

Romania - The Wildlife of Transylvania

Naturetrek Tour Report

4 - 11 June 2016



Yellow-bellied Toad by Annette Warrick



Female Brown Bear by Terry Goble



Broad Bodied Chaser (Female) by Annette Warrick



Sooty Copper by David Hartill

Report compiled by Terry Goble
Images courtesy of Annette Warwick, Stephen Mullard, David Harthill & Terry Goble



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with 14 Naturetrek clients

Summary

This tour incorporates some of the finest areas for wildlife watching in Transylvania, set against the dramatic backdrop of the imposing limestone peaks of the Carpathian Mountains.

The group had an eclectic mix of interests which, over the week, worked well as this became a real team effort. Susan and Stephen helped out with dragonfly identification, Stephen and Judy tackled some tricky moths, and everyone chipped in with sightings and enthusiasm. Luckily this trip has a wide range of wildlife to accommodate such diverse interests and this was born out with the fascination that greeted a sighting of a Horse Hair Worm and the awe of watching European Brown Bears in close proximity. Add to this a wealth of beautiful and scarce upland plants including a variety of orchids; stunning butterflies with Large Copper, Swallowtail and Poplar Admiral competing for the 'butterfly of the week'; gorgeous birds such as the special views of the handsome Hawfinch, Eurasian Hoopoe and shrikes; and whilst mammal watching catching sight of Alpine Chamois, Red Deer, Brown Hare and our very own Brown Bear from the vicinity of the guesthouse was very special. We also found time to study some of the invertebrates that held much interest for some of the group.

It was a pleasure to work with such a keen group that worked together to share knowledge and experiences. It may have even opened up new horizons for some. A special thanks to Dan for his knowledge of history, culture and wildlife that brought the week to life, and the hard work and management of Simona and Elena. All these elements made this an excellent week.

Day 1

Saturday 4th June

Fight from Heathrow to Bucharest; drive from Bucharest to Magura

The group met at Heathrow for a flight to Bucharest. The flight took off without any delays and after an uneventful flight, we landed at the scheduled time of 4.10pm. We were through passport control and collected our bags promptly, and then we went out to meet Simona who took us to the bus. Here we met Bojan our driver for the week.

We took in some water and then got under way. It's a three and a half hour drive to the guest house and we were keen to get there around 8pm for our evening meal. The journey took us north across the largely agricultural plain, interspersed with lakes and villages. We then began our climb into the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. Here we took a short break for drinks and toilets. The birdlife around was mostly common birds such as Hooded Crow, Western Jackdaw, hirundines and swifts amongst others. We also saw a Common Buzzard from the service station. There were many 'white' butterflies around. Most looked to be Green-veined Whites, but there were surely others that were hard to identify from the bus!

After the break we climbed high into the hills and the beautiful scenery of the Carpathian Mountains came into view. We continued climbing for a while and then began to descend onto the Brasov Plateau. During the steep descent we became aware of just how high we had reached. We then made our way up again, through the town of Zarnesti and up through the Zarnesti Gorge which is in the National Park of Piatra Craiului (roughly

translated as the King's Rock). Here we made a sharp left turn up a winding road, climbing up through the Beech forest and past grazing fields. We then wound through the village until we finally arrived at the Mosorel Guesthouse.

It was a tiring journey, especially for those who had risen early to get to Heathrow, so we quickly got settled into our rooms and met for our evening meal at 8.30pm. Everyone seemed relaxed and enjoyed a hearty home-cooked three course meal. Once replete, we discussed plans for the next day and decided on an early night, but not before the moth trap was assembled to see what we could catch on what was a cool night. We then retired to our rooms in anticipation of our first full day.

Day 2

Sunday 5th June

Basra Region

The morning started bright and early for a few that met just after 6am. We first checked out the moth haul and found quite a decent amount of moths for what had been a chilly night. The highlights were Pebble and Lesser Swallow Prominents, and perhaps the Buff Tip; always a firm favourite. We then planned to go on a slow walk along a village path, past a little orchard and grazing meadows. We hadn't quite managed to leave when Joe spotted two Alpine Chamois on the cliff opposite. Then Graham spotted a Brown Bear walking through a small clearing. Only Andrew managed to get on to it as it melted back into the thick forest and out of sight. For the rest of the group bear sightings had to wait a while longer.

On the walk we saw a few nice birds such as Black and Common Redstarts, White Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Fieldfare, Alpine Swift and a handsome Red-backed Shrike. Cuckoos could be heard calling. We also did well on the mammal front spotting about nine Alpine Chamois, three Roe Deer and a family of Red Foxes with a cute cub. For the botanists there were a few Early Purple and Green-winged Orchids to admire among some of the other upland flowers in the lovely grazing meadows. We then had to get back in time to have breakfast and meet with Dan, our local guide.

Breakfast was a buffet of cereals, fruits and salad with omelettes and coffee/tea. After we were sated we meet with Dan, who arrived promptly at 8am. After brief introductions we set off down the winding road to the entrance to Zarnesti Gorge. On this occasion we walked down the gorge towards Zarnesti. Our target species was White-throated Dipper and we soon saw an adult, characteristically whizzing up the stream. We later found a fledgling that looked awkward in his big feet picking his way along the stream edge. We spotted a number of butterflies including good numbers of Woodland Ringlet and a smart fresh Pearl-bordered Fritillary, found by Sue. Not to be outdone Steve then found a nice Sooty Copper. We also saw the first of numerous Yellow-bellied Toads and turned one over to show its startling yellow patterning that acts as a defence mechanism when threatened. The birds were generally quiet, but we heard Song Thrush, European Robin and Common Blackbird amongst other common birds singing.

Next we drove passed the National Park Visitor Centre on the other side of Zarnesti to the Barsa Valley complex and walked along the floor of one of the valleys in this area. When we arrived the sunny morning was threatened by gathering dark clouds, but the sun shone intermittently whilst we explored the valley. Again there was an array of beautiful flowers and more orchids including Bog Orchid. We passed a nesting stork and heard both Garden Warbler and Eurasian Blackcap; neither seen very well in the woodland foliage. Common Buzzards

soared overhead. One buzzard had approached too near to a Fieldfare's nest and the Fieldfare then proceeded to harass the buzzard until it left the area. A Spotted Nutcracker was briefly seen before it dropped out of sight, and a few other birds including Marsh Tit were seen and heard calling. There were some nice butterflies around such as Clouded Apollo and Wood White. We also managed to see Sand Lizard, including a bright green male.

We stopped at a stream and as if from nowhere, Simona and her mother arrived bringing a sumptuous picnic full of homemade foods, using fresh produce and including a homemade elderflower cordial. We sat down to enjoy our lunch and a glass of wine before setting off to another valley on the other side of Zarnesti. As we were leaving it began to lightly rain, however we did manage to find a Little Owl, peering out from behind a chimney.

Then we made our way to the next valley walk. This valley was a different habitat and included typical mixed forest with Beech and Hornbeam and some conifer species (Norway Spruce and pines). At this point the rain was intermittent but gradually getting heavier. We saw a few more butterflies including a brief view of a Large Copper. However the reptiles were beginning to steal the show with three Grass Snakes including a rather large specimen and a Slow Worm. Birds were again thin on the ground and the mammals were represented by a black Red Squirrel that managed to bound off before most could see it. The flowers were excellent along this walk with Broad-leafed Hellebore and some other helleborine species greatly appreciated. We then walked out into a more open area and saw a male Common Cuckoo and male Red-backed Shrike. A Northern Raven could be heard 'cronking' in the distance. As had threatened, the rain began to get increasingly heavier and we had to wait until a large flock of sheep had passed so as not to agitate the dogs. We arrived at the pick-up point a little soggy but we had enjoyed a great day of wildlife watching. It was now time to say goodbye to Dan and head back to the guesthouse. As we set off we had good views of the Red Squirrel.

We arrived back at the guesthouse at 4.30pm and had some free time before meeting for our evening meal. Before we could enjoy the free time the thunder clouds rolled in and a heavy and thundery shower developed. There was a lull in the storm which was enough time for Graham to find another Brown Bear on the cliff face and share his sighting with his neighbours. We then met for lunch as the skies were brightening. Halfway through the meal George (Guesthouse owner) came in and told us he had seen a bear on the opposite hillside. We all went out and pleasingly, everyone managed to get a look at the bear which seemed to be busy feeding on something. We then settled down to finish our meal without any further wildlife interruptions!

After dinner we caught up with the checklist and went through a vast array of wildlife, but kept the plants down to just the highlights to save time. We had certainly seen a lot of wildlife since arriving yesterday; from moths to bears! The prospect of a long day and early morning tomorrow meant that everyone retired to their rooms after the listing to get some sleep.

Day 3

Monday 6th June

Drive to Dumbrovita Fish Ponds; drive to Brasov and on to Bear Hide.

Most of the group were up early for a bird walk and Stephen and Judy were even earlier to help with the considerable moth haul. Despite another cool night we had some great moths including two Pine Hawk-moths, Puss Moth and a variety of others. A scan of the rock face produced yet another sleeping bear for Graham, rapidly becoming his speciality! The walk through the village produced lots of lovely birds with the male Common Redstart never failing to impress. The only new bird was the Long-tailed Tit, although this is a little

different from those in the UK having a white head. We returned in good time for breakfast and to get ready for the day ahead.

We set off after a filling breakfast for our first destination of the day, Dumbrovita Fish Ponds, about an hour's drive away. On the journey we picked up Dan from Zarnesti and then made our way to the fish ponds, noting a few White Stork nests on the way. At the fish ponds it was hard to know where to look as birds wheeled around over the lake and many were calling from the shrubs and reeds. Marsh Frogs were calling everywhere and despite the inclement weather, we also found some butterflies and dragonflies to admire.

The ponds were full of life and we saw many Squacco Herons in breeding plumage with their buffy wings and almost purple backs. There were lots of other herons and egrets including Great Egret, Purple Heron and Black-crowned Night Heron, but perhaps the highlight was the elusive Little Bittern. On a few occasions this small heron flew above the reeds only to drop again quickly. Finally, we had a more prolonged view as it flew over the footpath. Warblers were also prominent with Great Reed Warbler clambering for attention, Savi's Warbler reeling from deep within the reed beds and several Marsh Warblers called and flitted between the reeds and shrubs. Other birds included Black and Whiskered Terns, Little and Black-Headed Gulls, Great and Pygmy Cormorants and several pairs of Marsh Harriers among many other species.

We then moved on to another pond which held much the same species. We walked to a low hill giving a panoramic view over the lake. On this walk in the brief sunshine we found a few butterflies including a gorgeous female Large Copper and some new species of dragonflies and damselflies including Norfolk Hawker and White-legged Damselfly. Judy managed to avoid stepping on a new mammal species in the shape of a Water Shrew, and we finally had a few new birds up on the hill; namely Whinchat and *flava* type Yellow Wagtails. We strolled back down the footpath to be greeted by Helen and Simona and another fabulous picnic. Despite the prospect of an early dinner, we all ate probably rather too heartily!

After lunch we set off to another lake, at Rotbav, and attempted to see Penduline Tit. We managed to locate its incredible nest but unfortunately the birds did not show. We contented ourselves with a new damselfly (Small Red-eye) and finally getting a decent sighting of Tree Sparrow.

It was now time for a guided tour of Brasov, which is Dan's speciality. We drove the short distance and walked around the old town, which was within an old fortress. We looked around the old buildings such as the Black Church and Dan gave details about the history and ethnic background of the people of the old town. We then had a little free time to explore the town prior to meeting up at 3.20pm to go for an early 'dinner'. We went to a lovely little restaurant that served traditional Romanian dishes as well as more conventional 'western' food. None of the group was brave enough to try the pig's brains, but everyone seemed to enjoy their meal.

It was now time for the main event of the day and we drove a little way outside Brasov to the entrance to the walk to the bear hide. Due to the road conditions, we walked to the bear hide through mainly pine woodlands. At the hide a young 18 month female bear was already eating, so we quickly got into position to watch this rather small, ungainly looking bear. After it had finished eating we waited a while for another bear to appear, however the same bear reappeared. The young bear soon left in a hurry as a bigger female bear approached. This bear stayed a while before drifting off and returning later. A third male bear made a brief appearance not long before it was time to leave. When the bear left hurriedly it signalled the end of our watching session and we made our

way back to the vehicle in the gathering gloom. Joe had a bonus bear as he had a comfort stop and saw a bear approach the feeding station. We arrived safely back at the bus where Bodan was waiting to drive us back to the guesthouse. We dropped Dan off at Zarnesti again and made our way back to Magura. The only sighting of note on our return was a Little Owl. Back at the guesthouse we quickly dispersed to our rooms to get some sleep after a long but enjoyable day.

Day 4

Tuesday 7th June

Walk up Zarnesti Gorge

Due to our late return the previous evening, we didn't have an early morning bird walk although some got up early to 'pot' and identify the moth haul. On this occasion there were fewer moths but some nice new species such as Scalloped Hazel. A quick scan of the hills produced about six chamois but no bears. We went for breakfast looking forward to the gorge walk ahead.

After breakfast we met Dan and walked down through several meadows before meeting back up with the main track. On the route, Dan stopped to tell us about the agricultural practise and give a brief talk on the historical and present day culture of the village. His first talk was interrupted as a Peregrine Falcon flew by carrying prey. He finished the talk and we walked on through the flower-rich meadows. On this section of the walk we saw some excellent orchids and flowering plants. Nottingham Catchfly (not found in Nottingham and does not catch flies!) and Heart-shaped Marsh, Fragrant, Military and Green-winged Orchids were all admired while a few butterflies including Little Blue made the most of the brief sunshine on an overcast day. A couple of woodpeckers were seen flying around and one seen without its chin strap confirmed it was a Syrian Woodpecker. We had also a curious sighting of a Roe Deer running at speed towards us before veering off over the meadow. As lovely as this sighting was, we couldn't help but wonder what had spooked it? We then reached the wooded path as we continued down to the valley floor. Bird's-nest Orchids and other flowering plants were noted and a Wood Warbler trilled overhead before giving some good views on a more open branch.

We finally reached the valley floor and walked up towards the impressive Zarnesti Gorge. The imposing limestone walls were quite spectacular and offered challenging climbing to those so disposed! Today we were focusing on the plants and woodland management. Dan explained how the five main species of hunted animals were managed in a way that ensured that they prospered, despite the limited hunting. Wolves are a separate issue from the others; Wild Boar, Brown Bear and Roe and Red Deer (and Capercaillie) and are controlled differently, but face pressure from illegal hunting around human settlements, however they still thrived in the remote parts of the region.

We walked up to the Ranger's Hut where we had arranged to meet Simona and Elena for lunch. Here we paused and soon enough they arrived with lunch. There was a brief shower, but not enough to dampen the spirits as everyone tucked in to another delicious homemade lunch with organic fruits and cordial to finish. Whilst eating lunch a Black Woodpecker flew overhead and we saw Common Buzzard and Common Kestrel as well. The Grey Wagtail was a constant companion up the gorge and we also saw and heard Coal Tit and other typical woodland species. Dan noted some interesting and beautiful plants on the way including a distant Alpine Iris, which was a lovely purple colour. Wendy found the only Fire Salamander of the walk; this spectacular amphibian sports a vivid black and yellow livery to warn predators that it is toxic. David found a Transylvanian Aquilegia, which was a speciality of the area and one Dan was keen to show the group.

We stopped again at the 'crossroads' and were lucky to have a brief sunny interlude which brought out some of the many butterflies and gave us a taste of what a warm, sunny day might have produced. In the event Duke of Burgundy, Map (Spring Brood) and Woodland Ringlet were spotted. As the sun again disappeared under grey skies we walked a little further to the edge of the gorge where it turned into a woodland track and split into a multitude of paths. Here we turned back and made our way down the gorge to meet up with Bodan and get a lift back to the guesthouse. Whilst waiting for the minibus we watched Yellow-bellied Toads mating in a clear pond, quite an interesting way to pass the time! Bodan then arrived and transported us back up the hill, where we dispersed for some free-time after bidding Dan farewell.

We met again at 7.30pm for dinner and caught up with everyone's various sightings in their free-time. After dinner we discussed the plans and weather for tomorrow's outing and then undertook the checklist. We had two days to do and also to add some of the plant highlights. It was a relaxed and light-hearted session and soon after we retired to get some sleep for another early start.

Day 5

Wednesday 8th June

Drive to Narcissus Forest

A few met early to 'pot' the moth haul and sort the identifications. There were a few new species but numbers were low again, probably due to the cool evening. We then saw Graham rushing down the stairs to tell us he had seen a mother Brown Bear and cub feeding on the hillside opposite. We quickly found them in the telescope and everyone had good views of the feeding bears. We also saw two Alpine Chamois to add to the mammal sightings. We then set off for a walk down the village and on to a lower slope. The morning was bright and sunny, but cool in the shady valley. We saw a few birds but none new and we went to see some Globe Flowers that Joe had found previously. After looking at these we turned back and went for breakfast.

Breakfast was the usual buffet style and afterwards we all met again at 8am to drive down the valley and pick up Dan in Zarnesti. We then got underway, heading for the Narcissus Forest about an hour away. Despite the dire forecast, the day was turning out to be sunny and it was a lovely warm day when we reached the oak woodland. We immediately saw some excellent birds with Lesser Grey Shrike and Eurasian Hoopoe occupying the same bush! We divided the day into two walks with a break in the middle for Elena and Simona's flying picnic.

The first walk took us over some grasslands and then into the forest. We had some excellent bird and butterfly sightings with a few insects and amphibians to add to the diversity. There were also some excellent orchids (Lesser Butterfly) and other flowering plants such as Spiked Rampion, Sticky Catchfly and Lady's Bedstraw to keep everyone in the group busy. Dan relayed a story about Lady's Bedstraw that it was believed that if a young woman kept some under her pillow, she would dream of her future beloved! The pick of the birds were probably the Lesser Spotted Eagles as they swooped and displayed overhead. Eurasian Golden Orioles were as elusive as ever and despite hearing their fluting song in many parts of the wood, a few glimpses were all we could manage. Grey-headed and Great Spotted Woodpeckers were seen, but the Middle Spotted Woodpecker remained frustratingly out of sight. The butterflies were excellent with Chequered Skipper, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary and later a Green-underside Blue being the most notable. On the walk back to the bus a European Bee-eater flew over calling and was seen by some of the group.

Elena and Simona served up a delicious lunch with aubergine spread, schnitzels, omelettes and potato salad all homemade. Fresh cherries and strawberries also went down very well. After lunch we were off again into the heart of the oak woodland. The birds really took centre stage on this section as we had fabulous views of a Hawfinch perched in the open for several minutes, a Eurasian Wryneck flew across a field, and Eurasian Golden Orioles gave tantalising views again until a few at the front watched a Montagu's Harrier being harried by a male Golden Oriole! We also saw Agile Frog, Yellow-bellied Toad and some great insects including a large Longhorn Beetle (Musk Beetle). It was difficult to leave this fabulous forest after such a feast of wildlife, but it was now time to make the journey back.

A rather sleepy group made the hour's drive to Zarnesti where we said goodbye to Dan and then continued to the guesthouse. We all went off to get some rest and take some time out before meeting for dinner. At dinner we enjoyed a home cooked three course meal and then settled down to discuss plans for the next day and undertake the checklist. It had been quite a day for wildlife and some of the creatures seen still needed work to confirm identifications, however the rest of the sightings were gone through. Then some of the group departed to their rooms and others went for an evening walk. A mother bear and cub (probably the same as this morning's pair) and a smart male Common Redstart were seen. Then it was time for everyone to get some sleep after a truly great day's wildlife's watching.

Day 6

Thursday 9th June

Drive to Nouă Șinca; Horse and Cart to Strumbie Valley; evening at the bear hide

The moth haul was again low in numbers but we had some excellent moths including the impressive Fox Moth. We then re-grouped for a walk down through the flower meadows in the direction of the Zarnesti Gorge. We hadn't gone far before we began spotting mammals; first a Roe Deer and then an unidentified mammal that after several morphs revealed itself to be a Brown Hare, the first of the trip. The views and flower meadows themselves were gorgeous, however the birds were quiet and we could only muster Yellowhammer, Common and Black Redstarts and a smart Lesser Whitethroat.

Back at the guesthouse we quickly got ready and departed on time, collecting Dan on the way to Nouă Șinca. At Nouă Șinca we waited a while whilst our horse and carts were prepared. Whilst we were waiting Ed gallantly picked some Walnut leaves for a local woman to have blessed on Ascension Day; she beamed her delight at his help. We then boarded the two carts and rode off towards Strumbie Valley. En route we saw a Peregrine Falcon fly over and a pair of Lesser Spotted Eagles gave great views. We then arrived at Strumbie Valley where we walked a little way, spotting a Hawfinch fly over.

We met the bus and arranged to meet up in about an hour's time. We then embarked on a lovely walk up the valley to our lunch spot where we met Elena and Simona for a delicious home cooked lunch in the shade of some trees as it was a very warm afternoon. At lunch we were pleased to hear Corn Crake calling from near-by.

We then drove further up the valley and got out for another walk. We looked at mammal prints and saw some rare orchids such as the *elegans* variety of Bog Orchid and an Early Marsh Orchid, which for the botanists were the highlight of the trip. For the butterfly enthusiasts the Poplar Admiral was probably the butterfly of the trip so. It was quite a productive session. We also saw a White Admiral. We now had to head back to Nouă Șinca to eat at a local family home. They served homemade food and later showed us the garden in which they grew most

of the ingredients! The garden was very tidy and well-tended and we wondered how the couple managed all this workload - they also drove the horse and cart and ran a guest house.

We then drove back to the Strumbie Valley to meet the ranger. Here we saw a group of three Wild Boar and an even better sighting of the Poplar Admiral. Bodan spotted a bear, but nobody else managed to get on to it, however as events proved we were more than compensated by bear sightings in the hide. We enjoyed fantastic bear sightings and watched eleven Brown Bears. It was fascinating watching the behaviour as the smaller bears gave way to larger ones. Some were very nervous and ran off into the woods, particularly when an imposing female bear arrived. After two great hours of watching bears from the hide it was time to head back to the guest house. On the drive out of the valley we saw a Red Deer and then probably the same deer just as we left the valley; a new mammal for the trip. We got back to Mosorel about 10.30pm and said a sleepy “goodnight” after another great day’s wildlife watching.

Day 7

Friday 10th June

Drive to Basra region; walk to Coltii Chilieii and the Sacred Cave

The morning moth haul was again not numerous but we had some lovely moths including a splendid Poplar Hawk-moth. After breakfast we set off slightly late having watched Red Deer and Alpine Chamois on the cliff face opposite. We met Dan in Zarnesti and sang a rousing chorus of “Happy Birthday” to celebrate his special day. We then drove the short distance to the Basra region where we had visited on our first full day. On this occasion we took a path that led up above the agricultural area, hearing Corn Crake calling on the way, and along the valley heading up towards the monastery.

The walk took us through some beautiful woodland and pastures, all against the backdrop of the imposing craggy limestone cliffs of the Carpathians. We had some new butterflies including Dingy Skipper, and the Scarce Swallowtail was pleasing to see. There were also a few fritillaries and many common species around. Birds were well represented with a distant Northern Goshawk, and we enjoyed views of several Spotted Nutcrackers. Other birds included the parachuting Tree Pipits and later a fabulous Common Firecrest bring food to its nest. There were a profusion of orchids and specialist plants of the region. A particularly inspiring sight was on an area covered in Fragrant, Lesser Butterfly and Heart-shaped Marsh Orchids.

We met Simona and her mother for another delicious feast and on this occasion they brought a cake for Dan’s birthday, which we all enjoyed. After lunch we walked on towards the monastery and then a little further still to reach the curious Sacred Cave, decorated with many paintings and drawings hung from the walls. It was then time to walk down the hill to meet up with Bodan. We managed to add a few more birds including a pair of Woodlarks and some Great Spotted Woodpeckers.

We boarded the bus and headed into Zarnesti. Just before we left, Caroline gave a thank you speech to Dan and Bodan for their hard work and expertise which had made the trip very successful. We said goodbye to Dan and then to Bodan as they were both leaving us. The group then had some free time before dinner and a few administrative tasks.

Day 8

Saturday 11th June

Drive to Bran; picnic en route Bucharest airport; flight to Heathrow

We had the luxury of a lie-in as there was no pre-breakfast walk today. A few people were up early to tend to the moths. It was a disappointing haul but three new species were found. We then scanned for a final bear sighting but could not locate one. We did however find four Alpine Chamois on the cliff face. We then went for our last buffet breakfast of the trip and then got ready for our departure. The bus was a little delayed by 'roadworks' and was stuck behind a roller and bulldozer. When it finally made it to the guest house we had the compensation of watching a Peregrine Falcon fly past.

We soon loaded up and said our 'goodbyes' to Onoa and George, who had looked after the group very well. Bran Castle was our next destination where we met with Simona again. She gave a guided tour around the 13th century castle, illustrating the history of the famous castle and its links to the famous character Dracula. We then had a little time to walk around Bran before meeting up at the bus and heading to a picnic area. Here we enjoyed our last group picnic with Simona's and Elena's fabulous spreads. A passing Common Buzzard and Great Spotted Woodpecker were the only avian highlights and we were soon on our way to the airport with Simona in tow.

At the airport we thanked Simona for her work in feeding us and managing the logistics of the week and hugged her goodbye. The group then boarded the flight back to Heathrow and the end of a lovely trip with some great wildlife.

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Black-veined Moth by Annette Warrick



Male Black Redstart by Terry Goble

Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common name	Scientific name	June							
			4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>			7					
2	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓		✓			4		
3	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>			2					
4	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			✓					
5	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>					1			
6	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			H					
7	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			✓					
8	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	1	2	10		10	4		
9	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus mintus</i>			3					
10	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>			✓					
11	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>			✓					
12	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1		✓		1	2		
13	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>			10					
14	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>			6					
15	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			10					
16	Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmeus</i>			4					
17	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			6					
18	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga pomarina</i>					2	2		
19	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>							1	
20	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>			10		2			
21	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>					1			
22	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	1	5	6	1	6	6	4	2
23	Corn Crake	<i>Crex crex</i>						H	H	
24	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	2		✓					
25	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	1							
26	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>			✓					
27	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>			4					
28	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>			1					3
29	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>			✓					
30	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>			6					
31	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
32	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>			2		5			
33	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>			3					
34	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	□	✓	✓	✓	✓
35	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	H	2	8	H	1	H	H	
36	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		1	1					
37	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>		3			4	4		
38	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
39	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>					1			
40	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>			H		6	1		
41	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>					1			
42	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>		H			H	H	H	
43	Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>				1				
44	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		H			2	2	3	
45	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>				2				
46	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>					1			
47	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	1	1	6	2	2	2	1	

	Common name	Scientific name	June							10	11
			4	5	6	7	8	9			
48	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>					1				
49	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				1		1	1		
50	Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>					6				
51	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>		3	2	2	✓	10	✓		
52	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>					6				
53	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		3	4	2		10	3		
54	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
55	Spotted Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>		1					6		
56	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
57	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
58	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
59	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		H	4	2	4		2		
60	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		H		1			6		
61	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		5	6	6	2	2			
62	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			5	H					
63	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
64	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>							2		
65	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>					2				
66	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>								L/O	
67	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
68	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
69	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			3			4			
70	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>							H		
71	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		H	H	H	3	✓	✓		
72	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>				1					
73	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>			2						
74	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>			H						
75	Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>			3						
76	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>			H						
77	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		H	H	1	H	2	H		
78	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>		H	H		H	H	H		
79	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>						1			
80	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				H					
81	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>							2		
82	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				1					
83	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>					H			2	
84	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
85	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
86	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>		10	6	6	✓	✓	2		
87	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		6	3	H	2	1	H		
88	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		1	2	2	3				
89	Flycatcher sp	<i>Ficedula sp</i>							1		
90	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		2	H	H		1	1		
91	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		✓	✓	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	
92	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>		1	2	2		2	2		
93	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>			1		1	1			
94	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>		2	1				1		
95	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
96	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>			3	2	1	1			
97	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>			2						
98	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Montacilla flava feldegg</i>								L/O	

	Common name	Scientific name	June							
			4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
99	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	2	6		✓	2	4		
100	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
101	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		1					✓	
102	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
103	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>					3	4		
104	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>				2				
105	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>				1	6		3	
106	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	1	1						
107	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>				3	8	4		
108	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		3	H	2	3	2	2	
109	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>			2					

Mammals

1	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>		2						
2	Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>								
3	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		3	1					
4	Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>		3	5		3	10		
5	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elephas</i>						2	5	
6	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>		3		2	1	3		
7	Alpine Chamois	<i>Rupicapra rupicapra</i>		9		15	6	4	7	4
8	Water Shrew	<i>Neomys fodiens</i>			1					
9	Bat sp	<i>Chiroptera sp</i>			✓					
10	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>							3	

Reptiles

1	Green Lizard	<i>Lacerta viridis</i>						1		
2	Viviparous Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>					2			
3	Sand Lizard	<i>Lacerta agilis</i>		4			✓		1	
4	Slow Worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>		1						
5	Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>		3	1		1	1		

Amphibians

1	Smooth or Common Newt	<i>Triturus vulgaris</i>							1	
2	Fire Salamander	<i>Salamandra salamandra</i>				1				
3	Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>						1	1	
4	Yellow-bellied Toad	<i>Bombina variegata</i>		✓	□	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5	Agile Frog	<i>Rana dalmatina</i>					3	4		
6	Marsh Frog	<i>Rana ridibunda</i>		H	✓					
7	Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>			✓					

Butterflies

1	Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>						✓		
2	Clouded Apollo	<i>Parnassius mnemosyne</i>		✓						
3	Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>		✓				✓	✓	
4	Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓				
5	Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>		✓				✓	✓	
6	Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>						✓	✓	
7	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>					✓	✓	✓	

	Common name	Scientific name	June							
			4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
8	Wood White sp.	<i>Leptidea sp.</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓		
9	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>				✓				
10	Mountain Green-veined White	<i>Pieris bryoniae</i>		✓		✓				
11	Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>						✓		
12	Little Blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>				✓			✓	
13	Purple-shot Copper	<i>Heodes alciphron</i>					✓	✓		
14	Large Copper	<i>Lycaena dispar rutilus</i>		✓	✓			✓		
15	Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>		✓	✓	□	✓	✓	✓	
16	Duke of Burgundy	<i>Hamearis lucina</i>				✓	✓			
17	Camberwell Beauty	<i>Aglais antiopica</i>						✓		
18	Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	
19	Map	<i>Araschnia levana</i>				✓				
20	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>					✓	✓	✓	
21	Marsh Fritillary	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>					✓	✓		
22	White Admiral	<i>Limenitis camilla</i>						✓		
23	Poplar Admiral	<i>Limenitis populi</i>						✓		
24	Heath Fritillary	<i>Mellicta athalia</i>						✓		
25	Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>						✓		
26	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
27	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>		✓				✓	✓	
28	Pearly Heath	<i>Coenonympha arcania</i>					✓	✓		
29	Chestnut Heath	<i>Coenonympha glycerion</i>						✓		
30	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
31	Woodland Ringlet	<i>Erebia medusa</i>		✓	□	✓	✓	✓	✓	
32	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>						✓		
33	Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>					✓	✓		
34	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>							✓	
35	Chequered Skipper	<i>Carterocephalus palaemon</i>					✓			
36	Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>							✓	
37	Large Skipper	<i>Ochlodes sylvanus</i>						✓		
38	Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>				✓	✓	✓		
39	Scarce Swallowtail	<i>Iphiclides podalirius</i>		✓					✓	
40	Sooty Copper	<i>Lycaena tityrus</i>		✓					✓	
41	Mountain Small White	<i>Pieris ergane</i>		✓		✓				
42	Pearl Bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>		✓						
43	Assman's Fritillary	<i>Melitaea britomartis</i>						✓		
44	Marbled Fritillary	<i>Brenthis daphne</i>						✓		
45	Green-underside Blue	<i>Glaucopteryx alexis</i>					✓	✓		

Dragonflies & Damselflies

□

1	Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>					✓			
2	Banded Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>					✓			
3	Beautiful Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>		✓						
4	Common Blue Damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>		✓						
5	Small Red-eyed Damselfly	<i>Erythromma viridulum</i>			✓					
6	Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>			✓					
7	Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>			✓					
8	Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>		✓	✓					
9	Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>			□		✓			
10	White-legged damselfly	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>			✓					
11	Large Red Damselfly	<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>		✓			✓			

	Common name	Scientific name	June							
			4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	Downy Emerald	<i>Cordulia aenea</i>			✓					
13	Norfolk Hawker	<i>Aeshna isoceles</i>			✓					
14	Variable Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion pulchelum</i>			✓					
15	Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>						✓		

Other Insects

Rose Chafer, *Cetonia aurata*

Fire Bug, *Pyrhocoris apterus*

Scorpion Fly, *Panorpidae sp*

Click Beetle sp, *Ampedus sp*

Froghopper, *Cercopis vulnerata*

Wood Ant, *Formica rufa*

Common Carder Bee, *Bombus pascuorum*

White-tailed Bumblebee, *Bombus lucorum*

Green Bush Cricket sp, *Tettigoniidae sp*

7-spot Ladybird, *Coccinella 7-punctata*

2-spot Ladybird, *Adalia bipunctata*

Musk Beetle (Long-Horned), *Aromia moschata*

Tortoise Bug, *Podops inuncta*

Horse-hair Worm, *Nematomorpha sp*

Hornet, *Vespa crabro*

Millipede sp, *Diplopoda sp*

Dor Beetle, *Geotrupes stercorarius*

Cockchaffer, *Melolontha melolontha*

Leech sp, *Hirudinea sp*

a Leaf Hopper, *Cicadellidae sp*

Honey Bee, *Apis mellifera*

Buff-tailed Bumblebee, *Bombus terrestris*

Ichenumon wasp , *Netelia testacea*

Roesels' Cricket, *Metrioptera roeselii*

10-spot Ladybird, *Adalia 10-punctata*

13-Spot Ladybird, *Hippodamia 13-punctata*

a Leaf Beetle, *Cryptocephalus sericeus*

Bee Beetle, *Trichius fasciatus*

Pictured-winged Fly sp, *Tephritidae sp*

Moths

Moth Trap

Bordered Sallow

Buff-tip

Clouded Silver

Dusky Broade

Gothic

Grey Dagger

Lesser Swallow Prominent

Marbled Brown

Nutmeg

Orange Footman

Pale-shouldered Brocade

Pine Hawk-moth

Puss Moth

Scalloped Hook-tip

Small Fan-footed Wave

Straw Belle

Treble Lines

Willow Beauty

Brindled Pug

Chocolate Tip

Common Pug

Fox Moth

Grass Rivulet

Heart and Dart

Light Feathered Rustic

Marbled Coronet

Nut-tree Tussock

Pale Pinion

Pebble Prominent

Poplar Grey

Scallop Shell

Setaceous Hebrew Character

Small Phoenix

Swallow Prominent

White Ermine

Buff Ermine

Clouded Bordered Brindle

Dark Brocade

Foxglove Pug

Grey Arches

Iron Prominent

Lunar Thorn

Northern Spinach

Ochraceous Wave

Pale Tussock

Peppered Moth

Poplar Hawk-moth

Scalloped Hazel

Silver-ground Carpet

Spruce Carpet

Treble Bar

White Point

Day Flying Moths

Argent and Sable	Black-Veined Moth	Burnet Campion
Common Heath	Common Wave	Cream Wave
Drab Looper	Fan-foot	Four Spotted Footman
<i>Jordanita budensis</i>	Lace Border	Latticed Heath
Mother Shipton	<i>Nemaphora degreerela</i>	<i>Nematopogon schwarziellus</i>
<i>Pentaphera morio</i>	Plumed Fan-foot	Red-necked Footman
Silver Y	Speckled Yellow	Straw Dot
White-pinion Spotted	Yellow Shell	

Plants (Courtesy of client Stephen Mullard)

Asarabacca, <i>Asarum europaeum</i>	Nottingham catchfly, <i>Silene nutans</i>
Sticky catchfly, <i>Lychnis viscaria</i>	Bladder campion, <i>Silene vulgaris</i>
Carthusian pink, <i>Dianthus carthusianorum</i>	Pink, <i>Dianthus spiculifolius</i>
Ragged robin, <i>Lychnis flos-cuculi</i>	Transsylvanian columbine, <i>Aquilegia transsylvanica</i>
Globeflower, <i>Trollius europaeus</i>	Kidney vetch, <i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>
Dusky cranesbill, <i>Geranium phaeum</i>	Alpine flax, <i>Linum alpinum</i>
Mountain valerian, <i>Valeriana Montana</i>	Wild pansy, <i>Viola tricolour</i>
Violet, <i>Viola declinata</i>	Yellow wood violet, <i>Viola biflora</i>
Common rockrose, <i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Alpine bells, <i>Cortusa matthiola</i>
Bladder gentian, <i>Gentiana utriculosa</i>	Carpathian gentian, <i>Gentianella sp</i>
Willow Gentian, <i>Gentiana asclepiadea</i>	Greater Meadow Rue, <i>Thalictrum aquilegiifolium</i>
Sickle-leaved Hare's-ear, <i>Bupleurum falcatum</i>	Mountain Clover, <i>Trifolium montana</i>
Viper's bugloss, <i>Echium vulgare</i>	Meadow clary, <i>Salvia pratensis</i>
Whorled Meadow Clary, <i>Salvia verticillara</i>	Basil-thyme, <i>Clinopodium acinos</i>
Yellow toadflax, <i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	Nettle-leaved speedwell, <i>Veronica urticifolia</i>
Large speedwell, <i>Veronica austriaca teucrium</i>	Swallow-wort, <i>Vincetoxicum album</i>
Large Yellow Foxglove, <i>Digitalis grandiflora</i>	Sainfoin, <i>Onabrychis vicifolia</i>
Coral-root Bittercress, <i>Cardamine bulbifera</i>	Shining Cranesbill, <i>Geranium lucida</i>
Great Masterwort, <i>Astrantia major</i>	Sanicle, <i>Sanicula europaea</i>
Orpine, <i>Hylotelephium telephium</i>	Honey-scented Wallflower, <i>Erysium odoratum</i>
Spurge Laurel, <i>Daphne mezereum</i>	Water Avens, <i>Geum rivale</i>
Eidelweis, <i>Leontopodium alpinum</i>	Crested Lousewort, <i>Pedicularis comosa</i>
Wood Cow-wheat, <i>Melampyrum nemorosum</i>	Elecampane, <i>Inula helenium</i>
Cornflower, <i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	Cypress Spurge, <i>Euphorbia cyparissias</i>
Cream scabious, <i>Scabiosa ochroleuca</i>	Spiked rampion, <i>Phyteuma spicatum</i>
Spreading bellflower, <i>Campanula patula</i>	Peach-leaved bellflower, <i>Campanula persicifolia</i>
Arnica, <i>Arnica Montana</i>	Carpathian leopardsbane, <i>Doronicum sp</i>
Purple vipergrass, <i>Scorzonera purpurea</i>	Martagon lily, <i>Lilium martagon</i>
Siberian iris, <i>Iris sibirica ruthenica</i>	Mountain sisyrinchium, <i>Sisyrinchium montanum</i>
White false helleborine, <i>Veratum album</i>	White helleborine, <i>Cephalanthera damasonium</i>
Sword-leaved helleborine, <i>Cephalanthera longifolia</i>	Broad-leaved helleborine, <i>Epipactis helleborine</i>
Bird's nest orchid, <i>Neottia nidus-avis</i>	Common Twayblade, <i>Listera ovate</i>
Lesser butterfly orchid, <i>Platanthera bifolia</i>	Fragrant orchid, <i>Gymnadenia conopsea</i>
Heath spotted orchid, <i>Dactylorhiza maculata var transsilvanica</i>	Heath spotted orchid, <i>Dactylorhiza maculate var schurri</i>

Early marsh orchid, *Dactylorhiza incarnate*

Pink globe orchid, *Traunsteinera globosa*

Bug orchid, *Anacamptis coriophora*

Bog orchid, *Orchis palustris*

Military Orchid, *Orchis militaris*

Heart-shaped marsh orchid, *Dactylorhiza cordigera*

Green-winged orchid, *Anacamptis morio*

Early purple orchid, *Orchis mascla*

Bog orchid type, *Orchis elegans*



Sword-leaved Helleborine by Stephen Mullard



Musk Beetle by Terry Goble