

## KAZAKHSTAN TRIP REPORT LATE APRIL – MID-MAY 2013

From 28 April to 16 May 2013, Patrick Palmen and Arend Wassink visited Kazakhstan again, from which trip a short report is presented here. This time the vast steppes of the Tengiz-Korgalzhyn region were visited. The area is situated in north-central Kazakhstan, nowadays part of Aqmola province. Our base was Korgalzhyn (50°35' N, 70°01' E) from where we made daily trips. Patrick concentrated on photography while I mainly focussed on sound recording. I also trapped a number of Lesser Whitethroats *Sylvia curruca* from which DNA material was collected for further analysis. In the process, some other passerines were caught and photographed. A selection of photographs, sound recordings and relevant sightings made are published on [www.birdsofkazakhstan.com](http://www.birdsofkazakhstan.com).

Underneath, the map outlining the area visited, interesting records and the species list with some notes on subspecies.



### INTERESTING RECORDS

**Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* – This year large numbers were present in the region, due to a high level of the rodent population. In the area outlined we estimated at least 250 pairs. All age-classes were observed, including many juveniles. The abundance of food also attracted good

numbers of Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* and Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*. Several times was seen that Steppe Gulls *Larus barabensis* were hovering over the steppe, successfully catching rodents.

**Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* – Only one record: a juvenile at Balyksor lake on 7 May.

**Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* – One between Orazak and Sabyndy on 28 April, and one between Arykty and Kembidaik on 4 May. This species is rare in the region.

**Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* At overgrazed steppe near several villages we found at least 6 pairs. Other birds, apparently not breeding, were found on several occasions, including 9 birds on a recently ploughed field between Kembidaik and Sabyndy on 16 May. On 10 May, we found a fresh female killed by powerlines just outside Korgalzhyn. This bird will be included in the collection of the Zoological Institute of Almaty. Birds being killed by powerlines is a massive problem in Kazakhstan and other former USSR states.

**European Roller** *Coracias garrulus semenowi* – One was seen just outside Korgalzhyn on 29 April. The species is rare in the region.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* – A singing bird was sound recorded at Korgalzhyn on 9 May. The species is rare and not annually recorded in the region.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus acredula/yakutensis* – Regularly, large, long-winged birds with greyish upper and whitish underparts, and yellow tones restricted to the wingbend were observed. Although ssp *acredula* can show similar plumage characteristics, the percentage of these pale birds seen, probably indicate that these belonged to ssp *yakutensis*.

**European Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca sibirica* – A first-summer male was found at Maishukur and on 30 April and a female at Korgalzhyn on 3 May. Although presumed to be a rare bird in the region, at least 8 were seen this spring (see the News section on [www.birdsofkazakhstan.com](http://www.birdsofkazakhstan.com)).

## SPECIES LIST

Mute Swan	Pied Avocet	Rook
Whooper Swan	Eurasian Oystercatcher	Carrion Crow
Siberian Greylag Goose	Grey Plover	Hooded Crow
Ruddy Shelduck	Sociable Lapwing	Great Tit
Common Shelduck	Northern Lapwing	Bearded Reedling
Red-crested Pochard	Little Ringed Plover	White-winged Lark
Common Pochard	Common Ringed Plover	Black Lark
Tufted Duck	Kenish Plover	Greater Short-toed Lark
White-headed Duck	Eurasian Whimbrel *2	Eurasian Skylark
Smew	Eurasian Curlew	Sand Martin
Common Goldeneye	Black-tailed Godwit	Barn Swallow
Gadwall	Bar-tailed Godwit	Cetti's Warbler
Eurasian Wigeon	Ruddy Turnstone	Greenish Warbler
Northern Shoveler	Curlew Sandpiper	Wood Warbler
Mallard	Temminck's Stint	Common Chiffchaff
Northern Pintail	Dunlin	Willow Warbler *3
Garganey	Little Stint	Lesser Whitethroat *4
Common Teal	Red-necked Phalarope	Common Whitethroat
Common Quail	Terek Sandpiper	Common Grasshopper Warbler
Great Cormorant	Common Sandpiper	Booted Warbler
Dalmatian Pelican	Green Sandpiper	Paddyfield Warbler
Eurasian Bittern	Spotted Redshank	Blyth's Reed Warbler
Western Great Egret	Common Greenshank	Great Reed Warbler
Grey Heron	Marsh Sandpiper	Bohemian Waxwing
Great Crested Grebe	Wood Sandpiper	Common Starling
Red-necked Grebe	Common Redshank	Spotted Flycatcher
Black-necked Grebe	Common Snipe	Thrush Nightingale
European Honey Buzzard	Black-winged Pratincole	Common Nightingale
Black-eared Kite	Slender-billed Gull	Bluethroat *5
White-tailed Eagle	Black-headed Gull	European Pied Flycatcher
Western Marsh Harrier	Little Gull	Common Redstart
Pallid Harrier	Pallas's Gull	Siberian Stonechat
Montagu's Harrier	Mew Gull	Isabelline Wheatear
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Steppe Gull	Northern Wheatear
Steppe Buzzard	Rock Dove	Eurasian Tree Sparrow
Long-legged Buzzard	Stock Dove	Sykes's Blue-headed Wagtail
Rough-legged Buzzard	Oriental Turtle Dove	Grey-headed Wagtail
Steppe Eagle	Common Cuckoo	Citrine Wagtail
Eastern Imperial Eagle	Common Swift	Grey Wagtail
Common Kestrel	European Bee-eater	White Wagtail
Red-footed Falcon	European Roller	Tawny Pipit
Merlin *1	Eurasian Hoopoe	Tree Pipit
Common Moorhen	Eurasian Wryneck	Meadow Pipit
Eurasian Coot	Eurasian Golden Oriole	Sijs
Common Crane	Red-backed Shrike	Frater
Demoiselle Crane	Lesser Grey Shrike	Roodmus

Little Bustard	Eurasian Magpie	Common Reed Bunting *6
Black-winged Stilt	Western Jackdaw	

### NOTES ON SUBSPECIES

\*1 only ssp *pallidus* identified. Other sighting might have referred to *aesalon* and/or *insignis*.

\*2 all birds identified belong to the ssp *phaeopus*.

\*3 both ssp *acredula* and *yakutensis* (see Interesting records above) 'identified'.

\*4 All birds identified seem to belong to the ssp. *blythi*.

\*5 All males identified belonged to the ssp *pallidogularis*.

\*6 All birds identified belonged to the local breeding population of the ssp *incognita*.

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