

Georgia – Wildlife, Wine & History

Naturetrek Tour Report

5th – 13th June 2025



Bearded Vulture



Black Francolin



Anemonastrum fasciculatum



Caucasian Agama

Tour report and photos by Giorgi Natsvlishvili



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Tour participants, Giorgi Natsvlashvili (leader) with 14 Naturetrek clients

Summary

Based among varying spectacular landscapes of Georgia, this was a wonderful trip for nature lovers. We were fortunate with excellent weather throughout the trip, we saw wide range of species like Black Francolin, Wallcreeper, Bearded Vulture and Goitered Gazelle.

The group arrived in Tbilisi a day apart depending on whether they took a direct or indirect flight.

The first part of the tour was spent in Tbilisi including an organised cultural tour, before the main tour started.

Day 5

Monday 9th June

We had an early start of the day to make the best use of time. After an hour-and-a-half long drive, we arrived in Dedoplistkaro, checked in to our hotel and set off to Chachuna Managed Reserve with 3 4x4 vehicles. Within 30 minutes, I spotted a male Black Francolin perched on a *Paliurus spina-christi* branch, but the bird quickly disappeared in the undergrowth and only a part of the group managed to catch a glimpse. We continued towards a Black Stork's nest viewpoint and along with it, saw several Cinereous and Egyptian vultures. Next we drove in a riparian forest, along the river Iori bed, where we had picnic lunch. After the lovely lunch, we drove towards the dam, to see Dali reservoir. There we saw several Lesser Kestrels, European Rollers and several dozen Armenian Gulls. We then headed back to Dedoplistkaro and on the way, our local wildlife guide Temo noticed a male Black Francolin perched on a fence post, and this time the bird remained long enough for the whole group to see. Back in town we had a wonderful dinner, a home-cooked meal at Temo's house.

Day 6

Tuesday 10th June

This day we had a goal to see Goitered Gazelles and the day was a success! On the way to Vashlovani National Park, we made several photo-stops, where the group enjoyed abundant wild flowers and various species of birds. Our local wildlife guide Temo caught a glimpse of a Blunt-Nosed Viper, but before we could do anything, the snake disappeared in the hole in the ground. Nearby we found three Greek Tortoises. We had a short walk in a Bear Gorge where one can find fossilized molluscs in the cliffs, along with a House Martin colony. Then we drove inside Vashlovani National Park for about 20-30 minutes before finding a dozen Goitered Gazelles. On the way back, before our picnic lunch spot, we spotted Chukar Partridges several times. We then continued to several scenic viewpoints over the National park, and along the way we encountered a Little Owl, Eastern Imperial Eagles, Booted Eagles and Griffon Vultures. Later in the evening we had a diner again at Temo's house.

Day 7

Wednesday 11th June

This Day was focussed more around the culture and history of Georgia. We drove to Telavi, capital of the Kakheti region to visit the gems of early medieval Georgian architecture, Ikalto Academy and Alaverdi Cathedral. In the afternoon we had a lunch in a winery where the group enjoyed a tour from our host, along with amazing local food and natural amber wine. After lunch we drove over a mountain pass to reach our destination, Stepantsminda.

Day 8

Thursday 12th June

Early in the morning we drove towards Dariali Gorge to try our luck with East Caucasian Turs, but our several attempts at spotting them at usual locations proved futile. Then we continued towards Truso valley where we had a two hour long walk in the alpine meadow filled with flowers and butterflies. Our lepidopterist guide, Tina, caught a couple of Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoths, which was a surprise even for her and she collected a sample for a future study. Before reaching our picnic lunch spot, I spotted couple of Bearded Vultures and a Golden Eagle above a ridge nearby. Soon enough, a third Bearded Vulture appeared and they all flew right above us. It was a magical experience. Before reaching our destination, we encountered Black Redstarts and Common Rosefinches.

Our day was concluded with a wonderful dinner in our hotel.

Day 9

Friday 13th June

We set off south, for a 3000-year-old rock-hewn city of Uplistsikhe, but on the way, we stopped in village Kobi to inspect cliffs for a Wallcreeper. It was overcast and rather windy, and we were about to get back on the road, but I spotted a Wallcreeper streaking across the cliff-side. Happy with the brief encounter, the group got on the bus, but few minutes later, it broke down. Thankfully we organized a replacement within 30 minutes, and continued to our destination. after visiting Uplistsikhe that was teeming with Caucasian Agamas, we drove towards a local winery, where we had an amazing wine tasting and a farewell dinner.

Day 10

Saturday 14th June

Three left on the indirect flight via Istanbul to London.

Day 11

Sunday 15th June

The rest of the group left in the morning for a direct flight.

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	June 2025				
		9	10	11	12	13
Black Francolin	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	✓				
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>		✓			✓
Chukar Partridge	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>		✓			
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>		✓		✓	✓
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	✓	✓		✓	
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>				✓	
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓		✓	
European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	✓				
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓		✓	
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓				
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>				✓	
Armenian Gull	<i>Larus armenicus</i>	✓				
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	✓				
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓				
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	✓				
Bearded Vulture	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>				✓	✓
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	✓	✓			
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		✓		✓	✓
Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	✓	✓			
Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	✓				
Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga pomarina</i>	✓				
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>		✓			
Eastern Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>		✓		✓	
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>				✓	
Eurasian Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>				✓	
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓			
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	✓	✓			
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	✓				
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	✓				
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓			✓
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		✓			✓
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	✓	✓			✓
European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	✓	✓			
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓				
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	✓	✓			
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	✓				
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓		✓	
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	✓	✓			
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	✓	✓			
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	✓	✓			
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>		✓		✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	June 2025				
		9	10	11	12	13
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓			
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>				✓	✓
Alpine Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>				✓	
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓				
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>				✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓	✓		✓	
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓	✓			
Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	✓				
Turkestan Short-toed Lark	<i>Alaudala heinei</i>		✓			
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>				✓	✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Mountain Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus sindianus</i>				✓	✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>					
Green Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus nitidus</i>				✓	✓
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	✓				
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Iduna Pallida</i>		✓			
Western Rock Nuthatch	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>		✓			✓
Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>					✓
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓			
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓			✓	✓
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>				✓	✓
Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	✓	✓			
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>				✓	✓
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>				✓	
Common Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>				✓	
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>				✓	
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>				✓	
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	✓	✓		✓	
Eastern Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe melanoleuca</i>					✓
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>		✓			✓
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>					✓
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	✓	✓			
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>				✓	
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓			✓	✓
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	✓	✓			
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>				✓	✓
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>				✓	
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>				✓	✓
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>					
Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>				✓	✓
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓			
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Red-fronted Serin	<i>Serinus pusillus</i>				✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	June 2025				
		9	10	11	12	13
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	✓	✓			
Black-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>	✓	✓			

Others

		June 2025				
Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13
Butterflies						
Eurasian Hummingbird Hawkmoth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>				✓	
Common Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>				✓	
Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoth	<i>Hemaris tityus</i>				✓	
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>		✓		✓	
Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>	✓				
Eastern Bath White	<i>Pontia edusa</i>		✓			
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>	✓			✓	
Common Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>		✓		✓	
Common Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>	✓	✓			
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>		✓			
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>		✓			
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>				✓	
Queen of Spain Fritillary	<i>Issoria lathonia</i>				✓	
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	✓				
Common Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	✓	✓			
Southern White Admiral	<i>Limenitis reducta</i>		✓			
Marsh Fritillary	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>				✓	
Repriles						
Caucasian Agama	<i>Paralaudakia caucasia</i>		✓			✓
Greek Tortoise	<i>Testudo graeca</i>	✓	✓			
Rapid Racerunner	<i>Eremias velox</i>		✓			
Caspian Turtle	<i>Mauremys caspica</i>		✓			
Amphibians						
Marsh Frog	<i>Pelophylax ridibundus</i>				✓	
Taurus Frog	<i>Rana macrocnemis</i>				✓	
Variable toad	<i>Bufo viridis</i> ssp. <i>sitibundus</i>				✓	

Persian or Goitered Gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*) seen on 10th June

Plants noted

Common name	Scientific name
Polygala major	<i>Polygala major</i>
Polygala Caucasia	<i>Polygala caucasica</i>
Black Sea Marsh Orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza euxina</i>
Anemonastrum fasciculatum	<i>Anemonastrum fasciculatum</i>
Prophet-Flower	<i>Huynhia pulchra</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Jerusalem Thorn	<i>Paliurus spina-christi</i>
Smokebush	<i>Cotinus coggygria</i>
Willow-leaved Pear	<i>Pyrus salicifolia</i>
Primula algida	<i>Primula algida</i>
Primula caucasica	<i>Primula caucasica</i>
Yellow-flowered Skull Cap	<i>Scutellaria orientalis</i>
Rough-leaved Phlomis	<i>Phlomis herba-venti</i>
Cowslip	<i>Primula veris</i>
Red Horned Poppy	<i>Glaucium corniculatum</i>
Common Polypody	<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>
Spring Gentian	<i>Gentiana verna ssp. pontica</i>
Gentiana dschimelensis	<i>Gentiana dschimelensis</i>
Warty-Cabbage	<i>Bunias orientalis</i>
Teucrium orientale	<i>Teucrium orientale</i>
Purple Mullein	<i>Verbascum phoeniceum</i>
Caucasian Stonecrop	<i>Phedimus spurius</i>
Androsace villosa	<i>Androsace villosa</i>
Austrian Flax	<i>Linum austriacum</i>
Clove-scented Broomrape	<i>Orobanche caryophyllacea</i>
Saintfoin Milk Vetch	<i>Astragalus onobrychis</i>
Purple Crownvetch	<i>Securigera varia</i>
Iris furcata	<i>Iris furcata</i>
Linum nodiflorum	<i>Linum nodiflorum</i>
Alpine Forget-Me-Not	<i>Myosotis alpestris</i>
Fritillaria collina	<i>Fritillaria collina</i>
Pulsatilla violacea	<i>Pulsatilla violacea</i>
Trollius ranunculinus	<i>Trollius ranunculinus</i>
Euphorbia iberica	<i>Euphorbia iberica</i>
Phelipanche caesia	<i>Phelipanche caesia</i>
Dryas caucasica	<i>Dryas caucasica</i>
Onobrychis radiata	<i>Onobrychis radiata</i>
Pontechium maculatum	<i>Pontechium maculatum</i>
Gentian Speedwell	<i>Veronica gentianoides</i>
Milk Thistle	<i>Silybum marianum</i>
Saltcedar	<i>Tamarix ramosissima</i>
Common Juniper	<i>Juniperus communis</i>
Foetid Juniper	<i>Juniperus foetidissima</i>
Eastern Prickly Juniper	<i>Juniperus deltoides</i>
Persian Juniper	<i>Juniperus polycarpus</i>
Securigera balansae	<i>Securigera balansae</i>
Black Maidenhair Fern	<i>Adiantum capillus-veneris</i>
Urville's Marsh Orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza urvilleana</i>
Euphorbia iberica	<i>Euphorbia iberica</i>
Bistorta carnea	<i>Bistorta carnea</i>
Daphne glomerata	<i>Daphne glomerata</i>
Italian Bugloss	<i>Anchusa azurea</i>
European Barberry	<i>Berberis vulgaris</i>
Field Elm	<i>Ulmus minor</i>
Russian Olive	<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Russian Hollyhock	<i>Alcea rugosa</i>
Teucrium orientale	<i>Teucrium orientale</i>
Caucasian Stonecrop	<i>Phedimus spurius</i>
Sedum pallidum	<i>Sedum pallidum</i>
White Hellebore	<i>Veratrum lobelianum</i>
Pedicularis chroorrhyncha	<i>Pedicularis chroorrhyncha</i>
Pedicularis condensata	<i>Pedicularis condensata</i>
Phelipanche caesia	<i>Phelipanche caesia</i>
Cirsium obvallatum	<i>Cirsium obvallatum</i>
Stachys atherocalyx	<i>Stachys atherocalyx</i>
Verbascum formosum	<i>Verbascum formosum</i>
Kalidium caspicum	<i>Kalidium caspicum</i>
Mediterranean Saltwort	<i>Caroxylon vermiculatum</i>
Halocnemum strobilaceum	<i>Halocnemum strobilaceum</i>
Klasea quinquefolia	<i>Klasea quinquefolia</i>
Blood-spotted Bladder Senna	<i>Colutea orientalis</i>
Oriental Wormwood	<i>Artemisia scoparia</i>
Pale Bugloss	<i>Echium italicum</i>
Caper Bush	<i>Capparis spinosa</i>
Common Glasswort	<i>Salicornia europaea</i>
Burnt-tip Orchid	<i>Neotinea ustulata</i>
Reaumuria alternifolia	<i>Reaumuria alternifolia</i>
Allium atroviolaceum	<i>Allium atroviolaceum</i>
Harmel	<i>Peganum harmala</i>
Achillea arabica	<i>Achillea arabica</i>
Asian Yarrow	<i>Achillea asiatica</i>
Ephedra procera	<i>Ephedra procera</i>
Campanula saxifraga	<i>Campanula saxifraga</i>
Silene lacera	<i>Silene lacera</i>
Sea-Buckthorn	<i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i>
Astragalus microcephalus	<i>Astragalus microcephalus</i>
Syrian Bean-Caper	<i>Zygophyllum fabago</i>
Ground-Pine	<i>Ajuga chamaepitys</i>
Caucasian Clover	<i>Trifolium ambiguum</i>
Pallas' Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus erythroxylodes</i>
Cream Scabious	<i>Scabiosa ochroleuca</i>
Wild Pistacio Tree	<i>Pistacia atlantica ssp. mutica</i>
Marsh Marigold	<i>Caltha palustris</i>
Cornish Bellflower	<i>Campanula alliariifolia</i>
Campanula kakchetica	<i>Campanula kakchetica</i>
Digitalis ciliata	<i>Digitalis ciliata</i>
Bladder Campion	<i>Silene vulgaris</i>
Eastern Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus orientalis</i>
Hylotelephium caucasicum	<i>Hylotelephium caucasicum</i>
Viper's-Bugloss	<i>Echium vulgare</i>
Oriental Beech	<i>Fagus orientalis</i>
Crested Gentian	<i>Gentiana septemfida</i>
Dianthus orientalis	<i>Dianthus orientalis</i>
Immortelle	<i>Xeranthemum annuum</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Georgian Snow Rose	<i>Rhododendron caucasicum</i>
Yellow Azalea	<i>Rhododendron luteum</i>