

# **International youth birdwatching project**

## **Field trip to Azerbaijan**

### **25-30 October 2015**

#### **Result and progress**

A group of 10 persons from BirdLife Sweden visited Azerbaijan 25-30 October 2015 as the result of an idea being developed during 2014-2015. The trip was very successful in terms of birds monitored (more than a quarter of a million birds of 150 species), meeting up and initiating co-operation with Nature Friends Azerbaijan as well as supporting rural community tourism as we used a home stay in a village near the main birdwatching site Besh Barmag.

#### **Co-working**

We met up with Nature Friends Azerbaijan on several occasions. I had a meeting with Elshan Nur and Ilgar Marramoff one evening, we were joined by three members for the day trip on Oct 29 and also had a very nice dinner together the same evening in Baku. We also planned for meeting members of BirdLife Azerbaijan which did not happen unfortunately.

I had also had a short and informal meeting with the *charge d'affairs* of the Swedish embassy where he expressed their interest and commitment to support our work.

We had good ground support by Caspian Tour and their logistics is imperative for our successful work in the country.

#### **Costs and finance**

BirdLife Sweden covered part (about 25%) of each participants individual cost and the nature tour operator AviFauna, owned by BirdLife Sweden, covered my expenses as tour guide/initiative holder. The local Azeri tour operator Caspian Tour made a very generous package offer with visa, paper work, transports, accommodation and some meals.

This kind of arrangement in Azerbaijan is still possible to get a fairly low cost on and the amount per individual totalled at about 7.500 SEK (roughly 750 €).

#### **Flights, visa and accommodation**

We used Turkish Airlines this time with return flights from Stockholm and Copenhagen via Istanbul to Baku at around 3.000-3.500 SEK (roughly 300-350€) and it worked out fine. Visa was arranged by Caspian Tour and handled digitally – we recieved an e-visa as pdf file.



bird migration studies at Besh Barmag. Photo Emil Lundahl.

For accommodation we used Araz Hotel in Baku for two nights and for two nights broke new ground in terms of birders visits to Besh Barmag – we used a private home stay in the village of Qala Alti, some 30 minutes from the site. The house was very rough standard and wouldn't suite the regular tourist but as young adventurous birders we found it exciting and an unforgettable experience.

## **Besh Barmag**

We counted migration at Besh Barmag for three full days and used the same watch point as during the periods of monitoring by German researchers. The site is on the low dune ridge a few kilometers northeast of the cafés at the rest houses by the highway. Detailed numbers were taken as were many documentation photos.

As a birding experience it was a short but amazing visit with both rich migration and lots of birds in the area. See our trip report for details and full species list, find the report at the OSME web or on Cloudbirders.

## **Plan for 2016**

Encouraged by the good developments we plan for a field camp at Besh Barmag in September 2016 with a larger scope in terms of participants, finance and co-working. Please get in touch with me if you are interested to learn more,  
[tomasharaldsson@hotmail.com](mailto:tomasharaldsson@hotmail.com)

***Tomas Axén Haraldsson***  
***AviFauna/BirdLife Sweden***

