

KYRGYZSTAN

ENDEMIC & SPECIALITIES

4-days bird tour with Miksture - Eastern Kyrgyzstan's
pristine and beautiful landscapes



Guiding by Danish biologist
Michael Westerbjerg Andersen

Birding in Kyrgyzstan

Tour start and finish in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Miksture is pleased to offer this exclusive journey – a bird tour designed for the eager birder that wish to watch so many of Kyrgyzstan's great birds possible - but also for those interested in seeing beautiful landscapes, nature, culture, people, photographing, etc.

The tour takes place in the Eastern part of Kyrgyzstan; around Lake Issyk-Kul. Route depends on the season, e.g. in April we spend more time near the lake, and later in spring we concentrate our efforts in the mountains – all made to maximize the observations and to get the best birds present.

Situated in the northern Himalayas with over 80% of the country straddling the fabled Tien Shan and Pamir Mountains, Kyrgyzstan's intact and undisturbed alpine nature makes it among the world's most unique mountainous places. Kyrgyzstan is one of the Central Asian ex-Soviet states achieving independence in 1991 and since then continues to develop and flower making it to the most peaceful and beautiful of the Central Asian countries. It's wedged between Kazakhstan in North, Uzbekistan in west, Tadzhikistan in South and the huge China in east. Without any ocean (however the worlds next-biggest mountain lake Issyk Kul) and palm-coral beaches Kyrgyzstan is luckily still visited by few tourists and those coming here does it to marvel the magnificent nature. Both ethnic Kyrgyz and Russians are incredible hospitable and friendly. Here too the Silk Road in centuries formed the civilizations and even today travelers are welcomed. Year-round the landscapes of Kyrgyzstan provide some of the most interesting and rewarding birding. The birdlife varies of course according the seasons. In winter all the non-resident migrants is long time migrated away, however new species arrive from North, in spring and summer all the migrants are back, and the landscapes are filled with great birds – and so the species varies according time of year. During spring and autumn it's the time of year where birds gather in the wetlands and the shore-birds migrate between their summer and the winter areas south of the Himalayas. So there is always lots of interesting birds in Kyrgyzstan. Visiting the pristine mountains of Kyrgyzstan, watching its birds and meet the hospitable friendly Kyrgyz people is the best experience and holiday one can make. Travel conditions in Kyrgyzstan are less comfortable than in Europe but we have the best and most experienced team providing good meals, smooth way of making the tour, and of course the locations are very well known by us – the birds too. We don't make any compromise, however we always make priority not to flush and frighten the birds. On this journey, we will watch some of the most remarkable bird species and the bird list will be impressive with all the regions special and wanted bird. Prior departure we agree what to look for and provide you with an updated and informative bird list

We have designed this tour to maximize the experience of staying outside as much possible. Its active holiday where we will make relaxed hikes in the pristine nature, and there is time enough to dwell in each traveler's special interest. We always respect and try to help and support each traveler's special wishes and projects – e.g. photographing, studying certain species. You can use the day according your wishes, and we will do our best to help in that way. There will be more than enough time being out in the fresh air and use the time for birding.



We look forward to show you some of the most beautiful parts of this magnificent country!

Welcome!

Miksture/Michael, Bishkek 10.June 2011

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Itinerary

Day 01: Bishkek – Karakol. Night in Karakol

Day 02: Karakol-area; birding in the mountain and lake-area. Night in Karakol

Day 03: Lake Issyk-Kul; Karakol – Jeti Oghuz - Tamga. Night in Tamga

Day 04: Tamga - Bishkek, birding enroute. Tour concludes at your accommodation.

Tour Fact Sheet

Key Species

NOTE! The list varies according time of season. What mentioned here are the all-year round birds – the so-called residents that we might encounter on the tour. Of course each season provides several more species to the final bid-list. For a more detailed bird-list pls look under the section of "Birds around the Year". Before the tour, Miksture sends a detailed list of birds. We don't include the commonest species on the list – only the key-species! Of course the common species will occur on the final birding list!

Himalayan Snowcock, Lammergeier, Himalaya Griffon Vulture, Eurasian Black Vulture, Long-legged Buzzard, Upland Buzzard, Saker Falcon, Ruddy Shelduck, Red-crested Pochard, Chukar, Common Pheasant, Great Egret, Horned Grebe, Ibisbill, Caspian Gull, Laughing Dove, Eurasian Hoopoe (few in winter), White-winged Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Brown Dipper, White-throated Dipper, Black-throated Accentor, Mistle Thrush, Brown Accentor, Altai Accentor, Eversmann's Redstart, Güldenstädt's Redstart, White-browed Tit Warbler, Bearded Reedling, Azure Tit, Yellow-breasted Tit, Rufous-naped Tit, Songar Tit, Crested Lark, Wallcreeper, Red-fronted Serin, Plain Mountain Finch, Brandt's Mountain Finch, Red-mantled Rosefinch, White-winged Grosbeak, Common Myna, Alpine Chough, Red-billed Chough, Carrion Crow, Spanish Sparrow, Rock Bunting, etc.

When to go!

All-year round

Number of participants

From 1 to 25 pax. All are welcome!

Price

This tour can be specifically crafted and designed individually for You and your fellow travellers. Costs depend of number of participants, route and service. Pls contact Miksture for a non-obligatory quote!

Ease of Birding & Tour Pace

Brisk but fair; early up. Birding all day with lunch-break - many birds to watch & long stretches and areas to cover.

Habitats Covered

Agricultural and Mountains; Northern Himalayas (Kyrgyzstan)

Climate

Summer – variable; the weather is as in southern Europe. Sunny – sometimes hot in the lowland but comfortable and warm during the day. In the mountains it's cooler, however pleasant and with a wonderful summer freshness and beauty smell of flowers and herbs. Winter – Cold; but easy to tolerate if dressed correctly!

Accommodation

Guesthouse

Photographic Opportunities Good - excellent

Other Attractions Beautiful landscapes, history, mountains and culture

BIRDS PRESENT DURING THE YEAR:

Present all-year round is species like Himalayan Snowcock, Lammergeier, Himalaya Griffon Vulture, Eurasian Black Vulture, Long-legged Buzzard, Golden Eagle, Upland Buzzard, Saker Falcon, Ruddy Shelduck, Red-crested Pochard, Chukar, Common Pheasant, Great Egret, Horned Grebe, Ibisbill, Caspian Gull, Laughing Dove, Eurasian Hoopoe (few in winter), White-winged Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Brown Dipper, White-throated Dipper, Black-throated Accentor, Brown Accentor, Altai Accentor, Eversmann's Redstart, Güldenstädt's Redstart, White-browed Tit Warbler, Bearded Reedling, Azure Tit, Yellow-breasted Tit, Rufous-naped Tit, Songar Tit, Wallcreeper, Red-fronted Serin, Plain Mountain Finch, Brandt's Mountain Finch, Red-mantled Rosefinch, White-winged Grosbeak, Alpine Chough, Red-billed Chough, Carrion Crow, Spanish Sparrow, Common Myna, Rock Bunting, etc.

NOTE! There will be an overlap between the species during the months, as weather conditions naturally fluctuate the occurrence, distribution and arrival/departure time both for resident and migrating birds.

DECEMBER – JANUARY - FEBRUARY:

The Central Asian Avifauna is one of the most exciting and challenging for European birdwatchers. There is so much to find out about the birds here in Kyrgyzstan – and it makes it both challenging and exciting for those birders leading in new knowledge of field-identification and expand their knowledge. There is always guarantee for the latter too – it's not easy to go in depth with such projects, but its uttermost interesting! The areas we will visit are host to a vany of seldom encountered variants, and what we especially will seek out include tricky reed-buntings in drab and sometimes rather cryptic plumages (more ssp of Reed-buntings occur), winter plumaged Black-throated Accentor and Brown Accentor (it's probably just a matter of time before we find Siberian Accentor too), winter plumaged Pine Buntings in mixed flocks with Yellowhammer – hybrids between the two latter species, raptors: odd Long-legged Buzzards, and odd subspecies of Common Buzzards – here you see plumages not to found in any field guides!, Thrushes – usually Black-throated Thrush and Mistle; but other things can occur. Resident mountainous species in mixed flocks – one really have to keep eyes open to get everything

This is a journey made for the eager birders but in addition it's also a journey in beautiful landscapes. It's of course open for any birder – there are great birds to find during the wintertime here: some Pine Bunting males occur in beautiful plumages even its winter, Ibisbill. It's a great

project to find out. Several redstart species are resident's e.g. Eversmann's Redstart and Güldenstädt's Redstart. More resident mountainous species occur in the areas we will visit, the gardens in the villages or near the lakeshore: Long-legged Buzzard, Solitary Snipe, Great Black-headed Gull, Common Pheasant (the "real" one), Pygmy Cormorant, Great Egret, White-winged Woodpecker, Horned Lark, White-throated Dipper, Brown Dipper, Black-throated Accentor, Brown Accentor, Wallcreeper - in the winter 2010/2011 twenty meters from our guesthouse, White-browed Tit Warbler, Azure Tit, Yellow-breasted Tit, Rufous-naped Tit, Wallcreeper, Great Grey Shrike, Spotted Nutcracker, Alpine Chough, Red-billed Chough, Western Jackdaw ssp soemmeringii, Common Myna, Red-fronted Serin, European Goldfinch ssp parapanisi, Plain Mountain Finch, Brandt's Mountain Finch, Red-mantled Rosefinch, Long-tailed Rosefinch, White-winged Grosbeak, and of course the buntings: Pine Bunting, Reed Bunting, Yellowhammer, Meadow Bunting, Rock Bunting ssp par, Corn Bunting, etc. BUT I'm sure there are other buntings species present and just wait to be found...

Lake Issyk-Kul itself is a great site for waterfowls - thousands of wintering waterfowls that spend the winter in this lake which never freezes even in the harshest winter months. The reason for this is numerous thermal streams that keep the water ice-free year-round. An visiting German bird-watcher wrote about his visit few winters ago: Yet as soon we drove out of Bishkek heading along the Chui river, the rising sun broke through making the fog disappear, exposing a clear dark-blue sky contrasting sharply with the heavily snowed in Tien-Shan mountain-chain". "Bird-presence was extraordinary in and along the water - I have never seen as many ducks and coots in one area as I was privileged to observe by the western lakeside - literally tons and tons of biomass floating on the water surface, at times it looked entirely black while looking through the binoculars...! Raptor sightings were excellent and plentiful, so were buntings, finches and larks" It's possible to find flocks of thousands of Red-crested Pochard! And in addition lots of other ducks - Common Pochard, Ferruginous Duck, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Common Teal, etc. There is thousands of wintering Black-necked Grebe spiced with fewer Horned Grebe. I already mentioned the occurrence of odd subspecies of raptors - in addition it's possible to watch: White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, Black Vulture, Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Lammergeier, Northern Goshawk, Hen Harrier, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard, Rough-legged Buzzard, Upland Buzzard, Merlin, Saker, etc

In addition some really fine species that usually rare found outside the winter-season: Common Kingfisher, Black-throated Thrush, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Solitary Snipe, Great Black-headed Gull, Tengmalm's Owl, Spotted Nutcracker, Meadow Bunting, etc.

March - April:

The onset of springtime is surprisingly quick in Kyrgyzstan.

Early springtime is a favorite time of year for birding. The early migrants already turned up, thickets and bushes hide migrants and provide challenging and exciting birds - everything can occur, so to speak. The spring makes the vegetation fresh and green, the light clear and sunny excellent for photographing not blurred by heat - the temperature is moderate and comfortable for birding. The leaves yet not appeared hiding the birds providing good views of woodpeckers, Tits, etc. and

overhead Black-throated thrushes and Demoiselle Cranes migrate northwards. The latter species is one of our target birds in April. On this journey as we will find them roosting in good numbers in Eastern Kyrgyzstan. Of course some of the most sought after birds in central Asia is on site, however most warblers and buntings is not yet appeared.

In Karakol we use most of the day near the lake area. One of the most rewarding and great experiences is to find roosting Demoiselle cranes. This time of year provide the best option for seeing this magnificent bird on its way from the winter quarters in Northern India to its breeding grounds in Kazakhstan and Mongolia. Other target birds is Ibisbill, Pine Bunting and several montane species Golden Eagle, Upland Buzzard, Oriental Turtle Dove, Ruddy Shelduck, Black-throated Accentor, White-winged Grosbeak, Grey Wagtail, Dipper (White-throated Dipper), Brown Dipper, Greenish Warbler, Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler, Red-billed Chough, Alpine Chough, Fire-fronted Serin. Needless to say there would be excellent photo opportunities this day.

We also try to get the impressive Ibisbill on the list (which so far have been 100%). The valley is one of the most beautiful spots in Kyrgyzstan and in addition a very good birding-area. Other birds could be: Golden Eagle, Black-eared Kite, Oriental Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Grey Wagtail, Dipper (White-throated Dipper), Brown Dipper, Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler, Turkestan Shrike, Red-billed Chough, Alpine Chough, Fire-fronted Serin, Rock Bunting etc. In the afternoon we arrive to the little village Tamga on the south coast of Issyk-Kul. The guesthouse is situated with excellent view to the surroundings, in south, the towering Jetim-Bel range at the end of Barskaun valley. Across the road there is an apricot orchard which feathered inhabitants make frequently visits to the gardens a.o. Azure Tits, Hoopoe, Common Mynah, etc. Five minutes from the guesthouse is the lakeshore. There are always plenty of water birds to observe. The fields east of the village are excellent for birding. In spring and autumn the area teems with roosting migrants. In breeding season plenty interesting birds as: Black-eared Kite, Hobby, Common Quail, Corncrake, Common Pheasant, Oriental Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, European Roller, more species of larks, Citrine Wagtail e.g. ssp. *M.c.calcarata*, Grey Wagtail, five species of wheatears, Isabelline Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Rose-coloured Starling, Golden Oriole, (Grey-headed) Goldfinch, more species of buntings, etc. Furthermore there is several species associated with semi-desert and mountain habitats. In our guesthouse it's possible to try real Russian sauna. There is Azure Tit in the garden.

On day 3 or 4 we usually visit the mountainous areas south of Tamga. There are more roads leading to good bird locations. The most accessible but less charming is the Kumtor Mine road. Species to be seen include: Himalaya Snowcock, Black Vulture, Upland Buzzard, Lammergeier, Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Golden Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Songar Tot, Altai Accentor [Himalayan Accentor], Gldenstdt's Redstart, Black Redstart, Eversmann's Redstart, Blue-headed Redstart, Carrion Crow, Fire-fronted Serin, Red Crossbill, Brandt's Mountain Finch (Brandt's Rosy Finch), Plain Mountain Finch (Hodgson's Rosy-Finch, Hodgson's Mountain Finch) and Rock Bunting.



MAY:

May is a special month ornithological. The last migrants arrive, and some days the bushes and trees in the parks can be filled with migrants; e.g. Blyth Reed warbler. It's also the month where temperatures increase – beautiful Rollers, Bee-eaters and White-throated Rubythroats makes birding cool!

The bird-list include most of Aprils birds and the residents, but in addition late migrants as warblers fill the air with song: Oriental Turtle Dove, Greenish Warbler, Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler, Paddyfield Warbler, Syke's Warbler, Barred Warbler, Blyth Reed Warbler, Sulphur-bellied Warbler, Cetti's Warbler, Common Grasshopper Warbler, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Hume's Leaf Warbler, Hume's Whitethroat, etc. Common Rosefinch, Black-eared Kite, Hoopoe, Turkestan Shrike, Hobby, Common Quail, Corncrake, Lesser Grey Shrike, Long-tailed Shrike, Rose-coloured Starling, Indian Oriole, Red-headed Bunting, etc.

On day 3, we spend the majority of the days in the mountainous areas south of Tamga. There are more roads leading to good bird locations. The most accessible but less charming is the Kumtor Mine road. Species to be seen include: Black Vulture, Upland Buzzard, Lammergeier, Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Golden Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Altai Accentor [Himalayan Accentor], Himalayan Rubythroat, Güldenstädt's Redstart, Black Redstart, Eversmann's Redstart, Blue-headed Redstart, Carrion Crow, Fire-fronted Serin, Red Crossbill, Brandt's Mountain Finch, Plain Mountain Finch, Alpine Swift, Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow and Rock Bunting.

Himalayan Snowcock is more difficult in late spring and summer, but is possible, Lammergeier, Himalaya Griffon Vulture, Eurasian Black Vulture, Long-legged Buzzard, Black-eared Kite, Pallid Harrier, Montague's Harrier, Upland Buzzard, Booted Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Eurasian Hobby, Barbary Falcon, Saker Falcon, Common Shelduck, Red-crested Pochard, Chukar, Common Quail, Common Pheasant, Little Bittern, Great Egret, Horned Grebe, Ibisbill, Black-winged Stilt, Little Ringed Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Pallas's Gull, Caspian Gull, Oriental Turtle Dove, Hill Pigeon, Laughing Dove, European Scops Owl, Short-eared Owl, Alpine Swift, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Eurasian Hoopoe, White-winged Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Pale Sand Martin, Eurasian Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Tawny Pipit, Water Pipit, Citrine Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Black-headed Wagtail. Masked Wagtail, Brown Dipper, White-throated Dipper, Black-throated Accentor, Brown Accentor, Altai Accentor, Common Nightingale, Blue-throat, White-tailed Rubythroat, Eversmann's Redstart, Blue-capped Redstart, Güldenstädt's Redstart, Black Redstart, Siberian Stonechat, Isabelline Wheatear, Pied Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Blue Whistling Thrush, White-browed Tit Warbler, Bearded Reedling, Azure Tit, Yellow-breasted Tit, Rufous-naped Tit, Songar Tit, Wallcreeper, White-crowned Penduline Tit, Indian Oriole, Turkestan Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Long-tailed Shrike, Rose-coloured Starling, Red-fronted Serin, Plain Mountain Finch, Brandt's Mountain Finch, Red-mantled Rosefinch, White-winged Grosbeak, Grey-necked Bunting, Red-headed Bunting, Pine Bunting, Alpine Chough, Red-billed Chough, Carrion Crow, Spanish Sparrow, White-winged Snowfinch, Twite, Mongolian Finch, Common Rosefinch, Rock Bunting, etc.

If time allows, we try to include the fishponds near Bishkek, where good numbers of waterfowl present: Terek Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Temminck's Sandpiper, Red-winged Pratincole, White-winged Tern, etc.

JUNE – JULY – AUGUST:

Himalayan Snowcock is more difficult in late spring and summer, but is possible. Oriental Honey-buzzard, Lammergeier, Himalaya Griffon Vulture, Eurasian Black Vulture, Long-legged Buzzard, Black-eared Kite, Pallid Harrier, Montague's Harrier, Upland Buzzard, Booted Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Eurasian Hobby, Barbary Falcon, Saker Falcon, Common Shelduck, Red-crested Pochard, Chukar, Common Quail, Common Pheasant, Little Bittern, Great Egret, Ibisbill, Black-winged Stilt, Little Ringed Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Pallas's Gull, Caspian Gull, Oriental Turtle Dove, Hill Pigeon, Laughing Dove, European Scops Owl, Alpine Swift, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Eurasian Hoopoe, White-winged Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Pale Sand Martin, Eurasian Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Tawny Pipit, Water Pipit, Citrine Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Black-headed Wagtail. Masked Wagtail, Brown Dipper, White-throated Dipper, Black-

throated Accentor, Brown Accentor, Altai Accentor, Common Nightingale, Bluethroat, White-tailed Rubythroat, Eversmann's Redstart, Blue-capped Redstart, Gldenstdt's Redstart, Black Redstart, Siberian Stonechat, Isabelline Wheatear, Pied Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Blue Whistling Thrush, Cetti's Warbler, Paddyfield Warbler, Common Grasshopper Warbler, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Sykes's Warbler, Hume's Leaf Warbler, Barred Warbler, Hume's Whitethroat, Greenish Warbler, Sulphur-bellied Warbler, White-browed Tit Warbler, Bearded Reedling, Azure Tit, Yellow-breasted Tit, Rufous-naped Tit, Songar Tit, Wallcreeper, White-crowned Penduline Tit, Indian Oriole, Turkestan Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Long-tailed Shrike, Rose-coloured Starling, Red-fronted Serin, Plain Mountain Finch, Brandt's Mountain Finch, Red-mantled Rosefinch, White-winged Grosbeak, Grey-necked Bunting, Red-headed Bunting, Pine Bunting, Alpine Chough, Red-billed Chough, Carrion Crow, Spanish Sparrow, White-winged Snowfinch, Twite, Mongolian Finch, Common Rosefinch, Rock Bunting, etc.

In late summer the shorebirds is a welcomed sight in the Kyrgyz Avifauna, and several species occurs – rarities occur as Black-winged Pratincole, Pacific Golden Plover, Red-necked Stint, Long-toed Stint, etc. So the shorebirds present a wonderful challenge.



SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER – NOVEMBER:

Is the quietest months, but the birds are still present. It's also the time of year, where the vegetation really should be carefully checked – rare migrants can turn up everywhere! Northerly breeding Siberian migrants can be found by careful examination of the more common migrants and residents. In addition it's the most beautiful season being outside – the light is crisp-clear and the vegetation's colors are stunning. The cooler temperatures makes birding more comfortable, and the days are long making the bird list impressive. We spend much time in higher altitude searching the mountainous species that already can be found in flocks of variable numbers – sometimes hundreds. The residents mix with migrants making birding challenging. On the Issyk-Kul Lake the numbers of waterfowl increases as the days get shorter and cooler. In September many of the late summer birds still are present, while the October and November birding reminds more and more of winter birding in December.

Day-to-day program

Miksture always try to make the journey according to the program, but sometimes it can happen that routes can be changed as well as the order of the locations (unpredictable circumstances). We always try to optimize the birding hence we can add extra locations or change locations according to the clients' wishes. Please note! These are the following meals provided during the days: B (Breakfast), L (Lunch) and D (Dinner). Miksture is always ready to answer the questions and give more information. Please feel free to contact us.

Day 1. Bishkek – Tokmok - Karakol

Drive to Karakol (250 km) at Eastern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul. Along the northern shore we will look for waterfowls and raptors. Probably we will witness a wonderful day in the pure Kyrgyzstan air with interesting sightings. We drive through small villages where people live a quiet existence and we stop on the way to visit local birding hotspots. After Tokmok, which means "hammer" in Kyrgyz, we continue east along the Chui Valley with the river on our left-hand; the river that mark the border between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. This road is actually a part of the Silk Road, this ancient way that branched across Central Asia connecting west to East. In the afternoon we arrive to our accommodation in Karakol for the next days; a comfortable guesthouse on the Eastern shore of Issyk Kul. Karakol, former Prezhevalsk (original named Karakol ("Black Hand") – then in 1866 renamed Prezhevalsk after the famous Russian explorer – Lenin gave it back its original name in 1926 only for a short time, until Stalin renamed it Prezhevalsk again in 1935 – Finally in 1991 it was renamed Karakol once more, and I suppose the name is valid still...). Accommodation in guesthouse. LD

Day 2. Karakol & birding in the area

We will use this day to explore the area around Karakol and explore the beautiful landscape along the Eastern shore of Issyk Kul. There are several small hot-birding-spots in the landscape: numerous ponds, small lakes, and the beautiful mountains. We also devote time to one of the famous birds in the Himalayas – the Ibisbill. This remarkable bird is endemic for the Himalayas and one of the ornithological highlights for everyone. Here we find the Ibisbill in pristine and incredible beautiful landscapes. This is the Kingdom of the Ibisbill; here it shares the summer landscapes with local nomads and their livestock. In the evening we return to our guesthouse. BLD

Day 3. Karakol – Djety Oguz – Tamga

After breakfast we leave Karakol and drive to the valley of Djety Oguz 25 km South West of Karakol. A lush valley with some striking red sandstone formations called the "Seven Bulls" from which the valley takes its name. In the afternoon we drive along the south coast of Issyk Kul towards the quiet Russian village, Tamga at the mouth of the Barskaun valley. Our guesthouse is situated with excellent view to the surroundings, in south, the towering Jetim-Bel range at the end of Barskaun valley. Twenty minutes strolling from the guesthouse is the lakeshore. There are always plenty of water birds to observe. The fields east of the village are excellent for birding. In summertime the area teems with plenty interesting birds as: Black-eared Kite, Hobby, Common Quail, Corncrake, Common Pheasant, Oriental Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, European Roller, more species of larks, Citrine Wagtail e.g. *ssp. M.c.calcarata*, Grey Wagtail, five species of wheatears, Isabelline Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Rose-colored Starling, Golden Oriole, (Grey-headed) Goldfinch, more species of buntings, etc. Furthermore there is several species associated with semi-desert and mountain habitats. From our guesthouse it's possible to go swim in the Issyk-Kul Lake and try real Russian sauna. Night in guesthouse Tamga. BLD

Day 4. Tamga – Bishkek

We leave Tamga and drive towards Bishkek. During the drive we make few stops. In the evening we arrive in Bishkek and the tour concludes. BL

Photography: We'll spend our time trying to see birds, but the keen photographer will find plenty of opportunity to make use of the often excellent light.

Health: Problems aggravated by altitude is as good as non-existing. We take very good care of our clients and we travel careful to reduce risks and uncomfortable and, anyone in general good health and reasonably fit should find that acclimatization is achieved within a few days of arrival, ensuring full enjoyment of this exciting journey.

Meals: The food is very delicious in Central Asia. When we are in the field we bring our own kitchen team who serve three meals a day: Good, healthy and delicious food! We provide mineral water during all tour, and serve tea and coffee to all meals. When possible and wished we make tea and coffee-breaks. Vegetarians are welcome too, and we have experience in preparing good meals, though it's of course not as home.

Essential equipment: Summer - cloth for warm weather; Rainproof jacket & ditto over trousers; hiking boots or good shoes; hat; sun glasses; sunscreen lotion & ditto lip balm; torch; towel. However prior departure we will provide informative and plentiful information about this matters. Winter – warm cloth!

General note: Though all possible efforts will be made to stick to the itinerary this may not always be possible due to circumstances beyond our control: a degree of flexibility is thus required, and participants must be adventurous and willing to put up with the rigors and discomforts inherent in travel in remote & culturally alien areas.

Trekking is restricted to short distances to/from the car according where the birds are: emphasis will be on seeing the birds, not on covering as many kilometers as possible on foot.

Mammals

Though its birds we go for, there is an excellent range of mammals to be seen in the region, and good bird sites usually are good places for other animals... During the years we have made these tours we have seen a long list of mammals (and insects, butterflies, flowers, etc.): Wolf, Deer, Wild Pigs, Ibex, Marco Polo Sheep, Persian Gazelles, Tolai Hare, Great Gerbil, Red Pika, Corsac Fox, Marbled Polecat, Marmots (Long-tailed Marmot), Red Squirrel, Ground Squirrel, etc.



Participants should tolerate and be ready for, transportation on roads less comfortable etc. the activity level is adjusted so it fit all clients, and everyone can enjoy this journey. There is certain flexibility, so individual wishes and pace can be respected. We don't climb mountains or endure tough levels of activity, but this is birding and participants should be ready getting up early – and participants should be ready to endure changing climatic conditions. We visit semi-deserts, mountains – with shifting cool & hot climate, etc. when this is said, it should be stressed that Miksture and my team are very experienced in handling these tours. We know the areas and the conditions. We are well prepared, and make sure the participants achieve the best possible comfort – tasty, healthy and enough food! Our vehicles are comfortable and our drivers are always sober and experienced. Please bear in mind; tourism and service are not the same high level here as in many other parts of the world. Tourism is new here and it took years before guesthouses and hotels were available. When I began here in 1993 and think back, it's incredible what a change have happened – year for year the comfort has increased and travelling nowadays is pleasure! So please bear this in mind and be patient if the breakfast on the guesthouse are served ten minutes later than agreed, or the breakfast served is different than at home... etc.

Price include: Guiding by Miksture/Michael Westerbjerg Andersen • Local (English, German, French or Russian-speaking) interpreters • Transportation according program • All accommodation mentioned in the program; except in Bishkek • All food during the tour • All permits • Services of Miksture • Local entrees and fees according day-to-day program

Price does NOT include Alcoholic drinks at meals in restaurants and cafes • Personal expenses for eventual extra arrangements not mentioned in the program • Tips to drivers and interpreter • Extra arrangements not mentioned in the program • Money for own expenses • anything strictly personal (e.g laundry, phone calls, snacks).

Single room: Is usual available on the tour, except in the yurt camp at Son Kul. A single room surcharge will apply for anyone not sharing. Please note that, single room accommodation may not be available at some places, but this will be explained and agreed prior departure.

Welcome!

Miksture/Michael Westerbjerg Andersen

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I speak Danish (my native language), English, German, French and Russian. I understand Spanish (speak poor...) and speak other Swedish and Norwegian languages

Prior departure Miksture mail a detailed list of birds possible to be seen on the tour.

Miksture provide information about travelling in the region and specific ornithological information. My team and I can be hired for birding in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Southern Siberia and Western China. We are able to "tailor-make" the journey according your wishes – destinations & species as well as duration. It's possible to book me as leader or co-leader for your



journey in the region. We use our own vehicles, own gear – tents, kitchen-team, etc. Everything to increase your birding experience and your safety. In addition our prices are reasonable for everyone. We have an excellent team by whom I have travelled and worked together with for more than ten years. They are some of my very best friends and in combination; we know thoroughly the areas and the birds. Usually we arrange tours for 4-16 pax – best group's size for birding is 5-12 participants; but we are flexible. Fair prices, security, honesty and great birding are keywords – try us! Please contact me for further information. Programs can be studied on our websites. You are welcome to contact me for further information and I welcome any remarks and dialogue.

Miksture was established with the purpose of encourage and combine Eco-tourism and biological scientific research in Central Asia; mainly Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The approach of combining Eco-tourism and Nature Conservation is in many ways opposite activities, but in Kyrgyzstan we have done it without severe compromises for the visitors and the environment. Our tours are the result of friendship and strange ideas and our carefully planned itineraries and intensive approach have since 1994 given those who travel with us an unusually experience.

Miksture is an independent company, established and owned by Michael Westerbjerg Andersen. You will always be in contact with Michael when you contact us. All itineraries are accompanied by the staff of local agencies that possesses the knowledge and experience to make the tour wholly successful. We know the areas thoroughly and take pride in showing those who travel the local hotspots, confidently coping with any problems that may arise and so greatly increasing the chance that everything will run smoothly. Leading a tour in Europe or North America is one thing, leading one in Central Asia where logistical problems are a fact of life is quite another! Where practicable and necessary we obtain the assistance of local leaders who have both an intimate knowledge of their home areas and the ability to look after the group to the required standard.

Miksture/MWA/Bishkek/June 2011