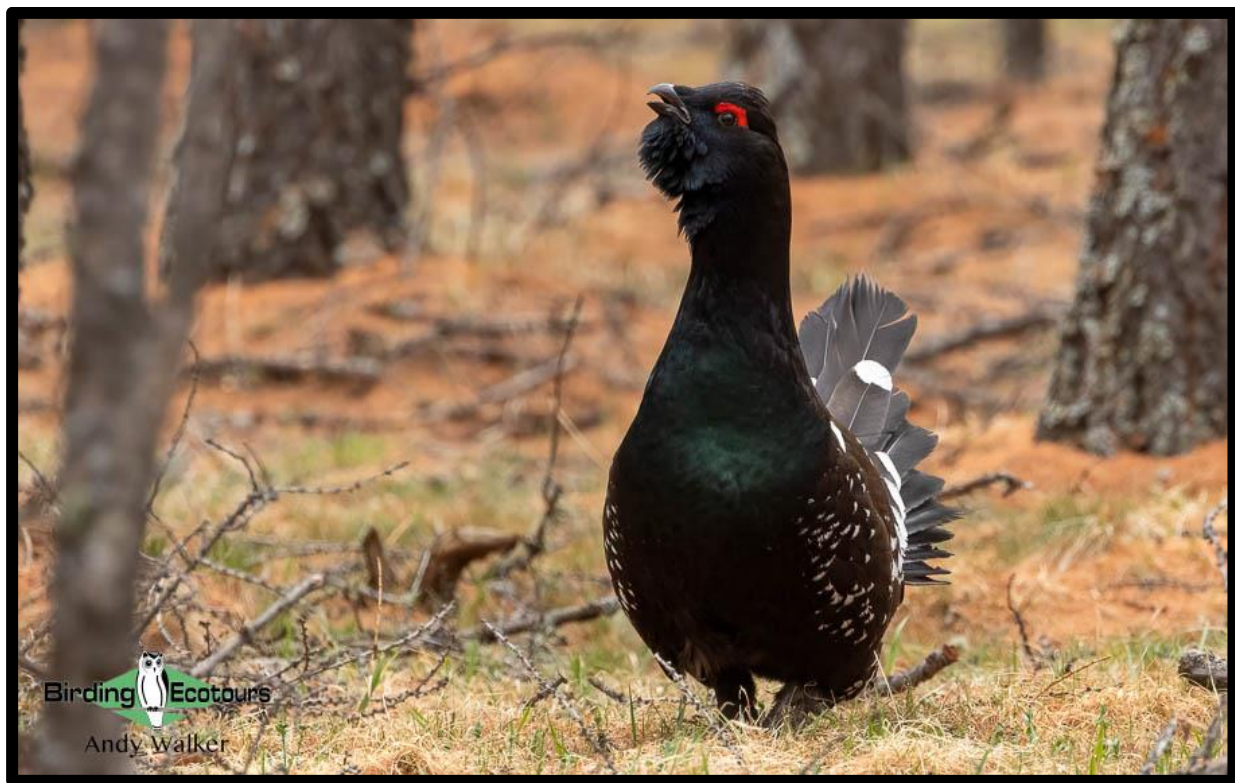


# Birding Ecotours



## BIRDING TOUR MONGOLIA: STEPPES AND GOBI DESERT BIRDING

11 –22 MAY 2027  
23 MAY –03 JUNE 2028



*The incredible **Black-billed Capercaillie** will be a big target on this Mongolia birding tour.*

Mongolia is one of the most exciting and remote landlocked birding destinations in Asia and this small-group Mongolian birdwatching tour (without real camping like some operators) will allow you to see a wide variety of birds in spectacular natural landscapes. We will traverse Mongolia, visiting the Siberian taiga forests, the seemingly endless steppe grasslands, a range of fresh and brackish lakes, the Gobi Desert, and impressive mountains. We will stay in local-style comfortable and mostly heated Mongolian yurts (here called gers), offering an incredible and authentic Mongolian travel experience.

Mongolia has been made famous worldwide by Genghis Khan (Chinggis Khaan) and the Mongol hordes (army), but the draw of some highly sought-after and poorly known bird species has also kept birders and wildlife enthusiasts enthralled in the country, making a Mongolian bird tour an essential destination for serious world birders and folks with a sense of adventure.

This Mongolian birdwatching tour offers the ultimate adventure to find an array of dream birds from the Eastern Palearctic. We will start (and end) our Mongolian birding journey in Ulaanbaatar (also widely known as Ulan Bator). We will visit several different areas and key habitats in the region where we will look for a range of important target species. On arrival in the city some of our target birds should be waiting for us near our carefully selected hotel, such as **Bar-headed Goose**, **Mandarin Duck**, a range of shorebirds, **Amur Falcon**, **Common Hoopoe**, **Azure-winged Magpie**, **Red-billed Chough**, **Daurian Jackdaw**, **Azure Tit**, **Naumann's Thrush**, **Red-throated Thrush**, **Long-tailed Rosefinch**, **Citrine Wagtail**, and **Little Bunting**.



*The gorgeous **Azure Tit** may provide an early tour highlight.*

We will first travel to Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve in the steppe grassland habitats. In this park, we will search for **Swan Goose**, **Bar-headed Goose**, **Stejneger's Scoter**, **White-naped Crane**, **Demoiselle Crane**, and with extreme luck we may even encounter the Critically Endangered

(IUCN/BirdLife International) **Siberian Crane**. Other targets here include **Black Stork**, **Asian Dowitcher**, **Steppe Eagle**, **Greater Spotted Eagle**, **Golden Eagle**, **Bearded Vulture** (Lammergeier), **Cinereous Vulture**, and **Saker Falcon**. We might also find **Lanceolated Warbler**, **Red-throated Thrush**, **Pied Wheatear**, **Citrine Wagtail**, **Pere David's Snowfinch**, **Meadow Bunting**, and **Pallas's Reed Bunting**, to name a few exciting possibilities.

The next stop on our Mongolian birding tour will take us to some incredible Siberian taiga forest where we will look for the magnificent **Black-billed Capercaillie**, along with other high-quality birds like **Black Grouse**, **Hazel Grouse**, **Ural Owl**, **Great Grey Owl**, **Black Woodpecker**, **White-backed Woodpecker**, **Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker**, **Eurasian Jay**, **Northern Nutcracker**, **White-crowned Penduline Tit**, **Chinese Bush Warbler**, **Siberian Rubythroat**, **Red-flanked Bluetail**, and many more high-latitude forest birds along the way.

Following a flight south, we will bird in the high mountains, where we will look for Mongolia's near-endemic, **Kozlov's Accentor** and **Wallcreeper** (a monotypic family). Other specials here include **Himalayan Vulture**, **Bearded Vulture** (Lammergeier), **Golden Eagle**, **Brown Accentor**, **Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch**, **Mongolian Finch**, and **White-winged Snowfinch**.

After birding the mountains, we will do something totally different, birding the famed Gobi Desert! Here, yet more targets await us, with mouthwatering prospects of breeding-plumaged **Oriental Plover** and **Greater Sand Plover**, along with **Pallas's Sandgrouse**, **Mongolian** (Henderson's) **Ground Jay**, **Asian Desert Warbler**, **Desert Wheatear**, and **Saxaul Sparrow** to name a few. Once our birding is completed we'll fly back north to Ulaanbaatar where the tour will conclude.

In addition to these exciting birds, we should also see an assortment of interesting mammals during the tour, such as **Tolai Hare**, **Pallas's Pika**, **Tarbagan Marmot**, **Mongolian Jird**, **Argali**, **Siberian Ibex**, **Mongolian Gazelle**, **Goitered Gazelle**, **Onager**, **Corsac Fox**, and more.



*Wallcreeper can be found on the towering cliffs in the southern Gobi Desert.*

## Itinerary (12 days/11 nights)

### Day 1. Tour starts with afternoon birding in Ulaanbaatar

We will have a welcome lunch together and then we will go to some woodland near the Tuul River in the afternoon, where we will look for **Amur Falcon**, **Azure-winged Magpie**, **White-crowned Penduline Tit**, **Azure Tit**, **Red-throated Thrush**, and **Long-tailed Rosefinch**. We will perhaps also see some wildfowl and shorebirds in the nearby gravel pit ponds, such as **Bar-headed Goose** and **Mandarin Duck** for a nice relaxed introduction to our Mongolian birding experience.

Overnight: Ulaanbaatar hotel



*Saker Falcon is a huge falcon and makes its home in the steppes and mountains of Mongolia.*

### Days 2 – 3. Ulaanbaatar to Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve

We will spend time birding in the picturesque Gun-Galuut Nature Reserve. The reserve was founded in 2003 to protect the endangered wildlife and their habitat along the River Kherlen. The reserve is made up of high mountains and pretty lakes teeming with birds, and surrounded by grassland full of beautiful and colorful wildflowers, all providing important breeding and foraging grounds for many of our regional target bird species.

There are several birds of global significance in this area, and we will spend time trying to find as many of them as possible. One highlight, with extreme luck, would be the Critically Endangered (IUCN/BirdLife International) giant **Siberian Crane** – these days a very rare visitor. Other crane targets here include **White-naped Crane**, **Demoiselle Crane**, and **Common Crane**. Further species we will look for include **Swan Goose**, **Bar-headed Goose**, **Whooper Swan**, **Stejneger's**

**Scoter, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Black Stork, Asian Dowitcher, and White-winged Tern.** A wide range of impressive raptors can be encountered here too, such as **White-tailed Eagle, Eastern Marsh Harrier, Upland Buzzard, Golden Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier), Cinereous Vulture, Amur Falcon, and Saker Falcon.**

Some of the passerines possible in this area include **Red-billed Chough, Asian Short-toed Lark, Mongolian Lark, Lanceolated Warbler, Paddyfield Warbler, Oriental Reed Warbler, Common Rock Thrush, Red-throated Thrush, Northern Wheatear, Pied Wheatear, Isabelline Wheatear, Richard's Pipit, Citrine Wagtail, Rock Sparrow, Pere David's Snowfinch, Meadow Bunting, and Pallas's Reed Bunting.** We will spend some time searching for these many great species, as well as the impressive non-passerines of the area.

Overnight (two nights): Tourist ger camp



*The stately **White-naped Crane** may be one of several crane species seen on this tour.*

#### **Days 4 – 5. Gun-Galuut to Gorkhi Terelj National Park**

We will drive to Gorkhi Terelj National Park and check into a tourist ger camp near the birding site for a two-night stay to explore this fascinating area. Here we will look for forest and forest/steppe birds, including the tough and highly sought-after **Black-billed Capercaillie** (see cover image for the fantastic views we enjoyed on a recent Mongolia birding tour).

Other target birds for our time here include **Daurian Partridge, Common Cuckoo, Oriental Cuckoo, Great Grey Owl, Ural Owl, Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker, White-crowned Penduline Tit, Chinese Bush Warbler, Siberian Rubythroat, Red-flanked Bluetail, Daurian Redstart, Dark-sided Flycatcher, Taiga Flycatcher, Siberian (Stejneger's) Stonechat, White-cheeked Starling, Olive-backed Pipit, Black-faced Bunting, and Pine Bunting.**



*Ural Owl can be found while birding at Gorkhi Terelj National Park.*

Birders who have spent time in the non-breeding season in Thailand (e.g. on our **Northern Thailand – Spectacular Resident and Migrant Birds** tour) or chased rare birds in the UK, US, or continental Europe, will likely be familiar with the challenge (and fun!) of *Phylloscopus* warbler identification. In Gorkhi Terelj, in late May, we have the opportunity of seeing breeding and singing **Arctic Warbler**, **Greenish Warbler**, **Two-barred Warbler**, **Yellow-browed Warbler**, **Hume’s Leaf Warbler**, **Pallas’s Leaf Warbler**, and **Dusky Warbler**, which makes identification a little less of a challenge!

Other birds we will look for in the Siberian boreal forest (taiga) include **Eurasian Goshawk**, **Eurasian Sparrowhawk**, **Common Hoopoe**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Grey-headed Woodpecker**, **White-backed Woodpecker**, **Northern Nutcracker**, **Paddyfield Warbler**, **Oriental Reed Warbler**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Willow Tit**, **Common Redstart**, and **Daurian Redstart**.

Overnight (two nights): Tourist ger camp

#### **Day 6. Travel between Gorkhi Terelj National Park and Yolyn Am (via flight between Ulaanbaatar and Dalanzadgad)**

Today we will travel to, then take a flight from, Ulaanbaatar to Dalanzadgad. We will then drive the short distance to Yolyn Am. Depending on the flight schedule, we may get time for some extra birding in the Gorkhi Terelj National Park area, where we might have further chances to look for **Grey-headed Woodpecker**, **Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker**, **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, **Northern Nutcracker**, and **Red-flanked Bluetail**. Alternatively, if we arrive in Yolyn Am earlier we may get started on some of the birds to be found near our accommodation.

Overnight: Tourist ger camp

### Day 7. Birding Yolyn Am

We will drive through yet more beautiful scenery as we head from our accommodation to Yolyn Am, a deep and narrow gorge in the Gurvan Saikhan Mountains in the Gurvan Saikhan National Park. We hope to see **Bearded Vulture** (Lammergeier) and **Himalayan Vulture** at close range, along with **Wallcreeper** (a monotypic family), **Sulphur-bellied Warbler**, **Kozlov's Accentor** (a Mongolian near-endemic bird), and the attractive **Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch**.

Other species we will look for will include **Chukar Partridge**, **Cinereous Vulture**, **Golden Eagle**, **Eurasian Eagle-Owl**, **Saker Falcon**, **Barred Warbler**, **Eurasian Crag Martin**, **Common Rock Thrush**, **Brown Accentor**, **White-winged Snowfinch**, **Mongolian Finch**, **Godlewski's Bunting**, and **Grey-necked Bunting**. We will also scan the mountain ridges for **Siberian Ibex**, which can be found here too.

In the afternoon we will take a drive around the open desert plains looking for **Oriental Plover**.

Overnight: Tourist ger camp



*One of the least snazzy birds on the trip, but **Kozlov's Accentor** is a near-endemic to Mongolia, so a highly sought after and well camouflaged target species.*

### Days 8 – 9. Khongoryn Els

We have a long drive ahead as we travel to the 'Singing Sands', the famous dunes of Khongoryn Els, located within the Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park (i.e. the Gobi Desert!). We will make stops along the way for any interesting birds and for the incredible sandstone hills scenery.

Once we arrive at our ger camp, we will be able to relax and unwind with spectacular views of endless desert steppe, with massive sand dunes set against the grandeur of the high mountains

behind. We will have to pull ourselves away from these views to find the many Gobi Desert bird specialties, such as **Hill Pigeon**, **Pallas's Sandgrouse**, **Long-legged Buzzard**, **Lesser Kestrel**, **Mongolian** (Henderson's) **Ground Jay**, **Great (Steppe) Grey Shrike**, **Desert Wheatear**, **Asian Desert Warbler**, and **Saxaul Sparrow**.

Overnight (two nights): Tourist ger camp



*Mongolian Ground Jay is an interesting bird found in desert scrub.*

### Day 10. Travel between Khongoryn Els and Bayanzag (the “Flaming Cliffs”)

Today we will travel from Khongoryn Els to Bayanzag, also known as the “Flaming Cliffs”, famed for the world's first discovery of dinosaur eggs in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This site is also great for a few prized birds like **Pallas's Sandgrouse**, **Oriental Plover**, **Long-legged Buzzard**, **Great (Steppe) Grey Shrike**, **Horned Lark**, **Isabelline Wheatear**, and **Desert Wheatear**. Several mammals are also possible in the area such as **Goitered Gazelle**, **Gobi Jerboa**, **Great Gerbil**, and with luck maybe even some dinosaur bones! The landscape is also rather spectacular (as it is for pretty much everywhere we visit on this tour!).

Overnight: Tourist ger camp

### Day 11. Travel between Bayanzag and Ulaanbaatar

We will spend the early morning birding at Bayanzag before we drive back to Dalanzadgad and take a flight to Ulaanbaatar. The exact timings will depend on the domestic flight schedule.

Overnight: Ulaanbaatar hotel



*Pallas's Sandgrouse can be found in the Gobi Desert and we will likely be able to get good flight (and perched) views of birds as they come to desert pools to drink.*



*Oriental Plover can be found in the desert grasslands and is one simply stunning bird in breeding plumage.*

**Day 12. Tour ends in Ulaanbaatar**

This is a non-birding day with the tour concluding. Breakfast is the final meal of the tour. Time at leisure before your departure from Ulaanbaatar.

Overnight: Not included

*Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads or birding sites, and the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling and other factors.*

<b>Duration:</b>	12 days
<b>Group Size:</b>	4–8
<b>Dates:</b>	11–22 May 2027 23 May–03 June 2028
<b>Start:</b>	<u>Chinggis Khaan International Airport, Ulaanbaatar</u>
<b>End:</b>	<u>Chinggis Khaan International Airport, Ulaanbaatar</u>
<b>Price:</b>	US\$7,995 per person sharing – based on 4–8 participants (2027) includes domestic flight US\$8,875 per person sharing – based on 4–8 participants (2028) includes domestic flight
<b>Single Supplement:</b>	US\$660 (2027) US\$735 (2028)

**Price includes:**

Return domestic flight (Ulaanbaatar to Dalanzadgad to Ulaanbaatar)  
All accommodation (as described above - 2 nights in hotels and 9 nights in tourist ger camps – see important “Accommodation note” below and further details in the “General Tour Information” document)  
Meals (from lunch on Day 1 until breakfast on Day 12)  
Drinking water – please bring a refillable water bottle  
Expert tour leader  
Local bird and wildlife guide/trackers fees  
National park/birdwatching reserve/protected areas entrance fees  
All ground transport and tolls/taxes while on tour, including airport pick-up and drop-off

**Price excludes:**

Flights to/from Chinggis Khaan International Airport, Ulaanbaatar

Visa (if required)

Departure tax (if required, usually included in international flight ticket)

Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls, etc.

Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or birding/sightseeing/monument excursions

Soft/alcoholic drinks

Camera (still/video) permits (if required)

Personal travel insurance

Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))

**Accommodation notes:**

We will spend two nights in hotels (one night in Ulaanbaatar at the beginning of the tour and one night back there at the end of the tour), but for the majority (nine nights) of the tour, accommodation will be spent in tourist ger camps with all equipment e.g. beds, bedding, towels, etc. provided (gers are the local name for yurts).

Our selected ger camps are the highest of local standards. The camps provide gers for accommodation; each ger usually has 1 - 4 beds, some have a stove for heating or an electric heater (though some do not, mainly in the warmer more southerly locations), chairs, a table, and drawers/hangers inside. Due to the remoteness of our accommodations, bathrooms are shared (separate male and female toilet/shower blocks). We will book individual gers for each person/couple/group of friends traveling together.

Electricity is provided, often at limited hours, usually between 18:00 – 22:00 hrs., but at some (most) accommodations, power is connected 24 hrs. a day. Note that at a couple of locations, electricity is only provided in a communal area (usually the restaurant ger/building where we will eat our meals), with these locations only providing solar powered lighting and no mains electricity in the sleeping gers.

Hot water may be limited to certain times across the day and it (and the general power supply) may be restricted by weather conditions (such as cold weather or strong wind). We will mostly stay in comfortable and clean ger camps and we will try to book the gers closest to the bathrooms for convenience.

We do not stay in small, portable tents (such as those you might use when you go camping at home) like some operators in Mongolia put you in. We believe you can see the birds and amazing country yet still remain relatively comfortable at the same time, additionally, temperatures can drop to near freezing during May at some of our overnight locations.