

ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO BULGARIA
The Black Sea Flyway

09 – 16 September 2012



Leaders: Simon Boyes and Dancho Kutsarov

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A Personal Diary

Sunday, 9 September

Four of us meet up in Gatwick's South Terminal for the Balkan Holidays flight to Bourgas (or Burgas on some maps) in a new Airbus 320. Alan and Liz will follow us from Manchester tomorrow. We take off a little late at 1800, and arrive three hours later. With the two hour time change it's now 2300. Drinks and a few snacks are available to buy on the flight. Immigration and money-changing are fast and luggage retrieval soon follows. Dancho, a large smiling Bulgarian from the Danube region, is here to meet us. Pancho is our driver for the short drive to the hotel, right by the Black Sea beach in nearby Pomorie. The staff kindly offer us a meal, but we accept only the watermelon dessert. Sleep is our priority now!

Monday, 10 September

We meet up for a buffet breakfast at 0830, and find ourselves plenty of good food and coffee. One pleasant surprise is that Lyubo, an ornithology professor who has guided some of our past tours, is available to be with us today, in addition to Dancho. The birding begins right outside the hotel, where the salt pans keep us occupied half the morning. Outside the salt museum three Broad-billed Sandpipers make the best of starts, alongside many other wader species in perfect light. Wood and Curlew Sandpipers, Dunlin and Little Stints offer close comparisons. The stints have already travelled a great distance from their tundra homes, well north of the Arctic Circle. Masses of gulls include a few Caspian, Mediterranean and Little Gulls. Two Slender-billed Gulls are especially close, one showing the pink breast of breeding plumage. All the gulls and terns are all put to flight like a snowstorm when a Peregrine hurtles through, making two failed attempts at a small sandpiper. Moments later a Eurasian Hobby appears above us, probably moving south.

Next stop is on the edge of busy Bourgas town, on the shore of Lake Vaya, which is also named Bourgas Lake on some maps. Here the main attraction is the huge flocks of White Pelicans, well over a thousand. Most are packed into a fishing frenzy, which is joined by flocks of hovering gulls and terns. Lyubo tells us that most of these pelicans are Danube Delta breeders, just beginning their long southbound migration to East Africa's Rift Valley. There are far smaller numbers of Dalmatian Pelicans, greyer and more solitary. The whole lake is covered in waterfowl, mostly Eurasian Coot, but with many Pygmy Cormorants, Common Pochard and Great Crested Grebe among them. A few Whiskered Terns and one Black Tern fly past us. We drive round the lake, stopping to watch Eurasian Spoonbill and Ferruginous Duck, while a White-tailed Eagle lumbers overhead. There are signs of a raptor movement, with a few Common Buzzard and two Lesser Spotted Eagles heading south. Five Black Storks are, to our surprise, the only storks we see all day.

For lunch Dancho and Lyubo have arranged a visit to Russi's house in Dolno Ezerovo. Russi used to keep a café and take boat-trips out on the lake, but now he tells us his business is dead. Nevertheless, he is very hospitable to us, and opens his shaded garden to us. Pancho spreads out the tasty picnic he has brought along, which ends with delicious juicy peaches. Beer and coffee are optional extras. As we say our farewells to Russi and his family, a large flock of White Pelicans circles round above us, and a more brightly coloured flock of Eurasian Bee-eaters fly past. We are seeing no shortage of visible migration.

The main afternoon stop is close to Bourgas town, at the south end of Atanasovsko Lake. Here we walk out on an embankment that overlooks disused salt-works, where the most exciting of the waders are Marsh Sandpipers. There are also Common Shelduck, Pied Avocet, Northern Pintail, and a few Marsh Harriers that fly past, upsetting all the gulls. Our final stop is in grassland close to Bourgas Airport, where three European Rollers and two Short-toed Eagles perform well. One eagle carries a small snake in its bill. We return to base happy with our sightings in perfect weather. There is plenty of time to relax before dinner, and we call the long checklist with local beer and Chardonnay in hand.

Tuesday, 11 September

The early walk along the edge of the salt pans adds waders such as Red Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, and Temminck's Stint to our list. The Broad-billed Sandpipers are still in place, appropriately very close to the bird-watching centre by the salt museum.

At breakfast we welcome Alan and Liz to the group: their plane from Manchester was delayed, and they arrived in the small hours. We spend the morning exploring to the north of Pomorie, visiting a number of salt-pans and wader habitats, but without the close views that we have on our Pomorie door-step. Lyubo is disappointed that various sites have dried out during the baking summer: it has not rained here since June. Moving inland, we enjoy European Bee-eaters at a filling station where the coffees and conveniences are also appreciated. Lyubo leaves us in Aheloi for other commitments in Varna, leaving us in Dancho's capable guiding hands. Other birds that appear during the morning include European Roller, Lesser Spotted and Short-toed Eagles, Tree Pipit and Common Kingfisher.

Pancho drives us to a remote picnic spot for our midday break. From here we walk across a bridge onto a wetland reserve of reedbeds and open pools, at the north end of Atanasovsko Lake. Here are our first Great Egret and Purple Heron, and many Spotted Redshanks swimming like overgrown phalaropes. Duck here include Eurasian Teal and Northern Shoveler. A pink line in the distance turns out to be a mass of hundreds of resting White Pelicans. There is a steady passage of Common Buzzard and Western Marsh Harrier during the afternoon, with a lone Long-legged Buzzard and two distant Montagu's Harriers. Back by the main road, we stop to watch and photograph Little Gulls, Pied Avocets and an overflying Eurasian Spoonbill, all in excellent light.

The day's last stop is a chance for Liz and Alan to catch up on the excellent waders and terns by the salt museum. Broad-billed and Curlew Sandpipers offer close comparisons, among all the usual species. Grey Plover, newly arrived from the Arctic, and a resident Slender-billed Gull show well too. The dinner menu features *moussaka* and salad, with a *tiramisu* dessert.

Wednesday, 12 September

An early visit to the salt museum reveals the usual suite of terns, gulls and waders, with two close-up additions: Little Gulls are swimming with their larger cousins on a small salt pan in front of the museum entrance, with a Pied Avocet offering a photo opportunity on the same pan.

After breakfast, our destination is Poroy, a beautiful oak forest on a sandy soil, north of Pomorie. The first part reminds us of the cork oak 'parkland' of Extremadura, although there are denser forest areas to explore too. In the more open areas, we are soon watching juvenile Woodchat Shrikes – as with the abundant Red-backed Shrikes, the adults have mostly migrated already. Eurasian Bee-eaters fill the open spaces with their elegant flights and liquid *quillp* calls throughout the morning. Twice we have views of Northern Goshawk: first a pair interacting, with two bursts of unseasonal slow-flapping display, and later a single bird soaring powerfully above the forest. There are Woodlarks to enjoy in the scopes, and both Green and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers play hide-and-seek with us. There are many Spotted Flycatchers, mostly on the forest edge, but in the interior we see more Red-breasted Flycatchers. An overflowing water-trough creates a small wetland which is worth watching as many species come to drink or bathe. The highlight here is the flocks of Hawfinch, which need to drink regularly in such dry conditions. Sometimes 15 or 20 fly up together, but two perched in the scopes make up for these fleeting flight views. There are also Sombre, Great and Blue Tits, a Grey Wagtail, a Common Redstart and a Blackcap, and Wood and Willow Warblers visiting, among others. The trough makes a good spot for a lunch picnic, well prepared by Pancho as usual.

Beyond Poroy village is an open valley that leads to a dam. Here we spend the afternoon, catching up with species such as Corn Bunting, Whinchat, Crested Lark and Northern Wheatear. A Eurasian Hoopoe perches by the dusty track ahead, but disappears all too soon. Raptors include a Booted Eagle of the dark morph, and both Marsh and Montagu's Harriers. As we approach the dam, we see four Black Storks on the ground, and 20 or so Ruddy Shelduck. The latter keep up a constant honking conversation as they swim in the shallows. Here are also a migrating flock of Ruff, a Dunlin and a Common Snipe. Swimming with the Ruddy Shelduck and the Common Teal is a lone Black-necked Grebe. On the scrubby hillside above the dam, a Syrian Woodpecker calls from a treetop, before resuming a more usual woodpecker pose, against a trunk. All around and above is an impressive gathering of hirundines: Barn Swallows and both Common Sand and

Common House Martins. Dancho tells us that the Red-rumped Swallows have already departed after this exceptionally hot and dry summer. Have we missed all the White Storks too? Usually the middle of September has large flocks moving south through the Bourgas area.

A short stop near Medovo village on the way back is to check for any visible raptor migration. There are three Montagu's Harriers, quartering the ground as they slowly move south. One is attacked by the resident Common Kestrels, and returns their aggression too. A Short-toed Eagle flies high, and a small flock of White Pelicans looks brilliant in the afternoon sun. Meanwhile Pancho picks almonds from the base of a tree across the road. We return to base pleased with another day of fine Bulgarian birds in fine weather.

Thursday, 13 September

We take a break from pre-breakfast outings in the spirit of our 'At Leisure' tours. Brian, out with his camera, photographs a Wood Warbler and a Red-backed Shrike close to the hotel.

Today's programme is similar to Monday's, to give Liz and Alan a chance to catch up on Lake Vaya's pelican spectacular. First stop is by the salt museum, where the wader numbers have decreased. We can only find two Broad-billed Sandpipers, but they feed obligingly close to Dunlin and Little Stint for comparisons. Other notable records are Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, and two Slender-billed Gulls among the flocks of gulls and terns. In September, the knot are grey rather than red. Bulgaria in autumn must be the best Ornitholidays tour in Europe for wader study. Here they are, every day, in great profusion and variety within ten minutes' walk of our hotel.

The first Lake Vaya stop turns up several Dalmatian Pelican, a few Ferruginous Duck and Pygmy Cormorant, a Squacco Heron statuesque in the reeds, and surprisingly a male Red-crested Pochard, which is unusual here. The White Pelican flocks are more distant, but we have closer views of their amazing feeding frenzy at our next stop. As the dense flock moves forward, lunging at the abundant fish as they go, an entourage of hovering gulls and terns is almost as impressive a sight as the pelicans themselves. Two European Honey Buzzards fly overhead, revealing characteristic small head, pinched-in wings and slender, triple-barred tail. Further on we stop again to admire a group of nine Black Storks, while a Short-toed Eagle perches massively on a pylon behind. Again we picnic in Russi's garden, in the shade of a spreading grape-vine to shield us from our hottest sun yet.

During our travels round the Bourgas area, we have commented on two tree species in particular. One is abundant everywhere and perhaps more shrub than tree: the Christ's Thorn (or Jerusalem Thorn, or Crown of thorns - *Paliurus spinachristi*), which is reputed to have been the species used for the biblical crown of thorns. The second one is the acacia-like *Gleditsia*, an attractive locust tree with long, woody, sickle-shaped pods. Not surprisingly from a look at the pods, it is in the bean family, *Fabaceae*.

The visitor centre and hide at Lake Atanasovsko has only a few Common Shelducks and Little Egrets outside. In spring this is a great stop, with Pied Avocets nesting on a platform in front of the hide. But we soon press on to the track that runs up the western side of the northern part of the lake. Here we start to see hundreds of White Pelicans flying north in untidy skeins and flocks. Dancho tells us they fly to roost each afternoon at the north end of the lake – where we saw several hundred after our Tuesday picnic. Nigel puts us onto a flock of Spotted Redshank and two Marsh Sandpipers below us, but visible through the tops of the reeds. With patience we see them well enough, and the juvenile Red-necked Phalarope that flies in to join them. It stays out in deeper water, swimming. A walk out on a dyke produces Ruff and another Marsh Sandpiper. A flock of 50 Dalmatian Pelican rests in the foreground, with a thousand or so White Pelicans behind them. Between us and the pelican roost, the surface of the shallow lake is littered with many Little Gulls and several hundred Pied Avocets. Overhead we have a Short-toed Eagle, an Osprey and several Marsh Harriers. As the wind strengthens, we turn back and arrive at the hotel at 1730.

Friday, 14 September

Our early expedition is along the track to the north from the hotel. While Pancho rests, Dancho takes the wheel and drives us to the end of the road. This is along the dyke that separates the Black Sea from the Pomorie lagoon. As we step out of the minibus, four Crested Larks walk around us. From the raised dyke, we look out to sea, where Nigel finds three Red-necked Grebe swimming and occasionally diving. Looking in the other direction, we can make a direct comparison with the Great Crested and Black-necked Grebes on

the lagoon. Below us in the reeds a few migrants find food: Sedge, Reed and Willow Warblers; and even one out-of-habitat Wood Warbler. A juvenile Red-backed Shrike offers unusually close photo opportunities.

After another satisfying breakfast buffet, we set out southwards on our longest drive of the week, to the seaside resort of Primorsko. Even that is only an hour and a quarter away: one pleasure of this itinerary is that the birding sites are all close together, and vehicle time is minimized. Along the way we see hundreds of Great Cormorants in the areas of Lakes Vaya and Mandra, many perched up on the wires and on the pylons where they nest earlier in the year. A Lesser Spotted Eagle crosses the road ahead of us. A few miles along a quiet forest road north of Primorsko is the ancient Thracian ceremonial site of Beglik Tash. This area has only recently been opened to tourists, as in Soviet days it was part of a zone restricted to the Politburo chiefs, presumably for hunting. So that is why we are seeing no wild mammals! Five thousand years ago the Thracian tribe of the Skirmians were metallurgists here, digging out the copper and trading the ore with other tribes and coastal people. Now their ceremonial site remains, where the king was also high priest. Explanations in English are available of the stone 'nuptial bed', sacrificial stones, throne, sacred cave, sundial, etc. After looking round the site, we explore the surrounding oakwoods. Here the trees are smaller than at Poroy, and the activity lower. One Red-breasted Flycatcher appears between several Spotted Flycatcher sightings; and we have wonderful views of posing Green and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers. A Eurasian Nuthatch calls as it explores the trunks, and a Eurasian Hobby briefly appears over the canopy. As Pancho lays out another varied picnic – today with peach and apricot juice – a Grey-headed Woodpecker calls, but cannot be enticed into view.

The first afternoon stop is on the way back, at Arkutino Marsh. This is a beautiful freshwater wetland with a wooden boardwalk overlooking reedbeds and a lake. Dancho points out and identifies three dragonfly species: Eastern Willow Spreadwing, Ruddy Darter and Emperor; and we look down on a Eurasian Pond Terrapin. Birds include Purple Herons and Great Egrets, but not the hoped-for Little Bittern. A lone Eurasian Honey Buzzard passes over. The water lilies and purple loosestrife, both still in flower, add to the attraction of this peaceful spot. We decide against stopping at Ropotamo, a popular beauty spot where cruises are offered along the river. Our last autumn group spent most of the morning here and reported little of interest!

Next comes a short stop at a coastal bay called Chengele Skele. Here among the Common Redshank and Common Greenshank, we find a single Marsh Sandpiper. A Green Sandpiper also flies past, typically in a hurry to be somewhere else. Brian and David watch a Blotched Snake swim across the small stream that flows into the sea: a large, well-marked reptile with mostly Asian distribution. We have time for a final stop, and choose the dyke across the north end of Atanasovsko Lake where we finished yesterday. On the way we surprise a Short-toed Eagle that has just killed another large Blotched Snake. It rises only a few feet from the front of the minibus: a massive white bulk of raptor. It never returns to its prey, as the headless snake is still where we left it on our return. The highlights of the walk along the dyke are again the thousands of pelicans and many hundreds of Pied Avocet, plus good views of Ruff, Sanderling, and Wood Sandpiper among many other waders. Dancho spots a juvenile Penduline Tit in a small tamarisk, clinging on bravely despite a brisk breeze. David finds a Common Kingfisher. We are back at base by 1745, and meet up as usual for checklist, dinner, and plenty of local beer and wine.

Saturday, 15 September

Before breakfast the salt museum area has its usual treasure trove of waterbirds. Today there are three Broad-billed Sandpipers, with a variety of other sandpipers and plovers. Slender-billed Gull numbers have risen to five. Dancho and I see a Common Quail fly from over the salt pans into the long grass onshore, but unfortunately as we are the only ones to see it, it does not appear on the group list.

Our destination today is Lake Mandra, which lies south of Lake Vaya and south of Bourgas city. It is also a freshwater lake, but much deeper than Vaya, which reduces the avian diversity and density. However, before reaching Mandra, we make three stops in the area of Poda, between Mandra and the coast. At the first, two massive White-tailed Eagles can be seen both in flight and perched in a tree, where one is harassed by a Magpie. Western Marsh Harriers are much in evidence, as at all stops today: the day's total must be 25 or more. Although most are in suitable breeding habitat, most will be migrants on passage. The second stop has Gadwall and Northern Shoveler on the water below us; and a Green Woodpecker flies past. The third stop, close to the Poda Wildlife Centre, overlooks a shallow bay in the Black Sea. Here – much to my relief – a lone White Stork finally appears, feeding along the shore. Out in the bay are many Pygmy Cormorants and a

few Ferruginous Duck. The pelicans flying above us in ones and twos are Dalmatian, with their plain grey underwings.

Now we skirt round another Bourgas suburb, and have our first views of Mandra Lake from the dam: strictly speaking it is a reservoir, as the dam (built in 1963) raised its level and altered its ecology. There is some evidence of raptor migration as Lesser Spotted, Booted and Short-toed Eagles, and a lone Levant Sparrowhawk (with black-tipped pointed wings) fly over. We enjoy our picnic on the terrace of a café in the village of Dimchevo, and meet one of the British nationals who have recently settled here. She advertises a stay in her home in the RSPB magazine. In the heat of the afternoon we stop to check the river crossings and adjacent hills of the Fakiyska and Izvorska Rivers. A few more raptors include a Long-legged Buzzard, and the marshes produce a Purple Heron and a few Great Egrets among the more common waterbirds. A short woodland walk fails to achieve many notable sightings, as the heat and lack of breeze is sapping both to us and the birds!

However, the Poda Wildlife Centre has a shaded rooftop platform that overlooks brackish marsh and the bay where we saw the White Stork this morning. We now make our way here, and are rewarded: a Common Kingfisher starts us off, followed by our first White-winged Tern. It is in transitional plumage, with black mantle and white rump, and noticeably smaller and more agile than the greyer Whiskered Tern with it. While the rest of us visit a second hide, David stays on the roof and watches four Collared Pratincoles. Western Marsh Harriers continue to be conspicuous, regularly rearranging the Spotted Redshanks and Great and Little Egrets in one pond. Our last bird of note is a Gull-billed Tern which quarters the reedbeds nearby.

Our final evening meal is accompanied by carafes of local wine provided by Ornitholidays, in celebration of many excellent wildlife sightings during an almost cloudless week. This of course is ideal migration weather for the birds, which can pass high above without pausing to rest and feed. An overnight storm would have caused more 'falls' of migrants: but those conditions that might be inconvenient or serious for the birds are always eagerly anticipated by the birders. Nevertheless, along the Black Sea Flyway, there is always plenty to see, even in a fine September week.

Sunday, 16 September

Packing takes precedence over an early outing; but I also enjoy a swim in the Black Sea soon after dawn. It's only 130 paces from the front door of the hotel to the first waves, and seems too good an opportunity to miss after a warm week. After breakfast, we return to the salt museum where the Broad-billed Sandpipers are still obligingly close to us. We can make side-by-side comparisons of Little and Temminck's Stints, and watch a Greenshank fishing by running and lunging forwards. It successfully catches two tiny silver fish within a few minutes. Its mandibles look like chopsticks as it tries to manoeuvre the prey into position. We continue working at the confusing juvenile plumages of the small plovers. Further along the shore by the Penny Market, Black-winged Stilts and Little Terns appear.

There is time to finalize our packing before an early lunch at the hotel. Now we say our farewells to Liz and Alan who have another day here before their flight. As we leave, the only rain of the week begins to fall. We are soon at the airport where the wonderful Pancho and Dancho Show finally comes to an end. We are early enough to beat the coaches from the big hotels, and take off on time at 1505. After just over three hours in the air, we land at Gatwick at 1620 local time. Now all that remains is to collect our luggage and say our goodbyes by the carousels, before dispersing homewards.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to Dancho and Lyubo for excellent guiding and bird-finding. Equally, thanks to Pancho for safe driving, and buying and preparing our excellent picnics. Thanks also to Dancho for help with the dragonfly list (below). Many thanks also to you for participating in the tour with enthusiasm and good humour. I hope we may meet up on another Ornitholiday again soon. Thanks also to Alan Burrows and Brian Garner for the photographs that illustrate this report.

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October 2012

Itinerary and Weather

Wherever possible, **shade** temperatures at dawn and midday are given.

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|--------|---|
| 09 Sep | Arrive Bourgas 2300. Pomorie.
Dry, 18°C (64°F) |
| 10 Sep | Pomorie Salt Lake. Lakes Vaya and Atanasovsko (south part).
Sunny, breezy, 18-25°C (64-77°F) |
| 11 Sep | Pomorie Salt Lake. Lake Atanasovsko (north-east part).
Sunny, breezy, 21-26°C (70-79°F) |
| 12 Sep | Pomorie Salt Lake. Poroy Oakwood and Dam.
Sunny, breezy, 20-26°C (68-79°F) |
| 13 Sep | Pomorie Salt Lake. Lakes Vaya and Atanasovsko (north-west part).
Sunny, 18-28°C (64-82°F) |
| 14 Sep | Pomorie Salt Lake. Beglik Tash, nr. Primorsko. Arkutino Marsh. Chengele Skele.
Lake Atanasovsko (north-west part).
Sunny, 18-27°C (64-81°F) |
| 15 Sep | Pomorie Salt Lake. Lake Mandra and Poda Protected Area.
Sunny, 21-31°C (70-88°F) |
| 16 Sep | Pomorie Salt Lake. Bourgas Airport, depart 1505.
Cloudy, light rain, 22-24°C (72-75°F) |

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR

No of days recorded

4 1h means seen on 4
day and heard on 1
other day

Abundance Scale (max. seen on 1 day)

1 = 1 – 4 individuals
2 = 5 - 9
3 = 10 - 99
4 = 100 - 999
5 = 1000 - 9999

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Mute Swan	5	3	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Common Shelduck	5	3	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	2	3	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Mallard	7	3	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Gadwall	1	2	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Northern Pintail	1	1	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Northern Shoveler	3	3	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Eurasian Teal	7	3	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Red-crested Pochard	1	1	<i>Netta rufina</i>
Common Pochard	3	4	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Ferruginous Duck	3	2	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
Black-necked Grebe	3	2	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
Little Grebe	5	3	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Crested Grebe	6	3	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Red-necked Grebe	1	1	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
White Pelican	6	5	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
Dalmatian Pelican	4	3	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>
Great Cormorant	7	5	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Pygmy Cormorant	3	3	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmeus</i>
Squacco Heron	1	1	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
Little Egret	7	4	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Great Egret	3	2	<i>Egretta alba</i>
Grey Heron	6	3	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	3	1	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
White Stork	1	1	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Black Stork	3	2	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	4	2	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
White-tailed Eagle	2	1	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
Osprey	2	1	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Lesser Spotted Eagle	5	1	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>
Short-toed Eagle	6	1	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
Booted Eagle	2	1	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>
Western Marsh Harrier	7	3	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Montagu's Harrier	2	2	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
Long-legged Buzzard	2	1	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>
Common Buzzard	5	3	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
European Honey Buzzard	4	2	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	3	1	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Levant Sparrowhawk	1	1	<i>Accipiter brevipes</i>
Northern Goshawk	1	1	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
Common Kestrel	6	2	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Eurasian Hobby	2	1	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
Peregrine Falcon	1	1	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Common Moorhen	5	3	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Eurasian Coot	4	5	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Eurasian Oystercatcher	3	2	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Pied Avocet	7	4	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Black-winged Stilt	2	2	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Collared Pratincole	1	1	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
Little Ringed Plover	7	3	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>

Common Ringed Plover	5	3	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	
Kentish Plover	3	2	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	
Grey Plover	3	1	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	
Northern Lapwing	3	3	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	
Red Knot	3	1	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	
Sanderling	2	1	<i>Calidris alba</i>	
Dunlin	6	3	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	
Curlew Sandpiper	2	3	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	
Broad-billed Sandpiper	6	2	<i>Calidris falcinellus</i>	
Temminck's Stint	3	1	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	
Little Stint	7	3	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	
Wood Sandpiper	5	2	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	
Green Sandpiper	2	1	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	
Common Redshank	7	3	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	
Spotted Redshank	4	1h	3	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
Common Greenshank	7	3	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	
Marsh Sandpiper	3	1	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	
Black-tailed Godwit	1	1	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	
Bar-tailed Godwit	4	1	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	
Eurasian Curlew	1	1	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	
Common Snipe	3	1	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	
Red-necked Phalarope	1	1	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	
Ruff	3	2	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	
Black-headed Gull	7	4	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	
Slender-billed Gull	6	2	<i>Larus genei</i>	
Mediterranean Gull	7	3	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	
Caspian Gull ¹	7	3	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	
Little Gull	7	4	<i>Larus minutus</i>	
Little Tern	4	1	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	
Sandwich Tern	7	4	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	
Gull-billed Tern	1	1	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>	
Common Tern	6	3	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	
Black Tern	1	1	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	
White-winged Tern	1	1	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	
Whiskered Tern	3	2	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	5	3	<i>Columba livia</i>	
Eurasian Collared Dove	5	2	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	
Common Swift	1	2	<i>Apus apus</i>	
Eurasian Hoopoe	1	1	<i>Upupa epops</i>	
Common Kingfisher	3	1	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	
European Bee-eater	6	1h	3	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
European Roller	2	1	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	
European Green Woodpecker	3	1	<i>Picus viridis</i>	
Grey-headed Woodpecker	-	1h	-	<i>Picus canus</i>
Syrian Woodpecker	1	1	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>	
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	2	1	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>	
Common Skylark	1	1	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	
Crested Lark	3	2	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	
Woodlark	1	1	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	
Common Sand Martin	7	4	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	
Barn Swallow	7	4	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	
Common House Martin	7	3	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	
Tree Pipit	1	1	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	
White Wagtail	7	3	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	
Yellow Wagtail	3	1	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	
Grey Wagtail	1	1	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	
European Robin	1	1	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	
Common Redstart	1	1	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	
Northern Wheatear	1	1	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	
Whinchat	1	1	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	
Common Blackbird	4	2	<i>Turdus merula</i>	
Blackcap	1	1	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	
Common Whitethroat	1	1	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	

Lesser Whitethroat	1	1	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Cetti's Warbler	- 1h	-	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Sedge Warbler	1	1	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
European Reed Warbler	2	1	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Willow Warbler	6	3	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Wood Warbler	3	1	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	5	2	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Red-breasted Flycatcher	3	2	<i>Ficedula parva</i>
Great Tit	1	1	<i>Parus major</i>
European Blue Tit	2	1	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Sombre Tit	1	1	<i>Poecile lugubris</i>
Eurasian Penduline Tit	1	1	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>
Eurasian Nuthatch	2 1h	1	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
Red-backed Shrike	6	3	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
Woodchat Shrike	1	1	<i>Lanius senator</i>
Eurasian Jay	4	1	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Common Magpie	7	3	<i>Pica pica</i>
Western Jackdaw	4	3	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Hooded Crow	2	1	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
Common Raven	1	1	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Common Starling	7	4	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
House Sparrow	7	4	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Tree Sparrow	4	1	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Common Chaffinch	3	2	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Common Linnet	1	2	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
European Goldfinch	1	1	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
European Greenfinch	2	2	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
Hawfinch	1	3	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
Corn Bunting	1	1	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>

Taxonomic Note

- 1 Caspian Gull: the taxonomy of Europe's large grey-backed gulls is complex. Originally they were all placed together as Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus*. About 25 years ago yellow-legged birds of the Mediterranean were split as a separate species, Yellow-legged Gull, *L. cachinnans*. Within the last few years, a further split for the longer-billed, longer-legged form that breeds in the Black Sea area has been agreed. These are now called Caspian Gulls, but they have kept the name *cachinnans*, since that was originally used to describe this subspecies. Yellow-legged Gulls of the Mediterranean are now *L. michahellis*. See the Collins guide, (Svensson, Mullarney & Zetterstrom), 2nd edition, pp. 186-8.

MAMMALS: Surprisingly, no wild mammals were recorded on this tour!

OTHER ANIMALS included Blotched Snake (*Elaphe sauromates*), European Pond Terrapin (*Emys orbicularis*), Marsh Frog (*Rana ridibunda*), and Kotschy's Gecko (*Cyrtodactylus kotschyi*).

DRAGONFLIES included Common Darter, Southern Darter, Red-veined Darter, Ruddy Darter, Scarlet Darter, Keeled Skimmer, Eastern Willow Spreadwing and Emperor.

BUTTERFLIES included Great Banded Grayling, Red Admiral, Meadow Brown (spp), Clouded Yellow sp, Comma, and various blues and fritillaries.

OTHER INSECTS included Praying Mantis (*Mantis religiosa*).

This list represents those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.



Broad-billed Sandpiper



Crested Lark



Red-backed Shrike



Middle Spotted Woodpecker



Dalmatian Pelican



Ruff



Black Stork and Starlings



Blotched Snake

Front Cover : White Pelicans

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