

Buryatia/Southern Siberia

Borgoi steppe and Southern Lake Baikal

Aug 29th to Sept 11th 2009

Trip report by Fredrik Friberg, Petter Haldén, Alexander Hellquist, Peter Schmidt and Mats Wærn

Contact: petter.halden(at)gmail.com

Buryatia and Lake Baikal has many biotopes in a restricted area and has a lot to offer birdwatchers. The area has experienced a renaissance among birdwatchers during the last decade. For this trip the aim was to get experience from plumages of vagrants that might turn up in Western Europe during autumn. Passerines were of main interest and tour dates were chosen to encounter as interesting species as possible.



Exhausted birders in Posolskoe.

We were flying from Stockholm via Moscow to Ulan-Ude and returning Irkutsk via Moscow to Stockholm. The entire trip was organized by Victor Dashanimaev, Ulan-Ude. We were also accompanied by Tsydyp Dorzhiev, professor in Zoology at Buryat State Academy in Ulan-Ude during the first half of the trip and by the renowned ornithologist Igor Fefelov at the University of Irkutsk during our stay in Kultuk. In addition several English-speaking students accompanied us during the trip.

Victor, who has arranged several trips for western birdwatchers, made our trip very successful. In 2010, a year after our trip, sad news told that Mr Dashanimaev accidentally had died.



Victor Dashanimaev preparing the evening Omul in Kultuk, September 2009.

Itinerary

Aug 29th. Transportation Stockholm-Moscow-Ulan-Ude

Aug 30th. Arrival Ulan-Ude. Transport to and birding around salt lakes with reed-beds in Orongoy. Night in tents. *Locustella* warblers and waders.



The camp site next to the salt lake south of Orongoy.

Aug 31st. Morning birding around Orongoy, transport to Beloozersk. Roadside views include brown shrikes, oriental turtle doves and a flock of 18 amur falcons.



Flat tire close to Beloozersk.

Sept 1st. Birding Beloozersk, a village close to the Mongolian border surrounded by steppe. Superb accommodation in the school residential. Birding in village gardens, steppe and the two salt lakes on the outskirts of the village. Good numbers of warblers, buntings, ducks, stints and raptors.

Sept 2nd. Birding Beloozersk.



Beloozersk.

Sept 3rd. Morning Beloozersk, transport via Orongoy to Murzino in the Selenga delta. Murzino is a river patrol station where we were accommodated.

Sept 4th. Morning birding Alimasovo, a resort at Lake Baikal, afternoon around Murzino.

Sept 5th. Birding Posolskoe, a village at the shore of Lake Baikal. Birding in gardens and wetlands close to Lake Baikal. Good numbers of warblers, flycatchers, buntings, waders, raptors.

Sept 6th. Birding Posolskoe.



Posolskoe, Lake Baikal.

Sept 7th. Birding Posolskoe.

Sept 8th. Birding Posolskoe.

Sept 9th. Afternoon transport to Kultuk at the southwestern edge of Lake Baikal.
Accommodation in guesthouse "SWIFT". Migrating raptors, passerines, shorebirds and gulls.

Sept 10th. Birding Kultuk.



Watching raptor migration in Kultuk.

Sept 11th. Morning around Kultuk, transportation to Irkutsk for transport back to Sweden.

GPS Coordinates:

Salt Lake S Orongoy (Tsaagan Nur) N 51' 28 E 107' 01

Roadside Lake in Orongoy N 51' 32 E 107' 02

Village of Beloozersk N 50' 39 E 105' 42

Northern white lake in Beloozersk N 50' 38 E 105' 44

Southern white lake in Beloozersk N 50' 36 E 105' 46

Village of Enhore N 50' 30 E 105' 50

Murzino River station N 52' 11 23 E 106' 29 32

Posolskoe N 52' 01 E 106' 10

Alimasovo N 52' 04 E 103' 43

Kultuk N 51' 43 E 103' 43



Posing in front of boats in Murzino, Selenga are, from left to right: River police officer Vladimir, Alexander Hellquist, Fredrik Friberg, Mats Wærn, Tsydyp Dorzhiev, Petter Haldén, Peter Schmidt and Victor Dashanimaev. Sitting is handyman Igor. Absent (sleeping?) is driver and chef Sergei.

Species account

Whooper Swan, *Cygnus cygnus*. 1 adult on two dates in Beloozersk.

Swan Goose, *Anser cygnoides*. 3+6 birds on two dates in Beloozersk. Possibly breeding birds as this is one of the few sites in Russia where the species breed.

Lesser White-fronted Goose, *Anser erythropus*. A young bird coming in to rest briefly in Posolskoe was a good finding. This species is irregular in the Lake Baikal area.

Ruddy Shelduck, *Tadorna ferruginea*. Impressive numbers with an estimated total of 5000+ birds in both white lakes in Beloozersk. A few also noted in Orongoy lake and along the coast of Lake Baikal.

Eurasian Wigeon, *Anas penelope*. Noted in Orongoy, Beloozersk and in Lake Baikal in small numbers.

Gadwall, *Anas strepera*. As previous species but fewer numbers.

Eurasian Teal, *Anas crecca*. Common in Orongoy, Beloozersk and in Lake Baikal.

Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*. Common in Orongoy, Beloozersk and in Lake Baikal.

Spot-billed Duck, *Anas poecilorhyncha*. A few sightings of perhaps 5-6 birds the morning in Alimasovo. A rare but regular breeder in the Selenga delta, rare elsewhere along Lake Baikal. Common breeder in Transbaikal and the Russian far east. Is known to hybridize with mallard.

Northern Pintail, *Anas acuta*. The most numerous *Anas*-duck both in the Borgoi steppe and along Lake Baikal. Appeared to have a migration peak with many bigger migrating and resting flocks.

Garganey, *Anas querquedula*. Only two identified in Orongoy lake. Certainly overlooked.

Northern Shoveler, *Anas clypeata*. Noted in Orongoy, Beloozersk and in Lake Baikal in small numbers.

Common Pochard, *Aythya ferina*. Most numerous in Orongoy with flocks of several hundreds, but common also in Beloozersk. Only a few noted in Lake Baikal.

Tufted Duck, *Aythya fuligula*. A few up to 20 birds noted at most places visited.

White-winged Scoter, *Melanitta deglandi stejnegeri*. 7 female plumaged birds noted in Kultuk on two dates was the only record. According to Dr Igor Fefelov most birds migrate early in the autumn and are largely gone from Lake Baikal by September.

Common Goldeneye, *Bucephala clangula*. Common in small numbers at most places visited.

Smew, *Mergellus albellus*. A female in the south white lake in Beloozersk was the only record.

Red-breasted Merganser, *Mergus serrator*. A single female in Alimasovo and a female with some 10 grown young in Posolskoe.

Goosander, *Mergus merganser*. In total 6 females recorded in Alimasovo (1), Istok (2) and Posolskoe (3).

Common/Japanese Quail, *Coturnix coturnix/japonica*. One flushed in Orongoy and another at the abandoned kolkhoz north of Posolskoe. Both species should be a possibility as the distribution transition is somewhere south of Lake Baikal.

Great Crested Grebe, *Podiceps cristatus*. Common and noted in most places visited.

Red-necked Grebe, *Podiceps grisegena*. A single bird northern white lake Beloozersk.

Black-necked Grebe, *Podiceps nigricollis*. Common in Orongoy and Beloozersk. Not noted in Lake Baikal/Selenga delta.

Great Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*. A few noted in Orongoy, Beloozersk and along the coastline of Lake Baikal. This species disappeared for unknown reasons from Lake Baikal during the second half of the 20th century and was gone for many decades. During only the last couple of years Lake Baikal has been recolonised by birds from the southern steppes (possibly due to dry conditions here) and it is now again a regular breeder with a fast growing population.

Grey Heron, *Ardea cinerea*. Common in small numbers at most places visited.

Black Stork, *Ciconia nigra*. A trip total of 15 birds seen primarily south of Ulan-Ude and around Orongoy. One bird in Istomino was the only Lake Baikal record.

Spoonbill, *Platalea leucorodia*. A younger bird seen in the northern lake in Beloozersk. This species is a vagrant to the Borgoi area.

Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*. Two migrating birds in Kultuk on Sept 10th.

Oriental Honey-buzzard, *Pernis ptilorhynchus*. Two young birds in Posolskoe Sept 7th and a total of 52 migrating south during a few hours when the clouds temporarily dispersed on Sept 10th the last day in Kultuk. Most aged birds were older males.



Black Kite, *Milvus migrans*. Noted daily in small numbers at most places visited. A group of 42 soaring migrating birds together in Kultuk Sept 10th is worth mentioning. The birds in Buryatia belong to race *lineatus* (Black-eared Kite), which we don't oppose against. However, most of the adults seen showed some *migrans* characters, such as dark vent and throat and yellowish cere. In structure and jizz we found them to fit well for *lineatus*. Rather large and six fingers creating a broad and squarish wingtip, reminding of greater spotted eagle.

1cy Black kite Milvus migrans lineatus, Beloozersk.



White-tailed Eagle, *Haliaeetus albicilla*. A single bird Beloozersk and one adult and 2-3 younger birds along the shores of Lake Baikal (e.g. Istomino).

Black Vulture, *Aegypius monachus*. A few soaring birds in Beloozersk.

Eastern Marsh Harrier, *Circus spilonotus*. 60 birds in total recorded all days except in Kultuk, a few are likely to be the same individuals seen on consecutive dates. Most females and young birds studied displayed obvious pale rumps. However, a few young birds only showed a slightly paler rump. Whether this can be attributed to individual variation within *spilonotus* is not clear since hybridization with Western Marsh Harriers, *C. aeruginosus*, is known to occur.



Immature male (left) and 1cy Eastern marsh harrier, Circus spilonotus, Posolsoke.

Orongoy area 30-31 Aug		Beloozersk and surroundings 1-4 Sept				Selenga delta/Lake Baikal 5-8 Sept			
4	10	3	2	2	20	6	3	5	5

Fig. 1. Eastern marsh harriers seen.



Hen Harrier, *Circus cyaneus*. About 40 individuals, with a majority of younger birds, fairly evenly distributed over all major sites visited. Best day was 7 seen in Beloozersk Sept 3rd.

1cy Hen harrier, Circus cyaneus Posolskoe.

Japanese Sparrowhawk, *Accipiter gularis*. Only 2 males identified in the Selenga delta, but also a few probables were recorded elsewhere during the trip.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk, *Accipiter nisus*. Only 2-3 birds recorded on the Borgoi steppe, then more commonly observed during the days along Lake Baikal with almost half - 15 individuals - seen migrating south during the last day in Kultuk on Sept 10th.

Northern Goshawk, *Accipiter gentilis*. The first not seen until Sept 6th in Posolskoe where a total of 7 birds were recorded on three dates. 2 individuals in Kultuk added to a trip total of 9, mostly younger birds.

Common Buzzard, *Buteo buteo japonicus*. Singles noted south of Ulan-Ude then not recorded until the days along Lake Baikal where 5-10 birds were seen daily. 10 were seen during the few hours of raptor migration in Kultuk Sept 10th. Almost exclusively younger birds.

Upland Buzzard, *Buteo hemilasius*. Only recorded on the steppe around Orongoy and Beloozersk. Here it was fairly common with up to 15 birds seen daily.



1cy Upland buzzard, Buteo hemilasius, Orongoy

Greater Spotted Eagle, *Aquila clanga*. 11 in total including 3 Beloozersk, 5 Enhore, 1 Orongoy and 2 in Posolskoe.

Steppe Eagle, *Aquila nipalensis*. 2 near Talgoy south of Ulan-Ude and 3 in the Orongoy area on two dates.

Eastern Imperial Eagle, *Aquila heliaca*. One adult and a younger bird soaring together in Orongoy.

Booted Eagle, *Aquila pennata*. 1 dark morph Beloozersk and totally 11 individuals of both morphs in Kultuk including 9 during the hours of raptor migration Sept 10th.

Lesser Kestrel, *Falco naumanni*. 2+1 males and a few probables Orongoy lake and a male and female together with Amur Falcons on wires in Enhore, Borgoi.

Eurasian Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus*. 5-6 birds during the days at the steppe, then 1 Posolskoe and 1 Kultuk.

Amur Falcon, *Falco amurensis*. Some 75 birds in total; 1 near Talgoy south of Ulan-Ude, 2 Orongoy lake, 18 together on wires close to Ubukun south of Ulan-Ude, more than 50 together in Enhore, these larger congregations possibly gathering for migration, and a few en route from the bus on the way back to the Selenga delta. Fairly even distribution between age and sex.



1cy, adult male and female Amur falcon, Enhore.



1cy Amur falcon, Ulan-Ude.

Hobby, *Falco subbuteo*. 1 Orongoy lake, 2-4 daily in Beloozersk, 1 Alimasovo, 3-4 all days in Posolskoe and a family group of 4-5 birds in Kultuk gave an estimated total of 20-25 birds, mostly adults.

Merlin, *Falco columbarius*. 1 Orongoy lake, 1+1 in the Selenga delta and 1 Posolskoe.

Peregrine, *Falco peregrinus*. 1-3 birds seen during seven of the days in Orongoy, Beloozersk and along Lake Baikal for a total of 13 records.

Saker, *Falco Cherrug*. One probable near Beloozersk never showed well enough for certain identification. Possibly the same bird was later photographed by our guide Victor.

Demoiselle Crane, *Anthropoides virgo*. 10 soaring birds near Talgoy south of Ulan-Ude and 2-3 flocks of 20-30 birds around Beloozersk.

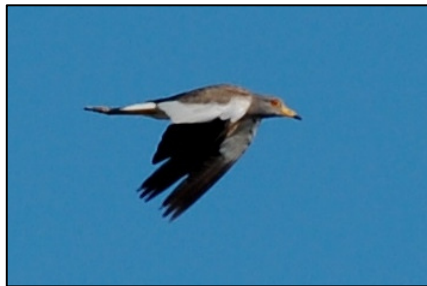
Common Crane, *Grus grus*. 40-70 birds in the Beloozersk area. Small groups were seen flying in and out from the Selenga delta at dusk and dawn during our three days stay here.

Eurasian Coot, *Fulica atra*. Common among the hundreds of ducks in Orongoy and Beloozersk lakes. Also recorded in Posolskoe.

Great Bustard, *Otis tarda*. A male was found in the grassland west of Beloozersk. The Borgoi hollow is the only place with regular sightings of this truly enigmatic species in Russia.

Pied Avocet, *Recurvirostra avosetta*. In Beloozersk this local breeder was seen twice (2+6 ind.) in both white lakes.

Northern Lapwing, *Vanellus vanellus*. Common and recorded most days with 40 in Kultuk on Sept 9th being the highest day count.



Grey-headed Lapwing, *Vanellus cinereus*. One bird was discovered standing on the beach in the southern white lake, Beloozersk. After a few minutes it took off heading southwards. There are only a few previous records from the area. The nearest breeding grounds are in northern China.

Grey-headed lapwing, Vanellus cinereus, Beloozersk.

Pacific Golden Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*. An estimated 175 individuals during the whole trip with most records from Lake Baikal south of the Selenga delta. Especially in Posolskoe the birds were extremely confiding. All except 2 adults in Beloozersk were 1cy birds.

Beloozersk 1-3 Sept			Alimasovo 4 Sept	Posolskoe (P)/Selenga (S)/Kultushnaya (T) 5-8 Sept				Kultuk 9 Sept
2	6	1	34	35 (P) + 30 (T)	30 (P)	6 (P) + 17 (S)	15 (P)	1

Fig. 2. Pacific golden plovers seen



Pacific golden plovers, Pluvialis fulva. Posolskoe.

Grey Plover, *Pluvialis squatarola*. One adult Alimasovo, 3-4 daily in Posolskoe and a younger bird in Kultuk.

Common Ringed Plover, *Charadrius hiaticula*. A few noted in Beloozersk, Posolskoe and Kultuk.

Little Ringed Plover, *Charadrius dubius*. 4 in Beloozersk, 1 Posolskoe and 1 Kultuk.

Kentish Plover, *Charadrius alexandrinus*. 1 northern white lake, Beloozersk.

Eurasian Woodcock, *Scolopax rusticola*. 1 flushed Kultushnaya.

Common Snipe, *Gallinago gallinago*. The most common *Gallinago* and noted almost daily with some 20 flushed in both Orongoy and Beloozersk, 35 during a long walk in good habitat in Istomino, 5 in Alimasovo, a total of 20-25 birds around Posolskoe and 3 in Kultuk.

Pintail/Swinhoe's Snipe,

Gallinago stenura/megala. In total an estimated 20-25 flushed birds, with a similar distribution during the trip as the previous species, were either of these two species. Some sources claim that most *megala* leave the Baikal area already in August and that most birds encountered in September are *stenura*. However, several of our birds were silent and largish birds suggesting *megala* and we never really figured out what we actually saw. We made quite an effort in trying to solve this



Pintail/Swinhoe's snipe (G. megala/stenura), Kultuk.

identification problem, but to be honest none of these snipes could be 100% identified.

Black-tailed Godwit, *Limosa limosa*. 2 birds including at least one adult in Orongoy. An estimated total of 30+ younger birds seen several times in the Beloozersk lakes. Probably all of race *melanuroides* although *limosa* could not be ruled out, as plumage of juveniles is very similar.

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*. At least two birds of race *variegatus* with other Curlews in the southern lake in Beloozersk and at least one heard Posolskoe.

Eurasian Curlew, *Numenius arquata*. 2+2+2 birds recorded in Beloozersk on three dates in both lakes.



Far Eastern Curlew, *Numenius madagascariensis*. At least two in the southern white lake and another in the northern white lake in Beloozersk. Both times mixing with other Curlews.

Far eastern curlew, Numenius madagascariensis, Beloozersk .

Spotted Redshank, *Tringa erythropus*. Noted at most places visited in small numbers, primarily younger birds.

Common Redshank, *Tringa totanus*. Only a single record, in Beloozersk.

Marsh Sandpiper, *Tringa stagnatilis*. Fairly common in Orongoy lake and Beloozersk with 15-30 birds daily. Only a single record in lake Baikal, in Posolskoe.

Common Greenshank, *Tringa nebularia*. Noted in small numbers on 7 days, with most records (20+) from Orongoy lake.

Green Sandpiper, *Tringa ochropus*. 1 Beloozersk and in all 5 birds in Posolskoe.

Wood Sandpiper, *Tringa glareola*. Noted in small numbers at most places visited.

Terek Sandpiper, *Xenus cinereus*. 2-3 birds Beloozersk.

Common Sandpiper, *Actitis hypoleuca*. 2 Beloozersk, 1 Alimasovo and 2-3 birds Kultuk.

Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*. 3 in the south with lake, Beloozersk and 1 in Posolskoe.

Red Knot, *Calidris canutus*. 2 adults in Posolskoe and 2 adults Kultuk.

Sanderling, *Calidris alba*. Small numbers noted in Beloozersk, Alimasovo, Posolskoe and in Kultuk.

Little Stint, *Calidris minuta*. Fairly common in Beloozersk, 2 Alimasovo, 10-15 birds on three dates in Posolskoe and 3 Kultuk. Only juveniles were seen.

Temminck's Stint, *Calidris temminckii*. 1+3+10 Beloozersk and noted almost daily at most places visited along lake Baikal with 8 birds in Posolskoe as the best day.

Red-necked Stint, *Calidris ruficollis*. 1 Orongoy lake, seen daily in Posolskoe with 10 birds as the highest day count and finally 3 in Kultuk. Only juveniles were seen.

1 cyRed-necked stint, *Calidris ruficollis*, *Posolskoe*





Long-toed Stint, *Calidris subminuta*. One Orongoy, 1+1 Beloozersk, 3+1 Posolskoe and 1 Kultuk. Only juveniles were seen.

1cy Long-toed stint, Calidris subminuta, Posolskoe

Curlew Sandpiper, *Calidris ferruginea*. 6 Orongoy lake, fairly common in Beloozersk and up to 8 birds daily along the shores of lake Baikal. Only juveniles were seen.

Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*. A few birds in Beloozersk and 5-10 birds daily around Posolskoe. Both young and adults.

Broad-billed Sandpiper, *Limicola falcinellus*. 1-2 Orongoy lake.

Ruff, *Philomachus pugnax*. Fairly numerous and the most common wader in Beloozersk, a few also noted along Lake Baikal on several occasions.

Red-necked Phalarope, *Phalaropus lobatus*. 5-6 birds swimming with ducks in the southern white lake in Beloozersk.

Common Gull, *Larus canus heinei*. Only a few noted around Orongoy and Beloozersk. Then common at all places visited along Lake Baikal. Adults differed from race *canus* (not seen during the trip) in having strikingly yellow legs and bill. A majority, if not all, of the adult birds also had light grey irises, reminding of Ring-billed Gull, *L. delawarensis*. Only a few 2cy birds were seen but some (if not all?) had an interrupted black tail-band similar to Ring-billed Gull. Moreover, the black markings on the head and neck seemed to be coarser than in the corresponding *canus* plumage. In all, the taxon appeared larger and heavier than *canus*, resembling Ring-billed Gull in many aspects!



Common gull, Larus canus heinei, Posolskoe

Caspian Gull, *Larus cachinnans mongolicus*. Small numbers noted in Orongoy and in the Selenga delta. Common along the Lake Baikal coastline including Kultuk with 50-100 birds seen daily.

Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Larus fuscus heuglini/taimyrensis*. An adult bird with dark mantle and yellow legs was discovered the last evening in Kultuk. According to Igor Fefelov these taxa are uncommon in Lake Baikal. The bird showed an extensive black wingtip (complete black band p5 and small black spot p4 and no protruding grey tongues typically shown by *barabensis*), white head without streaking and no traces of commenced wing moult (probably would be on the late side for *barabensis*), pale iris and intensively yellow legs and bill with an extensive red gonyx spot (not bleeding over on the upper mandible though).

Black-headed Gull, *Larus ridibundus*. Seen most days, highest numbers being 50-100 daily in Beloozersk and 50+ in Kultuk.

Little Gull, *Larus minutus*. A 2cy bird in Orongoy lake was the only record.

Caspian Tern, *Hydroprogne caspia*. 10+ birds Alimasovo and 1 Posolskoe.

Common Tern, *Sterna hirundo longipennis*. One seen in north white lake, Beloozersk.

White-winged Black Tern, *Chlidonias leucopterus*. 1 Orongoy lake and 2 at northern white lake, Beloozersk.

Parasitic/Pomarine Skua, *Stercorarius parasiticus/pomarinus*. One seen over the lake the very windy morning in Alimasovo. Only a few previous skua-records in Lake Baikal according to Igor Fefelov, most of them *S. pomarinus*.

Feral Pigeon, *Columba livia*. Common in villages and often seen mixed in flocks with Hill Pigeon.

Hill Pigeon, *Columba rupestris*. Common throughout. Most flocks contained birds with features indicating interbreeding with feral pigeons.

Stock dove, *Columba oenas*. One near Enhore and another in the Selenga delta on telephone wires. According to Igor Fefelov, the Stock Dove is expanding its range and is nowadays a rare but regular breeder in the Irkutsk area. The status in Transbaikal is uncertain, but in any case probably uncommon this far east.

Oriental Turtle Dove, *Streptopelia orientalis orientalis*. 1+6 south of Ulan-Ude (Ubukun), 1+1 Beloozersk, 1+2 Selenga delta, 1+1 Istok, 1 Kultushnaya and finally 1 in Kultuk. All adults that could be studied well were in active wing moult, with 3-5 replaced inner primaries. This is consistent with the moult pattern shown by the subspecies *orientalis* in the skin collections in New York and Copenhagen, and possibly rather advanced for *meena* at this time of the year.

Eurasian Hoopoe, *Upupa epops*. Repeatedly seen with up to 5 birds in the village, Beloozersk and a single bird Posolskoe.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos minor*. Probably the same bird seen and heard three days in the bushland north of Posolskoe.

Great Spotted Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos major*. 2-3 birds in Posolskoe on three dates.

Black Woodpecker, *Dryocopus martius*. One heard south of Ulan-Ude and another calling near Istok.

Mongolian Lark, *Melanocorypha mongolica*. Not very numerous in Beloozersk, an estimated 5-7 birds.

Lesser Short-toed Lark, *Calandrella rufescens*. Recorded around Orongoy lake and Beloozersk with a trip total of 15-20 individuals.

Eurasian Skylark, *Alauda arvensis*. Noted most days in small numbers. Highest day count was 40 in Kultuk.

Horned Lark, *Eremophila alpestris*. 1 Orongoy and a few around Beloozersk.

Sand Martin, *Riparia riparia*. Only 1-2 birds in Selenga delta and 1 in Beloozersk identified for certain, but additional probables were seen at least in Beloozersk.

Pale Sand Martin, *Riparia diluta*. At least two juveniles Beloozersk. In the Selenga delta initially some confusion with the previous species, but with 1-2 *riparia* showing up side by side next to some 25 *diluta*, the size and colour differences confirmed the suspicions, *diluta* being paler and smaller. In Posolskoe *diluta* was recorded daily.

Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*. Fairly common and widespread. Mostly race *tytleri* with dark rufous underparts, but occasional paler birds could have been *rustica*. Interestingly, a nest still with young in it was found in the Selenga delta as late as Sept 5th.



White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba*. Locally breeding race *baicalensis* common throughout. Migrating race *ocularis* noted almost daily with 1-4 birds in Beloozersk, Posolskoe and in Kultuk. According to Igor Fefelov *ocularis* appears on migration in greater numbers later in the season.

White wagtail, Motacilla alba ocularis, Posolskoe

Citrine Wagtail, *Motacilla citreola*. Noted every day with a few near Talgoy south of Ulan-Ude, 20-30 birds daily around Beloozersk, 30-50 daily along Lake Baikal/Selenga delta at most places visited and in Kultuk where the best day yielded a flock of 150+ recorded along the sandy shore the last day.

Yellow Wagtail, *Motacilla flava*. 2-4 almost daily with the highest day count along the northern lake, Beloozersk on Sept 2nd. Most birds probably of race *tschutchensis* with calls very similar to Citrine Wagtail. A few birds called differently, more like *flava* or *thunbergi*, and in some cases one single bird gave different types of calls. Of those seen on the ground, one bird showed characters suitable for *taivana* in having very dark ear-coverts and a very prominent and towards the nape very broad supercilium. How to completely rule out hybrids between Citrine and Yellow Wagtail is however incompletely known.

Grey Wagtail, *Motacilla cinerea*. Noted most days, common in Beloozersk, Posolskoe and in Kultuk.

Richard's Pipit, *Anthus richardi*. Recorded on nine of the days with up to 15 birds both in the Borgoi steppe and along lake Baikal. Often in loose assemblies probably still moulting on their breeding grounds.

Olive-backed Pipit, *Anthus hodgsoni*. Common and noted daily in various habitats with the best day being Sept 6th in Posolskoe with some 100 migrating birds.

Tree Pipit, *Anthus trivialis*. A few probables (identified by call) in Kultuk.

Red-throated Pipit, *Anthus cervinus*. 1 near Talgoy south of Ulan-Ude, 1 Orongoy, 2 Alimasovo and 5-6 birds in grassland along the shore both days in Kultuk.

Buff-bellied Pipit, *Anthus rubescens japonicus*. Two birds in Kultuk on two dates, both heard and seen on the ground. One of them giving prolonged views on the shore.



Lanceolated Warbler, *Locustella lanceolata*. 3 Orongoy lake, 1+4+2 Posolskoe and 1 in Kultuk.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, *Locustella certhiola*. Some 15 birds flushed around Orongoy lake, 1 Beloozersk and then noted daily along lake Baikal with 1-3 birds.

Thick-billed Warbler, *Acrocephalus aedon*. Only two observations. 1 in a garden in Beloozersk on Sept 2nd and one in a moist shrubbery north of Posolskoe.

Chiffchaff, *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*. 1 in Posolskoe and up to 8-10 birds in Kultuk on two dates.

Lanceolated warbler, Locustella lanceolata, Posolskoe.

Dusky Warbler, *Phylloscopus fuscatus*. 3 during the day with most passerines in the village of Beloozersk on Sept 1st. After relocation to Lake Baikal noted with 25-50 daily with a slight drop towards the end in Kultuk.



Radde's Warbler, *Phylloscopus schwarzi*. First bird was not found until Sept 7th in Posolskoe where another 6-7 birds together with 2 in Alimasovo were seen the subsequent days. Several noted in Kultuk with an estimated 25+ the last day.

Radde's warbler, Phylloscopus schwarzi, Kultuk.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler, *Phylloscopus proregulus*. Surprisingly few, 7-8 noted in Posolskoe and 3 in Kultuk. Migration peak is probably later in the autumn.

Yellow-browed Warbler, *Phylloscopus inornatus*. Fairly common with up to 50 birds noted the best day in Beloozersk and during several days along Lake Baikal.

Hume's Leaf Warbler, *Phylloscopus humei*. A possible record from Kultuk where a bird calling differently (from *inornatus*) and showing features of *humei* was photographed.

Arctic Warbler, *Phylloscopus borealis*. About 15 in Beloozersk, a dozen records in Posolskoe and Alimasovo and a single bird Kultuk.

Arctic warbler, Phylloscopus borealis, Posolskoe



Greenish Warbler, *Phylloscopus trochiloides plumbeitarsus*. Only 2 records of this common breeder in the Baikal area, a family group in Kultushnaya and 1 Posolskoe.

Lesser Whitethroat, *Sylvia curruca*. 1 at the abandoned kolkhoz north of Posolskoe and 1 in Kultuk.



Asian Brown Flycatcher, *Muscicapa dauurica*. 1 seen and photographed in the bushland north of Posolskoe on Sept 6th.

Asian brown flycatcher Muscicapa dauurica, Posolskoe.

Mugimaki Flycatcher, *Ficedula mugimaki*. Totally 6 birds between Sept 6-8th in Posolskoe and 7 in Alimasovo on the 7th. Only males were seen.



1cy male Mugimaki flycatcher, Ficedula mugimaki, Posolskoe

Taiga Flycatcher, *Ficedula albicilla*. Recorded 9 of the days with Sept 1st in Beloozersk and Sept 6-7th in Posolskoe being the best days with 25-35 birds.



1cy Taiga flycatchers, Ficedula albicilla, Posolskoe.



Siberian Rubythroat, *Luscinia calliope*. Mostly older males primarily during the second week of the trip indicated that we were here at the beginning of the migration.



Adult male Siberian rubythroat, Luscinia calliope, Posolskoe

Red-flanked Bluetail, *Tarsiger cyanurus*. Brief views of 1 in Kultushnaya and 1 in Alimasovo were the only records.

Daurian Redstart, *Phoenicurus aureus*. 1 Orongoy, 2 Posolskoe, 1 Kultushnaya and 4 birds both days in Kultuk. Both males and females/immature.

Female Daurian redstart, *Phoenicurus aureus*, Kultuk



Stonechat, *Saxicola torquatus maurus/stejnegeri*. Some 25 birds in total; 1 Orongoy lake, 1 Istomino, 1 Selenga delta, 3+5+10 Posolskoe and 4 Kultuk.

Northern Wheatear, *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Widespread in small numbers.

Pied Wheatear, *Oenanthe pleschanka*. A male Beloozersk, another male Istok and a female Kultuk.

Isabelline Wheatear, *Oenanthe isabellina*. 2 Orongoy lake, 2-3 Beloozersk and a single bird Kultuk.

Bearded Parrotbill, *Panurus biarmicus*. 4-5 birds in the reeds, Orongoy.

Marsh Tit, *Parus palustris*. 1 near Talgoy south of Ulan-Ude, 2-3 Alimasovo, 2-3 Posolskoe and 1 Kultuk.

Willow Tit, *Parus montana*. Some migration movement along Lake Baikal with parties of up to 10 birds seen repeatedly in e.g. Alimasovo, Selenga delta and the bushland north of Posolskoe.

Great Tit, *Parus major*. Fairly common in small numbers, the majority along lake Baikal.

Azure Tit, *Parus cyanus*. 5-6 birds, possibly a family group, seen along a stream with *salix* near Talgoy south of Ulan-Ude.

Brown Shrike, *Lanius cristatus*. 1+2 Orongoy area, 1 Beloozersk, 1+2 Posolskoe and up to 5 birds Kultuk on three dates. Only juveniles.



1cy Brown shrikes, *Lanius cristatus*, Kultuk (left) and Orongoy.

Eurasian Jay, *Garrulus glandarius*. 4 birds in the bushland north of Posolskoe could indicate some migration movement, but these were the only birds recorded.

Azure-winged Magpie, *Cyanopica cyanus*. 7 together near Talgoy south of Ulan-Ude and 3 in the Selenga delta.

Common Magpie, *Pica pica*. Common and widespread, perhaps less so around Beloozersk.

Daurian Jackdaw, *Corvus dauuricus*. A few birds and then a large 50+ flock near Talgoy south of Ulan-Ude on Aug 30th 500+ birds mixed with Crows in Enhor near the Mongolian border. Many younger birds.

Rook, *Corvus frugilegus*. Fairly common south of Ulan-Ude and in Orongoy.

Crow, *Corvus corone orientalis*. Common and widespread. Many in heavy moult. We found that these *orientalis* had a more heavy bill and a slightly longer tail compared to the European Crows, making the appearance a bit Raven-like.

Raven, *Corvus corax*. Widespread in small numbers.

Eurasian Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*. Only noted on 4 occasions; Beloozersk 2, Selenga delta 6+25 and Posolskoe 4.

House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*. Common and widespread.

Tree Sparrow, *Passer montanus*. Common and widespread.

Chaffinch, *Fringilla coelebs*. One seen and heard on migration in Kultuk.

Brambling, *Fringilla montifringilla*. 2+1 in Posolskoe and 15+ in Kultuk.

Common Rosefinch, *Carpodacus erythrinus*. 5-10 daily in Beloozersk, 1+3 Posolskoe and 1+1 Kultuk.

Long-tailed Rosefinch, *Uragus sibiricus*. Widespread in damp shrubbery. Noted in Orongoy, common in Alimasovo, several in the bushland north of Posolskoe.

Pine Bunting, *Emberiza leucocephalos*. Seen seven days. Probably 100+ birds in total appearing to be on migration south of Ulan-Ude and around Orongoy. Only a few noted in Beloozersk and along Lake Baikal.

Meadow Bunting, *Emberiza cioides*. Some five birds in a ravine near Orongoy seen on two dates and 10+ birds along the eastwards hillside/railway in Kultuk.



Chestnut-eared Bunting, *Emberiza fucata*. 2 probables by the Orongoy lake in the evening Aug 30th and 2 seen in a garden in Beloozersk on Sept 1st.

Presumed adult Chestnut-eared bunting, *Emberiza fucata*, *Beloozersk*.

Little Bunting, *Emberiza pusilla*. 5+2 Beloozersk then fairly common during the second week along Lake Baikal. Sept 6th with 40+ birds in Posolskoe and Sept 7th with 40+ in Posolskoe and 20+ in

Alimasovo were the best days. Also some 30 noted on the last day in Kultuk.

Yellow-breasted Bunting, *Emberiza aureola*. 1-2 birds seen on two dates in the bushland north of Posolskoe was the only record. The peak migration is probably well earlier in August. Some of the many unidentified “ticking” buntings could of course have been this species.

Chestnut Bunting, *Emberiza rutila*. Only one record of a female-coloured bird photographed in Beloozersk. As with the previous species possibly overlooked, and it also migrates earlier in the season.

Chestnut bunting, *Emberiza rutila*, *Beloozersk*





Black-faced Bunting, *Emberiza spodocephala*. Common and widespread with up to 25 birds daily in Alimasovo and Posolskoe and also a few south of Ulan-Ude, around Orongoy and in Kultuk.

*Immature/female Black-faced bunting
Emberiza spodocephala, Posolskoe.*

Pallas's Reed Bunting, *Emberiza pallasii*. Two 1st cy birds were seen in steppe habitat around Beloozersk. They differed a lot in plumage compared to the PRB's seen along Lake Baikal. These "steppe birds" were almost ridiculously long-tailed, pale over-all, lacked streaking on the flanks (only breast) and had a broad pale supercilium. The birds seen in Beloozersk have probably bred there.



*1 cy Pallas's reed bunting, Emberiza pallasii
Beloozersk.*

The PRB's seen in the Baikal area were all migrants belonging to some of the northern subspecies. Besides a single adult male all of the Baikal birds had a more or less complete juvenile plumage.



1cy Pallas's reed buntings *Emberiza pallasi*, *Posolskoe*

Reed Bunting, *Emberiza schoeniclus*. 1 Orongoy lake, then noted at most sites visited along lake Baikal including 25+10+6 Posolskoe (primarily in the bushland north of the village) and 6+10 in Kultuk on two dates. All birds were very pale with in general only a few black markings underneath. Strikingly different from north European counterparts (not noted). The calls were similar. Which eastern subspecies involved here is uncertain.



Reed buntings, Emberiza schoeniclus, Posolskoe

Lapland Longspur, *Calcarius lapponicus*. 2 in Posolskoe and a flock of 11 along the shore in Kultuk.

More pics can be found at:

http://www.pbase.com/luscinia/buryatia_2009 & <https://picasaweb.google.com/Mats.Waern>