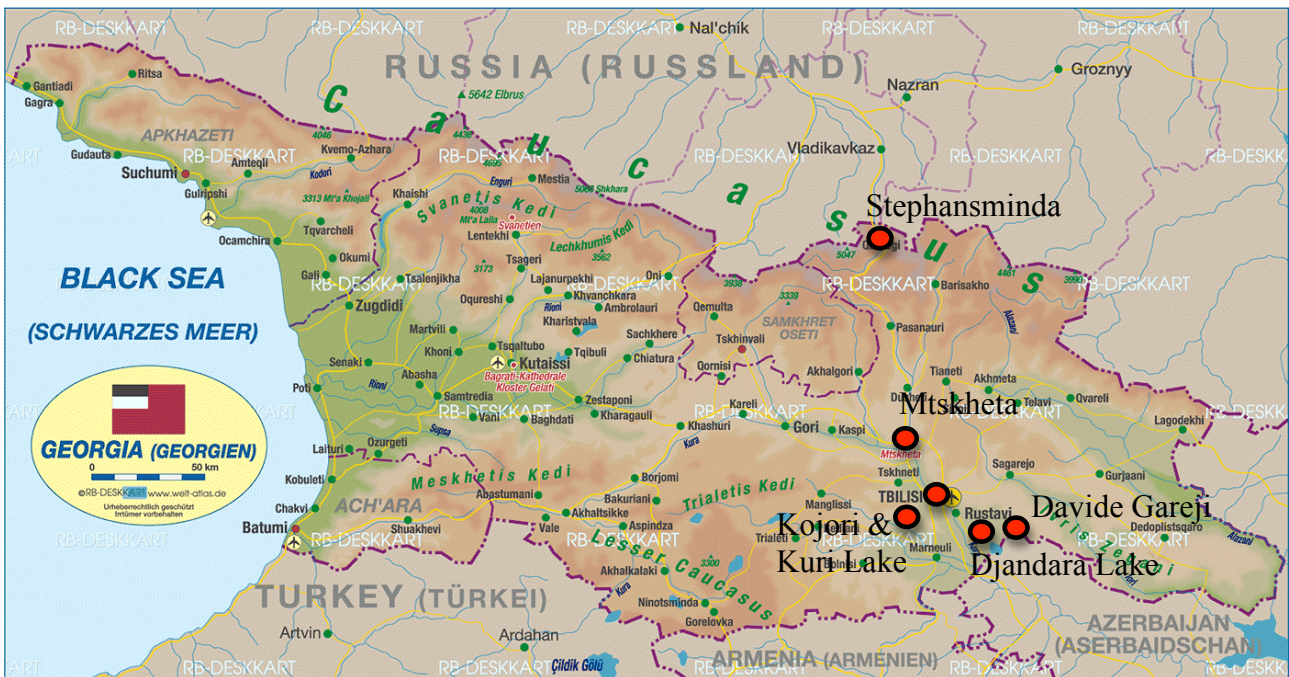


# Trip Report Georgia 16. - 25.04.2011

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## Itinerary:

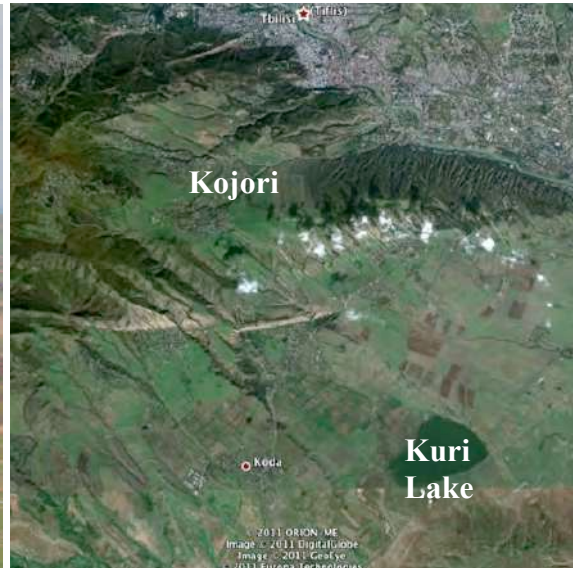
- 16.04.: Flight to Tbilisi, taxi drive to Kojori, small excursion in the village
- 17.04.: Walk from Kojori to Lake Kuri and back
- 18.04.: Field work in and around the village
- 19.04.: Field work in and around the village, excursion to Lake Kuri in the afternoon.
- 20.04.: Field work in and around the village in the morning, drive to Tbilisi
- 21.04.: small walk (06:00 – 07:00) in the hill north of the hotel.
- 22.04.: Drive to Stephansminda, afternoon walk around the village and to the small church east of the village.
- 23.04.: Drive up to Sameba Church, walk back to Stephansminda. Exkursion into Sno Valley and to the Russian border.
- 24.04.: Drive from Stephansminda to Tbilisi with stops in Anauri and Mtskheta.
- 25.04.: Exkursion to Djandara Lake and Davide Gareji.
- 26.04.: Flight back from Tbilisi.



Picture 1: Itinerary.

## Places visited:

**Kuri Lake:** Especially the northern side of the lake is very interesting and there are several dams from which you can easily scan the area. Except for a lot of water birds and passerines there was heavy raptor migration.



Picture 2 and 3: Kuri Lake.

**Tbilisi:** According to local ornithologists the city itself is good for observing raptor migration. A nice place is the hill south of the city quarter on the south side of the river (next to Narikala; see circle on picture 4).



Picture 4: Tbilisi



Picture 5: Stepansminda

**Stepansminda and surroundings:** We mainly visited the places known from other trip reports. The best places for observing Great Rosefinch and Gldenstdt's Redstart were the bushes on the slope east of the electricity station (map: point 1). Caucasian Black Grouse and Caucasian Snowcock were seen from the small church behind the pine wood (map: point 2). Another very nice place was the Sno Valley some km south of Stepansminda where we saw Caucasian Black Grouse as well as Citrine Wagtail, migrating Levant Sparrowhawk and others.

During our visit we stayed at the hotel of the Institute of Alpine Ecology which was a great place in every respect (location, food, service, rooms). Furthermore they can organise local drivers and cars as well (even to get you from Tbilisi or elsewhere)! To contact the responsible person: [nino.kasradze@iliauni.edu.ge](mailto:nino.kasradze@iliauni.edu.ge)



**Mtskheta:** The freshwater area next to the big parking place proved to be very interesting (map: point 1). A nice place for observing raptor migration is the church on the other side of the river (map: point 2).



Picture 6: Mtskheta.

**Djandara Lake and surroundings:** The fields between Rustavi and the lake are a known stopover site for Demoiselle Crane. The lake itself is easily accessible on the eastern side.

**Davide Gareji:** We visited the area around the monastery. There are surely other nice places on the way to this place, but when we were there, there was heavy mist, so we did not see a lot...

### **Commented Species List:**

#### **Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna casarca***

Some ind. seen at Kuri Lake and on a steppe lake on the way to Davide Gareji.

#### **Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos***

Some ind. seen at Kuri Lake, Mtskheta and Djandara Lake.

#### **Pintail *Anas acuta***

Some ind. seen at Kuri Lake and Djandara Lake.

#### **Wigeon *Anas penelope***

Several ind. (min. 10) at Kuri Lake.

#### **Shoveler *Anas clypaeta***

Common at Kuri Lake and Djandara Lake.

**Teal *Anas crecca***

At least 1 male at Kuri Lake.

**Garganey *Anas querquedula***

Common at Kuri Lake and Djandara Lake.

**Caucasian Grouse *Lyrurus mlokosiewiczi***

4 males seen from the small church east of Stephansminda on a mountain slope northwards on 22.04. One pair seen on a mountain slope in the Sno valley.

**Caucasian Snowcock *Tetraogallus caucasicus***

Heard daily in Stephansminda calling from the slopes east of the village. Seen from the village and the small church east of the village (at least 8 birds on 22.04.).

**Chukar *Alectoris chukar***

Heard in Davide Gareji.

**Quail *Coturnix coturnix***

One flushed at Kuri Lake on 17.04.

**Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis***

Common at Djandara Lake.

**Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus***

Some ind. at Kuri Lake and Djandara lake.

**Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo***

Common along the river in Tbilisi and on Djandara Lake.

**Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus***

About 20 ind. at Kuri Lake and at least 100 at Djandara lake.

**Bittern *Botaurus stellaris***

One calling at Kuri Lake on 17.04.

**Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax***

Seen and heard on two occasions in Tbilisi, one seen at Djandara Lake.

**Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides***

One seen at Kuri Lake (17.04.).

**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta***

A few at Kuri Lake, several birds at Djandara Lake.

**Great Egret *Casmerodius albus***

Common at Kuri Lake and Djandara Lake.

**Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea***

Common.

**Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea***

Common at Kuri Lake and Djandara Lake.

**Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus***

One adult seen in Stephansminda on 22. and 23.04.

**Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus***

Seen almost daily (Kuri Lake, Stephansminda and surroundings, Davide Gareji).

**Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus***

Two birds, probably a pair, seen on 16.04 in Kojori.

**Osprey *Pandion haliaetus***

One seen at Kuri Lake on 17.04.

**Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos***

One bird in Stephansminda on 22.04. and 1-2 at Davide Gareji.

**Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca***

One 2 KY-bird at Kuri Lake on 19.04. one subadult between Rustavi and Lake Djandara on 25.04.

**Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina***

Several birds seen at Lake Kuri (17. and 19.04.).

**Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis***

One immature bird at Lake Kuri (17.04.), at least 10 birds resting around Gudauri (24.04.), two birds at Mtshketa.

**Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata***

Some ind. seen at Kuri Lake (17. and 19.04.) and at Mtshketa (dark and pale morphs).

**Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus***

3 ind. resp. 2 ind. at Lake Kuri (17.04. and 19.04.).

**Black Kite *Milvus migrans***

Some migrating ind. all along the trip. Heavy migration around Gudauri (24.04.).

**Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus***

Common near water.

**Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus***

Probably hundreds at Lake Kuri on 17.04 (hunting around the lake)! Migrating birds noted almost daily.

**Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus***

One subadult male at Lake Kuri on 17.04.

**Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus***

Common.

**Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus***

Seen at lake Kuri, Kojori, Stephansminda, Mtskheta and in the Sno valley.

**Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis***

One seen east of Kojori on 18.04.

**Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes***

At least 2 migrating birds seen in the Sno valley and one migrating ind. in Mtskheta.

**Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus***

Common.

**Hobby *Falco subbuteo***

One ind. seen in Mtskheta.

**Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus***

Heard at Kuri Lake and Mtskheta.

**Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana***

Several birds seen and heard at Mtskheta.

**Little Crake *Porzana parva***

Several birds seen and heard at Mtskheta.

**Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***

Seen at Kuri and Djandara Lake.

**Coot *Fulica atra***

Seen at Kuri and Djandara Lake.

**Crane *Grus grus***

3 ad ind. seen between Rustavi ad Djandara Lake on 25.04.

**Demoiselle crane *Grus virgo***

10 resting ind. seen between Rustavi ad Djandara Lake on 25.04.



Picture 7: Splendid view of these exciting Demoiselle Cranes. 25.04.2011, Rustavi. N. Martinez (sorry, I was way too excited to make a sharp picture☺)

**Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus***

Seen at Kuri and Djandara Lake.

**Little ringed plover *Charadius dubius***

Seen at Kuri Lake.

**Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus***

One ind. seen at Kuri Lake on 17.04.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola***

Several ind. seen at Kuri Lake.

**Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus***

Several ind. seen at Kuri Lake.

**Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleuca***

Kuri Lake, Sno Valley, Djandara Lake.

**Redshank *Tringa totanus***

Several ind. seen at Kuri Lake.

**Curlew *Numenius arquata***

One ind. seen at Kuri Lake on 17.04.

**Snipe *Gallinago gallinago***

Seen at Kuri Lake on 17.04.

**Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus***

Common at Kuri Lake, Djandara Lake and Mtskheta.

**Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus***

At least 10 ind. Observed at Djandara Lake (25.04.).

**Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans***

Seen at Djandara Lake, Mtskheta and in Tbilisi.

**Palla's Gull *Larus ichthyaetus***

One ind. at Kuri Lake (17.04.) and two at Djandara Lake (25.04.).

**Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis***

Common at Kuri Lake.

**Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica***

Common at Kuri Lake and Djandara Lake.

**Common Tern *Sterna hirundo***

About 15 ind. at Kuri Lake on 17.04.

**White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus***

Five ind. in breeding plumage at Kuri Lake on 17.04.

**Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida***

Two ind. in breeding plumage at Djandara Lake on 25.04.

**Rock dove *Columba livia***

Feral form common. Probably wild form around Stephansminda.

**Wood pigeon *Columba palumbus***

Common.

**Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto***

Common in Tbilisi.

**Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis***

Three ind. (one single bird and one pair) seen in Tbilisi on 21.04. Although not listed as breeding in Literature, we assume that it does.

**Cockoo *Cuculus canorus***

One ind. calling in Kojori on 20.04.

**Scops Owl *Otus scops***

Two ind. calling in Kojori on 17.04.

**Swift *Apus apus***

Common.

**Alpine swift *Apus melba***

Observed in the Sno Valley and around Stephansminda.

**Hoopoe *Upupa epops***

Common.

**Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis***

Observed at Kuri and Djandara Lake as well at Mtskheta.

**Bee-eater *Merops apiaster***

About 10 ind. seen at Kuri Lake on 19.04.

**Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis***

One ind. seen in Tbilisi (next to Narikala) on 21.04.

**Great spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major***

Noted in Kojori and Stephansminda.

**Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius***

One ind. seen in Tbilisi (next to Narikala) on 21.04.

**Wryneck *Jynx torquilla***

One ind. at Kuri Lake, next to Kojori and in Anauri.

**Skylark *Alauda arvensis***

Common around Lake Kuri, Kojori and Davide Gareji. Single ind. seen next to Stephansminda.



**Crested Lark *Galerida cristata***

Only seen in Kojori.

**Woodlark *Lullula arborea***

Quite common in and around Kojori.

**Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla***

About 30 seen next to Lake Kuri. Single birds seen around Stephansminda.

**Sand Martin *Riparia riparia***

Some ind. seen at Kuri and Djandara Lake.

**Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica***

Common.

**Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica***

Three ind. observed in Mtskheta. According to literature this species does not breed in Georgia.

**House Martin *Delichon urbicum***

Common.

**Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris***

Only one ind. heard next to Djandara Lake.

**Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta***

Common.

**Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis***

Common.

**Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis***

Common.

**Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus***

Some birds seen and heard at Kuri Lake (17. and 19.04.).

**White Wagtail *Motacilla alba***

Common.

**Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava***

Common. Subspecies *flava*, *feldegg*, *superciliaris*.

**Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola***

Three birds at a pool in the Sno Valley on 23.04., about 10 birds at Mtskheta on 24.04. and one bird at Davide gareji on 25.04.

**Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea***

At least one pair in Kojori.

**Dipper *Cinclus cinclus***

At least one bird next to Stephansminda (on the way to Sameba Church) on 23.04.

**Dunnock *Prunella modularis***

Very common around Stephansminda.

**Robin *Erithacus rubecula***

Single birds seen all along the trip.

**Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica***

One bird in Kojori (17.04.), common at Kuri Lake (17. and 19.04.) and in Mtskheta (24.04.). Three birds in Stephansminda on 23.04. (along the river).

**Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus***

Subspecies *samamisicus* very common in Kojori, Tbilisi and other villages/towns outside of the Caucasus. Less common in Stephansminda. Some nominate race migrants noted all along the trip.



Picture 8: Common Redstart ssp. *semirufus*. 24.04.2011, Anauri. N. Martinez

**Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros***

Common in the Caucasus. Plumage of male birds quite variable with some having orange belly almost like *semirufus* and some having a completely black body. One pair on Anauri (24.04.).

**Güldenstädt's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogaster***

Three male and three female birds in the bushes south of Stephansminda (about 500 m east of the electricity station) seen on 22.04. At the same location we saw two males and one female on the next day.



Picture 9: female and male Güldenstädt's Redstart. 22.04.2011, Stephansminda. N. Martinez

**Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe***

Common.

**Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina***

Some birds around Kuri Lake (17. and 19.04.).

**Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica***

Two male birds resting on a field next to Kuri Lake on 17.04. One male singing on the church next to Mtskheta on 24.04.

**Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka***

One male resting on the same field as the Black-eared Wheatears next to Kuri Lake (17.04.), one male singing in Kojori on 19.04. and one male at Djandara Lake on 25.04.

**Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra***

Some birds next to Lake Kuri on 17. and 19.04. and some seen at Djandara Lake on 25.04.

**Stonechat *Saxicola torquata***

Common next to freshwater sites (Kuri Lake, Djandara Lake, Mtskheta) with some ind. observed elsewhere (e. g. Stephansminda). Most birds where **Eastern Stonechats *Saxicola maurus variegates*** and ***S. m. armenicus***, but some nominate ssp. where present as well.



Picture 10: Stonechat ssp. variegatus. 24.04.2011, Mtskheta. N. Martinez

**Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos***

Single birds seen at Kojori and Stephansminda.

**Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus***

Single birds seen and heard at Kojori and Stephansminda.

**Blackbird *Turdus merula***

Common.

**Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus***

Subspecies *caucasica* common in and around Stephansminda.

**Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla***

Single birds noted all along the trip.

**Whitethroat *Sylvia communis***

One bird seen next to Kojori on 19.04.

**Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca***

Common migrant at Kuri Lake (17. and 19.04.). Single birds noted all along the trip.

**Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus***

One bird seen at Mtskheta on 24.04.

**Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon***

One bird seen at Mtskheta on 24.04., several birds seen at Djandara lake on 25.04.

**Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides***

One bird seen at Mtskheta on 24.04.



**Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti***

One singing bird in Stephansminda on 23.04. (along the river), several birds at Mtskheta on 24.04.

**Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus***

Common.

**Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita***

Common.

**Caucasian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus lorenzii***

Only one bird identified in Mtskheta on 24.04. (see image). Some possible birds noted around Stephansminda (where Common Chiffchaff was very common), however compared to the individual from Mtskheta, we believe that all the other birds were Common Chiffchaffs....



Picture 11: Caucasian Chiffchaff. 24.04.2011, Mtskheta. N. Martinez.



Picture 12: Chiffchaff sp. 22.04.2011, Stephansminda. N. Martinez.

**Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus***

The first individuals were already back by the end of April: We saw and heard one bird in Kojori on 20.04., one or probably even two birds in Tbilisi on 21.04. and one bird in Davide Gareji on 25.04.

**Goldcrest *Regulus regulus***

Some birds seen and heard in the pine wood next to Stephansminda on 22.04.

**Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes***

Common.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva***

Common migrant at Kuri Lake, in Tbilisi, Kojori and Mtskheta.

**Semicollared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata***

One female bird well seen on 19.04. in Kojori.

**Great Tit *Parus major***

Common.

**Coal Tit *Pariparus ater***

Noted in the wood next to Kojori and in the Caucasus.

**Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus***

Single birds noted in Kojori and Stephansminda.

**Long-tailed Tit *Aegothalos caudatus***

One flock heard and seen in Kojori on 18.04., some birds seen in Stephansminda on 23.04.

**Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus***

Several ind. heard at Kuri Lake on 17.04.

**Rock Nuthatch *Sitta neumayer***

One pair at Davide Gareji (in the monastery) on 25.04.

**Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria***

One ind. at Davide Gareji (in the monastery) on 25.04.

**Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris***

Some birds seen and heard in the pine wood next to Stephansminda on 22.04.

**Magpie *Pica pica***

Common.

**Jay *Garrulus glandarius***

Common. Subspecies *krynickyi*.

**Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax***

Two birds observed between Sameba Church and Stephansminda on 23.04.

**Alpine Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus***

Common around Stephansminda.

**Rook *Corvus frugileus***

Common around Djandara Lake (nesting in the trees on the eastern side of the lake).

**Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix***

Single birds seen almost daily.

**Raven *Corus corax***

Common (more often seen than Hooded Crow).

**Starling *Sturnus vulgaris***

Common.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus***

Common.

**Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis***

Several flocks seen at Kuri Lake, Stephansminda and Djandara Lake.

**Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus***

Some birds seen at Kuri Lake on 17.04. and some birds in Kojori on 19.04.

**Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia***

Quite common around Kojori and even inside of the village in empty houses.

**Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs***

Common.

**Linnet *Carduelis cannabina***

Seen at Djandara Lake on 25.04.

**Twite *Carduelis flavirostris***

Singe birds and flocks seen daily around Stephansminda.



Picture 13: male Twite spp. *brevirostris*. 22.04.2011, Stephansminda. N. Martinez

**Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis***

Common.

**Greenfinch *Chloris chloris***

Common.

**Siskin *Carduelis spinus***

Single birds seen on the pine wood next to Stephansminda.

**Red-fronted Serin *Serinus pusillus***

Common (but not easily seen) in the pine wood next to Stephansminda (22.04.). Several birds noted between the Sameba Church and Stehansminda on 23.04.

**Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula***

Several birds in Stephansminda, seen daily there.

**Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes***

Two ind. seen in Tbilisi (next to Narikala) on 21.04.

**Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra***

Some birds heard and seen in the pine wood next to Stephansminda (22.04.).

**Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilla***

Several flocks (about 30 ind. including at least 10 males) in the bushes south of Stephansminda (about 500 m east of the electricity station) seen on 22.04. and 23.04. Not shy at all (birds were feeding 5 m next to us). One flock seen between the Sameba Church and Stephansminda on 24.04.



Picture 14: male Great Rosefinch. 22.04.2011, Stephansminda. N. Martinez.

**Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus***

Seen at Kuri Lake on 17.04.

**Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana***

Single birds noted daily from 20. 04 onwards.

**Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella***

Single birds seen at Kojori (18.04.) and between the Sameba Church and Stephansminda (23.04.).



**Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala*

One singing male in the monastery of Davide Gareji.

**Corn Bunting** *Miliaria calandra*

Common in the lowlands. Not noted around Stephansminda.

**Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia*

Two birds seen in Tbilisi on 21.04. (next to Narikala). Common around Stephansminda.

## **Mammals**

**Red Fox:** One grey ind. Seen next to Kojori on 18.04. and one brown ind. Seen around Stephansminda on 22.04.

**Jackal:** One ind. Seen between Kojori and Kuri Lake on 17.04. Two seen between Rustavi and Djandara Lake on 25.04.

**East Caucasian Tur:** About 20 ind. Seen from the small church behind the pine wood next to Stephansminda on 22.04.

**Eurasian Squirrel:** One ind. (with grey back) seen in the wood between the Sameba Church and Stephansminda on 23.04.

**Microtus sp.:** Seen around Kojori and Anauri.

## **Amphibians and Reptiles**

**Bufo viridis:** Heard daily in Kojori and at Kuri Lake.

**Hyla arborea:** Heard daily in Kojori.

**Rana macronemis:** Adults and spawn seen next to Stephansminda.

**Phelophylax sp.:** Heard and seen at Kuri Lake.