

Report of a Birding Trip to

Stepantsminda, Georgia

from 28th April to 2nd May 2010

Participants:

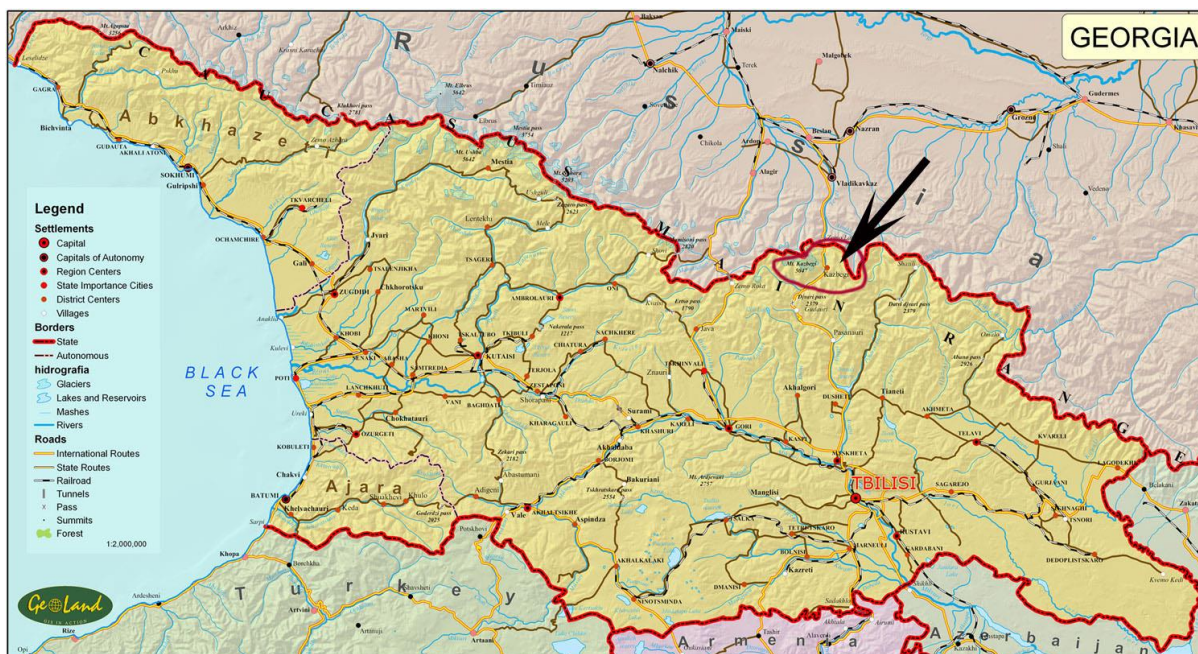
Cor Hopman,
Harm Niesen,
Jan van der Laan.



Lammergeier – *Gypaetus barbatus*;
29 April 2010, Stepantsminda; © Harm Niesen

Introduction

Between 28th April and 2nd May 2010 I made a birding trip with Cor Hopman and Harm Niesen to Georgia. Ever since – since 1976 - I had the field guide Bird of Britain, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa from Heinzl, Fitter & Parslow, I always had the plan to see the whole field guide. Russia was difficult to reach in the eighties, but after an article in Dutch Birding in 2005 by Arnoud van den Berg and René Pop (Dutch Birding 27: 241-247, 2005), this area became into our mind again and finally – 2010 - we went there.



Map of Georgia; © http://travel.javakhh.net/travel_javakhh_maps/georgia_map605.jpg

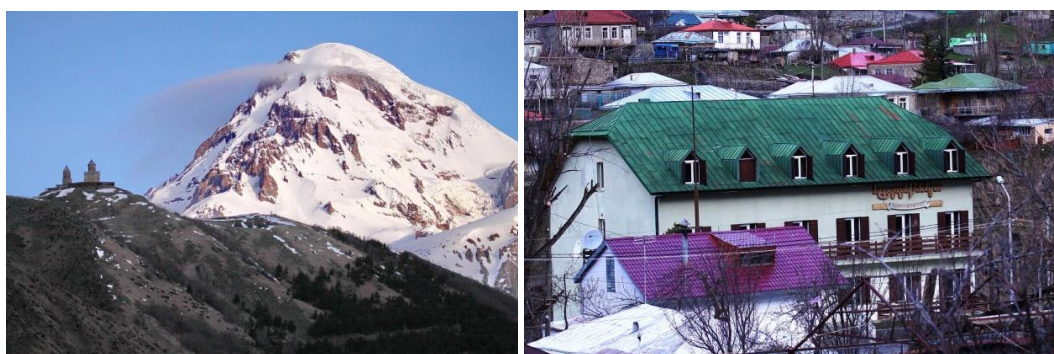
From Thierry Jansen we knew the best time was end of April. He was there in 2009 at the end of May and was not able to see Gldenstadt's Redstart and Greater Rosefinch, since they were already above 3500 meters. In April however, birds are still lingering around the village of Stepantsminda (or Kazbegi as is the official name). Also Caucasian Black Grouse is more easy in this month. Green Warbler, however, is not present yet, but it is better to try to see that one in Turkey or Armenia. There is one but: the 2379 m high Krestovyy Pass (Dyvuri Pass) can still be difficult to pass. Thierry Jansen and Ernie Davis for example, went back in 2010 four days before us and they could not get pass the Krestovyy Pass for four days! Finally at 26th April they reached Stepantsminda (Kazbegi) and had only the following morning to get the Redstart and Rosefinch. However, they succeeded. Moreover, they left a note for us in the hotel!



Left: South of Ananuri, we were suddenly surrounded by this herd! **Right:** our taxi driver from Stepantsminda to Tblisi. He was so kind to stop whenever we want, 2 May 2010; © Cor Hopman.

Itinerary

28 April Departure from Schiphol Amsterdam with Georgia Airways (www.arirzena.com) for € 428 at 10:40 hours (A9652). Arrival time 17:15 hours on time. In the arrival hall Niko and Paata from ExoTour (www.exotour.ge) were already waiting for us and after changing money in Tblisi Centre Paata drove us to Stepantsminda. Most exciting birds were Night Heron, Steppe Buzzard and Red-billed Chough. On our way we first encountered a large rock blocking the road. After half an hour the rock was removed by a bulldozer, we could continue our ride. The road to Stepantsminda was wonderful, with the most exciting part behind Gudauri at the Krestovyy Pass, where snow and ice were still present. After the pass, Paata resumed its normal speed again and nearly didn't see the large rock blocking the road! But finally at 21:00 hours we arrived at Stepantsminda In the last parts of daylight and we could see the 5033 m high Kazbeg mountain and the famous Tsminda Samebi church. We checked in at the hotel and were served an excellent dinner, although no wine was available! In our hotel room we watched the Champions League match between Barcelona and Inter Milan (1-0). Paata returned and made it until the next day!



Left: Tsminda Samebi church with Mount Kazbek – height 5033 (or 5047?) meter; **right:** our hotel; © Cor Hopman.

29 April At 6:00 am it was already light, so we decided to check the thorny bush area just south of Stepantsminda. Most common birds were Blackbird, Chaffinch, Dunnock and several chiffchaff-spec singing. However, none of the targetbirds were seen, so at 8:00 hours we went back to have some breakfast. After breakfast we returned to the same spot as early morning. There was more bird activity and soon we had are first female Gldenstadt's Redstart, followed by a passing Lammergeier – my first ever. A female Caucasian Great Rosefinch showed itself very well, and we had some flyby's of a pair Caucasian Great Rosefinch. A distant male Gldenstadt's Redstart completed our quest, but we could not get nearer, because it was on the other shore of the River Terek (42.644297°N, 44.634309°E).



Left: valley of the river Terek. Great Rosefinches were seen near the snow on the left; bushes on the right is the location for the Redstarts; © Harm Niesen; **right:** Jan and Harm crossing the river Snostskali (Terek); © Cor Hopman.

Next we went to the low bushes south of the electricity station, where Thierry and Ernie saw a group of c 25 Greater Rosefinches. There we saw lots of Water Pipits, Northern Wheatears, Ring Ouzels, Turkish Twite, Common Kestrel but no Rosefinches. Then we heard several Caucasian Snowcocks calling and Harm and Cor managed to see a glimpse of one bird near the ruin at

42.646377°N, 44.651296°E. We continued our track towards the pine forest east of the village, where more we saw Red-fronted Serin, Siskin, Red Squirrel, Common Crossbill and several times an adult Lammergeier passed by, but also an immature. Finally, at last we reached the hotel in the late afternoon, very tired of climbing and walking. Harm was just able to find a shop where they sold vodka and beer. Again we had an excellent dinner and again there was football on television (Liverpool - Atletico Madrid), but we were too tired to see the extra time.

30 April

After breakfast we walked to the little church east above the village. There is a flat area from where you can overview the rocky slopes. This has been the best place for Caucasian Snowcocks, seen by several birders before us. We managed to see two Lammergeiers, a lone Rock Thrush, but no Snowcocks nor Caucasian Black Grouse. From there we walked south and in next east again to climb the scree slope where we heard several Snowcocks at close range, not only the whistling call, but also a cackling sound. We climbed higher and higher and at the point of giving up, I saw one bird flying from on crag to the other.



Left: Kuro Mountain ridge, the crags on the right is the place where most birders see Caucasian Snowcocks; **right:** Harm and Cor looking for Caucasian Snowcocks and Caucasian Black Grouse; © Jan van der Laan.

Other birds seen there was a large flock of Snowfinches, again a lone Lammergeier, Red-billed and Alpine Coughs. We descend again and tried to find Caucasian Great Rosefinch, which were not present, but two Shore Larks were added to the list. Finally we found some interesting Yellow Wagtails, one superciliaris-type and one dombrowski-type.

1 May

We negotiated a taxi for 60 lari to get us to the famous Samebi Church. After a bumpy and muddy ride, we reached the area west of the church. It was cold and rainy, but we managed to find several Caucasian Black Grouse, Shore Lark, a Fox (grey coloured, so we thought it was a Wolf at first!), Wallcreeper and a large group of Red-fronted Serins. We walked back to the hotel. During the descend we saw Crossbills, a sparrow-hawk, Ring Ouzels, a Squirrel (with a white-grey body), Griffon Vultures and several Jays.



Left: Caucasian Black Grouse location west of the Samebi Church, the birds were on the grassy patches; **right:** Cor and Harm at the same spot, minutes before a Wallcreeper would pass by; © Jan van der Laan.

At the hotel we met Laurens Steijn, the co-leader of [Birding Breaks](#) guiding a group with Giorgi Darchiashvili and had just arrived. With them Cor and Harm spent the last hours of daylight looking for the Caucasian Great Rosefinches, while I walked south (there was no room for me in the car). They saw a Caucasian Black Grouse, while I found a stunning male Gldenstadt's Redstart. In the evening we met an international botanist group. The guide (from Belgium) told they drove 5 hours to see one flower!

2 May

We were still asleep when Laurens phoned us at around 7:00 hours. He and Giorgi had found some Caucasian Great Rosefinches near the electricity station. Fifteen minutes later we were there too and the birds, a pair, were still present. We could see the birds at close range and we took many photographs. We heard another Caucasian Snowcock and saw the first and only Lesser Grey Shrikes (migration was starting). After breakfast we packed our bags. Laurens phoned us again, telling us they had two Caucasian Snowcocks in the scope at the small chapel east of Stepantsminda. However, the people at the hotel advised us to get over the Krestovyy Pass before twelve, as they close the pass every day between twelve and six, because of the possibility of avalanches. The women at the hotel arranged a taxi for us and the driver managed to get pass the gate at 11:55 hours.



Left: Krestovyy Pass with Cor; right: Cor and Harm photographing Rock Thrush, 2 May 2010; © Jan van der Laan.



Landscapes south of Gudauri, 2 May 2010; © Jan van der Laan.

The driver stopped for us at several places, giving us good opportunities to photograph several good birds we encountered. We saw Griffon Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Bearded Vulture, Rock Thrush, Steppe Eagle, Black Kite and enjoyed the beautiful scenery of the Caucasus. We arrived at the airport at 17:00 hours, where we took a meal and drank our only bottles (2 in fact) of wine. The rest of the evening and night was a boring long wait.

3 May

Early flight (Airzena A9651) at 5:00 hours to Schiphol Amsterdam. Arrival on time at 7:45 hour. There we took the train to Alkmaar.

Recommended Literature and Trip Reports

For identification purposes we used the 2nd edition of *Collins Bird Guide* by Lars Svensson, Killian Mullarney, Dan Zetterström, and Peter J. Grant published in 2010.

Useful trip reports can be found at <http://www.cloudbirders.com/>. The most useful for us at that time was the report by [Richard Bonser from May 2008](#).

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Laurens Steijn (www.birdingbreaks.nl) and Giorgi Darchiashvili for showing us the beautiful pair of Caucasian Great Rosefinch, Thierry Jansen and Ernie Davis for providing us up-to-date information and Niko Kululashvili and the driver Paata from www.exotour.ge for arranging transport to and the hotel in Stepantsminda. The taxi driver from Stepantsminda to Tbilisi was also very helpful, but we did not note his name.

The Species Accounts

The order and nomenclature follows *Dutch Birding bird names: list of Western Palearctic birds species in 2008* by Arnoud van den Berg published in 2008 (ISBN 978-90-808433-4-9). Latest update can be found [here](#). Endemic taxa are in capitals.

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Mammals are not what they seem! **Left:** Fox - *Vulpes vulpes caucasica*, 1 May 2010; seen from a distance, we thought it was a Wolf, but Foxes here can be grey; © Harm Niesen; **right:** Red Squirrel – *Sciurus vulgaris* with its body snowy-white. According to Giorgi Darchiashvili, this is quite normal in the Caucasus!; © Cor Hopman.



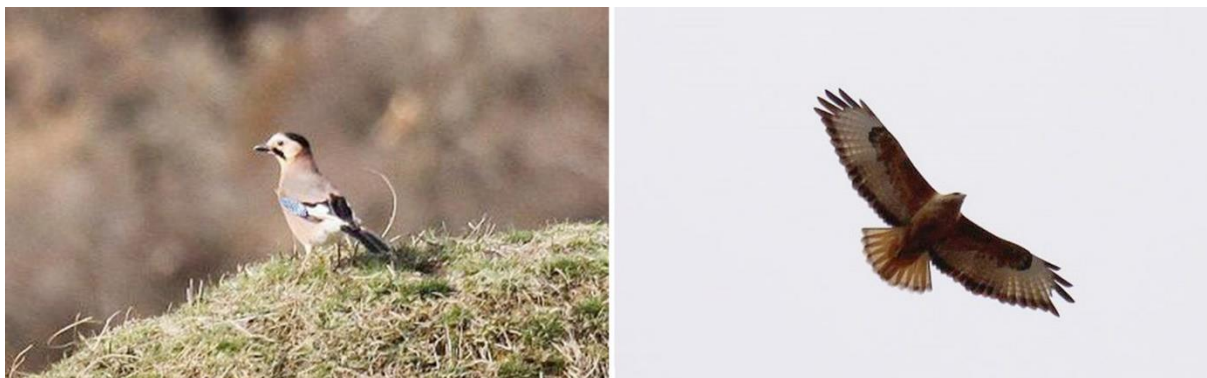
Steppe Eagle 2nd calendar year (aged by the uniform aged remiges), 2 May 2010, north of Tblisi; © Cor Hopman.



Left: Caucasian Chiffchaff, 29 April 2010; the supercilium is brightest between the bill and the eye and connects above the bill; also the bird lacks any green on the remiges and rectrices; **right:** Wallcreeper, 1 May 2010; always a nice treat!; © Harm Niesen.



Left: flock of Red-fronted Serins with some Twites, 1 May 2010; **right:** Treecreeper, 30 April 2010; © Harm Niesen.



Left: Caucasian Jay - *Garrulus glandarius krynicki*; note the black cap and white face; 1 May 2010; **right:** Steppe Buzzard, 2 May 2010; © Cor Hopman.

01. **Caucasian Grouse / Kaukasisch Korhoen** – *Tetrao mlokosiewiczi*
- | | | |
|-------|---|---|
| 1 May | 8 | (7 males, 1 female) west of the Samebi Church, Gergeti. |
| | 1 | male on the slopes southeast of Stepantsminda. |
02. **CAUCASIAN SNOWCOCK / KAUKASISCH BERGHOEN** – *Tetraogallus caucasicus*
- | | | |
|----------|-----|--|
| 29 April | c 5 | one seen, others heard, on rocky slopes southeast of Stepantsminda. |
| 30 April | c 6 | one seen, other heard, rocky slopes east of Stepantsminda (42.64980°N, 44.663952°E). |
| 2 May | 1 | heard at the Great Rosefinch place, southeast of Stepantsminda. |
03. **Continental Great Cormorant / Aalscholver** - *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*
- | | | |
|-------|---|--|
| 2 May | 2 | Jinvali Lake, seen from Ananuri fortress (42.163646°N, 44.703603°O). |
|-------|---|--|
04. **Black-crowned Night Heron / Kwak** - *Nycticorax nycticorax*
- | | | |
|----------|---|--------------------|
| 28 April | 1 | in Tbilisi centre. |
|----------|---|--------------------|
05. **Grey Heron / Blauwe Reiger** - *Ardea cinerea*
- | | | |
|-------|---|--|
| 2 May | 2 | Jinvali Lake, seen from Ananuri fortress (42.163646°N, 44.703603°O). |
|-------|---|--|
06. **Black Kite / Zwarte Wouw** - *Milvus migrans*
- | | | |
|----------|---|------------------------------|
| 30 April | 1 | between Tbilisi and Ananuri. |
| 2 May | 4 | between Ananuri and Tbilisi. |
07. **Bearded Vulture / Lammergier** - *Gypaetus barbatus*
- | | | |
|----------|---|---|
| 29 April | 5 | at least 2-4 adults and on immature, surroundings of Stepantsminda. |
| 30 April | 5 | at least 2-5 adults, seen on several occasions, rocky slopes east of Stepantsminda. |
| 2 May | 1 | immature south of Gudauri. |
08. **Egyptian Vulture / Aasgier** - *Neophron percnopterus*
- | | | |
|-------|---|-------------------------|
| 2 May | 1 | adult south of Gudauri. |
|-------|---|-------------------------|
09. **Griffon Vulture / Vale Gier** - *Gyps fulvus*
- | | | |
|----------|------|--------------------------------|
| 29 April | c 10 | surroundings of Stepantsminda. |
| 30 April | c 20 | surroundings of Stepantsminda. |
| 1 May | 6 | north of Gergeti. |
| 2 May | c 10 | south of Gudauri. |
10. **Cinereous Vulture / Monniksgier** - *Aegyptius monachus*
- | | | |
|----------|---|--|
| 30 April | 1 | adult soaring north from the church northeast of Stepantsminda (seen from 42.657380°N, 44.663952°E). |
|----------|---|--|
11. **Eurasian Sparrowhawk or Levant Sparrowhawk / (Balkan)Sperwer** - *Accipiter nisus / brevipes*
- | | | |
|-------|---|--|
| 1 May | 1 | seen too short to be certain, between Samebi Church and Gergeti. |
|-------|---|--|

12. **Steppe Buzzard / Steppebuizerd** - *Buteo buteo vulpinus*
 28 April 2 just before Gudauri.
 2 May 5 south of Gudauri.
13. **Golden Eagle / Steenarend** - *Aquila chrysaetos*
 29 April 2 west of Stepantsminda (seen from the hotel).
 1 east of Stepantsminda.
 30 April 2 east of Stepantsminda.
 1 May 1 north of Gergeti.
 2 May 1 south of Gudauri.
14. **Steppe Eagle / Steppearend** - *Aquila nipalensis*
 2 May 2 both 2nd calendar-year, discovered from the car and subsequently well observed, c
 10 km south from Ananuri.
15. **Common Kestrel / Torenavalk** - *Falco tinnunculus*
 Single birds were seen daily in the surroundings of Stepantsminda.
16. **Eurasian Hobby / Boomvalk** - *Falco subbuteo*
 29 April 1 east of Stepantsminda.
17. **Peregrine Falcon / Slechtvalk** - *Falco peregrinus*
 29 April 1-2 west of Stepantsminda (seen from the hotel)
 30 April 1 east of Stepantsminda.
 1 May 1 north of Gergeti.
 2 May 1 south of Gudauri.
18. **Little Ringed Plover / Kleine Plevier** - *Charadrius dubius*
 29 April 2-4 in the riverbed of the Terek river, south of Stepantsminda.
19. **Common Sandpiper / Oeverloper** - *Actitis hypoleucos*
 29 April 2 in the riverbed of the Terek river, south of Stepantsminda.
 1 May 2 (most probably the same pair) Terek river, south of Stepantsminda.
 2 May 1 south of Gudauri.
20. **Common (Rock) Pigeon / Rotsduif** - *Columba livia*
 A flock of 11 birds was present east of Stepantsminda on 29 and 30 April. Status unknown in Georgia.
21. **Eurasian Collared Dove / Turkse Tortel** - *Streptopelia decaocto*
 Single birds were seen almost daily in the centre of Stepantsminda.
22. **Common Swift / Gierzwaluw** - *Apus apus*
 28 April c 10 Tblisi.
 2 May c 300 just south of Ananuri.

23. Hoopoe / Hop - *Upupa epops*

- 29 April 1 just south of our hotel, Stepantsminda.
 30 April 1 (calling) eastern part of Stepantsminda.
 1 May 1 in the pine forest below Samebi Church, Gergeti.

24. Great Spotted Woodpecker / Grote Bonte Specht - *Dendrocopos major*

- 29 April 1-2 east of Stepantsminda.
 30 April 2 east of Stepantsminda.
 1 May 1 in the pine forest below Samebi Church, Gergeti.

25. Red-backed Shrike / Grauwe Klauwier - *Lanius collurio*

- 2 May 1 seen from the car, c 20 km north of Tbilisi.

26. Lesser Grey Shrike / Kleine Klapekster - *Lanius minor*

- 2 May 2 at the electricity station (42.648121°N, 44.642381°E), Stepantsminda.

27. Alpine Chough / Alpenkauw - *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

Common in the higher parts of the mountains.

28. Red-billed Chough / Alpenkraai - *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

- 28 April 2 Krestovyy Pass.
 29 April c 100 Stepantsminda.
 30 April c 50 Stepantsminda.
 1 May c 50 Stepantsminda.
 2 May c 5 Krestovyy Pass.

29. Eurasian Magpie / Ekster - *Pica pica*

Singles were seen daily, between Tbilisi and Stepantsminda, and at Stepantsminda and Gergeti.

30. Eurasian Jay / Gaai - *Garrulus glandarius krynicki*

Singles and pairs seen at Stepantsminda and Gergeti. The birds here belong to the *atricapillus* group of the Middle East and Transcaucasia. As the name suggests, the birds are black-capped.

31. Western Jackdaw / Kauw - *Corvus monedula*

- 29 April 1 lone bird between a flock of Rook, rubbish dump south of Stepantsminda.

32. Rook / Roek - *Corvus frugilegus*

Common at Stepantsminda. Always nice to hear their sounds!

33. Hooded Crow / Bonte Kraai - *Corvus cornix*

Singles and pairs throughout the country. A pair or so seen daily in the village centre of Stepantsminda.

34. Northern Raven / Raaf - *Corvus corax*

Common, seen daily with up to 10 birds a day.

35. **European Blue Tit / Pimpelmees** - *Cyanistes caeruleus*
Common to very common in Stepantsminda, especially in the pine forest east of the village.
36. **Great Tit / Koolmees** - *Parus major*
Fairly common and widespread in Georgia.
37. **CAUCASIAN HORNED LARK / KAUKASISCHE STRANDLEEUWERIK** - *Eremophila alpestris penicillata*
30 April 2 southeast of Stepantsminda.
1 May c 15 on the grassy field at the Samebi Church, Gergeti.
38. **Eurasian Crag Martin / Rotswaluw** - *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*
30 April c 5 beneath a bridge somewhere between Ananuri and Stepantsminda.
39. **Barn Swallow / Boerenwaluw** - *Hirundo rustica*
Common, seen daily with up to 10 birds a day.
40. **Common House Martin / Huiswaluw** - *Delichon urbicum*
A few seen at Stepantsminda and several seen during our journey back to Tblisi.
41. **Red-rumped Swallow / Roodstuitwaluw** - *Cecropis daurica*
2 May 1 seen from the car, c 20 km north of Ananuri.
42. **Long-tailed Tit / Staartmees** - *Aegithalos caudatus*
1 May 2-4 in the thorny bushes south of Stepantsminda.
43. **Lesser Whitethroat / Braamsluiper** - *Sylvia curruca*
29 April 1-2 (migrants?) in the thorny bushes south of Stepantsminda.
 1 in the pine forest east of Stepantsminda
1 May 1 in the pine forest above Gergeti
44. **Eurasian Blackcap / Zwartkop** - *Sylvia atricapilla*
29 April 3-5 in the thorny bushes south of Stepantsminda.
1 May 1-2 in the thorny bushes south of Stepantsminda.
45. **CAUCASIAN CHIFFCHAFF / KAUKASISCHE BERGTJIFTJAF** - *Phylloscopus lorenzii*
Several birds seen and heard daily in Stepantsminda, almost exclusively in the bushes along the river. At close range and on the screen of the camera, birds could be identified quite easily. Song is also quite different.
46. **Common Chiffchaff / Tjiftjaf** - *Phylloscopus collybita*
29 April c 5 (migrants?) in the thorny bushes south of Stepantsminda.
30 April 1-2 (migrants?) in the thorny bushes south of Stepantsminda.
1 May 1-2 in the thorny bushes south of Stepantsminda.

47. **Willow Warbler / Fitis** - *Phylloscopus trochilus*
29 April at least 1 in the thorny bushes south of Stepantsminda.
48. **Wallcreeper / Rotskruiper** - *Tichodroma muraria*
1 May 1 flying by on the grassy ridge just west of the Samebi Church, Gergeti.
49. **Eurasian Treecreeper / Taigaboomkruiper** - *Certhia familiaris*
29 April c 5 east of Stepantsminda.
30 April c 5 east of Stepantsminda.
1 May 1-2 In the pine forest below Samebi Church, Gergeti.
50. **CAUCASIAN WREN / KAUKASISCHE WINTERKONING** - *Troglodytes troglodytes hyrcanus*
Several birds were daily seen and heard in Stepantsminda, especially in the river bed and park south of the hotel and in the pine forest east of the village.
51. **CAUCASIAN RING OUZEL / KAUKASISCHE BEFLIJSTER** - *Turdus torquatus amicornum*
Several seen daily at Stepantsminda and Gergeti, with daily totals of up to 10 birds. Birds have a very obvious white wing patch.
52. **Common Blackbird / Merel** - *Turdus merula*
Common and widespread in Georgia.
53. **Mistle Thrush / Grote Lijster** - *Turdus viscivorus*
29 April 4 east of Stepantsminda.
30 April 2 east of Stepantsminda.
54. **European Robin / Roodborst** - *Erithacus rubecula*
Several birds were seen daily in Stepantsminda.
55. **Caucasian Black Redstart / Kaukasische Zwarte Roodstaart** - *Phoenicurus ochruros ochruros*
Several birds were seen daily in Stepantsminda. We observed and photographed several birds with more red on the underparts than the pictures in the latest Collins Guide, with the black breast sharply divided from the orange-red belly, more reminiscent (or better: exactly like) the Levant subspecies *semirufus*.
56. **Common Redstart / Gekraagde Roodstaart** - *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
29 April 1-2 south of Stepantsminda. These birds were obviously migrants.
57. **Ehrenberg's Redstart / Oosterse Gekraagde Roodstaart** - *Phoenicurus phoenicurus samamisticus*
Several birds were seen daily in Stepantsminda. The male had an obvious white wing patch and a quite different song. A pair was nesting opposite the Stepantsminda Hotel.
58. **Güldenstädt's Redstart / Witkruinroodstaart** - *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus*
29 April 3 one male, two females, thorny bushes south of Stepantsminda.
1 May 4 two males, two females, thorny bushes south of Stepantsminda.

On 29 April we found two females just south of Stepantsminda (42.644877°N, 44.639217°E) and a distant male across the river Terek (at about 42.644297°N, 44.634309°E). On 1 May we were more lucky and we had good views of one male and two females, at the same area (42.645127°N, 44.640204°E). Beautiful bird! Timing is everything with this species that can be common in winter, but access is more difficult as the Krestovyy Pass is often closed.

59. **Whinchat / Paapje** - *Saxicola rubetra*

30 April 3 east of Stepantsminda.

60. **Northern Wheatear / Tapuit** - *Oenanthe oenanthe*

One of the most common birds, always present in the meadows east and south of Stepantsminda. Also several seen on our journey from Stepantsminda to Tbilisi.

61. **Rock Thrush / Rode Rotslijster** - *Monticola saxatilis*

30 April 1 (male) east of Stepantsminda.

1 May 1 (female) southeast of Stepantsminda.

2 May 2 (males) between the Krestovyy Pass and of Gudauri.

62. **Duncock / Heggenmus** - *Prunella modularis*

Common along the river Terek at Stepantsminda and in the pine woods east of Stepantsminda and the forest west of Gergeti.

63. **House Sparrow / Huismus** - *Passer domesticus*

Several birds were seen daily in Stepantsminda.

64. **White-winged Snowfinch / Sneeuwvink** - *Montifringilla nivalis*

30 April c 50-100 Large flock seen flying at a great distance above the rocky slopes east of Stepantsminda (42.64980°N, 44.663952°E).

65. **Yellow Wagtail spec / Gele Kwikstaart spec** - *Motacilla flava*

29 April 3 two males, one female, thorny bushes south of Stepantsminda.

One male was a bird with a black cap, white supercilium and a white line under the eye, possibly a *superciliaris* with *beema* blood in it, the other one was a typical *dombrowski*.

66. **Grey Wagtail / Grote Gele Kwikstaart** - *Motacilla cinerea*

Common at Stepantsminda and several seen between Stepantsminda and Tbilisi.

67. **White Wagtail / Witte Kwikstaart** - *Motacilla alba*

Common at Stepantsminda and several seen between Stepantsminda and Tbilisi. The birds seemed to have a more contrasting white wing panels than our *alba* in the Netherlands.

68. **Tree Pipit / Boompieper** - *Anthus trivialis*

29 April 1 east of Stepantsminda.

30 April 2 east of Stepantsminda.

69. Water Pipit / Waterpieper - *Anthus spinoletta*

One of the most common birds. Present on every piece of grassy area.

70. Common Chaffinch / Vink - *Fringilla coelebs*

Common at Stepantsminda and Gergeti.

71. Red-fronted Serin / Roodvoorhoofdkanarie - *Serinus pusillus*

29 April c 10 east of Stepantsminda.

30 April c 15 east of Stepantsminda.

1 May c 100 in the deciduous zone beneath the Samebi Church, Gergeti.

72. European Greenfinch / Groenling - *Chloris chloris*

Single birds were seen daily in the centre of Stepantsminda.

73. European Goldfinch / Putter - *Carduelis carduelis*

One of the most common birds at Stepantsminda and Gergeti.

74. Eurasian Siskin / Sijs - *Carduelis spinus*

29 April 2 east of Stepantsminda.

75. Common Linnet / Kneu - *Carduelis cannabina*

Single birds in the meadows east of Stepantsminda on 29 and 30 April.

76. Turkish Twite / Turkse Frater - *Carduelis flavirostris brevirostris*

29 April 2 a pair east of Stepantsminda. Very conspicuous birds.

1 May c 10 (found when examining the photographs) in the deciduous zone beneath the Samebi Church, Gergeti.

77. Red Crossbill / Kruisbek - *Loxia curvirostra*

29 April c 5 east of Stepantsminda.

30 April c 6 east of Stepantsminda.

1 May c 5 between Samebi Church and Gergeti.

78. CAUCASIAN GREAT ROSEFINCH / GROTE ROODMUS - *Carpodacus rubicilla*

29 April 5 1 female closely observed and on two occasions two birds flying-by, south of Stepantsminda.

2 May 2 a pair well seen, just southeast of Stepantsminda (42.647669°N, 44.646916°E).



Caucasian Black Grouse seen from a great distance west of the Tsminda Samebi church, 1 May 2010; © Cor Hopman.



Caucasian Great Rosefinches southeast of Stepantsminda, 2 May 2010; © Cor Hopman.



Left: male *Güldenstadt's Redstart*, 1 May 2010; © Harm Niesen; **right:** two females, 1 May 2010; © Jan van der Laan.



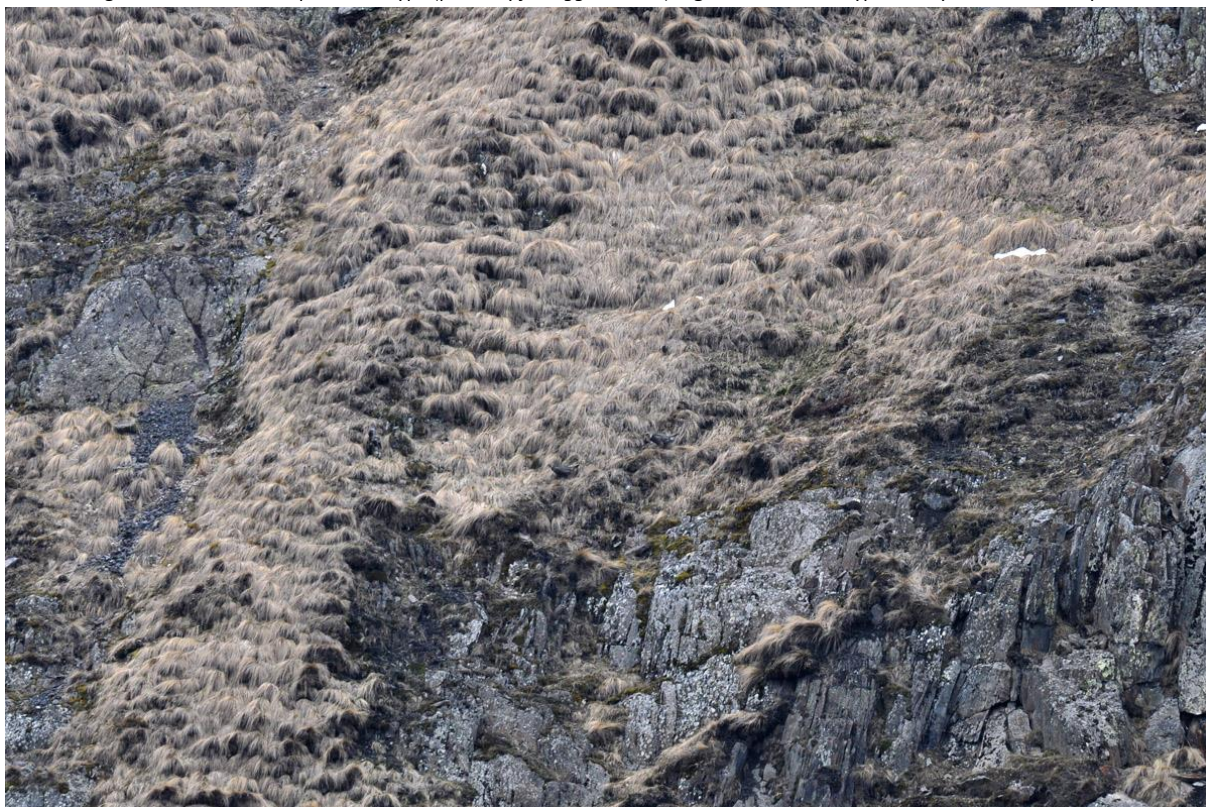
Left: male *Ehrenberg's Redstart*; note the whitish wing panel; **right:** male *Black Redstart* supposedly of the subspecies *ochruros*; but note the black breast contrasting with the orange belly, 29 April 2010; © Cor Hopman.



Left: Caucasian Ring Ouzel male; note the blackish belly combined with white wing coverts and white margins on the secondaries and primaries forming clear white wing patches; **right:** female, 30 April 2010; © Cor Hopman.



Wagtail variation! **Left:** superciliaris-type (probably *feldegg x beema*); **right:** *dombrowski*-type, 1 May 2010; © Cor Hopman.



Find the Snowcocks! East of the small chapel east of Stepantsminda we heard several Snowcocks, but to see them is difficult. Laurens Steijn from Birding Breaks (www.birdingbreaks.nl) managed to see two on this rocky slope on 2 May. Train yourself with this picture!; © Laurens Steijn / Birding Breaks.



Left: our only Egyptian Vulture; **right:** Griffon Vulture were more common, 2 May 2010; © Cor Hopman.



Left: Lesser Grey Shrike, 2 May 2010; **right:** Turkish Twites; note the contrasting striped mantle and breast combined with the white underside, 29 April 2010; © Cor Hopman.



Left: Red-billed Chough on the Krestovyy Pass, 2 May 2010; **right:** Raven at the same location, 2 May 2010; © Cor Hopman.



Left: female Rock Thrush, southeast of Stepantsminda, 1 May 2010; **right:** 'Caucasian' Horned Lark: note the black cheeks are connected with the black breast patch, the neck is pinkish buff and there is limited streaking on mantle and scapulars; grassy field west of Tsminda Samebi church, 1 May; © Cor Hopman.



Harm and Jan walking on the muddy road from the Tsminda Samebi church back to Gergeti, 1 May 2010; © Cor Hopman.