

South-central Siberia & Lake Baikal



May 30 – June 15 2005

By Magnus Hellström, Sweden

This is a report from a private bird watching trip to Russia in late spring 2005. 14 full days birding were spent in three separate regions; in the far north of lake Baikal (based around the city Severobaikalsk), in the south (base at Irkutsk) and in the Tunka valley (base at Ulbugay by the foot of the Sayan mountains). Participants were Johan Eriksson, Lars B Eriksson and Magnus Hellström.

Lots of practical information can be found in a trip-report from 2004 by Petter Haldén at the address http://www.club300.se/Files/TravelReports/Buryatia2004_PH.pdf and will not be repeated here. However, some logistics from our trip may be useful for future visits in the area:

Guides

The travel company Lovely Tours Ltd in Irkutsk provided us with accommodation and transportation to/from the airport during our stay in the city of Irkutsk. They were also very helpful during check-in (the staff at the airport in Irkutsk speak Russian only). The company can be reached by e-mail to lovely(at)irmail.ru.

In Severobaikalsk we got in contact with Vladimir Yatskovich (e-mail vladimir551(at)yandex.ru) who served as an excellent guide/interpreter during our whole stay in the north. His friend/college Aleksandr Zubov (a.k.a. "Zasha") did not speak English but was very helpful as driver and cook. None of them are ornithologists, but both were extremely helpful and understanding about the special needs, demands and priorities that were made during our trip.

In Irkutsk we were lucky to get in contact with Professor Sergey J. Pyzhjanov, at the Pedagogical University of Irkutsk. He joined us during our whole stay in Irkutsk and the Tunka valley and showed us lots of nice habitats in the region. Sergey has a deep knowledge of the Siberian fauna and we had lots of interesting ornithological discussions. Sergey's e-mail is pyjyanov(at)isttu.irk.ru.

The guides above perfectly fulfilled anything a birdwatcher can wish for, and we gladly recommend other trips to contact them!



Lake Baikal, south of Bolshoye Goloustnoye.

Maps

We used a road-map covering the whole lake Baikal area in the scale 1:200.000. This was the best map that we could find, but did not cover the Tunka valley and some other places a bit further from Lake Baikal. Therefore we also bought a map covering the whole republic of Buryatia in the scale 1:500.000 (some areas in 1:200.000). Both maps were bought at a bookshop in central Irkutsk, close to the big Lenin-statue down-town.

Domestic flights

For the shorter transports Irkutsk-Nizhneangarsk-Irkutsk we used the regional company Buryat Airlines. Tickets for this flight are available only 14 days before departure and cannot be booked in Europe. Lovely Tours Ltd in Irkutsk helped us with this. This flight was a bit of an adventure but in the end worked out perfectly well. For all the major flights we used Aeroflot and had no problems at all. All flights were pleasant and on time.

Itinerary

May 30: departure from Stockholm in afternoon. Arrived Moscow (Sheremetyevo-2) by evening.

May 31: In late afternoon departure from Moscow (Sheremetyevo-1) to Irkutsk.

June 1: Arrived Irkutsk early morning. Birding in central Irkutsk. Mid-day and afternoon was spent at the Novo Leninsky marshes in the suburbs SW of Irkutsk.

June 2: The whole day was spent E of Irkutsk, in the taiga and in open valleys on our way to Bolshoye Goloustnoye by lake Baikal.

June 3: Early morning to Korolok, just SE of Irkutsk. At noon transportation to the airport and departure to Nizhneangarsk. Arrived by afternoon.

June 4: Early morning at Tia river, just S of Severobaikalsk. Mid-day and afternoon at Baikalskoe, S of Severobaikalsk. Evening at the mouth of the Tia river.

June 5: Early morning at the shore-meadows at Nizhneangarsk. During mid-day we went for a boat trip to the island Yerki in lake Baikal. In afternoon transportation to Kichera and evening was spent in the small village Zaimka.

June 6: Morning at Tipuki, W of Zaimka. Rest of the day was spent in the taiga N of Kichera.

June 7: Morning in the taiga N of Kichera. During mid-day we drove to Dzelinda E of Kichera. In late afternoon transportation back to Severobaikalsk.

June 8: Morning and mid-day in Severobaikalsk. Spent whole afternoon and evening at Tia river mouth.

June 9: Morning and mid-day in the mountains above Davan. Afternoon and evening at Tia river mouth.

June 10: Transportation to the airport in Nizhneangarsk. The plane was delayed and we did not reach Irkutsk until early afternoon. Transportation to Kultuk SW of Irkutsk.

June 11: Transportation/birding W through the Tunka valley. Evening at Ulbugay by the Arshan wetlands.

June 12: Whole day at the Arshan wetlands.

June 13: Morning at Ulbugay. Mid-day in the mountain-taiga above Arshan and then transportation E to Antchuk close to Kultuk.

June 14: Early morning in taiga between Kultuk and Irkutsk. Mid-day at Irkut river just outside Irkutsk. Afternoon and evening in Irkutsk.

June 15: Departure from Irkutsk during morning. Arrival to Moscow late morning. Flight to Stockholm leaves just after lunch. Arrival to Stockholm in early afternoon.

Day by day

May 30

Arrived Moscow in the evening. Stayed at hotel Novotel just outside the gates of Sheremetyevo-2 airport. The surroundings was not very romantic, but despite the nearby noisy high-way to Moscow city, we managed to find two singing Blyth's reed warblers by the edge of the forest.

May 31

Some rain during morning, but a two hours walk was rewarded with three Blyth's reed warblers (one new since yesterday), three River warblers, a Red-breasted flycatcher and two Marsh warblers within 2 km from the hotel. Most of the day was spent waiting for the flight to Irkutsk at Sheremetyevo-1. Departure during evening.

June 1

Arrived Irkutsk close to 05 am. The guide from Lovely Tours Ltd, Oleg, met us by the airport gate, as did our contact from the university, Sergey. Sergey suggested a tour to the Novo Leninsky marshes just outside Irkutsk and we decided to meet up with him later during the day. Oleg and his driver took us down-town Irkutsk to our flat, close to the river Angara, just a block away from the Irkutsk city hall. We dropped our bags and went out for bird watching along Angara.



River Angara, central Irkutsk.

Despite the early hour the temperature was already above 20°C, and it was obvious that a hot day was waiting. Lots of Pacific swifts were seen, and down by the river we spent an hour watching and photographing these birds at close range. The call is very different from the Common swift, more pressed, electrically harsh, a bit drawn out and tapering at the end. The Pacifics were somewhat bigger than Common swift with slightly longer wings and a longer and clearly deeper forked tail. Coloration was colder grey, maybe a little paler than Common, and the extensive pale (white?) fringes/chevrons on the breast and belly was visible in 8x binoculars up to c. 70-100m when light was favourable. The pale throat was pretty large but diffuse at the edges. Meanwhile, Common terns of the subspecies *S. h. longipennis* flew up and down the river, and after a while an Arctic warbler started to sing from the park just behind

the city hall. Soon other *Phylloscopus*-warblers tuned in and after some search in the park we could add another four Arctic warblers, single Radde's, Dusky and Pallas's warblers and a Brown shrike. At least three more Dusky/Radde's warblers were present but only gave insufficient views.

Sergey picked us up outside hotel Angara just before noon, and we drove southwest through the outskirts and suburbs of Irkutsk. We soon reached the Novo Leninsky marshes where we spent the rest of the day. These marshes looked like a system of semi-natural ponds or small shallow lakes with some reed beds, meadows and ruderate land close to the Trans Siberian railway and heavy-trafficked roads. The surrounding landscape was very open with agricultural fields and grasslands. We walked on paths and on railways around most of the lakes. Highlights included at least nine Siberian stonechats, c. 10 Citrine wagtails, c. 10 Marsh sandpipers, some 25 pairs of Yellow-breasted buntings, two Eastern marsh harriers, two White-winged black terns, a few Richard's pipits and an Arctic warbler.



Novo Leninsky marshes.

Due to bad sleep during the flight and a seven-hours-jet-lag we were all pretty exhausted when we returned to our flat later in the evening.

June 2

Got picked up by Sergey in the morning. We drove eastwards and soon the agricultural landscape changed into taiga. We headed for the small village Bolshoye Goloustnoye by the lake Baikal shore, but stopped birding several hours at different locations along the way, where the habitat looked interesting. First stop, some kilometers before Maloye Goloustnoye, gave a singing White's thrush, which later proved to become our only encounter with this species. The song consisted of a shy, slowly repeated, single whistling, with no or very little variation in tone or pitch. Other birds included a male Siberian rubythroat and a singing male Siberian blue robin which evidently showed reasonably well in a rather low Birch. An

Arctic warbler sang and a pair of Black-faced bunting seemed to be breeding in a *Salix*-bush between the road and a small stream.



We continued to the next stop, a rather open and beautiful valley situated a couple of kilometers before (NW) of the village Burkhai. The sound of displaying Oriental cuckoos echoed through the valley, and songs from Olive-backed pipits and Greenish warblers of the siberian subspecies *P. t. plumbeitarsus* dominated the choir. In a while we could add both Dusky and Pallas's warblers, and two male Pine buntings were singing from the same tree as a Yellowhammer only minutes later. A Rufous-tailed robin sang from the other side of the river, and soon an adult female Crested honey-buzzard was found soaring above the forested hills. A bit further south the valley got wider and from a dry area with shrubberies and single dead trees we soon discovered several singing Thick-billed warblers. The same habitat were also occupied by a number of Brown shrikes, and it soon became clear that these two species often choose to breed in each others vicinity. Two Radde's warblers were seen and heard, as where a Blyth's reed warbler which was out of breeding range. According to Sergey this may be the first record of the species in this region.

Just after the village Burkhai a small and rather narrow valley leads northeast up in the forest. We followed a path that lead along the valley and soon encountered our first Mugimaki flycatcher, a beautiful male. The song somewhat recalled Red-flanked bluetail, but was initiated with a careful acceleration and in the end 'died out' (a bit like Red-breasted flycatcher). Later during the trip we heard a couple of 2:nd calendar year male Mugimakis, and their songs were clearly shorter with less initial acceleration and less tendency to die out in the end. The song from those birds got even more similar to Red-flanked bluetail, and at least two times during the trip we were mistaken. Deeper into the valley we found several Eye-browed thrushes and a male Daurian redstart. A few Siberian flycatchers were noted, and several cuckoos

as well (both Common, Oriental and silent ones). Lots of tracks from bears in the mud proved that we were not the only ones using the path...



Taiga east of Maloye Goloustnoye.

Once out of the valley the unmistakable silhouette of an *Aquila*-eagle turns up just above us, soon identified as an adult Imperial eagle. In a couple of minutes the bird disappears southeast towards lake Baikal. Interestingly, this individual showed whitish shoulders that even reached the forewing by each side of the head. Seen from below the pattern was rather similar to the 'head-lights' shown by Booted eagles.



Steppe north of Bolshoye Goloustnoye.

We continued eastwards and soon reached Bolshoye Goloustnoye. A couple of Daurian jackdaws flew by and the only Hoopoe of the trip was seen in the small orchards between the houses. Lake Baikal was very beautiful, but a side from a couple of Velvet scoters of the subspecies *M. f. stejnegeri* no particular birds were seen. Just north of the village we were surprised to find a rather extensive, tree-less, steppe-like landscape. Isabelline wheatears were common, as were Richard's pipits. We soon found a Black stork on the ground, and minutes later we discovered an *Aquila*-eagle resting in a single dead tree. As we moved closer we soon got fantastic views of two adult Imperial eagles, and none of them showed the white 'head-lights' of the Burkhay-bird and should therefore safely be regarded as two new individuals.

The ride back home to Irkutsk was rather calm and was only distracted by short glimpses of Oriental turtledoves that were flushed from the roadsides.

June 3

By early morning Oleg from Lovely Tours Ltd drove us to the bog Korolok some 30 km southeast of Irkutsk. Korolok is the name of the small river that runs under the highway to Listvyanka, and the area looks rather much like an ordinary Swedish mire. Due to extensive areas of wet tussock-land it is very hard to move around so we never went more than a couple of hundred meters from the road. Several singing Lanceolated warblers were heard and seen well, and in a low bush we also found a silent Pallas's grasshopper warbler. A couple of singing Siberian rubythroats posed in higher bushes together with numerous Yellow-breasted buntings and Dusky warblers. A Short-eared owl passed quickly and for us unknown sounds soon proved to originate from a male Long-tailed rosfinch. At least six Brown shrikes were found, and close to these five singing Thick-billed warblers were seen. A Corncrake was heard and distantly also the display from several Swinhoe's/Pin-tailed snipes. In this area the latter should be highly unlikely but due to low quality in the recordings we had brought with us, we did not dare to claim any individual as identified. A couple of Stonechat males were found just before we left back for Irkutsk.



Korolok, waiting for the rubythroat.

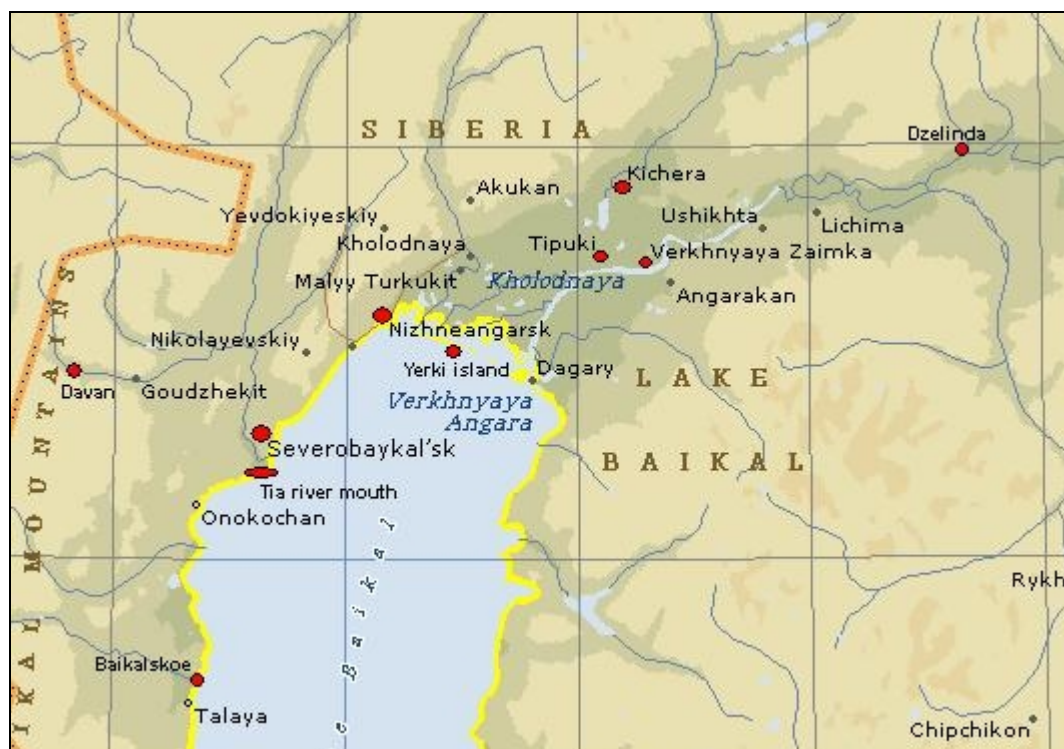
Oleg helped us with the check-in at the airport and soon we were off for Nizhneangarsk. Despite all the cows on the runway we landed safely, and both temperature and habitat quickly made us realize that we had moved rather far north. We met up with Vladimir, our guide/interpreter for the week, and while we were waiting for the bus to Severobaikalsk we enjoyed a singing Yellow-browed warbler in the low Birches just outside the airport. Vladimir told us that the spring was a little late this year and the ice on lake Baikal had disappeared only four days ago.

Since we had no car the afternoon was spent in the town Severobaikalsk, and together with Vladimir's friend Peter we enjoyed a couple of beers and booked a taxi for tomorrow morning's excursion at the nearby Tia river.

June 4

This morning was supposed to be spent by the mouth of Tia river. We were dropped by the bridge just south of Severobaikalsk and began to walk the path along the southern shore of the river. The forest was nice and Siberian blue robin, Arctic warblers and Black-faced buntings were noted along more common species like Greenish warblers and Olive-backed pipits. The path got more and more difficult to follow as smaller rivers, streams and oxbow-lakes had to be crossed, and after a couple of hours we realized that it was impossible to reach the rivermouth this way. We were running out of time and had to turn back in order to catch the taxi we had pre-ordered. We were happy to find our first Asian brown flycatcher singing from a rather exposed branch, and above a clearing four White-throated needletails gave nice views before we got back to the bridge.

Just before lunch time Vladimir arrived with his friend Zasha, a non-English-speaking hunter that joined us as a driver, cook and local guide for the rest of the week. Zasha had a 4wd jeep-like car, and in an hour we sat off for the village Baikalskoe, some 30 km south of Severobaikalsk. Along the road we stopped to enjoy a beautiful Larch-forest with a dense cover of pink blooming Rhododendrons. An unfamiliar *Emberiza*-song led us to very nice male Yellow-browed bunting singing from a rather low Larch-tree. Unfortunately he disappeared before we got a chance with our cameras.





Lake Baikal south of Severobaikalsk.

The village Baikalskoe is beautifully situated where the river Rel floods the shore meadows before it runs out into Baikal. Flocks of Daurian jackdaws were playing in the air and foraged among the grazing cattle along the shoreline.



Shoreline at Baikalskoe.

A nice flock of wagtails included lots of Grey-, White- and Citrines, but also two Yellow wagtails. One of the expected form *M. f. tchutchensis*, but the other one showed to be a *M. f. taivana*, a beautiful male. This is far west of the published breeding range and was a welcomed surprise for us. The shore mainly

consisted of gravel and smaller rocks, and along the waterline we soon discovered a small flock of Grey-tailed tattlers. These birds paid little notice of our presence and in a while we managed to get some photos. A short visit at a high hill (good view-point) just north of the village paid off with a nice male Pied wheatear.

We drove back towards Severobaikalsk and got a short glimpse of a Siberian jay crossing the road. To repair our failure from the morning-visit at Tia river, we decided to try another approach. We took a chance at a road that looked good enough and we were happy to see that the road took us all the way down to the shore, c. 3 km south of the rivermouth. The muddy and sandy shoreline looked rather good for shorebirds and we soon found small flocks of Little stints and Grey-tailed tattlers. A pair of Falcated duck swam close to the shore and as we walked on we soon discovered what seemed to be two *Limosa*-godwits on a small sandy island a kilometer or two north of us. It took us another 30 minutes to get acceptable views of these as we got closer, and we were very happy to find that the two birds actually were summer plumaged Asian dowitchers. They were feeding in a loose group of shorebirds, mainly Grey-tailed tattlers and Little stints, but also a couple of Terek sandpipers and two Red-necked stints. With a sky-line of snow covered mountains and a perfectly calm lake Baikal in sunset this was truly an unforgettable view.



Evening at Tia rivermouth.

June 5

The morning was spent on the vast meadows between Nizhneangarsk and lake Baikal. Lots of Richard's pipits and Citrine wagtails. Yellow-browed and Dusky warblers were heard singing from the village, and a Lanceolated warbler tuned in. A female Stonechat was seen briefly but the great surprise of the day was six males Yellow wagtail of the subspecies *M. f. taivana*. Unlike the bird at Baikalskoe yesterday these males behaved like breeding birds. Some of them were singing from low *Salix*-like bushes, and more than once they showed aggressions towards each other. While trying to photograph these beautiful birds some of them were flushed, but instead of flying away they seemed to just move from bush to bush. Very interesting, but unfortunately no hard evidence of breeding could be seen. A very small and dark *Calidris* was suddenly flushed and landed only 10 meters away in the knee-high grass. Despite hard work it could not be relocated, but it was pretty obvious that it concerned a Long-toed stint, probably a breeding bird.



Lasse at the meadows east of Nizhneangarsk.

During late morning Vladimir had arranged a boat trip for us. We went out to the island called Yerki and spent a couple of hours birding there and in the huge delta in the north. The weather was very nice, and maybe that's why we couldn't find any birds. A Yellow-browed warbler, a Dusky warbler, some Yellow-breasted buntings, some Citrine wagtails and a flock of Grey-tailed tattlers were the only birds seen. Apart from large numbers of ducks and gulls, the delta gave some Red-throated divers, two Smews and two White-winged black terns.



Captain Sergey scanning the delta...

Back ashore we continued northeast towards the village Kichera where we were supposed to stay a couple of days. South of Kichera, along the river Verkhnyaya Angara, a small village called Zaimka is situated. We spent the evening hours here and among more common birds we enjoyed a couple of White-throated needletails hunting over the forest in the sunset.

June 6

Morning was spent at Tipuki, an impressive vast area of mowed meadows west of Zaimka. A couple of Oriental turtledoves flew by and at least four Swinhoe's/Pin-tailed snipes were heard displaying. Oriental and Common cuckoos sang, just like Lanceolated, Yellow-browed, Greenish and Dusky warblers. The *Salix*-bushes held some Brown shrikes, Yellow-breasted and Black-faced buntings and a male Long-tailed rosefinch sang while we had some grilled pork-fat for breakfast. We went back to Kichera to prepare ourselves for the coming days in the hunters-hut in the taiga.



Grand Hotel Taiga, north of Kichera. Zasha prepares the dinner.

A lot of bear-tracks on the muddy road proved that we were about to enter the wilderness, and we had a nice 5 km walk through the taiga north of Kichera. A first summer male Red-flanked bluetail was alarmed by our presence, and soon we added some Common waxwings, two singing Mugimaki flycatchers, a pair of Two-barred crossbills and a pair of Yellow-browed buntings. Just outside the hut, where we were going to spend the night, an Asian-brown flycatcher held territory. The thin choir was dominated by Olive-backed pipits, Pallas's warblers and Oriental cuckoos, but among these also some Dusky and Yellow-browed warblers were heard. Side by side, we tried to sleep through the night on a 60 cm wide Cedar bench...

June 7

Some rain during the early morning hours didn't stop us and besides yesterday's birds we added another Yellow-browed bunting, a new Red-flanked bluetail, Arctic warbler and small flocks of Two-barred crossbills. By lunch-time we left the taiga and drove east to a small village called Dzelinda. The forest

here had a higher percentage of old deciduous trees, and while enjoying a refreshing bath in the natural hot-springs we listened to Rufous-tailed robin, Mugimaki flycatcher and some always-present Greenish warblers.

Rest of the afternoon was spent in the car driving back west to Severobaikalsk and some stops only yielded the regular birds. A singing Siberian blue robin while refuelling the car just north of Nizhneangarsk may serve as a potential highlight.

June 8

During morning a dense fog made birding impossible. We were ready to spend the day in the mountains west of Severobaikalsk, but we soon changed our mind and for the first time we slept through the morning. The foggy weather remained the whole day, but at lunch time the sky got a trifle clearer and we decided to try our luck at the Tia river mouth again. The habitat at this place was dominated by extensive wet grasslands. The grass was about knee-height and very homogenous with little variation, but seemed interesting for resting migrants. We soon flushed a couple of Lanceolated warblers and a single Pallas's grasshopper warbler and minutes later a dark and quiet pipit flew off and landed only 40 m further ahead. After an hour we managed to get the (still quiet) pipit out on the gravel bank along the shore, and with the help of tape recordings we soon got fairly good views of the bird. Our suspicions proved right, and we were more than happy to identify the bird as a Pechora pipit! In an hour or two the same procedure was repeated with a second and third individual, but when the fourth bird was flushed we felt satisfied to clinch the identification on behaviour and flight characters alone. When flying off, all birds gave a rather dark impression (one of them had a slightly more rufous coloured rump and neck) with distinct white wing bars, but with the pale lines on the mantle less easy to see than expected. Most of the time they landed only 30-50 meters from where they took off, and it shall be stressed that we never heard a single call from any of the birds, despite a total of 20-30 flushes.



Grasslands south of Tia river. Pipits and warblers are hiding...

A couple of Daurian jackdaws flew by and a small flock of White-throated needletails hunted low over the meadows. The nice shorebird flocks from the other day could not be found, so we soon turned back in order to meet up with Vladimir and Zasha on time. Almost back again, a small and dark *Calidris* flew up but landed again in a small grassy pond close to the shore. We got the same impressions as with the bird in Nizhneagarsk three days ago, and after some work we managed to get the bird to walk out of the grass, showing itself very well on a small mud-flat. It was easily identified as a summer plumaged Long-toed stint, and some photos were obtained before it took off and disappeared in the far south.

June 9

During early morning we drove west towards the mountains at Davan. A few stops along the road gave nice observations of e.g. Siberian rubythroats and Siberian blue robins. We had hopes to reach the tree-limit by car, and initially we were a bit disappointed to see that Davan was situated far below the alpine zone. The mountain sides were impossible to climb because of huge areas of scree and rocky slopes, and we were instead recommended to follow the old non-used railroad that went up through the pass. The forest around Davan was completely destroyed in a huge fire a couple of years ago, and we had to walk more than an hour to reach non-affected habitat. Scarlet rosefinch were extremely common, and we also noted several Oriental turtledoves and Greenish warblers. Olive-backed pipits were also common and in the low vegetation along the small rivers and streams several Siberian rubythroats held territory. Two rather heavy finches flew by and landed in a Spruce some 100 meters away and were soon recognised as a pair of Pallas's rosefinch. Further up the pass we stopped to enjoy an unafraid Arctic warbler when a Dunnock-like song suddenly surprised us. In seconds a beautiful Siberian accentor was found in the top of a Spruce just across the road. The bird was rather shy and quickly alternated between the trees, but calmed after having crossed a small mire. We enjoyed the bird for another five minutes and managed to get some bad photos before it disappeared. We turned downwards and again reached Davan just as lunch was ready.



Foggy morning at Davan.

Afternoon was again spent at the Tia rivermouth in hope for newly arrived migrating shorebirds, but a side from three Falcated ducks no new birds had arrived. At least three of yesterdays Pechora pipits were still here, and we spent some time getting photos of the *longipennis*-terns and *stejnegeri*-scoters.



A focused Johan...

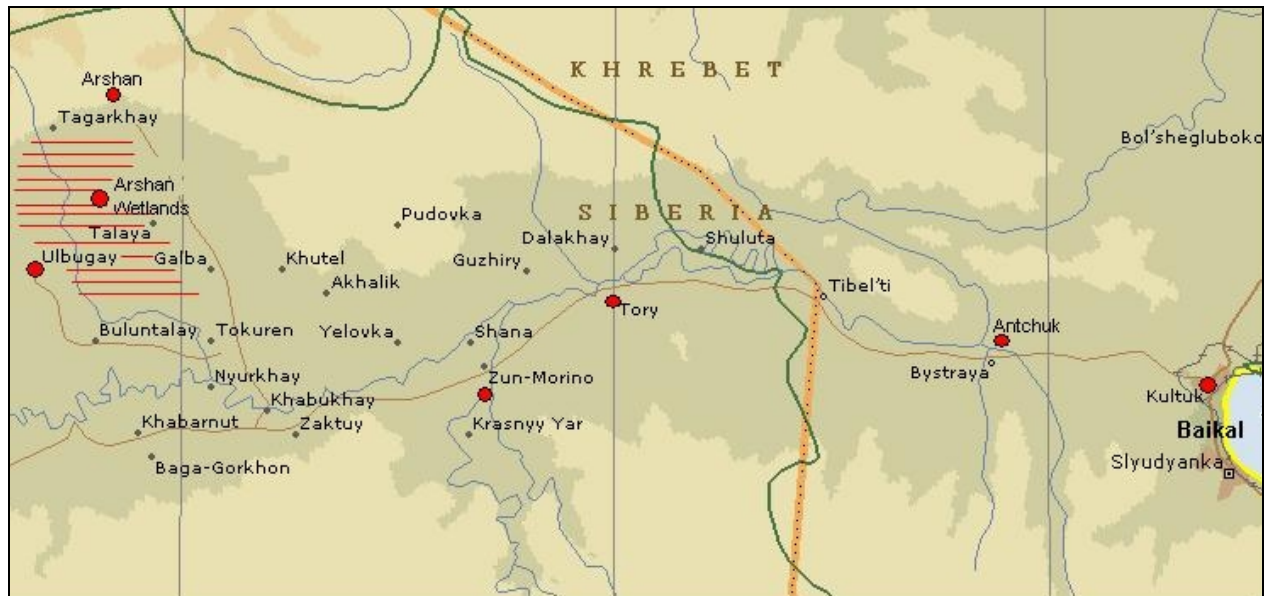
June 10

Transport to Nizhneangarsk airport during morning. The plane was delayed because of fog so we had a good five-hours wait. Short walks around the Airport-building produced a male Daurian redstart, a singing Oriental cuckoo, a Yellow-browed warbler, some Greenish warblers and an adult female Crested honey buzzard.

Well back in Irkutsk the rain was pouring down and strong winds made things even worse. Sergey picked us up outside the gates and we went to his home to get his daughter Marsha and some field-equipment for the coming days. We drove southwest and because of the rain no observations were made along the way. In Kultuk we stopped for the night at an old friend and college of Sergey. He had a small but nice collection of skins, primarily from the southern Baikal area, and lots of interesting discussions were raised before we went to sleep on the floor.

June 11

We left Baikal and turned west into the Tunka valley. Close to Tory we stopped for a walk in the taiga and was rewarded with a displaying Oriental turtledove, a Mugimaki flycatcher, some Siberian blue robins and lots of more common birds like Olive-backed pipits, Greenish warblers and Pallas's warblers. Further west, just south of Zun-Murino, we had lunch along a river. Pine buntings were common here, and after a walk in the area we could add a Grey-headed woodpecker and a female Black-throated thrush. A couple of kilometers west two Demoiselle cranes were feeding on a field along the road, and a few more were counted as we got closer to Arshan. Lots of Richard's pipits sang from wires and fences and soon we arrived the small village Ulbugay where Sergey had found a small house where we could stay for a couple of days. During an evening excursion to the nearby Arshan wetlands we enjoyed some White-throated needletails low-flying just a couple of meters besides us. Lots of Yellow-breasted buntings, Richard's pipits and Stonechats were seen and a single Black stork passed by.



June 12

During early morning we took a nice walk around the village. A heavy fire destroyed the surroundings some 10 years ago, and the forest succession was now very favourable for species like Pine bunting, Thick-billed warbler and Brown shrike, which all were common and gave great views.



Arshan wetlands and Sayan mountains.

The rest of the day was spent out in the huge Arshan wetland area as we had promised Sergey to help with some counting in a water-bird colony on an island in one of the lakes. During our, rather long, walk we encountered a pair of Demoiselle cranes, some Thick-billed, Lanceolated and Pallas's grasshopper warblers. At least four Greater-spotted eagles were seen, and also a younger Imperial eagle. We almost wet our pants as we nearly stepped on a Great bittern that flew off less than a meter away, and over 50 Black kites soared in the sky. Stonechats, Richard's pipits and Yellow-breasted buntings were everywhere, and also Citrine wagtails were rather common. Once we reached the lake Lasse and Johan stayed ashore to photograph while the rest of us went out with a small rubber-boat. The island held lots of breeding Black-headed gulls, *longipennis*-terns and lots of different ducks. Suddenly a flock of seven Asian dowitchers flew by very close, and some of the birds landed only 20 meters away. We later found three or four nest of the species. A few Little gulls probably bred in the colony, and a couple of White-winged black terns hunted nearby. The way back to Ulbugay gave lots more of the already mentioned species, and we were pretty exhausted when we finally reached home again. During the night we suddenly woke up because of noises from a buryatish man who told us that he just shot a wolf nearby! He wanted to borrow our car to bring the wolf to the village, and 20 minutes later he pulled the dead animal out of the mini-bus... Strange experience!



Just east of Ulbugay. Lasse is trying to get close-ups of the Demoiselle cranes.

June 13

Early morning was spent around Ulbugay. No doubt the highlight of the day was a male Isabelline shrike discovered a couple of 100 meters northwest of the village. The bird most probably was a nominate *L. i. isabellinus*, but although the flanks were well coloured the breast and belly was paler (less buffish) than expected. Interestingly, the bird was attracted to a female Brown shrike, and on several occasions approached her with song and wing-shaking. The female however couldn't care less, and after an hour of observations it was obvious that the *isabellinus*-male had no true territory at the site. Besides the shrike some Thick-billed warblers, Richard's and Olive-backed pipits and lots of Pine buntings were noted before we headed towards Arshan on the northeast side of the wetlands. A long walk in the taiga above the village resulted in a hand-held Hazel grouse-chick, Asian brown flycatcher, Mugimaki flycatchers, Red-flanked bluetail as well as lots of Pallas's and Greenish warblers. Surprisingly two or three Lanceolated warbler were found on the ground in the middle of the forest, and a probable Radde's warbler were



flushed from its nest under a fallen Birch. A drawn-out Redwing-like whistle suddenly got our attention and it was quickly understood that it probably came from a singing Hume's warbler. The song was repeated c. ten times before it got silent, but only a minute later classical *humei*-calls were heard some 40 meters away. Again it got silent before we reached the site, but a small *Phylloscopus* was briefly seen in a Cedar. Unfortunately it disappeared before we got a chance to see it properly, but all together the indications highly suggest that it actually was a *humei*. As I understand, *humei* regularly occurs in the southwest parts of Sayan mountains, but our observation is still rather far northeast of the known breeding range. According to Sergey, there might be some earlier records in the Arshan area.

Mountain taiga and waterfalls above Arshan

We left Arshan and headed east towards Kultuk again. We stopped along the road to enjoy a close-up Greater spotted eagle, and at the same site some Lanceolated and Dusky warblers were singing. We stopped for the night close to the village Antchuk, and by an old and closed camping site we found another singing Blyth's reed warbler out of its breeding range. Some Daurian redstarts and Siberian blue robins held evening concert as the sun disappeared behind the hills.

June 14

The morning was spent in the taiga along the highway between Kultuk and Irkutsk. Several Oriental cuckoos were displaying, and the forest held a very dense population of Olive-backed pipits. At least four different Siberian blue robins were heard, and one of them showed very well while singing from a dead branch. Three Red-flanked bluetails sang, as well as several Greenish and Pallas's warblers. A nice pair of Chestnut buntings were noted before we continued towards Irkutsk. We still hadn't seen any Taiga flycatchers (*Ficedula albicilla*) during the trip, so Sergey took us down to the shore of the river Irkut, just southwest of Irkutsk. Sergey have had several previous observations of Taiga flycatcher in this area, but unfortunately we failed to see any. However, we were happy to find at least four singing Chiffchaffs of the Siberian form *P. c. tristis*. Initially, the song confused us, but we soon got nice observations of the birds. I was surprised by their rather dark tobacco-brown appearance as I have expected them to be greyer

than *Ph. c. abietinus*. The song were fairly constant in these four birds; a mostly five syllabic song with deeper voice and a more Coal tit-like structure than *abietinus*. Very nice! Further on we found a male Long-tailed rosefinch and a singing but skulking Siberian rubythroat. Several Black-faced and Yellow-breasted buntings were noted, and a flock of Long-tailed tits were heard as we entered the cars.

Late afternoon and evening was spent in central Irkutsk, preparing for tomorrow's flight back to Europe.

June 15

Left Irkutsk during morning. After a pretty calm flight to Moscow and a two-hours-wait at Sheremetyevo - 2 we continued towards Stockholm. Landed on Swedish ground at early afternoon, local time.

List of species

Subspecies only given (and discussed) in those cases we actively examined the birds.

Wooper swan Sångsvan *Cygnus cygnus*
2 in the delta N of Yerki island 5.6.

Ruddy shelduck Rostand *Tadorna ferruginea*
3 at Tia rivermouth 8.6, and 1 still there 9.6. In Tunka valley 5 were seen 11.6, 12 on 12.6 and 18 on 13.6, mainly at Ulbugay and Arshan wetlands but 2 were also seen in the river south of Zun-Murino.

Eurasian wigeon Bläsand *Anas penelope*
Rather common in the northern parts of lake Baikal. Highest count was 75 in the delta north of Yerki island 5.6. Common also in Arshan wetlands.

Falcated duck Praktand *Anas falcata*
At Tia rivermouth 1 pair was seen 4.6, 1 male 8.6 and 3 males and 1 female 9.6. Not seen elsewhere.

Gadwall Snatterand *Anas strepera*
C. 20 at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6, 5 at Arshan wetlands 11.6 and c. 25 at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Common teal Kricka *Anas crecca*
Small numbers seen at Korolok 3.6, Zaimka 6.6 and at Tia rivermouth 8-9.6. At Arshan wetlands the highest count was c. 20 12.6.

Mallard Gräsand *Anas platyrhynchos*
Recorded more or less daily with highest numbers c. 40 at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6 and c. 35 at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Northern pintail Stjärtand *Anas acuta*
Low numbers recorded at several places around Irkutsk and Nizhneangarsk. Highest count was c. 30 at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Garganey Årta *Anas querquedula*
Recorded at Novo Leninsky marshes and Yerki Island. At Arshan wetlands c. 25 was seen 12.6.

Northern shoveler Skedand *Anas clypeata*
Seen in most wetland habitats with the highest count c. 25 at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Common pochard Brunand *Aythya ferina*
Recorded at Novo Leninsky marshes, Yerki Island (c. 75 ind.) and Arshan wetlands.

Tufted duck Vigg *Aythya fuligula*

Highest number was 60 in the delta north of Yerki island 5.6 and 15 at Arshan wetlands 12.6. Recorded at several other sites.

Velvet scoter Svärta *Melanitta (fusca) stejnegeri*

Commonly seen at lake Baikal with 45 at Tia rivermouth 9.6 as highest count.

Characters against the N. American *M. (f.) deglanti* presented in an article by Ian Lewington (Birding World 2004) seems to hold well in the Baikal area.



Stejnegeri-scoters at Tia rivermouth 9.6.

Long-tailed duck Alfågel *Clangula hyemalis*

1 male at Tia rivermouth 9.6.

Common goldeneye Knipa *Bucephala clangula*

Recorded at lake Baikal with c. 135 in the delta north of Yerki island 5.6 as highest count.

Smew Salskrake *Mergus albellus*

2 females in the delta north of Yerki island 5.6.

Red-breasted merganser Småskrake *Mergus serrator*

Small numbers seen around Bolshoye Goloustnoye and Nizhneangarsk.

Goosander Storskrake *Mergus merganser*

Recorded at Bolshoye Goloustnoye and at Tia rivermouth.

Hazel grouse Järpe *Bonasa bonasia*

A female with chickens was seen at Arshan 13.6.

Red-throated diver Smålom *Gavia stellata*

Only recorded at Nizhneangarsk with highest number 5 seen in the delta north of Yerki island 5.6.

Black-throated diver Storlom *Gavia arctica*

2 divers far out in lake Baikal north of Severobaikalsk 10.6 probably concerned this species.

Great crested grebe Skäggdopping *Podiceps cristatus*

C. 10 at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6. Small numbers were also seen in lake Baikal during our week in the north.

Black-necked grebe Svarthalsad dopping *Podiceps nigricollis*

12 at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6.

Great bittern Rördrom *Botaurus stellaris*

1 heard at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6, 1 heard E of Ulbugay 11.6, 1 heard and 1 seen at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Grey heron Gråhäger *Ardea cinerea*
2 at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Black stork Svart stork *Ciconia nigra*
1 at Bolshoye Goloustnoye 2.6, 2 (1+1) at Ulbugay and Arshan wetlands 11.6 and 1 at Ulbugay 13.6.

Crested honey buzzard Tofsbivvråk *Pernis ptilorhyncus*
1 adult female NW of Burkhay 2.6, 1 adult female Nizhneangarsk airport 10.6.

Black kite Brunglada *Milvus migrans*
Small numbers seen most days. More common in the Tunka valley where at least 55 were seen at Arshan wetlands 12.6 and 20 on different sites 13.6.

White-tailed eagle Havsörn *Haliaeetus albicilla*
2 seen at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Eastern marsh harrier Brokig kärrhök *Circus spilonotus*
2 males at Novo Leninsky marshes 2.6, 1 female at the delta north of Yerki island 5.6, 1 pair at Arshan wetlands 12.6.



Greater spotted eagle W of Antchuk 13.6.

Eurasian sparrowhawk Sparvhök *Accipiter nisus*
1 briefly seen in the taiga north of Kichera 6.6 probably concerned this species, but other smaller *Accipiter* can not be safely excluded.

Common buzzard Ormvråk *Buteo buteo japonicus*
3 adults at Davan 9.6, 1 at Arshan wetlands 12.6 and 2 adults close to Antchuk 13.6.

Upland buzzard Mongolvråk *Buteo hemilasius*
According to Sergey a buzzard seen S of Ulbugay 13.6 may have concerned this species, but due to a crowded car the verification with the telescope was too late.

Greater spotted eagle Större skrikörn *Aquila clanga*
Only recorded in Tunka valley, where at least 4 (2 2cy, 1 3-4cy and 1 adult) were seen at Arshan wetlands 12.6 and 1 (3-4 cy) W of Antchuk 13.6.

Eastern imperial eagle Kejsarörn *Aquila heliaca*
1 adult SE of Burkhay 2.6, 2 adult N of Bolshoye Goloustnoye 2.6, 1 younger subad (probably 3cy) at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Osprey Fiskgjuse *Pandion haliaetus*
1 at the delta north of Yerki island 5.6.

Common kestrel Tornfalk *Falco tinnunculus*
2 recorded at Ulbugay and Arshan wetlands 11, 12 and 13.6 respectively. Probably two pairs involved.



Demoiselle crane at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Eurasian coot Sothöna *Fulica atra*
C. 15 at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6.

Corncrake Kornknarr *Crex crex*
1 heard at Korolok 3.6.

Demoiselle crane Jungfrutrana *Grus virgo*
2 W of Zun-Murino and 3 at the S parts of Arshan wetlands 11.6, in total 23 at Arshan wetlands 12.6, 2 S. of Arshan 13.6.

Little ringed plover Mindre strandpipare *Charadrius dubius*
Singles seen at Novo Leninsky marshes and Maloye Goloustnoye. More common in the northern parts of lake Baikal were recorded almost daily. Highest count was c. 20 at Tia rivermouth 4.6. Some may have been migrants, but several pairs bred at the site.

Common ringed plover Större strandpipare *Charadrius hiaticula tundrae*
1 at Tia rivermouth 8.6.

Grey plover Kustpipare *Pluvialis squatarola*
1 at the delta north of Yerki island 5.6.

Northern lapwing Tofsvipa *Vanellus vanellus*
Recorded in good numbers at several sites. Highest count was 65 in the delta N of Yerki 5.6.

Red-necked stint Rödhalsad snäppa *Calidris ruficollis*
2 in summer plumage at Tia rivermouth 4.6.

Little stint Småsnäppa *Calidris minuta*
Recorded at Tia rivermouth with 15 4.6, 9 8.6 and 11 9.6.

Merlin Stenfalk *Falco columbarius*
1 male N of Bolshoye Goloustnoye 2.6.

Eurasian hobby Lärkfalk *Falco subbuteo*
Singles seen at Bolshoye Goloustnoye 2.6 and Tia rivermouth 4, 5 and 8.6 (2 ind.). Recorded daily at Ulbugay and Arshan wetlands, with at least 3 11.6 as highest count.

Peregrine falcon Pilgrimsfalk *Falco peregrinus ssp.*
1 at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6.
A very brief observation of a hunting bird. As we are not sure of the age (probably a younger, non breeding, individual) we have no guesses about subspecific origin.

Long-toed stint Långtåsnäppa *Calidris subminuta*

1 in summer plumage S of Tia rivermouth 8.9.

In addition 1 probable was seen at Nizhneangarsk 5.6 (see text under June 5).

Dunlin Kärrsnäppa *Calidris alpina ssp.*

A few seen at Tia rivermouth 4 and 9.6 and in the delta N of Yerki island 5.6.

On a geographical basis these birds should rather safely be called *C. a. sakhalina*, but it must be hard to exclude pale nominate on single birds on migration.

Ruff Brushane *Philomachus pugnax*

3 at Tia rivermouth 4.6.

Common snipe Enkelbeckasin *Gallinago gallinago*

Recorded in low numbers at Korolok, the delta N of Yerki island, Tipuki and in the Tunka valley.

Swinhoe's/Pin-tailed snipe Taiga-/Sibirisk beckasin *Gallinago megala/stenura*

A few heard at Korolok 3.6, 1 flushed at Tia rivermouth 4.6, 1 flushed at Nizhneangarsk 5.6, at least 4 heard at Tipuki 6.6.

Asian dowitcher Asiatisk beckasinsnäppa *Limnodromus semipalmatus*

2-4 in summer plumage at Tia rivermouth 4.6, 7-8 at breeding site in Arshan wetlands 12.6.

The birds at Tia rivermouth probably flew off in a northern direction, so when we 45 minutes later found another two birds a couple of kilometers to the south it is possible that it concerned two new birds. However, we are not sure, and hence the uncertainty in the figure above.



Asian dowitchers and Terek sandpiper at Tia rivermouth 4.6.

Black-tailed godwit Rödspov *Limosa limosa ssp.*

2 W of Kichera 5.6.

Baikal is far from published breeding ranges of the species. In western Siberia nominate should be rather common, and in Russian far east it is represented by *L. l. melanuroides*. A small population is also supposed to exist in central Yakutia, but subspecific status unknown by us. It was therefore a pity that we did not get good views of these birds. We only saw them in flight, during display.

Eurasian curlew Storspov *Numenius arquata orientalis*

Rather common in the north, especially on the meadows east of Nizhneangarsk and on the mowed meadows at Tipuki where 12 and 11 were noted respectively. Singles also seen in Tunka valley.

Marsh sandpiper Dammsnäppa *Tringa stagnatilis*

C. 10 at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6, 17 at Tipuki 6.6 and 7 at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Common greenshank Gluttsnäppa *Tringa nebularia*

2 at Zaimka 6.6.

Wood sandpiper Grönbena *Tringa glareola*

C. 10 at the meadows east of Nizhneangarsk 5.6 and 2 at Arshan wetlands 11.6.

Terek sandpiper Tereksnäppa *Xenus cinereus*

2 at Tia rivermouth 4.6.

Common sandpiper Drillsnäppa *Actitis hypoleucos*

Common along rivers and shorelines. Highest count was 20 at Baikalskoe and Tia rivermouth respectively 4.6.

Grey-tailed tattler Sibirisk gråsnäppa *Heteroscelus brevipes*

8 at Baikalskoe 4.6, c. 35 at Tia rivermouth 4.6, 10 at Yerki island 5.6, 2 at Tia rivermouth 9.6.



Little gull Dvärgmås *Larus minutus*

1 at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6 and at least 2 (probably a breeding pair) at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Black-headed gull Skratmås *Larus ridibundus*

Common in all wetland habitat.

Common gull Fiskmås *Larus canus heinei*

1 2cy at Tia rivermouth 8.6.
Surprisingly uncommon.

Grey-tailed tattler at Baikalskoe 4.6.

Caspian gull Kaspisk trut *Larus cachinnans mongolicus*

Commonly seen at lake Baikal, along rivers and in Arshan wetland (mostly non-breeding subadults in the Tunka valley).

Rather heavy and bulky birds with strong bills. Overall appearance was far from nominate. Sergey's opinion was that *mongolicus* more likely share ancestor with *L. vegae*, rather than *cachinnans*.

Caspian tern Skräntärna *Sterna caspia*

4 seen at Yerki island 5.6 and 2 at Tia rivermouth 9.6.

Common tern Fisktärna *Sterna hirundo longipennis*

Common at lake Baikal, along slower rivers and at Arshan wetlands.

White-winged black tern Vitvingad tärna *Chlidonias leucopterus*

2 at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6, 2 in the delta N of Yerki island 5.6 and 2 at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Hill pigeon Östlig klippduva *Columba rupestris*

Seen in low numbers more or less daily, mostly in urban habitats.

Oriental turtle dove Större turturduva *Streptopelia orientalis orientalis*

3 W of Maloye Goloustnoye 2.6, 2 at Zaimka 6.6, 2 at Dzelinda 7.6, at least 6 at Davan 9.6, 1 heard at Tory 11.6, 1 at Ulbugay 12.6 and 2 at Arshan 13.6.

Most birds were seen flying up from the roadside as we passed with the car. All birds (seen reasonably well) seemed to have tail pattern as nominate (in the Tunka valley, Petter Haldén et al. (2004), had a bird with white tail-tip).

Common cuckoo Gök *Cuculus canorus*

Common in low numbers almost daily.

Oriental cuckoo Taigagök *Cuculus saturatus*

Common in low numbers almost daily.

Short-eared owl Jorduggla *Asio flammeus*

1 at Korolok 3.6 and 1 at Arshan wetlands 11.6.

White-throated needletail Taggstjärtseglare *Hirundapus caudacutus*

4 at Tia river 4.6, 2 at Zaimka 5.6, 3 at Tia rivermouth 8.6, 15-20 at Arshan wetlands 11.6, 8 at Arshan wetland and 5 at Ulbugay 12.6.

Common swift Tornseglare *Apus apus apus*

Some seen in Moscow 30-31.5, c. 100 at Arshan wetlands 11.6 and c. 200 at the same place 12.6.

No paler birds were seen.

Pacific swift Orientseglare *Apus pacificus*

Very common, both in urban areas, taiga and in wetlands. Highest counts was c. 400 at Irkutsk 1.6 and c. 250 at Arshan wetlands 11.6.

Eurasian hoopoe Härfågel *Upupa epops ssp.*

1 at Bolshoye Goloustnoye 2.6.

Should be *U. e. saturatus*.

Black woodpecker Spillkråka *Dryocopus martius*

Singles noted in many taiga-sites as well as out in the Arshan wetlands.

Grey-headed woodpecker Gråspett *Picus canus*

1 was seen S of Zun-Murino 11.6.

Greater spotted woodpecker Större hackspett *Dendrocopos major*

Singles seen in many sites. Largest count was c. 10 at the taiga site between Kultuk and Irkutsk 14.6.

Lesser spotted woodpecker Mindre hackspett *Dendrocopos minor*

Only seen in Birch-forest close to Arshan wetlands 12-13.6.

Eurasian wryneck Göktyta *Jynx torquilla*

Singles were seen at Burkhay 2.6, Korolok 3.6 and Ulbugay 12.6.

Eurasian skylark Sånglärka *Alauda arvensis*

Singles noted on a few locations, and larger numbers were only seen at Bolshoye Goloustnoye 2.6 (15 ind.) and in Tunka valley 11-13.6 (in total c. 20 ind.).

Barn swallow Ladusvala *Hirundo rustica tyleri*

Well distributed, but not very numerous. Seen most of the days, and highest count was c. 30 in the Tunka valley 13.6.

Petter Haldén et al. (2004) says "Barn swallows with white underparts were not uncommon and consisted of about 5-10% of the population in certain areas". Maybe this figure increases to the north as we experienced a higher percentage (approx. 10-20%) in the area around Severobaikalsk and Nizhneangarsk.

Common house martin Husvala *Delichon urbicum lagopoda*

Recorded like Barn swallow, but with highest number c. 40 at Baikalskoe 4.6.

Richard's pipit Större pipilärka *Anthus richardi*

2 at Novoleninsky marshes 1.6, at least 5 pairs at Bolshoye Goloustnoye 2.6, c. 15 E of Nizhneangarsk 5.6, 5 at Tipuki 6.6, c. 20 in Tunka valley (mainly SE of Ulbugay) 11.6, at least 45 at Arshan wetlands 12.6 and at least 18 at different sites in the Tunka valley 13.6.



Richard's pipit at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6 and Olive-backed pipit at Davan 9.6.

Olive-backed pipit Sibirisk pipilärka *Anthus hodgsoni yunnanensis*

Common in all forested areas and recorded more or less daily. Highest numbers were c. 15 at Davan 9.6, c. 15 at Tory 11.6 and at least 17 at the taiga site between Kultuk and Irkutsk 14.6.

A weak (but yet present) variation in the pattern of the mantel was seen. Still, no one was close to tree pipit in this respect.



Tree pipit Trädpilärka *Anthus trivialis*

1 at Moscow 31.5, 1 at Irkutsk 1.6, 1 SW of Irkutsk 10.6 and 2 at the taiga site between Kultuk and Irkutsk 14.6.

Pechora pipit Tundrapilärka *Anthus gustavi gustavi*

4 S of Tia rivermouth 8.6 and 3 seen at the same place 9.6 (likely the same birds).

Seemed to be resting birds on migration. No acoustical answer on play-back attempts.

Yellow wagtail Gulärla *Motacilla flava tchutchensis*

1 male at Baikalskoe 4.6.

Still on migration, although this form should be a breeding bird in this area.

Yellow wagtail tchutchensis at Baikalskoe 4.6.



Yellow wagtails of the form taivana. Baikalskoe 4.6 and Nizhneangarsk 5.6.

Yellow wagtail Guläräla *Motacilla flava taivana*

1 male at Baikalskoe 4.6 and at least 6 males E of Nizhneangarsk 5.6.

Maybe the great surprise of the trip! Western edge of published breeding range is about 1500 kilometers east of Baikal. However, no evidence of breeding was attained (see above under June 5).

Citrine wagtail Citronäräla *Motacilla citreola*

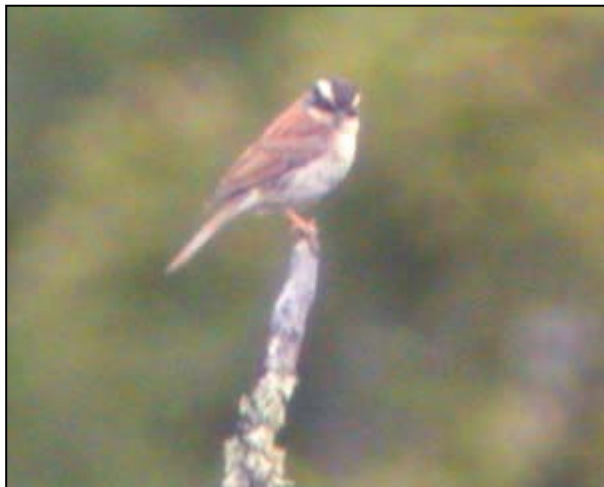
C. 20 at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6, 2 at Korolok 3.6, c. 15 at Baikalskoe 4.6, c. 25 E of Nizhneangarsk 5.6, c. 10 at Yerki island 5.6, 1 at Arshan wetlands 11.6, at least 10 pairs Arshan wetlands 12.6 and 1 at Kultuk 14.6.

Grey wagtail Forsäräla *Motacilla cinerea*

Common in suitable habitat. More than 10 were noted 2.6, 4.6 and 9.6.

White wagtail Sädesäräla *Motacilla alba baikalensis*

Common and recorded daily in numbers up to c. 30 (1.6).



Bohemian waxwing Sidensvans *Bombycilla garrulus*

3 in the taiga N of Kichera 6.6 and 1 at the same place 7.6.
1 at Davan 9.6.

White-throated dipper Strömsstare *Cinclus cinclus*

1 at Davan 9.6.

Siberian accentor Sibirisk järnsparv *Prunella montanella*

1 at Davan 9.6.

European robin Rödhake *Erithacus rubecula*

A few heard in Moscow 30-31.5.

Rufous-tailed robin Drillnäktergal *Luscinia sibilans*

1 N of Burkhai 2.6 and 1 at Dzelinda 7.6.

Siberian accentor at Davan 9.6.

Thrush nightingale Näktergal *Luscinia luscinia*

A few heard in Moscow 30-31.5.

Siberian rubythroat Rubinnäktergal *Luscinia calliope*

1 W of Maloye Goloustnoye 2.6, at least 3 at Korolok 3.6, at least 5 at Davan 9.6 and 1 SW of Irkutsk 14.6.



Siberian rubythroats at Korolok 3.6 and at Davan 9.6.

Siberian blue robin Blånäktergal *Luscinia cyane*

1 W of Maloye Goloustnoye 2.6, 1 at Burkhai 2.6, 1 at Tia river 4.6, 1 at Nizhneangarsk 7.6, 2 at Davan 9.6, at least 5 at Tory 11.6, 2 at Antchuk 13.6, and at least 4 at the taiga site between Kultuk and Irkutsk 14.6.

Red-flanked bluetail Blåstjärt *Tarsiger cyanurus*

1 2cy male and a female in the Taiga north of Kichera 6-7.6, 3 2cy males at the taiga site between Kultuk and Irkutsk 14.6.



2cy males Red-flanked bluetails at Kichera 7.6 and N of Kultuk 14.6.

Common redstart Rödstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Singles noted both in the north and in the south.

Daurian redstart Svartryggad rödstart *Phoenicurus aureus*

1 SE of Burkhay 2.6, 1 at Bolshoye Goloustnoye 2.6, 4 at Davan 9.6, 1 at Nizhneangarsk 10.6, 1 pair at Zun-Murino 11.6 and 3 at Antchuk 13.6.

Common stonechat Svarthakad buskskvätta *Saxicola torquatus maurus/stejnegeri*

At least 9 Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6, 2 males at Korolok 3.6, 1 female at Nizhneangarsk 5.6, 6 SE of Ulbugay 11.6 and at least 25 (8 females, the rest males) at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

One of the females at Novo Leninsky marshes had a rather distinct dark grey throat, especially the lower parts.



Common stonechats of the form *maurus/stejnegeri* at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6 and at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Isabelline wheatear Isabellastenskvätta *Oenanthe isabellina*

At least 10 N of Bolshoye Goloustnoye 2.6.

Northern wheatear Stenskvätta *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Singel pairs seen on many sites both in the north and in the south. Highest count (due to family-groups with juveniles) was c. 25 at Zun-Murino 11.6.



Pied wheatear Nunnestenskvätta *Oenanthe pleschanka*

1 male at Baikalskoe 4.6.

White's thrush Guldtrast *Zoothera dauma*

1 W of Maloye Goloustnoye 2.6.

Eye-browed thrush Gråhalsad trast *Turdus obscurus*

4 SE of Bukhay 2.6.

Dark-throated thrush Taigatrast *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis*

1 female S of Zun-Murino 11.6.

Eye-browed thrush at Burkhay 2.6.

Fieldfare Björktrast *Turdus pilaris*

2 at Korolok 3.6, 3 at Zaimka 6.6 and 2 E of Ulbugay 12.6.

Song thrush Taltrast *Turdus philomelos*

3 N of Burkhay 2.6 and 1 at Tia river 4.6.

Redwing Rödvingetrast *Turdus iliacus*

6 between Zaimka-Tipuki 6.6 and 2 at Tory 11.6.

Mistle thrush Dubbeltrast *Turdus viscivorus*

1 SE of Burkhay 2.6 and 1 seen at Ulbugay 11 and 13.6 (possibly the same).

Pallas's grasshopper warbler Starrsångare *Locustella certhiola*

1 at Korolok 3.6, 1 S of Tia rivermouth 8.6, 4 SE of Ulbugay 11.6 and at least 14 at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

Lanceolated warbler Träksångare *Locustella lanceolata*

At least 10 at Korolok 3.6, 1 at Nizhneangarsk 5.6, 5 at Tipuki 6.6, 2 S of Tia rivermouth 8.6, 1 S of Ulbugay 11.6, 4 Arshan wetlands 12.6 and 4 in E Tunka valley 13.6.

River warbler Flodsångare *Locustella fluviatilis*

3 in Moscow 31.5.

Blyth's reed warbler Busksångare *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

3 in Moscow 30-31.6, 1 N of Burkhay 2.6 and 1 at Antchuk 13.6.

Marsh warbler Kärrsångare *Acrocephalus palustris*

2 in Moscow 31.5.

Thick-billed warbler Tjocknäbbad sångare *Acrocephalus aedon*

8 N of Burkhay 2.6, at least 6 at Korolok 3.6, at least 11 around Ulbugay 12-13.6.



Lanceolated warbler at Korolok 3.6 and Thick-billed warbler at Burkhay 2.6.

Lesser whitethroat Ärtsångare *Sylvia curruca ssp.*
C. 5 N of Burkhay 2.6 and 1 at Korolok 3.6.

Common whitethroat Törnsångare *Sylvia communis*
1 in Moscow 30-31.6.

Greenish warbler Lundsångare *Phylloscopus trochiloides plumbeitarsus*
Common. Recorded more or less daily in varying numbers, both in the north and in the south. Highest day-sum was c. 17 13.6.
A couple of individuals (both in the north and in the south) used an alternative song which was completely different from the ordinary one. It partly consisted of crystal-clear trills and high-pitched tones and also had *Parus*-like elements. The identification of all these individuals was verified visually. I am not certain if these birds were changing between the song types (other Greenish warblers singing nearby), but they probably didn't. Maybe this is *plumbeitarsus* version of *viridanus* Wren-like song type?

Arctic warbler Nordsångare *Phylloscopus borealis*
5 at Irkutsk City hall 1.6, 1 at Novo Leninsky marshes 1.6, 1 W of Maloye Goloustnoye 2.6, 4 N of Burkhay 2.6, 1 at Korolok 3.6, 2 at Tia river 4.6, 1 in the taiga N of Kichera 7.6 and 1 at Davan 9.6.

Pallas's warbler Kungsfågelsångare *Phylloscopus proregulus*
1 at Irkutsk City hall 1.6, 1 N of Burkhay 2.6, 12 in the taiga N of Kichera 6-7.6, 4 at Davan 9.6, 11 at Arshan 13.6 and 5 at the taiga site between Kultuk and Irkutsk 14.6.

Yellow-browed warbler Taigasångare *Phylloscopus inornatus*
1 at Nizhneangarsk airport 3.6, 1 at Tia river 4.6, 1 at Severobaikalsk 4.6, 1 at Nizhneangarsk 5.6, 1 at Yerki island 5.6, 2 at Zaimka 6.6, 3 in the taiga N of Kichera 6-7.6 and 1 at Nizhneangarsk airport 10.6.

Hume's warbler Bergstaigasångare *Phylloscopus humei*
Song and call at Arshan 13.6 strongly indicates a Hume's warbler (see under 13 June above).

Radde's warbler Videsångare *Phylloscopus schwarzi*
1 at Irkutsk City hall 1.6, 2 N of Burkhay 2.6 and 1 probable at Arshan 13.6.

Dusky warbler Brunsångare *Phylloscopus fuscatus*
1 at Irkutsk City hall 1.6, 1 N of Burkhay 2.6, c. 5 at Korolok 3.6, 1 at Tia river 4.6, 1 at Nizhneangarsk 5.6, 1 at Yerki island 5.6, 2 between Zaimka and Tipuki 6.6, 2 in the taiga N of Kichera 6-7.6, 1 S of Ulbugay 11.6, 1 at Arshan 13.6 and 2 W of Antchuk 13.6.

Wood warbler Grönsångare *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*
1 in Moscow 31.5.

Chiffchaff Gransångare *Phylloscopus collybita abietinus*
1 in Moscow 31.5.

Chiffchaff Gransångare *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*
4 at river Irkut SW of Irkutsk 14.6.

Dark-sided flycatcher Sibirisk flugsnappare *Muscicapa sibirica*
3 SE of Burkhay 2.6 and 1 at Tia river 4.6.

Asian brown flycatcher Glasögonflugsnappare *Muscicapa dauurica*
1 at Tia river 4.6, 1 in the taiga N of Kichera 6-7.6 and 1 at Arshan 13.6.

Red-breasted flycatcher Mindre flugsnappare *Ficedula parva*
1 in Moscow 31.5.



Mugimaki flycatcher Mugimakiflugsnappare
Ficedula mugimaki

1 adult male SE of Burkhay 2.6, 1 adult male and 1 2cy male in the taiga N of Kichera 6-7.6, 1 2cy male at Dzelinda 7.6, 1 male at Tory 11.6 and 2 2cy males at Arshan 13.6.

Long-tailed tit Stjärtmes *Aegithalos caudatus*
A small flock at river Irkut SW of Irkutsk 14.6.

Willow tit Talltita *Parus montanus*
Seen in small numbers at many taiga sites.

Coal tit Svartmes *Parus ater*
Seen in small numbers at many taiga sites.

Great tit Talgoxe *Parus major*
Seen in small numbers at many sites.

Eurasian Nuthatch Nötväcka *Sitta europaea asiatica*
Recorded at several sites with maximum of 7 in the taiga N of Kichera 6-7.6.

Mugimaki flycatcher at Burkhay 2.6.



Brown shrike Brun törnskata *Lanius cristatus cristatus*

1 at Irkutsk City hall 1.6, at least 8 N of Burkhay 2.6, c. 8 at Korolok 3.6, 1 at Nizhneangarsk 5.6, 2 at Tipuki 6.6 and at least 7 around Ulbugay 11-13.6.

Isabelline shrike Isabellatörnskata *Lanius isabellinus isabellinus*
1 male at Ulbugay 13.6.

Eurasian jay Nötskrika *Garrulus glandarius*
1 SE of Burkhay 2.6 and 1 at Zaimka 6.6.

Siberian jay Lavskrika *Perisoreus infaustus*
1 N of Baikalskoe 4.6.

Common magpie Skata *Pica pica*
Commonly seen in different habitats, mainly in the south.

Brown shrike in Irkutsk 1.6.

Spotted nutcracker Nötkråka *Nucifraga caryocatactes macrorhynchos*
Common in taiga dominated by Cedar trees.

Western jackdaw Kaja *Corvus monedula*
Seen in Moscow. Maybe also in Irkutsk, but none of them seem to have any notes!



Isabelline shrike at Ulbugay 13.6.

Daurian jackdaw Klippkaja *Corvus dauuricus*

3 at Bolshoye Goloustnoye 2.6, c. 100 at Baikalskoe 4.6, 2 at Tia rivermouth 8.6, 5 at Tia rivermouth 9.6 and 1 in the E parts of Tunka valley 13.6.

Rook Råka *Corvus frugilegus*

C. 10 in Moscow 31.5.

Carriion crow Kråka *Corvus corone orientalis*

Common and recorded every day in numbers up to c. 50.

Common raven Korp *Corvus corax*

Rather common and recorded most days in numbers up to c. 10.

Common starling Stare *Sturnus vulgaris*

Locally common in suitable habitat.

House sparrow Gråsparv *Passer domesticus*

Common in towns and villages.

Eurasian tree sparrow Pilfink *Passer montanus*

Rather common in towns and villages.

Common chaffinch Bofink *Fringilla coelebs*

1 in Moscow 30.5, 1 N of Burkhay 2.6, 2 at Arshan 13.6 and 2 SW of Irkutsk 14.6.

Brambling Bergfink *Fringilla montifringilla*

Quite common during the week in the north. Not recorded in the south.

Eurasian siskin Grönsiska *Carduelis spinus*

Common in taiga during the week in the north, but very few seen in the south.

Two-barred crossbill Bändelkorsnäbb *Loxia leucoptera*

C. 12 in the taiga N of Kichera 6-7.6 and 1 heard in a crossbill-flock at Tory 11.6.

Common crossbill Mindre korsnäbb *Loxia curvirostra*

Locally common in suitable taiga. Largest flock was c. 60 at Tory 11.6.

Common rosefinch Rosenfink *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Common, with locally dense populations. Highest count was c. 40 at Davan 9.6.



Pallas's rosefinch Sibirisk rosenfink *Carpodacus roseus*
1 pair at Davan 9.6.

Pine grosbeak Tallbit *Pinicola enucleator*
1 male N of Burkhay 2.6.

Long-tailed rosefinch Långstjärtad rosenfink *Uragus sibiricus*
At least 1 male at Korolok 3.6, 1 male at Tipuki 6.6 and 1 male at river Irkut, SW of Irkutsk 14.6.

Eurasian bullfinch Domherre *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*
4 at Arshan 13.6 and 1 at the taiga site between Kultuk and Irkutsk 14.6.
All heard birds used the common "western" call, and nothing like the tumpeter-call heard during the invasion in western Europe autumn 2004.

Pallas's rosefinch at Davan 9.6.

Black-faced bunting Gråhuvad sparv *Emberiza spodocephala*

A total of c. 10 at Maloye Goloustnoye and Burkhay 2.6, 2 at Korolok 3.6, 3 at Tia river 4.6, 1 at Kichera 5.6, 5 at Tipuki 6.6 and 2 at river Irkut SW of Irkutsk 14.6.



Pine bunting Tallspär *Emberiza leucocephalos*
2 males N of Burkhay 2.6, c. 12 at Tory 11.6, c. 30 around Ulbugay 11-13.6.
Sympatric occurrence with Yellowhammer was noted at several places, but no birds with intermediate characters were seen.

Yellowhammer Gulspär *Emberiza citrinella*
2 pairs N of Burkhay 2.6, 2 males at Korolok 3.6, 2 males at Ulbugay 13.6 and c. 10 males in the E part of Tunka valley 14.6.

Pine bunting at Ulbugay 13.6.

Yellow-browed bunting Gulbrynad sparv *Emberiza chrysophrys*

1 male N of Baikalskoe 4.6 and 1 pair + 1 male in the taiga N of Kichera 6-7.6.

Chestnut bunting Rödbrun sparv *Emberiza rutila*

1 pair at the taiga site between Kultuk and Irkutsk 14.6.

Yellow-breasted bunting Gyllensparv *Emberiza aureola*

Common in all suitable habitat and recorded most days. Highest count was c. 40 at Arshan wetlands 12.6.



Yellow-breasted buntings at Arshan wetlands 12.6.

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Included digital maps are from: <http://encarta.msn.com/>

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