

NOTES ON THE WADERS OF MONGOLIA

By Alan Kitson

Introduction

Despite its size, 1,565,000 km² (i.e. six times the area of the United Kingdom), in terms of ornithology Mongolia is poorly known. In 1977 I spent the six months from February to July studying birds in Mongolia, on a scholarship offered by the British Council under the Cultural Exchange Programme which exists between the UK and Mongolia. The Mongols evidently considered ornithology a somewhat unorthodox topic, but I was finally accepted.

Details of my itinerary and descriptions of the wetlands visited are given by Kitson (1978) who also summarizes the relatively little earlier ornithological work in the country. Mongolia is a high plateau (average 1580m above sea level), a land of mountains and steppes (Figure 1). Its climate is extreme continental. Several periods were spent at the capital Ulan Bator (9 February to 21 April; 10 May to 16 June; 4 to 17, 24, 25 July). Wetland birds were seen here on melt-water sloughs on Nisek and Amgalong Plains near the city and on the river Toal. The river was frozen until 26 March and some waterways until 16 April. Records for the Ulan Bator area are noted by an A. I was able to visit two other areas: (B) from 21 April to 10 May, Orok Nor, a lake of 80 km², and several nearby smaller lakes in the arid steppe zone; and (C) from 16 June to 3 July, the Hangai mountains, particularly the lakes in this area.

Systematic list

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*. A common and widespread breeding visitor. A. In mid-May up to 20 Amgalong Plain, 20 Nisek Plain and 20 Toal at UB; in July 6, 2 and 4 respectively, almost certainly breeding. B. First were 2 Orok Nor April 25th; 7 there May 5th; 40 Taatsing Tsagan Nor May 7th. C. Bayan Nor 1; Ogi Nor 2; Terhing Tsagan Nor 2; Dzoon Nor 3 pairs; Sangin Dalai Nor 6; Tsagan Cling Nor 1; Hont Nor 2; Jognain Nor 4 pairs; Boost Nor 1 pair; Telming Nor 10 and 5 pairs; Halboh Nor 2 pairs; Oigon Nor 4; Cholot river 3 pairs.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*. Only on lakes having shallow, muddy shores. B. First were 4 Booreng April 22nd; 10 there May 9th; at Orok Nor max 60 April 27th; Adging Tsagan Nor 6 April 29th; Davs Nor 130 May 3rd. C. Telming Nor 14; Oigon Nor 20; Shorbok Nor 10 July 1st distraction-displaying.

Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii*. Either on muddy shores, or, more commonly, on stone plains. B. Up to 8 Orok Nor April 25th- May 5th; Davs Nor 2 May 3rd; Taatsing Tsagan Nor 5 May 7th; 4 near Toogruk May 8th. C. 1-2 Oigon Nor June 27th.

Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus*. All males, probably all non-breeders or passage migrants, since it breeds in the alpine zone (Vaurie 1964). B. On stone plains between Booreng and Toogruk 3 singles April 23rd and 7 May 9th; 1 near Taatsing Tsagan Nor May 8th. C. 2 Oigon Nor June 26th.

Asiatic Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*. A. 1 Amgalong Plain May 23rd. B. Dzoon Nor 1 June 21st; Hont Nor 11 June 22nd; Oigon Nor 5 June 27th.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*. C. 1 Telming Nor June 25th and 1 Oigon Nor on June 26th.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*. A. Migrant in small numbers: most notable parties are given. First were 12 at Songin April 2nd with 26 at UB next day; 11 Nisek Plain June 2nd. B. At Orok Nor up to 18 and 4 Taatsing Tsagan Nor. C. Suspected breeding pairs are indicated Bayan Nor 1; Ogi Nor 30 June 17th, 600 in flock and 3 pairs July 2nd; Chinging Nor 150 and 2 pairs July 3rd; Terhing Tsagan Nor 40 and 2 pairs; Dzoon Nor 1; Sangin Dalai Nor 23; Hont Nor 200; Jognain Nor 4; Boost Nor 30 and 6 pairs; Telming Nor 70; Halboh Nor 2 pairs; Oigon Nor 16; Boolinging Nor 1 pair; Shorbok Nor 3 pairs.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. B. 1 Taatsing Tsagan Nor May 6th. C. 6 Telming Nor June 25th.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*. A. 1-2 Amgalong Plain May 16th-23rd. B. 2 Taatsing Tsagan Nor May 7th. C. 4 Chinging Nor July 3rd.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*. A. c 15 at marsh 50km SW of UB May 10th; 1 UB May 12th; 4-5 Amgalong Plain May 17th-23rd; 1 UB July 15th, presumably an early return bird. B. At Orok Nor 1 only, May 5th; 6 Taatsing Tsagan Nor May 6th and 3 on May 7th.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*. B. 1 Orok Nor April 25th, 26th was, inexplicably, the only record.

Asiatic Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*. C. At Ogi Nor 2 June 17th, 1 18th but none July 2nd; flock of 12 Hont Nor June 22nd. While both these sites offer apparently suitable habitats for breeding, it seems that my records probably refer to passage birds.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*. B. 1 Taatsing Tsagan Nor May 7th. C. Ogi Nor 1 June 18th, 25 July 2nd; Oigon Nor 1 June 27th; Terhing Tsagan Nor 28 June 29th; Cholot river 2 on 30th; Boolinging Nor 1 July 1st, when also 52 Shorbok Nor; 30 Chinging Nor July 3rd. These records imply that this species (a) has an early return migration, and (b) it is not the vagrant to Mongolia that it has hitherto been labelled.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*. A. Passage migrant: singles May 12th, 17th, 28th. B. Seen Orok Nor April 25th - May 5th with max 6 on latter date; 8 Taatsing Tsagan Nor May 7th; 39 Booreng May 9th. C. Breeding unproven but strongly suspected and indicated as pairs here. Terhing Tsagan Nor 17; Dzoon Nor 4; Sangin Dalai Nor 13; Hont Nor 4; Jognain Nor 1; Boost Nor 3 pairs; Telming Nor 3; Halboh Nor 1; Oigon Nor 10; Cholot river 1 pair; Boolinging Nor 1 pair; Shorbok Nor 4; Ogi Nor 18 and 6 pairs July 2nd; Chinging Nor 8 and 1 pair July 3rd.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*. A. On May 10th 1 50km SW of UB; 1 on Amgalong Plain May 16th, 17th. B. First May 8th, 2 Gochin Os at water-hole, and 1 Booreng following day. C. Pair/pairs indicate suspected breeding. Chinging Nor 4pairs July 3rd; Ogii Nor 6 pairs July 2nd; Terhing Tsagan Nor 5; 1 pair; Sangin Dalai Nor 1; Hont Nor 15, 1 pair June 22nd; Boost Nor 1; Telming Nor 3; Oigon Nor 5.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*. A. Recorded May 13th - 17th, max 6 on 16th Nisek Plain. B. 2 Orok Nor May 5th; 5 Taatsing Tsagan Nor 7th; 9 Booreng 9th. C. Oigon Nor 1 June 26th; Terhing Tsagan Nor 3 on 29th; Ogii Nor 1 July 2nd; 1 Chinging Nor 3rd.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*. A. On the Plains mid and late May, peak 20 Amgalong Plain 16th; 4 there July 9th and 3 UB 15th; B. First seen April 26th Orok Nor, where daily max 13 May 5th; on 9th 8 Booreng; 3 Onjool. C. On June 19th 1 pair along rocky stream-with-bushes near Terhing Tsagan Nor may have been breeding; Telming Nor 5; Cholot river 13 June 30th; Shorbok Nor 2; Ogii Nor 6 July 2nd; Chinging Nor 5 on 3rd.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*. A. Up to 16 Amgalong Plain mid May, and 3 Nisek Plain 13th; 16 at marsh 50km SW of UB May 10th; singles UB July 9th, 25th. B. First was 11 days after Green Sandpiper, on May 7th Taatsing Tsagan Nor; 1 Gochin Os 8th; 2 Booreng 9th. C. None in Hangai proper. Shorbok Nor 5 July 1st; Ogii Nor 15 2nd; Chinging Nor 200 on 3rd.

Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*. A. Suspected of breeding on Toal. Seen more or less daily May 12th onwards; max 100 Amgalong Plain May 16th; held up by a cold spell; in July small numbers along Toal. B. At Orok Nor on only two dates, April 25th (the first) 1, May 5th 2; 6 Taatsing Tsagan Nor May 7th. C. Despite numerous fast-flowing rivers only recorded once, on river between Hont Nor and Jognain Nor, a pair June 22nd.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*. A. 1 Nisek Plain July 14th. C. 2 (pair?) on mud-flats, Oigon Nor June 26th.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*. B. 16 Orok Nor May 1st, 1 5th; 2 Davs Nor 3rd; 1 Taatsing Tsagan Nor 7th. C. At Ogii Nor 7 June 18th, 12 July 2nd, including 2 probable nesting pairs; Hont Nor 1 June 22nd; Chinging Nor flock of 12 July 3rd.

Curlew *Numenius arquatus*. B. 10 Taatsing Tsagan Nor April 24th, 2 May 6th; max 16 Orok Nor April 25th. C. No sign of breeding except 1 singing Terhing Tsagan Nor June 19th; Sangin Dalai Nor 8; Hont Nor 1; Boost Nor 31; Telming Nor 3; Oigon Nor 135 June 26th; Shorbok Nor 14; Ogii Nor 4 July 2nd.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*. A. Migrant. Seen May 12th-22nd, max 7 Amgalong Plain 16th; 1 Nisek Plain June 2nd. B. 2-3 Taatsing Tsagan Nor April 24th, May 6th; 3 Orok Nor April 27th, 5 May 5th.

Pintail Snipe/Swinhoe's Snipe *Gallinago stenura/G. megala*. Although I called all the snipes given here as Pintail, since so far as I know the field identification of Pintail from Swinhoe's is impossible, and since both occur in Mongolia, it is prudent not to exclude possibility of latter. A. On Amgalong Plain in May 7 on 16th; 6 17th, 60 23rd and 1 on 28th.

Solitary Snipe *Gallinago solitaria*. A. 1 in wet brush Nisek Plain May 20th. B. At Orok Nor 2 in marsh April 27th and 1 there 28th.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*. B. More or less daily at Orok Nor, max 11 May 5th; first were 8 Taatsing Tsagan Nor April 24th; 6 Davs Nor May 3rd. C. The only wader proved to breed. Bayan Nor pair June 17th; at Telming Nor 35 and a loose colony of 6 nests found at west end, of which 5 examined had clutches 1,1,4,4,7; Oigon Nor 6; at Shorbok Nor on July 1st 45 adults and 6 chicks.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*. Not mentioned in Vaurie (1964). B. 9 Orok Nor April 25th, 26th on north shore; 2 27th, 28th west end; 1 Dav Nor May 3rd; 2 Taatsing Tsagan Nor May 7th. C. 2, presumably a pair, Chinging Nor July 3rd.

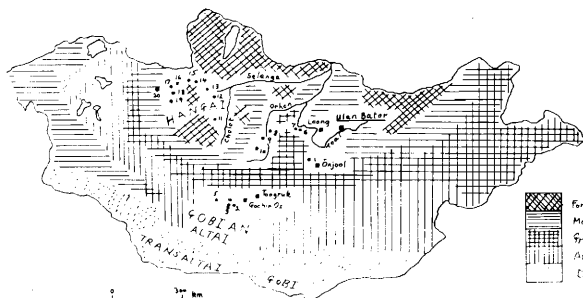
Acknowledgements

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References

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No.	Key to lakes: Name	Co-ordinates		No.	Key to lakes: Name	Co-ordinates	
		N	E			N	E
1	Booreng	46°57'	105°00'	11	Terhing Tsagan Nor	48°10'	99°43'
2	Taatsing Tsagan Nor	45 10	101 28	12	Dzoon Nor	49 05	99 30
3	Orok Nor	45 00	100 45	13	Sangin Dalai Nor	49 17	99 00
4	Davs Nor	45 23	100 53	14	Tsagan Oling Nor	49 30	98 32
5	Adging Tsagan Nor	45 32	100 00	15	Hont Nor	49 30	98 00
6	Bayan Nor	47 55	104 30	16	Jognain Nor	49 24	97 35
7	Chinging Nor	47 55	104 17	17	Boost Nor	49 10	97 24
8	Ogii Nor	47 54	102 48	18	Halboh Nor	49 03	97 10
9	Shorbok Nor	47 41	102 19	19	Telming Nor	48 51	97 20
10	Booling Nor	47 31	102 00	20	Oigon Nor	49 12	96 32