

Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



GEORGIA & ARMENIA: Birding the Caucasus

Tuesday 26th April - Saturday 7th May 2022

6 Wise Birding Clients

Leaders: Chris Townend & Dachi Shoshitashvili

HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

Eurasian Lynx: Voted "bird" of the trip! An incredible sighting for 45 minutes (on and off) out in the open near Kazbegi was a memory never to be forgotten. [Video HERE](#)

Caucasian Snowcock & Caucasian Black Grouse: Great sightings of both of these key species were enjoyed during our stay at Kazbegi.

Armash Ponds Warblers: Menetries's, Paddyfield, Moustached, Savi's and Great Reed Warblers were enjoyed as we explored this internationally important site.

Great Rosefinch: A flock of 18 birds in the sleet and rain at Kazbegi.

Honey Buzzard Migration: Almost daily movements with high counts of 250+ birds.

Brown Bear & Cubs: A wonderful sighting of a mother and three cubs whilst scanning for Caspian Snowcock. [Video HERE](#) courtesy of D Shoshitashvili



The stunning White-throated Robin was seen on numerous occasions

Summary

This was Wise Birding's first tour to Georgia and Armenia and following such a successful tour it is sure to be a regular destination on our calendar of tour. Quite simply both Georgia and Armenia have fabulous birding, great food, wonderful accommodation and hospitality, spectacular scenery and fantastic mammals too!

Our tour began in the spectacular Greater Caucasus Mountains and the small mountain village of Stepantsminda, or Kazbegi as it is better known. It was a truly impressive journey as we worked our way up into the mountains and over the Jvari Pass. Our three nights here allowed us ample time to see some target species with great views of both Caucasian Snowcocks and Caucasian Grouse, but the good clear sunny weather and high snow line made it difficult to locate some of the other high altitude species, despite walking up to 2,700M! However, it was a certainly a memorable walk surrounded by stunning scenery and although we found no Gldenstdt's Redstart, some poor weather on our final morning produced a very welcome flock of 18 Great Rosefinches. Of course we cannot forget the amazing views we enjoyed of Eurasian Lynx and Brown Bear on one particular morning!

A visit to the lowlands and Steppe country of Georgia gave a very different experience and many more birds. Visits to both Kumisi and Jandari Lakes allowed us to see a good selection of wetland birds including both Collared and Black-winged Pratincoles and Eastern Imperial Eagle, whereas the Steppe areas and David Gareja produced Calandra Larks, Pied Wheatear and Eastern Orphean Warbler.

In Armenia, the lush deciduous forest of Dilijan NP greeted us and we enjoyed the wonderful sights and sounds of Semicollared Flycatchers and Green Warblers. Then down to the lower elevation at Lake Sevan where Pygmy Cormorants and Armenia Gulls dominated our daily counts of birds. Crossing over the Vardenyats Pass at around 2,400M was a memorable day as we enjoyed singing Radde's Accentor and Bluethroat with a backdrop of White-winged Terns feeding over a mountain pool. The spectacular scenery continued as we visit the Yeghegnadzor region and the Gndasar Mountains where one of the tour highlights was seeing a female Brown Bear with three cubs to the sound of calling Caspian Snowcocks!

A visit to the lowlands and the Armash Fishponds was also a highlight whilst in Armenia. This internationally recognised site is an Important Bird Area (IBA) and we enjoyed wonderful views of Menetries's Warbler, Moustached and Paddyfield Warblers as well as the beautiful White-tailed Lapwings and White-headed Ducks. The nearby Urts Mountains produced the hoped for Red-tailed Wheatear. A visit to the slopes of Mount Aragats, Armenia's highest mountain at just over 4,000M, was an exciting day with fabulous views of White-throated Robins, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrushes, migrating Honey Buzzards & Horned Larks in the snow. Our final day was mostly travelling back through Armenia and into Georgia, but we had a very enjoyable afternoon in a park to the SW of Tbilisi where we enjoyed great views of Semicollared Flycatchers, Ehrenberg's Redstart and Caucasian Squirrels.

A huge thanks to Dachi for all his hard work in ensuring a fun and successful tour.

We recorded a total of 211 species of bird and 7 mammals on this tour.

SUMMARY OF DAILY ACTIVITIES

DAY	DATE	ITINERARY / HIGHLIGHTS DAY BY DAY
1	Tue 26 April	Arrival Tbilisi very early morning. After a few hours rest in a nearby hotel we head into the mountains via Zhinvali Reservoir. Caucasian Grouse & Lammergeier seen on first evening. Overnight Kazbegi
2	Wed 27 April	Kazbegi & Darialy Valley: Raptor passage and Caucasian Snowcock. Overnight Kazbegi
3	Thur 28 April	Kazbegi: Bear before breakfast followed by Lynx and Caucasian Snowcock! Memorable day hiking to 2,700M in search of Rosefinch and Redstart. Overnight Kazbegi
4	Fri 29 April	Morning Kazbegi: 18 Great Rosefinches and Wallcreeper. Afternoon Kumisi Lake: Rosy Starling & Eastern Imperial Eagle. Overnight Tbilisi
5	Sat 30 April	Jandari Lake: Two Pratincole species and Shrikes. David Gareja: Wheatears, Calandra Larks & BH Buntings Overnight Tbilisi
6	Sun 01 May	Travel to Armenia Dillijan Forest: Semi-collared Flycatcher and Green Warbler. Lake Sevan: Pygmy Cormorant, Armenian Gull & BC Bee-Eaters. Overnight Sevan, Armenia
7	Mon 02 May	Vardenyats Pass, Zedea area & Norovank: Radde's Accentors, Bluethroat, WW Terns & White-throated Robins. Overnight Yeghegis, Armenia
9	Tue 03 May	Gndasar Mountains, Chiva Village & Vedi Gorge: Mother Bear and 3 cubs whilst scanning for Snowcocks. Syrian Woodpecker. Finsch's Wheatear and Grey-necked Bunting. Overnight Yerevan, Armenia
10	Wed 04 May	Armash Fishponds: Menetries's Warbler, Moustached Warbler, White-tailed Lapwings, White-headed Ducks and 100s of waders. Urts Mountains: Red-tailed Wheatear & migrants. Overnight Yerevan, Armenia
11	Thur 05 May	Aragats Mountains: White-throated Robins, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrushes, Honey Buzzards and Horned Larks in the snow! Overnight Yerevan, Armenia
12	Fri 06 May	Return to Georgia Semi-collared Flycatchers and Caucasian Squirrels.
13	Sat 07 May	Morning: Transfer to Tbilisi airport



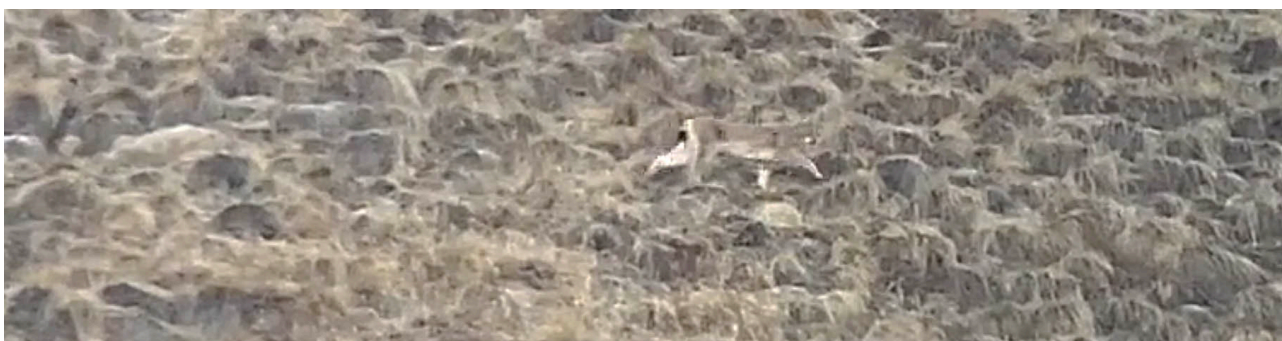
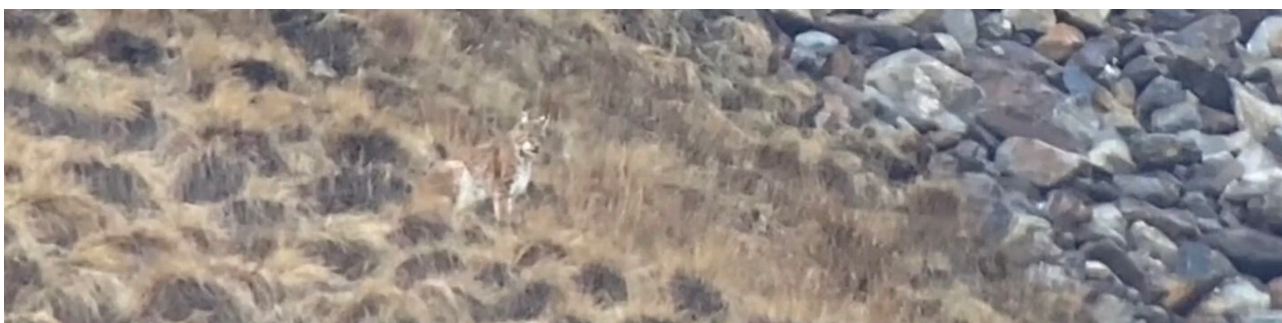
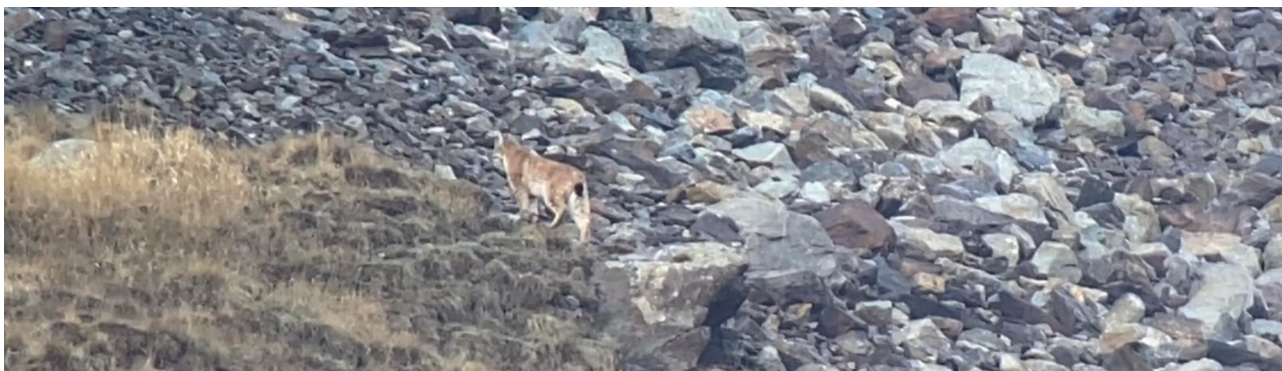
Stepantsminda Village, Georgia is better known by the old name of Kazbegi. Caucasian Snowcock was seen well here.



Eurasian Lynx, 28th April 2022
Stepantsminda (Kazbegi), Georgia



An amazing Eurasian Lynx encounter for 45 minutes was voted highlight of the tour!





The Gergeti Monastery, Georgia
Immature Lammergeier





**Part of the flock of 18 Great Rosefinches
watched during heavy rain and sleet in
the Kazbegi Mountains**





**Mountain Chiffchaff (above) and the
major subspecies of Long-tailed Tit (below)**





Male Montagu's Harrier migrating over the snow covered mountains of Kazbegi and a male Ring Ouzel





**The Kazbegi Mountains, Georgia
where we enjoyed great views of Caucasian Grouse**





Yellow Wagtail subspecies included the common *feldegg* Black-headed Wagtail and the less common *lutea* with complete yellow head





Male Red-breasted Flycatcher, Zhinvali Reservoir (above)
Male Semi-collared Flycatcher, Tetrtskaro Park (below)





**Calandra Lark near David Gareja , Georgia (top)
Eastern Black-eared Wheatear near Zedea, Armenia (middle)
The snow-capped mountains of Armenia**





This stunning Bluethroat (above) and the *ochruros* subspecies of Black Redstart (below) posed for us at the Vardenyats Pass, Armenia





Red-fronted Serin, Noravank (above)
Radde's Accentor, Vardenyats Pass (below)





**A mountain lake with White-winged Terns
and a close flyby at Lake Sevan, Armenia**





Armenian Gulls at Lake Sevan, Armenia
Collared Pratincole at Jandari Lake, Georgia





**Pygmy Cormorants
Lake Sevan, Armenia**





The Gndasar Mountains, Armenia where we watched a female Brown Bear with 3 cubs





**"Steppe" Buzzard, Gndasar Mountains
The Vedi Gorge, Armenia**





**Male Black-headed Bunting
& Migrating Honey Buzzards
Vedi Gorge, Armenia**





**Male Ortolan Bunting, Urts Mountains (above)
Male Grey-necked Bunting, Vedi Gorge (below)**





The Armash Fishponds IBA, Armenia
Male Bearded Reedling





Great Reed Warbler, Armash Fishponds





Moustached Warbler, Armash Fishponds





**Paddyfield Warbler (above)
Menetries's Warbler (below)
Armash Fishponds**





White-tailed Lapwing, Armash Fishponds





**Red-tailed Wheatear, Urts Mountains (above)
Male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Aragats Mountains (below)**





**Male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Aragats Mountains (above)
Female Blue Rock Thrush, Noravank (below)**





**The stunning male White-throated Robin
Aragats Mountains, Armenia**





**Male Lesser Grey Shrike (above)
Female Honey Buzzard (below)**





Male Semicollared Flycatcher (above)
Male Common Redstart of the subsp. *samamisticus* (below)
Tetritskaro Park, Georgia





**Caucasian Squirrel at Tetrtskaro Park, Georgia
Noravank Monastery, Armenia**



The following bird checklist follows the nomenclature and classification from Gill F, D Donsker & P Rasmussen (Eds). 2022. **IOC World Bird List** (v12.2). <https://www.worldbirdnames.org/new/>
The mammal checklist mostly follows the IUCN framework (Red List) but also the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) www.gbif.org and Handbook of The Mammals of the World.

The IOC World Bird List complements three other primary world bird lists that differ slightly in their primary goals and taxonomic philosophy, i.e. [The Clements Checklist of the Birds of the World](#), [The Howard & Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World](#), 4th Edition, and [HBW Alive/Bird Life International](#).

Total number of birds recorded: 211 species (4 heard only)

Ruddy Shelduck

Tadorna ferruginea

Recorded on three days. Seen at Kumisi Lake (GE) and Sevan Lake (AM).

Garganey

Spatula querquedula

A group of 5 birds (4m & 1f) were present at Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th.

Northern Shoveler

Spatula clypeata

A single bird recorded at Kumisi Lake (GE) on the 29th April.

Gadwall

Mareca strepera

Recorded on Sevan Lake (AM) on the 1st and 2nd May.

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

Recorded on three days at Jandari Lake (GE) and Sevan Lake (AM).

Northern Pintail

Anas acuta

Two females on a pool as we passed over the Vardenyats Pass (AM) on the 2nd April.

Eurasian Teal

Anas crecca

Recorded on a pool as we passed over the Vardenyats Pass (AM) on the 2nd April.

Red-crested Pochard

Netta rufina

Pairs recorded on Kumisi Lake (GE) and Sevan Lake (AM) and numerous birds at the Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th May.

Common Pochard

Aythya ferina

Recorded in small numbers with a single bird at Kumisi Lake (GE), small numbers at Sevan Lake (AM) and at least 8 birds at the Armash Fishponds on the 4th May.

Ferruginous Duck

Aythya nyroca

A minimum of 5 birds at the Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th May.

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

A pair of birds recorded at Sevan Lake (AM) on the 1st May.

White-headed Duck

Oxyura leucocephala

A total of 4 birds were recorded at the Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th May.

Caucasian Grouse

Lyrurus mlokosiewiczi

Great views of this target species with a count of 6 birds on the 26th April and then at least 10 birds recorded on the 28th, all around the Kazbegi Mountains (GE).

Caucasian Snowcock***Tetraogallus caucasicus***

Another target species with birds seen and heard very well around the Kazbegi Mountains (GE). Two birds on the evening of the 27th and 3 birds on the morning of the 28th which were ignored for a while as a Eurasian Lynx strolled across the same mountains!

Caspian Snowcock***Tetraogallus caspius***

Frustrating to only hear this key species on the early morning of the 3rd May in the Gndasar Mountains (AM). If only the low cloud base had cleared!!!

Chukar Partridge***Alectoris chukar***

Recorded on four days with birds either seen or heard and counts of 1-2 birds recorded in the mountainous regions of both Georgia and Armenia.

Alpine Swift***Tachymarptis melba***

First recorded from our hotel terrace in Tbilisi on the 26th and then again in the Kazbegi Mountains on the 27th and finally in the Urts Mountains (AM) on the 4th.

Common Swift***Apus apus***

Great to see so many screaming groups throughout the tour. Recorded on nine days.

Common Cuckoo***Cuculus canorus***

Recorded in both Georgia and Armenia on a total of seven days.

Rock Dove***Columba livia***

Recorded in both Georgia and Armenia and recorded on a total of nine days.

Common Wood Pigeon***Columba palumbus***

Recorded in both Georgia and Armenia on a total of five days.

European Turtle Dove***Streptopelia turtur***

Only a single bird recorded at Sevan Lake (AM) on the 1st May.

Eurasian Collared Dove***Streptopelia decaocto***

Recorded in both Georgia and Armenia on a total of four days.

Laughing Dove***Spilopelia senegalensis***

Small numbers recorded in both Georgia and Armenia on a total of four days.

Water Rail***Rallus aquaticus***

A bird heard at Sevan Lake (AM) on the 1st May was the only record for the tour.

Common Moorhen***Gallinula chloropus***

Recorded in Armenia only at Sevan Lake and Armash Fishponds.

Eurasian Coot***Fulica atra***

Recorded in both Georgia and Armenia on a total of five days.

Common Crane***Grus grus***

Two birds seen flying high over the mountains whilst at Kazbegi on the afternoon of the 26th April.

Little Grebe***Tachybaptus ruficollis***

Small numbers recorded in both Georgia and Armenia on a total of four days.

Great Crested Grebe***Podiceps cristatus***

High numbers recorded in both Georgia and Armenia on a total of four days.

Black-necked Grebe***Podiceps nigricollis***

Five birds at Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th and also recorded on our final day.

Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus***

Small numbers on just two days at Kumisi Lake (GE) and Armash Fishponds (AM).

Northern Lapwing***Vanellus vanellus***

Single birds at Jandari Lake (GE) and the Verdenyats Pass & Armash Fishponds (AM).

White-tailed Lapwing***Vanellus leucurus***

One of the highlights of Armash Fishponds were a group of 12 birds that performed perfectly as they fed in a flooded meadow and allowed great scope views.

Grey Plover***Pluvialis squatarola***

Single birds at Kumisi Lake (GE) and Sevan Lake, Armenia.

Common Ringed Plover***Charadrius hiaticula***

Recorded in small numbers only at Armash Fishponds (AM).

Little Ringed Plover***Charadrius dubius***

Recorded in small numbers at Kumisi Lake (GE) and Armash Fishponds (AM).

Kentish Plover***Charadrius alexandrinus***

Recorded in small numbers at Kumisi Lake (GE) and Armash Fishponds (AM).

Eurasian Whimbrel***Numenius phaeopus***

A single bird at Armash Fishponds (AM).

Bar-tailed Godwit***Limosa lapponica***

Two birds at Kumisi Lake (GE) was the only sighting.

Ruff***Calidris pugnax***

Impressive numbers in Armenia with 10+ birds on the 2nd at a pool on the Vardenyats Pass, but this was eclipsed by 450+ birds at the Armash Fishponds on the 4th May.

Curlew Sandpiper***Calidris ferruginea***

All sightings in Armenia - 3 birds at the Vardenyats Pass and 6 at the Armash Fishponds.

Temminck's Stint***Calidris temminckii***

A single bird at Kumisi Lake (GE) on the 29th and 4 birds at Armash Fishponds (AM).

Dunlin***Calidris alpina***

Three birds at Armash Fishponds (Am) on the 4th May.

Little Stint***Calidris minuta***

All sightings in Armenia. Four birds at a pool on the Vardenyats Pass on the 2nd May was surpassed by at least 100 birds on the Armash Fishponds on the 4th May.

Common Snipe***Gallinago gallinago***

A count of 3 birds at the Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th May.

Common Sandpiper***Actitis hypoleucos***

Counts of 1-2 birds in both Georgia and Armenia over four days.

Common Redshank***Tringa totanus***

Small numbers recorded on two dates whilst in Armenia.

Marsh Sandpiper***Tringa stagnatilis***

Two birds at the Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th May.

Wood Sandpiper***Tringa glareola***

Recorded in both Georgia and Armenia over three days.

Common Greenshank***Tringa nebularia***

Small numbers recorded in both Georgia and Armenia over three days.

Collared Pratincole***Glareola pratincola***

First recorded at Jandari Lake (GE) on 30th April and then again in Armenia at Armash Fishponds on the 4th May. A high count of 70+ birds at Jandari Lake.

Black-winged Pratincole***Glareola nordmanni***

A single bird hawking at dusk on the 29th April at Kumisi Lake (GE) and then the odd bird with a large feeding flock of Collared Pratincoles at Jandari Lake (GE).

Slender-billed Gull***Chroicocephalus genei***

A total of 14 birds at Armash Fishponds on the 4th May.

Black-headed Gull***Chroicocephalus ridibundus***

Recorded at Kumisi Lake (GE) and Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th May.

Armenian Gull***Larus armenicus***

Recorded on five days in both countries with the most impressive numbers at Lake Sevan (AM) at a breeding colony.

Gull-billed Tern***Gelochelidon nilotica***

Counts of 3 birds at Kumisi Lake and Jandari Lake in Georgia.

Little Tern***Sternula albifrons***

Small numbers at Jandari Lake (GE) on the 30th April and at least 2 birds at Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th May.

Common Tern***Sterna hirundo***

A single bird at Lake Sevan (AM) on the 1st May.

Whiskered Tern***Chlidonias hybrida***

Great views of this smart marsh tern at Jandari Lake (GE) on the 30th April.

White-winged Tern***Chlidonias leucopterus***

One of the lasting memories of both countries was seeing wonderful flocks of this beautiful species. Recorded on five days with a high count of 60+ birds at Kumisi Lake.

White Stork***Ciconia ciconia***

Recorded in both countries over five days with many nesting birds.

Pygmy Cormorant***Microcarbo pygmaeus***

Recorded in both countries over three days, but the high count by far was 70+ birds at Lake Sevan (AM) on the 1st May.

Great Cormorant***Phalacrocorax carbo***

Recorded in both countries over three days and the high count was 150+ birds at a breeding colony on Lake Sevan (AM) with Pygmy Cormorants nearby.

Glossy Ibis***Plegadis falcinellus***

Recorded in Armenia on two days. A bird at Lake Sevan and 4 birds at Armash Fishponds.

Eurasian Spoonbill***Platalea leucorodia***

Three birds at Kumisi Lake (GE) on the 29th and a single bird at Armash Fishponds (AM).

Eurasian Bittern***Botaurus stellaris***

A booming male heard at Jandari Lake (GE).

Little Bittern***Ixobrychus minutus***

A single bird flushed from the side of one of the ponds at Armash Fishponds (AM).

Black-crowned Night Heron***Nycticorax nycticorax***

Small numbers recorded in Armenia at Lake Sevan and Armash Fishponds.

Squacco Heron***Ardeola ralloides***

A minimum of 15 birds at Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th May.

Western Cattle Egret***Bubulcus ibis***

Recorded only at Jandari Lake Georgia.

Grey Heron***Ardea cinerea***

Small numbers recorded in both countries over four days.

Purple Heron***Ardea purpurea***

Counts of 1-2 birds at wetland sites in both Georgia and Armenia.

Great Egret***Ardea alba***

Small numbers recorded in both countries over three days.

Little Egret***Egretta garzetta***

Small numbers recorded in both countries over five days.

Great White Pelican***Pelecanus onocrotalus***

A count of 27 birds in flight over the Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th May.

Bearded Vulture***Gypaetus barbatus***

Some great views whilst in the mountains of Kazbegi in Georgia and Yeghegnadzor region in Armenia. Recorded on five days with a max. day count of 3 birds in Kazbegi.

Egyptian Vulture***Neophron percnopterus***

Recorded in Armenia with a single on the 1st whilst travelling and then 2 adults on the Gndasar mountains on the 3rd May.

European Honey Buzzard***Pernis apivorus***

One of the definite highlights was the almost daily movement of this wonderful raptor.

Recorded in both countries over six days with high counts of 250+ and 260+ birds on the 5th and 6th May in Armenia, thanks to the diligent counting by Richard.

Griffon Vulture***Gyps fulvus***

Recorded in both countries over six days with counts of up to 5 birds.

Cinereous Vulture***Aegypius monachus***

Recorded in both countries over four days with counts of 1-3 birds.

Short-toed Snake Eagle***Circaetus gallicus***

Single birds at Jandari Lake (GE) and whilst travelling from Yerevan - Georgia on 6th May.

Lesser Spotted Eagle***Clanga pomarina***

A single bird at Jandari Lake (GE) on the 30th April was the only sighting.

Booted Eagle***Hieraaetus pennatus***

Recorded on three days whilst in Armenia with a high count of 4 birds on the 6th May and all light phase birds.

Steppe Eagle***Aquila nipalensis***

A single bird seen in the Aragats Mountains of Armenia on the 5th May.

Eastern Imperial Eagle***Aquila heliaca***

Two adults at a pylon nest in Georgia on the 29th April was a highlight of the trip.

Golden Eagle***Aquila chrysaetos***

Recorded around the Kazbegi mountains on the 26th and 27th April with a high count of 3 birds. A single bird also in Armenia on the 5th May in the Aragats.

Levant Sparrowhawk***Accipiter brevipes***

We were very fortunate to connect with some raptor passage whilst close to the Russian border in the Darialy valley and this included small flocks of this species and a total of 46 birds recorded.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk***Accipiter nisus***

Recorded on six days (four whilst in GE) and a high count of 6 birds on the 28th.

Northern Goshawk***Accipiter gentilis***

Single birds in Armenia on the 1st and 5th May.

Western Marsh Harrier***Circus aeruginosus***

Recorded in both countries over five days with a max. count of 40 birds on the 1st May at Lake Sevan (AM).

Pallid Harrier***Circus macrourus***

At least 1 adult male recorded on the 27th April during some impressive raptor migration in the Darialy Valley. Plus other probable ringtails on at least two days, but not seen well enough to confirm the identification from the similar Montagu's Harrier.

Montagu's Harrier***Circus pygargus***

Recorded in both countries over at least five days. Mostly 1-2 birds other than an impressive 13 birds on the 27th April in the Darialy Valley (GE).

Black Kite***Milvus migrans***

Recorded in both countries over five days with a high count of 20 birds during an impressive afternoon of raptor migration on the 27th April (GE).

White-tailed Eagle***Haliaeetus albicilla***

An adult at Jandari Lake (GE) on the 30th April and an immature overhead whilst checking the area below the Aragats Mountains (AM) for Bimaculated Lark.

Long-legged Buzzard***Buteo rufinus***

Counts of 1-2 birds in both countries over six days, though seemingly more common in Armenia when recorded on four of those days.

Common (steppe) Buzzard***Buteo buteo***

Recorded on eight days (both countries) and a max. count of 50 birds on the 28th April whilst in the Kazbegi mountains (GE). **Subsp.** *vulpinus*

Little Owl***Athene noctua***

Heard only on the 30th April at Jandari Lake (GE).

Eurasian Hoopoe***Upupa epops***

Recorded daily.

European Roller***Coracias garrulus***

Recorded in both countries over six days with counts of 1-2 birds.

Common Kingfisher***Alcedo atthis***

Singles at Jandari Lake (GE) and at the Armash Fishponds (AM).

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater***Merops persicus***

Recorded on three days whilst in Armenia. Counts of 16 birds at Lake Sevan and then 6 and 4+ birds on the 3rd and 4th May.

European Bee-eater***Merops apiaster***

A familiar sight and sound over eight days with counts up to 14 birds.

Eurasian Wryneck***Jynx torquilla***

A single migrant seen briefly in the Urts Mountains (AM) on the afternoon of the 4th May.

Syrian Woodpecker***Dendrocopos syriacus***

Three birds seen very well in Chiva Village (AM) on the 3rd May.

Great Spotted Woodpecker***Dendrocopos major***

Recorded on three days (GE & AM).

Common Kestrel***Falco tinnunculus***

Recorded in both countries over seven days.

Merlin***Falco columbarius***

A female type seen at Lake Sevan (AM) on the evening of the 1st May.

Eurasian Hobby***Falco subbuteo***

A single bird on the 27th passing through Kazbegi and 2 birds on the 30th April.

Peregrine Falcon***Falco peregrinus***

A single bird on the 3rd May at Vedi Gorge (AM).

Red-backed Shrike***Lanius collurio***

Great to see, though in small numbers, with counts of 1-2 birds over seven days in both countries.

Lesser Grey Shrike***Lanius minor***

Recorded in both countries with 2 birds at Jandari Lake (GE), at least 3 birds at the Armash Fishponds (AM) and another single bird on the 6th May at a random stop in AM.

Woodchat Shrike***Lanius senator***

Two birds at Jandari Lake (GE) and a single on the 3rd in Armenia.

Eurasian Jay***Garrulus glandarius***

This distinctive black-capped **subsp** *krynickyi* was recorded on eight days.

Eurasian Magpie

Recorded on ten days.

Pica pica

Red-billed Chough

Recorded in both countries in the mountainous areas over five days.

Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax

Alpine Chough

Recorded only in the Kazbegi mountains (GE) on two days.

Pyrrhocorax graculus

Western Jackdaw

Recorded in Armenia on four days.

Coloeus monedula

Rook

Small numbers on three days (GE & AM).

Corvus frugilegus

Hooded Crow

Recorded daily.

Corvus cornix

Northern Raven

Recorded daily except for the 4th May.

Corvus corax

Coal Tit

Recorded in the Dilijan Forest (AM) on the 1st May.

Parus ater

Eurasian Blue Tit

Recorded on seven days.

Cyanistes caeruleus

Great Tit

Recorded on seven days.

Parus major

Bearded Reedling

Seen very well at Armash Fishponds (AM) in good numbers.

Panurus biarmicus

Woodlark

Heard singing and seen well in Armenia on three days.

Lullula arborea

Eurasian Skylark

Recorded on two days in Armenia.

Alauda arvensis

Crested Lark

Recorded in both countries over six days.

Galerida cristata

Horned Lark (Caucasian)

A total of 15+ birds seen in the Aragats Mountains (AM). The **subsp. *pencillata*** is one of numerous subspecies in the world and named by some as Caucasian Horned Lark.

Eremophila alpestris

Greater Short-toed Lark

A single bird at Kumisi Lake (GE) on the 29th April.

Calandrella brachydactyla

Calandra Lark

Great views of this species on farmland en route to Davit Garej Monastery (GE).

Melanocorypha calandra

Sand Martin

Recorded in both countries over four days. Notable for the time of year were 100s of birds at Armash Fishponds seemingly migrating still.

Riparia riparia

Eurasian Crag Martin

Recorded in both countries over six days.

Ptyonoprogne rupestris

Barn Swallow

Recorded daily.

Hirundo rustica

Common House Martin

Recorded in both countries over six days.

Delichon urbicum

Cetti's Warbler

Heard on five days (both countries) and finally seen at Armash Fishponds (AM).

Cettia cetti

Long-tailed Tit

Three birds of the **subsp** *amicorum* seen well in the Kazbegi area (GE).

Aegithalos caudatus

Willow Warbler

At least 10 birds at the Armash Fishponds (AM) on the 4th May.

Phylloscopus trochilus

Mountain Chiffchaff

Heard calling and seen well whilst in the Kazbegi Mountain on three days.

Phylloscopus sindianus

Common Chiffchaff

Recorded in both countries over five days.

Phylloscopus collybita

Green Warbler

Seen well and heard singing in the Dilijan Forest (AM) on the 1st May. Another bird was heard singing at a random stop (AM) whilst travelling back to Georgi on the 6th May.

Phylloscopus nitidus

Great Reed Warbler

Recorded at Jandari Lake (GE) and again at Armash Fishponds (AM) where birds were very common and the best views were obtained.

Acrocephalus arundinaceus

Moustached Warbler

A minimum of 3 birds seen well and heard singing at the Armash Fishponds (AM).

Acrocephalus melanopogon

Sedge Warbler

Recorded at Jandari Lake (GE) and again at Armash Fishponds (AM).

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Paddyfield Warbler

Numerous birds seen well and heard singing at Armash Fishponds where numbers seemed to be high this year.

Acrocephalus agricola

Eurasian Reed Warbler

Recorded at Jandari Lake (GE) and again at Armash Fishponds (AM).

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Savi's Warbler

Great to see and hear with a minimum of 6 birds at the Armash Fishponds (AM).

Locustella luscinioides

Eurasian Blackcap

Recorded in both countries over four days.

Sylvia atricapilla

Lesser Whitethroat

Recorded on eight days with many birds singing.

Curruca curruca

Eastern Orphean Warbler

A single bird at David Gareja Monastery (GE) on the 30th April.

Curruca crassirostris

Menetries's Warbler

Great views of 2 males and a female at Armash Fishponds (AM).

Curruca mystacea

Common Whitethroat***Curruca communis***

Recorded in both countries over five days.

Eurasian Wren***Troglodytes troglodytes***

Recorded in the mountains of Kazbegi only. The **subsp.** is *hyrcanus* restricted to the Crimean Peninsula, N Turkey, Caucasus and NW Iran.

Western Rock Nuthatch***Sitta neumayer***

A single bird near Noravank (AM) on the 2nd May.

Eastern Rock Nuthatch***Sitta tephronota***

Recorded on three days in Armenia at various sites with 1-2 birds seen each day.

Eurasian Nuthatch***Sitta europaea***

Seen and heard (very different call to UK subsp) in the Dilijan Forest and again on the 6th May at Tetrtskaro Park (GE). **Susp.** *Caucasia*

Wallcreeper***Tichodroma muraria***

Recorded on three days in and around the Kazbegi Mountains. Seen by some of group on 27th/28th and then a male seen very well by everyone (despite the rain!) on the 29th April.

Eurasian Treecreeper***Certhia familiaris***

Recorded in both countries over three days.

Rosy Starling***Pastor roseus***

All sightings in Georgia. An impressive flock of 200+ birds at Kumisi Lake on the evening of the 29th April and then 12 birds at Jandari Lake on the 30th April.

Common Starling***Sturnus vulgaris***

Recorded in both countries over six days.

Song Thrush***Turdus philomelos***

Low numbers recorded on three days only, Two days in Georgia and one in Armenia.

Mistle Thrush***Turdus viscivorus***

Recorded in the Kazbegi region and on three days in Armenia.

Common Blackbird***Turdus merula***

A common species recorded on eight days.

Ring Ouzel***Turdus torquatus***

Seen very well in the Kazbegi mountains on three days and then again in Armenia in the Gndasar and Aragats Mountains. **Subsp.** *amicorum*

Spotted Flycatcher***Muscicapa striata***

Counts of just 1-2 birds in Armenia on three days.

European Robin***Erithacus rubecula***

Recorded only on the first and last days.

Bluethroat***Luscinia svecica***

A stunning singing male at the Vardenyats Pass (AM) on the 2nd May.

Common Nightingale***Luscinia megarhynchos***

Heard singing on two days (GE & AM) and a migrant seen in the Urts Mountains (AM) on the 4th. Some whistling calls from the bird on the 4th were similar to Thrush Nightingale,

but later seemed to better fit the alarm call of Common Nightingale & photos confirmed id and presumed to be an “Eastern” Nightingale with a striking all black bill. **Subsp** *africana*



White-throated Robin

Irania gutturalis

This stunning species posed beautifully on a number of occasions in Armenia with 3 males and a female seen very well near Zedea on the 2nd and a singing male in the Arafat's Mountains on the 5th May.

Red-breasted Flycatcher

Ficedula parva

Counts of 1-2 birds in both countries over five days. The most confiding bird was a singing male near Zhinvali Reservoir (GE).

Semicollared Flycatcher

Ficedula semitorquata

Great views of 3 singing males and a female in the Dilijan Forest (AM) on the 1st May. Followed by even closer views of 3m and 2f at Tetrtskaro Park (GE) on our final day.

Black Redstart

Phoenicurus ochruros

A common species, particularly in mountainous areas. Recorded on seven days and the red-bellied **subsp.** *ochruros*.

Common “Ehrenberg’s” Redstart

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Counts of 1-3 birds (males & females) recorded on three days in Armenia. Of the males, all except one were the **subsp.** *phoenicurus*. A male in Tetrtskaro Park on our last day showed a strong white wing panel and was presumed to be of the **subsp.** *samamisicus*.

Common Rock Thrush

Monticola saxatilis

All sightings in Armenia. A male at the Vardenyats Pass on the 1st May and then 3 males and 2 females in the Aragats Mountains on our last day.

Blue Rock Thrush

Monticola solitarius

Small numbers recorded in Armenia on the 2nd - 4th May.

Whinchat***Saxicola rubetra***

Single birds on the 30th April (GE) whilst watching Calandra Larks. Then 2nd May and 4th May in Armenia with a single and 2 birds on the 4th.

European Stonechat***Saxicola rubicola***

The only sighting was at David Gareja (GE) on the 30th April. and was distant and in poor light so Siberian Stonechat could not be excluded.

Northern Wheatear***Oenanthe oenanthe***

Small numbers recorded, mostly in the mountains, on seven days.

Isabelline Wheatear***Oenanthe isabellina***

Recorded in both countries over three days with birds at Kumisi Lake and near David Gareja (GE) and Vedi Gorge (AM).

Eastern Black-eared Wheatear***Oenanthe melanoleuca***

Recorded on four days whilst in Armenia.

Pied Wheatear***Oenanthe pleschanka***

Recorded only in Georgia with a male on the 30th April near David Gareja.

Finsch's Wheatear***Oenanthe finschii***

A singing male at the Vedi Gorge in Armenia on the 3rd May was the only sighting.

Red-tailed Wheatear***Oenanthe chrysopygia***

A singing and displaying male in the Urts Mountains on the 4th May was a highlight.

White-throated Dipper***Cinclus cinclus***

Three birds on the 27th and 1 bird on the 29th in the Kazbegi region (GE).

Rock Sparrow***Petronia petronia***

Small flocks recorded in Georgia on one day near Kumisi Lake and three days in Armenia.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow***Passer montanus***

A relatively common species with birds recorded in both countries over five days.

Spanish Sparrow***Passer hispaniolensis***

Recorded only at Kumisi Lake (GE) on the 29th.

House Sparrow***Passer domesticus***

A common species recorded on all but one day.

Radde's Accentor***Prunella ocularis***

A highlight of the tour was seeing 3 singing males at the Vardenyats Pass on the 2nd May.

Duncock***Prunella modularis* ssp:**

Recorded on four days in the mountainous region of Kazbegi. The **subsp. obscura** is sometimes referred to as Caucasian Duncock.

Western Yellow Wagtail***Motacilla flava***

Counts of 2 - 10+ birds on seven days. **Subsp** recorded were mostly *feldegg*, some *thunbergi* and a single very striking *lutea* at Kazbegi with bright yellow head.

Citrine Wagtail***Motacilla citreola***

A single bird at Kumisi Lake (GE) on the evening of the 29th April was the only sighting.

Grey Wagtail***Motacilla cinerea***

Recorded in both countries over six days, mostly in the mountains.

White Wagtail***Motacilla alba***

A common species recorded daily.

Tawny Pipit***Anthus campestris***

Single birds at Kumisi Lake and Jandari Lake.

Tree Pipit***Anthus trivialis***

Recorded on five days as migrants and singing birds in breeding habitat.

Red-throated Pipit***Anthus cervinus***

Heard on two days and then finally seen at Armash Fishponds with 3 birds on the ground, thanks to Richard.

Water Pipit***Anthus spinoletta***

A common species in suitable mountainous breeding sites, recorded on seven days.

Common Chaffinch***Fringilla coelebs***

Small numbers recorded in both countries over five days.

Hawfinch***Coccothraustes coccothraustes***

Seen at Zhinvali Reservoir on our first day in Georgia.

Eurasian Bullfinch***Pyrrhula pyrrhula***

Seen only on the 27th in Georgia whilst in Kazbegi.

Great Rosefinch***Carpodacus rubicilla***

A total of 18 birds forced down from the mountains due to heavy sleet/snow was one of the highlights of the tour despite enduring the very wet viewing conditions!

European Greenfinch***Chloris chloris***

Recorded in both countries over three days.

Twite***Linaria flavirostris***

First seen in the Kazbegi region on the 28th, but 6 birds in the Aragats Mountains were seen far better, despite the snow flurries and cold wind! **Subsp. *brevirostris*.**

Common Linnet***Linaria cannabina***

Small numbers recorded in both countries over seven days.

Red Crossbill***Loxia curvirostra***

A small flock flew over during a random stop whilst travelling from Armenia to Georgia on our last day.

European Goldfinch***Carduelis carduelis***

A common species recorded on eight days.

Red-fronted Serin***Serinus pusillus***

This very smart species was seen on four days whilst birding around Kazbegi (GE) and again at Noravank (AM) on the 2nd May.

Corn Bunting***Emberiza calandra***

Small numbers recorded in both countries over three days.

Rock Bunting***Emberiza cia***

Two birds at our hotel garden in Kazbegi on the 28th. Also seen in Armenia on three days.

Grey-necked Bunting***Emberiza buchanani***

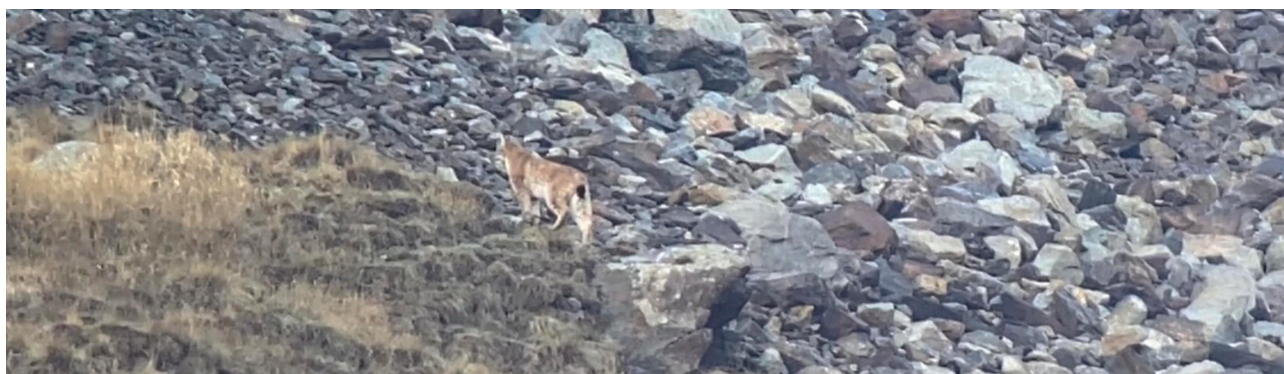
A posing male was seen very well in the Vedi Gorge (AM) on the 3rd May.

Ortolan Bunting***Emberiza hortulana***

Single birds en route to David Gareja on 30th April and the Urts Mountains (AM) 3rd May.

Black-headed Bunting***Emberiza melanocephala***

Counts of 2-6 birds in both countries over four days. The high count of 6 birds was in Georgia around David Gareja on the 30th April.



Eurasian Lynx, Kazbegi Georgia April 28th 2022

Total number of mammals recorded: 7 species including dead Hedgehog

Southern White-breasted Hedgehog***Erinaceus concolor***

Sadly recorded as deceased road casualties only on two days in Armenia.

Eurasian Lynx***Lynx lynx***

Voted the highlight of the trip as we scoped this mythical cat in full daylight for over 45 minutes (on and off) in the mountains around Kazbegi on the morning of the 28th April. This presumed big male (sexed on size) strutted around the mountain side and marked its territory as Caucasian Snowcock tried to distract our attention! [See video HERE](#)

Red Fox***Vulpes vulpes***

Single animals whilst in the Kazbegi Mountains on the 27th and the 29th.

Brown Bear***Ursus arctos***

A total of four animals seen. A single animal early morning of the 28th (thanks to Richard) in the Kazbegi Mountains just before seeing a Lynx! [See video HERE](#)

Plus a female with 3 cubs in the Gndasar Mountains of Armenia on the morning of the 3rd May and a great spot by John. All whilst a calling male Caspian Snowcock taunted us!

Bezoar / Wild Goat***Capra aegagrus***

Great scope views of at least 10 animals in the Noravank area on the 2nd May.

East Caucasian Tur***Capra cylindricornis***

Recorded on three days whilst exploring the Kazbegi Mountains.

Counts of 9, 8 and 10 animals.

Caucasian (Persian) Squirrel

Sciurus anomalus

Five animals in Tetrtskaro Park on our final day.

REPTILES

Spur-thighed Tortoise

Testudo graeca

A single animal feeding in a field whilst watching Calandra Larks!

European Pond Terrapin

Emys orbicularis

Recorded at the Armash Fishponds.

Also recorded were an unidentified a Snake and Lizard species

Conservation Donation – Following this tour to Georgia and Armenia, £150 was transferred to the Wise Birding Holiday's central conservation fund.

For the last three years Wise Birding Holidays has been supporting a number of small conservation projects. However, we now believe that to try and make a bigger difference to conservation it seems best to pool the donations from most of our tours into one central fund. Once a target amount has been reached this money will be used to support one single project in the hope of achieving more for species conservation. Currently this amounts to over £8,000. Some tours will continue to donate money to help some of the smaller projects that we feel will still benefit from smaller donations. Please visit www.wisebirding.co.uk to find out more about the projects we support.

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