

# Two weekend trips to Nurota Mountains 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2021



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## **Nurota Mountains**

The Nurota Mountains (Uzbek: Nurota tog'lari, Russian: Нурата́у or Нурати́нский хребёт) is a mountain range located in Uzbekistan and constitutes one of the western buttresses of the Gissar Range. It borders Aydarkul Lake to the north, the town of Nurota to the west, the Kyzylkum Desert to the south, and the Sanzar river to the east. Stretching over 170 km in east–west direction it culminates in the 2169 m Mount Zargar. The range is composed chiefly of sandstone and limestone. It has a flat crest, a steep and rocky northern slope, and a gentle southern slope.



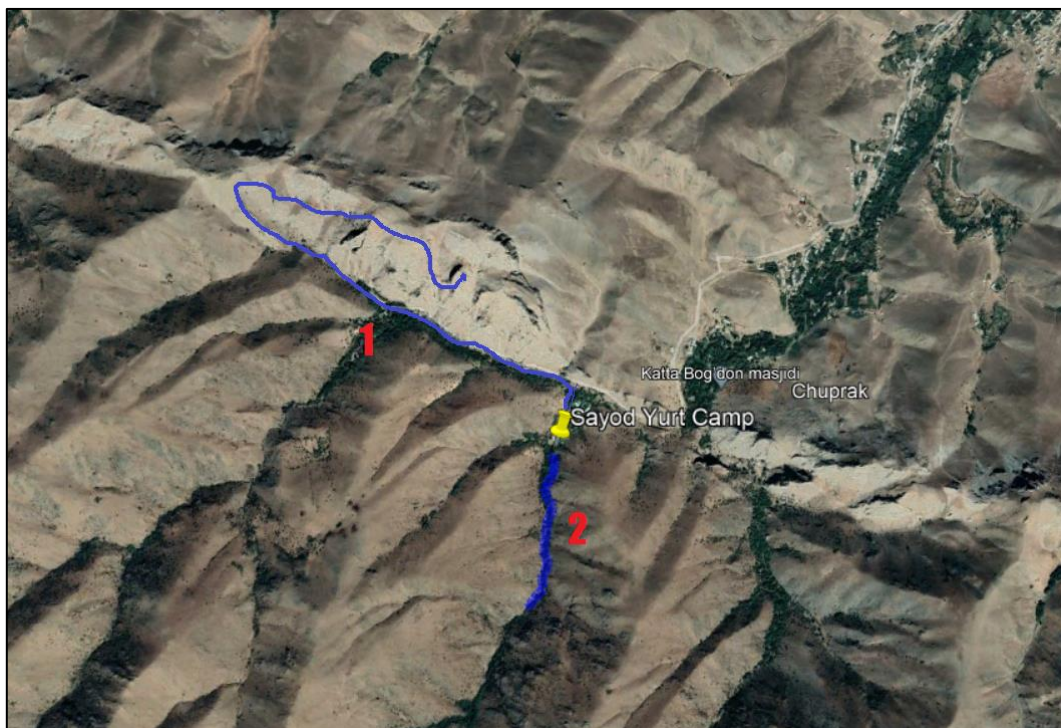
## **Sites**

### **1/Sayyod Yurt Camp**

The first one on 22nd-23rd of May, we visited the northern most range of the mountains. We went into a green valley a bit south of Forish. We went on two hikes around the place in addition of birding the Yurt Camp. The first hike **1** consisted simply in walking up the valley and turning back to reach the closest highest point. It is 3.5km long for about 130m of elevation gain. The highest point of the hike ranged at 1 114m. This hike was truly a raptor delight with no less than 7 species including Egyptian and Bearded Vultures. The first part were you walk among trees was teeming with singing Eastern Olivaceous Warblers while Red-headed Buntings were enlightening the higher part of the slopes. The second hike **2** was a there and back walk to a small waterfall where a pair of Blue Whistling Thrush was showing pretty well, probably alarming because of a nearby nest. During this hike, you'll also be able to connect with quite a lot of Indian Paradise Flycatchers. It's a pretty easy walk of about 700m long one way and 100m of elevation gain.

Birding in and around the Sayyod Yurt Camp was also pretty rewarding with 2 pairs of Indian Paradise Flycatchers, a singing Blyth's Reed Warbler, a Barred Warbler, a putative Arctic Warbler and an active nest of Indian Golden Oriole.

When the night comes, get ready for real festival from Nightjars and Scops Owls ! I'd advise to chill around the bonfire and scan the nearby trees with your headtorch. Guaranteed success !



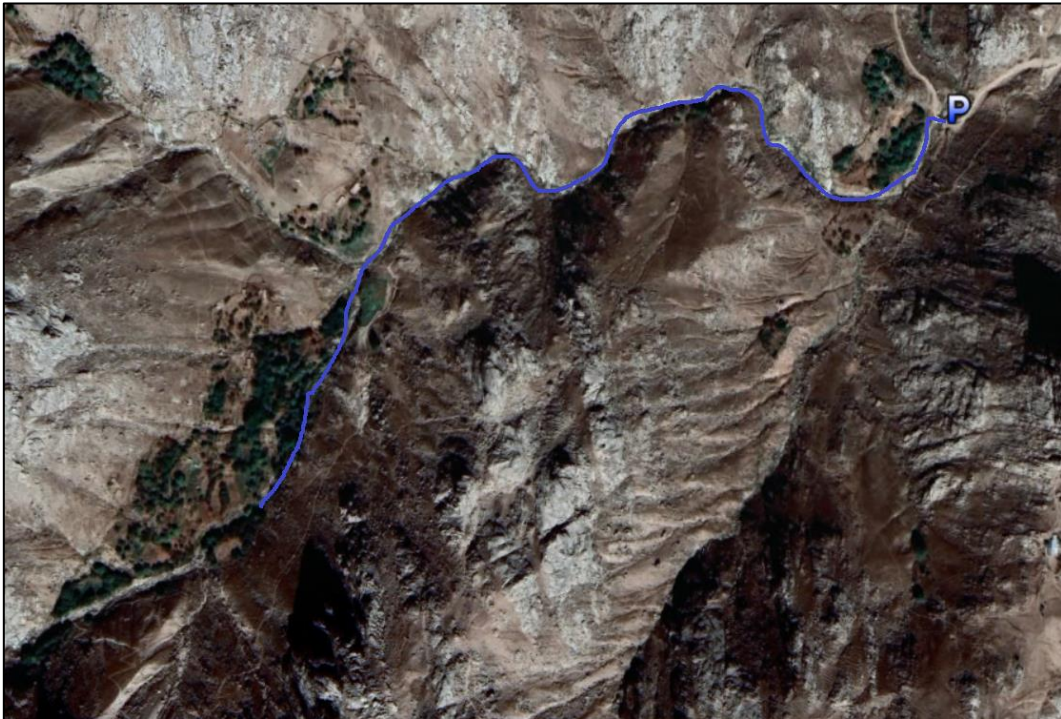


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## **2/ Langar**

The second site was visited on a day trip. As the final track to reach the parking spot is a bit rough, it would be advised to go there using a 4WD, but you could also park a bit before and walk. The parking spot is here : 40.413978, 65.983981. This hike is rather short with 1.6km and easy with around 250m of elevation gain. The highest reached point was just a little under 1 300m but the surrounding ridges elevates as high as 1 800. The diversity of birds was quite interesting all along the walk since you can encounter different habitats. Highlights included three vultures : Bearded, Cinereous and Egyptian, White-capped Bunting, loads of Red-rumped Swallows and a Blue Whistling Thrush.





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### **Accommodation**

The hotel booked for the first trip was Sayyod Yurt Camp. The price is not very low for the country but quite coherent with other touristic areas : around 600 000 sums. The owners speak pretty well English and are as always really friendly and welcoming. And food is pretty good for the uzbek standards !

I couldn't recommend more to choose this place as it is incredibly green and peaceful. The yurts are built in a small meadow near a slow flowing stream. There's a nearby woodland definitely worth birding !!

### **Books**

In order to prepare your trip, the best books to look for are:

Birds of Central Asia, Raffael Ayé, Manuel Schweizer, Tobias Roth.

Collins Bird Guide, Lars Svensson, Killian Mullarney & Dan Zetterström.

### **Website**

<https://birds.uz/>

<https://uzbekistan.birds.watch/>

[https://uzbekistan.observation.org/user/view/127700?q=&akt=0&g=0&from=2021-02-19&to=2022-02-19&prov=0&z=0&sp=0&gb=0&method=0&cdna=0&f=0&m=K&zeker=O&month=0&rows=80&only\\_hidden=0&zoektext=0&tag=0&plum=0&from=2021-05-22&to=2021-05-23&q=&zoektext=0&g=0&z=0&month=0&prov=0&m=K&zeker=O&rows=80&only\\_hidden=0](https://uzbekistan.observation.org/user/view/127700?q=&akt=0&g=0&from=2021-02-19&to=2022-02-19&prov=0&z=0&sp=0&gb=0&method=0&cdna=0&f=0&m=K&zeker=O&month=0&rows=80&only_hidden=0&zoektext=0&tag=0&plum=0&from=2021-05-22&to=2021-05-23&q=&zoektext=0&g=0&z=0&month=0&prov=0&m=K&zeker=O&rows=80&only_hidden=0)

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## PERSONNAL ANNOTATED BIRD LIST (51 species)

Taxonomic order follows IOC World Bird List version 11.1

### North range/Sayyod Yurt Camp (43 species)

**Chukar Partridge** - *Alectoris chukar subpallida*

**European Nightjar** - *Caprimulgus europaeus sarudnyi*

One male was actively singing in the Yurt camp after dark.

**Common Cuckoo** - *Cuculus canorus subtelephonus*

**Common Wood Pigeon** - *Columba palumbus casiotis*

**Bearded Vulture** - *Gypaetus barbatus aureus*

One amazingly beautiful adult was seen soaring over the ridge for a few minutes before going on.

**Egyptian Vulture** - *Neophron percnopterus percnopterus*

**Griffon Vulture** - *Gyps fulvus fulvus*

**Himalayan Griffon** – *Gyps himalayensis*

An adult bird was spotted by the rest of the group on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. That's a very interesting record outside of its usual Himalayan range !

**Golden Eagle** - *Aquila chrysaetos daphanea*

Only one brief sighting before we arrived at the Yurt Camp on the first day.

**Shikra** - *Accipiter badius cenchroides*

A pair was fighting/displaying over the valley during the hike on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** - *Accipiter nisus nisus*

**Eurasian Scops Owl** - *Otus scops pulchellus*

A strict minimum of 5 singing males brightened our night around the bonfire with some of them even come pretty close on open branches !

**European Roller** - *Coracias garrulus semenowi*

**European Bee-eater** - *Merops apiaster*

**Eurasian Hobby** - *Falco Subbuteo subbuteo*

**Indian Golden Oriole** - *Oriolus kundoo*

A pair was nesting just above the camp, actively feeding hatchlings.

**Indian Paradise Flycatcher** - *Terpsiphone paradisi leucogaster*

This wonder was luckily fairly common wherever there are trees ! Such a delight, but incredibly shy and thus difficult to take in picture !

**Eurasian Magpie** - *Pica pica bactriana*

**Carrion Crow** - *Corvus corone orientalis*

**Turkestan Great Tit** - *Parus major bokharensis*

**Barn Swallow** - *Hirundo rustica rustica*

**Greenish Warbler** - *Phylloscopus trochiloides viridanus*

Heard and seen here and there throughout the trip.

**(Arctic Warbler** - *Phylloscopus borealis*)

A putative bird almost checked all boxes for Arctic Warbler but the observation was too brief and this bird still remains rarely observed in the country but should show up...

**Blyth's Reed Warbler** - *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

A male was singing in the bushes right in front of our yurt !

**Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** - *Iduna pallida elaeica*

Fairly common, singing in the trees during the first part of the hike on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.



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**Barred Warbler** - *Curruca nisoria merzbacheri*

One bird foraging in the bushes and trees right in front of our yurt.

**Hume's Whitethroat** - *Curruca althaea*

One male was singing on a bushy slope during the hike on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Eastern Rock Nuthatch** - *Sitta tephronota tephronota*

**Common Myna** - *Acridotheres tristis tristis*

**Common Blackbird** - *Turdus merula intermedius*

**Mistle Thrush** - *Turdus viscivorus bonapartei*

**Spotted Flycatcher** - *Muscicapa striata sarudnyi*

**Common Nightingale** - *Luscinia megarhynchos golzii*

**Blue Whistling Thrush** - *Myophonus caeruleus temminckii*

One pair of this amazing species was strongly alarming near the waterfall : 40.323, 67.233.



**Pied Wheatear** - *Oenanthe pleschanka*

**Rock Sparrow** - *Petronia petronia intermedia*

**House Sparrow** - *Passer domesticus indicus*

**White Wagtail** - *Motacilla alba personata*

**Tawny Pipit** - *Anthus campestris*

**European Goldfinch** - *Carduelis carduelis caniceps*

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**Red-headed Bunting - *Emberiza bruniceps***



**White-capped Bunting - *Emberiza stewartia***

A male was seen perched on the wires in front of the Yurt Camp by the rest of the group.

**Rock Bunting – *Emberiza cia par***

**REPTILES**

**European Glass Lizard - *Pseudopus apodus***



## **South Range/Langar (30 species)**

**Alpine Swift** - *Tachymarptis melba tuneti*

A floco of 16 birds was spotted foraging over the ridge nearby the river.

**Common Wood Pigeon** - *Columba palumbus casiotis*

**Bearded Vulture** - *Gypaetus barbatus aureus*

We were directly welcomed by a thermal of a Bearded Vulture and two Cinereous Vulture, what a start !!

Then, there were numerous observations of different birds flying over the valley.

**Egyptian Vulture** - *Neophron percnopterus percnopterus*

**Griffon Vulture** - *Gyps fulvus fulvus*

**Cinereous Vulture** - *Aegypius monachus*

We were directly welcomed by a thermal of a Bearded Vulture and two Cinereous Vulture, what a start !!

**Booted Eagle** - *Hieraaetus pennatus*



**Shikra** - *Accipiter badius cenchroides*

Only seen flying over.

**Eurasian Hoopoe** - *Upupa epops epops*

**European Bee-eater** - *Merops apiaster*

**Common Kestrel** - *Falco tinnunculus tinnunculus*

**Eurasian Golden Oriole** - *Oriolus oriolus*

**Western Jackdaw** - *Coloeus monedula soemmerringii*

**Red-rumped Swallow** - *Cecropis daurica rufula*

Two birds were seen foraging at the beginning of the valley.

**Greenish Warbler** - *Phylloscopus trochiloides viridanus*

A lonely bird was foraging in the bushes above the biggest waterfall.

**Blyth's Reed Warbler** - *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

One singing male was heard near the pastures above the biggest waterfall.

**Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** - *Iduna pallida elaeica*

Two males were singing while we were going back down to our car.

**Eastern Rock Nuthatch** - *Sitta tephronota tephronota*



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**Common Myna** - *Acridotheres tristis tristis*

**Common Starling** - *Sturnus vulgaris porphyronotus*

**Common Blackbird** - *Turdus merula intermedius*

**Mistle Thrush** - *Turdus viscivorus bonapartei*

**Spotted Flycatcher** - *Muscicapa striata sarudnyi*

**Common Nightingale** - *Luscinia megarhynchos golzii*

**Blue Whistling Thrush** - *Myophonus caeruleus temminckii*

Only one bird was seen above the biggest waterfall flying away from us without showing itself again.

**Pied Wheatear** - *Oenanthe pleschanka*

**House Sparrow** - *Passer domesticus indicus*

**Grey Wagtail** - *Motacilla cinerea cinerea*

**European Goldfinch** - *Carduelis carduelis caniceps*

**White-capped Bunting** - *Emberiza stewarti*

A striking male was seen wandering around a bush along the river, followed by a female bathing in the highest part of the hike in the suspended valley.

