

Romania's Danube Delta & Carpathian Mountains

Naturetrek Tour Report

10 – 19 May 2014



Chamois



European Brown Bear



European White Pelican



Red-necked Grebe

Report compiled by Ed Drewitt
Cover images courtesy of Vaughan Grantham



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Introduction

During our ten days in the Carpathians and Danube Delta we had an immersive experience of what the countryside and woodland of Eastern Europe is really like and where many farming practices are traditional and sustainable. From Hoopoes to Rollers, and Bee-eaters to Kingfishers, there were splashes of colour everywhere. There were stunning bright green beech forests in the mountains alongside ancient limestone gorges, and in the east extensive reedbeds and willow woodland that went on forever. Up to a dozen Brown Bears showed up one evening in the mountains while in the south hundreds of Cuckoos, herons, egrets, cormorants and pelicans revealed what a magnificent place Romania is. Everything was in full song from Redstarts to Wood Warblers, and Red-backed Shrikes to a Rock Thrush. Fritillaries adorned the meadow flowers while on the wetlands wading birds were passing through on their journey north to the Arctic – we even saw over 100 Broad-billed Sandpipers.

Day 1

Saturday 10th May

Leaving behind a slightly overcast but bright day at Heathrow with Swifts flying low over the runway and Starlings busy collecting food for chicks, our three-hour flight, which was running a little late due to strong winds delaying the inbound flight from Paris, got us in to Bucharest for 4.40pm local time. Despite cloud across most of Western Europe the views out across the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary for those of us with a window seat provided lovely views of the farmland, mountains and river systems. We met up with Peter and Jillyan at the airport alongside our local guide Laurentiu and driver Florin and we headed to Zarnesti, our base for three nights where we explored the stunning Carpathian Mountains. As we headed north-west we spotted a host of birdlife including at least eight Kestrels, a Marsh Harrier, lots of Rooks, Jackdaws and Magpies, a few Ravens and Hooded Crows, House Martins and Starlings.

Passing by small lakes we saw a few Whiskered Terns, a family of Coots and a pair of Mute Swans. The occasional Lapwing and Collared Doves were also seen. We stopped in Sinaia for coffee, tea or beer and as soon as we got out of the bus a family of fledged Treecreepers were busily being fed by the parents and a Serin sang from the top of a pine tree. One or two Willow Tits called close by and from the café we saw a pair of Goldfinches, a Chaffinch, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and Swallows. As we climbed further up into the mountains we were amazed by the continuous swathe of bright green Beech trees growing on the steep rocky slopes, topped with Black Pine, Larch and some Scots Pines.

We arrived at Pension Elena in Zarnesti at 8pm as a dark rain cloud loomed over the mountains nearby and after a quick freshen up we met again for dinner which included a plum-liqueur to wet our lips, delicious home-made vegetable soup, salad, chicken and potatoes and a sponge pudding. Laurentiu briefed us for the following day and we headed to bed ready for breakfast at 8am.

Day 2

Sunday 11th May

We woke to a beautiful sunny morning with the Kingstone Mountains (Piatra Craiului) behind our pension shining in the bright morning light. From our rooms Collared Doves broke the dawn chorus along with the odd cockerel, Serin, Black Redstart, Swifts and House Sparrows. With the mountain climate still cool (there was thick snow three weeks ago) and bird activity still high, later in the morning we were able to have breakfast at eight and set off at nine to walk the Zarnesti Gorge. A few had already ventured outdoors and spotted a White Stork amongst the other birds.

As we drove along the track to the gorge a Dipper showed well in the stream – we spotted it several times, including feeding under water. We ventured up the gorge and along the stream and we were moved by the abundance of beech trees and their fresh, bright, lime green leaves. Grey Wagtails were common throughout our walk, sometimes accompanied by one or two White Wagtails. A male Cuckoo sang out across the lower areas of our walk, a constant reminder that spring was here. It was so good to hear a bird that in the UK has become less common. One or two Red-breasted Flycatchers still on migration sang a little in the woods while a Goldcrest and a Firecrest sang in pine trees close by. During our walk Robin, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff and Blackcap were all commonly heard singing, while the calls of Marsh Tits were frequent. Alpine Swifts circled high above us calling and a little further along we watched a few flying into crevices in the rock faces where they have nests. As we came to an area where the limestone gorge narrows a Black Redstart sang up on a small sapling. A little further along Laurentiu spotted a Fire Salamander and moved it to the side of the path for us to see. What a stunning amphibian - large (25cm long), black with distinctive yellow patches and obvious poison glands. It was put safely back in the damp, muddy part of what was a gushing stream a few weeks ago.

As the gorge opened up grasses and flowers were in abundance and so too were butterflies. During our walk we totted up at least eight species including Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Dingy Skipper, Orange Tip and Swallowtail. Around the same area we could see the towering limestone cliffs and the bendy lines where it had been squeezed under immense pressure millions of years ago.

We stopped for lunch in a sunny, grassy spot looking out for the elusive Wallcreeper. None showed, but to make up for it we had a real treat on our walk back down – Jillyan and Peter, who were slightly ahead, had stopped and were hurrying us along. There, only 50 metres away, was a Chamois, a type of ungulate or sheep normally very difficult to see and certainly not on a gorge path during the middle of a Sunday. We had prolonged views of the animal as it fed on some plants and stopped to look at us. A Red Squirrel also dashed past it on the same path. Eventually a cyclist did come up the path and the Chamois climbed on the steep cliff where we could just see it through the trees. A little further along the path a Peregrine called overhead while a Raven parted in the opposite direction. A male Marsh Harrier drifted high overhead.

Mid-afternoon we drove 20 minutes away to the town of Bran where we visited the 650-year-old Bran Castle, originally built as a fortress and later converted to a castle to be used by the royal family in the 19th and 20th Century. Laurentiu became our castle guide for an hour and gave us a fascinating tour around the castle giving nuggets of information and insights into both the castle's history and his country's past. We explored a secret passage, ventured outdoors onto different levels of the building, and saw the various furniture, costumes, and armoury that the royal family used. The castle itself is known as Dracula's Castle as it fits with the Irish writer Bram Stoker's description of such a building in his fictional story of Dracula in 1897.

With a little time to explore and stop for a coffee or ice cream, a White Stork was spotted visiting a nest on a nearby building where its mate was sat on eggs. Great Tits were visiting chicks in nests as was also a Nuthatch. And from Bran Castle itself the group had brief views of a Great Spotted Woodpecker. Peter White came back from a brief walk having seen a Red Squirrel, newts and a Fieldfare.

Before heading back we gained some height in the bus in Moeciu to take photos of the two ridges of mountains flanking the town. As soon as we got out of the bus we could hear crickets rasping away by the roadside, while the short grassland was home to Kidney Vetch and Green-winged Orchids. On our way back down we stopped to take a photo of Bran Castle and headed back to Pension Elena for some rest, dinner and sleep in preparation for the following long day.

Day 3

Monday 12th May

After a breezy night we woke to a bright morning and light cloud over the mountains. After a good breakfast of cereals, mixed cured meats and cheeses we headed off to the outskirts of Zarnesti for a morning's walk into the hills. Unlike yesterday's hike, today's gentle but sloping walk was through open meadows, deciduous scrub and forest edge. The meadows were a mosaic of limestone grassland species dotted with smaller trees and bushes. As we gained some height to 900metres we encountered lots of hazel. Cowslips were in abundance along with speedwells, orchids, and stitchworts. Hooded Crows were common on the lower meadows and as we watched a shepherd looking over his flock of sheep a few Lesser Whitethroats were singing from nearby trees. A Yellowhammer was also singing and was very cryptic in a tree with its leaves just emerging.

A pair of White Wagtails dashed around low over the grassland while Starlings foraged for food and a pair of Fieldfares was collecting grubs for recently fledged chicks. A migrating male Whinchat was perching on some of the nearby bushes. A little further up Laurentiu found a Nutcracker, almost a cross between a Starling and a Rook in plumage and features and looked only about Mistle Thrush size. It stood on the top of a tree against the skyline and gave us a chance to see its dark body, abundance of white spots, and white band on its tail. Goldcrests were seen in nearby pine trees and a Firecrest also sang nearby. We eventually saw two including a male that stood out on a branch – his lime green back, pale eye stripe, and orange crest were all clearly visible. Blackbirds, Mistle Thrushes, Song Thrushes, Robin, Dunnocks, Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps, Chaffinches, Coal Tits, and Great Tits were seen often and most were singing during our walk. We also had brief views of Marsh Tits and Willow Tits and David spotted a Crested Tit. As the rain came in over the mountains we headed back down to lower grounds and stopped in the open meadows to see a few more Lesser Whitethroats, a female Sparrowhawk, and a Tree Pipit. Before we got back to the bus we also heard a Black Woodpecker.

We headed back to the Pension Elena where Gigi and Elena and their cooks provided a delicious lunch of homemade tomato soup, salad, chicken escalope and a very tasty cake. We then had time to time to relax, read, or have a snooze while the rain came down for the afternoon. We met again in at 5pm and headed for the Stramba Valley for an evening with bears. As we drove along the track we saw Red-backed Shrikes, mainly stunning males. A Lesser Spotted Eagle was perched on a tree across a field – we stopped to get out and see before it flew further back into the trees. A little further along was another perched a little closer. We stayed in the bus and had the chance to take some photos before it flew on. A Cuckoo took off from the middle of a field and Fieldfares and Blackbirds were feeding in the meadows.

We made the bear's warden office for 6.15pm and followed him to a stopping point where we transferred to 4x4 vehicles to go a mile or so up the track which was less healthy for the bus to travel. As we got out and walked to the bear hide two Lesser Spotted Eagles passed overhead. A fast flowing stream gushed past us, full of the afternoon's heavy rain. The trees, bright green, were mainly beech and hornbeam. No sooner had we settled into the hide and the first bear of the evening appeared on cue at 7pm. Over 40 wild Brown Bears inhabit the forest and many visit this area to top up on their diet with food put out by the bear wardens. Not only does it provide visitors with the opportunity to see a wild bear but it also keeps the bears (and wolves) away from local villages.

During the course of the evening 12 bears came to visit the clearing where Ravens, Jays, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a flycatcher, a Grey Wagtail, and other small birds came down to find food. Dippers called behind the hide in the nearby stream and a male even began to sing. The first bear to appear was around 15 years old and one of the first to visit this area when the feeding station was first set up back then. The second was a younger, leaner eight year old – as she fed you could see her powerful canine teeth. They were mainly feeding on the food scattered in large logs and in a raised trough. Two dead pigs were also laid out for the wolves that visit at night. After 25 minutes the two bears parted ways in different directions and we waited until 8pm before a family of bears appeared from our left. This was a very special family – the female had four cubs only a year old. Three of the cubs hurried straight into the open area and headed for the larger pig which had been opened up by one of the earlier bears. The three were soon chomping away at the skin and fresh meat of the pig, tearing and biting at pieces with such ease.

One of the cubs was very distinctive and had pale, almost white patches on either side of its neck. They only stayed for 10 minutes or so but we didn't have to wait long for more bears. At 8.30pm a large unidentified bear arrived – the ranger wasn't sure who they were mainly because the rain was wetting their coat which is used to know who is who. This bear managed to turn the large pig all the over to begin eating the other side after the cubs had devoured the other half. Soon a small four-year-old male appeared along with a five or six year old female. They all began feeding together although the younger female disappeared off after a while. Sometimes the bears came to a close log only 30 metres away while those feeding on the pig were around 50 metres away.

Eventually the very first female we saw, the older 15 year old returned and soon showed who was boss. She saw off the bears feeding on the pig and chased off the female – they had a stand off in the woods close by which included some growling and face-to-face staring. The older female returned and to show her dominance wiggled her bottom splayed her legs as she walked and presumably began scent marking this particular area of grass and mud! We left three bears to their evening meal and headed back to the bus via the 4x4 vehicles. On our way back along the track we stopped by some meadows and fields full of a cacophony of Field Crickets. We listened to the occasional rasping song of one or two Corn Crakes and heard a Woodcock flying overhead with its distinctive croaking and then 'twisip' display call. We arrived back around 10.15pm and headed for bed ready for a day's travel tomorrow.

Day 4

Tuesday 13th May

Today we travelled south and east from the stunning Carpathian Mountains to the equally beautiful River Danube and the start of the delta at Tulcea. An hour and a half into the drive we stopped at Chastelul Peles, a castle built for the royal family in 1873 and finished in 1883 (before formerly opened in 1885). The birdlife here was used to people and we saw Coal Tits, Great Tits, Chaffinches, and Blackbirds at close view. Goldcrests and Firecrests were singing in the trees along with Chiffchaff and a Willow Warbler. Even the Red Squirrels (some chocolate brown in colour) were very approachable. As we headed back a Treecreeper gave incredibly close views and a Redstart was singing around a building close to the bus.

After two hours we stopped at a rookery at Ciorani where the Rooks were busy feeding well grown chicks. By the riverside colourful beehives were placed by local beekeepers who keep a watch over their bees. A Hobby dashed overhead followed by a pair of Red-footed Falcons and a Kestrel. A Golden Oriole screeched from the nearby trees, a Cuckoo could be heard in the distance and a few Bee-eaters made their bubbly call overhead. Peter found a Spotted Flycatcher and we could hear the delicate call of a Little Ringed Plover. A Blackcap and Garden Warbler also sang in the background.

As we journeyed on there were plenty of Kestrels hovering or flying over nearby fields alongside Marsh Harriers, a few Lesser Spotted Eagles and Buzzards. An Avocet was feeding in a flooded field and as we edged closer to the Danube Delta White Storks became more evident with occupied nests in some of the villages. Little Egrets also became more frequent sat in fields. Three or four Cuckoos were spotted on power lines or flying low over the fields including a brown female and a pair of males fighting. Corn Buntings also became common on the wires after we had crossed the impressive River Danube.

We stopped again for coffee and ice cream and an hour later came to the beautiful Hasarlac Lake. Within 20 minutes we had spotted a Little Bittern, Purple Herons, Pochards, Pygmy Cormorants, Common Terns, Whiskered Terns, Great Crested Grebes, Coots, Mute Swans (with very young cygnets), a Spoonbill, two Glossy Ibises and much more. A singing Great Reed Warbler obligingly sat out on a tall dead reed stem above all the new green shoots. Its large size and grating song were very easy to note. In the hot sunshine a Corn Bunting and a Nightingale sang behind us while in the open grassland a stunningly bright lilac blue Roller perched in a bush and occasionally dropped down to the track to feed. Meanwhile, a male Red-backed Shrike sat in a nearby bush singing. A few were lucky to spot a Hoopoe while a few Bee-eaters flew around catching insects further back.

A further hour later, at around 6.30pm, we arrived at Laurentiu's hometown of Tulcea and moved to the floating hotel which would be our home for the next four nights. The river was high after recent rains. Swallows swept past the boat while a few Black-headed Gulls hawked nearby. A White Wagtail was feeding on the flotsam and House Sparrows were cheeping in the nearby willow trees. After a delicious dinner of catfish and wine we headed for bed ready for our first day on the Danube.

Day 5

Wednesday 14th May

After a night on the floating hotel on the River Dunube in Tulcea we took the small boat out onto the Dunube and then into one of the many dividing rivers that make up the delta. We passed corridors of White Willow followed by extensive reedbeds and a mix of both trees such as White Poplar and reeds. The recent rainfall in the past two weeks across Eastern Europe has meant that water levels in the delta are now returning to healthy levels after little rainfall. We saw water streaming down into places where it was flooding the woodland and soon to form important marshes, bogs and carr during the summer months. The waterways passed within a few kilometres of the border with the Ukraine – the country also have many parts of the Delta within its territory. We sailed pass the reserve known as Lake Nebuna (meaning Crazy Lake) where only scientists can go – here there are many colonies of egrets, herons and cormorants. We came out into Lake Furtuna, one of the five largest lakes in the delta, before heading down a narrow canal to the small village of Malluc where we returned to the floating hotel.

We were out for five hours after leaving at 8.30am and despite the rainfall - heavy at times - we still managed an impressive list of birdlife. As soon as turned off the main Danube Nightingales and Cuckoos serenaded us from all directions. Across the reserve we saw over a dozen Cuckoos and heard many others. They were often perched on trees or chasing each other. One male gave particularly obliging views in the willows by our boat. Throughout the whole journey we heard Redstarts and Lesser Whitethroats, while Thrush Nightingales replaced Nightingales further along our journey. There was even a single River Warbler and Icterine Warbler singing. Tree Sparrows were chirping all along the course, and at a few locations we heard Golden Orioles and saw a group of three and later a few single males in flight. Starlings were very numerous, nesting in holes in the willow trees and we saw our first Blue Tits of the trip, happily singing in trees along the waterways. Great Cormorants looked huge against their smaller cousins the Pygmy Cormorant – both were numerous and often feeding in the rivers or perched in the trees, sometimes in large numbers.

The creamy-eggshell colour of the Squacco Herons became a familiar sight – they were very numerous and we saw over 40 of this species that visits here each summer. From the reeds the deep resonating and grating songs of the Great Reed Warbler were common, while Coots and Moorhens fed on the water's edge. The creaking calls of Marsh, Pool and Edible frogs were entertaining alongside some of the reedbeds, while the drawn out whistle of the Penduline Tit was also heard in a few places. Kingfishers were numerous in certain sections – we saw and heard over a dozen, either hearing their piping whistle or seeing their dazzling flash of blue. Grey Herons were common alongside a single Purple Heron, half a dozen White Storks and Glossy Ibises, a few Great Egrets and Black-crowned Night Herons, and many Little Egrets. In terms of ducks we saw mainly Mallards and Pochards, followed by a few Gadwall, Ferruginous Ducks and even a few female Goldeneyes, an unusual bird here in the summer.

The rain persisted and to warm up we had some tea, coffee and snacks before continuing our journey, quickly rewarded with very close views of a White-tailed Eagle that was perched in a tree by the boat. It flew but thankfully circled round and came back to its perch – we slowly turned the boat around and saw the bird very well before we headed off as the eagle was chased off by a Hooded Crow. In the second half of the trip we began to see more Rollers, often in pairs, as well as two separate Red-backed Shrikes passing through on migration. Just before entering Lake Furtuna we spotted many Red-necked Grebes amongst Coots and Great Crested Grebes, and on the lake itself we saw Mute Swans, a few Common Terns and Whiskered Terns feeding over lily pads. When we watched closely we could see the terns picking off tiny fishes. We headed back to the floating hotel, passing pigs and other farm animals feeding in some woodland close to Malluc. Despite the weather a Hoopoe dashed across the water into cover. We moored our hotel and quickly warmed up ready for lunch and the afternoon's sailing along Sulina, one of the main channels of the delta.

The three-hour journey was full of excitement as we passed traditional thatched houses, riverside hotels and extensive reed beds, and most importantly lots of birds. During this time hundreds of Barn Swallows were migrating east along the Danube along with the occasional or groups of Common Terns. Trees and pylon lines were good places to see Rollers and Cuckoos, while Marsh Harriers surveyed the reed beds. Lapwings were often on flooded fields and a flock of 60 Ruff were moving through heading north. At least three White-tailed Eagles were seen and we finally caught up with our first pelicans, a White followed by two Dalmation Pelican. Along the journey other birds included two Purple Herons, nesting White Storks, Black-crowned Night Heron, Great and Pygmy Cormorants, families of Greylag Geese, Pheasant, Great Egrets (2+), Hobbies, Red-footed Falcon (1), and Ferruginous Ducks. The reed beds went on and on – it was incredible and as we turned off the Danube into a former main route for boat traffic we passed what used to be a fish farm, now grown into a reedbed and wetland. Some of the land we passed was also used as pasture for grazing cows.

We reached our destination at 7pm and the boat crew stopped us by the reeds and roped us off to some willow trees ready for the night. During the rest of the evening we spotted the odd Purple Heron, Hobby and Black-crowned Night Heron flying low over the reeds. One special bird we saw was a Pallas' or Great Black-headed Gull – the same size as a Yellow-legged Gull but with a distinctive black head. After a delicious dinner we headed for bed on an almost full moon but in the absence of any other artificial light apart from that of the boat.

Day 6

Thursday 15th May

A few of the group got up early and watched birds from the floating hotel between 5am and 6am, followed by further birding by most of the group at breakfast. There were plenty of Black-crowned Night Herons flying past alongside half a dozen Purple Herons, and a pair of Great Egrets and Marsh Harriers each visiting a nest on the opposite bank. Great Reed Warblers were singing from the reeds and Cuckoos, including one or two females, were calling. Alongside two White Pelicans, Lapwings and Ferruginous Ducks, our pre-breakfast birding has fulfilled its promise.

We met at 8.30am and took the small boat to the historic Ukrainian village of Letea. To get there we explored small channels through mighty floating reed beds. Despite the rain and breeze there were lots and lots of Cuckoos flying past, nesting Starlings, Purple Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons and Squacco Herons all along the shallow edges. A Spotted Flycatcher was in one of the willows while in the reeds we could hear the odd Reed Warbler, Savi's Warbler, Reed Buntings, a Garden Warbler and a very distant Sedge Warbler. The ducks didn't hang around but we saw various pairs of Ferruginous Ducks and one pair of Garganey. Penduline Tits were very common – their long drawn out whistle became a familiar call and on a few occasions we saw their domed nests made out of woven cobwebs hanging from willow branches. A beautiful male Red-footed Falcon dashed overhead and Hobbies were common. The odd Bittern was also 'booming'.

Before we reached Letea Laurentiu and Dan stopped the boat in the reeds. Laurentiu jumped off the front of the boat and explained that the reedbed we were looking at was in fact a floating island of reeds and marsh fern. The sandy bottom here makes it hard for any trees to grow but the loose substrate does allow water-loving plants to grow and form a floating mat. He was able to push a long pole through the plants to illustrate the lack of heavy soil. Bubbles frothed at the surface as methane escaped from the rotting vegetation under the water.

We arrived at Letea and spent a few hours being taken back in time to what the UK may have been like 100 years ago. Here people live on an island in the middle of the Danube Delta dealing with hot summers and very cold winters. They produce most of their own produce and top up with big shops from Tulcea from time to time. Their beautiful traditional houses have thatched roofing and are painted blue and white. Laurentiu showed us a ruined house and how it is made with the central part of the walls packed with reed stems to offer both an insulating and circulatory layer to keep the houses cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Most gardens had two houses; one used more in the summer to host friends and family, and a smaller building used mostly in the winter.

There was plenty of wildlife too. A small pool near where we walked off the boat was home to very small dark-brown Fire-bellied Toads – Laurentiu caught one to show us its orange-spotted belly. We quickly saw a flock of White Pelicans followed by a smaller group later. As we walked through the village admiring the gardens full of flowers and vegetables we spotted up to half a dozen Hoopoes; a few gave very close views and had a nest nearby. Two were carrying very large Mole Crickets in their bills and another was calling 'Hoo-poe' in a tree.

Tree Sparrows were common and at one home were sharing nests with House Sparrows. Some brightly coloured Bee-eaters were adorning a few trees and a male Northern Wheatear was perched on a roof with food for chicks. As the thunderclouds cleared and the sun shone Swallows were swooping past us very closely and were living in almost every house. Walking back along the waterway we admired a very tame male Cuckoo perched on the wires, while a Common Sandpiper and two Little Ringed Plovers took off from a pool. As we headed back the ringing calls of the Fire-bellied Toads could be heard – they sounded like the first part of a Cuckoo or Hoopoe song! A White-tailed Eagle was soaring above the reedbeds along with some White Storks while numerous parties of Pygmy Cormorants dashed past. A Bittern was booming too and as we got back on the boat a Great Reed Warbler was sat out on a reed stem.

We rejoined the small boat for coffee and drifted back to the floating hotel surrounded by acres of unspoilt reedbeds bordered with White and Yellow Water Lilies. Just as we left Letea we had good views of a male Penduline Tit, and nearby a Hooded Crow was feeding three well-grown chicks. The sun was coaxing a few Red-eyed Damselflies out though they were tricky to spot. On our journey back we spotted many more Cuckoos, Hobbies, Golden Orioles, a few more Penduline Tits (and many heard), Purple Herons, Ferruginous Ducks, Blue Tits, Starlings, Common Terns and Yellow-legged Gulls. We lunched in glorious sunshine enjoying homemade soup and vine-wraps filled with delicious rice and mincemeat, followed by chocolate cake for pudding. As we finished out lunch the floating hotel was moving once again to our new location.

During the three-hour journey we enjoyed glorious sunshine on top of the floating hotel where everyone was able to relax, read, or watch birds. Along the Danube we saw numerous Whiskered Terns and Black Tern, hundreds of Swallows and a group of 100 Sand Martins. Over 20 White Pelicans were spotted in small groups alongside the odd Dalmatian Pelican. As we turned off the main river and entered another part of the old Danube the water's edge was lined with White Poplars and willows and beyond all we could see was extensive reedbeds. At least three Kingfishers flew out from the bank and the power lines were ideal for spotting Hooded Crows, Rollers and Cuckoos. A single Dalmatian Pelican landed on the water and gave good views before flying off. From the trees we could hear Thrush Nightingales, Golden Oriole, and Lesser Whitethroats. Some marshland revealed over 60 Glossy Ibises, Greylag Geese, Little Egrets and two Black-tailed Godwits. Another two Black Terns flew past alongside the odd Black-crowned Night Heron, while over the reedbeds we saw two White-tailed Eagles, White Storks and Marsh Harriers.

We arrived at our location on an area of water surrounded by reeds at around 6.15pm and hopped onto the smaller boat at 6.30pm ready for a trip into the reeds. In beautiful evening sunlight we headed for Lake Gorgova where we found half a dozen White Pelicans and one Dalmatian Pelican. We were able to creep up on them in the boat to get closer views in the sunshine. The latter bird was perched on a small bush and its greyer plumage and less colourful face was easy to see in comparison to the pure white feathers of the White Pelicans. Pygmy Cormorants were flying all over the place and Cuckoos were displaying or chasing each other. On the open water of the lake there were various Pochards while in the connecting rivers chocolate coloured Ferruginous Ducks were more obvious alongside Grey Herons, Squacco Herons and Great Crested Grebes.

We navigated through a narrow river and as the willow trees brushed past the boat, hairy caterpillars fell onto the floor for us to have a closer inspection. These insects are important food for the Cuckoos especially. Golden Orioles were often flying out from the trees while Great Reed Warblers, Savi's Warblers and Reed Warblers sang from the reeds. We arrived back at 8pm before the sun had set and as we left the boat Red-necked Grebes were calling – they sounded like squealing Water Rails.

Day 7

Friday 16th May

We woke to a beautiful morning. During the night the various marsh frogs had their own nocturnal chorus and the occasional Cuckoo also joined in. By daylight the reedbed was a hive of activity and before breakfast, tens of Pygmy Cormorants were flying in all directions across the reedbeds. A Savi's Warbler reeled continuously opposite the boat while a pair of Starlings was busy feeding chicks in an adjacent willow. Whiskered Terns and Common Terns flew past calling and sat on a log with some gulls in the middle of the water was a Dalmatian Pelican – up to three had been seen before breakfast. Vaughan and Ron had got up a little earlier and been rewarded with a Grey-headed Woodpecker perched in a nearby tree where later a female Wheatear was stood. Cuckoos were 'cuckooing' all around us, and pairs of Red-necked Grebes and Coots were busy in an island of lily pads.

After breakfast we again set out on the little boat, to explore more of the channels, bays and lakes of this delightful delta from Lopatna, along Catavaia and through to Lake Baclanesti. We caught up with more Red-necked Grebes including one bird that flew right past revealing its exquisite plumage and white wing panels. We stopped at one lily-carpeted lake to see flocks of Whiskered Terns and a few Black Terns at their colonies. As we searched between the lily pad islands we spotted at least four pairs of Black-necked Grebes and a few Great Crested Grebes. Laurentiu showed us the various plant life that makes up this special habitat for marsh terns and small grebes. It included two species of bulrush, Hornwort, Frogbit and Water Soldiers (sometimes known as Water Pineapple). As Penduline Tits whistled from the reeds, Cuckoos were in ever abundance chasing each other. Pygmy Cormorants and Glossy Ibises were flying over with nest material and we passed a few different pairs of Red-footed Falcons calling as they flew overhead. The males were all sooty-grey aside from their red cere, eye ring and vent while the females were much lighter with a rufous head and breast.

In glorious sunshine we entered an area that felt homely and looked like a river of lowland England known as Stipoc. It was bordered by a dyke, reclaimed farmland and a disused fish-farm from the communist era. A Corn Bunting sang from the power lines accompanied by a Roller, Kestrel and Cuckoo. The Cuckoo remained very close giving excellent views. A Grey-headed Woodpecker flew along and perched on a pylon while a Sedge Warbler sang from a riverside bush. In the open marshland where cows were grazing we enjoyed views of over 100 Ruff, half a dozen Wood Sandpipers, and two Black-winged Stilts, alongside Squacco Herons and Little Egrets. A few squadrons of White Pelicans flew overhead and Rollers were common all along the riverside trees from here onwards along with small colonies of Tree Sparrows. Logs sticking out of the water were good places for European River Terrapins and we saw several. Laurentiu even managed to catch one with a net and we were able to see its dark black-green legs, head and shell covered in lots of yellow dots to keep it camouflaged. It had very sharp claws and long tail too. Laurentiu carefully placed it back in the water.

Three separate Grass Snakes were spotted in the water, while Red-eyed Damselflies and hawk dragonflies, probably Hairy, were flying low over the water. We got very good views of numerous frogs too, some almost luminous yellow-green in colour! In the trees Starlings were busy feeding babies while Lesser Whitethroats, Redstarts, Garden Warblers and tits sang from the willows. We spotted another pair of Red-footed Falcons in a rookery on an islet of willows on Lake Baclanesti where a very loud chorus of frogs was taking place. The young Rooks were looking quite big and the adults were flying low over the lake with their beaks and throats full of food for them. We reached the floating hotel for lunch and set sail, bound for Tulcea Harbour where we would moor for the night. On the journey we re-traced our steps from the very first day in the delta and headed along willow-rich rivers where we spotted a few White-tailed Eagles, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Marsh Harriers, Red-backed Shrikes, Rollers and Red-necked Grebes, and heard Redstarts, Lesser Whitethroats, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Black Woodpecker and Nightingales.

Day 8

Saturday 17th May

After a night on the floating hotel in Tulcea we finished breakfast on the boat and bid good-bye to Elena, Dan and the crew to head south in the bus to the southern edge of the Danube Delta and to the Black Sea coast. We called first at the Deniz steppe where our first birds were Spanish Sparrows feeding on the track and nesting in the telegraph poles. In a ploughed field at least two Grey Partridges were hiding while on the wires Corn Buntings were singing and Rollers perching. On the steppe habitat a Short-toed Lark was singing above us alongside a few Sky Larks. Isabelline Wheatears were feeding on the rocky hillside and Vaughan found a parent feeding two newly fledged chicks. In the distance we could just hear an Ortolan Bunting while nearby a few Susliks or European Ground Squirrels were getting on with their daily routine. On a distant pylon a pale, cream-coloured Long-legged Buzzard was resting and a Kestrel flew past with a lizard in its talons. We had excellent views of a few Tawny Pipits with their creamy-coloured chest and breast lacking any streaks, while Bee-eaters hunted insects a little further away.

Our next stop was Babadag forest and as soon we got out we were surrounded by beautiful roadside grassland flowers - a botanist's delight. We headed for an open area in the woodland and here we saw and heard at least three or four Ortolan Buntings and watched a courting pair of Red-backed Shrikes. One area was full of flowering Lady Orchids while the main open area was full of wild flowers ranging from sky blue to yellow-green – they were thriving in this low fertile grassland habitat. Dave found a bright green cricket and on the flowers we spotted a Scarce Swallowtail, a pair of Granville Fritillaries and a worn Painted Lady butterfly. A Golden Oriole and a Hoopoe sang nearby, and a light-phase Booted Eagle and a Lesser Spotted Eagle flew overhead. Just as we left some of the group saw a Sombre Tit, while Jo and Vaughan heard a daytime Nightjar.

We headed on to an area of farmland, marshland and reedbed on the coast at Grindul Lupilor spotting lots of Yellow Wagtails and Red-backed Shrikes along the road. We watched over 20 colourful Bee-eaters swooping and diving around their colonies and could hear baby Starlings from old bee-eater nests or holes made by Susliks. A few Northern Wheatears were feeding on the short grassland close by.

The reedbeds were full of singing Paddyfield Warblers alongside Reed and Great Reed Warblers. We saw a few males through the scopes – they look very similar to a Reed Warbler with a more obvious eye stripe and song which is a real mish-mash of different sounds. Two Bearded Tits flew out from the vegetation and across the road and lots of Yellow Wagtails were feeding in the marshland. A tiny, baby Pond Terrapin was walking across the track after missing the wheels of some recently passed vehicles – we watched it quickly scamper into the grass. A baby Grass Snake further along had been less fortunate. As we walked around the marsh we came to a fascinating area – a field full of cut reeds from the winter fixed together like wig-wams to dry. They were being cut, stacked and loaded on to lorries to be used as thatching for house roofs. Aside from the transport, the methods used appeared traditional and very low-tech. A pair of White Storks had chosen to nest on one of the stacks and had very young chicks reaching upwards. Barn Swallows were flying low over the field where a Lesser Grey Shrike was loitering.

Out on the marsh we had a snap shot of some of the latest wader migration – over 100 summer plumage Broad-billed Sandpipers and over 20 brick-red Curlew Sandpipers were feeding in the mud 100 metres away joined by a Little Stint and a dozen Ringed Plovers. Black-winged Stilts and Avocets were common and we also spotted the odd Black-tailed Godwit, a few Kentish Plovers, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank and Redshank. Out on the sand banks Yellow-legged Gulls were resting with three Caspian Terns and a loafing flock of White and Dalmatian Pelicans. Shelducks were feeding in pairs and the odd Collared Pratincole flew overhead calling. We stopped for a picnic and hot drinks watching the marshland birds. Small numbers of Sand Martins flew over and the background ‘coo-ing’ sound of Fire-bellied Frogs filled the airwaves. As we headed back we watched the bee-eaters resting on the track. Along the fields of wheat and sunflowers we stopped to watch over 500 White Pelicans soaring in the sky above – an incredible sight.

Our final stop today was Vadu, another area of wetlands bordered by a former factory extracting rare chemicals from sand and closed down as a result of the site becoming a special site for nature. A huge colony of hundreds of Common Terns filled an island in a man-made pit. On the edge of the colony many Avocets were nesting. A few summer-plumaged Slender-billed Gulls were stood close by while on the water a dozen immature Little Gulls were sitting and pecking at the water's surface. A stunning male Red-footed Falcon dashed past with a fish in its talons and on the track in front of us there was a Suslik, Crested Lark and Northern Wheatears. Further round on the marsh over a dozen Collared Pratincoles were resting up while Black-winged Stilts were resting, feeding or sitting on nests. A few Wood Sandpipers also dropped in. There was a small variety of ducks including Gadwall, Shoveler, Garganey, Red-crested Pochard and Ferruginous Duck. As we headed along the track by bus to the beach adjacent to the Black Sea we saw Red-backed Shrikes every 20 metres or so alongside Yellow Wagtails, the odd Cuckoo, and half a dozen Hoopoes collecting food for chicks. A Bittern popped up briefly above the reeds too.

On the beach Laurenciu showed us the different types of seashells found on the beach, including two species that have been introduced including one, the most elegant and interesting of all, which has caused problems with the local population of mussels. Out at sea Vaughan spotted an interesting brown bird that was neither a shearwater nor a skua.

It turned out to be a migrating Nightjar and was flying low over the water, beating its wings before gliding a little! What a surprise! It was a male and had white spots of the tips of his primary wing feathers. Flocks of Great Cormorants were flying in v-formation along the coastline and on the beach we spotted a few Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, a Common Sandpiper and a Grey Plover. Peter also found a dead Dice Snake. With time getting on we stopped on our way back at a nearby café nearby for ice creams before heading back to Tulcea and a well-earned dinner.

Day 9

Sunday 18th May

We headed out at 8.30am and stopped off just outside a village called Parches at a derelict building where Peter spotted a Little Owl. It flew to another smaller building where another was also residing. Meanwhile, everyone was watching a pair of Red-rumped Swallows which nest here, though they are uncommon in this part of Romania. The steppe habitat was perfect for Isabelline Wheatears that were dotted all around the grassland and a Tawny Pipit was calling in the distance along with a Mediterranean Gull. Rollers and bee-eaters were also foraging.

We then set off to the lovely shady Hornbeam forests and hay-meadows around the historic Celic Dere monastery in Telita – it was a gloriously sunny day. House Martins were busily collecting mud for their nests while an Icterine Warbler was singing away above us – the squeaks and scratches of its song were easy to hear but the bird wasn't! Golden Orioles were singing all around us along with the odd Hoopoe, Cuckoo and 'purring' Turtle Dove. A Syrian Woodpecker with its paler, pinkish vent perched vertically in a small bush. Three Hawfinches 'ticked' from nearby trees and flew out into another giving some of the group the opportunity to see at least one perched. Others were also spotted flying overhead or heard calling. A flock of 20 Rose-coloured Starlings dashed past like racing pigeons and didn't stop. A female Goshawk soared overhead while a Hobby, Common Buzzard, Steppe Buzzard and Honey Buzzard were spotted further away in the blue sky. A baby Chaffinch, recently fledged, was on the ground as we listened to a brief Middle Spotted Woodpecker.

As we entered in to the woodland Blackcaps, Blackbirds, Chaffinches, Icterine Warblers, Wood Warblers, Song Thrushes and Chiffchaffs were all singing. Part of the group got views of a family of Sombre Tits – the larger black bib and Great Tit 'jizz' and size was noticeable. A Green Woodpecker called in the background while a female Honey Buzzard flew overhead. Along the main track we have very good views of a singing Red-breasted Flycatcher which looked virtually like a Robin and sounded a little like a Willow Warbler! The colours and markings must have a similar advantage when it comes to attracting a mate or living in this type of habitat. Wood Warblers and Icterine Warblers were singing all around us and after some patience most of the group managed fleeting views of both as they sang from the canopies of the Hornbeam, hidden by the fresh green leaves. We walked up an open meadow where another Hobby flew overhead and a Woodchat Shrike (probably a migrant) sat in the tops of trees singing. A Corn Bunting also sang nearby. Hundreds of Migrant Hawker dragonflies were hunting over the meadows and woodland edges while the odd Common Blue, Painted Lady, Small Heath, Green-veined White and Scarce Swallowtail butterflies were in the open grassy areas.

We picnicked outside the Macin Mountains protected area – it was like going back in time to how the most of the British countryside once sounded with Turtle Doves ‘purring’ and flying in display, Corn Buntings singing from small bushes and Nightingales with their resplendent liquidly notes coming out of a small area of woodland close by. A pair of Lesser Grey Shrikes above us in the trees, Spanish Sparrows and Long-legged Buzzards (overhead) reminded us that we were of course in Romania. Nearby flowers were home to displaying Eastern Knapweed Fritillaries, while Dave found a group of small chafers feeding on a single flower head. We went for a walk up in some of the oldest mountains in Romania which have been worn down to only 467 metres high. The hot sunshine was attracting blue butterflies to wet, muddy paths including Common Blue, Chapman’s Blue and Green-underside Blue. As we headed into the narrow valley we found at least two Cardinals, Queen of Spain Fritillaries, Grizzled Skipper, Small Skipper, Small Heath, Red Admiral, and Scarce Swallowtail butterflies. In a flowering bush lots of Rose Chafers were busily feeding on the pollen of its flowers. An obliging male Red-backed Shrike was in a nearby bush and on the mountaintop we watched a Long-legged Buzzard stood on the rocks and a Kestrel in flight. A few spotted over 40 White Storks soaring up high.

As most of the group wandered back down the hill, Vaughan heard and spotted a Rock Thrush which some of those looking specifically for this species managed to see. On our way back we stopped briefly further down the road in the bus to photograph poppies and other roadside flowers while Isabelline Wheatears fed on the steppe habitat and Corn Buntings sang from bushes. A Turtle Dove flew quickly through the valley. We headed back to Tulcea for a well-earned rest and our last dinner together. Laurentiu had arranged for some champagne and cake, and we were able to thank him for all his hard work showing us his country and its wildlife. Peter also spoke some short poems he had made for both Laurentiu and Ed which made us all chuckle – this was followed by one Dave had written about Peter the next morning.

Day 10

Monday 19th May

After a slightly later start and breakfast we left Tulcea at 9am and headed for the airport at Bucharest and our journey home. As we packed the coach a Lesser Whitethroat was singing on the wires and House Sparrows were cheeping from the hotel. Along the way we saw many birds including Hoopoes, Rollers, Lapwings, Corn Buntings, and corvids. Two Red-footed Falcons were at a rookery and Vaughan spotted a White-winged Black Tern over a lake. We also ventured into the centre of Bucharest where we stopped to see the People’s Palace or the Parliament Building where Swifts were screaming overhead. Laurentiu explained more about the building and its history relating to when Romania was ruled under a communist government. We arrived at the airport by 2.45pm and said our goodbyes and thanks to Laurentiu and our driver before checking in and heading back to the UK over a very sunny Hungary, Czech Republic, Germany and Belgium.

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Fire Salamander by Ed Drewitt



2014 Naturetrek Group in the Delta by Ed Drewitt

Species Lists

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

	Common name	Scientific name	May									
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
1	Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>								2		
2	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>				2	1	h	1	1		
3	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>				2	✓	✓	✓			
4	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
5	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>							✓			
6	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			
7	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
8	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>								1		
9	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>					3		3+			
10	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			2	✓	✓	✓	✓			
11	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>							3			
12	Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
13	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>			✓							
14	Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>				2						
15	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				2						
16	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>				✓	h	30+				
17	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
18	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>						8+				
19	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	4		✓	6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
20	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>			2	✓	100+	100+	✓			
21	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>			1	2	1			1	1	1
22	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>					h	h	1			
23	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>			1	1	1	1				
24	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>				6	✓	✓				
25	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	1		

	Common name	Scientific name	May								
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
26	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
27	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>			1	1	✓	✓	✓		2
28	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>				2	✓	✓	✓		✓
29	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1	
30	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>				1	✓	20+	500+		
31	Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>				2	4+	3+	5+		
32	Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmeus</i>			2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
33	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓		1
34	European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>								2+	
35	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>				1	3	4			
36	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	1		✓	1	✓	✓	✓	1	
37	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		1							
38	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>								1	
39	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓		✓					2+	2
40	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>							1	2+	
41	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>		4	2+				1	1	
42	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>							1		
43	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	2	1	✓	1		2	2+	1	✓
44	Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>			5	1	1	8+	1		2
45	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>			1	4	6+	✓	✓	2	
46	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	1								
47	Corn Crake	<i>Crex crex</i>		h							
48	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>				✓	✓	✓			
49	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
50	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>						2	✓		
51	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>			1				✓		
52	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
53	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>							1		

	Common name	Scientific name	May									
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
54	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>								6+		
55	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>			h		2					
56	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>								3		
57	Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>		h								
58	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>								1		
59	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>								6+		
60	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>								1		
61	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>							6+	4+		
62	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>					1			1		
63	Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>								100+		
64	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>								1		
65	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>								6		
66	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>								20+		
67	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>					2			1		
68	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>				60			✓	✓		
69	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>								2		
70	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>								12+		
71	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>								2		
72	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
73	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>							1		h	
74	Pallas' Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus</i>				1						
75	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>								12+		
76	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
77	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>								3		
78	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>			2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
79	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
80	White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>										1
81	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>				1	6+	✓				

	Common name	Scientific name	May								
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
82	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
83	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>						1			
84	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓	1	✓	✓	1		
85	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>			3					3	
86	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
87	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	h	✓	6+	15+	30+	30+	6+	3+	✓
88	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		1						2	
89	European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>							2		
90	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>	✓								
91	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		2+			✓
92	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>			2	10+	✓	12+	6+	✓	✓
93	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			✓	12+	3	3			
94	European Bee-Eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>			✓		6		30+	✓	✓
95	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>			3	1	6+	3	8+	✓	✓
96	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>				1		h			
97	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>								h	
98	Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>								1	
99	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	1		✓		✓	1	1	
100	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>		h				h			
101	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>								1	
102	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	h			h	h	2		h	
103	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>		6+	2	2	2	6	40+	✓	
104	Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>							6+	4+	1
105	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>								1	
106	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>			h	6+	✓	✓	✓	✓	
107	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓	✓	✓						
108	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
109	Spotted Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>		1							

	Common name	Scientific name	May								
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
110	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
111	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
112	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
113	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	4	✓	✓						
114	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	✓	2	h						
115	Sombre Tit	<i>Poecile lugubris</i>		2					1	6	
116	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>		2	✓				1		
117	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	✓	✓							
118	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		1							
119	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		h	
120	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>				✓	✓	✓		✓	
121	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>				h	✓	✓			
122	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>					3		2		
123	Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>			3+				2+		
124	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>							1		
125	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>							3		
126	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>							h	1	
127	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>			✓				✓	✓	
128	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			✓		100+		12	✓	
129	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
130	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
131	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>								2	
132	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			h	✓		h			
133	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>			h	h					
134	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	h	2	h	h	h	h		h	
135	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>								6+	
136	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>			2	✓	✓	✓	h	6+	
137	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>					h	✓			

	Common name	Scientific name	May									
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
138	Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>								6+		
139	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>					✓	h	h			
140	Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>				h					6+	
141	River Warbler	<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>				h						
142	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>					h	h	h			
143	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	h	✓	h	h	h	h			✓	
144	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>		h	h		h	h			1	
145	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>		4+		h	2	h				1
146	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	h	2	h							
147	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	h	3	h							
148	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	h		h							
149	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓								1	
150	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	h		1						1	
151	Rosy Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>									20	
152	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
153	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			2		✓	
154	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	1	✓								
155	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓				h		✓	
156	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	2	2								
157	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓								
158	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>				✓	h	1			h	
159	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>			h	h		h			h	
160	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	1	✓		1					
161	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			1	✓		✓				
162	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>		1								
163	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>					1	1	6+		1	
164	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>							6+		✓	
165	Common Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>									1	

	Common name	Scientific name	May								
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
166	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		1	1		1				
167	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>		1							
168	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	h							1	
169	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	1	h							
170	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
171	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>							✓	✓	
172	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
173	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		2							
174	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>					1	1	✓		
175	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓						
176	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
177	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>							4	✓	
178	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		1							
179	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	h	h	h	h	✓	
180	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	✓								
181	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	1	✓	✓		✓			1	
182	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	2	✓	✓		✓		h	2	
183	Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>							1		
184	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			1						
185	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>								6+	
186	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>			✓		h	1	✓	✓	✓
187	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		1					1	h	
188	Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>							4	h	
189	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>					✓	✓	2		

Reptiles and Amphibians

1	Fire Salamander	<i>Salamandra salamandra</i>		✓							
2	Common Frog	<i>Rana</i>		✓							

	Common name	Scientific name	May								
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
3	Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>		✓							
4	Newt sp.			✓							
5	European Fire-bellied Toad	<i>Bombina bombina</i>				h	✓	3	h	h	
6	Pool/marsh/edible Frog	<i>Pelophylax sp.</i>				h	✓	✓	✓	✓	h
7	Lizard sp.				1						
8	Dice Snake/Grass Snake							1			
9	Grass Snake	<i>Matrix natirx</i>							3		
10	European Pond Terrapin	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>							6	1	
11	Dice Snake (dead)	<i>Natrix tessellata</i>								1	
12	Balkan Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis tauricus</i>								1	1

Mammals

1	Chamois	<i>Rupicapra rupicapra</i>		✓							
2	European (Brown) Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>		✓							
3	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓	✓					
4	Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>			12						
5	Roe Deer	<i>Capreplus capreolus</i>					1				
6	Suslik	<i>Spermophilus citellus</i>								6+	

Butterflies and Moths

1	Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>		✓							
2	Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>		✓							
3	Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>		✓							✓
4	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>		✓							
5	Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>		✓							
6	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		✓							
7	Small Pearl-bordered	<i>Boloria selene</i>		✓							
8	Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>		✓							

	Common name	Scientific name	May									
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
9	Speckled Yellow	<i>Pseudopanthera macularia</i>		✓							1	
10	Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>				1				1		✓
11	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>							1			1
12	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>									1	1
13	Queen of Spain Fritillary	<i>Issoria lathonia</i>									1	1
14	Glanville Fritillary	<i>Melitaea cinxia</i>									2	
15	Eastern Knapweed Fritillary	<i>Melitaea telona</i>										6
16	Scarce Swallowtail	<i>Iphiclides podalirius</i>									1	2
17	Chapman's Blue	<i>Polyommatus thersites</i>										✓
18	Green-underside Blue	<i>Glaucopsyche alexis</i>										✓
19	Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>										✓
20	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>										✓
21	Cardinal	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>										2+
22	Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>										1
23	Brown Argos	<i>Aricia agestis</i>										1

Other inverts

1	Field Cricket	<i>Gryllus campestris</i>		h	h	h						h
2	Roman Snail	<i>Helix pomatia</i>		✓		✓						
3	Mole Cricket	<i>Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa</i>							✓			
4	Large Redeye	<i>Erythromma najas</i>								✓		
5	Hairy Dragonfly	<i>Brachytron pratense</i>								✓		
6	Migrant Hawker/Southern Hawker?											1000+
7	Ramshorn Snail	<i>Planorbis rubrum</i>								✓		
8	European Hornet	<i>Vespa crabro</i>								3		
9	Rose Chafer	<i>Cetonia aurata</i>										
10	Chafer sp.											
11	Violet Ground Beetle	<i>Carabus scarosus</i>										

	Common name	Scientific name	May									
			11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
12	Assassin Bug	<i>Rhinocoris iracundus</i>										



European Bee-eater by Vaughan Grantham



White-tailed Eagle by Vaughan Grantham