PhotoExpedition to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan with Helge Sørensen & Miksture
30.th May – 10.th June 2013
Central Asian PhotoExpedition 2013 to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

This is a journey for those interested in wildlife photographing, especially birds! There will be seen many birds and very interesting species, but on this journey we make priority photographing the birds. On Mikstures specialized ornithological tours we don’t have time enough for going in depth with photographing – on this we have! Besides photographing we also spend time of teaching different photo technical aspects, both in capturing and processing the images in the field and at the computer afterwards. We teach in “action photographing” birds in flight (BIF) and in different technics and set-ups when trying to get the best results. We discuss the resulting pictures in evening sessions and enjoy long days in the field.

Central Asia is known as an essential destination for anyone with a serious interest in Palearctic birds, and these two countries in combination providing the opportunity to see a high concentration of Central Asian specialties amidst unsurpassed beautiful scenery. In addition there is a great selection of species present in Southern Europe and South Siberia. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan provides some of the most prolific and rewarding photographing – and some of the most wanted species known as “dream-species.” The regions Avifauna is also one of the least photographed. We at Miksture pride ourselves on crafting unique and specialized wildlife expeditions in Central Asia and this tour is passionately prepared by photographers for photographers. In addition this tour is an excellent opportunity for the birdwatchers to meet some of the regions famous bird species.

Join Danish award-winning Wildlife photographer Helge Sørensen and Mikstures Michael Westerbjerg Andersen for this ultimate Central Asian photoexpedition. This is a journey that provides excellent photographing in these two great countries, and Miksture knows thoroughly the locations and the birds of course. We have done this tour for many years, so our clients get the best logistic and itinerary – in short: the best. 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. Your target subjects include the Central Asian mountain and semi-desert birds. The landscapes are magnificent, offering the photographer a wealth of possibilities. There are many exciting photographic possibilities not limited only to birds. Our base of operations will be in the mountains near Tamga, lake Issyk Kul, Lake Son Kul and Taukum Desert. This tailor-made photo expedition are suitable for both amateur and professional photographers alike, to fit your particular photographic needs and in order to offer you a more personal experience, our maximum group size is limited to 9 participants and two leaders. Welcome!
### Key Species

- The ornithological list will of course be bigger, and in addition we might include Black Stork, Ibisbill, Demoiselle Crane, Saxaul Sparrow, Brown Dipper, White-throated Dipper, Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo*, Turkestan Tit, White-browed Tit Warbler, Blue-capped Redstart, Black-headed Penduline Tit, White-crowned Penduline Tit, Pine Bunting, Grey-necked Bunting, Pallas’s Grasshopper Warbler, White-winged Lark, etc.

### Activity level
Active photographing! Early up, lunchbreak, and short siesta if it’s hot. No climbing and tough trekking, but participants should be ready for different types of terrain, climates in order to find the birds.

### Habitats
Semi-desert, wetlands and mountains.

### Climate
Comfortable to hot and dry in the desert, Can be cold in the mountains.

### Accommodation
Comfortable guesthouses, but less comfortable, but well organized nights in 2-persons tents, at places where no other accommodation alternative is to be found.

### Highlights
Central Asian dream species, beautiful desert- and mountainous landscapes. Interesting mammals, reptiles, flora and creeps. Central Asian culture and hospitality – Silk Road history.

### Max Group Size
9 Participants & 2 Leaders: Helge Sørensen and Michael Westerbjerg Andersen

### Photographic opportunities
Incredible!
**Day 1. Departure Copenhagen**

**Day 2. Arrival Bishkek. Transfer to Lake Issyk Kul**

**Day 3 and 4. Barskaun Gorge – Mountain birds**

**Day 5. Tamga – Son Kul**

**Day 6. Son Kul**

**Day 7. Son Kul - Bishkek**

**Day 8. Bishkek – Taukom Desert; Konchangel**

**Day 9. Konchangel**

**Day 10. Konchangel**

**Day 11. Konchangel - Bishkek**

**Day 12. Heading home – Welcome home!**

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**Who should attend?**

This photo expedition is highly recommended for any level photographer. Whether you are completely new to nature photography, an experienced amateur, or a seasoned pro. There will be something to photograph and we will have plenty of time to tailor your instruction to your abilities. The seasoned pro can take full advantage of the logistics, our site and subject knowledge.

This expedition is designed to target a wide array of highly sought after Central Asian specialties including the Ruddy Shelduck, Dalmatian Pelican, Black-eared Kite, Steppe Eagle, Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier), Himalayan Vulture, Eurasian Black Vulture, Long-legged Buzzard, Macqueen’s Bustard, Greater Sandplover, Oriental Turtle Dove, Ring-necked Pheasant (the real stuff), Pallas’s Sandgrouse, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Richards Pipit, Bimaculated Lark, Masked Wagtail, Citrine Wagtail, Common Rock-thrush, Black Redstart ssp *phoenicuroides*, Siberian Stonechat, Pied Wheatear, Isabelline Wheatear, Sykes’s Warbler, Hume’s Whitethroat, Turkestan Shrike, Long-tailed Shrike, Rose-colored Starling,
House Sparrow ssp *bactrianus*, Red-fronted Serin, (Grey-headed) European Goldfinch ssp *paropanisi*, Desert Finch, Azure Tit, White-winged Grosbeak, White-tailed Rubythroat, Eversmann’s Redstart, Güldenstädt’s Redstart, Plain Mountain Finch, Brandt’s Mountain Finch, Mongolian Finch, Red-mantled Rosefinch, Black-throated Accentor, Altai Accentor, Brown Accentor, Asian Desert Warbler, Water Pipit ssp. *blakistoni*, Red-headed Bunting, etc. The ornithological list will of course be bigger, and in addition we might include Black Stork, Ibisbill, Demoiselle Crane, Saxaul Sparrow, Brown Dipper, White-throated Dipper, Indian Golden Oriole, Turkestan Tit, White-browed Tit Warbler, Blue-capped Redstart, Black-headed Penduline Tit, White-crowned Penduline Tit, Pine Bunting, Grey-necked Bunting, Pallas’s Grasshopper Warbler, White-winged Lark, etc, Days out in photo hides at Konchangel will round out our portfolio nicely with the abundant semi-desert species. The beautiful Kyrgyz Mountains is home for some of the most sought-after (and least photographed) species in Central Asia. Among its impressive bird list are species of redstarts, accentors, and mountain finches rarely found in other parts of the region. Marmots, pikas, Ibex and the occasional but rarely seen Wolf are just some of wildlife that may be spotted. In addition there are plenty of butterflies, insects, and flowers – for the macro photographer.

We’ll all meet in Bishkek on the morning the 31.th May followed by eleven days of intense and action filled photography and instruction.

Prior departure Miksture mail a detailed list of birds. Meanwhile a fairly representative list of bird species seen during this tour is fairly equivalent to similar “pure ornithological” Miksture tours – these reports can be found at our Miksture website: [www.miksture.com](http://www.miksture.com)
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 photographing hence we can add extra few 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. 30.th May Departure Copenhagen

Day 2. Bishkek – Tamga

Miksture will be pleased to organize accommodation in Bishkek for anyone preferring to arrive a day or two earlier in order to rest up after the 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.

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 Europe but our team and arrangement makes tour and our stay as comfortable possible. 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!

31.th May: Arrival Bishkek and after a short breakfast break we leave Bishkek and drive East towards Tamga at southern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul. Enroute we make small photo stops at good places. In the afternoon we arrive to our guesthouse. Tamga is a quiet village on the south coast of Issyk-Kul. The 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, e.g. 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 the evening we make an intro-
duction to the area and the coming days events. In our guesthouse it’s possible to try real Russian sauna and there is Azure Tit in the garden. BLD

Day 3. Barskaun Gorge – Mountain birds

1.th June: 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 winding up to a plateau in 3000 meters altitude. Species to be seen include: Lammergeier, Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Golden Eagle, Altai Accentor [Himalayan Accentor], Güldenstädt’s Redstart, Black Redstart, Eversmann’s Redstart, Whi
tailed Rubythroat, Fire-fronted Serin, Brandt’s Mountain Finch (Brandt’s Rosy Finch), Plain Mountain Finch (Hodgson’s Rosy-Finch, Hodgson’s Mountain Finch), etc. Accommodation and night in guesthouse Tamga. BLD

Day 4. More Central Asian specialties

2.th June: We visit some of the areas interesting places, especially some of the beautiful mountain valleys. Birds could be: Pine Bunting, Siberian Stonechat, Ibisbill, Golden Eagle, Black-eared Kite, Hobby, Oriental Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Grey Wagtail, Dipper (White-throated Dipper), Brown Dipper, Turkestan Shrike, Fire-fronted Serin, Common Rosefinch, Red-mantled Rosefinch, Rock Bunting etc. Again we make priority to find accessible areas where good photo targets occur! The fields east of Tamga village are excellent for birding. In early summer 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, Golden Oriole, (Grey-headed) Goldfinch, more species of buntings, etc. Late afternoon we try to reach a little gem where Grey-necked Bunting is among the commonest birds. Night in Tamga. BLD
Day 5 and 6. Son Kul

3.th and 4.th June: We leave Tamga and drive towards Son Kul. During the drive we make a few stops. In the afternoon we arrive at Son Kul. There a plenty of interesting birds, especially water- and mountain birds. In the windy days, it’s difficult to obtain good pictures and views of the waterfowl hence we spend the days in the surrounding hills and mountains. It’s a very beautiful area – landscape is similar to Mongolia; a dry tundra like landscape covered with Edelweiss and dotted with the nomads felt tents (jurs). The raptors are excellent here: Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Lammergeier, Cinerous (Black) Vulture, Barbary Falcon, Saker and Demoiselle Crane, Lesser Sand Plover, Shore Lark, Yellow Wagtail, Citrine Wagtail, Brown Dipper (Himalayan Dipper), Alpine Accentor, Brown Accentor, Northern Wheatear, Isabelline Wheatear, Waterpipit, White-winged Snow Finch (Snow Finch), Wallcreeper, Sulphur-bellied Warbler, etc. Night in yurtcamp. BLD

Day 7. Son Kul - Bishkek

5.th June: Drive to Bishkek. Early up and off we go to Bishkek. Priority still goes to the birds, e.g. we make a stop at “Shrike-boulevard” where dozens of shrikes – Lesser Grey Shrike and Long-tailed occurs in good numbers. We arrive to Bishkek in late afternoon or in evening depending on our pace. Accommodation in a comfortable guesthouse. BLD
Day 8, 9, and 10. Bishkek - Konchengel

6th – 8th June: Welcome to Kazakhstan! After breakfast we drive towards Taukum Desert. Our goal is the endless semi-desert plain of Taukum. Kazakhstan is a giant country – ornithological too. More than 500 species has been seen in Kazakhstan. In the SE corner of Kazakhstan there is mountains, however birding her compared to Kyrgyz Mountains are less profitable. Impressing numbers of raptors along the road: Booted Eagle, Black-eared Kite, Steppe Eagle and Long-legged Buzzard. At our campsite near a waterhole 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, Bimaculated Lark, Calandra Lark and even White-winged Lark (rare), Indian Sparrow, more species of wheatears, Asian Desert Warbler, Desert Finch, Spanish Sparrow, Red-headed Bunting, etc. This is one of the strongholds of Houbara Bustards and Pallas Sandgrouse. Less common but quite possible are species like: Caspian Plover, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Saker, etc. In addition there is an excellent range of sparrows, buntings and especially – larks visiting the waterholes. The latter is one of the highlights of this tour. We place our photo hides around the waterholes and this for sure will entertain giving possibilities to watch and photograph some of the “dream species.” In order to maximize all participants’ results we might split the group at two places when photographing during the day, as we have two “hot-spots” and both are excellent. We have time enough to ensure that all participants get equal excellent possibilities to experience every place. Every evening we of course gather in our common camp and discuss the day’s events and results. Night in tents – arranged by our team of course. BLD
Day 1

1. Konchengel - Bishkek

9.th June: After breakfast we drive back towards Bishkek, but we have one more hot-spot at Lake Sorbulak where the colony of Rose-colored Starlings is a famous experience and incredible photogenic one! In late afternoon we arrive in Bishkek and accommodate at comfortable guesthouse. We find a good café with good local food and firewater. Night in Bishkek. BLD

Day 12. Heading home – Welcome home!

10.th June: Usually flight departs very early morning.

MAMMALS

Though its birds we go for, there is an excellent range of mammals to be seen in the region, and good bird sites are good places for other animals... During the years we have made tours in these areas we have seen a long list of mammals (and insects, butterflies, flowers, etc.): Wolf, Deer, Wild Pigs, Ibex, Marco Polo Sheep, Persian Gazelles, Tolai Hare, Goitered Gazelle, Great Gerbil, Red Pika, Corsac Fox, Marbled Polecat, Marmots, Red Squirrel, Ground Squirrel, etc.
ABOUT THE TOUR!

This is an active journey. Participants should tolerate and be ready for active outdoor life. The activity level will be 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 bird photographing and participants should be ready getting up early – and should be ready to endure changing climatic conditions. We visit deserts, semi-deserts, mountains, etc. when this is said, it should be stressed that Miksture and my 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! Comfortable accommodation whenever it’s possible, and luckily we try to provide good accommodation at least with few days in between, so the participants never are several days away from comfortable accommodation. 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 increasingly better year for year. Now we use Mercedes Sprinter, comfortable 4x4 vehicles, 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 many clients that already have been on 3 or 4 journeys with us here in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. 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. 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.

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.

Weather and climate: The climate is influenced by altitude. In June it’s usually pleasant in southern Kazakhstan and lowlands in Kyrgyzstan. Rain occurs but usually not in heavy amounts.

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...
CUSTOMS: On entering Central Asian countries 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 Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are very friendly and service minded.

What to bring?

LUGGAGE: Please bring one piece of luggage if at all possible. In addition take a small to medium sized rucksack which should be carried as cabin baggage.

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 cold during the trip, although some days it will be pleasantly warm and even hot. However, clothing needs to cater for these fluctuating needs. The season is predominantly dry apart from the steppe and mountains. In addition, in the mountains it can be windy and cold. Rain occurs! Remember that it is easier to keep warm if you wear several layers.

HIDES: One of the major events on this tour is photographing at the artesian wells in the Taukom Desert. This is huge underground water reservoirs in the deserts. An artesian aquifer is a confined aquifer containing groundwater under positive pressure. This wells locally rise to a point where they reach the ground surface and cause natural water springs waterholes. It’s the case in the desert of southern Kazakhstan, and these waterholes are important for the nomads and their livestock’s (horses, cows, sheep, goats and camels) that daily comes to drink. Water attracts birds too! Sandgrouses, larks, desert finches, buntings, shorebirds and many others. It’s possible to get excellent images of the birds when they come to drink, and a hide is essential not to frighten the birds! Therefore it’s important to bring hides, and anyway it’s an important part of every wildlife photographer’s equipment. It’s a wonderful “tool” to use when photographing wildlife! Hides come in many types, but we recommend the tent dome-hides with front window and tripod slit. And NO groundsheet! We have small chairs, but it’s quite individual what is comfortable for you, and you might have your own preferred chair to bring from home. When opportunity is presented we will use our hides to get those extra good images. In order for everybody to get good results it is important that all photographers stay the agreed time in the hides. Usually that means several hours in the hide, therefore it is important that you bring a good chair for the hide. There are other “hide solutions” but this will be detailed explained prior departure and in our VERY detailed “Practical Tips” for the tour! Pls contact Miksture or Helge for further advises.
WALKIE-TALKIE: is also one of the essential things to bring on this journey! It’s very important we can communicate with each other; when walking around in the terrain or sitting in the hides! Pls contact Miksture or Helge for further information.

ACCOMMODATION in Guest houses, hotel and tents

Rooms are provided with twin beds. One key only usually (but not always) is allocated per room and this is looked after by a floor attendant when you leave your room. Extra blankets are provided in most hotel rooms. Most hotels have adequate (but not always private) bathrooms with hot running water for at least part of the day. The guesthouses in the region are generally of fair and reasonable standard. Hot water may not be available when camping. Mugs and glasses are also provided but not necessarily toilet paper; so bring 1-2 rolls/person. Good sterilized mineral water is available during the travel. On meals in cafes it’s usually possible to buy drinks like beer/wine/cola, etc.

CAMPING: For some days you will be under canvas accommodation. You will need to bring a 2-season sleeping bag (can be rented, please contact Michael). Karrimot, are provided; though if you prefer pls bring the more modern self-inflated Thermorest' mattress. There are no air mattresses. Remember that Miksture clients get 20% discount at some of the best outdoor shops in Copenhagen, pls contact Miksture if you need advice and wish to buy at our friends, as you need a paper from Miksture.

ELECTRICITY: Guesthouses and hotels will have electricity. If you need to recharge batteries you don’t need an adapter: Charge whenever possibilities are available. In the field we bring generator!

LAUNDRY: Bring your own washing powder; hotels normally, but not invariably, have a laundry service.
MEALS: All meals have been paid. 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. Meal times are generally very flexible and the group will eat together. You will NOT go hungry to bed in Central Asia!

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 Kyrgyzstan. 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: Tipping is generally welcomed!

SPENDING MONEY: Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have two currencies; these are no use outside the two countries. Exchange is possible only in the cities! Credit cards, especially Visa and MasterCard can be used in increasingly number of shops, mainly Bishkek, Astana and Almaty; and can be used to draw cash money!

GEAR:

One of the most commonly asked questions when preparing to go on a Central Asian expedition is always, what equipment to pack? In an ideal world we would take everything we own, but the realities of traveling are weight restrictions. These restrictions vary somewhat between the various flights companies, but Turkish Airlines is one of the most flexible and allow 30kg and 8 kg in hand luggage. This is less alarming figure for wildlife photographers; usually our camera kit weighs. If you opt to not photograph in the nude, then the reality is that you will therefore try to reduce the weight of your camera luggage... Pack as sensibly as possible. Besides, having too much equipment can stifle creativity; instead of working on creative techniques, you are constantly fumbling with equipment!

Below is a list of equipment that we recommend for the tour. Please note that the list is intended only to simplify matters and therefore we are not going into detail about which lens is best or which camera body outperforms another. The list below is intended to give you a quick guide in terms of what equipment is needed to capture potentially award-winning imagery 😊. It is intended to be just a guideline and not everything on the list is mandatory, nor is the list an exhaustive guide to equipment needed for wildlife photography. Rather, it is a practical guide and one that we have compiled after leading and hosting dozens of Central Asian expeditions.

Lenses: Fast super-telephoto lenses are great for wildlife; 300mm+ will suffice for the majority of situations. The birds can often approach very close to the hides. However, a 500mm+ will give the options to isolate individuals, focus on interaction, and create more intimate portraits. In general one long focal length lens of at least 400mm or longer is highly recommended. For those of you not wanting to break the bank account, Canon’s 100 – 400mm or Nikon’s 80 – 400mmm lenses both offer good all-round compromises. These lenses,
however, are slower focusing, battle in low light and are not as sharp as the prime or fixed focal length lenses, but they are small and incredibly versatile, allowing you to shoot wide and then zoom in. They are very practical lenses for Central Asian travel and still produce publishable results.

- A wide-angle lens of sorts for landscapes and to show your subjects in their environment is essential! These lenses are also small and light. The lens you buy here will depend on whether your camera is a full frame sensor or not. For cameras that are not full-frame, you want to be able to go as wide as 12mm to get that wonderful wide-angle perspective. For full-frame sensor bodies, you want to be able to go as wide as 16mm; any wider and you start bending lines. It makes sense to advocate a wide-angle lens with zoom functionality as these lenses are sharp enough and you cannot value their zoom functionality enough, especially when dealing with wild subjects that are often just out of reach.

- A 1.4 tele-converters are also recommended. I am not a fan of tele-converters but sometimes the action is just that little bit out of reach. Some argues that 2x converter is too much of a compromise in quality (and focusing speed). Make sure your lens is of course compatible with a converter and that both focusing and image stabilization works.

Cameras: Two camera bodies are preferable, many recommend: one with good ISO performance and a high frame rate. The other camera body should offer exceptional full-frame image quality. If you have two bodies, you can avoid changing lenses and missing the action. Also, you can avoid dust getting in and onto your sensor, which is a concern in the desert.

If you are only interested in wildlife action, as opposed to any type of landscape work, then bring two identical bodies that offer high frame rates and good ISO performance. Two identical bodies will allow you to switch seamlessly between lenses and in the middle of the action. Another good recommendation is two bodies for adventures of this kind, one main camera for a telephoto lens and one grab camera/backup with a short zoom or wide-angle lens for the jaw-dropping panoramic landscapes.

Support: Camera support is a constant challenge when on tour. Your biggest ally in this regard is the humble monopod. Purchase a monopod that can collapse short enough to be propped on the seat between your legs and then regardless of the vehicle configuration, you will always be ok. Monopods are small, light and easy to pack. As we are photographing from hides too, a tripod is a must. Due to weight restrictions, the carbon fiber tripods are the way to go. Then, you will need a decent head to screw onto your monopod or tripod. There are dozens of heads out there and here, again, if weight becomes a critical factor, large fluid heads are generally
not recommended. A medium-size ball head can do the trick for both your landscape and wildlife work. When shopping for a ball head, make sure that it can take the weight of your heaviest lens. It is very important that you test your longest lens on the head of your choice and please test your rigging before the tour. Depending on your brand of head, you will need matching lens plates attached to your lenses’ feet. When ordering or purchasing a head, ask them to send the relevant plates for as many lenses as you will want to attach to the head, and attach these before the tour to avoid having missing screws and needing allan keys out in the field.

If you have a large prime lens (500mm or longer), then the Wimberley gimbal heads are excellent. These screw onto your monopod or tripod and allow you to pan effortlessly. Perhaps the best solution for wildlife photography is the Mongoose tripod head. This product is difficult to find outside of the USA but it is similar to a Wimberly gimbal, but HALF the weight! Again, the Mongoose has its own lens plate design, so be sure to order those as well. Super clamp is not needed as we don’t are shooting from vehicles.

Lastly, the humble beanbag can often save the day. Bring an empty beanbag and, if needed, you can fill it when on safari. With a beanbag, monopod and a tripod/monopod head you can always make a plan on any surface.

Flash: A flash is small and light; we always recommend packing it. A flash comes in very handy when light conditions are less than favorable, and especially flashguns are recommended during the day for fill-in flash to relieve contrast or add punch in overcast conditions. When buying a flash, just purchase the latest professional flash from Canon or Nikon. They are not expensive when compared to cameras and as wildlife photographers we need all the functionality of the latest models. Flashes are durable and last for a long time so don’t withhold by buying cheaper or 3rd party flashes. If you want to photograph wildlife in very low light then an off camera flash bracket is essential to avoid getting green eyes (you can correct this in post-production).

Miscellaneous:

- Extra camera batteries are a must. Good rechargeable batteries are needed for your flash.

- Card reader, to download your memory cards.

- Storage device (laptop or other) and back up device (passport hard-drive or other.). I like to back up onto my laptop and then again onto a small passport hard drive. When traveling, keep your hard drive and laptop separate! Raincoat for camera or at least plastic bags.

- Sufficient memory cards! I favor large cards 16 gigs and up; I download every day. If you run out of memory on your laptop, memory cards can save the day!

- If you are into landscapes then don’t forget Lee or Singh Ray Split ND filters, Polarizer and cable release.

- A Headlamp in your camera bag WILL come in handy.

If you do not have all the equipment on the above list, then by all means still join us on the tour!

‘Do what you can with what you got’!
Miscellaneous:

Binoculars, batteries and chargers, power cables, connectivity cables, lens cloths, small MagLite™ or head-torch, note pad and pen.

Price pr. person (in shared double-room) 1770 EURO (calculated for a group of nine, but we try to keep it with slightly adjustments if fewer participate). To book a seat on this tour a non-refundable deposit on 170 EURO per person 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 1600 EURO per person should be paid LATEST 1.th February 2013

Price includes:

- Guiding and instruction by Helge Sørensen and Miksture/Michael Westerbjerg Andersen
- Local (English-speaking) interpreters
- Local transportation and logistics management according program
- All accommodation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan according program – hotels, guesthouses and tents (2-person tents)
- All food in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan
- Bottled mineral water and some drinks
- All permits
- Services of tour leader & administration from Miksture
- Local entrees and fees according day-to-day program

Price does NOT include: International flights - the earlier it’s booked – the cheaper. If bought few months prior departure the price can be double as much as booking in autumn 2012! At present 2.th September 2012 the price Copenhagen – Bishkek – Copenhagen is ONLY 3600 DKK! It’s important to notice; don’t wait until few months’ departure! Miksture of course assist and we book gladly for you; pls let us know if we should book your tickets. We book from all countries and cities! We recommend Turkish Airlines which have the best, most comfortable and swift service on this destination, e.g. Copenhagen – Bishkek via Istanbul – Copenhagen

- Alcoholic drinks at meals in restaurants and cafes
- Eventual extra arrangements not mentioned in the program
- Tips to drivers and interpreter
- Travel insurance – mandatory!
- Extra arrangements not mentioned in the program
- Visa to Kazakhstan
- Invitation letter (LOI) to Kazakhstan if needed
- anything strictly personal (e.g. laundry, phone calls, any excess luggage charges, snacks).

Visa fees and applications will be explained prior departure.

Single room: Is possible for surcharge in most accommodation; guesthouse and hotels - a single room surcharge will apply for anyone not sharing. Please note that, single room accommodation may not be available at some places, but this will be explained and agreed prior departure. Single-tent is possible
Booking procedure:

In order to book a seat on this Central Asian PhotoExpedition 2013, pls insert deposit 170 Euro per person to Mikstures account – your seat is booked when deposit is paid. As soon Miksture registers deposit, we mail a receipt and you seat is booked. If Miksture cancel the tour the deposit will be refunded 100%.

1. Deposit of 170 Euro per person should be paid to Mikstures account (pls mark it: “Deposit PhotoExpedition 2013”
2. When deposit is received, Miksture mail a receipt of the received amount, together with list of birds and “Practical Travel tips” which essential is a little booklet of ALL practical matters - incl. photo and a pack list
3. Mail a JPG file of the “picture-page” in your Passport, or a scanned copy of the page to Miksture. This will be used for obtaining permits, and book accommodation. Pls note – the copy of the Passport SHOULD is the same as you will use during PhotoExpedition!
4. Flight ticket: The earlier it’s booked – the cheaper! Miksture of course assist if wished. We recommend Turkish Airlines which have the best, most comfortable and swift service on this destination. 1.th September the price is around 3600 DKK Copenhagen – Bishkek t/r, and similar from other continental European countries
5. Visa – we assist of course with this matter. When your seat is booked Miksture inform you about the visas – usually we arrange it in advance or you can purchase it upon arrival at the destination
6. The remaining amount of tour price is paid latest 1.th February 2013.
7. One month before departure Miksture mail an updated program

Account: Miksture
Bank: NORDEA
Banks adress: NORDEA Helsinge Afd., Østergade 7, 3200 Helsinge, Danmark. Tel: +45 48 79 47 50
Reg nr: 2418
Accountnr: 8976114257
IBAN: DK5220008976114257
SWIFT: NDEADKKK

Contacts:

Miksture/Michael Westerbjerg Andersen: www.miksture.com and by E- mail: in-fo@miksture.com

Helge Sørensen: http://www.birdphotos.dk and E-mail: helge@birdphotos.dk

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 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.

Welcome to Central Asian PhotoExpedition 2013

Friendly greetings!

Michael Westerbjerg Andersen

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The Lammergeier or “Flying Dragon” is one of our Kyrgyz “friends” from the mountains... Not particularly afraid of human beings and in some ways quite curious (I would say). This magnificent bird I have met many times in the Kyrgyz Mountains and one of the birds we will observe and have possibility to photograph when we walk around in the landscapes. Sometimes the Lammergeier approach in a rather curious manner when human beings roams their territories, and during the years I have guided many photographers and birders who expressed surprises of the Lammergeiers friendly behavior – I use to say (only slightly exaggerated...almost): “If we don’t get an Lammergeier today eye-to-eye, or at least 20 meters it’s a rather poor day” ;)

Friendly greetings/Michael