

BURYATIA & SOUTH-WESTERN SIBERIA 10/6-20/7 2004

Petter Haldén
Sanders väg 5
75263 Uppsala, Sweden
petter.halden@spray.se



The first two weeks: 14-16/6 Istomino, Selenga delta (Wetlands), 16/6-19/6 Vydrino, SE Lake Baikal (Taiga), 19/6-22/6 Arshan (Sayan Mountains), 23/6-26/6 Borgoi Hollow (steppe).

Introduction:

I spent six weeks in Siberia during June and July 2004. The first two weeks were hard-core birding together with three Swedish friends, Fredrik Friberg, Mikael Malmaeus and Mats Waern. We toured Buryatia together with our friend, guide and interpreter, Sergei, from Ulan-Ude in the east to Arshan in the west and down to the Borgoi Hollow close to Mongolia. The other 4 weeks were more laid-back in terms of birding, as I spend most of the time learning Russian. The trip ended in Novosibirsk where I visited a friend together with my girlfriend. Most of the birds were hence seen during the first two weeks but some species and numbers were added during the rest of the trip. I will try to give road-descriptions to the major localities visited. At least in Sweden, good maps over Siberia are difficult to merchandise. In Ulan-Ude, well-stocked bookshops sell good maps and the descriptions given here are based on maps bought in Siberia. Some maps can also be found on the Internet. I have tried to transcribe the names of the areas and villages visited from Russian to English. As I am not that skilled in Russian yet, transcript errors are probably frequent! I visited Buryatia and the Novosibirsk area in 2001 too, that trip report is also published on club300.se.

Facts about Buryatia: Buryatia is a republic in the Russian Federation situated mainly east and south of Lake Baikal. Within Buryatia many of the Siberian biota exist, steppe on the border to Mongolia, the Sayan mountains in the east with peaks up to 3000 m and above, wetlands in the Selenga delta and in the Tunkinsky valley east of lake Baikal and of course a huge portion of Taiga. The area is 351 500 km² which is comparable with the size of Germany (357 000 km²).



Vydrino, SE Lake Baikal.

The climate is characterised by the fact that Buryatia lies almost in the middle of the Eurasian

continent, that means dry warm summers and dry cold winters. The annual precipitation varies between 150 and 350 mm, most in the Baikal area and lesser in the southeast. The main precipitation comes during July and August. The main city is Ulan-Ude which holds around 400 000 inhabitants. In all, around 1 million people inhabit Buryatia of which 25% are Buryats and the rest Russians and some minorities like Evenks and Tartars. By cultural means the Buryats have a lot in common with their fellow Mongolians. Buryatia is the centre of Russian Buddhism and many Buryats also practice shamanism.



Teplie Ozera a few kilometres upstream river Snezhnaya.

Itinerary: 10/6 arrival Ulan-Ude, 14/6-16/6 Istomino, Selenga delta (Wetlands), 16/6-19/6 Vydrino, SE Lake Baikal (Taiga), 19/6-22/6 Arshan (Sayan Mountains), 23/6-26/6 Borgoi Hollow (steppe), 28/6-2/7 Ust-Barguzin and Barguzin Valley, 2/7-11/7 Ulan-Ude area, 12-14/7 Olkhon Island (W Lake Baikal), 15/7-19/7 Novosibirsk area, 20/7 departure from Moscow to Stockholm.

Trip report:

Ulan-Ude 10-14/6: My first days in Ulan-Ude were rather quiet from a birdwatcher point of view. I spent these days within the city in order to prepare for the trip that my friends and me would start on the 14th. In Ulan-Ude like in many other cities and villages in Buryatia *pacific swifts* are very common, even more so than common swifts are in northern European towns. Other city birds that were seen during these first days were *hoopoe (saturata)*, *crows (orientalis)*, *white wagtail (baicalensis)* and a surprising but not the less stunning adult male *Amur falcon!* The Amur falcon soared for a few minutes above the flat building where I lived during the first days.

Ulan-Ude were rather quiet from a

My three friends, Fredrik Friberg, Mikael Malmaeus and Mats Waern arrived in Ulan-Ude on the 13th by air to Ulan-Ude airport. We went for an excursion to the ethnographic museum located a few kilometres to the north of Ulan-Ude. We toured this nice outdoor museum together with my friend Zoya Yampilova, who is head of the international department at the Buryat State Academy of Agricultural Sciences in Ulan-Ude. The museum deals a lot with how the different people of Buryatia have lived during the years. That is, there are a lot of houses out there! The area is nice though and we had our first *black kites*, *pacific swifts*, *Pallas's warbler*, *greenish warbler* and *Daurian redstarts*.

The Selenga delta 14-16/6

14/6

After a night at the University Hostel we filled our vehicle, a 4wd Lada Niva, with all our stuff and headed off for the Selenga delta, the first stopover on the trip. To go to the Selenga delta one follows the road M55 towards Irkutsk.

The road follows the Selenga River. On the outskirts of the city a small dark falcon was hunting insects over the Selenga River. Following a nice panic breaking by Sergei we could unfold our tri-pods and confirm the first collective *Amur falcon*, an adult male. Other birds here were a pair of *Isabelline wheatears*, *common terns (minussensis)* and a *black kite*. We made another short break at the minor mountain pass just north of the village of **Elovka**. The hills covered with trivial pine forest held an *oriental cuckoo*, *Daurian redstart*, *olive-backed pipits*, *coal and boreal tits*. Two *white-throated needletails* passed our heads in high speed. Further along the road we made a short stop in **Talovka** to enjoy a *Daurian jackdaw* close to the road. A *black stork* was also seen. In the village of Beregovaja we left the M55 and turned right towards **Kabansk** and **Istomino**. A short stop in the village of **Kargino** gave a *saker*, the only one on the trip and the first *Richard's pipits*.

We arrived in **Istomino** in the late afternoon and made ourselves comfortable in the Baikal Institute of Nature Management where it is possible to get a bed and meals. The Institute is situated in the tiny village of Istomino in the southwestern end of the Selenga River delta. At the time of our stay a herd of teenagers participated in a course given at the institute. We spend the first evening in Istomino exploring the delta in the outskirts of the village together with 15 teenagers and one of their teachers, Erdenii. Erdenii was also a scientist and had a good knowledge of the birds of the delta. The communication with Erdenii was however somewhat difficult as he didn't speak more than a few phrases English and some more phrases in German. His pupils were much better off in English and performed well as interpreters. With their help and scientific names we tried to find out about some of the most sought after birds in the delta like asiatic dowitcher, long-toed stint and spotbilled



Pine bunting, male, Istomino.

duck. Erdenii told us that the water level was unusually low in the delta this year so that the numbers of breeding waders were lower than usual. This first evening acquaintance with the delta gave all the European breeding *dabbling ducks*, *white-tailed eagle*, around 15 *eastern marsh harriers*, *black-tailed godwits*, *marsh sandpipers*, 4 *Caspian terns*, 14 *white-winged black terns*, an *oriental cuckoo*, *Richard's pipits*, *citrine wagtails*, *lanceloated warbler*, *pine bunting* and *yellow-breasted bunting*. All of which are characteristic breeding birds of the delta.

In the evening we tried to organise a boat trip on the delta for the morning after. The skipper who were about to drive us, as decided earlier, though were so drunk that we didn't feel comfortable enough with him to let us go with him. Our hope was then to visit the tourism co-ordinator for the region in Kabansk, which we did the next day.

15/6

Before visiting the tourist co-ordinator we spend the morning in a nearby area outside the village of **Ranchurovo**. We parked at an abandoned dairy farm (Kolchoz) at the northern end of the village and walked towards the delta. As in Istomino the area was dominated by marshes with dotted shrubbery and cattle also grazed much of the area. Pine forest and bushes covered a nearby sandy hill. The open water areas held a *red-necked grebe*, *crested grebes*, a *booming bittern*, a pair of *whooper swans*, *cranes*, *little ringed plovers*, *lapwings*, *marsh sandpipers*, *whimbrels* a *common snipe*, and a possible *Swinhoe's snipe*. The bushes in the marsh held several *dusky warblers* (13), a *single arctic warbler*, *lanceloated warblers*, *citrine wagtails*, *Pallas's grasshopper warblers*, *yellow-breasted buntings* and a *common rosefinch*. A walk in the adjacent pine forest revealed a previous unheard song. After several minutes playback attempts a splendid male *Siberian rubythroat* gave short but delicious glimpses while singing in a dense shrubbery. Not far from there, another unknown song unveiled a singing male *black-faced*



Hard-core birding at the Selenga delta.

bunting. Other birds in the forest were several *pine buntings*, a *lesser whitethroat* and a pair of *long-tailed rosefinches*. A *chaffinch*, the only *fieldfares* of the trip and two *siskins* represented the European avifauna.

At the region office in Kabansk we met a nice English-speaking woman Olga Myznikov who helped us to organise a trip in the delta the next day.

An evening excursion around Istomino didn't produce any new species.

The morning after we met our guide and the skipper in the village of **Tvorogovo**, not far from Istomino. Our guide, Vitaly, was the husband of the previous mentioned Olga, and he was also good at English. Our skipper weren't but he was sober and seemed reliable with his moustache and fox-fur hat in contrast to the skipper that offered his services to us earlier. After extraordinary views of a *Siberian rubythroat*, singing from the top of a shrubbery, we entered the boat. It soon showed that our guide and we were different in the idea of interesting birds. On his suggestion we made the first stop in a colony of



The Selenga delta. The lighthouse close to the edge of the delta (left) and fishermen (right.)

breeding *common gulls*. Interesting perhaps, but not what we have travelled several thousand kilometres east to experience. We were rewarded with more *Siberian rubythroats* and a *Pallas's reed warbler* but we were soon eager to continue. On our guides next suggestion we spend half an hour in search of *whooper swans*. We managed to persuade him to make a stop in an area with marshes and shrubbery. *Citrine wagtails*, *dusky warbler* and *yellow-breasted buntings* were numerous, and good numbers of *Pallas's reed warblers* were also present. The "crew" prepared a Siberian breakfast with bread, sausages, cookies, tea and vodka on a bear-fur in the lush grass. After enjoying the meal and a toast for the nice observations so far we continued. In a

similar area further down the delta a *white-backed woodpecker* showed well for a short time. Other species were *black-faced bunting*, *long-tailed rosefinch*, *long-tailed tits* and *lanceolated warbler*. We asked for reed-beds in hope to find waders and ducks. While slowly moving through one of the river-arms flowing through the reed-beds a male *falcated duck*



The group with guide and boat at the Selenga delta.

passed by with other dabbling ducks. At a short stop at a fishing-hut we saw a flying *bittern*, a *black stork*, *reed buntings*, *black-necked grebes* and *eight smews*.

We had been invited for lunch at the lighthouse close to the edge of the delta. The lighthouse was located on the only hill visible in this part of the huge delta where the lighthouse keeper lived together with his two sons. Wetlands and reed-beds dominate the surrounding delta but in the lighthouse garden there were several trees which attracted a *two-barred greenish warbler* and very surprisingly a *little bunting*! The latter should definitely be at the tundra by this time of year. Around the lighthouse several males citrine wagtails held territory. *White-winged black terns* and *Caspian terns* were also seen. After a sturdy lunch with ide- and wels catfish-soup with a few vodka toasts and a little singing we entered the boat and went out on the Lake Baikal. We now realised that our skipper was a fishing inspector and with his company we visited a bunch of fishermen who were preparing their catch-equipment for the season soon to start. The totally dominating fish species of the fishermen's interest is the Omul, a whitefish species endemic for Lake Baikal. The construction for catching Omul was gigantic with nets stretching for several hundred meters held up by poles stuck in the lake bottom. The construction was set up in the estuary where the lake is only a few meters deep, in contrast to the mere area of the Lake, which is several hundred meters deep. Bird observations were few, apart from a flock of *Herring gull (mongolicus)* and further out two flocks of *velvet scoter (stejnegeri)* and a pair of *red-breasted merganser*. After a few sips of the crystal clear lake water we ended the trip in Istomino. After a final meal at the Institute's canteen we took an emotional goodbye of the crew and the students and continued our trip towards the Taiga close to Vydrino on the southern end of Lake Baikal.

Taiga 17-19/6

Vydrino

Our base for exploring the Taiga was the village of **Vydrino**, located between the villages of Tanhoi and Baikalsk along the M55 road between Irkutsk and Ulan-Ude. We had on beforehand organised a bed & all-meals stay in one of the families in the village. The area of our interest was the forest along the river Snezhnaya, originating in the eastern Sayan Mountains south of Lake Baikal. A lot of the mountainous Taiga around Lake Baikal is protected in different forms of parks. One of the better known is close to the village of Tanhoi where there also is a park office where it's possible to hire guides and accommodation. We had got information that it was in practical mandatory to hire a guide to be allowed to visit the park in Tanhoi, and also that the Taiga was as nice in Vydrino.

The days to come we walked around in the Taiga around the health resort named **Teplie Ozera** (the warm lakes in translation) a few kilometres upstream river **Snezhnaya**. The microclimate close to the health resort is said to be warmer than the surrounding area and especially north of the resort, towards the Lake Baikal, deciduous trees with thick undergrowth dominate the vegetation. Southwards from the resort, coniferous taiga also with thick



Birding at Teplie Ozera a few kilometres upstream river Snezhnaya.

undergrowth and lots of dead fallen and standing trees covers the mountains. Here and there small mires and lakes could be found. The forest in the area seems never to have been affected by forestry and was hence of a very high quality. I have never seen such a forest anywhere in Sweden and its depressing to realise that forests of this kind still might have been standing if it weren't for the last century clear-cutting in north-western Europe.

As we spend the three days in the same area the following is a sum-up of our observations.

Bird activity was still high in the area at our visit in the middle of June. The bird of the area was definitely *Siberian blue robin* that could be counted in around 35 singing males. They were always very shy and difficult to see but all of us got short glimpses at least. *Olive-backed pipits* and *Pallas's warblers* were also very common. The best day, four singing males *Swinhoe's red-tailed robins* were noted. With a little help from playback singing one male gave short and distant views. An unfamiliar insect-like song showed to be a *spotted bush warbler*, in all five males was counted. The flycatchers were represented by 3 males *dark-sided flycatcher*, 14 males *mugimaki flycatcher* and a single male *taiga flycatcher*. A singing male *Siberian thrush*, giving superb views from the top of a birch, will forever stay in our memories as a possible bird of the trip. *Eye-browed thrush* was represented by four territories, unfortunately without prolonged views. In one of the mires 3 males *chestnut bunting* held territory. The non-passerines didn't let us down either; a pair of *crested honey buzzards* soared above the forest, as did a *besra*. *White-throated needletails* were counted in tens. A bunch of more or less familiar species of the boreal forest was also noted. Woodpeckers were well represented and *white-backed*; *three-toed* and *grey-headed woodpecker* was all noted. A single *Siberian jay* was also seen.

After lunch we spend our time around the village of **Vydrino** which gave nice views of a brown shrike. Arctic warbler was common and five males were heard. As in other villages around Lake Baikal, *Daurian redstarts* sang from several buildings. On the outskirts of the village a family of *azure-winged magpies* were seen, giving a new lifer for Misja.

The last morning a high percentage of the annual rainfall fell over us and we were completely soaked after a few hours in the forest. Luckily, Sergei returned a few earlier than we have decided and picked us up. After drying up and a last perfect meal we filled our Russian jeep with our stuff and continued our journey west towards the Sayan Mountains.



The taiga at Teplie Ozera

Sayan Mountains 20-22/6

Arshan

One of the easiest ways to reach the Sayan Mountains is probably to travel to the health resort of Arshan, located at the foot of the mountains; around 3 hours drive southwest from Irkutsk. The **Tunkinsky valley**, leading from Lake Baikal westwards towards Mongolia, is a popular hangout for Urban Russians on vacation. This is especially true for **Arshan** that is famous for its water quality. During summer holiday-celebrating well-paid Russians overpopulate this tiny village, which means that it's

easy to find somewhere to stay at least if you arrive early in the day or if you are a little bit out of season. Signs with “room to rent” (in Russian) are held up by locals along the main street (probably named Ulitsa Lenina). It is also possible to stay at a big hostel, with its main office in a large building at the end of Ulitsa Lenina. We stayed at the hostel and rented beds for 3 Euros each per night.

On our way to Arshan we stopped for a short bird-break a kilometres east of the village of **Bistraya** next to a tiny river. The first *yellow-browed warbler* of the trip foraged in a shrubbery together with a *dusky warbler*. A *common whitethroat* (*rubicola*) sang and so did also two *Daurian redstarts*. A female *taiga flycatcher* gave nice views and a juvenile *dark-sided flycatcher* together with an adult individual was also seen. While travelling through the Tunkinsky valley a flock of eight *oriental turtledoves* were seen as well as several *brown shrikes* and a *black stork*.



One of many butterflies.

20/6

During the first day of our stay we had hard rain during the morning which made it impossible to hike in the mountains due to the slippery ground. We then decided to visit the huge **Tunka wetlands** south of Arshan. After we had passed a few minor rivers with our 4WD vehicle the rain suddenly stopped and was followed by sunny weather. Fredrik, eager to explore this to him unfamiliar wetland, ran away and suddenly ran right into a breeding *thick-billed warbler*. The shrubbery around the

wetland held a good number of *stonechats* often seen together with *yellow-breasted buntings*. *Richard's pipits* were also common. After wading a kilometre or so in the shallow water we reached a minor hill which made a perfect observation point. Many of the wetland species that we saw in the Selenga delta were also noted here. As an example all European dabbling ducks, *ruddy shelducks*, *black stork*, *white-winged black tern* and a *single little gull*. Several raptor species could also be seen and a very probable nest of *greater spotted eagle* was seen. In total at least five different *GSE:s* were seen. Other eagles include 1-2 light morph *booted eagle*, an *imperial eagle*, *white-tailed sea eagle*, *peregrine falcon*, an *osprey* and several *eastern marsh harriers*. In addition lots of *buzzards* were seen and some of those were probably Upland buzzards but due to the distance and the



Yellow-breasted bunting, Tunka wetlands.

plumage-similarity with common buzzards (*japonicus*) we couldn't surely identify a single Upland buzzard. At least ten *hobbies* and a good number of *kestrels* were hunting dragonflies over the marshes. In the nearby forest an *eye-browed thrush* were singing together with a *yellow-browed warbler*, a *Siberian blue robin* and *pine bunting* and *yellowhammer* side by side. According to the distribution map, this area should be the eastern tip of yellowhammers. Nonetheless, yellowhammers dominated over pine buntings in numbers.

In the evening our colonel species-priest Mats led a short prayer in hope for better weather for tomorrow.

21/6

After a few days in Arshan we learned that it often rains in the mornings in the surrounding mountains. This day was not an exception but the rain was at least much less than the day before. We could therefore do an attempt to reach one of the mountaintops just north of the village of Arshan. The path to the top follows the river flowing through the western parts of Arshan. It's a very popular path and easy to find, just walk through the gates on the eastern side of the river and you're on it! For



Heavily fire affected forest. In the background the village of Arshan.

our climb we chose the "easy" alternative for the ascent but even this one showed to be extremely steep. The ground is soil without rocks until one reaches the alpine meadows which means that it is not dangerous to fall over but easy especially after rain. The mountainsides are covered with coniferous forest, in many areas heavily affected by forest fires, of an extent never seen by me before. In contrast to the coniferous forests of the southern Lake Baikal, the dominating tree species seemed to be larch in this area.

After an hours walk or so we heard a new song that came from a *radde's warbler*. After a little work with the recorder it gave nice views. In all, seven singing males were noted. Further up the mountain, in one of the fire-fields a *red-throated thrush* gave short views while visiting its nest.



Breeding red-flanked bluetail, Arshan 21/6 2004

Olive-backed pipits, *Pallas's warblers* and *two-barrred greenish warblers* were as always among the dominating species. A few Daurian redstarts and an arctic warbler were among the species noted. In the upper-most forest, just below the tree line we discovered a breeding pair of *red-flanked bluetails* close to the path. A few minutes later a pair of gorgeous *Eversmann's redstarts* was discovered not far from other but were unfortunately not seen but everyone.

Finally we reached the alpine meadows exhausted and rested just below one of the minor mountaintops. The weather as well as the views over the Tunkinsky valley was

splendid. Several *water pipits (blakistoni)* held territory in the area, as did a pair of *alpine accentors*. The alpine accentors had extensive red on rump and wings, which puzzled us a bit, as it's possible to see Himalayan accentors in the area too. The always on-the-go birder Fredrik ran away and returned with a *rock ptarmigan*. After being satisfied with the views we started sliding downwards towards Arshan. Without injuries but totally exhausted we celebrated the day with a meal at the local "Stalovaya" followed by a few beers in the sauna.

22/6

After a good night sleep we prepared our car for the long trip back to Ulan-Ude. Bird observations along the trip were few. Our up to now reliable Russian jeep unfortunately soon started to struggle as the power transmission fucked up just a few hours away from Arshan. In spite of attempts to fix the problem we had to travel all way back to Ulan-Ude in 40 km/h. To make things even worse, Fredrik left his newly renovated binocular on the roof of the car. After a time-consuming search we had to conclude that it was forever gone. We returned to Ulan-Ude in the late evening and much appreciated a warm meal and a bed at Sergei's parents.

Borgoi Hollow/Steppe 23/6-26/6

23/6

Most of the day was spent at a police station where a kind officer with minor English-speaking skills helped Fredrik in writing a report for the insurance company. Meanwhile, Sergei fixed his car. Late in the afternoon we could restart our trip and travelled southwards towards Mongolia and the steppe areas in and



Eggs of demoiselle crane. Bjeloozersk 24/6.

around the **Borgoi Hollow**. Our base of exploration was the village of **Bjeloozersk** (literally, the white lake), where we stayed in a family household. To get to the Borgoi Hollow from Ulan-Ude, follow the road A165 towards **Kyakhta** on the Mongolian border. A few kilometres south of the city of **Gusinozersk** (located at the Lake Gusinoe) turn left towards **Petropavlovka** and **Zakamensk**. (Road signs are probably absent, a good road map is a must!). Follow the road towards southwest and after a 100 kilometres or so you reach the village of **Borgoi**. A few kilometres ahead, you find Bjeloozersk.

After less than an hour drive we were already in steppe habitat and at a short stop we discovered the first *demoiselle cranes* of the trip, a pair with a chick. At the same spot a male *hen harrier* were seen. A break a few kilometres north of the village of **Selenduma** in a dry area with dotted shrubbery and poplar trees produced three stunning males *Amur falcons* and the first *Mongolian larks* of the trip. A single *collared dove* seen under very good conditions is probably the biggest surprise in the species list. According to the species normal distribution, this is very far off. We arrived in **Bjeloozersk** at dusk and got acquainted with our landlords. They didn't speak any English but we had a nice time anyhow, with the help from our

interpreter Sergei. As in the other families the housewife prepared (mostly) very tasty and large portions of Russian specialities.

The name of the village **Bjeloozersk** is given by the two salt lakes close to it. They are called the upper and the lower white lake that I hope is a correct translation from the map. The upper lake is located next to the village and the lower a few kilometres to the Southeast. Note that the lower lake is not visible from the village! Lakes are sparse in this otherwise very dry area and hence they attract a large number of both breeding and non-breeding water birds. At the time of our visit, migration was over since a few weeks. The number of birds was nonetheless overwhelming! A visit here during May or September would probably produce unimaginable number of birds migrating between Arctic Siberia and South Asia. During our stay we had very warm weather, 35 °C and constant sun. This is probably normal condition during summertime. In the lack of wind the large numbers of small mosquitoes were quite annoying. Fortunately these nasty creatures didn't seem too interested in biting and insect repellent worked well.



Fredrik Friberg in steppe habitat, Borgoi hollow.

As we spend the days to come much in the same area the following is a sum up of our observations.

In the steppe surrounding the two lakes, *Mongolian* and *horned larks* were seen and heard almost everywhere. The *Mongolian larks* were even bigger than expected and their unfamiliar and much

varied song puzzled us a bit at the beginning. *Skylarks* were also seen on several occasions as were yet unidentified small larks resembling both short-toed lark and lesser short-toed lark. The first morning while we were standing on the outskirts on the village counting ducks and trying to get comfortable with the presence of the mosquitoes, an unfamiliar tzrii-tzrii-tzrii, was heard. Soon we discovered a small pale bunting singing from a straw, *Pallas's reed bunting*! During the day another two males were found. In the lake a maximum of 240 *demoiselle cranes* were roosting and on the surrounding steppe another three pairs were found. Wheatears were represented by *Isabelline* and *Northern wheatears*. During the afternoons a lot of raptors were seen soaring over the steppe. An otherwise rare species in this part of Russia is the *Black vulture* but we saw up to 20 individuals at the same time. Eight *steppe eagles* in different plumage were also seen. In all at least three *Amur falcons* were seen of which one was a female. *Hobby*, *black kite*, *eastern marsh harrier* were among other raptor species seen. Finally we could confirm an *Upland buzzard* that gave very nice views at the lower white lake.

Of the two lakes, the lower one was the most bird-rich at the time of our stay. The almost non-existent vegetation along the shoreline of these two lakes made all individuals easy to see, as there were nothing for them to hide in. The two dominating species were *ruddy shelduck* and *pochard* both counted in well over a thousand individuals each. *Dabbling ducks* were also numerous, the common species were all counted in hundreds. Among them, six beautiful males *falcated duck* were seen as was a single *spotbilled duck*. The Borgoi steppe is famous by Russian conditions by a few species that occur here that are rare

in other parts of Siberia. Black vulture is already mentioned and great bustard was last seen in 1998. Lesser kestrel is said to breed with a few pairs but we were not lucky enough to find a single one of them. Three other speciality species are *shelduck*, *pied avocet* and *swan goose* of which we could confirm breeding by the two first-mentioned species. The more exotic *swan goose* was seen with up to eight adults in the lower white lake. Among other water birds *40 white-winged black terns*, *130 black-necked grebes*, *20 Slavonian grebes*, *30 velvet scoters (stejnegeri)* and *eight smew* deserve to be mentioned.

The list of waders on the trip so far was embarrassingly short in spite of intense searching in wetlands in Selenga and the Tunkinsky valley. We got new hope after a surprising meeting with two Russian birders at the lower white lake. They claimed that an asiatic dowitcher had been present in the lake since a while. Unfortunately my Russian is still very bad and we couldn't rule out the possibility that they in fact meant the *black-tailed godwits* also present in the lake. Asiatic dowitcher is however not at all unlikely in the area, at least on migration. Though intense searching in the lower white lake the species wasn't seen. A big surprise was however the discovery of two *pacific golden plovers* at the lower white lake. At the end of day two another unexpected species was a single *long-toed stint* that foraged along the shoreline at a close range. The more common waders include *lesser ringed plover*, *kentish plover* and *marsh sandpiper*.

At the last day we made a desperate last attempt to find a highly wanted species that according to the distribution maps should occur in the area, Blyth's pipit! We wandered several rocky hillsides up and down without luck but we were finally awarded with another great species, a pair of *meadow buntings*!

On our way back to Ulan-Ude we stopped outside the village of **Orongoi** at a lake with reed-beds surrounding it. This lake was also called the white lake (Ozera Bjeloe). At least five *oriental reed warblers* sang in the reed-beds together with a *bittern*. All the common Buryatian ducks were also noted. More surprising were that two males *Isabelline shrike* of the nominate subspecies held territory around the reed-beds. They were collecting food and flew back and forth to the reed-beds. According to the distribution map in "Shrikes" they do not breed at all in Russia, but here they apparently did! A perfect end to this gorgeous trip.

The next day I left my three friends at the airport as they departed for Moscow and Sweden. I still thought that I should be learning Russian for the weeks to come but instead I ended up birding in **Ust-Barguzin** just a few days later! The reason to this doesn't interest birders why I exclude it here.

Ust-Barguzin 28/6-2/7

Together with two newly arrived Swedish students, Ida and Klara; I travelled by mini-bus to the village of **Ust-Barguzin** at the eastern shore of Lake Baikal. At a short photo-break in **Maximischa** I counted 1200 (!) males velvet scoters roosting in a flock on Lake Baikal. We stayed in a family at the main road, Ulitsa Lenina, where we paid 20 Euro per night with all meals included.

Birds in the village were the usual Buryats like *Daurian redstarts*, *Northern Wheatear*, *two-barred greenish warbler*, *white wagtail* and *pacific swifts*. While walking around the village the first evening I heard a strange voice and I saw a small flock *common starlings*. But there was clearly something odd with the voice... together with the common starlings (probably *poltaratskyi*) were also five adult and three juvenile *white-cheeked starlings*! **BIG** surprise. Later on I saw white-cheeked starlings on other places in the village too, always outnumbered by common starlings, but in all they didn't seem to be rare and probably breeds in the village.

29/6

In the morning I took the fascinating thug-boat ferry across the Barguzin River to the gigantic **Zabaikalski National Park**. I entered the park at the National Park office where I paid a small fee and were invited for fish and tea. I walked the road towards the lake named **Bormashevoije** on the southern tip of the **Chivirkui Isthmus**. The Chivirkui Isthmus is mainly wetlands (huge!) but at the southern end is a strip of sand where there is a VERY bad road lading to the Svitnoy Nos peninsula. A 4WD car is absolutely essential (unless you travel there in the winter) otherwise you'll end up digging sand for a looong time. The time of my visit was far from optimal, both in terms of date and time of the day (noon) and bird observations were few. Much to my surprise I saw a large white heron in flight very far away. White egrets do not occur in the area at all but grey herons do and an albino grey heron is maybe as possible as a great white egret. Besides the most common Buryatian birds I saw a pair of *red-throated divers*, *1-2 greater spotted eagles*, *a white-tailed sea eagle*, *a common snipe*, *oriental turtle doves* and *nutcrackers*.

30/6

My Russian improved a lot during this day as we travelled with our not-at-all English speaking driver and guide Jurij to the **Barguzin Valley** in the northeast. As I was travelling together with two non-birders I couldn't do birding all of the time, but I did my best in this little visited area. A short look at the map is enough to understand that this area is most interesting to birders. The valley is more than 100 kilometres long and around 10 kilometres wide. The bottom of the valley is covered with wetlands mixed with drier areas in between. The valley is surrounded with mountains up to 3000 m covered by mountainous taiga and alpine meadows above the tree line. We followed the road on the eastern side of the valley to a sacred shamanistic site close to the village of **Suvo**. Birds of the wetlands were *pochards*, *ruddy and common shelducks*, *black-necked grebes*, *coots*, *water rail*, *a bittern*, *white-winged black terns*, *whimbrels*, *marsh sandpipers*, *lesser ringed plovers* and several *Richard's pipits*. At the sacred site (a rounded stone next to the road) we climbed the rocky hillside next to it and enjoyed the view. On the way up several pairs of *meadow buntings* were seen as were breeding *pied wheatears* and a *rock thrush*. Gorgeous! While admiring the view an adult *Imperial eagle* flew by less than 200 metres away. Seen from above! Sadly, time was very limited and we had to return after a few hours in the area. I will highly recommend birdwatchers to visit the area and explore it. As there are so many different types of nature there, wetlands, taiga and mountains, it should be possible to see a lot of species in a restricted area. It takes a long time to go there and the road between Ulan-Ude and Ust-Barguzin is mostly bad. At the time of my visit they were busy paving parts of the road and hence it should have improved since I were there.

1/7

I followed a gravel road southwards from Ulitsa Lenina (visible on good maps) through ordinary forest towards a wetland along the river of **Shantalyk**. The wetland is on the eastern side of the main road leading to Ust-Barguzin. Birds in the forest were a singing male taiga flycatcher, three singing males *red-flanked bluetails*, *white-throated needletails*, *a female redstart*, *dark-sided flycatchers*, *nutcracker*, *lesser spotted woodpecker*, *black woodpecker*, *black-faced bunting* and of course *olive-backed pipits*.

2/7

Again my Russian improved as we travelled together with Jurij to the Svitnoy Nos peninsula where we had booked a boat trip. The Svitnoy Nos peninsula is as almost everything else in Siberia, huge. More than 50 kilometres long and 20 kilometres wide covered with coniferous forest. The highest mountain is almost 1900 m. We travelled across the Chivirkui Isthmus and followed the road on the eastern side of the peninsula to the tiny fishing village of Katun where a fishing-boat awaited us. After an hours trip on the lake we went back to the shore and had barbecue Buryat-style on the beach with grilled perch, potatoes and vodka. A short walk in the forest behind the village awarded me with a *red-flanked bluetail*, *dark-sided*

flycatcher, nuthatch and Daurian redstarts. At the beach a large flock of *pacific swifts* (<300) were hunting insects. An *osprey* was seen as we took the ferry back to Ust-Barguzin.

Early the next morning we returned to Ulan-Ude.

10/7 Ivolginsk Datsan

Together with my newly arrived girlfriend Anna and our Buddhist friend Bulat, we went to **Ivolginsk Datsan**, around 25 kilometres south of **Ulan-Ude**. The Ivolginsk Datsan is a temple area with a monastery and the Datsan (temple) is the centre for Russian Buddhism. Recommended! A short walk in the dry areas outside the temple area produced a pair of *stonechats*, an *Isabelline wheatear*, a *brown shrike* and *long-tailed rosefinches*. *Richard's pipits* were singing everywhere.

12-14/7 Olkhon Island

We took the night train from Ulan-Ude to **Irkutsk** (8h) on the evening the 11/7. In Irkutsk we caught a minibus at the bus station bound for **Khuzhir** (another 8h) on Olkhon Island, NE of Irkutsk. There is also a large bus (10 hr) running between Irkutsk and Khuzhir but you need to book this in advance. At Khuzhir staying at Nikita's guesthouse can be recommended. As it's said in the Lonely Planet guide to Russia; this is probably Siberia's only hang out for backpackers. Nikita and his staff speak English and you can find his phone number on the Internet. It's relatively easy to find a mean of transport to Olkhon in Irkutsk, returning can pose bigger problems! We experienced this when we tried to return. We made a booking through Nikita on the large bus to Irkutsk but when we arrived to the bus post well in advance before departure the bus was already packed with people. As westerners with little Russian skills we weren't top priority. Luckily enough we managed to persuade a private minibus also heading for Irkutsk to bring us with him so that we could catch our train to Novosibirsk.

Olkhon is indeed very beautiful and photogenic. It's a large Island but is inhabited by a few hundred souls only, mainly occupied by fishing. The shoreline is mixed cliffs and long sandy beaches. The southern part of the Island is gently rolling grasslands with grazing cattle while pine forests cover the northwestern part. Electricity is lacking but there is a diesel generator providing electricity for Khuzhir, daytime only though.

Olkhon is well worth a visit for the nature but the bird-fauna didn't impress me. *Daurian Jackdaws* were common and were easy to see at the ferry crossing both on Olkhon and in **MRS** (name of a village) on the mainland. *Black kite, hobby and kestrel* were common.

On a boat-trip from Khuzhir to the mainland in the west across Lake Baikal (the Bay to the west of Olkhon is called "**Maloe Morje**", little lake) we saw the endemic Baikal seal (Njerpa in Russian) on a few occasions. A flock of 200 red-breasted mergansers were also a good record. On the mainland I saw a juvenile *horned lark*, *Richard's pipits*, *Isabelline wheatear* and a pair of *ruddy shelducks*.

The next morning we returned to Irkutsk to catch an overnight train to Novosibirsk.

Novosibirsk 15-19/7

We arrived in Novosibirsk after a little more than 30 hours on the Trans-Siberian railway. After a day in the city we went to our friend Evgeniyas dacha in **Motkovo**, around 60 kilometres east of Novosibirsk. We stayed there for two nights before we returned to Novosibirsk and our departure for Moscow and Stockholm.

Novosibirsk is a good place for practising the difference between *pacific* and *common swift* (nominata) as both are common, also in the city centre. On a boat trip on the river **Ob** I saw at least 2 adult *black terns* close to the railway bridge. Greater black-headed gulls are sometimes seen on the river but I didn't.

The nature around Motkovo is dominated by birch forest and grass meadows. There is also a river, Inya, not far from the village. Close to the river there are some small wet areas with shrubbery. Birds noted in the area include: "steppe" buzzard (*vulpinus*), *common quail*, *lesser spotted woodpecker*, *tree pipit*, *citrine wagtail*, a *Siberian rubythroat*, *stonechats*, *Pallas's reed warbler*, *Blyth's reed warbler*, *golden oriole* and a *greenfinch*.

I visited the Novosibirsk area and the Altai Mountains for almost six weeks in 2001 and the report from that trip is much more comprehensive than this one. I advice you to download it from club300.se!



Buryat delicacies



Planning a trip

Travel in Russia

We flew with Aeroflot between Stockholm and Moscow and continued the same day with Siberia Airlines to Ulan-Ude. On the way back we had to spend a night in Moscow, as the flight bound for Stockholm leaves in the morning. A return ticket Stockholm - Ulan-Ude was around 700 Euro. The Trans-Siberian railway is a more pleasant but time-consuming mean of transportation. Travelling from Moscow to Ulan-Ude takes a little more than 90 hours. A good alternative is to take the train eastwards and to return by air. Train tickets are less than half the price if you buy them in Russia instead of in the west.

For visa to Russia, your travel agent can hopefully give you advice. Be sure that you get a visa that allows you to travel to other parts of Siberia than you arrive to. If you enter a new region and intend to stay there for more than three days you need to register your visa at the local police office or at the hotel where you are staying. However not all hotels offer this service. For example when we were in Istomino in the Selenga delta we had to go to Kabansk to register our visas as its not the same region as Ulan-Ude. In Arshan we registered our visas at the hostel but in both Vydrino and Borgoi we didn't register at all. If you travel with a tourist company they will take care of invitations for visas and they can also register visas. In Sweden we got nice help with visas and tickets by "Andy" at Spectrum (www.spectrum.se).

Independent travel is possible but things will get much easier if you bring somebody with you who speak Russian and is used to Russian authorities. If you contact the travel companies listed below they will probably suggest you to hire a guide, an interpreter, a chef and possibly also a driver of the car. You will probably manage with a driver who speaks a little English only. Insist to plan a trip of your own instead of buying some of the travel companies “packages” that are often rather expensive. We travelled with a student from the agricultural university who spoke some English, drove the car (his own 4WD Lada Niva) and took care of all the contacts with authorities and hostels/families. We paid him 50 \$ a day for this service. In addition we covered most of his expenses.

Accommodation

We received nice help from a friend of mine in Ulan-Ude in organising bed & all-meals in Istomino, Vydrino and in Bjeloozersk. In Arshan we stayed in a hostel (see that chapter). If you manage to establish a local contact he/she should be able to find family households in strategic places. Expect to pay around 15-20 Euro per night with all meals included. In Ulan-Ude we stayed at Hotel Buryatia who registered my girlfriends visa. We paid 20\$ for a double. It's an OK hotel by Russian standards. The canteen (Stalovaja) on the ground floor serves hot and cheap meals. Other Hotels in Ulan-Ude are listed on www.waytorussia.net where you can also find other kinds of accommodation, family households too.

In Moscow, staying at gigantic “Hotel Rossija” at the Red Square is a good bet as its as central it can be and comparably cheap, 50\$ for a double. Tel 232 6046, 232 6248. Taxis to and from the airport can be booked in advance at the ground floor.

Contacts

Below I have listed some persons or companies that I was in contact with during my stay. Some of them have English-speaking staff members. I haven't checked them since I was there and some of the telephone numbers or e-mail addresses might no longer be working.

“The Baikal Institute of Nature Management” in Istomino. It should be possible to get beds and meals there. www.buryatia.ru contact binm@baikal.net . Phone: (3012) 434115. Fax (3012) 438753 or 434259. I am not sure whether somebody speaks English.

Olga Myznikova is a tourist co-ordinator at the region office in Kabansk, close to the Selenga delta. She speaks splendid English and helped us in organising a trip on the Selenga delta with her husband Vitaly as our guide. She is really a doer and can probably help you with accommodation and information around southern end of Lake Baikal. As I understood she knew a lot about the “Baikalski Zapovednik” which is a large Nature Reserve at the southern end of Lake Baikal including the taiga we visited close to Vydrino. Her e-mail is: bereg77@mail.ru telephone: (3013) 840497



Sorry mate, I'm also out of cigarettes.

“Zabaikalski Natsionalnij Park” Is a National Park that includes the Chivirkui Isthmus, The Svitnoy Nos Peninsula and a good portion of the mountains on the northeastern shore of Lake Baikal. It's a truly wild area. The office is in Ust-Barguzin and they can hopefully help you to find housing and maybe also a guide in the area. Their e-mail is: zabaikal@burnet.ru website: <http://ngo.burnet.ru/znp> tel/fax: (3013) 191575. Don't expect them to speak English but e-mail or a fax might do!

Baikal Naran Tur is a tourist company in Ulan-Ude that can arrange trips in the Baikal region. They are not specialised in nature holidays but Svetlana is very helpful and speaks good English. E-mail: baikalnarantour@mail.ru tel/fax: (3012) 215097

Hotel Buryatia is a basic hotel downtown Ulan-Ude with partly English-speaking staff. We spend a night there and they can register visas. There are several tourist offices at the ground floor, of which the above mentioned Baikal Naran Tur is one. Unfortunately I don't have the telephone numbers to the other companies but giving hotel Buryatia a call or e-mail might be a good start. E-mail: hotel@burnet.ru tel (3012) 211835 fax (3012) 211760

Language

Few Russians manage to communicate in English or other western languages, and if you don't speak Russian things will take time if you don't bring an interpreter. In general, people under 25 are best at English. For reading maps and road-signs it's useful to try to learn the Cyrillic alphabet. It seems complicated at the beginning but you will get most of it after only an hour of practice.



Local fisherman at the Lake Baikal.

Precautions

Ticks were incredibly common in the Taiga in Vydrino and had to be removed from the clothes several times per hour. Despite this, several ticks could be found on our bodies after just a few hours walk in the forest. We learned that putting the socks outside the trousers made ticks easier to discover before they reached the "Glockenspiel" and other precious parts of the body. Compared to Western Europe, a high percentage of the ticks are infected with Tick Borne Encephalitis (TBE) virus that can cause severe brain damage or death. Vaccination against TBE is hence highly recommended.

Literature

Flint, V.E. 1989. *A field guide to birds of the USSR: including Eastern Europe and Central Asia*. Princeton University press. ISBN 0-691-02430-8. Brief information on field characters and a very small distribution map for every species. Essential.

Lindell, Ulf & Bodil. *Russia – a birding trip on our own during 4 weeks in may/june 2000*. The trip report is available from club300.se and skof.se. Good description on birding hotspots in the Selenga delta as well as the Irkutsk area.

Rogacheva, H. 1992. *The birds of central Siberia*. Husum Druck- und Verlagsgesellschaft. ISBN 3-88042-631-7. Covers the area stretching from the Republic of Tuva in the south, bordering to Mongolia, to the Taimyr Peninsula in the north. Hence it does not cover the Novosibirsk-Altai area nor the Baikal area but the area in-between. There are no field characters or pictures in it; rather it gives information on the birds occurring in this area acting as a good complement to Flint. Comprehensive!

Richmond, S. et al 2003. Russia & Belarus. Lonely Planet Publications Ltd 2003.

Internet resources

Typing birdwatching, birds or tourism together with Buryatia, Lake Baikal or Siberia on Google produces some hits on the topic. All of the websites listed below have English versions.

www.ecotours.ru Organises birdwatching tours around lake Baikal, mostly the western parts though. Elena on Elenik@deol.ru can give you more information. In English!

www.greenexpress.ru organises tours around lake Baikal together with naturetrek.co.uk. e-mail: travel@greenexpress.ru
tel/fax+7 (395-2) 564-877 +7 (395-2) 564-964

www.firntravel.ru is a tourist company in Ulan-Ude which organises nature holidays around Lake Baikal.

www.russianconcept.com/en organises birdwatching trips around Lake Baikal.

www.waytorussia.net provides a lot of information about independent travel in Siberia. A good site to start with. Some maps can also be found.

www.baikaltravel.ru provides information on travel in the Baikal area.

Maps

Good maps over Siberia are difficult to purchase in Sweden. Your best bet is probably to try finding something on the Internet.

Hallwag. A map covering the "Commonwealth of Independent States" scale 1:7 000 000 (ISBN 3-8283-0095-2). Available in most bookshops at least in Sweden.

"Tactical Pilotage Chart" Series TPC, Sheet E-6B, Edition 1. Scale 1:500 000. A map which seems to be developed for military use. This particular sheet covers a large area around Novosibirsk but not the Altai. Purchased from "Kartbutiken" in Stockholm, (kartbutiken.se).

"Respublika Buryatia" Scale 1:500 000. Nice road map covering Buryatia purchased in a bookstore on Ulitsa Lenina in Ulan-Ude. In Russian. ISBN 595230007-3. Produced by "Omskaya Kartograficheskaya Fabrika" (The map factory of Omsk in translation). Website: www.okf.ru, e-mail okf@omsknet.ru

“Respublika Buryatia” Scale 1:1 250 000. Covers the entire Buryatia. Bought in a bookstore on Ulitsa Lenina in Ulan-Ude. In Russian. Produced by “Novosibirskaya Kartograficheskaya Fabrika” Telephone/Fax (383-2) 24 59 32, 24 96 77. E-mail: nkf@online.nsk.ru

“Novosibirskaya Oblast” Scale 1:750 000. Covers the Novosibirsk Area, including the Chany lakes west of the city. Bought in a bookstore on the Lenin Square in Novosibirsk. In Russian. Produced by “Novosibirskaya Kartograficheskaya Fabrika”. Same address as the previous map.

“Pribakaljie” Scale 1:200 000. Very good road map purchased in a bookstore on Ulitsa Lenina in Ulan-Ude. In Russian. Unfortunately there is no information given about where its produced.

Species list Buryatia & Olkhon Island 10/6 – 14/7

Red-throated diver (*Gavia stellata*) 1 pair Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6

Crested grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) 1 Istomino 14/6, 4 Ranchurovo 15/6, 20 Selenga delta 16/6, 10 upper white lake Bjeloozersk 24/6, 5 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6, 10 the White lake, Orongoi 26/6, 10 Barguzin Valley 30/6.

Red-necked grebe (*Podiceps grisegenea*) 1 Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, 5 Selenga delta 16/6, 1 Tunka wetlands 20/6.

Slavonian grebe (*Podiceps auritus*) 20 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Black-necked grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) At least 20 Selenga delta 16/6, 10 The White lake, Orongoi 23/6, 23 upper white lake and 75 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 24/6, 130 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6, 20 Barguzin Valley 30/6.

Great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*) 5 Selenduma 26/6

Great bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) 1 heard Ranchurovo 15/6, 3 Selenga delta 16/6, at least 3 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 2 the White lake, Orongoi 26/6, 1 Barguzin Valley 30/6.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) Common in wetland areas. 30 Istomino 14/6, 50 Ranchurovo 15/6, at least 100 Selenga delta 16/6, Tunka wetlands 20/6, 1 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6, 10 the White lake, Orongoi, 26/6, 10 Barguzin valley 30/6

Heron sp. (*Ardea/Egretta* sp.) A large all-white heron was seen in flight in a very long distance in the Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6. None of the white egrets breed in the area, or even close to it. An albino grey heron cannot be excluded.

Black stork (*Ciconia nigra*) 1 ad. Talovka 14/6. 1 ad Selenga delta 16/6, 2 Tunkinsky valley 19/6, 2-4 Tunka wetlands 20/6. 1 Ulan-Ude 10/7.

Whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) 2 adults at nest, Ranchurovo 15/6, 1 Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6

Swan goose (*Anser cygnoides*) Up to eight adults' lower white lake Bjeloozersk 24-25/6.

Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) 1 ind. river Selenga 14/6, at least 4 pairs Tunka wetlands 20/6, 1 pair with chicks, Zun-Murino, Tunkinsky valley 22/6, 10 pairs with chicks The White lake, Orongoi 23/6, 400 adults upper white lake and 1500 adults with 500 chicks lower white lake Bjeloozersk 24-25/6. 25 breeding pairs, Barguzin Valley 30/6, 1 pair Lake Baikal NE Khuzhir 13/7.



Ruddy Shelducks, Bjeloozersk.

Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) 6 adults upper white lake, 1 ad lower white lake 24/6. 2 breeding pairs lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6. 2 pairs with chicks, Barguzin Valley 30/6.

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) 1 pair Istomino 14/6, 10 Selenga delta 16/6, 5 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 30 upper white lake Bjeloozersk 24/6, 250 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Falcated duck (*Anas falcata*) 1 male Selenga delta 16/6, 3 males upper white lake Bjeloozersk 24/6, 6 males lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) Seen in the Selenga delta all days with between 10 and 100 individuals. 10, Tunka wetlands 20/6, 10 upper white lake Bjeloozersk 24/6, 200 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Common teal (*Anas crecca*) 4 Ranchurovo 15/6, 10 Selenga delta 16/6, 50 upper white lake, 200 lower white lake Bjeloozersk, 24/6, 350 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) common in wetlands, 30 ind. Istomino 14/6, 200 Selenga delta 16/6, 10, Tunka wetlands, 20 upper white lake, 100 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 24/6, 50 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Spot-billed duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha zonorhynca*) 1 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Northern pintail (*Anas acuta*) Common in wetlands, 1 pair Istomino 14/6, 20 Selenga delta 16/6, 10 upper white lake Bjeloozersk 24/6, 200 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*) 1 pair Istomino 14/6, 2 males Ranchurovo 15/6, 1 male Selenga delta 16/6, 3 pairs lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Common in wetland areas, 3 pairs Istomino 14/6, 10 Ranchurovo 15/6, 300 Selenga delta 16/6, 5 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 50 upper white lake, Bjeloozersk 24/6, 300 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*) Numerous in Wetland areas, especially in the Selenga delta and in the Borgoi Hollow. At least 100 in the Selenga delta 16/6, 5 Tunka wetlands 20/6, noted in the White lake Orongoi, at least 1000 (one thousand) lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Tufted duck (*Aythya fuligula*) At least 20 Istomino 14/6, 25 Selenga delta 16/6, 5 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 10 upper white lake Bjeloozersk 24/6, 25 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6, 1 pair Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6

Velvet scoter (*Melanitta fusca stejnegeri*) 25 + 40 males Lake Baikal 16/6, 6 males The White lake, Orongoi 23/6, 1 male lower white lake, Bjeloozersk 24/6, 25 males, 5 females lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6, 1200 (!) males 10 kilometres west of Maximischa (Ust-Barguzin area) 28/6.

Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) 3 Selenga delta 16/6, 5 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 20 upper white lake Bjeloozersk 24/6, 100 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Smew (*Mergus albellus*) 6 males 2 females, Selenga delta 16/6, 8 upper white lake, 5 lower white lake, Bjeloozersk 24/6, 8 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) 1 pair Lake Baikal 16/6, 2 pairs Svitnoy Nos 2/7

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*) 5 Teplie Ozero 17/6

Crested honey buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhyncus*) 1 pair Teplie Ozero 18/6, 1 ind. Vydrino 18/6. In addition a very probable CHB in the Selenga delta close to Ranchurovo 15/6.

Black kite (*Milvus migrans lineatus*) Common and widespread all over Buryatia, as an example 10 in Istomino 14/6, 15 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 10 Bjeloozersk 24/6, 1 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6.

White-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) 2 adults in Istomino 14/6, 1 adult Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6, 1 ad Barguzin Valley 30/6



*Velvet scoter (stejnegeri),
Bjeloozersk.*



Eastern marsh harrier, the Selenga delta.

Eurasian black vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) 20 Bjeloozersk 24/6

Eastern marsh harrier (*Circus spilonotus*) Seen in the Selenga delta all days, maximum 30 individuals 16/6. 4 territories Tunka wetlands 20/6, 2 males and a female the White lake Orongoi 23/6. 2 males white lakes Bjeloozersk 24/6, 1 pair the White lake, Orongoi, 26/6, 1 male Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6, 5 Barguzin valley 30/6

Hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) 1 ad. male 30 km south of Ulan-Ude 23/6.

Sparrowhawk sp. (*Accipter* sp.) 1 unidentified sparrowhawk Nizhnaya Ubukun 26/6

Besra (*Accipter virgatus*) 1 probable Teplie Ozera 17/6, 1 confirmed Teplie Ozera 18/6

Eurasian sparrowhawk (*Accipter nisus*) 1 Selenga delta 16/6, 1 Arshan 21/6, 1 Selenduma 26/6

Buzzard (*Buteo buteo japonicus*) Due to the plumage similarity with Upland buzzard only a few buzzards were identified to species. As an example 10 buzzards were seen in the Tunka wetlands 20/6 but none identified to species, 1 confirmed Arshan 21/6

Upland buzzard (*Buteo hemilasus*) 1 adult Bjeloozersk 24-25/6, 1 Barguzin Valley 30/6

Greater spotted eagle (*Aquila clanga*) At least 5, Tunka wetlands 20/6. At least 1 adult Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6

Steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) 1 subadult the white lake, Orongoi 23/6, 8 subadults Bjeloozersk 24/6

Imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) 1 older subadult Tunka wetlands 20/6, 1 adult close to Suvo village Barguzin Valley 30/6

Aquila sp. 1 Tunkinsky valley 19/6, 1 the White lake, Orongoi, 26/6

Booted eagle (*Hieraateus pennatus*) 1-2 adult pale morph, Tunka wetlands 20/6

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) 1 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 1 Ust-Barguzin 2/7

Common kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) 4 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 1 Arshan 21/6, 1 Selenduma 26/6

Amur falcon (*Falco amurensis*) 1 adult male were seen in the eastern suburbs of Ulan-Ude 11/6. 1 adult male was hunting insects over the Selenga river in the north-western outskirts of Ulan-Ude. 3 males 5 kilometres NE Selenduma 23/6, 2 males Bjeloozersk 24/6, 1 female Bjeloozersk 25/6



Steppe eagle, Bjeloozersk.

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) 1 Vydrino 18/6, 2 Tunkinsky valley 19/6, at least 10 were hunting dragonflies over the Tunka wetlands 20/6. 1-2 Bjeloozersk 24-25/6, 1 Selenduma 26/6



Long-toed stint and pacific golden plover, Bjeloozersk.

Saker (*Falco cherrug*) 1 ind. seen hunting in Kargino 14/6

Hazel grouse (*Bonasia bonasia*) 1 heard Arshan 21/6, 1 female with chicks, Makarinino, Barguzin Valley 30/6

Rock ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus*) 1 Arshan 21/6

Water rail (*Rallus aquaticus indicus*) 2 heard in Barguzin Valley 30/6

Coot (*Fulica atra*) Heard at Tunka wetlands 20/6, 1 white lakes Bjeloozersk 24/6, 1 ad. with 3 chicks the White lake, Orongoi, 26/6, 2 ad with chicks Barguzin Valley 30/6

Crane (*Grus grus*) 10 Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, 10 Selenga delta 16/6

Demoiselle crane (*Grus virgo*) 1 pair with chick 30 kilometres south of Ulan-Ude 23/6. At least 240 adults upper white lake Bjeloozersk 24/6, in addition 3 pairs lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6, 1 pair km 44 from Irkutsk towards Olkhon 12/7.

Pied avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) 16 adults upper white lake, Bjeloozersk 24/6, 30 adults and 5 breeding pairs lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Little ringed plover (*Charadrius dubius*)

1 pair Ranchurovo Selenga delta 15/6, 10 pairs Selenga delta 16/6, 5 pairs outside Vydrino 17-19/6, 25 pairs white lakes Bjeloozersk 24/6

Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) 5 pairs white lakes Bjeloozersk 24/6

Pacific golden plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) 2 ind. lower white lake, Bjeloozersk 24-25/6

Northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) 40 Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, 2 Selenga delta 16/6, 1 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 150 upper white lake, Bjeloozersk 24/6, 120 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Long-toed stint (*Calidris subminuta*) 1 lower white lake, Bjeloozersk 24/6

Common snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) 1-2 ind. Istomino, Selenga delta, 14/6, 10 Selenga delta 16/6, common along river Snezhnaya 17-19/6. 1, Tunka wetlands 20/6, 2 displaying males white lakes, Bjeloozersk 24/6, 1 Barguzin valley 30/6

Swinhoe's snipe (*Gallinago megala*) 1 possible seen and heard in the wetlands close to Ranchurovo, 15/6. 1 possible seen in the Tunka wetlands 20/6

Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) 1 Teplie Ozera 17/6

Eurasian curlew (*Numenius arquata orientalis*) 1 in Istomino, Selenga delta 14/6, 2 Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, 10 Selenga delta 16/6, 1 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 80 white lakes, Bjeloozersk 24/6, 15 Barguzin valley 30/6

Black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa melanuroides*) 2 ind. Istomino 14/6, 8 upper white lake, 2 lower white lake, Bjeloozersk 24/6, 55 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Spotted redshank (*Tringa erythropus*) 1 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) 4 pairs white lakes, Bjeloozersk 24/6

Marsh sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*) 3 ind. Istomino 14/6, 10 Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, 10 Selenga delta 16/6, 12 upper white lake, 10 lower white lake, Bjeloozersk 24/6, 5 Barguzin valley 30/6



Common tern (longipennis) with nest and herring gulls (mongolus), the Selenga river delta.



Common greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*) 1 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Green sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*) 1 displaying Teplie Ozera 19/6, 3 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6

Wood sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*) 2 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 2 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 24/6, 5 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6, 1 pair mainland NE Khuzhir 13/7

Common sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) 3 Teplie Ozera 17/6

Little gull (*Larus minutus*) 1 adult Tunka wetlands 20/6

Black-headed gull (*Larus ridibundus*) Common in the Selenga delta, at least 50 (2 colonies) Tunka wetlands 20/6, 30 white lakes, Bjeloozersk 24-25/6

Common gull (*Larus canus heinei*) Common in wetlands around Lake Baikal, 5 white lakes Bjeloozersk 24-25/6

Herring gull (*Larus argentatus mongolicus*) Common in wetlands around Lake Baikal. 50 white lakes Bjeloozersk 24-25/6

Caspian tern (*Sterna caspia*) At least 4, Istomino, Selenga delta, 14/6, 2 Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, at least 15 Selenga delta 16/6

Common tern (*Sterna hirundo longipennis*) Common in the Selenga river delta, as well as around Lake Baikal. At least 5 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 30 white lakes, Bjeloozersk 24-25/6, two of which had a red bill.

White-winged black tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) 14 in Istomino, Selenga delta, 14/6, 10 Selenga delta 16/6, 1 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 40 adults lower white lake, Bjeloozersk 24-25/6, 10 Barguzin valley 30/6

Hill pigeon (*Columba rupestris*) Common in rural areas

Collared dove (*Streptotelia decaoto*) 1 ind. seen at close range 5 kilometres NE Selenduma 23/6.

Oriental turtle dove (*Streptotelia orientalis orientalis*) Surprisingly uncommon on this trip. 1 Istomino, Selenga delta 16/6, 8 Tunkinsky valley 19/6, 3 Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6

Common cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) 1-2 Teplie Ozera 18/6, 1 Selenduma 26/6

Oriental cuckoo (*Cuculus saturatus*) 1 ind. heard Elovka "mountain pass" 14/6. Superb observations of a displaying male in Istomino 14/6. at least 3 Teplie Ozera 17-19/6, 1 Arshan 21/6

Cuckoo sp. (*Cuculus canorus/saturatus*) 2 unidentified birds seen in Bjeloozersk 24/6

Short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*) 1-2 Tunka wetlands 20/6

White-throated needletail (*Hirundapus caudacutus*) 2 individuals Elovka "mountain pass" 14/6, up to 20 Teplie Ozera 17-19/6, 5 Vydrino 17/6, 3 E Ust-Barguzin 1/7

Common swift (*Apus a. apus*) The common swifts that were seen on this trip were all dark and looked like European swifts. The subspecies *pekinensis* occur in Mongolia. Single individuals were seen in the Selenga delta all days.



Citrine wagtail.

Pacific swift (*Apus pacificus*) Common in urban and rural areas throughout Buryatia. Seemed to be even more common in cities than common swift is in Europe. Seldom seen in forested areas. Several hundreds seen on many occasions in Ulan-Ude as well as in smaller towns. Not seen in Borgoi hollow 24-25/6, 2 Selenduma 26/6.

Eurasian hoopoe (*Upupa epops saturata*) Common in rural areas always associated with farmland. 10 Bjeloozersk 24/6

Grey-headed woodpecker (*Picus canus*) 1 Teplie Oзера 18/6

Black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) At least 1 Teplie Oзера 17-18/6, 1 Vydrino 18/6, 1 Tagarchai (close to Tunka wetlands) 20/6, 1 Arshan 21/6, 1 male and 2 juv. E Ust-Barguzin 1/7

Great spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) At least 3 Teplie Oзера 17-19/6, 1 Arshan 21/6, 1 pair E Ust-Barguzin 1/7

White-backed woodpecker (*Dendrocopos leucotos*) 1 male Selenga delta 16/6, 1-2 Teplie Oзера 17/6

Lesser-spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*) 1 Selenduma 26/6, 1 female E Ust-Barguzin 1/7. .

Three-toed woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*) 1 female Teplie Oзера 18/6, 1 male Arshan 21/6



Olive-backed pipit, Arshan



Barn swallows, notice white underparts, the Selenga delta.

Mongolian lark (*Melanocorypha mongolica*) 2 ind. 5 kilometres NE Selenduma 23/6, common in the Borgoi hollow, 50 pairs around Bjeloozersk 24-25/6

Greater short-toed lark?? (*Calandrella brachydactyla* ???) 5 pairs Bjeloozersk area 24-25/6, 2 ind. the white lake, Orongoi 26/6

Eurasian skylark (*Alaula arvensis intermedia/kiborti*) Common in rural areas. 50 pairs Bjeloozersk area 24-25/6, 20 Barguzin valley 30/6, 5 Ivolginsk Datsan 10/7. Subspecies unknown.

Horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris brandti*) Common in the Borgoi hollow, 30 pairs around Bjeloozersk 24-25/6, 1 pair Barguzin valley 30/6, 1 juvenile mainland NE Khuzhir 13/7.

Sand martin (*Riparia riparia riparia/diluta*) 2 lower white lake Bjeloozersk 25/6. Diluta is said to occur in northern Mongolia. Bjeloozersk is just a few tens of kilometres north of Mongolia and they seemed to be pale as diluta should be.

Barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica tyleri*) Common in rural areas throughout Buryatia. Barn swallows with white underparts were not uncommon and consisted of about 5-10% of the population in certain areas.

Asian house martin (*Delichon asiatica*) Common in Vydrino and Ust-Barguzin

Richard's pipit (*Anthus richardi*) Common in rural, open areas, almost always associated with moist or wet areas, at least 5 Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, at least 7 territories Tunka wetlands 20/6, 7 pairs white lakes Bjeloozersk 24-25/6, 5 pairs the White lake, Orongoi, 26/6, 5 pairs Barguzin valley 30/6, 2 pairs Ivolginsk Datsan 10/7, 3 pairs mainland NE Khuzhir 13/7.

Olive-backed pipit (*Anthus hodgsoni yunnanensis*) Common in forested areas throughout Buryatia, like tree pipit in northern Europe. As an example, 10 Arshan 21/6, 5 Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6, 10 E Ust-Barguzin 1/7.

Water pipit (*Anthus spinoletta blakistoni*) At least 3 territories Arshan 21/6



Eurasian skylark (intermedia/kiborti) and mongolian lark, Borgoi hollow.

Yellow wagtail (*Motacilla flava tshutschensis*) 1 pair Tunka wetlands 20/6.

Citrine wagtail (*Motacilla citreola citreola*) Common in wet areas, especially so in the Selenga delta where around 75 territories were counted 16/6. Seemed to breed in small colonies. 2 males Vydrino 18/6. At least 10 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 3 pairs Bjeloozersk 24/6, 1 male the White lake, Orongoi, 26/6, 1 pair Chivirkui Isthmus 28/6, 1 pair Barguzin valley 30/6.

Grey wagtail (*Motacilla c. cinerea*) 5 territories Teplie Ozera 17/6, at least 4 territories Arshan 21/6, 1 male Svitnoy Nos 2/7. In general more short-tailed than European grey wagtails. The grey wagtails in C Siberia were formerly treated as a subspecies, *melanope*. Alström et al 2004 however argues that the variation is within *cinerea*.

White wagtail (*Motacilla alba baicalensis*) Common in urban as well as rural areas throughout Buryatia. As example 5



“European” species in Asia: *Water pipit (blakistoni, Arshan)*, *common redstart (phoenicurus, Arshan)*, and *white wagtail (baicalensis, Selenga)*.

territories Teplie Ozera 17/6. Not noted in the Borgoi hollow 24-25/6, 1 pair Selenduma 26/6, 3 pairs Ust-Barguzin 28/6-2/7.

Alpine accentor (*Prunella collaris*???) 1 pair Arshan 21/6 looked mostly like alpine accentor but had extensive red on rump and wings. Subspecies unknown.

Rufous-tailed robin (*Luscinia sibilans*) At least 5 singing males Teplie Ozero 17-19/6

Siberian rubythroat (*Luscinia calliope*) At least 3 singing males Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, 4 singing males Selenga delta 16/6, at least 3 singing males Teplie Ozera 17-19/6, 1 singing male Vydrino 18/6, 1 singing male Tunka wetlands 20/6.

Siberian blue robin (*Luscinia cyane*) At least 25 singing males Teplie Ozera 17-19/6, one of the most common passerines! 1 singing male Tunka wetlands 20/6

Red-flanked bluetail (*Tarsiger cyanurus*) A 2nd cy male and a female fed chicks Arshan 21/6, 3 singing males E Ust-Barguzin 1/7, 1 singing male Svitnoy Nos 2/7.

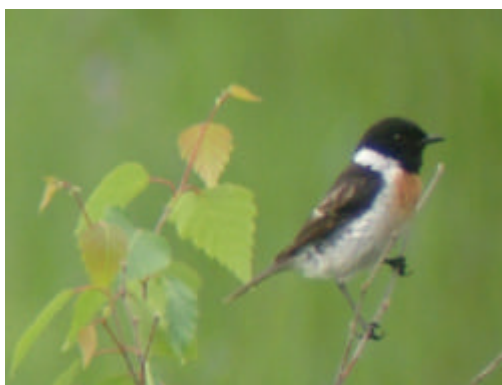
Eversmann's redstart (*Phoenicurus erythronata*) 1 pair Arshan 21/6

Common redstart (*Phoenicurus p. phoenicurus*) 1 male Arshan 21/6, 2 males Ulan-Ude 22/6, 1 female E Ust-Barguzin 1/7

Daurian redstart (*Phoenicurus auroreus*) Common in rural villages. 1 male Elovka "mountain pass" 14/6, 3 males + 2 females Vydrino 17-19/6, 2 males E Bistraya 19/6, 4 males Arshan 21/6 of which 2 were seen in the village and 2 were singing in the larch forest. 1 male Nizhnaya Ubukun 26/6, 1 male Ust-Barguzin 28/6-2/7, 1 male E Ust-Barguzin 1/7, 1 male Svitnoy Nos 2/7

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata maurus*) At least 6 territories Tunka wetlands 20/6, 1 pair Ivolginsk Datsan 10/7.

Isabelline wheatear (*Oenanthe isabellinus*) 2 adults close to river Selenga in the northwestern outskirts of Ulan-Ude. 20 pairs Bjeloozersk 24-25/6, 5 Selenduma 26/6, 10 pairs Barguzin valley 30/6, 1 pair Ivolginsk Datsan 10/7



Stonechat (maurus) and isabelline wheatear.

Northern wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) One pair bred successfully close to the BGSMA hostel in Ulan-Ude. Common in dry rural areas throughout Buryatia. 4 pairs Bjeloozersk 24/6, 1 pair Selenduma 26/6, 1 pair Nizhnaya Ubukun 26/6, 2 pairs Ust-Barguzin 28/6-2/7. 30 pairs Barguzin valley 30/6

Pied wheatear (*Oenanthe pleschanka*) 1 pair feeding chicks in a stony slope close to Suvo, Barguzin valley 30/6

Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush (*Monticola saxatilis*) 1 pair in a stony slope close to Suvo, Barguzin valley 30/6

Siberian thrush (*Zoothera sibirica*) At least 2 males Teplie Ozero 17-18/6

Eye-browed thrush (*Turdus obscurus*) At least 4 Teplie Ozero 17-19/6, 1 singing male Tunka wetlands 20/6

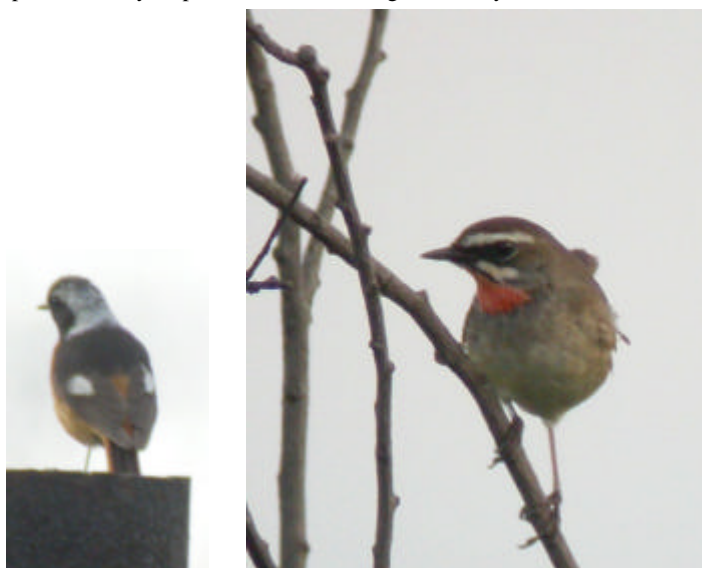
Dark-throated thrush (*Turdus ruficollis ruficollis*) 2 territories Arshan 21/6

Song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) At least 10 Teplie Ozero 17-19/6

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) 2 Ranchurovo, Selenga delta, 15/6.

Spotted bush warbler (*Bradypterus thoracicus*) At least 5 Teplie Ozero 17-19/6, 1 singing 30 kilometres SW Babuschkin 22/6.

Pallas's grasshopper warbler (*Locustella certhiola*) At least 2 singing Ranchurovo,



Daurian redstart and siberian rubythroat were both common.

Selenga delta 15/6, at least 10 singing males Selenga delta 16/6, 1 Teplie Ozera 17/6, at least 5 singing males Tunka wetlands 20/6, 3 Selenduma 26/6, 1 Svitnoy Nos 2/7.

Lanceolated warbler (*Locustella lanceolata*) 1 singing ind. Istomino 14/6. At least 4 singing Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, 5 Selenga delta 16/6, 1 singing Tunka wetlands 20/6

Oriental great reed warbler (*Acrocephalus orientalis*) 2 males the white lake, Orongoi 23/6. 5 singing males the White lake, Orongoi, 26/6

Thick-billed warbler (*Acrocephalus aedon*) 1 Tunka wetlands 20/6

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca blythi*) 1 ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, 1 ind. E Bistraya 19/6, 2 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 2 Nizhnaya Ubukun 26/6.

Common Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis rubicola*) 1 male singing E Bistraya 19/6, 1 Selenduma 26/6

“Siberian” Greenish warbler (*Phylloscopus trochiloides plumbeitarsus*) Common in forested areas throughout Buryatia. For example 10 Teplie Ozera 17-19/6, 5 Arshan 21/6, 5 Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6, 10 E Ust-Barguzin 1/7

Arctic warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*) 1 singing, Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, up to 4 singing individuals Vydrino 17-19/6, 1 singing Arshan 21/6

Pallas’s warbler (*Phylloscopus proregulus*) Common in forested areas. For example 2 males singing in the ethnographic museum, Ulan-Ude 13/6. At least 20 territories Teplie Ozera 17-19/6, 2 singing E Bistraya 19/6, 1-2 singing Tunka wetlands 20/6, 10 singing Arshan 21/6

Yellow-browed warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*) 1 singing ind. E Bistraya 19/6, 2 calling ind. Tunka wetlands 20/6. Surprisingly low numbers.

Radde’s warbler (*Phylloscopus schwarzi*) Around 7 singing males Arshan 21/6. Not observed anywhere else on the trip.

Dusky warbler (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*) Common/Numerous in wetland with bushes. At least 13 singing Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, 8 Selenga delta 16/6, 1 E Bistraya 19/6, 5 singing Tunka wetlands 20/6, 3 E Ust-Barguzin 1/7

Dark-sided flycatcher (*Muscicapa sibirica*) At least 3 territories Teplie Ozera 17/6, 1 ad & 1 1st cy E Bistraya 19/6, 2 E Ust-Barguzin 1/7

Taiga flycatcher (*Ficedula albicilla*) 1 adult male Teplie Ozera 18/6, 1 female E Bistraya 19/6, 1 singing male Ust-Barguzin 28/6



Pallas’s grasshopper warbler and “siberian” greenish warbler.

Mugimaki flycatcher (*Ficedula mugimaki*) At least 14 singing males Teplie Ozera 17-19/6 including a 2nd calendar year male. In addition a female.

Bearded reedling (*Panurus biarmicus*) 3 the White lake, Orongoi, 26/6

Long-tailed tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*) Noted on several occasions in the Selenga river delta area, Teplie Ozera 17/6, noted in E Bistraya 19/6, 5 Arshan 21/6

Willow tit (*Parus montanus*) Common in forested areas



Brown shrike (Vyrino) and mugimaki flycatcher (Teplie Ozera). Close to Vydrino/Teplie Ozera the microclimate is said to be warmer than the surrounding area. The area is dominated by coniferous taiga with thick undergrowth and lots of dead fallen trees.

Crested tit (*Parus cristatus*) Common in forested areas

Coal tit (*Parus ater*) Common in forested areas

Great tit (*Parus major*) Noted in forested as well as urban areas

Nuthatch (*Sitta europea asiatica*) 4 Teplie Ozera 17/6, 3 territories Arshan 21/6, 1 male E Ust-Barguzin

Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*) 3 Teplie Ozera 17/6

Brown shrike (*Lanius cristatus*) 1 male Vydrino 17/6, 1 Tunkinsky valley 19/6, 1 male Tunka wetlands 20/6, 1 male E Ust-Barguzin 1/7, 1 male Ivolginsk Datsan 10/7

Isabelline shrike (*Lanius isabellinus isabellinus*) 2 males with nesting material the White lake, Orongoi, 26/6. According to "Shrikes" it doesn't breed in Russia.

Red-backed shrike (*Lanius collurio*) 1 possible male seen in the distance 5 kilometres NE Selenduma 23/6. The bird was far away but looked like this



Azure-winged magpie, Selenduma.

species. Isabelline shrike is the alternative.

Siberian jay (*Perisoreus infaustus*) 1-2 Teplie Ozera 18/6

Azure-winged magpie (*Cyanopica cyanus*) 2 adults central Ulan-Ude 11/6, 3-5 ind. Vydrino 17/6, 25 Selenduma 26/6

Common magpie (*Pica pica leucoptera?*) Common in urban and rural areas throughout Buryatia. White markings on tips of tertials clearly visible on perched birds.

Spotted nutcracker (*Nucifraga caryocatactes macrorhynchos*) 2 Tunka wetlands 20/6, 3 territories Arshan 21/6, 4 Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6.

Jackdaw sp. (*Corvus monedula/dauricus*) 2 the White lake, Orongoi, 26/6

Daurian jackdaw (*Corvus dauuricus*) 1 pied morph seen in Talovka 14 and 22/6, 5 Barguzin valley 30/6, 20 Elantsi, SW of Olkhon Island 12/7, 20 Olkhon 13/7.

Carrion crow (*Corvus corone orientalis*) Common in urban and rural areas in Buryatia.

Common raven (*Corvus corax*) Common in rural areas

Common starling (*Sturnus vulgaris poltaratskyi*) 30 (ad. + juv.) Ust-Barguzin 28/6-2/7.

White-cheeked starling (*Sturnus cineraceus*) At least 3 confirmed breeding in Ust-Barguzin 28/6-2/7.

House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) Common in urban and rural areas

Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*) Common in urban areas

Common chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) 1 male Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*) 1 singing male Vydrino 17/6, 1 singing male Teplie Ozera 18/6.

Eurasian siskin (*Carduelis spinus*) 2 Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, noted in Teplie Ozera 17/6, 2 E Bistraya 19/6, 2 E



“Ordinary swedish species”: yellowhammer and reed bunting.

Ust-Barguzin 1/7

Common crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) 1 male Teplie Ozera 18/6, heard in Arshan 21/6, 2 Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6, 2 E Ust-Barguzin 1/7.

Common rosefinch (*Carpodacus erythrinus*) Common in forested areas as well as in the Selenga delta area 20 16/6, 10 Teplie Ozera 17/6, 1 Arshan 21/6, 1 E Ust-Barguzin 1/7.

Long-tailed rosefinch (*Uragus sibiricus*) Not uncommon in wet areas with bushes and trees. 1 pair Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6. 8 ind. Selenga delta 16/6, 1 pair Selenduma 26/6, 2 males Niznaya Ubukun 26/6, 1 pair Ivolginsk Datsan 10/7

Eurasian bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) 1-2 pairs Teplie Ozera 17/6

Black-faced bunting (*Emberiza spodocephala*) 3 pairs Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, 3 pairs Selenga delta 16/6, 5 territories Teplie Ozera 17-19/6, 3 pairs Tunka wetlands 20/6, 2 pairs Nizhnaya Ubukun 26/6, 1 male E Ust-Barguzin 1/7

Pine bunting (*Emberiza leucocephala*) Common in forested areas, especially in pine-dominated poor forests. At least 5 males Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, 1 singing male Tunka wetlands 20/6

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella erythrogenys*) At least 3 singing males Tunka wetlands 20/6

Meadow bunting (*Emberiza cioides*) 1 pair 10 kilometres N of Bjeloozersk village 25/6, at least 5 pairs in a stony slope close to Suvo, Barguzin valley 30/6

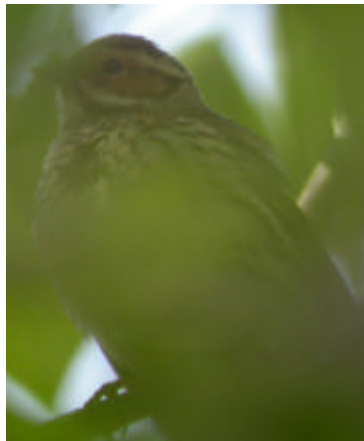
Little bunting (*Emberiza pusilla*) 1 probable female were seen at close range in the lighthouse garden at the lone lighthouse in the Selenga delta.

Chestnut bunting (*Emberiza rutila*) At least 5 territories Teplie Ozera 17-19/6

Yellow-breasted bunting (*Emberiza aureola*) Common in wet meadows. At least 10 males Ranchurovo, Selenga delta 15/6, at least 25 males Selenga delta 16/6, 7 territories Tunka wetlands 20/6, 1 male Selenduma 26/6, 2 males Chivirkui Isthmus 29/6, 1 male Barguzin valley 30/6

Common reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus pyrrhulina/minor*) At least 10 in the Selenga delta. 1 male Tunka wetlands 20/6, 2 males and a female the White lake, Orongoi, 26/6, 1 male Barguzin valley. Large bill, little streaked below.

Pallas's reed bunting (*Emberiza pallasi*) 3 pairs, white lakes, Bjeloozersk 24/6.



More emberizas! Blackfaced (Arshan), little (Selenga), and meadow bunting (Borgoi).

Species list Novosibirsk Area 15-19/7

Black kite (*Milvus migrans*) Common around Novosibirsk 17-19/7.

“Steppe” buzzard (*Buteo buteo vulpinus*) 1 adult Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) 1 Motkovo, E Novosibirsk, 16/7

Common quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) 1 heard Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7.

Common gull (*Larus canus*) Common in River Ob, Novosibirsk 19/7

Herring gull (*Larus argentatus*) Common in River Ob, Novosibirsk 19/7

Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*) Common in River Ob, Novosibirsk 19/7

Black tern (*Chlidonias niger*) At least 2 adults were seen on a boat trip on the river Ob in Novosibirsk 19/7.

Common swift (*Apus a. apus*) Common in Novosibirsk city

Pacific swift (*Apus pacificus*) Common in Novosibirsk city.

Great spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) A male was seen in Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7.

Lesser spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*) 1 pair Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7

Sand martin (*Riparia r. riparia*) A colony with around 100 pairs, Motkovo, E Novosibirsk, 18/7.

Barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica rustica*) Common in rural areas around Novosibirsk

Tree pipit (*Anthus trivialis*) Common in forested areas around Novosibirsk.

Yellow wagtail (*Motacilla flava* ?) 1 male Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7. Subspecies unknown, similar to *flava*.

Citrine wagtail (*Motacilla citreola citreola*) 1 male Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7

White wagtail (*Motacilla alba alba*) Common in Novosibirsk

White wagtail (*Motacilla alba ocularis*) 1 male Krasnojarsk railway station 16/7.

Siberian rubythroat (*Luscinia calliope*) 1 male Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata maurus*) 2 males Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) At least 15 Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7.

Pallas's grasshopper warbler (*Locustella certhiola*) 1 singing male Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7.

Blyth's reed warbler (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*) 2 singing males Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca* ?) 1 singing male Motkovo, E Novosibirsk, *blythi*?

Greenish warbler (*Phylloscopus trochiloides viridianus*) Common in forested areas around Novosibirsk

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita tristis*) Common in forested areas around Novosibirsk.

Willow tit (*Parus montanus*) Common in forested areas

Coal tit (*Parus ater*) Common in forested areas

Great tit (*Parus major*) Noted in forested as well as urban areas

Golden oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*) 1 singing male Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 17-18/7.

Common magpie (*Pica pica*) Common in urban and rural areas.

House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) Common in urban and rural areas

Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*) Common in urban areas

Common chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) Common around Novosibirsk 15-19/7.

Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*) 1 singing male Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis carduelis*) A small flock were seen in Motkovo, E Novosibirsk 18/7

Common rosefinch (*Carpodacus erythrinus*) Common around Novosibirsk 17-19/7.



Petter Haldén with children at the Baikal Institute of Nature Management, Istomino.

Photos: Mats Waern, Fredrik Friberg and Mikael Malmaeus. Map (modified) by Martin Åkesson.