

Project Update: August 2012

In 2012, we studied fauna and flora of Mountain Rivers and streams in Tajikistan from 16th May to 25th July. The participants of our expedition spent several days at the end of May in the Kondara gorge in vicinities of Dushanbe (N 38°48' E 068°49'). We worked here in 2010 and visited again in 2011. The Kondara gorge is a protected area because of high plant species richness. After our research it was decided to raise the protection level and to establish a biosphere reserve with a complex biological station there. New surveys enabled us to specify the composition of avifauna of the gorge in particular to prove the breeding of a rare bird species – the plumbeous water redstart (*Rhyacornis fuliginosa*) – for the first time for Tajikistan.

Our main surveys were in the Gorny Badakhshan Autonomous Region. In Dehmiyona village in the Gunt river valley (N 37°42' E 071°55'), we studied in detail the breeding biology and behaviour of two little known bird species – the large-billed reed warbler (*Acrocephalus orinus*) and the mountain chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus sindianus*). We found that the former species is a common inhabitant of shrubs at the field sides and does not required specific protection. Nevertheless, our Tajik colleagues proposed to include these two species in the regional Red Data Book as key species for forests and shrubs communities of Badakhshan. We made avifaunistic surveys in Gunt and Panj rivers valleys and also in vicinities of Murghab settlement (N 38°09' E 073°57'). In particular, we found a new possibly breeding bird species for Tajikistan and Middle Asia –Tickell's thrush (*Turdus unicolor*) and failed to find another little-known bird species – the long-billed bush warbler (*Bradypterus major*). The plant communities suitable for the latter bird are completely destroyed in vicinities of Murghab.

We described freshwater invertebrate communities of Panj, Gunt and Shakhdara rivers and its tributaries and proposed to establish a new nature reserve in Shakhdara valley to protect an isolated locality of Indian heat-loving freshwater fauna. We also collected plant species and described plant communities in Gunt and Panj rivers valleys.

