

KAZAKHSTAN

A report on birds seen on a birding trip to Kazakstan
from 5 – 20 May 2007



Observatory, Tien Shan Mountains (3000 m. alt.)

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Other Participants:

Jos Aarts

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INTRODUCTION

Kazakstan is the place to visit if you are interested in some of the most sought-after species in the Western Palearctic.

Besides that it offers some fantastic scenery and a great variety of habitats.

Since the country became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991 it became more and more accessible for birders.

After reading the 2003 report from David van de Schoor and the positive experience another group of Belgian birders had in May 2006 I decided it was time to go.

It did not take long for me to form a small team of birders. Besides my brother Frans, 4 other local birders Rob Bouwman, Wiel Poelmans, Jos Aarts and Jan-Hein van Steenis joined me.

I contacted a small new birding company, Central Asia Birding led by a Dutchman, Machiel Valkenburg and his Kazak woman Madina.

The advantage of this company is that they offer flexible itineraries for a reasonable price.

After extensive e-mail contact we agreed on the itinerary and the price.

The ground arrangement provided by Central Asia Birding cost us €1925.- a person.

This included all transport, accommodation, food and drinks, use of local guides and the return flight Almaty-Astana.

This trip report covers a 16-day trip to south-east and northern Kazakstan.

THE COUNTRY

Kazakstan is a huge country in Central Asia, situated at the edge of the Western Palearctic.

With an area of more than 2.700.000 km it is the ninth largest country in the world.

It stretches from the delta of the Wolga in the west until the border with Mongolia and China in the east at a distance of almost 3000 km and from Russia in the north to Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in the south of more than 1800 km.

The greatest part of the landscape is formed by endless steppes and semi-deserts, intersected by rivers and dotted with numerous lakes.

In the east and south one find the mighty mountain chains of the Altai and Tien Shan mountains with snow-covered peaks of up to 6000 meters.

Despite its size Kazakstan only harbours 15 million inhabitants and in fact large parts of the country are almost uninhabited. Kazakstan is further a safe country to travel with a stable regime.

But the visiting birders are attracted to this country by the fact that they can observe species like **Himalayan Snowcock, Upland Buzzard, Ibisbill, Caspian Plover, Great Black-headed Gull, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Yellow-eyed Dove, White-winged Woodpecker, White-winged Lark, Black Lark, Citrine Wagtail, Turkestan Shrike, Altai Accentor, Black-throated Accentor, Brown Accentor, White-browed Tit-Warbler, Booted warbler, Sykes's Warbler, Sulphur-bellied Warbler, Eversmann's Redstart, Guldenstadt's Redstart, White-tailed Rubythroat, Songar Tit, Azure Tit, Turkestan Tit, White-crowned Penduline-Tit, Saxaul Sparrow, Mongolian Finch, Red-mantled Rosefinch, White-winged Grosbeak, Meadow Bunting, Grey-necked Bunting and White-capped Bunting.**

All of the above mentioned species were seen by us with the exception of Caspian Plover. Despite a lot of effort we missed this species.

VISA

A Visa is absolutely necessary for Kazakstan and is rather expensive.

We arranged that through our local travel agency and had to pay €85,- for it.

MONEY

The currency used in Kazakstan is the Tenge

During our stay the exchange rate was: 1€= 160 Tenge

Upon arrival we all changed €100.- and this was sufficient for all alcoholic drinks, gifts and tips to guides and drivers.

GETTING THERE – FLIGHT

We flew with KLM from Amsterdam directly to Almaty. (6½ hour flight)

For this return flight we had to pay €950,- including taxes. Both flights were trouble free.

GETTING AROUND – CAR

During the Almaty leg of the trip we used a large van in the desert and semi-desert areas and 2 four-wheel drive vans in the Tien Shan Mountains.

Both were comfortable with enough space and airco.

In the Astana area we used 3 different vans and these were a lot less convenient.

No airco, no opening windows, too small and dusty.

Machiel assured us that this will be improved in the near future.

ACCOMODATION

In Almaty we stayed 4 nights in hotel Tau Samal with had nice spacious rooms with private bathrooms.

In the Charyn area we stayed 2 nights at the basic Hunting Lodge (Ash Tree Grove Lodge) along the Charyn River. Great location but the main disadvantage is that there were no washing facilities at the time of our visit.

In the Taukum desert we stayed 3 nights at a Yurt camp specially erected for us. This was an experience in itself. Our organisation also provided toilet and shower facilities at this site.

In the Tien Shan Mountains we stayed 3 nights at the Observatory. The accommodation here was basic but ok and there was a toilet and shower for every 3 rooms.

In the Astana area we stayed 2 nights at a private house in the village of Korgalzhyn which was very nice and 1 night in small cabins at the accommodation area of the Nature Reserve. Rather basic but sufficient.

FOOD & DRINKS

We were provided by plenty of food. We either had predawn breakfasts at hotels or out in the field. The picnic lunch was mostly out in the field at sometimes really idyllic sites.

Dinner was at hotels or in the central yurt in our yurt camp around 20.00 in the evening.

We had mineral water at our disposal all day and from time to time we were offered tea and coffee.

The quality of the food varied but was mostly of good quality.

Jos Aarts made sure that every night we had a few beers and was therefore quickly named “The Beer Hunter” by us.

LANGUAGE

Hardly anybody in Kazakstan speaks English and the main language is Russian.

During the whole period we were accompanied by Madina Rasulbaeva who spoke excellent English and who made sure that our trip went as smoothly as possible. She did an outstanding job.

WEATHER

During our stay we experienced all kinds of weather conditions so it is important that you come prepared for these conditions. You have to bring a good jacket, gloves and cap for cold weather conditions, rain gear for wet weather but also clothes for warm/hot weather conditions.

We had beautiful sunny, warm weather in the desert areas but also rain and a cold, nasty wind. In the foothills of Tien Shan we had snow one day but on our second visit we had clear, blue skies with very agreeable temperatures.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Kazakstan is a very safe country to travel around and we did not have any hassle whatsoever. Four persons of our team, including me and the guide Vladimir, had some stomach problems for one/two days. I am not sure if these problems were food related but anyway it did not have much influence on our birding.

BIRDING

Generally our itinerary worked out fine. During the trip we were also able to alter minor changes to the program. Important is that you have some extra time planned in case you experience bad weather conditions as we did once.

We also spent quite some time in the vehicle but that is unfortunately inevitable because the good birding areas are not always close by.

During the Almaty leg of the trip Vladimir Kolbintsev was our guide. He is a really nice guy with great knowledge of Kazakstan history, plants, reptiles and birds.

He is not an expert birder but he knows where to go for the specialties.

In the Astana area we were supposed to have Alexei Koshkin for 4 days but it turned out that he was overbooked so instead we had him only for less than 2 days. We did not really miss anything because of this with the exception of Pine Bunting. He had explained to the driver where to stop for this species on the way back to Astana but that was a complete waste of time.

In the end we did not have enough time to visit another stake out for this species.

EQUIPMENT

We used 4 scopes and this was sufficient to obtain excellent views of most species.

Jan-Hein van Steenis used a Mini-disc player with a good Sennheiser mike to record songs and calls and Wiel Poelmans brought an I-pod with him with a selection of recordings of the CD-collection of Birdsongs of

Rob Bouwman took pictures digiscoping as well as using a 500mm telelens and Wiel used a 400 mm telelens.

This way a nice collection of birds observed during this trip was recorded.

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USEFUL ADRESSES

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITES VISITED

AREA EAST OF ALMATY - CHARYN REGION

SUGATY VALLEY/PLAINS – KOKPEK PASS – CHARYN VALLEY/CANYON – KEGEN PASS

The Sugaty Plains provides the best chance of finding the sought-after **Pallas's Sandgrouse**. Other species found here include **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, **Short-toed Larks**, **Shore Larks**, **Desert Wheatears** and **Asian Desert Warbler**.

The Kokpek pass area is reliable for finding **White-capped Bunting**, **Rock Bunting** and **Red-headed Bunting** while overhead **Golden Eagle**, **Griffon Vulture** and **Saker** are possible.

At the Charyn Canyon one can find **Black Stork**, **Raptors**, **Grey-necked Bunting** and **Mongolian Finches**.

The riverine forest near the Ash Tree Grove Lodge in the Charyn Valley is reliable for breeding **European Scops Owl**, **White-winged Woodpecker** and most important **Azure Tit**.

Kegen Pass on the road towards Kyrgyzstan is a good place to observe Lesser Kestrel.

Temirlik Valley along the same road is the place where we recorded **Upland Buzzard**, **White-bellied Dipper**, **White-crowned Penduline-Tit** and **Sulphur-bellied Leaf-Warbler**.

AREA NORTH-WEST OF ALMATY

SORBULAK LAKE - TAUKUM DESERT(KANSHENGEL) – ALAKOL LAKE – TOPAR LAKES – ZHELTURANGA (TURANGA) FOREST.

Sorbulak Lake is good for large numbers of **Rose-coloured Starlings**, 2 species of **Pelican**, **waders** and **reed warblers**.

The Kanshengel area in the Taukum Desert is generally good for **waders**, **larks/finches** and **wagtails** coming to drink at the different artesian wells. If you are extremely lucky you observe a **Caspian Plover** at one of these wells. We only saw **Greater Sand Plovers**.

Another specialty along the dirt track near Kanshengel is **Macqueen's Bustard**.

Alakol Lake is not an absolute necessity to visit but here one can observe **White-tailed Eagle**, 2 species of **Pratincole**, **Great Black-headed Gull** and all 3 species of **Marsh Terns**.

Near Topar Lakes we observed **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler**, **Sykes's Warbler**, **Cetti's Warbler** but we failed to find the **Black-headed Penduline-Tit** which is claimed from this area.

At the Turanga Forest of Zhelturanga we found the specialties of this type of forest easily namely: **Yellow-eyed Dove**, **White-winged Woodpecker**, **Turkestan Tit** and **Saxaul Sparrow**. Also **Sykes's Warbler** was regularly observed.

AREA SOUTH OF ALMATY - TIEN SHAN MOUNTAINS

It takes less than 2 hours by car to reach the astronomical observatory (nearly 3000 m.alt.) where it is possible to stay overnight in rather basic accommodation.

Around the observatory it is possible to find species like **White-tailed Rubythroat, Black-throated Accentor, Eversmann's Redstart, White-winged Grosbeak, Red-mantled Rosefinch** and **White-browed Tit-Warbler**.

On the way-up near a concrete wall at a hydroelectric plant we found nesting **Brown Dipper** and **Blue Whistling Thrush**.

In the forest **Songar Tit, Goldcrest, Nutcracker** and **Blue-capped Redstart**. In the skies above **Himalayan Griffon, Eurasian Black Vulture** and **Golden Eagle**.

Nearby Big Almaty Lake is probably the most reliable place in the world to observe the enigmatic **Ibisbill**.

From the observatory one can drive even higher to the Cosmostation at 3300 m.alt., where we found species like **Altai Accentor, Brown Accentor, Gldenstadt's Redstart, Choughs** and **Alpine Choughs** and flocks of **Plain Mountain-Finches**.

Lammergeier is common and along the slopes of the higher valleys **Himalayan Snowcock** occurs as well as **Sulphur-bellied Leaf-Warblers** between the rocks.

KORGALZHYN NATURE RESERVE – WEST OF ASTANA

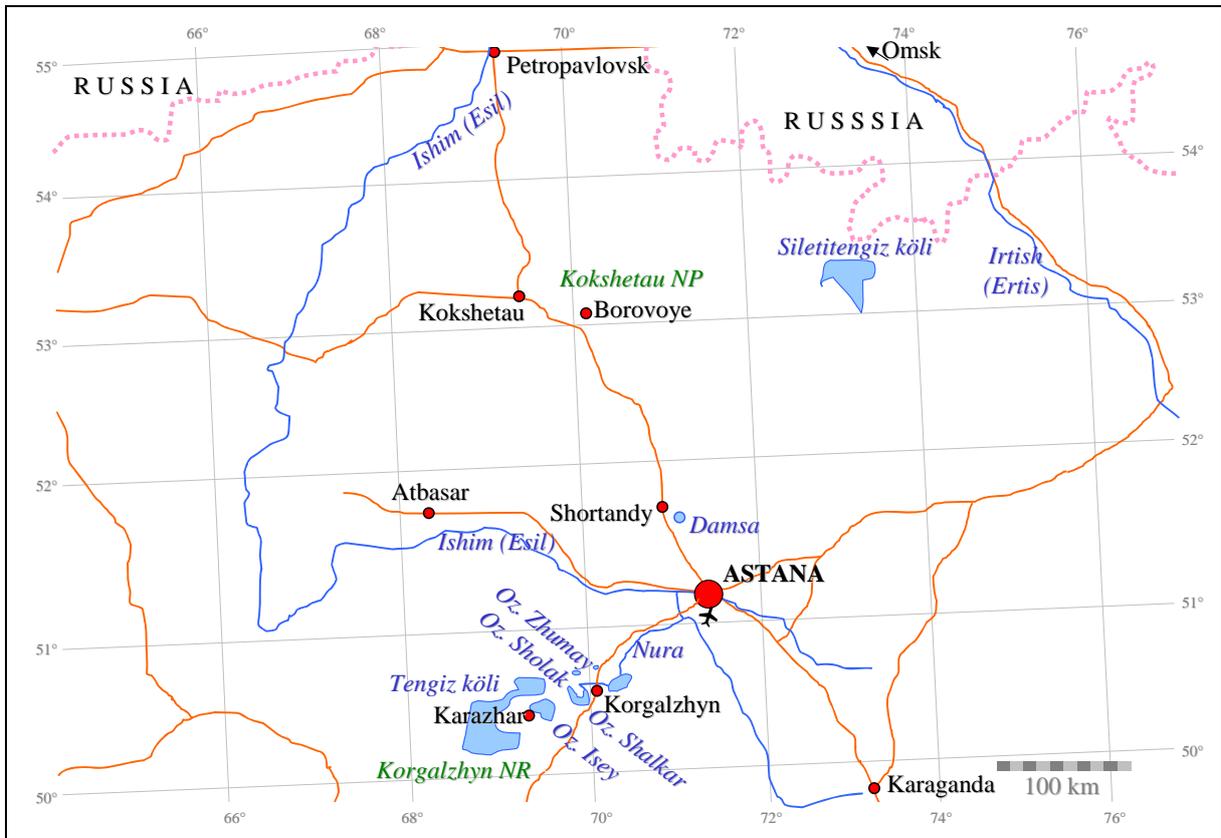
All the specialties of the region, with the exception of **Pine Bunting**, can be found within the boundary of this Nature Reserve.

THE target species for visiting birders, **Black Lark**, is abundant and also the other specialty **White-winged Lark** is easily observed.

The number of birds in this area is unbelievable. Thousands of **Ruff, Red-necked Phalaropes** and **White-winged Black Terns** are observed daily.

Another specialty of this park is the **Sociable Plover** which was also easily found. That we cannot say of **Caspian Plover**, a pair of which was observed 3 days prior to our arrival but we dipped again despite a lot of effort we put in to find this species.

Some other interesting species observed include **Pallid Harrir, Merlin, Moustached Warbler, Booted Warbler, Paddyfield Warbler** and **Caspian Reed Warbler**.



DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Saturday May 5 Geldrop – Amsterdam – Almaty

Between 13.00 and 13.15 the team assembled at Geldrop and at exactly 13.30 pm. our taxi bus arrived. Without any delay we arrived at Schiphol airport at 15.00 pm.

After checking in we bought a couple of small walkie talkies because we thought that these might be handy in the field during this trip.

At 18.45 pm. we left Amsterdam with KLM for our 6½ hour flight to Almaty.

Day 2: Sunday May 6 Almaty – Kokpek Pass – Charyn Valley – Aydarly village

Just after 5.00 am we landed in Almaty. Customs went smoothly and after collecting our luggage we met our Kazak team. Andrey our driver, Madina co-owner of Central Asia Birding, another Madina our general guide and Vladimir Kolbintsev, our birding guide.

We changed some money, unpacked our scopes and at 6.30 am. we started our trip.

It did not take long before we were out of the city and some random stops gave us our first good species like **Grey-headed Goldfinch**. At a nice spot near the Kokpek Pass we made our first real birding stop and had breakfast. The weather was fine, even hot.

Isabelline Wheatears and **Short-toed Larks** were common. Unexpected was the observation of an **Eastern Imperial Eagle** at this spot just after we had observed a **Steppe Eagle**. After our breakfast we climbed into a small valley near the Kokpek Pass and here we added **Red-headed Bunting**, **Rock Bunting** and best of all a fine male **White-capped Bunting** to our list. Also **Chukar**, a male **Pied Wheatear**, a male **Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush** and overhead twice a **Golden Eagle** and a **Eurasian Griffon** were observed. It was a fine start of the trip.

We later continued to the Sugaty plains where we made a short stroll and despite the heat and an upcoming wind we found some **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, a singing male **Asian Desert Warbler** and some **Horned Larks**.

It was already 13.00 pm as we arrived at the Ash Tree Grove lodge in the Charyn Valley where we would stay for the next couple of nights. The accommodation was nicely situated at the small stream but rather basic. Major disadvantage was the fact that during our stay there were no washing facilities whatsoever.

Our lunch was suddenly interrupted as we heard the unmistakable calls of tits outside. And sure enough 2 gorgeous **Azure Tits** showed themselves nicely just outside our dining room.

After lunch we birded in the direction of Aydarly but unfortunately the wind had picked up considerably and this made the birding quite unpleasant and difficult.

Nevertheless we had a nice gathering of **Black-eared Kites** on a carcass, just next to the road and various roadside stops at bushes and pools gave us among others **Long-legged Buzzard**, **Turkestan Shrike**, **Citrine Wagtails**, **Indian House Sparrows** and late afternoon 2 “real genuine” **Pheasants**. It was 20.00 pm when we arrived back at our lodge.

After dinner and some beers we crashed out. At least 2 **European Scops Owls** were frantically calling in the evening but we were too tired to chase them for good views.

Day 3: Monday May 7 Sugaty Plains – Charyn Canyon – Alasy Pass – Temirlik River Valley – Kegen Pass – Kakara River Bridge – Kirghiz Border – Sugaty Plains (Km 189 – 192 road to Almaty)

Vladimir told us the previous evening that he expected bad weather today but fortunately he was wrong. It turned out to be a nice, sunny day and only during the afternoon it became increasingly more windy.

After breakfast (7.00 am) we drove straight to the Sugaty Plains. Our main target here was the **Pallas’s Sandgrouse**. We walked in line in military fashion through the area but no luck.

We did see **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, **Desert Wheatear**, **Asian Desert Warbler**, several **Tawny Pipits** and more **Horned Larks**.

At 10.00 we left and drove to the spectacular Red or Charyn Canyon.

After photographing the canyon from several viewpoints we found our first singing **Grey-necked Bunting** and also some very obliging **Mongolian Finches**.

We also had distant views of a group of soaring **Black Storks**.

Later we continued to Alasy Pass where we found **Grey-necked Bunting** to be very common. In the same area we had good views of some **Pied Wheatears**.

Just before the Kegen Pass we left the main road and entered the Temirlik River Valley. At a very scenic spot along the stream we enjoyed our picnic lunch. This was of course several times interrupted by birds. First we had good views of one and later 2 **Upland Buzzards** soaring along the top of the adjacent ridge and later we had excellent views of a **White-crowned Penduline-Tit**. The observation of an unfamiliar phylloscopus warbler caused some discussion but we all agreed later that it was a **Sulphur-bellied Leaf_Warbler** as suggested by Jan-Hein from the beginning. Just before we left we had brief views of a **White-bellied Dipper** along the stream. This is a very distinctive bird indeed.

After lunch we continued towards Kyrgyzstan but we made it clear to Vladimir that we wanted to be in time on the Sugaty plains, later in the afternoon, for another try for the Sandgrouse.

At the Kegen Pass itself we found a small colony of **Lesser Kestrel** which gave great photographic opportunities. Twice a small flock of **Demoiselle Cranes** cruised by.

We slowly travelled further in the direction of the Kyrgyzstan border with occasional roadside stops. Just before the Kegen pass we observed quite some raptors as we recorded **Eastern Imperial Eagle**, 2 single **Black Vultures**, **Long-legged Buzzard**, **Steppe Eagle**, a dark phase **Booted Eagle** and plenty of **Black-eared Kites**.

The scenery was great but we did not add many new birds to our list. **Tree Pipit** and some **Corn Buntings**. Just after the Kakara River Bridge we turned back.

The last hours of the day was again spent on the Sugaty plains and this time we struck gold as we had excellent and rather close flight views of a pair of **Pallas's Sandgrouse** under good light conditions. We saw the birds land but were unable to relocate them.

We did stir several **Greater Sandpipers** and a few **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** but that was it. So very satisfied we drove back to our lodge where we arrived around 20.00 pm.

It had been an extremely good birding day with fine weather.

We all needed a good shower but because of lack of washing facilities we went straight for the beer. During dinner we decided to bird the same area, where we had observed the **Pallas's Sandgrouses**, again early next morning.

Day 4: Tuesday May 8 Sugaty Plains – Kotuabulak – Almaty – Tau Samal area

The rain had arrived during the night. After breakfast and packing our gear we drove straight to the Sugaty Plains. It was cold, rainy and windy. We walked for about 20 minutes and then we decided to give up. It was no use. We drove back towards Almaty and made a birding stop at Kotuabulak where we observed a breeding **Long-legged Buzzard**. As it was still raining we decided to push on to Almaty and to bird in the foothills of the Tien Shan in the afternoon, weather permitting. Madina phoned to the hotel that we would arrive early and that we would have lunch at hotel Tau Samal. We arrived at Tau Samal around 13.00 am and we found the area covered in fog.

Tau Samal is a typical product of communist's time but the rooms were ok.

In the afternoon we walked out of the hotel grounds and up the hill. Damp and foggy weather conditions with from time to time a shower. Higher up, the slopes were covered with snow.

It was a rather depressing afternoon and almost completely wasted because of the weather.

We saw some more **Azure Tits**, **Hume's Warblers**, heard **Blue Whistling Thrush**, a very obliging **White-bellied Dipper** and Wiel and I observed briefly a **Songar Tit**.

On the hotel grounds we first heard and later observed 2 very wet **European Scops Owls**.

Another disappointment was the fact that the hotel bar had only 3 bottles of beer in the fridge!!

Day 5: Wednesday May 9 Almaty – Sorbulak Lake – Wandering Tree(Km 153/154) – Aydarly Village - Kanshengel

Vladimir had arranged breakfast at 8.00 am. what was not to our liking but the car would only arrive at 8.30 so we might as well have a good night sleep.

But of course we did not and birded from 6.30 to 8.00 am. around our hotel. It was around freezing point and it had snowed at night. We found **Common Rosefinch**, **Azure Tit** and **European Scops Owl** during this walk.

After breakfast we drove from Almaty to Lake Sorbulak. Fortunately the weather was fine again and near Sorbulak it became even hot. We made an extensive stop at Sorbulak Lake.

We encountered our first **Rosy Starlings** and our only **Turtle Dove** of the trip as soon as we stepped out of the car. We spent a nice 2 hours birding at Sorbulak.

Very good scope views of **Little Bittern**, 2 **Whiskered Terns**, **Great White Pelicans** and **Dalmatian Pelicans** and we also identified 2 **Pale Sand Martins** between the **Common Sand Martins**. **Great Reed Warbler** was singing away as was **Cetti's Warbler**.

We then continued to the Taukum Desert. We saw **European Bee-eater**, **Lesser Grey Shrike** along the road and especially **Roller** became very common. We also encountered huge flocks of **Rosy Starling** which was a very impressive sight.

We had a lunch break at the so-called "Wandering Tree". It is actually the only large tree in an otherwise treeless environment, surrounded with some bushes/scrub near a waterhole and this spot acts as a true migrant trap. We hardly had time to enjoy our lunch at this spot as every time we found another interesting bird.

Species observed include an exhausted **Black-throated Thrush**, **Barred Warbler**, **Asian Desert Warbler**, **Wryneck**, **Red-spotted Bluethroat**, **Turkestan Shrike**, a possible **Daurian Shrike**, **Citrine Wagtail**, **Siberian Chiffchaff**, **Hume's Warbler**, **Red-headed Bunting**, **Pied Wheatear** and **Common Rosefinch**.

We then continued and along the main-road in the endless desert we saw **Steppe-Eagles**, **Long-legged Buzzards** and flocks of **Demoiselle Cranes**.

We finally arrived at our Yurt camp near Kanshengel. One of the yurts was fitted up as a dining room and very tasteful decorated with carpets on the wall and on the ground.

They had also arranged washing and toilet facilities for us.

And all this situated in a very nice setting. After dropping our gear we spent all afternoon at the nearby well.

This was a particularly good spot for observing and studying several species of wagtails, larks and finches. We saw **White Wagtail**, **Masked Wagtail**, **East Siberian Wagtail**, **Citrine Wagtail**, **Grey-headed Wagtail**, **Sykes's Wagtail** and **Grey Wagtail**, **Mongolian Finches** and a pair of **Ortolan Buntings**.

We had a very nice and copious dinner in the evening.

Day 6: Thursday May 10 Taukum Desert: Kanshengel – Lake Alakol – Kanshengel

We got up at 5.30 am, and after some cookies and tea we left for the search of **Macqueen's Bustard** along a dirt track which starts behind our camp. It was a rather chilly morning.

We drove for a distance of 21 km. along this track and by carefully scoping the desert from time to time we found at least 3 birds. At one time we flushed a bird just next to the track and this bird gave great flight views.

We arrived back at the camp at 9.00 am , where we got a proper breakfast. Rob, Wiel and Vladimir did not feel very fit at the time! A male **Common Redstart** was seeking shelter behind our yurt for the wind.

After breakfast we decided to check the 2 wells nearby first but this did not yield anything interesting. We then drove to Alakol Lake but unfortunately the wind picked up again.

A few hours of birding near this lake gave us the following interesting species: a distant soaring **White-tailed Eagle**, a few **Great White Pelicans** between the **Dalmatian Pelicans**, our only sighting of **Eurasian Spoonbill**, **Western Marsh-Harriër**, a lonely **Terek Sandpiper** which was only seen by Rob, 2 species of **Pratincole**, **Great Black-headed Gull**, **Caspian Tern**, **Little Tern**, 3 species of **Marsh-Terns**, a **Paddyfield Warbler** and **Greenish Warbler**.

After lunch at this lake we returned to Kanshengel where we spent late afternoon again at the well. We saw both, **Calandra** and **Bimaculated Larks**, **Water Pipit** and **Red-throated Pipit**, **White-headed Wagtail**, **Mongolian Finch** and **Desert Finch**.

Day 7: Friday May 11 Taukum Desert: Kanshengel –Topar Lakes – Zhelturanga Forest.

After Breakfast we left for the rather long drive to Topar Lakes. A short stop at a nearby petrol station gave us some interesting migrants in some bushes at the back of this petrol station.

Several **Black-throated Thrushes**, **warblers** and most notable a **Yellow-browed Warbler**.

Soon we were driving through quite a different habitat: rolling low hills covered with scrub.

During a roadstop we identified our first **Steppe Grey Shrike** and a fine male **Saxaul Sparrow**.

We passed the Topar Lakes area as we decided to bird this area on our way back and we continued to the Turanga Forest. We first stopped at an area which was rather degraded and though we added **Turkestan Tit** to our list this was in fact a rather unsatisfying stop. We then continued to a beautiful area where we found a large tract of Turanga Forest. The specialties of this area were quickly found. **Yellow-eyed Dove**, **White-winged Woodpecker**, **Saxaul Sparrow** and **Turkestan Tit** all gave excellent views. Other good species were several very obliging, singing **Sykes's Warblers** and a light phase **Booted Eagle** soaring overhead.

We also visited briefly a fenced of protected area of Turanga Forest where apparently **Striated Scops Owl** occurs (But not at this time of the day) and here we saw some more **White-winged Woodpeckers**.

After a nice lunch in the forest we returned to Topar Lakes. By this time it was already soaring hot. We knew that **Black-headed Penduline-Tit** is sometimes found in the reed beds in the Lake Topar area. And sure enough, as soon as we stepped out of the car we heard twice a Penduline-Tit calling but unfortunately it never showed. As **White-crowned Penduline-Tit** and even **Eurasian P.Tit** on migration also occurs we can only guess which species we heard. Despite the fact that it was midday we had good views of **Sykes's Warbler** which we could very well compare with also present **Eastern Olivaceous Warblers**.

Other birds were a booming **Great Bittern**, **Whiskered Tern**, **Cetti's Warbler** and **Red-spotted Bluethroat**.

Late afternoon was again spent at the well.

During the night I woke up realising that I was not feeling very well and I had to rush for the toilet.

Day 8: Saturday May 12 Kanshengel – Karabastau – Kaskelen Valley – Tau Samal.

We changed our route a bit as we wanted to visit the Kaskelen Valley in Ile Alatau N.P. to try for **Meadow Bunting** which was a lifer for four of us. So after breakfast we drove west on a

potholed road to the Petroglyph site near Karabastau. Personally I was in a pretty bad shape today and I slept a lot in the car and did not eat much. On our way to Karabastau we observed our first **White-winged Larks** which performed well just next to the road. We also saw our only **Red-rumped Swallow** of the trip on this stretch and a female **Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush**.

The Petroglyph site is a reliable site for **Eastern Rock Nuthatch** but unfortunately their nest was damaged and the birds had left the area. We did see **Eastern Nightingale** and **Blyth's Reed Warbler** at this site though. After lunch we continued towards Almaty and just after 16.00 pm. we entered the Kaskelen Valley. We quickly found **Rock Bunting** but it took some time and effort before we scored our target species **Meadow Bunting**. Meanwhile the weather had changed from nice and sunny to overcast, windy and with occasional showers. Down near a bridge I observed another **White-bellied Dipper**.

It took another 2 hours before we reached hotel Tau Samal where we were welcomed by Machiel Valkenburg of CAB. At dinner I just had some soup and went straight to bed while the others stayed, drank beer and discussed birds of course.

Day 9: Sunday May 13 Tien Shan Forest – Tien Shan Mountains – Observatory.

After this good night sleep I felt reborn and was ready for the next leg of the trip.

After breakfast we left in 2 four-wheel drive vans to the Tien Shan area. It was a beautiful, sunny day and luck was with us this time as the weather stayed nice for the next couple of days.

We first made a stop at a bridge over a stream with a concrete wall on the opposite side of the stream. During the time we spent birding here we had excellent views of **Brown Dipper** which was actually nesting near the bridge and a pair of **Blue Whistling Thrushes** which showed nicely as well.

We continued higher into the spruce forest where we easily found our next target species the **Songar Tit** as well as singing **Greenish Warbler's**, **Hume's Warblers**, **Goldcrest**, **Nutcracker**, **Blue-capped Redstart** which often perch high on top of spruce trees, and briefly our first **Black-throated Accentor**.

Just before lunch time we arrived at the observatory. We quickly dropped our gear at our rooms, which were basic but adequate and made our first stroll around the Observatory.

We saw our first **White-tailed Rubythroats**, **Red-mantled Rosefinches** and more **Black-throated Accentors**.

After lunch we hiked up into a valley nearby. It takes about 30 minutes to reach the bottom of this valley and during the walk we heard **Himalayan Snowcocks** calling from the surrounding slopes of this valley. We decided to climb up into the valley to a kind of flat area and to try to find the snowcock by scanning with our scopes the slopes. It was a short but pretty tough hike up and as we were above 3000 m. we were soon out of breath.

It took another 30 minutes before Wiel said: "I got one!" Knowing where to look for we were soon watching 2 and later even 4 **Himalayan Snowcocks** foraging along the steep grassy slopes.

Other species found in this valley include **White-tailed Rubythroats**, **Red-mantled Rosefinch**, **Black-throated Accentor**, **Brown Accentor**, **White-winged Grosbeak** and also brief views of a **White-browed Tit-Warbler**.

Vladimir told us that in order to find **Eversmann's Redstart** it was best to try the area just behind the Observatory and so we walked back to try for this bird.

Water Pipit turned out to be common in the whole area.

We decided to split up and look for the Redstart. Jan-Hein was the first to find it but by the time we all got to him the bird was gone. It took another 30 minutes before I found the bird again and this time everybody got good looks at a beautiful male **Eversmann's Redstart**.

Late afternoon was spent in the area around the observatory and some of us including me had brief but good looks of a female **White-browed Tit-Warbler**.

We had dinner and we found out that 2 other birdtours were present in the observatory. Birdseekers with Svetlana Annenkova and Steve Bird and a Nature Trek group.

Day 10: Monday May 14 Tien Shan Mountains – Big Almaty Lake – Cosmostation – Observatory area

We got up early for a pre-breakfast walk around the observatory. I tried the area where we saw the Tit-Warbler yesterday. I saw a female of this species in 1999 in the Nubra Valley in Ladakh and since then I was hoping that one day I was lucky enough to observe a male.

But not this morning. After breakfast we had a discussion in the group about the program.

We had planned to drive up to the Cosmostation for some high altitude species but we found out that the Nature Trek group was planning the same thing. That did not appeal to us and also the fact that **Ibisbill** was a lifer and a most wanted species for four of us, made us decide to drive to Big Almaty Lake first and to visit the Cosmostation area after lunch.

As soon as we arrived at the lake we started to walk along the edge of the lake to an area where we would scope the edges of the fast flowing stream. It did not take long before Frans spotted a foraging male **Ibisbill** along the stream but it took some time before he could explain to us the exact spot. These birds are so well camouflaged between the rocks that if it had not moved from time to time we would probably not have located the bird.

Another interesting bird we observed during our walk along the lake was a “**Red-capped Falcon**” which gave good views in the scope. It is either a subspecies of Peregrine or Barbary Falcon.

After this success we returned to the Observatory and after an early lunch around noon we left for Cosmostation. This station at 3300 m. alt. is a collection of dilapidated buildings originated from old soviet days.

We quickly found one of our target species, a gorgeous male **Güldenstadt’s Redstart**. We recorded at least 3 pairs in the general area. **Plain Mountain-Finch** was common and we regularly observed a few **Alpine Choughs** and **Choughs**.

Another target species took some more time, at least for me. But after some effort we all had great views of several **Altai Accentors** in the company of **Brown Accentor**.

Having found our target species we decided to travel back to the Observatory area to try for better views of **White-browed Tit-Warbler**.

Jan-Hein decided to walk down together with Madina. It takes a little over an hour to reach the Observatory from the Cosmostation.

We split up and birded for several hours around the Observatory until at 18.00 pm I hit the jackpot.

First I heard a Tit-warbler call and saw the bird fly into a small juniper bush. After a few tantalising minutes it climbed up to the top of the bush and there a fantastic male showed himself beautifully for several minutes. What a bird.!

I located the others and after 10 minutes we all arrived at the same bush with the exception of Frans who could not be contacted at the time.

And sure enough the bird showed itself again and could be observed for minutes at close range in the scope and also photographed by Rob.

Of course this was reason for some beers.

In the evening some of us visited the telescope of the Observatory and had quite some fun.

Day 11: Tuesday May 15 Tien Shan Mountains/Forest – Almaty – Tau Samal

As we had seen everything we wanted some of us decided to climb up the valley again to observe more **Himalayan Snowcocks**, I joined at first Frans and Madina to try to find the Tit-Warbler again, which Frans had missed yesterday and Rob wanted to photograph birds in general.

The first hour we failed to find the Tit-Warbler, so I left Frans to join the others in the valley. As soon as I had reached them they told me that they had great views of 2 Snowcocks in flight along the slopes and also perched on some rocks under perfect light conditions!! But unfortunately they had disappeared over the ridge. Later Frans joined us after he had also succeeded in obtaining good views of a male **White-browed Tit-Warbler**.

We stayed in the area for the next couple of hours and we observed twice a soaring **Lammergeyer** and once a dark phase **Booted Eagle** in the skies above us.

Just as we were about to leave the **Snowcock** started to call again and this time we all had good views of the 2 birds, first perched on rocks and later also in flight. Impressive.

We walked back down and during a last stroll I finally tracked down a nice male **Red-mantled Rosefinch** at close range.

After lunch we drove down and during some stops on our way down we observed at least 2 **Golden Eagles**, 2 **Eurasian Black Vultures** together with one **Himalayan Griffon**, **Brown Dipper** and **Blue Whistling Thrush** again and singing **Greenish Warblers**.

Late afternoon we spent at a terrace at the outskirts of Almaty where we were ripped of because we paid far too much for our beer.

Back at Tau Samal hotel we had dinner and met Machiel Valkenburg of Centralasiabirding.

He told us that there were some problems with the guides in the Astana area. It turned out that our guide Alexei was double booked so instead of 4 days we had only the services of Alexei for 4 days. Meanwhile we would be helped by a local guide who did not speak any English but that was not supposed to be a problem as we had Madina with us.

Day 12: Wednesday May 16 Almaty – Astana – Korgalzhyn N.R.

We had to get up at 4.00 am as we had a very early flight 6.45 am.to Astana. The flight was fast and on time and we arrived in Astana just after 7.00 am.

Our driver and guide were waiting for us with the minibus. There was only one problem.

There was only space for 8 people and we were with 9!! We were not happy with this to say the least. We decided to call the office and to continue our trip to Korgalzhyn N.R. without the guide. He would follow us in a taxi and later they would change our minibus for a bigger one. Fortunately I had brought some sketch maps with me from reports and so I was able to point out some good birding spots along the way.

Just outside the airport we saw a female **Red-footed Falcon**. We slowly birded our way west and after some 60 km west of Astana we found our first **Black Lark**.

We also had great views of 3 **Eurasian Black Vultures** together with 6 **Steppe Eagles** on a carcass, just next to the road.

Around noon we arrived at the village of Korgalzhyn where we warmly welcomed by a local family where we would stay for 2 nights. To promote local tourism CAB had contacted local people to provide accommodation and food for us. This was actually a very nice idea.

We had 3 spacious rooms, we dined in the kitchen and there was a sauna with washing facilities inside the house. We felt immediately at home and had a very pleasant stay here and good food.

At 14.00 pm our new bus arrived and with our not so knowledgeable guide we started to bird into the Korgalzhyn N.R. mainly around Lake Isey and Lake Korzak.

The vastness of the area really made an impression on us. Coming from a densely populated country like the Netherlands it is hard to believe that these areas still exists on earth.

Black Lark was really abundant and we also recorded huge flocks of **Ruff** and **White-winged Terns**. Other notable species we observed that afternoon were **Pallid Harrier** including some nice males, **Dalmatian Pelican**, **Demoiselle Crane**, **Great Black-headed Gull**, **Slender-billed Gull**, some **White-winged Larks** and **Common Reed Bunting** of the *ssp. incognita*.

At the end of the afternoon our guide took us to an area which is supposed to be good for **Sociable Plover** and soon we found 5 birds which showed well.

In the evening we had a very nice meal at our guesthouse and I was the only one using the sauna.

Day 13: Thursday May 17 Korgalzhyn N.R.

In the morning we found out that the bus we used yesterday was no longer available and so we were offered our third bus in 2 days. Unfortunately this minibus was below standard.

No airco, no possibility to open any window, exhaust pipe was leaking and as a result we inhaled the fumes inside and this car was absolutely NOT dustproof.

After breakfast we drove straight to the accommodation/HQ area of Korgalzhyn N.R. (we saw a flock of 80 **Greater Flamingos** during this drive), where we met our official guide Alexei Koshkin. He is a good birder, spoke some English/German and knew all the latin names of the bird species in the park.

Our accommodation for tonight was some very small cabins which Rob aptly named our dog houses or nest boxes.

We birded all day in the park with Alexei and saw some really good species, some new for the trip. At a lake we added **White-headed Duck**, **Horned-** and **Black-necked Grebes** to our list. In the reed beds we had good views of **Moustached Warbler** which has only recently established in the park, **Caspian Reed Warbler**, **Savi's Warbler**, **Paddyfield Warbler** and **Bearded Reedling**. At another site we found again 6 **Sociable Plovers**.

Late afternoon we returned to the accommodation area and at walking distance of this area Alexei showed us 2 **Black-throated Divers** on a lake and a pair of **Merlins** *ssp.pallidus* on a nest. We also birded a small garden which is very attractive for migrating warblers. Here we observed **Blyth's Reed Warbler**, **Paddyfield Warbler**, **Booted Warbler**, **Greenish Warbler**, **Lesser Whitethroat** and **Common Rosefinch**.

Dinner at the HQ area. In the evening Alexei phoned to his son Maxim who is doing research in the park on Sociable Plover to ask up to date info about the occurrence of Caspian Plover.

Maxim told his father that he had seen 2 birds 2 days ago at a certain marshy area just outside the village of Korgalzhyn!! We decided to check this area next morning.

Day 14: Friday May 18 Korgalzhyn N.R.

After breakfast we drove straight to the area mentioned by Maxim but besides a lot of other waders we did not find our target species. We also checked some other suitable places nearby but nothing. We drove back to the accommodation area where we had lunch.

Rob decided that he want to spend the afternoon photographing in the accommodation area and so with 5 of us we visited with Alexei an area north-west of the HQ.

We made an extensive stop at a lake where the surface was boiling with thousands of foraging **Red-necked Phalaropes** and again huge flocks of **White-winged Terns** and **Ruff** at the margins of this lake. Another stop gave us 4 **Flamingos**, 8 **Terek Sandpipers** and our only **Greenshank**, **Dunlin** and **Common Ringed Plover** of the trip.

On our way back we met another van with birders and Alexei left us to join this other group of British birders. We picked up Rob at the HQ and drove back to Korgalzhyn village where we birded at the outskirts at the same marsh we visited this morning. A lot of **Temminck's Stints**, **Little Stints**, some displaying **Marsh Sandpipers** and **Sociable Plovers**.

We stayed again at our excellent guesthouse in Korgalzhyn.

Day 15: Saturday May 19 Korgalzhyn – Astana – Almaty (Hotel Tau Samal)

Untill 10.00 am we birded at the outskirts of Korgalzhyn but scored more or less the same species as yesterday. We returned to our guesthouse, said goodbye to our hosts and left for the drive to Astana. During a roadside stop for **Red-footed Falcon** we discovered a group of no less than 7 **Sociable Plovers** just next to the main road.

Some 30 km. before Astana we made another stop at a site which is supposedly a stake-out for **Pine Bunting**. The area did not look very suitable but anyway we spent 2 hours in vain in the area looking for this species but dipped.

This turned out to be a mistake because as a result we did not have enough time to visit another stake-out I knew from some reports. At least that is what our driver told us.

We found out afterwards that in fact we did have enough time before our flight left for Almaty to pay this site a visit but that our driver was reluctant to drive to this site.

So instead we drove to Astana, visited a restaurant where we enjoyed a good pizza together with some beers.

During a short visit to an internet café we found out that there was an invasion of White-winged Black Terns going on in The Netherlands at the moment.

Just before 19.00 pm we left Astana for the short flight to Almaty. We were quickly transferred to hotel Tau Samal where we had a late dinner.

Day 16: Sunday May 20 Almaty – Amsterdam – Geldrop

We got up at 4.00 am. At 5.00 am we checked in and said good-bye to Madina who had accompanied us for 2 weeks and had really become a member of our team.

She had seen a lot of lifers during this trip and had really enjoyed the trip with us.

The flight left Almaty at 7.20 am and arrived at Amsterdam at 10.00 am.in the morning.

After a phonecall we were picked up by our taxibus and by 12.30 we were back home.

RETROSPECT

Looking back at this trip I can only say, and I think I can speak for every one of our team, that we had an excellent trip to Kazakstan.

Of course we had some minor setbacks but that is inevitable the case on most birding trips.

We were very lucky with weather conditions, with only one day lost to rain/snow and generally the wind was less fierce than expected beforehand.

We scored all our targets with the exception of Caspian Plover and we really enjoyed our birding in fantastic habitat and great scenery.

And also not unimportant we laughed a lot.

Finally I can really recommend CentralAsiaBirding as a company to organise your trip to this fascinating country.

If you need any further info do not hesitate to contact me.

Henk Hendriks Geldrop June 2007 he.hendriks@wxs.nl

SHORT ITINERARY

- Day 1: Saturday May 5** Geldrop – Amsterdam – Almaty
- Day 2: Sunday May 6** Almaty – Kokpek Pass – Charyn Valley – Aydarly area.
- Day 3: Monday May 7** Sugaty Plains – Charyn Canyon – Alasy Pass – Temirlik River Valley – Kegen Pass – Kakara River Bridge – Kirgiz Border – Sugaty Plains
- Day 4: Tuesday May 8** Sugaty Plains – Kotuabulak – Almaty – Tau Samal area
- Day 5: Wednesday May 9** Almaty – Sorbulak Lake – Wandering Tree – Aydarly Village - Kanshengel
- Day 6: Thursday May 10** Taukum Desert: Kanshengel – Lake Alakol – Kanshengel
- Day 7: Friday May 11** Taukum Desert: Kanshengel – Topar Lakes – Zhelturanga Forest.
- Day 8: Saturday May 12** Kanshengel – Karabastau – Kaskelen Valley – Almaty
- Day 9: Sunday May 13** Tien Shan Forest – Tien Shan Mountains – Observatory.
- Day 10: Monday May 14** Tien Shan Mountains – Big Almaty Lake – Cosmostation – Observatory Area
- Day 11: Tuesday May 15** Tien Shan Mountains/Forest – Almaty – Tau Samal
- Day 12: Wednesday May 16** Almaty – Astana – Korgalzhyn N.R.
- Day 13: Thursday May 17** Korgalzhyn N.R.
- Day 14: Friday May 18** Korgalzhyn N.R.
- Day 15: Saturday May 19** Korgalzhyn N.R. – Astana – Almaty (Hotel Tau Samal)
- Day 16: Sunday May 20** Almaty – Amsterdam - Geldrop

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES OBSERVED

Taxonomy, sequence and nomenclature follow “Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World” by C.Sibley & B. Monroe with some recent additions/taxonomic changes by especially Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) and the Dutch committee for avian systematics. The latter compiled the List of Western Palearctic bird species (van den Berg 2006)

ANATIDAE: Ducks

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

A total of 28 birds seen on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus Cygnus*

A total of 17 birds seen on 3 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Siberian Greylag Goose *Anser anser ssp.rubrirostris*

Daily and commonly encountered in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

On 16-05 4 exx. Isey Lake area in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

A total of 72 birds observed on 10 dates during the Almaty leg of our trip.

A maximum of 20 exx. on 9-05 between Almaty – Sorbulak Lake – Kanshengel.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

A total of 9 birds seen on 3 dates on the lakes in the Taukum Desert area.

On 11-05 4 exx. Topar Lakes.

Daily up to 50 birds recorded in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas Penelope*

On 18-05 4 exx. Korgalzhyn N.R.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

On 9-05 20 exx. on Sorbulak Lake.

On 11-05 2 exx. Topar Lakes.

On 17-05 6 exx. and on 18-05 20 exx. Korgalzhyn N.R.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

On 17-05 4 exx. and on 18-05 2 exx. Korgalzhyn N.R.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Daily up to 20 exx. in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

On 16-05 1 male Korgalzhyn N.R.

On 17-05 5 exx. and on 18-05 60 exx. Korgalzhyn N.R.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

On 6-05 1 pair near Aydarly.

On 9-05 40 exx. at Sorbulak Lake.

On 10 and 11-05 single birds were seen near Kanshengel and Topar Lakes.

A total of 120 birds were observed on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R. with a maximum of 50 exx.on 18-05.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

On 9-05 3 exx.on Sorbulak Lake.

A total of 21 birds were observed on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R. with a maximum of 10 exx. on 18-05.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

On 9-05 20 exx. on Sorbulak Lake

On 11-05 20 exx. on Topar Lakes.

Daily and commonly recorded in Korgalzhyn N.R. On 17-05 100+.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Daily and commonly recorded in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

On 11-05 20 exx. on Topar Lakes.

On 18-05 1 ex. flushed from a roadside pool in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

A total of 40 exx. recorded on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R. with a maximum of 20 exx. on 17-05.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*

On 17-05 20 exx. observed in Korgalzhyn N.R.

PHASIANIDAE : Pheasants

Himalayan Snowcock *Tetraogallus himalayensis ssp.sewerzowi*

On 13-05 we had nice views of four birds on our first afternoon in a valley in the Tien Shan area. The birds were first located by call and it took another 30 minutes of scoping the surrounding slopes before we finally located the birds.

On 14-05 we only heard the species.

On 15-05 we had again fabulous views of 2 birds in the same valley. Under very good light conditions we observed them perched on crags while calling, feeding on the grassy slopes between the rocks and also in flight. One of the highlights of the trip.

Chukar *Alectoris chukar ssp.falki*

On 6-05 we saw 2 birds at the Kokpek pass.

On 12-05 the species was heard and 1 ex. seen at the petroglyph site near Karabastau.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

On 10 and 11-05 several birds were heard calling in the Taukum desert.

On 10-05 we also saw 3 birds in flight on our way to Alakol Lake.

On 13-05 we heard one on our way up to the Observatory.

Daily heard in Korgalzhyn N.R. and on 16-05 6 exx. were seen.

Ring-necked Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus ssp.mongolicus*

This species was heard on 7 dates during the Almaty leg of the trip. The call was quite different from the call of Pheasant in Europe and more reminiscent of a Tinamou.

On 6-05 2 birds were seen near Aydarly and on 11-05 1 ex. seen at Zhelturanga Forest.

GAVIIDAE : Loons

Black-throated Loon *Gavia arctica*

On 17-05 2 summer-plumaged birds were observed near the accommodation area of Korgalzhyn N.R. (Karazhar)

PHALACROCORACIDAE : Cormorants

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo ssp.sinensis*

On 6-05 2 exx. near Aydarly.

On 9-05 10 exx. Lake Sorbulak.

On 10-05 50+ at Lake Alakol

On 16-05 common and on 17-05 10 exx. in Korgalzhyn N.R.

PELECANIDAE : Pelicans

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

On 9-05 30 exx. on Sorbulak Lake.

On 10-05 3 exx. on Lake Alakol.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*

On 9-05 2 exx. on Sorbulak Lake.
On 10-05 40 exx. on Lake Alakol.
On 11-05 5 exx. Topar Lakes.
Daily up to 30 exx. in Korgalzhyn N.R.

ARDEIDAE : Herons

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

On 8-05 1 ex. on transit to Almaty.
On 9 and 10-05 single birds were observed at Sorbulak Lake and Lake Alakol.
On 11-05 10 exx. at Topar Lakes.
A total of 50 birds on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Great Egret *Casmerodius albus*

On 9-05 1 ex. Sorbulak Lake.
On 11-05 10 exx. Topar Lakes.
A total of 70 exx. on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

On 9-05 excellent views of 2 birds at Sorbulak Lake.
On 11-05 1 ex. was heard at Topar Lakes.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

On 11-05 twice 1 ex. was heard near Topar Lakes.
On 18-05 the species was heard and 2 birds were seen in Korgalzhyn N.R.

CICONIIDAE : Storks

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

On 7-05 3 birds were seen soaring near Charyn Canyon.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE : Ibises

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

A single birds was seen at Lake Alakol on 10-05

PHOENICOPTERIDAE : Flamingos

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

On 17-05 a flock of 80 exx. were seen in flight at Korgalzhyn N.R.
On 18-05 4 exx. at a saline lake, Korgalzhyn N.R.

PODICIPEDIDAE : Grebes

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

On 11-05 2 exx. on Topar Lakes.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

A total of 32 birds on 3 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R. with a maximum of 25 exx. on 17-05.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Common on Sorbulak Lake and other lakes in the Taukum desert like Topar and Alakol.
Common in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

On 17-05 2 exx. Korgalzhyn N.R.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

On 17-05 2 exx. Korgalzhyn N.R.

ACCIPITRIDAE : Hawks

European Honey-Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

On 10-05 2 exx. near Kanshengel.

Black-eared Kite *Milvus lineatus*

A total of 150 birds seen on 11 dates during the Almaty leg of the trip.

Maximum counts were 40 birds on a carcass near the Ash Tree Grove lodge on 6-05 and 50 exx. on 9-05 while travelling from Almaty to Kanshengel in the Taukum desert.

Only single birds were seen in the Tien Shan area and on 16-05 1 ex. between Astana to Korgalzhyn N.R.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

On 10-05 a distant soaring bird near Lake Alakol was the only observation.

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus ssp.aureus*

On 14 and 15-05 2 birds were seen in the Tien Shan Mountains.

Eurasian Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

On 7-05 2 exx. just north of the Kegen Pass together with Eastern Imperial Eagle and Black-eared Kites.

On 15-05 2 exx. in the Tien Shan Mountains.

On 16-05 3 exx., together with 6 Steppe Eagles, at a carcass between Astana – Korgalzhyn N.R.

Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*

On 7-05 1 ex. just north of The Kegen Pass.

On 15-05 1 ex. Tien Shan Mountains.

Eurasian Griffon *Gyps fulvus*

On 6-05 1 ex. Kokpek Pass and on 7-05 1 ex. just north of the Kegen Pass.

Western Marsh-Harriër *Circus auriginosus*

On 10-05 1 ex. Lake Alakol and on 11-05 2 exx. Topar Lakes.

A total of 23 exx. on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Pallid Harriër *Circus macrourus*

A total of 33 birds on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

We had some fabulous views of nice males.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

On 9-05 twice a bird near Aydarly village.

On 11-05 a total of 8 exx. between Topar Lakes and Zhelturanga Forest.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

On 7-05 twice 1 ex. near Temirlik village.

A single bird was seen near Kanshengel on 11-05 and near Almaty on 16-05.

Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo ssp. vulpinus*

Only single birds were recorded. A total of 8 birds on 7 dates.

Twice in the Charyn area, 3 in the Taukum desert, twice in the Tien Shan Mountains and a single bird near Astana.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

A total of 41 birds on 7 dates were observed during the Almaty leg of the trip with a maximum of 10 birds on 10-05 between Kanshengel and Alakol Lake.

Not seen in Tien Shan and only 2 birds on 18-05 in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*

On 7-05 excellent views of at least 3 birds in the Temirlik River Valley near the Kyrgyzstan border.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

On 6-05 1 ex. near Kokpek Pass.

On 9-05 4 exx. between Almaty and Kanshengel. At least 3 near the village of Aydarly.

On 10-05 1 ex. near Kanshengel.

On 16-05 1 ex. and a group of 6 birds at a carcass with 3 Eurasian Black Vultures between Astana – Korgalzhyn N.R.

On 17-05 3 exx. Korgalzhyn N.R.

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

On 6-05 1 ex. near the Kokpek Pass.

On 7-05 1 ex. just north of the Kegen Pass.

On 11-05 1 ex. Kanshengel area.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos ssp.canadensis*

On 6-05 4 exx. near the Kokpek Pass.

On 15-05 2 exx. in the Tien Shan Mountains.

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennatus*

A dark phase bird was seen on 7-05 just north of the Kegen Pass.

Another dark phase bird was seen at 3000 m. near the Observatory, Tien Shan area on 15-05.

A light phase bird was seen at the Turanga Forest of Zhelturanga on 11-05.

FALCONIDAE : Falcons

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

Single birds were seen in the Charyn area and the twice in the Taukum Desert.

On 7-05 at least 20 birds were observed at a small colony at the Kegen Pass.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

On 16-05 3 exx. and on 19-05 15 exx. were seen between Astana and Korgalzhyn N.R.

On 19-05 a small colony was found at km. 72 along this road.

On 17-05 2 exx. and on 18-05 1 male was seen inside the park.

Merlin *Falco columbarius ssp.pallidus*

Several of this beautiful subspecies of Merlin were seen in Korgalzhyn N.R.

A total of 7 birds on 3 dates. A pair was nesting in one of the scarce trees near the accommodation area of the Korgalzhyn N.R. and gave excellent views.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

A total of 9 birds on 4 dates were seen in the Charyn and Taukum Desert areas.

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

On 9-05 we observed 1 bird near the well of Kanshengel.

“Red-capped” Falcon *Falco peregrinus/pelegrinoides ssp.babylonicus*

On 14-05 we observed three times a bird near Big Almaty Lake, Tien Shan Mountains.

One of the birds passed close by and gave excellent views. A very distinctive bird.

This is an intriguing species.

Rasmussen considered this a subspecies of **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus ssp.babylonicus*.

Other authors consider this a subspecies of **Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides ssp.babylonicus*.

RALLIDAE : Rails

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

On 17-05 heard at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Corncrake *Crex crex*

On 8-05 2 exx. were heard near our hotel Tau Samal, Almaty.

On 13 and 15-05 we heard one in the Tien Shan Mountains.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

On 9-05 3 exx. Sorbulak Lake.

On 11-05 5 exx. Lake Topar.

On 17-05 2 exx. Korgalzhyn N.R.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Up to 20 exx. at Sorbulak Lake and Topar Lakes.
Common Korgalzhyn N.R.

GRUIDAE ; Cranes

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo*

Generally small numbers (1 to 9 birds a day) were encountered on 8 days during this trip

On 7-05 we recorded a total of 24 exx. in the area close to the Kegen Pass.

On 9-05 we recorded several groups totalling 250 exx. between Almaty and Kanshengel, mainly in the area around Aydarly.

In Korgalzhyn N.R. we generally observed pairs.

Common Crane *Grus grus*.

On 18-04 we observed 4 birds in Korgalzhyn N.R.

OTIDAE : Bustards

Macqueen's Bustard *Chlamydotis macqueenii*

On 10-05 3 or 4 exx. along the track into the Taukum Desert near Kanshengel.

Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

During our visit to Big Almaty Lake, Frans quickly found a male foraging in a small rocky stream and this bird gave great and lengthy views in the scope. For some the highlight of the trip.

HAEMATOPODIDAE : Oystercatchers

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus ssp.longipes*

On 17-05 4 exx. in Korgalzhyn N.R.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE : Stilts

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

On 6-05 2 birds near Aydarly village.

On 9-05 50+ at Sorbulak Lake and on 10 and 11-05 2 to 5 exx. at Lake Alakol and Topar Lakes.

The species was common in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

A total of 26 exx. recorded on 4 days in Korgalzhyn N.R.

GLAREOLIDAE : Pratincoles

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*

On 10-05 6 exx. at a small colony at Alakol Lake.

On 11-05 1 bird identified at Topar Lakes.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*

On 9-05 2 exx. near Kanshengel.

On 10-05 3 exx. at Lake Alakol.

Commonly and daily recorded at Korgalzhyn N.R.

CHARADRIDAE : Plovers

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

On 18-05 1 ex. at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

A total of 75 exx. recorded on 9 dates. Maximum was 20 exx. on 18-05 in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

A total of 7 exx. on 3 dates recorded in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultia ssp. crassirostris*

On 7-05 a total of 6 exx. on the Sugaty Plains.

A total of 10 exx. on 3 dates recorded near Kanshengel, Taukum Desert.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

A total of 17 exx. on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

On 6-05 4 exx. near the village of Aydarly.

On 9-05 20 exx. at Sorbulak Lake.

On 11-05 2 exx. Topar Lakes and on 12-05 1 ex. near Almaty.

The species was common at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius*

In Korgalzhyn N.R. we observed a total of 26 birds on 3 dates. (5+6+15)

This was all close to the village of Korgalzhyn.

On 19-05 when driving back towards Astana we observed at km.92 along the main highway, a group of 7 exx. during a stop for Red-footed Falcon.

SCOLOPACIDAE : Sandpipers

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Common to abundant in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

On 6-05 1 ex. near Aydarly.

On 9-05 we observed 10 exx. at pools between Almaty and Kanshengel.

A total of 12 birds on 3 dates were observed at the wells of Kanshengel.

1 to 2 exx. daily in Korgalzhyn N.R. but on 18-05 at least 40 at a marshy lake near the village of Korgalzhyn.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

On 17-05 a group of 5 exx. at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

On 18-05 a single observation of a summer-plumaged bird at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

On 7-05 at dusk we observed 2 exx. flying along the Charyn river near the Ash Tree Grove lodge.

On 13-05 1 ex. was observed at the Observatory, Tien Shan Mountains.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Up to 10 birds daily at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

A total of 72 birds were seen on 3 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

At least 50 exx. were recorded on 17-05.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

On 10-05 Rob was the only one to observe 1 ex. at Lake Alakol.

On 17-05 we found 8 exx. in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

A total of 48 exx. observed on 9 dates.

Only single birds in Korgalzhyn N.R. and up to 10 daily in suitable habitat elsewhere.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

On 9-05 1 ex. at Sorbulak Lake.

A total of 47 exx. on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R. with a maximum of 30 on 17-05.

Common Redshank *Tringa tetanus*

On 9-05 5 exx. at Sorbulak Lake.

Daily and commonly recorded at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

A total 21 exx. recorded on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R. with a maximum of 8 on 18-05.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

A single bird on 18-05 in Korgalzhyn N.R. was the only observation.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

On 9-05 5 exx. at Sorbulak Lake and on 11-05 a single bird at Kanshengel.

A total of 11 birds recorded on 3 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

On 9-05 2 exx. at Sorbulak Lake and on 11-05 2 exx. at Kanshengel.

Up to 5 exx. were recorded on 16 and 19-05 at Korgalzhyn N.R., none at 17-05 and on the 18th the species was again commonly encountered in the visited area of this Nature Reserve.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Extremely abundant on the steppes of Korgalzhyn N.R.

Unbelievable flocks of this species were seen.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

On 17-05 we observed a flock of 50 exx. at a lake in Korgalzhyn N.R.

On 18-05 we observed thousands of phalaropes in another part of this park.

The lake and the marshy margins of this lake seemed boiling with this species and it was quite an experience to witness this spectacle.

LARIDAE : gulls

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

On 10-05 25 exx. at Lake Alakol.

A total of 50 exx. on 3 dates at Korgalzhyn N.R. with a maximum of 30 exx. on 17-05.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

On 6-05 1 ex. near Chilik.

On 9-05 20 ex. Sorbulak Lake.

On 10-05 4 exx. at Alakol Lake.

On 11-05 20 exx. at Topar Lakes

Daily and commonly observed at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*

A total of 38 exx. recorded at Korgalzhyn N.R. with a maximum of 20 exx. on 18-05.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

A single bird was observed on 18-05 at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Common Gull *Larus canus ssp.heinei*

A single bird was observed at Korgalzhyn N.R. on 17-05.

On 19-05 2 exx. seen near Korgalzhyn village.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

On 9-05 20 exx. at Sorbulak Lake.

On 10-05 40 exx. at Lake Alakol.

On 11-05 2 exx. at Topar Lakes.

On 16-05 5 exx. and on 17-05 2 exx. identified at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Steppe Gull *Larus (heuglini) barabensis*

Commonly observed at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Heuglin's Gull *Larus heuglini*

On 17-05 1 ex. identified at Korgalzhyn N.R.

STERNIDAE : Terns

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

A total of 18 exx. recorded on 3 dates at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

On 10-05 2 exx. at Lake Alakol.

A total of 18 exx. recorded on 3 dates at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

On 7-05 2 exx. at the Karkara River Bridge.

On 9-05 20 exx. at Sorbulak Lake.

On 11-05 10 exx. at Topar Lakes.

Common at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

On 10-05 10 exx. at Alakol Lake.

On 18-05 2 exx. at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*

On 9-05 2 exx. at Sorbulak Lake.

On 11-05 2 exx. at Topar Lakes..

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

On 9-05 100+ at Sorbulak Lake.

On 10-05 20 at Lake Alakol.

On 11-05 20 at Topar Lakes.

The species was abundant at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

On 9-05 200 at Sorbulak Lake.

On 10-05 4 exx. at Lake Alakol.

On 11-05 30 exx. at Topar Lakes.

Commonly and daily recorded at Korgalzhyn N.R. but far less numerous than previous species.

PTEROCLIDIDAE ; sandgrouse

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles oriëntalis ssp.arenarius*

On 6-05 2 exx. and on 7-05 5 exx. on the Sugaty Plains.

Daily observed around the artesian wells near our yurt camp at Kanshengel.

Maximum counts were 100 on 10-05 and 150 on 11-05.

Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

In the late afternoon of 7-05 we had excellent flight views of a pair on the Sugaty Plains.

Unfortunately we could not relocate the birds.

COLUMBIDAE ; doves

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*

Observed.

Yellow-eyed Dove *Columba eversmanni*

Excellent views of at least 10 birds in the Turanga forest of Zhelturanga on 11-05.

Common Wood-Pigeon *Columba palumbus ssp. casiotis*

Single birds were seen on transit near Almaty and twice in the foothills of the Tien Shan area.

Eurasian Turtle-Dove *Sterptopelia turtur*

A single bird was seen at Sorbulak Lake.

Oriëntal Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

On 7-05 2 exx. near the Kegen Pass.

On 9-05 5 exx. near Aydarly village.

On 11-05 40 exx. between Kanshengel and the Turanga Forest.

On 12-05 10 exx. between Kanshengel and Almaty.

A total of 90 exx. recorded on 3 dates at Korgalzhyn N.R..

On 17-05 some migration of this species was noted as within 1 hour we recorded 50 birds passing the accommodation area (Karazhar) of Korgalzhyn N.R.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Mainly recorded around villages near Almaty. Recorded on 6 dates.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

On 6-05 3 exx., on 8-05 2 exx. and on 12-05 2 exx. along the road near Almaty.

On 11-05 1 ex. near Kanshengel.

CUCULIDAE : Cuckoos

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Heard/seen on 10 dates throughout the trip. A total of 27 exx. seen on these dates.

STRIGIDAE : Owls

European Scops-Owl *Otus scops*

On 6 and 7-05 2 birds were heard and seen at the Ash Tree Grove lodge, Charyn area.

During every overnight stay at the Tau Samal hotel on the outskirts of Almaty we heard and observed 1 or 2 exx. in the garden of our hotel.

On 12-05 1 bird was heard in the Kaskelen valley in the Ile Alatau N.P.

APODIDAE : Swifts

Alpine swift *Apus melba*

On 7-05 10 exx. were seen in the Charyn Canyon area.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

On 6-05 15 exx. in the Kokpek Pass area.

On 7-05 3 exx. Kegen pass area.

Single birds were seen near Kanshengel on 10 and 11-05. On 12-05, 25 exx. at our yurt camp.

On 16-05 1 ex. near Astana.

ALCEDINIDAE : Kingfishers

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

On 9-05 4 exx at Sorbulak Lake.

On 11 and 12-05 a single bird was seen at the artesian wells at Kanshengel.

MEROPIDAE : Bee-eaters

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

A total of 43 exx. recorded on 8 dates with a maximum of 20 exx. between Almaty-Kanshengel on 9-05.

CORACIDAE : Rollers

European Roller *Coracias garrulous*

This species was recorded on 9 dates.

On 9-05 100+ between Almaty and Kanshengel.

On 11-05 very common between Kanshengel and Topar Lakes.

On 12-05 40+ between Kanshengel and Almaty.

On 16-05 1 ex. near Korgalzhyn village was the only observation of the Astana region.

UPUPIDAE : Hoopoes

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

A total of 44 exx. recorded on 7 dates during the Almaty leg of the trip.
On 11-05 15 exx. between Kanshengel and Topar Lakes/Zhelturanga Forest.
Only single birds seen on 16 and 18-05 in Korgalzhyn N.R.

PICIDAE 'Woodpeckers

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

On 9-05 1 ex. at the Wandering Tree site between Almaty and Kanshengel.

White-winged Woodpecker *Dendrocopus leucopterus*

On 11-05 4 exx. at Zhelturanga Forest.

ALAUDIDAE : Larks

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*

This species was commonly recorded from 9 to 12-05 in the Taukum desert area.

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*

A total of 6 birds recorded on 3 dates around the artesian well of Kanshengel.

White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera*

On 12-05 5 exx. observed between Kanshengel and Karabastau.

A total of 65 exx. recorded on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis*

This species was abundant in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

This species was commonly recorded on 7 dates during the Almaty leg of the trip.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*

We struggled with this species which should be common according to other reports.

On 7-05 1 ex. on the Sugaty Plains.

On 3 dates single birds were seen at the artesian well at Kanshengel.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

A total of 16 exx. on 3 dates in the Taukum desert area.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Abundant in Korgalzhyn N.R. and the Astana area in general.

On 7-05 5 exx. near the Kegen Pass.

On 12-05 2 exx. near Kanshengel.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris ssp.albigula*

A total of 20 exx. on 3 dates recorded on the Sugaty Plains.

HIRUNDINIDAE : Swallows

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Up to 20 exx. daily in the Taukum desert area.

Common to abundant in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Pale Sand Martin *Riparia diluta*

On 9-05 2 exx. at Sorbulak Lake.

On 11-05 200+ near Zhelturanga village.

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

On 6-05 3 exx. Kokpek Pass.

On 14-05 1 ex. Tien Shan mountains.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Commonly recorded on 11 days of the trip.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica ssp.rufula*

A single bird was identified between Kanshengel and Karasbastau on 12-05.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbica*

On 6-05 10 exx. near Aydarly and 20 exx. at Chilik.

On 9-05 20 exx. at Sorbulak Lake.

On 13-05 2 exx. foothills of the Tien Shan Mountains.

MOTACILLIDAE : Wagtails

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

A total of 53 exx. recorded on 4 dates near the artesian well of Kanshengel.

A maximum of 30 exx. on 11-05.

On 17-05 1 ex. at Korgalzhyn N.R.

East Siberian Wagtail *Motacilla ocularis*

A total of 5 exx. on 3 dates at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

According to Wassink this species was only observed twice before in Kazakstan.

Masked Wagtail *Motacilla personata*

A total of 41 exx. observed on 7 dates during the Almaty leg of the tour.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola ssp.citreola*

On 6-05 1 ex. near Aydarly.

A total of 4 exx. on 3 dates at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

A total of 11 exx. on 3 dates at Korgalzhyn N.R.

“Black-backed” Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola ssp.calcarata*

On 6-05 4 exx. near Aydarly.

On 11-05 6 exx. at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

Black-headed Wagtail *Motacilla feldegg*

On 6-05 3 exx. near Aydarly.

On 12-05 1 ex. at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

Grey-headed Wagtail *Motacilla thunbergi*

A total of 21 exx. on 3 dates at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

Common at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Blue-headed (Sykes’s) Wagtail *Motacilla beema*

A total of 21 exx. on 4 dates at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

Common at Korgalzhyn N.R.

White-headed Wagtail *Motacilla leucocephala*

A total of 5 exx. including 3 fabulous males on 3 dates at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

Yellow-headed Wagtail *Motacilla lutea*

On 18-05 2 males near Korgalzhyn village were seen by Rob and Wiel.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis ssp. zaissanensis?*

Twice a male with characteristics of this subspecies was observed at Kanshengel.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

On 7-05 1 ex. Kegen Pass area.

Commonly and daily (20+) encountered during our stay in the Taukum desert area.

A total of 7 exx. on 2 dates observed in the foothills of the Tien Shan Mountains.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

A total of 8 exx. on 2 dates on the Sugaty Plains.

On 7-05 3 exx. Charyn Canyon area.

Single birds (4 on 3 dates) were seen in the Taukum desert area.

A total of 10 exx. on 3 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis haringtoni*

On 7-05 3 exx. in the Kegen Pass area.

On 11-05 1 ex. heard between Kanshengel and Topar Lakes.

On 15-05 1 ex. in flight foothills of the Tien Shan Mountains.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

A total of 5 exx. on 3 dates at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

On 15-05 1 ex. heard lower part of Tien Shan Mountains.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta blakistoni*

On 9-05 1 ex. at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

A total of 22 exx. on 3 dates in the Tien Shan Mountains.

CINCLIDAE : Dippers

White-bellied Dipper *Cinclus cinclus leucogaster*

On 7-05 1 ex. at the stream in the Temirlik Valley.

On 8 and 9-05 great views of this very distinctive bird near hotel Tau Samal.

On 12-05 1 ex. in the Kaskelen valley, Ile Alatau N.P.

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*

On 13 and 15-05 1 ex. along a stream in the lower part of the Tien Shan area.

TROGLODYTIDAE : Wrens

Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes ssp.tianschanicus*

A few heard and seen in the Tien Shan Forest.

PRUNELLIDAE : Accentors

Altai Accentor *Prunella himalayana*

A total of 7 exx. observed around Cosmostation in the Tien Shan Mountains.

We had excellent scope views of some.

Brown Accentor *Prunella fulvescens*

A total of 10 exx. on 3 dates in the Tien Shan Mountains.

Black-throated Accentor *Prunella atrogularis*

A total of 26 exx. observed on 3 dates in the Tien Shan Mountains.

Common around the Observatory.

TURDIDAE : Thrushes

(Eastern) Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos ssp.hafizi*

Commonly heard in the riverine scrub along the Charyn River. 2 seen

On 11-05 heard near Topar Lakes.

On 12-05 heard and seen at petroglyph site near Karabastau.

White-tailed Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis*

A total of 21 exx. recorded on 3 dates in the general area around the Observatory in the Tien Shan area. A very vocal and showy species indeed.

Red-spotted Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

On 9-05 2 exx. at the Wandering Tree site and at Aydarly village between Almaty and Kanshengel.

On 10-05 1 ex. Lake Alakol.

On 11-05 1 ex. Topar Lakes.

A total of 15 exx. on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Eversmann's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythronota*

On 13-05 Jan-Hein found a gorgeous male near the Observatory and this bird gave great views to all of us. The next couple of days a pair was seen in the same area.

Blue-capped Redstart *Phoenicurus caeruleocephalus*

Daily 2 males were seen in the Tien Shan area. On our way up and also when going down from the observatory we observed 2 males in the forest belt.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

On 10-05 1 male was seeking shelter from the strong wind at our yurt camp near Kanshengel.

Güldenstadt's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogaster*

On 14-05 we found 4 pairs at the Cosmystation in the Tien Shan Mountains.

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus*

Recorded on 10 dates.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

On 14-05 1 male near the Observatory, Tien Shan.

Commonly and daily observed in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

On 6-05 2 males at the Kokpek Pass.

On 7-05 4 exx. Charyn canyon.

On 9-05 3 exx. Sorbulak Lake and 2 exx. "Wandering Tree" area.

On 10-05 2 males at Alakol Lake.

On 12-05 1 male at the petroglyph site near Karabastau.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

On 7-05 15 exx. on the Sugaty Plains.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellinus*

Daily and commonly recorded in the Charyn and Taukum desert areas.

Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*

On 6-05 1 male at the Kokpek Pass.

On 12-05 1 female between Kanshengel and Karabastau.

Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*

On 9-05 heard near hotel Tau Samal.

On 13-05 we observed a pair at the Brown Dipper site, lower part of Tien Shan.

On 15-05 a male was seen at the same spot.

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*

On 6-05 1 ex. near Chilik.

On 8 and 9-05 2/3 exx. near hotel Tau Samal, Almaty.

On 12-05 4 exx. Kaskelen Valley, Ile Alatau N.P.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

A single bird was seen by me only on 19-05 during a roadside stop some 30 km. before Astana.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*

On 9-05 1 male was found at the bushes of "The Wandering Tree".

On 11-05 4 exx. were seen at some bushes behind a petrol station, near Kanshengel.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Single birds were heard near hotel Tau Samal and in the Tien Shan Forest.

SYLVIIDAE : Warblers

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

On 7-05 1 ex. was heard and seen at the Ash Tree Grove lodge along the Charyn River.

On 9-05 2 exx. were heard at Sorbulak Lake.

On 11-05 at least 4 exx. were heard and seen at Topar Lakes.

Common Grasshopper-Warbler *Locustella naevia ssp. straminea*

On 8, 13 and 15-05 1 to 2 exx. were heard near hotel Tau Samal.

On 12-05 2 exx. were heard at the Kaskelen valley in Ile Alatau N.P.

On 13-05 2 exx. were heard at the lower part of Tien Shan Forest.

A few were heard and seen daily in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

A total of 14 exx. were heard on 3 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

On 17-05 10 were heard of which 5 were seen.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

On 17-05 great views of at least 3 singing birds in reedbeds, Korgalzhyn N.R.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

A single bird was seen on 16-05 at a marshy area during a road stop some 20 km. west of Astana along the main road.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*

On 10-05 1 ex. Alakol Lake.

On 11-05 3 exx. at Topar Lakes.

Up to 10 exx. daily recorded at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Caspian Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus (scirpaceus) fuscus*

On 9-05 heard at Sorbulak Lake.

A few birds seen and heard on 2 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Blyth's Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

On 12-05 2 exx. observed at the petroglyph site near Karabastau.

A total of 6 exx. recorded on 3 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Great Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

On 9-05 5 exx. at Sorbulak Lake.

On 11-05 2 exx. at Topar Lakes.

Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata*

A total of 33 exx. on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R. This species gave often excellent views and could be studied in detail.

Sykes's Warbler *Iduna rama*

On 11-05 2 exx. near Topar Lakes and 3 exx. at Zhelturanga Forest.

This species was also very well studied and photographed

Different song from previous species, different habitat, jizz as well as plumage differences.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*

Only observed at Topar Lakes. On 11-05 4 exx. seen.

Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus tristis*

A total of 11 birds recorded on 3 dates in the Taukum desert areas. When checking scarce bushes/trees in this area one stands a good chance of finding one.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

A total of 5 birds on 3 dates in the Taukum desert areas.

A few singing birds heard and seen on 13 and 15-05 in the Tien Shan Forest.

On 17 and 18-05 up to 15 exx. observed in the bushes near the accommodation area of Korgalzhyn N.R.

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

Commonly recorded on 7 dates during the Almaty leg of the trip. Once you are familiar with the call you notice how often you hear this species in bushy valleys and scrub.

It was very common and singing in the Tien Shan area.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

On 9-05 we found 1 ex. in some bushes behind a petrol station near Kanshengel.

A brightly coloured bird with 2 obvious wingbars.

Sulphur-bellied Warbler *Phylloscopus griseolus*

On 7-05 1 ex. in the Temirlik Valley. This bird caused initially some discussion but we finally agreed that it was this species.

Up to 10 birds were daily recorded in the Tien Shan Mountains.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

On 9-05 1 ex. in the bushes at "The Wandering Tree". (KM 32)

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

On 11-05 1 ex. was seen and another one heard at Zhelturanga Forest.

On 15-05 1 ex. of the *ssp. rubicola* in the valley near the Tien Shan Observatory.

Central Asian Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca ssp. halimodendri*

On 6-05 1 ex. seen at the Sugaty Plains.

On 9-05 10 birds observed at several sites along the road between Almaty and Kanshengel.

On 10-05 1 ex. at Alakol Lake.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca ssp. curruca*

A total of 14 exx. on 3 dates in the Taukum Desert area.

A total of 10 exx. on 3 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R. with a maximum of 7 exx. in a small garden near the accommodation area (Karazhar)

Hume's Whitethroat *Sylvia althaea*

On 6-05 2 exx. at the Kokpek Pass.

On 7-05 1 ex. at ??

Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*

Single birds were seen on 6 and 7-05 on the Sugaty Plains.

On 9-05 1 ex. at "The Wandering Tree" in the Taukum desert.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus ssp. tristis*

On 13 and 15-05 a few were heard/seen in the Tien Shan Forest.

White-browed Tit-Warbler *Leptopoeile sophiae*

A total of 7 exx. were recorded on 3 dates.

One pair was present near the Observatory and on 2 consecutive days the male gave absolutely astonishing and lengthy views, while perched on top of a small juniper bush.

Another pair (We even saw 3 birds at this spot) was observed at the valley up from the Observatory.

MUSCICAPIDAE : Flycatchers

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Birds were observed on migration on 9-05 at Sorbulak Lake, "The Wandering Tree" and near Aydarly village (1 – 3 – 4 exx.)

On 11-05 6 exx. at Zhelturanga Forest.

On 12-05 5 exx. at the petroglyph site near Karabastau.

On 13-05 2 exx. Tien Shan Forest.

On 17 and 18-05 single birds in the garden of our accommodation area in Korgalzhyn N.R.

TIMALIDAE Babblers

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus*

On 17-05 6 exx. at a lake in Korgalzhyn N.P

PARIDAE : Tits

Songar Tit *Poecile songara*

On 8-05 1 bird was briefly seen by me and Wiel in the forest near hotel Tau Samal.

On 13-05 5 birds were seen in the Tien Shan Forest.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater ssp. rufipectus*

On 8 and 9-05 up to 5 exx. near hotel Tau Samal.

Up to 10 exx. daily in the Tien Shan area.

Azure Tit *Cyanistes cyanus*

On 6 and 7-05 one pair near the Ash Tree Grove lodge.

Up to 4 birds were present in the garden of hotel Tau Samal.

On 8 and 9-05 we observed 1-3 exx. in the area up from Tau Samal.

On 13 and 15-05 2 exx. lower part of Tien Shan.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Up to 6 birds present around the Ash Tree Grove Lodge on 6 and 7-05.

Common around hotel Tau Samal.

Turkestan Tit *Parus bokharensis*

On 11-05 10 exx. in Zhelturanga Forest.

REMIZIDAE : Penduline Tits

White-crowned Penduline-Tit *Remiz coronatus*

On 6 and 7-05 1-2 birds heard and seen in the riverine scrub near the Ash Tree Grove Lodge.

On 7-05 excellent views of 1 ex. in the Temirlik River valley during our picnic lunch.

NOTE: On 11-05 we heard a Penduline-Tit at Topar Lakes but never saw the bird.

ORIOLIDAE : Orioles

Eurasian Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

On 17-05 1 ex. heard HQ area of Korgalzhyn N.R.

Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo*

Rasmussen split this from Eurasian Oriole.

On 11-05 we observed 2 males and a female in poplar trees near the village of Zhelturanga.

On the males we saw the narrow black masks which were extended behind the eye and also the different plumage of the female compared to that of Eurasian Oriole.

On 13-05 1 ex. heard in the foothills of the Tien Shan Mountains.

LANIDAE : Shrikes

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

On 9-05 1 ex. between Kanshengel and Topar Lakes.

On 12-05 1 ex. between Kanshengel and Almaty.

On 17-05 twice a single bird at Korgalzhyn N.R.

Turkestan Shrike *Lanius phoenicuroides*

On 6-05 2 exx. near Aydarly.

On 7-05 1 ex. near the Ash Tree Grove Lodge, Charyn valley.

A total of 43 exx. observed on 4 dates in the Taukum desert area.

A total of 10 exx. on 3 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Daurian Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

On 9-05 2 birds showing characteristics of this species seen at the "Wandering Tree" site.

Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius pallidirostris*

On 11-05 twice observed between Kanshengel and Topar Lakes area.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

Less common as expected. A total of 45 exx. on 7 dates recorded.

Maximum of 20 exx. on 12-05 between Kanshengel and Almaty and 10 exx. on 17-05 in Korgalzhyn N.R.

CORVIDAE : Crows

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica ssp.bactriana*

This species was recorded on 12 dates on this trip. Most days up to 10 exx.

Eurasian Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*

On 13-05 heard and 1 seen in the Tien Shan forest.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax centralis*

On 14-05 6 exx. around Cosmostation (3300 m.) in the Tien Shan Mountains.

Alpine Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

On 14-05 4 exx. around Cosmostation and on 15-05 2 exx. in the valley up from the Observatory, where we observed the snowcocks.

Jackdaw (Russian) *Corvus monedula soemmerringii*

Commonly and daily observed with the exception of the higher altitudes of the Tien Shan area.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

As previous species and even more common.

Oriental Carrion Crow *Corvus (corone) orientalis*

Commonly and daily observed with the exception of the Astana region.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix ssp.sharpii*

On 7-05 1 ex. near Kegen Pass.

On 11-05 1 ex. between Kanshengel and Topar Lakes.

Daily and commonly recorded in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*

On 11-05 1 ex. between Kanshengel and Topar Lakes.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

On 6-05 heard near the Kokpek Pass.

On 7-05 2 at Charyn Canyon and 2 near Kegen Pass.

Single birds were observed on 3 dates in the Taukum desert areas.

Daily 2 to 4 exx. in the Tien Shan Mountains.

STURNIDAE : Starlings

Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus*

Our first small flocks we observed at Sorbulak Lake on 9-05.

Later that day we encountered huge flocks when we continued towards Kanshengel in the Taukum desert. We estimated we saw some 15.000 birds that day.

Also the next couple of days (10 to 12-05) we saw daily thousands of birds.

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Some 120 birds were recorded on 6 dates during the Almaty leg of the trip.

Common Mynah *Acridotheres tristis*

Commonly encountered around habitation and waterholes. Recorded on 9 dates.

PASSERIDAE : Sparrows

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common around habitations.

Indian House Sparrow *Passer domesticus ssp.bactrianus*

Commonly recorded on 5 dates in the Charyn and Taukum desert areas.

This species is less associated to habitation.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus ssp.dilutus*

Small numbers at villages near Almaty.

A total of 50 birds recorded on 4 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

On 17-05 30 exx. in the accommodation area of this N.R.

FRINGILLIDAE : Finches

Red-fronted Serin *Serinus pusillus*

A total of 18 exx. in 3 days recorded in the Tien Shan area. Mostly in flight unfortunately.

Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris ssp.turkestanicus*

On 6-05 5 ex. in a village, close to Almaty.

Grey-headed Goldfinch *Carduelis (carduelis) caniceps*

On 6-05 2 exx. in a village, close to Almaty.

On 7-05 5 exx. near the Kegen Pass.

On 13-05 20 exx. lower part of Tien Shan Forest.

On 14 and 15-05 a few in the Tien Shan area, near the Observatory.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris ssp.kirghizorum*

On 17-05 4 exx. and on 18-05 10 exx. in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Eurasian Linnet *carduelis cannabina ssp.bella*

On 6-05 1 ex. at the Kokpek Pass.

On 7-05 20 exx. along the road from the Kegen Pass to the Kyrgyz border.

Mongolian Finch *Bucanetes mongolicus*

On 7-05 2 exx. at Charyn Canyon. Also a flock of 20 exx. at Alasy Pass.

A total of 33 birds were recorded on 4 dates at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta*

A total of 9 exx. on 3 dates at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

Plain Mountain-Finch *Leucosticte nemoricola*

Flocks were daily observed in the Tien Shan Mountains with most numerous around the Cosmostation where also the best views were obtained.

A maximum of 100 was recorded on 13-05.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

On 9-05 common around hotel Tau Samal, at the "Wandering Tree" and Aydarly village.

On 11-05 40+ at Zhelturanga Forest.

On 17 and 18-05 4 and 6 exx. present in the accommodation area of Korgalzhyn N.R.

Red-mantled Rosefinch *Carpodacus rhodochlamys*

A total of 14 exx. recorded on 3 dates in the area around the Observatory in Tien Shan.

Only on my last day I managed to get superb, close views of a beautiful male.

White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carnipes*

A total of 21 exx. in 3 days recorded in the Tien Shan mountains near the Observatory.

Very vocal and some great views were had of this species.

EMBERIZIDAE : Buntings

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*

On 6-05 1 male at the Kokpek Pass.

On 13-05 2 exx. in the Kaskelen valley in Ile Alatau N.P.

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*

On 12-05 4 exx. observed in the Kaskelen valley of Ile Alatau N.P.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

On 9-05 1 pair at the artesian well of Kanshengel.

On 12-05 1 male at the same place.

Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani*

On 7-05 1 singing male at the Charyn Canyon.

At the same date 10 exx. at the Alasy Pass.

White-capped Bunting *Emberiza stewarti*

On 6-05 3 exx. at the Kokpek Pass.

Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*

On 6-05 3 exx. at the Kokpek Pass.

A total of 100 exx. observed on 4 dates in the Taukum desert.

Mostly in trees and bushes near villages and waterholes.

Common Reed-Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus ssp.incognita*

A total of 5 exx. on 3 dates in Korgalzhyn N.R.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

On 7-05 2 exx. seen and some more heard in the area just after the Kegen Pass.

Amphibians and reptiles

Central Asian Green Toad *Pseudepidalea oblonga*

1 small individual at the Temirlik River Valley

Probably it was this species calling regularly in Korghalzhyn N.P.

Marsh Frog *Rana ridibunda*

Seen or heard on 6 dates during the Almaty leg of the trip.

Horsfield's Tortoise *Testudo horsfieldii*.

Observed on 3 dates in the Taukum Desert, with a maximum of 12 exx. Vulnerable because of collecting for the pet trade.

Sunwatcher Toadhead Agama *Phrynocephalus helioscopus*

Common on the Sugaty Plains; singles on 10-05 and 11-05 near the yurt camp at Kanshengel.

Steppe Agama *Trapelus sanguinolentus*

3 exx. at Alakol Lake on 10-05, and 1 seen the next day near Topar.

Steppe Racerunner *Eremias arguta*

4 exx. on 7-05, mostly in the Temirlik River valley

Reticulate Racerunner *Eremias grammica*

1 ex. of this nicely marked lizard on 11-05 at the Topar Lakes.

Striated Racerunner *Eremias lineolata*

10 exx. seen mostly by Vladimir on 11-05 at the Topar Lakes.

Rapid Racerunner *Eremias velox*

5 exx. on 7-05 (mostly at the Temirlik River Valley), common on 10-05 near Alakol Lake and 1 on 11-05 near Topar.

Steppe Ribbon Racer *Psammophis lineolatus*

3 exx. on 10-05 at Alakol Lake, of which one was caught and shown to all by Vladimir.

Dione (Rat) Snake *Elaphe dione*

1 individual discovered by Madina on 11-05 in the Zhelturanga Turanga Forest.

Mammals

Pipistrelle sp. *Pipistrellus sp.*

A few were seen at the Ash Tree Grove lodge on 6-05 and 7-05.

Tolai Hare *Lepus tolai*

On the Sugaty Plains, 3 were seen on 6-05 and 1 on 7-05. One was seen at Zhelturanga on 11-05.

Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*

1 startled by our guide on 18-05 near Korgalzhyn village.

Turkestan Red Pika *Ochotona rutila*

Seen every day in the Tien Shan Mountains, even right next to the Observatory.

Grey Marmot *Marmota baibacina*

3 seen and more heard at the Kegen Pass on 7-05. Each day small numbers were seen near the Observatory in the Tien Shan Mountains.

Bobak Marmot *Marmota bobak*

3 exx. on 18-05 in Korgalzhyn NP.

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

2 near Tau Samal on 8-05; 2 near the Observatory in the Tien Shan Mountains on 14-05 and 15-05.

Greater Gerbil *Rhombomys opimus*

5 at the Kokpek Pass on 6-05; numerous on 7-05 in the plains.

Musk Rat *Ondatra zibethicus*

1 swimming in Alakol Lake on 10-05.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

1 at Kokpek Pass on 6-05, 1 along the track towards the Macqueen's Bustards on 10-05.

Stoat *Mustela erminea*

1 in the Tien Shan Mountains on 13-05.

Large-toothed Suslik *Spermophilus fulvus*

Very common in the Taukum desert, especially around the artesian well at Kanshengel.

Little Suslik *Spermophilus pygmaeus*

Probably it was this species of suslik that was common at Korgalzhyn N.P.

Goitered Gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa*

2 along the "Macqueen's Bustard track" in the Taukum desert. A vulnerable, rapidly declining species.