Eagle-Eye Tours



Mongolia Snow Leopards & Birds Trip Report (May 25 – June 8, 2025)

Link: Mongolia Snow Leopards & Birds Trip Report (May 25 – June 8, 2025)



Mongolia landscape © A Meyer-Wernecke

Day 1, May 25

We spent the morning birding around the hotel and saw a good list of birds with 2 Swan Geese,

several Ruddy Shelducks, a female Lesser Spotted Woodpecker showing well, Daurian Jackdaw, an Azure Tit posing, flyby White-crowned Penduline Tit, many Arctic and two Pallas's Warblers, White-cheeked Starling, Asian Brown and Taiga Flycatchers, a pair of Daurian Redstart, Hawfinch, Common Rosefinch and a nice male Long-tailed Rosefinch.



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker © A Meyer-Wernecke

In the afternoon went walking around the hotel with the group. There were many migrating birds including dozens of Arctic Warblers in the trees feeding and singing. Tiny Pallas's Warblers were also very active. A denser place with tall trees held a Dark-sided, an Asian Brown and two Taiga Flycatchers. By a stream a Grey Wagtail was showing its bright yellow vent, while a Black-faced Bunting came down to drink. Common Rosefinches were feeding in the trees and a couple of Hawfinches also appeared. It was then time to head back for dinner.



Arctic Warbler © A Meyer-Wernecke



Asian Brown Flycatcher © A Meyer-Wernecke

Day 2, May 26

We walked around the hotel before breakfast. It was first cold and quiet, but then we found a male Yellow-breasted Bunting along the river. While taking pictures we flushed a Siberian Blue Robin from a ditch. Unfortunately, it only gave fleeting views before it flew to the other side of the river. A

flyby Demoiselle Crane was also nice. While watching a Little Ringed Plover we found a Little Bunting. After breakfast right before leaving we found a singing Long-tailed Rosefinch at the parking lot. It perched atop a tree and sang giving very good views. We then left the hotel and started driving east. We stopped at the huge Genghis Khan statue. Even at this busy place we found a beautiful male Siberian Rubythroat and two Dusky Warblers.



Yellow-breasted Bunting © A Meyer-Wernecke



Siberian Rubythroat © A Meyer-Wernecke



Long-tailed Rosefinch © A Meyer-Wernecke

We spent some time by the river finding Siberian House Martins and Mongolian Gulls. After lunch we started exploring the lakes and marshes of Gun Galuut Reserve. When reaching the first lake we bumped into a small group of elegant Demoiselle Cranes. White-winged Terns were flying above the lake and two Little Gulls in immaculate breeding plumage were swimming. We scanned the lake and saw a good mixture of ducks with Stejneger's Scoter, Falcated Duck and Garganey. Whooper Swans were already on the nest. There was a group of lovely Eurasian Spoonbills resting on the shore. The smaller lake held more ducks, lots of Common Shelducks, Pied Avocets and some Temminck's Stints. A bit further on we saw our first White-naped Cranes at the marshes that were much drier than usual due to the draught. We counted four of the rare cranes here. Eastern Marsh Harriers were quartering the area, and we found a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper feeding with a Wood Sandpiper.



Demoiselle Cranes © A Meyer-Wernecke



White-naped Crane © A Meyer-Wernecke

Day 3, May 27

We started early checking the marsh and lakes again in Gun Galuut Reserve. There were some newly arrived birds present such as an active group of pretty Red-necked Stints in breeding plumage, a Ruddy Turnstone and Black-winged Stilts. After a nice breakfast we checked some riverside trees

and bushes. Blyth's Pipits were busy singing in the air; a Eurasian Hoopoe was calling. We found some Daurian Pikas next to their burrows, our first mammal of the trip. Brown Shrikes were patrolling the trees, and a Thick-billed Warbler was singing inside the thickets. We found a female Yellow-breasted Bunting and a Black-faced Bunting.



Daurian Pika © A Meyer-Wernecke

We then drove to a more extensive marshland. On the way we had some very close Mongolian Larks. We took many photos of these beautiful, big larks. We counted 5 pairs of White-naped Cranes. Good numbers of Swan Geese were present and Black-tailed Godwits were displaying. Scanning the meadows suddenly a big white bird was found landing not far from us. A Siberian Crane! We drove closer to have better views. The bird had an injured left leg, but was in good condition, feeding and preening. We felt very lucky seeing another endangered crane species. Later we walked along the river finding many beautiful flowers on the hillside. A Common Tern was hovering above a small bay trying to catch fish. It kept diving and trying again until it finally caught a fish and flew off.



Mongolia landscape © A Meyer-Wernecke



Mongolian landscape © A Meyer-Wernecke

After a filling lunch we drove into the nearby mountains looking for Argali. We soon found five young males, but they ran across the ridge and quickly disappeared. Then a group of seven animals were found grazing on the hillside. We spent some time with them. Back at the cars we found three females with offspring below the ridge. Checking out another valley we saw more Argalis offering good photo opportunities. A singing Meadow Bunting, Pied Wheatears and a Daurian Partridge were

the avian highlights. On the way back to the hotel we stopped for some nice Pacific Golden Plovers.



Argali © A Meyer-Wernecke

Day 4, May 28

We had a very windy day that was heavily influencing birding. Early morning was spent at the lakes of Gun Galuut, but the only new bird was a Curlew Sandpiper. After breakfast we transferred to Terelj National Park famous for its scenic rock formations. We reached Terelj Lodge camp fairly early and had some time for exploring before lunch. We walked on the hillside behind the campsite in the strong wind. We found a Tarbagan Marmot sitting under a rock in a crevice hiding from the wind. A nice male Pine Bunting was singing perched atop a rock. We bumped into a pair of Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush feeding in the grass, the male beautifully posing from time to time on a stone.



Horses at Terelj © A Meyer-Wernecke



Pine Bunting © A Meyer-Wernecke

After lunch we visited a nice valley surrounded by ancient granite rock formations. We saw more marmots on the slopes. Entering the forest we admired the pretty wildflowers. Birding was difficult, but a Eurasian Jay and some Willow Tits were nice. Checking the rocks we discovered a Lammergeier sitting on its nest high upon the rock wall. Leaving the valley, we paid a short visit to the floodplain forest seeing Taiga Flycatcher and Coal Tit, but then it started raining and we

returned to camp.

Day 5, May 29

We had a very early start to be at dawn at the Black-billed Capercaillie lek. We arrived there at 5.30 and started walking towards the lek in the fir forest. Soon we heard the characteristic sound of lekking capercaillie. Getting closer we found one male lekking in a tree at a height of about two metres. We watched mesmerized until the male stopped calling. It was standing silently for a while then flew away.



Black-billed Capercaillie © A Meyer-Wernecke

We had a late breakfast and afterwards we revisited the same valley as the day before. This time the weather was much better and as soon as we started walking, we saw a stunning male Daurian Redstart busy singing and chasing a female. Black-faced Buntings were singing in the forest, but it took a while until we had good views. Walking deeper into the forest we discovered a cute Siberian Chipmunk. Willow Tits were very active, calling almost everywhere. We walked atop a ridge for fantastic views of the surrounding landscape. Back inside the woodland two Red-throated Thrushes appeared and Olive-backed Pipits walked on the ground. A Siberian Rubythroat was singing inside the thicket and showed briefly. Then it was time for lunch. We spent the afternoon driving back to the capital and packing for the upcoming early flight to Western Mongolia.

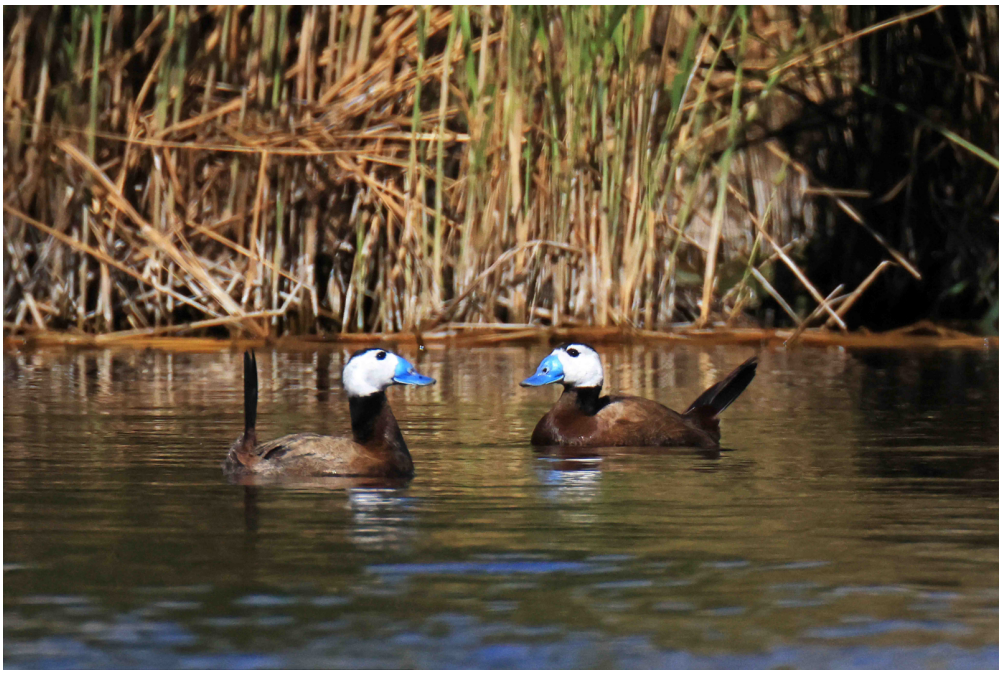
Day 6, May 30

We had another early start and drove to the airport for our flight to Khovd. The flight was quick and uneventful. We were enjoying the views over the endless steppes and desert, as well as the great lakes near Khovd. At the airport we were met by our Altai local team. After some shopping we drove to Khar-us Lake. There are huge reedbeds intersected by channels and smaller open areas that are home to thousands of water birds. Walking on the shore we listened to the song of Paddyfield, Great Reed and Savi’s Warblers and had good views of them. Eurasian Spoonbills were a common sight. Along the muddy edge Little and Temminck’s Stints, Greater Sand Plovers, Black-winged Stilts and Pied Avocets were feeding. Bright yellow Citrine Wagtails and the beautiful white-headed race of

Western Yellow Wagtail were seen in the grass. Out on the water Great Crested Grebes, Red-crested and Common Pochards were swimming. A bit further along the shore we saw good numbers of great looking White-headed Ducks with their glowing white heads and blue beaks. Two Horned Grebes in breeding plumage were also nice to see. An island held a colony of Pallas's Gulls that had fairly big chicks already. Scanning the huge expanse of water, we spotted two Dalmatian Pelicans flying in the distance. Khar-Us Lake is the most westerly breeding site of this rare bird.



Citrine Wagtail © A Meyer-Wernecke



White-headed Duck © A Meyer-Wernecke

Late afternoon we drove to our ger camp situated at the foot of mighty Jargalant Mountain. The scenery around us was spectacular with snow-capped mountains surrounded by endless desert dotted with lakes. We were very excited about the following days spent in this remote corner of Mongolia.



Mongolia landscape © A Meyer-Wernecke

Day 7, May 31

After breakfast we started driving up into Jargalant Mountain. We stopped in a spectacular gorge to have a look at ancient rock art that is characteristic of this part of Mongolia. Argalis, ibexes and hunters were carved into the dark stone thousands of years ago by people living here. We started walking in the gorge finding Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush and Black Redstart singing. A Sulphur-bellied Warbler was sitting atop a bush on the ridge. Eurasian Crag Martins were hunting along the rock faces and a surprise Ruddy Shelduck was sitting on a peak and calling.

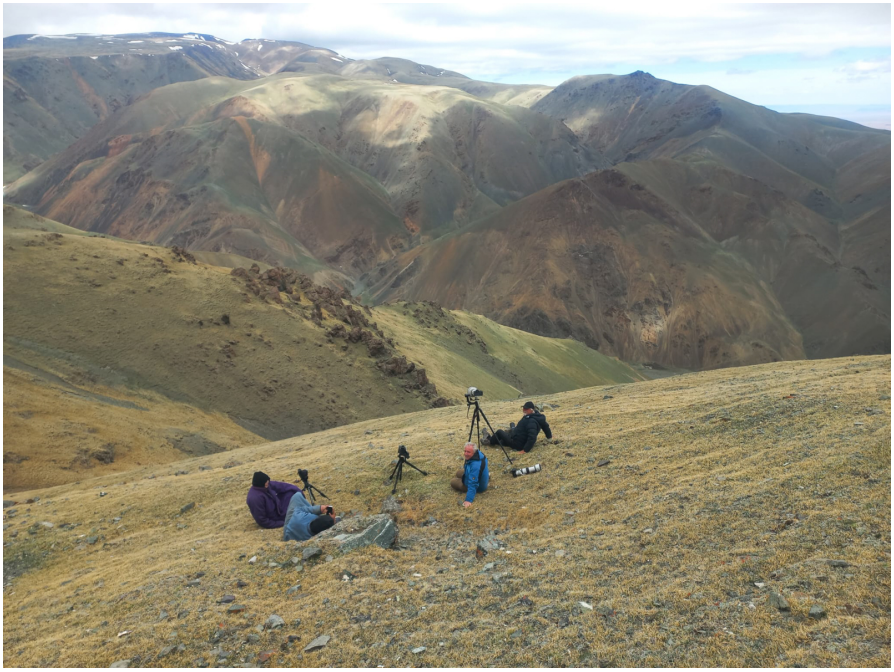


Mountains © A Meyer-Wernecke

We drove higher seeing Horned Larks and White-winged Snowfinches from the car. We reached our viewing position at a height of 3,000 m asl. The views were superb across the mountain and down to the desert and lakes. We started scanning the rocky slopes and discovered the scouts on strategic points looking for Snow Leopard. We saw a beautiful male White-winged Redstart, a Steppe Eagle and a young Bearded Vulture. A Saker Falcon flew past quickly. We had a delicious lunch prepared by our crew on a gas stove and decided to change position. We drove to the other side of the huge valley on bumpy tracks where the scanning continued. We had some co-operating Brown Accentors, and a Himalayan Griffon glided past quickly. At 5 pm we decided to return to camp. Soon after there was a radio call announcing Snow Leopard! We quickly turned around and started driving towards the place where the scouts were. Our excitement was very high. As we got there we walked to the top of the ridge where the scouts were trying to set our scope on the animal. Unfortunately, the Snow Leopard started to move running down the slope below us, then crossed the valley and started climbing up the other side. Then it sat down, and we had good scope views in the howling wind. We could even take some distant photographs. It was a male leopard as we were told later by our host. We spent about an hour with the majestic animal in the cold and then it was time to return to camp.

Day 8, June 1

After breakfast we were told that we must leave quickly to go up the mountain again. A Snow Leopard was located by the scouts. It took us almost an hour without stops to reach the site. We had to walk up the slope to join the scouts, and as we got there, we could see a Snow Leopard sitting next to a small cave below us. It was much closer than the previous day. We could see that the Snow Leopard noticed our presence, but due to the safe distance it didn't bother her. Soon she laid down and fell asleep. We moved a bit closer for better photos always making sure we don't disturb her. She would look up from time to time to check us and then go back to sleep. We spent three hours with this fantastic animal taking hundreds or thousands of pictures.



Looking for Snow Leopards © Attila Steiner



Snow Leopard © Attila Steiner

Lunch was ready and while we ate it, the Snow Leopard moved out of sight. She was waiting for us to leave to change her position. We felt really lucky having seen two Snow Leopards in two days. As we were told later, we saw a pregnant female about a week before giving birth to her cubs. We went to another area and started looking for Altai Snowcock. We saw White-winged Redstarts, two Bearded Vultures and finally found a pair of Altai Snowcocks. They were feeding on the opposite

slope providing good views through the telescope. Then we started descending the mountain stopping in the gorge again but not finding anything new. We returned to camp happily after a very successful day.

Day 9, June 2

We left camp after breakfast driving towards Durgun Lake, the third of the big lakes. It has no outflow, so the water is brackish. On the way we stopped at a natural spring. Isabelline Wheatears were feeding their fledged youngsters. Horned Larks came to the stream and Barn Swallows were collecting mud for their nest. Nearby we found a cute Pallid Ground Squirrel staying still for good photos.



Pallid Ground Squirrel © A Meyer-Wernecke

Reaching the town of Chandmani we stopped at a birch forest that is usually a magnet for migrating birds in the desert. As soon as we started walking, we heard Hume's and Greenish Warblers calling. There were many of them in the trees. Then an interesting song caught our ears. It was a Blyth's Reed Warbler on its way to its breeding ground further north performing a subsong. Near some bushes we saw Lesser Whitethroats and a Thick-billed Warbler. There were some migrating Spotted Flycatchers and Olive-backed Pipits found as well. We spotted a small mammal building an earthen mound, an Eastern Mole Vole. After some waiting it would quickly come out of the ground to push some earth on top of the mound. A very interesting and rare encounter. Stopping in the town of Chandmani we enjoyed good views of Hill Pigeon. A pair of Common Linnets was a surprise find, a new bird for our Mongolia list. Leaving the town we started driving in the endless semi desert. There were animals moving in the mirage, Saiga Antelopes. They were hunted until recently and are very shy, not letting people close to them. We still had good views, but taking pictures was not an option. Reaching Durgun Lake we walked along the shore while lunch was being prepared. There was a large colony of Great Crested Grebes in the reeds. The grebes were very vocal and there were many sitting on the nest. Little Terns were flying along the shore, and we spotted some Black Terns, an uncommon species in Mongolia. A pair of beautiful Arctic Loons was swimming in the lake. There were many Red-crested Pochards, a few Eurasian Spoonbills and some Red-breasted Mergansers on

the shore. After lunch we saw more Saiga Antelopes, a Saker Falcon and a nice male Lesser Kestrel. On the drive back to camp a pair of Greater Sand Plovers were seen in the semi desert.



Saiga Antelope © A Meyer-Wernecke



Our camp © A Meyer-Wernecke

Day 10, June 3

We explored Bumbat Mountain today. Driving at the foot of the mountain we glimpsed a Little Owl that soon disappeared in a rock face. We scanned the plains below us and and saw two Goitered Gazelles running. They eventually stopped and we had good views in the telescope. After an hour we started driving into a large valley that goes deep inside Bumbat. First it was wide and full of Caragana bushes. We spotted a Chukar running between the bushes. It was our first Chukar of the trip, but many followed during the course of the day. The valley than became narrower with some willow trees and bushes on the sides. We started walking to see what was around. A pair of Bearded Vultures soon appeared above us. One of them landed behind a crag, where it sat on the nest, while the other flew away. Black Redstarts were singing on the slope, and Barred Warblers performed their characteristic song-flight. We found a singing Common Rosefinch, a beautiful adult with rich carmine red colours on the head and breast. There were beautiful flowers around us, which attracted Small Tortoiseshells, Glanville Fritillaries and other butterflies. We reached a shady spot with taller poplar trees and a stream running below them. While our crew started preparing lunch we went exploring the gorge. We soon found a stunning male Rustic Bunting, what a gorgeous bird. It is a Taiga Forest species that was on its way to Siberia. In the trees Hume's and Greenish Warblers were feeding and a Grey Wagtail was walking in the stream. Nearby a Spotted Flycatcher and a male Daurian Redstart were also seen.



Rustic Bunting © A Meyer-Wernecke

After lunch we started walking down the valley and the vehicles followed. We had better views of Barred Warbler, yet more Chukars, but nothing new. On the way back to camp we were searching for Mongolian Ground Jay. The second car saw a bird flying out of a gulley, but it was not found again.

Day 11, June 4

We went to an area before breakfast where the scouts have seen Pallas's Cat. We were scanning from several viewpoints, but unfortunately, couldn't find the cat. There were many birds around us,

and we had a new species for the list, a nice male Desert Wheatear that performed very well for us. After breakfast we returned to the same area seeing Upland Buzzard, Golden Eagle, Mongolian Finch, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, many wheatears and a Grey-necked Bunting.



Desert Wheatear © A Meyer-Wernecke

After lunch we went searching for Mongolian Ground Jay. We were checking gulleys with sparse bushes in the semi desert. After a while we spotted a bird flying into a gulley. We stopped and started searching. The ground jay flew across and landed in another gulley, where we eventually got closer views. Driving in the desert we had two groups of Saiga Antelopes running away from us. We walked into a little oasis in the desert and found an Oriental Turtle Dove, a Common Cuckoo and lots of mosquitos. We had a local music group performing for us in the evening. They were playing traditional musical instruments and were singing local folk songs. The two men were performing throat singing. It was very interesting, an amazing performance.

Day 12, June 5

We left camp after breakfast and started driving towards Altai town from where our plain would take us back to Ulaanbaatar. Reaching the asphalted road we stopped at some marshy meadows. Eurasian Skylarks were singing; Richard's Pipits were gathering nesting material and Common Snipes were displaying. Walking into the meadow we photographed Whiteface Dragonflies. A small pond held Red-crested Pochards, and a Great Reed Warbler was singing in the reeds. Suddenly a singing Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler appeared and started singing. We continued our journey to a lake next to the road. A pair of Arctic Loons greeted us. White-winged Terns were flying above the lake, and a pair of Whooper Swans was leading their cute little cygnets. There were some shorebirds and many Common and Red-crested Pochards, but nothing new. Leaving the town of Altanteel we stopped next to a large birch woodland. Our crew started preparing lunch and we explored the area. There were at least two Eurasian Golden Orioles singing, but it was difficult getting close to them. We had good but short views after a while. Several Common Cuckoos were calling and migrating Greenish Warblers were common. After lunch we continued our long journey south-east. A small roadside pond in the desert had a few pairs of Black-winged Stilt, Northern Lapwing and Common

Redshank. A male Citrine Wagtail and a White-headed Yellow Wagtail were also present.



Northern Lapwing © A Meyer-Wernecke

Another stop for photographing camels brought us our first Asian Desert Warblers and a nice Desert Wheatear. Then we arrived at Altai Airport, checked in and said good-bye to our Altai crew. The flight to UB was quick and we were expected by our driver at UB airport to take us to Hotel Mongolica.

Day 13, June 6

We had a later breakfast after the long day, then set off to the last place, Hustai National Park. We followed River Tuul for a while and spotted two Azure-winged Magpies from the car. After a bit of searching, we had good views of these beautiful birds. Further on we saw a Eurasian Hoopoe and Meadow Buntings.



Azure-winged Magpie © A Meyer-Wernecke

Along the main road a freshly ploughed land was attracting Steppe Eagles. We counted 36 of them, almost all immature birds catching gerbils and voles. It was a great sight. Reaching our camp we checked into our comfortable en-suite gers. A short walk around camp produced a couple of Saker Falcons, an Upland Buzzard and lovely Mongolian Gerbils. We had a hot pot for lunch and then drove into Hustai NP. Hustai is a relatively small park, but well protected. It was the first national park in Mongolia to reintroduce Przewalski’s Horses that went extinct in the wild at the end of the last century. It is now home to a healthy horse population along with many other mammals.



Przewalski's Horses © A Meyer-Wernecke

As we entered the park Tarbagan Marmots were very common on the roadside and there were many cute young marmots around. We stopped several times for good views and photos. Reaching a good viewpoint, we scanned the slopes finding several groups of wapitis. A bit farther there was a group of horses. We drove closer to them. There was a nice stallion with his harem of three mares, two with young foals. They were quietly grazing and slowly walking away from us to keep a safe distance. It was great to see these fabulous animals roaming in their element.



Tarbagan Marmot © A Meyer-Wernecke

We continued our journey driving past spectacular rock formations. In one of the few trees a Saker Falcon was perched. Reaching the flatter area, we were looking for Mongolian Gazelles and after a while we found a few in the distance. We tried to get closer to them, but they vanished. On the way back to camp we saw many more marmots and a few Long-tailed Ground Squirrels. Mongolian Larks were very common, and a male Amur Falcon was flying alongside the track.

Day 14, June 7

Our last full day in Mongolia started early. We met a ranger, and he took us into a remote area not normally visited by tourists. On the way a Siberian Jerboa crossed our path with quick jumps. A wild horse harem was grazing next to the track, and we stopped to admire them and to take photos. Going on we spotted two Corsac Foxes, one of them quickly disappearing in a marmot burrow, the other running away from us. Reaching a high slope our guide started scanning and soon announced that he saw wolves. There were five adults slowly walking uphill. The ranger started howling and the wolves howled back stopping on the mountainside. What a magical moment. Soon the ranger discovered three puppies in the den, and we had good views through the scope. The adults climbed up to the ridge and sat down there watching us. We decided to leave them, so the adults can return to the puppies.



Wolves on ridge © A Meyer-Wernecke



Mongolian Gazelles in Hustai NP © A Meyer-Wernecke

A few minutes later we stopped for six Argalis grazing on the hillside. They were males with big horns, majestic animals. We moved to a more open area in search of Mongolian Gazelles. This time we had much better views than the previous day. Several groups of pregnant females were grazing in the grassland providing great views. We had a very successful excursion with the ranger who explained about their work, about satellite tagging wolves and other large carnivores in the park. We

returned to camp and after checking out drove back to Ulaanbaatar. After lunch we had an optional city sightseeing tour that included a visit to a cashmere shop. We had our last dinner at Hotel Mongolica and said good-byes as some of us were leaving home early the next day.



Our group in Mongolia

[Mongolia eBird list 2025]