CENTRAL ASIA BIRDING – Endemics & Specialties of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan & Uzbekistan with Miksture
This is a “Classical Central Asian” bird watching tour with Miksture that provides excellent value. Central Asia is known as an essential destination for anyone with a serious interest in Palearctic birds, and this journey providing the opportunity to see a high concentration of Central Asian specialties. In addition there is a great selection of species present in Southern Europe and South Siberia – and of course, the endemic species and subspecies. This new endemic & specialty birding tour visits the prime destinations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in search of some of the most exciting birds in Central Asia. There are more endemic species, with several other potential ‘splits’ pending and numerous distinctive races that may one day be elevated to full-species status and we shall focus our efforts on finding as many of these as possible. We have carefully selected the hot-spots, and our tour concentrates on the steppe, semi-deserts of Kazakhstan, the mountainous areas in NE Kyrgyzstan, and the desert of Uzbekistan, plus a visit to the two world famous Silk Road cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. Join us on this endemic rich, and as usual fun-filled, Miksture tour that will leave nothing behind except the longing to return!

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. This is birding where you can expect to get the majority of well-known Central Asian birds known as “dream-species,” at a fair price, cool and safety pace. Miksture/Michael knows thoroughly the locations and the birds of course. We have done these areas for many years (though it’s first time, we decide to combine all three countries in one tour), and we continue to improve and keep the routes updated, so our clients get the best logistic and itinerary – in short: The best and most rewarding birding in Central Asia.

Tour start: In Astana, Kazakhstan and best time of year: May and Early June.

We organize fixed departure tours as well as private, customized tours for groups or individuals. This is one of our “Custom Tours” with flexible departure dates suited for your clients, birding pals, family, or a hard core twitch to fill the gaps in your bird list. Mikstures Custom Tours are one of our key strengths and we take particular pride in tailor-making your ultimate birding adventure. Contact us for a non-obligatory quote. Group size max 16, and no minimum (though costs decrease considerably when travelling in a small group). All tours are led by Michael and his team.

Booking is open!

Friendly greetings

Miksture/Michael Westerbjerg Andersen, Bishkek 10.March 2011
### Tour Fact Sheet

#### Key Species


#### Ease of Birding & Tour Pace

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

#### Habitats Covered

Virgin Steppe, Semi-desert (S Kazakhstan), Turanga Forest; Populus euphratica (S Kazakhstan), Desert (Uzbekistan) and Mountains; Northern Himalayas (Kyrgyzstan)

#### Climate

Humid Continental – cold-semi-arid (Steppe), semi-arid (Desert) and Mountain climate

#### Accommodation

Huts (N Kazakhstan), camping & hotel (S Kazakhstan), guesthouse (Kyrgyzstan), yurt-camp; ger (Son Kul, Kyrgyzstan) and hotel (Uzbekistan)

#### Photographic Opportunities

Good - excellent

#### Other Attractions

Beautiful landscapes, butterflies & flora, mountains, culture and the famous Silk Road cities in Uzbekistan
Prior departure Miksture mail a detailed list of birds. Meanwhile the numbers and species of birds seen during this tour is equivalent to previous Miksture KAKIs – these reports can be found at www.travellingbirder.com or at our Miksture website: www.miksture.com

Day 1: Arrival Astana, Kazakhstan; transfer to Korgalzhyn Nature Reserve
Day 2 and 3: Korgalzhyn Nature Reserve
Day 4: Astana – Almaty
Day 5: Almaty – Zhelturanga Forest
Day 6: Zhelturanga - Taukum (Desert birds): Konchangel
Day 7: Konchangel – Nurly
Day 8: Sogety valley: Nurly-area
Day 9: Sogety Valley: Nurly – Kokpek Pass – Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Day 10: Ala-Archa and Fishponds
Day 11: Bishkek – Tokmok - Karakol
Day 12: Karakol & birding in the area – Ibisbill - Djety Orguz - Tamga
Day 13: Barskaun Gorge – Mountain birds
Day 14: Tamga – Bishkek
Day 15: Arrival Tashkent, Uzbekistan; transfer to hotel. Birding begins
Day 16: Tashkent – Samarkand
Day 17: Birding Samarkand
Day 18: Samarkand - Bukhara
Day 20: Bukhara-wetlands - Flight to Tashkent
Day 21: Heading home – Welcome home!
Day-to-day program
Miksture always try to make the journey according to program, but sometimes it can be necessary to change routes, and order of the locations. Miksture always try to optimize the birding hence we can add extra locations or change locations. One month before departure Miksture mail an updated program. Please note following meals provided during the days is agreed with the place where you stay. B (Breakfast), L (Lunch) and D (Dinner)

Miksture is of course always ready to answer questions and for more information. Please feel free to contact us.

Day 1. Arrival Astana, Kazakhstan; transfer to Korgalzhyn Nature Reserve

Welcome! Morning arrival in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan. Miksture will be pleased to organize a night in a hotel in Astana for anyone preferring to arrive a day early in order to rest up after the long international flight. Please note that to minimize logistical difficulties arising from any delays one flight this day will be designated „The Official Flight“. Anyone unable to use The Official Flight will be required to arrive a day earlier.

Kazakhstan is a giant country – ornithological too. There are lots of habitats and to maximize our birding we visit as many habitats as possible. More than 500 species has been seen in Kazakhstan. In the SE corner of Kazakhstan there is mountains. In Kazakhstan one of the famous birding events occurs in the northern part of the country at the steppe. This is of course included in our departure, and we use the best local guide available, and Miksture know the area very well from more than 25 visits. Astana is the new capital of Kazakhstan (former Almaty lost that status ten years ago). The city were founded in 1824 and named Akmolinsk. This name was replaced by Tselinograd by minister president Nikita Khrushchev. In 1991 the name was changed again to Aqmola, but this name is almost similar to Russian word for “white burial” hence it was finally changed in 1998 to present name Astana – a simple word meaning just… capital! After arrival we drive to Korgalzhyn Nature Reserve, c.140 km from Astana. It takes some hours but we stop here and there were interesting birds appear – Red-footed Falcon colonies, ponds etc. Korgalzhyn Nature Reserve is Kazakhstan’s biggest nature reserve and established 1968. The little remote village Karachar is our base from where we explore the area during the coming days. The village is situated at the shore of a lake, and within hun-
dred meters from our accommodation it’s possible to watch good numbers of interesting birds; reed beds with warblers and overflying birds. The program for the coming days depends on the weather and road conditions. The dominating type of habitat is agriculture land and grass steppe with lots of small ponds and lakes. A combination that attracts huge numbers of birds. The steppe is considered as a threatened type of landscape – huge parts already are converted to agriculture and the pristine habitat we find in the reserve is increasingly rare. The following days we explore the area using our own bus and my local friend. Usually we drive out in the morning, make excursions – stop here & there were birds present – sometimes we hike but always short distances. The area is app. 2.500 square kilometers of which most is steppe lakes. Following lines are cited from Mauri Leivo and Pauli Dernjatins excellent article “Kazakhstan - The land of the Pallas Sandgrouse”, Aula 2/2000 and describe excellent the area as unique atmosphere: "Several ”Baraba Gulls” Larus cachnans/heuglini/barabensis, flew around us maybe hoping for bread, fish remains or some other handout (actually the fishermen throw fish remains every evening while they clean fish, attracting several species of gulls, MWA). A few Greater Black-headed Gulls, tens of marsh Harriers and large flocks of Pochard, Greylag Goose and Flamingo were flying on the lake". During the following days, we’ll explore the area in our private chartered bus and by easy hiking. Accommodation in small wood chalets or guesthouse in the village of Karazhar at Lake Tengis. LD

**Day 2 and 3. Korgalzhyn Nature Reserve**

We spend next day’s exploring the area. Of course species like Demoiselle Cranes, Black and White-winged Larks, Sociable Plover, Pallid Harrier, White-headed Duck, pelicans, shorebirds etc. are target species. We drive out in the morning, returns to Karachar at lunch and make yet another excursion in the afternoon. The days are busy, but with pleasant time for watching the species well. Evening and early morning is rewarding birdwatching in Karachar. BLD

**Day 4. Astana – Almaty**

We say goodbye to the Black Larks and travel south. During afternoon we fly from Astana – Almaty, the former capital in SE Kazakhstan. Accommodation in hotel downtown Almaty. BD

**Day 5. Almaty – Zhelturanga Forest**

In Almaty our Kyrgyz team arrive with buses and we drive direction west until we late afternoon arrive to the regions special forest-type, the endemic Turenga Forest with its rare birds. The species list for this area includes some of the most sought after birds in Central Asia: White-winged Woodpecker, Eversmann’s Dove (Yellow-eyed Pigeon [F: Eastern Stock Pigeon]), Saxaul Sparrow and Turkestan Tit. There are several other interesting species in the Turenga Forest: Sykes warbler, Shikra, Short-toed Eagle, European Scops Owls, Pallid Scops Owl, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Little Ringed Plover, Steppe Grey Shrike, Booted Eagle, Lesser Whitethroat, etc. Night in tents (BLD)
Day 6. Zhelturanga - Taukum (Desert birds): Konchenge

Mo. 30.th May: After final morning birding and breakfast we continue our journey. This time our goal is the endless semi-desert plain of Taukum. Impressing numbers of raptors along the road: Booted Eagle, Black-eared Kite, Steppe Eagle and Long-legged Buzzard. At our campsite there is an interesting selection of semi-desert birds: Demoiselle Crane, Little Ringed Plover, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse (rare), Common Pratincole (Collared Pratincole), Greater Sandplover, European Nightjar, Hoopoe, plenty of larks a.o. both species of short-toed larks and even White-winged Lark, Indian Sparrow, more species of wheatears, Asian Desert Warbler, Spanish Sparrow, Red-headed Bunting, etc. This is one of the strongholds of Houbara Bustards. Less common but quite possible are species like: Caspian Plover, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Saker, Pallas Sandgrouse etc. Night in tents – arranged by our team of course. BLD

Day 7. Konchenge – Nurly

We return towards East. Long days drive and we arrive to guesthouse in Nurly late evening. We leave very early morning which allows us to make an important birding stop enroute. Night in Nurly BLD

Day 8. Sogety valley: Nurly-area

We use most of the day birding in the Nurly-area, one of the strongholds for the rare Pallas Sandgrouse. The species are increasingly rare in this part of its distribution, but so far we always managed to find them, and with one day in the area we have sufficient time. Plenty of other good birds around, e.g. Houbara Bustard is increasing in numbers, Rufous Bush Robin, Bluethroat, Desert Finch, Steppe Eagle, Crested Honey Buzzard, etc. We will be accommodated in guesthouse or tents – depending on weather and the birding. BLD

Day 9. Sogety Valley; Nurly – Kokpek Pass – Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Long day – long drive which in the end of the day will bring us to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. 25 km before we reach Bishkek, we cross the border. Good birds are on the list this day, and we might encounter Long-tailed Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Greenfinch (ssp turkestanicus), Starling (ssp poloratskyi), European Roller, Chiffchaff (ssp tristis - Siberian Chiffchaff), Siberian Stonechat, Azure Tit Chestnut-breasted Bunting, Pied Wheatear, Rock Bunting, Lesser Kestrel, Golden Eagle, Lammergeier, Eurasian Griffon Vulture, Blue Rock Thrush (ssp pandoo), Black-eared Kite (ssp lineatus), Grey-necked Bunting, Desert Finch, Mongolian Finch, Isabelline Wheatear, Tawny Pipit, Rufous-tailed Thrush, Turkestan Shrike, Chukar, Pheasant, Hobby, Booted Eagle, Black Stork, Desert Wheatear, Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Steppe Eagle, Rock Petronia, Syke’s Warbler, Central Asian Lesser Whitethroat, Asian Desert Warbler, Saker Falcon, Red-headed Bunting, Rose-coloured Starling, etc. Accommodation in guesthouse in Bishkek. BLD
Welcome to Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is one of the former republics in former USSR. Bordering big neighbor in East – China, Kazakhstan – north, Uzbekistan – West and Tadzhikistan in SW. In this part of Kyrgyzstan the mountains are evident and beautiful! Few places on earth reveal such unspoiled and beautiful mountains. The mountain chain in this part Tien-Shan (Heaven Mountains) is shared with China. Kyrgyzstan is a poor country compared to Kazakhstan – no oil & gas makes life here more problematic, but the population – 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. Travel conditions in Kyrgyzstan are less comfortable than in Kazakhstan but our team and arrangement makes tour and our stay to pure pleasure. We have done these tours for many years and know Kyrgyzstan as our own back-pocket. We look forward to show you some of the most beautiful parts of this magnificent country!

Day 10. Ala-Archa and Fishponds

Half-day excursion to National park Ala-Archa. This well-known and beautiful mountain area is located c. 40 km south of Bishkek. The National Park was created in 1976 by Government decree and occupies about 120,000 hectares. With snow-covered peaks, steep forested slopes, picturesque water meadows of the fast-flowing Ala-Archa River it’s a wonderful area. After breakfast we prepare for walking in the mountains. With right equipment it’s not at all an impossible task. Before departure we will make sure that everyone has received plenty information about the equipment to be brought (of course this tour does NOT involve any hazardous climbing). We’ll walk approximately 3-4 hours to and from higher altitude. On the way we will admire beautiful mountainous landscapes and do some forests edge birding. The road to the National Park is excellent birding area and the national park itself is outstanding: Lammergeier, Himalayan Griffon, Golden Eagle, Hobby, White-tailed Rubythroat, Black-throated Accentor, Sulphur-bellied Warbler, Greenish Warbler, Severtzov’s Tit Warbler, Blue-capped Redstart, Eversmann’s Redstart, Red-fronted Serin, Common Rosefinch, Red- mantled Rosefinch, White-winged Grosbeak, Plain Mountain Finch, Brown Dipper, Dipper (White-throated Dipper ssp. C.c.leucogaster, Azure Tit, Oriental Turtle Dove, Common Myna, Rufous-naped Tit, Black-eared Kite M.m.lineatus, White Wagtail ssp. personata, Grey Wagtail, Mistle Thrush, Black Redstart, Hume’s Yellow-browed Warbler, etc. The National park is also rich in flora and fauna – with over 800 species of plants and interesting animals like Wolf, Lynx, Wild Boar, and Ibex. Usually we don’t encounter many species of animals, but as it’s a good place to admire the sightings of a big herd of Ibex foraging on the upper slopes this usually is a great bonus with the excellent birds here. In the afternoon we offer birding in the former State Fishponds north of Bishkek (If you are too tired after the long journey, we can arrange city tour for those who wants to get an impression of Bishkek). The fishponds attract good numbers of shorebirds during the summer months. Usually there are good numbers of gulls, and shorebirds foraging in the shallow water. Species to be seen is among other: Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Garganey, Little Bittern, Black-eared Kite, Bee-eater, Eurasian Coot Black-winged Stilt Northern Lapwing, Temminck’s Stint, Common Greenshank,

Drive to Karakol (250 km) Issyk Kul Lake. Along the northern shore we will look for waterfowls and raptors. Probably we will witness a wonderful day in the pure Kyrgyzstan summer 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 and shop in the bazaars. Our first stop will be in a little gem of a nature reserve; actually the president’s hunting residence – though rarely used nowadays. As a curiosum it should be mentioned this was one of the favorite haunts for the long-time gone Russian president Brezhnev. Nowadays it’s possible to see his little hunting hut that function as a museum. It’s kind of bizarre, but an interesting glimpse of the past for those remembering Brezhnev and former days of USSR. Much more interesting is the Azure Tits in the bushes near the houses, and the calling Penduline Tits in the willow trees. Usually there is a good selection of waterfowl and raptors. After some hours we leave Tokmok which means “hammer” in Kyrgyz, and 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 from West to East. The story of the Silk Road is a fascinating one – full of fearless explorers, military campaigns, religious pilgrims and great philosophers and enterprising traders who risked life and health travelling in caravans across deserts, mountains and steppes. Actually, there was no such thing as a single “Silk Road” – there were a branch of different routes used by the ancient traders. Some of the main ones ran through Kyrgyzstan, both in the North coming from China and past lake Issyk Kul then along the Chui river (where we drive this day), another variant ran over the Torugart Pass in Central Kyrgyzstan through Naryn, while a third variant came over the Irkeshtam Pass in the South. These routes worked as trading roads more than two thousand years ago, and the heyday was in the period about 1800 years ago, and its importance for transporting goods declined when the ships took over the transport. Nevertheless it’s one of the areas where the past goes hand in hand with the present; these roads are still busy trading routes though the Bactrian camels have been replaced by trucks and vans. In the evening we arrive to our accommodation in Karakol; 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 in summer 2011…). Karakol is the regions administration center and a peaceful though busy city with beautiful old wooden houses and giant white poplar trees. Accommodation in guesthouse. BLD
Day 12. Karakol & birding in the area – Ibisbill - Djety Orguz - Tamga

We devote the day 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. There are other good birds along the road: Pine Bunting has its restricted breeding Kyrgyz range in the foothills. After lunch we leave Karakol and drive to the valley of Djety Orguz 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 dry slopes occurs interesting birds: Golden Eagle, Black-eared Kite, Hoopoe, Grey Wagtail, Dipper (White-throated Dipper), Brown Dipper, Greenish Warbler, Hume’s Yellow-browed Warbler, Turkistan Shrike, Red-billed Chough, Alpine Chough, Fire-fronted Serin, Common Rosefinch, Rock Bunting etc. 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. Across the road there is an apricot orchard which feathered inhabitants make frequently visits to the gardens a.o. Azure Tits, Common Rosefinch, 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 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. There is Azure Tit in the garden, and it’s wonderful to stroll through the village at dusk and dawn. Night in Guesthouse Tamga. BLD

Day 13. Barskaun Gorge – Mountain birds

We spend most of the day 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. This road used to be one of the routes of the Silk Road, passing over the Bedel Pass (4284 m) into China. It is now the main road leading to the Kumtor Gold mine – hence its well maintained and there is a reasonable amount of traffic – including lorries making their way up to the mine and back. Along the road there is an impressive waterfall, and there is an interesting monument along the road – a bust of Yuri Gagarin, who holidayed on the South shore of Issyk-Kul after his historic first manned space flight. We continue way up to a plateau and stop to explore the area. Species to be seen include: Black Vulture, Upland Buzzard, Lammergeier, Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Golden Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Altai Accentor [Himalayan Accentor], Himalayan Rubythroat, Güldenstädts 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. In the afternoon we visit another excellent birding spot where we usually find Pied Wheatear, Rock Thrush, Blue Rock Thrush and Grey-necked Bunting. Night in guesthouse, Tamga. BLD

Day 14. Tamga - Bishkek

Early up and off we go to Bishkek. Priority still goes to the birds, e.g. we make a stop at good birding sites. We arrive to Bishkek in late afternoon or in evening depending on our pace. We eat a good dinner and taste some of the local firewater before turning to sleep. Accommodation in a comfortable guesthouse. BLD

Uzbekistan is one of the least known Central Asian birding destinations. However amidst the most famous and beautiful Silk Road cities waits excellent birding another attraction. This is a purebred birding tour, BUT when time and possibilities occur we will marvel some of the country’s famous Silk Road cities like Samarkand and Bukhara. This will not steal time from our birding possibilities, but is possible to combine with ease those hours we are not in the fiend.

Uzbekistan is home for several nationalities including Turkmen, Uzbeks, Kirghiz and Kazakhs. It’s also the start point of Central Asia reaching from the borders of Europe to western China, extending from the shores of the Caspian through the Kyzyl-Kum desert to the western Tien Shan range. Samarkand and Bukhara is the most famous Silk Road cities, and impress all visitors and during this exciting journey we shall travel to these cities, in search of some of the least known birds of Central Asia. We initiate our journey at Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan and explore the Chatkal range. From here we will make our way to the famous Silk Road city of Samarkand with its beautiful blue domes, stone arches and minarets. We shall explore the Zeravshan range. As we move deeper into arid country we come to the historic oasis city of Bukhara, our base for exploring the edge of the vast Kyzyl Kum desert, home to the odd Pander’s Ground Jay – and probably the best place on Earth to study this great bird.

Day 15. Arrival Tashkent, Uzbekistan; transfer to hotel. Birding begins

Depending on the time of arrival and immigration formalities, we begin the tour with the mountain ranges of western Tien-Shan. There are an excellent number of raptors, and species include a.o: Crested Honey Buzzard, Booted Eagle, Himalaya Griffon Vulture, Eurasian Griffon Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Eurasian Black Vulture, Long-legged Buzzard, Eastern Honey Buzzard, and Black-eared Kite. There is Passerines difficult to observe in other parts of Central Asia, and our list increase with goodies as Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Azure. More common is the distinct hafizi-ssp of Common Nightingale, Red-headed Bunting, White-capped Bunting, Masked Wagtail, Common Myna, Rufous-naped Tit, etc. Back in Tashkent we eat dinner and get early to bed – ready for the next day’s busy birding. D
Day 16. Tashkent - Samarkand

Early up and depart to Samarkand. During the drive, we stop en route where birds occur: Red-headed Bunting, Pied Wheatear, Variable Wheatear, Lesser Grey Shrike, Hume’s Whitethroat, House Sparrow ssp baetris, the White Stork colony at Syr Darya River, Lammergeier, Eurasian Hobby, Shikra, Lesser Kestrel, Long-legged Buzzard, European Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Roller, Rose-colored Starling, Laughing Dove, etc. Upon arrival in Samarkand we will admire the first sight of the famous azure domes of the Registan complex in Samarkand Night in hotel. BLD

This historic city on the Silk Road was founded over 2500 years ago and was the capital of the empire of Sogdiana. Alexander the Great, who took the city in 329 BC, wrote that “everything I have heard about the beauty of Marakanda is true, except that it is more beautiful than I could imagine”. Later Samarkand became capital of the great Mongol conqueror Timur, centre of an empire that stretched from the Euphrates to the Ganges. Samarkand possesses many visible reminders of its long and turbulent history. The skyline of the city is punctuated by the huge azure-blue domes and minarets of its mosques, tombs and religious schools, in particular the stunningly beautiful Registan complex and the enormous and as yet only partly restored mosque of Bibi Khanum. Alexander’s words are as true today as they were then and we will spend some time
admiring the remarkable architecture and intricate decoration of Samarkand’s rich heritage, including Timur’s mausoleum the Gur Emir.

**Day 17. Birding Samarkand**

We spend the day exploring the around Samarkand. List of species we want to see and might be seen the beautiful White-throated Robin, Upcher’s Warbler, Eastern Orphea Warbler, Red-headed Bunting, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Turkestan Shrike, Yellow-breasted Tit, Finch’s Wheatear, Cettis Warbler, Rock Sparrow, Eurasian Hoopoe, White-winged Woodpecker, Crested Lark, Tawny Pipit, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Turkestan Tit, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Humes Short-toed Lark, Chukar, Egyptian Vulture, Eurasian Black Vulture, Eurasian Griffon Vulture, and migrants. After the days birding we check some of Samarkand’s beautiful Silk Road attractions. Night in same hotel as previous night. BLD

**Day 18. Samarkand - Bukhara**

Morning birding at Zarafshan River provides more migrants to our list plus some of the previous day’s species. We continue our journey with the long drive to Bukhara. On the way we might see White-tailed Lapwing, Citrine Wagtail, Stone Curlew, Collared Pratincole, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Yellow Wagtail ssp feldegg, etc. Night in hotel in Bukhara. BLD


We make an early start into the Saxaul-covered dunes of Kyzyl-Kum Desert (the Red Sand desert), where we expect to arrive just after dawn. One of the main species we want to see is Pander’s Ground Jay (Turkestan Ground Jay). We also might see Asian Desert Warbler, Streaked Scrub Warbler, Isabelline Wheatear, Steppe Grey Shrike, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Desert Finch, Common Redstart, Moustached Warbler, etc. We spend the remains of the day in downtown Bukhara admiring the bazaars with their silk products, spices and the famous Kalyan Mosque and Minaret. Night in Bukhara. BLD
Day 20. Bukhara-wetlands - Flight to Tashkent

We spend the day around the oasis city of Bukhara. In the wetlands we might find Indian Reed Warbler, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Paddyfield Warbler, Syke’s Warbler, Eastern Oliveceous Warbler, Menetrie’s Warbler, Oriental Skylark, Bearded Reedling, Rufous Scrub Robin, Pied Buschat, Long-tailed Shrike, Ruddy Shelduck, Garganey, Pygmy Cormorant, Glossy Ibis, Marbled Duck, White-tailed Plover, Collared Pratincole plus several duck & shorebird species – many migrants, etc. Late afternoon we have a flight to Tashkent. Night in Tashkent. BLD

Day 21. Heading home – Welcome home!

The tour concludes with post-breakfast transfer from the hotel to the International airport in Tashkent for departure. Usually flight departs very early morning. Welcome home!

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 seen a long list of mammals (and insects, butterflies, flowers, etc.): Wolf, Deer, Wild Pigs, Ibex, Persian Gazelles, Tolai Hare, Goitered Gazelle, Great Gerbil, Red Pika, Corsac Fox, Marbled Polecat, Marmot, Red Squirrel, Ground Squirrel, etc.
This is a birding journey and participants should tolerate and be ready for hiking (easy!), some days with long transportation, 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 warm to hot… deserts, semi-deserts, mountains – with cool climate, 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! And comfortable accommodation whenever it’s possible. There will be nights in tents because no other possibilities are present, but its solely an advantage as we are close or right in the center of the best birding sites. Our vehicles are comfortable, and our drivers always are sober and experienced drivers. Many companies here in central Asia offers rotten service for the participants and made silly excuses that other possibilities are not present…We don’t – we value and respect uttermost the clients, and Miksture have several clients that have been on 3 or 4 journeys with us. When it’s said please remember that 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.

What to bring…?

Note that only the most basic medical facilities exist away from the big cities: all participants must accept the full implications of this, but we are of course capable handling most incidences and our team is well educated and experts in moving in mountainous conditions. However, 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.

VISA: Visas is needed entering Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan; this we will inform about prior departure – special permits relating to our itinerary are secured for us locally prior to our arrival.

LUGGAGE

Please bring soft luggage if at all possible (i.e. lockable bag, strong nylon or canvas bags rather than hard suitcases, which are for more difficult to pack into the vehicles and take up more room). In addition take a small to medium sized rucksack which should be carried as
cabin baggage. Pack photographic equipment, binos and things of this sort in your rucksack for the journey.

CLOTHING

You will be outside most days unless you request to stay at base for any reason, so it is essential to be properly kitted out. At the same time, try to travel as lightly as possible; leave superfluous clothing etc. at home. It will be both cool and warm. However, clothing needs to cater for these fluctuating needs. The season is predominantly dry, but in the mountains it can be windy and cold. Remember that it is easier to keep warm if you wear several layers. Essential equipment: Warm jacket! Rainproof jacket & ditto over trousers; long-johns; good shoes/hiking boots; hat; gloves; sun glasses; sunscreen lotion & ditto lip balm. There is few opportunities to do any washing); torch and towel. However prior departure we will provide informative and plentiful information about this matters. Please note that outer layers must be in muted colors to decrease the risk of spooking e.g. those shy animals.

Other good equipment: Thermos for tea (must not leak), your own sleeping bag & mattress, small everyday ruck-sack, sunglasses, sun screen, pills for indigestion, diarrhea etc., Kleenex tissues, wet wipes, travel wash and mug.

ACCOMMODATION in Guest houses/Hotel is provided with twin beds. Extra blankets are provided in guesthouses. Most guesthouses have adequate bathrooms with hot running water for at least part of the day, but its central Asia so hot water may not be available outside towns. Mugs and glasses are also provided but not necessarily toilet paper; so bring 1-2 rolls/person. Good sterilized mineral water and beer (lager type) are available during the travel.

CAMPING: We might be under canvas or in simple covered accommodation. You will need to bring a good sleeping bag (can be rented, please contact Michael prior departure). Karrimot, are provided; though if you prefer you need to bring the more modern self-inflated Thermo rest’ mattress. There are no air mattresses.

MEALS: The food is very delicious here 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.

ELECTRICITY: Guesthouses and hotels have electricity. If you need to recharge batteries you don’t need an adapter. On the rest of the trip we will bring a generator, but in general: Charge whenever possibilities are available.

LAUNDRY: Bring your own washing powder; guesthouses have a no laundry service, but in the hotels there is possibility to get cloth washed.

MEDICAL: Vaccinations. None are compulsory. It is recommended that you protect yourself against tetanus. A check up with your doctor and dentist are wise precautions before departure. Please ensure that if you use any medicament, you have an adequate supply to last for the trip; they will be difficult, if not impossible, to purchase in Kyr-
gyzstan. Bring: Simple pain killer (e.g. Paracetomol), Lip salve, and travel sickness pills if required, 1-2 toilet rolls, Sun screen with a high protection factor (e.g. 25 sun block is recommended), Sunglasses, suitable for screening out high UV at altitude. Sun hat. If you are prone to diarrhea then Lomotil or Imodium and Dioralyte or Rehydrat may be useful.

TIPPING: is generally welcomed!

SPENDING MONEY: Kazakhstan’s, Kyrgyzstan’s and Uzbekistan’s currency is no use outside the country. Exchange is possible only in the cities! Traveller’s cheques, Standard bank cards such as ACCESS, MASTERCARD, VISA and AMERICAN EXPRESS can usually not be used outside big cities. Bring EURO or USD in cash – best is new, intact bills of 50/100 USD/EURO. If not intact or smaller notes, a less exchange rate is given.

**Bird Photography: Opportunities...Excellent – GOOD!**

**Tour Price pr. person (in shared double-room)** Please Contact us for a non-obligatory quote. Group size max 16, and no minimum (though costs decrease considerably when travelling in a small group). All tours are led by Michael and his team.

To book a seat on this tour a deposit should be paid – You are not reserved a seat before the deposit is paid. This deposit will be paid back if the tour is cancelled by Miksture. The remaining amount should be paid prior departure or brought and paid upon arrival.

**Price include:** Guiding by Miksture/Michael Westerbjerg Andersen and his team ● Local (English-speaking) interpreters ● Transportation according program ● All accommodation in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan according day-to-day program – guesthouses, hotels, huts and tents ● All food in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan ● Necessary permits for Restricted Area sites and other paperwork ● Services of tour leader, porters and driver ● Administration from Miksture ● Local entrees and fees according day-to-day program ● Domestic flight Astana – Almaty and ● – hotels, guesthouses, tents ● Bottled water and some drinks

**Price does NOT include:** International flights and other transportation not mentioned in the program ● Alcoholic beverage at meals in restaurants and cafes ● Arrangements not mentioned in the program ● Tips to drivers and interpreter ● Travel insurance – mandatory! ● Photo permits in Uzbekistan (not much!)● Money for own expenses – actually little needed ● Visa to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan ● Visa support, e.g. Letter of Invitation ● Anything strictly personal (e.g. laundry, phone calls, any excess luggage charges, snacks).

**Single room & tent:** If available a single room surcharge will apply for anyone not sharing. However we usually make it without extra surcharge if there is enough space in the guesthouse. We don’t charge for single-tent. Please note that, single room accommodation may not be available at some places, but this will be explained and agreed prior departure.

It’s possible to rent sleeping bags and karimats. Pls contact Miksture for further info.
If you require any further information please contact us – any question is welcome!

Miksture v. Michael Westerbjerg Andersen

Phone/SMS: 996555036635 (use country code for Kyrgyzstan)

E-mail: michael@miksture.com or michaelwandersen@hotmail.com

All birders are welcome and on our travels there usually is a mix-ture of nationalities. Language is no problem: English, Russian, French, German and Danish are spoken – other languages-guides e.g. Japanese and Chinese can be found. 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 Kyrgyz-Travel who 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 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/March 2011