

<http://birdingforalark.blogspot.com/2015/08/gun-guluut-national-park.html>

[BirdingRob](#)

Gun Guluut National Park

On July 31st, I was guided by Otgonbayar Baatargal usually called Oogii. Oogii took me to Gun Guluut National Park. his park is 2 hours drive east of Ulan Bator compared with the day before's Hustai National Park which is one hour west.

Gun Guluut has several fresh water pools which are attractive to water birds. It is also well known for summering cranes.

When Oogii and I arrived early in the morning it was a grey day with showers.seeing birds was difficult in poor light. However persistence paid and there were a few bright spells.

We visited the main cluster of pools twice. The first time was grey but the second time was much better. Either way it is clearly a good place to see waders.



sharp-tailed sandpiper 1

On the first visit, we thought we had seen ***sharp-tailed sandpiper*** but the views were poor because of the light. On our return it was obvious there were two.

The species breeds on the East Siberian coast and migrated to Australasia

for winter. Mongolia is towards the western edge of the migration route in autumn and too far west in spring when birds return north by a more easterly route. It is apparently not common in Mongolia even in autumn.

Our luck was in.



sharp-tailed sandpiper 2

Two birds came very close to the parked car at one stage and gave us excellent views.



two sharp-tailed sandpiper

In the same area as the two ***sharp-tailed sandpiper*** identified above (at least on the return visit) were eight other waders. I initially thought they were *dunlin* as the least worse option. However thanks to Bart de Schutter alerting me, it looks like they are also ***sharp-tailed sandpiper***. These were all adults in breeding plumage. While in Mongolia I had no access to my

guidebook which shows all palearctic waders in all plumages. Referring to that, I can see that Bart is right.



sharp-tailed sandpiper in summer plumage

On the earlier visit though the light was poorer there were actually more waders to see than later.



red-necked phalarope

Two of them were ***red-necked phalarope***.



spotted redshank

There was a mobile flock of **common redshank** and a single **spotted redshank** which is so much easier to separate when both birds were still in breeding plumage.



black-tailed godwit

Two **black-tailed godwit** were identified at distance and in the gloom.



red-necked stint

Three types of stint were around: **red-necked stint**, **little stint** and a solitary **Temminck's stint**.



Temminck's stint

Other sandpipers included **wood sandpiper**.



wood sandpiper

Although I had seen ***ruddy shelduck*** at UB Ponds the day before, both it and ***common shelduck*** were present at Gun Guluut.



ruddy shelduck and common shelduck

There was solid evidence of ***common shelduck*** breeding. Two gaggles of young ducks were seen.



young shelduck

Black-necked grebe also breed there. One bird was seen with a chick taking a ride on the back though not in the picture below.



black-necked grebe

Black-headed gull breeds this far inland too.



black-headed gull

Several ***white-winged black tern*** in breeding plumage were flying over the ponds.



white-winged black tern

Of course not all the birding took place at the ponds. In the fields were at least three types of lark.



horned lark

In the shorter grass the more common one was ***horned lark***.



Mongolian lark

Around or in the longer grass, ***Mongolian lark*** was more common.



Pere David's snowfinch

As in Hustai National Park, ***Pere David's Snowfinch*** was sighted here too. The one above is another juvenile.



red-billed chough

Red-billed chough is an attractive bird. Four were seen.



demoiselle crane

There are three types of crane often seen in summer in the park: *Siberian crane*, *white-naped crane* and ***demoiselle crane***. Unfortunately for me, only ***demoiselle crane*** was observed the day I was there and we searched hard and long. It was poor compensation that as many as 30 ***demoiselle crane*** were seen. Both of the other cranes would have been lifers.

We had seen a saker falcon briefly during our search for cranes in one of the inner valleys. I was very lucky to see another close up near the pools. This one rested on a pylon.



saker falcon

Upland buzzard was easily seen and when we were making our way out of the park at the end we drove straight into a group of 12 ***cinereous vulture***. Two ***northern raven*** were also near-by. I couldn't see any carcass so I don't know why so many were grouped together.



cinereous vulture

Virtually the last bird seen in the park was a **rock sparrow** on a rock.



rock sparrow

We stopped off to eat about half way back to Ulan Bator. It was here that Oogii pointed out a flock of **jackdaw** on the other side of the road from the restaurant.



jackdaw

By the end of the day, my Mongolian list had reached 76. I thank Ooggii for his guidance and driving. It was an excellent day.

Along with the day before, I had had two consecutive 12-15 hour days of birding. The day after (August 1st) I took a complete rest. However the birding wasn't entirely finished. I went to the Tuul river on August 2nd. This was my one foray into woodland birding. I will blog about this next.

Species seen at Gun Guluut National Park

Whooper Swan
Ruddy Shelduck
Common Shelduck
Tufted Duck
Black-necked Grebe
Cinereous Vulture
Upland Buzzard
Demoiselle Crane
Black-winged Stilt
Northern Lapwing
Common Sandpiper
Spotted Redshank
Wood Sandpiper
Common Redshank
Black-tailed Godwit
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Curlew Sandpiper
Temminck's Stint
Red-necked Stint
Dunlin
Little Stint
Red-necked Phalarope
Black-headed Gull
White-winged Tern
Common Tern
Pacific Swift
Eurasian Hoopoe
Saker Falcon
Common Magpie
Red-billed Chough
Common Raven
Mongolian Lark
Greater Short-toed Lark
Horned Lark
Sand Martin
Barn Swallow

Wheatear
Isabelline Wheatear
White Wagtail
Pallas's Reed Bunting
Tree Sparrow
Rock Sparrow
Pere David's Snowfinch