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# Birds of Khalzan soum, Mongolia

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#### Abstract

In our study, we recorded 208 birds belonging to 44 families and 18 orders. The recorded bird species compose 40.5% of Mongolian registered bird fauna. Khalzan soum is one of the stop-over sites for migratory birds through the Eastern steppe of Mongolia. Our observation was held in five types of habitats that occur in Khalzan soum, including dense rock, low-density shrub, forb dominated short grass steppe, tall vegetation, and ephemeral water bodies. The area supports several globally threatened breeding species, such as the Endangered steppe eagle (*Aquila nipallensis*) and Saker Falcons (*Falco cherrug*). This bird list provides a baseline for future bird surveys in the region.

Keywords: bird list, Khalzan, eastern Mongolia

### Introduction

Mongolia is a vast country with diverse ecosystems and landscapes, harboring a rich assemblage of birds. In Sukhbaatar, which extends across three major vegetation zones (Mallon, 1985), few details on the distribution of birds exist, yet we require such data to better manage and conserve the avifaunal community. We require a better understanding of species composition, distributions, habitat preferences, feeding ecology, and nesting ecology to improve the prospects for successful bird conservation. The dearth of distribution data stems largely from a lack of systematic surveys, limited access to and publication of results from surveys that do occur, and the difficulties associated with detecting some species.

Here we process the data comprehensive records of the avifauna in the area and update existing knowledge about the distributions and migration patterns of some species in Mongolia.

# Study area

The study area is located in Khalzan Soum, Sukhbaatar province (45°85´ N-112°56´ E), 70 km south of Baruun Urt City. Khalzan soum extends to 4687.2 km2 ha and treeless flat plains, rolling hills and a surprising amount of important several small lakes characterize the Khalzan soum. The area has been classified by Bold (1990) as "Eurasian steppe – Dornod – Mongol steppe region". The region is arid with ≤200 mm of annual precipitation, which falls mostly as rain (80%) between June and August, and air temperatures range from -30 (mean winter temperature = -20°C) to +30 (mean summer temperature = +20°C). Five types of habitats occur in Khalzan soum, including rocky, low-density shrub, forb dominated short grass steppe, tall vegetation, and ephemeral water bodies. Although the site has no protection status for wildlife, inhabits some threatened birds of high densities of nesting steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) and Lesser Kestrels (*Falco naumanni*).

Here we report the bird species observation data gathered from 2013 to 2020. We have represented information about bird species (Table 1) and their breeding status in the region. For the smaller lakes, counts were made of birds along the entire shoreline, from one or two vantage points reached by a vehicle, using binoculars and telescope.

We use common ornithological research observing methods. The equipment and devices used were GPS (Garmin GPS64s, New Taipei, Taiwan), camera (Canon 7D, 7D Mark 2; Canon, Tokyo, Japan), lenses (Canon 400, 600 mm lenses; Canon, Tokyo, Japan), binoculars (Nikon 10x42 Prostaff 7s; Nikon, Tokyo, Japan) and spotting scope (Swarovski Optic ATS-65 HD, 20x60; Absam, Austria). Researchers working within the area also recorded some data while conducting other wildlife studies. We rely on the Mongolian Red List of Birds (Gombobaatar *et al.*, 2011; Lepage 2020) for taxonomy and common names to be consistent with other studies.

#### Results

Out of the 519 species of birds recorded in Mongolia, we have observed 207 species of birds belonging to 44 families and 18 orders (Appendix 1). These bird species compose 40% of registered bird species in Mongolia. Of them, Passeriformes were 49.3%, Chradriformes 16.4%, and Anseriformes 8.7% and Accipitriformes 7.2% (Figure 2). The vast majority of species recorded in the reserve were passage migrants (n = 160, 77.3%), followed by summer breeder (n = 20, 9.6%), resident breeders (n = 18, 8.7%), vagrants (n = 7, 3.4%) and winter visitor (n=6, 2.9%) (some species fall into more than one category) (Table 1).

There were nine (4.3%) globally threatened species that occur in the area, including 1 critically endangered, 2 endangered species and 6 vulnerable and 7 near threatened (IUCN, 2020, Table 1). Within Mongolia, 1 endangered, 4 vulnerable, and 3 near-threatened species of birds are listed in the regional red list (Gombobaatar *et al.*, 2011). However, two species remain Data Deficient in Mongolia (Table 1).

We sighted vagrant species during migration, including Eurasian Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*), Black-naped Oriole (*Oriolus chinensis*), Yellow-rumped Flycatcher (*Ficedula zanthopygia*), Mugimaki Flycatcher (*Ficedula mugimaki*), Two-barred Crossbill (*Loxia leucoptera*), Chestnut (*Emberiza rutila*), and Tristram's (*Emberiza tristrami*) Buntings.

Common resident breeders in the area include Pallas's Sandgrouse (*Syrrhaptes paradoxus*), Rock dove (*Columba livia*), Eurasian Eagle-owl (*Bubo bubo*), Little owl (*Athene noctua*), Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*), Northern Raven (*C. corax*), Red-billed Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*), Black-billed Magpie, Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), Asian Mongolian lark (*Melanocorypha mongolica*), Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) and Rock Sparrow (*Petronia petronia*) (Table 1).

The relatively large number of habitats in Khalzan soum provide a range of breeding and migratory stop-over sites for birds. Rocky outcrops, deep ravines, and rock cavities provide potential nesting substrates for breeding raptors, including steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*), Upland Buzzards (*Buteo hemilasius*), Saker Falcon, Common Kestrel (*Falco tinniculous*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*), Little Owls (*Athene noctua*), and Eurasian eagle-owls (*Bubo bubo*). Few stands of Siberian elm that occur in drainages of perennial springs or sandy, dry river beds, the two freshwater springs, and the ephemeral lake of the area attract a large number and diversity of migrants (Figure 3).

Steppe Wildlife Research and Conservation Center's research team has been conducting ecological studies of raptors in the area since 2018, focusing primarily on the steppe eagle. We studied 78 breeding pairs from 2018 to 2020. The average breeding success of steppe eagle was (52.8 % in 2018 and 45.5% in 2019) fluctuating by main prey species abundance. Furthermore, we recorded a Cinereous Vulture and a golden eagle breeding nest in the natural substrate in Khalzan region. In the research area, artificial nest platforms are availability some parts of the area. Nest building species, common raven, saker falcon, upland buzzard, and common kestrel, breeding density increased near the artificial nest sites (Gombobaatar et al, 2010; Dixon, 2013; Rahman et al, 2014). Furthermore, we planted two thousand trees in 2017 because trees provide shelter, food, and a resting location for wildlife. The trees also help birds to move across the landscape to get to breeding sites, water sources, and to move to different habitat as the seasons change.

### **Acknowledgments**

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Figure 1. Location of the Khalzan Soum, Mongolia

Figure 2. Observed orders with the class birds in Khalzan soum, Sukhbaatar province, from 2013-2020.

Figure 3. Habitat fidelity of bird species at Khalzan soum, Sukhbaatar province, Mongolia. The number of bird species in a single habitat and repeatedly studied habitats are given in the graph.

Fig.1

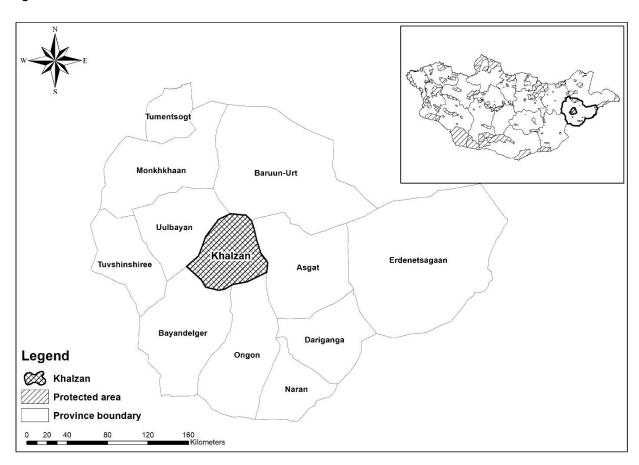


Fig.2

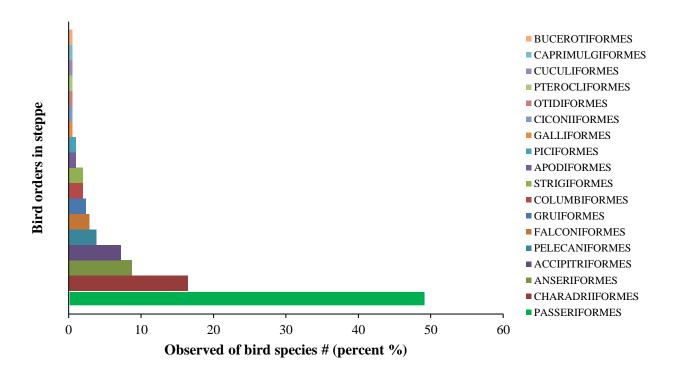
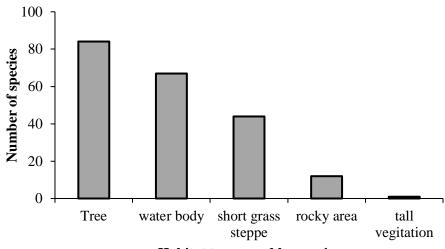


Fig 3.



Habitat types used by species

**Table 1. Bird species list in Khalzan Soum, Mongolia**. Mongolia and global statuses follow the IUCN Red List (IUCN 2020); EN = endangered, V = vulnerable, LC = least concern, NT = near threatened, DD = data deficient, and NA = not applicable. Occur = occurrence includes VA = vagrant; RB = resident breeder, PM = passage migrant, WV = winter visitor, SV = summer visitor.

No	Common name	Scientific Name	Stat	Status	
INO		Scientific Name	Mongolian	Global	Occur
	ANSERIFORMES				
	Anatidae				
1	Swan Goose	Anser cygnoides	NT	VU	PM
2	Bean Goose	Anser fabalis	LC	LC	PM
3	Greylag Goose	Anser anser	LC	LC	PM
4	Whooper Swan	Cygnus cygnus	LC	LC	PM
5	Common Shelduck	Tadorna tadorna	LC	LC	PM
6	Ruddy Shelduck	Tadorna ferruginea	LC	LC	SB
7	Garganey	Spatula querquedula	LC	LC	PM
8	Northern Shoveler	Spatula clypeata	LC	LC	PM
9	Gadwall	Mareca strepera	LC	LC	PM
10	Eurasian Wigeon	Mareca penelope	LC	LC	PM
11	Eastern Spot-billed Duck	Anas zonorhyncha	LC	LC	PM
12	Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	LC	LC	PM
13	Northern Pintail	Anas acuta	LC	LC	PM
14	Eurasian Teal	Anas crecca	LC	LC	PM
15	Common Pochard	Aythya ferina	LC	VU	PM
16	Tufted Duck	Aythya fuligula	LC	LC	PM
17	Common Goldeneye	Bucephala clangula	LC	LC	PM
18	Common Merganser	Mergus merganser	LC	LC	PM
	GALLIFORMES				
	Phasianidae				

19	Japanese Quail	Coturnix japonica	LC	NT	SB
	CICONIIFORMES				
	Ciconiidae				
20	Black Stork	Ciconia nigra	LC	LC	PM
	PELECANIFORMES				
	Threskiornithidae				
21	Eurasian Spoonbill	Platalea leucorodia	LC	LC	PM
	Ardeidae				
22	Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax	NA	LC	PM
23	Chinese Pond Heron	Ardeola bacchus	NA	LC	PM
24	Eastern Cattle Egret	Bubulcus coromandus	NA	LC	PM
25	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	LC	LC	PM
26	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta	NA	LC	PM
27	Great Egret	Ardea alba	LC	LC	PM
28	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo	LC	LC	PM
	ACCIPITRIFORMES				
	Pandionidae				
29	Cinereous Vulture	Aegypius monachus	LC	NT	RB
30	Greater Spotted Eagle	Clanga clanga	EN	VU	PM
31	Booted Eagle	Hieraaetus pennatus	LC	LC	PM
32	Steppe Eagle	Aquila nipalensis	LC	EN	SB, RB
33	Golden Eagle	Aquila chrysaetos	LC	LC	SB, RB
34	Japanese Sparrowhawk	Accipiter gularis	LC	LC	PM
35	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus	LC	LC	PM
36	Northern Goshawk	Accipiter gentilis	LC	LC	PM
37	Eastern Marsh Harrier	Circus spilonotus	LC	LC	PM
38	Hen Harrier	Circus cyaneus	LC	LC	PM

39	Black Kite	Milvus migrans	LC	LC	SB
40	White-tailed Eagle	Haliaeetus albicilla	NT	LC	PM
41	Upland Buzzard	Buteo hemilasius	LC	LC	RB
42	Eastern Buzzard	Buteo japonicus	LC	LC	PM
43	Common Buzzard	Buteo buteo	LC	LC	PM
	FALCONIFORMES				
	Falconidae				
44	Lesser Kestrel	Falco naumanni	LC	LC	PM
45	Common Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	LC	LC	RB
46	Amur Falcon	Falco amurensis	LC	LC	PM
47	Merlin	Falco columbarius	LC	LC	PM
48	Eurasian Hobby	Falco subbuteo	LC	LC	PM
49	Saker Falcon	Falco cherrug	VU	EN	RB
	OTIDIFORMES				
	Otididae				
50	Great Bustard	Otis tarda	VU	VU	PM
	GRUIFORMES				
	Rallidae				
51	Western Water Rail	Rallus aquaticus			PM
52	Eurasian Coot	Fulica atra	LC	LC	PM
	Gruidae				
53	White-naped Crane	Antigone vipio	VU	VU	PM
54	Demoiselle Crane	Grus virgo	LC	LC	SB
55	Common Crane	Grus grus	NT	LC	PM
	CHARADRIIFORMES				
	Recurvirostridae				
56	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus	LC	LC	PM

57	Pied Avocet	Recurvirostra avosetta	LC	LC	PM
	Charadriidae				
58	Northern Lapwing	Vanellus vanellus	LC	NT	PM
59	Pacific Golden Plover	Pluvialis fulva	LC	LC	PM
60	Little Ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius	LC	LC	SB
61	Kentish Plover	Charadrius alexandrinus	LC	LC	PM
62	Greater Sandplover	Charadrius leschenaultii	LC	LC	PM
63	Oriental Plover	Charadrius veredus	LC	LC	SB
	Scolopacidae				
64	Eurasian Curlew	Numenius arquata	LC	NT	PM
65	Black-tailed Godwit	Limosa limosa	LC	NT	PM
66	Ruddy Turnstone	Arenaria interpres	LC	LC	PM
67	Ruff	Calidris pugnax	LC	LC	PM
68	Broad-billed Sandpiper	Calidris falcinellus	LC	LC	PM
69	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Calidris acuminata	LC	LC	PM
70	Curlew Sandpiper	Calidris ferruginea	LC	NT	PM
71	Temminck's Stint	Calidris temminckii	LC	LC	PM
72	Long-toed Stint	Calidris subminuta	LC	LC	PM
73	Red-necked Stint	Calidris ruficollis	LC	NT	PM
74	Sanderling	Calidris alba	LC	LC	PM
75	Little Stint	Calidris minuta	LC	LC	PM
76	Eurasian Woodcock	Scolopax rusticola	LC	LC	PM
77	Common Snipe	Gallinago gallinago	LC	LC	PM
78	Red-necked Phalarope	Phalaropus lobatus	LC	LC	PM
79	Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos	LC	LC	PM
80	Green Sandpiper	Tringa ochropus	LC	LC	PM
81	Common Redshank	Tringa totanus	LC	LC	PM

82	Marsh Sandpiper	Tringa stagnatilis	LC	LC	PM
83	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola	LC	LC	PM
84	Spotted Redshank	Tringa erythropus	LC	LC	PM
	Laridae				
85	Black-headed Gull	Chroicocephalus ridibundus	LC	LC	PM
86	Mongolian Gull	Larus mongolicus	LC	LC	PM
87	Gull-billed Tern	Gelochelidon nilotica	LC	LC	PM
88	Common Tern	Sterna hirundo	LC	LC	PM
89	White-winged Tern	Chlidonias leucopterus	LC	LC	PM
	PTEROCLIFORMES				
	Pteroclidae				
90	Pallas's Sandgrouse	Syrrhaptes paradoxus	LC	LC	RB
	COLUMBIFORMES				
	Columbidae				
91	Rock Dove	Columba livia	LC	LC	RB
92	Hill Pigeon	Columba rupestris	LC	LC	PM
93	Oriental Turtle Dove	Streptopelia orientalis	LC	LC	PM
94	Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	LC	LC	PM
	CUCULIFORMES				
	Cuculidae				
95	Common Cuckoo	Cuculus canorus	LC	LC	PM
	STRIGIFORMES				
	Strigidae				
96	Eurasian Eagle-Owl	Bubo bubo	LC	LC	RB
97	Little Owl	Athene noctua	LC	LC	RB
98	Long-eared Owl	Asio otus	LC	LC	PM
99	Short-eared Owl	Asio flammeus	LC	LC	PM

	CAPRIMULGIFORMES				
	Caprimulgidae				
100	Grey Nightjar	Caprimulgus jotaka	LC	LC	PM
	APODIFORMES				
	Apodidae				
101	Common Swift	Apus apus	LC	LC	SB
102	Pacific Swift	Apus pacificus	LC	LC	SB
	BUCEROTIFORMES				
	Upupidae				
103	Common Hoopoe	Upupa epops	LC	LC	SB
	PICIFORMES				
	Picidae				
104	Eurasian Wryneck	Jynx torquilla	LC	LC	PM
105	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos major	LC	LC	WV
	PASSERIFORMES				
	Laniidae				
106	Brown Shrike	Lanius cristatus	LC	LC	PM
107	Isabelline Shrike	Lanius isabellinus	LC	LC	SB
108	Northern Shrike	Lanius borealis			PM
109	Chinese Grey Shrike	Lanius sphenocercus	DD	LC	PM
	Oriolidae				
110	Eurasian Golden Oriole	Oriolus oriolus	DD	LC	V
111	Black-naped Oriole	Oriolus chinensis	NA	LC	V
	Corvidae				
112	Eurasian Magpie	Pica pica	LC	LC	RB
113	Red-billed Chough	Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax	LC	LC	RB
114	Daurian Jackdaw	Coloeus dauuricus	LC	LC	PM

115	Rook	Corvus frugilegus	LC	LC	PM
116	Carrion Crow	Corvus corone	LC	LC	RB
117	Northern Raven	Corvus corax	LC	LC	RB
	Bombycillidae				
118	Bohemian Waxwing	Bombycilla garrulus	LC	LC	WV
	Paridae				
119	Great Tit	Parus major	LC	LC	PM
	Remizidae				
120	White-crowned Penduline-tit	Remiz coronatus	LC	LC	PM
	Alaudidae				
121	Eurasian Skylark	Alauda arvensis	LC	LC	PM
122	Crested Lark	Galerida cristata	LC	LC	PM
123	Horned Lark	Eremophila alpestris	LC	LC	RB
124	Greater Short-toed Lark	Calandrella brachydactyla			SB
125	Mongolian Lark	Melanocorypha mongolica	LC	LC	RB
126	Asian Short-toed Lark	Alaudala cheleensis	LC	-	SB
	Hirundinidae				
127	Sand Martin	Riparia riparia	LC	LC	PM
128	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica	LC	LC	SB
	Phylloscopidae				
129	Hume's Leaf Warbler	Phylloscopus humei	LC	LC	PM
130	Yellow-browed Warbler	Phylloscopus inornatus	LC	LC	PM
131	Pallas's Leaf Warbler	Phylloscopus proregulus	LC	LC	PM
132	Radde's Warbler	Phylloscopus schwarzi	NA	LC	PM
133	Dusky Warbler	Phylloscopus fuscatus	LC	LC	PM
134	Siberian Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus tristis	LC	LC	PM
135	Two-barred Warbler	Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus	LC	LC	PM

136	Greenish Warbler	Phylloscopus trochiloides	LC	LC	PM
137	Arctic Warbler	Phylloscopus borealis	LC	LC	PM
	Acrocephalidae				
138	Thick-billed Warbler	Arundinax aedon	LC	LC	PM
	Locustellidae				
139	Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	Helopsaltes certhiola	LC	LC	PM
140	Chinese Bush Warbler	Locustella tacsanowskia	LC	LC	PM
	Sylviidae				
141	Lesser Whitethroat	Sylvia curruca	LC	LC	PM
	Troglodytidae				
142	Eurasian Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes	LC	LC	PM
	Sturnidae				
143	White-cheeked Starling	Spodiopsar cineraceus	LC	LC	PM
144	Common Starling	Sturnus vulgaris	LC	LC	PM
	Turdidae				
145	White's Thrush	Zoothera aurea	LC	LC	PM
146	Eyebrowed Thrush	Turdus obscurus	LC	LC	PM
147	Black-throated Thrush	Turdus atrogularis	LC	LC	PM
148	Red-throated Thrush	Turdus ruficollis	LC	LC	PM
149	Naumann's Thrush	Turdus naumanni	LC	LC	PM
150	Dusky Thrush	Turdus eunomus	LC	LC	PM
	Muscicapidae				
151	Dark-sided Flycatcher	Muscicapa sibirica	LC	LC	PM
152	Asian Brown Flycatcher	Muscicapa dauurica	LC	LC	PM
153	Siberian Blue Robin	Larvivora cyane	LC	LC	PM
154	Siberian Rubythroat	Calliope calliope	LC	LC	PM
155	Red-flanked Bluetail	Tarsiger cyanurus	LC	LC	PM

156	Yellow-rumped Flycatcher	Ficedula zanthopygia	LC	LC	V
157	Mugimaki Flycatcher	Ficedula mugimaki	LC	LC	V
158	Taiga Flycatcher	Ficedula albicilla	LC	LC	PM
159	Daurian Redstart	Phoenicurus auroreus	LC	LC	PM
160	Güldenstädt's Redstart	Phoenicurus erythrogastrus	LC	LC	PM
161	Siberian Stonechat	Saxicola maurus	LC	LC	PM
162	Northern Wheatear	Oenanthe oenanthe	LC	LC	SB
163	Isabelline Wheatear	Oenanthe isabellina	LC	LC	SB
164	Pied Wheatear	Oenanthe pleschanka	LC	LC	PM
	Passeridae				
165	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	LC	LC	SB
166	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	Passer montanus	LC	LC	RB
167	Rock Sparrow	Petronia petronia	LC	LC	RB
168	Pere David's Snowfinch	Pyrgilauda davidiana	LC	LC	SB
	Prunellidae				
169	Siberian Accentor	Prunella montanella	LC	LC	WV
170	Brown Accentor	Prunella fulvescens	LC	LC	WV
	Motacillidae				
171	Eastern Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla tschutschensis	LC	LC	PM
172	Citrine Wagtail	Motacilla citreola	LC	LC	PM
173	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea	LC	LC	PM
174	White Wagtail	Motacilla alba	LC	LC	PM
175	Richard's Pipit	Anthus richardi	LC	LC	PM
176	Blyth's Pipit	Anthus godlewskii	LC	LC	PM
177	Olive-backed Pipit	Anthus hodgsoni	LC	LC	PM
178	Buff-bellied Pipit	Anthus rubescens	LC	LC	PM
179	Water Pipit	Anthus spinoletta	LC	LC	PM

	Fringillidae				
180	Common Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs	LC	LC	PM
181	Brambling	Fringilla montifringilla	LC	LC	PM
182	Hawfinch	Coccothraustes coccothraustes	LC	LC	PM
183	Eurasian Bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula	LC	LC	PM
184	Mongolian Finch	Bucanetes mongolicus	LC	LC	SB
185	Asian Rosy-finch	Leucosticte arctoa	LC	LC	PM
186	Common Rosefinch	Carpodacus erythrinus	LC	LC	PM
187	Long-tailed Rosefinch	Carpodacus sibiricus	LC	LC	PM
188	Pallas's Rosefinch	Carpodacus roseus	LC	LC	PM
189	Oriental Greenfinch	Chloris sinica	NA	LC	PM
190	Twite	Linaria flavirostris	LC	LC	PM
191	Redpoll	Acanthis flammea	LC	LC	PM, WV
192	Red Crossbill	Loxia curvirostra	LC	LC	PM
193	Two-barred Crossbill	Loxia leucoptera	LC	LC	V
194	Eurasian Siskin	Spinus spinus	LC	LC	PM, WV
	Calcariidae				
195	Lapland Longspur	Calcarius Iapponicus	LC	LC	PM
	Emberizidae				
196	Pine Bunting	Emberiza leucocephalos	LC	LC	PM
197	Meadow Bunting	Emberiza cioides	LC	LC	PM
198	Tristram's Bunting	Emberiza tristrami	NA	LC	V
199	Chestnut-eared Bunting	Emberiza fucata	LC	LC	PM
200	Little Bunting	Emberiza pusilla	LC	LC	PM
201	Yellow-browed Bunting	Emberiza chrysophrys	LC	LC	PM
202	Rustic Bunting	Emberiza rustica	LC	VU	PM
203	Yellow-breasted Bunting	Emberiza aureola	VU	CR	PM

204	Chestnut Bunting	Emberiza rutila	LC	LC	V
205	Black-faced Bunting	Emberiza spodocephala	LC	LC	PM
206	Pallas's Bunting	Emberiza pallasi	LC	LC	PM
207	Reed Bunting	Emberiza schoeniclus	LC	LC	PM