

# Snow Leopards of Mongolia

## *Mammal-Watching*

### A Greentours Trip Report

13<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Led by Ian Green, Uugan Chuluunbaatar and Attila Steiner

#### **Day 1      September 13<sup>th</sup>      Departure**

Most of us took-off in the evening from Heathrow, though other members of the group travelling from Helsinki, Stockholm and the US had started their journeys earlier.

#### **Day 2      September 14<sup>th</sup>      to Ulaan Baator**

We land at lunchtime in Beijing having already passed over Mongolia's huge swathe of steppe and mountain bathed in morning light. Our connection was easy enough and we were soon on our way back to Ulaan Baator where we were met by an ebullient Uugan who took us out to the waiting bus. It was a short journey into the city however new bridge construction meant the traffic was rather snarled up as we got close to the hotel giving us chance to take-in the mix of modernity and pastoral that is Ulaan Baator today. We arrived at the Zuchi and checked-in and found that it was a rather excellent hotel with really nice warm comfortable rooms – it was already getting cold outside as the sun sank to the horizon. We went next door for a slap-up meal at an excellent restaurant serving traditional Mongolian foods, Korean dishes and even pizza, before sinking gratefully into our beds.

#### **Day 3      September 15<sup>th</sup>      Tuul River, Khovd and to Jargalant Mountain**

A relaxed start this morning with breakfast at eight on the top floor of the hotel, though I don't recall the view! Then it was down to the river, just a five minute drive, for a spot of birding to keep us going until the flight. We did actually manage to see two mammals as well. A Siberian Chipmunk was posing nicely on a garden wall and Dick spotted something altogether smaller and more mouse like that we failed to get a good look at. As Attila and Sandar had surmised the birding was quite excellent. Within moments of crossing the road by the bridge we'd racked up Siberian Rubythroat, Azure Tit and a bagful of Daurian Redstarts and Little Buntings. The latter two species were very common and the male Daurian Redstarts were a picture. The Siberian Rubythroat helpfully stayed out in the open, not often the case with this species. The Azure Tits were joined by Great Tits and White-crowned Penduline Tits and we also saw a Eurasian

Nuthatch. Two Meadow Buntings were much enjoyed and there were several Azure-winged Magpies as well as a real abundance of Magpies. A Goshawk flew over eluding most of us, the dark phase Booted Eagle however was more widely observed. Olive-backed Pipits flew past occasionally and there were plenty of Tree Sparrows. For many of us the bird highlight was probably the lovely male Long-tailed Rosefinch that flew in to a bush right next to us allowing excellent views for a minute or two. A Camberwell Beauty was a nice surprise. Old mans beard seedheads told of a Clematis that must have looked great a month earlier – eventually we found the lovely yellow hanging blooms of *Clematis tangutica*.

We took lunch in an idyllic spot in the countryside, or at least that's what the shopping mall restaurant would have us believe with the stone-bedded stream and astro-turf next to our table! The meal though was wonderful again and featured a huge range of dishes, perhaps midday was a little early to do justice to it. Still we had a flight to catch and our much delayed early morning flight was newly on time at 14.30. Our twin-prop took to the air in warm sunshine and the two and a half hour flight to Khovd passed serenely and flying at only 6600m we were able to see the landscape below us superbly well. It was an endless sea of steppe stretching across ridges and hills, some of them really quite high with extensive snow covering the mountains on the south side. We flew over lakes of intense azure surrounded by fields of barchan dunes, we passed braided river channels and only very occasionally did we see signs of humanity – the odd track, occasional ger, and once or twice, buildings! We passed a mighty massif – Jargalant – our target – just before dropping past a huge lake with steep-sided black hills and into Khovd. Walking from the aircraft into the building we stopped to admire very many Black Kites in the air, these joined by a couple of Black Vultures, an Upland Buzzard and a Steppe Eagle – wonderful views of all in the blue sky.

We met our drivers and after a brief visit to the local supermarket headed out into the arid steppes between us and Jargalant Mountain.

The landscapes were amazing. We drove along a wide valley with the mountain we were aiming for forming a giant bulk ahead of us. The landscapes were certainly very arid with dry plains and rolling desertic hills. However much of the valley to our left was green and large herds of livestock could be seen as we drove. Eventually we turned off the asphalt and headed towards the mountain crossing the wide plain. A small group of Saiga was seen and later a small group of Goitred Gazelle too. Then we rose for what seemed a long time (we were getting tired...) before reaching a little plateau where we could see our gers laid out before us. It was now dark so we could not see the scene, only the welcoming lights.... We sank gratefully into our chairs and ate dinner in a lovely warm ger before sloping off to bed.

## **Day 4      September 16<sup>th</sup>      Jargalant Mountain**

We awoke to see just what a spectacular situation our ger camp was in. To the south the arid steppe descended to a wide valley dotted with lakes and sand dune systems amid the wide grasslands. Beyond rose another range of mountains, these dotted with snow, and the shining

white peaks of yet-higher mountains were beyond. To our north lay the many-layered Jargalant, dry and one moment craggy one moment smooth and rolling. To our east the land soon rose again to Jargalant's sister mountain whose many folded terrain looked fabulous in the morning sun. Our gers were on a flat piece of land below the main rise of the mountain and the gravelly semi-desert around us was now extremely dry. Hardly a twig showed on the little ridges, in the low gullies some vegetation grew. Twite, Shorelark and Desert Wheatears flew in soon after the sun rose and there were Black Redstarts too. Mongolian Finches flew over but didn't stop. An Upland Buzzard was perched not far away. We saw Pallas's Pikas almost straight away, and there proved to be several of them right by the gers. Patience was required to get pictures though!

After breakfast we headed up onto the mountain. There had been no positive news from the horse team who spot the Snow Leopards though we were later to find out they had seen one Snow Leopard in the morning but had failed to keep 'hold of it' and so they continued to search. We went to other areas of the mountain both morning and afternoon, waiting (in the morning at least) for news from the horse team, but also scanning ourselves for our quarry. Neither had any luck on that score today. We returned to the ger camp for an excellent lunch, but otherwise were at two positions on the mountain, the morning's at a relatively modest 2100m the afternoons considerably higher. We scanned... and we scanned... and though we found no Snow Leopards we did find some wonderful wildlife and above all spent much of the day in superb warm sunshine amongst the most incredibly wild and beautiful landscapes. Deep valleys cut into the mountain, the rocky bones showing through on the slopes, sometimes ochre, sometimes greyish, greenish or even maroon in places. There were vast rolling hills tinged yellow by the little remaining autumn vegetation, there were craggy tops, and little streams still ran in the deep valleys. Our search did reveal several Ibex. We found three in the morning and three in the afternoon, the latter we watched for some time. Pallas's Pikas were everywhere especially on the drives up and there was a little Vole too. Roger managed some decent photos but the jury's still out on the ID. Several of the group found Long-tailed Ground Squirrel at a surprisingly high altitude. Raptors were seen regularly. Black Vultures soared past on several occasions and Golden Eagles featured one sitting on a pinnacle and as we descended in the late afternoon there were three not so high in the air, an adult and two superbly marked immatures. Lammergeiers soared past the morning watchpoint, coming really close at times, two adults together at one point. Upland Buzzards were seen but perhaps the raptor highlight was two Saker Falcons which came screaming all around us in the morning, chattering away to each other as they circled, dived and generally caroused through the air. Northern Wheatears were frequently sighted and there was a pair of redstarts down by a stream that included both Black and Common. Mongolian Finches flew overhead, some coming to drink at the same stream. Brown Accentors were a feature there too.

A maroon-winged grasshopper kept on drawing our attention, for both its striking colours and its habit of winnowing through the air and clicking loudly as it went! Plantwise everything was autumnal however one plant still kept its striking pink blooms – *Saussurea* I think.

In the afternoon we stopped by a rock in a canyon where ancients had etched various animals on smooth rocks. We could see ibex, deer, dogs and other less obviously decipherable figures.

We returned to the ger camp by later afternoon with enough time to relax, shower, or wander around before dinner. I popped into the nearby canyon and saw a Red-flanked Bluetail. The after-dinner wander revealed a few rather skittish Siberian Jerboas and a Tolai Hare. I carried on and explored a canyon for some distance up into the mountains hearing Eagle Owls and finding two Lammergeiers roosting on a cliff. Further up a Steppe Polecat fossicked about a slope before retiring to its den. On the way back I ran into several of the Jerboas close to the camp.

## **Day 5      September 17<sup>th</sup>      Snow Leopard!**

Most of us were just settling in to breakfast when the rumour started to spread – we needed to go and quickly. Those of us last in barely had chance to guzzle some tea and down our eggs before we were out in the 4wds and heading up the mountain.

News had come in that the horsemen had spotted a Snow Leopard. They had also said it was on the move....

So we headed upwards with both excitement and fear. Maybe the leopard would have gone? There was no time to stop for anything on the way except... of course a breakdown. On the steepest ascent, and it was very steep one of the vehicles burst a pipe and gear fluid spewed forth. Guldenstadt's Redstart was by the vehicles at this point. Immediately all the other drivers were under or on the engine and soon declared it unfit for further travel so we all fitted in the remaining vehicles (easy enough) and continued upwards. A Steppe Eagle came perilously close to the vehicle I was in. We were really going to the top today. The vehicles topped a long valley and we found ourselves literally on top of the mountain, the track undulating towards a sudden defile facing west. As we approached we could see that this was a tremendously spectacular landform. Snow specked part of the mountain top and indeed it was very cold as we stepped from the vehicles – only 4°C – but made much cooler by a piercing wind that cut through us on the mountain ridge. Some of us realised that we maybe hadn't remembered all the warm clothes we might have wished for in the haste to leave! Though this spot was nastily windy we found places along the ridge with no wind and where it was quite pleasant in the full sunshine. We hurried over to the horsemen and soon they were trying to train our scopes on the Snow Leopard. Ugan took a long look at the first scope taking time to use his phone to get a picture and more than one of us thought it a little rude that he didn't let the customers look first. But we were wrong – what he was doing was quickly showing us on the phone where the Leopard was in the viewfinder – necessary as it was very distant. In fact it was not easy to make it out at all. It was snuggled up under the corner of the rock and looked hardly more than a rather soft looking pale grey lump. As we looked through our 'scopes the initial euphoria at seeing such a wonderful creature was perhaps replaced by a little disappointment. We discussed what to do. Several elected to stay put and see if the Snow Leopard would move and several of us decided to try and get closer along the ridge.

We headed to the next peak and a little beyond it the wind disappeared and the Snow Leopard appeared. So we were able to watch as this young adult (we couldn't be sure of the sex) came out

from behind her rock and spent a while moving her prey around. We could now see this amazing cat well – her (most of us decided...) long heavy tail, her lovely pale grey-white pelage, and this covered in large darker grey rosettes. The prey she was shoving this way and that was deep orange and we at first suspected Ibex but later Uugan suggested that it was probably one of the goats 'lost' by one of the herders up here in August. A Red Fox came by and nosed around, not daring to go close. The fox was most unusually coloured, almost yellowish with a pale grey white-tipped tail. After a while we watched transfixed as the Snow Leopard left her prey and sauntered across and down the hillside giving us a great view before she eventually disappeared behind a rock. I should emphasise that these views were great through a 'scope and those using either cameras or binoculars would not have fared as well. Another Guldenstadt's Redstart came and perched literally on the rock next to us. We continued on the ridge dropped to a lower but closer level to the Leopard. She was not for appearing for a while though so we sat for a long time and scanned. The landscape was wild and beautiful and huge. Peggy spotted five male Ibex on a slope below us. Two of the males had fine horns. They fed for a while but soon all five seemed to be lying on their sides on the steep slope! Black Vultures and Golden Eagles soared. The fox came by – perhaps this was the catalyst that set our cat in motion. She went back up to her prey but again disappeared behind the rock. We could see her head sticking up, the black-backed ears very obvious. After a while she moved again this time heading across the slope, it was our best view yet. She moved toward the next rocky outcrop, climbed it, then headed up the slope across the tundra to the ridge itself before disappearing entirely. It seemed she had left...

After a while we headed back to the rest of the group. I walked along the edge of the ridge seeing four Guldenstadt's Redstarts, two White-winged Snowfinches and no less than eight Altai Snowcock. We took lunch back by the horsemen. 3000m up and full of elation and no little hunger. The camp had sent us up a delicious lunch. We headed downhill stopping for scenery photos and for some impromptu road building. Once back in the lower mountain we stopped for Chukar and Tolai Hare. Further down we spent a while looking for Goitred Gazelle. Three ran across the valley in front of us but we couldn't find more nor get good views. We found a fine Toad-headed Agama and I thought I saw some cranes (rocks- they don't have necks!).

Back at camp there was a chance to relax or, after some tea and biscuits come out for a walk up the canyon. We were looking to see if the Steppe Polecat might come out of its den and play. This didn't happen unfortunately though we did see some great wildlife and enjoyed the quiet wildness of the canyon. Peggy again spotted the Ibex, five of them, making the score Peggy 10 everyone else 0 in Ibex terms today. A superb Eagle Owl flew here and there. Red-flanked Bluetail, Twite, Grey Wagtail and a few Yellow-browed Warblers were seen. A Lammergeier came down the valley, later two more, and on the way back two Lammergeiers were on the roosting cliff.

This evening we enjoyed a fine meal and toasted the horsemen who dropped in to see us. A strong wind meant that night time animal life was not observed.

## Day 6      September 18<sup>th</sup>      Lake and Steppe

Dawn broke with heavy clouds and a little light snow around the ger camp. Definitely not a day to go up we surmised! After breakfast we left at 08.15 and drove downwards to an area of steppe and a large lake. Isabelline and Desert Wheatears vacated the track as we drove and once on a wide dark gravelly plain we started seeing large flocks of Horned Larks. Jargalant rose always to our left, plenty of snow visible any time the clouds lifted enough to see it. We headed to the village of Chandmani where the drivers could refuel and while they did this we searched a delightful grove of birch trees growing on a gently sloping slightly boggy, or at least green area. Fine blue *Lomatogonium carinthiacum* was blooming though sadly the weather kept the flowers shut. The birch leaves were already strongly autumn tinted. The trees held many Yellow-browed Warblers and later a decent sized flock of Black-throated Thrushes, these with a few Red-throated Thrushes too. Sandar found a Taiga Flycatcher in them too. There were several Black-eared Kite nests – some of them only two metres up - and though we only saw one of two of the owners we found many feathers. The highlight though was the avian content of the bushes. Everywhere there were Redstarts. At least five of them were Eversmann's Redstarts, the two males present being particularly beautiful. With them were quite a number of Black Redstarts and just a couple of Common Redstarts. Several Bluethroats including one male were seen and we had to work hard to get decent views of the Rustic Bunting lurking as buntings do. Other birds here were Tree Pipits, Chaffinches, Greenfinches and a Daurian Shrike.

Now we drove out over the plain. We started to encounter livestock in some abundance. We started with a small group of yaks, photographing them with the mountain background. Next were a mixed group of sheep, Bactrian camels and yaks as well as dzhos, the hybrid between yaks and cattle. They all look fabulous in the autumn tinted steppe with the folded snowy mountains and dark brooding skies behind. We drove on and eventually Soronson spotted a Saiga! This is what we had been hoping for though we surprised to see just a singleton. We watched it from a distance for a short while then some of us walked over towards it. They are extremely shy animals and in such an open flat landscape they can see you coming as soon as you are over the horizon – and they make themselves scarce from both vehicles and people on foot, so they are not at all easy to get close to. This one did allow us the grace of getting nearly half way to it before half running and half bounding it exited left. Marc was lucky or skilful enough to capture one bound in mid-air. The steppe here had an intriguing flora with a little clump forming plant dominating. It was in full flower, each plant having either orange, yellow, green, maroon or even crimson blooms. The other plant that formed the sparse vegetation here was *Allium mongolicum*. Then we were off again heading toward the lake. Another three Saiga were seen, these running off well before we got close to them.

Now we were at Durgun Lake. Bird life was immediately evident and we spent the hour before lunch studying it. A group of Spoonbills loafed off to the left flying past later and there were also Great Egrets and Grey Herons. With Cormorants on the sand bar were Mongolian Gulls, Black-headed Gulls, and two Caspian Terns, and later several Pallas's Gulls appeared. Several Greylags flew in to join Common Pochard, Shoveler, Teal, Shelduck, Red-crested Pochard, Coot and many Great Crested Grebes on the water. Goldeneye were there too. Swallows and Sand Martins

hawked over the reeds. On the shore were Kentish Plovers and Lapwings. A Pacific Golden Plover was just inland and in the same area Attila saw what was probably a Grasshopper Warbler and several of us saw a Pallas's Reed Bunting. Other birds of note here were two Whooper Swans, Common Snipe, Hoopoe and Hen Harrier. Ugan made us an excellent lunch which we ate in a little 4wd corral to shelter us from the cold wind. A sharp looking rain shower headed our way looking like it was going to send us into the vehicles but at the last minute it veered out over the lake! The shores had an interesting flora including the little buttercup *Ranunculus strigulosus* and both *Saussurea amara* and *Saussurea laciniata*.

We explored another larger swathe of steppe after lunch looking for Saiga. This area of steppe is some four hundred kilometres long and is home to under six thousand Saiga so you can imagine finding them is not so simple even given the huge visibility. We found only one group – a nice set of five. Too distant to photograph they nonetheless looked great before they fled from us. We also found a wonderful flock of around fifty Pallas's Sandgrouse. Ugan taught us to be patient and watch them as they fly as they rarely fly far. Meantime we watched a singleton close to us on the ground. Then we went to try out Ugan's theory and found it to be true, we got quite close to them both times we flushed them.

We left the steppe behind and re-entered the black gravels. Black Vultures sat watching us go past. There were more memorable livestock scenes including plenty of horses. Then we stopped by a dry riverbed with well-spaced bushes. Immediately we spotted our quarry – Henderson's Ground Jay. We watched one bird for a while before descending to the riverbed for closer looks. There were at least four birds there and we got reasonably close – they are renowned for running off before you get a good look at them!

Then it was back to base arriving at four-thirty to our welcoming heated gers, the outside with a little snow surround – there was light snow in the air. Hot tea in the dining ger was much appreciated too! By dinner time the snow was starting to settle. Dinner was superb – a fine stuffed pasta with a carrot slaw, both delicious, and a pudding of yoghurt and mandarin pieces. Outside it was all white.

## **Day 7      September 19<sup>th</sup>      Jargalant Mountain**

It was still snowing as we awoke though it was not deep, just a couple of inches... however it was cold and grey. Breakfasted it seemed to brighten a little but still there was no way we were going to attempt anything higher on the mountain, indeed even driving out of the camp and turning downhill proved a tad tricky. We descended to snow-free areas and checked out a spring where there were a few Desert Wheatears and Isabelline Wheatears but little else. So we drove down to the lowland along a stream bed. We passed a running camel as we neared the valley floor, indeed there were many camels on the barren plains either side of us. Intriguingly there were none on the well-vegetated valley floor. Ugan told us the camels preferred the very few little succulent chenopods that grew on the barren slopes and that they hated the grass.

Once on the valley floor we had another problem to contend with. Mud. The track was terribly slippery and muddy and we couldn't get far along it. So as the drivers turned their vehicles around we potted about in the steppe. It was raining by now and decidedly unpleasant. We spent an hour wandering around watching mainly small brown birds! Actually there was a rather good variety of them. Asian Short-toed Larks were abundant and rather strangely with them were Rock Sparrows. We saw Skylarks, Richard's Pipits, Lapwings, Starlings, Sparrowhawk, Upland Buzzard, Ruddy Shelducks, and a Hoopoe. We found the mounds that must have been made by Zaissan Mole-rats. Then it was time to drive back up to the gers.

We arrived to find that winter had really arrived. Snow-free just a hundred metres in altitude downhill but at our camp there was 10cm of snow – a beautiful scene – and it was still snowing quite a lot. We very much enjoyed a well-heated ger and a fine lunch. Meanwhile outside things were cooling off a little. We decided that for the afternoon we would take a walk through the snowy mountain scenery in the canyon above the camp. The snow soon eased off and actually as we set off it suddenly warmed up quite a few degrees and we all got rather hot walking to canyon rim. We spent the rest of the afternoon walking up the canyon marvelling at the wintry scene, snow lying deeper the further we went up and the rocky cliffs standing proud in the otherwise white scenery. Of course we didn't see much. However there were some nice species. We again encountered Eversmann's Redstart, again with Black and Common Redstarts. There were Yellow-browed Warblers and Grey Wagtail. Lammergeiers were seen several times including the two roosting on the cliff late on. There were Upland Buzzards, a Saker Falcon and a fabulous male Goshawk who had caught a Chukar. Later there were Chukars too! We saw, heard and examined the tracks in the snow of Pallas's Pikas. Otherwise no mammals were seen.

## **Day 8            Jargalant Mountain            September 20<sup>th</sup>**

We awoke to a beautiful morning, the sun shining on the extensive snow around us! It had been a cold night.

Still by the time breakfast was done it was starting to melt and it felt pleasantly warm in the sunshine. It stayed brilliantly sunny all day without a cloud in the sky. We drove round to the east side of the mountain taking in the amazing landscapes as we went. For much of the drive we drove across vast slopes covered in snow. It wasn't deep enough to hamper the vehicles though and Soronson knew where he was going even if often he couldn't see the track underneath! We stopped by a building to photograph a Little Owl and then it was into a deep valley that cuts right into the heart of the mountain, essentially splitting Jargalant into two. It wasn't too long before our first animals were seen, a group of six Ibex. Shortly after another nine, then five more and then another five. Plenty of prey around here for snow leopards we surmised! Whilst watching these a stunning Red Fox was spotted high on the slopes backlit beautifully as it sat on the ridge top. Then Dick spotted another Red Fox on the other side of the valley. We continued seeing another Red Fox in the valley in front of us before the vehicles reached as far as they could at a junction in the valleys. Here we made camp for the next few hours. We scanned the immediate slopes for a while then as lunch was prepared we took a walk up a side valley.

We were in plenty of snow here, sometimes it overtopped my wellies as we walked up the narrow valley. Some moved up onto the open slopes to scan and found Tarbagan Marmots. I continued up the valley seeing little but scanning and looking for sign. Eventually I found some exciting tracks! A Snow Leopard had been sitting on rocks ten metres above and had bounded down – a small group of Ibex had been standing in the valley – it looked like since before the snow became deep as there was no tracks entering the area. The ibex had it seemed spotted the cat well before it was near them as they sped away up the opposite slope, the tracks showing the frenzy of their flight. The Snow Leopards tracks merely veered round in a tight circle and headed back up to the rock – it had missed. It was not sitting on the rock now. Now that would have been something! I searched the slopes above for a while but could see no sign of it. Walking back down I found an impressive Argali horn in the snow. There was a flock of Snowfinches on the slopes.

We had an enjoyable picnic in this amazing spot, all the time watching around us. A Lammergeier came past close. In the afternoon some walked down the valley and others of us walked up the other side valley. Again we searched the hillsides assiduously but to no effect as far as Snow Leopard is concerned. There were three more Ibex. There were also a good number of lovely Guldenstadt's Redstarts along the stream and some spent some time photographing these. We found an area where there were many rather gory goat carcasses lying in the snow – perhaps twenty of them. We surmised they must have been corralled at the time – describing the scene to Ugan later he thought it more likely that Wolf would have been the killer rather than Snow Leopard. The *Urtica cannabina* nettles in the valley played host to Lesser Whitethroat, Siberian Chiffchaff and some Hume's Leaf Warblers.

Then it was back down the valley and around the mountain to the ger camp, marvelling at how much of the snow had disappeared since morning – the camp was now free of snow. I popped down into the canyon and saw an Eagle Owl. Attila went into the lower valley and saw no less than fifteen Tolai Hares.

## **Day 9      September 21<sup>st</sup>      Khovd and to Ulaan Baator**

After another sharp clear cold night we woke early for breakfast as the sun first rose above the mountain to our east. Then we were on our way at seven, heading downhill and towards Khovd. Just after our first little group of Goitred Gazelles the text message came to Ugan that our flight had been delayed – nine hours! This required a whole lot of reorganisation (hotel in UB rather than Hustai, transport etc) which Ugan dealt with amazingly, especially given the in and out nature of the mobile signal in the valley.

So we descended now without haste and in so doing found a goodly number of Goitred Gazelle, these looking amazing in the morning light, their tan coats shining in the sun. Most were distant but most vehicles had some close to at some point. We arrived on the plain and crossing it Soronson spotted six Saiga. As usual they ran away at speed but then stopped. As some of us went on some of the group walked a good way out to these Saiga and managed to get photographs of

them. Ahead we were finding more Saiga, this time a group of eleven, these stopping in front of a Bactrian Camel for fine though distant photos. Two more Saiga were off to their right.

Then it was on to Khar Us Lake where we said goodbye to Soronson. He had an important mission to help the local municipality to collect rubbish – and in so doing oil the wheels that give us permission to have the ger camp where we do. Down by the lake we found a load of birds though there were mostly quite a way off. There were Dalmatian Pelicans on the lake, and lots of Spoonbills and Great Egrets in the marsh over which flew Marsh Harriers. On the dry steppe to our right was a female Hen Harrier, as well as Skylarks and various pipits. Back in the marsh there were Pallas's Gulls, Greylag Geese, a Curlew Sandpiper, Lapwings, Pintail, Wigeon, Shoveler and Red-crested Pochard. Lapland Buntings flew back and forth. Next we moved to another part of the lake where we found four White-headed Ducks as well as a Black-necked Grebe. In grasses nearby was a Pallas's Reed Bunting.

Into Khovd and we enjoyed a fine lunch in the steppe hotel's restaurant. Our first internet and telephone connection for most of a week kept some busy! Then we were off to the outskirts of the town where we spent a happy two hours birding in an area of trees and Sea Buckthorn. The latter were laden with their yellow fruits and may have been the reason for the presence of half a dozen Black-throated Thrushes, a Fieldfare, and a small group of Chaffinches, Greenfinches and a Brambling. A fine Black-throated Accentor was spotted and there were also Eversmann's Redstarts. A wonderful family of Azure Tits was enjoyed and close to them was a Wood Warbler, probably a very scarce species in Mongolia. There were Lesser Whitethroats, a few male Common Whitethroat, lots of Yellow-browed Warblers and a few Hume's Leaf Warblers, a Daurian Shrike and both Asian Brown and Spotted Flycatcher. The area was alive with good birds!

We headed to the airport checked in and then went back into town for pizza! Completely full we headed back to the airport and the departure gate where there was a further delay before we took off. In the end it was half eleven at night when we landed. At least the traffic was not a problem getting to the hotel quickly...

## **Day 10      September 22<sup>nd</sup>      Hustai**

We awoke after a night of unremitting luxury – the rooms are really excellent – and headed for breakfast on the top floor. Then it was out of town, which took a while though the weekend traffic was fairly innocuous, and then westwards towards Hustai National Park. As we rose out of the city the snow became more prevalent and once we'd shrugged ourselves clear of urban sprawl we were in a region of endless steppe, rolling over ridges and hills to the horizon. This was only occasionally broken by some agricultural land. Only a few gers and occasional herds interrupted the steppe itself.

Raptors were numerous especially Upland Buzzards and there were Black Vultures and Steppe Eagles too. Flocks of Mongolian Larks flew over the landscape. We arrived at our new ger camp around eleven and settled in. This is a permanent camp and thus a step up from the 'erected-just-

for-us' Jargalant one. The gers have solid floors, electricity and lighting, and even little heaters. We took a walk into the dune system behind the camp and soon found a selection of birds. Daurian Redstart, Olive-backed Pipit, Red-flanked Bluetail, Little Bunting and several unidentified birds lurked in the Ulmus bushes that dotted the dunes. A female Merlin flew through. Then it was to lunch which was excellent – a salad and an excellent soup followed by a main dish of meatballs. Then we were out into the national park which starts fifteen minutes drive from the camp. A superb Saker Falcon sat on a roadside pylon allowing photography. Once gate formalities had been completed it was into the rolling grasslands of Hustai. Immediately we started to see Marmots. They were plentiful and sometimes close to the road so we stopped to photograph a few. Some even saw a lovely golden colour form. There were few birds other than raptors. It wasn't long before we found our first Przewalski's Horse, the original wild horse. The reintroduction programme here is proving successful and the horses, initially rather tame, are now thoroughly wild. These ones were high on a ridge and comprised a large group of females and a fine stallion. They moved over the ridge so Uugan surmised they would be more approachable from the next valley so we drove round and sure enough there they were grazing on the slopes quite high above us. Several of us walked up and approached them carefully. From a distance they watched us as they continued to graze and at five hundred metres we stopped and sat down. We photographed them for a while and as they relaxed they came closer allowing us to both watch and photograph these fine creatures at our leisure. There were seventeen in the group including one young foal and scanning from there produced four other distant groups to make a total of 33 animals. Returning to the others who had moved to the nearby carpark we found they also had been watching more Przewalski's Horses and had found thirty-two Red Deer on the snow-streaked slopes in front. We headed back out of the park stopping again for the Saker. We visited the excellent information centre which details the story of the Przewalski's Horse re-introduction into the wild and also gave plenty of information about wildlife in the national park. Next door was a shop...

Dinner was excellent again and included a superb stir-fried meat dish. After dinner we did a night walk into the sand dunes and saw... nothing!

## **Day 11      September 23<sup>rd</sup>      Hustai**

I went out early into the dunes. Before the sun rose I looked for mammals but only managed a Tolai Hare. After the sun rose, and a beautiful morning it was, birds came to the fore. In the next hour I saw many Little Buntings and Daurian Redstarts, a couple of Pallas's Leaf Warblers, twenty or so White-crowned Penduline Tits, a Red-throated Thrush and a Merlin harrying two female Hen harriers.

After breakfast we headed into Hustai National Park. Saker Falcon, Eastern Buzzard, Upland Buzzard, Steppe Eagle and Hen Harrier were all noted on the way in. The main event here were the Mongolian Gazelles. We'd made friends with a ranger the day before and as we drove up there he was on the hillside waiting for us, cutting a most striking figure wearing the thick mongol garb and leaning against his motorbike. He had already spotted a herd of gazelle for us. They

were far away – we could see twenty or so – and when we looked in the opposite direction there was another group. The ranger suggested though that we might find a larger group a little further on and he was right. There were no less than two hundred and fifty Mongolian Gazelles on the slopes above us. They were still a distance away though so we decided to walk closer with the ranger's blessing. Most of the group came along. It was a wonderful walk across pristine Mongolian steppe with wonderful animals ahead and birds around us and abundant Grasshoppers flying about us and clicking their red-hued wings. We passed asters and dianthus still in flower and all about was the aroma of artemisa. Roger pointed out various grass species. Horned Larks, Rock Sparrows, and Lapland Buntings flew about and of course Black Vultures were in the air. We managed to get quite close to the gazelle – we must have walked a kilometre towards them. Sentries monitored our progress and first one or two got up - they had all been sitting – then a few more, so we stopped and studied and photographed them from this point. They were in a wonderful setting with granitic tors either side and a high snow-flecked ridge behind. Amongst and around them were many Tarbagan Marmots. Some of us moved a little closer and now the whole herd were on their feet, watchful... We decided this was enough as they edged almost imperceptibly away. At this point a Corsac Fox suddenly appeared between us and the gazelle causing slight pandemonium both amongst us and the nearby marmots! Then it was back downhill leaving the gazelle to slide gracefully back down to their favoured resting area. Dropping back down the valley Marc and Peggy found a little colony of Mongolian Jirds (Gerbils) occupying a marmot burrow. We watched and photographed these for a while. Continuing, a shy bunting caused some difficulty as it hid so well. Amazingly Marc caught a shot of it in flight and so we confirmed it as a Little Bunting. Another bunting here was photographed by Attila and this proved to be a first winter Black-faced Bunting.

We started back now, stopping only briefly for distant views of Przewalski's Horse, though Sally's shout of 'fox' got us all out of the bus quickly. It was right by the road she said and we looked puzzled – it could have run off given the view we had... but where was it? I noticed some fur and started to walk towards it when Ken hissed 'stop' – it was the fox. Game over – the fox changed from crouching dragon to charging tiger in half a second and barely touched the ground (as proved by Roger's photos) as it flew downhill – our second Corsac Fox of the morning. Daurian Ground Squirrel was also noted on the way back for lunch.

After lunch a few of us headed into the dunes to enjoy Mongolian Jirds, Daurian Redstarts, Pallas's Leaf Warblers and Little Buntings.

In the afternoon we returned to Hustai. The Saker was again on his perch as we headed out. We dropped Jill at the entrance as she wanted to walk along the track and then we headed up into the national park. Abundant Tarbagan Marmots marked our progress but we saw nothing else other than distant Przewalski's Horses. We reached the research centre where some of the rangers were showing visitors (few even on Sunday – some locals and a Swiss family) Red Deer and Przewalski's Horses through their scopes. We took a look too. The tracks divide here but both were closed due to radio-collaring of the Red Deer on-going from yesterday. We were however allowed to walk from here (as long as we didn't go too far!). We chose the hill in front so as to get a good view over the landscapes. A shortish but sharpish walk uphill and we found gentler

ground taking us to one of the granite tors that dot this very Dartmoor-esque landscape. Tight clumps of a *Sempervivum* or close relative grew tight to the dry gravels here. The tor was liberally speckled with vulture droppings and a quick walk round it revealed a few smaller feathers. While doing this I disturbed a Lanceolated Warbler which we all then got a look at as it crept around the fissures between the great granite blocks. A flock of Pine Buntings went past. We scanned the landscapes for a while finding of course more deer and horses before walking about to the vehicles and heading out of the park, stopping for a group of Przewalski's Horses that came really close to the road, and then on to the ger camp. Back there we had another excellent meal – they really cook good food at this camp – and then I went out for a night walk seeing no mammals again but I did see a Long-eared Owl.

## **Day 12      September 24<sup>th</sup>      Hustai, Lun Wetland, and back to Ulaan Baator**

Some of us took a very early option this morning heading with Oscar into the park at 05.45. Our aim was to look for Wolves. We spotlighted a little on the way in but only one pair of eyes showed and that soon disappeared. A small group of Przewalski's Horses were right by the roadside but it was too dark to photograph them. We met up with our Kublai Khan of a ranger – the same guy who had showed us the Mongolian Gazelle the day before – and he jumped in and showed Oscar a faint track over the steppe and up onto the highest hill in the area. We drove up this with the sun still below the horizon but now it was light enough to appreciate the beautiful landscape we were passing through. We stopped just short of the hilltop and spent the next two hours in a magical place all the while surrounded by the bugling, ranting and even 'howling' of rutting Reed Deer stags. It was quite an experience! We were however here to search for Wolves so busily scanned the slopes, none more so than the ranger who was determined to find them. Not long after we arrived the ranger signalled that we could hear Wolves, but we missed in them in the noise the deer were making, which in part was rather similar! A little while later Wolves called again and this time I could hear them but still the group couldn't pick them out from the admittedly loud noise the deer were making. That was the last time they called and search as we might we couldn't find them. In the end the ranger said they 'had flown away'. All the scanning revealed so many other animals though. There were hundreds of Red Deer everywhere we looked including many magnificent stags. There were stags with hareems and stags without, and occasionally we witnessed stags with hinds pushing or chasing away intruding stags. Przewalski's Horses were scattered about the slopes in some numbers too. A big surprise was a group of six Argali, all males with large curling horns, down in the valley below us. As we drove back down the mountainside a covey of Daurian Partridges were seen well right by the roadside.

Back at nine for breakfast we found that Attila and some of the group had been into the dunes where the morning highlight had been around twenty Long-eared Owls. Roger found a headless jird, presumably a casualty of the unusually heavily owl presence in the dunes! There were lots of White-crowned Penduline Tits (Attila even saw a group perched on wires just outside camp!) as well as Daurian Redstarts, Pallas's Leaf Warblers and Little Buntings. Hen Harriers were common this morning too and Tolai Hares were seen. As we gathered by the bus to leave the camp a female Merlin swept past us scattering Tree Sparrows in all directions!

We headed back towards the main road but spent some time in the arable fields before we reached there. There were quite a number of Mongolian Larks here and we eventually got a good look at them. One side of the road had a ploughed field where we could see numbers of Brandt's Voles standing at the entrance to their burrows, and on the other side of the road Mongolian Jirds were giving great views too. A lizard lived in the colony too.

We next visited the Lun wetlands. Here a shallow valley is dotted by small lakes and some salt steppe and marshes. We parked the bus and walked down towards the wetland. We couldn't reach the lakes or reedbeds as the marshy ground in front of us was too wet but nevertheless we saw some good things here. A small and very rotund Daurian Pika sat upon one of the hummocks but we soon got distracted by a colony of Brandt's Voles to our right. These were just a few metres away and as we all stood there they came out to play. Some were gathering vegetation and bringing it down the holes, others stood on their hind legs watching us. Two cuddled very photogenically. Walking on down we found a few Small Bath Whites and also some impressive hunting spiders. There were a number of dragonflies about including Black Darter and another red *Sympetrum*. Further on many of the clumps that rose above the marshy ground provided convenient steps to keep our feet dry had little plants of sky blue *Lomatogonium carinthiacum*. This member of the gentian family like many gentians flowers late in the year. We disturbed Common Snipe and Meadow Pipits as we went and Lapland Buntings flew over regularly. Spotted Redshank was seen and in the far distance we could see Eastern Marsh Harriers and were almost certainly a pair of White-naped Cranes. Easier to be sure of was the Pallas's Fish Eagle that soared over the wetland. A stunning Upland Buzzard came over.

We moved on a little for lunch. As this was being served we checked the wetland outside – Common Merganser was on the river and there were Lapwings, Ruddy Shelduck, three Black Storks, a Pallas's Gull and a group of very shiny Rooks. A little back up the valley were some large groups of Spoonbills with Grey Herons and a pair of Whooper Swans.

Now it was time to head to Ulaan Baator and the excellent Zuchi Hotel. En route we passed so many Upland Buzzards, and quite a few Eastern Buzzards, Sakers and Steppe Eagles. We of course got snarled up in the traffic in UB but arrived at the hotel with plenty of time to relax before dinner. Dinner was again in the restaurant next door with good food, good beer and good coffee.

## **Day 13      September 25<sup>th</sup>      Departure**

Lunchtime flights meant we had plenty of time for breakfast and a relaxed journey to the airport. We said farewell to our Mongolian hosts who had looked after us so well. It had been a memorable trip with prime objective of seeing Snow Leopard achieved. The landscapes of both Jargalant and Hustai were just wonderful in particular the setting of the ger camp on the former. The abundance of Przewalski's Horses and Red Deer in Hustai was impressive and we all enjoyed the large herd of Mongolian Gazelle there a lot too. Sally's Corsac Fox which changed from a 'rag'

hiding in front of us to a 40kmh super fox in the blink of an eye was a highlight. Jerboas hopping around the camp, Red Foxes shining in the snows of Jargalant, Saiga speeding across the steppes and the many cute pikas, jirds and voles we encountered, all provided great memories, as did the rich variety of rather special birds we saw.

## Systematic List Number 1      Mammals

|                             |                                |   |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Tarbagan Marmot             | <i>Marmota sibirica</i>        | a few Jargalant but very common in Hustai   |
| Daurian Ground Squirrel     | <i>Spermophilus dauricus</i>   | the ground squirrels seen around Hustai looked to be this species   |
| Long-tailed Ground Squirrel | <i>Spermophilus undulatus</i>  | a few seen on Jargalant   |
| Siberian Chipmunk           | <i>Tamias sibiricus</i>        | 1 by the Tuul River, UB   |
| Siberian Jerboa             | <i>Allactaga sibirica</i>      | frequent by the ger camp in Jargalant until the snow came and they disappeared  |
| Gobi Jerboa                 | <i>Allactaga bullata</i>       | a few by the ger camp on Jargalant- photographs show them as having a tail tuft not bordered white forward of the black and having differently shaped ears and head from previous species |
| Brandt's Vole               | <i>Lasiopodomys brandtii</i>   | common at Hust  |
| Midday Jird                 | <i>Meriones meridianus</i>     | seen daily at Jargalant especially as one to two animals joined us every meal time in the Ger giving fabulous views and becoming quite tame!  |
| Mongolian Jird              | <i>Meriones unguiculatus</i>   | common at Hustai  |
| Daurian Pika                | <i>Ochotona dauurica</i>       | the cute little pika at the Lun wetland!  |
| Pallas's Pika               | <i>Ochotona pallasi</i>        | very common at Jargalant  |
| Tolai Hare                  | <i>Lepus tolai</i>             | frequent everywhere<br>Hustai   |
| Snow Leopard                | <i>Panthera uncia</i>          | 1 on Jargalant Mountain. Though distant we did get to spend all morning with the Snow Leopard though it wasn't visible for much of the time   |
| Corsac Fox                  | <i>Vulpes corsac</i>           | 2 seen in daylight in Hustai  |
| Red Fox                     | <i>Vulpes vulpes</i>           | a scattered of records including at the ger camp on Jargalant, one interested in the Snow Leopards food, and several high on the mountain in deep snow                                    |
| Steppe Polecat              | <i>Mustela eversmanii</i>      | 1 in the canyon by the ger camp on Jargalant (leader only)  |
| Przewalski's Horse          | <i>Equus ferus przewalskii</i> | many groups seen in Hustai on all three days  |
| Red Deer                    | <i>Cervus elaphus</i>          | locally frequent in Hustai – very many on the last morning there-in   |
| Goitred Gazelle             | <i>Gazella subgutturosa</i>    | a few on the way in to Jargalant Mountain and quite a few on the way out from there   |
| Mongolian Gazelle           | <i>Procapra gutturosa</i>      | c.300 in Hustai   |
| Saiga                       | <i>Saiga tatarica</i>          | someone the way in to Jargalant, 9 on the plains north of Jargalant and 16 on the way out from Jargalant  |
| Siberian Ibex               | <i>Capra sibirica</i>          | a total of only 4 seen on Jargalant Mountain  |

Argali

*Ovis ammon*

6 in Hustai was a surprise. A large horn found on Jargalant

The following species were noted only by sign

Long-eared Hedgehog

*Hemieichinus auritus*

we didn't see any but there were tracks at

Grey Wolf

*Lupus lupus*

heard early morning in Hustai

## Systematic List Number 2

## Birds

|                       |                               |   |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Altai Snowcock        | <i>Tetraogallus altaicus</i>  | c.8 on Jargalant (leader only)  |
| Daurian partridge     | <i>Perdix dauurica</i>        | a covey of 6 seen superbly in Hustai.   |
| Chukar                | <i>Alectoris chukar</i>       | a few Jargalant Mountain – one was the prey of a  |
| Great Crested Grebe   | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>     | wetlands  |
| Black-necked Grebe    | <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>   | Khar Us Lake  |
| Whooper swan          | <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>          | 4 at Durgun Lake and 2 in the Lun wetland   |
| Greylag goose         | <i>Anser anser</i>            | wetlands  |
| Shelduck              | <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>        | 6 at Durgun Lake  |
| Ruddy shelduck        | <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>     | wetlands  |
| Eurasian Wigeon       | <i>Anas penelope</i>          | wetlands  |
| Mallard               | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>     | wetlands  |
| Northern shoveler     | <i>Anas clypeata</i>          | wetlands  |
| Northern pintail      | <i>Anas acuta</i>             | wetlands  |
| Common teal           | <i>Anas crecca</i>            | wetlands  |
| Red-crested pochard   | <i>Rhodonessa rufina</i>      | wetlands  |
| Pochard               | <i>Aythya ferina</i>          | Durgun Lake   |
| Tufted duck           | <i>Aythya fuligula</i>        | Khar Us Lake  |
| Goldeneye             | <i>Bucephala clangula</i>     | Durgun Lake   |
| Goosander             | <i>Mergus merganser</i>       | Lun wetlands  |
| White-headed Duck     | <i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>    | 4 Khar Us Lake  |
| Dalmatian pelican     | <i>Pelecanus crispus</i>      | 3 Khar Us Lake  |
| Great cormorant       | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>    | wetlands  |
| Great egret           | <i>Casmerodius alba</i>       | wetlands  |
| Grey heron            | <i>Ardea cinerea</i>          | wetlands  |
| Eurasian Spoonbill    | <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>    | locally common at wetlands  |
| Black stork           | <i>Ciconia nigra</i>          | Single over Ulaan Baator and 3 Lun wetland  |
| Black-eared kite      | <i>Milvus lineatus</i>        | throughout, sometime abundant   |
| Lammegier             | <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>      | daily on Jargalant Mountain   |
| Black vulture         | <i>Aegypius monachus</i>      | widespread  |
| Western marsh harrier | <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>     | 4+ Khar Us Lake   |
| Eastern marsh harrier | <i>Circus spilonotus</i>      | 2 Lun wetland   |
| Hen harrier           | <i>Circus cyaneus</i>         | scattered, many in the dunes behind Hustai ger camp   |
| Eurasian sparrowhawk  | <i>Accipiter nisus</i>        | scattered records   |
| Northern goshawk      | <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>     | 1 over Ulaan Baator and a fine male with a Chukar in his talons in the canyon behind the ger camp at Jargalant Mountain |
| Eastern buzzard       | <i>Buteo japonicus</i>        | frequent in Hustai area   |
| Upland buzzard        | <i>Buteo hemilasius</i>       | daily, sometimes in large numbers   |
| Booted Eagle          | <i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>    | scattered – noted on 3 days   |
| Steppe eagle          | <i>Aquila nipalensis</i>      | widespread generally in low numbers   |
| Golden eagle          | <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>      | a few daily on Jargalant Mountain   |
| Pallas's Fish Eagle   | <i>Haliaeetus leucoryphus</i> | 1 Lun wetland   |
| Common kestrel        | <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>      | scattered   |
| Merlin                | <i>Falco columbarius</i>      | seen daily around the ger camp in Hustai.   |

|                             |                                |   |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Saker                       | <i>Falco cherrug</i>           | wonderful to see this bird almost daily   |
| Demoiselle crane            | <i>Grus virgo</i>              | 300+ migrating as we arrived at Hustai ger camp   |
| White-naped Crane           | <i>Grus vipio</i>              | 2 at Lun wetlands must have been this species – hugely distant though!  |
| Common coot                 | <i>Fulica atra</i>             | wetlands  |
| Common snipe                | <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>     | Durgun Lake and Lun wetland   |
| Curlew Sandpiper            | <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>     | Khar Us Lake  |
| Spotted redshank            | <i>Tringa erythropus</i>       | 1 Lun wetland   |
| Pacific golden plover       | <i>Pluvialis fulva</i>         | 1 Durgun Lake   |
| Little Ringed Plover        | <i>Charadrius dubius</i>       | Khar Us Lake  |
| Kentish Plover              | <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i> | Durgun Lake   |
| Northern lapwing            | <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>       | wetlands  |
| Pallas' gull                | <i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>       | Small numbers at all wetlands   |
| Mongolian gull              | <i>Larus mongolicus</i>        | Small numbers at all wetlands   |
| Black-headed gull           | <i>Larus ridibundus</i>        | wetlands  |
| Caspian tern                | <i>Sterna caspia</i>           | 2 Durgun Lake   |
| Little owl                  | <i>Athene noctua</i>           | 2 Jaragalant Mountain, 1 Hustai   |
| Eurasian Eagle Owl          | <i>Bubo bubo</i>               | a pair in the canyon by the ger camp on Jargalant were seen several times and hunted around the camp at night |
| Long-eared Owl              | <i>Asio otus</i>               | c.20 in dunes behind Hustai ger camp  |
| Pallas' sandgrouse          | <i>Syrrhaptes paradoxus</i>    | c.50 on the plains north of Jargalant   |
| Rock pigeon                 | <i>Columba livia</i>           | scattered   |
| Hill pigeon                 | <i>Columba rupestris</i>       | a flock on the plains north of Jargalant  |
| Hoopoe                      | <i>Upupa epops</i>             | singles twice on lower slopes of Jargalant  |
| Daurian shrike              | <i>Lanius isabellinus</i>      | scattered – singles thrice  |
| Azure-winged Magpie         | <i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>        | several in Ulaan Baator   |
| Magpie                      | <i>Pica pica</i>               | locally abundant Ulaan Baator and Hustai  |
| Henderson's ground-jay      | <i>Podoces hendersoni</i>      | 4 noted in valley below the ger camp  |
| Red-billed chough           | <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> | widespread – noted on 7 days  |
| Daurian jackdaw             | <i>Corvus dauuricus</i>        | some seen from bus on the way to Hustai   |
| Rook                        | <i>Corvus frugilegus</i>       | steppes between UB and Hustai, also Lun   |
| Carrion Crow                | <i>Corvus corone</i>           | scattered – but mainly near UB  |
| Raven                       | <i>Corvus corax</i>            | recorded daily  |
| Azure Tit                   | <i>Cyanistes cyanus</i>        | Tuul River in UB and also Khovd trees   |
| Great Tit                   | <i>Parus major</i>             | Tuul River in UB and also Khovd trees   |
| White-crowned Penduline Tit | <i>Remiz coronatus</i>         | Tuul River in UB, daily at Hustai   |
| Bearded Reedling            | <i>Panurus biarmicus</i>       | Khar Us lake  |
| Eurasian Skylark            | <i>Alauda arvensis</i>         | frequent  |
| Horned lark                 | <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>    | widespread and abundant   |
| Mongolian Lark              | <i>Melanocorypha mongolica</i> | scattered in Hustai area – noted on 3 days  |
| Asian Short-toed Lark       | <i>Alaudala cheleensis</i>     | lowlands around Jargalant   |
| Sand Martin                 | <i>Riparia riparia</i>         | lakes around Jargalant – noted on 2 days  |
| Barn Swallow                | <i>Hirundo rustica</i>         | scattered – noted on 3 days   |
| Eurasian crag martin        | <i>Hirundo rupestris</i>       | between Jargalant and Khvod   |
| Hume's warbler              | <i>Phylloscopus humei</i>      | eastern valley of Jargalant and also Khovd  |
| Yellow-browed warbler       | <i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>  | widespread – much the commonest phyllosc  |
| Pallas's leaf warbler       | <i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i> | frequent in the dunes at Hustai   |

|                         |                                  |  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Dusky warbler           | <i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>     | just 1 Khovd   |
| Common Chiffchaff       | <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>    | tristis form. Jargalant and Khovd                                  |
| Wood warbler            | <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>   | 1 Khovd was a surprise   |
| Grasshopper warbler     | <i>Locustella naevia</i>         | 1 at Durgun Lake was probably this species (leader only)           |
| Lanceolated warbler     | <i>Locustella lanceolata</i>     | 1 watched well in a granite tor at Hustai                          |
| Lesser whitethroat      | <i>Sylvia curruca</i>            | several in Jargalant and Khovd                                     |
| Common whitethroat      | <i>Sylvia communis</i>           | 1 Khovd (leader only)  |
| Eurasian Nuthatch       | <i>Sitta europaea</i>            | 1 Tuul River in UB   |
| Starling                | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>          | 3 Hustai   |
| Red-throated thrush     | <i>Turdus ruficollis</i>         | 3 in trees by Chandmani village, 1 in the dunes behind Hustai      |
| Black-throated thrush   | <i>Turdus atrogularis</i>        | 25 in trees by Chandmani village, several in Khovd                 |
| Fieldfare               | <i>Turdus pilaris</i>            | probably 1, Khovd  |
| Spotted flycatcher      | <i>Muscicapa striata</i>         | 1 Khovd  |
| Asian brown flycatcher  | <i>Muscicapa latirostris</i>     | 1 in trees by Chandmani village, 2 Khovd                           |
| Taiga flycatcher        | <i>Ficedula albicilla</i>        | singles in trees by Chandmani village, and some in dunes at Hustai |
| Siberian rubythroat     | <i>Luscinia calliope</i>         | a fine male Tuul River in UB                                       |
| Bluethroat              | <i>Luscinia svecica</i>          | several in trees by Chandmani village                              |
| Red-flanked bluetail    | <i>Luscinia cyanura</i>          | scattered throughout – noted on 4 days.                            |
| Black redstart          | <i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>      | locally frequent – noted on 6 days                                 |
| Common redstart         | <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>   | scattered – noted on 4 days  |
| Daurian redstart        | <i>Phoenicurus aureus</i>        | locally common at Tuul River in UB and Hustai                      |
| Guldenstadt's redstart  | <i>Phoenicurus erythrogaster</i> | frequent at highest elevations on Jargalant                        |
| Eversmann's Redstart    | <i>Phoenicurus eversmanni</i>    | 5+ in trees by Chandmani village, 3+ in Khovd                      |
| Siberian Stonechat      | <i>Saxicola maurus</i>           | 1 Khovd  |
| Northern Wheatear       | <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>         | frequent on Jargalant – noted on 4 days                            |
| Isabelline Wheatear     | <i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>       | frequent on Jargalant – noted on 6 days                            |
| Desert Wheatear         | <i>Oenanthe deserti</i>          | frequent on Jargalant – noted on 5 days                            |
| Pied Wheatear           | <i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>       | Jargalant – noted on 2 days  |
| House sparrow           | <i>Passer domesticus</i>         | UB and Hustai  |
| Tree sparrow            | <i>Passer montanus</i>           | UB, Khovd and Hustai   |
| Rock sparrow            | <i>Petronia petronia</i>         | locally frequent, some flocks – noted on 6 days                    |
| White-winged snowfinch  | <i>Montifringilla nivalis</i>    | locally frequent Jargalant - noted on 4 days                       |
| Brown accentor          | <i>Prunella fulvescens</i>       | Jargalant – noted on 2 days  |
| Black-throated accentor | <i>Prunella atrogularis</i>      | 1 Khovd  |
| White wagtail           | <i>Motacilla alba</i>            | frequent throughout – noted on 7 days                              |
| Western yellow wagtail  | <i>Motacilla flava</i>           | Khar Us Lake   |
| Grey wagtail            | <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>         | Jargalant – noted on 2 days  |
| Richard's pipit         | <i>Anthus richardi</i>           | scattered – noted on 3 days  |
| Blyth's pipit           | <i>Anthus godlewskii</i>         | 1 Khar Us Lake   |
| Olive-backed pipit      | <i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>           | Tuul River in UB and 1 dunes at Hustai                             |
| Tree pipit              | <i>Anthus trivialis</i>          | scattered – noted on 2 days  |
| Meadow pipit            | <i>Anthus pratensis</i>          | scattered – noted on 3 days  |
| Water pipit             | <i>Anthus spinoletta</i>         | scattered – noted on 3 days  |
| Chaffinch               | <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>         | widely scattered – noted on 4 days                                 |
| Brambling               | <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>  | a single, Khovd  |

|                       |                               |   |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Greenfinch            | <i>Carduelis chloris</i>      | a single, Khovd                                 |
| Twite                 | <i>Carduelis flavirostris</i> | Jargalant – noted on 4 days                     |
| Mongolian finch       | <i>Bucanetes mongolicus</i>   | Jargalant – noted on 2 days                     |
| Long-tailed rosefinch | <i>Uragus sibiricus</i>       | a fine male at the Tuul River in UB             |
| Pine Bunting          | <i>Emberiza leucocephalos</i> | a flock at Hustai                               |
| Godlewski's bunting   | <i>Emberiza godlewski</i>     | single on Jargalant (leader only)               |
| Meadow Bunting        | <i>Emberiza cioides</i>       | 2 Tuul River in UB                              |
| Little bunting        | <i>Emberiza pusilla</i>       | locally common – noted on 4 days                |
| Black-faced bunting   | <i>Emberiza spodocephala</i>  | a first winter in Hustai                        |
| Pallas's reed bunting | <i>Emberiza pallasi</i>       | singles Durgun Lake and Khar Us Lake            |
| Common reed bunting   | <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>   | 1 Hustai  |
| Rustic Bunting        | <i>Emberiza rustica</i>       | 1 in Chandmani village                          |
| Lapland bunting       | <i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>   | Locally frequent near wetlands- noted on 4 days |