

BIRDING EASTERN MONGOLIA

– Ultimate birding with Miksture
19.th May – 02.th June 2023



Welcome to Mongolia birding tour with Miksture

This epic ornithological expedition ventures into the breath-taking eastern steppes of Mongolia, exploring the abundant avifauna. Eastern Mongolia is the land of cranes and rare buntings of East Asia. This remote birding area boasts favourable habitat for many migrating and breeding birds. In Mongolia the nomadic lifestyle, even today is still the norm, a land of awesome landscapes, profuse wildflowers, and fantastic birdlife. Mongolia conjures up images of endless grasslands, the wastes of the Desert, yurts, and wild horsemen. This is the land from whence came the hordes of Genghis Khan and his successors, newer less colourful history followed and today Mongolia is an unknown land, far away in the heart of Asia, about which one hears little. With its tiny population of only two and a half million scattered across a huge area, it is one of the least densely settled countries on earth – a true wilderness where most of the land is still the domain of wild creatures rather than man. Mongolia is the crossroads of East Asia. In the north is the southern edge of the Siberian taiga, in the centre the seemingly endless steppe and in the south the sands of the Gobi Desert. Adding further diversity to this mixture are the Eastern mountains and a multiplicity of lakes and marshes.

The wide range of habitats is reflected in an exciting avifauna which encompasses both Siberian and Central Asian species, including species unique to Mongolia and its immediate surroundings. Prime specialties include: Japanese Quail, Steppe Eagle, Great Bustard, Oriental Plover, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Mongolian Lark, Pere David's Snowfinch, Jankowski's Bunting, Exotic wetland and riparian birds include Bar-headed Goose, Swan Goose, Baikal Teal, Falcated Duck, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, White-winged Scoter, Amur Falcon, Siberian Crane, White-naped Crane, Demoiselle and Hooded Crane, Grey-headed Lapwing, Pintail Snipe, Far Eastern Curlew, Broad-billed Sandpipers, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Long-toed Stints, Red-necked Stints, Asian Dowitcher, Relict Gull, Azure Tit, White-crowned Penduline-tit, Bearded Reedling, Oriental Reed, Black-browed Reed, and Paddyfield Warblers, Marsh Grassbird, Pallas's Grasshopper, Lanceolated Warblers, Reed Parrotbill, White-cheeked Starling, Daurian Starling, White's Thrush, Siberian Thrush, Eyebrowed Thrush, Red-throated Thrush, Naumann's Thrush, Dusky Thrush, Siberian Blue Robin, Rufous-tailed Robin, Siberian Rubythroat, Yellow-rumped, Narcissus, Mugimaki, & Taiga Flycatchers, Daurian Redstart, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Oriental Greenfinch, Little, Yellow-browed, Yellow-breasted, Black-faced, Pallas's, Japanese Reed Buntings and Jankowski's Bunting. Among the mammals the great herds of Mongolian Gazelle in its natural habitat are an amazing sight. Late spring is a delightful season when birds are in breeding plumage, and migrants are passing through on their way north. Marvellous birding and travel through wide open spaces with very few people make for a wonderful and never-to-be-forgotten experience. A real adventure in fact. This journey provides excellent birding in this great country. Miksture and our Mongolian team knows thoroughly the locations and the birds of course - in short: the best and most rewarding birding. Our team provides good meals, and we always make the journey as comfortable and smooth as possible. We don't make any compromises; however, we always make priority not to flush and frighten the birds.

Tour start: In Ulaanbaatar 19.th May 2023





Expected: 220 - 230 species of birds and 10-12 species of mammals

Mongolia is one of the important breeding and stopover sites for Palearctic species. Breeding birds occur in many different habitats (from taiga forest through different steppes to desert including wetlands). Migratory birds pass through Mongolia from Siberian Taiga to wintering grounds. It means that you will have a unique opportunity to see not only breeding Palearctic species but also migratory species during both breeding and migration seasons. Untouched landscape and nomadic lifestyle give chance to discover a new species for the birds list of the country. The peaceful country and friendly field company attract many birdwatchers to Mongolia. The very name Mongolia conjures images of a vast, remote, and distant land; the land of Genghis Khan (Chingis Khaan) and the Mongol hordes. While Mongolia is certainly vast and much of it is remote, it is also home to an exciting array of poorly known and rarely observed birds that occur only here. As we traverse this vast land, we will often be travelling on rarely used roads, and occasionally driving across steppe grasslands using GPS to navigate our way to exciting wetlands where no roads venture.

Short day-to-day program

- Day 1: Welcome to Ulaanbaatar
- Day 2: Fly to Choibalsan
- Day 3: Menen Steppe
- Day 4-5: Buir Lake
- Day 6-7: Khalkh River
- Day 8-9: Tashgai Lakes
- Day 10: Menen Steppe
- Day 11-12: Matad Mountains
- Day 13: Choibalsan
- Day 14: Ulaanbaatar
- Day 15: Fly Home





Day 1. Welcome to Ulaanbaatar – transfer to hotel – Birdwatching Valley of Tuul River

19.th May: Miksture and our Mongolian team greets you at the airport. Mongolia is a landlocked country in East and Central Asia. It is bordered by Russia to the north and China to the south, east and west. Although Mongolia does not share a border with Kazakhstan, its western-most point is only 38 kilometres from Kazakhstan's eastern tip.

Ulaanbaatar, the capital and largest city, is home to about 45% of the population. Mongolia's political system is a parliamentary republic. The area of what is now Mongolia has been ruled by various nomadic empires, including the Xiongnu, the Xianbei, the Rouran, the Gokturks and others. The Mongol Empire was founded by Genghis Khan in 1206. After the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty, the Mongols returned to their earlier pattern of constant internal conflict and occasional raids on the Chinese borderlands. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Mongolia came under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism. At the end of the 17th century, all of Mongolia had been incorporated into the area ruled by the Qing Dynasty. During the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, Mongolia declared independence, but had to struggle until 1921 to firmly establish de facto independence from the Republic of China, and until 1945 to gain international recognition. The country came under strong Russian and Soviet influence; in 1924, the Mongolian People's Republic was declared, and Mongolian politics began to follow the same patterns as the Soviet politics of the time. After the breakdown of communist regimes in Eastern Europe in late 1989, Mongolia saw its own Democratic Revolution in early 1990, which led to a

multi-party system, a new constitution in 1992, and transition to a market economy. At 1,564,116 square kilometres (603,909 sq. mi), Mongolia is the 19th largest and the most sparsely populated independent country in the world, with a population of around 2.75 million people. It is also the world's second- largest landlocked country after Kazakhstan. The country contains very little arable land, as much of its area is covered by steppes, with mountains to the north and west and the Gobi Desert to the south. Transfer to the reserved hotel located in the Valley of Tuul River near airport. The interesting birds include Amur Falcon, Demoiselle Crane, White- winged Tern, Pacific Swift, Azure-winged Magpie, Daurian Jackdaw, Azure Tit, White-crowned Penduline-tit, Horned Lark *brandti*, White-cheeked Starling, Red-throated Thrush, Isabelline Wheatear, Pied Wheatear, and Long-tailed Rosefinch. O/N hotel in Ulaanbaatar. LD

Day 2. Transfer with airplane to Choibalsan – capital of Eastern province Dornod; birdwatching: Kherlen River

20.th May: Transfer to the airport and fly to Choibalsan for about one and half hours. Dornod; (lit. "East") is the easternmost of the 21 aimags (provinces) of Mongolia. Its capital is Choibalsan. Choibalsan is the fourth-largest city in Mongolia after Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan, and Erdenet. The name of the city was Bayan Tümen until 1941, when it was renamed after the communist leader Khorlogiin Choibalsan in honour of the 20th anniversary of the Mongolian Revolution of 1921. The city administrative unit's official name is



Kherlen sum, with area of 281 square kilometres or 108 square miles. It is situated at the Kherlen River, at an elevation of 747 metres above sea level. Choibalsan experiences a cold semi-arid climate with frigid, very dry winters and warm, wetter summers. In terms of temperatures, it resembles a humid continental climate, but falls short of that classification due to the very dry winters. We continue birdwatching along the Kherlen River for the highlight species including Japanese Sparrowhawk, Amur Falcon, Demoiselle Crane, Azure Tit, White-crowned Penduline-tit, White-cheeked Starling, White's, Eyebrowed, Naumann's, and Dusky Thrushes, Siberian Blue Robin, Rufous-tailed Robin, Siberian Rubythroat, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Oriental Greenfinch, Lapland Longspur, Yellow-browed, Yellow-breasted, and Black-faced Buntings. O/N in tent camp. BLD

Day 3. Menen Steppe (150 km day-drive through the steppe)

21.th May: The Menen Steppe is one of the biggest steppes in the world, it is unique because it has largely remained undeveloped. It is in the Dornod province, 60 km to the west of Buir lake, 600m above sea level. This vast steppe continues all the way till the east side of Mongolia, to Dariganga volcano. The steppe is divided into two main parts: the north side of Kherlen, and the south side of

Tamsag. The lowest point of this steppe in Mongolia lies in the northern area of the Kherlen. Mongolian famous poet B. Yavuukhulan described this steppe as: "Seeing the sunrise from the distance of lassoing the horse is amazing" (it means that because Mongolian people lasso the horse from very close, looking the sunrise from very close is more amazing). Driving through the steppe gives a great impression. It is home to great herds of Mongolian Gazelle. The target bird species are Japanese Quail, Steppe Eagle, Upland Buzzard, Great Bustard, Oriental Plover, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Mongolian Lark, Isabelline Wheatear, and Pere David's Snowfinch. Camping on the seamless grassland is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. O/N in tent camp. BLD

Day 4-5. Buir Lake

22.th and 23.th May: The Buir Lake is a freshwater lake that straddles the border between Mongolia and China. It lies within the Buir Lake Depression. The Chinese city of Hulunbuir is named after both this lake and Hulun Lake, which lies entirely on the Chinese side of the border in Inner Mongolia. Lake Buir and surrounding shallow pools are great habitats of breeding and migrating waders and other wetland birds. We visit the Halh River Delta in the north-western corner of the lake where we explore the reedbed and riparian forest. Target birds include Bar-headed Geese, Swan Geese, Mandarin Duck,

Baikal Teal, Falcated Duck, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Japanese Quail, Little Grebe, Black Stork, Siberian and White-naped Cranes, Mongolian & Greater Sandpipers, Oriental Plover, Red-necked Stint, Asian Dowitcher, Oriental Pratincole, Relict Gull, Oriental Reed, Black-browed Reed, Pallas's Grasshopper, Lanceolated Warblers, White's, Eyebrowed, Naumann's & Dusky Thrushes. O/N in tents. BLD

Day 6-7. Khalkh River – poplar and riparian forest birds (70-km dust roads)

24.th and 25.th May: We explore poplar trees and riparian forest for enigmatic bird species including Amur Falcon, Grey-headed Lapwing, Hill Pigeon, Oriental Turtle Dove, Chinese Grey Shrike, Azure Tit, White-cheeked Starling, Daurian Starling, Siberian Blue Robin, Rufous-tailed Robin, Siberian Rubythroat, Yellow-rumped, Narcissus, and Mugimaki Flycatchers, and Oriental Greenfinch. The Khalkh River (also spelled as Khalkha River or Halaha River) is a river in eastern Mongolia and northern China's Inner Mongolia region. The river is also referred as the Khalkhyn Gol, or River of Khalkh. Khalkyn at the far eastern edge of Mongolia in the Amur River basin. The river's source is the western slopes of the Greater Khingan mountains of Inner Mongolia. In its lower course, it forms the boundary between China's Inner Mongolia, and the Mongolian Republic. From May to September 1939, the river was the site of the Battles of Khalkhin Gol, the decisive engagement of the Soviet-Japanese border conflicts. Soviet and Mongolian forces defeated the Japanese Kwantung Army. O/N in tents (if the shower is working in the village, we will use it). BLD

Day 8-9. Tashgain Lakes – shorebirds and other wetland birds (70-km dust road)

26.th – 27.th May: This site is in the east of Tamsag depression, 30 km southwest of Sumber soum centre, Dornod Province and it comprises the group of small lakes, located in 1.2 km from each other. There are many more lakes in the Tashgai depression. Some of the lakes are fully surrounded by reeds, while some are partially surrounded by reeds and bushes. The major land use of Tashgain depression is livestock grazing and some are used for agriculture. Globally threatened bird species occurs, and we will explore the shallow brackish waters for waders and the lakes for scoters. Look for elusive and rare Reed Parrotbill in the reedbed. This



is the only known breeding site for this species in Mongolia. Other bird highlights include Bar-headed, Greylag, Swan, Bean, and Greater White-fronted Geese, Baer's Pochard, White-winged Scoter, Japanese Quail, Great Bustard, Baillon's Crake, Siberian, White-naped and Hooded Cranes, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Long-toed Stint, Red-necked Stint, Asian Dowitcher, Relict Gull, Short-eared Owl, Bearded Reedling, Oriental Reed, Black-browed Reed, Paddyfield Warbler, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Marsh Grassbird, Reed Parrotbill, Daurian Starling, White's, Eyebrowed, Naumann's & Dusky Thrushes, Yellow-breasted, Pallas's, and Japanese Reed Buntings. O/N in tents. BLD

Day 10. Menen Steppe (150 km)

28.th May: We spend one more day at the Menen Steppe, enroute to Matad Mountains, exploring the lakes and steppe for missing species. O/N in tents. BLD

Day 11-12. Matad Mountains – Jankowski's Bunting (150 km)

29.th – 30.th May: The Matad Haan uul is a mountain in Eastern Dornod. It is located at an elevation of 1,103 meters above sea level. The mountain is an elevation standing high above the surrounding area with small summit area, steep slopes, and local relief of 300m or more. This mountain is a special place among birdwatchers. It is famous for the recent finding of breeding Jankowski's buntings. We explore the rocky outcrops and scrubs around the mountain. Bird highlights are Daurian Partridge, Japanese Quail, Cinereous Vulture, Greater Spotted, Booted, Steppe, and Golden Eagles, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Meadow, and Jankowski's Buntings.

O/N in tents (if the shower is working in the village, we will use it). BLD



Day 13. Matad Mnts – Choibalsan (150 km)

31.th May: We drive towards Choibalsan and make stops along the riparian forest along Kherlen River for missing species. O/N in hotel. BLD

Day 14. Choibalsan - Ulaanbaatar

01.th June: We fly back to Ulaanbaatar. The hotel is located close to the airport on the bank of Tuul River. The guests are free to do birding in the riparian forest: Amur Falcon, Demoiselle Crane, White-winged Tern, Pacific Swift, Azure-winged Magpie, Daurian Jackdaw, Azure Tit, White-crowned Penduline-tit, Horned Lark brandti, White- cheeked Starling, Red-throated Thrush, Isabelline Wheatear, Pied Wheatear, and Long-tailed Rosefinch. O/N hotel. BLD

Day 15 - Heading home from Ulaanbaatar – Welcome home!

02.th June: Transfer to the airport according to your flight schedule.



This is an active journey. Participants should tolerate and be ready for active birding. The activity level will be adjusted so it fits all clients, and everyone can enjoy this journey. We don't climb mountains or endure tough levels of activity, but this is birding, and participants should be ready getting up early – and should be ready to endure changing climatic conditions. We visit steppe, semi-deserts, low mountains, etc. when this is said, it should be stressed that Miksture and our 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! Most of the nights will be nights in tents because no other possibilities are present, but it's solely an advantage as we are close or right in the centre of the best birding sites. Our vehicles are comfortable, and our drivers are experienced. But it's a tough terrain and roads are sometimes very bad or even absent... Some days can be long, exhausting, and dusty on the road! Tourism is still new here and it took years before guesthouses and hotels were available. So please bear this in mind and be patient.

What to bring...?

Prior departure, and usually at booking confirmation, we send a detailed packing list and information about what to bring. Miksture are of course always prepared to assist and explain, so please feel free to ask us about every matter.

PHYSICAL RATING: Moderate. We designed this trip involving the least possible strenuous walks and treks throughout the trip.

MEALS: The food is delicious. When we are in the field, we bring our own kitchen team who serve three meals a day: Good, healthy, and delicious food! Lunches could be packed and be basic. Some evening meals will be in the hotel or in a restaurant close by. Dinners are with plenty of food and a variety of communal dishes. Soups are often included as well as both meat and vegetable dishes. Mealtimes are generally very flexible, and the group will eat together. 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.

CUSTOMS: On entering Mongolia you need to declare all equipment such as cameras (especially camcorders) and money. Usually, it goes smooth and



without any problems and frankly... the customs and authorities in Mongolia are very friendly and service minded.

ACCOMMODATION: The hotels in Ulaanbaatar are of normal standard but just below the international standard, however clean and comfortable. We ask you to understand the local standard hotel in Choibalsan town. Due to low development of the infrastructure and isolation, the hotels might not meet your expectations. Anyways we will choose the best possible. This tour involves a lot of camping on the seamless steppe. There will not be any shower for extended periods. For the camping nights, each participant will have to share with one of the other participants, but we might try to get as many tents as possible. Couples may of course be accommodated together. The only camp assistance group members will be asked to give is erecting and dismantling one's personal tent (an easy and rapid task) on those occasions when the camp crew has limited time. In addition to the individual sleeping tents, there is a dining tent and a toilet tent. You will need to bring a 2-season sleeping bag. Karmat, are provided; though if you prefer pls bring the more modern self-inflated Thermarest' mattress. There are no air mattresses.

MEALS: 14 breakfasts, 14 lunches, and 14 dinners is included in this tour, which covers all the main meals during your stay in Mongolia. Our cook will cater for your special food requirements. Please let us know your dietary requirements in advance so that we can prepare the supplies accordingly. We will provide our guests with fresh fruits every day. However, the meals in the camp might lack a variety comparing to the European standards. There will always be hot drinks and snacks.

WEATHER: Mongolia is the 'Land of Blue Sky', the nickname comes from the number of sunny days throughout the year in the country – two third of the year. Temperatures should be relatively moderate, and skies are usually brilliantly clear. The days will usually be sunny and cool, and pleasant. Nights will be considerably cooler after the sunset. The temperature should be lower in the mountains and snow is possible.

ELECTRICITY AND POWER SOURCES: We will use power inverter in the vehicle. You can charge your batteries while vehicle is moving. The common socket type is type E. The recently built buildings



have the combination of Type G and Type E. Please



see the details of socket types at <https://www.power-plugs-sockets.com/>.

TRANSPORT IN MONGOLIA: Roads are generally poor (or even completely lacking in some places, where one merely drives across the steppe or desert!), but our transport consists of sturdy 4x4 vehicles and a well-equipped camp truck which can easily cope with the conditions.



VISA: Miksture assist with this matter. When your seat is booked Miksture inform you about the visas. Our Mongolian partners and Miksture recommend arranging it in advance. It is possible but more expensive to purchase it upon arrival at the destination

TIPPING: Tipping is generally as always - welcome!

TAXONOMICAL CHECK LIST OF BIRDS: The list provides the potential birds that could be seen during the whole trip. As our trip date coincides with late migrations, we might miss some early migrants. Hope you understand that the birds do not stay in a place for long time because of the season. However, we have tried to include the most potential birds to the list. The taxonomical order and nomenclature follow the Howard and Moore 4.th edition (incl. corrigenda vol.1-2). When deposit is received, Miksture mail a receipt of the received amount, together with list of birds of MONGOLIA 2023 and Practical Travel tips which essential is a little booklet of all practical matters and a pack list



One of the highlights of trip is great herds of the enigmatic Mongolian Gazelles grazing on its natural habitat

Price include

Guiding by Michael Westerbjerg Andersen/Miksture

- Local (English-speaking) interpreters
- Domestic flight Ulaanbaatar – Choibalsan
- All private transportation by 4WD vans/jeeps/trucks) and other domestic transportation according program
- All accommodation in Mongolia according program: 2 nights of accommodation at a hotel in Ulaanbaatar, 1 night of accommodation at hotel in Choibalsan, 12 nights camping in tents
- Full board in Mongolia
- Bottled water each day
- All permits
- Services of tour leader & administration from Miksture
- Local entrees and fees according day-to-day program
- Sightseeing specified cost
- Road taxes
- Visa support invitation letter. Mongolian poor roads conditions & changing weather conditions is not charged extras ;)

Price does NOT include

International flights

- Alcoholic drinks at meals in restaurants and cafes
- Personal expenses for eventual extra arrangements not mentioned in the program
- Tips to drivers and interpreter
- Travel insurance – mandatory!
- Money for own expenses; anything strictly personal (e.g., laundry, phone calls, any excess luggage charges, snacks)
- Visa to Mongolia (Miksture recommend obtaining Mongolian visa prior departure as it's much easier and much cheaper
- Sleeping bag and any optical equipment (binoculars).

Visa fees and applications will be explained prior departure.

Single room: Please note that, single room accommodation may not be available at some places, but this will be explained and agreed prior departure. Is possible for surcharge in some accommodation, a single room surcharge will apply for anyone not sharing.

All birders are welcome and, on our travels, there usually is a mix-ture of nationalities. Language is no problem – Birders talk the same language! English, Russian, French, German and Danish are spoken. Miksture was established with the purpose of encourage and combine Eco-tourism and biological sci- entific research in Siberia, Mongolia, and Central Asia. The approach of combining Eco-tourism and Nature Conservation is in many ways opposite activities, but 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 unusual 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 local staff that possesses the knowledge and experience to make the tour wholly successful. They 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 Eu- rope or North America is one thing, leading one in Mongolia, Siberia, and 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.

Welcome to MONGOLIA 2023

One month before departure Miksture mail an updated program

Pls contact Miksture for further details – we would be happy to organize and assist!

Michael Westerbjerg Andersen/Miksture

