



Participants:

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Introduction

In June 2017, Mikkel visited a couple of sites north of Almaty in southern Kazakhstan as a part of Lund University's Great reed warbler-project using light-loggers to track the migration of Great and Clamorous reed warbler. This trip was a follow-up on Mikkel's visit with the main purpose of retrieving last year's loggers and adding new ones. After successful fieldwork, we had a couple of days of birding in the area.

Since we were unsure of how many days we needed for the fieldwork, our birding trip was decided on the go. The whole visit was possible thanks to Andrey Gavrilov, one of the pioneers in bird ringing in Kazakhstan. His knowledge and experience with fieldwork made our trip much easier. For most of the trip we were also joined by other Kazaks, Almat and Ruchan, as well as Silvio from the Netherlands.



Light logger successfully added to a GRW

Logistics and weather

We flew with Turkish airlines from Copenhagen via Atatürk in Istanbul to Almaty. No problems and only a few hours waiting time on Atatürk both ways. Night flight on our way there and a long day for returning back home. Mikkel had to leave earlier on the 28th.

We rented Andrey's and Ruchan's 4WD Mitsubishi Minivans complete with camping accessories as well as their driving and cooking skills. Except for four nights, we slept in single-tents provided by Andrey that proved extremely easy to use and with good quality. The four nights in the Tien Shan Mountains were spent at the Alpen Rose, a hotel at 2000 m.a.s. along the road to Big Almaty Lake. The hotel had okay rooms; however, warm water was a shortage when there was many guests at the hotel. The observatory above Big Almaty Lake is closed for visitors since 2017, apparently the military has restricted access to some areas around the lake. Since we already had payed Andrey and the others for cooking, we never tried the hotel restaurant except for a few beers in the evening. Our initial plan was to have three nights with two whole days of birding in the mountains, which would have been enough to get all the species. However, one of the cars broke down so we had to extend the stay for one night.



Andrey and his lovely car fully packed

Camping in Kazakhstan turned out to be a good option. However, the nights were much colder than expected. Most of the days we had between 25-30°C during the day, even in the mountains, but during the nights the temperature dropped down to a couple degrees above zero. According to Andrey, this spring has been much colder than usual though.

We lost one day of fieldwork to bad weather. Storm winds and rain/hale showers almost the entire day. The extra day we unwillingly spent in the mountains, we experienced fog and heavy snowfall and on our only day in the Kanshengel-area a minor sandstorm picked up during the day.



Birding in bad weather

Birding sites

Sorbulak lake system

We camped at three different sites close to areas with reeds in the eastern parts of the lake system. These were the sites Mikkel found in 2017. Both **Great reed warbler** and **Clamorous reed warbler** were common in the reeds here. The lakes proved to be very nice bird lakes. We saw many **ducks** (including **White-headed**), **grebes**, **waders**, both **pelican** species as well as a few migrating passerines in the bushes scattered around the lakes. The mist nets we used to capture the reed warblers also caught some other species including **Little bittern**, **Turkestan shrike**, **Grey-necked bunting**, **Hume's leaf-**, **Greenish-**, **Syke's-**, **Savi's-** and **Paddyfield warbler**.



Fieldwork and trapped GRW

Ile-Alatau national park

The national park is located just south of Almaty in the Tien Shan Mountains. Most target birds for the area are reachable after an hour in car, and the only road necessary to take is the one from Almaty up to Cosmostation via Big Almaty lake. The spruce forest around our hotel, the Alpen Rose, produced many interesting species. We heard **White's thrush** from the hotels parking lot every night as well as **Boreal owl**. A pair of **Azure tits** where building close to the hotel. In a small stream along the road, we saw a pair of **Blue whistling thrush** building a nest under a rock in the stream and a **Brown dipper** pasted by. Everywhere in the spruce forest **Hume's leaf** and **Greenish warblers** sang together with **Black-throated accentors**, **Blue-capped** and **Evermann's redstarts**.



Male Blue-capped redstart

Just along the treeline in the valley directly north of the Observatory, we found two pairs of **Red-fronted rosefinches** and in rocky areas in the forest we found two singing **Sulphur-bellied warblers**. The dense juniper slope along the north side of the valley produced a pair of **White-browed tit warbler**. **Himalayan rubythroat** was very common in this area.



Sulphur-bellied warbler

Finding the **Ibisbills** that are breeding in the delta south of the lake is apparently more difficult now than it used to be, mainly because you need special permission to walk along the road east of the lake, which we did not have. We stopped at the viewpoint over the lake and scanned the delta with our scopes. After maybe an hour, we found one individual far back in the delta, in the rockiest area.

Slowly climbing the road to the Cosmostation, after passing through the passport control, and stopping along the road produced many species including several **Snowcocks**, **Altai** and **Brown accentors** and amazing views of **Bearded vulture**, **Cinereous vulture** and **Himalayan griffon**. At and around the Cosmostation it did not take long to connect with the pair of **Güldenstädt's redstarts** in the slope adjacent to the station.



Our Kazaks friends enjoying the view and a pair of Snowcocks

Kanshengel

We only had one evening and one morning in this amazing area. We camped by a waterhole just northwest of Kanshengel which produced **Steppe** and **Eastern Imperial Eagles**, **Montagu's harrier**, five lark species, **Desert finch** and much more. We drove west over the semi-desert in the morning looking for Caspian plover and Macqueen's bustard but failed to find both species. However, we had nice views of **Greater sand plover** and **Pallas's sandgrouse**. More research on where exactly the plovers' breed and more time spent along the border between the semi desert and the desert are probably necessary to see these target species. Before we headed north, we drove a few kilometres south of Kanshengel and along the road, we found, to our surprise, several **White-winged larks** even though a minor sandstorm had picked up.



Campsite at Kanshengel

Zhel'turanga

Apparently, our guide had not been to the Turanga forest east of Topar for several years and therefore we did not put up camp at the famous forest, which is very close to the small village. We camped further east in a forest not as dense as the famous one according to google earth. However, that did not matter as the forest was very nice also here and we soon found all three target species: **White-winged woodpecker**, **Yellow-eyed pigeon** and **Saxaul sparrow**. Other interesting species we found were **Syke's warbler**, **Common nightingale**, **European golden oriole**, **Azure** and **Turkestan tits** and **halimodendri-Lesser whitethroat**.



Campsite at Zhel'turanga



White-winged woodpecker - one of the target species in the Turanga forest

Itinerary

17/5

Evening flight to Atatürk airport in Istanbul, connecting night flight to Almaty.

18/5

We arrived at Almaty international airport in early morning. Andrey and Ruchan picked us up and we drove into Almaty to buy some SIM-cards, breakfast, beer and to pick up the second car filled with camping and ringing equipment. The trip started off with a quick stop at a mechanic to fix one of the car.... After some hours, we left Almaty and drove into the semi-desert; what an amazing feeling! We soon found our camping spot at the east part of Sorbulak lake system. After setting up camp, we started to scan for ringed **Great reed warblers** (GRWs) and it did not take long before we had located three individuals with loggers. The research part of the trip was already a success!



Bengt was eager to leave the city

19/5

Whole day spent trapping GRWs. Five loggers retrieved already this day and a sixth one spotted in another nearby lake. We added new logger to all GRWs caught, and during the day, we found and caught one **Clamorous reed warbler** (CRW) and a hybrid between GRW and CRW. Birding while working produced many birds, **White-headed ducks** being the best one in the lake and August saw the first **Grey-necked bunting** of a walk to a small patch of trees.

20/5

Most of the day was spent catching the remaining unringed GRWs and CRWs. We found a single **Terek sandpiper** along the lake's shore with many other waders; **Temminck's stint** being the most numerous one. In the afternoon, we walked to the other lake to retrieve the sixth logger and caught the few GRWs and CRWs in this area.

21/5

In the morning, we drove around the lake, to another patch of reed that looked very promising, to scan for any remaining ringed birds. We were unsuccessful, even though the area hosted many big *Acrocephalus*. We saw our first **Black-bellied sandgrouse** and **Paddyfield warbler** here and Mikkel saw a **Sulphur-bellied warbler** in a small bush.

After driving back to the camp, we had the difficult task of packing everything, previously stored in two cars, into a single car. Ruchan had to leave earlier with one of the cars. We managed to pack everything into the car (and on top of it) and drove slowly west along the lakes until we arrived at the second spot where Mikkel had been ringing last year.

Along the road we saw the trip's only **Little bustard**. After arrival at the second field site, we were disappointed to find that there were much fewer CRWs at this site compared to last year. However, we soon discovered the sevenths and last logger GRW. In the evening, a **Ballion's crane** displayed close to our tents.

22/5

We tried to catch all GRWs and CRWs in the area, but soon realized that we already had caught them all and still no logger retrieved from a CRW. We search the nearby area and found a new location, a small reed lake, with extremely many large *Acrocephalus*. After some discussion, we decided to move the camp once again. We scanned GRWs and CRWs but did not observe any ringed ones. We put up some mistnets in the evening, to capture some birds feeding early the next morning.

23/5

We started early and had a few rounds of intense bird ringing before a storm picked up, rendering fieldwork impossible. Still, we manage to capture several GRWs and CRWs, but no logger birds. We also caught a **Turkestan shrike**, two **Syke's warblers** and many other migrating birds in the reed. The storm also made birding difficult, but not impossible. August and Mikkel saw a **Griffon vulture** and Bengt saw a **Bluethroat** around the camp.



A 2cy male Turkestan shrike was a nice surprise to find in the net

24/5

We continued to capture as many of the target birds as possible without any sign of more logger birds. The trips first **Shikra** was spotted from the camp and August saw the only **Lesser black-backed gull** of the trip, presumably a *barbarensis*.

25/5

This was the last morning of fieldwork and we started with a few hours of ringing before heading to the mountains. Unfortunately, we did not retrieve any of the loggers attached to CRWs, and the reason for this is still unknown. While packing up camp the only **Lesser kestrel** seen during the trip flew by and Mikkel spotted an **Eurasian spoonbill** which apparently was out of range here.

We stopped in Almaty before heading south along the road to Big Almaty Lake. Since our cars were overheating, we made many stops along the way and we spotted our first mountain birds, a **Bearded vulture** being one of them. In the evening, a **White's thrush** sang, which was the one of the highlights of the trip.

26/5

Whole day birding in the mountain. Amazing weather and incredible birds. We made a short stop to watch **Blue whistling thrush** along the road before leaving the forest. We scoped in the **Ibisbill** in the delta and then continued to the Cosmostation. Along the road, we made several stops. At one point we found an adult **Bearded vulture** resting on a mountain ridge close by; soon the bird left its resting place a flew straight towards us. It passed by the whole group at a distance of maybe 50 m in head height. What an observation!

At the Cosmostation birding was tougher with few birds around. We found a pair of the target bird in this area, the **Guldenstädt's redstart**, in the rocky slope south of the Cosmostation. On our way down, we did additional stops to search for the **Altai snowcock** that we so far only had heard calling. We soon found a pair on a grassy slope at relatively close distance and later we found an additional pair further away.

27/5

Three target species left to see in the mountain. **Red-fronted rosefinch**, **Sulphur-bellied warbler** and **White-browed tit-warbler**, and Andrey knew a good area for all three species. We stopped at the group of houses below the lake, and followed a small path to the valley directly north of the observatory. Already close to the houses, we found a pair of the **rosefinch** and it did not take long before we heard the distinct song of the **Sulphur-bellied warbler**. As we reached a small plateau, we heard a **Black grouse** displaying in the distance. Further up in the valley we searched for the **Tit-warbler** in the dense juniper slopes and after a while we found a pair building.

As we enjoyed lunch back at the car, a juvenile **Himalayan griffon** passed over the lake together with several **Cinereous vultures**. We walked back down and spent the evening around the hotel.



Juvenile Himalayan griffon passing over us

28/5

Mikkel left for the airport early in the morning, and Silvio, who had to leave for Kyrgyzstan with Almat, joined him. Bengt, August and Dennis stayed in the mountains. Heavy fog was covering the area but we still decided to reach the Cosmostation once again. Birding was extremely slow in the bad weather, but we had very nice views of **Brown accentor**. At the Cosmostation snow began falling and we searched the area for additional birds. Just as we decided that we needed to leave, before there was too much snow on the road, two **Brandt's mountain finches** passed by, calling characteristically. After some siesta, waiting for the bad weather to pass we walked down along the road looking for additional species without any luck. However, we had great views of the area as the clouds started to break apart. In the evening, August set out to spot the **White's thrush** that had been displaying every evening and morning. Just as the sun set a thrush started to call from the top of a spruce.

29/5

Before leaving the mountains, we walked to the area where the **White's thrush** displayed the night before and soon after we discovered the bird displaying in the top of a spruce. What an amazing bird!

We left the mountains behind and re-joined with Almat and Sylvio in Almaty before leaving the city with the goal of reaching Kanshangel. We had few days left and wanted to get the most out of it. As we reach the semi-desert area around Kanshangel, we were surprised by the amount of different species here compared to the semi-desert around Sorbulak lake system. According to Andrey, the latter is much drier compared to the Kanshangel area that more closely resembles a steppe habitat. Before the sunset, we saw many new birds including **Steppe eagles**, **Eastern imperial eagle** and **Black-winged pratincole**.

30/5

We scanned the area around the campsite in the morning. Several Goitered gazelles moved around in the area as well as two Steppe foxes, both very cool animals. After breakfast, we drove west birding around the border between semi-desert and desert. We saw a few **Pallas's sandgrouses** and **Greater sand plovers** but we unfortunately missed the other target species. When we returned to the camp, the wind started to pick up and we packed the cars quickly. A short detour south of Kanshangel produced several **White-winged larks** from the car even though it was a sandstorm outside.

Then we headed north towards Zhel'turanga. As we arrived at Topar, we were running low on diesel and the gasstation was closed due to the storm. Luckily, Almat and Ruchan asked around and found a guy willing to sell us some diesel. Since we lost a lot of time because of this, we had only a few hours of birding in Turanga forest as we arrived. All target species, **White-winged woodpecker**, **Yellow-eyed pigeon** and **Saxaul sparrow**, were easy to find though, and we even got some bonuses such as **Pallid** and **Eurasian scops owl** calling in the night.



Yellow-eyed pigeon was another target birds at Zhel'turanga

31/5

The last whole day in Kazakhstan. During the morning hours, we birded around the forest, which produced many great views of the target species. We drove southeast, along the Ile-river and along the way, we saw some birds including a few **Steppe grey shrike** and an unexpected **Hooded crow**. We made a short stop at a canyon area just north of Qapsjaghaj along the river. This area looked promising, but we could not spend a lot of time here. At least we saw a few new birds including **Tawny pipit** and **Rock sparrow**. We camped close to the airport.

1/6

Returning flight in the morning. As we packed our bags, we heard a **White-crowned penduline tit** and a flock of **Common crossbills** flew by. These were the last new species of our trip.

Species list - Birds

1. **Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*
Seen every day at Sorbulak lake system
2. **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*
Common
3. **Garganey** *Spatula querquedula*
Common
4. **Northern Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata*
Common
5. **Gadwall** *Mareca strepera*
Common
6. **Eurasian Wigeon** *Mareca penelope*
A single male seen three days at Sorbulak lake system.
7. **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*
Common
8. **Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*
Few seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 20th
9. **Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*
Few seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 20th
10. **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina*
Common
11. **Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*
Common
12. **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*
Common
13. **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*
Few seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 20th
14. **Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*
A single female seen at Sorbulak lake system on 19th and 20th, only winter visitor in the area
15. **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala*
Seen at Sorbulak lake system the 19th – 21th
16. **Black Grouse** *Lyrurus tetrrix mongolicus*
One heard on the 27th below the observatory



Male White-headed duck

17. **Himalayan Snowcock** *Tetraogallus himalayensis sewerzowi*
Heard 26th - 28th. Seen at two locations on the 27th



A pair of Himalayan snowcock feeding along a ridge

18. **Chukar Partridge** *Alectoris chukar falki*
Seen along the road on the and at Ile river canyon on the 31st.
19. **Common Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus mongolicus*
Common outside of mountains
20. **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis albescens*
1-2 birds at the second ringing site
21. **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*
Common in lakes outside mountains
22. **Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*
Several individuals seen around Sorbulak lake system
23. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*
A migrating bird seen on the 20th
24. **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*
On flying passed camp on the 25th. Apparently rare in the area.

25. **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus*
Common in reed beds. One bird caught on the 19th
26. **Black-crowned Night H** *Nycticorax nycticorax*
Common around lakes outside mountains
27. **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*
Common around lakes outside mountains
28. **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*
A single bird seen flying on the 18th. Rare in the area
29. **Great Egret** *Ardea alba*
Common around lakes outside mountains
30. **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus*
Seen every day at Sorbulak lake system except for the 25th
31. **Dalmatian Pelican** *Pelecanus crispus*
Seen every day at Sorbulak lake system and a flock soaring close to Zhel'turanga on the 31st
32. **Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Common around lakes outside mountains
33. **Bearded Vulture** *Gypaetus barbatus*
One subadult seen along the road on the 25th. Two adults and one juvenile seen the 26th near the Cosmostation.
34. **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus orientalis*
One migrating on the 20th and one migrating on the 24th, both from Sorbulak lake system
35. **Himalayan Vulture** *Gyps himalayensis*
At least one juvenile seen around the Big Almaty Lake on the 27th



Caught Little bittern



Adult Bearded vulture

36. **Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus*
One seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 23th
37. **Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus*
Several individuals seen in the mountain area
38. **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus*
One seen at Sorbulak lake system at the 24th as well as at least one around Kanshangel on the 30th and 31st
39. **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus*
Two, one light and one intermediate morph, seen migrating from Sorbulak lake system on the 22nd
40. **Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*
At least two around Kanshangel on the 29th and 30th
41. **Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*
One juvenile around Kanshangel on the 29th and 30th



Juvenile Eastern imperial eagle

42. **Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos daphanea*
Common in the mountains. Mostly adults seen. One seen along the Ile-river on the 31st
43. **Shikra** *Accipiter badius cenchroides*
Two seen migrating at Sorbulak lake system on the 24th. One close to Kanshangel on the 29th. Several around Zhel'turanga on the 30th and 31st
44. **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*
Ssp nisosimilis: common at Sorbulak lake system
Ssp dementjevi: common in the mountain area
45. **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*
Common at Sorbulak lake system
46. **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*
Several seen around Kanshangel on the 29th and 30th. One along the Ile river on the 31st

47. **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans lineatus*
Common
48. **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*
Seen almost daily at Sorbulak lake system. Also a few observations at Kanshengel and Zhel'turanga.
49. **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*
Common outside the mountains
50. **Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo vulpinus*
Common in the mountains. Seen two days in the semi-desert.
51. **Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax*
A single bird seen from the car at Sorbulak lake system on the 21st
52. **Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus korejevi*
A few individuals heard in small reed lakes at Sorbulak lake system
53. **Corn Crake** *Crex crex*
Heard in the lower mountains on the 25th and 28th
54. **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla*
One individual heard close to our camp on the 21st and 22nd
55. **Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*
Common in lakes
56. **Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra*
Common in lakes
57. **Demoiselle Crane** *Grus virgo*
Two flying by camp on the 21st and one drinking at the waterhole NW of Kanshengel on the 30th



Demoiselle crane drinking at the waterhole

58. **Eurasian Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus*
Two seen at Zhel'turanga on the 31st
59. **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus harterti*
Common at Sorbulak lake system
60. **Ibisbill** *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*
One bird seen in the Big Almaty lake delta on the 26th
61. **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*
Common outside mountains
62. **Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*
One seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 19th to 21st
63. **Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*
Common outside mountains
64. **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius curonicus*
On seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 20th
65. **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultia scythicus*
Ten individuals NW of Kanshengel on the 30th



Greater sand plover in its breeding ground

66. **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*
Around thirty birds seen migrating and resting at Sorbulak lake system on the 20th
67. **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*
Ten flying past at Sorbulak lake system on the 19th
68. **Ruff** *Calidris pugnax*
A big flock flying past at Sorbulak lake system on the 18th
69. **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*
Common at Sorbulak lake system

70. **Eurasian Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*
Heard outside the Alpen rose on the 25th and 26th
71. **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*
One individual resting at Sorbulak lake system on the 20th and 21st
72. **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*
One individual resting at Sorbulak lake system on the 20th
73. **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*
Few seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 19th and 24th
74. **Common Redshank** *Tringa tetanus ussuriensis*
Common at Sorbulak lake system
75. **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*
One seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 21st
76. **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*
Common at Sorbulak lake system
77. **Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*
A few seen at Sorbulak lake system
78. **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni*
Two resting at waterhole NW of Kanshengel on the 29th



One of two Black-winged pratincoles drinking at the waterhole

79. **Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*
Common close to water outside mountains
80. **Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*
Common close to water outside mountains
81. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus (barbarensis?)*
One seen from camp at Sorbulak lake system on the 24th

82. **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica*
Several seen at Sorbulak lake system
83. **Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*
Common close to water outside mountains
84. **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*
A few seen at Sorbulak lake system and around Topar on the 30th
85. **Pallas's Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*
Four flying by and a pair resting NW of Kanshengel on the 30th



Male Pallas's sandgrouse resting in the semi-desert NW of Kanshengel

86. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis arenarius*
Four seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 21st and very common NW of Kanshengel (200+) on the 29th and 30th
87. **Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia var. domestica*
Common
88. **Stock Dove** *Columba oenas yarkandensis*
One flying by the Alpen rose on the 28th
89. **Yellow-eyed Pigeon** *Columba eversmanni*
Common around Zhel'turanga
90. **Common Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus casiotis*
A few seen around Almaty on the 29th
91. **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur arenicola*
Single birds seen at Sorbulak lake system
92. **Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis meena*
Common
93. **Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*
Seen in Almaty on the 18th and 29th

94. **Laughing Dove** *Spilopelia senegalensis ermanni*
Seen in Almaty and along the road on the 18th and 29th
95. **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus subtelephonus*
A few birds seen at Sorbulak lake system, mountains and Zhel'turanga
96. **Pallid Scops Owl** *Otus brucei*
Heard at Zhel'turanga on the 30th and seen on the 31st
97. **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops pulchellus*
Several heard at Zhel'turanga on the 30th and one heard at our last campsite on the 31st
98. **Boreal Owl** *Aegolius funereus pallens*
Heard from the Alpen rose on the 25th to 27th
99. **European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus sarudnyi*
Several heard at Zhel'turanga on the 30th
100. **Common Swift** *Apus apus pekinensis*
Common at Sorbulak lake system and Kanshengel
101. **European Roller** *Coracias garrulous semenowi*
Common in the semi-desert often close to civilization
102. **Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*
One seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 20th and one at our last campsite on the 31st and 1st of June
103. **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus*
Single bird(s) seen flying by on the 23rd and 24th at Sorbulak lake system
104. **European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*
Common in semi-desert area



European bee-eater was a common view along the roads around Kanshengel

105. **Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*
Common in semi-desert area as well as in Zhel'turanga

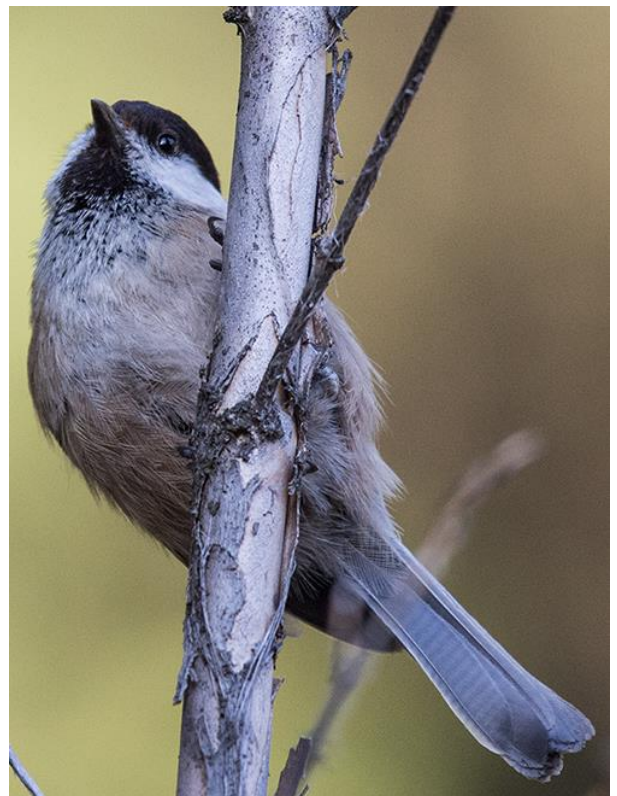
106. **Three-toed Woodpecker** *Picoides tridactylus tianschanicus*
 Heard in the spruce forest around the Alpen rose on the 26th and 27th
107. **White-W Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucopterus*
 Common at Zhel'turanga



We found several nest of White-winged woodpeckers. Here is one with food for their chicks.

108. **Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni*
 One flying by camp on the 25th
109. **Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*
 Common
110. **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus*
 One bird at Sorbulak lake system on the 18th and a pair on the 23rd. Single bird seen at Zhel'turanga on the 31st
111. **Merlin** *Falco columbarius lymani*
 One male seen in the valley north of the observatory on the 27th
112. **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*
 Common. The only species seen every day
113. **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*
 Two birds seen along the road on the 31st
114. **Turkestan Shrike** *Lanius phoenicuroides*
 One 2cy male caught and one 2cy female seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 23rd. One seen above the observatory on the 26th. Common around Zhel'turanga and along the Ile river
115. **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor*
 Common at Sorbulak lake system and the outskirts of Almaty
116. **Steppe Grey Shrike** *Lanius pallidirostris*
 A few seen along the road on the 31st
117. **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*
 At least one female heard and seen in Zhel'turanga on the 30th and 31st

118. **Indian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus kundoo*
Heard in Almaty on the 29th
119. **Eurasian Magpie** *Pica pica bactriana*
Common
120. **Spotted Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes rothschildi*
Rather common in the spruce forest around the Alpen rose
121. **Red-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax centralis*
Seen at the Cosmostation on the 26th and 28th
122. **Alpine Chough** *Pyrrhocorax graculus forsythi*
Around thirty birds along a ridge in the lower mountain area on the 25th and a few birds seen at the Cosmostation on the 26th
123. **Western Jackdaw** *Coloeus monedula soemmerringii*
Common in Zhel'turanga. Few birds seen elsewhere.
124. **Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*
Common in semi-desert areas and close to urban areas
125. **Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone orientalis*
Common
126. **Hooded Crow** *Corvus cornix sharpie*
One seen along the road on the 31st. Only winter visitor in the area.
127. **Brown-necked Raven** *Corvus ruficollis*
Seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 29th and 30th. Several individuals NW of Kanshengel on the 29th and 30th
128. **Northern Raven** *Corvus corax laurencei*
Common in the mountain area
129. **Coal Tit** *Periparus ater rufipectus*
Common in the spruce forest in the mountain area
130. **Willow Tit ("Songar tit")** *Poecile montanus songarus*
Seen on the 26th and 27th in the spruce forest in the mountain area. Rather rare



The "Songar tit" were difficult to find in the spruce forest

131. **Azure Tit** *Cyanistes cyanus*
Ssp tianschanicus: breeding in the football court at the Alpen rose
Ssp koktalensis: Common at Zhel'turanga



Azure tit ssp koktalensis to the left and ssp tianschanicus to the right

132. **Great Tit** *Parus major*
Ssp major: Common
Ssp bokharensis ("Turkestan tit"): Common at Zhel'turanga

133. **White-crowned P. Tit** *Remiz coronatus*
 One heard at our campsite on the 1st of June

134. **Bearded Reedling** *Panurus biarmicus russicus*
 Common in reeds at Sorbulak lake system

135. **White-winged Lark** *Alauda leucoptera*
 Eight birds seen along the road south of Kanshengel



White-winged lark – one of the highlights of the trip

136. **Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis dulcivox*
 Heard at Sorbulak lake system on the 21st and heard and seen along in Ile river on the 31st
137. **Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata magna*
 Seen at several locations along the road on the 29th, 30th and 31st
138. **Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla longipennis*
 Common around Kanshengel
139. **Bimaculated Lark** *Melanocorypha bimaculata*
 Rather common around Kanshengel



Bimaculated lark was quite common in the area around Kanshengel

140. **Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra psammochroa*
 Common in semi-desert area
141. **Asian Short-toed Lark** *Alaudala cheleensis leucophaea*
 Several seen and heard around Kanshengel
142. **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*
 Seen every day at Sorbulak lake system
143. **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*
 Common
144. **Eurasian Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*
 Seen from the Alpen rose on the 26th and along the Ile river on the 31st
145. **Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*
 Rather common
146. **Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica rufula*
 Seen in Almaty on the 18th and along the Ile river on the 31st
147. **Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti albiventris*
 Several heard at Sorbulak lake system and one heard at our last campsite on the 31st

148. **White-browed Tit-W.** *Leptopoecile sophiae*
A pair in the valley north of the observatory on the 27th



White-browed tit-warbler gathering nest materials

149. **Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*
Ssp tristis: several seen around Sorbulak lake system
Ssp abietinus: one seen and heard around Sorbulak lake system on the 21st
150. **Sulphur-bellied Warbler** *Phylloscopus griseolus*
One seen in a bush at Sorbulak lake system on the 21st. Two heard and seen in the valley north of the observatory on the 27th
151. **Hume's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei*
Common both on migration in the semi-desert and in the mountains
152. **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides viridanus*
Common in the mountains and a few seen on migration in the semi desert. One caught on the 23rd at Sorbulak lake system
153. **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus zarudnyi*
Common in reeds at Sorbulak lake system



Great reed warbler to the left and Clamorous reed warbler to the right

154. **Clamorous Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus stentoreus brunnescens*
Common in reeds at Sorbulak lake system

155. **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*
Several birds seen, heard and caught at Sorbulak lake system

156. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
Extremely common in reeds at Sorbulak lake system and the species we caught most of. In addition, several were heard in the mountains and Zhel'turanga



Paddyfield warbler to the left and Blyth's reed warbler to the right

157. **Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus fuscus*
Fewer than expected in the reeds at Sorbulak lake system. Several caught

158. **Sykes's Warbler** *Iduna rama*
Two caught at Sorbulak lake system on the 23rd. Common around Zhel'turanga.



Syke's warbler was common around Zhel'turanga

159. **C. Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia straminea*
Several heard in the mountains on the 25th to 27th
160. **Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides fusca*
Common at Sorbulak lake system
161. **Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*
Ssp blythi (?): Several seen and caught at Sorbulak lake system
Ssp halimodendri: Common around Zhel'turanga
162. **Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis (rubicola?)*
Several seen and caught at Sorbulak lake system. Rather common in the mountains
163. **Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus tristis*
Common in the spruce forest in the mountains
164. **Eurasian Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes tianschanica*
Common in the spruce forest in the mountains
165. **Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris tianschanica*
Common in the spruce forest in the mountains
166. **Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis*
Common outside the mountains
167. **Rosy Starling** *Pastor roseus*
Common in the semi-desert. Several tens of thousands (!) roosting in the reeds at our first field site



Several tens of thousands of Rosy starlings gather after sunset at Sorbulak lake system

168. **Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris porphyronotus*
Rather rare near urban areas. Several seen in Zhel'turanga

169. **White's Thrush** *Zoothera aurea*
At least one displaying every night and morning just outside the Alpen rose



Maybe the best bird of the trip - White's thrush

170. **Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula intermedius*
Few seen around Almaty and in the mountains
171. **Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus bonapartei*
Common in the spruce forest in the mountains
172. **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata sarudnyi*
A few birds seen around Sorbulak lake system and Zhel'turanga
173. **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica svecica*
One seen at our campsite on the 23rd
174. **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia*
One bird caught at Sorbulak lake system on the 25th
175. **Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos golzii*
Several singing at Zhel'turanga
176. **Himalayan Rubythroat** *Calliope pectoralis ballioni*
Common along the treeline in the mountains

177. **Blue Whistling Thrush** *Myophonus caeruleus temminckii*
One pair seen well along the road between the hotel and the Big Almaty lake. Additional birds seen or heard at several places in the mountains.



A female Blue whistling thrush with gathered nest material

178. **Eversmann's Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythronotus*
Several birds seen along the treeline in the mountains
179. **Blue-capped Redstart** *Phoenicurus coeruleocephala*
Common in the spruce forest in the mountains
180. **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
One female seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 19th
181. **Güldenstädt's Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus grandis*
One pair at the Cosmostation on the 26th



The beautiful male Güldenstädt's redstart at the Cosmostation

182. **Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola maurus maurus*
One seen between the observatory and the Cosmostation on the 26th
183. **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*
One pair close to the Cosmostation on the 26th
184. **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina*
Common around Kanshangel and along Ile River
185. **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka*
Common around Kanshangel and along Ile River
186. **Brown Dipper** *Cinclus pallasii tenuirostris*
One juvenile seen in the lower mountains on the 25th and one adult seen further up the road on the 26th
187. **Saxaul Sparrow** *Passer ammodendri nigricans*
Common around Zhel'turanga



Male Saxaul sparrow outside Zhel'turanga

188. **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*
Ssp domesticus: Common near humans
Ssp indicus: one pair seen at Kanshangel on the 29th
189. **Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis transcaspicus*
One male seen on the 21st, one female seen on the 22nd and one female caught on the 24th at Sorbulak lake system
190. **Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus dilutus*
Seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 21st and in Almaty on the 25th

191. **Rock Sparrow** *Petronia petronia intermedia*
A pair in the canyon along the Ile River on the 31st
192. **Altai Accentor** *Prunella himalayana*
Several seen at and around the Cosmostation on the 26th and 28th
193. **Brown Accentor** *Prunella fulvescens*
Several seen at and around the Cosmostation on the 26th and 28th



Brown accentor in the top left, Altai accentor in the top right and Black-throated accentor in the bottom image

194. **Black-throated Accentor** *Prunella atrogularis huttoni*
Common in the spruce forest and along the treeline in the mountains
195. **Western Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*
Ssp feldegg: few birds seen on the 21st, 24th, 30th and 31st
Ssp beema: one bird seen on the 21st at Sorbulak lake system
196. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*
Ssp citreola: Seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 20th and 22nd, and along the Ile River on the 31st
Ssp calcarata: Seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 19th to 21st
197. **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*
One seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 21st. Common in the mountains.

198. **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*
 Ssp *alba*: Seen on the 23rd at Sorbulak lake system and on the 29th in Almaty
 Ssp *personata*: Common
199. **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris*
 Several seen in the canyon along the Ile River on the 31st
200. **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*
 Migrating at Sorbulak lake system on the 20th and 22nd. Common in the lower mountains
201. **Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta blakistoni*
 Common at and around the Cosmostation
202. **Common Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*
 One seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 20th. Winter visitor in the area
203. **White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carnipes merzbacheri*
 Rather common along the treeline in the mountains



A beautiful male Red-fronted rosefinch in a spruce

204. **Plain Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte nemoricola altaica*
 Very common above the treeline
205. **Brandt's Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte brandti brandti*
 Two seen flying by at the Cosmostation on the 28th
206. **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus ferghanensis*
 Two seen on the 20th and four on the 24th at Sorbulak lake system. Common in the mountains
207. **Red-fronted Rosefinch** *Carpodacus puniceus*
 At least two pairs seen in the valley north of the observatory. One flying by at the hotel on the 29th

208. **Desert Finch** *Rhodospiza obsoleta*
Two seen at Kanshengel on both the 29th and 30th
209. **Red Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra tianschanica*
A flock flying by our last campsite on the 1st of June
210. "Grey-headed" **Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis volgensis*
Several seen in the mountains
211. **Red-fronted Serin** *Serinus pusillus*
Common along the treeline in the mountains



Red-fronted serin with its beak full of seeds

212. **Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra buturlini*
Seen at Sorbulak lake system on the 21st and 22nd. As well as along the Ile River on the 31st
213. **Grey-necked Bunting** *Emberiza buchanani neobscura*
Up to four individuals seen at Sorbulak lake system on five days. Two birds were caught on the 24th. One seen in the canyon along the Ile River on the 31st
214. **Red-headed Bunting** *Emberiza bruniceps*
Common around Kanshengel. Few birds seen around Sorbulak lake system and Zhel'turanga

Additional pictures



Two young males Grey-necked bunting caught at Sorbulak lake system



Great white pelicans flying passed our camp at Sorbulak lake system



European goldfinch ssp volgensis to the left and Lesser whitethroat ssp halimodendri to the right



One of many Goitered gazelles grazing NW of Kanshengel before sunrise



Male Red-headed bunting, a common bird in the semi-desert



The characteristic subspecies of Common nightingale, ssp golzii, at Zhel'turanga



The Pied wheatear is a characteristic bird in the semi-desert



One more picture of the amazing White-winged lark south of Kanshangel

Once again thanks to Andrey, Almat and Ruchan for making this trip a success!