. Eventually we arrived at our wonderful Ger camp which we called base camp. Here we enjoyed a lovely lunch and then later in the afternoon we set off for our first visit into the mountains and a valley nicknamed Snow Leopard Valley. Here we drove to view a cave regularly used by the leopards but no one was at home. Birds were plentiful and our best time was beside a small stream where we watched Chukars calling from the rocks while Mongolian Finches, Grey-necked Bunting and



Godlewski's Bunting all showed well. A male Common Rock Thrush also posed nicely for us, while Crag Martins flew around and landed to collect mud for nest building. Tumen



and a local ranger set up three camera traps at areas where Snow Leopard tracks and recent scent spray were found. We returned from the valley in the early evening to a wonderful sunset after seeing a nice group of Hill Pigeons and many more Pallas's Sandgrouse. While we were enjoying another excellent dinner one of our drivers found a Long-eared Hedgehog, so we all ran outside and got wonderful views of this very cute creature. With no cover to hide from our nosy group the hedgehog ran and hid underneath Mick's backside as he was crouching



down to get a good view. I think it would have stayed there all night. In the evening several little Siberian Jerboas bounced around near our parked vehicles and hundreds of moths were flying into the ultraviolet light Steve had put out.

Snow Leopard Valley - Flaming Cliffs - 13th June

Today we had a fabulous early breakfast in our Ger camp before setting off to the valley of the Snow



Leopard. We arrived and slowly scanned the mountain tops as the morning sun lit them up. Then we left everyone scoping the valley where there seemed to be plenty of Siberian Ibex roaming around. Steve and Tumen went to check the camera traps. The first trap showed promise with 12 video clips being taken. At the car we checked the videos on a laptop and were soon delighted to see that a male Snow Leopard had stopped and sprayed his scent before scratching the overhanging rock. This fantastic video inspired us to know that he was present and active in this area. The video also showed him returning 4 hours

later. We checked the other 2 camera traps which showed nothing. Birds in the valley include several Cinereous Vultures, Himalayan Griffons and singing Grey-necked and Godlewski's Buntings. Plenty of Mongolian Finches and Pacific Swift were seen, before we set off on what we thought was a short drive to an area for Henderson's Ground Jay. 120km and 2 hrs later we arrived at the spot where we only found a Steppe Grey Shrike and some Pallid Ground Squirrels. Other birds seen on our desert drive included brief views of flying Desert Warblers, and the ever-present Pallas's Sandgrouse.



We then returned back to base camp for lunch. After a short rest we took a drive to

the nearby Flaming Cliffs an area that produced the very first fossils of dinosaur eggs, and many excellent complete dinosaur fossils.

Incredibly we actually saw a small piece of a dinosaur egg sticking out of the sand. There weren't too many birds to see but the scenery was spectacular. In the evening we drove to Snow Leopard valley to search for our quarry. We spot lit the mountains until eventually we spotted a pair of eyes looking at us from high up on the cliffs. Tumen has done this many times and explained the difference between the Snow Leopard and how other mammals at night show themselves and behave. So, the likelihood was that this was a Snow Leopard looking at us. We tried to get closer to try and actually see more than just eyes in the spotlight but it disappeared. On the way back to camp we found another Long-eared Hedgehog, Siberian Gerbils and finally a Desert Hamster that Steve and Tumen chased around the desert until they caught it to show everyone.

Base Camp - Red Lake - 14th June

The usual early morning parade of Pallas's Sandgrouse would fly past the camp, and the male Desert Wheatear was hanging around by our toilet block. After another fabulous breakfast we drove to an area of Saxual Trees a small but critically important commodity for nomadic people as it offers drinkable

water, wood for warm campfires and cooking. It also provides fodder for livestock and is an important shelter for wild animals and birds, including the one we were looking for the Saxual Sparrow. We were hundreds of kilometres from regular sites that this bird could be found so our only chance was some patches of Saxual where Tumen saw three birds last autumn. We checked many areas and saw a variety of birds such as Steppe Grey Shrikes, Desert Wheatears, Greater Short-toed Lark and our first Asian Short-toed Larks with the ever-present Horned Larks always in view. Another area had Long-legged Buzzard, and a Pallas's Leaf Warbler, as well as some Gobi Racerunner Lizards and an interesting flower called Desert Broomrape. The Broomrapes are a family of parasitic plants that are all unique to their host plant. They lack chlorophyll and obtain nutrients and water by parasitizing their host, in this case Saxual. Anyway, not surprisingly we did not find any sparrows. We returned to camp for lunch



and had a short rest before heading out for another journey across endless open plains. It was amazing to see a reed fringed lake suddenly appear in front of us after a couple hours of driving. We got out along the edge of what looked like an idyllic shallow lake. Pied Avocets with chicks were easily seen as well as Kentish Plovers running along the shoreline. We found both Ruddy and Common Shelduck, Northern Shoveler, Pintail and a lone Black-headed Gull and 17 Gull-billed Terns. We tried to access the

other side of this beautiful lake but one of our vehicles suddenly broke down and needed a little maintenance to clear the desert dust from its engine and filters before it got going again. A Goitered Gazelle was good compensation and our only sighting of the trip. We decided it was best to return and this we did with another minor stop when another vehicle got stuck in soft sand. We continued on and had a nice ice-cream when we passed through the only small town in this part of the desert. Once back at camp we had our dinner and some of us went out to retrieve the camera traps from Snow Leopard Valley. There were no more sightings on the cameras and apart from another set of eyes on the hill top and the shape of a cat being seen we came away with nothing more. Our return journey across the desert at night produced our second Long-eared Hedgehog and quite a few Gobi Jerboas.



Base Camp - West Altai Mountains - 15th June

This morning we woke early and packed our luggage ready to move on from our comfortable Gers. Our final breakfast here and we were soon on our way back towards Dalanzadgad. We crossed the track-less desert and made a couple of stops. The first at a small pool beside a well where we got fantastic views of many Pallas's Sandgrouse. The next stop was even better, another well that had produced a stream and here we witnessed hundreds of Horned Larks constantly flying in to drink. We then spotted a pair of Oriental Plovers, a Greater Sand Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Demoiselle Crane, Asian Short-toed Larks and a lone Black-faced Bunting. Time to move on and we crossed the steppe to arrive in Dalanzadgad at lunch-time. With a short time before lunch was ready a few of us walked the patch of trees and bushes in town. Mick took me to the spot he had seen the rare Desert Finch he found a few days back, and amazingly it was still there but this time with two juvenile birds! This meant that the bird had breed and it now represented the first ever breeding record for this species in Mongolia.



Excited, myself and Mick returned to the hotel for lunch and told everyone of the news. With lunch over we all returned to the spot and after an anxious wait Paul re-found the birds but now there were 5! Two adults and three juveniles. They showed well to all of us and record photos were taken. It was now time to head to another area of mountains. After a couple of hours drive, we arrived at the tiny village that was going to be our base for the next couple of nights. We eventually sorted ourselves out into this somewhat odd accommodation and then later we set off for our first visit into the valleys of this new area. Our local contacts had advised us of recent Snow Leopard activity so we made our way to a spot where we needed to walk a short distance to get to a cliff top from which we could scan for the elusive cat. It was a beautiful evening but try as we did, we just could not spot any Snow Leopard among the expanse of rocks and cliffs. Several Pallas's Pika were seen before we retreated to the vehicles and return back to our accommodation.



West Altai Mountains - 16th June

This morning we decided we would leave early in order to get in position to scan for Snow Leopards knowing that this was probably our best time of day to find one. We had a quick coffee and biscuits and set off into a very picturesque valley. We stopped and scanned the mountains before setting off on foot down a side valley. More Pallas's Pikas were seen and as the valley narrowed, we got good looks at



Common Rock Thrush, Mongolian Finch, Common Cuckoo perched on the top of rocks and both Pacific Swift and Eurasian House Martins nesting under some overhangs. Black Redstart was noted plus Rock Sparrows and White-winged Snowfinch. As some of the group rounded a corner in the valley a Eurasian Eagle Owl flew across the rest of the group and landed briefly on an open rock. And just a little further on and we could see an old Lammergeier nest. Then a pair of delightful Wallcreepers appeared and showed off in front of us for about 15 minutes, while a Common Chiffchaff of the subspecies

tristis often referred to as Siberian Chiffchaff appeared and then disappeared behind a rock.

It was now about 08.00am and time we set off back toward our accommodation and breakfast. A call on



the phone to Tumen from one of his trackers said that a Snow Leopard had made a kill and must be close by so we quickly arranged for Maggie and Laren plus our breakfast to be brought up to the spot where we were going to try and see this ever-elusive cat. Within 20 minutes or so we arrived at the spot to find it was exactly where we were last night. Just 50 - 100 metres from where we



were scoping last night until 9 pm a camera trap showed a Snow Leopard out in the open at 8pm!!! How could we have been so close! Anyway, we intently scanned every rock and cave near the kill but to no avail. Our tracker then rode his horse around the back of the rocks and hills but still came up empty handed. White-winged Snowfinch and Brown Accentors consoled us and a Himalayan Griffon flew low over the dead goat. It was now near lunch time so we gave up and returned for lunch and a short rest. Afterwards we returned to a different valley and searched until dusk. Still no luck with the Leopard!

West Altai Mountains - Lake - Dalanzadgad - 17th June

We set off early to try and search the endless steppe. After several hours of seeing nothing other than countless Horned Larks and the odd Pallas's



Sandgrouse we spotted a small group of Mongolian Gazelle. A better count revealed 73 gazelles. From here we changed direction and set



off toward an unknown lake. It took us a while to get there and we timed it with the arrival of a sand storm. Luckily the storm didn't last and we could drive down to the edge of the lake. One of the first birds we spotted walking along the shoreline was a nice Grey-

tailed Tattler. There were lots of Greater Sand Plovers nearby and a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler flew out from under the first vehicle and disappeared into the sand dunes. We slowly made our way around one side of the lake adding Black-winged Stilts, Pied Avocet, Little Ringed Plover, Green Sandpiper and Common Redshank. A male Citrine Wagtail hid behind some sticks in the water and both Little and Common Tern were seen. We then made our way back to Dalanzadgad via many bush-filled gullies where we only managed to find Isabelline Shrike and a few larks that we had seen plenty of before. After a long day we made it back to the comfort of our hotel. This was our last dinner with Nara our fabulous cook and a great chance to show our appreciation for all she had done.

Dalanzadgad - Ulaanbaatar - 18th June

Today was our travel day back to Ulaanbaatar so after breakfast we packed our luggage into the vehicles and set off on the long drive. With few stops along the way except for lunch and comfort stops we eventually arrived at our hotel in the early evening. Time to clean up and have dinner with the rest of our team which included our guides and drivers. They were all amazing and everyone thought their driver was the best!!! It was certainly a great team and we had covered many miles and seen a wealth of wildlife few people will ever get the chance to see without going off the grid in Mongolia!

Thanks to everyone who participated in this tour – you are all stars!! Early the next morning we went to the international airport in time for our flights to Istanbul and beyond.

Steve & Gina

BIRDLIST FOR MONGOLIA 2022

A = Number of species recorded on tour B = Number of days out of 15 recorded C = Highest daily count

H = Heard Only N/C = No Count C=Common

This list follows the IOC WORLD BIRD LIST v (10.1) and as such names may be different than some of the field guides and other taxonomy's

A	SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	B	C
1	Bar-headed Goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>	1	8
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	1	6
3	Swan Goose	<i>Anser cygnoides</i>	1	20
4	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	1	1
5	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	3	8
6	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	3	10
7	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	8	20
8	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	3	2
9	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>	1	8
10	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	2	4
11	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	2	80
12	Falcated Duck	<i>Mareca falcata</i>	2	1
13	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	2	2
14	Eastern Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>	1	6
15	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	7	20+
16	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	2	15
17	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	2	6
18	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	1	3
19	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	3	10+
20	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	3	20
21	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	3	6
22	Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	2	1
23	Hazel Grouse	<i>Tetrastes bonasia</i>	1	H
24	Black-billed Capercaillie	<i>Tetrao urogalloides</i>	2	3
25	Daurian Partridge	<i>Perdix dauurica</i>	1	2
26	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	1	H
27	Chukar Partridge	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>	4	4
28	European Nightjar (flight views most likely of this species from one vehicle)	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	1	1
29	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	5	8
30	Pacific Swift	<i>Apus pacificus</i>	8	20
31	Oriental Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus optatus</i>	1	H
32	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	7	2
33	Pallas's Sandgrouse	<i>Syrrhaptes paradoxus</i>	7	50+
34	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	13	C
35	Hill Pigeon	<i>Columba rupestris</i>	4	50
36	Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	2	1
37	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	3	2
38	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	3	80
39	White-naped Crane	<i>Antigone vipio</i>	2	4
40	Demoiselle Crane	<i>Grus virgo</i>	7	100
41	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	1	4

42	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	3	2
43	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	4	20
44	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	4	50
45	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	4	30
46	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	4	2
47	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	2	6
48	Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	5	2
49	Oriental Plover	<i>Charadrius veredus</i>	2	8
50	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	1	1
51	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	1	2
52	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	2	1
53	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	1	1
54	Grey-tailed Tattler	<i>Tringa brevipes</i>	1	1
55	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	4	4
56	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	2	1
57	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chriococephalus ridibundus</i>	3	6
58	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>	1	3
59	Vega Gull (Mongolian Gull)	<i>Larus vegae</i>	4	10
60	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	1	17
61	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	2	8
62	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	3	8
63	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	1	1
64	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	3	60
65	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	2	20
66	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	1	H
67	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	3	8
68	Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier)	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	3	3
69	Himalayan Vulture	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	7	10
70	Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	6	40
71	Steppe Eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	5	12
72	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	4	4
73	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	2	2
74	Eastern Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus spilonotus</i>	1	4
75	Black Kite (Black-eared Kite)	<i>Milvus migrans lineatus</i>	11	30+
76	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	1	1
77	European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	1	1
78	Upland Buzzard	<i>Buteo hemilasius</i>	3	3
79	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	4	3
80	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	1	1
81	Eurasian Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	1	1
82	Ural Owl	<i>Strix uralensis</i>	1	1
83	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Epupa epops</i>	5	2
84	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	1	1
85	Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>	1	1
86	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>	1	2
87	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>	2	2
88	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	2	1
89	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	2	4

90	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	6	2
91	Amur Falcon	<i>Falco amurensis</i>	5	6
92	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	1	1
93	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	2	1
94	Saker Falcon	<i>Falco cherrug</i>	4	2
95	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	1	1
96	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>	4	1
97	Isabelline Shrike (Daurian Shrike)	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	4	2
98	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	2	2
99	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	9	20
100	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	10	C
101	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	6	4
102	Daurian Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus dauuricus</i>	5	6
103	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	6	N/C
104	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus carone</i>	6	N/C
105	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	13	10
106	Coal Tit	<i>Pariparus ater</i>	1	1
107	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	2	3
108	Azure Tit	<i>Cyanistes cyanus</i>	2	4
109	Great Tit	<i>Parus Major</i>	4	4
110	White-crowned Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz coronatus</i>	1	1
111	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	2	2
112	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	3	8
113	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	1	1
114	Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris brandti</i>	12	100+
115	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	3	2
116	Mongolian Lark	<i>Melanocorypha mongolica</i>	8	20
117	Asian Short-toed Lark	<i>Alaudala cheleensis</i>	3	8
118	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	1	1
119	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	4	6
120	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	3	30
121	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	4	10
122	Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	1	1
123	Pallas's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	3	2
124	Sulphur-bellied Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus griseolus</i>	1	1
125	Dusky Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>	2	10
126	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybitta tristis</i>	1	1
127	Two-barred Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus</i>	1	1
128	Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>	3	1
129	Oriental Reed Warbler (Dead)	<i>Acrocephalus orientalis</i>	1	Dead
130	Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Helopsaltes certhiola</i>	2	1
131	Barred Warbler	<i>Curruca nisoria</i>	1	1
132	Asian Desert Warbler	<i>Curruca nana</i>	1	1
133	Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	1	1
134	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	1	1
135	Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>	2	2
136	White-cheeked Starling	<i>Spodiopsar cineraceus</i>	2	3
137	Daurian Starling	<i>Agropsar sturninus</i>	1	1

138	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	1	1
139	Red-throated Thrush	<i>Turdus ruficollis</i>	1	2
140	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	2	1
141	Siberian Rubythroat	<i>Calliope calliope</i>	1	2
142	Taiga Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicilla</i>	1	1
143	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	2	1
144	Daurian Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureoreus</i>	3	1
145	Common Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	4	1
146	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	5	10
147	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	12	80
148	Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	4	10
149	Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	3	4
150	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	8	8
151	White-winged Snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla nivalis</i>	3	15
152	Pere David's Snowfinch	<i>Pyrgilauda davidiana</i>	4	2
153	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	10	C
154	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	8	N/C
155	Brown Accentor	<i>Prunella fulvescens</i>	2	8
156	Kozlov's Accentor	<i>Prunella koslowi</i>	1	3
157	Eastern Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla tschutschensis</i>	1	4
158	Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	4	2
159	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	2	2
160	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	5	2
161	Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>	2	1
162	Blyth's Pipit	<i>Anthus godlewskii</i>	1	1
163	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	1	1
164	Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	1	2
165	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	1	2
166	Mongolian Finch	<i>Bucanetes mongolicus</i>	5	10
167	Desert Finch (1 st breeding record)	<i>Rhodospiza obsoleta</i>	3	5
168	Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	6	3
169	Great Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rubicilla</i>	1	2
170	Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus pulcherrimus</i>	1	6
171	Long-tailed Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus sibiricus</i>	2	2
172	Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>	1	4
173	Pine Bunting	<i>Emberiza leucocephalos</i>	3	4
174	Godlewski's Bunting	<i>Emberiza godlewskii</i>	3	2
175	Meadow Bunting	<i>Emberiza cioides</i>	1	1
176	Grey-necked Bunting	<i>Emberiza buchanani</i>	3	2
177	Yellow-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza aureola</i>	1	1
178	Black-faced Bunting	<i>Emberiza spodocephala</i>	2	1
179	Pallas's Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza pallasi</i>	1	2

Other sightings

A	SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	B	C
1	Long-eared Hedgehog	<i>Taipa altaica</i>	2	1
2	Snow Leopard (Many signs, including spot light at night, scat, spray, kill, and camera trap)	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	5	1
3	Corsac Fox	<i>Vulpes corsac</i>	3	2

4	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	4	1
5	Przewalski's Horse	<i>Equus ferus przewalskii</i>	1	30
6	Altai Wapiti	<i>Cervus canadensis sibiricus</i>	1	10
7	Siberian Ibex	<i>Capra sibirica</i>	2	17
8	Goitered Gazelle	<i>Gazella subgutturosa</i>	1	1
9	Mongolian Gazelle	<i>Procapra gutturosa</i>	2	73
10	Argali	<i>Ovis ammon</i>	1	1
11	Tolai Hare	<i>Lepus tolai</i>	4	2
12	Pallas's Pika	<i>Ochotona pallasi</i>	2	20
13	Mongolian (Tarbagan) Marmot	<i>Marmota sibirica</i>	2	60
14	Eurasian Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	1	1
15	Alashan Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus alashanicus</i>	3	15
16	Pallid Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus pallidicauda</i>	1	5
17	Long-tailed Ground Squirrel	<i>Urocitellus undulatus</i>	1	8
18	Gobi Jerboa	<i>Allactaga bullata</i>	2	6
19	Mongolian Hamster	<i>Allocricetulus curtatus</i>	1	1
20	Brandt's Vole	<i>Lasiopodomys brandtii</i>	3	10
21	Mid-day Gerbil	<i>Meriones meridianus</i>	3	4
22	Toad-headed Agama	<i>Phrynocephalus mystaceus</i>	2	4
23	Gobi Racerunner,	<i>Eremias przewalskii</i>	1	2
24	Siberian Pit Viper	<i>Gloydius halys</i>	1	1
25	Old World Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>	1	2
26	Pale Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias hyale</i>	1	2
27	Butterfly species	<i>Oeneis lederi</i>	1	5
28	Butterfly species	<i>Boeberia parmenio</i>	1	3
30	Knapweed Fritillary	<i>Melitaea phoebe</i>	2	3
31	Banded Tiger Moth	<i>Arctia festiva</i>	1	1
32	Yellow Tiger Moth	<i>Arctia flavia</i>	1	1
33	Moth species	<i>Hyles exilis</i>	2	2
34	Moth species	<i>Marumba gaschkewitschii</i>	1	5
35	Privet Hawk Moth	<i>Sphinx ligustri</i>	1	1
36	Essex Emerald	<i>Thetidia smaragdaria</i>	1	1
37	Moth species	<i>Drasteria picta</i>	1	1
38	Lesser Swallow Prominent	<i>Pheosia gnoma</i>	1	1
39	Scarce Crimson and Gold	<i>Pyrausta sanguinalis</i>	1	20
40	Asian Globeflower	<i>Trollius asiaticus</i>	1	Lots
41	Yellow Pasqueflower	<i>Pulsatilla patens flavescens</i>	1	20
42	Purple Pasqueflower	<i>Pulsatilla turczaninovii</i>	1	N/C
43	Alpine Pasqueflower	<i>Pulsatilla alpina</i>	1	N/C
44	Chinese Stellera	<i>Stellera chamaejasme</i>	1	N/C
45	Forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis krylovii</i>	2	N/C
46	Barbary Nut Iris	<i>Iris tenuifolia</i>	6	1,000's
47	Desert Broomrape	<i>Cistanche deserticola</i>	1	10
48	Locoweed	<i>Oxytropis bungei</i>	2	6
49	Yellow-flowered Skullcap	<i>Scutellaria orientalis</i>	2	N/C
50	Green-flowered Columbine	<i>Aquilegia viridiflora</i>	1	20
51	Flower with no English Name	<i>Dontostemon integrifolius</i>	2	N/C

The above list and info below follow IOC WORLD BIRD LIST v (10.1)

A few more from our trip:



Amur Falcon



Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch



Hill Pigeon



Mongolian Lark



Daurian Partridge



Pallas's Leaf Warbler



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker



Mongolian Marmot



Tolai Hare



Mongolian Pit Viper



Barred Warbler