



ARMENIA & GEORGIA
AUGUST 29th – OCTOBER 3rd 2016



JOACHIM BERTRANDS

SIMON VYNCKE

JONAS POTTIER

WILLEM BOCKX

SANDER BRUYLANTS



TRIP REPORT

INTRODUCTION

From the 29th of August until the 3rd of October Simon Vyncke, Sander Bruylants, Jonas Pottier, Willem Bockx and I travelled to Armenia and Georgia in order to score some very good WP-birds. Sander, Jonas and I had been in Georgia before (2010) but failed to find Great Rosefinch at Mt. Kazbek in the Greater Caucasus. This species, combined with all the specialties Armenia has to offer, made us decide to do a road trip through the latter, combined with a visit at Mt. Kazbek.

We flew from Brussels (Zaventem) to Yerevan Zvartnots National Airport where we hired a car to facilitate our transport through the country. We stayed a few days in the arid hills of Vedi before driving south in the direction of Meghri. After one day here, we had every target in the pocket so drove north again, taking another route along the big Lake Sevan. This turned out to be a good idea with some nice and unexpected species added to the list again. Jonas only arrived the 6th of September because of his thesis that still needed to be finished, so we had to pick him up at the airport. Next stops included Mt. Aragat and the famous Armash fish ponds southeast of Yerevan. With this, our visit to Armenia had come to an end and the morning of the 10th of September, we turned in the car.

From this point, me, Simon, Sander and Jonas travelled to Mt. Kazbek by minibus, while Willem decided to travel on his own for a few days. He visited the big steppe lakes at Ninotsminda in the southern part of Georgia. Because the 2010-crew and I had been there before, we chose the Great Rosefinch instead. After this small part of the trip, which would for both teams only take a few days, we caught up again in Batumi to participate in the Batumi Raptor Count project. Because Willem had planned to stay until the end of the season (16th of October) and he still had some spare time after that, he would visit Mt. Kazbek as well but later during the season.

We counted raptors from the 16th of September until the 1st of October and had a great time with friends, a lot of birds and the Georgian people of course.

In total we saw 239 species, an astonishing number given the time of the year which made us miss a few ones like White-throated Robin, Pale Rock Finch and Bimaculated Lark. Most targets were seen however, and we were rewarded with some bonuses. More info can be found further in this report! Hope it comes in handy.

Joachim Bertrands

On behalf of the rest of the crew: Simon Vyncke, Sander Bruylants, Willem Bockx and Jonas Pottier.

LOGISTICS

We flew from Brussels (Zaventem) to Yerevan Zvartnots National Airport with a transfer at Kiev Borispol Airport (Ukraine). This took us about 230,- euros each. The car, a Toyota Landcruiser, was hired from rentcaramenia.am but the website now seems to be down. It was quite cheap though compared to other countries where a car like this would be way more expensive. It took us about 450,- euros in total, so more or less 100 euros each. A good deal in our opinion! Payment was arranged at the office, we didn't have to pay anything in advance! The only bad experience we had was when we turned in the car at the end of the Armenian part of our trip. The owner inspected the car and went crazy because of some scratches on the front and the fact we didn't clean it on the inside. For this, he charged us about 70,- euro's extra. We had been to a carwash just before turning in the car, even though this isn't required normally, but only cleaned the car on the outside. This wasn't enough apparently...

SOURCES

Our greatest help turned out to be Karen Aghababyan, a professor at the American University of Armenia. He arranged our permits for entering the Armash fish ponds, functioned as a translator in some difficult situations, provided us with decent info and arranged a guided tour for us in the mountains north of Meghri which we explored to find Caspian Snowcock. I can only recommend to first contact him about your plans and the species you would like to see. He is very helpful and will do everything to make sure your stay in Armenia goes without unwanted events. He can be contacted at karen@aua.am.

It has to be said that Armenia is still a relatively unknown country for birders and the amount of information found on the internet is still very low compared to other birding destinations in the Western Palearctic. However, it is a very good birding destination with some species that, in the WP, can almost only be encountered here or are quite easy in Armenia while they can be tricky elsewhere.

For the Georgian part of the trip, we didn't need any other sources except for Observado.org. We had been there before so we knew the drill how to get there and how to see the species.

People

Apart from Karen, a lot of people helped us preparing our trip and were consultable during our stay in both Armenia and Georgia. We would like to thank all the persons listed below for making this trip possible or easier for us:

- Karen Aghababyan for translation, arrangements and help
- Stepan Adamyan for translation, contact and help
- Our guide 'Stepan' who showed us the beautiful mountains of Meghri
- Johannes Janssen for bringing us into contact with a lot of people
- Christian Brinkman and Bram Ubels for their tips about finding the Great Rosefinches at Mt. Kazbek
- Filiep T'Jollyn and Frans de Schampelaere for tips about visiting Armenia

Published Literature

- Collins Bird Guide, the most complete bird guide to the birds of Britain and Europe. Lars Svensson et al., 1999.
- The Advanced bird ID guide. Nils van Duivendijk, 2010

Trip reports (all found via www.cloudbirders.com)

- 1 – 12 May 2013 – Georgia and Armenia – Garry Armstrong
- 14 – 27 July 2006 – Georgia and Armenia – Janne Aalto
- 30 July – 7 August 2008 – Armenien, ornitologisch rapport – Ole Zoltan Göller
- 4 – 17 August 2010 – Arménie – Sébastien Durand

Websites

- www.observation.org
- www.cloudbirders.com
- www.netfugl.dk
- www.armeniabirding.info
- All our sightings can be consulted at Observation.org using the following link:
http://observado.org/user/view/40846?q=&akt=0&g=0&from=2015-01-07&to=2016-01-07&prov=0&z=0&sp=0&gb=0&cdna=0&f=0&m=K&zeker=0&month=0&rows=20&only_hidden=0&zoektext=0&tag=0&plum=0&q=&zoektext=0&from=2015-08-29&g=0&akt=0&plum=0&to=2015-10-03&prov=0&z=0&m=K&zeker=0&rows=20&month=0&only_hidden=0
- If the link above is broken, go to Observation.org => This Site => Users => Type 'Joachim Bertrands' and press enter => select Observations => adjust date to 'from 2015-08-29' to '2015-10-03'

SLEEPING AND EATING

We mainly ate bread with cheese and vegetables which were easy to find in the sometimes quite big supermarkets. Sardines can be found as well and taste good! Restaurants were visited and we often had very good meals for little money. The Armenian cuisine is excellent and can be considered as a combination of both eastern and western influences. A classic dinner took us about 4 or 5 euro's each. Water can be bought at every little shop or supermarket, and we made sure we always had enough of it. We tried to only drink bottled water, to reduce the chances of diarrhea...

Although the bed & breakfasts and hotels are quite cheap in Armenia, we preferred to sleep in our tents. This because of the fact we often drove a lot after sunset, wanted to be at the next birding stop the following morning at dawn, and we all are a bunch of broke students. At Meghri, we slept in a B&B because we had a meeting there with our guide Stepan the following morning. He would show us the Caspian Snowcocks in the mountains north of the town. We paid around 30,- euro's each, got nice beds and a lot of food! We were advised in advance to sleep in a B&B while staying around Meghri. I don't really know why, because it was a very peaceful town and we didn't have the impression people were nervous or didn't like the presence of Westerners. Maybe the proximity of the Iranian border is seen as a 'problem' by some birders.

Anyway, I can only recommend the Bed&Breakfast 'Haer' at Meghri. If you pass your nights in a tent all the time, you don't always get the opportunity to experience the Armenian hospitality. Therefore it was a very pleasant experience and we were welcomed as kings. The lady of the house was extremely friendly, the food very good and the home-brewed vodka even better ☺. Since the owner doesn't speak English, it is better to arrange your stay in advance by the help of someone who speaks Armenian/Russian, or to just go and check if she has some place left. I don't think it is very dangerous to sleep in a tent in Meghri, so it's still an option if the B&B would be full.

The contact details are:

Bed&Breakfast 'Haer'

Mets Tagh, Meghri, Armenia

Telephone: +37493545414

GPS-coördinates: 38.909178, 46.239474

DRIVING IN ARMENIA

Driving in Armenia can be tricky, mostly because of the bad condition of the roads. A good vehicle, for example an SUV like we had, is recommended and can prevent a lot of bad situations. It's also widely known that driving too fast in Armenia will result in a fine since there are a lot of speed controls. We saw a few but not that many however. A little caution is advised though.



ITINERARY

August 29: Arrived at Yerevan airport only a few minutes before midnight. Caught up with Simon who had been there already since the previous day since he booked his flight ticket a few months later and prices had skyrocketed for the 29th. Slept in tents in a field nearby.

August 30: Woke up and birded around the airport the first few hours. Around 10:00 AM we took a taxi to the center of Yerevan and to pick up our car at the Rent-a-car-office. From there we drove to Vedi and birded there the whole day. Slept in a tent there.

August 31: Birded the whole day in the various wadis the area holds. Slept in a tent here.

September 1: In the morning we birded again at the various wadis of Vedi. In the afternoon we began our journey south but not before having a brief look at the entrance of the Ardashir fish ponds which already yielded the first Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters. We drove south until we reached the Spandarian Reservoir where we slept in a tent.

September 2: In the morning we birded at the shores of the Spandarian Reservoir before we left for Meghri. After a lot of driving we reached Meghri in the late afternoon. We had the time to check a gorge next to the Iranian border where we were able to see our first Red-tailed Wheatears. After this, we checked in at the B&B Haer, met our guide Stepan there for the following morning and had a good night sleep.

September 3: We were picked up in the morning by Stepan and had a great day of alpine birding in the mountains north of Meghri. We successfully saw the Caspan Snowcocks and in the late afternoon returned to our B&B and picked up our luggage. Because we had seen everything we really wanted, we left Meghri after just one day and decided to drive north again. Slept near a reservoir north of Kapan and Syunik.

September 4: We took an alternative road north. Instead of driving to Goris we took a road west of the main one which was quite an adventure due to the very bad state of it. Birded along the way and slept on the shores of the Herher Herher Water Reservoir.

September 5: Visited the ruins of Selim Caravanserai in the morning. A few people had seen Crimson-winged Finch here in the past, but we weren't lucky (but would be later). From there we drove further north in the direction of Lake Sevan which we reached around noon. Had a great time birding here with multiple stops along the shores and a lot of new species for the trip list. Highlight was the sighting of a migrating flock of Demoiselle Cranes. We slept at the northern side of the lake.

September 6: Drove to Yerevan where we spent the noon and had a snack. In the afternoon and evening we visited the fish ponds southwest of Masis which we could enter without any major problems. After sunset we drove to the airport and awaited Jonas who had planned to arrive later due to his thesis presentation. A crazy night drive later we arrived at the flanks of Mt. Aragat where we slept.

September 7: Birded at Mt. Aragat and its surroundings which was a great success with a lot of nice sightings. In the afternoon we met Karen at the American University of Armenia and had a good talk with him before leaving again for Vedi. Spent the night at the same location of one week earlier so Jonas could add a few of the local species to his list.

September 8: After one last check we left Vedi and arrived at Ardashir Fish Ponds. Birded the whole morning here. Because I had some nasty feelings in my intestines the days before and they were becoming more and more painful, we left Ardashir in the afternoon to go look for a hospital. It turned out to be quite a hectic experience so at the end

of the day I just bought some Immodium (with the help of Karen) in a local pharmacy and we drove back to Armash where we birded another few hours and slept.

September 9: The whole morning was spent birding in Armash. In the afternoon we visited Vedi again because Jonas still missed Grey-necked Bunting, which again proved to be unfindable. Slept there again and prepared the car to be turned in the following morning.

September 10: We turned in the car in the early morning. From there Willem left our crew to do some birding in southern Georgia before heading towards Batumi, while we were going to Mt. Kazbek. We said goodbye to him and took a taxi to a little square where there were minibuses leaving. In the afternoon we reached Tbilisi and from there we caught an easy taxi towards Stepantsminda, the village situated in the valley next to Mt. Kazbek. We arrived around 8:00 PM, had a great snack and took one last taxi to Gergeti Church where we slept.

September 11: Got up early to make a chance for Caucasian Black Grouse, with success. The whole day we climbed and birded with a lot of nice sightings. At nightfall we had reached a boulders field, a few hundred meters lower than the glacier.

September 12: After waking up with a massive hangover, we climbed further until we reached the glacier. Had very good observations of Great Rosefinch, Güldenstadt's Redstart etcetera. In the afternoon we already began our journey downwards and slept just beneath the little altar at the edge of the crater.

September 13: We woke up with nice sightings of Caucasian Snowcock and Caucasian Black Grouse before going down the mountain. Arrived at Stepantsminda center around noon and took a minibus to Tbilisi from here. After we reached Tbilisi we caught a minibus towards Batumi which we reached in the evening. Luckily, the guys of the Green Café were still awake and let us sleep in the café.

September 14: After waking up we visited the Chorokhi Delta in the morning. After this, a visit was paid to Batumi and its park. Slept again at the Green Café.

September 15: First visited Batumi Park, in the afternoon Chorokhi Delta. Slept at Merabi's house from the BRC-project.

September 16 – October 1: The last two weeks of our trip were mainly spent on counting raptors. We had a great time being around friends and, of course, with the Georgians.



BIRDING SITES

A summary of the best or at least the key birding sites we visited during our trip is necessary I presume. Be aware that almost anywhere in Armenia you can have a great time birding and there are most likely a lot of other, probably still unknown places where the classic target species can be encountered. It is nice have to something to start from however.

A. Vedi

There are two major wadis interlarding the arid mountains north of the village which are worth checking for specialties like Grey-necked Bunting, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Upcher's Warbler, Finsch's Wheatear, Menetries's Warbler and Eastern Rufous-tailed Robin. Pale Rock Finch, Bimaculated Lark and White-throated Robin are possible as well but a visit more early in the season is necessary. Especially the Pale Rock Finches are known to have a very short breeding period and already migrate in the second half of August.

The wadis can easily be accessed starting from the town's center, but a car with 4x4 wheel drive is necessary. We saw most of the species in the westernmost wadi which was probably caused by the limited amount of water there, which made all the birds come to a very small source we located. There was a small river running through the other wadi which caused the birds to be more scattered over the area. It is, however, the place where a few years ago some birders found Mongolian Finches...

Basically, all the species can be seen anywhere in the wadis, but finding water seems to be the key to success. Especially in the early morning and late afternoon birds came to drink at the small source indicated by the blue arrow on the map below. Walking around in the wadis can yield a lot of migrant birds, at least during our stay. We saw a lot of Sylvia warblers, mostly Menetries's, by walking around in the riverbeds during the day.

GPS-coördinates Vedi:

- Westernmost Wadi:
 - Entrance: 39.931012, 44.715536
 - Point where the wadi splits in two: 39.938943, 44.707918
 - Small watersource where we saw almost all the specialties: 39.951494, 44.706287

- Easternmost Wadi:
 - Entrance: 39.933933, 44.743109
 - Site of the Mongolian Finches that were seen a few years before: 39.94756, 44.74324



Red Arrow: old swimming pool that sometimes holds water and can be used by birds to drink. While we were there, no water was found here however. **Blue arrow:** small source with almost all the species seen. **Yellow arrow:** location of the Mongolian Finches a few years ago.

B. Meghri

Meghri lies in fact on the border between two different habitats. The region north of the town is a forested area with thermophile oak- and beech forest, interspersed with alpine vegetation on the higher mountains. South of Megri, an arid mountain region begins to make its way through Iran. This habitat is home to Red-tailed Wheatear, very localized in the Western Palearctic and now a full species. It's more or less the only place in Armenia where this species occurs in decent numbers and only in Azerbaijan it is 'doable' as well. This, in combination with Caspian Snowcock, makes it a place to visit for birders.

The Red-tailed Wheatears are very easy to find and everyone should be able to see a few if visiting the right spots. The only place we visited was the big canyon east of Meghri, which can partly be entered by car, with caution. The path is in a bad shape so again an SUV is recommended. During two visits on consecutive days, we saw about 9 birds both times. Reports of other people revealed that they occur in most of the canyons around Meghri. On the map below, some of these other sites are indicated as well.

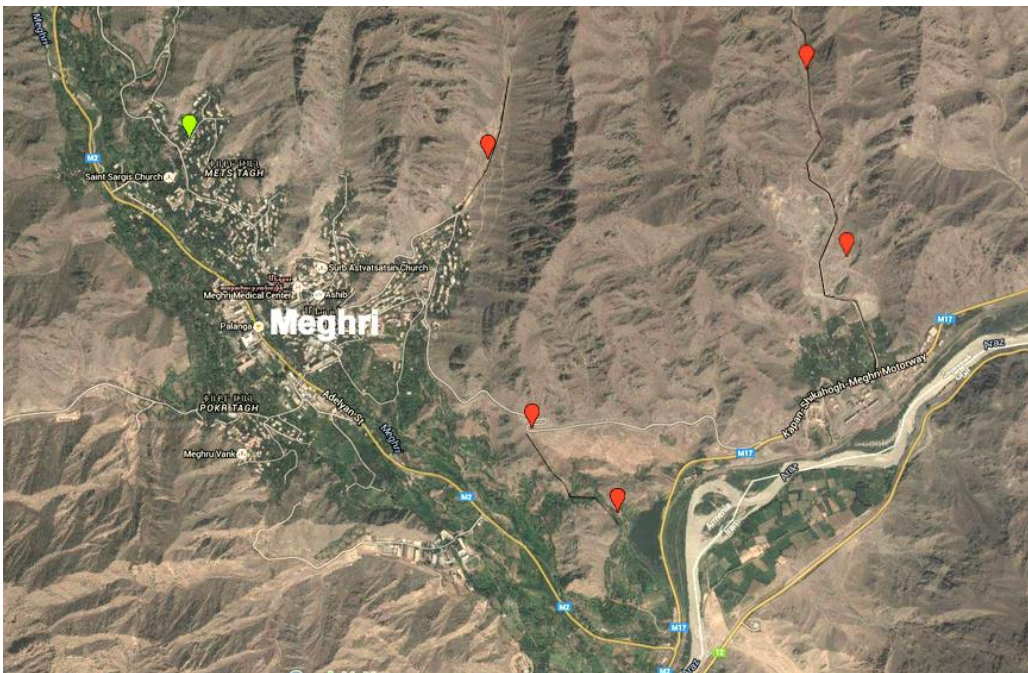
For the Caspian Snowcocks it seemed us possible that the site can be entered alone, but due to the bad road it is recommended to hire Stepan for one day. Karen arranged an excursion with him for us to see the snowcocks and he knows the area very well. He took us with him in his Lada Niva and drove up the mountain like a real boss. It is very difficult to drive on the road going up the mountains, especially with a hired car, and not have any problems. On a moment he was driving through meter high vegetation while the path was unrecognizable...

Lucky for us, this resulted in only a 'small' part of the hill we still had to climb. Despite having reached such a high point, it still took us about 3 hours to reach the tip of one of the peaks from where the showcocks where seen. To ease this process, we firmly advise to not go there on your own and just ask Stepan to guide you. He is a pleasant

guy, knows the area very well and always brings some of his home-brewed vodka! He monitors the leopard population in the area, consisting of about 8 adults, and had already seen it five times during his career.

GPS-coördinates Meghri:

- Entrance Red-tailed Wheatear canyon: 38.908237, 46.272976
- Location with high density of Red-tailed Wheatear: 38.913000, 46.273000
- Other sites with Red-tailed Wheatear, not seen by us:
 - 38.90833, 46.25561
 - 38.89700, 46.25800
 - 38.89343, 46.26265
- B&B Haer: 38.909178, 46.239474
- Caspian Snowcocksite (guided visit required): 39.043000, 46.298000



Map of Meghri and its surroundings. All the **red arrows** indicate sites where Red-tailed Wheatear was seen before. We visited the canyon in the east (with the two red arrows) and saw a total of 9 birds. The **green arrow** indicates B&B Haer.



Green arrow: the Caspian Snowcock-site. It's located quite a distance from Meghri itself.

C. Lake Sevan

We didn't initially plan to visit this lake, but because of the progress we made at Vedi and Meghri, we had some spare time and decided to explore the region. Basically, anywhere around the southern shore of the lake is good for birding. The biggest surprise here was a flock of 83 migrating Demoiselle Cranes, followed by a single individual a few moments later. A nice area was the shoreline near Hayravank where we saw Citrine Wagtail, Ruddy Shelduck, Red-necked Grebe and so on. A lot of waterfowl there, worth checking.

Most interesting sites are located at the southern side of the lake, but later that day we camped at the northern side. Not very interesting for birds here, but it sure was a nice camping spot.

GPS-coördinates Sevan:

- Place where the first flock of 83 Demoiselle Cranes flew by: 40.226, 45.206
- Shoreline where we had one Demoiselle Crane flying by: 40.28199, 45.21800
- Shoreline near Hayravank with a lot of good birds: 40.423, 45.109
- Shore where we slept: 40.475, 45.277



Lake Sevan. **Blue arrow:** flyby of 83 Demoiselles here. **Yellow arrow:** flyby of one Demoiselle + good shoreline here. **Green arrow:** Very good shoreline a lot of birds. **Orange arrow:** Place where we slept.

D. Mount Aragats

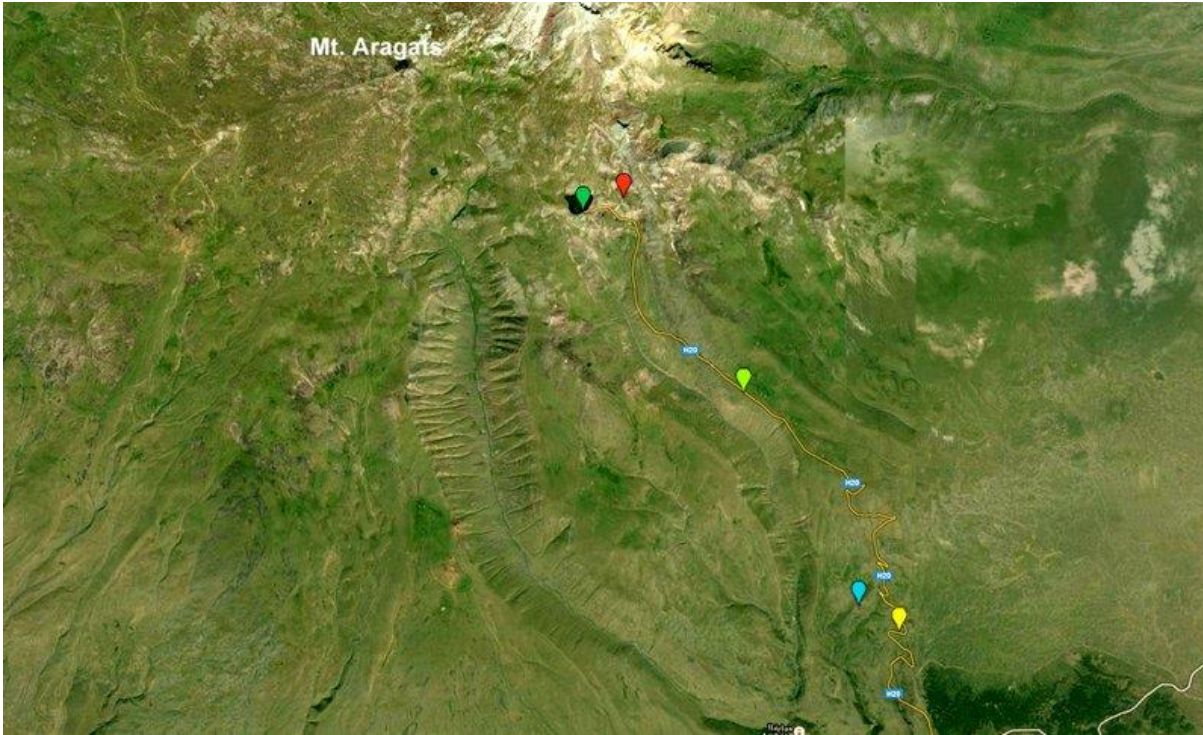
This place is now known as maybe the best site in Armenia to find Radde's Accentor. With ease we found over 15 individuals during a two-hour-walk. They can be seen anywhere where its habitat is found: juniper vegetation. A good, tarmac road connects Yerevan with the research station at the top of the mountain, and it is next to this road that the Radde's Accentors are found. We also had two Crimson-winged Finches there, which was, apart from Willem, a new subspecies for all of us.

Higher up the mountain, closer to the top in fact, no more vegetation is growing. It's the ideal habitat for Asia Minor Twite, Caucasian Horned Lark and Cinereous Vulture. We even had a Saker there as well! Next to the research center

and the mountain lake, there's a small hotel and car park which is a good starting point if you want to make a walk in the mountains. We only did a short one and had good observations of all the species mentioned before.

GPS-coördinates:

- Best area for Raddes' Accentor: 40.410, 44.240
- Place where we had the two Crimson-winged Finches: 40.408, 44.242
- Mountain lake: 40.472742, 44.182313
- Point where we had Caucasian Horned Larks in the mountains near the hotel: 40.475, 44.191
- Point along the road where we had the Saker: 40.443, 44.217



Mt. Aragats: Red arrow: location of Caucasian Horned Larks and Asia Minor Twite. Green arrow: mountain lake and hotel. Green arrow: observation of Saker. Yellow arrow: Best area for Radde's Accentor. Blue arrow: area with both Radde's Accentor and Crimson-winged Finch.

E. Armash Fish Ponds

Every birder visiting Armenia should not leave the country without having paid a visit to this wonderful reserve. Being located between Turkey, southern Russia and close to Iran, this place of fish ponds and endless reedbeds offers the chance to see a unique combination of bird species with many mouthwatering kinds like White-tailed Lapwing, Paddyfield Warbler, White-headed Duck, Marbled Teal, Blue-cheeked Beak-eater, zillions of Pygmy Cormorants, ...

For visiting the reserve, a permit is required. This can be arranged by asking Armenian birders like Karen Aghababyan to do this for you. It seemed also possible to just drive to the entrance and communicate with the gatekeeper. We called Stepan Adamyan who translated for us by phone and arranged a visit. Because it had been a few days we had heard from Karen, we thought something had gone wrong and tried to require a visit by this way. Eventually, we got a call from Karen, telling us that we shouldn't have done this because everything was already set. But either way I guess we could have entered.

The fish ponds are private property and therefore an entrance fee has to be paid upon arrival. We paid approximately 20,- euro's p.p. for two days and the permit for sleeping in a tent there that night. Although not really recommended because of the highest density of mosquitos I ever saw, we were 'at site' at dawn, which could be crucial in this time of the year because of the high temperatures during the day. Around noon it was just too hot to watch birds, but in the mornings and evenings, birding was nice.

It's possible to drive around in the reserve with a car, but again a good car (SUV) is advised. The area is huge but most of the target species can be found quite close to the entrance. Especially the area just south of the entrance

was good for species as White-tailed Lapwing (especially the smaller, overgrown ponds, for GPS-coördinate see further) and waders. The northern part of the reserve seemed drier but we had good sightings there as well, especially White-headed Duck in one of the ponds, a lot of Lesser Short-toed Larks on the plains and a few Paddyfield Warblers in small reedbeds. The latter we also found in the southern part, so any reedbed should be suitable. Blue-cheeked Bea-eaters are hard to miss since they occupy the telephone wires at the entrance but in the reserve as well.

GPS-coördinates:

- Entrance of the reserve: 39.784762, 44.761755
- Plain with short vegetation and a lot of larks (Lesser Short-toed included): 39.785, 44.762
- Observations of Paddyfield Warbler:
 - 39.770, 44.773
 - 39.791, 44.756
 - 39.769, 44.753
- Smaller ponds with White-tailed Lapwings: 39.770, 44.750



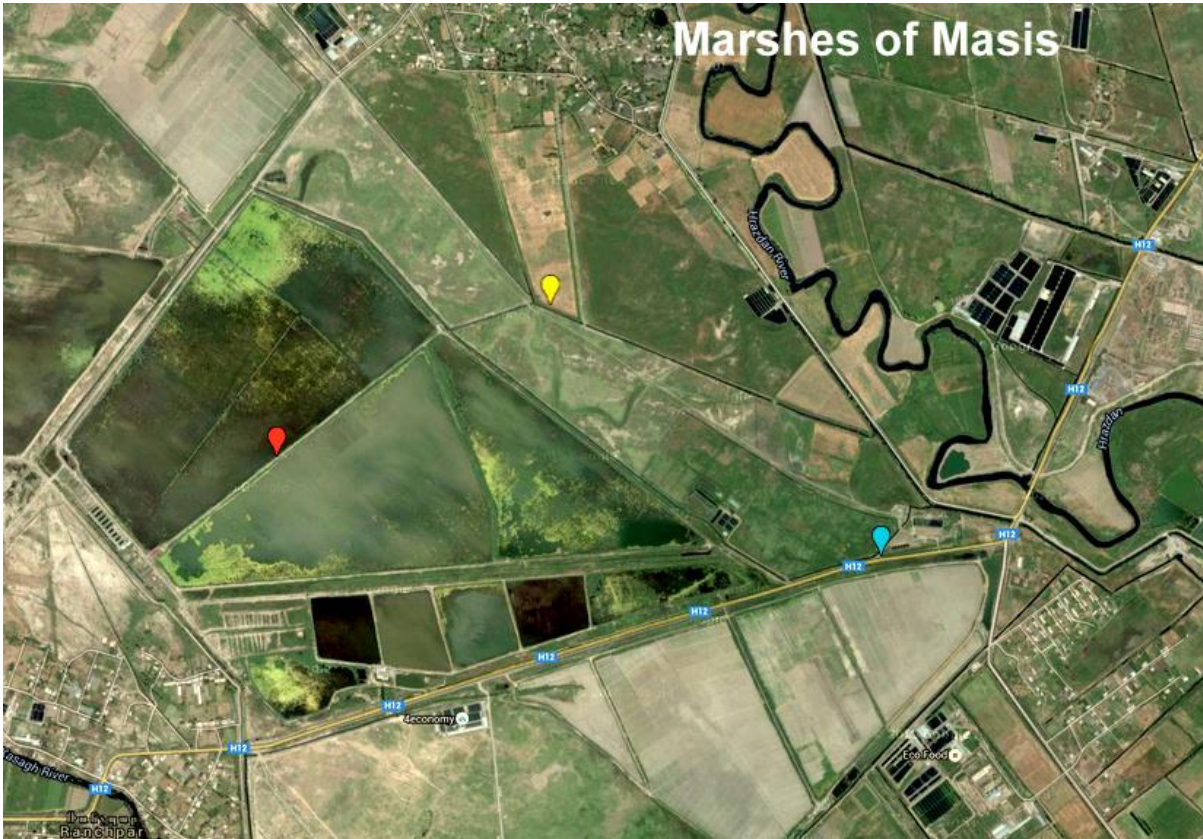
Map of Armash Fish Ponds. **Red Arrows:** points where Paddyfield Warblers were seen. **Yellow arrow:** entrance of the reserve. **Blue arrow:** plain with lot of larks, Lesser Short-toed included. **Pink arrow:** smaller ponds with flock of White-tailed Lapwings.

F. Fish ponds near Masis

The 6th of September we explored another wetland area southwest of Yerevan, close to Masis, while awaiting the arrival of Jonas. We didn't hear from this area in advance but saw on the map there were some fish ponds situated. It turned out to be a very good area, maybe with an even higher diversity compared to Armash although we didn't find our target species there. I don't know whether it's private property or it is forbidden to enter, but we just looked on the map and found some unpaved roads we could use to drive through the area. A big dam gave the opportunity to scan the various ponds and we found nice species such as Black-winged and Collared Pratincole, Blue-cheeked Bea-eater, Slender-billed Gull, Red-crested Pochard, Black-winged Stilt, Lesser Short-toed Lark etcetera... Worth a visit if you have some spare time!

GPS-coördinates:

- Entrance to an unhardened road that leads to the dike: 40.03854, 44.40263
- Area with plains and a lot of pratincoles: 40.04699, 44.38800
- Dike with good views on the various ponds: 40.04190, 44.37596



The fish ponds of Masis: **Blue arrow**: entrance to a path that leads to the dike running through the reserve. **Yellow arrow**: area with plains and possible breeding site to the numerous pratincoles we saw (both species). **Red arrow**: the dike from where the area can be overviewed.

G. Mt. Kazbek (Georgia)

In 2010 we had been to Mt. Kazbek, or more familiar 'Kazbegi', as well, but failed to find Great Rosefinch. It was clear we had to return. It happens a lot that a birding crew fails in finding every member of the 'Big 4' at Kazbegi. The targets here are well known: Caucasian Black Grouse, Caucasian Snowcock, Great Rosefinch and Gldenstadt's Redstart. The Gldenstadt's Redstarts are in our opinion the easiest, but it happens that they get missed as well. Especially during the summer months, birds tend to stay high up the mountain and are the most difficult. It would be a challenge, but we succeeded!

If you start from the town of Stepantsminda, it takes a while to reach Gergeti church. The forests between these two points are good for Caucasian Chiffchaff and Green Warbler, but once passed the church, the real job starts.

The path runs up the mountain with on your left side a big gorge and another mountain flank covered in dwarf rhododendron shrub. This part is especially good for the Caucasian Black Grouses, mainly during the early morning when they are foraging on the few open spaces between the shrubs. An early morning scan of the flanks is necessary, but we were lucky to see a few hikers flush some birds that were sitting next to the road, hidden in the vegetation, around 10:00 AM. To be sure, get up early though!

Just before you enter the famous 'crater', pointed out by a small altar which is a classic resting point for hikers, you will see the first bare mountain ridge to your left. Both in 2010 as well as in 2015 we were lucky here with a very cooperating Caucasian Snowcock that showed well. Still distant views though, but better to see them here because once passed the crater, the ridges are truly massive and although the species is found here as well, distant views are even more likely.

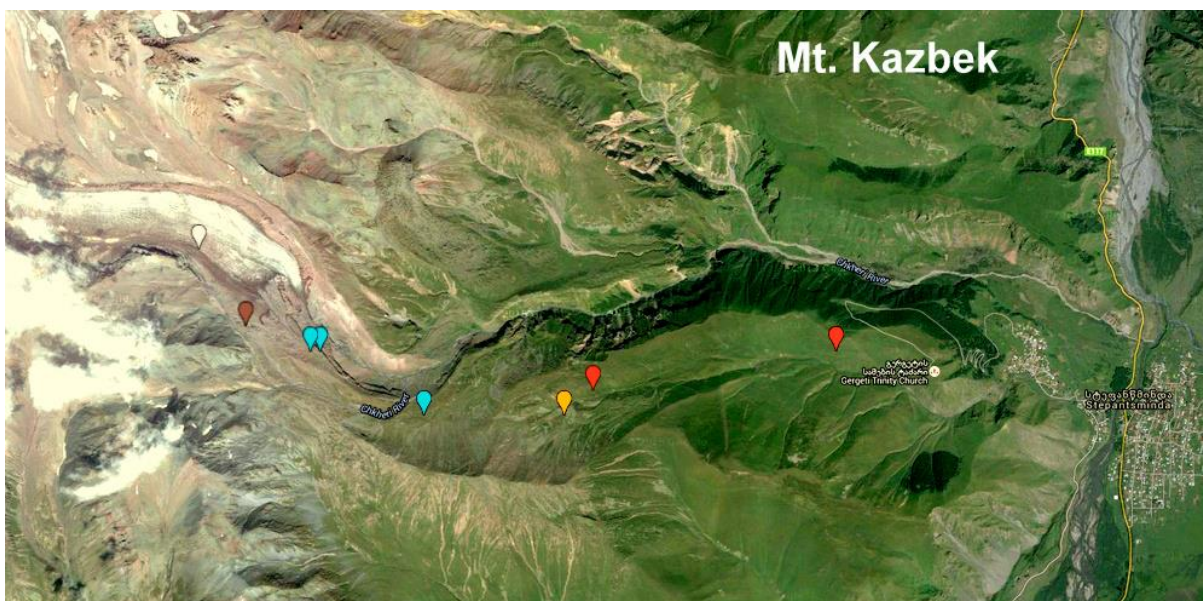
Once passed the crater, the path runs downhill for a while, before you have to cross the glacier river. This was the tricky part during our trip, since it had rained the days before and the river had swollen enormously. Other birders that visited the area more later had no difficulties crossing the river though.

After the river, comes the redstarts! In 2010 as well we had very nice sightings here of this wonderful species. They are easily found while scanning the bolder field around you. Alpine Accentor is common as well here.

The Great Rosefinches need to be found even more uphill. The area around the glacier consists of a massive bolder field, flanked by the river and enormous mountain walls to the left, by the glacier to the right. It was here we found a very cooperating flock of 12 birds. We were still lucky though, as I heard from other birders they had to climb even further and even had to cross the glacier! The latter is possible, but needs to be done safely. We walked a small part of the glacier but due to the fact we had already seen the species, didn't cross the whole thing.

GPS-coördinates:

- Caucasian Black Grouse:
 - 42.664, 44.610
 - 42.661, 44.854
 - 42.659, 44.581
- Caucasian Snowcock: 42.659, 44.581 (C-B-Grouse here as well!)
- Gldenstadt's Redstart:
 - 42.659, 44.566
 - 42.664, 44.555
 - 42.664, 44.55399
- Great Rosefinch: 42.666, 44.547
- Highest point we went: 42.672, 44.542



Mt. Kazbek: **Red arrows:** Caucasian Black Grouses here. **Orange arrow:** both Caucasian Snowcock and – Black Grouse here. **Blue arrows:** Gldenstadt's Redstart here. **Brown arrow:** Great Rosefinches here. **White arrow:** highest point we went.



DAILY REPORTS

DAY 1 – AUGUST 29th

BRUSSELS – KIEV – YEREVAN

Around noon, me, Willem and Sander arrived at Brussels National Airport. With Ukraine Airlines, we flew to Kiev where we had to wait an hour or two before our next flight to Yerevan left. At the airport, the first birds were noted down including **Crested Lark**, **House Sparrow** and **Wood Dove**. Quite boring however, and knowing Simon was already in Yerevan, with Upcher's Warbler freshly ticked, we were eager to explore the country.

Around midnight we finally arrived at Yerevan Zvartnots International Airport. It was a happy meeting again with Simon who was already completely wasted after finishing a bottle of whiskey on his own. Luckily, he still had some left though, and quickly led us out of the airport to the surrounding fields where he had seen the Upcher's during the day. We put up our tents and fell asleep.

DAY 2 – AUGUST 30th

YEREVAN – VEDI

We woke up around 6:00 AM and decided to check the fields and shrubs around us for any good birds. With the Upcher's Warblers of Simon in mind, which was a new species for everyone, we couldn't wait to explore the area. First birds included **Eurasian Hoopoe**, **Wryneck**, **Lesser Grey Shrike**, **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler**, **Ortolan Bunting**, **Eastern Black-eared Wheatear**, **European Bee-eater**,... A flock of **Armenian Gulls** flew over our heads when we picked up an aberrant Sylvia-warbler which was skulking in a tree nearby. Two other birds joined, and it took a few moments to realize we were looking at the first collective lifer of the trip: **Menetries's Warbler!** All 1cy birds and not

the easiest to identify, but once we were familiar with the typical up-and-down-stroking of the tail, an easy find. No Upcher's Warblers however...

We packed our stuff and took a cab to the center of Yerevan. The first **Laughing Doves** and **Hooded Crows** were noted down as we approached the city center. When we arrived at the car rental office, Sander realized he had lost his phone in the cab, right after having bought his Armenian simcard. We had a good laugh about it, but couldn't know this would happen again during the trip... Luckily it was just a basic, cheap phone.

It took a while to arrange everything at the car rental office, but eventually, a big, muscled Armenian guy showed up with an even bigger Toyota Landcruiser with him. Time to go!

After buying some food at a big supermarket with surprisingly a lot of western foods and brands, the GPS led us through the city center and through the outskirts of Yerevan as well. A beautiful city, although the traffic can be quite chaotic.

Finally we were on the road to our first birding site and the first impressions of the Armenian countryside were becoming apparent. **Bee-eaters**, **Rollers**, **Booted Eagle** and **Marsh Harriers** were seen from the car, and after an hour or so we arrived in the area of Vedi. We would only explore the westernmost wadi today, so no rush was needed. We found the small, rocky path leading into the arid landscape and it didn't take long before the first **Finsch's Wheatear** was seen. A lifer for all except me, but only seconds later, a collective lifer landed on a rock a bit further: **Eastern Rock Nuthatch**! A big bird and highly pleasant to watch as it inspected the cracks in the rock it was sitting on. We had kind of 'missed' this species near Vardzia, Georgia, in 2010, when it turned out that Eastern Rock Nuthatch doesn't occur there and all the birds we had seen were believed to be Western ones. Still not convinced since we did in fact see really bulky, big birds, but no pictures to have a second look... Therefore, this species needed to be seen again, and so we did.

The swimming pool turned out to be empty, but after turning right where the wadi split, we found a small source, or at least a riverbed where a tiny stream was flowing.

We split up and after the car had been parked everyone walked around in the area. **Trumpeter Finch** was common at the rocks above the source, and I was just checking one of these guys when a heavy *Hippolais* flew into my view. An **Upcher's Warbler**! The bird balanced itself in the withered vegetation and showed itself nicely. Simon was able to see the bird as well since he was birding just around the corner and got to me in time. He also picked up a **Black-headed Bunting** which I could see as well before it flew off. Sander and Willem missed both birds and for both species these would be the only individuals we would be able to connect with during the whole trip... After we regrouped, we found a flock of **Chukar Partridges**, both **Blue** and **Common Rock Thrush**, **Eastern Orphean Warbler**, **Isabelline** and a lot of **Finsch's Wheatear**, **Long-legged Buzzard** and some **Corn Buntings**. A bunting-like call turned out to be our first **Grey-necked Bunting**. A small flock of about three birds visited the source and would return multiple times during the evening. We could enjoy them for ages before they finally disappeared.

At a small, iron table which was built near the source, we cooked our dinner, consisting of only pasta with a basic tomato sauce. To our surprise, empty AK-47-casings were spread all over the area. A quality time activity for the local villagers?

We put up our tent near the car with company of a hunting **European Nightjar**. While taking out his backpack from the trunk of our car, Sander noticed a big, yellow scorpion that had installed itself in one of the folds of his backpack. No idea how it got into our car, probably sneaked in at the fields close to the airport... From this point, we checked our shoes every morning before putting them on! Satisfied, we fell asleep.

DAY 3 – AUGUST 31st

VEDI

We started the day at the small source to check for drinking birds. The **Grey-necked Buntings** were relocated easily and gave away even better views than the day before. **Eastern Black-eared** and **Finsch's Wheatears** were alarming the whole morning while **Trumpeter Finches**, **Common Rock Thrush**, **Crested Lark** and **Northern Raven** were seen in the immediate surroundings. The tamarisk bushes in the riverbed hosted some migrant birds including **Lesser**



Whitethroat and **Willow Warbler**. A small passerine that landed briefly on a branch proved to be a juvenile **Red-fronted Serin**.

Time to have breakfast, and while sitting on the iron bench we found, we could add more species to the list: **Golden Eagle**, **Tawny Pipit** and the 'usual' birds as **Menetries's Warbler**, **Common Kestrel**, **Eastern Rock Nuthatch**, **Lesser Grey Shrike** and so on.

Time to discover the easternmost wadi, and after a stop at the supermarket in Vedi, which turned out to be extremely cheap compared to the big one in Yerevan, we drove up the rocky path, starting from the outskirts of Dashtakar.

The first birds were the usual ones, with **Bee-eaters** and **Rollers** welcoming us along the path. Then the **Eastern Rock Nuthatches** were first heard (as usual) and then seen. After a while, we stumbled upon a river that was crossable by car, so we did. A nice field with short grass was on the other bank, so we decided to leave the car here and walked around in the area. In the different ravines in the area, we found excellent shrubs that hosted a lot of migrant birds. A few **European Nightjars** were flushed here, but the best species and a lifer for Simon were the two **Eastern Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins** we found. Other birds included **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Chukar Partridge**, **Finsch's Wheatear**, **Greater Short-toed Lark** and so on.

That night we set the record for cooking food with the least amount of firewood, using only a few dried tamarisk twigs to light. Credits to Sander and Simon for doing this. Me and Willem hang around in the area and decided to taste the ridiculously cheap vodka we had bought in Vedi.

Later that night, we installed ourselves in our tents on the grass field and fell asleep. Heavy thunderstorms were heard and seen in the distance, but luckily none of these came close enough to hit us.

DAY 4 – SEPTEMBER 1st

VEDI – ARMASH – YEGHEGNADZOR – SPANDARIAN RESERVOIR

A short walk in the early morning didn't yield any new ticks. The local hodgepodge of birds was observed again with **Eastern Orphean Warbler**, **Red-backed** and **Woodchat Shrike**, **Lesser Whitethroat** and **Isabelline Wheatear** being

the most noteworthy. A small flock of **Penduline Tits** caught us by surprise since they were foraging in a tamarisk. Not their usual habitat in the middle of this desertlike environment.

We decided to check the entrance of the famous Armash Fish Ponds. Karen had not yet responded to our e-mails so we thought to ensure our visit by asking the gatekeeper if it would be okay that we would visit a few days later. When we were driving the road towards the gate, we were welcomed by our next lifer, a big flock of **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters**. Wonderful birds and very cooperative to say the least. It took a while before we continued our way but eventually we stopped the car in front of a big gate. A young guy came out of the guard house and after a difficult but successful call and translation with our friend Stepan on the phone, we were told that it would be okay. Afterwards we heard from Karen that this was not the best idea since everything was already set and we now caused a bit of confusion. But in the end it turned out fine and with the certainty we would be able to visit the reserve in a few days, we continued our way south.

Because it was still early, we tried to find an entrance to the more unknown hilly areas east of Armash. We didn't really succeed but in the end we found a big wadi with a view on the fish ponds. It was extremely hot there and due to the high temperatures, birding was difficult. Some **Eastern Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins, Tree Pipts, Rock Sparrow, Tawny Pipts, Spotted Flycatchers** and **Eurasian Hoopoe** were seen though. When we drove down again, we encountered a flock of **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** sitting on the road and flying around the car. Quite common birds when you find the right spots, but still very localized in Armenia.

When we got back on the main road, we had only one next destination: MEGHRI! We wouldn't reach it tonight, so decided to camp at a big reservoir we found on the map. While driving, we scored some more new species for the trip list including **Lesser Kestrel, Alpine Swift, Eurasian Crag Martin** and **Caucasian Water Pipit**. Gradually, we found ourselves in more alpine habitat and a quick look on the map showed that we drove up the big plateau of Yeghegnadzor.

Eventually, we found the reservoir and using a small path we could reach the shore. Temperatures were much lower here compared to the plains of Yerevan, so an extra jacket was needed. The high vegetation next to the shore proved to be good for (migrant) birds and an evening walk yielded birds as **Willow Warbler, Common Quail, Eurasian Reed Warbler** and a flock of **Grey Partridges**. On the lake itself, big flocks of **White-winged Tern** were congregating. A few **Armenian Gulls** and a flock of **Black Storks** that came to sleep, were the last sightings of the day. We could light yet again a very small pile of firewood to cook our food on. It became freezingly cold here during sunset, so it didn't took long before we jumped in our sleeping bags.

DAY 5 – SEPTEMBER 2nd

SPANDARIAN RESERVOIR – MEGHRI

It was a cold morning when we woke up in the Armenian highlands, but birds seemed to be everywhere around us! The thickets around us proved to be loaded with migrants and during an early morning walk we found a flock of over 10 **Common Rosefinches, Great Reed Warbler**, over 30 **Caucasian Water Pipts, Siberian Stonechat, Caucasian Bluethroat** (ssp. *magna*), few **Whinchats** etcetera. While I was checking the washed up carcass of a **Long-legged Buzzard** on the beach, I suddenly heard Simon yelling. Did he forget to take his daily pill? Did his girlfriend break up with him again? He came closer and slowly I could understand parts of what he was saying: "Ra... ..or" ... "...dd.. accen...." ... "Raddesor" ... "**RADDE'S ACCENTOR!!!!!!**". WOW! A lifer for all of us and an unexpected species here since we only thought to see the species at the end of the Armenian trip! I quickly ran towards him, where in the distance I could already see Sander and Willem looking in the thickets. When I arrived, it turned out the bird had already vanished. An hour-long search didn't yield anything, it had just disappeared...

A bit disappointed, we drove off with only Sander and Simon having seen the bird for a few seconds. Willem had already ticked it in Turkey, so for me the pressure was tough. But with the fact in mind we would almost certainly see the species again during the upcoming week, we continued our way south.

Along the road, in the direction of Goris, we found several **Lesser Spotted Eagles**, hunting above freshly plowed fields. A **Woodchat Shrike** was found as well but the first big frustration of the trip occurred when we entered the city center of Goris. Sander saw a big flock of birds through our windshield. We quickly stopped the car. Whilst taking

the telescopes out of the trunk, the adrenaline was rushing as we suspected the flock to be **Demoiselle Cranes**... About 200 'longnecks' were soaring at an enormous height in very bad light. We all agreed this had to be Demoiselles, but because of the light and the fact it was a lifer for all of us, we had to let them go... This did however raise the enthusiasm for the upcoming days and during the next part, the road from Goris to Kapan, my eyes were most of the time high up in the sky instead of on the road. Since I was driving, this caused some tricky situations which made the guys gasp for air a few times.

We arrived in Meghri in the late afternoon and immediately went to the wadi east of the town. It was an impressive drive between the city center and the wadi, since we had to pass the border with Iran. Barbed wire everywhere, and three species now on our Eastern Palearctic – list (**Bee-eater, Raven and Crag Martin**)!

The wadi was easily reached by first passing a few plantations where figs, pomegranates and other fruit was grown. We parked the car and immediately found our first **Red-tailed Wheatear** here. It turned out to be quite common, with about 9 birds seen during a walk of 500 meters through the ravine. **Blue Rock Thrush, Eastern Orphean Warbler, Chukar, Rock Bunting, Golden Eagle** and the inevitable **Menetries's Warbler** were seen as well.

Around 07:00 PM it was time to go to the B&B Haer we had booked through Karen. We would have a meeting there with our guide for tomorrow and were starving as well. Upon our arrival, the lady of the house welcomed us with 'чай и кофе', or 'tea and coffee'. It didn't take long for our guide to arrive, and from the first moment the atmosphere was good. He told us to pick us up the next day around 6:00 AM.

After having a massive dinner with of course some of the home-brewed vodka, we quickly tucked in.

DAY 6 – SEPTEMBER 3th

MEGHRI – CASPIAN SNOWCOCK-SITE – MEGHRI - KAPAN

At 5:30 AM in the morning, a disgusting Angerfist-song awoke all of us. A quick breakfast later and Stepan was waiting for us across the road with his Lada Niva. He would take us to a mountain ridge in the area, where Caspian Snowcock was possible. Finding this species in Armenia requires some local contacts since the good spots are quite hard to reach on your own and the species is quite localized in the country.

We drove almost an hour during which we first took the main road north. After about 20 minutes, a long and difficult road led us towards a huge mountain ridge. After Stepan drove the last 10 minutes on something that couldn't be called a path anymore, with mountain vegetation reaching to the passenger windows, we parked the car on one of the mountain flanks. We all got out and started to climb up the ridge. It took almost two hours to be at the right spot, during which we continuously had to pause because of the extreme steepness.

Finally, we reached a spot with a view that was pretty much one of the most beautiful we had ever seen. It was possible to see both Iran, Nakchivan and Azerbaijan in the distance. Then we heard a big curlew calling... It was there!

After some nerve-racking minutes, I finally located two **Caspian Snowcocks**, perched against a massive mountain wall in the distance. Quite far away, but close enough to enjoy it and, most important, to see the difference with Caucasian Snowcock. We were happy and so was Stepan, clearly being very amused that he could show us these chickens. He made a few photographs, mostly of us watching the Snowcock, and asked if we would like to go closer. We approached the birds during which we paused a few times to look at them. We were distracted by an adult female **Pallid Harrier** that came soaring over our heads when suddenly the Snowcocks vanished...

Intensive searching didn't result in a refund, but we agreed to descend the mountain by passing the big mountain wall the Snowcocks were last seen on. Stepan told us a crazy story of him seeing a Caucasian Leopard at the same ridge we were now, in November 2014. He had kind of 'flushed' it while walking and made us laugh with his epic imitations of a sneaking Leopard. There should be around 8 adult individuals living in this southern part of Armenia, Stepan told us, based on the results of intensive camera trapping in the area.

When we walked passed the flank, other mountain birds became apparent: **Red-fronted Serin, Wallcreeper, Bearded Vulture, Red-billed Chough, Caucasian Water Pipit, Rock Bunting, Golden Eagle**, etcetera. I was checking



the Rock Bunting a few meters below me when I noticed a smaller bird sitting in the top of a small juniper-bush: **Radde's Accentor!** Instant happiness when I saw this lifer and I quickly called the others to come and take a look. We were rewarded with prolonged views on this bird before it decided to disappear in a crack.

It took a while to descend the mountain during which we had to make some tricky scree-passages but we finally made it and drove down the mountain in Stepan's Lada Niva. When we finally got on a dirt track Stepan suddenly stopped the car and shouted: 'snake!'. I looked through the windshield and saw this massive viper laying on the track. Despite Stepan's protests I jumped out and chased the snake through the vegetation. It turned out to be a **Radde's Rock Viper**, one of the species where the name just sounds as epic as the snake's appearance. A big black viper with flashy red zig-zag-markings and a black-and-white eye-mask. When Stepan started to shout repeatedly 'Joachim! PROBLEM!' I decided it was time to return to the car and continue our way.

He stopped a few kilometers further. There was a small picnic-place along the road with a water source. Apparently, Stepan had some food with him he wanted to share with us. First, the always obligated shots of his home-brewed vodka were emptied which resulted in us all being in higher spheres. Especially Sander enjoyed it 😊! After the drinking, bread, cheese and tomatoes were shared by Stepan. A lovely experience to enjoy a meal with a local in one of the most remote parts of this wonderful country...

Around 2:00 PM Stepan dropped us off again at the Bed&Breakfast Haer and we said goodbye to him. I would later realize that my two sweaters I brought for climbing Mt. Kazbek were still in his trunk, hope it comes in handy for him!

We packed our stuff at the B&B and agreed to go and have a look at the Red-tailed Wheatears again. Temperatures were skyrocketing by this time of the day and it took a while before we reached the site because of some groceries that had to be bought. We saw a lot of the same species with for example **Menetries's Warbler**, the usual **Red-tailed Wheatears**, **Eastern Orphean Warbler**, **Eurasian Jay (*krynicky?*)**, both **Common** and **Ehrenberg's Redstart (*samamisicus*)** and a **Golden Eagle**. Sander and me found an iron bench, again with a lot of AK-47-casings laying around it, in the deeper part of the ravine. While sitting on this bench, in the shade of some pine trees, we noticed an interesting call which in our opinion couldn't be anything else than a **Sombre Tit**. It took a while to locate the bird,

but eventually not less than 5 individuals showed themselves. Simon, who still needed this species, found a few himself alone.

The day was about to end and since every species was in the pocket, we decided to take lead on the schedule and drive north already. We left the beautiful scenery of Meghri and took a smaller road towards Kapan. The day ended on a small turn of the main road, a bit north of Syunik, where we camped next to the path.

DAY 7 – SEPTEMBER 4th

KAPAN – TATEV – HERHER HERHER WATER RESERVOIR

Still a bit tired from the day before, we packed our stuff and tried to find some waders or other water birds at the Artsvanik reservoir (north of Syunik). Not a single bird could be found on the strange mud-like flats however...

The H45 seemed like a nice replacement for the usual main road towards Yeghegnadzor, so we agreed to try this one out. It turned out to be a real adventure with some parts being in a heinous state... After been driving for hours, we passed a green valley with willows and a small river. A stop here produced our first **Red-breasted Flycatchers**, **Green Warblers**, **Siberian Stonechat** and **Caucasian Dipper (*caucasicus*)**.

Around Tatev we started to drive up the high plateau of Yeghegnadzor again, with sightings of **Wood Lark**, **Egyptian Vulture**, **Lesser Spotted Eagle** and **Long-legged Buzzards** along the road. A small source with natural sparkling water (true story!) was the ideal opportunity for us to fill all our empty water bottles. Eventually, we got back on the main road towards Yeghegnadzor.

Around 4:00 PM we reached the Herher Herher Water Reservoir which we would like to check if it was suitable to put up our tents. The water was crystal blue and around it were only very arid rocks with some small bushes. Not many birds around the lake, but the lake itself produced a flock of **15 Garganeys**, some **Little Grebes**, **Armenian** and **Caspian Gull** and eventually a flyby of a **Golden Eagle**.

After losing the bottle of vodka in the lake we all had to go in and relocate it, which luckily worked out fine. The same bottle got emptied that night with some drunk campfire stories as a result. With me imitating how a Bulwers Petrel forages, the night ended and we had a good but giddy night of sleep.

DAY 8 – SEPTEMBER 5th

HERHER HERHER WATER RESERVOIR – ORBELIAN CARAVANSERAI – LAKE SEVAN

After waking up with a small but present hangover, we left for the Vardenyats Pass, a road towards Lake Sevan where Crimson-winged Finch was seen before by other birders. Only Willem had seen it before while me, Sander and Simon had seen African Crimson-winged Finch in Morocco. Apart from the old building, a centuries-old resting place for passing travelers, we only found **Long-legged Buzzard**, **Rock Bunting**, **Blue and Common Rock Thrush** and some **Rock Sparrows** at the site. A roadkill turned out to be a **Persian Jird**, a massive rat-like rodent.

Plans had been made the days before to add Lake Sevan to our schedule. We didn't know any exact birding spots but would try to find some ourselves by driving along the shores.

We were still following the shore when around 11:45 AM Willem spotted a flock of unidentified birds through the windshield, while driving. We all knew what was going to happen... A short look at the flock and I started to yell like hell to stop the car immediately. Everyone jumped out and I slammed the trunk open to get our scopes. They were still far away... it were cranes! Wait... cranes??? **FUCKING DEMOISELLE CRANES!!!**

What happened the moments after is still etched in our memories as one of the top moments of the trip. The flock came closer and closer until we could not only see the typical silhouette but now the black breast as well. A few moments later even the white strings in the back of their heads were visible. A species everybody had dreamed off, now passing under our noses! Because of the stress we didn't focus on counting the birds but just enjoyed the epic views we were having. When they started to circle behind us, I managed to take some photographs which betrayed the real number: 83 birds. The higher-pitched calls completed the identification of this steppe species as they passed us at a distance of approximately 200 – 300 meters. Mission accomplished.



After us being unable to finish the unidentified flock of cranes a few days earlier (which were Demoiselles as well, we now finally dare to say), this was a welcome surprise. After we all landed back on earth with our both feet, we drove a bit further until we found a shoreline (at 40.28199, 45.21800) that looked worth checking. We parked the car and scanned the lake for any new trip species: **Cetti's Warbler, Great Crested Grebe, White-winged Tern, Ruddy Shelduck, Armenian Gull** and **Citrine Wagtail** were seen when Sander noticed a familiar sound in the air. Another **Demoiselle Crane**, a single bird, flew by at only 150 meters but in very bad light. Silhouette and call made identification easy however. Wow! 84 Demoiselles in less than half an hour of birding around Lake Sevan, not bad! After lunch we continued our way west and found another shoreline where a lot of birds were resting, at 40.423, 45.109, close to Hayravank. Some scanning produced a **Red-necked Grebe, Gadwall, Citrine Wagtails, Grey Heron**, a lot of **Armenian Gulls, White-winged Terns, Garganey, Wood Sandpiper, Common Cuckoo, Common Moorhen, Western Cattle Egret** and **Black-headed Wagtail (feldegg)**.

It was already late afternoon when we found a supermarket at Sevan's city center where we bought all our food for the following night and morning. A look at our map learned us there was a peninsular-like land tip at the northern side of the lake. This seemed like a good camping site for us, maybe we could hear or see Demoiselle Cranes that night as it should be a logical place to fly over in our opinion. The other ones we had seen possibly did the same... Again we had a beautiful private beach for ourselves and again there was a shitload of vodka to be finished, especially now since we had all ticked the most wanted target of the trip. No comments on what happened that evening but the fact is Simon woke up in his sleeping bag next to the campfire instead of in his tent!

DAY 9 – SEPTEMBER 6th

LAKE SEVAN – YEREVAN – FISH PONDS MASIS – ZVARTNOTS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

After waking up Simon, who needed some time to land back on his feet, we packed our stuff and left for Yerevan. Since I needed a new sweater for the upcoming alpine hike at Kazbegi, we tried to find a clothing store. We stumbled upon a local market which resulted in me buying an old green army sweater that only just fitted. Mission accomplished though!

After having lunch we were looking at the map and saw an area with multiple ponds southwest of Yerevan: the Fishponds of Masis. Being situated in one of the outskirts of Yerevan, it didn't take long to reach it and we were

welcomed with the always present **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters**. **Pygmy Cormorants**, **Purple Heron**, **Squacco Heron**, **Red-crested Pochard** and **Slender-billed Gull** were seen while entering the reserve and we quickly found a small pond, situated in the middle of a big plain (see blue arrow at description). A nice flock of **Collared Pratincoles** was discovered and it didn't take long to find a juvenile **Black-winged Pratincole** between his European relatives. The alarm call of a **Little Bittern** was one I hadn't heard in a while, but again this proved to be a new species for the triplist! On the plain itself **Tawny Pipits** and **Black-headed Wagtails** were following a herd of cattle, when we heard a dry call, produced by a flock of what seemed Short-toed Larks. **Lesser Short-toed Lark** was the verdict! Again a new one for the triplist, but we would see them better at Armash a few days later.

After we witnessed the presumed owner of the reserve go mental on a local fisherman, probably didn't have a permit to fish, the day had already come to an end. It was getting dark and we decided to gradually drive to the airport to pick up Jonas. Some stops were made to buy food or petrol and when buying a watermelon at a typical next-to-the-road market stall, we got a second one for free!

It was a happy reunion with Jonas at the airport, who was eager to see the awesome species we had seen in the days before. We drove to Mt. Aragats around midnight, during which we saw a drunk driver crash into the roadside and get back on the road again. Lovely Armenia!

We found a good sleeping spot a few kilometers from the Radde's Accentor-site, which was the perfect start for the day after.

DAY 10 – SEPTEMBER 7th

MOUNT ARAGATS – YEREVAN - VEDI

Around 7:00 AM we arrived at the site where **Radde's Accentor** should be common. Walked around in the area of the yellow and blue arrow and quickly multiple birds! At the end of the day, we had seen an estimate of at least 15 different birds, wow! Other nice sightings here were **Eurasian Black Vulture**, **Rock Bunting**, **Common Linnet** but most important: two **Crimson-winged Finches**! Two birds came in briefly, sat at the roof of an old shed, then flew off again. Never found them again, but we saw them good enough to add this subspecies-tick to our lists!

While following the road to the alpine lake, I saw a big falcon flying in the distance. The bird landed on a rock and turned out to be a splendid **Saker Falcon**! A lifer for Jonas and a long time I had seen this bird.

After having parked at the carpark, high up the mountain, we made a walk in the immediate area which yielded multiple **Turkish Twites**, **Caucasian Horned Lark**, **Northern Wheatear**, **Alpine Accentor** etcetera... The alpine lake seemed lifeless at first, but while having a tea at the little café, a **Citrine Wagtail** walked by, foraging at the water line.

Around noon, we left the area and headed for the American University of Armenia, located in the center of Yerevan. We would finally meet Karen who wanted to hear about our stay in his country and how everything went so far. After we were lead to the dining room, we had a great conversation with him about bird conservation and how he sees the future regarding the protection of birds and habitats. He was particularly enthusiastic about our sightings of the Black-winged Pratincole and Saker Falcon, two scarce species in Armenia apparently. About our Demoiselles he only could add that they aren't that rare and in September flocks could be seen migrating above Yerevan as well! We said goodbye and left the capital again. Jonas still needed to visit Vedi for a few lifers there, so we set course to these arid hills again.

Both **Eastern Rock Nuthatch** and **Finsch's Wheatear** were picked up almost instantly but the Grey-necked Buntings were not present anymore. The whole evening we awaited drinking birds at the small source (blue arrow), but apart from a beautiful **Woodchat Shrike**, no other species were added to the list. The iron bench with the AK-47-casings was a familiar sight and after dinner, our tents were set up here.



DAY 11 – SEPTEMBER 8th

VEDI – ARMASH – YEREVAN – ARMASH

At 6:00 AM we quickly woke up and before the first sunbeams hit our heads, we were already driving towards Armash. Because most of our targets required early morning visits (Paddyfield Warbler) or no heat gaze (scanning for waders), we wanted to be there in time. At the entrance, the first **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** were already calling when we were let in by the guard. He still had to make a call however, to ensure we were let in or something, so we started scanning the horizon in the distance. Jonas quickly picked up a few large birds migrating south: 5 **Demoiselle Cranes!** Unbelievable, he just missed the species we thought would be so hard to see, but instead found himself a small flock. They passed us at large distance but still the dark breast and typical silhouette was visible. A lucky shot for Jonas, but only a few moments later he discovered his second lifer: **Menetries's Warbler**. We were a bit tired of this species that proved to be way more common than expected, but still enjoyed the little bird skulking around. A familiar call turned out to be a few **Lesser Short-toed Larks** which we could relocate moments later at one of the dry plains the reserve is also rich in.

The rest of the morning we drove around in mostly the southeastern part of the reserve, checking all the sites mentioned earlier in this report. Birds were numerous and often big flocks of **Pygmy Cormorants, Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** and waders were seen. A lifer for everyone except myself was **White-tailed Lapwing**. We found a party of 6 birds including one juvenile, which showed well at an overgrown pond in the middle of the reserve.

We saw a big mudflat in the distance, but couldn't find a path leading to it. After opening a few gates and crossing some private watermelon plantations, we got to a point which was good for overlooking the pond. A very diverse flock of waders was foraging a bit further away and yielded **Common Greenshank, Little and Common Ringed Plover, White-tailed Lapwing, Ruff, Common and Spotted Redshank, 5 Marsh Sandpipers, Temminck's and Little Stint, Kentish Plover, Wood and Green Sandpiper** and a few **Black-winged Stilts**.

An old Lada approached us and the two apparent owners of the private land we had crossed, came towards us. At first they seemed pissed off, but in the end turned very friendly and even gave us a watermelon for free! They asked

us politely though to leave the area and drive back to the reserve. Apparently, a few of the adjacent ponds are not part of the official nature reserve and thus private property.

Back in the reserve we were checking out a **Caspian Stonechat** when Jonas pointed out an interesting *Acrocephalus*. A few exciting moments later, we were all watching our first **Paddyfield Warbler**, skulking in the reeds but responding rather well to tape. We never thought this species to be still possible in this time of the year, but this and also later sightings would prove the opposite.

Around noon I started to feel like shit. A probable food poisoning in the beginning of our trip had kept me in its grip during the rest of the week and stomach cramps were intensifying. At a moment I told the rest of the group we should go see a doctor. At 12:00 AM we left Armash and drove towards Yerevan. We found a local hospital in the outskirts of Yerevan where I was quickly put in a waiting room between all kinds of sick or wounded people. I suddenly realized the crowd in the back of the room where in fact surgeons. Moments later I witnessed a live surgery of a fainted guy with an open leg fracture, out in the open. I kept telling one of the local translators, who spoke limited English, my cramps were probably caused by diarrhea and not some kind of intestinal parasite or something, but she wouldn't listen and told me I had to get an echography and all kinds of things. I could see from Jonas' face he was thinking the same as me: WTF. When our translator left for a few moments, we both sneaked out of the room and got out of the hospital. At a pharmacy at the hospitals' parking lot I bought some Imodium with help from Karen, who translated for me by phone.

After this rather strange experience we quickly found the others who had a good laugh with all we just had witnessed. Time had come to return to Armash, so around 4:00 PM we left Yerevan again and drove back to Armash. We arrived round 6:00 AM and enjoyed the two last hours of daylight to check the reed beds for any interesting warblers. No Moustached Warbler, but **Paddyfield** proved to be present again at the spot we had find the flock of **White-tailed Lapwings** earlier. They were still there and together with a '*magna*' **Bluethroat**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Bearded Reedling** and **Common Reed Bunting**, offered some nice birding.

The guards had given us permission to camp close to the entrance on a field of old alfalfa vegetation, but what they didn't tell us was that Armash probably has the highest density of mosquito's in the world. At least we didn't encounter so many biting, aggressive and most of all numerous of these little fuckers. There was a constant buzzing hearable, produced by all the wings together. We had to eat in the car, run to our tents and hope none intruded. A bit stressed out, we finally fell asleep.

DAY 12 – SEPTEMBER 9th

ARMASH - VEDI

Our last full day in Armenia! We were woken up by the calls of Golden Jackals. It was still dark but in the twilight already a few birds were calling. After we packed up our tent, we found ourselves in the middle of a foraging flock of **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters**. A lot of them were sitting on the electricity wires including a substantial amount of juveniles. A strange sight was a **Menetries's Warbler**, calling on one of the wires between the Bee-eaters.

We did one last tour through the reserve, with our car, and could add **Eurasian Bittern** and **White-headed Duck** to the list. No Marbled Teals however, a species that should occur here as well but is becoming more rare the last few years, according to other birders. In a small reed bed, in the middle of the area for **Lesser and Greater Short-toed Larks**, we found two **Paddyfield Warblers** which showed well again. Other birds here included **European Turtle Dove**, a lot of **Menetries's Warbler**, **Ruddy Shelduck**,...

Around noon we said goodbye to the guard and decided to try one last time for the Grey-necked Buntings at Vedi, which were missed by Jonas. We walked around the small source at the blue arrow for hours but apart from an unidentified flock of Rock Sparrows spec. (possibly Pale?), we didn't find anything new. A migrating **Montagu's Harrier** was a nice one, but **Egyptian Vulture** and **Lesser Spotted Eagle** proved to be around as well. Our last dinner at Armenian soil was accompanied by a foraging **Eurasian Nightjar** that showed well. A bit melancholic, we went to sleep. Tomorrow would be a stressful day...



DAY 13 – SEPTEMBER 10th

VEDI – YEREVAN – TBILISI – KAZBEGI

We woke up around 6:00 AM, packed our stuff and drove towards Yerevan. The car had to be turned in at 10:00 AM and we wanted to visit a carwash before. It looked like this car had entered a few warzones and hoping to reduce any possible extra costs, this looked like a good idea. Since we hadn't read anything about cleaning the car before turning it in, and we never had experienced this before (normally, you can just turn it in dirty...), we only cleaned it on the outside.

After arrival at the car rental office, it proved to be only open at 10:00, so we were a bit too early. Willem had planned to travel the southern part of Georgia on his own, visiting the steppe lakes of Ninotsminda, while Jonas, Simon, Sander and me were going to Kazbegi to catch up with the Great Rosefinches we had missed there in 2010. He told us it was fine to already leave, since we had a greater distance to cover today. Around 9:30 AM we took a taxi and said goodbye to him. Afterwards we heard from Willem he had some major problems turning the car in. Apparently, we were assumed to totally clean the car before turning it in. They also noticed a big scratch on the bumper which was probably made while driving down the rough track at Vedi. The apparent owner of the car got really angry and fined us an extra amount of 70,- euros...

The rest of the day was spent by us in minibuses. We got on one to Tbilisi after the cab dropped us at some kind of small minibus station. In Tbilisi we found a good Mercedes Vito with two drivers who agreed to drive us all the way to Kazbegi. We paid a bit more than usual (around 20,- euros p.p.) but had the whole car for ourselves.

Around 6:00 PM we arrived in the village of Stepantsminda where we had a good meal in one of the smaller restaurants, owned by an old 'babushka' who made excellent shashlik (meat), katsjapuri (cheesebread) and tsjinkali (meat in dough pockets). It soon became dark and with a European Nightjar flying by, we asked a local driver to drive us all the way up to Gergeti church. This was quite expensive (around 5 euros each), but made sure we could have a good start tomorrow morning since it was more or less the spot to look for Caucasian Black Grouse.

Apart from the little rope at Jonas' tent, which made a strange, irritating noise because of the resonance the wind created, we had a good night of sleep.

DAY 14 – SEPTEMBER 11th

KAZBEGI

We woke up before dawn and quickly walked to the first red arrow to scan the mountain ridge south of us for any grouses. It took a while but eventually, Jonas picked up a male at huge distance. The first **Caucasian Black Grouse** of the trip was a fact! A very distant bird however, so not a mouthwatering sighting to say the least.

The first **Golden Eagle** of the day flew by, accompanied by a **Bearded Vulture**. Not bad! Other birds included **Red-billed Choughs**, **Caucasian Water Pipits** and a few **Whinchats**.

We walked further and met other hikers. The track going up the mountain was a hard one. Especially the low levels of oxygen made it more difficult than expected. We reached the second red arrow when suddenly some hikers that walked a few hundred meters in front of us flushed not less than 4 males **Caucasian Black Grouses**. They flew by and we had a good look at them in the morning light. A nice surprise was a male **Pallid Harrier**, circling with a male **Montagu's**, above our heads. Wow! Active migration even in the high mountains.

Around noon we finally reached the small altar at the edge of the ridge. This is a famous pausing site for hikers and has a good view on the glacier in the distance. From here, the road went down but quickly went up again. We were walking through some kind of massive boulder field with **Alpine Accentors** everywhere. It only took a few moments to encounter the first **Güldenstädt's Redstart**, a species that proved to be very easy. We had only seen juvenile males back in 2010, so it was the first time we could enjoy them in full adult plumage!

We had a hard time trying to cross the river that was flowed down from the glacier. It looked extremely tricky to cross it and only with the help of some hikers that gave us their walking sticks, we could finally cross. We said goodbye to the hikers, threw over the sticks and continued our way. We were now walking on the right side of the river and finally reached Basecamp 1 (see Googlemaps for this). Our goal for today was reached but we agreed to climb a bit more and eventually put up our tent a few hundred meters further.

While putting up our tent, two big passerines flew over our heads in a typical undulating flight. This had to be the Rosefinches, but we weren't able to relocate them...

The first **Caucasian Snowcocks** were calling in the far distance however, but despite some scanning we didn't find them either. The rest of the day we explored the area around our tents but apart from the usual **Bearded Vulture** or **Güldenstädt's Redstart**, no Rosefinches!

Me and Jonas decided to open up the bottle of Zubrowka vodka we had previously bought in Vedi. It was empty after an hour, so the rest of the night is kind of blurry to me. The next morning however, we would experience what a hangover at high altitude means...

DAY 15 – SEPTEMBER 12th

KAZBEGI

At 6:00, a **Caucasian Snowcock** called in the distance. It was the moment I realized I felt like complete shit. After Jonas awoke, it turned out he had the same problem as me... I had never felt anything like this, being completely weak and feeling sick. Even getting up was difficult and I had difficulties with standing straight. We had previously agreed to take our backpacks with us, all the way up, but this was not an option anymore...

We left our tents and our stuff and decided to walk in the direction of the glacier with only our binoculars and telescopes. Every step took ages and Sander and Simon clearly hadn't the same problem since they were already in front of us while me and Jonas were struggling in the back...

When we discovered a **Wallcreeper** that showed pretty well, it looked like Jonas was dying as he was sitting on a rock with his head in his hands. I decided to walk a few meters further, to gain some lead when I heard a whistling call of a passerine. A big, brown finch-like bird flew towards me in an undulating flight and landed on a rock only a few meters in front of me: a female **GREAT ROSEFINCH!** Everyone was ecstatic about this bird and we enjoyed it for the full 20 seconds it sat there, calling and showing well. The bird quickly flew up again and disappeared behind the boulder field in front of us. The species was in the pocket, although we had hoped for a nice male instead. Jonas



decided to go back to the tents as he was feeling worse with every step. Sander and Simon wanted to look for an adult male and so did I, although I asked the guys to walk slowly.

After half an hour, we were now close to the edge of the glacier and saw multiple Caucasian Water Pipits, a Peregrine Falcon and even a migrating Black Kite in the low clouds. A nice surprise was a flyby of a single **Snowfinch**, a new species for the triplist! Suddenly, we heard the rosefinchcall again, and realized a flock was feeding only a few meters from us! At least 12 **Great Rosefinches** were feeding at approximately 5 meters or so, including 3 splendid males! Finally we had the famous raspberry-with-white-dots-bird on the list! A lot of pictures were made, especially from the males (with moulting tails!) that proved to be the most tame. We enjoyed good views of them for about 15 minutes before they flew up again and disappeared in the distance.

After a short walk on the glacier, we descended the mountain again to check if Jonas was okay. He turned out to be way better than this morning and, after a small puke, was now ready to go for the Rosefinches. Me, Sander and Simon stayed around our tent for the rest of the afternoon, while Jonas went for the males Great Rosefinch. He didn't succeed however, the birds had vanished and he had to be happy with only a female seen. Still a good tick on his WP-list though! While me and Sander were having a nap in the tent, Simon also managed to score his first Caucasian Snowcock, when he saw a flying bird in the far distance while scanning the slopes. Despite intensive search, we couldn't relocate the bird.

In the late afternoon, we packed our stuff and planned to sleep a few meters below the altar, at the edge of the crater. The river proved to be a problem once again, but a few sherpas with horses came right in time to help us cross. I got over for free, but when they continued their way down, the rest of the crew appeared. I arranged that they took Sander, Jonas and Simon as well for 20 lari. A good deal and we even got some of their home-brewed chacha for free!

We found a good spot at the orange arrow where we had seen Caucasian Snowcock from back in 2010. The plan was now to try for the species again the following morning...

DAY 16 – SEPTEMBER 13th

KAZBEGI - BATUMI

We woke up in the early morning with the sound of a calling **Caucasian Snowcock**! It didn't take long to locate the bird which showed – for Snowcock-standards – ridiculously well! With this bird, we had now all seen the 'Big 4' of Kazbegi. A party of 6 **Caucasian Black Grouses** was another surprise and after some good views of these birds, we packed our stuff and began our journey downwards.

The weather got worse while we were walking down, with a constant drizzle and mist.

In the birch forest between Gergeti Church and Stepantsminda, we managed to get good views of **Green Warbler**, **Caucasian Chiffchaff** and **Eurasian Bullfinch**. A **Ring Ouzel (*amicorum*)** was another nice addition to our list. Around 11:00 AM, we finally reached Stepantsminda.

After a good meal at the same 'babushka' of a few days earlier, we took a marshrutka (minibus) towards Tbilisi. It was a long ride through bad weather which gradually became better while we approached the capital.

At the Didube Bus Station we found a good minibus towards Batumi which would make an end to our roundtrip. The driver was quite crazy and the ride took ages, but eventually we made it to Sakhalvasho where we arrived at 10:00 PM. We walked up the road towards the Green Café where we met Rodami and Tomasj who knew Simon from the previous year. After a few beers and ofcourse some chacha, they let us sleep in the café itself! A good end to a tiring day.

DAY 16 - 33 – SEPTEMBER 14th – OCTOBER 1st

BATUMI

The rest of the trip was mainly spent on counting raptors for the Batumi Raptor Count project. I will not go into full detail about this part since the project is now widely known and a lot of info can be accessed using their website or Facebook page (see below).

Apart from the counting, the Chorokhi delta and harbor of Batumi (Batumi Park) itself were visited multiple times by us. The delta is very good for waders and waterfowl, but regarding passerines, Batumi Park is the real deal. Jonas, Sander and Simon found a **Paddyfield Warbler** at Batumi Park which later got ringed by the Dutch ringers Christian Brinkman, Lars Buckx and Bram Ubels. We could add some more species to the triplist including **Rosy Starling**, **Little Crake**, **Yelkouan Shearwater**, **Eurasian Stone-curlew** and so on.

During the counting, which is a massive experience, we saw a lot of good birds including **Steppe**, **Imperial** and **Greater Spotted Eagles**, a few selffound **Crested Honey Buzzards**, a **Great White Pelican** found by Jonas and so on. A groundbreaking project and worth participating in!

For more info:

<http://www.batimiraptorcount.org/>

...and on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/batimiraptorcount/?fref=ts>

DAY 34 - 35 – OCTOBER 2nd – 3th**BATUMI – ISTANBUL - BRUSSELS**

To travel back to Belgium, we booked a bus from Batumi to Istanbul where we had a flight from Sabiha Gökçen Airport. The busses are very comfortable and provide a good service. This whole trip (bus and flight) took us around 150 euros. It is worth checking if there are cheaper flights from Tbilisi or even Batumi since this used to be the cheapest option but prices are declining in recent years if travelling from the closer airports.

We could add one last new bird to our triplist! A **Eurasian Crane**, the only ‘normal crane’ of the trip, was seen circling above the landing strip of the airport while we were checking in.

TOTAL TRIPLIST

1.	Caucasian Grouse	
2.	Caucasian Snowcock	
3.	Caspian Snowcock	<i>caspius</i>
4.	Chukar Partridge	
5.	Grey Partridge	
6.	Common Quail	
7.	Ruddy Shelduck	
8.	Gadwall	
9.	Mallard	
10.	Northern Pintail	
11.	Northern Shoveler	
12.	Garganey	
13.	Eurasian Teal	
14.	Red-crested Pochard	
15.	Common Pochard	
16.	Ferruginous Duck	
17.	Tufted Duck	
18.	White-headed Duck	
19.	Yelkouan Shearwater	
20.	Little Grebe	
21.	Red-necked Grebe	
22.	Great Crested Grebe	
23.	Black-necked Grebe	
24.	Black Stork	
25.	White Stork	
26.	Eurasian Spoonbill	
27.	Glossy Ibis	
28.	Eurasian Bittern	
29.	Little Bittern	
30.	Black-crowned Night-heron	
31.	Squacco Heron	
32.	Western Cattle Egret	
33.	Grey Heron	
34.	Purple Heron	
35.	Great Egret	
36.	Little Egret	
37.	Great White Pelican	
38.	Pygmy Cormorant	
39.	Great Cormorant	
40.	Osprey	

41.	European Honey Buzzard	
42.	Crested Honey Buzzard	
43.	Black Kite	
44.	White-tailed Eagle	
45.	Bearded Vulture	
46.	Egyptian Vulture	
47.	Griffon Vulture	
48.	Eurasian Black Vulture	
49.	Short-toed Eagle	
50.	Western Marsh Harrier	
51.	Hen Harrier	
52.	Pallid Harrier	
53.	Montagu's Harrier	
54.	Levant Sparrowhawk	
55.	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	
56.	Goshawk	
57.	Steppe Buzzard	
58.	Long-legged Buzzard	
59.	Lesser Spotted Eagle	
60.	Greater Spotted Eagle	
61.	Steppe Eagle	
62.	Eastern Imperial Eagle	
63.	Golden Eagle	
64.	Booted Eagle	
65.	Lesser Kestrel	
66.	Common Kestrel	
67.	Eurasian Hobby	
68.	Red-footed Falcon	
69.	Saker Falcon	
70.	Peregrine Falcon	
71.	Water Rail	
72.	Little Crake	
73.	Common Moorhen	
74.	Eurasian Coot	
75.	Common Crane	
76.	Demoiselle Crane	
77.	Eurasian Stone-curlew	
78.	Eurasian Oystercatcher	
79.	Black-winged Stilt	
80.	Northern Lapwing	
81.	White-tailed Lapwing	
82.	European Golden Plover	
83.	Common Ringed Plover	
84.	Little Ringed Plover	
85.	Kentish Plover	
86.	Common Snipe	
87.	Great Snipe	
88.	Common Redshank	
89.	Spotted Redshank	
90.	Marsh Sandpiper	
91.	Common Greenshank	
92.	Green Sandpiper	
93.	Wood Sandpiper	
94.	Common Sandpiper	
95.	Black-tailed Godwit	

96.	Little Stint	
97.	Temminck's Stint	
98.	Dunlin	
99.	Ruff	
100.	Collared Pratincole	
101.	Black-winged Pratincole	
102.	Slender-billed Gull	
103.	Black-headed Gull	
104.	Little Gull	
105.	Caspian Gull	
106.	Yellow-legged Gull	
107.	Armenian Gull	
108.	Lesser Black-backed Gull	
109.	Sandwich Tern	
110.	Whiskered Tern	
111.	White-winged Tern	
112.	Wood Dove	
113.	Stock Dove	
114.	European Turtle Dove	
115.	Laughing Dove	
116.	Common Cuckoo	
117.	Little Owl	
118.	Scops Owl	
119.	European Nightjar	
120.	Common Swift	
121.	Alpine Swift	
122.	European Roller	
123.	Common Kingfisher	
124.	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	
125.	European Bee-eater	
126.	Eurasian Hoopoe	
127.	Eurasian Wryneck	
128.	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	
129.	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	
130.	Black Woodpecker	
131.	European Green Woodpecker	
132.	Sombre Tit	
133.	Coal Tit	
134.	Great Tit	
135.	Eurasian Blue Tit	
136.	Eurasian Penduline Tit	
137.	Bearded Reedling	
138.	Greater Short-toed Lark	
139.	Lesser Short-toed Lark	
140.	Crested Lark	
141.	Wood Lark	
142.	Horned Lark	
143.	Sand Martin	
144.	Eurasian Crag Martin	
145.	Barn Swallow	
146.	Common House Martin	
147.	Cetti's Warbler	
148.	Western Yellow Wagtail	
149.	Citrine Wagtail	
150.	Grey Wagtail	

151.	White Wagtail	
152.	Tawny Pipit	
153.	Meadow Pipit	
154.	Tree Pipit	
155.	Red-throated Pipit	
156.	Water Pipit	
157.	Ring Ouzel	
158.	Common Blackbird	
159.	Mistle Thrush	
160.	European Robin	
161.	Bluethroat	
162.	Thrush Nightingale	
163.	Black Redstart	
164.	Common Redstart	
165.	Güldenstädt's Redstart	
166.	Whinchat	
167.	Siberian Stonechat	
168.	Isabelline Wheatear	
169.	Northern Wheatear	
170.	Finsch's Wheatear	
171.	Red-tailed Wheatear	
172.	Eastern Black-eared Wheatear	
173.	Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin	
174.	Common Rock Thrush	
175.	Blue Rock Thrush	
176.	Spotted Flycatcher	
177.	Red-breasted Flycatcher	
178.	White-throated Dipper	
179.	Eurasian Wren	
180.	Alpine Accentor	
181.	Radde's Accentor	
182.	Long-tailed Tit	
183.	Common Chiffchaff	
184.	Willow Warbler	
185.	Mountain Chiffchaff	
186.	Green Warbler	
187.	Great Reed Warbler	
188.	Sedge Warbler	
189.	Paddyfield Warbler	
190.	Eurasian Reed Warbler	
191.	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	
192.	Upcher's Warbler	
193.	Savi's Warbler	
194.	Blackcap	
195.	Garden Warbler	
196.	Lesser Whitethroat	
197.	Eastern Orphean Warbler	
198.	Common Whitethroat	
199.	Menetries's Warbler	
200.	Eurasian Nuthatch	
201.	Western Rock Nuthatch	
202.	Eastern Rock Nuthatch	
203.	Wallcreeper	
204.	Short-toed Treecreeper	
205.	Red-backed Shrike	

206.	Lesser Grey Shrike	
207.	Woodchat Shrike	
208.	Eurasian Jay	
209.	Eurasian Magpie	
210.	Red-billed Chough	
211.	Hooded Crow	
212.	Eurasian Rook	
213.	Northern Raven	
214.	Western Jackdaw	
215.	Eurasian Rook	
216.	Rosy Starling	
217.	Golden Oriole	
218.	Common Chaffinch	
219.	European Serin	
220.	Red-fronted Serin	
221.	European Goldfinch	
222.	European Greenfinch	
223.	Twite	
224.	Common Linnet	
225.	Eurasian Crimson-winged Finch	
226.	Trumpeter Finch	
227.	Common Rosefinch	
228.	Great Rosefinch	
229.	Eurasian Bullfinch	
230.	House Sparrow	
231.	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	
232.	Rock Sparrow	
233.	Snowfinch	
234.	Corn Bunting	
235.	Rock Bunting	
236.	Grey-necked Bunting	
237.	Ortolan Bunting	
238.	Black-headed Bunting	
239.	Common Reed Bunting	