

Go Slow in Montenegro

Naturetrek Tour Report

26th April – 3rd May 2026



Dalmatian Pelican



Near Virpazar



Squacco Heron



Great Crested Grebes

Tour report by Mark Wood
Photos by Mark Wood and Allan Winkworth



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Mark Wood (leader) with eight Naturetrek clients.

Day 1

Sunday 26th April

The group departed the United Kingdom from three different airports and arrived at two different ones in Montenegro. The main group arrived in the capital of Podgorica late evening. After a quick transfer we arrived at Villa Miela, our accommodation for the whole week, just outside the village of Virpazar on the southern shores of Lake Skadar. Food had been prepared for us and after a quick dinner we all retired to our rooms.

Day 2

Monday 27th April

The whole group met for the first time at breakfast at 8.00am. Our excellent chef had prepared a lovely spread, and we dined on the terrace, watching the morning sun bathe the spectacular view across the valley to the snow-capped peaks on the horizon. Around us, the woods were alive with bird song, particularly Nightingale, Blackbird and Blackcap. A Hawfinch paid the tree over the terrace a quick visit and Red-rumped Swallows circled around at eye level.

We set off at 9.00am in two 4x4 vehicles to explore the narrow road along the southern shore of the lake, making several stops. The lake held a few Dalmatian Pelicans, which we scoped, and on the hillsides we found a few Eastern Black-eared Wheatears, a couple of pairs of Western Rock Nuthatches, and many Eastern Subalpine Warblers. We then descended from the hillsides to a small village on the lake shore, where we boarded a boat that would take us back to Virpazar: the vehicles would meet us there. Out on the water, we passed a small island covered in nesting Grey Herons and Great Cormorants, and then moved on to the island where the Dalmatian Pelicans were nesting, but not too close.

Next, we landed on a small island inhabited solely by eighteen nuns. They gave us a short tour of their monastery and brought us fresh sage juice. Several butterflies were present, including Black-veined White and Red Admiral. We continued back along the lake, eating our packed lunch along the way. Many Great Crested Grebes were present, some with chicks on their backs. Pygmy Cormorants were also numerous, along with Little Egret, Yellow-legged and Black-headed Gull, Whiskered and Common Tern, and in the reeded areas Great Reed Warblers and Little Grebes. Upon returning to the village, we were driven back to the accommodation to relax for the afternoon, before meeting for dinner on the terrace, where we watched the sun set behind the hills.

Day 3

Tuesday 28th April

This morning, we travelled a short distance by car to the nearby Orahovstica valley, where we began a walk through the pretty woodland, following a beautiful stream. Along the way, we found Bee and Green-winged Orchids, and several species of butterfly, including Scarce Swallowtail, Scarce Copper and Nettle-tree Butterfly. Birds were difficult to observe in the dense foliage, with Nightingale, Blackcap and Golden Oriole remaining heard only, but we did see our only Black Kite of the trip. We ventured further up the valley where we had lunch at a local lady's house, on her beautiful terrace overlooking the hillsides. From here we spotted some Golden Orioles and our first Common Swift.

After lunch, we walked up the road further still, adding Alpine Swift, Sombre Tit and Eastern Orphean Warbler. With the afternoon heat increasing, we retired to the villa, where we found a rather large Glass Lizard, which our local guide captured, allowing everyone a close look. A relaxing afternoon followed, with another fine dinner on the terrace at 6.30pm.

Day 4

Wednesday 29th April

A few of us went for a pre-breakfast stroll from the accommodation, down the quiet road. We found a Blue Rock Thrush, several Eastern Subalpine Warblers, Cirl Bunting and Hawfinch.

We set off promptly at 9.00am and began to make our journey towards the coast, but were halted in our tracks by a broken-down train on the level crossing out of the village. This necessitated a detour through the valley, which cost us a little time: no matter. We made it to the Ulcinj salt pans, where we had been given permission to drive to the best bit, saving a lengthy walk. We quickly encountered many birds like Zitting Cisticola and Corn Bunting, and on a wire were Whinchat and Red-backed Shrike. Overhead, Bee-eaters and flocks of feeding Collared Pratincoles appeared. Rollers were seen displaying, and on the water's edge, waders like Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper and Black-winged Stilt could be seen. We walked around a big lake to where the pratincoles nested and got good views of them on the ground. Not much more could be added, except for very distant Greater Flamingoes, a Mallard, Great Reed Warbler and Common Tern.

Nearly back where we started were more birds like Curlew Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Kentish Plover, Little Tern, Squacco Heron and many more pratincoles, all of which were really close, allowing for great, prolonged viewing. We went to the coast to have lunch in a nice restaurant, overlooking a river estuary. After eating, we walked out to the beach, but there was not much to see, apart from Mediterranean Gulls.

On the return journey, we stopped at a large grassland, which was the nesting colony for hundreds of Bee-eaters. They were all very busy mating and pairing up, looking resplendent in the afternoon sunshine. From here, the journey was a bit slow, as we got stuck in some traffic, but we made it back to the villa with some rest time before dinner. While we went through the list, a Scops Owl could be heard in the valley below the villa.

Day 5

Thursday 30th April

Today was rather cool, overcast, windy and rainy, so we opted to spend most of it exploring the historic hill town of Stari Bar. To get there required driving over the old, scenic, mountain road, with many twists and turns and superb views. Upon our reaching the town, the rain had picked up, so we sat a while in a café drinking teas and coffees. When the rain eased, we tried to find a cliff nesting Eagle-Owl on the opposite hillside, which required us to walk under an ancient Roman aqueduct, but the bird could not be found.

The rain returned once more, so we decided to have an early lunch in a fine old restaurant, which served excellent local cuisine. After lunch, the rain had ceased, so we went and visited the intriguing remains of the old citadel. The ruins were fascinating, but no wildlife of note was found. We then visited a nearby ancient olive tree, reputed to be two thousand years old. We retraced our steps back over the mountain road, stopping a few times to admire some roadside orchids, which included Common Tongue, Elderflower, Monkey, Loose-flowered and Three-

toothed species. Back at the villa, we ate dinner indoors, as it had cooled considerably outside, but the food was as excellent as always.

Day 6

Friday 1st May

The weather had returned to blue skies and sunshine once again, but remained breezy. Our first stop of the day was by a river, near the small settlement of Zabljak. We went for a walk along the willow-lined banks, picking up some nice birds, including great views of Penduline Tit. Huge numbers of martins and swallows flew low over the water, and from the banks we flushed several Glossy Ibises. Other species seen included Hobby, Little Bittern and Cattle Egret.

In the village itself, we climbed a small hill with a ruined fortress on top, with commanding views of the surrounding floodplain and hills. Afterwards, we crossed the river in a small boat to an area of floodplain which we explored on foot, taking us to the southern shores of Malo Blato, a large lake. Several Glossy Ibises were here, and Golden Orioles were in the trees; we also flushed a Cuckoo, but birds seemed few, perhaps because of the wind. We returned across the river and travelled to another river in a small ravine, where many Alpine Swift hawked overhead. We had lunch in a local restaurant, where the food and service were excellent.

After eating, we explored another area of floodplain, with lots of woods and meadows. Loose-flowered Orchids filled the fields, a Scops Owl was calling (but could not be located), and many Nightingales were singing. We then returned to the accommodation to relax: we had to eat inside again as the wind was still a bit strong.

Day 7

Saturday 2nd May

The last full day for most of the group saw us taking the 4x4s up some scenic, twisting, hill roads where we made several stops at various viewpoints. We spotted a few Short-toed Snake Eagles, Eastern Subalpine Warblers, Alpine Swift, Blue Rock Thrush, Western Rock Nuthatch and Black Tern. At the end of a valley, we made a short hike through the forest, following the course of a beautiful river. At the end were many pools, containing Marsh Frog and lots of Yellow-bellied Toads. Birds were limited, but we did see our only Dipper and Spotted Flycatcher of the trip.

We then retired to a nearby waterside village, where we had lunch in another lovely restaurant. We boarded a small boat which took us down the river into Lake Skadar, and all the way back to Virpazar, where the 4x4s picked us up to take us back to the accommodation.

The journey along the many waterways was quite wonderful, and we saw a great array of herons, including Squacco and Grey Herons, and Little, Great and Cattle Egrets. There were also huge numbers of Cuckoos (possibly more than twenty) along the journey. Other highlights included Dalmatian Pelican, Ferruginous Duck, Pygmy Cormorant, Hobby, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and many nesting Whiskered Terns. We even saw a pair of terns sharing a frog they had caught. Yum!

Day 8

Sunday 3rd May

Our final day started with an extra dawn boat trip on Lake Skadar and its marshes. Only three people decided to take this trip, but it was well worth it. We had a similar mix of species to the previous afternoon, but we had greater numbers of Ferruginous Ducks, more Black Terns, (heard) Penduline Tit, a pair of showy Little Bitterns, many Great Reed Warblers, Black-crowned Night Herons and Purple Heron, but probably best of all were the large numbers of Dalmatian Pelican we saw at very close range, catching large fish alongside the Pygmy and Great Cormorants.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast, and four of the group then departed for Tivat: they had earlier flights than the rest of us. For those who remained, we still had a full day ahead of us, which we started by leaving the accommodation on foot and making our way downhill to Virpazar. We walked slowly, getting several great views of Eastern Subalpine Warbler, a few Cirl Buntings, Greenfinch, Hawfinch, a brief Eastern Black-eared Wheatear and many Nightingales calling. Close to the village, we got good views of both Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes, and many Chaffinches.

In the village, we stopped for some drinks, before setting out again along a different road. Bird activity was dropping as the afternoon heat rose, but we did find several Dalmatian Algyroides, a snake (which remained unidentified), European Pond Terrapin and several species of butterfly, including Oriental Marbled Skipper.

We returned to the village and had lunch in a restaurant overlooking the river. Afterwards, we decided to go for one more stroll to walk off our food. This time, we went down a more shaded lane to avoid the sun. Here we found a Woodchat Shrike, a Short-toed Treecreeper and an Eastern Orphean Warbler hidden in the undergrowth.

We then decided to call it a day, and returned to the accommodation to relax before our evening flight back to the UK.

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek email list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers.

naturetrek.co.uk/e-newsletter-signup

Scan to
sign up!



Social Media

We're social! Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, Bluesky and X and be the first to hear about the launch of new tours, offers, exciting sightings and photos from our recently returned holidays.



[instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays](https://www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays)



[facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays](https://www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays)



[naturetrek.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/naturetrek.social)



x.com/naturetrektours (formerly Twitter)

Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	April - May 2026							
		26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>							✓	✓
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>						✓		
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>								✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				✓		✓	✓	✓
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>				✓				
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓				✓	✓	✓
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		✓				✓	✓	✓
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>		✓						
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		H	H	H		✓	✓	✓
European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>							✓	
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>				✓	✓	✓		
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓				✓	✓	✓
Feral Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓		
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>							✓	
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓				✓	✓	✓
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>				✓				
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>				✓				
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Thinornis dubius</i>				✓				
Kentish Plover	<i>Anarhynchus alexandrinus</i>				✓				
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>				✓				
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>				✓				
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>				✓				
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>				✓				
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>				✓				
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>				✓				
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>				✓				
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>		✓				✓	✓	✓
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>							✓	✓
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		✓				✓	✓	✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓		✓		✓		✓
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i>				✓				
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmaeus</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>						✓		
Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>		✓				✓	✓	✓
Little Bittern	<i>Botaurus minutus</i>						✓		✓
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>								✓
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>				✓		✓	✓	✓
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>							✓	✓
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>						✓	✓	
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>				✓		✓		✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>				H				
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>			✓			✓	✓	✓
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>			✓	✓			✓	

Common name	Scientific name	April - May 2026							
		26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3
Eurasian Scops Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>			H	H		H		
Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>						✓	✓	
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>				✓			✓	✓
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>			✓					
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓				✓	
Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>						✓	✓	
European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>				✓				
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>				✓		✓	✓	
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>							✓	
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>						✓		
Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>		✓				✓	✓	
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>		✓	✓	✓		H	✓	H
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>								✓
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>								✓
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>				✓				✓
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>				✓				
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓				✓	
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>						✓		H
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			H				H	
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sombre Tit	<i>Poecile lugubris</i>			✓					
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>				✓				
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>		✓		✓			✓	✓
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>						✓	✓	✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis rufula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>							✓	✓
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>			H	H		H	H	H
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		H	H	H	H	H	H	✓
Eastern Orphean Warbler	<i>Curruca crassirostris</i>			✓					H
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>							✓	
Eastern Subalpine Warbler	<i>Curruca cantillans</i>		✓	H	✓			✓	✓
Western Rock Nuthatch	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>		✓					✓	
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>								✓
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>							✓	
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>							✓	
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>			H	H	H	H		H
Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>		H	✓	H		H	H	H
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>				✓			✓	
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>				✓				
Eastern Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe melanoleuca</i>		✓	✓					
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			✓					
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>			✓	✓			✓	

Common name	Scientific name	April - May 2026							
		26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>			✓	✓	✓			✓
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>				✓	✓	✓		✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>						✓		
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>				✓				
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>			H	✓				✓

Amphibians & reptiles

Common name	Scientific name	April - May 2026							
		26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3
Yellow-bellied Toad	<i>Bombina variegata</i>							✓	
Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>			✓					
Marsh Frog	<i>Pelophylax ridibundus</i>				✓			✓	
Dalmatian Algyroides	<i>Algyroides nigropunctatus</i>								✓
Balkan Green Lizard	<i>Lacerta trilineata</i>							✓	
Common Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis muralis</i>						✓		
European Glass Lizard	<i>Pseudopus apodus</i>		✓	✓					
Slow Worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>			✓					
Hermann's Tortoise	<i>Testudo hermanni</i>			✓	✓				
European Pond Terrapin	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>			✓					✓

Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name	April - May 2026							
		26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3
Scarce Swallowtail	<i>Iphiclides podalirius</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	
Common Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>				✓				
Oriental Marbled Skipper	<i>Carcharodus orientalis</i>								✓
Common Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>			✓				✓	
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>			✓	✓		✓		✓
Black-veined White	<i>Aporia crataegi</i>		✓						
Common Orange-tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>		✓	✓	✓				✓
Scarce Copper	<i>Lycaena vigaureae</i>			✓					
Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>						✓		
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>		✓	✓	✓				✓
Southern White Admiral	<i>Limenitis reducta</i>			✓				✓	✓
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>		✓					✓	
Nettle-tree Butterfly	<i>Libythea celtis</i>			✓					
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>			✓				✓	
Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>		✓	✓				✓	
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>						✓		

Damselflies & dragonflies

Common name	Scientific name
Beautiful Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>
Keeled Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>

Beetles

Common name	Scientific name
Rose Chafer	<i>Cetonia aurata</i>
Rainbow Beetle	<i>Chrysolina cerealis</i>
Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>

Orchids

Common name	Scientific name
Elderflower Orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza sambucina</i>
Monkey Orchid	<i>Orchis simia</i>
Three-toothed Orchid	<i>Neotinea tridentata</i>
Common Tongue Orchid	<i>Serapias lingua</i>
Loose-flowered Orchid	<i>Anacamptis laxiflora</i>
Green-winged Orchid	<i>Anacamptis morio</i>