Russia: Altai Mountains
June-July 2013
Sander Bot
Introduction

In June 2013 the 7th International Symposium on Syrphidae (Hoverflies) was held in Novosibirsk. A few days collecting at Lake Teletskoye were also included in the program. A group of participants thought it would be nice to extend our stay and visit other places in the Altai mountains as well. Despite the fact that we are all entomologists mainly interested in hoverflies some of us are bird watchers as well. So besides collecting insects we were keen on seeing birds as well. However, since collecting was our main goal, birds came often on second place, so assume to see more if you do this trip with bird watching as the main goal. If you go for bird watching I would suggest another itinerary as well. We spent a long time on relatively low altitude, and only one night in a mountain hut. One also need clearly less time in the Russian Altai than we took. If going this long crossing the Mongolian border is probably a good idea.

Logistics

The first few days of the trip we stayed at Lake Teletskoye, and since this was part of the symposium this was organised for us. We booked the rest of the trip with www.sibalp.com. Taking a tour operator might be a good idea. If you don’t speak Russian it is hard to arrange permits, find hotels or to arrange taxi’s, meals etc.. Public transport seems to be limited in the mountains. Since we concentrated on the hoverflies we did not hire a bird guide. I don’t think Sibalp can offer specialised bird guides though. If you want to hire a bird guide as well, you could contact http://www.rubythroatbirding.com/. At Seminski-Pass we met a Belgian group of bird watchers with Elena as a bird guide. She seemed to be very knowledgeable and spoke good English, and works for rubythroatbirding: http://www.rubythroatbirding.com/index.php/rbt-tour-leaders.html. Sibalp did a good job. First, the minibuses were Japanese made and not Russian made UAZ, so we could drive normal speed, without stopping every 15 minutes to cool down the engine. We asked them to organise all hotels and meals etc., and they did a good job, and the cars never broke down. The only disadvantage: if you want several near death experiences a day take director Sergei as a driver. In the mountains it was OK, but on the busy M52 towards Novosibirsk we could have multiple youtube hits if we would have filmed that trip. Not only Sergei was driving crazy, the rest of the Russians as well.

If you are really adventurous, this trip could likely be done entirely on your own without an operator. If you can rent a 4WD vehicle in Barnaul, figure out how to get the needed travel visa, and get some decent maps you would likely not even need to speak Russian if you are prepared to camp. The Altai is a popular camping area and we saw people camped along all of the major rivers. It is clearly the way that Russians get around in this area and there are enough small towns to easily find ample groceries, etc.

Participants

At Lake Teletskoye we were with many people from the symposium. Onwards we were with a group of 14 people, some not interested in birds at all, others being keen birders: André van Eck, Chris Palmer, Dieter Doczkal, Esther van den Heuvel, Gerard Pennards, Gisella Merkel-Wallner, Jeff Skevington, Jeroen van Steenis, John Smit, Marjolein, Menno Reemer, Menno van Zuijen, Sander Bot, Theo Zeegers.

Literature

On the internet there are a few trip reports covering the Altai on www.cloudbirders.com. There is no proper bird guide covering the Russian Altai. Birds of Central Asia by Ayé, Schweizer and Roth (2012) covers the Kazakh side of the Altai mountains though. This is a good field guide, and works fine for the Russian Altai as well: all birds we saw, except Rufous-tailed Robin, were covered by that book. It was however sometimes unreliable to trust the Kazakh side of the Altai for what to expect in the Russian part. For instance, the following species were seen by us in the Russian Altai, but are not on the maps for the Kazakh Altai: Himalayan Vulture, Cinereous Vulture, Wallcreeper, Godlewski’s Bunting, Red-throated Thrush and Grey-necked Bunting.
Trip Summary
June 19: Novosibirsk
June 19-22: Symposium south of Novosibirsk
June 23-26: Lake Teletskoye
June 27: Lake Teletskoye → Seminski-Pass
June 28-29: Seminski-Pass
June 30: Seminski-Pass → Aktash
July 1: Aktash
July 2-3: Aktru Mountains
July 4: Kosh-Agach
July 5: Aktash → Barnaul
July 6: Barnaul → Novosibirsk

Daily log
June 19 Novosibirsk
We arrived in the evening at the airport of Novosibirsk after a long flight form Khabarovsk (http://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/BOT_Russia_06_2013.pdf). Pacific Swifts were flying around the airport. Fortunately there was a bus organised by the symposium waiting for us to bring us to a downtown hostel. At dusk we crossed the Ob River near the city centre (1). Despite the near dark I was quite sure that I saw Pallas's Gull flying over the highway near the river. I knew where to go for a pre-breakfast birding tomorrow morning!

(1) 55° 1.284'N 82° 53.605'O

June 20 Novosibirsk
As promised yesterday, we (Jeff, Jeroen and I) were at the bridge (1) at first light. Soon we saw gulls flying over the Ob River, most of them being ‘Steppe Gulls’ (Ssp barabensis of Lesser Black-backed Gull) but also Pallas’s Gulls indeed! Fantastic birds. We found a small sand bank in the river (2) with roosting gulls: 50 Steppe Gulls and 10 Pallas’s Gulls. Along the river here (west bank, north of the bridge) also 5 Citrine Wagtails and 2 males beema Yellow Wagtails. In the trees on the other side of the bridge (3) we found singing Blyth’s Reed Warbler, Siberian Chiffchaff and Greenish Warbler. Among some 20 Common Swifts we found 1 Pacific Swift. Most remarkable, when back at the hostel (4), we heard a song coming from the roof of a block of flats. It sounded a bit like a Black Redstart but it was different. After some searching we found it on the antenna of the flat: a Bluethroat! In the middle of town with only flats, not the habitat we are used to find them. Anyway, after breakfast a bus was waiting for us to bring us to Sosnovka Hotel (5), some 30km southeast of Novosibirsk. Here the symposium was held for the upcoming days. The hotel was situated in quite unattractive dry pine forest.

(2) 55° 1.418'N 82° 53.201'O
(3) 55° 1.152'N 82° 53.569'O
(4) 55° 1.624'N 82° 54.613'O
(5) 54° 47.594'N 83° 6.074'O
June 21 & 22  around Sosnovka Hotel
Before, in between and after the talks there was time to explore the pine woods. Not a place I would recommend to visit for bird watching, a wood like this produces mainly birds also common in Europe. We still managed to see some interesting birds though: *Hooded Crow, Icterine Warbler, Siberian Rubythroat, Greenish Warbler* (very common), *Siberian Chiffchaff* (abundant), *Common Rosefinch, Blyth’s Reed Warbler, Dusky Warbler, Redwing* (singing), *Fieldfare, Pied Flycatcher, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Common Cuckoo, Oriental Turtle Dove, Oriental Cuckoo* and *phoenicuroides Black Redstart*. Few of us saw 2 *Common Cranes* and 1 *Eurasian Wryneck* near Berdsk along Shadriha river at (6). In the evening of the 22nd we went in a bus for an overnight ride to Lake Teletskoye.

(6) 54°46’ N 83°09’ E

June 23 - 26  Lake Teletskoye
A very early start of the day at 2 AM or so when the bus got a flat tire in the middle of nowhere (7). Good for singing *Thrush Nightingale* and also *Common Quail* was heard here before the tire was replaced. We arrived in the morning at Lake Teletskoye. The university of Novosibirsk has accommodation here (8) and we were placed in cosy houses without running water. From here we would explore the nearby area for hoverflies. The sun was shining, the fields were full of flowers and interesting hilltops held rare hoverflies, so we collected very good numbers of hover flies here. That’s good for the collection, but not for the bird list. Still we did see a good selection of birds. First, few of us were lucky to find *Ural Owl* (9) in the middle of the day. Searches afterwards on the same spot failed. The lake itself was of little interest, no ducks or whatsoever on the lake. Alongside the lake *personata White Wagtail* was common. On the property I saw *Taiga Flycatcher* once. We were mainly catching on the fields directly near the lake, or catching on hilltops north of the lake, in the woods behind our accommodation. It was on our walks to the hilltops that we saw some good birds: we heard, but frustratingly just couldn’t see *Siberian Jay, Hazel grouse* (thanks to some chicks this one is now on the touch-list), *Lanceolated Warbler, Hume’s Warbler, Siberian Blue Robin, Oriental Turtle Dove, Black Stork, Upland Buzzard, Oriental Cuckoo, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Olive-
backed Pipit, Crested Honey Buzzard, Dusky Warbler, Booted Warbler, Black Woodpecker, Red-flanked Bluetail, Eversmann's Redstart, Three-toed Woodpecker (heard drumming only) and Black-throated Thrush. I sound recorded twice a Rufous-tailed Robin in the forest. From a bird watchers perspective I don’t think it is necessary to stay four days here, one might even skip the lake. It’s a nice place, but the hills are too low to produce Altai specialties.

Collecting near Lake Teletskoye, June 23, Sander Bot

(7) 52° 18.371'N  85° 49.714'O
(8) 51° 47.650'N  87° 18.262'O
(9) 51° 48.075'N  87° 18.391'O

**June 27  Lake Teletskoye → Seminski-Pass**

In the morning we were picked up by two minibuses by our tour operator sibalp. Our destination was Seminski-Pass, but we also had to stop in Gorno-Altaysk, to arrange our visa. During the drive from Lake Teletskoye to Gorno-Altaysk we saw 1 Pacific Swift, Carrion and Hooded Crows and Red-backed Shrike from the bus. In Gorno-Altaysk we had to wait near the bus while sibalp arranged our visa. This should cost 1,5 to 2 hours. After a funny 4 hours wait we finally had our visa. Most interesting sighting from the bus drive to Seminski-Pass was an Eastern Imperial Eagle (10). We arrived just before dusk at the hotel at Seminski-Pass (11), and while getting our bags from the bus we saw a handsome pair of Pine Grosbeaks. Hotel was good, the food served less good, once the menu was boiled cow tongue with buckwheat, not even edible to most of those who had hiked over 30km that day!

(10) 51° 21.541'N  85° 40.307'O
(11) 51° 2.308'N  85° 35.579'O
June 28  Seminski-Pass

Our goal for today was to reach the top of Sarlyk Mountain (12). We left at 6AM and only Jeff went up even more early, being rewarded with Pallas’s Rosefinch just on the hotel grounds! We crossed the highway, and walked in eastern direction. The walk goes through fields and fairly open coniferous forest. At around (13) we found Citrine Wagtail and Sulphur-bellied Warbler. Bluethroat and Black-throated Thrush were common. At (14) the trail kind of ends, and just northeast of it there is a small ridge, good for our first mountain species: 2 Himalayan Accentors, Eversmann’s Redstart and 3 Plain Mountain Finches. From the ridge we walked further east into the treeless valley, where we flushed a Swinhoe’s Snipe and saw a Himalayan Vulture flying past. From here the plan was to climb Sarlyk Mountain, but this proved to be a bit ambitious for some of us, the ones that did were rewarded with a breeding female Willow Grouse, they nearly stepped on her. After collecting hover flies in the valley (15), we made our way back again, first stop being (16) were we saw our first Black-throated Accentor of the trip. The long but beautiful walk back to the hotel produced 1 Cinereous Vulture, 1 male Hen Harrier, 3 Booted Eagles including a displaying pair, Spotted Nutcrackers, Hume’s Warblers, Siberian Stonechats, personata White Wagtails and Water Pipits. The valley contains quite some Bluethroats and several Pine Grosbeaks were seen.

(12) 51° 4.554’N  85° 44.175’O
(13) 51° 2.710’N  85° 39.072’O
(14) 51° 3.197’N  85° 41.312’O
(15) 51° 3.488’N  85° 41.927’O
(16) 51° 3.577’N  85° 41.426’O

June 29  Seminski-Pass

Another full day at the pass. Today I was the one getting up very early, I wanted Pallas’s Rosefinch too! I walked the pine forest around the hotel for a few hours, but no rosefinch. I did see many Spotted Nutcrackers, and quite a few Grey-headed Chickadees (the name for Siberian Tit following worldbirdnames.org) though. The best however was an adult Ural Owl roosting in a pine tree (17). I knew some of the group would like to see the bird, so I dared to wake them up, and just before
breakfast we went back, fortunately the bird was still there. Hurrying back to be in time for breakfast we found my wished for Pallas’s Rosefinches as well, fantastic! After breakfast everybody was free to go, and by the end of the day we had seen quite some birds while collecting hoverflies. First, three times a family party of Siberian Jays was seen (18, 19), in one occasion the tame and approachable birds could be followed as long as wished for in the open pine forest. Spot 18 also produced singing Olive-backed Pipit. During the day more Ural Owls were found, near the same spot as in the morning, among 2 adults at least 3 juveniles were seen, showing very well. The forest here is packed with Black-throated Thrushes, Spotted Nutcrackers, Hume’s Warblers and Siberian Chiffchaffs. At the entrance of the hotel ‘Eastern Goldfinch’ showed well. Esther and Theo found a 2 Eastern Imperial Eagles, 3 Kestrels and a Northern Goshawk a few km southwest of the hotel. They got here chasing 4 Cinereous Vultures attracted by the cattle farm over there, that went to and fro, up and down. Finally, one went down, presumably to land (out of sight). The field between the highway and the hotel holds different Steppe Buzzards, some look quite different from the book, I identified them from Upland Buzzard only by size. Upland Buzzard was seen by some of us here as well. Pallas’s Grasshopper Warbler was heard at the big field in front of the hotel and in the bushes just northwest of the hotel complex. Golden Eagle and black-throated Accentor were seen somewhere half way to Sarlyk Mountain. Several Swinhoe’s Snipe were heard and seen in a wetland just east of the resort.

June 30  Seminski-Pass → Aktash
Early bird watching with Jeff. He discovered a productive birding site yesterday: at the other side of the highway there is a spot where there are still some patches of snow, attracting feeding passerines (18). We were not disappointed: 4 Pallas’s Rosefinches and 2 Pine Grosbeaks. Richard’s Pipit was singing above the field near the highway. Today we left Seminski-Pass, but not before having breakfast, which proved to be a productive one since we met a group of Belgian birders. They gave us valuable information, including a spot for Godlewski’s Bunting. Our destination was Aktash, and there was time for stops underway. Our first stop was for a couple of Demoiselle Cranes (20). Next stop was not much further (21) and we walked the slopes north of the road, here are some petroglyphs as well, don’t know whether they were genuine. Anyway, birds seen here: singing Ortolan Buntings, 6 Pied Wheatears, 3 Northern Wheatears, 2 Isabelline Wheatears, 1 Common Rock Thrush, 2 Eastern Imperial Eagles and a Hoopoe. Before our next stop we saw Lesser Kestrels from the bus. Second stop was a tip from our Belgian friends (22). This is a parking place with a green truck as a monument. Down the parking lot is a field where the Belgians found Meadow Bunting, but since we just saw them in the Far East earlier this month we concentrated on the other side of the road. This is a steep rocky slope were the Belgians saw Godlewski’s Bunting. We were very happy to find them as well, two singing males. One just next to the parking lot, the other one a few 100m further north along the road, by taking the steep path from the parking place, parallel to the road. Many Ortolan Buntings, a Grey-necked Bunting and a distant Pine Bunting (too distant to exclude hybrid) here as well. Here we also saw an adult Peregrine Falcon trying to steel prey from a Black Kite, without success. We arrived in the afternoon in Aktash. After checking in in our hotel there was time to do some hover fly collecting. We drove a bit further along the M52 and stopped at a parking lot at (23). Just a few 100 meters further along the road there is a meadow east of the road, where some of us saw Pine Bunting. In Aktash we soon found out that phoenicuroides Black Redstart is common and we saw a Hoopoe.
July 1  Aktash
I took a pre-breakfast stroll around Aktash. From the village I crossed the highway and the big field south of the road. I crossed the bridge and followed a path along the forest edge in eastern direction. At (24) I found a hybrid **Pine Bunting x Yellowhammer**, although it resembled a pure Pine Bunting: [http://observado.org/waarneming/view/77398400](http://observado.org/waarneming/view/77398400). A second bird was singing, but I had no time to check that one out. At the same place I had brief views of a female **Long-tailed Rosefinch**. Other birds seen during the walk: 1 **Citrine Wagtail**, 2 **Ruddy Shelducks**, 10 **Ortolan Buntings** and 5 **Siberian Stonechats**. After breakfast we went exploring the mountains north of Aktash. From Aktash we took the road north (the road starts at 25). First the road goes through a gorge, where we saw **White-throated Dipper**. Hereafter we passed some lakes which produced a pair of **Ruddy Shelducks** with chicks, 5 **Tufted Ducks**, 10 **White-winged Scoters** and a **Common Goldeneye**. We stopped at the pass at an elevation of 2080 meters (26). The pass and surroundings are all pine forest. While it started to rain we walked the forest around the pass. I liked our **White's Thrush** observation the most. We didn’t even see it, but the song is just awesome for a thrush: [http://www.xeno-canto.org/148533](http://www.xeno-canto.org/148533). Kind of random walking through the forest in by now pouring rain resulted in **Pallas’s Rosefinch** (by Esther & Theo), **Pine Grosbeak**, a couple of **Evermann’s Redstarts**, **Black-throated Accentor**, **Grey-headed Chickadee** and **Olive-backed Pipit**. On a rare dry moment, an **Upland Buzzard** soared over. Soaking wet, we decided to have coffee in the next village (26). Jeff waited outside and witnessed a flock of **Sand Martins** including a **Pale Martin** flying by. Fortunately we found two other birds upon leaving the village. In some light conditions id seems easy, in other conditions I found it quite difficult to identify, not the greatest addition to the list. After some 7km driving from the village back to Aktash we stopped for some collecting, and found 10 **Demoiselle Cranes**, a **Red-tailed Shrike** and an alarming **Green Sandpiper** in the fields.
July 2  Aktru Mountains
Today is the day we all looked forward to. We finally went up high, to the Aktru Mountains. Here we hoped to find mountain specialties, both in birds and hover flies. We were picked up early in the morning by a Russian army truck who drove us up to Aktru Camp (28). The camp is situated amongst the pines in an over 2100m high valley, surrounded by mountains. From here one can go to two different glaciers, most of us went to the big one. After leaving the treeline (29) the path goes a few kilometres up towards the glacier (30). During this walk we twice saw a Wallcreeper flying past, a male and a female (31). We walked up the glacier for a while, but this seemed quite dangerous, so soon we returned. We explored the base of the glacier (30) seeing some mountain specialties: 1 Brown Accentor, 10 Himalayan Accentors, 3 Plain Mountain Finches, 4 Spotted Great Rosefinches and many Black Redstarts. We were happy with these finds, but it was clear that we were not finished yet: we also hoped for Brandt’s Mountain Finch, Asian Rosy Finch and Altai Snowcock.
July 3  Aktru Mountains
This was the only morning during the whole trip that we could be high in the mountains early in the morning. So Jeff and I decided we wanted to be at 3000m at sunrise to maximize our chances on the only real prize bird here, Altai Snowcock. The day before we picked a seemingly suitable slope, and this morning we left at 4AM. From the camp in the pines we took a path straight up. Unfortunately we don’t have GPS coordinates of the start of the path, but it is the only clear path steep up from the camp to north-western slopes. The path started among the small settlement on the west side of the river and the path is clearly visible on the slope seen from the valley. The photo below is also helpful: the path starts between building 1 and 2. The path is very steep, so we gained height very quickly. When we were at 2600m the sun came above the top, shining on our slope. Jeff commented that this would be a nice moment for the snowcocks to become active, and only minutes later a flock of 7 Altai Snowcocks (32) called, and flew over our heads! We had good looks and felt very, very lucky! The group flew southwest and disappeared behind a ridge we couldn’t reach. That was it, no other signs of snowcocks the rest of the morning. After this relief we were more relaxed, and we soon found flocks of finches flying around. It was difficult to get good views of the finches because they landed often far away or out of view. However, after a couple of hours we identified 10 Plain Mountain Finches, 30 Brandt’s Mountain Finches, 10 Asian Rosy Finches and 2 Spotted Great Rosefinches. 8 Alpine Choughs and some 15 Himalayan Accentors here as well. We walked to the top, nearly 3000m high, which gave breath-taking views (33). The rest of the morning and early afternoon was spent collecting hover flies. Esther & Theo found Bearded Vulture and Menno R. came back to the camp with pictures of a male Red-throated Thrush on his camera, not too bad! He
was also lucky enough to spot a wolf on the snowcock-mountain slope yesterday. We left the camp at 3PM with the same army truck, back to Aktash.

(32) 50° 5.546’N  87° 46.283’O
(33) 50° 5.701’N  87° 45.815’O

Poor map of part of Aktru Camp. Path to Snowcock starts between building 1 and 2.

Small steppe near Aktash, July 3, Sander Bot
July 4  Kosh-Agach

Today we visited the steppe near Kosh-Agach, not far from the Mongolian Border. We drove straight to the village, and after a late breakfast and seeing two Red-billed Choughs above the village we went out for an hour on the steppe along the highway where there were some lakes as well (34). The lakes produced Common and Red-crested Pochard and Horned Grebe with young. Along the lakes we saw brandti Horned Larks, 2 Mongolian Finches, Richard’s, Little Ringed Plovers and Tawny Pipits and we flushed a Spotted Crake. It started to rain, so we went back to Kosh-Agach for a coffee and lunch. After the rain stopped we went back into the field, this time on the edge of the steppe at (35). Here was a small group of Western Jackdaws present along the river, including a hybrid with Daurian Jackdaw and a bird looking fine for a pure Daurian Jackdaw, except that the white colouration was a bit dirty white: http://observado.org/waarneming/view/79020913. At the other side of the road, in the dry hills and in a riverbed, we saw different Mongolian Finches, a stunning summer plumage male Common Rock Thrush, Red-tailed Shrike, long-tailed Rosefinch and a Twite (36).

(34) 50° 1.078’N  88° 38.608’O
(35) 50° 4.294’N  88° 24.681’O
(36) 50° 4.420’N  88° 25.243’O
July 5  Aktash → Barnaul
Today we left the Altai Mountains. In the first hours we saw 4 Demoiselle Cranes male Red-footed Falcon and a Eurasian Crag Martin from the bus. Our first stop on the drive back was at a restaurant at (37). An Upland Buzzard was sitting on the road, an Eastern Imperial Eagle flew past and around the few buildings there, a group of 54 Hill Pigeons was flying around. In the electricity poles at least 8 Lesser Kestrels were present. Once out of the mountains there was a long flat road to Barnaul, without notable birds.

(37) 50° 24.343’N  86° 42.086’O

July 6  Barnaul → Novosibirsk
Our final full day in Russia, we had to drive back to Novosibirsk. There was time to stop for collecting hoverflies, we did so southwest of Talmenka, near a river at (38). We did see not too many birds here: beema Yellow Wagtail, 4 Black Storks circling above the forest and hybrids Pine Bunting/ Yellowhammer. In Novosibirsk we stayed in a downtown hotel, with Pacific Swift flying above it. The next morning we were on early flights back home.

(38) 50° 24.343’N  86° 42.086’O
Trip list

**Willow Grouse** *Lagopus lagopus*
28: 1 female at a nest near Seminski-Pass.

**Hazel Grouse** *Tetrastes bonasia*
24: Male in forest near Lake Teletskoye
25: 5 in forest near Lake Teletskoye, including 2 small chicks

**Altai Snowcock** *Tetraogallus altaicus*
3: Highlight of the trip, group of 7 seen well flying past in the Aktru Mountains.

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*
1: 2 birds flying past at Aktash.
1: 13 at the lakes north of Aktash.
2: 2 on our way to Aktru.
3: 6 between Aktru and Aktash.
4: 2 at the steppe near Kosh-Agach.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera*
4: 6 at the lakes near Kosh-Agach.
**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*
4: 8 at the lakes near Kosh-Agach.

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina*
4: 2 at the lakes near Kosh-Agach.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*
1: 13 at the lakes north of Aktash.
4: 15 at the lakes near Kosh-Agach.

**White-winged Scoter** *Melanitta deglandi*
4: 14 at the lakes near Kosh-Agach.

**Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*
1: 1 at the lakes north of Aktash.

**Horned Grebe** *Podiceps auritus*
4: Pair with young at the lakes near Kosh-Agach.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*
4: 3 at the lakes near Kosh-Agach.

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*
24: 1 at Lake Teletskoye.
2,4: Along the river not far east from Aktash along the M52.
6: 4 above the forest between Barnaul and Novosibirsk.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*
Common.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*
30: 1 adult near the green truck monument before Aktash.
5: Along the M52 west of Aktash.

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni*
30, 5: Between Seminski-Pass and Aktash we drove several times past groups of kestrels. Twice we had the opportunity to check them and they were as expected Lesser Kestrels.
4: 5 near the Kosh-Agach steppe.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*
Common.

**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*
20: Near Sosnovka Hotel, south of Novosibirsk.
30: West of Aktash.

**Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus*
5: From the minibus west of Aktash.

**Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*
5: 1 near Barnaul.
**Himalayan Vulture** *Gyps himalayensis*
28: 1 juvenile flying past at Seminski-Pass.

**Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus*
28: 1 at Seminski-Pass.
29: 4 at Seminski-Pass. There is a cattle farm nearby, attracting the vultures.

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**Bearded Vulture** *Gypaetus barbatus*
3: 1 Mount Aktru.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*
Very common.
Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*
25: 1 near Lake Teletskoye.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*
28: 1 male at Seminski-Pass.
29: A male and a female at Seminski-Pass.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*
Seen of 5 days.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*
29: at Seminski-Pass.

Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus*
Common.

Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*
23: 1, Lake Teletskoye.
28, 29: 1 Seminski-Pass.
1: Pass north of Aktash
4: 1 near Kosh-Agach.
5: 1 west of Aktash.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*
29: 1 at Seminski-Pass.

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*
27, 5: 1 in the Altai Foothills along the M52.
29: 2 at Seminski-Pass.
30: 2 west of Aktash.
**Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus*
Seen at 6 days with a maximum of 3 throughout the Altai.

**Demoiselle Crane** *Grus virgo*
30: 4 west of Aktash.
1: 14 north of Aktash.
3: 2 near Aktash.
4: 4 near Kosh-Agach.
5: 4 west of Aktash.

![Demoiselle Crane, June 30, west of Aktash, Menno Reemer.](image)

**Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana*
4: 1 flushed along a marsh near Kosh-Agach.

**Common Coot** *Fulica atra*
4: At the lakes near Kosh-Agach.

**Swinhoe’s Snipe** *Gallinago megala*
28: 1 flushed near Seminski-Pass. According Elena, the bird guide we spoke there, Swinhoe’s is the default snipe here.
29: in a marsh north of our hotel at Seminski-Pass.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*
7: 5 near Novosibirsk.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*
7: 2 near Novosibirsk.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*
4: 3 near Kosh-Agach.
**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*
Common.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*
1: 1 north of Aktash.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*
4: 14 at the lakes near Kosh-Agach.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*
20: Common on the Ob River at Novosibirsk.
4: Common on the lakes near Kosh-Agach.

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*
5: 1 along the M52 near Barnaul.

**Steppe Gull** *Larus fuscus barabensis*
Not much like a Black-backed Gull with its grey back.
20: Common over the Ob River at Novosibirsk.

**Pallas’s Gull** *Ichthyaeetus ichthyaeetus*
20:10 at the Ob River at Novosibirsk.

![Pallas’s Gulls and Steppe Gulls, June 20, Novosibirsk, Jeroen van Steenis](image)

**Common Tern** *Stern hirundo*
20:10 at the Ob River at Novosibirsk.
4: Several near Kosh-Agach.

**Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia*
Seen at many locations, both good looking birds and feral ones.

**Hill Pigeon** *Columba rupestris*
1: 1 in Aktash.
5: A flock of 54 near the roadside restaurant west of Aktash.

**Stock Pigeon** *Columba oenas*
5: 3 near Barnaul.
Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
Seen regular at Lake Teletskoye and at a few other places.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*
Common.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus optatus*
Clearly less common than Common Cuckoo.
20-22: Heard daily near Sosnovka Hotel, south of Novosibirsk.
23-26: Heard daily at Lake Teletskoye.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*
23: 2 in the forest at Lake Teletskoye.
29: Up to 5 seen very well at Seminski-Pass.

Common Swift *Apus apus*
Seen at different places, also in towns.

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*
Seen on 5 days, including in Novosibirsk. Less common than Common Swift.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
Seen daily in Aktash, also at couple of other places, often near villages.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*
22: 1, Sosnovska, river Shadriha
25: 1, Lake Teletskoye.
4: 1 near Kosh-Agach.
**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*
20-22: Daily near Sosnovka Hotel, south of Novosibirsk.

**Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker** *Picoides tridactylus*
25: Drum recorded in forest near Lake Teletskoye.

**Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius*
24: In forest near Lake Teletskoye.
1: 1 north of Aktash.

**Grey-headed Woodpecker** *Picus canus*
23: In forest near Lake Teletskoye.

**Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*
24: Lake Teletskoye.
27: Between Lake Teletskoye and Gorno-Altaysk.
5: near Barnaul.

**Red-tailed Shrike** *Lanius phoenicuroides*
1: Pass north of Aktash 1 male
4: 1 near Kosh-Agach.

**Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*
Seen near Novosibirsk and Barnaul.

**Siberian Jay** *Perisoreus infaustus*
25: Heard at the forest near Lake Teletskoye.
29: In total 14 birds seen at 3 different locations at Seminski-Pass.

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*
25: near Lake Teletskoye.

**Eurasian Magpie** *Pica pica*
Common.

**Eurasian Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes*
Remarkably common at Seminski-Pass. Seen in low numbers at few other locations as well.

**Red-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*
4: 2 circling above the village Kosh-Agach.

**Yellow-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax graculus*
3: 12 at Aktru Mountains.

**Eurasian Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*
Common.

**Daurian Jackdaw** *Corvus dauuricus*
4: 1 In a group of Eurasian Jackdaws west of Kosh-Agach, in the same group also a hybrid.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*
5: Near Barnaul.
Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*
Common outside the mountains, near Barnaul and Novosibirsk.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*
Common in the Altai Mountains.

Northern Raven *Corvus corax*
Common.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*
4: Common on the Steppe near Kosh-Agach.
5: 1 near Barnaul.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*
4: 5 on the steppe near Kosh-Agach.

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogna rupestris*
5: 1 from the bus, west of Aktash.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*
Common.

Pale Martin *Riparia diluta*
1: 2-3 birds in a village north of Aktash among Sand Martins.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
Common.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*
Scattered sightings.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*
25: 2 at Lake Teletskoye.

Willow Tit *Poecile montanus*
Very common.

Grey-headed Chickadee *Poecile cinctus*
1: 2 at the pass north of Aktash.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*
Common.

Great Tit *Parus major*
Common outside the mountains.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*
Few sightings near Lake Teletskoye.
**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*
Common.

**Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*
2: A male and a female near Aktru Glacier.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*
30: West of Aktash.

**White-throated Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus*
1: In a gorge just north of Aktash.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*
Few sightings at Lake Teletskoye.

**Siberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*
Very common.

**Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus*
20: 2 near Sosnovka Hotel, south of Novosibirsk.
24: 2 heard at Lake Teletskoye.
2: Heard near Mount Aktru.

**Sulphur-bellied Warbler** *Phylloscopus griseolus*
28: near the treeline at Seminski-Pass.
2: Near the Aktru Glacier.

**Hume’s Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei*
Very Common.

**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
Very Common.

**Booted Warbler** *Iduna caligata*
21: 2 near Sosnovka Hotel, south of Novosibirsk.
23: twice around Lake Teletskoye.

**Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina*
21: 2 near Sosnovka Hotel, south of Novosibirsk.

**Blyth’s Reed-Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
19: In willows along the Ob River in Novosibirsk.
20-22: Daily at Sosnovka Hotel, south of Novosibirsk.
23-26: Heard several times near Lake Teletskoye.

**Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata*
25, 26: 1 singing bird in a marsh behind our accommodation near Lake Teletskoye

**Pallas’s Grasshopper-Warbler** *Locustella certhiola*
Heard singing at few locations near our hotel at Seminski-Pass.
Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*
28: 3 at Seminski-Pass.
30: 2 west of Aktash.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*
Common in the lowlands.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*
Seen at several locations.

Siberian Blue Robin *Larvivora cyane*
24-26: Singing on the hill slopes at Lake Teletskoye, very difficult to see.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*
23: heard at night, thanks to a flat tire, between Novosibirsk and the Altai mountains.

Rufous-tailed Robin *Luscinia sibilans*
24, 26: Made sound recordings of the song of this species at Lake Teletskoye. Recognised the song only back home, so did not try to tape it in in the field. [http://www.xeno-canto.org/149249](http://www.xeno-canto.org/149249)

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*
20: 1 singing male at the top of an apartment building in the middle of Novosibirsk.
28: common at the some valley north-west of Seminski Pass

Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope*
20-22: Few birds around at Sosnovka Hotel, south of Novosibirsk.
29: 1 at Seminski-Pass.
2-3: Near Mount Aktru.
**Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus*
25: Heard and seen in the Lake Teletskoye area.
3: 1 Mount Aktru

**European Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*
20-22: Seen daily at Sosnovka Hotel, south of Novosibirsk.

**Taiga Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicilla*
23, 25: 1 male near Lake Teletskoye.

**Eversmann’s Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythronotus*
25: Singing male in forest near Lake Teletskoye.
28: 2 at Seminski-Pass.
29: 6 near Seminski-Pass.
1: Couple on the pass north of Aktash.

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
Few sightings, eg Sosnovka Hotel and Lake Teletskoye.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros phoenicuroides*
Very common.

**Common Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis*
30: 1 west of Aktash.
4: 1 Male showed very well near the steppe of Kosh-Agach.

Common Rock Thrush, June 30, West of Aktash, Jeroen van Steenis

**Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola maurus*
Common in suitable habitat.
**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*
30: 6 west of Aktash.
4: 3 on the steppe near Kosh-Agach.

**Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka*
30: 14 on the hillside at a stop west of Aktash.
4: 3 on the steppe near Kosh-Agach.

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina*
Common roadside bird, e.g., near Aktash and Kosh-Agach.

**Black-throated Thrush** *Turdus atrogularis*
Very common

**Red-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis*
3: 1 seen and photographed by one observer around Aktru Camp.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*
Commonly seen in Novosibirsk area and Seminski-Pass.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*
Singing at Sosnovka Hotel, south of Novosibirsk.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*
Common.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*
Common.

**European Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*
Fairly common in open and cultivated areas.

**Himalayan Accentor** *Prunella himalayana*
28: 1 at Seminski-Pass.
2, 3: fairly common at Mount Aktru.
**Brown Accentor** *Prunella fulvescens*
2: 1 Seen well at base of Aktru Glacier.

**Black-throated Accentor** *Prunella atrogularis*
Fairly common at Seminski-Pass, twice at Mount Aktru.

**Western Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava beema*
19: Along Ob River, Novosibirsk.

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*
19: 4 males along Ob River, Novosibirsk.

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**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba alba*
Common outside the mountains, eg Novosibirsk and Barnaul.

**Masked Wagtail** *Motacilla alba personata*
Common in the mountains, especially around Lake Teletskoye. Never seen hybrid birds.
Masked Wagtail, June 30, West of Aktash, Jeroen van Steenis

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*
Common.

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi*
Commonly heard at Seminski-Pass and at the Steppe near Kosh-Agach.

**Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris*
4: Seen and heard singing at the steppe near Kosh-Agach.

Tawny Pipit, July 4, steppe near Kosh-Agach, Jeroen van Steenis
**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*
Common.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*
Less common than Tree Pipit.
23: Singing at Lake Teletskoye.
29: Singing at Seminski-Pass.
1: At the Pass north of Aktash.

Olive-backed Pipit, June 29, Seminski-Pass, Jeroen van Steenis

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinolletta*
Singing at Seminski-Pass.
Singing on the slopes of Aktru Mountains.

**Common Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*
Common.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*
Only seen at Seminski-Pass, where fairly common.

**Plain Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte nemoricola*
28: 3 at Seminski-Pass.
2,3: fairly common at Mount Aktru.

**Brandt’s Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte brandti*
3: Some flocks, in total 36, at Aktru Mountains.

**Asian Rosy-Finch** *Leucosticte arctoa*
3: Few birds flying around at Aktru Mountains.
**Mongolian Finch** *Bucanetes mongolicus*  
4: 2 at Kosh-Agach steppe.  
4: 5 seen very well in dry mountains near Kosh-Agach steppe.

**Pine grosbeak** *Pinicola enucleator*  
27-29: Seen daily at Seminski Pass.  
1: 1 male at Pass north of Aktash.

![Pine grosbeak, July 1, Pass north of Aktash, Jeroen van Steenis](image)

**Eurasian Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*  
29: 1 at Seminski-Pass.

**Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*  
Very common.

**Pallas's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus roseus*  
29-1: 1 to 3 birds at Seminski Pass.  
1: 1 male at the pass north of Aktash.

**Spotted Great Rosefinch** *Carpodacus severtzovi*  
2,3: Few birds seen very well at Aktru Mountains.

**Long-tailed Rosefinch** *Uragus sibiricus*  
1: 1 female-type near Aktask  
1: 1 at pass north of Aktash.  
4: 1 female in riverbed near steppe of Kosh-Agach.

**Red Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*  
Few sightings near Lake Teletskoye and Seminski-Pass.
Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus*
Few sightings near Lake Teletskoye and Seminski-Pass.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*
Seen at several places, the ones seen at Seminski Pass were clearly ‘Eastern Goldfinch’ cf. *subulata*.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*
4: 1 in dry mountains near Kosh-Agach steppe.

Eurasian Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*
Common.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*
25: 2 at Teletskoye Lake.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
Very common.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*
Very common.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*
Seen at several locations, but mostly they were hybrids, or not seen well enough to exclude hybrids.

Godlewski’s Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*
30: 2 singing males at the green truck monument west of Aktash.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*
30: good numbers at the green truck monument west of Aktash, also seen at few other places.
Ortolan Bunting, July 3, near Aktash, Jeroen van Steenis

Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani*
30: 1 at the green truck monument west of Aktash.

For any comments or questions feel free to contact me at: sanderbot at yahoo.co.uk

The original purpose of the trip: collecting hover flies