

# Snapshots of Azerbaijan - Shirvan

An hour and a half south of Baku lays 60,000 hectares of semi desert seacoast and wetland. Easily accessible by dual carriageway and completely unvisited is the lowland region home to jungle cats, wolves, jackal, hare, tortoise goitre Gazelle kangaroo rats and 270 species of bird.

The once nearly extinct goitre gazelle now numbers several thousand and although not tame you can get within 50 meters of them before they raise their little black tails and bound off their white bottoms flashing in the sun.

Arriving an hour before dusk we were amazed by the closeness and the number of bee-eaters – eating large grasshoppers which were on the road. We drove slowly forward raising flocks of bee eaters who flew slightly ahead and then settled to their dinners once more on the road. Each time they flew, the air was filled with flashes of red, yellow and blue. After fifteen minutes suddenly the air was filled with just green and a flash of red. It was a different colony of bee-eaters, blue cheeked, and incredibly they were completely separate from the other birds, divided by an invisible line.

