

Southern Siberia 14/6-26/7 2001

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

INTRODUCTION

Taking part of a student exchange program between the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Novosibirsk State Agrarian University during the summer of 2001, I came to see several nice birds which this trip report deals with.

Top ten birds of the trip include: Demoiselle crane, white-throated needletail, Siberian blue robin, Eversmann's redstart, black-throated accentor, thick-billed warbler, Gray's grasshopper warbler, long-tailed rosefinch, black-faced bunting and meadow bunting.

Among the possible species but missed by me are: Altai snowcock, crested honey buzzard, Amur falcon, Pallas's sandgrouse, Swinhoe's red-tailed robin, Blyth's pipit, mugimaki flycatcher, Siberian thrush and Godlewski's bunting to mention a few.

In the areas where I had extraordinary birding I will try to give an explanation of how to get there and where I was birding. If possible I have made sure that the description is based on the Hallwag map covering the Commonwealth of Independent States scale 1:700 000 (ISBN 3-8283-0095-2). Better maps are available in Novosibirsk or Ulan-Ude. However, many of the areas that I visited weren't that unique and I consider that any area could be as good as the ones that I visited. The reason to this is that I seldom could decide where we should go, or even had the brightest idea of where I should go!

If you have any comments don't hesitate to contact me.

ITINERARY

Moscow city 14-17/6, Trans-Siberian railway Moscow-Novosibirsk 17/6-19/6 (51h), Novosibirsk 19/6-3/7, Altai republic 3/7-10/7, Novosibirsk 10/7-19/7, trans-siberian railway Novosibirsk-Ulan-Ude 19/7-20/7 (43h), Ulan-Ude and lake Baikal 20/7-25/7.

TRIP REPORT

Trans-Siberian railway 17-19/6

My travel-mate Ulrika and I entered the train bound for Novosibirsk and Lena (north of lake Baikal) 9 am from the Yaroslavl station. The first hours of Moscow suburbs were pretty depressing with worn building blocks and piles of rubbish along the railroad. We had a good night sleep and woke up somewhere between Niznyj Novgorod and Vjatka. Mostly forested areas looking pretty much like mid-Sweden forests. Birds noted here were 1 male *hen harrier*

and 2 *black kites*. In the evening we passed the Ural Mountains while sipping on a Baltika beer in the dining wagon together with the Armenian bartender. The Urals aren't very mountainous but more like hills with no tendencies of "peaking". When we woke up the next day we were in the west-Siberian lowlands. The western areas were very flat with forest-steppe, groves and scattered marshes. Birds here were 1 ad female *pallid harrier*, *kestrels*, nominate *buzzards*, *herring gulls*, *white-winged black terns*, *yellow wagtails* and *bluethroats*. While approaching Barabinsk we moved into drier areas which resembled steppe and is probably an extension from nearby Kazakstan. In these areas *pallid harriers* were pretty common and 5 ad males and 2 ad females were seen. Further on, *steppe buzzards* (*B.b.vulpinus*) 2 *short-eared owls*, *black-tailed-godwits*, *rufous turtle dove* and several *bluethroats* were also seen while approaching Novosibirsk.

Novosibirsk 19/6-19/7

After I had been picked up by my host Igor in the middle of the night we drove to his place. While walking from the garage to the building block we passed the local sewage marsh where a distinct *Pallas's grasshopper warbler* was singing. Good start!

20/6 Akademgorodok 20 km south of Novosibirsk

After visiting the institute of cytology and genetics we had some free time which we spent in a nearby forest. The forest was rather young and could have been located outside Uppsala. *Blyth's reed warbler* was noted with several singing males as well as *tristis-chiffchaffs*. *Golden orioles* were seen feeding chicks in a nest. Other species here were *Icterine warbler*, *scarlet rosefinch*, *common redstart*, *chaffinch*, *great tit*, *pied flycatcher* and *fieldfares* all of which turned out to be common in all the visited areas around Novosibirsk. *Common rosefinch* was indeed very common also in dense forests. Above our heads several *black kites* were soaring together with swifts. A closer examination of the *swifts* revealed several *pacifics* (*Apus pacificus*) among the *common swifts*. The *pacific swifts* were not remarkably larger than the *common swifts* and it was sometimes difficult to pick them out by size alone when in flocks with *common swifts*.

21/6 NGAU Novosibirsk State Agrarian University

While visiting the Agrarian university of Novosibirsk (NGAU) I had nice views on breeding *pacific swifts* on the main building. A *lesser whitethroat* was skulking in a nearby hedge.

26/6 Botanical garden of Novosibirsk, in Akademgorodok

When we walked from the main building to the experimental area for horticulture I recorded 13 *black kites* together, *greenish warbler* (*viridianus*), *common whitethroat*, *common redstart*, *pied flycatcher*, *golden oriole*, *chiffchaff* (*tristis*), *yellowhammer* and a brief observation of a singing *lanceolated warbler*.

In the evening we went to a Datja (Russian summer house) Southeast of Akademgorodok where we spent the night. During the evening an *oriental cuckoo* was heard singing and also

seen in the distance. At least 3 *Siberian rubythroats* were singing in the vicinity of the Datja. In addition several *blyth's reed warblers*, *common rosefinches* and *golden orioles*

27/6 Datja area Southeast of Akademgorodok

Datja area with mixed woodland and some pretty dry meadows.

I spend the early hours in a meadow area close to the Datja. 3 *lanceloated warblers* were seen and heard singing as well as 2 *Radde's warblers* (which I didn't manage to see), *golden orioles*, *fieldfares* and *blyth's reed warblers*. In the evening several *pacific swifts* were again seen from my balcony in Snegiri, Novosibirsk.

28/6 (Botanical garden of Novosibirsk, in Akademgorodok)

Mixed woodland with very dense and lush thickets.

Returned to the botanical garden where Ulrika looked at the flowers and me myself was birding. When we tried to get there we hopped on the wrong bus and ended up in Berdsk instead of Akademgorodok. However this wasn't that bad as I spotted an adult *great black-headed gull* soaring over the river Berd through the bus window! It turned out to be the only *GBHG* during the whole trip. When we finally arrived in the Botanical garden Ulrika went to the Bonzai-garden while I stepped into the lush vegetation along a spring where I tried to localise a singing *Siberian blue robin*. Unfortunately I didn't manage to see it except from very short glimpses when it changed position. Indeed frustrating but the song was pretty nice. Other birds here were *grey wagtails*, *willow tit* and of course *greenish warblers*.

30/6-1/7 Motkovo rural village, ca 60 km east of Novosibirsk.

I went here with Evgenia with which I stayed for the rest of my stay in Novosibirsk. Her grandparents have a Datja there and we went there over the night. After we had arrived around lunch we took a walk down to the meadows next to the river Inya. As this was my first trip outside the more or less crowded areas around Novosibirsk I was excited about the birding possibility here. Several *yellow-breasted buntings* were singing from *Anthriscus*-plants as well as *maura stonechats*. Out of 4 male *yellow-breasted buntings* only one was adult and the rest 2 c.y. birds. Other birds were *hen harrier*, *black kite*, *lapwing*, *redshank* and *flava yellow wagtails*. After lunch we had a walk in the forest to collect mushrooms for dinner. The birch forest was pretty sparse and open, easy to walk in. Forest birds were, *greater spotted woodpecker*, *wryneck*, *tree pipit*, *grey wagtail*, *common rosefinch*, *garden warbler*, *blyth's reed warbler*, *pied and spotted flycatchers*, *golden orioles*, *redstart* and *chaffinch*. After dinner I again had a short walk down to the meadows along the river. As there were no wind the mosquitoes were annoying but I had some good birds! 2 *Quails*, *corncrake*, *bluethroat*, *siberian rubythroat*, lots of *sand martins*, displaying *rufous turtle dove* and singing *pallas's grasshopper warbler*. The next morning I went up early and walked down to the meadows and the small marsh nearby. In the marsh I had excellent views of singing *pallas's grasshopper warblers* who sat in the top of the *Typha*-plants. *Oriental cuckoos* and *rufous turtle doves* were displaying nearby. When I turned around I discovered a brown passerine sitting in a bush 100m away. Tripod up and zooming with the Leica, Heureka, *Thick-billed warbler*! The bird sat on the same branch for about ten minutes and then suddenly disappeared. After breakfast we had a walk along the river where I saw more

yellow-breasted buntings, *bluethroats* and *maura stonechats*. From the fallow shrubbery along the river I heard strange voices, fuitt-fuitt-fuitt or something like that reminding of both finch and tits and suddenly I discovered the source of the sound: *long-tailed rosefinches*! One male and a female, very beautiful. In addition *grasshopper warbler* and *kingfisher*.

2/7-10/7 Republic of Altai

Ulrika and I together with Vitalij and Jurij, Ulrikas hosts, travelled with a guide organised through the Sibalp tourist company in Novosibirsk. Our intention was to visit the Altai mountain range in the southern part of the Altai republic with peaks over 4200m. As our lonely planet travel guide highly recommended Sibalp as a guide company for trips in the Altai we contacted them and got very well along with the team. The chief Sergei Kurgin, a retired mountaineer, doesn't speak any English but they have telephone operators who do. The guides are in general probably less good at English, but if you really stress that you need an English speaking guide I guess they can arrange it. That most certainly takes longer time though. Luckily enough, I was travelling with Ulrika who speaks very good Russian. Our arrangement was a complete package with everything included that is guide, transportation (by car), food and accommodation in tents. Ivan, our guide, was an experienced mountaineer who had visited the area ca 20 times before, took care of all the practical arrangements. Our trip was indeed very cheap. 9 days for four persons with everything included was 500 US\$.

We left Novosibirsk early in the morning 2/7 and headed for the scout-camp in Ust-Cema which was arranged by Sibalp. The road is M52 all the way from Novosibirsk to Ulaan-Baatar and we did only leave it for eating and petrol filling until we were in Kurai where we headed right towards the mountains. We knew that Ust-Cema was about half the distance to our goal and that it was around 500 km Southwest of Novosibirsk. Travelling in Sweden in normal conditions means seven or eight hours driving to do this distance, but with Ivan's UAS built in 1991 it took twice as long time! The maximum speed of our UAS was at best 60 km/h. However due to the low speed it was possible to do better birdwatching en route. The landscape south of Novosibirsk down to the northern Altai is dominated by agriculture and is very flat. Along the road a lot of poplar trees are planted which efficiently restrict the sight on both sides of the road. In combination with an almost linear M52 this first day of the trip was pretty boring. However I had almost constant eye contact with *black kites* along the road and the species was very numerous. At the city garbage dumps of Barnaul and Bijsk flocks of several hundreds of *black kites* was seen. In marshes along the road I saw several *marsh-terns* which most probably were *white-winged black terns*. Other roadside-views were 2 male *pallid harriers*, "steppe" *buzzards*, *kestrels*, *rooks* and *hooded crows*. Late in the evening after nearly 14 hours in the UAS we finally arrived to the scout camp in Ust-Cema where we had a nice welcoming by amongst others Jena, the English speaking travel co-ordinator and scouts of varying ages. The accommodation as in the rest of the Altai-trip was in tents. The next day we joined the scouts for rock-climbing a few kilometres southeast of Ust-Cema. Birds here were an adult male *peregrine falcon*, *steppe buzzards*, *hobby*, *kestrel*, *black kite* and *white wagtails* of the race *personata* (*masked wagtail*). After lunch I strolled around in the forest round our camp. The gem of our forest was an adult female *black-throated thrush*, which was seen very well and was also photographed. Other nice birds were a female *capercaille* with two chicks, *oriental cuckoos*, *oriental turtle doves* (*orientalis*), *pacific swifts*, one juvenile *dipper*, *long-tailed tits* and a breeding female *siberian rubythroat*. *Redstart*, *spotted flycatcher*, *fieldfare* and *Blyth's reed warbler* were all numerous.

4/7 Ust-Cema - Kurai steppe

We continued southwards from Ust-Cema towards the alpine areas of southeastern Altai. Already in Kamlak a few kilometres west of Ust-Cema the landscaped opened up and showed beautiful meadows mixed with spruce and fir forest. Our first stop was in Schebalino where we filled up the UAS with gas. I noted the first *Isabelline wheatear* there as well as a singing *lanceolated warbler*. When we arrived to the Seminsk pass the rain was pouring down. The Seminsk pass is visited by “Greentours natural history holidays” on their trip to central Asia and I was very excited to have the opportunity to do some birding in the area. However as the weather was simply too bad for birding and the fact that we were in short of time led us to cancel a visit in the area this time. The travel catalogue of “Greentours” mentions species such as *Pallas’s rosefinch*, *olive-backed pipit* and *red-flanked bluetail* as breeders in the area. Fortunately we stopped on our way back on the 8/7, see below for further details. The vegetation in the Seminsk pass area is dominated by taiga with grassy meadows along the road. The height is ca 1600 above sea level with mountains ranging up to 2500 m in the area. The mountain peaks are rounded and the area can’t be considered as “mountainous”.

As we continued further south the weather was still pretty bad and it was not until we came to the next mountain pass “Chike-Taman” that the weather became any better. As we stopped in this pass I saw *black redstarts* of a red-bellied race and *ravens*. At the other side of the pass the landscape was pretty dry and dominated by steppe vegetation with different *Artemisia* species dominating the flora. The hillsides were rather rocky and dry but sometimes they were covered with lush taiga. As we stopped to look for some ancient rock-carvings in Yalbak-Tash I grabbed the moment and went out in the steppe for birds. All birds seen were absolutely fabulous, *hill pigeon*, *oriental turtle dove (meena)*, *pied wheatear* and *meadow bunting*! In the same area I also saw a pair of *Demoiselle cranes* from the car. When stopping for lunch at the Stalovaja in the lush village of Belij-Bom several *pacific swifts* were seen flying over the river. Above our heads an adult *Imperial eagle* was soaring. Other birds were *red-backed shrike* and *chaffinch*. We entered the Kurai steppe in the late afternoon where we left the road in the village of Kuraj and headed south for our camp next to the Mt Aktrou mountain range. The northwestern part of the Chuya steppe, which we visited was, very dry (as a steppe should be I guess!). In areas with slow-running water true forests can be found. The steppe is located at 1500 m elevation and is surrounded by snow-covered peaks more than 4000 m high. Extremely beautiful scenery! When crossing the steppe on a road most like those that I have heard of from Mongolia, two wheel-tracks, in one of the frequent humps, our jerry can filled with petrol went kaputt. While our driver filled up the car with the petrol that was left in it I discovered a loose-held flock of 56 displaying and calling *demoiselle cranes* a few kilometres away! By the time the sun was setting and we put up our tents next to a spring. The vegetation in an area of ca 100 m on each side of the spring was forested but on the other side of the forest the steppe started immediately. It looked rather weird but was very good to watch birds in.

5-7/7 Kurai steppe – Mt Aktrou area

The next morning I went up a few hours before the other guys to be able to get acquainted with the avifauna. The morning was pretty cold which I guess was due to the rather high elevation. I did set the clock to get up but before it had rung I was already awake due to the intense birdsong next to our tent. In the forest next to our tent I noted several nice birds such

as *black-throated thrush*, *Hume's yellow-browed warbler*, *asiatica nuthatch*, *maura stonechat*, *wryneck*, *common crossbill* and *pine bunting*. Moving out on the steppe I immediately discovered a *Richard's pipit* which was followed by *isabelline whetears*, *ortolan buntings*, *hoopoes*, *quails* and more *demoiselle cranes*. After breakfast we parked our car next to a small farm and began to walk up to our camping site in the borderline between forest and alpine meadows. The forest consisted mostly of tall larch trees with blueberry vegetation beneath. We followed a track leading through the, in height, ca 500m dense forest until we reached our camp just beneath the timberline. Birds in the forest were at least 5 singing *males red-flanked bluetail*, several *greenish warblers* and *chiff-chaffs* which were outnumbered only by the *Hume's yellow-browed warblers* who were almost everywhere. *Mistle thrush* was also common and some *nutcrackers* were heard.

During the afternoon and the day after I spend most of the time birding in the area around our camp. In the nearby larch and siberian pine forest I recorded wonderful species such as, *black-throated accentors*, *siberian rubythroat*, *red-flanked bluetails*, *black-throated thrush*, *Eversmann's redstarts*, *oriental cuckoos*, *goldfinches* of the grey-headed race *orientalis*, *common crossbills*, *snowfinches*, *bluethroat* (red-spotted) lots of *greenish warblers* (*viridianus*), and *hume's yellow-browed warblers*. In the days to come species such as *booted eagle*, *water pipit* and *grey wagtail* was added to the species list.

During our climb up towards Mt Aktrou I recorded *Altai accentors*, *rock thrush*, *black redstart* (red-bellied subspecies), *alpine choughs*, a single *whinchat* and in addition different species of *mountain finches* which I couldn't identify to species. The identification problem was due to long distances and indecent literature (Flint...). There were also most likely some kind of *rosefinch* species (*Carpodacus*) which I couldn't identify to species either. It's probably worth the effort to bring your telescope up there!

8/7 Camping site north of the village Yaloman

In the afternoon and evening 7/7 we headed north again and had our overnight camp in an unofficial camping site next to the river Katun just to the north of the village Yaloman. The camping site is south of the bridge where the small river Yaloman meets the river Katun. The next morning I spent my time in the nearby steppe and forest along the river Yaloman where I recorded *black kite*, *lesser kestrel*, *lesser spotted woodpecker*, *oriental turtle dove*, several *pie* and *isabelline wheatears*, *hume's yellow-browed warbler*, *willow tits*, *chaffinch*, *linnet* and at least 7 singing *males meadow bunting*. We had lunch in the tourist centre in Seminsk pass (a few hundred meters to the west of M52). During a walk in the nearby forest and meadows I saw and heard, *water pipit*, *pallas's grasshopper warbler*, *Siberian tits*, *stonechats* and *yellow-browed warblers*.

Novosibirsk 10-19/7

14-15/7 Weekend in the forest 150 km east of Novosibirsk

Hilly landscape with mixed forest and grazing pastures.

We camped in an area close to the village Dubrovka about 40 kilometres northeast of the small town of Masljanino ("Butter city"). Along the small river south of Dubrovka and in the

nearby area I had good birding with *white-backed woodpeckers*, *white-throated needletails*, a singing *Gray's grasshopper warbler* and *black-faced buntings*. Not far from there I recorded my first *brown shrike* of the trip. *Radde's warbler* was incredibly common in the birch forest surrounding the river as were *Pallas's grasshopper warbler* and *Blyth's reed warbler*. Other good birds were *kingfisher*, *lanceloated warbler* and *water pipit*.

Baikal area 21/7-26/7

On the evening of 19/7 we entered the trans-siberian railway once again to continue our journey further east to the city of Ulan-Ude. The train-ride took 40 hours and we arrived to Ulan-Ude in the late afternoon. The only roadside view to mention is a flock of *azure-winged magpies* close to the river Selenga.

On the 22/7 we went to Istomino, a small village at the southwestern side of the river mouth of the Selenga River. I spend some of my time their birding. At a camping-ground next to lake Baikal south of Istomino I saw a *long-tailed rosefinch*, *dusky warblers*, *yellow-breasted buntings*, *common terns (longipennis)*, *pacific swifts* and *shovelers*. While walking at the edge of the Selenga delta in the village I saw *eastern marsh harriers*, *white-tailed sea eagles*, a *caspian tern*, *black-headed gulls*, redbrick coloured *barn swallows (tytleri)* and more *pacific swifts*.

During a short visit in a Datja area to the north of Ulan-Ude the same evening I saw a pair of *daurian redstarts* who apparently bred in the garden. I did also see *swifts* and *hill pigeons*. *Pacific swifts* were very common in the city centre of Ulan-Ude and flocks of several hundreds were seen on different occasions.

24-25/7 Selenga delta and Eastern shore of lake Baikal

We went by car to the Eastern shore of lake Baikal together with a native guide. Our goal was the tiny village of Enschemo approx. 120 kilometres north of Ulan-Ude. To get there one has to cross the river Selenga at Treskovo by a tugboat car-ferry. On the way back I had good birds while we were waiting for the next ferry. They were: *black-faced bunting*, *long-tailed rosefinch* and *brown shrike*. After crossing the river Selenga one soon arrives in the village of Kudara. On the sandy banks on the eastern side of the delta I had good views over the delta. Birds here include *eastern marsh harrier*, *ferrugineous duck* and *hill pigeons* as well as "European" waders. Ulf and Bodil Lindell who were on the same place in June the previous year had several nice birds here including, *spot-billed and falcated ducks*, *oriental stork*, *long-toed stint*, *asiatic dowitcher*, and *buff-bellied pipit*. I had only a single hour of birding in this area and to visit this area in mid-July is most certainly not optimal. Therefore I have to return!

However we continued to the village of Enschemo where we stayed overnight in a cabin. Birding in the nearby forest close to Lake Baikal produced lots of *yellow-browed warblers*, a single *pallas's leaf warbler*, *dark-sided flycatchers*, *black-faced buntings*, *daurian redstarts*, *taiga flycatchers (albicilla)* and *greenish warblers (plumbeitarsus)*.

NICE SITES

Motkovo (60 km east Novosibirsk)

Motkovo is situated between Novosibirsk and Togutschin. My host's grandparents had a Datja in this village approx. 60 km east of Novosibirsk. We went there by the *elekthriska*, which is a medium-distance train that operates areas around and between larger cities. The area around Motkovo is a valley with birch forests in the higher areas and meadows used for hay harvest and cattle production along the river Inya that flows in the centre of the valley. Sandbanks face the river and there is dense sallow shrubbery along the river. There are also some small marshes along the river edged by birch forest.

Kurai steppe (Southern Altai)

The Kurai steppe is situated at 1600 m a.s.l. just south of the tiny village of Kurai which in turn is 37 kilometres Southeast of the village Aktasch along the M52 road. The Kurai steppe is a northwestern extension of the Chuya steppe, which stretches into Mongolia. The M52 starts in Novosibirsk and passes through Bijsk and Barnaul before ending up in Ulaan-Baatar, Mongolia. The distance from Novosibirsk to Kurai is approx. 900 km. There is asphalt all the way and the road is in pretty good condition. The area is dominated by steppe with *Artemisia*-plants. The steppe is surrounded by the Mount-Aktrou mountain range in the south and the Kuraiski mountain range in the north. The steppe is not completely flat but with small hills where rocks sometimes appear. Along the river Chuya and the springs flowing through the area, there is lush spruce forest with bushes strongly contrasting to the extremely dry steppe. Further to the south as one approaches Mongolia (which I never did) is the huge Chuya steppe, which probably is even better for birds than the comparatively tiny Kurai steppe. Nevertheless I was indeed impressed by the size of the Kurai steppe. Once in Kurai drive through the village and pass a wooden bridge over the river Chuya and you are out on the steppe!

Mount Aktrou area

Mount Aktrou is the highest peak reaching almost 4000 m in the mountain range south of the Kurai steppe. To reach it you need a 4WD vehicle, as you have to cross the steppe to go there. Another possibility is to try to get somewhere in Kurai village to park your car and hike across the steppe. Once you have reached the foot of the mountains and the larch forest, there are several possible trails to enter the alpine zone. Our campsite, which also was used by some other tourist groups, was located just below the timberline close to the glacier Bolshaya Aktrou.

Seminsk pass

Seminsk pass lies approx. 40 kilometres south of Schebalino at approx. 1500 m a.s.l. While at the highest point one can turn to the west on the only road which leads to a pretty large winter sports camp. It is possible to rent a cabin there and also have something to eat at the Stalovaja.

Yaloman-Katun camping ground

About 60 kilometres south of Ongudai along the M52 road the small river of Yaloman flows into the Katun river just north of the village of Yaloman. Yaloman in turn is 8 kilometres north of the village of Inya. Just south of the bridge where the M52 passes over the river of Yaloman there is a “unofficial” camping ground which at the time of our visit were used by other tourist groups including a bunch of white-water rafting enthusiasts. The water seems to be perfectly clean and we drank it without any problem.

Selenga river delta

To reach the eastern side of the delta one has to cross the Selenga river at Treskovo by a weird tug-boat car-ferry. Treskovo in turn is approx. 50 km NE of Ulan-Ude not far from the village of Seleng along the road to Irkutsk. (Seleng is, but unfortunately not Treskovo, on the Hallwag map. Good maps, though, are for sale in Ulan-Ude or Irkutsk). Follow the road further north until you reach for the village of Kudara (not on the Hallwag map). To the northeast of the village along the road there are high sandy banks from where one gets good views over the delta. The delta is huge, several tens of kilometres, so if you want to get into it a good idea might be to try to arrange a boat trip through the locals, or try a tourist company in Ulan-Ude. In Enschedo, north of the delta, it is possible to rent cabins from the villagers.

Masljanino area

To reach this area good maps are a must. Luckily, maps are available in bookshops in Novosibirsk, for example the one at the northern corner of the Lenin square. Search for a map called “ Novosibirskaja Oblast. Masljaninskij Raion”. From Masljanino turn northeast to Aleksandrovka, when there turn east and follow the road further to the east until you reach the village of Dubrovka. To the southeast of Dubrovka there is a tiny stream which we camped next to. This area is probably as good as any one in the eastern Novosibirsk region. However the only needle-tailed swifts and gray’s grasshopper warbler of the trip were found here, as well as other good birds.

Literature/web sites

Alström, P. & Lewington, I. 1991. *Rare birds of Britain and Europe*. Harper Collins.

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!

Svensson, L., Mullarney, K., Zetterström D. & Grant, P.J. 1999. *Fågelguiden*. Albert Bonniers förlag. Stockholm.

<http://sibirien.csiewert.de/vogel>. Comprehensive trip report with information on visited sites around Tomsk, Novosibirsk and the Altai region from a trip conducted in August-September 2000. In English. Available from www.skof.se

Lonely planet's guidebook to Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

Maps

Hallwag. A map covering the "Commonwealth of Independent States" scale 1:7000 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 Altai" Scale 1:200 000. Nice road map purchased in a kiosk next to the railway station in Novosibirsk. In Russian. ISBN 5-85120-102-9.

"Novosibirskaja Oblast. Masljaninskij Raion". Scale 1:200 000. Covers the area around Masljanino to the east of Novosibirsk. This and similar maps covering the area around Novosibirsk can be purchased in well-stocked bookshops in Novosibirsk.

LIST OF SPECIES

Novosibirsk and Altai area

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*) Storskrake

1 female observed flying along a small river in Ust-Cema on the 3/7.

Honey buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*) Bivråk

One pair seen well soaring over the Botanical garden in Kamlak, NW Altai republic 9/7.

Black kite (*Milvus migrans*) Brunglada

Absolutely dominating raptor species in the Novosibirsk area and southwards. Along the road south towards the Altai republic (2/7) it seemed to be as numerous as kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) is in northern Europe. Apart from in rural areas also common in Novosibirsk City centre. The garbage dump just outside Barnaul held more than a thousand individuals (seen from the car window) 2/7. The same applies to the garbage dump in Bijsk, which we passed a few hours later the same day. Most birds seen seemed to have pale, almost white inner primaries, resembling red kite, *Milvus milvus*.

Hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) blå kärrhök

Most frequently seen harrier and widespread throughout western and central Siberia in semi-wooded areas. Seen from the train just west of the Ural on 18/6 (ad male) as well as close to Barabinsk (male) on 19/6. Also noted in Motkovo 30/6 and at least 3 different ind. just N of Aleksandrovka 15/7.

Pallid harrier (*Circus macrourus*) stäpphök

While travelling through the Barabinskaya steppe by train on the 19/6, I had very nice views of at least 5 ad males and two ad females. In addition two adult males were seen from the car while travelling south towards Bijsk on the 2/7.

Montagu's harrier (*Circus pygargus*) ängshök

Only one adult female identified with certainty seen N Alexandrovko 15/7.

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*) sparvhök

Observed in Akademgorodok south of Novosibirsk 20/6. I saw other small Accipiters on a few occasions in the Novosibirsk area as well as in the Altai and in the Baikal area, which I unfortunately couldn't identify to species.

Buzzard (*Buteo buteo vulpinus*) ormyvråk (stäppvråk)

Common in Novosibirsk area as well as in the Altai. Together with black kite and kestrel the most common raptor along the road to Altai (M52). Apparently much smaller than European buzzards. All colour varieties seemed to be represented though the red one seemed to be the most common.

Imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) kejsarörn

1 adult seen N Kupchegen, approx. 10 kilometres south of the Chike –Taman pass along M52 and another adult seen soaring over Belij-Bom on 4/7.

Aquila sp.

Unidentified *Aquila* eagles were seen in Kamlak on 4/7 as well as at the Chike-Taman pass 4/7. These were probably greater spotted eagles but I did only see them through the car window.

Booted eagle (*Hieraetus pennatus*) dvärgörn

1 adult pale morph was seen at the base camp Mt Aktrou 7/7.

Lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) rödfalk

Only one confirmed observation, an adult male at the steppe close to Yaloman where we camped on 7-8/7. Several kestrels were observed from the car as we drove through the steppe areas of southern Altai and some of them should most certainly have been lesser kestrels.

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) tornfalk

Common in rural areas south of Novosibirsk as well as in the Altai. Also seen in the base camp at Mt Aktrou at 2500 m. elevation.

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) lärkfalk

Rather common in wooded areas. Observed in Ust-Cema 3 and 9/7 and Ongudai 4/7 in the Altai republic. Also observed in Motkovo east of Novosibirsk 11/7.

Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) pilgrimsfalk

1 adult male was seen in Ust-Cema 3/7. Another adult bird was seen just south of Aktasch along the M52 on 4/7. Both were brief observations but the plumage seemed to be similar to north European peregrines

Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*) tjäder

One female with two chicks seen in the forest or “park” as Sergei called it, close to our camp in Ust-Cema on 3/7.

Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) vaktel

Common in meadows as well as in steppe areas. 2 ind. heard Motkovo 30/6 and 11/7. At least 2 heard Kurai steppe close to Kurai 5/7. The vegetation at this part of the Kurai steppe is very sparse and low, not much to hide in for a quail! Also noted close to Dubrovka 15/7, E of Novosibirsk, where we had a one-night camp.

Corncrake (*Crex crex*) kornknarr

1 male heard in Motkovo meadows 30/6.

Demoiselle crane (*Anthropoides virgo*) jungfrutrana

1 pair seen at the steppe just north of Iodra along the M52 was a real surprise as I expected Demoiselles to occur in remote areas in the Southeast Altai only. However I was even more surprised to discover a flock of at least **56** individuals on the Kurai steppe when we had to stop the car because of a petrol leaking jerry can the 4/7. Several birds were displaying and calling. The next morning scattered pairs were seen in elevated areas. Certainly one of the top-5 moments of the entire trip!

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) tofsvipa

Common in rural areas around Novosibirsk, for example noted in Motkovo 30/6.

Black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*) rödspov

At the Barabinskaya steppe I viewed single individuals from the train on 19/6.

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) rödbena

1 apparently breeding individual in Motkovo 30/6

Wood sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*) skogssnäppa

1 individual at Dubrovka east of Novosibirsk 15/7

Common sandpiper (*Actitis hyperborea*) drillsnäppa

Common in suitable habitats. Noted in Motkovo along river Inya 1/7. At least 3 pairs along river Katun in Ust-Cema on 3/7.

Great black-headed gull (*Larus ichthyaesus*) svarthuvad trut

Only one individual seen briefly just north of Berdsk when taking the wrong bus towards Berdsk instead of Novosibirsk 28/6! The beaches of Akademgorodok should otherwise be a good locality according to Klaus Malling Olsen who has visited the area. The species is also said to be breeding in the lakes in the steppe region NW of Novosibirsk, an area that I unfortunately never came to visit. That is I didn't see it along the river Ob in Novosibirsk.

Black-headed gull (*Larus ridibundus*) skrattnås

Common in suitable habitats. Seen along river Ob, Novosibirsk

Common gull (*Larus canus*) fiskmås

Common in river Ob, Novosibirsk.

Herring gull (*Larus argentatus cachinnans?*) gråtrut

Commons around the river Ob as well as in other wetland areas around Novosibirsk. I did only see adult birds, all of them were slightly darker on the back and wings compared to northern European herring gulls. I did not spend time on ruling out what race it might have been, I was busy with the passerines!

Common tern (*Sterna hirundo hirundo*) fisktärna

Common in wetland areas around Novosibirsk including river Ob in C Novosibirsk.

Least tern (*Sterna albifrons*) småtärna

1 individual seen from the car while passing a small river between Gorno-Altai and Barnaul on the 10/7.

White-winged black tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) vitvingad tärna

Several individuals were seen in small marshes on the steppe 19/6 while travelling by train from Ural to Omsk. Unidentified Chlidonia-terns probably belonging to this species were also seen from the car while travelling towards Ust-Cema 2/7.

Hill pigeon (*Columba rupestris*) östlig klippduva

One flock consisting of c.15 individuals seen close to the village Inya in the Altai republic 4/7.

Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*) tamduva

Common in Moscow and in Novosibirsk. Replaced by hill pigeon in the Baikal area.

Rufous turtle dove (*Streptotelia orientalis orientalis*) större turturduva

Common in rural areas. First individuals seen from the train while passing the Barabinskaya steppe on the 19/6. At least five individuals were heard and seen in Motkovo on 1/7. The display call resembles wood pigeon in pace but is hesare and not sinking in the end. One individual belonging to this race was seen in the forest close to Ust-Cema on 3/7. Seen in the area east of Novosibirsk visited on 14-15/7.

Rufous turtle dove (*Streptotelia orientalis meena*) större turturduva

This white-tailed race was only seen in the southern parts of the Altai republic. The first ones were seen 4/7 at the steppe close to some sort of memorial in Yalbak-Tash. Another 3 ind. were seen close to Yaloman where we spent the night 7-8/7.

Common cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) gök

Commonly heard in forested areas around Novosibirsk. Also heard in the camp at Mt Aktrou at 2200 m elevation as well as in a forested area along a river close to Inya where we camped 7-8/7.

Oriental cuckoo (*Cuculus saturatus*) taigagök

Common in forested areas and seemed to thrive in the same habitat as common cuckoo. Noted in the Datja area Southeast of Akademgorodok 26/6 where it was also seen in 8.5 binocular. No plumage characters differing from common cuckoo could be seen... The following individuals were only heard: 1 Motkovo 30/6, 1 Ust-Cema 3/7, 1 camp Mt Aktrou 5/7. The voice was definitely deeper than common cuckoo with a much faster pace. Resembling Hoopoe!

Tawny owl (*Strix aluco*) kattuggla

One probable individual was seen in Ust-Cema 3/7.

Short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*) jorduggla

2 single individuals were seen from the train at the Barabinskaya steppe. 1 ind Motkovo 11/7.

White-throated needletail (*Hirundapus caudactus*) taggstjärtseglare

At least seven individuals were seen above our camp close to Dubrovka 15/7. Impressing species indeed! Very large with thick body. In active flight powerful looking a little bit like small fulmars! Not seen anywhere else though intensive searching for the species. The white markings on the chin, rump and back were more prominent than I expected.

Common swift (*Apus apus apus*) tornseglare

Most common swift in the Novosibirsk area but were not noted in the forested areas east of N. visited 14-15/7. Formed huge flocks in Novosibirsk City centre.

Pacific swift (*Apus pacificus*) orientseglare

Rather common in the Novosibirsk area. Seemed to breed at the Mayakovskaya theatre (cinema) in the city centre as well as at the agricultural university in N. 5-10 ind. were seen in Ust-Cema 3/7. 10-20 individuals seen in the Mt Aktrou range 7/7.

Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) kungsfiskare

1 individual seen in the river Inya in Motkovo 30/6.

Hoopoe (*Upupa epops saturata*) härfågel

2 individuals were seen close to the camp at the steppe near the foothills of Mount Aktrou on 5/7.

Green woodpecker (*Picus viridis*) gröngöling

1 ind. seen and heard in Dubrovka 15/7.

Black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) spillkråka

1 ind. seen and heard close to Dubrovka 15/7

Greater spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) större hackspett

Singles were observed in Motkovo 30/6 and close to Dubrovka 15/7.

White-backed woodpecker (*Dendrocopos leucotos*) vitryggig hackspett

2 displaying males were seen close to Dubrovka 15/7, lifer!

Lesser spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*) mindre hackspett

1 strange-looking male was seen in a forest along river Yaloman close to the village of Yaloman 8/7. It seemed to be much less streaked below and also the black markings around the red cap was reduced especially the black markings in the neck. Different race?

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) sånglärka

2 ind. were seen just north of Alexandrovko 15/7.

Sand martin (*Riparia riparia*) backsvala

In rural areas the most common swallow species. In Motkovo, 30/6, a colony was found in the Inya riverbank that held at least 300 pairs. Common in northern Altai republic but not noted in the very south area.

Barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica rustica*) ladusvala

Common in rural areas in Novosibirsk and northern Altai.

House martin (*Delichon urbica*) hussvala

Less common than the other swallow species and was only seen in the Novosibirsk city centre where they bred at the Kalinin square

Richard's pipit (*Anthus richardi*) större pipilärka

1-2 individuals were seen well at the Kurai steppe 5/7. Due to constant lack of time in bird areas I was not able to search for this delicious species or its lesser cousin Blyth, which I did expect to see in the Altai. The Kurai-Chuya steppe is highly recommended!

Tree pipit (*Anthus trivialis*) trädpiplärka

Common in all forested areas and though intense studying of "forest pipits" I couldn't reveal a single olive-backed which was surprising.

Water pipit (*Anthus littoralis*) vattenpiplärka

Pipits that were heard and observed at long distances in the steep alpine meadows of the Mt Aktrou area most probably belonged to this species. A breeding pair was seen in the Seminsk pass area 8/7. Again lack of time prevented me from searching for buff-bellied pipits in the Baikal area where it is said to breed.

Yellow wagtail (*Motacilla flava tshutschensis*) gulärka

Several pairs in the meadows of Motkovo 30/6 & 11/7. Voice and plumage very similar to *flava*.

Grey wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) forsärka

Surprisingly common and seen in almost all areas visited some in remarkable dry environment. 2-3 botanical garden in Akademgorodok 28/6. 2 pairs Ust-cema 3/7. Several pairs along river Akmuru in the Mt Aktrou area. 1 pair in the river close to Dubrovka E of Novosibirsk 14-15/7.

White wagtail (*Motacilla alba alba*) sädesärila

Common in all visited areas including the Baikal area where they seemed to have more white in the lesser and median coverts. Not seen in the Altai republic.

Masked wagtail (*M. (a.) personata*) sädesärila

Common in the Altai republic where the first ones were observed in Majma at the northern border. Several pairs in Ust-Cema as well as along the river Akmuru in the Mt Aktrou area. Very beautiful race (by the Dutch treated as a species). Also the juveniles were very distinct with a prominent but short eyebrow. The voice was distinct and straighter and sharper compared to *alba* often accompanied by a Lapland-bunting similar “tui”.

Dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*) strömstare

1 juvenile was seen 3/7 in the river next to our campsite in Ust-Cema.

Black-throated accentor (*Prunella atrogularis*) svartstrupig järnsparv

3 singing males were seen in the vicinity of our campsite in the Mount Aktrou area 5-7/7. Rather pale below lacking prominent streaking. More grey-brown on the back than reddish. Eyebrow almost white. Song similar to dunnoek (*Prunella modularis*) but with a bit more “rr” in it. Song at times difficult to notice because of the numerous singing greenish- and Hume’s yellow-browed warblers in the area.

Altai accentor (*Prunella himalayana*) Altaijärnsparv

2 pairs with juveniles were seen at 2500 m elevation in the Mt Aktrou area. Due to long distance I couldn’t be sure about the species. Flint doesn’t help you much on the passerines I can tell...

Siberian rubythroat (*Luscinia calliope*) rubinnäktergal

Rather common in forested areas around Novosibirsk. At least 3 singing males were heard and seen in the Datja area Southeast of Akademgorodok 26/6. 1 singing male Motkovo 30/6. 1 warning female close to the camp in Ust-Cema 3/7 gave excellent views! 1 male campsite Mt Aktrou 6/7. 1 male Botanical garden of Cherga 9/7. 3 singing males Motkovo 11/7. The song appeared to me as something in-between pied flycatcher and redstart. The call note was a loud “ti-ly”.

Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*) blåhake

Common in marshes along the trans-siberian railway especially in the Barabinskaya steppe. 1 singing male Motkovo 30/6. 1 singing male in the campsite Mt Aktrou area 5-7/7. Several juveniles were seen in Motkovo 11/7. All the bluethroats seen well had red spots. I couldn’t be sure about the ones seen from the train.

Siberian blue robin (*Luscinia cyane*) blånnäktergal

1 singing male close to the Botanical garden in Akademgorodok 28/6. This male was only heard singing, one of the most frustrating moments of my life! (Only surpassed by the distant observations of red-flanked-bluetails mentioned later on.) The vegetation was too dense to locate the individual. Nice song though...

Red-flanked bluetail (*Tarsiger cyanurus*) blåstjärt

At least 5 different males were heard when we walked through the larch-taiga to reach our campsite close to Mt Aktrou 5/7. 2 males were seen in the distance but when I tried to approach them they suddenly disappeared. At this time I regretted that I left the spotting scope in the UAS. Just south of the mountain pass Chike-Taman 8/7 I had another singing male which I searched for in 45 minutes without seeing. Seemed to be pretty common in the larch-taiga.

Eversmann’s redstart (*Phoenicurus erythronota*) Altairödstart

At least 3 pairs with additional 3 males and one female were seen in the area around our campsite in the Mt Aktrou area 5-7/7. Two of the pairs also raised chicks. One of my target species which certainly did not disappoint me. The males are completely stunningly beautiful. Females and juveniles were similar to black redstart in plumage but more brown with much longer tail. Seemed to favour the zone where the taiga transitions into alpine meadow.

Black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros semirufus*(?)) svart röstjärt

This red-bellied race were seen with one pair in the Chike-Taman pass 4/7 as well as two pairs at 2400m elevation while climbing Mt Aktrou 6/7.

Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*) rödstjärt

Common in forested areas around Novosibirsk and Altai very often associated with houses. Noted in the parks of C Novosibirsk.

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*) buskskvätta

1 female at 2500 m elevation when climbing Mt Aktrou 6/7 was a really surprise but according to Flint they do also breed in mountainous areas with sparse vegetation. In addition one pair in the meadows close to our camp in Dubrovka 15/7.

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata maura*) Svarthakad buskskvätta

Common in open areas around Novosibirsk including the northern parts of the Altai republic. Several pairs seen in Motkovo meadows 30/6 and 11/7. When travelling from the rocky and steppe areas in southern Altai towards the more forested areas in the north, stonechats replaced pied wheatears as the most common "roadside view". Also seen at the Kurai steppe 5/7. Several pairs in the Seminsk pass area where we had lunch 8/7. The males here (at least 5) differed very much in the matter of orange-red on the chest and belly. 1 male had just a little red dot on the throat while 3 males had orange-red chest and belly down to the legs. The fifth male had something in-between. The male stonechats in the Motkovo meadows had a red dot on the throat. All males had clean white rumps but I did not have the time to look up the outer tail-feathers, which should differ between maura and other races (Alström et al. 1991).

Isabelline wheatear (*Oenanthe isabellina*) isabellastenskvätta

Common in the dry rural and steppe areas of Altai. The first individuals were seen in Schebalino 4/7 while gas filling. Several others were seen in plain steppe areas along the road. Several individuals were also seen at the Kurai steppe at the foothill of Mt Aktrou 5/7.

Northern wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) stenskvätta

Common in rural areas in the Altai area. In the Altai often seen in the same habitats as Isabelline wheatear.

Pied wheatear (*Oenanthe pleschanka*) nunnestenskvätta

In dry areas of southern Altai, (Chike-Taman pass and onwards), where rocks were exposed towards the road, I had almost constant eye-contact with the species 4/7. A new pair seemed to breed every 500 m! A bit strange though that I didn't record the species in the Mt Aktrou area apart from the steppe. Maybe too high above the sea? In the steppe close to the River of Yaloman that in turn flows into river Katun close to the village of Yaloman I recorded at least 6 pairs in a restricted area where rocks were exposed to the steppe. Most of the males were in heavy moult and hence looked best when viewed with the binocular. No juveniles were seen.

Rock thrush (*Monticola saxatilis*) stentrast

1 juvenile ind. were seen at 2400 m elevation as we climbed down the Mt Aktrou 6/7.

Black-throated thrush (*Turdus ruficollis atrogularis*) svarthalsad taigatrast

1 female seen well close to our camp in Ust-Cema 3/7. 1 female/juvenile Kurai steppe 5/7. 1 female/juvenile campsite Mt Aktrou 7/7. I thought that I was supposed to see red-throated ones down there but everyone lacked red tones in the plumage.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) björktrast

Common in forested areas except southern Altai where I didn't record the species.

Songthrush (*Turdus philomelos*) taltrast

1 individual campsite Ust-Cema 3/7.

Mistle thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) dubbeltrast

Common in forested areas in the Altai. At least three individuals were seen in the alpine meadows in the Mt Aktrou area 2400 m above the sea.

Pallas's grasshopper warbler (*Locustella certhiola*) starrsångare

1 individual heard several times behind Igor's garage in a Novosibirsk suburb 19/6-2/7. 2 ind. heard and seen in Motkovo 1/7 and 11/7. 1 ind. heard in the Seminsk pass area 8/7 where it sang in an ordinary meadow. At least 8

individuals in meadows and along the small river outside Dubrovka 15/7. Several of the individuals were heard (and seen!) in remarkable dry areas. That is, not as restricted to wetlands as I expected. The song is a little bit like sedge-warbler but shorter with a typical “sivi-sivi-sivi” at the end.

Lanceolated warbler (*Locustella lanceolata*) träksångare

1 singing ind. south of the Botanical garden in Novosibirsk 26/6. At least 3 singing ind. in the Datja area Southeast of Akademgorodok 27/6. 1 singing ind. Motkovo 1/7 and 11/7. 1 singing Dubrovka meadows 14-15/7. As for the former species I was surprised to find some of the individuals to be singing in ordinary meadows rather distant from wet areas. Definitely smaller and more short-tailed than the grasshopper warbler. The distinct tertials were seen well with binocular at 30 m distance on singing birds. The voice is not as insect-like as for grasshopper w. more mechanical or industrial. All of the individuals were singing with very short stanzas, most often not more than 15-30 seconds in a row, which is pointed out by Svensson et al. (1999).

Grasshopper warbler (*Locustella naevia*) gräshoppssångare

1 singing ind. Motkovo 1/7 and 11/7. 1 ind. singing Dubrovka meadows 14-15/7.

Gray's grasshopper warbler (*Locustella fasciolata*) större flodsångare

1 individual was singing from a shrubbery close to the little river in the Dubrovka meadows east of Novosibirsk 14-15/7. It sang most intense during dusk and dawn but also during daylight. Unfortunately not seen but the song is good enough. Definitely one of my target species and it didn't let me down at all!

Sedge warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*) sävsångare

1 individual heard singing close to river Inya in Motkovo 11/7.

Blyth's reed warbler (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*) busksångare

Widespread and common in forested and semi-forested areas in the Novosibirsk area as well as in the northern Altai. At least 5 heard in the Datja area Southeast of Akademgorodok 27/6. Several individuals Motkovo 30/6-1/7 and 11/7. At least 5 Dubrovka meadows 14-15/7.

Thick-billed warbler (*Acrocephalus aedon*) tjocknäbbad sångare

1 individual seen well (but not heard) in a marsh in Motkovo 1/7. Another one of my top-5 target species of the trip. This bird was sitting in a shrubbery and could be studied for ca. 10 minutes before it suddenly disappeared into it. The tail was pointing vertically, almost no contrasts in the face lacking eyebrow and very short wings and primary projection. The lower mandible was almost completely black with just a little yellow at the base. In the literature (Svensson et al., Alström, 1991) the bill is said to be almost completely yellow which confused me a little bit.

Icterine warbler (*Hippolais icterina*) härmsångare

1 individual heard and seen in the Akademgorodok forest 20/6 turned out to be the only one during the trip.

Lesser whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca* ??) ärtsångare

1 ind. Novosibirsk State Agrarian University (NGAU) 21/6. 1 ind. Botanical garden in Akademgorodok 26/6. 1 ind. in the village of Enschele 25/7. I don't know the heck which kind of race these belonged to but they weren't apparently different from the ones back home.

Common whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*) törnsångare

Common in the Novosibirsk area.

Garden warbler (*Sylvia borin*) trädgårdsångare

Noted in Motkovo 30/6.

Greenish warbler (*Phylloscopus trochiloides viridianus*) lundsångare

Numerous in forested areas around Novosibirsk and in the Altai. Around our campsite in the Mt Aktrou area 5-7/7 this was the most common species together with Hume's yellow-browed warbler. The individuals in the Altai mountains had only one wing-bar and looked like *viridianus*.

Hume's yellow-browed warbler (*Phylloscopus humei*) bergstaigasångare

Numerous in the Mt Aktrou area. While walking from the steppe through the larch forest up to our campsite 5/7 I heard ca 20 singing individuals. Around our campsite at least 5 males held territory. At least 3 ind. in the forest Kurai steppe 5/7. 1 ind. heard Yaloman river, N Yaloman 8/7. 1 ind. heard Seminsk pass 8/7. Not observed in

northern Altai or in the Baikal area. The most heard song was the alternative one, the double visslo-visslo as pointed out by Svensson et al (1999). The redwing-like song were heard at several occasions and is really similar to redwing (*T. iliacus*) but is longer and falling in the end.

Radde's warbler (*Phylloscopus schwarzi*) videsångare

Common in suitable habitats, mixed woodland with wet meadows and birches. Very loud voice and all of the observed individuals were heard singing. Difficult to see as they were sitting in the canopy. At least 2 singing ind. in the Datja area Southeast of Akademgorodok 27/6. At least 10 singing in the Dubrovka meadows 14-15/7. Up to 4 individuals were heard at the same time. Around our campsite in Dubrovka the species were more common than chiffchaff.

Dusky warbler (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*) brunsångare

Only one observation, 2 individuals were seen and heard at the western shore of the Selenga delta rivermouth 23/7. To me this habitat was new with bogs and Salix-species. Unfortunately I didn't have the opportunity to visit more areas like this during my trip.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita tristis*) gransångare

Numerous in forested areas around Novosibirsk. Not observed in the mountain area in southern Altai.

Spotted flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) grå flugsnappare

Common in forested areas around Novosibirsk and in Northern Altai.

Pied flycatcher (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) svartvit flugsnappare

1 female were seen in the forest in Akademgorodok 20/6 and one singing male Motkovo 30/6.

Long-tailed tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*) stjärtmes

One flock of 6-7 individuals were seen in Ust-Cema 3/7.

Marsh tit (*Parus palustris*) entita

Three individuals seen in the forest along river Yaloman south of Yaloman 8/7.

Willow tit (*Parus montanus*) tallita

Common in forested areas around Novosibirsk..

Siberian tit (*Parus cinctus*) lappmes

Two adults and one juvenile were observed in the Seminsk pass area 8/7.

Coal tit (*Parus ater*) svartmes

Common in forested areas around Novosibirsk.

Great tit (*Parus major*) talgoxe

Common in forested areas around Novosibirsk.

Nuthatch (*Sitta europea asiatica*) nötväcka

Single individuals were seen in Motkovo 30/6.

Golden oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*) sommargylling

Noted in all forested areas around Novosibirsk. A breeding pair and their nest with young were seen in the Akademgorodok forest 20/6. Also heard in the forest along river Yaloman north of Yaloman 8/7.

Brown shrike (*Lanius cristatus*) brun törnskata

Very nice observations of an adult male just outside Dubrovka 14/7. Brown mantle and back with a reddish tone. Large black bill and grey-white band on the fore-head. Little white dot on the base of the primaries.

Red-backed shrike (*Lanius collurio*) törnskata

Commonly seen along the Trans-Siberian railway from Moscow to Novosibirsk 17-19/6. Relatively common in rural areas around Novosibirsk and in the Altai.

Magpie (*Pica pica*) skata

Common around Novosibirsk.

Nutcracker (*Nucifraga caryocatactes macrorhynchos*) "smalnäbbad" nötkråka
Common in larch forests of the Altai republic.

Alpine Chough (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*) alpkaja
Up to 30 individuals were seen in the high areas of Mt Aktrou.

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*) kaja
Common in the Novosibirsk area and the Altai republic. Several flocks were seen in the Kurai steppe 5-7/7. The daurian jackdaw is said to replace the ordinary jackdaw in the southern Altai but at least I didn't see any...

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*) råka
Common around Novosibirsk and down to northern Altai republic.

Hooded crow (*Corvus corone cornix*) grå kråka
Common in the Novosibirsk area down to the northern Altai.

Carrion crow (*Corvus corone corone*) svart kråka
Common in the southern Altai

Raven (*Corvus corax*) korp
Seen in all visited areas including the highest areas of Mt Aktrou (2700m).

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) stare
Not very common and as far as I remember only seen along the T-S railway 17-19/6 and 19-20/7 in rural areas.

House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) gråsparv
Common in all visited areas.

Tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*) pilfink
Common in Novosibirsk. Also seen in Ust-Cema 3/7.

White-winged Snowfinch (*Montifringilla nivalis*) snöfink
Small flocks and singles were seen in the high Altai Mountains 5-7/7.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) bofink
Common in forested areas around Novosibirsk as well as in the northern Altai republic.

Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*) grönfink
Two individuals were seen in Motkovo 11/7 and 2 pairs were seen around our campsite in Dubrovka 14-15/7. One of the biggest surprises as Flint says that the species barely should cross the Urals! Apparently the species is colonising new areas as it has done in Sweden for the last decades.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis carduelis*) steglits
Common in rural areas around Novosibirsk and down to the northern parts of the Altai republic. Noted in Ust-Cema 9/7.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis orientalis*) steglits
Common in the southern Altai. The first (or last) individuals of this grey-headed race were seen around our campsite next to river Yaloman north of Yaloman 8/7 ca 200 km south of Ust-Cema, where the *carduelis*-race was seen.

Common Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*) hämpling
1 ind. seen along river Yaloman close to Yaloman 8/7.

Twite (*Carduelis flavirostris*) vinterhämpling
Several individuals were heard and seen around our camp on the Kurai steppe 5/7.

Common Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) mindre korsnäbb
Common in forests in all areas visited, but especially in the Altai mountain forests.

Common Rosefinch (*Carpodacus erythrinus*) rosenfink

Common and widespread all over Siberia even so in forests which felt a bit unusual for a Swede like me.

Long-tailed Rosefinch (*Uragus sibiricus*) långstjärtad rosenfink

One pair seen and heard well in the sallow-shrubbery along river Inya in Motkovo 30/6. Nice views on the astonishing male. Easily discovered by its distinct call, fuitt-fuitt-fuitt.

Eurasian Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) domherre

Only seen in Ust-Cema in the Northern Altai 3/7.

Black-faced Bunting (*Emberiza spodocephala*) gråhuvad sparv

One male in company with another bird most probably this species were seen and heard well along the little river close to Dubrovka meadows east of Novosibirsk 15/7. The species was smaller than I expected, about the size of rustic bunting (*E. rustica*). I did not expect to see the species as far West as in the Novosibirsk area but fortunately I did!

Pine Bunting (*Emberiza leucocephalos*) tallspär

At least two males were heard and seen close to our camp in the Kurai steppe 5/7. Voice not distinguishable from yellowhammer.

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*) gulsparv

Common in the Novosibirsk area. No hybrids with pine bunting were seen. Common in the northern Altai.

Ortolan Bunting (*Emberiza hortulana*) ortolansparv

Numerous on the Kurai steppe 5/7. Also noted just south of the Chike-Taman pass where I had Red-flanked bluetail but not noted elsewhere.

Black-faced Bunting (*Emberiza spodocephala*) gråhuvad sparv

One male in company with another bird most probably this species were seen and heard well along the little river close to Dubrovka meadows east of Novosibirsk 15/7. The species was smaller than I expected, about the size of rustic bunting (*E. rustica*). I did not expect to see the species as far west as in the Novosibirsk area but fortunately I did!

Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*) gyllensparv

Common in large and moist meadows in all areas visited. At least 4 singing males + females in Motkovo 30/6 and 11/7.

Meadow Bunting (*Emberiza cioides*) ängssparv

Fairly common in suitable habitats in the southern Altai, that is whenever there are bushes on the dry steppe. 1 singing male close to Yalbak-Tash 4/7. At least 7 singing males in the steppe area close to the village Yaloman 8/7.

Baikal area

Crested grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) Skäggdopping

Several individuals observed from the train in wetlands just W of Irkutsk 21/7. Also seen in the Selenga delta on 24/7.

Grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*) Gråhäger

Common in the Selenga delta with at least 30 ind. observed on 24/7

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) Gräsand

Common in the Selenga delta 25/7

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) Skedand

Females were observed from the train in wetland W Irkutsk on 21/7 and also in the Selenga delta 24/7.

Pochard (*Aythya ferina*) Brunand

At least 3 females with chicks in the Selenga delta 24/7.

Ferruginous duck (*Aythya nyroca*) Vitögd dykand

1 male and 2 females with chicks observed in the Selenga delta 24/7.

Black kite (*Milvus migrans lineatus*) Brunglada

The species seemed to be less common in the Baikal area than in Novosibirsk, but was still fairly common. Observed at the Selenga delta on 22 and 24/7 as well as in Ulan-Ude on 21/7.

White tailed sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) havsörn

1 adult at Selenga delta 22/7 and 2 adults Selenga delta, NE Kudara 24/7.

Eastern marsh harrier (*Circus spilonotus*) brokig kärrhök

At least 2 ad males at Selenga delta 22/7 and at least 4 ad males at Selenga delta, NE Kudara 24/7. Beautiful and distinct race which seemed to be fairly common in the Selenga delta. The body was pale reminding of male hen harrier. Seemed to be lighter in flight compared to European marsh harriers

Coot (*Fulicia atra*) sothöna

1 ind. heard Selenga delta 24/7

Black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*) rödspov

A flock consisting of at least 15 individuals were seen in the Selenga delta on the 24/7.

Green sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*) grönbenä

Several individuals heard but not seen while visiting the Selenga delta the 24/7.

Common sandpiper (*Actitis hyperborea*) drillsnäppa

Seen in the Selenga delta on 24/7 where it seemed to breed.

Black-headed gull (*Larus ridibundus*) skratmås

Seen in the Selenga delta 23-25/7.

Common gull (*Larus canus*) fiskmås

Small numbers seen in the Selenga delta 25/7.

Herring gull (*Larus argentatus mongolicus*) gråtrut

Common in the lake Baikal area

Caspian tern (*Sterna caspia*) skröntärna

2 adults were seen in the Selenga delta on the 22/7.

Common tern (*Sterna hirundo longipennis*) fisktärna

Seen in a wetland close to Irkutsk 21/7 as well as in the Selenga delta and in Lake Baikal on 23-25/7. The bill was all black and it seemed to be much whiter beneath. In addition the tail seemed to be a little shorter than on the nominate race. All in all it resembled sandwich tern a little bit. Beautiful bird!

Hill pigeon (*Columba rupestris*) östlig klippduva

One flock consisting of c.15 individuals seen close to the village Inya in the Altai republic 4/7. Rather common in rural areas around Lake Baikal and frequently seen 23-25/7. Compared to feral pigeon/rock dove the species had almost all-white inner parts of the tail-feathers and seemed to be a bit darker above.

Common swift (*Apus apus apus*) tornseglare

A few were seen in the Selenga delta and in the outskirts of Ulan-Ude. According to the literature the common swifts in the Baikal area are nominate-race and not *pekinensis* which I thought at the time of my visit.

Pacific swift (*Apus pacificus*) orientseglare

Numerous in Irkutsk and Ulan-Ude where flocks of several hundred individuals could be seen.

Hoopoe (*Upupa epops saturata*) härfågel

1-2 individuals with grey mantle were seen in the Selenga delta northeast of Kudara 24/7.

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) sånglärka
2 ind. Kabansk, SE lake Baikal 24/7.

Sand martin (*Riparia riparia*) backsvala
Common in the Selenga delta where it is said to be represented by another race but they did not look different from the nominate race to me.

Barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica tytleri*) ladusvala
In Ulan-Ude and in the Baikal area the barn swallows were beautifully deep brick-red coloured beneath. The juveniles were pale-red beneath.

House martin (*Delichon urbica*) hussvala
Common in the village of Enschemo at the shore of lake Baikal 24-25/7.

Richard's pipit (*Anthus richardi*) större piplärka
1 individual seen and heard singing (!) in Chergino when we stopped for gas filling 24/7.

Northern wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) stenskvätta
Common in rural areas in the Baikal area.

Two-barred greenish warbler (*P. trochiloides plumbeitarsus*) "sibirisk lundsångare"
Several individuals were heard and one was seen briefly in the Baikal area 24-25/7. According to the literature (Alström et al, 1991, Flint, 1986) this is the race to be represented there although I couldn't be positive on the identification of this race. Song possibly a bit softer than *viridianus*.

Pallas's warbler (*Phylloscopus proregulus*) kungsfågelsångare
One singing individual in a mountain-pass N of Ulan-Ude 22/7. Only one confirmed individual in the dense flocks of yellow-browed warblers along the shores of lake Baikal 24-25/7.

Yellow-browed warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*) taigasångare
Apparently one family, 2 ad. + 3 juv. were seen in the Seminsk pass 8/7. Dense flocks of yellow-browed warblers frequented the pine-strip along lake Baikal in the village of Enschemo 24-25/7. Compared to Swedish autumn circumstances where you have to check out tens of thousands of goldcrests to find a single wing-bar, this was just lovely. Single coal tits and willow tits were accompanying the ybw:s as well as Dark-sided flycatchers...

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita tristis*) gransångare
Fairly common in the Baikal area.

Dark-sided flycatcher (*Muscicapa sibirica*) sibirisk flugsnappare
At least 10 individuals (ad. + juv.) were seen in the pine forest along lake Baikal in the village of Enschemo 25/7. Brown flycatcher (*Muscicapa dauurica*) is said to frequent the area and to be honest I can't exclude the possibility that some of the adults were brown flycatchers. The juveniles were very distinct with heavy streaking especially on the chest and belly. In all giving a rather dark impression with dirty-white central belly.

Taiga flycatcher (*Ficedula albicilla*) taigaflugsnappare
Ca 5 juveniles were observed in the village of Enschemo 24-25/7. The upper tail-coverts were all black and were seen well from behind on perched birds.

Willow tit (*Parus montanus*) talltita
Common in forested areas in the Baikal area.

Coal tit (*Parus ater*) svartmes
Common in forested areas in the Baikal area.

Great tit (*Parus major*) talgoxe
Common in forested areas in the Baikal area.

Nuthatch (*Sitta europea asiatica*) nötväcka

A single individual and in the village of Enschemo 25/7.

Brown shrike (*Lanius cristatus*) brun törnskata

A male seen in the area around the Selenga-river crossing 25/7 were pale above but lacked the white dot on the base of the primaries. Confusing, but I don't know about what different races of Isabelline and brown shrikes that occur in the area. (Does anyone?)

Azure-winged magpie (*Cyanopica cyanea*) blåskata

A small flock was seen just north of Ulan-Ude along river Selenga while passing by train.

Carrion crow (*Corvus corone orientalis*) svart kråka

Common in the Baikal area.

Raven (*Corvus corax*) korp

Seen in all visited areas.

House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) gråsparv

Common in all visited areas.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*) bergfink

Only observed in the village of Enschemo where several individuals could be seen and heard.

Eurasian Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*) grönsiska

2 individuals were heard in the village of Enschemo 25/7.

Common Rosefinch (*Carpodacus erythrinus*) rosenfink

Common and widespread all over Siberia even so in forests which felt a bit unusual for a Swede like me.

Long-tailed Rosefinch (*Uragus sibiricus*) långstjärtad rosenfink

A male was heard and briefly seen close to Lake Baikal 22/7. One individual was heard while waiting to cross the Selenga river 25/7.

Black-faced Bunting (*Emberiza spodocephala*) gråhuvad sparv

One male and one juvenile were seen in the village of Enschemo 25/7. One male were seen close to the Selenga river crossing in Treskovo 25/7.

Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*) gyllensparv

Common in the Baikal area.