

MONGOLIA TOUR REPORT 2025

22 May - 12 June 2025

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The 2025 Birdquest Mongolia tour was extremely successful, traversing this vast and unimaginably beautiful country and recording a mouth-watering selection of its special birds and mammals. The highlights were many but included displaying Black-billed Capercaillies in the Khenti Mountains, hundreds of Relict Gulls at a saline lake colony and several dazzling and critically endangered Yellow-breasted Buntings. The endless open plains and the vast Gobi furnished us with vast flocks of beautiful Pallas's Sandgrouse, truly stunning Oriental Plovers and enigmatic and attractive Mongolian Ground Jays. Our forays into the mountains were enlivened with superb White-throated Bush Chats, evocative Altai Snowcocks and confiding Kozlov's Accentor. Migrants were plentiful everywhere, ranging from a Siberian Thrush in the tiniest scrap of cover in the Gobi, to flocks of Pacific Golden Plovers (in full summer dress) at the wetlands. The thousands of White-winged Terns that almost besieged our campsite at Boon Tsagaan Nuur will live long in the memory, as will the impressive Taiga forests dripping with such mouth-watering species as Siberian Rubythroat, Red-flanked Bluetail, Red-throated Thrush and exquisite Pine Buntings. Buntings were something of a specialty of the tour as we recorded a total of eleven species, including Grey-necked, Chestnut-eared, Pallas's Reed, Meadow and Godlewski's along with the aforementioned Yellow-breasted and Pine. We also did well with rosefinches, managing to find Long-tailed, Himalayan Beautiful, Pallas's and the ubiquitous Common. The name 'Pallas' was to feature heavily through the trip as we logged everything from Pallas's Fish Eagle and Pallas's Gull, through to Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and Pallas's Pika! Raptors were omnipresent with Cinereous Vulture, Lammergeier and Golden and Steppe Eagles all being common roadside birds. Cranes were also a highlight and we recorded six species, from the common and beautiful Demosielle, through to the group of five rare and local Siberian Cranes that we saw in the remote Khurkh Valley. We also took some time to look at mammals and recorded around thirty species, ranging from Grey Wolf, Saiga, Wild Horse, Gazelles and Siberian Ibex, down to Hamsters, Jerboas, Jirds and Siberian Chipmunk. Indeed a particularly impressive Marmot wrestling match featured on the 'bird of the trip' list for several guests!

Our Mongolia adventure officially started with a drive to the Mongolica Hotel, once everyone had cleared the airport on the morning of the 22nd of May. Unofficially several of the group arrived in advance and indulged in some pleasant birding in the vicinity of the Mongolica in the preceding days, including enjoying quite a fall of migrants.

By mid-morning of the 22nd we had all assembled in the grounds of the Mongolica. Before we had even left the hotel, a surprise Crested Honey Buzzard joined the ubiquitous Black-eared Kites overhead. This species is a scarce migrant in Mongolia, and we took this sighting as a fortuitous omen of the possibilities on the tour ahead. We made a short drive to an area of scrub which was very productive, as we found White-crowned Penduline Tit, Long-tailed Rosefinch and after a bit of searching, a small group of Azure-winged Magpies. Azure Tits were pleasingly common and other species included our first Bar-headed Geese, Ruddy Shelducks, Mallards, a few Goosanders and several much appreciated Eastern Spot-billed Ducks. A couple of Common Cuckoos were seen along with Eurasian Hoopoe while migrants included Brown Shrike, Pallas's, Arctic and Dusky Warblers, Barn Swallows, Taiga Flycatchers and Black-faced Buntings. Resident birds included Great Tits, Eurasian Tree Sparrows, White Wagtails, Magpies and Rooks, along with a few Carrion Crows and some smart Daurian Jackdaws. We also noted our first Red-billed Choughs and Common Ravens, both species that we were to see daily throughout most of the tour. A couple of White-cheeked Starlings showed well, a species that was to prove to be very scarce during the trip. We made a short visit to a wetland where a pair of Swan Geese were the highlight, while commoner waterfowl included Whooper Swan, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Common and a couple of Red-crested Pochards and lots of Tufted Ducks. We also noted our first Eurasian Coots and Great Crested Grebes. Migrant waders included smart Wood Sandpipers and Spotted Redshanks, along with a single Common Redshank. The lake also held a colony of Common Terns, a species that was frequent at wetlands throughout the tour, while our first Citrine Wagtail (a smart male) was nearby.

We rounded the morning off with a showy Swinhoe's Snipe along the river, which also held a couple of Little-ringed Plovers, a Common Sandpiper and a Grey Wagtail. A brief Lesser Spotted Woodpecker in riverside trees was to be our only sighting of this species during the trip. Much searching failed to produce the hoped for Mandarin but we managed to catch up with this species later in the tour. While we waited for lunch, the odd freshly arrived male Amur Falcons cruised overhead. They were clearly looking to start defending territories around the active rookery, as they utilise the vacant Rook nests later in the season. After lunch it was a case of making the long drive north to the Khentiy mountains. We logged our first Pacific Swifts as we started on our journey. Stopping opportunities were few, as we hoped to make camp before dark but we did note Black Vulture, Golden Eagles, Horned Lark, Isabelline Wheatear and Demoiselle Cranes among common roadside birds! We set up camp to the sound of singing Pine Buntings and Siberian Rubythroats on the edge of some lovely boreal Taiga forest in the late evening.

A pre-dawn start the following morning saw us climb up into the forest, where we soon heard and then saw our main target, the lovely Black-billed Capercaillie. Several males endlessly lekned from nearby trees in the still cold dawn, an unforgettable experience. Having had our fill we birded our way back to the camp adding Willow Tit, territorial Yellow-browed Warblers, several Red-flanked Bluetails, Great Spotted Woodpecker and both Common and Daurian Redstarts. We then enjoyed a hearty breakfast, after which we walked a little way further into the forest, in a different direction, picking up Red-throated Thrush, plentiful displaying Olive-backed Pipits and some stunning Pine Buntings.

A siesta was enjoyed at lunch, allowing some to catch up on much needed sleep, before afternoon and evening walks. These produced nice looks at a calling Oriental Cuckoo and a brief furtive Eurasian Goshawk. A couple of Eastern Buzzards soared overhead and were clearly nesting nearby. We also saw our first massive stick nest of Cinereous Vulture, a species that we were to see commonly throughout the tour. Eurasian Wryneck proved common with multiple individuals seen and heard and a couple of Grey-headed Woodpeckers were seen near the camp. Black Woodpecker proved much more elusive, being heard only. A single Northern Nutcracker perched on a distant tree, which was our only sighting of the tour, though we did hear one later in the trip and a try for Ural Owl in the evening only produced heard birds, which came slightly closer and then fell silent, while a brief roding Woodcock was also heard.

The following early morning gave some time for a short period of birding before we broke camp and began a fairly long but fascinating drive down to the Gobi. We birded down the road below our camp picking up our first Eurasian Teal, another Crested Honey Buzzard and a couple of Eurasian Sparrowhawks. Leaving the forest and heading out into the more Steppe-like habitat, we found our first Saker Falcon, Steppe Eagle, Northern Lapwings, Eurasian Skylarks, Northern Wheatear and some wonderfully dancing Demoiselle Cranes and passing through some settlements produced our first Common Swifts.<

A stop at some saline lakes instantly boosted our list with Mongolian Lark, White-naped Crane, Stejneger's Scoter and a multitude of waders that included Temminck's, Long-toed and Little Stints. Common Shelducks were abundant and we also added Garganey, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Common Goldeneye and a pair of Falcated Ducks. A single Slavonian Grebe and eight Black-necked Grebes were our only ones of the trip. We also began to increase our wader list with our first Black-winged Stilts, Pied Avocets and Kentish Plovers, plus some migrant flocks of Pacific Golden Plovers (in stunning summer plumage) and Black-tailed Godwits (of the eastern melanuroides race). Our first gorgeous White-winged Terns flitted above the waves and further wetlands species included Mongolian Gull, Eurasian Spoonbill and a lovely male Eastern Marsh Harrier.

The afternoon was spent driving down a paved highway, with a quick stop for our first Upland Buzzard, before setting up camp in the desert near Delgersogt. A short spotlighting session nearby produced Campbell's Desert Hamster and Brandt's Vole.

In the early morning we found the plains to be fairly quiet though we did note our first Greater Sand Plovers and Asian Short-toed Larks and plenty of Central Midday Jirds. The nearby hills were alive with Isabelline Wheatears and our first Tolai Hares raced up the scree slopes. A Thick-billed Warbler was a nice migrant fossicking around a remote compound, where we also found our first Rock Sparrows nesting in the stone walls. Migrants were in fact to be omnipresent throughout the day as we drove south and found that any patch of available cover held birds. Our most notable finds being a female Siberian Thrush in a tiny stand of trees, a brief Oriental Turtle Dove, and our first Asian Brown Flycatchers.

Some birding on the plains near Dalanzadgad failed to produce Oriental Plover but our first Pallas's Sandgrouse was a bonus. We camped near the entrance to Yolyn Am and were able to secure the use of toilet and shower facilities, something of a luxury!

The following morning we climbed in the rocky gorges of Yolyn Am and soon located our first target, a lovely male Kozlov's Accentor. Blyth's Pipits displayed all around us and a Barred Warbler was busy building a nest. Our ascent further in the gorge was stopped by a spectacular group of Siberian Ibex and we also added Common Rock Thrush, Black Redstarts and our first Isabelline Shrikes, while Brown Accentors were omnipresent.

The walk down into the main canyon was beset with White-winged Snowfinches, while Lammergeiers cruised overhead and assorted Pikas scurried anywhere over seemingly very rock. A total of twenty seven Himalayan Griffon Vultures left roost and we also enjoyed a couple of Golden Eagles cruising the canyon's sides. Eurasian Crag Martins were plentiful and a couple of Common Whitethroats sang from the scrub. A single tail-less Eyebrowed Thrush was a rather sorry sight but showed the pressures that migratory birds face. After a little searching we located a group of lovely Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch, which showed well, while a couple of Godlewski's Buntings helped increase our Emberiza list. In the afternoon it was back out into the endless open plains and after some searching our main quarry, a gorgeous Oriental Plover was located. After some lengthy scope views, it took off on its long whinnying display flight and we headed back to camp, though we were stopped again by a second much closer individual.

The following morning was again spent in the canyon. A lovely pair of Chukar Partridge were new for the list but we added little else that we had not seen the previous day. We did appreciate extra time to photograph some of the species and new mammals included a couple of Gobi Altai Voles that were busy feeding on jelly babies that had been left at a rock shrine!

In the late morning we made a mostly off road transfer to Khongoryn Els. We stopped for lunch at some isolated bushes which were seething with migrants including White-cheeked Starling, Eyebrowed Thrush, Hawfinch and our first Common Rosefinches. We also began to see Desert Wheatears and more Isabelline Shrikes, while in the late afternoon we located a small flock of Mongolian Finches. The drive was also punctuated by our first groups of Goitered Gazelles that skipped daintily across the vast open plains of the Gobi. Although we arrived quite late at Khongoryn, it was truly special to descend into the valley with the spectacular formation of dunes laid out in front of us, glowing in the evening sun. A little spotlighting here produced plentiful Three-toed Jerboas and a diminutive clockwork toy Desert Hamster.

The following morning a search at one spot for Saxaul Sparrow produced a lovely male Lesser Kestrel and our first Hill pigeons but no sparrows. A quick change of sites ensued and we were soon enjoying spectacular views of this desert specialty. We also picked up our first Eurasian Collared Doves. Upon our return to camp we found the sky filled with Pallas's Sandgrouse, as hundreds and hundreds flew in to drink at a nearby marsh. It truly was another memorable sight to watch endless squadrons against the backdrop of the magnificent sand dunes. Plentiful flocks passed directly overhead all morning uttering their evocative bubbling calls. The wetland also held our first Common Snipes and Great Egrets.

It was then again time to break camp and we wended our way through the desert to Orog lake, picking up Steppe Grey Shrikes and our first Mongolian Ground Jays en-route. Our campsite by the lake allowed us to log our first Greylag Geese including families with goslings.

The morning at Orog Lake was dedicated to more Ground Jays and Desert Warbler plus a little bit of wetland birding. The wetlands produced our first Common Cranes, distant Oriental Reed Warblers and a single fly over Black Stork. We also found a lovely male Western Yellow Wagtail of the leucocephala form, while our first Richard's Pipits exploded out of the grass with their loud shreep calls. Our second sighting of Mongolian Finch involved a pair coming to drink at the river. After a late breakfast we continued on to the famous Bootsagaan Nuur. En-route we stopped at Khoolbooj which produced our first Pallas's Gulls, Eurasian Whimbrels, Common Greenshank, Marsh Sandpiper and Gull-billed Terns, along with many commoner waterfowl. We arrived at Boon Tsagaan in near gale force condition and camped quickly but were still able to enjoy the spectacle of thousands of White-winged Terns, picking insects off the grass and sometimes virtually surrounding us. A short visit to the wetlands yielded our first Terek Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Caspian Terns and Great Cormorants.

Our first morning walk at Boon Tsagaan was very productive with a lovely male Mandarin associating with a flock of Garganeys, a couple of male Falcated Ducks, a female Smew, a flock of Ferruginous Ducks, a female Red-breasted Merganser and a surprise couple of Dalmatian Pelicans. Grilling of the gulls produced a couple of Brown-hooded and a single Slender-billed among the commoner species. We also located our only Siberian Sand Plover and a couple of lovely Red-necked Phalaropes, along with three Whiskered Terns.

Post breakfast exploration helped us to add Asian Dowitcher and a nice group of Ruff, while small numbers of Black Terns were teased out amongst the huge throngs of White-winged Terns. A couple of Western Marsh Harriers were also watched cruising past the campsite

and our only Paddyfield Warbler of the trip actually perched on some of the tents! A couple of Eastern Cattle Egrets were supposedly a rarity for Mongolia but perhaps have simply been under recorded. After lunch we explored some other areas of the lake where we found three Pallas's Fish Eagles. We then returned to our favoured wader area and this produced fifteen Broad-billed Sandpipers and a couple of brief Red Knot, plus a single Dunlin and a few Little Terns.

The following morning a short birding session added a Grey-tailed Tattler and our only Common Ringed Plover, before we began the long drive to Ikhes Nuur. As expected this took most of the day but with much of it on tarmac, it passed fairly quickly. We did very little birding on the drive, though a nice male Lesser Kestrel, a couple of Oriental Turtle Doves and our first Spotted Flycatcher were highlights amongst the commoner species. We arrived at Ikhes Nuur in the evening and were able to enjoy 57 Relict Gulls from our campsite!

We spent the following day birding around the lake and counted over 250 Relict Gulls. A pool where they were coming to bathe was very productive and we also added a couple of nice Terek Sandpipers and Dunlin, along with many commoner species. As well as the breeding Relict Gulls the saline lake also held a colony of Gull-billed Terns and we estimated around 100 birds were present. Citrine Wagtails were common around the lake edges and we also noted a single Eastern Yellow Wagtail.

We then headed out into the desert with a Saiga Ranger and after a short while located some very, very distant Saigas. Further searching produced a closer pair, which allowed a reasonable approach and some photos. Some further birding around the lake added a male Masked Wagtail. We then headed back to Altai with some birding in the mountains adding singing Sulphur-bellied Warblers, Grey-necked Bunting and a couple more Mongolian Finches. We arrived at the luxury of a hotel in Altai in the evening and enjoyed our first night in a bed for quite a few days!

Pre-breakfast birding in some scrub around this pleasant regional town added migrant Hume's Yellow-browed and Greenish Warblers. We then once again climbed into the mountains where a quick stop at a water source we connected with our first Pere David's Snowfinch, while a spectacular Saker tussled with a Steppe Eagle overhead.

We continued to climb for much of the day and arrived at the remote Khukh Lake in the afternoon. En-route we had forded various rivers and passed a selection of mini snowfields. While spring and its flowers may have arrived it was clear that the long Mongolian winter had only recently loosened its grip. Our journey passed quickly as we enjoyed the spectacular scenery and our first Tarbogan Marmots, a species that was to prove very common at these higher elevations.

The following morning we birded the canyon where we located Eversmann's Redstarts and a couple of Altai Snowcocks, calling high from the cliff walls above us, allowing great views in the scope. A selection of commoner species were present and included our first Amur Stonechats, some stunning Common Rock Thrush, plentiful singing Hume's Yellow-browed warblers and our first Pallas's Reed Buntings, which seemed common around the lake edges. Brown Accentors and Blyth's Pipits were once again abundant and were joined by plentiful Water Pipits and several singing Common Rosefinches. As with everywhere we went in Mongolia a thin scattering of commoner migrants also kept us busy. In the late morning a search for White-throated Bush Chat was unsuccessful so we returned for lunch and planned a second visit. We climbed higher in the jeeps in the late afternoon and after a bit of a walk were soon enjoying a pair of White-throated Bush Chats. After watching them for some time, we were able to encounter multiple further individuals.

On the next morning we again tried to bird at higher elevations but after much searching a single Altai Accentor was glimpsed only by the leader. An obliging pair of Willow Grouse were also seen well along with a few commoner species including multiple Lammergeiers overhead – a rather common bird in Mongolia! In the afternoon scanning and searching of the cliffs produced a brief distant White-winged Redstart and some better views of more Altai Snowcocks. We also found Bluethroat and Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler along the beach, while a migrant Thick-billed Warbler showed particularly well along the canyon. A group of Twite were located near the campsite – the subspecies present in Mongolia is quite distinct and may represent a future split.

We stayed for an extra night and on the following morning enjoyed better views of the Redstart, plus some Asian Rosy Finches, a bonus Grey Wolf and yet more Altai Snowcocks. We then made the spectacular drive to the Tariat area. In a country full of spectacular vistas this was truly a special drive with towering mountains, endless valleys, a brief hailstorm and flocks of Black Vultures, Lammergeiers and the odd Himalayan Griffons. We arrived in the Tariat area in the late afternoon and a Pallas's Rosefinch was seen by the leader only. This prompted us to camp the night and the next morning was spent in the boreal forests. After much searching a Pallas's Rosefinch was seen by most and we also enjoyed Red-throated Thrushes, displaying Tree and Olive-backed Pipits, more Eversmann's Redstarts, multiple Ortolan Buntings and a singing Brambling. A single Black Woodpecker showed well, a species that we had only heard previously,

while the forest was filled with the typical boreal species that we had become used to, including Wrynecks, Eurasian Nuthatches, Willow Tits, Red-flanked Bluetails and the ever present and always stunning Pine Buntings. One of the group were also lucky with a close encounter with a group of Eastern Roe Deer.

We then had to make the very long drive on to the capital. This was punctuated with a roadside colony of Pale Martins. We of course passed many wetlands and other attractive habitats but on this day we had little time to stop. As we had decided to spend an extra night at Khukh Lake we were effectively a day behind and we had to spend much of the day catching up, arriving at a Ger camp near Khustai NP in the afternoon. We enjoyed some hot showers and our second night in a bed during the tour!

We headed out early into Khustai NP and were soon enjoying our first re-introduced Przewalski's Horses and some herds of Wapitis (American Elk). A search of some rocky areas and both Meadow Bunting and Pied Wheatear were common. We also enjoyed a few commoner species such as Amur Falcon and Golden Eagle, while Tarbogan Marmots were the most abundant that they had been all tour. A side trip allowed us to add Mongolian Gazelle, before the late morning haze and sun meant that it was time to return to the capital and finish the main tour with a fine dinner in our lovely hotel in the city.

The extension began with a climb into the hills above Ulaanbaatar and a visit to more Taiga forest. Here after some searching we enjoyed great looks at Siberian Tit and we also found Willow and Coal Tits, singing Pallas's Warblers, some smart Red Squirrels and our only Eurasian Jay of the trip. Eurasian Siskin were heard overhead and one guest even glimpsed a Sable. We then took a bumpy track though a lovely valley before heading on to the Khurkh valley, where we arrived in the late evening after some mechanical problems with one of the cars.

The following morning found us enjoying the wetlands in this spectacular valley with displaying Black-tailed Godwits, several White-naped Cranes and a showy pair of Brown-cheeked Rails, all seen near our campsite. A male Falcated Duck was also present on the lake and Eastern Marsh Harriers were pleasingly common. A drive around the valley produced plenty of birds but we drew a blank on Siberian Crane. It was time to call in re-enforcements and Nasta duly rustled up a Crane Ranger. He quickly led us out to a remote part of the valley, where we found five reasonably obliging Siberian Cranes. After this he took us to a separate lake, where we enjoyed fifteen Hooded Cranes plus a flock of 49 Curlew. Other birds present included a single Taiga Bean Goose and an impressive minimum of 17 Falcated Ducks along with a flock of 16 Ruddy Turnstones and our only Common Gulls of the trip.

Our penultimate day involved a very early start as we climbed into some of the foothills above the valley. We quickly located Chestnut-eared Bunting and a singing male Yellow-breasted Bunting and followed this with a skulking Lanceolated Warbler and then a furtive but obliging Chinese Bush Warbler. Other species included Common Rosefinch, Thick-billed Warbler, several Common Whitethroats and a pair of Japanese Quail, that were seen well after being accidentally flushed from the thick vegetation. An afternoon visit to the ringing station produced a bonus group of Great Bustards including a displaying male, while the journey back to camp was punctuated with a superb adult White-tailed Eagle. We also noted plenty of the commoner wetland species that we had seen over previous days. A little spot-lighting on our final night boosted the list with Siberian Jerboa, Daurian Hedgehog, Long-nosed Vole and Striped Dwarf Hamster all seen well.

On our final morning we birded near the camp adding a superb singing male Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and enjoying the commoner birds including Marsh Sandpipers and the breeding White-naped Cranes. The weather had somewhat turned and warm sunshine had given way to overcast cool and windy conditions. We wended our way back to Ulaanbaatar but as throughout the tour, Mongolia still had a few surprises in store for us. First a female Merlin was perched in a dusty field and then even more surprisingly, a group of three Argali were watched jogging across the plains and presumably moving from one mountain range to another. Traffic into the capital was not too bad and we concluded with another sumptuous meal at our hotel in the centre of the city.

It had been a long tour and we had covered a lot of distance but we truly had seen the best that Mongolia had to offer, both in terms of birding and wonderful landscapes. The special birds and the passage migrants had left an impression, while the Mongolian people had always been courteous and helpful and the scenery had been nothing short of breathtaking. It had indeed been a truly remarkable adventure in a truly remarkable country.

BIRDS OF THE TOUR

- 1st: Black-billed Capercaillie
- 2nd: Pallas's Sandgrouse
- 3rd: Oriental Plover
- 4th: Relict Gull
- 5th: Siberian Rubythroat

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g., it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

The species names and taxonomy used in the bird list follow Gill, F., Donsker, D., & Rasmussen, P.(Eds). **2025. IOC World Bird List (v15.1).**

BIRDS

- Bar-headed Goose** *Anser indicus* Widespread at wetlands throughout the tour.
- Greylag Goose** *Anser [anser] rubrirostris* Quite common at wetlands through the tour.
- Swan Goose** ◊ *Anser cygnoides* Quite common at some wetlands, sometimes in flocks.
- Taiga Bean Goose** ◊ *Anser fabalis* A single with a Greylag in the Kurkh Valley.
- Whooper Swan** *Cygnus Cygnus* Widespread at wetlands throughout including breeding pairs.
- Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna* Widespread at wetlands.
- Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* Omnipresent at Wetlands and surrounding areas throughout.
- Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata* Several near the Mongolica pre-tour and a single at Boon Tsagaan .
- Garganey** *Spatula querquedula* Widespread at wetlands.
- Northern Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata* Widespread at wetlands.
- Gadwall** *Mareca strepera* Widespread at wetlands.
- Falcated Duck** *Mareca falcata* 2 at Gun Galuut, 2 drakes at Boon Tsagaan and 18 Kurkh valley.
- Eurasian Wigeon** *Mareca penelope* Widespread in small numbers at wetlands.
- Eastern Spot-billed Duck** *Anas zonorhyncha* Small numbers at scattered wetlands through the tour.
- Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* Common at wetlands.
- Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* Small numbers at some wetlands.
- Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca* Small numbers at some wetlands.
- Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* Common at some wetlands.
- Common Pochard** *Aythya farina* Common at some wetlands.
- Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* Ten at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.
- Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* Common at some wetlands.
- Stejneger's Scoter** ◊ *Melanitta stejnegeri* A thin scattering of sightings from wetlands throughout.
- Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* Common at some wetlands.
- Smew** *Mergellus albellus* A female at Boon Tsagaan.
- Common Merganser** *Mergus merganser* Small numbers at some wetlands.
- Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* Females at Boon Tsagaan and Khukh Nuur.
- Willow Ptarmigan** ◊ *Lagopus lagopus* A very confiding pair at Khukh Nuur.
- Black-billed Capercaillie** ◊ *Tetrao urogalloides* Six males displaying in the Khentiy mountains.
- Altai Snowcock** ◊ *Tetraogallus altaicus* Scoped on three days at Khukh Nuur.
- Japanese Quail** ◊ *Coturnix japonica* A couple flushed above the Khurkh valley.
- Chukar Partridge** *Alectoris chukar* A pair seen well at Yolyn Am and a pair seen near Ikhes Nuur.
- Common Swift** *Apus apus* Widespread near settlements throughout.
- Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus* Fairly widespread near settlements/mountains throughout.
- Great Bustard** ◊ *Otis tarda* A group of three males and a female in the Khurkh valley.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus optatus* Small numbers of calling birds at several Taiga forest sites.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* Fairly widespread at forested sites.

Pallas's Sandgrouse ♦ *Syrrhaptes paradoxus* Abundant in the Gobi especially at Khongoryn Els.

Rock Dove *Columba livia* Apparent pure birds seen at a couple of sites.

Rock Dove *Columba [livia] var. domestica* Widespread.

Hill Pigeon ♦ *Columba rupestris* Small numbers in more remote areas.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* A couple of sightings.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* Common at a few sites near settlements.

Brown-cheeked Rail ♦ *Rallus indicus* A pair showed well in the Khurkh Valley.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* Common at wetlands.

Siberian Crane ♦ *Leucogeranus leucogeranus* Nice views of five in the Khurkh valley.

White-naped Crane ♦ *Antigone vipio* A single at Gun Galuut and common in the Khurkh valley.

Demoiselle Crane ♦ *Grus virgo* Widespread throughout. A roadside bird in Mongolia.

Common Crane *Grus grus* Seen at a scattering of sites through the tour.

Hooded Crane ♦ *Grus monacha* Fifteen in the Khurkh Valley.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Common at wetlands.

Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus* A single at Gun Galuut.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* Eight at Gun Galuut.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Fairly common at some wetlands.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* Common at wetlands.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Small flocks at several wetlands.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* A single at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* Common at wetlands and braided river valleys.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* Common at some wetlands areas, including displaying birds.

Oriental Plover ♦ *Anarhynchus veredus* At least four in the Steppes below Yolyn Am

Siberian Sand Plover *Anarhynchus mongolus* A single at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Greater Sand Plover *Anarhynchus leschenaultia* Small numbers at various steppe and desert sites.

Kentish Plover *Anarhynchus alexandrinus* Common at many wetlands.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Three at Kholboolj and three at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* A flock of 49 in the Khurkh Valley and heard at Khongoryn Els.

Black-tailed Godwit ♦ *Limosa [limosa] melanuroides* Common at some wetland sites.

Asian Dowitcher ♦ *Limnodromus semipalmatus* Small numbers at Boon Tsagaan.

Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* A couple seen at the Mongolica pre-tour, heard Mungunmorit

Swinhoe's Snipe ♦ *Gallinago megala* A single at the Mongolica on our first morning.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* Scarce and local at some wetland sites.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* Two at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* One at Boon Tsagaan and a couple at Ikhes Nuur.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* A small number of sightings at rivers/wetlands.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* A single at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Small numbers at some wetlands.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Small numbers at some wetland sites.

Common Redshank *Tringa tetanus* Fairly common at wetland sites.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* Small numbers at some wetland sites.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Odd individuals at a small number of wetland sites.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Up to eight at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and a flock of 16 Kurkh valley.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* Two briefly at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax* Five at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* Fifteen at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* Fairly common at wetland sites.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* Small numbers at some wetland sites.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* Singles at Boon Tsagaan, Ikhes Nuur and Kurkh valley.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* Quite common at wetland sites.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* Small numbers at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* 100 at Ikhes Nuur, small numbers at Kholboolj and Boon Tsagaan

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* Fairly common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrid* Three at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* Small numbers with the swarms of White-winged Terns at Boon Tsagaan.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Thousands at Boon Tsagaan, smaller numbers elsewhere.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Common throughout.

Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei* A single at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Common at many wetland sites.

Brown-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus* Two at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Pallas's Gull *Ichthyaeetus ichthyaeetus* Common at Boon Tsagaan Nuur and a few at Kholboolj.

Relict Gull ♦ *Ichthyaeetus relictus* Over 250 at a breeding colony at Ikhes Nuur.

Common Gull *Larus canus* A couple of subadults in the Khurkh Valley.

Mongolian Gull ♦ *Larus mongolicus* Common at wetlands throughout.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* A few individuals at a few of the wetlands.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Common at wetlands throughout.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* Scattered sightings at a number of wetlands.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* Fairly common at wetlands throughout.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Ardea coromanda* Two were seen at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Fairly common at many wetlands.

Dalmatian Pelican ♦ *Pelecanus crispus* Three at Boon Tsagaan Nuur.

Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier) *Gypaetus barbatus* Common in mountainous areas.

Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis [ptilorhynchus] orientalis* Single at Mongolica and Mungunmorit.

Himalayan Vulture *Gyps himalayensis* Common at Yolyn Am and a few elsewhere.

Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* The commonest raptor after Black Kite. Abundant throughout.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* Widespread in small numbers throughout the tour.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* Common in the highlands.

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata* A single juvenile near Orog Nuur.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* Several sightings in the Mungunmorit area.

Eurasian Goshawk *Astur gentilis* A single briefly at Mungunmorit.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* Several at Boon Tsagaan, seen on the drive to Khukh Nuur.

Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus* A single at Gun Galuut and common in the Khurkh valley.

Black Kite *Milvus [migrans] lineatus* Abundant.

Pallas's Fish Eagle ♦ *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* Four were seen at Boon Tsagaan.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* A single adult in the Khurkh valley.

Upland Buzzard ♦ *Buteo hemilasius* Widespread in small numbers.

Eastern Buzzard ♦ *Buteo japonicas* Several at Mungunmorit.

Ural Owl ♦ *Strix uralensis* Heard at Mungunmorit.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Widespread sightings through the tour.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* Seen or heard at several boreal forest sites.

Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker ♦ *Picoides tridactylus* A single seen by some near Tariat.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor* A single seen briefly near the Mongolica.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* Common at Mungunmorit.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* Heard at Mungunmorit and seen at Tariat.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus* Seen at Mungunmorit.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* Three widely scattered sightings.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* Small numbers seen on many days but not common.

Amur Falcon ♦ *Falco amurensis* Scattered sightings throughout in small numbers.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* A single female on the last day drive back from the Khurkh valley.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco Subbuteo* A single in the Khurkh valley.

Saker Falcon ♦ *Falco cherrug* A scattering of sightings mainly in steppe and mountainous areas.

Great Grey Shrike ♦ *Lanius [excubitor] pallidirostris* Several seen well in the Gobi.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* Seen on numerous days in desert and mountainous areas.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* Widespread with migrants and breeding birds.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* Singles at Mungunmorit and Gachuurt.

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus* Several were seen well at the Mongolica.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* Common at a number of sites.

Mongolian Ground Jay *Podoces hendersoni* Small numbers were seen in the Gobi.

Northern Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* A single at Mungunmorit and heard at Gachuurt.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax* Abundant throughout.

Daurian Jackdaw ♦ *Coloeus dauuricus* Locally common in several areas.

Rook ♦ *Corvus [frugilegus] pastinator* Locally common in several areas.

Carrion Crow ♦ *Corvus [corone] orientalis*. Small numbers at several sites.

Northern Raven *Corvus corax* Common throughout.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater* Common in boreal forest.

Grey-headed Chickadee ♦ *Poecile cinctus* A pair were seen at Gachuurt.

Willow Tit *Poecile montanus* Fairly common in boreal forest.

Azure Tit ♦ *Cyanistes cyanus* Common near the Mongolica.

Great Tit *Parus major* Common near the Mongolica and seen at one or two other sites.

White-crowned Penduline Tit ♦ *Remiz coronatus* A couple seen near the Mongolica.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* Common at several sites.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* A couple seen at Bulgan.

Horned Lark ♦ *Eremophila [alpestris] brandti* Abundant throughout.

Mongolian Lark ♦ *Melanocorypha mongolica* Common in many areas.

Asian Short-toed Lark ♦ *Alaudala cheleensis* Common in some areas, especially Khongoryn Els.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* Small numbers at Boon Tsagaan.

Pale Martin ♦ *Riparia diluta* A small colony roadside near Tariat.

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Common at Yolyn Am.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Widespread.

Siberian House Martin ♦ *Delichon lagopodum* Fairly widespread.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* A single near Gachuurt.

Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* Common at Khukh Lake and Tiarit, a few elsewhere.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* Common in some boreal forest areas.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* Common as a migrant, also some boreal forest areas.

Sulphur-bellied Warbler ♦ *Phylloscopus griseolus* Several pairs in the mountains near Ikhes Nuur.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* Common throughout.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus [collybita] tristis* A couple at Khukh Nuur, a single at Altai.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Several seen at Altai.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* A common migrant.

Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis* Seen distantly at Orog Nuur.

Paddyfield Warbler ♦ *Acrocephalus Agricola* A single at our campsite at Boon Tsagaan.

Thick-billed Warbler ♦ *Arundinax aedon* Small numbers of breeding and migrant birds.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Helopsaltes certhiola* A few migrants, a singing bird Khurkh valley.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolate* Several seen near the Khurkh valley.

Chinese Bush Warbler ♦ *Locustella tacsanowskia* Great views of a single near the Khurkh valley.

Barred Warbler *Curruca nisoria* A nest building bird at Yolyn Am.

Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca* Several pre-tour at the Mongolica and a single at Khustai NP.

Asian Desert Warbler ♦ *Curruca nana* Small numbers seen in the Gobi.

Common Whitethroat *Curruca communis* A few singing birds in the highlands.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* Small numbers in the boreal forests.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* A couple seen at Mungunmorit.

White-cheeked Starling ♦ *Spodiopsar cineraceus* A few Mongolica, a single migrant in the Gobi.

Siberian Thrush *Geokichla sibirica* A single female at a roadside stop in the Gobi.

Eyebrowed Thrush ♦ *Turdus obscurus* Several migrants including a tailless individual at Yolyn Am.

Red-throated Thrush ♦ *Turdus ruficollis* Fairly common in boreal forest.

Dusky Thrush ♦ *Turdus eunomus* Several at the Mongolica pre-tour.

Naumann's Thrush ♦ *Turdus naumanni* Several at the Mongolica pre-tour.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* A common migrant.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* A fairly common migrant.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* A couple at Khukh Nuur, including a singing bird.

Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* Several migrants and common at Mungunmorit.

Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla* An abundant migrant.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* Vocally common at Mungunmorit and Tariat but hard to see.

Eversmann's Redstart ♦ *Phoenicurus erythronotus* Several at Khukh Nuur and Tariat.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* Common at Yolyn Am, near Ikhes Nuur and at Khukh Nuur.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* A small number of migrant birds.

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus* A scattering of migrant birds.

Güldenstädt's Redstart ♦ *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus* Scoped high on the cliffs at Khukh Nuur.

Common Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* Seen commonly at Yolyn Am and Khukh Nuur.

White-throated Bush Chat ♦ *Saxicola insignis* Good numbers at Khukh Nuur.

Amur Stonechat *Saxicola stejnegeri* Scattered sightings.

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* Scattered sightings.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* Widespread.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Widespread.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* Fairly common in the Gobi.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* The odd migrant and small numbers at Khustai NP.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* Fairly Widespread.

White-winged Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis* Common at Yolyn Am, small numbers near Ikhes Nuur.

Pere David's Snowfinch ♦ *Pyrgilauda davidiana* Several on the drive from Altai to Khukh Nuur.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* Abundant

Saxaul Sparrow ♦ *Passer ammodendri* A small colony at Khongoryn Els.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Small numbers at urban centres, much scarcer than Tree Sparrow.

Altai Accentor ♦ *Prunella himalayana* A single seen briefly by the leader at Khukh Nuur.

Brown Accentor ♦ *Prunella fulvescens* Common at Yolyn Am and Khukh Nuur.

Kozlov's Accentor ♦ *Prunella koslowi* Seen well at Yolyn Am.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* A male of the leucocephala form at Orog Lake.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla [tschutschensis] macronyx* A single at Ikhes Nuur.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Widespread at wetland sites.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* A few scattered records.

White Wagtail (form unknown) *Motacilla alba* A single in the Khurkh Valley

White Wagtail ♦ *Motacilla [alba] personata* A lovely male briefly at Ikhes Nuur.

White Wagtail ♦ *Motacilla [alba] baicalensis* A few scattered sightings through the tour.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* Fairly common at several of the wetlands.

Blyth's Pipit ♦ *Anthus godlewskii* Fairly common at several highland sites.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* Several singing birds at Tariat.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* Common in taiga forest sites.

Water Pipit ♦ *Anthus spinoletta* Common at Khukh Nuur.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* A lovely singing male at Tariat.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* A scattering of migrants.

Mongolian Finch ♦ *Bucanetes mongolicus* Small numbers seen at several sites.

Asian Rosy Finch ♦ *Leucosticte arctoa* Distant views on the cliffs at Khukh Nuur.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* A scattering of sightings, both migrants and breeders.

Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch ♦ *Carpodacus pulcherrimus* Small numbers seen at Yolyn Am.

Siberian Long-tailed Rosefinch *Carpodacus sibiricus* A female seen well near the Mongolica.

Pallas's Rosefinch ♦ *Carpodacus roseus* A female showed well at Tariat

Twite *Linaria flavirostris* A small flock at Khukh Nuur.

Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus* A couple heard at Gachuurt pass.

Pine Bunting ♦ *Emberiza leucocephalos* Common at Taiga forest sites.

Godlewski's Bunting ♦ *Emberiza godlewskii* Several at Yolyn Am

Meadow Bunting ♦ *Emberiza cioides* Common at Khustai NP.

Grey-necked Bunting ♦ *Emberiza buchanani* A singing male near Ikhes Nuur.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* Several seen well at Tariat.

Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata* Several above the Khurkh valley on the extension.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* A single at the Mongolica pre-tour.

Yellow-breasted Bunting ♦ *Emberiza aureola* Seen at the Mongolica, Khukh Nuur and Kurkh valley.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* Quite a common migrant.

Pallas's Reed Bunting ♦ *Emberiza [pallasi] pallasi* Migrant and breeding birds seen.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* A couple seen by some in the Kurkh Valley.

MAMMALS

Daurian Hedgehog *Mesechinus dauuricus* A couple in the Kurkh valley on our last night.

Sable *Martes zibellina* A couple seen briefly by one guest at Gachuurt.

Grey Wolf *Canis lupus* A single on the cliffs at Khukh Nuur – a trip highlight.

Corsac Fox *Vulpes corsac* Scattered sightings on a number of days.

Wild Horse ♦ *Equus [ferus] przewalskii* One hundred and eight in Khustai NP.

Eastern Roe Deer *Capreolus pygargus* Seen at Tariat by one of the group.

Wapiti (American Elk) *Cervus Canadensis* A small group at the Mongolica and sixteen at Khustai NP.

Saiga *Saiga tatarica* Seven seen near Ikhes Nuur.

Siberian Ibex *Capra sibirica* Great looks at several groups at Yolyyn Am, a small group at Khukh Nuur.

Goitered Gazelle (Black-tailed G) *Gazella subgutturosa* Small numbers in the Gobi.

Argali *Ovis ammon* A surprise group of 3 females on the drive back from the Kurkh valley.

Mongolian Gazelle ♦ *Procapra gutturosa* Four were seen at Khustai National Park.

Tolai Hare *Lepus tolai* Scattered sightings with an especially obliging individual at Yolyn Am.

Alpine Pika *Ochotona alpina* Small numbers of this shy Pika at Khukh Nuur.

Daurian Pika ♦ *Ochotona dauurica* Seen at Yolyn Am and on the drive to Khukh Nuur.

Pallas's Pika *Ochotona pallasi* Common at Yolyn Am.

Siberian Chipmunk *Eutamias sibiricus* Singles at Mungumorit and Gachuurt.

Tarbagan Marmot *Marmota sibirica* Common in the highlands. Marmot wrestling was a trip highlight!

Eurasian Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* Several dark individuals at Gachuurt.

Alashan Ground Squirrel ♦ *Spermophilus alashanicus* Small numbers at Yolyn Am.

Pallid Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus pallidicauda* A couple of roadside sightings.

Long-tailed Ground Squirrel *Urocitellus undulates* Seen roadside in the Tariat and Khukh Nuur areas.

Siberian Jerboa *Allactaga sibirica* Small numbers around our campsite in the Khurkh valley.

Northern Three-toed Jerboa ♦ *Dipus sagitta* Good numbers at Khongoryn Els.

Gobi Altai Mountain Vole *Alticola barakshin* A couple feeding on jelly babies at a shrine at Yolyn Am!

Mongolian Mountain Vole *Alticola semicanus* Singles at Yolyn Am and Khukh Nuur.

Narrow-headed Vole *Stenocranius gregalis* A single around our campsite in the Kurkh valley.

Brandt's Vole *Lasiopodomys brandtii* Multiple individuals seen well near Delgersogt.

Striped Dwarf Hamster *Cricetulus barabensis* A single in the Khurkh valley on our last night.

Campbell's Desert Hamster *Phodopus campbelli* A single seen well near Delgersogt.

Roborovski's Desert Hamster *Phodopus roborovskii* A single seen well at Khongoryn Els.

Central Midday Jird *Meriones meridianus* Good numbers seen near Delgersogt.

Mongolian Jird (*Meriones unguiculatus*) Seen well at Yolyn Am.