

## Contribution to the breeding bird fauna of the Mansi language area (Western Siberia, Russian Federation)

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**Abstract.** The paper is a supplement for specifying distribution of breeding birds in the westernmost Siberia, in the area which has rarely been visited by ornithologists, based on data collected in 1979–1987. The findings include for instance an expansion in the known distribution area of Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus*. On the other hand, a couple of species are pointed out which likely are absent as breeding birds in the region, in contrary to former opinions.

### Introduction

In Europe, we are used to the relatively high accuracy of distribution of all breeding bird species e.g. presented on the 50 km × 50 km level (Keller et al. 2020). In many countries, national bird atlases have been prepared using 10 km × 10 km or 5 km × 5 km grids. The situation is far less satisfactory if we deal with the whole Western Palearctic which, from the biogeographical point of view, is a more logical unit than Europe. Large areas in Sahara, the Middle East and Western Siberia have been studied unevenly, and in a number of 50 km × 50 km squares no ornithological data has ever been collected at all.

In the field guide of birds of the Urals and Western Siberia, it is mentioned: “Great part of our vast region has been poorly studied by ornithologists, the boundaries of ranges of many species are depicted very approximately simply because they are not known more precisely” (Ryabitsev 2001: 10). This has been the main incentive to compile this overview, though it is based on non-systematic observations.

Some decades ago, I visited the westernmost part of Western Siberia over a period of six summers, to gather names of natural objects and other linguistic data of the Mansi language. As is my custom, I also took notes about the birds I noticed at different villages, and also recorded remarks about birds made by local hunters and fishermen. Though none of my trips were dedicated to ornithological research, a part of the collected data may be of some use for improving the knowledge about the breeding bird fauna of this region.

### Material and methods

Between 1979 and 1987, I visited most of the villages and hamlets (50+) where the Mansi language is (was) spoken (Fig. 1). Thus, the study area is located mainly in the western part of the Halypúz (Beryozovo)<sup>1</sup> district of Tyumen' oblast and in the Szápsza (Ivdel') district of Sverdlovsk oblast, but also in the north-western part of the Motúsz (Kondinskoye) district, north-western part of the Soveckiy district and the northern part of the Masztörúsz (Oktyabr'skoye) district of Tyumen' oblast. The Mansi-speaking villages are situated mainly along the rivers Many Ász (Malyi Ob'), Tágt (Severnaya Sos'va), Szakv (Lyap-in) and Tápsz (Tapsuy), along the upper courses of the Lússzm (Loz'va) and Polum (Pelym) rivers, and at some tributaries of the Hontöng (Konda) river. Thus the study area is crescent-shaped and remains within the middle taiga zone (only the Szakv basin is situated within the northern taiga). The south-westernmost visited settlement was Túkta (Tokhta; 61°11'N 59°43'E), the north-westernmost Szúkörja (Shchekur'ya; 64°16'N 60°51'E), the north-easternmost Pukszámt (Neremovo; 63°42'N 65°06'E) and the south-easternmost Tojpávöl (Shugur; 60°13'N 66°28'E). In addition, some ornithological notes were taken in the neighbouring Khanty- or Russian-speaking settlements along the Ász (Ob'), Hontöng, Polum and Lússzm rivers. All of the visited villages and hamlets are marked in Fig. 1.

<sup>1</sup> For writing place names in the Mansi language, I have used the orthography of the Hungarian language which is their closest related one using Latin transcription. In the brackets, place names in Russian are added.

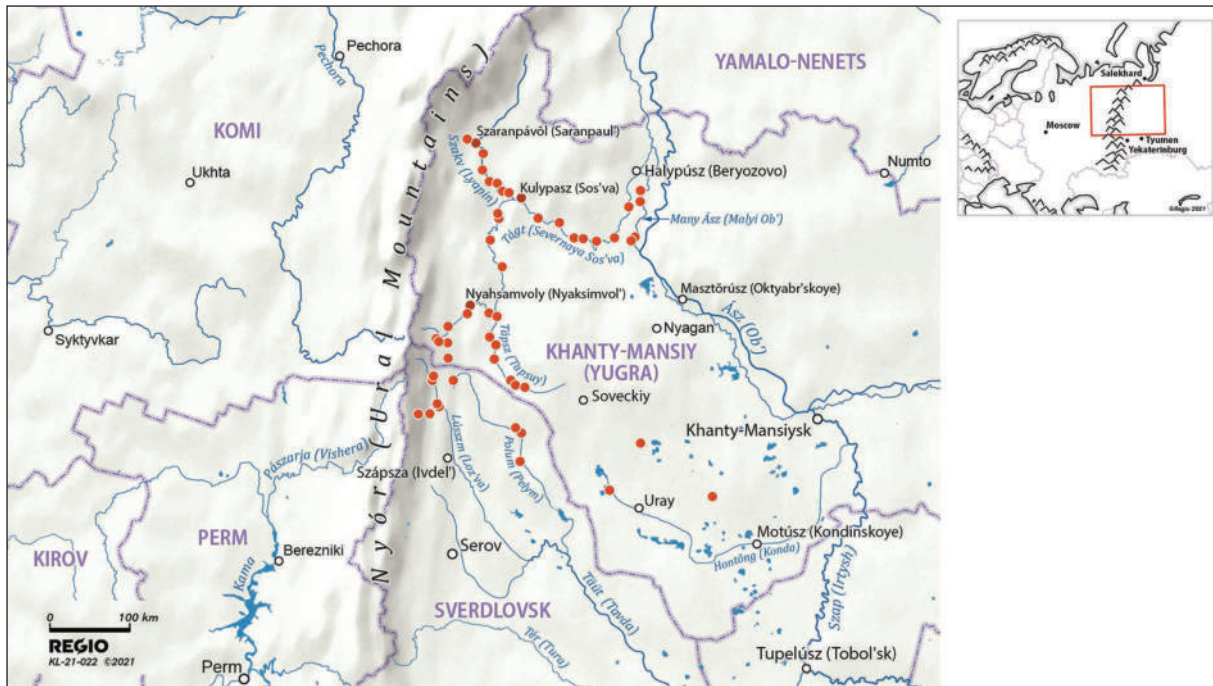


Figure 1. Location of visited villages and hamlets in the Mansi language area in 1979–1987.

Field work took place on 9<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> August 1979, 8<sup>th</sup>–25<sup>th</sup> August 1980, 12<sup>th</sup> June–18<sup>th</sup> July 1982, 10<sup>th</sup>–25<sup>th</sup> June 1983, 10<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> July 1985 and 25<sup>th</sup> June–4<sup>th</sup> July 1987. Thus, only the four latter trips coincide with the proper breeding season, however most of the villages where I made observations in 1979 and 1980 were revisited in later years. In 1980 and 1987, I was accompanied by the ichthyologist Arvo Tuvikene, and in 1980 also by botanists Pille Tomson and Ann Raidve (Polma).

In most cases, I visited only villages and their nearest vicinity, which makes the potential species list shorter than it otherwise might be. Between the villages, I usually moved by motorboats of local inhabitants or by public or institutional river vessels; and in the Hontöng basin — by local planes. More thorough contact with forest and mire habitats took place only in 1982 (travelling over watershed areas between the Lússzm / Polum and Polum / Tág basins on foot) and in 1987 (by inflatable boat along the Tápsz river). Montane habitats of the Ural mountains were out of my reach, and I lack any data on their specific species (Rock Ptarmigan *Lagopus muta*, Eurasian Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Eurasian Dotterel *Eudromias morinellus*, Swinhoe's Snipe *Gallinago megala*, Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus*, White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea*, Black-throated Accentor *Prunella*

*atrogularis*, Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*, Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*).

As my notes reflect the bird community of the 1980s, I tried to compare them with contemporary and earlier data. It seems that the bird fauna of the Mansi language area has been studied very poorly. S. Reztsov visited the upper Lússzm basin in 1896 (Reztsov 1904). Montane habitats of the Urals were studied in 1926–1928 (Portenko 1937) but only occasional notes concern the journey of this expedition along the Tág and Szakv rivers. Data from the uppermost Szakv basin were collected in 1972–1973 (Balakhonov 1978), and in the vicinity of Jalpöngnyol (Shaytanka), lower Tág, in 1973 (Vartapetov et al. 1980). The latter place, as well as the Many Ász basin, has also been visited in 1897 (Deryugin 1898). The southern part of the former Konda-Sos'va Nature Reserve was situated within the Mansi language area and thus studied ornithologically in 1931–1946 (Raevskiy 1982). Some censuses were also carried out in the central part of the Hontöng basin in 1959 (Panteleev 1972). All other observations and studies on the birds of Western Siberia before 1990, which have been available to me, come from outside the Mansi language area. English and scientific bird names and their sequence follow the taxonomy presented in the Handbook of the Birds of the World and BirdLife International digital checklist (2020).

**Table 1. List of common and uncommon bird species which were presumably widespread in the Western Siberian study area.**

Common species	Uncommon species
Common Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Hazel Grouse <i>Bonasa bonasia</i>
Oriental Cuckoo <i>Cuculus saturatus</i>	Willow Grouse <i>Lagopus lagopus</i>
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Western Capercaillie <i>Tetrao urogallus</i>
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Black Grouse <i>Lyrurus tetrix</i>
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>	Garganey <i>Spatula querquedula</i>
Mew Gull <i>Larus canus</i>	Common Crane <i>Grus grus</i>
Eurasian Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>	Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>
Northern Nutcracker <i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Hooded Crow <i>Corvus corone cornix</i>	Short-eared Owl <i>Asio flammeus</i>
Willow Tit <i>Poecile montanus</i>	Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Siberian Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus tristis</i>	Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Lesser Whitethroat <i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Eurasian Nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i>	Northern Goshawk <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	White-tailed Sea-eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	Three-toed Woodpecker <i>Picoides tridactylus</i>
Brambling <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dryobates minor</i>
Eurasian Bullfinch <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Eurasian Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>
Rustic Bunting <i>Emberiza rustica</i>	Siberian Jay <i>Perisoreus infaustus</i>
Yellow-breasted Bunting <i>Emberiza aureola</i>	Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
	Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>
	Bluethroat <i>Cyanecula svecica</i>
	Orange-flanked Bush-robin <i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>
	Whinchat <i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
	Common Stonechat <i>Saxicola torquatus</i>
	Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
	Olive-backed Pipit <i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>
	Red Crossbill <i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
	Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>

## Results

Below, I will only briefly mention the species with even distribution, and comment more thoroughly on data concerning species with different frequency and/or distribution pattern. The “default” situation of distribution always refers to maps in Ryabitsev (2001).

### Evenly distributed species

The species listed in Table 1 were distributed in suitable habitats over all the study area — they had been observed in all dialect areas and in many visited sites, sometimes in high numbers. The common species list of Table 1 should also be supplemented by the following species: Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, Common Teal *Anas crecca*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* and Redwing *Turdus iliacus*. These species were widespread except for in the south-east (Hontöng river basin) where they were not noticed, however this could have been because of the field work time in mid-July. Panteleev (1972) registered all these species in the Hontöng basin in 1959 except the Pintail and Willow Warbler. Indeed, Willow Warbler was also absent at upper Tápsz between Hori szúnt (Saratovskiy

Bufernyy) and Hulyumpávöl (Hulyumpaul’) on 25<sup>th</sup>–28<sup>th</sup> June 1987 (but common downstream of Hulyumpávöl). On the other hand, Pintail was a well-known species to local inhabitants throughout the Hontöng basin.

Though Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* and Common Raven *Corvus corax* were observed only in the southern part of the study area (upper Tágt, upper Lússzm, upper Polum, the Raven also in the Hontöng basin), they were well-known species to Mansi in all dialect areas and presumably breed throughout the study area, as shown on the maps in Ryabitsev (2001).

The following species were widely distributed over all or most of study area, but were not noticed or occurred in lower numbers in some parts of it:

\* Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* and Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* were rather widespread in the northern part of the study area (Many Ász, Tágt, Szakv and Tápsz basins) but not noticed in the south (Lússzm, Polum, Hontöng). However, local inhabitants of the latter basins knew these species well;  
\* Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* followed exactly the same registration pattern but this species

might be rare or totally absent in some southern regions (areas without larger rivers, especially towards the Urals). Local Mansi considered it a rare breeding bird only at upper Polum;

\* Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* was rather widespread but not noticed in the Lússzm, Tápsz and upper Tágt river basins, upstream of Kulypasz (Sos'va). According to local inhabitants, this species occurred only during migration in those basins;

\* Black Kite *Milvus migrans* and Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* were rather widespread except in the south-west (Lússzm and Polum river basins) where they were not noticed;

\* Collared Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* was widespread and often numerous in the northern part of the study area (Ász, Tágt and Szakv basins), scarcer in upper Lússzm; not registered in other southern basins (Hontöng, Polum, Tápsz), although local inhabitants of the two latter basins know the species well;

\* Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* and Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* were widespread in all southern and central regions but fewer records from villages at lower Tágt (downstream of Kulypasz) and at Szakv;

\* Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* was widespread in all southern dialect areas, a few records northwards up to Kulypasz but not noticed downstream at lower Tágt nor at Szakv;

\* Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*, Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* and Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus* were widespread except north-east (river basins of lower Tágt downstream of Kulypasz, and Many Ász) where not noticed, except for two registrations of Common Chaffinch at the Many Ász and one record of the Green Sandpiper in a neighbouring Khanty village Mulipávöl (Muligort).

The uncommon species listed in Table 1 were observed in different regions in less than 10 cases because their density was not high, their breeding habitats were visited occasionally and/or their displaying period had passed and thus detectability may have decreased before the season of my field trips. Presumably, they were distributed throughout the study area which in many cases is supported by data gathered from local inhabitants.

### Unevenly distributed species

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* turned out to be rather common around the Many Ász river but single pairs or broods were also observed in the Szóraht (Kempazh) river basin (from the helicopter) and on Lake Túrvat (uppermost Tágt).

All four observations of Goosander *Mergus merganser* were from the vicinity of Manyja-szúntpávl (Ust'-Man'ya; upper Tágt), with flightless broods upstream of it (19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> August 1980). As the bird was well-known by local inhabitants of all regions, its actual distribution may be much wider. Nevertheless, the species seemed to be more typical of fast flowing mountain rivers.

Although I observed Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* only in the Ász and lower Tágt basins, it was probably distributed widely, which is supported by the species recognition among local inhabitants throughout the study area. The same was valid for Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope* noticed by me in the Ász and Szakv basins.

The only village within the study area where Feral Pigeon *Columba livia f. domestica* was met was Szörtöngja (Sartyn'ya), at lower Tágt (13<sup>th</sup> July 1982).

All Red-throated Loons *Gavia stellata* and Arctic Loons *Gavia arctica* were observed in the middle Tágt and Szakv basins, the latter species also at the Tápsz. However, both species are well-known by local people throughout the study area and presumably have a widespread distribution, especially the Arctic Loon.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* was registered mainly along the Ász but also at the lower Tágt (Voszöngtur (Vanzetur) 18<sup>th</sup> June 1983). Along the middle and upper Tágt, the species was known only as a transit migrant by local Mansi.

In addition to the expected occurrence of Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus* in the Many Ász and Hontöng basins, at least one pair was noticed also at Hószloh (Hoshlog; at Szakv) on 4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> July 1982. Breeding records of Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* were limited to the Ász, lower Tágt (Ánja (Aneyeva) village) and Hontöng basins.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* was registered sparsely in different sites in the southern part of the study area (the Hontöng basin, upper Polum, upper Lússzm, upper Tágt). The northernmost breeding sites were situated in Nyahsamvolj (Nyaksimvol') in 1980 where it was regarded a recent newcomer (and it was not breeding any more in 1987). Additionally, the species inhab-



ited Ánja at lower Tágt at least in 1982 but was lacking in all villages between them. However, local inhabitants remembered that “in the past” the species had bred in more villages, e. g. Hulumszúnt (Hulimsunt) at middle Tágt, Lópmusz (Lombovozh) at Szakv, Púj Nyárő Humit (Verhniye Narykary) at Many Ász, etc. To facilitate nesting, people added a special board to the eaves of their house.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* was noticed in two separate regions: upper Lússzm basin (Vísszm, Jalpöngja úsz) and upper Szakv basin (Szúkörja, Szaranpávöl (Saranpaul’), Hószloh). According to local inhabitants, Starlings bred as newcomers also elsewhere at Tágt and Szakv in the 1970s–1980s, but mostly temporarily, e.g. in Nyahsamvoly they became extinct by 1987.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* was mainly observed in the south-west (upper Lússzm, upper Polum), with the northernmost specimens near Lépja pávl (Leplya), uppermost Tágt. An isolated place of occurrence was in a burnt wood near Szórtöngja, at lower Tágt.

Though all my checked registrations of Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis* were made at the Tápsz, this species was probably distributed much more widely. The same is valid for Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* recorded in the Tápsz and upper Lússzm basins.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* was recorded in villages at lower Tágt — Pánszuj (Igrim), Ánja, Szórtöngja, Kulypasz –, at the Szakv — Horöngpávöl (Hurumpaul’) — and, on the other hand, in the very south: in Szupör pövvöl (Supra) and in the railway settlement of Pelym. It seems to be lacking in most of the study area.

As most of observations of Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* were made in August, all these observations may have already considered passing through migrants. Probably it is a scarce breeding bird mainly in the northern and western parts of the study area.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* has been observed only twice, in both cases at the Szakv river in July 1982 (Szúkörja and Lópmusz).

#### Species at their eastern or northern boundary of distribution

According to local inhabitants, Common Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* was a newcomer everywhere (even in the south-westernmost part of the study area) except probably the Hontöng basin. It was still rare everywhere. During my trips, I ob-

served the species five times, in all cases in 1982: at Vísszm (Ushma; upper Lússzm basin), in and downstream of Manyja-szúnt-pávl (upper Tágt), in the cemetery of Szórtöngja (lower Tágt) and in a fresh boreal forest near Szúkörja (upper Szakv). All observations of Common Swift *Apus apus* are limited to the southern part of my study area (upper Tágt, upper Lússzm, upper Polum, Hontöng basin), with the northernmost birds recorded near Tápsz-szúnt-pávöl (Ust’-Tapsuy). Common Swift shares this distribution pattern with Great Tit *Parus major* whose northernmost records were noticed at Kerszkölöngja pávl (upper Lússzm, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1982) and at Nalmpávöl (Tápsz river, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1987).

Three species were observed at the southernmost edge of the study area. The only record of Corncrake *Crex crex* dates back to 10<sup>th</sup> June 1983 in Masszava (Massava), middle Polum basin. I observed Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* only in Szuojim (Shaim; Hontöng basin) on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1985. Eurasian Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*) was heard at Lugovoy airport (Hontöng basin) on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1985. All these species were unknown to Mansi. They are probably absent in most of the study area except the Hontöng basin where reported also by Raevskiy (1982) and Panteleev (1972).

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* was noticed along the Ász but also in the upper Tágt, Lússzm and Hontöng basins. According to local inhabitants, this species has also settled in mires of middle Tágt, Tápsz and Szakv basins, as a rare newcomer. In the 1910s–1940s, the Lapwing was only an accidental behind the eastern border of the study area (Shukhov 1916, Raevskiy 1982). This expansion is in line with recent and future trends in distribution in the European part of Russia (Keller et al. 2020, Huntley et al. 2007).

Registrations of Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* turned out to have similar pattern: at the Many Ász (widespread) and lower Tágt (Tumpövöl-túr mire near Kúrtja (Toboldino)), but an agitated pair was also observed in the Manytúr mire 9 km south of Manyja-szúnt-pávl (upper Tágt) on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1982. Taking into consideration that the species was relatively common in large mires of the former Konda-Sos’va Nature Reserve in 1931–1946 (Raevskiy 1982) and occurred in the Hontöng basin in 1959 (Panteleev 1972), it might have been much more widespread. However, the species was almost unknown to local Mansi unlike most other waders.

Display flights of Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* were noted in the southern part of the study area (upper Tágt, Tápsz, upper Polum) but according to local Mansi the species is also present in upper Lússzm, middle Tágt, Szakv and maybe also Many Ász basins.

All the few checked registrations of European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* and Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* were made at the Tápsz and upper Tágt. The only observation of Greater Spotted Eagle *Clanga clanga* was made at lower Tápsz on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1987.

Registrations of Eurasian Buzzard *Buteo buteo* are limited with uppermost Tágt and upper Lússzm basins, with the northernmost specimens near Manyja-szúnt-pávl.

The only Grey-faced Woodpecker *Picus canus* and Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* were observed at Visszm (upper Lússzm basin) on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June 1982, respectively. A nest of the first mentioned species was found. According to local inhabitants, Grey-faced Woodpecker was a rare inhabitant also in the upper Tágt (up to Nyahsamvoly in the north) and Tápsz basins. The Common Kestrel seems to be absent from village and floodplain landscapes in the whole Tágt basin (incl. Szakv and Tápsz).

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* was observed only three times and only in the westernmost parts of the study area: 12<sup>th</sup> August 1979 upstream of Szúkörja (adult with a fledged juvenile), 18<sup>th</sup> August 1980 upstream of Manyja-szúnt-pávl (fledged juvenile) and 16<sup>th</sup> June 1982 near Visszm. Coal Tit *Periparus ater*, European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* and Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* were recorded in the south-western part of the study area (upper Tágt, Tápsz, upper Lússzm, upper Polum). Elsewhere there is only one observation of the Tree Pipit from the lower Tágt region (11<sup>th</sup> July 1982 Szórtöngja).

The range of Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* should cover all the study area (Ryabitshev 2001). However, I registered the species only outside of it, near Uvat (at the Irtysh river), and maybe on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1983 also near Nyárő Humit (on floodplains of the Many Ász). It seems to be lacking in most of the study area.

The only two Booted Warblers *Iduna caligata* were noticed in a birch overgrowth near Tükta (upper Lússzm basin) on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1982. The song of River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* was heard on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1987 upstream of Nalmpávöl (Nalmpaul') at the Tápsz River.

Though the distribution of Blyth's Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* should cover all of the study area, I registered the species only in the south-western part of it (upper Tágt, upper Lússzm, upper Polum). The northernmost specimens were heard singing at and near Tápsz-szúnt-pávöl on 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> July 1987. The species was more numerous in Russian settlements at the edge of the study area — Jalpöngja usz (Vizhay) and Hori szúnt — in a more anthropogenic environment.

The distribution of Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* was similar to the last mentioned species: all registrations come from the upper Tágt and upper Lússzm basins, with the northernmost specimens near Tápsz-szúnt-pávöl (further north at Hulyumszúnt, local inhabitants considered it an autumn visitor from the south). In places at the Tápsz river, the species was strikingly numerous in 1987, with abundant broods. The distribution and commonness of European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* is similar, but this species was also met in the south-east (Hontöng basin). The northernmost singing males were registered at Kerszkölöngja pavl (upper Lússzm) and near the mouth of the Nyurmja river at the Tápsz, i. e. at 61°40'–62°.

The only male of Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* was heard singing near Soltitpávöl at the Tápsz river (27<sup>th</sup> June 1987).

The distribution of Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* seems to be limited to the south-westernmost edge of the study area (upper Lússzm, upper Polum). The same is valid for Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* which was noticed only at Jalpöngja úsz and Tükta (both upper Lússzm basin) on 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> June 1982.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* turned out to be a common species along the rivers Tágt (upper course, upstream of Nyahsamvoly) and Tápsz. The only observation elsewhere was made near Tükta (Lússzm basin).

#### Species at their southern or western boundary of distribution

Four adults and six flightless juveniles of Bean Goose *Anser fabalis* were observed on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1987 on lower Tápsz, downstream of the mouth of the Vórja river. The species distribution was probably patchy but, according to local Mansi, may cover most of the study area except the Hontöng basin where it was only considered as a transit migrant (Tojpvávöl (Shugur), Csantörjő (Chantyr'ya), etc.).

Siberian Gull *Larus fuscus heuglini* was registered only in the northern part of the study area (Ász, lower and middle Tágt, Szakv basins) upstream up to Horöngpávöl on the Szakv.

The only three observations of Merlin *Falco columbarius* were made at Kulypasz (1980) and Szórtöngja (1982) but the species may be distributed much further south. The Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* was observed soaring on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1980 near Kulypasz.

Siberian Tit *Poecile cinctus* inhabited the whole Tágt basin up to its uppermost course in the south-west (Manyja-szúnt-pávl, Túrvat) but I did not register it in more southern basins and even not at the Tápsz river.

On 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> August 1979, a large number of adults and juveniles of Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus* were observed SW of Szúkörja (upper Szakv). Three years later it became evident that there exists a permanent breeding population — on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1982, I noticed agitated adults SE of the same village in a mixed landscape of old riverbeds and fir-dominated fresh boreal forest. Probably this population forms an isolated distribution patch, as there are no other observations from the study area. However, in September 1876 one specimen of this species was shot in Ustrem (at the Many Ász, NE of the study area) (Shukhov 1916).

Redpoll *Acanthis flammea* was recorded only once at Nyahsamvoly (3<sup>rd</sup> July 1987).

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* was observed twice: SE of Szórtöngja (11<sup>th</sup> July 1982) and near Szupör pövvöl (16<sup>th</sup> July 1985; adult carrying food for young).

#### Probable non-breeders

\* A pair of Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* was observed on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1987 ca 16 km downstream of Nyahsamvoly (upper Tágt). Local inhabitants of the same region consider this species a rare transit migrant, probably some pairs stay as summer visitors.

\* A Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* was recorded on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1979 near Szúkörja, and a male Ruff *Calidris pugnax* on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1979 at Lópmusz (both in the Szakv basin). These observations likely consider stopover birds during migration but possible breeding within the northern taiga zone cannot be excluded.

\* A pair of Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* was noticed on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1983 at Lúj Njárõ Humit (Nizhniye Narykary; at the Many Ász), and a sin-

gle bird on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1982 at Szórtöngja (middle Tágt). It is difficult to guess whether there may have been an exceptional or isolated nesting site (in the first case), or non-breeding birds spent their summer south of the continuous breeding range which is (was?) quite close the study area, starting from Ustrem at the Many Ász in 1897 (Deryugin 1898).

#### **Discussion**

On the basis of such randomly gathered data, no major conclusions can be drawn. Certain specifications of the range boundaries of a few species were presented above.

However, Ryabitsev (2001) presumes the occurrence of a number of species within the study area which I did not register at all. Analysis of this list may deserve some attention. These lacking species may be considered in four different groups.

Firstly, I excluded most of the uncertain and dubious records from the data — however, these might be the only ones for some species (Eurasian Pygmy-owl *Glaucidium passerinum*, Smew *Mergellus albellus*, Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope*, Dun-nock *Prunella modularis*).

Secondly, there are a number of species whose breeding habitats (e.g. large mires and other wetlands) were visited occasionally, which are not very abundant, and/or are vocally active in spring (before the season of my field trips). Presumably, they are distributed throughout the study area or at least in most of it, which in many cases is supported by data gathered from local inhabitants (Table 2). One should also note that maybe the critically endangered Siberian Crane *Leucogeranus leucogeranus* still bred in the 1980s in some remote mires (local Mansi considered it a very rare bird in the Ász and Tágt basins, and declared it probably extinct in the Szakv basin). By now, its total Western Siberian population is estimated at less than 20 individuals (IUCN 2022).

Thirdly, there are some species which had been presumed to breed in the study area, but which most probably were not breeding in the area, either due to the absence of suitable habitats or to the former tendency to include the area covered by occasional breeding or by mere observations into the permanent distribution range. I regard the following six species absent from the study

**Table 2. List of species which were likely breeding in the Western Siberian study area, but were not observed during the study visits.**

Group	Species
Likely uncommon breeding species in the area	Horned Grebe <i>Podiceps auritus</i> Spotted Crake <i>Porzana porzana</i> Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> Great Snipe <i>Gallinago media</i> Boreal Owl <i>Aegolius funereus</i> Great Grey Owl <i>Strix nebulosa</i> Ural Owl <i>Strix uralensis</i> Eurasian Eagle-owl <i>Bubo bubo</i> Great Grey Shrike <i>Lanius excubitor</i> Lanceolated Warbler <i>Locustella lanceolata</i>
Likely breed in the northern part of the study area	Velvet Scoter <i>Melanitta fusca</i> <sup>1</sup> Pintail Snipe <i>Gallinago stenura</i> <sup>2</sup> Jack Snipe <i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i> Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i> Northern Hawk-owl <i>Surnia ulula</i> Rough-legged Buzzard <i>Buteo lagopus</i> <sup>3</sup> Red-throated Pipit <i>Anthus cervinus</i> Pine Grosbeak <i>Pinicola enucleator</i>
Likely breed in the southern part of the study area	Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i> <sup>4</sup> Stock Dove <i>Columba oenas</i> Oriental Turtle-dove <i>Streptopelia orientalis</i> European Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i> Black Stork <i>Ciconia nigra</i> <sup>5</sup> Long-toed Stint <i>Calidris subminuta</i> White-winged Tern <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i> Northern Long-eared Owl <i>Asio otus</i> White-backed Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i> Red-footed Falcon <i>Falco vespertinus</i> Eurasian Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i> <sup>6</sup> Icterine Warbler <i>Hippolais icterina</i> Pallas' Grasshopper-warbler <i>Locustella certhiola</i> Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i> Long-tailed Rosefinch <i>Carpodacus sibiricus</i> European Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
May breed in the Many Ász basin	Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i> Greater Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i> <sup>1</sup> Gadwall <i>Mareca strepera</i>
Likely inhabit foothills of the Urals and the uppermost Szakv basin	Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i> Yellow-browed Warbler <i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>

<sup>1</sup> well-known as a transit migrant, <sup>2</sup> at least in Szakv basin, <sup>3</sup> at least in the Urals, <sup>4</sup> rare, <sup>5</sup> at least in the Hontöng basin, <sup>6</sup> locals know it up to 63° in the north at middle Tágt

area as breeding birds, at least in the 1980s: Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* (locals observed during transit migration), Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* (locals observed accidentally), Rook *Corvus frugilegus* (locals observed it as a newcomer but no rookeries exist), Northern House Martin *Delichon urbicum* and Northern Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*.

Fourthly, there are three more species which should be widespread according to Ryabitsev (2001): Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*, Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*,

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, as well as Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* in the western part of the study area. In the 1980s all four were also familiar to me by vocalizations, and I did not make any observations in the study area, which seems to indicate the absence (or extreme rarity) of them. Nevertheless, Meadow Pipit breeds numerous in the montane tundra of the Urals (Portenko 1937) and it might breed within large mires of the northern part of the study area (this habitat was not visited there), but it is obviously absent from floodplains and other grasslands. Danilov (1965) also states that he has not found



the species south of Muzhi, according to Ravkin (1978) it was absent at Polnovat (both behind the NE boundary of the study area), and it was only recorded as a rare transit migrant in the former Konda-Sos'va Nature Reserve (Raevskiy 1982).

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